

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24, 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

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

Alex Kithes, 2010 WHS Valedictorian: He addressed the WSC as a former student of the district and member of the Superintendent Search Committee. Kithes took issue with the events that have taken place over the past two months and the points that were made at the last meeting about the open meetings law. He contacted all the school districts in the state and found that 65% of them have conducted all interviews in closed session. He had also researched the exceptions to the Open Meetings Act in the RI General Laws and found that they support his findings. While the actions of other school districts don't constitute law, he believes that the actions of our subcommittee for the superintendent search were not inappropriate. "It wasn't the leaking of the subcommittee list to the media that angered the subcommittee members most of all—it was the alleged violation of the Open Meetings Act that drew the most offense." According to his research, the Personnel and Contract Subcommittee is the only subcommittee that is not required to post minutes.

Jeff Partington, WTG President: Spoke about bullying in schools and a big push that is going on to prevent it. He passed out anti-bullying bracelets that will also be given to all teachers and school staff to wear during the first two weeks of school and posters to put up. The blue bracelets read, "See a bully, stop a bully." It will help students know they have adults they can turn to for help if they are being bullied. "It's a very worthwhile cause and I'm hoping for your support."

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Colette Traylor, Interim Superintendent

Dr. Traylor announced that Governor Pothier School will be hosting their Open House from 4-5 p.m. on Monday, August 29th. All are welcome to visit the school, meet the staff, and visit with some of their daycare providers. She announced that Open Houses are also scheduled for Monday, August 29, 2011 at Globe Park beginning at 4:00pm and Bernon Heights beginning at 5:30pm. Also, on Tuesday, August 30, 2011, an Open House will be held at Citizens beginning at 4:00pm and Savoie and Harris Schools beginning at 5:30pm. Coleman & Fifth Avenue Schools will hold their Open House on September 20th from 6-8pm. Traylor encouraged parents and students to attend their school's Open House. Traylor announced that Freshman Orientation will be held at the Woonsocket High School this evening and tomorrow evening beginning at 6:30pm. Last Names beginning with A through L is this evening and M-Z tomorrow evening. Dr. Traylor commended the Custodial Staff for their hard work in preparing schools for opening day, saying they have spent many hours washing and waxing floors, preparing classrooms, and moving furniture. Dr. Traylor thanked the School Committee, Directors, and Principals for their support through this transition time. She has enjoyed working with everyone and extended her best wishes to Dr. Donoyan. Traylor announced that our Professional Development Day is scheduled for August 29th and Orientation Day is scheduled for August 30th. Letters have been sent out to all faculty and staff and the School Committee is invited to attend the orientation day. The students' first day will be on August 31st.

Motion to receive and place on file: A. Forcier

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: August 10, 2011 Open; Special Mtg. Aug. 12, 2011 Open

Mrs. Majewski requested that the rationale for each selection of members for the Superintendent Search Committee be added into the August 10, 2011 Open Session minutes under her Good & Welfare.

Motion to approve: V. Phongsavanh

2nd: A. Forcier (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion to approve Consent Agenda w/ the following exemptions: E. Nadeau

***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
2. **Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000 - None**
3. **Field Trip/Conference Requests**
Skills USA, Washington Leadership Training, Washington, DC/WACTC/Fundraiser
4. **Home Schooling Requests**

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:

- 1) **Personnel Actions:** Mrs. Majewski asked whether or not any more people will be brought back from lay-off status. Dr. Traylor said there may be a possibility of bringing more TAs back because we have been able to access more funds through Title 1.

Motion to approve exemptions: L. Majewski

2nd: A. Forcier (Unanimously Approved)

COMMUNICATIONS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Mrs. Majewski said she has been in contact with Mr. Garceau and they have not been able to meet with the principals about the uniform policy yet. Mr. Garceau said they will be meeting tomorrow.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

2. **Appointment of Coordinating Supervisor for Student Services – Elementary: C. Traylor, Interim Supt. (TAKEN OUT OF ORDER)**

Dr. Traylor read her letter recommending Roger Picard for the position of Coordinating Supervisor for Student Services--Elementary, which included his qualifications for the position and the members of the interviewing team.

Motion to approve Roger A. Picard as Coordinating Supervisor for Student Services – Elem.: A. Forcier
2nd: E. Nadeau
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes. APPROVED

1. Approval of Pre-K Demonstration Project – L. Filomeno

Mrs. Filomeno presented the WSC with an information packet from RIDE on the Pre-K Demonstration Project. "In the fiscal state we are in, the funding was cut at the state level for this project. RIDE has asked that we use our Carryover Title I Funds to continue this valuable program for this coming school year. This is for a Pre-K classroom at Woonsocket Head Start," explained Filomeno. Filomeno explained that for the first year of the program, the funding would come from us through our Title I funds because the funding was cut from the state budget. "Next year, the funding formula will take the place of our Title I funding for future years," said Filomeno. "So if we don't do it, will we have to come up with more money next year?" asked Mrs. Forcier. "Next year, we would be either picking up the cost or eliminating it," said Mrs. Busby. "Will we be displacing Title I funds for this?" asked Mrs. Majewski. "No, we actually were given Carryover Funds now to put into this and can use the remaining funds for other programs in Woonsocket. The Carryover Funds come from unused Title I funds from the previous year. There is always some money left over. It's from the previous year's unexpended Title I funds. The kids that will be going to this program will be going into our kindergarten the next year. It's important to partner with RIDE on this to better prepare our kids for kindergarten in 2012. This would fund just the classroom at Park Square Head Start. Head Start staff will be running the program. It's RIDE's initiative and the children are referred through Child Outreach. RIDE has committed to fund the program through the funding formula for the following year," explained Filomeno. Mrs. Nadeau said she has an issue with RIDE wanting us to use our Title I funds in a different way when we have already been cut. Mrs. Forcier also had concerns. "We took away all-day kindergarten. Now, we are going to use the money to fund pre-K?" asked Forcier. Mrs. Majewski noted that it would cost much less than the funding for all-day kindergarten. "If we don't do this, they won't give us this money?" asked Mrs. Forcier. Filomeno said that they might not give it to use right now. "We have been able to call back 8 teacher assistants with it," she said. "We would love to support programs for all pre-K's, but I feel that they won't fund it the following year. Together with the surplus we have, this is \$300,000 we could put towards more teacher assistants or reinstate all-day kindergarten," said Mrs. Forcier. Mrs. Majewski noted that amount still wouldn't be enough to reinstate all-day K. "With more grants plus this money we could possibly reinstate all-day kindergarten. I agree with Mrs. Nadeau on this. I don't trust RIDE 100%," said Mrs. Forcier. "This is an unfortunate thing that happened at the last minute. They are asking us to continue it for one year," explained Filomeno. "I understand that, but we have a surplus and with this money we could possibly reinstate all-day Kindergarten. This is going to be another program that we may have to end a year from now because the funding doesn't come through," said Forcier.

Ms. Phongsavanh noted that the budget says that the total is \$51,775 and asked what the amount of \$167,000 is on the budget page provided by RIDE. Mrs. Filomeno explained that Providence and Central Falls are also part of the project. "Is this strictly for Woonsocket students?" asked Mr. Dubois. "Yes," answered Filomeno. "Title I comes through the federal government through RIDE. I don't like money coming to us with strings attached and we are always held hostage," said Mrs. Nadeau. "Some of those things are federal laws for Title I money. I'm not saying that this is. This is strictly a request that they made to fund a program that was already under way and was cut. It does impact our schools in the end because these kids come into our kindergarten classrooms. I will absolutely make sure that this is a one-year commitment on our part. We are giving these kids that are very much at risk a leg up in half-day kindergarten and helping them to be successful," explained Filomeno. "So we save 18 kids. What happens to the rest?" asked Mrs. Nadeau. "These are 18 of the neediest kids in the city," said Filomeno. "How long is this research program?" asked Mrs. Majewski. Filomeno said it will culminate this year and the data will be used to help pass legislation saying that all-day kindergarten is mandatory. Mrs. Majewski said she will support this because it will help us to that end. "The demands in kindergarten and first grade are so much greater than when we were kids that the delay in enrichment will pose a greater hardship for those children at risk," she said. Mrs. Forcier understands that they want to gather data about pre-K and the benefits. "There is tons of information out there already. The General Assembly realized that it's important and don't question the data, but it's a financial problem. They were wise enough to realize that the districts can't afford to make it mandatory at this time. Therefore, getting more data on these 18 children is not going to solve RI's problem. I have followed everything on the fair funding formula. They are not going to add money to the formula. Could we run our own program cheaper? I think we could with a teacher and a teacher assistant," said Forcier. Linda Filomeno said she didn't think we could. Ms. Phongsavanh said she would support it because the cost per pupil averages out to a little more than \$9,000 per student, which is less than what it costs us per student to educate and it's only a one-year commitment. She feels it's a great opportunity for the kids. "Is there a specific line item earmarked for pre-K services in the fair funding formula?" asked Mr. Dubois. Filomeno told him that there is. Dubois mentioned how RIDE required us to hire teacher leaders with grant funds when we have been forced to cut and cut and cut. Mrs. Forcier thinks we should focus on bringing back all-day kindergarten before we start funding other programs. She is not comfortable starting a program we cannot afford. "It's only for a one-year bridge," said Filomeno. "A one-year bridge we can't use for something else," maintained Forcier. Mr. Garceau explained that the money they are talking about here of \$167,000 will not bring back all-day kindergarten. "The money is our money, but we don't have access to it and wouldn't have access to it without funding this project.

"In fact, we didn't even know we had the money. We were told that if we would use it to bridge this year gap, we could have this money. The money is ours, but we wouldn't have access to it now and use it for other things. This money will not be the solution to bring back all-day K. Many of the other programs that were cut couldn't be brought back with Title I funds anyway. It's not a new program," explained Garceau. "If we can't have it, then it's not our money," said Forcier.

Motion to approve: L. Majewski
Roll Call Vote: 3 no – 2 yes (LM/VP)

2nd: V. Phongsavanh
MOTION FAILS.

3. FY11 Budget Update – Stacey Busby

Mrs. Busby reported that last summer we started out with the deficit reduction bond for FY10 of \$5,598,587, and we owed \$7.1 million in invoices. "It left a balance of \$1.2 million. We paid these with fiscal year funds for FY11. We have had about 51 positions cut so we had severances that were paid out. We also exceeded our projections for revenue. We actually have revenue of \$1,607,000 and climbing for Medicaid reimbursements. Two positions were created with ARRA funds for Medicaid reimbursements and medical billing. The reimbursements have gone up dramatically since those positions were implemented. These positions are more than paying for themselves." Busby received an email about pension reform and the rates proposed to be enacted for FY13. We would have an increase of \$2 million just for pension liabilities that we would be accountable for if staffing stays the same. The legislature reconvenes in January, and she thinks the pension reform will be implemented for FY13, which will send us into a tailspin downward. "Looking into it and speaking to the City Council, if it happens this year, we are going to go bankrupt, that's for sure. We have a tax cap and would need to raise taxes over 10%. Mrs. Busby's concerns are also my concerns. The City and the School Dept. together couldn't cut that much and stay open. We are facing some very difficult times. The last two years have been rotten, but the next two years look like it will be even worse," said Forcier. Busby said that the school department has to pay its pension liability. "If we don't, we don't get our state aid for that month," she noted. Mr. Dubois, Mrs. Forcier, and Mrs. Majewski thanked Mrs. Busby for all her hard work, as well as the special education department and medical coding people who put in those reimbursements. Majewski asked about training for those medical coding and billing people to keep them up to date. Mrs. Busby believes that PCG is very good about keeping everyone up on the mandates.

CONFERENCES: None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Colette Trailor

Dr. Trailor gave a status report on the plans for opening of schools. She reported that each of the schools that she contacted is very, very prepared to receive students and staff. Cleaning has been done and supplies have been received and are being distributed. She reported that Mr. Fontaine said they have completed that goal even with the reduction in staff. "The custodial and maintenance staffs are very proud of their work and deserve our gratitude and appreciation. The bus schedules have been prepared and sent out to the press. They are expected to be published tomorrow. Some schools have some overages in enrollments and we are trying to balance that out. Plans for orientation day are following a full-day of professional development. The PD activities will be conducted by personnel from RIDE and that was the only day they are available to provide the training being done." Tomorrow morning she has organized a meeting of all the directors regarding the possibility of a hurricane and the impact it might have and to develop strategies. She thanked everyone for their help during her time here and wished the WSC the best.

Motion to receive and place on file: L. Majewski

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

L. Majewski: She thanked Dr. Trailor for the fine job she did during her time here. She thanked her for her advice with the Superintendent Search Committee also and is glad there will be an overlap with her and Dr. Donoyan. Majewski thanked the custodial and maintenance staffs for their hard work. She noted that we will be having the dress code again this year and have added black shirts and crop pants to the choices. She and Mr. Garceau will be meeting with the principals soon about enforcement. "We have always enforced the dress code and will continue to do so. Whenever there's a discipline issue, it's not a public issue. It's dealt with privately so the public doesn't see that." She will wear her blue anti-bully bracelet proudly and gladly support the cause. She asked for a copy of the open house schedule because she would like to attend as many as she can. "Some parents have been asking about kindergarten notification because they haven't been notified about a.m. or p.m. sessions." Mr. Garceau said that they may be late registrants and he will check on it.

A. Forcier: Thanked Dr. Traylor for her hard work. She hopes she enjoyed her stay here. Congratulated Roger Picard on his appointment. "We are seriously in trouble as far as finances go. It's going to be the worst ever because of the pension reform. We will find a way to get through it. Enjoy the first day of school and make sure it's a safe one." Forcier said her daughter is a freshman at the high school and she found out about the orientation by seeing the marquis at the high school when she drove by over the weekend. "There was no time listed and I notified Doty and it was added. Usually a letter goes out. I wouldn't have known about it if I hadn't driver by. The ball was dropped somewhere." Mr. Garceau will contact Dr. Bedard about that.

E. Nadeau: Thanked Dr. Traylor, saying she has learned a lot from her and it has been a pleasure. "You came at a very difficult time and you survived it! About the early intervention program, I have always thought this and the older I get the more I believe it, especially with all the money we have spent on special education. I worked in a special education classroom as a teacher assistant and have spent time in them to check out programs we have funded. It's not just kids with IEPs anymore. There needs to be an early intervention program for parents on how to be parents! I remember observing a pre-K class of students that didn't have a language barrier—that wasn't the problem. They had never seen a coloring book or crayons. They didn't respect reading materials, but they had iPods and flat screen TVs and every gadget known to man. Therein lies the problem. Kids enter kindergarten that aren't toilet trained, which is absolutely ridiculous to me. The responsibility of raising children has been passed onto education. Pretty soon we will be in the delivery room! It doesn't belong here. If you are unemployed, and many of our parents are, you certainly have time to read to your children. When I was a kid, we were poor but still learned our colors and alphabet. Until someone addresses that issue, it's going to remain a problem. It's not a popular thing to say, but it's the truth. It's not about raising other people's children!"

V. Phongsavanh: Announced that there will be bracelets for sale to support the Global Citizens Class that Mr. Marzini is running in order for his students to go to Rwanda. She thanked Dr. Traylor for serving our community and said she has learned a lot from her. She has met with Dr. Donoyan and they see eye-to-eye on many things. Phongsavanh is excited for a fresh start. She wished the students good luck this coming year.

M. Dubois: Congratulated Roger Picard. Thanked Dr. Traylor for her brief but effective stay here in Woonsocket. He announced that school starts next Wednesday and asked parents to please read the student handbook when it's brought home before they sign it and make sure their son or daughter doesn't sign it for them. "It's very important to know about the school policies." Dubois was saddened to see the retirement of Marlene Smith. "She has had a rough time the last few months and I was hoping she would be well enough to come back. She is doing better but has decided to retire. I was lucky because she took a liking to me from the start. She was very feisty. The students will miss her and I wish her well."

Motion to adjourn at 9:30 p.m.: A. Forcier

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary