

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2008
7:00 PM – OPEN SESSION
Woonsocket Area Career & Technical Center
Multimedia Room 303

Call to Order / Moment of Silence / Pledge of Allegiance

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

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

Donna Houle, 130 Ward Street, parent of a 10th grade WHS student: She referred to Dr. Garcia speaking a couple of months ago about addressing the parents regarding the PBGRs. She had suggested putting something on the report cards regarding their portfolios. When she got her son's report card yesterday, it said for parents to check on their child's portfolio progress. She said she can't do that because there's nothing on their report card about their portfolio and the portfolio is kept at school. "Something needs to be addressed there so that parents can follow through with their children. We need some kind of communication to parents so they know how their children are doing with the PBGRs," she said.

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Robert Gerardi

Gerardi reported that students from the Feinstein Learning Academy had an early Thanksgiving which was held Tuesday, November 25th. The students and faculty cooked and prepared this annual meal. Primary Teacher Tracy Cesana was the organizer of this third annual meal and she did wonderful job. Gerardi thanked the faculty and students. He recognized Ruth Cardello as an outstanding Kindergarten teacher at Bernon Heights Elementary School. He was urged to recognize her by a mother and father who emailed him several times with quotes like "My son has done a complete 360 and I owe it all to her". He was equally impressed with Ruth Cardello when he met her in her classroom. She gave him a welcome card, letter, and a book of short stories in which she has one of her stories published. He learned that she is a Woonsocket native who has come back to serve the community in which she was raised. She considered herself an at-risk youth growing up and attributes her success to the Woonsocket education she received. He publicly announced that Ruth Cardello is an exceptional educator with whom he is proud to be working with! Gerardi announced that Bruce Boss was selected to sit on the Rhode Island Mathematic Education Leadership Council (MELC). This council is comprised of teachers and administrators at the K-12 and higher education levels. He said it's a very important appointment and is happy to have Mr. Boss representing WED on this Council. Gerardi also read an email sent from Mike Debrosse (the Woonsocket Superintendent of Solid Waste) to Peter Fontaine (WED Director of Facilities and Securities).

Motion to receive and place on file: E. Nadeau

2nd: M. Williams (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: 11/19/08 Open & Closed

Motion to approve: A. Forcier

2nd: M. Williams (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

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

- *Personnel Appointments (Hrly. Stipend & Extra-Curricular Positions): Removed by L. Majewski*
- *Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000: City of Woonsocket; NRI Community Services, Inc.; & Patrick J. McKenna Roofing, Inc. removed by L. Majewski.*

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Personnel Actions:

Certified Appointments
Non-Certified Appointments
Hourly, Stipend and Extra-Curricular Positions: Removed by L. Majewski

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

Brown University/Support Services/Grants & Assessments/PRIMES Grant
City of Woonsocket/Police Detail/Focus Class/Grants & Assessments/DNA Grant: Removed by LM
Communication Systems, Inc./Intercom System/Citizens/Local
De Lage Landen/Copier Leases/WMS/DNA Grant
Graphic Expressions/Sweatshirts/Citizens/Feinstein Grant
Keystone Information Systems, Inc./Financial Software/Business Office/Local
Mt. Saint Charles Ice Arena/Ice Hockey Rental Fees/Athletics/Local
Norton & Associates, Inc./Contracted Services/Special Education/Local
NRI Community Services, Inc./Contracted Services/Grants & Assessments/Title IV Grant: Removed by LM
Patrick J. McKenna Roofing, Inc./Roof Repairs/WHS/Local: Removed by LM
RI Interscholastic League/Membership Fees/Athletics/Local
Visconti & Boren Ltd./Legal Services Rendered/PROMAC/Business Office/Local

3. Field Trip/Conference Requests

NAESP 88th Annual Conference and Expo, New Orleans, LO/Harris Elem/Article 18 Grant
MUSE Conference at Savannah College/Savannah, GA/Mt. St. Charles/Title II
AFJROTC/ LaSalle Institute/Troy, NY/WHS: Added by M. Dubois & removed for explanation.

4. Home Schooling Requests

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:

1. PERSONNEL APPOINTMENTS – Hrly., Stipend & Extra-Curricular Appointments

Mrs. Majewski asked if the District School Improvement Coordinators appointments were a continuation of these positions. Dr. Gerardi told her that they were and are being paid for under the District Negotiated Agreement.

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

- ***City of Woonsocket for Police Detail--Focus Class: \$20,806.00 DNA Grant***

Mrs. Majewski asked if this detail was fully funded. Mr. Strom told her that it was.

- ***NRI Community Services, Inc./Contracted Services: \$6,400.00 Title IV Grant***

Mrs. Majewski asked what this expenditure was for. Mr. Strom explained that it's for a Title IV Drug and Alcohol Counselor at the WHS.

- ***Patrick J. McKenna Roofing, Inc. for Roof Repairs at WHS: \$3,192.00 Local***

Mrs. Majewski asked if we would be getting reimbursement from the state for this repair. Mr. Strom told her that it was not for repairs at the WACTC, which is a state-owned building, and we would not be reimbursed.

3. FIELD TRIPS/CONFERENCES:

- ***AFJROTC to LaSalle Institute in Troy, NY***

Lt. Col. Dan Richard reported on the field trip that was added to tonight's agenda. It's for a Drill Team Meet in Troy, NY, and will give our students an opportunity to compete against some of the best drill teams in the country. It's being paid for with Air Force funds.

Motion to approve exemptions from the consent agenda: A. Forcier
2nd: M. Williams/E. Nadeau (4 yes- 1 abstention) Mr. Dubois abstained from voting on these items due to his affiliation with NRI Community Services.

COMMUNICATIONS: Bus Appeal – Had been rectified prior to the meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Mrs. Majewski said that the Special Education local advisory met this month. The Special Education Staffing Policy was presented to the PAC and SELAC. It will be ready for the next agenda for the WSC to approve. The School Success Coalition met in December. The PAC has met and she announced that Cindy Stepanian had her baby and congratulated her.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Discussion/Approval of Corrective Action Plan – Dr. Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi requested approval for him to write the Auditor General for another 30-day extension request, and approval to schedule at least two more joint school committee/city council workshop meetings to finalize what cuts and/or consolidations or revenues will be needed to resolve this problem within the next 30-day period.

Motion to approve both requests: A. Forcier
(Unanimously Approved)

2nd: M. Dubois

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Approval of December 26th and January 2nd Building Closing for Cost Savings: Dr. Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi reported that 12-month employees are required to work on December 26th and January 2nd. The administration would like to close the buildings to save money. The bargaining unit agreed to it under the renegotiated contract. Mrs. Majewski said that she had asked Mr. Strom about the buildings being closed for December 22nd & 23rd, but it was too late in the calendar to do that.

Motion to approve: M. Williams
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes

2nd: A. Forcier

2. Approval of Alternative Certification Pilot Program: Dr. Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi explained this 3-year grant that is being provided to urban districts. RIDE recognized that the Urban Districts tend to have more emergency certified teachers and after we train them and get them certified and highly qualified, they leave our districts. Mrs. Majewski asked how we are assured that these teachers will be retained here and whether the principals are in favor of it. Dr. Gerardi explained and said the principals he has spoken to were in favor of this program.

Motion to approve: A. Forcier
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes. Motion approved.

2nd: M. Dubois/M. Williams

3. WMS STAFFING: Dr. Gerardi & Dr. McGee

Dr. Gerardi read his memo to the WSC members regarding WMS Staffing for 2009-2010. He noted that the two new middle schools will be twice the size of the current middle school and it will be impossible to staff them with the same amount of staff as we have now. He believes that the WSC and Building Committee were misled when they were told that no additional staff would be needed. In order to diminish the need for additional staff, two strategies have been developed. One strategy is to change the schedule from a 7-period day to a 6-period day with an A week and a B week. The second strategy is to include the Feinstein Learning Academy in one wing of one of the new schools. With the adoption of these two strategies, there would still be a need for 8.5 full-time positions. They are also exploring the option to change the high school schedule from a 4-period block schedule to a more traditional 6-period rotating schedule. In both cases, the schedules that are being advocated will reduce the need for certified staff and save the district significant amounts of money in staffing. In order to change the schedules, by regulation he must notify the Rhode Island Commissioner of Education. He asked for approval of the change in the middle school and high school schedules and for the staffing plan that was presented. Mrs. Forcier expressed concerns about bringing back the Feinstein children to the WMS. Dr. Gerardi believes that the program has developed better supports and they would still be housed separately from the rest of the building. Forcier asked why 2.5 more secretaries would be needed. Dr. Gerardi explained and referred to the flow charts included in their packets. He said that another principal would be added with a secretary and a clerk. He explained the reasoning for another principal for the other

building and possibly making one of the current assistant principals a principal. Mrs. Nadeau questioned why one principal couldn't do both. "When I worked at Kendrick Avenue School, I never saw the principal. I think it's defeating the purpose of having the two schools on the same parcel of land. It's a stone's throw away. The WHS has 2000 students with one principal and three assistants," said Nadeau. She has been called by volunteers who said that they were told there would not be any additional staff. "I'm always told that we need a principal in the building, but half the time they aren't in the building. They're at meetings and conferences. The assistant principals are the ones in the building," she said. Dr. Gerardi was told that for responsibility purposes, it's best to have a principal in each building. Dr. McGee added that they wouldn't be adding any new administrators. They would have another principal and one less assistant principal. He wouldn't shirk the responsibility of running the two schools. He thinks the middle school runs very well the way it is now, but he doesn't want to lose ground. "People think we are top-heavy in administrators at the middle school. I don't agree. We are working with what we have right now, including the house leaders," McGee said.

Dr. Gerardi explained how the new schedule would affect the role of house leaders at the middle school. Mrs. Nadeau said that RIDE isn't funding the full salaries of the house leaders and that the WSC didn't know we were funding part of their salaries. Nadeau is leery about adding three more house leaders unless RIDE is going to fully fund them. With the pot of money becoming smaller, she doesn't think the school will fall apart without them. "The goal was to make the middle school more manageable by splitting it into two buildings. I cannot support the staffing changes except in the area of secretarial, custodial and librarian," said Nadeau. Dr. Gerardi pointed out that by changing the schedule, they will be saving money on staffing and asked her to keep an open mind. Mrs. Majewski had concerns about band and chorus being done after school. There would be bussing issues and some students wouldn't be able to participate. She was willing to help with the development of the scheduling, if needed. A member of the WMS staff who worked on the schedule said that this was the best they could come up with without adding staff. She will gladly sit with Mrs. Majewski to help her understand what is involved. Dr. Gerardi noted that, at the WHS, every class can be maxed out at 30 kids. With the cluster model, they are in a cluster of four teachers. He then explained how the numbers worked. If he asked RIDE not to have clusters, he could guarantee what their answer would be. Gerardi said that he hears Mrs. Majewski saying that she wants to meet with the team but they are running out of time. Kathy Lombardo needs to know soon so she knows who needs to be cut, etc., for the next school year and notices can go out. Mrs. Majewski said she knows that a great deal of time has been put into this and it's a monumental task, but she hopes they can see the WSC's side of this. "We still haven't gotten a response on our request to have waivers," she said.

Dr. Gerardi asked that the approval of writing to the Commissioner for the change in the schedule and staffing plan be tabled and rescheduled to the WSC agenda at a later date. Ms. Williams remembers having chorus and band after school when she was in school and they had a great band and chorus. She doesn't think it's a major setback to this plan to have these things take place after school. She has heard more complaints from the middle school teachers about these subjects than anything else. Mrs. Nadeau was willing to join Mrs. Majewski in meeting with the staffing team to look at options. Mrs. Forcier commended them for all their hard work. From talking with Dr. Gerardi, she thinks this is our cheapest way out. She remembers John Ward saying that we were going to need more staff. She would like to see the costs broken out for the additional staff that would be needed.

Motion to approve the change in schedules for the middle school and the WHS and reconvene to look at the staffing plan: L. Majewski

2nd: E. Nadeau

Roll Call Vote: 5 yes.

4. APPROVAL OF LOCAL #1137 CONTRACT: Dr. Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi read the agreement that was approved by the Local 1137 membership. Mr. Dubois applauded the members of the union for agreeing to this, saying it was a win/win situation. Mrs. Nadeau thanked the Local 1137 for working with them and agreeing to these concessions.

Motion to approve: L. Majewski

2nd: M. Williams

Roll Call Vote: 5 yes.

5. APPROVAL OF POLICY P2-21.1B PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING, TEEN DATING VIOLENCE, AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE – 1ST PASSAGE: George Nasuti

Mr. Nasuti addressed the WSC explaining that this is a guide for everyone to follow. He thinks we have a lot of policies in the school department that a lot of people don't know about. "This policy came from a model from RIDE. We looked at theirs and adapted it for our own use. It's a mandated policy based on teen dating violence. Once it's passed, I will meet with the administrators on how to start adopting it," said Nasuti. He continued to review the policy for the public and the WSC. Mrs. Majewski thanked him for putting it together, saying that she has worked with the School Success Coalition. "The Coalition works with many of the social service agencies in the city and this might be a very good opportunity for some professionals of the Coalition to partner with us to provide the parent education

piece,” she said. Nasuti asked her to email her concerns to him. “There’s much more in the other piece, but I’m presenting this tonight for your purposes,” he said. Mrs. Forcier mentioned that we recently had an instance where a staff member crossed the boundary with students (boundary invasion). She suggested having professional development with staff on this issue. Atty. Ackerman said that when this policy is passed, the WSC has a responsibility to act when a staff member or student violates this policy.

Motion to Table: L. Majewski
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes.

2nd: M. Williams
TABLED.

CONFERENCES: None

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT: Dr. Robert Gerardi

Gerardi announced that he received a letter of resignation from Mr. Robert Strom on Friday, adding that he will miss Mr. Strom’s professionalism. He is happy for him being offered a job that will be a promotion in his hometown. Even though Mr. Strom has been with us for a short time, Gerardi acknowledged the huge impact it made for the Woonsocket Education Department. Because of his experience on the municipal side, he legitimized the education budget in the eyes of the Mayor and the City Council. Gerardi reported that he is still in the process of visiting every classroom and this month he was invited by Principal Rob Derosiers to come to Fifth Avenue School. He was given a tour of the building and saw students and teachers working hard.

Motion to receive and place on file: M. Williams

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

M. Dubois: Dubois asked Atty. Ackerman if it’s necessary to print the WSC agenda in the local newspaper. Ackerman said that we have to by state law. It must be posted in the newspaper and electronically. Ackerman read the statute. Dubois noted that it’s very expensive and circulation of The Call has decreased. “The City Council doesn’t have to do it,” he added. He thanked Mr. Strom for his time served, adding that there was some controversy over his appointment, but Dubois is convinced that they made the right decision. “His time here was short, but very valuable.” Dubois wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

L. Majewski: She echoed what Mrs. Houle said about the portfolio entries being included on the report card. “The portfolios are kept at school and parents need some kind of mechanism to check their child’s progress.” She thanked the people working on the middle school staffing and appreciates the hard work they have done. Wished Mr. Strom the best in his new endeavor. Thanked Mrs. Nadeau for sitting on all the committees she does. Thanked her for the work she has done. Wished everyone happy holidays.

E. Nadeau: Thanked the staff at Feinstein for the invitation to their Thanksgiving dinner. She was very impressed. Announced that tomorrow night the Christmas concert is being held at the WHS. Thanked Mr. Strom for his service, adding that she is disappointed that he is leaving. Wished everyone happy holidays.

A. Forcier: Wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.

M. Williams: Thanked Local 1137 for their concessions. Wished Mr. Strom luck, adding that “it’s our loss.” Said that she and Mrs. Nadeau sat on the committee to find a Finance Director and they certainly picked the right person.

Motion to adjourn at 9:25 p.m.: M. Williams

2nd: L. Majewski (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary