

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2008
7:00 PM – OPEN SESSION
Woonsocket Area Career & Technical Center
Multimedia Room 303

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

Roll Call:	Marc Dubois, Chairman	Present
	Michelle Williams, Vice Chairwoman	Absent
	Anita McGuire-Forcier	Present
	Eleanor Nadeau	Present
	Linda Majewski	Present

By a consensus of the committee, Unfinished Business was moved up on the agenda.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS (taken out of order)

1. Approval of Revised FY2009 School District Budget Options – M. Goodman

Dr. Macera informed the public that she met again with teachers who will be affected by the budget cuts to see what steps they can take to lobby the legislators for more money. She reviewed the three versions of the FY09 Budget Options. Version 1 is exactly as it was as approved at the WSC meeting of 2/13/08. Salary increases are as per contract and cuts are as previously identified with a projected increase of 4.07% from the City and a decrease of -.41% from the State of RI. The total budget increase is 0.5%. Version 2 is based on LEVEL SERVICE – as if we could get everyone reinstated and what would be needed to accomplish that. The projected increase from the City is 5.25% and the increase from the State would be 10.98%. The total budget increase would be 9.36%. Version 3 is based on some projected concessions from the Unions as well as an increase of 5.25% from the City and an increase of 2.62% from the State. Total budget increase is 3.03%. Positions cut from this version include Elementary Technology Teachers, HS Family/Consumer Science, HS Librarian, and half of the MS encore subjects (music/foreign language/business/art). Dr. Macera asked the WSC to endorse all three budget options and based on the situation at the time, the appropriate budget will be adopted. The version being submitted to the City Council is Version 2.

PUBLIC FORUM:

- **Cindy Chompka, 380 Carrington Avenue:** Said she spoke to Dr. McGee about the budget, noting that he is the principal of the largest middle school in New England in an antiquated building. She suggested that the school department take this fact to the state when asking for money.
- **Allen Auclair, 24 Florida Street:** In regards to the superintendent search, he noted that state law allows the appointment of a joint superintendent. He suggested speaking to some of our neighbors about appointing a joint superintendent. He also suggested a consolidation of resources for the city and education department, such as for payroll and maintenance services. He doesn't foresee the fiscal situation in the state going away anytime soon. Auclair requested a copy of the budget that is being submitted to the City Council.
- **Lynn Bouvier-Capiscus, Bouvier Avenue:** Expressed her concerns regarding the special needs students, saying that more than half of the elementary school OT's have been laid off. She stressed that there needs to be consistency for these children. "They have formed bonds with these people. It's very important, especially for children with autism like my son, to develop a trust relationship with their OT's." She urged the WSC to keep that in mind as the budget progresses.
- **Union Reps for School Lunch Workers in Pawtucket, Coventry, East Bay Area:** They are very concerned with Aramark, a food service company used in schools. They heard that our food service contract is up for bid this year and want to make sure the WED has all the information they need to make an informed decision on who gets the contract. John Alvarez of Loring Street in Woonsocket works in the food service business and his opinion of Aramark isn't the greatest. They want to give the WED a heads-up on this company and gave the WSC some literature about them.

1. Personnel Actions

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

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

Adaptive Technology/Braille Embosser/Technology/Local—Removed by L. Majewski
Adtech/Interactive Boards/Mount St. Charles/Title II Grant
Follett Library Resources/Library Books/WHS, Citizens, Globe Park/Get Ready Library Grant
Graphic Expressions/Sweatshirts/Citizens/Feinstein Grant
IKON Office Solutions of So. New England/Printer/WACTC/Perkins Grant
Nettie L. Alexander/Professional Development/District/PRIMES Grant—Removed by L. Majewski
Northern RI Collaborative/VLA Enrollments/Feinstein Schools/Local
Salve Regina University/Staff Development/Consulting/WACTC/Perkins Grant
Tech Deport/Printer/WACTC/Perkins Grant
Trapeze Software Ohio, Inc./Software Maintenance/Technology/Local

3. Field Trip/Conference Requests

“Early Literacy and the English Language Learner” Academy/Tampa, FL/Literacy Grant

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:

Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000:

- **Adaptive Technology Consulting, Inc. - \$3,080.00**

Mrs. Majewski asked how many students in this district need this equipment. Mrs. Goodman told her there is one student right now, but this item will stay with the district no matter where the student moves to—otherwise, Medicaid reimbursement could be sought, but then the equipment would go with the student.

- **Nettie L. Alexander - \$3,007.04**

Mrs. Majewski questioned what this payment was for. She was told that this person is a consultant who is being paid for 9 days of professional development having to do with the PRIMES grant, which is funding this cost.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE EXEMPTIONS FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA: A. Forcier
2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

COMMUNICATIONS: Mrs. Majewski received a communication from a parent about an article in The Valley Breeze regarding the arena for Mt. St. Charles being built near Bernon Heights. This parent was involved with the Nature Trail in this area. Majewski was looking for clarification of an easement that was provided to Atty. Ackerman. It was a grant of an easement from the City to the Bernon Heights Elementary School for a science and nature trail; however, it has no definite time limit. Atty. Ackerman felt that it was subject to interpretation because it's not clear. "It's an issue and affects the title," he said. He also said he would be happy to discuss it further with Majewski.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Mrs. Majewski announced a SELAC meeting being held on March 6th at Pothier School. The PAC has requested an open forum with the WSC to discuss the budget.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Revision to Movie Policy (P3-7.5) – 1st Passage – L. Majewski

Mrs. Majewski reviewed the changes that were made due to some concerns by teachers that were raised.

Motion to approve: A. Forcier 2nd: E. Nadeau
Roll Call Vote: 4 yes.

2. Discussion of Strategies for Increase Funding Resources for FY2009– Dr. Macera

Dr. Macera reported that she met today with the teachers affected by the lay-offs. She also met with Cindy McNeill, PAC Co-Chair. Macera said, "We need to get support from the City Council first before going to the state for more money. If we don't get the full 5% from the City to show their commitment, it will be very difficult to persuade the state legislators to give us more." She urged people to get out and vote.

3. Discussion and Approval of School Closing for Special Elections of State Primary and State Elections – Dr. Macera

Dr. Macera read a communication she received from the Board of Canvassers regarding the use of schools during the Special Election in April. They want to use the WHS, Leo A. Savoie School and Governor Pothier School on April 22, 2008. Mr. Dubois said he would like to see the schools being used closed on that day, since former felons are now allowed to vote. Mrs. Forcier agreed.

Motion to close whichever schools are being used for special elections: M. Dubois
2nd: A. Forcier Roll Call Vote: 4 yes

4. Discussion and Approval of Job Description for Superintendent of Schools - Dr. Macera

Mrs. Majewski reported that she has been working with Mrs. Nadeau on the subcommittee for the superintendent search because of some time-consuming work demands on Ms. Williams at this time. A proposed timeline was developed for the search and hiring of the new superintendent and provided to the other WSC members for their review. Mrs. Nadeau asked about the terms of employment and if they are incorporated into the job description. Dr. Macera said that the Human Resources Director told her that those things are usually contractual so that there's room for negotiation. Mrs. Majewski questioned the use of "serves as the *Chief Administrative Officer of the School Committee*" in the first sentence under **Function** in the job description and also #19 under **Duties and Responsibilities**. Atty. Ackerman felt that the first sentence of the Function description should be left as is. Dr. Macera explained the reason for the addition under Duties and Responsibilities #19 of: "Enforces RI laws relating to education, **and all regulations and mandates of the RI Dept. of Education.**" Mrs. Nadeau asked the PAC Co-Chairs for two names of people they recommend to serve on the search committee.

Motion to approve the superintendent's job description as submitted: A. Forcier
2nd: M. Dubois Roll Call Vote: 4 yes

5. Discussion of NECAP Results – Dr. Macera, P. Dubois

Pat Dubois reviewed the NECAP results and read the highlights of the results by schools in the district. Increases in proficiency were good across the board. Mrs. Nadeau asked if the elementary kids are tracked on how they do going from elementary to the WMS. Dubois told her that the principals do it. Dubois feels that the kids don't do so well in the 6th grade tests because they are going from having one teacher all day long to having many more and they are in a new, huge building. "It's a big adjustment and the test is given at the beginning of the year," she said. Dr. Macera thinks there's something wrong with the test because there is too strong a pattern where's there's a dip in the scores when kids get to the middle school. Mrs. Majewski wondered why there was a big discrepancy between schools' scores when the same practices are being used in every school. Dubois said that if there's a higher population of special needs students, it makes a difference in the scores. Dr. Macera feels that we are heading in the right direction, however.

CONFERENCES: Reading Recovery Presentation- Julie Francis/Linda Filomeno (Not presented.)

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Macera

Dr. Macera discussed an editorial in The Providence Journal entitled, "The Finnish Way to Excellent Schools". "They don't educate children in school until they are 7 years old. In comparison, there are pre-school kids 3 years old in this country that are transported on buses to school. Maybe we should rethink this practice. The Fins don't administer assessment tests during the nine years of basic education. Finland's 15-year-olds recently placed No. 1 in math and science on the Program for International Student Assessment and their schools are considered the best in the world." She had provided a copy of the article in each WSC member's packet for their review.

Motion to receive and place on file: A. Forcier 2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

M. Dubois: Reported that Ms. Williams is at a week-long conference in Boston for her job. Thanked everyone for coming to the last two meetings showing their concerns about the proposed cuts and offering their suggestions. Felt that our NECAP scores are very encouraging when compared to the suburban schools in our state.

L. Majewski: Congratulated Globe Park School on their Title 1 School Award. Congratulated Claire Laquerre on her award also. Majewski got a call from a Bernon Heights parent regarding parking near the school and being ticketed while in an area where they were told they could park. Dr. Macera will check into it. Majewski thanked everyone for coming.

A. Forcier: She's very happy with the NECAP results. She asked about the crosswalks at Bernon Heights and who is responsible for clearing a pathway to them. She asked Atty. Ackerman about the legislation regarding schools being built on contaminated soil. He told her he's not familiar with that legislation. Forcier will provide him with a copy of it. Thanked the parents for coming and showing interest in the school budget. "We have to start here in the city. If the city isn't going to support it's children's education, the state isn't going to either!" she said.

E. Nadeau: Spoke about the editorials in The Woonsocket Call regarding a dress code for students. "This week I have been waiting for a child to come out of the WMS and if seeing the way these kids are dressed doesn't change your mind, I don't know what will! I think that when kids look good, they will act well. I just hope that when we go into that new middle school, we can go in there looking like normal people."

Motion to adjourn at 9:05 p.m.: A. Forcier

2nd: L. Majewski (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary