

MINUTES  
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 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**

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

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**PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:**

**Prior to the start of Public Good & Welfare, Chairman Dubois reported that a vote was taken to continue the closed session matter for two weeks.**

**Denise Auclair, PAC Co-Chair:** Said that with all the cuts going on, seeing Family Planning on tonight's agenda is ridiculous and that parents' permission will be needed.

**Phil Simonini, WHS Teacher, Woonsocket resident and parent of school-age children:** Said he was appalled at the decision to lower the passing grade at 60. "It is said that it's a matter of equity because students in other communities fail at 60, not 65." He spoke about other districts that use 65 as a minimum grade for passing—not 60, and why didn't we go with that. "Another reason given was to raise the graduation rate." He then gave reasons why it will not work. "It will move students along—not necessarily better-prepared ones. This policy doesn't have much support amongst the teachers. They voted to leave the passing grade at 70. I believe this policy is harmful in and of itself. It undermines the professional judgment of teachers. It's unjust to parents, teachers and students. What message are we sending?" He hopes this policy can be reversed or amended. "We should not permit the implementation of this policy in the middle of a semester."

**Kristin Treganowan, WHS Student:** Spoke about her frustration about going to a 6-period day. She is disappointed that the WSC still went with this decision even after hearing about all of the negative effects it would have. She thinks that electives being put after school will only destroy those programs.

**Justina Pietrus, WHS Student:** She spoke at the special meeting and is disappointed in the WSC's decision to go to a 6-period day. "There was a plan that got us close to avoiding it." She urged them to find a way to do it.

**Estelle Bubble, Woonsocket resident and Teacher Assistant:** She spoke about the Second Avenue School playground and whether the people who put it in can have permission to move it to the Fifth Avenue School. "They have volunteered to take it out and move it and it won't cost the school department anything. In Fairmount, they are trying to raise money to sell ice cream and healthy snacks. They want to know if they could use part of the cafeteria to do that." She said that at Coleman Elementary they use part of the cafeteria to do that. Mrs. Busby told her she got some information from RIDE to send to Mr. Celio on that matter. Mrs. Forcier doesn't think anyone would have a problem with moving the swing set, but said they would need mulch to put under it. Mrs. Bubble said that everything is being donated and she has a whole list she can give them. They just need the okay to go ahead. Dr. Gerardi will have Peter Fontaine get in touch with her and Chris Beauchamp.

**Marlene Smith, WHS Social Studies Teacher:** Spoke about her educational philosophy and how she actually felt bad for the WSC members last week. Something that bothers her is the direction that education is going in. She asked that they think about things before hooking onto some of these programs. She learned after her first three years of teaching that she can't save every kid. "The teachers get blamed and the parents. What about the students? Those that deserve it least and appreciate it least are the ones who get all the attention. We should forsake 85% for the sake of 15%? Every time some new program comes along, such as NCLB or Race to the Top, I don't understand why we jump on all of these things." She spoke about her feelings on heterogeneous versus homogeneous grouping in classrooms. Smith said she knows there's pressure on people to do something about the dropout rate, absentee rate, etc. She just asked that they look before they leap, ask questions and don't take things

on face value. She reported that she didn't do the Jennifer Rivera Award this past year because she had little response from the teams at the middle school and the girl that used to help her moved away. Smith thanked the WSC for their time and wished them well in their endeavors.

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

Gerardi announced that the students on Team 7-2 at the Woonsocket Middle School participated in World Math Day on March 1st. This year 191 nations were represented. A total of 1,180,270 students, representing 32,513 schools participated. Together, they answered 428,598,214 questions correctly. Our students answered 23,298 questions correctly. Three students received the "Platinum Award" for the number of points they earned. He congratulated them. He also congratulated all the 2011 Skills USA Winners from the Woonsocket Area Career and Technical Center naming each winner, the medal they won and the area in which they competed. He also recognized the students at Governor Pothier for their display of dinosaurs and prehistoric animals. Students studied prehistoric history and were able to display their own creations of dinosaurs. He congratulated the Woonsocket Middle School at Villa Nova for collecting 16 pounds of aluminum tabs over the winter for the Ronald McDonald House. He named those who organized this project thanked them. Gerardi reported that the Woonsocket Career and Technical Center had a fashion show on Friday April 1<sup>st</sup>, which was a great success. The show was organized by Mercedes Melgar, a senior in the Hospitality & Tourism program. All the proceeds from the show will benefit the Diabetes Association. Gerardi thanked all of the Elementary Schools for inviting him to read to their classrooms during the various reading weeks, saying it's always a pleasure to see the teachers and all of their hard work in the classroom as well as getting to read to the children. Congratulated Justyna Pietrus, Jordon Lopes, Samantha Plant and Kristen Treganowan for being nominated captains for the Villa Novan High School Girls Track Team and wished the team good luck throughout the season. Dr. Gerardi congratulated School Committee member Vimala Phongsavanh for being recognized as one of the "Rising Stars" in the state of Rhode Island. Vimala is the first Laotian-American Female School Committee member in the US. She received her award at the YWCA's third annual "Women Holding Office" event at Bryant University.

Motion to receive and place on file: A. Forcier

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

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**APPROVAL OF MINUTES: March 23, 2011 OPEN/CLOSED**

Motion to approve as corrected: V. Phongsavanh

2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

Mrs. Majewski made a correction on Pg. 3 of the Open Session under Rebecca Dedmond. "She wondered why it was coming out of Title II funds." She also made a correction on Pg. 5 of the Open Session under the Graduation Credit Requirement Alignment Policy. "For students who want to go to a selective 4-year college, ~~she discussed how that would work~~ **they need three Foreign Language Credits.**"

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

**Motion to approve Consent Agenda with the following exemptions: M. Dubois**

\*Personnel Actions – Removed by L. Majewski

\*Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000: Apple Computer, Fesco Fire Extinguisher, Pacific Learning, Inc., & Woonsocket Prevention Coalition removed by L. Majewski

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

CONSENT AGENDA:

**1. Personnel Actions**

***Certified Appointments/Non-Certified Appointments removed by L. Majewski to be voted on separately so that she could abstain due to the possibility of one appointment being a relative.***

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

***Apple Computer/Computers/Technology/Title I ARRA Grant removed by L. Majewski***

***Fesco Fire Extinguisher/Annual Inspection/Facilities/Local removed by L. Majewski***

***Navitas Lease Finance Corp./Copier Lease/Bus. Office/Local***

***Okapi Educational Publishing, Inc./Ed. Supplies/District/Title I ARRA***

***Pacific Learning, Inc./Ed. Supplies/District/Title I ARRA removed by L. Majewski***

***Woon. Prevention Coalition/Contract Services/Grants & Assessment/Title IV Grant removed by LM***

3. **Field Trip/Conference Requests:**  
LRP National Institute, Phoenix, AZ/McFee/Idea Part B
4. **Home Schooling Requests: NONE**

**END OF CONSENT AGENDA**

**EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:**

1) **Personnel Appointments:** Because one person on the list for appointment tonight may be a relative, Mrs. Majewski asked that this item be voted on separately so that she could abstain.

**Motion to approve Personnel Appointments: A. Forcier**      **2<sup>nd</sup>: E. Nadeau (4 yes to 1 abstain LM)**  
**APPROVED**

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

**Apple Computer (\$7,693.00 Title I ARRA Grant):** Mrs. Majewski asked why this purchase was coming from Title I funds. Mrs. Filomeno explained that the computers are being used by Reading and T.I.M.E. teachers K-5. It includes Leo Savoie because it's being used by a reading teacher and instructional coach.

**Fesco Fire Extinguisher (\$4,175.50 Local):** Mrs. Majewski asked if we would save any money by bidding for a 3-year contract. Mrs. Busby said she would need to look into that.

**Pacific Learning, Inc. (\$62,249.04 Title I ARRA Grant):** Mrs. Majewski asked which kits these grade level packages were specifically for. Mrs. Filomeno told her they are for reading instruction.

**Woonsocket Prevention Coalition (\$2,740.00 Title IV Grant):** Mrs. Majewski asked when this program would begin running. Mrs. Filomeno told her that if it's approved today, they will start working on it tomorrow. Mrs. Majewski noted that our EduFunds were appropriated in October and re-appropriated for this budget, but they are going away for next year.

**Motion to approve Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000: E. Nadeau**      **2<sup>nd</sup>: L. Majewski (Unanimously Approved)**

**COMMUNICATIONS: None**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:** Mrs. Forcier reported that at the Health and Wellness Meeting they had recently, they touched upon curriculum they have brought into the schools in the Kindergarten, which is called "Good Touch, Bad Touch". She thanked the teachers for allowing Forcier and her sister to come in. Tomorrow night they will go to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue to meet with those parents. Forcier thanked Ashley Guiney for creating a song to go along with this program, which the Rotary Club donated the money for to get it going. She asked everyone in the community to participate and educate themselves. Their next committee meeting will be on May 4<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Majewski reported that the Curriculum Committee met yesterday to look at policy in light of some of the changes that were made relative to the PBGRs and credits. She made a request about the grading policy and whether it would be in effect for just the high school or for grades K-12. She asked that the committee reconsider putting this item back on the agenda for another vote because they are compiling more data. If anything else comes up, she will share that also. The next Curriculum Committee meeting will be on April 25<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 p.m. The SELAC meeting will be rescheduled for June because it was supposed to be last Thursday night.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

1. **Approval of School Calendar 2011-12 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Passage -R. Gerardi**

Dr. Gerardi noted that there had been no changes made since the 1<sup>st</sup> Passage and recommended 2<sup>nd</sup> Passage. Mrs. Majewski asked if he had received any correspondence from the Catholic schools. Gerardi said he was unable to get to it yet. "It has been a very busy week," he said.

**Motion to approve for 2<sup>nd</sup> Passage: M. Dubois**  
**Roll Call Vote: 5 yes**

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

**2. Update regarding the Action brought at RIDE Challenging the Uniform Behavior and Dress Code -R. Gerardi**

Dr. Gerardi was proud to announce that the Plaintiffs have withdrawn their hearing request with the RIDE regarding the Uniform Dress Code Policy. He is confident that the entire community will grow to appreciate the financial and professional benefits of the dress code each year that it continues to be implemented. Mrs. Majewski asked that the policy be reiterated to the principals with the warmer weather coming. She has seen mostly middle school students that are not in compliance. Mr. Dubois said he read in several classrooms during the past few weeks and it seems that the policy is not being enforced equally in the classrooms and schools. "I know it has been a challenge and they are doing the best they can. We will remind them. I believe I hear from more parents that say they hope it continues next year because it saves them money and creates a more professional atmosphere," said Gerardi. "The elementary schools don't seem to be problem. It's a little worse at the middle school and then even more so at the high school. It's more challenging at that level. I would like to hear what the principals think and show us the issues they are dealing with," said Mrs. Forcier. Mrs. Majewski said they have met with the principals and know the issues they are dealing with. "It's just that with the warmer weather coming, it brings up new issues," she said. "Was the withdrawal of the hearing request at the parents' request?" asked Mr. Dubois. Atty. Ackerman believes so, but cautioned that "you never know what tomorrow will bring".

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**NEW BUSINESS**

**1. Bid Awards:**

- **#11-12 Ford E250 Extended Van** – Mrs. Lerner reported that four companies came through with bids. "We were looking for very specific criteria. The vans are being paid for out of ARRA IDEA funds and will be used for the special education program at the high school to enable them to go to job sites throughout the city, such as Savers, to work. When asked who would be driving the vans, she explained that there are three people in the special education program with a Chauffeur's License.

**Motion to approve this purchase from Mobility Works for \$28,368.50: E. Nadeau**  
**2<sup>nd</sup>: A. Forcier** **Roll Call Vote: 5 yes APPROVED**

- **#11-13 Ford E250 Extended Super Window Van** – Mrs. Majewski asked why there was a difference in price. Lerner explained that this van has more seating capacity and the seats can be removed for wheelchairs to come on.

**Motion to approve this purchase from National Van Builders for \$37,476.00: V. Phongsavanh**  
**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Dubois** **Roll Call Vote: 5 yes APPROVED**

- **RFP -Playground Globe** – Robert Desrosiers, Principal, reported that three companies bid on this project. O'Brien & Sons has been selected because they have done playgrounds for us before and we got more equipment and better warranties on the equipment. The equipment can accommodate handicapped adults as well as children.

**Motion to approve award of this bid to O'Brien & Sons Inc.: A. Forcier**  
**2<sup>nd</sup>: E. Nadeau** **Roll Call Vote: 5 yes APPROVED**

**2. Proposal to Change the March 1<sup>st</sup> Deadline for School Department Budget to City and adjust School Department Fiscal Year – L. Majewski**

Mrs. Majewski put this item on the agenda for discussion purposes because it seems that it would make much more sense to adjust our budget to August 31<sup>st</sup>. "The question is—what do we do with the months of June and July if we adjust it?" she asked. She thinks it's worth having the Charter Commission look at it. Dr. Gerardi knows that East Providence is one community that isn't on the same fiscal year and he will look into it. "It would be tough in these challenging times, but it does make sense," he said. Ms. Phongsavanh said that the Charter Commission is taking public testimony and she can take it and bring it to them, but they are on a tight deadline.

"It does have to pass the City Council first," she added. She doesn't have any more voting rights on the Charter Commission, but will bring it forward. "I'm not so sure about you not having voting rights. You may be off the hook and can vote. Someone on the City Council should read the Charter and they don't," said Nadeau.

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### 3. Approve or Disapprove Support of House Bill #S5297 and Senate Bill #S0071- M. Dubois

Dr. Gerardi reported that there are several bills in place that talk about the March 1<sup>st</sup> notification deadlines for union members.

<p><b>Motion to support the bill that supports the Association of School Committees position: E. Nadeau</b> <b>2<sup>nd</sup>: A. Forcier</b></p>	<p><b>Roll Call Vote: 5 yes APPROVED</b></p>
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### 4. Strategic Planning Requests – R. Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi reported that our current 2009 to 2012 Strategic plan will be used by Mrs. Filomeno to write the CRP that will be due in June. As we are forced by financial constraints to make changes in our programs, we may even have to revise that strategic plan to justify budgetary requests in the CRP. He noted, however, that for the 2011-2014 strategic plan, we need to get a Strategic Planning Committee assembled and begin reviewing our past plan and developing a future plan. Gerardi asked Chairman Dubois to poll the members of the School Committee and determine which two school committee members would like to serve with him on this committee. Mrs. Majewski volunteered and Mrs. Forcier said she is also interested, depending on the hours.

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## CONFERENCES

**Educator Evaluation System – L. Filomeno:** Filomeno said she wanted to bring to the WSC's attention that they are bringing together a teacher evaluation system which is a joint venture with six other communities. "It's a requirement of the Race to the Top application, and it's also part of the Strategic Plan for RIDE, which has its own model. The AFT gave the RI Federation of Teachers a grant to do the same kind of work. We are with the Innovation Grant – the RI Federation of Teachers model. There are efforts to merge the two, however. We invited the WSC to hold a work-session so we could bring all this information to them in detail with Mr. DiPardo and the principals of the schools that are piloting the models. The RIDE model is approved, but it's not grant-funded," said Filomeno. Dr. Gerardi said there's something out there that is called the Coventry Model, that's approved by the Department of Education. "We are trying to present our own model," explained Gerardi. Mrs. Nadeau spoke about the plan to pay retired teachers \$500 a day to do the evaluations. "One of the teachers in the audience told me during the tape change break that the teachers are actually against that," said Nadeau. Filomeno told her they could also use college professors. "The AFT model is suggesting that all the evaluators come from within the district," said Filomeno.

**Family Planning – V. Phongsavanh & A. Forcier:** Mrs. Forcier said that, unfortunately, Mrs. Auclair was unable to make it to their last Health and Wellness meeting when this was discussed. "There will be permission slips going out and if you don't want your children to have access to this information, they don't have to. What's number one to me is safety. We have the highest rate of teenagers having a second child. We are also the highest in the state in sexually transmitted diseases in teenagers. People say that other things are more of a priority, but we can multitask. We will meet again on May 4<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 p.m. Information will be provided with parent permission. It's not like we are going to put out a platter of condoms!" said Forcier. "It's a big community issue that needs to be discussed. We want parent input," said Ms. Phongsavanh. "You are all welcome to our meeting. There will be a workshop during the summer with Thundermist," said Forcier. "When you do family planning, are you just addressing females?" asked Mrs. Nadeau. "It's for everyone with parent permission," said Forcier. "Is the Health and Wellness Committee doing family planning?" asked Mrs. Majewski. "No, Thundermist is. It would be for additional services through Thundermist," answered Forcier. "Does Thundermist think the main problem is lack of information?" asked Mrs. Nadeau. "Lack of information and no one they feel comfortable talking to and access. Our kids are bombarded with sex every time they turn on the TV. Go home and watch a couple episodes of "Jersey Shore" to see what kids are watching these days. Everything is sex, sex, sex! Commercials, TV shows, movies – even if you try to prevent them from getting access to it—they do, believe me!" stressed Mrs. Forcier.

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## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi commented that he knows we have had problems balancing the budget and is worried because he is hearing reports that RIDE and the Legislature may be looking at reducing our state aid significantly more. He wanted to assure everyone that he and his staff are still requesting recommendations for costs savings measures and are preparing for a worst case scenario. "Many of us asked you at the last meeting to call all your representatives and tell them that you will not support additional cuts to education," said Gerardi. He hoped all of our students and staff have

a safe and happy spring break next week so they can come back reenergized and ready to finish the school year strong.

**Motion to receive and place on file: E. Nadeau**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: A. Forcier (Unanimously Approved)**

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**SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:**

**E. Nadeau:** Said she appreciated the input last week from the teachers and students, but felt that it was misdirected. If they would go to the State House, she feels it would be a lot more effective. "If all the people that showed up here last week would take their efforts to the right place, it would go a lot further. They are in session after school, so if we could get something organized to go and let them see us, it would have more of an impact." She hopes that everyone that is as disgusted as they are chooses to do that. "We don't enjoy making these decisions. You can't be the silent majority anymore. You can't just go to one meeting when something that affects only you is going to be affected." She urged everyone to get involved.

**V. Phongsavanh:** Said that tomorrow she will be meeting with Johnson and Wales and a group of WHS students about school-related issues to get them informed about the decisions that the school committee makes and why. "Like why I voted the way I did about the 6-period day and my heart wasn't in it. It's because it's the law and we went through it last year. I appreciated the students voicing their opinions. Regarding the passing grade of 60, I voted against it. Most districts go with the 65 passing grade and I would like to see if we can reconsider that vote." She reported that on April 1<sup>st</sup>, the Woonsocket Prevention Coalition and the YMCA partnered up for a conference at the Providence URI Campus regarding bullying issues. "That was exciting." On Sunday, she ran in her first 5K with the YMCA. "It was very successful and tiring, but a great experience."

**M. Dubois:** Congratulated the medal winners from the Woonsocket Area Career & Technical Center. Congratulated Ms. Phongsavanh for being named one of the rising stars. Reported that he read to a 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Class yesterday in Mrs. Bolduc's room. He thanked her for all she does. Dubois asked Dr. Gerardi to let Mr. Fontaine know that Durham Bus was supposed to send a representative to every school committee meeting and they haven't been attending. He recently heard bad news about the state possibly taking away \$700,000 from us after all the cuts we have made so far. He knows that there are many highly paid employees at RIDE and they just bring in more people to implement more mandates. "If it comes to being cut \$700,000, I will put on the agenda that at the end of the school year, we should turn the keys over to RIDE to run the schools."

**L. Majewski:** Congratulated Adam Brunetti on his benefit for autism, saying they raised \$3,300 for that project and did a wonderful job. She congratulated Vimala on her award. Spoke with Rep. Jon Brien about the budget and the cuts we have made. "If the General Assembly makes any more cuts, we are seeing the dismantling of public education." She suggested that we draft a letter to the Senate Finance Committee about the cuts that have been made to our programs and district. "They have cut Woonsocket school funding by \$7 million over the last five years." She thanked everyone for coming tonight and wished everyone a safe vacation week.

**A. Forcier:** Congrats to Vimala and those who shared their musical gifts for the Autism Benefit. "After last week's meeting, I felt attacked. I don't feel people are listening when we talk about the budget and what the law is to have a balanced budget. It was an extremely hard vote, but it needed to be done. When we were here last Thursday, the General Assembly was hearing about having all the communities taking on the responsibility for all their kids at the training school. They say they won't take away from education, but do it indirectly. Go back and look at what your state reps voted to cut at [www.ri.gov](http://www.ri.gov). It's in the record. They voted to take away money from education. I am also taking away from my own kids. As far as having 60 for a passing grade, it's not like when we were in school. These kids need to be proficient in their portfolios, NECAP scores, common tasks, etc. They need to meet higher goals than we ever did. If parents don't want their kids failing, look at the comments and effort section on their report card. It's in your hands! Many parents don't let their kids get less than an "A". It's not always easy. Cumberland and North Smithfield have a 6-period day. They don't have a career and technical school, however. They are managing. Their extracurricular activities are after school. We will work on the career and technical school issues." Forcier said she would have like to attend more reading weeks at the schools, but now she is involved with Good Touch, Bad Touch and she loves it. "It's needed in our community." She went to the Autism Benefit and it was wonderful. "Linda performed and it was great." She noted that she won't be at the next meeting because she will be in Florida on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Motion to adjourn at 9:45 p.m.: A. Forcier

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

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary