

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, February 25, 2009
7:45 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:

Samantha Medieros, WHS Student: Addressed the WSC about the cutbacks in the WMS in art, music and sports, saying that she comes from a single-parent family and these programs were her salvation. She was around people that supported her and cared about her. She believes everyone deserves to go after something they love. She made a lot of friends that way and thinks it's really, really wrong to take away a part of who individuals are.

Diane DiCasse, President, WHS Music Boosters: Asked that the WSC reconsider taking music out of the middle school. She knows budgets are tough and she knows they have a hard decision to make. "Please don't take it away from the kids. Take it somewhere else."

Tracy Belliveau, Carrington Avenue: Spoke about the issue with the Nature Trail at Bernon Heights Elementary School. She was one of the founding people of that Nature Trail and got a lot of support for it and spent a lot of money on it. "If Mt. St. Charles gets to put their double hockey rink there, it will ruin everything. Please know that it's near and dear to our hearts at Bernon." She complained that only three people were allowed to speak at the last meeting during Public Good & Welfare. "It took a lot of work to get all the people to show up that did. It was a disservice to them to not let them speak. You are not going to get people to move here who are decent citizens if you make these cuts. Everyone should be shouldering this burden. We have a lot of programs for troubled youth and have spent a lot of money on them. What about the good kids that really want to be here? Don't they deserve something?" Belliveau gave the WSC a petition from parents in support of the WMS music program with over 200 signatures.

Donna Houle, 130 Ward Street, Change Leader for RIPIN: Announced that tomorrow night there will be a meeting at Family Resources from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. Babysitting will be provided as well as a meal. Everyone is welcome.

Pauline Papino, WMS Assistant Principal: Announced that the WMS received \$1,000 from Allen Shawn Feinstein and thanked him for it. She welcomed any of the WSC members and Dr. Gerardi to go along on her trip to NYC with her students on the 30th.

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Robert Gerardi

Gerardi reported that a dedication ceremony was held at Globe Park Elementary School in memory of third-grade teacher, Ms. Terri Ficca. A special painting of the great outdoors (painted by teacher Kerrie Blais) and a book collection was dedicated in her honor in a special section of Globe Park Library. He also announced that Mr. Allen Shawn Feinstein donated \$1,000.00 to Woonsocket Middle School for their work with the "Feinstein Good Deeds Project." He thanked everyone who participated in these projects. Gerardi reported that Governor Pothier School had a visit from "Arthur", the children's book and TV series character, to read to the children. Arthur was promoting the "PBS KIDS GO!" and CVS Caremark's "All Kids Can" character search contest, which is designed to educate children about the importance of inclusion and how children of all ages can play together. The contest is open to all children ages 6-12. Children at Governor Pothier are submitting their entry forms to PBS. The deadline is March 31st. Gerardi also congratulated WHS Senior Chris Penso for capturing his first title in the high jump at the RI Interscholastic League Indoor Championship. His jump of 6 ft. 6 in. captured the school record. Wesley DeChristofaro tied for 4th place with a jump of 6 ft. 2 in. In the Women's division, Brittaney Lawson earned individual gold in the weight throw with a career-best toss of 46 ft. 7 in. Also, Geoff Phaneuf is ranked No.2 in the 300-meter run with his best run of 37.6 seconds. Gerardi congratulated everyone on a fantastic meet.

Motion to receive and place on file: L. Majewski

2nd: M. Williams (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: February 11, 2009 OPEN/CLOSED

Motion to approve: M. Williams

2nd: M. Dubois

Mrs. Forcier had a correction on Pg. 5 of the Public Session in the 2nd Paragraph. 'Mrs. Forcier **has safety concerns** about the elimination of TAs in the Kindergarten classes, saying she knows we don't have a choice but to eliminate them if we get down to the BEP. She asked if we could keep one TA for each school and split that person for the Kindergarten classes.' "Maybe we could add reading specialists if we got some **Title I stimulus money** to go in and help." ***Corrections are underscored and italicized.***

Motion to approve as corrected: L. Majewski

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion to approve Consent Agenda: E. Nadeau

2nd: A. Forcier/M. Williams (Unan. Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Personnel Actions
 - Certified Appointments/
 - Non-Certified Appointments
 - Non-Renewals/Terminations
2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000
3. Field Trip/Conference Requests
 - National Science Teachers' Assoc. Convention, New Orleans, LA/WHS/Armada Project/Title II Grant
 - NAFEPA Conference, Washington, DC/McFee/Title I & Title II Grant
4. Home Schooling Requests

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

COMMUNICATIONS: None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Mrs. Majewski reported that the Uniform Committee will meet Thursday, February 26th, at the WACTC. The School Success Coalition will meet this week at Family Resources. The PAC will meet on March 26th.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Discussion of Corrective Action Plan - Dr. Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi announced that the Auditor General granted our extension to March 15th. He also received a memo from Commissioner McWalters and an email from the State School Boards Association that analyze the impact of President Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The estimated increase to the WED for the FY2009 would be \$2,483,000 for Title I-A programs and \$2,100,000 for IDEA Part B programs. Under current federal regulations, this money could not be used to supplant local funds but could be used to supplement additional programs that the district could not ordinarily afford. In conversations with Rick Richards from RIDE and Deputy Commissioner Abbott today, Dr. Gerardi reported that the Commissioner and his staff have been analyzing the fine print on this act to see if there will be flexibility in the use of these funds due to the impact of the national fiscal crisis. They reported to him that the Commissioner was in Washington DC today meeting with the President's Secretary of Education to determine our access to that money. One concern is that the Governor may find a way to interpret any flexibility to mean that he has access to this money that was intended to reach school districts. If there is flexibility in the use of this money and it is designated solely for educational purposes, the district may be able to close the financial gap in the FY 2009 budget and finish our Corrective Action Plan. The Auditor General cautioned, however, that even if we are able to use this money as a Band-Aid for the next year and a half, the district would ultimately have to plan on reducing spending or raising taxes to eliminate the structural deficit that it currently has. A special joint School Committee/City Council Meeting will be held on Monday, March 9th, to discuss how to proceed with Corrective Action Plan. If there is no flexibility in the way the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act money can be used, Dr. Gerardi would have to recommend one of the following four actions to complete our Corrective Action Plan:

1. Ask the City Council to raise taxes to close the gap;
2. Consider a Carrullo action in court that might ultimately force the City of Woonsocket to raise taxes to adequately fund education; or
3. Develop a 5-year deficit reduction plan to address the FY 2009 budget shortfall; or
4. Any combination of these three items.

Mrs. Nadeau asked if we have factored in the projections for people that are retiring. Dr. Gerardi told her that he has. She asked how the projections were derived for their replacements. "Usually, we use the average of Step 3 for most projections," Gerardi told her. Mrs. Majewski asked if he has any idea when he might hear from RIDE about the stimulus money and how that will work out. Gerardi said he should know within the next few days. Mrs. Forcier asked about making our middle school a Title 1 School. A parent approached her about it. In a former community he was employed in, Gerardi said that most of the elementary schools were Title I, but the middle school wasn't because it draws so much money away from the elementary level that it isn't feasible. "However, seeing that we might get so much money, it may be something we could pursue next year," he said.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Approval of Sonitrol Contract for New WMS - Peter Fontaine

Due to continuing negotiations, Dr. Gerardi asked that this item be tabled.

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

2nd: A. Forcier
APPROVED

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2. Approval of Braver Audit Report for Fiscal Year June 30, 2008 – Dina Dutremble

Dr. Gerardi requested this item to be tabled because we haven't received the Management Letter yet. Tabling will give the WSC time to look the report over.

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

2nd: A. Forcier
APPROVED

CONFERENCES: None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Robert Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi was unable to provide any further updates on the lay-offs that were approved at the last meeting because of the financial uncertainties. He repeated his promise to rescind the lay-offs as soon as he possibly can. He also plans on inviting the Auditor General to the joint City Council/School Committee meeting on March 9th in an effort to find any alternative solutions to our problems. He was very proud to announce all of the Superintendent's recognitions—in spite of our financially difficult times. He knows it's difficult to keep moral up, but recognizes that our administration, faculty, staff, students and families are still doing the best we can with what we have. He encouraged everyone to continue finding solutions and strive for excellence.

Motion to receive and place on file: M. Williams

2nd: L. Majewski (Unanimously Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

E. Nadeau: Said that the policy of the WSC for the Public Good & Welfare portion of the meetings is to select spokespeople from each group. "No one up here is happy about cutting programs for children. For all those people that showed up—your voices were heard and your faces were seen. Nothing would make us happier than to give these kids back their programs. This isn't a job where you come to a meeting twice a month. We have sub-committees and are working hard in-between the meetings. We don't ignore people—whether it be one person or 100 people. If I get a call from one person, Dr. Gerardi gets a call from me."

M. Williams: Said that she's a big supporter of the Nature Trail at Bernon Heights and would certainly not support Mt. St. Charles putting an ice skating double rink there. She supports after school activities and was very involved in sports in high school. "We are in a fiscal crisis. I don't think a lot of people want their taxes raised considering we have the school bond. If we go before a judge, he will say that we need to fund the BEP. The City may be broke by March and not be able to pay the salaries of teachers and other city workers. It's a shame we are where we are. I'm sure the administration is working hard looking for ways to find money and save money." Williams extended her sympathies to Allen Auclair on the loss of his mother this past week.

M. Dubois: Thanked Mrs. Nadeau for coming to his defense about the last meeting's Public Good & Welfare portion. "In my five years as Chairman, I think I have had to limit the speakers three times. There were large groups from the music department and nurse/teachers here; and we have a policy where we cannot start any new business after 10:30 p.m. There were important items on the agenda that had to be voted on and if everyone was allowed to speak, they wouldn't have been taken care of." He was glad that the Auditor General has been invited to the March 9th meeting the City Council.

L. Majewski: Announced that she won't be here on March 11th due to touring colleges with her daughter out of state. "We do value music and art and sports. I have made suggestions, including one about the house leaders and administrators teaching one class a day at the middle school level to restore the music program. This raised some eyebrows. I support the Nature Trail and know how much time and effort was put into it." She announced that the Guidance Offices at the WHS and WACTC are being opened late on Thursdays until April to help parents and students with their schedules, adding that people should call for an appointment. She extended her condolences to Allen Auclair and his family.

A. Forcier: She extended her sympathies to Allen Auclair and his daughter. Told everyone that the administration's and WSC's hands are tied. "We need a fair funding formula." She asked Dr. Gerardi about any word on the 4-day school/work week from RIDE. Dr. Gerardi told her that he believes it's still on track to be presented at the legislature, but it wouldn't be able to happen this year. Forcier said that a parent called her and asked about what would happen if a student went an extended period time without wearing a uniform, if that initiative is implemented in the district. Mrs. Majewski said that they have to have that discussion during a Uniform Committee meeting. "By law, we still have to educate those students," said Forcier. Majewski agreed that it is something that will need to be addressed. Forcier said that she was one of the moms at Bernon Heights when they were pushing for the Nature Trail. She also resides in the Bernon Heights district and doesn't want more hockey rinks there.

Motion to adjourn at 8:35 p.m.: A. Forcier

2nd: M. Williams (Unan. Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary