

MINUTES  
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2010  
7:30 PM – OPEN SESSION  
Woonsocket Middle School @ Hamlet  
60 Florence Drive, Woonsocket, RI 02895

**Call to Order by Mrs. Nadeau. She reported that Mr. Dubois was on vacation.**

**Moment of Silence**

**Pledge of Allegiance**

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

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**PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:**

**Brenda Galvin, 73 Carey Court:** Announced when people that ordered shirts at the WMS event on August 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> can pick them up.

**Donna Houle, 130 Ward Street:** Had questions about the Freshman Orientation this Thursday evening and the times. Mr. Garceau said he got an email from Dr. Bedard saying that the orientation at the WACTC is from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and the one at the WHS is from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. There will not be any schedules given out that night. They will get them on the first day in their homeroom. "How will they know where their homeroom is?" asked Houle. Mr. Garceau believed there will be a list for students to see where their homeroom is. He will contact Dr. Bedard to be sure those procedures are in place. Houle announced the upcoming "Family Matters" conference on Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>, saying there were registration forms in the back of the room.

**Dawn Pariseau, parent:** Asked about school uniforms, saying she has heard several different things. Dr. Gerardi said that he was going to address this topic during his superintendent's report. He told her that a policy was approved back in 2009. Pariseau said that she has two children and knows someone who has one child and has spent over \$200 for their uniform. "I can't find the uniform at local stores. Not everyone can afford to go out and buy Dickie pants," she said. Dr. Gerardi said that after Public Good & Welfare he will give his report and it may address some of her concerns. Mrs. Majewski added that there are free uniforms available at St. James Episcopal Church on Hamlet Avenue if people can't afford them. They would just like some form of evidence that you are low-income, if possible. They will be available on Monday from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Wednesday from 10 am to 1 p.m. Dr. Gerardi added that a policy was adopted and will be put into effect the first day of school. He said he has had many people say they have saved money buying uniforms. Pariseau said she has spoken to a lot of kids and they don't want to wear them. "Most of the parents I have talked to have spent more money on the uniforms. Parents are confused. When you call the school department to find out what's going on, you don't get an answer. You get voice mails. Mr. Dubois is probably not here because he doesn't want to answer questions. This should be on a ballot in order for the citizens of Woonsocket to vote on it," she added. Mrs. Majewski said that they are doing their best to get the word out about the uniforms and that she has returned many phone calls. Mrs. Nadeau said, "I return my phone calls and have even made house calls for parents who wanted to know if what they bought was okay. It's not just a school committee policy. We had parents on the Uniform Committee and they helped choose the colors. There are parents who spent years on the committee working towards this. Any parent had the opportunity to join this committee if they wanted to. It's always the same few who volunteer and do all the work!" Pariseau questioned why appropriate shirts and pants can't be worn and said that her kids always went to school dressed appropriately. "It's because the word 'appropriate' is subjective. Some parents don't know what is appropriate for their kids to wear to school. We send the kids home for being inappropriately dressed and then the parents come in inappropriately dressed," said Nadeau.

**Becky Brien, parent:** Said that the problem with kids fighting over clothes is still going to be there because they will be able to tell who has cheap uniforms and who has better quality uniforms. "We have a 30-day grace period because a few parents have an issue. After the 30 days is up and these parents still have a problem, will there still be another grace period?" she asked. "The 30-day grace period wasn't in response to any legal action. We have a policy that was adopted last year," said Gerardi. Brien noted that Mrs. Nadeau said it was because some parents had an issue. Brien said she called McFee three times and got three different voicemail messages about the uniforms, so she didn't feel it would do any good to make a fourth call. "Will we be reimbursed if this drags out another 30 days or a year because of a lawsuit being filed?" asked Brien. Dr. Gerardi told her "no, because the

students can still wear them voluntarily to show school pride". "My children won't be wearing uniforms to school and I will go on FaceBook and tell everyone else not to also," threatened Brien.

**Denyse Lamarre, parent:** Said that she's looking for junior size pants for her daughter and Walmart doesn't have them. Dr. Gerardi told her where she might be able to get them for free. He also referred her to Brenda Galvin, who developed an order form and held an event to order uniforms at the middle school. She was told that many parents have had success finding uniforms online.

Mr. Garceau announced that he confirmed with Dr. Bedard that 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Orientation will be held this Thursday at the WACTC from 5:00-6:00 p.m. and at the high school from 6:30-7:30 p.m. Schedules will be distributed in advisories on the first day of school.

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**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Gerardi (taken out of order by unanimous consent)**

Dr. Gerardi noted that there has been a lot of attention to the Woonsocket Education Department Uniform Dress Code, which is a part of the Readiness To Learn Policy. He made it clear that the School Committee approved the readiness policy on April 14, 2010 and that he and the School Committee expect compliance starting on the first day of school. There have been a lot of rumors about the enforcement of the policy and the school committee has stated previously that they always knew that the implementation would require tweaking, so they have agreed that there should be a 30-day grace period in order to do that, which also allows for the application and processing of waiver requests to occur. He has had a lot of comments and questions about the uniform dress code. He stressed that it's more of a dress code than one required uniform for everyone. "There is some variety and not strictly one specific uniform. The 30-day grace period will also help parents who are having trouble finding certain items." Gerardi met approximately 1500 students and their families at the Back To School Celebration and estimated that 9 out of every 10 comments were from people in favor of a uniform dress code policy. He has heard questions and comments like, "If the ACLU overturns the policy, is the WED going to pay for the outfits parents have already bought?," and "If I can buy clothing for my five children, then anybody should be able to find the clothing they need for the dress code." One parent said, "Why is the ACLU complaining about the notice? The school committee has been talking about this for over two years and wanted to start it last year. We all know about it." Gerardi mentioned that many employees in the schools who live in Woonsocket and have already gone shopping for their children have thanked him profusely. "They all have said that they spent about ¼ of what they spent last year. In these economic times it is hard not to see that as a major benefit. The only 1 out of 10 complaints that I have heard so far seemed like legitimate free speech, health, or religious concerns," said Gerardi. He displayed a picture in Monday's Woonsocket Call where he is modeling the dress code. He and Mrs. Forcier were also wearing examples of how students could dress and be in compliance with the uniform dress code at the meeting and described their attire and other acceptable alternatives that will be allowed. He described the Khaki color for pants or black. For shirts, he included Maroon, Burgundy and even Merlot. Gerardi noted that the administration will be understanding of slight variances and those will not become an issue. "We aren't going to be splitting hairs about the colors. We haven't been challenged by the ACLU in court. They have only asked for a decision by the Commissioner of Education. I can't guarantee that the Commissioner won't overturn this. The bottom line is that this is an approved policy, and we expect that many parents are ready to comply and we will have a successful start to the school year," he said.

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

Gerardi congratulated Ms. DeAnne Owre, Speech Pathologist for Woonsocket, for being awarded the Distinguished Alumni Award for Professional Achievement at Worcester State College. DeAnne has served on many community programs and served as Vice President for the American Speech-Language Hearing Association, President of the RI Speech Language Hearing Association and chairwoman of the RI Department of Health Board of Examiners for Speech Pathology. He also congratulated the students and PTA at Savoie School for saving a total of \$7,340.00. Ninety-seven students in Grades K-5 took part in the "Save for America" savings program which began three years ago at Milford Federal Savings Bank. The program was sponsored by the PTA to help children learn about the importance of saving money at a young age. Gerardi thanked and recognized the following School Department employees who helped out with Elementary Summer Registrations on Thursdays at Harris Elementary School: Kim Blais, Debbie Mitchell, and Leidyana Tilano. He also thanked Ms. Blais for her quick response to a parent who was in need of medical assistance at Harris School while at registration. In addition, he thanked Ms. Brenda Galvin, and Ms. Sue Niles, parent volunteers, who also spent many hours helping with Kindergarten registration. He also thanked Mr. Pickett for the use of space at Harris Elementary. Gerardi recognized Renee McCutcheon, 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher at Pothier, for applying for a Target Grant to promote reading. Because of her efforts, Pothier received a \$2,000 grant to kick the school year off with a reading motivational show. He thanked McCutcheon and Target. Gerardi went on to recognize the Maintenance staff for their hard work at each school washing, waxing, cleaning and moving rooms over the summer, saying they do a great job maintaining the buildings. He gave special thanks to Fire Chief Gary Lataille and local EMS Officer Steve Preston for giving every school AED defibrators thanks to EMA funds. They

were presented Peter Fontaine, Director of Facilities and Security, and he will be distributing them to every school. The Fire Department will provide training for use of the defibrillators.

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**APPROVAL OF MINUTES: August 11, 2010 OPEN/CLOSED**

Motion to approve: A. Forcier

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

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

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

*\*Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000: The Longsight Group & Premier Agendas, Inc. removed by L. Majewski*

2<sup>nd</sup>: E. Nadeau

**(Unanimously Approved)**

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

**1. Personnel Actions**

Certified Appointments/Non-Certified Appointments & Addendum

**2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000**

Century Consultants/Software Support/Technology/Local  
Dell Computers/Server, Equipment/Technology/Local, E2T2 Grant  
Epson America/Equipment/Technology/E2T2 Grant  
Fertig-March/Ed. Supplies/WACTC/WIA-ARRA Grant  
Follett Software Company/Annual Software Support/Technology/Local  
Konica Minolta/Copier Usage/McFee, WHS, WMS, WACTC/Local  
***The Longsight Group/Support/Technology/Local – removed by L. Majewski***  
***Premier Agendas, Inc./Agendas & Handbooks/WMS/Local – removed by L. Majewski***  
Soliant Health/Contract Services/Sp. Ed./Local  
VHS, Inc./Membership Fees/WHS-E-Learning/Local  
Vortex, Inc./Inspections/District/Local

**3. Field Trip/Conference Requests: None**

**4. Home Schooling Requests**

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**END OF CONSENT AGENDA**

**EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:**

**2) Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000:**

**The Longsight Group (\$4,000.20 Local funds):** Mrs. Majewski asked whether the support services are covered by the contract for the Sakai Server. Dr. Gerardi explained that it was grant-funded last year and now we are doing it less expensively on our own. Majewski felt that there should still be an agreement as far as service hours are concerned and wanted to table this item. Mrs. Busby explained that it's already in effect because the contract expired on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

***Motion to table in order to consult with John Gallishaw on this item: L. Majewski***

2<sup>nd</sup>: E. Nadeau

***Roll Call Vote: 4 yes. TABLED***

**Premier Agendas, Inc. (\$7,306.20 Local Funds):** Mrs. Majewski noted that these agendas are purchased for each student in the middle schools and asked whether the student activity account could be used for this. Mrs. Busby told her that it can't because it's not for something the students have fundraised for in order to purchase. "There's a fine line there. It's not an extracurricular activity," said Busby.

***Motion to approve: A. Forcier***

***Roll Call Vote: 4 yes***

2<sup>nd</sup>: E. Nadeau

***APPROVED***

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**COMMUNICATIONS:** None

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:** Mrs. Nadeau reported that negotiations have been completed with Local 1137 and thanked all those serving on the negotiating committee. She noted that the contract will be brought before the union membership for ratification on Tuesday, August 31<sup>st</sup>. Mrs. Majewski noted that the Curriculum Committee will start meeting again in September, as well as the PAC and SELAC.

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**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

1. None

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**NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. Approval of MOU for Thundermist Health Hut (THC): Chuck Jones**

Mrs. Majewski asked Atty. Ackerman if there are any essential differences between a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) and a contract. Ackerman confirmed that it is a contract. Under PURPOSE Part "C", Majewski asked about the mid-level medical provider and if it was a nurse assistant. Mr. Jones explained that it would be a nurse practitioner or and MD. Under RESPONSIBILITIES OF THC Part "A", Majewski asked whether they should be including "reproductive health education classes. Jones said that this was included in case the school department requested they provide it. Majewski asked about supplies and materials and who would be paying for them. Jones said that they are THC's responsibility. "If students have insurance and there is a copayment, are they responsible for that?" asked Majewski. "No. The parents will not be billed. The copayment is waived," said Jones. Under TERM AND TERMINATION, Part A, Majewski asked, "If the agreement is renewed or rolled-over, would the agreement stay the same?" Jones said that the concept of having to renew this contract on an annual basis is difficult because of the staff involved. "If it's rolled-over it will give the staff greater security and the terms would remain the same," he said. Atty. Ackerman said that it would be up to the WSC as to whether they want the contract to automatically roll over every year. "The problem with the roll-over is that you must notify them 120 days prior to the rollover date. It's not unheard of to miss that notification date," said Ackerman. "It's not a contract that incurs any liability on the part of the education department. We occupy 1 ½ rooms," said Jones. Ackerman said he would be comfortable if this contract was rolled over as an exception to the rule, since the terms would stay the same. Mrs. Majewski asked Atty. Ackerman to review the WAIVER OF BREACH. "It's a boiler-plate clause that lawyers have created when contracts have been breached. It says that the fact that we waived it once, doesn't mean we waive it for all time," said Ackerman. Mrs. Majewski raised some concerns about the Consent Form to use THC's services, saying there's a booklet that goes along with the form. She would prefer that any consent given by parents is informed consent and would like the services listed on the form so that parents can initial the services they consent to. She would also like to see the forms in triplicate so that everyone that needs it has a copy. "The same thing goes for dental and mental health services. It also doesn't include a clause about parents being able to revoke their consent," she noted. Mr. Jones said that the Consent Form references the other documents they are consenting about. "They are in the handbook. We aren't trying to mislead parents in any way. As administrator, I'm not going to allow parents to pick and choose the services they want to have their child receive. It would be a problem for us to try to pick and choose which services to provide to each child as well as for the medical provider. As far as the forms in triplicate, the schools will not get a copy of the actual consent form. That's between the student, the parent and THC. Copies are made for the parents and sent out," said Jones. "What would happen in the case of a pregnant girl trying to circumvent going to her primary care doctor in order to avoid telling her parents?" asked Mrs. Nadeau. Another THC representative that was present explained that anything done by THC is sent to their primary care doctor if the student has one. She explained a law that protects the privacy of teens of a certain age. "Pregnant students would be advised to seek an OB-GYN and receive non-directional counseling services at Thundermist," said the THC rep. Mrs. Forcier thinks having THC back in the schools is a great idea. She has heard that there's a shortage of primary care doctors in this area and some of them only accept certain types of insurance. The THC representative also noted that the Consent Form has to be renewed annually. Mrs. Majewski said she would still like to see some changes to the consent form. Mr. Jones said he would appreciate her involvement in that process.

Motion to approve: A. Forcier

2<sup>nd</sup>: V. Phongsavanh

Motion to amend to approve the Consent Form but allow for some changes to be made after a WSC member works with THC: L. Majewski

Roll Call Vote on Amendment: 3 yes – 1 no (AF)

VOTE ON MAIN MOTION AS AMENDED: 3 yes – 1 abstain (LM)

APPROVED

## 2. Appointment of Social Studies Instructional Leader K-12 – Dr. Gerardi and Mark Garceau

The superintendent read his recommendation for the appointment of Tina Silva to this position.

<b>Motion to approve the appointment of Tina Silva to this position: A. Forcier</b> <b>2<sup>nd</sup>: E. Nadeau</b>	<b>Roll Call Vote: 4 yes APPROVED</b>
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## 3. Bid Awards: #11-04 Athletic Medical Supplies / #11-05 Athletic Supplies / #11-06 Athletic Uniforms

Mrs. Forcier asked if these bids have to go before Mr. Bruce at City Hall. Mrs. Busby said that all medical supplies have already been approved by Mr. Bruce.

<b>Motion to approve all three bid awards: L. Majewski</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup>: A. Forcier</b>
<b>Roll Call Vote: 4 yes</b>	<b>APPROVED</b>

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**CONFERENCES: None.**

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## SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

**L. Majewski:** Announced that free school uniforms are available to families in need at St. James Episcopal Church on Mondays and Wednesdays and gave the times. She thanked St. James Baptist Church for their support of the Back To School Celebration. She thanked everyone involved in the effort to develop a uniform policy over the last two years. She encouraged everyone to attend the Family Matters Conference on November 6<sup>th</sup> at the WHS, saying that it's a very worthwhile event. Majewski also thanked Mrs. Nadeau for her work on the contract negotiations. She wished everyone a smooth opening to the school year, adding that she will unfortunately miss some of the open houses because she will be getting her daughter at college settled.

**A. Forcier:** Announced that she has children who will be wearing uniforms to school, adding that she had trouble finding slacks for her daughter. She was able to find something eventually. "My son is wearing Dickie shorts. My daughter is wearing a black skirt with black spandex shorts underneath because we couldn't find skorts. The skirts are cheap to buy. It's too bad that the parents that spoke under Good & Welfare didn't stay to hear about this. Next year, we will probably have a lot of used uniforms for sale from kids that have outgrown them. We have over 6,000 students and we have 4 parents complaining. I still haven't heard from even 10 parents complaining about the dress code. It will be a lot easier for parents. I wish everyone would give it a chance. As far as Thundermist, I do believe parents need to take responsibility for taking their kids to the doctor. However, many parents don't have transportation or the money for it." Forcier said she had the opportunity to spend some time at the Back To School Celebration and thanked them for their support. She also went to the Roast to raise funds for the Athletic Department and was very disappointed that there weren't more people from the school department. Forcier said there were a lot of police and fire staff there and that it was very funny. She wished everyone well on their first day of school.

**E. Nadeau:** "As Acting Chairperson, I want to say that some statements that were made earlier upset her because they were directed at the school committee. All of us are available by phone and to say that we are unavailable is untrue." She thanked Kim Blais for fielding countless calls about uniforms and for helping people go online to find them. "Everyone had the opportunity to contribute. It's usually the same small group of people that volunteer." She wished everyone a smooth opening of school.

**V. Phongsavanh:** She thanked Chuck Jones for coming by and said it's great to see Thundermist come back to the high school. She announced that Expanded Learning Opportunities will be implemented during the second quarter of school. She thinks it will decrease the drop-out rate. "Yesterday it was announced that RI won the Race to the Top Grant and that will be something else for the administration to deal with." Phongsavanh is looking forward to the new school year and the implementation of the school uniform policy.

Motion to adjourn at 8:55 p.m.: A. Forcier

2<sup>nd</sup>: V. Phongsavanh (Unan. Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary