

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2009

5:30 PM – OPEN SESSION

WACTC – ROOM 303

MULTIMEDIA LAB

Called to order by Marc Dubois.

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

1. Approval of FY2010 Budget – 2ND Passage

Mr. Dubois asked if anyone wanted to address the WSC as part of the FY2010 Budget Hearing.

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

Phil Labrecque, 68 Victory Blvd: Addressed the WSC, saying he is a business owner, landlord, and a new member of the Woonsocket Taxpayers Coalition. He wanted the WSC to know that their eyes are on all elected officials in this city. He is paying attention more because the taxes are killing him. "This Coalition is very upset with the school committee. Someone was asleep at the switch." He hopes that the Coalition gets strong enough, fast enough so that it can keep the city leaders responsible. Labrecque said he is a WHS graduate and went to parochial school before that. "The Coalition wants to be on the school department's side. My sister is a schoolteacher. I have nothing against school teachers." He thanked the WSC for listening.

Lorraine Corey, 199 Huntington Avenue: She noted that she's also a landlord. She has heard all of them speak and feels that it's not "us against you". "This is me against my wallet—me against my mortgage. I sincerely hope that you can dig as deep as you can to make all the cuts you can possibly make. I found that after making cuts in my own budget, there were still more cuts I could make. One more meal out that I don't take. Please search a little deeper and make a few more cuts like I did personally."

Richard DiPardo, 134 Huntington Avenue: He fully understands the feelings of everyone that speaks. "I have been doing this for 38 years and there's so much misinformation out there. I have heard, 'You didn't ask for more money from the City for all these years so it's the school department's fault'. Maybe the superintendents got beat up so much for asking and were told not to even ask! It doesn't mean we didn't need it! People say, 'Look at all the money going towards salaries'. Well, it's not General Motors. People are our business. It's people in and people out!"

Dr. Gerardi noted that he has made contact with the unions regarding a salary reduction and health coverage co-pays. They plan to continue negotiations and he's encouraged by that. In regards to the group health care issue, Stacey Busby was able to find out that our contract doesn't end until 2011. "If they have a deficit and we left today, we would be responsible for part of that deficit," she said. She explained the penalties that we would incur by leaving the contract early and doesn't think it's feasible to leave the Governmental Health Group at this time. Dr. Gerardi suggested putting them on notice that we better see very competitive rates or when our contract ends, we will consider not renewing. The WSC members agreed. Mrs. Majewski wanted something drafted to the Mayor regarding the costs that would be incurred if we were to go with the City plan and attach the letter to GHG. "The bussing contract is out to bid and we have to wait until after June 2nd when the bids close to see what we should do," said Gerardi. Mrs. Nadeau heard some misinformation on her way to the meeting tonight. "It was said that we made our own cuts but ignored the Mayor's recommendations. We are not ignoring them. We are working on them and need to get that across to people because they aren't going to hear it on the radio," said Nadeau.

#200-271 Blue Cross: Dina noted that this line had an 18% increase because they had to allow for the retirees' replacements. "Some people drop off at 65. Some can still get Plan 65 after that if they have enough time in," she said.

#103-41632 Nurses: Mrs. Majewski asked if this allocation was for the nurse/teachers put back into the budget. Dr. Gerardi said, "Yes. They are one of the groups that will be called back immediately to avoid paying unemployment."

Majewski was doubtful that the legislators will be able to put in the pension reform within the next 30 days. "If there were some changes that did come down, can we amend the budget then to reflect those changes?" she asked. "It's easier to do that than to go back and ask for more money. There are a lot of "ifs" right now," said Dutremble. "It's better to estimate a little high and then be able to go back and cut when we have a better idea on things," noted Majewski.

#200-271 Blue Cross: The WSC unanimously approved cutting the 18% increase to a 16% increase in this line item.

#200-313 Dues & Subscriptions: Dina explained that the increase in this line item was because of a \$12,500 bill for the Association of School Committees dues. "You didn't do it last year and if you don't do it this year, this line item will be less.

#200-313 Dues & Subscriptions: The WSC was in favor of reducing this line item by \$12,500 by a vote of 3 yes and 1 no (AF).

#200-382 Auditing: Dina said that this item could be reduced by \$1,600. She believes that the Caruolo audit would be paid by the City. Dr. Gerardi told her that it could cost \$70,000 to \$100,000. Atty. Ackerman said that it's our responsibility. Ackerman read the legal statute for the Caruolo Action regarding the audit that is required being the school department's responsibility. The Caruolo audit is different than the annual audit we would usually have done. Mrs. Forcier thought money should be added to this line.

The WSC unanimously approved to shift the money saved in #200-271 Blue Cross to the #200-382 Auditing Services line item.

Mr. Dubois noted for the public that the WSC and the WED administration devoted a lot of time going over this budget even though tonight's meeting may be short. "We were here three hours last night and looked at it over the weekend also," he said. Dr. Gerardi added that the Mayor's recommendations, even if we followed all of them, would still leave us \$4 million short. "We went nine years with no increase, and more recently, with an increase that was never to the cap that it could have been," said Majewski. "The problem lies at the state level and is passed down to the cities and towns," noted Gerardi.

Motion to approve 2nd Passage of the FY2010 School Budget with the corrections made this evening: M. Dubois
2nd: L. Majewski **Roll Call Vote: 4 yes. APPROVED**

Motion to adjourn at 6:20 p.m.: A. Forcier

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Clerk