

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2006
7:00 PM – OPEN SESSION
WACTC –ROOM 303
MULTI MEDIA LAB

Called to Order by Chairman Marc Dubois
Moment of Silence
Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call:	Marc Dubois, Chairman	Present
	Allen Auclair	Present
	Michelle Williams	Present
	Eleanor Nadeau	Present
	Anita McGuire-Forcier	Present

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

- **Donna Houle, 130 Ward Street, Woonsocket:** Asked if the upcoming special election for City Councilman on Feb. 14th was going to interfere with the operation of the schools since they will be in session on that day. Dr. Macera explained that usually only the lobbies of the schools are used and the polling booths are cordoned off. She doesn't think the process will disrupt the students, especially since it's a special election.
- **Tammy Beuparlant, Elder Ballou Meeting House Road, Woonsocket:** She's concerned about the new high school proficiency requirements and common tasks that will be required for graduation because her daughter is a special education student. She thinks some sort of certification should be developed for these children with special needs and she hasn't heard of anything yet. Dr. Macera explained that starting March 1st, the WED will be participating in some alternative education programs, such as online tasks for Grades K through 12. Some alternative diplomas are also being developed.

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS – Dr. Maureen Macera, Superintendent-- Congratulated the District winner of the Spelling Bee, Mary Thipphavong, Gr. 8 from the Woonsocket Middle school, and the runner up Brandon Taylor, Gr. 4 from Globe Park School. Thanked all the students who participated in this district wide school event. Also, Marc Dubois, Karen Karten and Carol Lerner for taking time to be a judge and to Mr. Kenneth Bell, Sports Director for WLNE-Channel 6 News for being the Pronouncer at this district wide event. Gave a special thanks to Linda Filomeno, the District Coordinator and Moderator and Donna Blais, Department Secretary who spent many hours organizing and coordinating all the district school for the evening. Gave kudos to Jen Maiello, Director of this year's presentation of Jesus Christ Superstar. It was another fantastic performance and a positive recognition for the fine students from Woonsocket High School. Congratulated her and the entire cast!! Bravo!! Congratulated Krystal Palma in Graphics/Printing program at WACTC who was awarded a Silver Key in Printmaking in the Scholastic Art Competition. Her winning work can be viewed at Alpert's in Seekonk. Mr. Bill Webb, Graphics Instructor passed a national exam and earned certification as an Evaluation Team Leader from the Graphics Arts Education and Research Foundation. Susan Votto, Cox New Media and Eleanor Pierannunzi, Health Occupations encouraged their students to enter the 'Your Voice, Your View' competition sponsored by the Sexual Assault and Trauma Resource Center. Because of their collaborative efforts, the WPRO Street Team visited WACTC and gave away lots of prizes. There was a follow-up article in the Providence Journal and more articles will be forthcoming. Students from the New Media class at WACTC are involved in a state project in which they are being used as videographers in classrooms throughout the state, videoing best practices as teachers teach to the new GSE's. Two students, Ashley Smith and Elizabeth Guillen, along with their teacher, Eleanor Pierannunzi, from the Health Occupations Program at the Woonsocket Area and Technical Center have been chosen to participate in a pilot mentorship program. The program, a joint effort of Landmark Medical Center and its Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery, Dr. Michael Coady, is being coordinated by Woonsocket School Based Coordinator, Ken DeCubellis. Students will be given an opportunity to interview and observe a patient before, during, and after open heart surgery. This will allow the students to integrate subjects studied in class with an authentic "real world" experience. It is hoped that this will stimulate the students' interest in healthcare careers. Thanked Ms. Papino's sixth grade class at Woonsocket Middle School for taking part in a community service project by collecting hats and gloves for needy families. The student's enthusiasm and caring efforts shows great pride in their community, and their participation in this community project made this event a great success! Gave kudo's to Jennifer Savage for being named "**Scholar Athlete of the Week**" by the Woonsocket Call on February 6, 2006. Jen is a three-sport athlete and captain of the cross-country, indoor track and outdoor track teams. She is ranked ninth in her class and had straight A's on her last

report card while taking advanced courses in Calculus and English. Jen is also a member of the National Honor Society, FBLA (Future Business Leaders Association) and a member of the Woonsocket math team. She was also the Wendy's High School Heisman nominee for this year. Congratulated her on her accomplishments and urged her to keep up the good work.!

Motion to receive and place on file: M. Williams

2nd: A. Auclair (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: 1/25/06 OPEN/CLOSED

Motion to Approve: A. Auclair

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

Ms. Williams noted one spelling correction under her portion of Good & Welfare. ***“C-Lac” meeting should have been spelled, “SELAC” meeting.***

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion to approve by M. Dubois with the following exemptions:

- ***Personnel Actions – Removed by A. Auclair***
- ***Obsolete Textbooks – Removed by A. Auclair***

2nd: M. Williams (Unanimously Approved)

1. Personnel Actions - REMOVED

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

Apple Computers/Equipment/District/Local
Century Consultants/Prof. Dev. Training/Technology/Grant
CBE/Equipment/WHS/Local
Ema Jane Kondon/Consultant/WMS/Grant
Konica/Copier Usage/WMS/Local/Grant
LRP Publications/Subscription/SpEd/Grant
Alternative Ed Programming, Inc./Services/WHS/Grant
Ocean State Gymnastics, Inc/Facilities Rental/Athletics/Local

3. Field Trip/Conference Requests

AFT Conference, NY/WMS/Article 18
N.E. Kindergarten Conference, Boston, MA/Bernon/Local

4. Obsolete Textbooks List - REMOVED

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

EXEMPTIONS TO CONSENT AGENDA:

- **Motion to approve Personnel Actions** (Certified Appointments, Non-Certified Appointments, & Non-Renewals/Terminations): A. Auclair

2nd: M. Williams (Unanimously Approved)

Mr. Auclair noted that some of the personnel actions to be approved are intertwined with the budget, such as the non-renewals. Dr. Macera explained that she met with approximately 67 staff members about their non-renewal notices. “The school department is required to submit a balanced budget. These are very, very difficult times.” She noted that some retiree positions will not be replaced at the moment. Four nurse/teachers had to be laid-off. It is a priority for Dr. Macera to bring them back, however. She noted that she and Miriam Goodman have a meeting tomorrow at the Mayor's office to go over the budget. The implications of the pension reform legislation were explained and the impact it will have on the budget. “When we have federally funded positions, we need to contribute 17% to the pension system. Next year it will be 19.64%. The budget impact is an increase of \$750,000. Blue Cross Insurance

went up about 10%. The impact to our budget is \$650,000. There are also step increases for teachers and we are in contract negotiations right now. The increases we are proposing are reflected in this budget. We have requested a 3.95% increase, which is little below the cost of living. I will do everything in my power to recall as many of these people as possible," said Macera.

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- **Motion to approve the disposal of the books on the Obsolete Textbooks List:** A. Auclair
2nd: M. Williams (Unanimously Approved)

Mr. Auclair had asked for an inventory of textbooks that the WED currently has. Mrs. Goodman explained that the books on this list are books that were purchased by us for our schools or private schools in Woonsocket that are not being used. They have been sitting in a basement. He expressed again his concern about the WSC not being aware of what textbooks are being purchased for use in our schools. Dr. Macera assured him that if a new series of textbooks is purchased for the district, that purchase will come before the WSC for approval. "Don't they have to be from an approved list and approved by the local school committee before being placed in the schools?" he asked. Dr. Macera explained the WED's pilot program for textbooks and Miriam Goodman listed the amounts spent on textbooks for each of the past few years in the district.

COMMUNICATIONS

- **Ms. Williams** read a memo she sent out to the WSC members regarding the School Building Subcommittee and the difference in focus from before the election to after the election. Before the election, the Mayor supported building a new middle school and now it looks like she wants to build a new high school instead. There is also the issue of who's going to pay for it.
- **A. Auclair** announced a meeting of the School Building Subcommittee tomorrow to interview architects. He will ask Owen Bebeau about Ms. Williams' concerns. Auclair said he has had no response to his request for a meeting with the City Council regarding the budget. He sent a letter out on January 27th requesting the meeting. He explained the timeline for budget submission to the Finance Committee, Mayor to the City Council, etc., and spoke about the importance of working together. He was happy to hear that Dr. Macera and Mrs. Goodman were meeting with them, but stated that the WSC is the body that is supposed to meet with the City Council by law. Auclair thought the public should know that an effort is being made to work collaboratively with the City. "We are a department of the City. We can't survive on just state and federal funding." He'll make sure we have a public budget hearing no later than June 1st. He announced that there is a PAC meeting at the WACTC at 7 p.m. next Wednesday.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

CONFERENCES: None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Approval of School Calendar 2006-2007 (1st Passage)

Motion to approve: A. Auclair
Roll Call Vote: MD-yes; MW-yes; AA-yes; AF-yes; EN-yes

2nd: E. Nadeau

Passed 5-0.

Dr. Macera recommended that the WSC approve this calendar. Mr. Dubois noted that there are two WSC meetings scheduled for August of 2006, because they have found that one meeting that month isn't enough to take care of everything before school starts. Dubois also said he was opposed to school starting before Labor Day. Macera is working on it and there may be some flexibility with the scheduling of professional days so that this might be possible.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Bid Award #06-08 Telecommunications System

Motion to approve the award of a 5-year contract to Verizon for a monthly fee of approximately \$2,961: M. Dubois

2nd: M. Williams

Roll Call Vote: MD-yes; MW-yes; AA-yes; AF-yes; EN-yes Passed 5-0.

Mrs. Goodman explained that this contract is for the school system's basic service for its landlines.

2. FY07 School Budget – Public Forum

Mrs. Goodman provided a PowerPoint presentation showing the revenues and expenditures in a pie chart and bar graph format while explaining them for the public. Dr. Macera noted that the 3.95% increase over last year is by far one of the lowest increases that other superintendents are asking for. She added that she's a new superintendent in a district she has worked in for almost 7 years and doesn't want to have anything other than positive, pleasant and meaningful dialogue with regards to the budget. She will very strongly advocate for what she feels is fair, however. "The price of everything is going up. Our children are our future." She welcomed anyone to ask questions about the budget. "We have not run a deficit like some other communities have. We are a diverse, urban district with students with many different needs," she stressed.

- **John McLaughlin, 632 South Main Street, Woonsocket:** Stated that he had done a paper on how much of each tax dollar goes to the schools, but didn't see it in this report anywhere. He asked how much does go to the schools. Dr. Macera said she doesn't have that information. She doesn't have access to the city budget, but spoke about the InSight Report, which provides figures of this type. Figures for how much each school district in the state spent on leadership (salaries, fringe benefits, etc.) are included. Dr. Macera said that they watch this report very closely to see where Woonsocket stands compared to other districts. McLaughlin asked what would happen if we don't get the \$9 million in grants that have been secured in the past. Because most of the grant money funds positions, Dr. Macera thinks that those positions would be lost. Mr. Auclair pointed out that there is something on the back of each tax bill stating where each percentage of the tax dollar goes.
- **Denise Bouley:** Asked what would happen if the city doesn't contribute the 4.1% cost of living increase being requested from it. Dr. Macera said that it would certainly cause us to have to reduce staff at every level. Ms. Bouley asked what the public could do to help ensure that we get these funds from the city. Dr. Macera thanked her for her concern, adding that if we don't fund the cost of living, the quality of education will be impaired. "A 12.9% increase from the state to an urban district is not enough, especially when you look at what other communities are getting," she said. Macera asked the public to contact their legislators and City Council members.
- **Diane Engels, North Providence, part of the nursing department in Woonsocket:** She said that 33% of their staff received non-renewal letters. She feels that students will be at risk if these people are not recalled. "In many instances, we are the only health providers some of these kids ever see." She urged the reinstatement of the nurses.
- **Elizabeth Nault, Lydia Avenue, Teacher at Harris School:** Greatly concerned about staffing cuts—particularly the four school nurse/teachers. "Our school nurse is one of them. They are an important part of the school community." She spoke about what would happen if there's an emergency occurring during the school day. "You need someone with medical training in the building at all times. The absence of this person can make the difference between life and death." Dr. Macera said that she met with all of these nurse/teachers and explained that she had to equally distribute the non-renewals. Should the funding be secured, they would be reinstated. It's her top priority.
- **Donna Houle, 130 Ward Street:** Asked if the 83% salaries and fringe benefits section of the budget reflects the non-renewals. Mrs. Goodman said that some of the lay-offs are federally funded. If some non-federally funded positions are reinstated, the 83% figure will go up.
- **Richard DiPardo, WTG President:** Spoke about Mr. Auclair getting no response from the City Council. "If they won't come to you, you go to them! I will have 500 people right behind you! Go to them under Good & Welfare if you have to. I think they can be influenced with the proper motivation. You pick the day."
- **Carmen Boucher, Parent:** Said she sent a letter to Dr. Macera and Mr. Dubois regarding the school nurses and how important the nurse at her daughter's school has been in helping her to stay in school. Her daughter's nurse has called a long-distance number many times for just her child and she is willing to pay for it. The specialist for her daughter couldn't believe the amount of documentation that the nurse had on her daughter. Boucher said she was willing to let officials look at her daughter's records so that they can see how important it is for someone to be there to give medications, etc. "Without a nurse there, my daughter may not be able to go back to school." She thanked everyone who has helped her and her child.

A. Auclair: Discussed with Dr. Macera about keeping as many teachers in the classroom as possible. Asked what the minimum is for the number of administrators we have to keep without violating state law. Macera will be drafting

a letter to the Commissioner requesting waivers. She said we are under PS&I with the WMS. "We are having a meeting with the state on March 2nd," Macera added. Auclair asked what other items create a major impact on the budget. Salaries and fringe benefits, pension, and Medicaid are going to have the biggest impact. She mentioned the capital budget allocation, but pointed out that most of that is reimbursed. "The Commissioner has generally not given waivers. The worst-case scenario is that 24 teachers will be cut if we get this budget request. If we don't get it, 36 more teachers will have to be cut," said Goodman.

M. Williams: Thanked the administration for working so hard on the budget. "The City has said to clean up our own house first before it would give us any more money, and I think we have done that." She spoke about the cuts that the President wants to make and to require more standardized testing. "The testing companies make a ton of money off of this. We are the 4th lowest percentage of funding from the state. That is a disgrace! The Mayor is not a big supporter of social services and subsidized housing. If we don't educate our kids, these services are going to increase." She urged everyone to contact his or her legislators.

M. Dubois: Thanked Dr. Macera and her staff for their hard work. Mentioned the cost of fuel and electricity going up. "We cut down on travel expenses by 58%. I am very proud to be submitting a budget with a 3.95% increase. I think it's fair and reasonable." Mr. Auclair asked about ways to cut the cost of out-of-district placements. Dr. Macera will address that in her superintendent's report. "Last year we spent \$18,000 per pupil for special education. The state average is \$30,000 per pupil. We are the lowest in the state right now."

E. Nadeau: She supports this budget 100% and said it's up to the public to speak up. "The school department has been under-funded for years. We cannot continue to do this. We have to put value on our students and teachers. It's the thing that will change the world."

3. Approval of FY07 Budget – 1st Passage:

Motion to approve: M. Dubois
Roll Call Vote: MD-yes; MW-yes; AA-yes; AF-yes; EN-yes
2nd: A. Auclair
Passed 5 yes – 0 no.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – Dr. Maureen Macera, Superintendent

Dr. Macera said that we are exploring different ways for students to obtain a high school diploma, such as an external diploma program. With the performance-based graduation requirements, there will be a group of students that cannot attain this and there needs to be a way for those whose needs vary. Some kind of independent educational program needs to be provided. Dr. Macera complimented the teachers she met with regarding non-renewals on their graciousness. She is very proud of them.

Motion to receive and place on file: M. Dubois
2nd: M. Williams/E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE

Nadeau: Commended the WHS Drama Club on a fantastic performance of Jesus Christ Superstar. She said it was a like an off-Broadway production. Commended Dr. Macera on the way she handled the non-renewals, saying she thinks people were receptive to their non-renewals because each person was spoken to individually instead of getting a letter in their mailbox. "That's the difference."

Williams: Thanked everyone for coming out and expressing their concerns. She also attended the Jesus Christ Superstar production with her daughter and said it was a great show. Commended them all. Thanked everyone who attended the Minority Concerns Meeting. She will be contacting the churches in the city and childcare agencies to have a combined meeting. She wants a more diverse audience at the meetings. The SELAC meeting was very well attended. She said we need to come together as a community and go to City Hall to get more funding.

Auclair: Thanked everyone for coming out, but he was hoping to have more participation during the public forum. He asked if we have a draft budget that can be released to the public. Miriam Goodman said that the budget approved tonight was it and it will be posted on the website. Auclair would like it to be posted at the Harris Library as well. Auclair asked Mr. Dubois to give an update on the Promac litigation at the next meeting and also how contract negotiations are going. He asked what role the school physician plays. Mrs. Goodman explained that he issues prescriptions for nurses' supplies, such as Epipens, among other things. "Can we ask him to assist us in early intervention for Child Outreach?" asked Auclair. Dr. Macera informed him that she has had many meetings at the new Thundermist facility and that approximately 83% of the kids in the school district have received services through them at some point. "They have an electronic records system and are a great community partner," she said. She thinks we should have Thundermist come in and also the school physician. He is working with the EPA and the

Department of Health on obtaining a grant. Auclair noted that Charles Myers, WACTC Construction teacher, will be attending their interviews for architects for the new school to ask questions regarding energy efficient schools, etc. Auclair said he will be at the next City Council meeting.

Dubois: Stated that the parking lot across the street from Harris School has no lighting and is dangerous. Asked if something can be done about it. Spoke about how the prior superintendent sent letters to people in their mailboxes for non-renewals. He is very proud of the way Dr. Macera handled it. Thanked Pauline Papino for the great article in the paper. "I always see great things coming out of her classroom in the paper." He appreciates the Call and the Providence Journal for publishing the good things that have been happening recently at the schools. He thanked the reporters. "I think people realize that this is a very reasonable budget proposal and that's why they weren't here tonight."

Forcier: Thanked the WHS students and staff for the Jesus Christ Superstar performance. Said she was not surprised that Dr. Macera personally met with everyone who got a pink slip. "Her door has been wide open since I have been here. Thank you for that." Said that the Safety meeting went well. Letters from Lisa Mansfield and Owen Bebeau have been forwarded. Thanked Mr. Riley for inviting her to attend a sexual assault presentation recently. She met someone who is going to offer a sexual assault prevention program for the district. Spoke about the School Building Subcommittee and that they will discuss everything. She was told not to worry about where the money would come from.

Motion to adjourn at 9:30 p.m.: M. Dubois

2nd: A. Auclair (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle
WSC Recording Secretary