

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2011
8:00 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	Present
	Anita McGuire-Forcier	Present
	Vimala Phongsavanh	Present

Chairman Dubois apologized for the late start. He reported that the committee heard a student privacy issue and also a job performance issue. The school committee voted unanimously to accept Dr. Donoyan's recommendation in the job performance issue.

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

Adam Brunetti, Autistic WHS student who held a Benefit for Autism in April: He reminded the committee that he was one of three students who helped plan an Autism Benefit in April and raised \$10,000 for the Autism Council. The money was returned to the school district to be used for autism training, yet this training has yet to be scheduled. Adam said that his mother sent many emails to Carole Lerner, Linda Filomeno, and others about scheduling this free training and hasn't heard anything back. "There's no money for anything, yet free training is not being used." "Is there anyone here who wants to be the contact person for Adam?" asked Mr. Dubois. Dr. Donoyan volunteered to be the contact person.

Tony Cosentino, Social Studies Teacher, WHS: He announced that the first fundraiser for the Global Citizenship Group to raise money for their trip to Rwanda will be held on October 23rd at the Club Par-X. It's an all-you-can-eat breakfast. He urged everyone to support them in this effort. "Five wonderful students have been selected to participate in the trip. You can buy tickets at the door or I have tickets with me tonight." Mrs. Nadeau said that when they do the St. Jude's Breakfast at Club Par-X, they get Bill Legare from Valley Transportation to donate a bus because the parking is tough at this place. "He usually shuttles people back and forth from the high school parking lot," said Nadeau.

Jeff Partington, WTG President: Spoke about the grading policy being changed from letters back to numbers and that the Teachers' Guild is very much in favor of that. They are also in favor of looking at the policy regarding credits because of the change in policy. The WTG would like to have the opportunity to sit on the subcommittee for this. Mrs. Majewski will make sure Partington or a representative is invited to sit on that subcommittee.

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Giovanna Donoyan, Superintendent

On behalf of Karen MacBeth, Principal of Harris Elementary, Dr. Donoyan recognized and thanked the two custodians at Harris School, Cheryl Rondeau and Frank Lanoue, for their tremendous dedication in making the school a clean and safe environment for staff, students, and the community. Donoyan also recognized Ms. Emily Luther, a recent graduate of Woonsocket High School, for her performance at Autumnfest 2011, noting that Ms. Luther was recently a guest on the Ellen DeGeneres Show with her partner Charlie Puth. They signed a recording contract with Ellen DeGeneres' recording studio. Ms. Luther was also crowned Miss Rhode Island Outstanding Teen in 2009 and just recently won a "Glee" casting call last year on FOX Providence. Dr. Donoyan congratulated her and wished her good luck with her career goals. Dr. Donoyan congratulated the Woonsocket Middle School Building Committee for winning national recognition as one of the best environmental reclamation projects in the country. The 2011 "Gold Standard" award in the social impact category from Brownfield Trade Publication Journal announced two categories of competition. The Middle School was the only winner in its class from 26 projects nationwide. The Middle School site was known as a "Brownfield", a place marked by extensive environmental contamination which must be eliminated before any construction can begin. The amount of time and effort to clean the area was extensive and time consuming. A formal presentation for this prestigious award will be presented on Monday, October 17, 2011, at the City Council meeting. Donoyan congratulated the Building Committee, School Committee and Dr. Patrick McGee, Principal of the Woonsocket Middle School, for this outstanding recognition on this project. Dr. Donoyan announced

that there will be a Health & Wellness meeting on Monday, October 17th at 3:30pm at McFee and the next Curriculum meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 19th at 4:00pm at McFee.

Motion to receive and place on file: A. Forcier

2nd: L. Majewski (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: September 28, 2011 OPEN/CLOSED

Motion to approve: V. Phongsavanh

2nd: L. Majewski (Unanimously Approved)

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

*Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000: Apple Computer, George Resnevic, Home Care Services, NRI Comm. Services, Peter Yasagian, St. Mary's Home for Children removed by L. Majewski

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:**1. Personnel Actions**

Certified Appointments/Non-Certified Appointments

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000 - None

Apple Computer/Equipment/Bernon, Local – removed by L. Majewski

George Resnevic, DMD/Dentist/District/Local – removed by L. Majewski

Home Care Services of RI/Nursing Services/Special Ed./Local – removed by L. Majewski

New England School Services/Repairs/Facilities/WHS/Local

NRI Comm. Services/Contracted Services/Special Ed./Local – removed by L. Majewski

Peter Yasagian/Doctor/District/Local – removed by L. Majewski

Snap-On Industries/Equipment/WACTC/Perkins Grant

St. Mary's Home for Children/Contracted Services/Special Ed./Local – removed by L. Majewski

3. Field Trip/Conference Requests - None**4. Home Schooling Requests****END OF CONSENT AGENDA****EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:****2) Purchases/Transfers over \$2,000:**

- **George Resnevic, DMD, (dental services – \$9,015), NRI Comm. Services (contracted services - \$259,000), Peter Yasagian (doctor - \$7,500), St. Mary's Home for Children (contracted services - \$280,800) LOCAL:**

Mrs. Majewski wondered why these expenditures are being listed under local funds. Mrs. Busby explained that as of FY11, she had them switched over to purchased services instead of salaried positions in order to save on fringe benefits. Mrs. Lerner explained that St. Mary's provides a 45-day diagnostic placement and is Medicaid reimbursable as long as it's paid for from local funds. "We pay for it locally and get reimbursed for it. Anything paid by IDEA we cannot claim for Medicaid reimbursement," she said. Mrs. Nadeau asked about how the St. Mary's contract works and how much we pay per spot. Mrs. Lerner wasn't sure off the top of her head. "They also pay rental fees for use of our building and give us a very competitive rate for their services," said Lerner. "How many slots do we have at St. Mary's?" asked Mrs. Majewski. Lerner said it was in the single digits. "Many of these students come in as a step-down from DCYF and have always been covered by Medicaid," explained Lerner.

- **Apple Computer, MacBook Pro for Bernon Hts. Principal (\$2,299 - Local):** Mrs. Majewski asked why this principal needs a laptop and wouldn't it be cheaper to do remote access from home. Mrs. Busby said that when any of the staff has to remote access from home, the software needs to be put on a hard drive. They would have to bring their hard drive in or our computer specialist would have to go to their home to do it. Dr. Donoyan added that Mr. Nasuti is the facilitator of the new teacher evaluation program that requires his mobility to go from school to school. "It's in the best interest of the district to allow him and the other principals to use laptops. Principals

can go from classroom to classroom doing these new evaluations. If we can get grant funding in order to get them for the principals, we will," said Donoyan. Mrs. Majewski is afraid that if this one is granted out of local funds, every principal in the district will want one and she isn't really sure it's necessary.

- **Home Care Services of RI, Nursing Services for special ed. (\$27,200.00 Local):** Mrs. Majewski noted that this purchase is for nursing and bus services for a student whose family has a share in this company. She is concerned about this situation and liability issues. Dr. Donoyan has contracted with the corporation and not particular individuals. "If anything should happen, it would not be on a personal basis. We are fortunate that the company has the nursing staff available. It's a corporation—not an individual," stressed Donoyan.

Motion to approve everything except Apple Computer: A. Forcier
2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

Motion to approve Apple Computer: A. Forcier
Roll Call Vote: 4 yes – 1 no (LM)

2nd: V. Phongsavanh
APPROVED

COMMUNICATIONS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Ms. Phongsavanh announced the next Health and Wellness meeting will be held on Oct. 17th at 3:30 pm at McFee. The agenda will cover developing policies and procedures so we are transparent and creating an agenda for school year 2011-2012. It's open to the public and representatives from Thundermist, Sodexo, the Department of Health, and others will be in attendance. Mrs. Majewski announced that the SELAC meeting was well-attended and there was a lot of discussion and interaction. They had questions and Mrs. Lerner was unavailable that evening but there were plenty of secondary personnel present to answer them. Majewski announced that the next Uniform Subcommittee Meeting will be held on October 17th at the WACTC at 7 p.m. in the Conference Room.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Discussion of grading Policy – Dr. Donoyan

Dr. Donoyan reported that the new grading policy has caused some concern at the high school level. Since the change to letter grades from numerical grades has occurred, the high school administration has voiced their concern that the accuracy of translating a letter to a numeric grade may cause complications calculating GPAs and class rank of students. Maintaining the consistency of numerical grades aligns with the middle school level as well as provides a distinct quantitative value for the purpose of GPA and class rank. Conversely, a letter grade equates to a range of numbers and may provide complications. She requested that the WSC pass a resolution to maintain numerical grades for reporting purposes for grades 6 through 12. Mrs. McGuire-Forcier sits on the Curriculum Subcommittee and said she doesn't have a problem supporting this request, however, she just thought it was on the agenda for discussion tonight—not a vote. Dr. Donoyan said that the historical data on every student is in numerical form and the translation to the letter grades is proposing a complication. "We want the GPAs to be as accurate as possible," she said.

Motion to maintain numerical grades for reporting purposes for Grades 6 through 12: M. Dubois
2nd: L. Majewski
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes APPROVED

2. Discussion of Credit Policy – Dr. Donoyan

Dr. Donoyan reported that there is going to be a continuation of the Curriculum Subcommittee, as Mrs. Majewski had mentioned. Donoyan reported that since their last meeting, she has met with the involved high school staff and they are looking over the data from last year, such as the dropout rate and failure rate and how it may be a consequence of the change from block scheduling to a 6-period day. Students will fail or not attend because they are being forced to take classes they don't want to be in because the 6-period schedule doesn't allow for flexibility. "We aren't submitting anything for a vote at this point, but we will keep you updated on what we are looking at doing," said Donoyan.

3. Budget Update FY12 – S. Busby

Mrs. Busby provided a report showing the number of 1-on-1 Teacher Assistant positions required because of new students who have moved into the district--five so far that moved in during the summer. She also reported that a new Resource teacher was needed for the career and technical center students to provide extra resource. This position is being paid for out of the career center's tuition from the sending districts. "For FY12 we only have two funding sources that we will have to track and report because that is how we are receiving our state aid," said Busby. She mentioned that the auditors are here now going over the FY11 books. As she was going through the process for FY11, she found that we had 75 funding sources that we had to report for and track. Therefore, she is looking at using a different process for FY12 and explained her plan. She feels it will be easier for the public to understand if everything isn't placed into the operational budget like it has been. Mrs. Majewski asked how much flexibility the UCOA allows for streamlining the chart of accounts. Mrs. Busby explained that it was set up to provide transparency by comparing each district and what it is spending on each line item. "It's sometimes more difficult to figure out where an item should go. There are certain things it doesn't allow you to do. Sometimes we just don't know what something goes under and just have to put it where we think it fits best," said Busby. "With all the students coming into the district, are they given an IEP review to determine if they need a 1-on-1 TA?" asked Majewski. Mrs. Lerner said that they mostly came in from Providence and a review is done with the sending district. We also need to observe the kids for a little while. "Last year you said you were going to change the billing for the tuition for the career and technical center students instead of just doing it at the end of the year," said Dubois. Busby said she received a spreadsheet last year from RIDE that broke down what we could charge per student and the formula being used. The formula is based on the previous year's costs. Once she gets the actual rates, she can start billing them on a monthly basis. She and Carole Lerner have increased the funding source from tuitions after looking at what we were billing them, noting that we have one of the lowest per pupil rates in the state and the sending communities get the Medicaid reimbursements for the special needs students. "So financially, when we have these students come in with special needs, is it costing us money?" asked Mrs. Forcier. "It depends on the resources being provided. It can vary. In the past, we were only billing them for regular education tuition even if they were special needs students. That wasn't appropriate," said Busby. Mrs. Forcier asked if the WACTC student NECAP scores are included in the district's scores. Mrs. Lerner told her they are. "Then it's bringing down our scores. In most other career and tech schools, you need to pass a test to get in. We shouldn't just be a dumping zone. We should have standards too in order to attend the WACTC. We shouldn't be taking in everybody else's burdens. Why are we not doing that? That's something I want to look into when the new committee is elected. Hopefully we can have a policy where they have to take a test and it's based on NECAP scores or they aren't accepted," said Forcier. Mr. Garceau said that the WACTC does have a pretty rigorous application process and we can't refuse a child just because they are special needs. Forcier said that if her kid wanted to attend Davies and didn't pass the entrance exam then he couldn't attend. "They wouldn't accept students with "1"s on the NECAP test and we shouldn't either so that we don't become a dumping ground. We need to start protecting our schools," she said.

4. NECAP Science Results – Mark Garceau

Mr. Garceau did a PowerPoint presentation on the NECAP Science Test that was administered to students in Grades 4, 8 and 11 in the Spring of 2011. Garceau explained the NECAP reports for each grade, indicating that we need to ramp up in Science to get our kids up to the rest of the state in proficiency, especially at the middle and high school grade levels. Mrs. Majewski asked if the NECAP scores will be included in the proficiency requirements for 2014. Garceau indicated that they don't figure in right now for 2014. "Is the Dana Center doing any focus on Science?" asked Majewski. "Yes, they are. Science units of study are being developed right now and will be fully implemented next year," said Garceau. "When we put in the Physics First Program at the high school, that program was supposed to help those scores, but it doesn't look like it has. What are we doing to build our knowledge base?" asked Majewski. "We need to integrate Science into the literacy source of their reading. Science must be included in their non-fiction because they will learn the vocabulary," said Dr. Donoyan. "When I went to the new middle schools with Dr. Donoyan, I was impressed with the Science labs. These kids were engaged and knew the names of the equipment. I hope this will help when they get up to the high school," said Mrs. Nadeau. Mr. Garceau noted that the new policy requiring students to pass more Science classes at the middle school level should help. "The new 6-period day schedule should also help at the high school level so students aren't going so long in between their Science classes," Garceau added.

CONFERENCES: Mrs. Majewski announced the upcoming Family Matters Conference on Saturday, Nov. 5, at the middle school, saying that there's something for everyone. The \$30 registration fee includes lunch.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Giovanna Donoyan, Superintendent

Dr. Donoyan reported that she and Mrs. McGuire-Forcier visited the Leo Savoie School and participated in the Student of the Week presentation. She congratulated all the students who were awarded Legislative certificates for their good deeds. She and Mrs. Nadeau visited Woonsocket Middle School at Villa Nova and were in awe of the fine teaching and learning observed. The teachers provided rigor and essential questioning, the students were engaged and respectful, and the climate of the school was positive and productive. Donoyan reported that the NECAP state assessments are underway throughout the district and thanked the Principals for the oversight of the administration of the tests. Donoyan admires the families that ensured their children were ready and prepared each day to take the tests. The results provide us with the evidence of how well we teach, areas for improvement, and most importantly how well the students demonstrate mastery. Donoyan reported that she has opened discussions relative to the secondary standards and programming with Drs. Bedard and McGee, adding that the WED is committed to improving our graduation rates. They will design the system that supports pathways leading to higher graduation rates. Donoyan reported the WED is being diligent in ensuring our teachers and administrators are well-versed and trained in the new teacher evaluation model. Linda Filomeno leads the charge in the new initiative. The WED is grateful for the educators who have made this training a priority so we can improve student learning outcomes! Principal Karen MacBeth met with the Attorney General to advocate for stronger student safety laws. Donoyan has met with City Council President John Ward. Mr. Ward, along with Mrs. Busby, discussed pension reform issues. At a recent Community Advisory Committee meeting hosted by Thundermist Executive Director, Chuck Jones, Donoyan was fortunate to have met with key community leaders. They discussed concerns and ideas for strengthening partnerships and providing stronger student supports. She feels it has been a very productive 30 full days on the job!

Motion to receive and place on file: A. Forcier

2nd: L. Majewski (Unanimously Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

V. Phongsavanh: She walked in her Second Autumnfest Parade on Monday and said it was a good time. She congratulated Emily Luther on all her accomplishments and said she is very proud of her. Phongsavanh had her fundraiser on Sunday and wanted to start a scholarship fund for seniors in order to help them buy books for college. The scholarship would be \$500 and she would like to make it a school committee scholarship and it would be based on public service. She congratulated Mr. Dubois for making it through the primary. Phongsavanh has decided to wait until after the election to bring up the subcommittee reorganization again. She spoke about how, in her field of work in a non-profit organization, they do an assessment every so often to see how they are doing. She thinks the subcommittees are in need of that.

M. Dubois: Thanked everyone involved with Autumnfest and congratulated them on its success. He is proud of our school bands, adding that the parade was well-attended and hot. "Do we have a TA back at Savoie?" he asked. "Yes we do—a permanent one!" said Donoyan. Dubois noted that the few dealings he has had with the new president of the Teachers' Guild, Jeff Partington, have been very amicable and he thinks the WTG did a great job picking their president, saying he seems to be very fair. He thanked everyone who went out and voted yesterday.

L. Majewski: She's glad Dr. Donoyan is meeting with Mrs. Brunetti on the autism training so we can take advantage of this opportunity to provide it to our staff. Majewski will be happy to volunteer again if Adam decides to have another fundraiser. Majewski announced the Family Matters Conference on Nov. 5th, saying the information is online at www.FamilyResources.org. She congratulated Emily Luther on all of her accomplishments and believes she wants to pursue a music therapy career. "She has made a good choice," said Majewski. Thanked the Building Committee for all their hard work and dedication. Thanked the Autumnfest Committee for all of their hard work also.

A. Forcier: Congratulated Adam Brunetti on the Autism Fundraiser. Congratulated Mr. Dubois on making it through the primary. Said she has mentioned a school committee self-evaluation in the past and was out-voted. "It can be brought back up again in the future." Said she was on the Building Committee for the middle schools and gave herself and the others a big pat on the back, adding that they are still meeting. She called the Superintendent's Office more than once and spoke to Dotty about the date of the Curriculum Committee Meeting and still hasn't heard back from Dr. Donoyan. She didn't get the message that the meeting date was changed from the 17th to the 19th of Oct. Dr. Donoyan said that there were issues that had arisen from the original date and they are still trying to get everyone's schedule together. Donoyan said that Dotty had been out a day and she may have gotten the message and misplaced it herself. Forcier just wants to have open communication so they are all on the same page. She would not have been very happy if she showed up for a meeting on the 17th to find out it had been changed to the 19th.

E. Nadeau: Stated that she had her subcommittee consolidation list all ready for this meeting, but she will hang on to it. Congratulated Mr. Dubois and warned him that if she is elected and he gives her a hard time, she will give it right back. She will remind him where he came from because sometimes former school committee members forget once they get on the City Council. "I will keep the fire under their butts."

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

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary