

# MINUTES

WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11, 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**

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

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**RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Macera (Taken out of order by unanimous consent.)**

Dr. Macera recognized all those staff members who were nominated and read their names. The Recognition Awards were presented by Kathleen Lombardo to the following recipients:

**RECOGNITION AWARDS:**

<b>Teacher of the Year – Ms. Linda Stanley</b>
<b>Clerical Employee of the Year – Ms. Linda Houle</b>
<b>Custodian of the Year – Ms. Rhea Clement</b>

Dr. Macera thanked the WHS faculty and staff for their cooperation with the drill this afternoon, as well as the parochial school. She attended the retirement party the other night for the department and thanked those involved in its organization. She wished everyone good luck in their retirement. She also attended the WACTC Senior Banquet last night, adding that it was very well coordinated by Dr. Bedard and her staff. Dr. Macera reminded everyone that graduation is at 4 p.m. at Barry Field on Friday. She mentioned that there was a face-to-face meeting with RIDE on June 4<sup>th</sup> regarding Woonsocket's progress at the WMS and WHS. The reports were very favorable.

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**PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:**

**Nicole Denton, WMS Music Teacher:** Said she is concerned about the WMS. She's glad some staff have been reinstated. She worked very hard to show that students in band and chorus do better on the NECAP tests than other students. With the cutbacks, over 300 students who are in the Encore Program will not be serviced. She gave a packet to the WSC members.

**Kevin Plouff, WHS Band Director:** Thanked Dr. Macera for her support of music in Woonsocket. He noted that they are still facing a cut of 2 ½ teachers for next year. "That means many students will not be able to participate in these programs. Staff cuts at any level will diminish the quality of our program."

**Richard DiPardo, 134 Huntington Avenue, WTG President:** Said he's glad to be back speaking in front of the WSC tonight after what he went through. He said he read about the vote to terminate Atty. Ackerman's contract since he wasn't at the last meeting. If the vote isn't rescinded tonight, DiPardo said that he would like to hire him for the Teachers' Guild. His daughter, who is about to take the Bar Exam, said that the WSC would have to release him from his commitment to the WED, however. "I really would like to hire him."

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**APPROVAL OF MINUTES: May 28, 2008 OPEN/CLOSED; May 14, 2008 OPEN/CLOSED;  
May 7, 2008 SPECIAL CLOSED; April 30, 2008 CLOSED REVISED**

Motion to approve: A. Forcier

2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Williams (Unanimously Approved)

WSC Minutes  
Open Session  
June 11, 2008  
REVISED

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

**Motion to approve Consent Agenda with the following exemptions: M. Williams**

- *Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000: Woonsocket Police Dept. removed by M. Dubois*
- 2<sup>nd</sup>: E. Nadeau/A. Forcier (Unanimously Approved)**

**1. Personnel Actions**

Certified Appointments/Non-Certified Appointments

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

*Woonsocket Police Department/Police Detail/WHS/Local – Removed by M. Dubois*

Follett Library Resources/Books/Bernon, WMS,WHS/Get Ready Grant

Scott Foresman/Educational supplies/Fifth Avenue/Local

**3. Home Schooling Requests**

**END OF CONSENT AGENDA**

**EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:**

- 1. PERSONNEL APPOINTMENTS (CERTIFIED):** Mrs. Majewski asked that the name of the person appointed as a district speech therapist be forwarded to SELAC.

**2. PURCHASES/TRANSFERS OVER \$2,000:**

- *Woonsocket Police Department – Police Detail @ WHS for remainder of FY08 - \$5,500.00*

Mr. Dubois asked how long this detail is for. Dr. Macera explained that it's from 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. every day after school for the FACTS program. Dubois noted that there's a 4-hour minimum overtime charge. Carole Lerner assured him that the officer is there for the four hours. Dr. Macera explained that this detail is for an alternative program that saves the district money instead of having to put these kids in out-of-district placements.

**Motion to approve: M. Dubois**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Williams (Unanimously Approved)**

**COMMUNICATIONS: Response from Department of Attorney General regarding Termination of Attorney**

Dr. Macera noted the responses from the Attorney General's Office and David Abbott, Deputy Commissioner of Education/General Counsel, regarding the attorney contract. They both indicate that the Commissioner is able to give a legal opinion.

Mrs. Majewski reported going to RIDE about the new special education regulations coming out. She referred to a new policy that was presented regarding our commitment to provide instruction in the least restrictive environment. We will be getting an extension to develop our policy, which is due by July 1<sup>st</sup>.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Superintendent Search Committee** – Mrs. Nadeau said they have spent less than \$4,000 to do the superintendent search and were allocated \$10,000. The remainder of the funds will go back into the budget. They will be announcing the name of our new superintendent tonight.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

- 1. WHS Handbook – 2008-09 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Passage – Dr. Garcia** (*This item was heard later on the agenda due to the absence of Mr. Henderson.*)

Dr. Garcia presented this item prior to his conference on the Drop Out Rate. Mrs. Forcier said she had mentioned to Mr. Henderson about taking away I.D.s from suspended students. Dr. Garcia supports the idea 100%. He added that there is no need to put it in the handbook since it can be started as a guideline in

September. Dr. Garcia noted a change on Page 20 regarding exams and 12<sup>th</sup> graders in the National and RI Honor Societies being exempted. That is no longer valid because the PBGR requires that all students take the exams. This language will be deleted.

**Motion to approve: A. Forcier**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Dubois (Roll Call Vote: 5 yes)**

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**2. WMS Handbook 2008-09– 2<sup>nd</sup> Passage – Dr. McGee**

Mrs. Majewski suggested changing the number of accelerated programs per grade level to “one or more based on need”.

**Motion to approve: M. Dubois**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Williams (Roll Call Vote: 5 yes)**

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**NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. Motion to Reconsider and Rescind Termination of Attorney: E. Nadeau**

Ms. Williams stated that this item was improperly before them this evening. She asked the City Solicitor if this could be heard before the WSC tonight and provided a letter for the WSC members regarding the reconsideration vote. Williams read the letter from the City Solicitor regarding this matter. “Atty. Ackerman has already been notified of the termination of his contract,” she noted. “The motion to reconsider must be made on the same day. It must be made at the meeting during which the vote was taken. The minutes from the May 28<sup>th</sup> meeting were just approved, and no request was made by Mrs. Nadeau at that meeting,” said Williams. A meeting she heard about that was held last Thursday between Mrs. Nadeau, Dr. Macera and Atty. Ackerman also bothered her. Williams stated that considering this item tonight was a violation of the WSC bylaws. Mr. Dubois asked Atty. Ackerman to respond, to which Ms. Williams objected. Dubois allowed Atty. Ackerman to speak. Ackerman explained that he has been practicing law for over 38 years. “It’s day-to-day security. It’s a sad day when you can’t have the lawyer that the majority of the WSC wants to have. If you lay off teachers, you can call them back. I got notice while I was away. No one else has been hired in my absence. No contract has been signed. This is not a vote to reconsider. It’s a vote to rescind,” said Ackerman. At this point, he read an excerpt from his copy of Robert’s Rules of Order that argued against Ms. Williams’ statement of a violation. “They back up logic,” he said. Ms. Williams felt that their bylaws are what govern the WSC first and foremost. “If it’s not covered in our bylaws, then we revert to Robert’s Rules of Order. She believes it will invite litigation, absolutely. Mr. Dubois asked Ackerman what his interpretation was of the bylaws. Atty. Ackerman said he would like to see the bylaws she has because maybe he doesn’t have the same ones. He asked, “What’s preventing you from hiring whomever you want at the next meeting? If you don’t want me as your attorney, I don’t want to serve as your attorney. If you want me, then shouldn’t it be your choice?” Williams felt that putting out an RFP for these services that are over \$5,000 is the logical thing to do. She stressed that it’s not a personal issue with Atty. Ackerman. “What’s fair is fair,” she said. Ackerman responded by saying that he gives everyone respect and expects the same in return. A significant portion of his practice is devoted to the WSC; therefore, he suggested a few years ago that he be able to be on the payroll and after 10 years collect a modest pension. “The Commissioner gave an opinion and the lawyer from the Department of Education gave an opinion. The Attorney General deferred to the Department of Education. After 38 years, I’m not going to shy away from this discussion,” he said. Mr. Dubois asked if the WSC decided to table this item, if he would be willing to waive the 30-day notice. “Whatever you choose to do is fine. I have already been given notice,” Ackerman responded. Dr. Macera remarked that this comes at the worst possible time. “We are trying to work out a new superintendent contract and I think it’s terribly ill-advised--especially since it’s not based on performance,” she said.

**Motion to Table to get clarification: M. Dubois**  
**Roll Call Vote: (AF-no; EN-no; LM-no; MD-yes; MW-yes)**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Williams**  
**Motion fails 3 to 2.**

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**Motion to rescind prior action and void termination of the Attorney’s Contract: AF**  
**2<sup>nd</sup>: EN Roll Call Vote: (MD-no; MW-no; LM-yes, AF-yes, EN-yes) Motion passes 3 to 2.**

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**2. Appointment of New Superintendent:**

Mrs. Majewski presented the Search Committee’s recommendation of Dr. Robert Gerardi as the new superintendent after explaining that the person originally submitted for selection had refused the position *due to concerns about capacity and sustainability*. Dr. Gerardi was one of the two finalists for the position and was also very well qualified.

**Motion to approve the appointment of Dr. Robert Gerardi as superintendent: E. Nadeau**  
**2<sup>nd</sup>: L. Majewski Roll Call Vote: 5 yes**

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**3. Approval of Job Description for Director of Teaching and Learning: Dr. Macera**

Dr. Macera explained that due to some cost savings in our dental health care plan and a very strong request from the RI Dept. of Education, she is submitting this job description for a full-time Director of Teaching and Learning. It requires a superintendent's certification, has a salary of \$110,000, and would begin on September 1. Mrs. Nadeau said she would like the new superintendent to be involved and have some input as well. She is not against this position, but needs more time to absorb this process. The WSC was going to postpone this item to the August 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, but Mrs. Forcier didn't think it needed to be tabled until then and suggested tabling until June 25<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Macera presented this position to RIDE and they were very firm that this *has* to happen. Forcier noted that Dr. Gerardi said he was willing to work with Dr. Macera before August on this, which he confirmed. A compromise of July 16<sup>th</sup> for consideration of this item was agreed upon.

**Motion to Table to July 16<sup>th</sup> meeting: L. Majewski**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: E. Nadeau**

**Roll Call Vote: 5 yes**

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**4. Discussion and Approval of 504 Plan – C. Lerner**

Mrs. Majewski asked if this item requires two passages or one. Lerner said that this would be first passage. Majewski asked for a copy of the procedure protocol for the entire 504 Plan. Since this document is very large, Mrs. Lerner referred her to the WED website to see it in its entirety. Under Section VIII, Re-evaluation, Majewski had wanted a more specific time period set for re-evaluation. Lerner explained that the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) wanted it to be vague. "The government also doesn't define 'significant' and asked that we don't define it either," she said. Under #5 of Procedural Safeguards, Majewski asked that it be noted that the parent/guardian has a right to representation by counsel *paid for by them* for clarity.

**Motion to approve for 1<sup>st</sup> Passage: A. Forcier**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Dubois**

**Roll Call Vote: 5 yes**

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**5. Renewal of Contract extension between Woonsocket Education Department and Kids Klub, Inc.  
M. Shallcross, T. Cheney**

Amy Vogul from Kids Klub reviewed the services that Kids Klub provides and noted that their contract with the WED expires in June 2009. Dr. Macera said that this agency has given excellent service and gives us compensation for rental of space. She recommended the extension of their contract. Rental fees will stay the same for the duration of the contract. Majewski noted that no copy of the contract was included in their packet.

**Motion to approve: M. Williams**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Dubois**

**Roll Call Vote: 4 yes – 1 abstain LM**

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**CONFERENCES:**

**WHS Drop Out Rate/Graduation Rate – Dr. Garcia:** Dr. Garcia reported on the newly calculated Graduation Rate for the Class of 2007, as well as the Drop Out Rate. Woonsocket's graduation rate was 54.9% and the drop out rate was 33.9%. He noted that the number of students that go to the Virtual Learning Academy and receive GEDs counts against us with the way the drop out rate is calculated currently. "If they leave the regular school, it counts against us and there's nothing we can do about it," he said. He also noted the high mobility rate of our school population that is a factor. Dr. Macera agreed that the way the drop out rate is calculated is ridiculous. "We have a 34% mobility rate in Woonsocket and it counts against us. We have been doing a lot of monitoring on our own. We try hard not to let any child slip through the cracks. The way the state is calculating this drop out rate is a political issue that hurts the urbans and favors the suburbans," she said.

**Grading Committee Report – Dr. Bedard:** Dr. Bedard gave a report on the findings of a committee that was formed this year to review grading practices throughout the district. She reported on the members of the committee as well as on the research they did to come to their conclusions. Their recommendations included weighting homework at no more than 20% of a student's grade at the WHS and WACTC and no more than 10% at the WMS. They also recommended that all homework be purposeful and reinforce the skills needed to achieve proficiency. Preliminary recommendations were made for changing the grading scale to an alpha-based scale of A to F, 50 to 100 point scale to lessen the negative effect of a zero on a student's overall grade. They suggested that instead of assigning a grade of zero to work that's missing or not completed, the appropriate consequence will be to complete the work. Dr. Macera commended Dr. Bedard's work and that of the other committee members. She thinks it's a wonderful beginning and spoke about students eventually being able to take an exam over again after they have learned more. "We don't give credit for trying. Either they pass or they fail," she noted. Mrs. Majewski wanted to see the research

they studied. Bedard said they have it, and that it just wasn't included in the packet. Majewski noted that there were no parents on the committee. She thinks some parents need to be on it. Dr. Bedard said that this was mostly done internally because they weren't all on the same page. Mrs. Majewski thinks that the middle school students need more preparation for high school exams and experiences. "Some of the issues these kids face at home need to be taken into consideration when assigning homework because of what they go home to every day," added Williams. Dr. Bedard said that they are well aware of the situations that some of these kids face.

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**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Macera**

Dr. Macera congratulated Dr. Gerardi on his appointment as the new superintendent. She looks forward to working with him during the summer. She's glad that things worked out for Atty. Ackerman. She has relied on him a lot during the past nine years. Thanked Dr. Bedard for her report, saying, "Schools should be about hope." Macera commended Bedard for this work and the work she does at the WACTC. She congratulated the recipients of the Recognition Awards tonight. Reported that she met with the State on June 9<sup>th</sup> and they were complimentary about our efforts, but concerned about our resources. She and Mr. Strom will be working closely together to see if there are more funds available to bring more people back. She thanked the unions for their willingness to come to the table to renegotiate their contracts. Macera welcomed Mr. Strom to his first meeting and wished him well.

Motion to receive and place on file: A. Forcier

2<sup>nd</sup>: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

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**SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:**

**Majewski:** ***Congratulated everyone receiving awards that evening.*** Congratulated Dr. Bedard and her staff and students on their awards ceremony last night. Wished the seniors good luck and asked them to celebrate safely. Reminded parents to register their children for kindergarten. She has concerns about the WMS placements. Parents have called her about where their child's placement will be next year and they haven't always been treated warmly. Dr. Macera said she will need specifics. Majewski wished Dr. Gerardi good luck and is glad to say goodbye to the process. She's glad Atty. Ackerman is still with us. "You have always been accommodating." Welcomed Mr. Strom.

**Forcier:** Congrats to Dr. Gerardi and welcome Mr. Strom. She told Atty. Ackerman that he is doing this community a huge favor because she went through the attorney contracts about a year ago when this came up. "Thank you for that," she told him. She congratulated the seniors and her daughter Alyssa, who is graduating with honors. She's very proud of her.

**Nadeau:** Congrats to Dr. Gerardi. She attended the WACTC Awards Banquet last night and thought the teachers and staff there certainly have a connection with their students. "It's nice to see the accomplishments of those young people." She said hello to Mary Keegan, who was hospitalized last week. She's home and doing well now.

**Williams:** Congratulated Dr. Gerardi. Congrats to the Recognition Award recipients. Congratulated the Class of 2008 and wished them good luck.

**Dubois:** Congratulated Dr. Gerardi. Congratulated the Recognition Award recipients. Thanked Mrs. Nadeau, Mrs. Majewski and the rest of the Superintendent Search Committee for their hard work. Acknowledged the crossing guards at the elementary schools and thanked them for volunteering their time. Congratulated George Nasuti and Jennifer Amaral for being selected Man and Woman of the Year by the Task Force for the Prevention of Substance Abuse. Reported that the weather looks good for Friday's graduation at Barry Field. Congratulated the Class of 2008.

Motion to adjourn at 9:45 p.m.: L. Majewski

2<sup>nd</sup>: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary