

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 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	Present
	Linda Majewski	Present
	Anita McGuire-Forcier	Present
	Eleanor Nadeau	Present

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

Denise Auclair, PAC Co-Chair: Said that yesterday she was listening to the radio and someone called in about a new bill being presented to the legislature for sex education starting in Kindergarten. Auclair called Lisa Baldelli-Hunt about it and was told that it's being discussed tonight. She was also told that it was the original health education bill but with some changes to it. Baldelli-Hunt will get back to her as she learns more about it. Auclair announced a PAC meeting being held tomorrow night at 7 p.m. at the WACTC. On Saturday, the RI Urban Education Task Force and the PAC will have a forum at the WHS from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. She announced that it's an opportunity for the Woonsocket community to inform the Governor Carcieri's Task Force about the best solutions for RI's urban schools. She noted that free transportation is being provided from the elementary schools along with the pickup times at each school. Translation services will also be provided in Laotian and Cambodian.

Donna Houle, 130 Ward Street, Change Leader for RIPIN: Announced an upcoming School Success Coalition meeting tomorrow from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. noting that the time has changed due to the Acting Surgeon General coming to speak.

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Robert Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi congratulated WHS Senior Sabrina Villanueva for being selected to attend the prestigious United States Naval Academy next year. Sabrina, currently the Cadet Commander, has excelled as a student and athlete and as a Cadet. He congratulated Nina Khaled, a WHS sophomore, on her selection to attend the Air Force Honor Camp this summer. He noted that she is only the second High School student to be chosen to attend this camp, and that the Air Force selects only 440 cadets out of 110,000 possible candidates. Nina is in the top 1% of the Air Force Junior ROTC Cadet program. Gerardi congratulated the Woonsocket Area Career and Technical Center students for competing in the Skills USA Competition to construct a bathroom from scratch. It was part of a statewide competition where the winners will advance to the National SKILLS USA Contest held in June in Kansas City. He wished them luck. He thanked the Math and Science teachers at the Middle School who organized the Math & Science "After Hours" night, adding that it was a fun night for students and parents. He recognized everyone who participated at the Woonsocket Middle School Winter Festival and in the "Guitar Hero's" contest. He congratulated the Future Business Leaders of America on their recent placements at the State competition. Woonsocket came home with 59 awards: 13 First places, 9 Second places, 10 Third places, 15 Fourth places and 12 Fifth places. Gerardi congratulated the Woonsocket Division II Girls Basketball Champions. He reported that the girls won the division championship with a 55-42 win over the Barrington Eagles. Brooke Coderre was the Villa Novan's MVP scoring 11 points. Also, Freshman Kailey Fugere earned "Player of the Game" status scoring 23 points. He congratulated the team and Coach Coderre. Gerardi extended congrats to the Girls' soccer team on winning their State championship, as well as Brittney Lawson and Christopher Penso, who were State Champions in track. He added that James Suber made All-State Football player.

Motion to receive and place on file: M. Williams

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE: RE-OPENED by the Chair.

Lt. Col. Dan Richards and Sargent Pinckney introduced Sabrina Villanueva and Nina Khaled. Lt. Col. Richards expanded on their accomplishments and noted that Nina came from Algeria to the United States in the 8th grade knowing no English. "She has achieved what she has in three years time," he said. Dr. Garcia added, "The AFJROTC is a wonderful program and these young ladies have distinguished themselves and have made the school community proud. Congratulations!"

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: March 11, 2009 OPEN

Motion to approve: A. Forcier

2nd: M. Williams (Unanimously Approved)

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

- *Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000 – Simplex Grinnell & Trapeze Software removed by L. Majewski*

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Personnel Actions
Certified Appointments/
Non-Certified Appointments

Mr. Dubois asked why the personnel actions include the teachers' home address on the sheet that is distributed for the public at the WSC meetings. He said he was called by the teacher of the class held in this room because a copy of the list, which included his appointment as an adult-ed program teacher, was left after the last meeting and a couple of his students told him they knew where he lived. Dr. Gerardi said that, in the past, WSC members might have wanted to know if the candidates were local or not (i.e. residency policy). He will ask that their address not be included from now on. Atty. Ackerman didn't feel there was any legal reason for it to be there. Mr. Dubois had no problem with listing the city where they reside.

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000
3. Field Trip/Conference Requests
Alton Jones-Elementary Outdoor Science Weekend/West Greenwich, RI/Harris/SMILE Grant
Providence College/Providence, RI/WHS/American Mathematical Society and Providence College
Annual Teaching of Psychology Conference, Tarrytown, NY/Mt. St. Charles/Title II Grant
FBLA National Conference, Anaheim, CA/WHS/Student Self Funded
IRA Conference, Minneapolis, MN/Citizens/Title I
4. Home Schooling Requests

END OF CONSENT AGENDA**EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:****Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000**

- *Simplex-Grinnell for Fire Alarm Repairs: \$2,932.45 local*

Ms. Majewski said she spoke to Peter Fontaine about this and was told that it's a fire alarm panel that can only be fixed by Simplex-Grinnell if there's a problem.

- *Trapeze Software Ohio, Inc. for Software Maintenance: \$3,520.00 local*

Mrs. Majewski spoke to Mr. Gallishaw regarding this item and was told that it's annual software maintenance and part of the reimbursement we get from Valley Transportation.

Motion To Approve Exemptions: A. Forcier

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

COMMUNICATIONS: None.**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- **Uniform Committee Report: L. Majewski**

Mrs. Majewski reported that this committee has been meeting for the last couple of months. She and Ms. Williams are on the committee and they have members from the PAC as well as students involved. She reported that there has been a legislative hearing but she doesn't know where it stands at this point. The Uniform Committee has reached a recommendation of what the uniforms would look like. Majewski thanked Dr. Gerardi for attending a couple of their meetings. The recommended uniforms would consist of: black or khaki uniform-

style pants, with skorts or Bermuda shorts in the spring months. Shirts with solid colored maroon with no writing, maroon sweatshirts without hoods or writing. Any accessory (i.e. socks) must be a solid color (khaki, black or white). No denim will be allowed. There are a couple of exceptions such as for school-related uniforms for sports on game day or ROTC uniforms, and school-related logos on items such as band shirts. There may be an option for Dress Down Days to raise money or as a reward system as approved by the administration. Majewski requested that this item be placed on the next WSC agenda for discussion and approval. She thanked the parents and PAC members for the time they put in. Mrs. Nadeau asked if footwear was discussed. Majewski told her that it was discussed briefly and mainly about there being no open-toed shoes allowed. "It's mainly a problem at the high school level because of the flip-flops that are so popular," she said. Mrs. Forcier asked if jewelry was discussed. "No. We are trying to keep things as simple as possible. The least amount of accessories we can impose, the better the chance of participation," said Majewski. Forcier asked if bandanas hanging out of pants could be added to the restrictions. Majewski said that it's up for discussion by the WSC at the next meeting. The Uniform Committee is scheduled to meet on April 23rd at 7 p.m. at the WACTC.

- Other Committees: Mrs. Majewski announced that a PAC Meeting is scheduled for March 26th at 7 p.m. at the WACTC. SELAC will meet on April 2nd at 6 p.m. at Pothier School and the extended school year programs will be discussed. The School Success Coalition is meeting on March 26th at 4 p.m.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Discussion of Corrective Action Plan - Dr. Gerardi

Gerardi told the WSC that they had the letter in their packets that was delivered to the RI Auditor General's office on Friday the 13th. This letter outlined our corrective action plan which requests that the City of Woonsocket find the revenue to fund our combined FY08 and FY09 Shortfall of 3.2 million dollars. Their packets also contained a Letter to the City Council and the Mayor requesting that they respond to our request for revenue at the next available City Council Meeting, which is scheduled for April 6, 2008. Gerardi stated that it had become clear to him that neither the Governor's proposals nor President Obama's Stimulus package will help our financial situation in FY09. Therefore, there is no reason for us to wait until the problem gets worse or better to solve the school department's shortfall. If this becomes a litigious situation, the City of Woonsocket will incur unnecessary legal and other expenses; so Gerardi hopes that a local resolution of our financial crisis will move forward at the April 6th City Council meeting. If not, the WSC will be forced to cut all sports and activities for the rest of the year and seek a Caruolo Action. The Mayor called him and scheduled a work session among the City Council, School Committee, and administration to discuss the school department deficit on Monday March 30, 2009. Because it is a work session, no votes will be taken. She also asked him to request at the last school committee meeting that the WSC consider unilaterally beginning to withhold the appropriate percentage of co-pays for all employees in the WED regardless of whether they were hired before 1994 or not. The school committee asked him to formally request in writing that the unions consider reopening their contracts to accomplish this. He did write that letter and received a polite response from both unions that, at this time, they believe that they have negotiated in good faith and do not choose to reopen their contracts. He notified the Mayor of their response at a meeting with her this afternoon. She suggested that the school committee schedule an Open School Committee meeting on Monday March 30th before the work session to discuss and vote on whether to unilaterally begin withholding the appropriate percentage of co-pays as of April 1st for all employees in the WED regardless of whether they were hired before 1994. He and Attorney Ackerman had already given the WSC their opinions about this action last week, but the WSC is free to ask Attorney Ackerman his opinion again. He requested that the WSC decide if they would like him to schedule this open meeting prior to the Joint WSC/City Council meeting on March 30, 2009 to discuss and possibly vote on withholding co-pays for all employees.

Mr. Dubois asked Atty. Ackerman if his opinion had changed since the last meeting. Ackerman said, "No. I think that what is being requested is that valid contracts be violated. That's the basis of the justice system in this country. If that is what the request is, I don't think that you can legally do that." Mrs. Nadeau asked how many people this action would affect. Dr. Gerardi told her that it's about 30% of our employees and would save approximately \$90,000 for the remaining three months of the school year. Nadeau asked if it would then revert back after the three months. Dr. Gerardi believes that the Mayor would like it to stay that way. The WSC can't vote on it tonight, so the Mayor suggested they schedule the open meeting at 6 p.m. to discuss it and vote on it prior to the joint meeting on March 30th. "So it doesn't mean it saves any programs. It would have to go towards the deficit?" asked Nadeau. "Yes," answered Gerardi. Mrs. Nadeau suggested sending a letter to all WED employees requesting that they give up 1% of their salary for the last quarter. She wanted Dina Dutremble to do the figures and see how much it would be. Nadeau thinks it's a fair way to do it without involving the unions and a way to help save some programs and people's jobs. "If you want to step up to the plate and help us out, that would be great. People have said to me that they are grateful to have a job and the benefits they have and wish they could do something. We can try this. We have to do something!" said Nadeau. Ms. Williams agreed with her about everybody in this day and age should be paying a copay on their health insurance. "If we move forward with this, what are the potential legal fees we would encounter if we are taken to court? How long would it take?" Williams asked. Ackerman said that it wouldn't cost anything for his services because he's on salary. He hasn't really thought about what other legal damages there would be.

The meeting was stopped at this point (7:40 p.m.) to change the videotape. Atty. Ackerman requested to meet with the WSC during the break to give them some legal advice. They went to another room to meet in private. The meeting resumed at 8:15 p.m.

Mr. Dubois announced that during the break, the WSC was given legal advice by Atty. Ackerman regarding the co-pays for health insurance. The Mayor had suggested that the WSC institute a co-pay for all employees hired before 1994. The WSC could be held liable for violating a valid contract for \$90,000 and risk severing their relationship with the unions. He doesn't think it's worth it. Dubois asked Mr. DiPardo to ask everyone to volunteer to donate 1% of their salary back to the WED. "This would be across the board to all three unions. It would really help us out. When we renegotiated, it was a good deal for both sides, but the financial situation has declined since then," said Dubois. He said he would like Mr. DiPardo to name a point person for people to contact. He feels that the unions will show a good faith effort. Dr. Gerardi noted that Mrs. Nadeau wanted ALL employees to give back 1% voluntarily starting at the top and he volunteered to give back his 1%. Mr. DiPardo said that he appreciated the comments of the WSC after the consultation and discussion of the issue. He will think about how to deal with this thing. "Besides the negotiation we did, we gave the WED several ideas that would save money. I'm caught between a rock and a hard place in this. I know that this is a situation that is unprecedented, but there needs to be a systemic overhaul. You can't keep coming back to us to solve these problems. I'll take your suggestion under consideration and see what happens," said DiPardo. Mrs. Majewski thanked him. "We all want to honor the contract and it would be voluntary," she said. Mrs. Nadeau added that she had heard on the news that RI might not be eligible for three years for the education money in the stimulus package without a waiver because it has continually under-funded education. "That says something for the State of RI. We could lose stimulus money because they haven't done the right thing in RI. Shame on those people! The people who will suffer are the kids. It's time we all work together instead of finger-point," she said. "Besides being under-funded by the state, we also have state and federal mandates that we are not funded to run. It's also against the law for the WSC to run a deficit. How do we do both?" asked Dubois. Ms. Williams has had people ask her why they don't just lay people off. "We can't. We need to run certain programs and meet mandates set by the state," she said, commending Dr. Gerardi and others at McFee for doing two jobs for the price of one. "Dr. Gerardi doesn't have an assistant superintendent, which most other districts have. I hope everyone considers this request," she said. Mrs. Forcier agreed with the others and asked that all employees consider giving up the 1% because it would show their appreciation for the students and what they would have to do without. She likes the idea of volunteering instead of forcing it upon people.

Motion for the WSC to hold a special open session meeting at 6 p.m. on Monday, March 30, 2009, to institute a 15% health insurance co-pay on all employees of the WED: M. Dubois

NO SECOND.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Appointment of Director of Administration and Finance- Dr. Gerardi

After interviewing the final three candidates, Dr. Gerardi said he decided to repost the position and requested that this item be tabled. He wants to make sure he gets the perfect candidate for this position.

Motion to Table: E. Nadeau

2nd: A. Forcier (Unanimously Approved)

CONFERENCES: None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Robert Gerardi

Gerardi announced that a message was sent from his office about supporting the Fair funding formula. Several School Committee members suggested that he put a Fair Funding Resolution agenda item on the next school committee meeting; however, there appears to be several Fair Funding Formulas and he would like the time to determine which bills would be the fairest to Woonsocket before we send a resolution that would be misleading and support something that is not in our district's best interest. He will do the research and put it on the April 8th School Committee Agenda. Because of the financial crisis, the administration has not yet completed the budget process for FY 2010. He will contact the Mayor's office to seek an extension on the April 1st deadline. Gerardi was happy to be asked by Melissa Men to read at Coleman and Fifth Avenue Schools for Reading Week. He visited Ms. Gauvin's 5th Grade class at Coleman and Ms. Corio's 2nd Grade class at Fifth Avenue School and was very impressed by the administration, teachers, staff and students.

Motion to receive and place on file: M. Williams

2nd: E. Nadeau/A. Forcier (Unan. Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

M. Williams: Commented on things she has heard on talk radio, which she doesn't listen to much anymore because it's always the same people calling in all the time. She tuned in recently and heard people saying that the public should get rid of the WSC because we have mismanaged our money. Williams spoke about the out-of-district placements and how people don't really see the big picture. "We have no control over the number of kids that need to be placed out-of-district because they have brought in a weapon or become violent. We can't keep them in our schools, but are required by law to educate them at specialized facilities." She congratulated the Guitar Hero contestants. She said she hopes that the WED employees will consider giving back 1% and be part of the solution instead of part of the problem.

M. Dubois: Congratulated the WHS sports teams and WHS Girls' Basketball Team for their success. "Another thing that people are saying is that the WSC was foolish for approving three budgets last year. That's what many businesses do. What's foolish is the time at which we have to submit our budget because we don't have the figures we need." He asked Dr. Gerardi about the ROTC Program for next year. Dubois noted that he will be reading at 5th Avenue School tomorrow. He thanked Dr. Gerardi for taking a 1% salary reduction and asked that he appoint a point person at McFee to see what the feeling is there.

L. Majewski: Thanked Dr. Gerardi for the 1% pay cut and for leading the district. "In the past, we have had superintendents who have taken a lot more. This is a sign of a quality person who is willing to do the right thing." She congratulated the Girls' Basketball team, saying "they are great kids and athletes. Many of them are on the Honor Society." She requested that we have two accelerated programs at the new middle schools. She thinks having only one will skew the NECAP data. She got calls today about traffic issues surrounding Hamlet Avenue and the demolition. One parent said that even though she was behind a bus, all the bus students were given tardies at the high school and her child wasn't because he wasn't on the bus. Majewski asked that some leeway be given under these circumstances. She mentioned that the students at Bernon Heights always have paper plates for lunch and doesn't know if it's because the dishwasher is broken or not. She would like to see how much is being spent on the paper plates and if it would be more cost-effective to fix the dishwasher.

A. Forcier: Said she looked at the Board of Regents minutes for last month on the fair funding formula, but they didn't include details. She has made requests to get her hands on it and has also requested the addresses of the people who are on the Board of Regents. She wonders how many of them are from Woonsocket or Pawtucket. Forcier mentioned the tie-up this morning in the traffic jam and asked that Dr. Gerardi contact Joel Matthews about it. She asked Atty. Ackerman if last year Lisa Baldelli-Hunt passed legislation that a business could donate money to support a program or sports team. She wondered whether the WED employees would be able to donate the 1% after taxes by writing a check to the school department. Dina thinks that if it was a check, it would be set up as a separate fund so that people could donate their 1% after taxes to support football, for example. Mrs. Majewski believes that the legislation that Lisa put forward was for people in the community to donate to the City and the City would put that into an account. Dr. Gerardi will have to have a conversation with the City Council because he believes Mr. Strom discussed that with them and they wouldn't want the extra burden. Forcier asked if the employees could write a check to a special account for the students to help save their programs.

E. Nadeau: Nadeau asked when the WSC would get to see next year's budget. Dina said that Darin and herself have been working with the budget projection program, but don't have one put together yet. Dr. Gerardi is planning on asking the Mayor for an extension. Nadeau wanted to know what we are putting in for the House Leaders and what the state is putting in and whether or not we can protest it and not do it. Dr. Gerardi told her that we would lose 10% of our budget if we don't follow their rules and regulations. "If we do get a large amount of stimulus money for 2010, we can see if we can use it to fund some of those," he said. "It's called a District Negotiated Agreement. I don't see any negotiation!" said Nadeau. Dr. Gerardi noted that the state has been doing some extra negotiating with us.

M. Dubois: Asked Dina if, time-permitting, she could determine how much it costs us to meet the state mandates and how much we get funded by the state. Dr. Gerardi explained that it's very, very complicated to do that. Linda Filomeno added that since we are under PS&I and because of the NCLB Law, the government could also withhold grant money which amounts to quite a bit.

Motion to adjourn at 9:10 p.m.: A. Forcier

2nd: M. Williams (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary