

**MINUTES**  
**WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2005**  
**7:00 P.M. -OPEN SESSION**  
**WACTC-ROOM 303**  
**MULTI-MEDIA ROOM**

**Call to Order at 7:48 P.M.**

**Moment of Silence**

Chairman Dubois asked the audience to remember Mr. Kenny Zagaglia, a long-time teacher at the High School and a long-time coach, who passed away at a young age last week.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Roll Call:**

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

Chairman Dubois apologized for the meeting starting late but three issues needed to be discussed in Closed Session. He stated there are some wonderful changes taking place at the Middle School and if there was no objection, he asks that Dr. Todd Flaherty, Deputy-Commissioner R.I.D.E., be taken out of order and be able to address the Committee because he has another appointment. There was no objection.

Dr. Flaherty commented on the positive communication between the School Committee and the Administration and the close support relating to the School Department. They will show that the Middle School is a good place for kids to go to and for the teachers to teach. There were five areas they concentrated on and the first being a new administrative team. They did an extensive search and did not find the quality they were looking for. They have an acting principal who was an all-pro superintendent and a mentor coming in that was last year's R.I. Middle School Principal of the Year. Secondly, they are hoping the Committee approves the three House Leaders tonight, which is absolutely vital to the operation and will be part of the grade-level teams and the Leaders will move each year with the students in a looping fashion. Third issue was the school climate. It is an old building with over 1600 students. The Institute for the study and practice of and Non-Violence will be in there and they are working on getting funds from the Federal Government through the Century 21 Grant. The funds will be used to implement action plans which the teams are currently working on and will modify instruction. Tomorrow night, there is an Open House for the sixth-grade parents and next week, one for the seventh and eighth grades. There is support for family activities and have invested a lot of time and energy and will continue to over the next few months. The teachers and parents will be a larger part and will give them real ownership of the school. The State is in it for the long haul and has secured the funds. There have been a lot of gains in the elementary schools and they need the Middle School to continue that progress. There are lots of good things going on and they appreciate the partnership between them and the School Department. There will schedule a meeting in early November to bring the Committee up to date as to their progress at the school. He commended the Administration and the WTG for their efforts and proud of what has happened over the summer.

Mr. Ward thanked Dr. Flaherty for coming to the meeting and for the State giving this matter the attention and for assuring parents that this is a good place for their children. There are many things beyond what the Administration can control such as socialization and violence and shows the need for community-based programs and support.

**Motion to take the vote on the House Leaders out of order**  
Roll Call Vote (All Yes)

**MD Second: JW**

Dr. D'Acchioli stated that Dr. Flaherty sat in on the interviews and a lot of fine applicants applied. He stated the three House Leaders selected are Sandra Gasbarro, Natalie Brennan and Jessie Butash. They looked for years of experience, middle-school experience, and professional-development skills, attendance records- not more than 50 days absent over five years and good leadership skills and qualities.

Chairman Dubois stated he observed the interviews and all candidates were asked the same questions and was very impressed and welcomes the House Leaders and looks forward to working with them.

**Motion to appoint the WMS House Leaders named**  
Roll Call Vote (All Yes)

**MD Second: MB**

**GOOD AND WELFARE-PUBLIC:**

Ms. Theresa Dorry, the nurse at the Middle School, stated that she recognizes Dr. D'Acchioli who has built up the nursing staff from six to thirteen nurses during his time with the School Department. She requests that the High School and Middle School clerks be restored to full time. She and Mrs. Renaud handle more than five times what the elementary schools handle and there is all the state-mandated work and the huge number of students for one person to handle.

Mr. DiPardo, President of the WTG, congratulated the School Committee and the House Leaders and was on the interview committee. Many good people applied and they are three of the best. There have been headlines that the Union challenged the proposal of grant money being given to the Beacon Charter School. The Union is not against charter schools but last spring when Beacon couldn't make their payroll, they went to the State and received 250K with the understanding that they would forfeit their charter at the end of the school year. Now, they don't want to do that and there is pressure on the State to give them a second life. This places them not on an equal playing field with the School Department. Woonsocket will lose 100k if this happens. Many students at Beacon are from other communities. He will be going to the City Council on September 6<sup>th</sup> and the Board of Regents meeting tomorrow night on this issue.

Ms. Miriam Newton, a Teacher's Assistant, asked for information about the Job Fair on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Dr. D'Acchioli stated that letters were mailed out and should have been received and that the Job Fair will take place next Monday after lunch in the High School auditorium. The orientation is in the morning and is voluntary for TA's. Tuesday will be their first professional day for teachers and teacher assistants.

**RECOGNITIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Dr. D'Acchioli congratulated Mr. Fontaine and the entire custodial and Facilities staff for getting their buildings in such fine shape. Thanks were, also, extended to their secretarial and clerical staff for their preparations to guarantee a smooth start.

Lastly, he thanked the District Directors and Building Administrators for their planning and follow-through for the opening of their schools.

**Motion to receive and place of file**  
Unanimously approved

**MB Second: MW**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**Motion to approve the Open Minutes of August 10, 2005**  
Unanimously approved

**MD Second: MB**

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

**Personnel Actions:** (See Attached)  
Certified Appointments  
Non-Certified Appointments

**Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000**

**Local**

Allied Waste Services/Trash Removal/WACTC/Local-\$3,580.68  
Konica Minolta/Maintenance Usage/Savoie/Local-\$3,200.00  
Quill Corporation/Educational Supplies/WACTC/Local-\$4,992.11

**Grant**

ASAP Software/Server upgrades/Technology/Grant-\$2,445.91  
Connecting for Children & Families/COZI Services/District/Grant-\$39,500.00  
Dell Computers/Computers/Even Start/Grant-\$3,668.00  
Thornley-Degrass Rigging Co., Inc./Moving Donated Equip/WACTC/Grant-\$4,000.00

**Voc. Rev**

Advanced Concrete Cutting, LLC/Removal & Installation of Concrete/WACTC/Voc. Rev.-  
\$4,325.00

**Field Trips/Conference Request** (0)

**Home Schooling Requests** (9)

Chairman Dubois stated that there was one addition to the Personnel Items tonight and each member received a copy of it. Mr. Bileau asked that the Home Schooling be removed for discussion.

**Motion to approve the Consent Agenda without the Home Schooling Requests**

**MB Second: AA/JW**

Unanimously approved

Mr. Bileau stated that one of the requests included five children from one family. Does the family have to provide the School Department any proof of what the children are being taught?

Dr. D'Acchioli stated that the parents provide assurances and there is documentation of valid curriculum being taught.

Dr. Macera stated that home-schooled students may not participate in athletics, not subject to State assessment, do not receive a Woonsocket diploma and portfolios are provided to the School Department of the student's work and there is follow-up.

**Motion to approve the Home Schooling Requests**

**JW Second: AA**

Unanimously approved

**COMMUNICATIONS:** None

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Mr. Ward stated that he went to the Regents Sub-Committee and spoke regarding the budget and the Beacon School. If they do grant the opening of the school, it would cause the District to lose up to 100K and he feels the local or state government should be responsible for that. There is no animosity towards the school. It is simply an issue of money. Commissioner McWalters told him there is nothing in the State budget to accommodate that expense and that they would have to appeal to the City Council. The City Council did receive an additional one million plus dollars from the State and they should be asked to share the good fortune with the School Department. He will be attending the next Regents' meeting tomorrow.

**CONFERENCES:**

Mr. Peter Fontaine gave a brief review of the Emergency Response Plan. He stated that each school has their own plan and contains more than what is required. This summer, he received a CD from the State, which contains 171 pages on information on this subject, and there was nothing on the CD that was out of line with the document. The only changes in the plans may be teachers who no longer want to be on the teams. He will update that information and review the CD with each principal and the 171 pages contained on the CD has been posted on the website. The plan is very thorough and is about twenty pages long.

Dr. D'Acchioli stated he spoke with Mr. Levine, the chairman of the original committee and that this plan had all ready been approved by the Committee and all they need to do is to bring any changes before the Committee each year. It was stated recently that this is the best document in the State.

Mr. Ward suggested that each August, Mr. Fontaine should either send a notice to the Committee if there are no changes or come before the Committee if there are changes and make it a regular process each year. They need to be made aware of regulatory changes and not personnel changes.

Mr. Auclair stated that he spoke with George McDonough at R.I.D.E. and he stated that Woonsocket has been in violation for the past two years as well as other districts due to the lack of funding. Issues haven't been addressed such as disruptive students and strangers coming to the schools. Mr. McDonough with be talking to the Emergency Management Team regarding funding. Most districts are not included in the cities emergency plans so the State doesn't provide funding.

Dr. D'Acchioli stated that they are included in the City's plan and has practiced drills. The Mayor has declared the Holiday Inn as the central place for information once the schools are locked down. They have dealt with disruptive children, etc. All teachers have this information in their books. HAZMET has also reviewed and modified our plans. Perhaps Mr. McDonough should come and visit.

Mr. Auclair stated it is more than drills. The City has received funds form Homeland Security and some should be given to the School Department for drills, etc. The Safety Committee should get the CD, as well. They are still in violation of the General Laws.

**Motion to receive and place said report on file**  
Unanimously approved

**MD Second: MB**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Dr. D'Acchioli stated that Even Start Child Development Assistance is requesting a wage increase that would bring them up to the sub-para rate. He agrees with it and they agree to live within their grant limits.

**Motion to approve the rate change request for Even Start Child Development Assistance**

**MD Second: JW**

Unanimously approved

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:**

Dr. D'Acchioli stated that schools open for students next Wednesday. A reminder for parents that the elementary school hours have been moved back fifteen minutes. Elementary school schedules are now fifteen minutes later than they were last year. The school doors now open at 8:30 AM for elementary school students who participate in the school breakfast program and at 8:45 for all other students.

The annual School Committee facilities walk-through has been scheduled for this Friday at 9:00 AM. They will meet Mr. Fontaine at the high school and then visit whatever schools the Committee selects.

On the topic of facilities, he forwarded to the Mayor the list of school representatives designated to serve on a school facilities committee and await notification of a meeting date.

Another hearing on the status of the Beacon Charter School is scheduled for tomorrow. He referenced that only because that decision will have a significant impact on their budget. His concern is that the City Council is contemplating a \$50,000 grant to keep the Beacon School alive. The Council failed to provide the funds requested by the School Committee last February. Even the additional \$255,000 promised to the schools by Mayor Menard earlier this month is still short of their initial request. If the Council's assistance permits Beacon to open, then the Committee will need to identify an additional \$100,000 of cuts to cover anticipated tuitions. To add insult to injury, the Legislature removed the Charter School reimbursement line from their allocations, thus depriving them of approximately \$30,000.

As you heard earlier this evening, RIDE has been very helpful with the Middle School restructuring and everything appears to be going well. There was a setback this morning with the announcement of Ms. Roth Nordin accepting a position in her hometown of Burrillville. Fortunately, Mr. Richard Zagrodney is available to fill in while they conduct a formal search. With the approval of the Teachers' Guild, they will immediately post for this position with applications closing next Monday at noon on Orientation Day. Interviews can be set up for Tuesday so that the new person can be on duty for opening day pending formal appointment at their next meeting.

The re-advertisement of the Middle School principalship closed today. Seven new applicants threw their hats into the ring. A quick perusal suggests that they may have several viable candidates to interview for this most important job. He would like to have the screening Committee review all of the applications, those received earlier as well as the new ones sometime this week. A list of those individuals they feel would merit an interview can then be developed with interviews scheduled immediately after Labor Day. If this timeline can be met and a strong candidate emerges, it is possible to potentially make a recommendation for the September 14<sup>th</sup> meeting. The timeline, however, will not be the driving force. What is important is that we select the right candidate for this position.

Tomorrow will be the orientation for new teachers. By contract, new teachers have an additional fifteen professional development hours beyond the professional development afforded all teachers. In addition to their training, they will be given a bus tour of the City and will end their day at the Museum of Work and Culture.

Next Monday will be the Teacher Orientation for all staff. Committee is invited to attend. The program starts at 9:00 AM in the high school auditorium. Orientation provides the administration with the opportunity to communicate their goals, discuss our challenges and celebrate their past accomplishments. The Teacher Assistant Job Fair will be held following Orientation.

Next Tuesday, will be a professional day for teachers and teacher assistants. Varied activities have been scheduled throughout the districts.

Per request of the Chairman, they have scheduled Tim Duffy to conduct an informational session for all candidates running for School Committee. The session will be held on Wednesday, October 5, 2005. Details will be addressed closer to the event.

Valley busses will be parked overnight this Friday at the Globe Park School while the Valley lot is resurfaced. Valley will be providing security.

Other calendar items of note include the following:

Tonight, he attended the first of two Grade 9 orientations. The second orientation is scheduled for tomorrow. Concurrently, the Middle School will be offering a sixth grade orientation for students and parents. A program for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade parents is scheduled for next Tuesday night, August 30. Parent Orientation for 5<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Schools is scheduled for 9:15 AM on Friday, September 2. Coleman and Social Street Schools will, also, host morning orientations on Wednesday, September 7. That evening, Bernon will host its orientation session. Savoie will hold their session on September 8. The Pothier Orientation session is scheduled for September 13. Globe orientation will be on Tuesday, September 20 and Citizens finishes off the list on September 22.

Dr. D'Acchioli invited the Committee to attend any and all orientation sessions and, also, encourage parents to take advantage of these opportunities. Orientation sessions are deliberately scheduled early in the school year to afford parents the opportunity to meet their child's teacher, learn about classroom expectations and become familiar with instructional materials and methodologies.

School starts for all students next Wednesday. They will be sending home pre-printed emergency forms. These forms will allow them to verify the information they have in their computers. Parents are asked to please edit these forms and return them to your child's school as quickly as possible.

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

**MB Second: AA**

### **SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD AND WELFARE:**

Mr. Bileau thanked Dr. Flaherty for informing everyone on the Middle School's plan. He congratulated the three new House Leaders. He is unable to attend the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Open House nor the walk through due to family commitments. He looks forward to a great school year.

Chairman Dubois thanked Mr. Cronin for filing in on the videotaping for the students while they were out during the summer. He congratulated the new House Leaders. There is good work being done at the Middle School. He urged all parents next week to look at the handbooks regarding Zero Tolerance and dress codes, etc. and to check their child's backpack and to be involved. He thanked Dr. Flaherty for speaking about the goals and plans and expects a great year. He, also, thanked Mr. Legare of Valley Transportation for an expected fine job this year with the bussing as has he has provided over the last few years. Chairman Dubois asked Dr. D'Acchioli about leaves of absence and how they are approved or denied.

Dr. D'Acchioli stated that such as the new House Leaders, they are accepting a change within their system and they have the assurance that they will have a position to come back to. He will deny a request if it is to take another position in another district or another job.

Chairman Dubois was disappointed to hear about the Vice-Principal leaving today at the Middle School. Just two weeks ago, she stated she was in it for the long haul and was in the interviews for the House Leaders and now a week before school starts, she leaves. Her timing was awful and unethical and very disappointing. He, then, asked Dr. D'Acchioli to look into a student account at the Middle School, which contained 17K from dances, etc. and was closed out by Mr. Wojcik. Dr. D'Acchioli stated he would look

into it. Chairman Dubois stated he had received correspondence about the arrangement of the house-leader interviews. Dr. D'Acchioli stated in one of the emails that he is a short timer. Chairman Dubois doesn't want him to feel that way and still has twenty-two months left.

Mr. Ward congratulated the three House Leaders and is very enthusiastic. He was disappointed to hear about the Vice Principal leaving. It was good that it happened now rather than once school opened. Dr. Flaherty cleared up a lot of questions and expectation is high. There are lessons to be learned and perhaps in the future, they along with other Districts, experiencing the same thing, can see what caused and brought them to this. They, along with the State, can gain something from this. He will be attending the Regents' meeting regarding the Beacon School. He welcomed back the students and teachers and hopes for a safe, good year.

Ms. Williams thanked Dr. Flaherty for working with together as a team and with the community, will move forward. She congratulated the three House Leaders and thanked Mr. Wrona for his videotaping work. She asked about the budget for the Middle School sports. Dr. D'Acchioli stated that the City, hopefully, will write a resolution on how much they will receive and, also, about the situation with Beacon. Ms. Williams agreed with Ms. Dorry and they need to look at this because of all the State mandates. She responded to Mr. Blais of the City Council who at the last meeting, stated that they spent money and piloted a program (Universal Free Breakfast). She stated that they spent no money and lost only \$117 in revenue. They are not making any money on the breakfast program. If the kids don't come, they don't get reimbursed. 58% of their students are qualified now for free breakfast where they would be reimbursed \$1.51 for each meal. She encouraged these children to participate and it will bring in funds, as well. Teachers and parents need to promote this and put up some signs. Regarding the access to public records, she read from a case vs. the Johnston School Department, dated June 30, 2004, it states that regarding public employee contracts, certain information is available to the Public and some are not. Items that are not available to the Public are Personnel, medical and welfare, employee security, pupil records and information in Personnel records. However, gross salary range, total cost of fringe benefits, overtime, other remuneration in addition to job title and description are available for public access. She only has some questions because Mr. DiPardo had brought up some questions about Dr. D'Acchioli's contract at a couple of meetings and then she received some phone calls. So, she went back and reviewed the numbers. His current salary is \$146,732 and on June 30, 2005, he received a check for over 10K, which may have been his vacation by-back. Also, he receives 10,910 for opting out of the medical plan. The numbers don't add up. As of June 30, 2004, his base salary was 130K with a 3% increase of his adjusted base salary for 2005 and 2006 and travel and conference and medical are rolled into that base salary. She worked the numbers every which way and the numbers don't add up. She would like the Chairman, herself, someone from Payroll; Mr. Ackerman meet regarding this and then will get back to the Public. In two years, Dr. D'Acchioli's salary has increased by 31K+. Chairman Dubois stated a meeting is possible. Another item, one she has brought up before, that their attorney is to advise the School Committee on legal matters but tonight, as soon as he's done, he leaves. She did some research this week and found that most attorneys who represent School Committees in R.I. Are either on billable hours or a retainer and bill for certain things. One of the attorneys stated he advises the School Committee on day-to-day items as well as attendance at all meetings. Their attorney receives a salary and after ten years, can be eligible for a pension and he is almost never there. Maybe they should go out to bid. Most of these attorneys are paid at a deeply discounted rate and maybe they could save some money and use that for some positions being lost. For example, one attorney is paid \$105.00 an hour up to 150 hours and then the rate goes to \$150 an hour. She wanted to know what Mr. Ackerman is doing for the money he receives. Dr. D'Acchioli stated that Mr. Ackerman works and represents the School Committee and not him and if she has questions, to simply ask him. He is their attorney. She stated she has a list of attorneys provided to her from the R.I. Assoc. of School Committees and would like to meet with the Chairman and Mr. Ackerman.

Mr. Auclair thanked Dr. Flaherty for coming tonight and is very excited about the changes and the School Committee will fully support their plan and what will help the school. He thanked Mr. Nasiff for coming on board and congratulated the new House Leaders. He asked the City Council to meet for a brainstorming session and he has heard nothing. He is not asking for money but for ideas. The School Department is a department of the City. The Mayor has done a good job with the status quo with taxes at the School

Department's expense. They need to work together. Gasoline is up and will have an impact on their budget. At his house, oil is up \$1 per gallon. Mr. Ward stated he had to come up with some kind of quest mate, which is all it is, and the average over the last two years, was \$1.47. They predicted a 5-8% increase, which would mean it would be \$1.56 this year. They just called and it is at \$1.92 right now and they are getting it at virtual cost. The same is happening with electricity. The best you can do is a range of risk. Mr. Auclair reviewed the ruling by the Board of Regents regarding safety and they shall include school administration's evacuation plans for handicapped students and give them to the Fire Departments, as well. Dr. D'Acchioli stated that Mr. Emerson has talked with each Principal and identified these students and when they are moved to different classes and grades. Dr. Macera stated that they dogive these reports to the Fire Departments and are registered each year along with the students' schedule. They place an individual who is responsible to handle that and if there are changes, the Principal must report it to the Fire Department. The Fire Department is particularly vigilant on this issue. Mr. Auclair asked about attendance registers no longer being used yet still shows in the emergency plans. This policy needs to be revised regarding attendance (P3-6.8). He is very happy with the promotion policy changes for the elementary schools. Copies should be available at Orientation. Perhaps reevaluation of the elementary report cards should be done. Subjects such as Science or Social Studies have only room for one grade. Dr. Macera agrees and will revisit the suggestions made by elementary teachers and principals. Also, State testing will be in Science and not Social Studies. Mr. Auclair stated that Hawaii has progress reports, which are more detailed in the first and second trimester and then a report card on the third. Dr. Macera stated this is mandated by the State. Report cards are a work in progress, which have to deal with proficiencies and not grade averages. Mr. Auclair stated that per the teachers' contract. It states there is a District Discipline Oversight Committee. They need to reactive this and should fall under the Safety Committee. Also, a student discipline sub committee could be on the oversight committee. Each SIT may have this. Dr. Macera stated that is not the case. There is an article in this week's Time magazine from a gentleman who wrote the book, Crash Course, and talks about students being more involved in their environment and learning. It could be a focus of discussion. Mr. Auclair asked about the 30 day absent, automatic retention policy and what happened with summer school this year for the Middle School. Dr Macera stated she has had many long conversations on this issue and they need to look at the responsibility of the parents. Also, there is the Truancy Court. They need to review this policy. All students are reviewed closely regarding attendance. The summer school program was very successful. Leo DiMaio's transitional program is very successful. There were twenty-seven students that were tracked for three years and they maintained their grades and completed the ninth grade with a 93% success rate. They have submitted for a grant for next year, which would double that program. Of the other seventeen students who were failing, sixteen were retained and will be placed with a different teacher than the one that failed them and will receive above and beyond help. She can provide him with a report of the Summer School results. Mr. Auclair stated he has looked into information about starting a charter school and perhaps this is something they could look into perhaps for gifted or problem students in the future. Maybe CVS could help to start one like they have in another community. They are based right in Woonsocket.

**Motion to adjourn at 9:50 P.M.**

**MD Second: MB**

Roll Call Vote (All Yes)

Respectfully submitted,

Denise St Germain  
Secretary to the School Committee