

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 2011
7:15 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

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

Ruth Plante, Woonsocket P.E. Teacher: Spoke about the possible changes at the high school to the physical education program, saying that students are being given the option of taking P.E., Dance, ROTC, etc. She noted that Physical Education is a state-mandated program. She also spoke about the administrators being up for a raise on tonight's agenda. She would also like to get a raise and the money the teachers deferred. "Everyone else is giving back. We are losing programs. Why should the administrators get raises?" she asked. Dr. Gerardi told her that the Athletic Director has been meeting with the P.E. teachers regarding the program and what he has been working on.

Richard DiPardo, former WTG President, publicly welcomed the new Woonsocket Teachers' Guild President, Mr. Jeffrey Partington.

Jeff Partington, WTG President: He addressed the raises for the non-certified personnel that are on the agenda tonight. "The union is not in favor of it. The Teachers' Guild has given up almost \$4 million to help the Woonsocket budget. Programs have been cut, personnel has been cut, etc. The approval of these raises will upset the balance in the workforce where everyone has been asked to sacrifice and will create a class of us versus them. If funds are found, please put them towards services that directly affect the students."

John McLaughlin, Retired Woonsocket P.E. Teacher: Said he is pleased with what he sees in the administration, especially Stacey Busby. "If anyone deserves a raise—she does. I'm not advocating raises for anyone unless it's taken from someone else."

Michelle Croft, 175 Summer Street, Woonsocket: She is a parent of three boys in the Woonsocket school system. She has one with special needs and has seen all aspects of the education program. She is very concerned about giving raises when we are cutting back and cutting teachers. She helps out quite a bit in her sons' classrooms and sees these cutbacks. "Cutting teachers and teacher assistants and programs is not fair. Half-day kindergarten is a joke. Our resources could be put to much better use if we educate our kids right from the start."

Cindy Stepanian, Parent: She was taken aback by even the consideration of raises. "You may deserve raises, but everyone else is giving up raises they deserve too. I haven't gotten a raise where I work either. Many people haven't. I'm frustrated that it's even being considered."

Donna Houle, School Success Coalition Change Leader: Invited everyone to a cyber bullying prevention workshop on June 2nd at WMS Hamlet from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Professional Development hours are available for any Woonsocket teachers who want to attend. Dr. Filippelli will be presenting.

Denise Auclair, PAC Co-Chair: She referred to some comments at the last meeting referring to "the naysayers will say that we will be serving condoms on a platter". "I am one of the naysayers I guess you were referring to." She spoke about hearing something said about the children will be able to go to the school nurse and it will be much easier for them to get family planning services now. She asked for clarification on some of the items discussed and concerns she has about the permission form so parents know what it is they are giving permission for. "You need to communicate with parents and not make them feel that their voice doesn't count." Auclair spoke about a meeting she attended where that was the case as perceived by the parents in attendance. "If you want their input, you need to

respect them at the meetings.” As far as the raises, she doesn’t know how much money was found, but suggested using it to put back the 7-period day before giving out raises.

Chuck Jones, Executive Director, Thundermist Health Center: Said he appreciated the remarks of Mrs. Auclair and noted that on the parental consent form, they are very explicit regarding what parents are giving permission for and it’s a separate signature that is required for family planning services. “The school nurse will not touch birth control. Students will only get it from the nurse practitioner if they have a signed consent form and after they receive counseling from the nurse practitioner. The sad fact is that we have a very high rate of teen pregnancy and STD’s in Woonsocket.”

Diane Engels, Chairperson of Certified School Nurses, WED: Reported that the school nurses all support the services that Thundermist would provide. “We need to address family planning issues. We see this every day at the nurses’ office at the high school. It’s in everyone’s best interest to let Thundermist tackle this critical need.”

Justyna, WHS Student: Questioned the idea of a budget surplus going towards raises. She thinks that the money should go to the students.

Kristin Treganowan, WHS Student: Asked that the budget surplus be given back to the students and be used to fund a 7-period day or block schedule. “It’s insulting to think that this money will go towards administration.”

Jessica Frechette, Woonsocket Teacher: She agreed with her colleagues on the pay raises. Informed everyone about the Community Build Day on June 11 at 3 p.m. at Globe Park Elementary for the handicapped-accessible playground.

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Robert Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi reported that the College Crusade of Rhode Island offers mentoring, guidance and college scholarship money for students beginning in Grade 6. The district has been trying to help the Crusade recruit current Grade 5 students with the goal of filling the 100 spots available to Woonsocket students. As an incentive to apply, all students who complete and submit a Crusade application are being entered into a raffle drawing to win a new Ipod. The winning name will be chosen at the next School Committee meeting on Wednesday, June 8th. Any fifth grade students or their parents interested in applying to be Crusaders for next year should contact their school Principal, Time Teacher, or classroom teacher. Any of these people can provide information and help with the application process. Gerardi congratulated Linda St. Germain, Michaela Ward, and Aminata Diallo, WACTC Culinary Art Student Chefs, for their participation in the Asian –“Cook to order Lunch” special event held at the Woonsocket High School. These students served 365 guests and presented themselves as professionals to their fellow students while demonstrating their skills in a fast-paced environment. Gerardi congratulated Jen Maiello for producing another outstanding play this year! Godspell featured 34 talented Woonsocket High School thespians who have benefitted, along with the community, from Mrs. Maiello’s extraordinary teaching and directing. He also congratulated Leonora Hughes, Hospitality & Tourism teacher at WACTC, who has been named RI Teacher of the Year by the RI Hospitality Association. She will be honored by the American Hotel & Lodging Association at their Summer Summit on June 15 at the Hyatt Regency in Atlanta, Georgia.

Motion to receive and place on file: A. Forcier

2nd: E. Nadeau/L. Majewski
(Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: May 11, 2011 OPEN/CLOSED

Motion to approve: L. Majewski

2nd: M. Dubois (Unan. Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

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

*Personnel Actions removed by L. Majewski

2nd: A. Forcier (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Personnel Actions

Certified Appointments/Non-Certified Appointments removed by L. Majewski

CONSENT AGENDA (CONTINUED)

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

Action-Based Enterprises/Technology Equip./Grants & Curr./Title II Grant
B & H Photo/Digital Media Equipment/WACTC/Perkins Grant
CDI Computer Dealers, Inc./Computer Equipment/WACTC/Perkins Grant
Discovery Dome/Planetarium/WMS/ARRA IDEA Grant
Edvotek, Inc./Educational Supplies/WHS/Perkins Grant
Maryann Fung/Contract Services/Sp. Ed/Local

3. Field Trip/Conference Requests: NONE

American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute, Atlanta, GA/WACTC/Perkins Grant

4. Home Schooling Requests

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:

- 1) **Personnel Actions:** Mrs. Majewski asked what the stipends for the BRIDGE Teachers were for during the summer. "Is it the regular summer school program or a different program?" she asked. Mrs. Linda Filomeno explained that it's a separate summer program for elementary students and is being housed at the WMS for convenience. It's paid through Title I ARRA funds. Students will be referred based on academic need. Mrs. Majewski asked about bringing teachers back from lay-off status and when that would start happening. Dr. Gerardi explained that Human Resources is waiting for the actual schedules to be done and the high school is working on those now.

Motion to approve exemption: A. Forcier

2nd: L. Majewski (Unanimously Approved)

COMMUNICATIONS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Mrs. Majewski announced that the next SELAC meeting will be held on June 2nd at 6:30 p.m. at Pothier School. ESY will be discussed. The School Success Coalition will be holding its last meeting on June 30th, from 4 to 6 p.m. at Family Resources Community Action. The Curriculum Committee is still finalizing things for the middle school and finalizing policy for the handbooks. They are also going to be working on a homework policy within the next six months. Ms. Phongsavanh announced that the next Health and Wellness Committee Meeting will be held at the WMS Hamlet Building at 6:30 p.m. on June 8th in the conference room.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS

1. BID AWARD: # 11-14 – Life Safety Improvement – WHS

Peter Fontaine, Facilities Director, reported that this expenditure is for the first phase of the final fire code updates at the Woonsocket High School.

Motion to approve bid award to Aladdin Electric Company, Inc. for \$216,195.00: A. Forcier

2nd: V. Phongsavanh

Roll Call Vote: 5 yes. APPROVED

2. Appointment of K-12 ESL Program Administrator and Instructional Leader – R. Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi read his memorandum to the school committee recommending Raphael Diaz as the K-12 ESL Program Administrator and Instructional Leader.

Motion to approve Raphael Diaz for the position: M. Dubois

Roll Call Vote: 5 yes

2nd: E. Nadeau

APPROVED

Dr. Gerardi noted that this is a position that was created after the administrative consolidation. It is budgeted for and it is also a required position. Mrs. Majewski asked if Mr. Diaz is bilingual. "Si," answered Dr. Gerardi.

3. Approval of Family Planning Policy – 1st Passage – V. Phongsavanh/A. McGuire/Forcier

Mrs. Majewski asked that this item be tabled because she sees this as a change to the contract with Thundermist, not part of school department policy, which would require two passages and is listed on the agenda as "Approval of Family Planning Policy – 1st Passage". Mr. Dubois spoke to Atty. Ackerman today and had concerns about the word "policy" being used. He doesn't believe this should be a school committee policy. Atty. Ackerman said there is no issue if that word is removed and the school committee votes on it this evening. "This is a change of services that Thundermist offers, which were posted as a policy," noted Mrs. Majewski. "Since this was properly posted to the public as a policy and now it's being considered as something less, it's okay," said Ackerman. Majewski asked that permission slips be done in duplicate so parents have a copy of what they signed in case the student decides to sign it him/herself. Mrs. Forcier stressed that these services will only be provided with parental permission. "I work with many high-risk youth and know the problems that come from teenage pregnancies. The risk to kids with absentee fathers is high. The time has come for this as long as family planning information is provided to the students and parental permission is required," said Dubois. Ms. Phongsavanh thanked the Health and Wellness Committee for doing this all year long and fighting for this issue. Mrs. Nadeau said she wasn't supporting this. She realizes the problem is there, but she feels that in society today, we never get to the root of the problem. "Kids get a lot of information today and if they choose not to use it, that is totally irresponsible. I don't think making it easier for people to use bad judgment ever solves the problem. It has been made so easy for people to go on Welfare and get into another situation, it becomes generational. As far as STDs are concerned, I don't see people who are engaging in this type of behavior even using protection. I think there is another direction that should be considered. I think we will just be enabling people to do the wrong thing!" said Nadeau. Mr. Dubois said he has spoken to many boys who don't have condoms. "They reuse them. They rinse them out. It sounds gross, but not everyone has the availability to condoms," he said. Mrs. Majewski recalled that the nurse practitioner at The Met School said they provide four different types of contraception. "What are you planning on providing at WHS?" asked Majewski. Dr. Melkin would provide condoms for the disease part of it and birth control and then oral contraception pills, Depo-Provera, advice on IUD's and a referral, depending on the teenager's individual preference and ability to remember taking a pill, etc. Mrs. Nadeau said she disagrees with the concept that the boys can't buy condoms. "We see kids who have money to buy marijuana and they can't buy condoms? I sit in the hair salon and watch the baby-mommas coming in to have their nails done and hair done and talking about going here, there and everywhere. There's something wrong with this picture. I know a lot of people who can't afford to have these things done on a regular basis. That kid that won't buy condoms will go out and buy a bag of marijuana. You are going to have a hard time convincing me any different. This is not the way to stop it," said Nadeau. Ms. Phongsavanh asked Chuck Jones about a grant that Dr. Peter Simon had mentioned at the last meeting. Someone from the Department of Health explained that it's about personal responsibility. The grant of \$250,000 is to implement a teenage pregnancy prevention program. It can be implemented during or after school. Woonsocket will be one of the communities that is eligible to apply for this grant to help break the cycle of teen pregnancies.

Motion to Table: L. Majewski Roll Call Vote: 3 no – 2 yes (EN / LM)	2nd: E. Nadeau MOTION FAILS.
MOTION TO AMEND to remove the word "policy" from the approval: A. Forcier 2nd: V. Phongsavanh	Roll Call Vote: 3 yes – 2 no (EN / LM)
Motion to approve as amended: A. Forcier Roll Call Vote: 3 yes – 2 no (EN / LM)	2nd: V. Phongsavanh APPROVED.
NO SECOND PASSAGE NEEDED. NOT A POLICY.	

4. Administrative Reorganization/Administrative & Non-Union Employee raises – R. Gerardi, S. Busby

Dr. Gerardi said he knows this is a difficult topic to discuss because of all of the cuts that have occurred this year, but it's about doing what is right. He has heard one too many times that Woonsocket just can't afford to give administrators more money. When Dr. Garcia, then Siobhan Ryan, and even Dr. Gerardi himself received significant raises by going to lateral positions or even positions with less responsibility in Massachusetts, he heard Woonsocket is not rich like Massachusetts. Last week he received resignation letters from two extremely valued Woonsocket administrators who took lateral positions or positions with less responsibility in RI communities. Woonsocket is no longer providing competitive salaries in its own state and region he pointed out. He has heard the arguments against

these salary adjustments--about the multi-union renegotiations and about programs that have been lost in the last three years. He feels that what these people are ignoring is that many of these administrators and non-union employees have not received raises in 4 and even 5 years in some cases. What they are also ignoring is that the total cost of these raises of \$120,000 will not bring back the programs or change the renegotiations that were required. Gerardi noted that the renegotiation on health care and other benefits cost the administrators more and reduced their living wages. It upsets him when administrators are portrayed as not direct-service and not worthy of being a priority. "When a student has been physically beaten or emotionally bullied and a Principal is helping that child through the trauma... that is direct service. When a student has a functional computer to work on and learning 21st century skills, our network administrator and technicians are providing a service that is directly benefitting these students. When a non-union secretary is helping a parent and their child fill out appropriate paperwork to receive special attention, that is a direct service to the parent and their child," said Gerardi. Please don't tell him that these administrators and non-union employees are not providing necessary direct services. He has provided data to the school committee in regard to their top central office administrators who bring in millions of grant dollars while constantly striving to be more efficient and reduce expenses. "It is insulting when you look at the discrepancy of what your Finance director, Special Education Director, and Technology director are earning compared to the salaries of their peers in the two closest communities. Even though these employees rarely deal directly with our students, they run your system and keep you in compliance with federal and state mandates. More importantly, Mrs. Busby came into this district and her work alone has provided you with a balanced budget for FY11 and a projected balanced budget for FY12. The results of her hard work are that she has prevented the Woonsocket city government from their attempts to annually embarrass the school committee with twisted facts about the budget. Thanks to her work during the workday, in the evening and on weekends, this school committee can hold your head high," said Gerardi. He noted that many of the employees on the list, like principals, would actually be making more than the 3% adjustment in the other communities but for all of the ones that were close, they left them at 3%. He noted that three are exceptionally low and need a major adjustment if they have any hope of retaining these employees. Gerardi reminded the WSC that they must remain competitive and that just saying "we can't afford it" will not cut it when this vacuum of leadership sucks out their very best. He disagrees with anyone who says that now is not the time. "Right now you have a balanced budget for FY11 and a projected balanced budget for FY 12, and I am proposing through consolidations to make these adjustments without negatively impacting the budget. Now is the time to stop the bleeding, do the right thing and prevent future headaches that this vacuum of leadership will undoubtedly bring this school committee," said Gerardi, urging the school committee to approve the salary adjustments as presented tonight and saying that he fears for the school district if they do not.

Gerardi said he was hoping to consolidate two central office positions, but may only be able to do one. He may be only able to get \$55,000 right now. He recommended doing some of the positions (six). "The greatest impact of this money will be maintaining stability for the district with our administrative team," said Gerardi. He noted what the adjustments could be to six of the salaries. Mr. Dubois said he completely respects that people we have and knows we have people leaving to go to a more affluent community for more money and less work. However, he thinks that giving out raises at this time—even to a small number of people—sends out a poor message to our teachers, union members, students, parents, etc. "Because of the union concessions we have saved the district \$6 million by them giving up part of their salary, deferments and paying a 20% co-pay for health coverage. I understand Dr. Gerardi advocating for his people, but the General Assembly hasn't touched Governor Chafee's budget yet and we may still have more cuts," said Dubois. Mrs. Nadeau agreed with Dubois and also with Dr. Gerardi. "We are not competitive with other communities, but until the state figures are in place, we can't authorize this. I also know that we can't pay people like Stacey Busby what she deserves and could get elsewhere. I think at some point they can receive this if things work out in our favor," said Nadeau.

Motion to take the two issues separately for a vote--(the administrative reorganization & the administrative/non-union employee raises): L. Majewski

Dr. Gerardi noted that they would only be voting on the raises. The agenda item regarding the administrative reorganization was for their information only, since it's within his authority to make these changes as he sees fit. Majewski said she feels that Dr. Gerardi needed to bring to their attention that we are no longer competitive in salaries and we will become a stepping stone community where people will come on their way to somewhere else. "We have made some very painful cuts during the year. Everyone has gone above and beyond. We will also be willing to revisit this item in the future," said Majewski, commending Mrs. Busby and saying that she hopes we don't lose her. "If we use the \$120,000 for the 7-period day reinstatement like Mr. Dubois had recommended, remember that all kindergarten teacher assistants would have to be cut in order to do that," she said. Mrs. Forcier would not support any raises going out this year or next year. "It's not that they don't deserve it. I would like to at least give the principals the respect they deserve and give them contracts! I would vote yes to that for people who have proven themselves. I have spoken to many of them and I feel that they would be happy with that for now. I will not vote for any raises until all the things that have been cut during the last six years are restored!" said Forcier. "While teachers

have given a lot over the last decade, the administrators have given more. You have to afford money for heat, electricity, water, but you also have to afford money for manpower,” maintained Gerardi.

Motion to approve raises for the Director of Administration & Finance, the Technology Director, the Assistant Special Education Director, the Special Education Director, the secretary to the Superintendent, and the secretary to Director of Instruction & Curriculum: M. Dubois

2nd: E. Nadeau

Roll Call Vote: 5 no. Motion Fails.

CONFERENCES: None

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT: Dr. Gerardi

Gerardi announced that Dr. Lawrence Filippelli, a RI expert, is providing a Cyber bullying Prevention & Internet Safety professional development opportunity on Thursday, June 2nd, from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at Woonsocket Hamlet Cafetorium. This event is free and open to everyone. Educators will also have the opportunity for professional development hours. Dr. Gerardi reported that when he first saw Mr. Filippelli’s presentation, he learned so much. Gerardi and his daughter had very frank conversations about her internet use from that point on. He hopes other parents have the same opportunity to learn how to talk with their children about internet safety.

Motion to receive and place on file: A. Forcier

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

L. Majewski: Congratulated Jennifer Maiello on the great production of “Godspell” and said that Flavio Barios has her vote. Congratulated Jeff Partington on his new post and the other newly elected union officers. Congratulated Raphael Diaz on his ESL position. Thanked the administrators for all that they do.

A. Forcier: She brought everyone’s attention to an article written by City Council President John Ward that was in The Providence Journal on Woonsocket needing more school aid and the fair funding formula. She encouraged everyone to read it and pass it on to someone they know. “Knowledge is power. When we are funded properly, then maybe we can start bringing programs back and look at raises.”

E. Nadeau: Congratulated the newly-elected members of the WTG. “Salary adjustments aside, I don’t think this district will see the return of all-day kindergarten, block scheduling, and other programs that had to be cut until we are funded properly by the city and the state. Until the people there wake up and realize the value of education, the kids in Woonsocket will not have the education they deserve. There are serious inequities in the state of RI depending on where you live and it shouldn’t be that way. I don’t see it turning around any time soon. Education is not a top priority. They say it is—but they won’t put their money where their mouth is!”

V. Phongsavanh: Pass.

M. Dubois: He heard about the city obtaining a grant to assist the pedestrians crossing on Cumberland Street. “It’s such a dangerous intersection.” He thanked the police for having a cruiser there every day to stop traffic for the kids getting out of school. He thanked all of the crossing guards at the schools who give up their free time for other kids to be safe. He congratulated Jeff Partington and the other newly elected officers. Dubois spoke about Mr. DiPardo and how they sometimes butted heads over the years. “He will be missed and I appreciate all the years he put in on the Teachers’ Guild.” He congratulated Mr. Diaz on his appointment. Said it was nice to Alex Kithes in the audience tonight, adding that he just completed his freshman year at Boston University.

Motion to adjourn at 9:05 p.m.: A. Forcier

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary