

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2010
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
	Eleanor Nadeau, Vice Chairwoman	Present
	Linda Majewski	Present
	Anita McGuire-Forcier	Present
	Vimala Phongsavanh	Present

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

Darlene McGaw, Family Resources & Community Action: McGaw announced that the School Success Coalition will be meeting tomorrow night at Family Resources from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. She also announced some other community events coming up. On Wednesday, March 3rd, there will be a Woonsocket Youth Health Summit at Landmark Medical Center. A seminar is being offered to parents on March 9th on internet safety at the WMS Hamlet Building from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Robert Gerardi

Gerardi reported that Governor Pothier School kicked off the Pothier Olympics the Friday before break. Each class picked a country to represent and research. An opening ceremony was mimicked in the gymnasium as students marched in with their flags chanting the name of their country. Torch holders walked through the school and into the gym, igniting the cardboard flames. The children performed Math Olympics during the week leading up to the event. All students are monitoring their medal count with a huge display in the atrium. Gerardi thanked Mrs. Pam Moulico for organizing this great school event. Gerardi thanked CVS Caremark for a \$2200 grant awarded to Pothier to purchase listening centers for each classroom. He congratulated Kaymiris Castro, a grade 5 student at Citizens Memorial, for being awarded an Honorable Mention in the RI State Elks Americanism Essay Contest. She won a \$50.00 Savings Bond. Gerardi congratulated Senior Lauren Masse on becoming the 3rd girl in the school's history to score over 1000 points in her career as a Lady Novan Basketball Player. He also congratulated Coach Anthony Ciresi and the Varsity Hockey Team for clinching a Division 3 Title this weekend after beating Cranston East High School 7-4. Gerardi congratulated Coach Dan Richard and the Girls' Indoor Track Team for winning Woonsocket High's first Division Title in the history of the program.

Motion to receive and place on file: A. Forcier 2nd: L. Majewski (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: February 10, 2010 Open/Closed

Motion to approve: A. Forcier 2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion to approve Consent Agenda with the following exemptions: A. Forcier

**Personnel Appts. — Certified Appointments removed and withdrawn by Dr. Gerardi.*

**Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000 –Dell Computers, NCS Pearson removed by L. Majewski.*

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Personnel Actions

Certified Appointments – removed and withdrawn by Dr. Gerardi

Non-Certified Appointments

Non-Renewals/Terminations

CONSENT AGENDA: (CONTINUED)

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

Dell Computers/Computers/Sp. Ed., Technology/Local, Title 1 ARRA – removed by L. Majewski
Durham School Services/Transportation/Grants & Assessment/21st Century Grant
NCS Pearson/Software/Sp. Ed./Title 1 ARRA, IDEA Grant – removed by L. Majewski
Scholastic Education East Region/Software/Sp. Ed./Title 1 ARRA

3. Field Trip/Conference Requests

URI Kingston, RI/Smile Club/WHS/Smile Grant
Measured Progress NECAP Conference/Nashua, NH/Measured Progress, RIDE Grant

4. Home Schooling Requests

5. Disposal of Obsolete Equipment

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:

2) Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

- ***Dell Computer / Computers / Special Ed & Technology: \$15,067.01 Local, Title 1 ARRA Grant***

Mrs. Majewski asked if these computers were desktops or laptops. "Are notebooks the same as laptops?" she asked. She was told that notebooks and laptops are the same thing and that is what's being ordered. Mrs. Lerner explained that they are for teachers for IEP meetings. "Sometimes they will be taken home and sometimes they will be left at school," said Lerner. Majewski was concerned about their security when they aren't in use. Dr. Gerardi said that they are all documented.

- ***NCS Pearson, Software for Special Ed.: \$21,250.00 Title 1 ARRA, IDEA Grant***

Majewski wanted to know if we have actually started receiving some of the ARRA Funds. Mrs. Busby told her that we have. Mrs. Majewski asked that if we have any ARRA funds left, that they be used for a student information system that parents can access. She was told that Mr. Ferry is working on that.

Motion to approve exempted items: E. Nadeau

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

COMMUNICATIONS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Mrs. Nadeau and Mrs. Majewski met with the Uniform Committee and they worked on a letter that was drafted to send to all the vendors regarding the prototype for the uniforms. Atty. Ackerman has looked over the letter. They are still working on the uniform policy and getting input from the principals.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Discussion /Approval Increases to FY11 Budget –R. Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi distributed a handout which showed on one side the Budget Recommendations for tonight's meeting and the other side had the 2010-2011 Proposed Budget as it was on 2-24-10. He indicated that it was still \$4,078,031 greater than the 2009-2010 Budget. The first line of the page of Budget Recommendations says Total FY11 budget as presented on 2/10/10 1st passage had a total expenditure of \$68,090,683, which is 9% greater than the FY10 budget. It then itemized the cuts or shifting of funds that were approved at the last school committee meeting making the FY11 budget presented at tonight's meeting as having a total expenditure of \$65,400,860, which is 5.5 % greater than the FY10 budget. He noted that as it stands, the increase of 5.5% is not under the state cap of 4.5%. Gerardi explained that the WED has to look at other areas to cut. Two areas that expenditures were increased above what was spent last year are textbooks and capital improvements that were not covered by the use of the e-rate funds.

He explained that he had to advocate for no new textbooks even though we have funded no new textbooks for public school students for the last three years, but he was leaving the decision up to the school committee. Eliminating the textbooks would reduce the 5.5 % by .31%, which would bring it down to 5.19%. The Capitol improvements would further reduce the budget by .75%, but there were several line items that he believes are necessities. He asked the school committee to decide if they would like to make additional cuts from these two increases to the budget.

Mrs. Forcier asked that Mr. Fontaine and Dr. Gerardi send a letter to Mayor Fontaine regarding funds that might be available from Homeland Security grants for the high school because it's our shelter. She questioned why a new truck is needed when one was just purchased two years ago. Mr. Fontaine explained that we need to replace a 1996 truck that we are still using for plowing. Forcier said it was brought to her attention that we have had leaks in the WMS Hamlet Building. Mr. Fontaine said that none have been brought to his attention. No work orders have been placed, but he will look into it. Mrs. Majewski asked if we will receive the 81% reimbursement of the entire \$995,000 even though \$500,000 will be paid for by e-rate funds. Mr. Fontaine said we will receive reimbursement on the \$995,000. Mrs. Forcier felt that we can't afford the textbooks right now. Mrs. Nadeau asked how this money would be spent. Mrs. Busby explained that last week's packet included a breakdown for the needs throughout the district. Dr. Gerardi noted that we did get Algebra textbooks this year through a pilot program. "Many of our textbooks are over 25 years old," he noted. However, he did recommend cutting the \$200,000 because we have to get the budget down to a reasonable amount. Mrs. Majewski asked about the textbooks at the elementary level and whether they are in better shape. Mrs. Busby said that they are, adding that teachers are usually able to get these books through Title 1 funds. Mrs. Majewski thinks that the high school and middle school teachers may rely more on technology now instead of textbooks.

Motion to remove \$200,000 allocated for textbooks: A. Forcier	2nd: V. Phongsavanh
Roll Call Vote: 3 no – 2 yes (AF/VP)	Motion Fails.

Mrs. Forcier felt that these two increased line items are too much for the city to afford. She said that the Bernon boiler has been on the replacement list since she has been on the school committee and it keeps getting pushed down on the list every year. Mr. Fontaine explained that we can't keep deferring maintenance on these buildings. "I have heard it for five years now," said Forcier. "It has reached a critical state. We can't even get parts for them anymore. If they go down and can't be repaired, the building won't have any heat. Then what?" said Fontaine. Forcier still felt that the \$495,000 should be cut because the city doesn't have the money. "The truck can wait," she added. Ms. Phongsavanh asked if the items could be pulled out separately to be voted on. Mr. Dubois explained that a motion had already been made for the entire package. "If it gets defeated, another motion can be made," he said.

Motion to remove \$495,000 allocated for capital improvements: A. Forcier	2nd: V. Phongsavanh
Roll Call Vote: 3 no – 2 yes (AF/VP)	Motion Fails.

2. Discussion/Approval of Decreases FY11Budget – R. Gerardi

Gerardi noted that at the last meeting, he recommended the cuts listed under Recommended Decreases to Current Level-Funded Programs on 2/24/2010 on the handout. The three cuts he recommended were Middle and Junior varsity Sports for \$58,000, some secondary Extra Curricular Activities for \$35,000, and Elimination of all day Kindergarten. He explained that the elimination of all day kindergarten would free up Title I money that could be used to fund other locally funded items like the shifting of the Content Coordinators and additional funds for elementary guidance as well as save the cost of the locally funded all day teachers, the 10 kindergarten Teacher Assistants as well as 1.5 elementary music, .5 Art, .5 PE, and .5 Library teachers. The total of these reductions was \$936,146. He noted that if all these cuts are made tonight, the budget will be reduced to \$64,509,214, which would represent a budget that is 4.1% greater than the FY10 budget approved last year. These cuts would allow them to send the Mayor and City Council a budget that is less than the maximum tax cap of 4.5%. Knowing how tight our budget has been over the last few years and the inability to cut less than zero for the fourth year in a row, would identify for the city council that short of any negotiations with the unions, this is the lowest possible budget that the WED could submit that complies with federal and state laws and regulations and contractual obligations.

- **Motion to eliminate funding for Middle School and Jr. Varsity Sports: A. Forcier**
2nd: M. Dubois **Roll Call Vote: 5 yes. APPROVED**

Mrs. Majewski asked if this funding included the busing, uniforms—everything for these activities. Mrs. Busby said that it included everything, including stipends. Mrs. Forcier noted that we have city leagues that offer these sports at the age group.

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- **Motion to eliminate funding for Secondary Extra-Curricular Activities: A. Forcier**
2nd: M. Dubois **Roll Call Vote: 5 yes. APPROVED**

Mrs. Majewski asked if some of these activities could be supported by ARRA funds. Dr. Gerardi said that the ARRA funds are running out, so probably not. She asked if these activities could still be run by volunteers with a letter in their personnel file to give them some incentive to do them. Dr. Gerardi said that could be done. Mrs. Nadeau feels that stipends need to be addressed in the upcoming negotiations to reduce or eliminate them. "Some people are getting two and three stipends," she said.

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- **Motion to eliminate all day kindergarten and all items pertaining to it under Item #3, and include an amendment made by Mrs. Majewski that we look into doing a program in-house for extended day care and use a portion of any revenues for scholarships for families that experience a great hardship because of the elimination of all-day kindergarten: A. Forcier**

2nd: E. Nadeau

**Roll Call Vote: 4 yes – 1 no (MD)
APPROVED**

Dr. Gerardi said that this recommendation has been "torturous", saying that they all know the value of all day kindergarten. "It's not part of the BEP and if we enter a Caruolo Action, it could be jeopardized if we keep it in," he said. He did look into the concept of providing day care. "There may be a possibility to collaborate with the WACTC Child Care Program to utilize these rooms and still provide a learning environment," said Gerardi. Mrs. Nadeau wanted to make sure that the day care is a day care/pre-school. "The kids get taught something while they are there," she stressed. Dr. Gerardi explained that they would hope to expand the Child Care Program at the WACTC, which is NAEYC Certified. Mrs. Nadeau wants more focus on academics. Mrs. Forcier wants to see the scholarships go to parents who can't afford to pay for their kids to go to day care because they are just over the income limit to get any assistance. Mrs. Majewski asked about the cost of transportation for half-day kindergarten. Mrs. Busby explained that we are billed by the number of buses by the day so it won't make a difference. Mr. Dubois said he has a hard time cutting educational programs from children. "It will just cost us more in the long run. I'm not in support of this cut," he said. Mrs. Forcier said she read the Cranston Caruolo Action and they don't have all day kindergarten. "The auditors go through everything with a fine-tooth comb. I don't want to risk losing the Caruolo Action," she said. Mrs. Majewski asked Dr. Gerardi if he asked RIDE to weigh in on this issue. He did. "The Commissioner says that if we believe that it's part of the BEP we can keep it, but we have to manipulate our funds to meet their mandates. She agrees that all day kindergarten is ideal, but she's not the performance audit group. Two-thirds of the towns and cities in the state don't have it," said Gerardi.

3. Approval of FY11 Budget – PUBLIC COMMENT – R. Gerardi

Donna Houle, 130 Ward Street: Houle asked about the shift of the Content Coordinator and House Leaders from local funds to Title 1 funds. Dr. Gerardi explained that they will shift the literacy leaders to Title I and use Title II funds for the House Leaders and Content Coordinator.

Mark Lebrun, 44 Marian Court: Said he was glad they approved the textbook funds. He teaches in a 2nd Grade inclusion classroom and has not one textbook. "Every book I have in my classroom, I purchased and it amounted to \$3,300, which I claim on my taxes." He coaches and is willing to volunteer, even though he said he spends about \$2,200 of his own money which is what he makes in a stipend after taxes. Lebrun thinks that we should have laptops for every kid if we want to think progressively. "That's an investment for the future instead of textbooks," he said.

4. Approval of FY11 Budget – 2nd Passage – R. Gerardi

Motion to approve the FY11 Budget, as amended tonight, for 2nd Passage: L. Majewski
2nd: E. Nadeau **Roll Call Vote: 5 yes. APPROVED**

NEW BUSINESS: None

CONFERENCES: None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi acknowledged that this budget process has not been easy for anyone involved. There have been very difficult decisions and he hopes that the public appreciates the hard work and thoughtfulness behind the deliberations.

Motion to receive and place on file: A. Forcier

2nd: L. Majewski (Unanimously Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

V. Phongsavanh: Stated that it has been a very long week and that she's giving a leap of faith to the city leaders and RIDE as well.

M. Dubois: Thanked the committee for some hard decisions that were made tonight. "Some of our previous superintendents have been accused of being too close to the unions. The unions have done everything we have asked and we know it has been tough." He noted the leaks in the WACTC building and reminded everyone that it's owned by the state. He asked Dr. Gerardi about a meeting with the unions. Dr. Gerardi said it has been postponed to March 4th and both sides have been willing to negotiate.

L. Majewski: Congratulated Lauren Masse for her 1000 pts. in basketball and wished her well. Said it had been a difficult night. She values education and has spent much of her life in education. Majewski wasn't happy about the decisions that had to be made. "Our city can't afford any more." She thinks every person should be paying for their health coverage—a good portion of it. "If they agree to that, we will see more money in our budget. We can't do business as usual anymore." She hopes the unions are willing to negotiate again.

Forcier: Reported that she has been reading through Cranston's Caruolo Action and spoke about combining technology services with the city to save money. She asked if we can send a letter to the Mayor about this. "We are \$1 million in debt from the last Caruolo action that we are paying interest on that the city somehow doesn't think it has to pay. With the cuts we have had to make tonight, I feel sick to my stomach." She said she understands that the Woonsocket Taxpayers' Coalition wants everyone to start paying 25% of their health care. "It needs to be a sliding scale," she said. Forcier attended the Pawtucket RI is Ready meeting regarding the fair funding formula. "The Commissioner came and it was well-attended. The Commissioner even sounds like she has changed her tone a little bit."

E. Nadeau: Said she will give Dr. Gerardi her notes because she won't be here for the negotiations with the unions. She said that the union members pay the co-pay for the health premiums on a sliding scale. She thinks that it would be great if we could combine services with the city for plowing, technology, etc. She has been talking about it for years now. "The City owns the property. Why can't they help us out there?" She has mixed feelings about making the cuts that they needed to make tonight and feels they have done an admirable job bringing the budget down to 4.1%. Nadeau spoke about the tax incentive that the City wants to give to attract business and how they can't give funds to the education department. "All they do is criticize the school department and don't have a clue."

Motion to adjourn at 9:00 p.m.: A. Forcier

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary