

**MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2005
7:00 P.M. -OPEN SESSION
WACTC-ROOM 303
MULTI-MEDIA ROOM**

Call to Order at 7:05 P.M.

Moment of Silence

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call:

Marc Dubois-Chairman	Present
Michael Bileau-Vice Chairman	Present
Allen Auclair	Present
John Ward	Present
Michelle Williams	Present

GOOD AND WELFARE-PUBLIC:

Mr. Mike Bergeron, 140 Fifth Street, Woonsocket, has had a problem with a Middle School teacher and has been in to talk to the Principal. They can not come to an understanding. He has asked for his child's records and he was told the Principal would have to authorize that. He has met with Mrs. Valentine about the fact his daughter switched clusters without his authorization. Dr. Macera stated she would address this issue with him directly.

Mr. Richard DiPardo, President of the WTG, stated that there are a hundred and forty, hard-working people at the Middle School and there was a letter published in the Call on February 9th asking why Mrs. Jellows was receiving a paycheck when accused of a crime. In this country, you are presumed innocent until proven guilty. Secondly, he commented on the fact that tonight, they will approve a third vice-principal for the Middle School who is not from the Middle School. The three vice-principals have a total of twelve weeks experience in administration. He feels Mr. Benjamin should be brought back even though his wife works at the Middle School. They have had other husband and wives work together in the past. There have been four openings and at least one should be filled with someone from that school.

Ms. Karen DeLauria, stated she has one child at Bernon and one child at the Middle School. She claims her daughter has been harassed by other students and that when a student witnesses it, nothing happens and it only stands if a teacher witnesses it. She had wanted to go to the lunch room to see her daughter and she was told due to confidentiality, she was not allowed. There are parent volunteers in the building and she has had a BCI check done and was still not allowed in. Dr. Macera stated she will get the information from her and look into this matter.

Ms. Marlene Smith, teacher at the Middle School, also, spoke about the letter to the Editor in the newspaper. She is currently teaching Civics and just watched the movie, Twelve Angry Men, and reviewed the fact that you are innocent until proven guilty. There are a lot of things that go on in that school that are not reported such as a dead mouse head being left on a teacher's desk. That was not reported in the paper because they don't go running to the paper every time something happens. The teachers are only concerned with the students. She has talked to substitute teachers who come from other Districts and they tell her they are happy to be back in Woonsocket because there is always a lesson plan ready for them where other Districts simply use that time for a study hall. She strongly suggests cameras in the hallways and maybe even metal detectors at some point. They have the biggest middle school in New England.

RECOGNITIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Dr. D'Acchioli congratulated Diane Mayers at Citizen's Memorial for being selected to receive the Trust's Safety Enhancement Grant award for \$1,000. The award will assist in the purchase of supplies for Citizens' disaster plan. Awards will be presented on Wednesday, March 2, 2005 at the Crowne Plaza in Warwick. Congratulations for her hard work in helping acquire this grant.

Special thanks went to the Quota Club members who donated two brand new Maico Audiometers to the Speech and Language Department. These audiometers will provide a more efficient way to quickly screen children's hearing.

Motion to receive and place of file
Unanimously approved

MB Second: MW

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion to approve the Correction to January 12, 2005 Open Minutes (Pages 2 & 4) and the Open and Closed Minutes of January 26, 2005 and the Closed Minutes of February 2, 2005

MB Second: JW

Unanimously approved

Chairman Dubois stated that Mr. Grabowski of the Woonsocket Boys & Girls Club asked that the issue of bus transportation be taken out of order due to an appointment he has.

Motion to take the Approval of Bus Transportation for the Woonsocket Boys & Girls Club out of order

MD Second: MW

Unanimously approved

Mr. Grabowski explained that the request is only for bus transportation for eleven students from five schools and only until the end of this school year. They will then acquire private bus transportation through Valley Transportation for September. He has presented a formal proposal to Dr. Macera and met with Mr. Legare. They will pay \$3/day for each of the eleven students whether or not they are on the bus and a roster will be provided of the children involve and the number of students will not change. This should not require a policy change.

Mr. Legare, owner of Valley Transportation, stated there would be no adverse affect or impact on the current bussing and the busses all ready go near the Boys & Girls Club.

Dr. D'Acchioli stated he would need a written contract with many questions answered before he could recommend this and an amendment to the policy that could open the doors for other groups to ask the same thing. Some of the questions would be about insurance; indemnification; discipline; bus accidents; what if a child doesn't get on the bus and many more. These would need to be addressed in writing.

Mr. Ward stated he was troubled mostly by the lack of protocol in this matter. The Superintendent and the owner of the bus company were not aware students were being put on the buses all ready without proper approvals, etc.. He can not support this as presented.

Mr. Auclair suggested that the transportation sub-committee be involved with this issue.

Motion to table this issue until the February 23rd School-Committee Meeting

MD Second: JW

Unanimously approved

CONSENT AGENDA:

Personnel Actions: (See Attached)

- Certified Appointments
- Non-Certified Appointments
- Non-Renewals/Terminations

Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

Local

- Keystone Information Systems-Payroll Program-Business Office-\$2,000.00
- Perlmutter Purchasing Power-Televisions-Harris-\$7,623.00

Grant

- Apple Computers-Computers/Server-Technology-\$20,953.00
- Dell Computers-Computers-Technology-\$2,887.44
- School Dude.com-Management & Scheduling Modules-Technology-\$2,985.00

Field Trips/Conference Requests

- NAFEPA Conference, Washington, D.C.-Title I

Mr. Bileau asked that the field trip be removed for discussion and Mr. Auclair asked that the School.Dude purchase and nonrenewable/terminations be removed, as well.

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda except for the items removed for discussion

JW Second: AA

Unanimously approved

Mr. Auclair stated that the terminations look like they do because of the March 1st notification deadline. He is hopeful they will find the funding for many of these positions but they have to wait for the State's numbers regarding funding and the March 1st deadline is required by law. They must, also, be financially responsible.

Dr. D'Acchioli explained that there were three articles in the newspaper just today showing how some districts in Rhode Island is being hit. Newport is laying off fifty-six teachers; Coventry-fifty teachers; Bristol-thirty-eight teachers. Woonsocket is only looking at thirteen and they have a much bigger district than these others. Due to grants and creative scheduling, they have been able to keep more classroom teachers. It is the law in Rhode Island to either terminate the service of teachers by March 1st or keep them on the payroll the following school year. He asks that the unions together with the Association of School Committees reconsider this law. It is hurting people and morale.

Chairman Dubois stated that there is a bill in the General Assembly to change the date from March 1st to June 1st which would make more sense for school committees.

Motion to approve the list of non-renewals and terminations as listed on the Consent Agenda

AA Second: MB

Unanimously approved

Mr. Auclair stated that the School.Dude purchase is a Technology and Facilities Department initiative. He has talked with Dr. D'Acchioli and Mr. Gallishaw and this is being funded by grants. These are modules which will streamline accounting procedures like inventory and reduce the number of people who must handle these issues now and hopefully, will save money and time.

Motion to approve the School.Dude purchase as listed on the Consent Agenda JW Second: MB

Unanimously approved

Mr. Bileau asked if the field trip is an exemption from the policy and who is paying the additional \$87.00?

Dr. Macera stated that the Federal Budget office updates the costs of conferences several times a year. This one is a Title I conference in Washington, D.C.. Very rarely are there exceptions but in this case, they asked this person to attend this conference.

Motion to approve the field trip as listed on the Consent Agenda

MB Second: JW

Unanimously approved

COMMUNICATIONS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Mr. Auclair reminded everyone that there will be a Parent Advisory meeting at 7 P.M. in this room at the WACTC. Dr. D'Acchioli stated that he will be attending to discuss generating support for additional funding.

Chairman Dubois stated that there was a Safety Committee meeting last Wednesday night and only one person showed up. Usually, there has been twenty-fourty people. It was very disappointing. There are many issues to be addressed such as snow removal; weapons; the numerous disciplinary actions and more and they will try and have another meeting in a couple of months.

Ms. Williams reminded everyone that there will be a Minority Concerns meeting in this room at the WACTC on March 16th at 7:00 P.M.. Interpreters will be available that evening.

CONFERENCES: None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Dr. D'Acchioli explained that at the last meeting, the Administration submitted a \$ 62,050,715 budget representing a \$3,876,544 or 6.6% increase. Committee asked the Administration to prioritize it's spending and identify greater reductions. Tonight, the Administration has identified an additional \$ 1,175,542 in reductions. If these reductions are accepted tonight, the budget will still increase by an additional \$2,436,185 to total \$60,610,356 representing a 4.19% increase. Using the Governor's 3.3% recommended appropriation, the City will need to provide an additional \$616,206 representing a 5.36% increase. To sustain level funding proposed by the City, the Legislature would need to increase State support to a 4.7% level. Even if that should happen, this Committee and its citizens should be seeking a minimum 4% increase from the City. For far too long, City officials have short-changed the children of Woonsocket. The State has recognized the City's previous lack of support and has reduced Woonsocket's funding in the past two fiscal years. This Committee and its citizens cannot allow the City to level-fund its children any longer.

Several parents and teachers spoke with the main issue being the loss of five nurses and the safety and health of their children/students.

Motion to amend the FY06 budget restores the nurses, the clerk to the nurses, teachers assistants, and the Middle School and High School coaches and ask the City for a 4.5% increase and the State a 5% increase in funding
JW Second: MB

Roll Call Vote (All Yes)

After public discussion and modification, the new adjusted budget totaled \$61,255,845 representing a 5.3% total increase with 4.5% to be requested from the City and 5.0% anticipated increase from the State.

Chair declared a five-minute recess.

Meeting reconvened at 9:40 P.M..

NEW BUSINESS:

Motion to approve the wage increase of 3.08% for the Secretary to the School Committee
JW Second: MB

Roll Call Vote (All Yes)

Motion to reject all the bidders on the McFee Elevator project

MD Second: MB

Roll Call Vote (All Yes)

Dr. D'Acchioli stated that all three bidders were not even close to their budget. He recommends they reject all three. They must spend the capital budget and Mr. Fontaine is working on getting quotes for other projects that may be completed within the current fiscal year.

Motion to appoint Ms. Cheri Guerra as an Assistant Principal at the Middle School

MB Second: JW

Dr. D'Acchioli read his letter recommending Ms. Guerra for this position. (SEE ATTACHMENT #1)
There were two applicants from the Middle School, as well and all had credentials but the fit and capability with the staff was better and this was Mrs. Valentine's top choice. He will see that Ms. Guerra attends the three-day NELMS conference.

Mr. Ward stated he likes the practice of appointing as an assignment which allows for flexibility. He recognizes there is a lot of discomfort at the Middle School with the new administration.

Dr. D'Acchioli stated he, along with Dr. Macera, are in contact with Mrs. Valentine almost daily in addition to stopping in at the Middle School. They are experiencing some distress there because a lot of practices are being questioned and this is healthy and some change was needed. However, some don't recognize that the length of the instructional day and teachers' prep time were changes required by a change in the State Law. He is comfortable with the changes. Mrs. Valentine will be making a presentation next month to the Committee about the upcoming SALT visit and Mr. Vachon will be discussing the drop-out rate.

Mr. Ward stated that some of the tension could be due to the SALT visit and suggested that Dr. D'Acchioli and Dr. Macera go into the Middle School and meet with staff and speak freely about expectations.

Dr. D'Acchioli stated he has all ready talked with Mr. DiPardo about doing just that and he was asked to wait until the staff has had a chance to meet with Mrs. Valentine.

Audience members asked if they could speak on this issue.

Motion to allow the Public to address the Committee on this issue

MD Second: MW

Unanimously approved

Ms. Marlene Smith stated they are not angry about the additional twenty-seven minutes a day and they are supportive of Mrs. Valentine but it is a tough building and many people are concerned that the team in place is inexperienced as administrators and especially in a middle-school administration.

Mr. DiPardo stated there is a 140 staff members with two people applying for the position from the Middle School. It is a matter of trust. The Middle School is clannish. All the applicants could do a good job but it would be a better fit to have someone with Middle School experience. Eighty people showed up on their own time and they are doing more than the State is doing. They now will have four outside people. The committee working on the SALT visit is doing a great job. First, they lost their Team Leaders, then Mr. McGee resigned, then Mrs. Valentine came in with a different style, then two new assistant principals with no experience as administrators for different schools and now another person with no middle-school experience. They need to be given time and flexibility and to get together. Mr. Benjamin would be a better fit.

Chairman Dubois stated that an appointment can be transferred at a later date. He advocated that Mr. Benjamin be kept at the Middle School and he was not happy about the move. He had been at the Middle School for many years.

Dr. D'Acchioli stated there is flexibility here and the appointment can be moved.

Roll Call Vote on the original motion (All Yes)

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Dr. D'Acchioli stated that budget research, development of capital projects, personnel and student issues takes up the bulk of the Administration's time. He appealed to all Woonsocket citizens to call their City and State officials and cajole for more funding. The City should take great pride in its schools and over the past en years, they have achieved so much with so little. This budget threatens the future success of their children. Classrooms will be at maximum capacity and classroom support staff at an all-time low and items cut will force flexibility and effectiveness to be strained. He asked every single person to call their City and State officials.

Motion to receive and place on file said Superintendent's Report

MD Second: MB

Unanimously approved

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD AND WELFARE:

Ms. Williams thanked Mrs. Zagrodny for allowing her to attend her Reading 180 class and Mrs. Pepino and her class for breakfast. She urged all to address the budget by attending City Council meetings and talking to their State Reps. She reminded everyone about the upcoming Minority Concerns meeting. She talked to Mr. Vachon about student interpreters and he stated that Mrs. Rollins has started an Hispanic Club and she will be in attendance that evening and would ask around for volunteers. She attended the Harris PTO last night and they will be having their Earth Day on April 9th between 9-12 P.M.. She thanked and received some information from the Middle School nurse, Tracey Dorey and received more information from the R.I. Coalition for Healthy Schools and passed out information packets to each School-Committee member for their review and suggestions. She is meeting with members of the Coalition tomorrow. Dr. D'Acchioli added that Sodexo does work with the R.I. Coalition for Healthy Schools. Mixed signals are being given to their students about healthy habits.

Mr. Auclair thought there was healthy discussion tonight and a good compromise was met on the budget. There has been turmoil at the Middle School for over a year. He doesn't know what the answer is but they must trust the leadership and the Committee will ensure the right thing is done. They try to hire from within. He feels it is a positive thing computerizing the monitoring as discussed with the School.Dude purchase and hopefully that will free up some money. He asked that the Committee come together and put differences aside to work on such things as the budget. They must go to the City and State and it won't be easy. He asked that Mr. DiPardo worked with them on changing the March 1st deadline. They are doing everything they can to move the District forward. He thanked everyone for their participation. He, also, thanked Dr. D'Acchioli and Dr. Macera for meeting with him a week ago. Some of Dr. D'Acchioli's global goals are to have an extension from West Park Place to Hamlet to relieve some of the traffic congestion at the Middle School; they have DEM approval for Birch Street at Citizens and Pothier schools and justifying a new middle school. They need to go to the City and ask them to put some land aside for a new building. He attended a seminar yesterday on communication and it was wonderful.

Mr. Bileau, also, attended Mrs. Zagrodny's Scholastic Reading 180 class and was very impressed. The Town of Lincoln is just deciding whether they want this class. It shows how far ahead they are. He is sorry to see Mr. Vachon retiring and commented on how he saw him at a lot of events supporting the students. He thanked Mr. Emerson and Dr. D'Acchioli for meeting with him last week to answer some questions. He hears a lot about the problems at the Middle School but would like to hear some solutions.

Chairman Dubois stated he, also, attended Mrs. Zagrodny's Scholastic 180 Reading class and the students were bright and respectful. He has known Mr. Vachon for many years and has worked for the School Department for twenty-eight years. He wished him well. He is going out at the top with a glowing NEASC report.

Mr. Ward echoed the same comments that Mr. DiPardo did about the letter in the newspaper critical of the Middle School indicting people. He found out that this teachers has worked there since the 1980's and need answers first. Some people are never satisfied and need to take the high road. The Middle School requires a

lot of communication and hard work. He will support the administration with their decision and will make them accountable. He has know Mr. Vachon for many years and wished him well. He was glad he was here while they were moving through some changes and he was a part of that. He had a lot of good people working with him and they were successful.

Motion to adjourn at 10:40 P.M.

MB Second: MD

Unanimously approved

Respectfully submitted,

Denise St Germain
WSC Recording Secretary