

MINUTES  
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2009  
7:00 PM – OPEN SESSION  
Woonsocket Area Career & Technical Center  
Multimedia Room 303

**Call to Order / Moment of Silence / Pledge of Allegiance**

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

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**PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:**

**Marlene Smith, WHS Social Studies Teacher:** Said that she wants to continue the Jennifer Rivera Awards this year, but has not sent out letters yet. She asked if it was okay. Mr. Dubois told her that it was and that they could be presented at the meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday in May.

**Chris Beauchamp, 37 Meadow Road, Woonsocket, City Councilor:** Stated that it's his first time at a school committee meeting. As a councilman, he is very concerned about where the city is headed and read the letter from Dr. Gerardi about how to solve the deficit immediately. Beauchamp said that he needs to see something showing how the education department went from a little over \$1 million deficit to now an over \$3 million deficit. "It's hard to make decisions on partial information," he said. He has asked Mr. DiPardo about the medical co-pays for teachers that don't have co-pays and he is getting that information. "We all have to make sacrifices. How much pain can we tolerate, is the question," said Beauchamp. He got a call last night from a 75-year-old man who was crying about might having to pay a supplemental tax increase because he could lose his house. "These are the things that pull at my heartstrings. I believe there is still some fat in both the education department and the city government to be trimmed."

**Donna Houle, 130 Ward Street, Change Leader for RIPIN:** Announced an upcoming School Success Coalition meeting on Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. at Family Resources. She noted that dinner and childcare is provided and invited everyone to come.

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**RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Robert Gerardi**

Dr. Gerardi announced that Dr. Bedard, Principal of the WACTC, had brought students with her tonight who have placed at the Skills USA State Competition. Dr. Bedard introduced Linda Stanley, who in turn, introduced the Skills USA State Officer from the WACTC, Alicia Johnson. A Culinary Arts student, Alicia is serving as Secretary for the State Skills USA organization. She explained what she does in that capacity and what the national competitions are. The medal winners at the recent state competitions were announced and many were present for recognition of their achievement. Mr. Dubois thanked them for their hard work and wished the gold medal winners luck in the national competitions. Dr. Gerardi thanked Alexander Kithes for the speech that he made during the good and welfare section of the City Council meeting on Monday April 6, 2008, saying his plea was clear, concise and fact-filled. He's glad he's on the WHS Debate Team. Gerardi thanked all of the students, parents, boosters, and resident staff members who have been attending the City Council meetings and sending a message to their elected officials that they are an important voting block. He said their continued support will be needed at the next City Council workshop scheduled for Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, at City Hall and the final open City Council meeting on Monday, April 20. He knows many parents will be on vacation on the 13<sup>th</sup>, but asked that if they are staying in the city, it's important to have another strong showing of student and parent support to get the resources we need to continue to provide the programs our students deserve. He congratulated Chris Penso for winning two state titles during his varsity career. Chris is defending high jump champion with his record jump of 6' 6". Wished good luck to all athletes at the Division Championships and thanked the coaches. Gerardi congratulated the Woonsocket Girls' Basketball team and Coach Coderre for clinching the Division II Title. The Novans won over Barrington with a 55-42 final score. He noted that this title is the first for the Villa Novan girls in the city's high school history. He recognized all the WACTC Construction students who put their time and effort into constructing an energy-efficient home on Benefit Street. They are building the house as a part of a student project and are working with National Grid installing solar panels on the home. The project should be completed by June. Gerardi also thanked Amy Wilkenson and Michelle Denton for their hard work on behalf of the Music Boosters. They worked in conjunction with the Elks and the Garlic Connection to help raise \$1,200. He thanked these teachers for their dedication to the Music Department. Gerardi also reported

that Dr. McGee once again kissed a pig during an assembly for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Graders as a reward to the Middle School students for their part in improving this year's NECAP test scores. The students increased their writing scores by 17%.

Motion to receive and place on file: E. Nadeau

2<sup>nd</sup>: A. Forcier (Unanimously Approved)

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**APPROVAL OF MINUTES: March 25, 2009 OPEN**

Motion to approve as corrected: L. Majewski

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

Mrs. Forcier noted that on Pg. 9 under her Good & Welfare, she said that she asked if employees ***“had a choice of having their voluntary 1% donation from their salary go to a special account to help save student programs.”***

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

**Motion to approve Consent Agenda with the following exemption: L. Majewski**

- *Field Trip/Conference Requests: Science Safari, England – Removed by E. Nadeau*

2<sup>nd</sup>: **A. Forcier (Unanimously Approved)**

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

1. Personnel Actions
  - Certified Appointments/
  - Non-Certified Appointments
2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000
3. Field Trip/Conference Requests
  - National Urban Debate Championship, Chicago, IL/WHS Debate Team Members/Grant
  - International Reading Association, Minneapolis, MS/WHS/Title II
  - LRP Sp. Ed. Conference, Las Vegas, NV/MCFEE/IDEA
  - \*Science Safari, England/WMS/Prof. Dev./Self Funded – Removed by E. Nadeau*
4. Home Schooling Requests

**END OF CONSENT AGENDA****EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:****Field Trip/Conference Requests:**

- ***\*Science Safari, England for WMS Prof. Dev.: \$0.00 Self-Funded by Instructor***

Mrs. Nadeau had a concern about a teacher attending a conference in April after the same teacher attended one in March. “A substitute will be needed for the 6 days that this teacher would miss for this safari trip. This teacher will have been out of the classroom 9 days since March and I think that she should do it during her vacation or during the summer. Seeing the dire straits we’re in, even if she is self-funding the trip, we would have to provide a substitute. I object very strenuously to this item,” said Nadeau. Mrs. Filomeno explained that this was an honor given to the teacher where she was asked to attend by a nationally known researcher. The first conference she attended was because she was asked to attend as an outstanding science teacher. “We looked this over very carefully before we approved it and feel that these experiences will increase her content knowledge which she can then pass on to her students. It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and we didn’t expect one teacher to get this opportunity twice in one year,” said Filomeno. Mrs. Majewski asked if it was possible to use professional development funds to pay for the substitute. Filomeno said it could come out of the Title II Grant, but that this fund is dwindling. “If we had the Article 18 funds, it would come from there, but those funds are frozen,” noted Filomeno. “Even though she’s an outstanding teacher, she’s a 2<sup>nd</sup>-year teacher. We have outstanding teachers with many more years who have been given a problem if they want to go to Boston. She’s not a tenured teacher and who knows if she will be here next year,” said Nadeau. Filomeno explained that the WED had nothing to do with the selection of this teacher for this opportunity. “She was invited from outside of the district. That’s why it’s her and not someone else. We are only making the investment for the substitute,” said Filomeno. Nadeau didn’t care where the monies were coming from--she would not support this. She said that if she sees any more conferences that require substitutes, she will not support them. Filomeno noted that if we have to send any teachers to conferences, we need to pay for substitutes. Mrs. Majewski felt that if we can cover the substitutes through grant funds, we can do it. “It’s an honor not only for the teacher, but

for the district. I agree with Mrs. Nadeau's concerns and can support it as long as Title funds are used. If we don't use the funds, then the government will give us less next year," she noted. Filomeno believes the teacher has already bought the airline tickets because she was invited and Title II funds could pay for the substitute. "If we don't approve it, she will probably take the days without pay and we would have to take the substitute pay out of our local budget," she said. "If it was brought to us in a timely fashion, then she wouldn't have already bought the airline tickets," said Nadeau. Filomeno explained that the timeline was short and that type of thing isn't usually done. She's not sure if the tickets have been purchased. Mr. Dubois mentioned other trips that they have had short notice on and he has had to call school committee members to get approval for. Dr. Gerardi explained how federal funds are to be used for certain purposes and can't be supplanted to put a teacher in front of students if the funds are meant for professional development. "It creates the wrong impression for the City Council and the community when we send someone to England, but we have rules that we have to abide by when we take state and federal money," explained Dr. Gerardi. Mr. Dubois said he would support this item as long as there's money in the Title II funds for the substitute teacher.

**Motion to approve as long as the substitute teacher is paid for out of Title II funds: L. Majewski**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: A. Forcier**

**Roll Call Vote: 3 yes – 1 no (EN)**

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**COMMUNICATIONS: None.**

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**COMMITTEE REPORTS:** Mrs. Majewski announced that SELAC will meet on April 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6 p.m. at Pothier School. She said that the parents want to know how the BEP would affect the special education program. Dr. Gerardi explained that the BEP would not affect their budget because the special education budget is determined by the IEPs. If a student takes music or sports, they would be affected, however. Majewski announced that the Uniform Committee will meet on April 30<sup>th</sup>, which was changed from April 23<sup>rd</sup> due to Honors Night. She reported that the PAC met on March 26<sup>th</sup> and questions on the budget were discussed with Dr. Gerardi. The PAC co-sponsored a forum on March 28<sup>th</sup> with the Urban Education Task Force. She thanked those involved and reported on some suggestions that were made at the forum. The Literacy Committee will meet on April 20<sup>th</sup>. The Policy Committee will begin to meet on drafting a new ESL Policy. Majewski made a request that the Transportation Committee meet soon because our contract is up in June. The School Success Coalition met on March 26<sup>th</sup> and a presentation scheduled for tonight will be rescheduled. Their next meeting is on Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 p.m. at Family Resources.

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**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**1. Discussion of Corrective Action Plan - Dr. Gerardi**

Dr. Gerardi reported that at the open City Council Meeting on Monday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, he placed a formal request in writing and verbally during the Good and Welfare portion of the meeting that they place the following items on the regularly scheduled open City Council Meeting on April 20, 2009: 1) A resolution approving the petitioning of the Rhode Island General Assembly to pass legislation for a supplemental tax levy; 2) An ordinance which authorizes a special tax levy in the amount of \$3,690,035.69 to fund the Woonsocket Education Department projected deficit; and 3) An ordinance which amends the City of Woonsocket's appropriation ordinance for FY 09. Gerardi knows it's not a popular request but it's necessary because we'll have no recourse but to file a Caroulo Action if we don't receive those funds. If the WED is forced to file a Caroulo Action, we would have to consider terminating the spring sports and activities for the remainder of the year. He announced that a joint City Council/School Committee meeting has been scheduled for Monday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009. He commended the Local 1137 Union for agreeing to not fill a utility maintenance job this month through attrition so that more savings can be realized in this fiscal year. Gerardi said that eliminating the Security position had been considered, but they realized that money is saved by having this position on several levels. He explained that the security employee has proactively saved us money by finding heating systems that aren't working in the winter months and getting them fixed before pipes freeze and more expensive work is needed. Also, due to a union agreement that custodial overtime will not be needed when the security person can open or close for late and weekend programs, a decision was made that the savings in custodial overtime from this position is worth more than eliminating the position. Mrs. Nadeau said that she heard about a recent evacuation at the high school due to a student lighting Roman candles in the hallway. She asked if they can check the security cameras to see who did it. She also wants to make sure they're working properly and doing what they are intended to do. Mrs. Forcier said she spoke to Dr. Gerardi about the Board of Regents saying that the BEP only requires 12 ½ hours of kindergarten and how that would affect our all-day kindergarten program. Dr. Gerardi said he noticed that we have full-day kindergarten and the second half of the day is funded through grant funds. "We can't use those funds for anything else because of the rules we have to follow in order to receive these funds, so our full-day kindergarten program can still run," said Gerardi. Forcier asked about the status of discussions surrounding instituting a 4-day school week. Dr. Gerardi said he would address this topic when the school calendar is discussed later on the agenda. Forcier asked what happens if we don't meet the deadlines set by the government. "The Auditor General will step in. If we get a table or a no from the City on April 20<sup>th</sup>, we will have to move forward with a Caroulo Action," said Gerardi. Forcier felt that we have been open with the City Council about our finances right along.

Dr. Gerardi said that Councilman Ward has been the liaison and things have been changing so fast that it's hard to keep up the communications. "It's hard to keep everyone on the same page and it's nice to see Councilman Beauchamp here tonight," said Gerardi. Bill Legare noted that if the district returned to half-day kindergarten, buses would have to go back to the schools at half-day to pick the kids up; therefore, we are saving money on transportation with the all-day kindergarten. Mrs. Nadeau commended Dr. Gerardi for taking the hit for someone else's mismanagement. She has heard on the talk shows how he has been disrespected and called "Dr. Gerardo", etc. Nadeau pointed out that his name is "Dr. Gerardi". Mrs. Majewski asked that during the next meeting's executive session, they discuss with Atty. Ackerman whatever comes up regarding this issue.

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**NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. Discussion/Approval of Resolution for Fair Funding Formula – A. McGuire/Forcier, Dr. Gerardi**

Dr. Gerardi noted the concerns he had at the last meeting regarding the approval of a resolution for a fair funding formula until he had a chance to research which of the funding formulas that we heard about was the fairest. He reported that House Bill 2009-H 5978 is the bill the WED should show our support for and included a draft resolution in the WSC's packets tonight for approval. Mrs. Nadeau asked how much we would get if this formula is adopted. Dr. Gerardi figured it to be approximately \$13 million and said that each state has to have a fair funding formula in order to get the stimulus money unless it gets a waiver. He hopes that the federal government doesn't allow RI to get the stimulus money without a fair funding formula. Mrs. Forcier stressed for the public that if this formula passes, it means that we have been under-funded \$13 million every year that it didn't exist.

**Motion to approve resolution: A. Forcier**  
**Roll Call Vote: 4 yes**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: L. Majewski**  
**Approved**

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**2. Discussion/Approval of Uniform Recommendations- L. Majewski**

Mrs. Majewski made a correction to an article on the uniforms in *The Woonsocket Call*, noting that the uniform would include "skorts"—not "skirts" as reported. Skorts cannot be rolled up to make them shorter. She reviewed the Uniform Committee's recommendations and asked for questions. Mrs. Forcier asked if boys were going to be allowed to wear shorts. Mrs. Majewski said, "Yes." Forcier said that she looked in stores to find maroon shirts without lettering and found it wasn't that easy. Majewski said they would probably look at having a vendor fair. Forcier felt that we need to do shoes also, because the gangs will probably buy the expensive sneakers with a stripe for their color. Majewski said she would bring the suggestion back to the committee. Forcier thinks that plain black sneakers would prevent the problem she mentioned. Majewski explained that she is just trying to keep it simple and keep the cost down for parents. Forcier asked what happens if kids come to school without a uniform. Majewski said that it's the WSC's charge to develop a policy for that. She is on the next Principals' Meeting agenda to discuss this issue with them. She is looking at the policies that other schools with uniforms use and wants to get the input of the principals. Mrs. Nadeau asked if the intent is to make this district-wide or just in the middle and high schools. "Most of the parents and people involved think it should be either the whole district or not at all," said Majewski. Nadeau related her experiences with seeing kids improperly dressed and meeting the parents who were dressed exactly the same way. She invited people who don't think we need uniforms to go sit outside the middle school when school lets out and then see if they feel the same way. Mr. Dubois thinks that trying to mandate that the students all wear black shoes is going too far. "Letting the kids wear the shoes they want as long as they aren't open-toed would give them a little more freedom," he said. Majewski noted that they are looking for some agencies that would be willing to buy uniforms for the families that can't afford them. Mr. Dubois doesn't buy that argument because he thinks that parents probably would spend more for regular clothing for the school year than they would on uniforms. Forcier stressed that when they presented before the legislature, they brought up the fact that shoes were an issue and that's what she is going to stick to. "It was presented as part of the package. Dr. Gerardi was there," said Forcier. Majewski asked if she could just use the term "footwear" and asked if the rest of the uniform could be approved tonight. She would bring the shoe issue back to the Uniform Committee to get their view on it.

**Motion to approve uniform protocol with the exception of footwear: L. Majewski**  
**2<sup>nd</sup>: E. Nadeau**

**Roll Call Vote: 3 yes – 1 no (AF)**

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**3. Approval of DRAFT School Calendar 2009-10**

Dr. Gerardi noted that the proposed calendar for 2009-2010 is very similar to previous school calendars with the exception of two things. First, the school year will officially start on August 27<sup>th</sup> for the teachers and August 31<sup>st</sup> for the students. Second, the winter recess has been increased from 1-½ weeks to 2 weeks because we are projecting the move from the old to the new middle schools to occur during this time and want to allow enough time to accomplish this. Although he's still interested in pursuing a 4-day school week, the resolution of the FY08 and FY09 school budgets had to take priority. If those issues are resolved next week, the FY10 budget will then need to be finalized. After this is accomplished, the WED will be able to look at future cost savings or revenue-enhancing

projects like the four day school week or possible litigation supporting a fair funding formula. If either of these things impacts the calendar, we would need to seek RIDE approval to make those changes anyway.

**Motion to approve: E. Nadeau**  
**Roll Call Vote: 4 yes.**

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

Mrs. Nadeau asked if the private schools are on the same schedule as we are. "Not yet, but there is legislation pending that may force them to do so," said Gerardi. Nadeau requested that he ask them through their dioceses to adopt the same calendar as us since we are paying for their bussing. Mrs. Forcier has been told that many teachers and students have already made vacation plans and we would have more absenteeism and need more subs because of school starting earlier. Dr. Gerardi doesn't feel it's that unusual for us to start before Labor Day. "We have in the past and depending on how the calendar falls, sometimes it's necessary. Labor Day is late this year. It's on September 7<sup>th</sup>," he pointed out.

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**CONFERENCES:**

School Success Coalition Presentation- Brandies University & United Way-D. McGaw, D. Houle (**Rescheduled**)  
Riverz Edge – After School Presentation – WASC (**Postponed**)

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**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Robert Gerardi**

Dr. Gerardi said he's very impressed by the support and cooperation we have received from the Mayor and City Council and is confident that the meeting on Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup> will only solidify what we already know--that we have worked very hard to keep the deficit as low as possible in light of state actions that have exacerbated it. He's hopeful that the WED will receive the financial resources it needs at the April 20<sup>th</sup> City Council Meeting. He urged every constituent to attend both meetings and provide support. He reported that he was a door judge at the Harris Elementary School yesterday. The students decorated their classroom doors with themes from their favorite books. He also got to observe a professional development activity after school at Harris Elementary School. The X Connects Elementary Math program was provided for every teacher in Grades 2-5. It's a special program that Gerardi piloted in all of the North Providence Elementary schools for two years. During those two years, the North Providence Elementary Math Scores increased by 19%, which was twice as high as the state average increase.

Motion to receive and place on file: E. Nadeau

2<sup>nd</sup>: L. Majewski (Unan. Approved)

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**SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:**

**M. Dubois:** Thanked Chris Beauchamp for coming to the meeting and speaking to them. Thanked everyone for the turnout at City Hall and thanked the student from the Debate Team who did a wonderful job. Said that the WSC members are not the bad guys here. "People put their faith in us, but when we get level-funded for 9 years in a row and the state pulls funds, we need to make tough decisions. We don't want to recommend a supplemental tax bill, but it's necessary. If we had a little increase over the years, we wouldn't need it." He asked everyone for their support. He mentioned that he read at Pothier School also.

**L. Majewski:** Thanked Mr. Beauchamp for coming. Thanked Pothier and Bernon and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Schools for allowing her to read to some of their students. Thanked the PAC for helping with the Urban Education Forum. Thanked Lisa Carcifero and her staff for sponsoring the Surgeon General coming to address the issue of underage drinking. Congratulated the WHS students for their good NECAP results and on their awards, saying that about 180 students received awards. She noted that only the 11<sup>th</sup> Graders take the test. She wished everyone a holy and happy Easter or Passover.

**A. Forcier:** Thanked Mr. Beauchamp for coming. Thanked Leo Fontaine and John Ward for working with the WED very hard. She read to the students at Bernon Heights. Congratulated the WMS students for doing great on their test and getting Dr. McGee to kiss a pig. Also congratulated the WHS students on their good results. She found out where the Board of Regents members live. She said 1 is from Providence, 1 is from North Providence, 4 are from E. Greenwich, and 1 or 2 are from Barrington. Forcier found it amazing that the Board of Regents is made up of people from the richer communities. She stated that she didn't vote no on the uniforms because she believes in them but feels strongly about the footwear. "The presentation we made to the legislature included footwear as part of the uniform package. I think the Uniform Committee is doing a great job, however."

**E. Nadeau:** Congratulated the 11<sup>th</sup> Graders on their NECAP scores. She said the Jazz Ensemble was great at the awards ceremony. She read at Pothier to an inclusion class and thanked the teachers for their nice welcome. "The kids were asked to dress for a guest and it was a riot. They were 5 years old and had their fathers' ties on!" She commended the student who made the presentation to the City Council. "It has been a tough week, but when I sat in front of the first graders at Pothier, it made it all worth it. I have to do that more often."

Motion to adjourn at 9:35 p.m.: A. Forcier

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

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary