

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2011
7:45 PM – OPEN SESSION
Woonsocket Middle School @ Hamlet
60 Florence Drive, Woonsocket, RI 02895

Call to Order by Mr. Dubois.
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

Chairman Dubois reported out the result of the grievance heard during Closed Session. The WSC approved the grievant having a hearing with the superintendent.

The WSC approved taking CONFERENCES out of order:

CONFERENCES: Woonsocket High School Music Dept. – Autism Fundraiser Request (Adam Brunetti)

Adam Brunetti, a senior at WHS with autism, spoke about how much being part of the Music Dept. has helped him. He asked for approval of an Autism Benefit at the WHS on April 8, 2011, which would include performances by WHS students, alumni and faculty and performances/appearances by celebrities. He reported that 60% of the profit would go to the Autism Project of Rhode Island and the remaining 40% would go to the WHS Music Department. The Autism Project of RI has said that they will donate the money back to Woonsocket for Autism Education for teachers. Brunetti asked for the public's help with this project, saying they can use donations, performers and volunteers. Mr. Dubois didn't see any problems getting this approved by the superintendent's office. Mrs. Majewski told Adam that she would like to audition for his show because she is a music therapist.

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

Barbara Ozanian, 37 Cold Spring Place, Woonsocket: She is a teacher assistant and spoke regarding the proposed cuts to the kindergarten teacher assistants. She noted how valuable they are and told two stories—one of the experience of a kindergarten student with a teacher assistant in her class each day and one of a kindergarten student without one. The stories highlighted the necessity of the teacher assistants for kindergarten students and how they help from the moment the students arrive until the time they leave. Ozanian urged the WSC not to cut the kindergarten TAs.

Leslie Talamini, Teacher Assistant Union Vice President: Also spoke on behalf of the kindergarten TAs and the proposed cuts. "Why are you cutting TAs that are needed in a time in a child's life when foundations are formed? If those foundations aren't there, think about the struggles they will have in the middle school. By this short-term gain, we may be paying for this for many, many years to come!" she said.

Shayna MacDonald, Cold Spring Place, Woonsocket: She is a parent whose husband works in construction and is home a lot this winter. She is a stay-at-home mom and it helps to have an extra set of hands when her husband is there. She spoke about the need for TAs in a classroom of 5-year-olds and asked them to reconsider. She quoted from Frederick Douglas: "It's easier to build strong children than to fix broken men."

Katherine Moynihan, Kindergarten Teacher in Woonsocket: Spoke on behalf of the Kindergarten TAs and explained how needed they are in a classroom of 25 students who have many different needs. "When the TA is absent and there's no substitute for her, the 2 ½ hours seems like 24 hours. Even mundane tasks like taking 25 kindergarten students to the bathroom takes quite a long time. My TA helps with assessments and does many other tasks." She invited the WSC members into her classroom to see what the TA does.

Richard DiPardo, 134 Huntington Ave., WTG President: Reported that he was at Globe Park today with Governor Chafee and Commissioner Gist to hear the good news about the NECAP scores. He spoke about this being the year from hell for the WSC because of the decisions they have had to make. "When you had to cut all day kindergarten, you could tell it was very difficult and you agonized over it. I don't know how much the cutting of the teacher

assistants will save, but sometimes you just have to say that we can't do this. Would you rather build prisons in the future or pay for your education now? The new BEP gives you the flexibility to keep this if you feel it's necessary. If it's necessary in Barrington, it's definitely necessary in Woonsocket. Look at what you pay TAs. You will never get a better bargain than that!" He urged the WSC to keep them in the budget.

Denise Auclair, PAC Co-Chair: Announced the next PAC Meeting will be held on February 17th at 6:30 p.m. at the WMS Hamlet Building in Rm. 124. There will be an update from the Health and Wellness Subcommittee.

A Woonsocket Resident, Taxpayer, and Parent: A parent of elementary and high school students in Woonsocket said she noticed that there's a member of the Woonsocket Taxpayer Coalition on the Finance Subcommittee. Said she hopes that other concerned parents will join this subcommittee and suggested that the WSC think very carefully about what they are going to cut, such as the kindergarten TAs. She asked that they reconsider this cut.

Donna Houle, 130 Ward Street, Woonsocket: Announced that the School Success Coalition will be having its next meeting tomorrow night from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm at Family Resources. There will be a light supper and child care. The Commissioner is coming back on March 3rd for a community forum with the Board of Regents.

Wendy Gerrier, Elementary Teacher: Said that she was upset when she heard about the cuts of kindergarten TAs and saw it on FaceBook also. She spoke about the need for TAs in the kindergarten classrooms and told the WSC about an incident that happened yesterday in her classroom. A student was asking where the TA was. When the teacher asked why, the student said, "Because I need her." "He knows he needs her," she said.

John Burns, Council 94 Representative, 88 Mill Street, Woonsocket: Said he just found out that there are proposed cuts to the custodial staff. "We just took major concessions in our contract with pay and health care concessions. Nothing was mentioned about cutting positions when these concessions were made. I'm sure we will have more to say about this in the future."

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Robert Gerardi

Gerardi congratulated Jennifer Maiello for being named "Citizen of the Year" by the Kiwanis Club of Woonsocket. He noted that Ms. Maiello is the High School Theater, Dance and English teacher and has been teaching at the High School for 14 years. He mentioned that she coordinates many benefits, theater, and music cabarets for the students and families in Woonsocket to enjoy and urged everyone to see one of her spectacular events. He announced that she will be recognized by the Kiwanis on Tuesday, Feb. 15th at Savini's Restaurant. This event is open to the public and tickets are \$25.00 and are available at the Woonsocket High School, RSVP Office, Senior Center, and CCF. Dr. Gerardi congratulated KaylInn Pitts who won the high jump, the long jump and the 300 meter race at the Dwyer Division dual meet. Woonsocket swept the meet over Ponaganset and West Warwick. The Novans' also had victories from Jordan Lopes in the 600 meter, Justyna Pietrus in the 55 meter hurdles, and Latoya Dythe in the 55 meter dash. Dr. Gerardi announced that the Culinary Arts program at the Career & Technical Center, under the direction of Suzanne Marsella, has been accredited by the American Culinary Federation (ACF) for three years. The program went through a rigorous evaluation process in order to earn this certification. Gerardi also announced that Carnell Henderson, Assistant Principal of Woonsocket High School, has been named "Football Coach of the Year" - Division II, by the Rhode Island Interscholastic league. He congratulated him on this prestigious award.

Motion to receive and place on file: L. Majewski

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: January 19, 2011 OPEN/CLOSED; Revised December 1, 2010-Page 4; Revised December 15, 2010-Page 6

Motion to approve as submitted: L. Majewski

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

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

**Personnel Actions: Removed by E. Nadeau*

**Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000: Apple Computer, K & B Transmission, UMASS Medical School removed by L. Majewski.*

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. **Personnel Actions – Removed by E. Nadeau**
 - Certified Appointments/
 - Non-Certified Appointments
 - Non-Renewals
 - Addendum

2. **Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000**
 - Apple Computer/Servers/Technology-Elementary/Technology Investment Fund – Removed by L. Majewski**
 - K & B Transmission/Vehicle Repairs/Facilities/Local – Removed by L. Majewski**
 - Learning A-A/Educational Supplies/Grants & Curr./ Title I Grant
 - UMASS Medical School/Medicaid-Administrative/Special Ed./Local – Removed by L. Majewski**
 - Marshall Electric Co., Inc/Repairs/WHS/Lunch Revenue
 - Dell Computer/Computers/Technology-WHS/Local
 - Konica Minolta Leasing/Copier Leases/Globe, Bernon, Coleman/Local

3. **Field Trip/Conference Requests:**
 - NAESP, Tampa, FL/Professional Development/Globe Park/Title I Grant
 - AFT Innovation Evaluation Pilot -Admin. & Peer Evaluations, Albany, NY/AFT, McFEE, WMS, WHS, BERNON/AFT i3 Grant
 - New England Catholic Schools Conference, Newport, RI/Monsignor Gadoury/Title II Grant
 - Advancing Student Achievement through Labor-Management Collaboration Conference, Denver, CO/AFT, McFee, School Committee/Ford Foundation Grant
 - NECAP Bias Review Committee Meeting/Nashua, NH/WACTC, Pothier, Harris/Measured Progress Grant
 - Northeast Solar Heating and Cooling Training/Kennebec College, ME/WACTC/Perkins & US Dept. of Energy Grant

4. **Home Schooling Requests**

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:

- 1) **Personnel Appointments: Non-Renewals** – Dr. Gerardi noted that the name of Rebecca Schmitt should be removed from the list of non-renewals. Mrs. Nadeau asked about the non-renewals of some English teachers and Science teachers at the WHS/WACTC campus. She has heard about some people with less seniority not receiving non-renewal notices while people with more seniority did. Dr. Gerardi explained that it's always a challenge. "While seniority is one aspect to the layoff list, so is the certification. It's a process that we do and the Human Resources Dept. figures out where the layoffs will be. Someone was taken off the non-renewal list tonight. Last year, as a security measure, we did a blanket layoff of 240+ teachers. We tried to do it in a more targeted fashion this year to alleviate some of the pain and will try to bring back these people as soon as we possibly can," he said. "I know people get very upset and people have gotten a layoff notice that never got one before. We have been getting a lot of phone calls," said Nadeau. "It was like this, but worse, last year. We actually had a meeting with them and will be doing one again," said Gerardi.

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

K & B Transmission (\$2,886.48 Local): Mrs. Majewski recused herself from this vote.

Apple Computer (\$27,581.40 Technology Investment Fund): Mrs. Majewski questioned this payment because the server fees are usually approved in August. Mrs. Busby believed that Jonathan Gallishaw waited to make sure that the grant was actually funded. These fees are for FY11.

UMASS Medical School (\$10,000.00 Local): Mrs. Majewski asked if this was just an administrative fee for processing the applications for us. Mrs. Busby told her that it was and is done quarterly. "It's something that if we did it, we would need to hire additional staff," said Busby.

Motion to approve K & B Transmission: A. Forcier	2nd: M. Dubois (4 yes – 1 recused/LM)
Motion to approve all other exemptions: A. Forcier	2nd: V. Phongsavanh (Unan. Approved)

COMMUNICATIONS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Ms. Phongsavanh reported that the Health and Wellness Committee met today. The police chief was there and others. They're focusing on the anti-bullying policy. Their next meeting is March 16th at 3:30 pm at the WMS Hamlet Building and is open to the public. Mrs. Majewski reported that the Curriculum Committee met on Monday and continues to look at NECAP data. Mr. Garceau gave a presentation on the proposed 9th Grade academies. A truancy and attendance conference that was scheduled for February 14th will be rescheduled. SELAC met on February 4th and talked about the performance audit and its implications on special education. They will meet again on the first Thursday in April. The School Success Coalition will meet from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm tomorrow night at Family Resources. The PAC will meet on February 17th at the WMS Hamlet Building. Mr. Dubois reported that the Finance Committee has been meeting the past several Thursdays and recommendations will be discussed later tonight. He thanked Steven Lima from the Taxpayers Coalition for attending and giving his input. Mrs. Nadeau commended Henry Trudeau for notifying them about the roof at Citizens Elementary after their meeting last Thursday. She reported that Mr. Lima is in construction and went with Mr. Trudeau and the superintendent to check out the building. She thanked Lima for lending his expertise and time and for going above and beyond what most people would do. Nadeau also thanked Henry Trudeau for helping to avert any possible mishaps.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Discussion of FY12 Budget – R. Gerardi/S. Busby

Dr. Gerardi noted that due to inclement weather on Wednesday, we have been forced to cancel regular School Committee meetings and even a make-up meeting last Wednesday. However, he noted that the School Committee Finance Subcommittee has been meeting regularly on Thursday evenings to plan and recommend potential cuts to balance our FY12 budget. The WSC received today in their informational packets a revised preliminary Snapshot 2011-2012 School District Budget that was presented to the school committee at the January 19 School Committee meeting. The second page showed what that budget would look like if all of the recommendations discussed are approved. The WSC also received a series of documents showing how the Finance Subcommittee looked at the B&E recommendations and additional recommendations between January 26 and up to the revisions that Mrs. Busby and he had to make by today February 9, 2011. Extra copies were provided for the audience. Dr. Gerardi walked everyone through these documents. The page labeled, Potential WED Budget Deficit FY12, showed a total of \$2,549,032.00, which was as a result of a Finance Subcommittee meeting on January 26. That amount corresponded to the first budget cover page in the yellow box. Gerardi noted that the first group of cuts to the budget was the B&E Accepted Budget Reductions for a total of \$988,264.00. B&E used a lot of zeros, which had Mrs. Busby and Dr. Gerardi questioning the accuracy. The second document in this group of three showing the date of February 2nd Finance Subcommittee meeting, includes the exact numbers based on the actual teachers or custodians salaries that Mrs. Busby identified. At this point, the savings shrunk from \$988,264.00 to \$930,145.27. On the third page, the savings shrunk to \$698,047. Unfortunately, as Mrs. Busby identified the errors in B&E's calculations, it meant the Finance Subcommittee had to make more and greater recommendations to try to attain a balanced budget, keeping in mind that as they do this they have to make sure that they cut anything that is not covered by the BEP.

While looking at the Potential Reductions for FY12, Dr. Gerardi explained that the reclassification of salaries (\$11,500.00) is just a way of using federal grant money to pay a greater portion of several employees' salaries which used to come out of the local budget due to changes in their job responsibilities. The kindergarten TA cut of \$435,777.00 came out of a discussion of what other communities have done. In Pawtucket, they eliminated all non-special education TA's many years ago and has full-day kindergarten. Recently, as part of a performance audit, Cranston (which has half-day Kindergarten) was forced to eliminate all-day kindergarten. Dr. Gerardi agrees that this is a difficult cut to make because we want so much more for our young students, but he would be derelict in his duties if he didn't identify for the school committee that a judge would likely identify this expense as being above the BEP when there is RI case law to rely on. The elimination of the utility staff and Barry Field employees (\$260,038.00) came out of a conversation of consolidations. The members of the Finance Subcommittee suggested that if these positions were eliminated, we would have to ask the City to take over the responsibilities of maintaining Barry field and the plowing required for our parking lots during the winter. The reduction of \$200,000.00 from capital improvement still leaves \$300,000 in capital improvements. There is speculation that the City and schools will be awarded a grant to upgrade all of our utility systems.

As the B&E recommendation shrunk due to a realistic analysis by Mrs. Busby, the need for additional cuts by the Finance Subcommittee became a necessity, as evidenced by the Potential Deficit identified on the first sheet as \$627,791.00 and on the second sheet it went up to \$711,571.73, requiring the third revision to balance the budget. On the third sheet additional cuts were identified. Under the Finance Subcommittee portion, the following was added:

1. Elimination of a social worker at WHS.
2. The elimination of an LEA through attrition.
3. The elimination of a WACTC Guidance Counselor through attrition.
4. The elimination of 6 teaching positions at WHS if a modified schedule was added as recommended by B&E.
5. The elimination of Kindergarten TA's was added.
6. The elimination of Long term Substitutes.
7. The addition of the Medicaid Billing Specialist was added as a recommendation of B&E.

Dr. Gerardi noted that these changes would result in a balanced budget. He realizes that these cuts are painful and the only other cuts that the Finance Subcommittee could think of that would be more painful were the elimination of all regular education busing; all sports; and all high school activities including band and chorus. Dr. Gerardi announced that this afternoon, Mrs. Busby got updated figures from RIDE and he had her explain how we have an increased \$674,342 in revenue. Dr. Gerardi noted that if the school committee had a consensus on the elimination of some \$674,342 worth of cuts, they can have a balanced budget tonight. He has met with Rick Richards of RIDE regarding the WSC's request for a RIDE Regulatory Compliance Review and the need for it to be done as soon as possible. Gerardi reported that they have discussed changing the schedule at the high school and the pros and cons. A hybrid 7-period program schedule is what he and the high school administration think would be the most feasible. As far as the elimination of long-term substitutes, Gerardi noted that they are a convenience to have—not a necessity. They are paid a higher salary and fringe benefits. Daily substitutes don't get paid fringe benefits and make a lower salary. "With the 7-period hybrid schedule, teachers would have duty time and could sub during those times. It will be inconvenient for the principals, but we are now using the AESOP software and it will help with this situation," noted Gerardi. Mrs. Busby added that they would still have long-term substitutes on a case-by-case basis. She noted that the addition of a Medicaid Billing Specialist at a salary of \$56,723 has resulted in close to ten times the salary in revenue for the district. Mrs. Busby found out at 4 p.m. today when she contacted RIDE to get more accurate revenue figures that our state aid will be \$45,291,874, which is an increase of \$674,342 over our previous figure. Mrs. Majewski noted that the \$45 million is still \$2 million less than we received in 2006-2007, 2007-2008, and 2008-2009 from the state.

Mrs. Forcier questioned the elimination of 6 teachers at the WHS if we adopt a modified schedule and asked which schedule would provide us with these savings. Dr. Gerardi explained that scheduling is very complex so it's difficult to determine. "If we go to a 6-period day, I'm more confident that we would save those six positions. It's not an exact science. We have made it as accurate as possible. Mr. Ward and B & E feel confident that these savings would be realized if there is a schedule change," said Gerardi.

Motion to approve a 6-period day schedule at the WHS: A. Forcier

Forcier said she would not support cutting the kindergarten TAs, "no matter what." "We are counting on the City to take care of Barry Field and our plowing if we cut custodial and utility positions? Has anyone called them to see if that's even possible? For plowing, we would be at the bottom of the totem pole," said Forcier. Dr. Gerardi recommended that we don't cut the three utility positions and ask the City about Barry Field. Mrs. Forcier thinks they should have called them and asked before the WSC is being asked to consider it. Dr. Gerardi said he informally discussed it with Mayor Fontaine. "Is the amount of credits we require our students to get realistic? Maybe we should align them with what RIDE requires," said Forcier. Dr. Gerardi asked if anyone wanted to make a motion that would allow the high school to have a 7-period day and realign our policy of graduation requirements with the state's requirements. "With a 6-period day, students will have much fewer electives and less chances to earn the credits they will need to graduate," said Gerardi. "For a 6-period vs. 7-period day, there isn't a firm number we can put to that in savings. It's a mushy area. There's some hard and fast numbers there that can be cut, however," said Mr. Garceau. Mrs. Busby noted that all the actual numbers are on the budget except for the out-of-district tuition. "These are actual salaries and fringes that have been used," she said. Mr. Dubois suggested voting to eliminate the block scheduling tonight. Mrs. Majewski agreed with him so that they can work on whether a 6- or 7-period day would be more feasible. "It will allow the Curriculum Committee to meet and analyze the data and give everyone a full report," she said. "I see a reduction in requirements as aligning ourselves with the state and not lowering our expectations. I think it affects our dropout rates as well," said Mrs. Forcier.

Motion to approve 6-period day schedule withdrawn: A. Forcier

The WSC agreed to remove the elimination of kindergarten TAs from the list of reductions and the three utility workers in light of the increased revenue figures received by Mrs. Busby today from RIDE. They also

had a consensus to look at eliminating block scheduling at the high school and going to either a 6- or 7-period day.

Motion to approve the Finance Sub-Committee's recommended reductions for FY12 with the exceptions made tonight (no Kindergarten TAs will be cut and the 3 utility custodians will be kept) excluding the reduction in Capital Improvements: V. Phongsavanh

2nd: A. Forcier

Roll Call Vote: 5 yes. APPROVED

Mrs. Forcier wanted to vote on Capital Improvements separately because she didn't support cutting that line item. "This could affect our bond rating, so you should check with the City to be sure," said Forcier. Mrs. Busby explained that there's a separate line item for the maintenance of schools.

Motion to cut \$200,000 from the Capital Improvements line item: L. Majewski

2nd: E. Nadeau

Roll Call Vote: 4 yes – 1 no (AF)

APPROVED

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Bid Award: #11-10 Compound Microscopes –WMS – S. Busby

Motion to approve award to Carolina Biological Supply Company for a total of \$29,800.00: A. Forcier
2nd: E. Nadeau

Roll Call Vote: 5 yes APPROVED

2. Bid Award: #11-11 LabQuest Middle School Science Packages – S. Busby

Motion to approve the award to Vernier Software & Technology for a total of \$53,206.27: A. Forcier
2nd: V. Phongsavanh/E. Nadeau

Roll Call Vote: 5 yes APPROVED

Due to the time, the remainder the meeting was truncated. Mr. Dubois announced that the next meeting would be on February 16th.

Motion to adjourn at 10:30 p.m.: L. Majewski

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary