

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2009
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	Absent
	Linda Majewski	Present
	Anita McGuire-Forcier	Present
	Eleanor Nadeau	Present

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

Darlene McGaw, Woonsocket Resources Community Action: Spoke about the School Success Coalition and recognized Linda Majewski for her efforts as part of the Coalition. She thanked Majewski for all her help.

Denise Auclair, PAC Co-Chair: Reported that a meeting was held last night regarding the transition to the two new middle schools and spoke about their plan of holding an open house. Thanked those who came and offered their support. The PAC hopes to help the administration in planning for this transition because they know that with the budget cuts and everything else that's going on, they all have a lot on their plate.

Bill Legare, Valley Transportation: Informed the public about the cold temperatures coming up and that if there are any empty seats left on the buses, they will allow kids that walk to ride the buses on these extremely cold days.

Donna Houle, 130 Ward Street, parent of a 10th grade WHS student: Thanked Linda Majewski on behalf of RIPIN and the School Success Coalition for her tireless efforts.

Kevin Plouffe, Band Director, WHS: Spoke about the success of their concerts back at Christmas and about other events the band and chorus perform at. He doesn't want to have to tell them that this will be coming to an end because the WMS band and chorus will have to take place outside the regular school day. Students' access to these programs will be limited. He doesn't know of any district that has a before- and after-school music program that is successful. He feels that music will not be available as a core element of students' complete education. He feels there's no better way to close the achievement gap than with music. Plouffe urged the WSC not to take these opportunities away from them.

Marc Kurtzman, WHS School Psychologist: Commented on the extremely difficult week at the WHS due to a loss of one of their students. "Many people came together to show their support and there are many to thank." He thanked Mr. Dubois and Ms. Williams especially for their efforts. NRICMHC had an overwhelming response. He thanked Bill Legare for donating the buses to bring students to the funeral. He thanked the WHS administration for their support, as well as the staff and students who raised \$2,500 for the family. He thanked the church. Kurtzman announced that a letter will be going home to parents tomorrow. "Parents need to be extremely hyper-vigilant after something like this. Reach out to your children and be aware of what they are going through right now." The letter will give numbers that parents can call for assistance and signs to watch for.

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Robert Gerardi

Gerardi recognized the first graders in Michelle Lisiecka's class at Bernon Heights, who enjoyed reading and writing folktales during November and December. They shared their original stories, reading them to friends in kindergarten, first, and second grade classrooms at Bernon Heights and to Mrs. Tincknell and Mrs. Filomeno. Gerardi reported that Harris School was privileged to host Mr. Carl Anderson for Professional Development through a Title I Special Grant on January 12, 2009. Mr. Anderson is a noted author, speaker and consultant. He gave special thanks to Ms. Christine Greco for arranging this opportunity. He congratulated WHS Senior Football Player, James Suber, for being honored as an All-State Selection in Football by the Providence Journal. He also congratulated Head Football Coach, Carnell Henderson, for being named Coach of the Year in Division 2 North by his peers, saying it was a great way to end his first season as WHS Head Football Coach. Gerardi announced that Governor Pothier School would like to thank the Verizon Senior volunteers for donating \$500 worth of non-fiction books to their book room for use by classroom teachers and students. Volunteers helped write the grant, sort books, and catalogue and label books. They also spent time reading to students and helping in classrooms.

Motion to receive and place on file: E. Nadeau

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: 12/3/08 CLOSED; 12/17/08 OPEN/CLOSED

Mrs. Majewski made a correction on Page 4 of the 12/17/08 Open Minutes in the 2nd Paragraph. Where it said, "Mrs. Majewski had concerns about band and chorus being done after school," she added, "***and felt that it would dismantle the music program.***"

Motion to approve as corrected: A. Forcier

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion to approve Consent Agenda with the following exceptions: E. Nadeau

- *Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000: Benchmark Education; Braver, CPA; & Northern RI Collaborative --removed by L. Majewski.*

2nd: A. Forcier (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Personnel Actions:

- Certified Appointments
- Non-Certified Appointments

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

- Benchmark Education/Prof. Development/Savoie/Local-Article 18
- Braver, CPA/Annual Audit/District/Local
- Heinemann/Carl Anderson Conference/Prof. Development/Harris Elem/Title I School Improvement Grant
- Northern RI Collaborative/Books in Braille/Sp. Ed/Local
- Wistow & Barylick/Legal Services/District/Local

3. Field Trip/Conference Requests

- National Reading Recovery Conference, Columbus, OH/Gov. Pothier/Reading Recovery Grant
- Toms River HS South, NJ/WHS Wrestling Team/WHS/Student Funded (***Mr. Dubois noted that the time of departure is 10 a.m. instead of 1:30 p.m.***)

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:

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

- ***Benchmark Education/Prof. Development/Savoie: \$2,814.00 Local-Article 18***

Mrs. Majewski said that a comment was made at the City Council Meeting that the Article 18 money may be under a freeze. Mr. Strom said that, as of the 9th of January, we put a freeze on the Article 18 money. This invoice took place prior to that freeze.

- ***Braver, CPA/Annual Audit/District: \$23,600.00 Local***

Mrs. Majewski asked if we need to do a separate audit for the Corrective Action Plan. Mr. Strom said that this is part of 3-year contract and it's the second year of the contract. Majewski asked if we need to do an additional audit for the Corrective Action Plan. Strom doesn't believe we need to.

- ***Northern RI Collaborative/Books in Braille/Sp. Ed: \$2,000 Local***

Mrs. Majewski said she knows someone who works at the Library for the Blind and there may be some books available from them. Mrs. Forcier said she has spoken to this student's mother on numerous occasions and many times he has not had books available and is behind because of it. Mrs. Majewski told her that this would just be an additional resource that we could use.

Motion to approve exemptions from the consent agenda: E. Nadeau

2nd: A. Forcier

(Unanimously Approved)

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Mrs. Majewski announced that SELAC will hold its next meeting on Feb. 5 at 7 p.m. There was a Uniform Committee Meeting scheduled for January 22nd at 7 p.m. which will now be held in February. The School Success Coalition was scheduled to meet tomorrow, but that will be rescheduled because school will be closed. The Transportation Committee met this week.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Update and Discussion of Corrective Action Plan – Dr. Gerardi

Out of respect for the Mayors' office, Dr. Gerardi will contact our unions to find out if they are willing to reopen their contracts. An alternative to the Mayor's request would be to have the unions poll their members to find out if they would be willing to work 4-day workweeks of equivalent hours to a 5-day workweek. The cost savings from heat, electricity, and transportation alone could be significant. Gerardi also provided a letter from the Auditor General saying that he has granted the most recent 30-day extension that ends on January 31, 2009. However, the letter states that a plan will be due no later than January 31, 2009 and an extension will not be granted beyond this date. Gerardi asked for permission to write the Auditor General for another 30-day extension request highlighting the fact that, because of the Governors' budget cuts, he has exacerbated our problem by approximately \$500,000 and we will need more time to address the additional shortfall. He will also note that with each extension, we have identified additional cuts to the deficit and that it only makes sense to give us additional time to give him an accurate Corrective Action Plan. Since the last 30-day extension, we have identified more actual and some possible cuts. In actual cuts we have identified three secretarial positions that will not be filled for the second half of the year, thus saving an additional \$48,000. We will reduce cell phone usage by administrators by 25 % for the second half of this year, saving approximately \$1,800 for this year. Potential cuts that we may have to seriously consider as we get closer to the deadline for the Corrective Action Plan are cutting all Spring sports for an approximate savings of \$80,000 and a mid-year cut in all activity and club stipends which would, in effect, end any after school activities at the high school like Ski Club, Debate, band, chorus, etc. These are the only things that aren't part of the BEP. We keep our buildings open on weekends for Parks and Recreation and we may have to consider closing them. Mrs. Forcier said that she has been researching a 4-day school/work week and found that there are many advantages. Parents have found that it's easier to get daycare for one day than for two hours for five days. She suggested doing surveys of teachers and parents on it. "A lot of districts are glad they changed to it," she said. Dr. Gerardi said he will have to check with RIDE to see if we can do it and also get an okay from the unions. Mrs. Majewski asked if he would be resubmitting requests for waivers. Gerardi said that he will be. "As far as the Mayor's plan to mandate cuts, we have contracts that we negotiated in good faith. Will we be renegotiating contracts?" she asked. Dr. Gerardi said that we may renegotiate for something like the 4-day week, but we may not even have to for that. He urged everyone to contact their legislators about the fair funding formula. Mr. Dubois supported Dr. Gerardi's plan and appreciates everyone's creative ideas.

Motion to support: M. Dubois
Roll Call Vote: 4 yes.

2nd: A. Forcier

2. Update and Approval of WMS Staffing: Dr. Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi read a memo he wrote to the WSC regarding a decrease in the number of positions needed to staff the new middle schools. The number of staff required has decreased from 8.5 FTE positions to 4 FTE positions, and possibly, to 3 FTE positions. Also, two very difficult curricular changes need to occur in order for this plan to maximize the staff reductions: 1) the elimination of the current Foreign Language program from the WMS encore offerings, and 2) the elimination of performance band and chorus being taught during the school day. Students will receive general music and we are exploring offering performance music programs either before or after school. Foreign Language may be available through the e-Learning Program at the middle school level. Mrs. Forcier asked about the approximate cost for the additional positions. Mr. Strom said that it would be approximately \$250,000. Mrs. Majewski said she is in conflict about this staffing plan because she feels that making the music program take place after school hours will dismantle the program. She and Mrs. Nadeau spent many hours going over this plan. She has asked Dr. Gerardi to consider looking at the possibility of House Leaders and Assistant Principals teaching one class to increase the amount of encore people we have available. She would seriously like her suggestion looked at before school opens in September. Mr. Dubois thanked Mrs. Majewski and Mrs. Nadeau for their tireless efforts and Dr. Gerardi and other staff as well.

Motion to approve: M. Dubois
Roll Call Vote: 4 yes.

2nd: A. Forcier
Approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Approval of School Committee Meeting Calendar for 2009

Mrs. Majewski noted that RI is the most Catholic state in the United States and asked about changing the meeting for February 25th due to Ash Wednesday. Mr. Dubois said that we haven't done so in the past.

Motion to approve: M. Dubois
Roll Call Vote: 4 yes

2nd: E. Nadeau
Approved.

2. Discussion of WHS Staffing: Dr. Gerardi

Although they have had many meetings to investigate changing the current block schedule to a more traditional 6-period day for cost savings purposes, they ran into complications in implementing it in a timely manner. Therefore, Dr. Gerardi recommended that we keep the block schedule, but work collaboratively to maximize class sizes in an effort to reduce costs at the high school next year.

Motion to approve: M. Dubois
Roll Call Vote: 4 yes.

2nd: L. Majewski
Approved.

CONFERENCES: ESL – AMAO Accountability Report—RIDE: Linda Filomeno

Filomeno said that the report this year is not as positive as it was last year and gave reasons why she feels we didn't score as well this year. "We are in Significant Watch status for our ELL programming since we have not met our targets for three years in a row. However, we still made significant improvements," she said. Mrs. Forcier and Mr. Dubois thanked her for all her hard work in this district.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Robert Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi extended his deepest sympathy to the family, relatives and friends of the WHS student who has recently passed away. On Tuesday, January 13th, the funeral was held for this student and Mr. Legare from Valley Transportation donated bussing services making it more accessible for students, faculty and staff to attend the funeral services. He thanked him for his thoughtfulness during this difficult time. Michael Debrouse, Superintendent of Solid Waste for Woonsocket, met with the Manager for the SORT Program and reported that the Woonsocket School System is one of the top school systems for recycling. Gerardi commended all the students, faculty, staff, and custodians for their outstanding efforts in recycling. He added that none of this would have been possible without the supervision, organization, and vision of Peter Fontaine, Director of Facilities and Security. He thanked him for his continued dedication and hard work and urged everyone to keep up the great work.

Motion to receive and place on file: E. Nadeau

2nd: A. Forcier (Unanimously Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

M. Dubois: He thanked Bill Legare for being available on such short notice for the funeral. Mr. Legare said that the drivers donated their time for this also. Dubois thanked Mr. Strom for his service and wished him well since tonight is his last meeting. Dubois said it came to his attention that Mr. DiPardo had retired at the end of December, but has still been working. He found out that DiPardo has been donating his time for a month to the district to finish out the semester with his students. Dubois thanked him for that. After the last meeting, Dubois read a publication in a local weekly newspaper, which quoted him incorrectly. He said he never publicly said or in an interview that 60% of the people that usually work call in sick on the day after Christmas and New Year's. "They took it out of context. I only mentioned that many people take vacation time or call out sick, but they never mentioned the vacation time."

L. Majewski: She wished Mr. Strom well and thanked Mr. Kurtzman and Mr. Legare for their services. She extended their condolences to the family. "It's a difficult time economically and I want everyone to know that we are doing our best to preserve the quality of education we have." She thanked Globe Park for their invitation to Community Reading Day.

A. Forcier: Thanked Bill Legare and his drivers, Peter Fontaine and Mr. Kurtzman. She didn't know until her kids told her about it. Wished Mr. Strom well in his new job. Urged everyone to push for a fair funding formula. She's glad we're going to look into a 4-day school/work week. She urged everyone with any ideas to please come and share them.

E. Nadeau: Said she realizes that she has made a big deal about the staffing, but we are in a deficit and that's not going to go away. "I won't support a 10% pay cut because we negotiated in good faith with our unions and we would probably be taken to court. I think this district did the right thing years ago when it instituted co-pays and now the other districts need to catch up. RIDE also makes mandates that we must abide by and doesn't properly fund the districts in order to meet them."

Mr. Dubois announced that the next meeting will be held on January 28th.

Motion to adjourn at 8:55 p.m.: A. Forcier

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary