

MINUTES  
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2011  
7:00 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	Absent
	Anita McGuire-Forcier	Present
	Vimala Phongsavanh	Present

---

**PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:**

**Melissa St. George, 60 Cooper Avenue, Woonsocket:** Her son is at the middle school in the Feinstein Academy in 7<sup>th</sup> Grade. "He was assaulted on the Friday before vacation and my husband was called and told there was a small cut. Later I was called by Kids Klub and told that he had a sprained wrist and a laceration." St. George said she called the middle school and was told that her son had refused treatment. "Three weeks prior to this incident, he was assaulted in class and Ms. Pinto called and said he had a bloody nose and that was it. When I called the school, Mr. Boss didn't know anything about it." She tried to contact the superintendent, but he wasn't in. Her son is afraid to go to school anymore. Dr. Gerardi told her that individual students are not discussed during a public session of the school committee. He said he is sorry that he was not available when she tried to reach him and told her that Mr. Garceau will be in touch with her tomorrow.

---

**CONFERENCES:**

**GLOBE PARK PLAYGROUND PRESENTATION: C. Lerner, R. Desrosiers, J. Frechette (Taken out of Order)**  
Mrs. Lerner announced that a grant for \$75,000 has been approved with a new handicapped accessible playground for Globe Park School. They have asked some contractors to come and present what this playground might look like. She distributed some renditions to the WSC members, adding that it will go out to an RFP soon. She explained that the reason that Globe Park School was chosen was because it has a high population of students with mobility issues. Mr. Desrosiers explained how a committee was put together to find the best location for this playground. It will be placed on the right-hand side of the school in the parking lot near Globe Park and will be fenced in. Ms. Frechette added that the different structures within the playground will also go out to RFP. The playground will be open to the entire Woonsocket community. The flooring will be poured in place and will cushion falls.

---

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

Dr. Gerardi thanked Commissioner Gist for her visit to the Woonsocket School District and for Reading at Coleman and her visit to Bernon. On behalf of Mr. Celio, Principal of Kevin Coleman Elementary, Gerardi thanked the Commissioner, Marc Garceau and Dr. Gerardi for reading at Fifth Avenue during Reading Week. He also recognized Mrs. Patricia Degnan for acquiring the Reading is Fundamental (RIF) Grant for Kevin K. Coleman School. Also on behalf of Celio, Gerardi thanked Mrs. Elizabeth Nault-Costa and Mrs. Patricia Degnan for their work with the Books and Beyond Program, which is providing free books and a reading challenge to the children of Fairmount. Also, Gerardi recognized Mrs. Carol Power-Tilton for her work setting up Reading Week at Fifth Avenue School. Their guest readers included Mrs. Anita McGuire-Forcier, Mrs. Vimala Phongsavanh, Chief Carey, Mayor Fontaine, and Commissioner Gist. Gerardi on behalf of Celio also recognized Mr. Craig Minot for the wonderful paint job that he gave the cafeteria at Coleman School. Dr. Gerardi recognized the winners of the 2011 Healthy Living Essay Contest: Grade 4, McKenna Mareau, and Gr. 5 Itamar Santos, on behalf of Ms. Zambarano. Dr. Gerardi recognized Ashley Dubois, Senior Captain of the Girls' Basketball team, for scoring her 1,000<sup>th</sup> point in her high school career and for being nominated to the McDonald's All American High School Girls' Basketball team as top standout in the nation. Gerardi congratulated our District-Wide School Nurses, who were recently recognized in the National Journal of School Nurses for their outstanding service and role in administering the H1N1 Virus shots. The article recognized their support and service throughout Rhode Island with immunization of students.

Motion to receive and place on file: A. Forcier

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

---

---

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES: February 16, 2011 OPEN; February 9, 2011 OPEN**

Motion to approve as submitted: M. Dubois	2 <sup>nd</sup> : V. Phongsavanh (Unan. Approved)
---	---

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

**Motion to approve Consent Agenda: A. Forcier  
(Unanimously Approved)**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Dubois/E. Nadeau**

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

**1. Personnel Actions**

Certified Appointments/  
Non-Certified Appointments

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

Crisis Prevention Institute, Inc./Educational Supplies/Sp. Ed/Local  
Keough Kirby Assoc./Accident Policy/WACTC/Perkins Grant

**3. Field Trip/Conference Requests:**

LRP Disabilities Conference/Phoenix, AZ/McFee/Trust Scholarship  
NAFEPA Conference, Washington, DC/McFee, /Title I, IDEA Grant  
SMILE Engineering Challenge Weekend/URI Kingston Campus, RI/SMILE Grant

**4. Home Schooling Requests**

---

---

**END OF CONSENT AGENDA**

**COMMUNICATIONS:** None

---

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:** Ms. Phongsavanh announced that the Health and Wellness Committee's next meeting is March 16<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 pm at the WMS Hamlet Building and is open to the public. She also announced a Charter Review Committee meeting coming up on March 15<sup>th</sup>.

---

---

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS: NONE**

---

---

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. Approval of Revised Job Description for Secretary-Child Outreach- R. Gerardi**

Dr. Gerardi explained that we will have a retirement from the current clerk's position at the end of this fiscal year. In analyzing our needs for clerical staff in this area, it was determined that there is a need for more staffing in the summer for screening and summer registration. By approving this job description, the school committee will improve the coordination services for parents and students during the summer months. He believes that there will be no financial impact to the local budget as this will continue to be funded through IDEA Funds and asked the school committee to approve this job description tonight. Mrs. Forcier asked Carole Lerner about whether she had a clerk before and not a secretary in this position. "It was only school year also. Why do we need it now?" asked Forcier. Lerner explained that we don't get the 3-year-olds screened in time because there is no one there during the summer to work with the necessary agencies. "The outreach can be done during the summer to find these 3-year-olds in order to get them screened for September. Currently we are screening about 700 students a year, which is only about 40% of what is out there in the population. The difference in the budget is being paid through the grant. We do send out letters but we don't have anyone there to do the follow up," said Lerner. Mrs. Forcier wasn't comfortable adding any new positions, but Lerner explained that the position does exist now, but only as a school-year clerk. There would also be more responsibility involved than a clerk would handle. "Child Outreach operates out of Second Avenue School, right?" asked Nadeau. Lerner confirmed that it does. Mrs. Nadeau asked how many people are there. "There's a 10-month coordinator, the clerk and other service providers who come in and out," said Lerner. Nadeau asked why the coordinator doesn't do these things. Lerner explained that they are trying to rework the

staffing so that they aren't paying a coordinator's salary to someone for the summer months. "If the funds aren't available, what happens?" asked Nadeau. "By mandate, we have to have a coordinator anyway. In the past, it has never been paid for by local funds. We have an obligation to have these children screened by the time they are three years old," said Lerner. "If we increase the number of students we can reach at an earlier age, the better they will do academically later on," noted Gerardi. Mr. Dubois clarified that they would be changing this job description from a 10-month clerk to a 12-month secretary position. Lerner said that was right.

Motion to approve: M. Dubois  
Roll Call Vote: 4 yes

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

## **2. Discussion of Advancing Student Achievement through Labor-Management Collaboration – R. Gerardi, E. Nadeau**

Dr. Gerardi read the memo he had written to the WSC regarding the conference that he and Mrs. Nadeau attended, saying that he learned a lot about what innovative and progressive practices are occurring in education throughout the United States. He reviewed the major areas of collaboration that were discussed. Mrs. Nadeau gave her own report, stating that in RI we are facing and have faced many of the problems some of these other people are facing now. "We have some experience with it, unfortunately. In New York State, education is funded by the state—not the individual communities, and they have many of the same problems that we have here. It was very enjoyable and I got a lot of information out of it," she said.

## **3. Discussion of Purchase of Vans for WHS – C. Lerner**

Mrs. Carole Lerner announced that a grant was approved for two handicapped-accessible vans for the WHS Life Skills students to transport them to work placements throughout the area. She thanked Bill Legare from Valley Transportation for his assistance in seeing what would work best for us. They are going out to bid and will be housed at and maintained by the Woonsocket Area Career and Technical Center. There are three employees in the program who all have their Chauffeur's License to drive the students. This purchase will create more opportunities for these students later on also. The vans will be 100% grant-funded by ARRA funds.

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

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

## **4. Discussion of FY12 Budget Update – S. Busby**

Mrs. Busby wanted to update the WSC after the Governor's state budget presentation last night. She had good news and bad news. A letter was received last Friday from Blue Cross indicating that we will come in at 8.5% next year for our premiums, which is a decrease from this year. However, she also received an email from Tim Duffy of the RI School Committee Association notifying us that last spring the General Assembly wrote a budget with the FMAP money at a higher rate than what was actually given out. Woonsocket and some other financially-strapped communities used this money in order to balance their budget for FY11 and now we have a deficit again as of today's date. Dr. Gerardi recommended that the Finance Subcommittee reconvene to see if they can solve this problem. Mrs. Nadeau spoke about the resolution that the City authorized for payment of the emergency snow removal for the school roofs and required roof repairs that resulted from that removal out of the \$1.5 million that belongs to the school department. "We didn't hire this company and they caused damages. Why are we responsible to pay these damages?" she asked. Dr. Gerardi said he is grateful that the City isn't taking it out of this year's budget allocation and paying the bill. He explained that the \$3.7 million that is shown as being owed to us by the City is due to a cash flow problem on their part for summer payroll because of the slowdown in disbursements of state revenue during those months. Mrs. Nadeau wanted to know if we will ever get an accounting of who the City paid with this money. Dr. Gerardi said that they have to provide us with that information. Nadeau wants to make sure that we get an accounting of it and the breakdown monthly just like they want from us. She doesn't think that is an unreasonable request. "It has been going on for over 14 years and has been a problem and I want to keep track of it," she said. Mr. Dubois asked where the money for the repairs is coming from. He knows there was money left in the middle school bond that paid for the repairs to that roof. "Who is paying for the high school?" he asked. "That's why we are talking about the other monies. We didn't hire the company—why should the money come out of our account?" said Nadeau. Dr. Gerardi indicated that it isn't and that Atty. Ackerman is looking into the matter. "Unfortunately, the City is responsible for all the bills, including the school department. To me, they are doing us a favor because they are just adding onto their cash flow problem," said Gerardi. "In other words, the money the City is giving us is money already spent. I'm just glad that the problem with the roofs was noticed before they caved in on our children. Their safety is number one," said Mrs. Forcier. Ms. Phongsavanh asked about the cash flow situation and Mrs. Busby told her that right now, it's fine. "We are coordinating the bills with the time frame of when our funds are coming in," said

Busby. "Do we have control back of our finances?" asked Phongsavanh. "Yes. We are still playing catch-up, but we are working to ensure that vendors are getting paid better than they were previously," said Busby. "We had to use our EduFunds because the City brought us to court back in October and we had no choice," Nadeau pointed out. Mr. Dubois asked if we ever got an explanation as to why the City threatened not to cover our payroll last summer. Mrs. Busby believes that it was due to a cash flow problem on their part because the funds are slower coming in during the summer.

---

**CONFERENCES:****Thundermist Program Update on Health Hut/School-Based Health Center Activities: C. Jones**

Mr. Jones gave an update on the operations of the Health Hut at the Woonsocket High School, such as the number of students that have accessed the Health Hut to date, the number of visits with the Nurse Practitioner, the number of nutrition consults delivered, etc. The WHS Health Hut has been a huge success. Thundermist has received another grant opportunity of \$25,000 to use for a Tobacco Prevention program and he will be signing that grant. There is also an opportunity for them to get funds to expand their space and they will bring that to the WSC if they get notice of those funds. Jones reported that there are currently 30 pregnant teens receiving services through the Health Hut, which is the third highest rate in RI. They treat between two to five cases of sexually transmitted diseases each month. Jones reported on the results of the ThunderKids Obesity Program they are conducting for students from 11 to 13 years old, which works with 100 Thundermist patients that are selected to participate based on their age and Body Mass Index. Jones also reviewed the ThunderKids Community Dental Program, noting that approximately 2000 children receive dental exams under this program each year. "Are there any grants out there for marijuana prevention?" asked Nadeau. Dr. Belkin told her that the grant does include all high-risk behaviors and will be implemented by the Woonsocket Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition. "Do these kids have to take a blood test?" asked Nadeau. "Yes, but it's just for the weight-loss program," said Belkin. "The fact that we are in the high school increases accessibility. A lot of these kids wouldn't go to the Thundermist Center down the road," said Jones. Dr. Gerardi noted that all of this is being provided to us at no cost.

---

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

**Motion to received and place on file: A. Forcier**

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

---

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:**

**A. Forcier:** Passed.

**E. Nadeau:** Passed.

**V. Phongsavanh:** Passed.

**M. Dubois:** He thanked Thundermist for what they are doing in the high school, adding that he couldn't believe the statistics at halfway through the school year. He was disappointed when he went to McFee and found out about the budget, but "it's a moving target" he noted.

Motion to adjourn at 8:45 p.m.: A. Forcier

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

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary