

**WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2012
7:00 PM – OPEN MINUTES
WOONSOCKET MIDDLE SCHOOL
HAMLET BUILDING - 60 FLORENCE DRIVE
WOONSOCKET, RI 02895**

The School Committee may vote on all items listed on this agenda.

**Call to Order
Moment of Silence
Pledge of Allegiance
Roll Call**

Anita McGuire Forcier, Chairwoman	Present
Vimala Phongsavanh, Vice Chairwoman	Present
John Donlon	Present
Eleanor Nadeau	Present
Christopher Roberts	Present

GOOD AND WELFARE – PUBLIC –WHS

Dr. Donoyan said that the National Anthem would be played by four exceptional High School Students: Morgan Kimble, Shannon Gavel, Melanie Catnoir, Justyne Pietrus

Mr. Jeff Partington read his speech into the record: Tonight you have a resolution to oppose binding arbitration on the agenda, obviously we are against this. This is another in the long line of resolutions that slap us in the face.

I would like to point out a few things that need to be said. First, unions have been demonized for all that is wrong in public education, and the contracts are considered obstacles to sound education policy. In Woonsocket, it is good that our contract is in place because it has been the only thing in the last 4 years that has been the safeguard to education in Woonsocket.

I am hopeful that we are at the end of this “Race to the Bottom” because with all the budget cuts that have been affected in the last few years the only reason we do not have 40 children in every classroom is because our contract does not allow it. Unions and contracts are here to provide a check and balance against absolute power that will seek to take things for their own agenda or, as in our case, in the name of “fiscal responsibility”.

I applaud many resolutions this committee has passed this year, particularly for full day kindergarten. I look forward to any resolutions that favor educational initiatives that will benefit children. Next month the Superintendent, School Committee Chair, and myself are going to a conference with the US Department of Education about collaboration between administration and the unions. We have all worked hard throughout this crisis to keep the schools running despite impossible conditions. We have worked hand in hand to bend contract rules if it was better for education. I am hopeful we will continue to work together to look for ways to help Woonsocket children.

So I ask this committee to look at things in the context of where we are when you vote on yet another resolution that will limit this unions ability to negotiate. I remind the committee that there are those in City government advocating an appointed School Board to replace you because apparently in the past you have been actually looking out for what is best for children rather than what can be taken away in the name of “fiscal responsibility”. I hope you oppose this action also.

What we do should not always be about money, it is about what is right. Lets stop the resolutions that are just there to increase the political or real power of School Committees and Cities at the expense of the unions. Let’s come up with ideas and initiatives designed to work together to do what we are here for – to provide the best possible education for the children of Woonsocket.

Mr. Peter Fontaine addressed the School Committee regarding Durham Bussing thanking them for continuing to bus children. He mentioned that the newspaper said that there was a threat from Durham. Mr. Fontaine said that there was never a threat and that Durham agreed to bus until the end of the school year. He thanked Durham for their service.

RECOGNITIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Dr. Donoyan said that the Woonsocket Education Department received numerous boxes of different colored file folders to be distributed to all schools. This generous donation is from the Wal-Mart Super Center in North Smithfield. I would like to extend our sincere thank you for their kind and well-appreciated donation.

Congratulations to Claire Laquere (WHS Science Teacher) for receiving the Claes Nobel Educator of Distinction Award. This award was presented to her by the National Society of High School Scholars. Claire received this award for being a role model to her students and for having outstanding dedication and commitment to excellence in the classroom. Congratulations and Thank you for your hard work and dedication Claire.

Motion by C. Roberts to Approve Minutes of March 28, 2012 OPEN/CLOSED
J. Donlon

Seconded by:

Discussion: None
ALL IN FAVOR: YES

Motion to approve Consent Agenda in entirety: C. Roberts

Seconded: J. Donlon

Discussion: None
ALL IN FAVOR: YES

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Personnel Actions
 Certified Appointments/
 Non-Certified Appointments
2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000
3. Field Trip/Conference Requests
4. Home Schooling Requests (3)

Ms. Forcier mentioned that there were three home schooling requests

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

COMMUNICATIONS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Phongsavanh said that she is setting up a workshop with RI CAN ACHIEVE NOW "RICAN" to help with the district report card. They have done some research and presented every district with a report card. They would like to do a presentation and workshop on the achievement gap. She would like to have the presentation sometime next month.

Ms. Forcier and Ms. Nadeau are on the Legislative Committee and stated that there will be a Legislative Forum on Saturday, April 28, 2012, at 9:30am at the Hamlet Middle School Cafeteria. Senators and Representatives were invited and Ms. Forcier asked that the public attend and voice their concerns on Education Funding.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. **Approval of 2012-2013 School Year Calendar – 2nd Passage - G. Donoyan**

Dr. Donoyan requested approval of calendar.

MOTION TO APPROVE: C. Roberts
ROLL CALL: All Yes

Seconded: J. Donlon

2. Discussion/Vote of Policy Change P2.3-1 Contracts-2nd Passage- A. McGuire-Forcier, V. Phongsavanh

Motion to Approve: V.Phongsavanh

Seconded by: A. Forcier

Discussion:

Mr. Donlon asked that the contract policy be read into the record.

P2-3.1 Contracts.

"All contracts of employment entered into by the Woonsocket School Committee shall be in writing. No original contract of employment, amendment, extension or renewal thereof, shall be binding upon the Woonsocket School Committee unless first presented to the committee for its review and approval at a regularly scheduled meeting. The School Committee members will have a copy of the contract 5 days prior to the meeting in enough time to review it. **The Woonsocket School Committee's attorney must review all contracts of employment. There must be a line for the signature and date on all contracts. The School Attorney, Superintendent and School Committee Chairperson are to sign and date the contract and initial each page in blue ink. All contracts will be read out loud into the record. Any changes from an old contract to a new one must be highlighted and read out loud into the record at a school committee meeting. Unless contrary to state law the School Committee hereby declare(s) all contracts to be treated as public documents.** [adopted 1/11/05] (Amended 4/11/12)

ROLL Call: ALL YES

3. Thundermist Health Center/WHS Investment – G. Donoyan

Mr. Chuck Jones, CEO of Thundermist addressed the Committee regarding the Health Hut Lease at WHS and wanted approval which was discussed about a year ago. In January 2010-11 they became aware of a grant opportunity to improve the infrastructure of school based health centers. He said they applied or the grant and if they were awarded the grant, they would come back to School Committee with final ratification. In June they were awarded the grant and was to late to begin construction and the grant was approximately 200 thousand dollars for improvement of the space that Thundermist shares space with the school nurses at WHS. This money would help improve the space and make it more confidential. Mr. Jones said they had the original lease agreement which was signed by Dr. Gerardi and an amendment to the agreement. He would like the Committee to ratify the lease agreement to move forward with the Federal funds. He has had meeting with Mr. Fontaine, Superintendent and High School Principal.

Motion to Approve: V. Phongsavanh

Second: J. Donolon

Discussion:

J. Donlon stated that this was a wonderful opportunity for the High School children and he is in favor. Everything is confidential and it helps out our children

C. Roberts: asked if the lease 20/20 is a requirement of the grant.

C. Jones said that the Federal Government is making the investment and want to make sure the school is on board allowing this space to be used for this purpose. If Thundermist cannot provide the space or services the Federal Government wants to be sure the school will still be able to be used for health services

C. Roberts asked if they had a copy of the grant with the stipulations until 2020. If violated, would have control of the

C. Jones: said he does not have a problem with giving a copy of the grant. If something should happen then Thundermist would have to find someone to work with the school to fulfill the requirements.

C. Roberts asked Mr. Ackerman if he has seen any of this paperwork.

Mr. Ackerman stated he has not seen anything recently.

C. Roberts said that if they approve this then what control do we have over what is controlled in our building.

Dr. Donoyan agreed with Mr. Donlon and stated that what Thundermist does to benefit our children is instrumental because many of our children come to school sick and need guidance and this is a benefit to our children seek guidance on how to get well. We have a very strong Health and Wellness committee and I would advocate for this to happen.

C. Roberts asked Mr. Ackerman with regard to lease what control do we have for services that are not offered in our building.

Mr. Ackerman asked generally speaking because he has not seen any of the paperwork. Generally speaking we control what goes on in the building.

C. Roberts asked to table until the Attorney has time to review the paperwork.

Mr. Jones said that the information was delivered and the scope of care is defined in the MOU confined to primary care services.

C. Roberts said that he is not comfortable ratifying a contract that commits them until 2020 until it is review by the Attorney.

Ms. Forcier asked if this would be acceptable to hold this until the next meeting.

Mr. Jones stated that he will continue to work with Peter Fontaine and work on the plans and if Mr. Ackerman could review the agreement he would work with that.

Mr. Ackerman asked the Chair if she had the paperwork that he could review. Mr. Ackerman said that he would work with Mr. Jones on this and he would call him.

Ms. Phongsavanh asked Mr. Jones how much the grant for, and for how many years was.

Mr. Jones stated that the total grant was for 300 thousand and 100K to go to the High School and put in for some work at the Middle Schools but ended up not doing anything at the Middle Schools so the money was then converted to the High School to invest in the space

Mr. Roberts asked for a MOTION TO TABLE until April 25th Agenda: C. Roberts Seconded: E. Nadeau

ROLL CALL: CR, EN, AF JD – YES

VP: NO

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Update of Finance Work and UCOA – G. Donoyan

Dr. Donoyan reported that Ms. Dutremble is winding down on her work that she has been doing. She has submitted all the paperwork to the City, and sent paperwork on cash flow to the State and City as well. Everyone is in agreement that her work is creditable and the numbers are verifiable. There is also a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done the Uniform Chart of Accounts. The Rhode Island Department of Education has given us a lot of support and we thank them. Dr. Donoyan and Ms. Dutremble discussed what needs to be completed after her time is up. Ms. Dutremble advised Dr. Donoyan that the UCOA still needs to be updated. Dr. Donoyan is asking the School Committee to hire Ms. Dutremble up to and not to exceed a salary of \$40,000 for that period of time. Dr. Donoyan said that they have not expended this money and the City has provided her services. Ms. Dutremble has only a certain number of days to work and we have discussed having her work a certain number of days to finish the UCOA program. I wanted to give you an update on where we are at this time on the finances.

Discussion:

Ms. Nadeau asked if she wants to extend the time that Dina is working on the budget and UCOA.

Dr. Donoyan said she is not working on the budget but is working with Bacon & Edge and redesigning a zero based budget for next year. Dr. Donoyan would like to pick up her employment for the next 20 -25 days that is available for her to continue work. The City will end her employment and what I would like to do is hire her for whatever days she has left available to complete the UCOA for us. We would pay her up to and not exceed the \$40,0000. I don't think that this will be the \$40,0000.

Ms. Forcier asked that she would like them to vote.

Dr. Donoyan asked if they would allow her to utilize the money that was set aside to hire Ms. Dutremble to continue the work for 15 to 25 days on the UCOA.

Ms. Forcier asked Mr. Ackerman if they needed to vote on this because it was months ago and the City took over paying for Ms. Dutremble.

Mr. Ackerman said that if they maintained Ms. Dutremble as an employee they would need to revote because she is not an employee at the moment. It would be meaningful to take another vote because the City was paying for her previously.

Mr. Roberts made a motion to hire the services of Ms. Dina Dutremble for an amount not to exceed \$10,000. SECONDED BY: A. Forcier

Discussion:

Ms. Nadeau asked if Ms. Dutremble works three days a week, what is the status of looking for a new Finance Director.

Dr. Donoyan said they posted are looking for an Executive Director of Finance. Ms. Dutremble will not be the Business Finance Director. Ms. Dutremble will be working on the UCOA project only.

Ms. Nadeau asked if they have completed the budget.

Dr. Donoyan said they were in the process of doing this.

Ms. Nadeau asked if the budget was extended.

Dr. Donoyan said that everyone is aware that it is going to take some time.

Ms. Nadeau asked if she has any idea when it will be done.

Dr. Donoyan said she is meeting with the Auditors and she is designing something that will be a change in the landscape of the school system. I hope to be able to present a draft version of the budget at the April 25 School Committee meeting.

Further Discussion:

Mr. Donlon asked if we have the \$10,000 dollars in our account to pay Ms. Dutremble and will this release the City from their responsibility.

Dr. Donoyan said that her contracted work has ended with the City and we have budgeted up to \$40,000 to hire someone to do interim work. We have not used this money at all. The School Committee authorized me to hire Ms. Dutremble not to exceed \$40,000, so that money is still set aside in a line item, but we are still working in a deficit mode. So do we have money, No. We don't have cash. This money would be coming out of our state aid every month.

Mr. Donlon asked if this was on a per diem basis, no benefits.

Dr. Donoyan said absolutely with no benefits.

Mr. Ackerman asked if it is understood how much the per diem rate would be or is it understood.

Dr. Donoyan said her hourly rate with the City is \$85.00 per hour.

Ms. Forcier said that there are major cash issues and if we are meeting payroll she realizes that.

Dr. Donoyan said they are meeting payroll at the moment.

Ms. Forcier asked if she would be available to work on the 2013 budget with Dr. Donoyan instead of Bacon and Edge.

Dr. Donoyan asked Ms. Dutremble and she did not want to take responsibility for the budget going forward.

MOTION TO APPROVE: C. Roberts

Seconded by: A. Forcier

FURTHER DISCUSSION: NONE

ROLL CALL: YES.

2. Discussion of Attendance Policy P-4-15.1 - V. Phongsavanh

Ms. Phongsavanh said that she went to the Kids Count Fact Book Breakfast and they released data to help with policies and make out policies stronger. The biggest factor that stood out was the chronic attendance rate for Woonsocket. The rate for elementary students was 26% or 600 students, 34% at the Middle School, or 463 students and 48% at the High School or 822 students. Chronic absenteeism is more than 10% of the school year or almost a month worth of school. If you are not in school you are not learning. Almost 31% of our students are chronically absent. We have abandoned truancy court because of ACLU issues. With help from the Health & Wellness Committee and community input I would like to develop a policy to help with the chronic absenteeism. We would like to develop a voluntary hearing board to help find intervention for students with truancy. The Health & Wellness Committee is working with the Police Department to help solve this issue. I am challenging the district to help reduce the rate by 10% in the next two years. I think this is a goal we can achieve. I would like an opinion from the rest of the Committee what you think about this because it is a big issue in Woonsocket.

J. Donlon agrees with Ms. Phongsavanh that there is way too much absenteeism in the school district. He thinks that they need come up with a policy to lower the amount of day a child can miss school. When they are not in school they are getting in trouble. We need to hold the parents accountable. He thinks that the attendance officer needs to make more visits to parents.

Ms. Forcier made mention that the Attendance officer is Mr. Barnes not Mr. Picard.

Mr. Roberts wanted to know if Ms. Phongsavanh wanted any action on this.

Ms. Phongsavanh said only for discussion. She said there is a draft policy but would like input on the policy so they can move forward with this.

Mr. Roberts would like any changes to the policy in red.

Ms. Phongsavanh said there have been no changes at the moment.

Mr. Roberts asked Mr. Ackerman for some update on the truancy court issue. He wanted some history

Mr. Ackerman stated that the truancy court was a creation of Family Court. It dealt with petitions filed by the Education Department claiming student who were chronically absent and a lawsuit was filed a few years back challenging the operations of the truancy court that the due process of the students were being violated. This case was filed by the ACLU Lawyers and brought in many jurisdictions in the state and Woonsocket was the first district to be dismissed from the lawsuit from a vote by the prior School Committee. This case is still in action. We are out of this case with no expense to Woonsocket. We did agree that we would withdraw any cases pending before the truancy court, we agreed that we would not file wayward petitions without following procedures as to notification to parents, we agreed that it would require more than 10 unexcused absents in a semester before a petition could be filed, there was a definition of what is an excused and unexcused absent. These were all consented to in a court order. This is all a legal matter based upon the department filing petitions and bringing force of the state against a student. What Ms. Phongsavanh is referring to is totally voluntary; there is no compulsion, no sanction, nothing forcing a student to participate, no deprivation of property rights to attend school. She has explained this as totally voluntary. In this regard it is a great idea. This does not violate the consent in the truancy court case. Although I have not studied this in detail this voluntary effort, this may pass legal muster.

Mr. Roberts asked if there are still criteria that a student could meet and be subject to the truancy court.

Mr. Ackerman said that the truancy court no longer exists, but the Family Court does exist and as long as we meet the conditions we can still bring forth a petition.

Mr. Roberts asked when the last time we did one of these was.

Mr. Ackerman said he does not handle these. He thinks it is Mr. Barnes.

Mr. Roberts said he is not against it. He thinks that the reality is that they will not volunteer to come in to school.

Ms. Phongsavanh agreed with Mr., Roberts and said that sometimes you only need one person who cares about a child and reach out and be a mentor or peer to the child. Ms. Phongsavanh said that sometimes just a caring adult is enough. We would like to set up a mentor for children and a hearing board for with multiple levels of intervention this may be a help.

Mr. Roberts agreed and said that he would need to see more on the levels of intervention for the children and would like to have more information from Mr. Ackerman of the truancy criteria and he thinks there is a role for truancy court or family court in the City. We need to spend our money on children who are willing and eager to learn.

Ms. Nadeau asked if it was a state law that you must send your child to school.

Mr. Ackerman stated yes.

Ms. Nadeau said that the truancy court brought in the parents and made them responsible.

Mr. Ackerman said parents and children.

Ms. Nadeau wanted to know what the parent's responsibility is. There are many times that the parent goes to work and the child just stays home, where is the parents responsibility when by law they are suppose to have their child in school. There has to be a component that holds the parent accountable.

Mr. Ackerman stated that the court has the right to fine the parent. The child is a third party consequent of what happens with the wayward petition. The student was affected as well as the parent.

Ms. Nadeau asked how do you fine parent when they have no means to pay the fine and what do you do with parent who don't care if their child goes to school. Who enforces this is this a DCYF matter?

Mr. Roberts said the parent is fined \$50. per day.

Ms. Phongsavanh said that they are looking into creating more pathways and programs to help kids gain credits that they need to succeed and graduate. Also a GED or EDP program. I am just looking for other ways to help with these programs and this is helpful and thank you for all the feedback. Thank you.

Mr. Donlon said that he believes that Mr. Barnes should be going after the children who miss more than 10 days and they should be going to Family Court and see a judge. This is usually an inconvenience to the parents and after this happens then the kids usually go to school. They did away with the truancy court at the Middle School but you can still send them to Family Court.

Dr. Donoyan thanked Ms. Phongsavanh for bringing this subject up and they are aware of the issue. I would like to petition the School Committee to recognize that when the truancy/attendance officer was eliminated there seemed to be a culture in the schools by the kids that no one was there to watch out for them and there was no consequence. I would highly stress that we reconsider not just one attendance officer but another one at the middle school level. If we can get these children back into school at an earlier age we may be able to wart off some of these bad violators.

Ms. Forcier said she agrees with Ms. Phongsavanh and did a great job, however, many points have been brought up and I want to know who you are challenging to bring this rate down to 10%.

Ms. Phongsavanh said the Administration and School Committee.

Ms. Forcier said we had truancy officers and truancy court and still had more than 10% truancy. This has been an issue for many years. This year at the High School we already have 500 students who have missed more than 20 days. We have 400 students who have missed more than 10 days. We have one truancy officer and every district shares Family court and they are so backed up. We are going around in a broken circle. I think your ideas are great. If you have volunteer board who would be on the board.

Ms. Phongsavanh said it would be made up of community members, parents and school department members

Ms. Forcier asked Mr. Ackerman about student confidentiality. How would this board have access to this information.

Mr. Ackerman said that the parents would have to agree to participate: That would be the voluntary nature of this.

Ms. Forcier asked how this would be done.

Ms. Phongsavanh said a release form would be given out.

Mr. Ackerman said this is one way.

Ms. Forcier said it is the parent responsibility to get their children to school. We need to lead by example. Why doesn't DCYF get involved? This is neglect. We can try everything and it is the parent's responsibility to get their children to school. This is the parent's fault. I am willing to listen to anything that the committee can come up with to help with this issue.

Ms. Phongsavanh wants to work on reducing the truancy issue by 10%. I want to ask is it fair to the child when they probably want to go to school? It is the parent's fault. We still need to try to intervene. We have parents, and teachers who will step up and help the children. We need to do this as members of the community.

Ms. Forcier said she agrees and they have no legal options to bring these kids to schools. This has been a real issue for many years. I just want everyone to realize that this is a real situation that we have been dealing with for years. Do people realize that we also have 73% of our teachers and staff that miss more than 10 days? As adults we need to lead by example. The challenge is with the parents and community.

No Vote Taken

3. Discussion to Move Passing Grade Back to 70 – V. Phongsavanh

Ms. Phongsavanh. I put this on for discussion only for the passing grade policy. There seems to be a flaw in the system. The passing grade at the high school is 60 and passing at the middle school is 70. There needs to be consistency and it seems that there is not. At the Curriculum Committee meeting we are waiting until the end of the year to collect and analyze all the data so we can see where there are correlations and differences between grades and teachers. At the next meeting we need to discuss what we need to keep the grading consistent from middle to high school. The Curriculum committee feels that there is a need for a school improvement team to serve as an Advisory board to the School Committee. We have SIT Teams at every school and they have many ideas that need to be heard. The issues being discussed at the Curriculum committee is a lot of Administrative duties. We need to find a passing grade that is consistent with the High School and Middle School.

Mr. Roberts asked why it was moved from 60 to 70.

Ms. Phongsavanh it was changed because of the graduation rate. She said that they need to revisit it and make it more consistent across the board.

Ms. Nadeau wanted to know if there is any data on when it was dropped from 70 to 60. How many kids were on the line? What happened in the year?

Ms. Phongsavanh said they are gathering the data from when Mr. Ferry was there some data on the policy.

Ms. Nadeau said that 60 is a bad plan. The plan needs to be looked at and analyzed to find out what would be the best for all the students. She thanked Ms. Phongsavanh for her work on this project.

Mr. Donlon agreed with Ms. Nadeau. We need to have a plan, no just send kids out the door. 60 is not a passing grade. We should check with other systems and see what they have for passing grade levels. I think Mt. St. Charles is 65. It needs to be looked at further.

Ms. Forcier said that she was part of the curriculum committee along with Ms. Majewski and met up until December. We had statistics from the first half of the year from Mr. Ferry. We found at that time that the A, B and C students stayed the same and the F students went to a D to pass and they had hope. We have more 10th graders this year than in three years. Our drop out rate did go down. We gave student hope to pass. This is a complicated issue. There are many inconsistencies and we need to change the system but not rush it. We need to look at the data again and come up with a system that will work evenly across the district. The middle school children have more opportunities to make up work. We need more data and we will work with the Committee to develop a system that will be more consistent with all schools. Most districts have a passing grade of 65. The curriculum committee has been meeting and has been working on the data and will have further discussions on this issue. I want to see more data. The SIT Team has been meeting and they see what the issue is and will also be participating in this discussion.

No Vote Taken.

4. Discussion/Vote to give Social Street Building Back to City – G. Donoyan, P. Fontaine

Mr. Fontaine said we closed Social Street and cleaned out the school completely. Mr. Roberts toured the school and it ready to turn over to the City.

Ms. Forcier asked about Second Ave.

Mr. Fontaine said that we still have technology and other items in this building and it is very inexpensive to run this building. He said that he would know by the summer if it will be used or turned back to the City.

Motion to return Social Street School to City: A. Forcier

Seconded: C. Roberts

Discussion: None

ROLL CALL: All Yes

5. Discussion/Vote on Binding Arbitration Resolution – A. McGuire-Forcier, C. Roberts

Mr. Roberts read the resolution into the record:

Resolution Opposing Binding Arbitration

Whereas, current state law does not provide for mandatory binding arbitration on monetary matters for school teachers and other school employees; and

Whereas, payroll cost is the largest single expenditure in school budgets; and

Whereas, school districts and cities and towns have seen a calamitous reduction of state aid; and

Whereas, there is a projected \$120 million dollar gap in the State's upcoming FY 2013 budget; and

Whereas, taxpayers are already burdened by some of the highest property taxes nationally; and

Whereas, school districts and cities and towns must comply with R.I.G.L. 44-5-2, which caps the property tax levy imposed by municipalities; and

Whereas, according to R.I.G.L. 16-2-9 (d) "The school committee of each school district shall be responsible for maintaining a school budget which does not result in a debt;" and

Whereas, mandatory binding arbitration would take away from locally elected officials the ability to control the biggest component of local budgets; and

Whereas, the proposed mandatory binding arbitration legislation being advanced by its proponents does not take in to account student welfare, conformation with existing property tax caps (R.I.G.L. 44-5-2), recognition of management responsibilities, the cost of implementing the Basic Education Program and other unfunded mandates,

It is hereby resolved by the School Committee of the City of Woonsocket as follows:

Section 1: That the Woonsocket School Committee respectfully requests the Rhode Island General Assembly to oppose 2012 - H 7617 & H 7620 and reject any and all binding arbitration legislation currently being considered for teacher and other school employee contracts.

Section 2: The WSC requests the full support of our local delegation against the passage of this legislation.

Section 3: The WSC, realizing the strength of numbers, supports other School Committees throughout the State making the same request of our Legislature.

Section 4: A copy of this resolution is to be sent by the Superintendent to the Mayor of Woonsocket, the Woonsocket City Council, the local legislative delegation, the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, and a representative of each School Committee in the State.

Section 5: This resolution shall take effect upon passage.

Motion to Approve by: C. Roberts

Seconded: V. Phongsavanh

Discussion:

Mr. Donlon: Although this is in the best interest of the School Committee and City it restricts the amount of money an arbitrator will award at the conclusion on negotiations. I believe the arbitrator looks at both the ability of the City or School Committee to pay. The arbitrator looks at both sides to see if there is enough money to pay for raises, increase in benefits or whatever is agreed upon. I think we have a very good working relationship with our school people and I don't want this to be a detriment to our progress that we are making with them. Because of this, I will not be supporting this tonight.

Mr. Roberts clarified asked if this would continue the law as is.

Mr. Donlon said an Arbitrator would be a neutral party. If we could not to come to a mutual agreement with the Teachers' Union then it would go to arbitration.

Mr. Roberts stated that this is not the case right now. There is not binding arbitration.

Mr. Donlon said they want to put it in so there is. I am in support of this.

Mr. Roberts said that is correct.

Mr. Donlon said it could go on forever. Who would decide if we didn't have binding arbitration and neither side could come to a conclusion on the contract.

Mr. Roberts said the contract expires.

Mr. Donlon said yes it expires.

Mr. Roberts said correct.

Mr. Donlon said who would decide who gets paid how much.

Mr. Roberts said the School Committee.

Mr. Donlon said that they would be acting as an arbitrator on their own behalf.

Mr. Roberts said that is what the City of Woonsocket elected them for.

Mr. Donlon said he is against it.

Ms. Nadeau said that this should be done through negotiations. You don't get elected because you are the brightest person. You get elected because you get the most votes. This is a crap shoot when you run for office. If you get people on the School Committee that do not value education, then it's a total mess. It is up to you to set the salaries. I can see this coming down. This is not a good thing. Most people do not have this experience and if you have an idea that teachers are not valuable then it will be a blood bath. There has to be some structure and it works the way it is. If something is working, don't change it. That is how I feel. I don't trust School Committee's and I have been on one for twelve years and believe me, I have served with some of those people and I wouldn't want to put my life in their hands ever.

Mr. Roberts said he agrees with Ms. Nadeau's last statement. We don't want to change the system that currently exists. We are not asking. We are asking to leave the system as is with this resolution. Let's not create something that does not exist.

Ms. Forcier said that the last two years the Woonsocket School Committee supported the Resolution with the Unions. We did not want to change anything because we have had a great relationship with the Unions and want to keep it the same. However, if I was a union employee I would want that. So I am not judging anyone on this but I do need to do my job and keep what we have already. Yes, the Unions have been insulted, walked on, treated badly, not just in Woonsocket but though out the country. It is not fair or right. It does not help this situation. Our intention is to keep what we have it has been working and continue to move forward. We value our teachers.

ROLL CALL: AF, VP CR: YES JD/EN: NO

Vote passed: 3-2

6. Presentation of School Committee Policies/Guidelines – Attorney David Kane

MOTION TO TABLE: C. Roberts

Seconded: V. Phongsavanh

ROLL CALL: All Yes.

Ms. Forcier said that Attorney David Kane will be at the next meeting.

CONFERENCES: NONE

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Recent meetings with the Teachers' Union have ensued. They have been productive conversation regarding ways we can collaborate involving this overwhelming fiscal problem that we have. What is nice about the conversations is that the crisis has solidified a stronger bridge between labor and management. In fact, to be quit honest with you, I enjoy partnering with these individuals who want to improve the Woonsocket Education system. Another such initiative that we continue to work on together is the teacher evaluation model. And again, the City of Woonsocket is very fortunate to have dedicated professionals who work to improve the system. We are currently working with B & E Consulting to design our 2012-13 budgets. Today I began a roll out of a concept plan that will improve this system landscape. Our State Senators, Representatives, City Council, and School Committee were offered a first look at the concept that will focus our system, realign our focus and insure that all of our students are educated to the best of our capabilities. I will be presenting the concept further to our Administrators tomorrow and teachers and public over the next few days. I encourage everyone who is interested in improvement to the educational landscape to participate in these meetings. As Ms. McGuire Forcier explained, we are thrilled to host a Legislative Forum on Saturday, April 28, 2012 at 9:30am at the Woonsocket Middle School where all the community members that can be and should be able to discuss relevant and critical issues that are facing educational funding in Woonsocket. I encourage everyone to attend and be heard. Thank you.

Motion to be received and placed on file: J. Donlon

Seconded: E. Nadeau

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD AND WELFARE

C. Roberts: Mr. Roberts asked Mr. Ackerman for an overview of the Lawsuit against the State. Mr. Ackerman said he would have to speak to Mr. Robinson. Ms. Forcier asked if he would contact Mr. Robinson for a presentation on where we are on the lawsuit.

Mr. Roberts stated that he had a productive meeting with Senator's and Representatives and wanted to thank Senator Cote in advance funding for the advancement of Full Day K. We hope to see this in the next week. Also, thank you to Mr. Fontaine for taking him through Social Street School. He wanted the public to know that there is not a single thing left in the building that could be sold or transferred or anything that was left behind. I also had the opportunity to go to the State House and testify on Senate Bill 2406. We asked for a thousand person crowd but we had Ms. Forcier, Jeff Partington, six or seven teachers and Mr. Ward and myself. I want to thank every one of you for showing up for the most important piece of legislation we could have been there for. It may be withdrawn as a Senate bill and modified as part of the budget. Lastly, I spoke at the last City Council meeting and made a public plea during the good and welfare for support of the Math and Science night at the Middle School which has positive results. I want to thank Papa Johns for their support on reduced price on pizza and the funding by Mr. & Ms., Brian Tanny, City Councilman Dan Gendron and myself for their donations. Thanks to Jean Rondeau from Stadium Theater for raffle prizes to attend the theater. Tomorrow is Math & Science Night and it starts at 5:00 and they can get extra credit and the teacher will decide how it is applied. Good Luck.

J. Donlon: I will be going to Math & Science Night I want to let everyone know that there is a new article from Citizens Memorial from the school nurse regarding ticks. It is very bad and you need to watch your pets and check your children. You should check your children daily and if you see a tick remove it and put alcohol on it and watch for Lime Disease. I went to Leo Savoie School with Ms. Forcier and met the new Principal Ms. Kuras is doing a fine job. I want to remind everyone that the Rotary Club sponsored a Reading Rocks essay contest and all our fifth graders were able to participate. The winners will receive a \$50 dollar gift certificate. They will read their essays to the audience. I want to thank the Rotary Club for sponsoring this and it will take place on May 3rd at 6:30pm at Woonsocket Middle School. Next week is school vacation and everyone have a safe and happy vacation. Please be safe. Thank you.

A. Forcier: I had a few phone calls regarding the new middle schools. I just want to tell everyone that the state reimburses us 82% of the Middle Schools. We pay 18% of the school which is about 12 million dollars. The City does not have to come up with 80 million. It is a lot of money but it is not what people are saying. I want to thank Durham Bussing for help us during this crisis. I also had a call regarding PTO's. School Committee has no authority over the PTO's. I heard that people have been stealing the money from the PTO. Ms. Forcier asked Mr. Ackerman what authority does the School Committee have over the PTO's. Mr. Ackerman said that the School Committee has no authority over them. They are their own entity. The people should have a right to know if money is stolen and the Police should be informed. Want to wish everyone a nice April Vacation. Thank the Burrito Company for donation of food for tomorrow night's event. Thank you.

E. Nadeau: I want to share with you a couple issues when I was on vacation at my grandchildren's house. Their school calendar is constructed that if there is a Friday or Monday holiday they have a four day week. They schedule a few days for inclement weather. I am on the school Committee because I want what is best for kids. I hear so much negativity in the community and they don't want to pay taxes because they don't have kids in school. We don't realize how disadvantage that we are until you see other communities and what the children have. Every school is new and has new technology and new desks and everything is new. There is so much development that the taxes offset everything else. The elementary school is three years old there is a new high school. Their schools have media rooms and everyone uses the media rooms and there are smart boards in every classroom. They have a color code system and use this for grading and strong on discipline. They have a good learning environment. The 50% of their teachers are nationally board certified. We need to be friendlier and there is no negativity. They want their children to succeed. I can understand why people move to these areas. I worked in elementary schools and they take pride in their school in the South. We need to work on the negativity. It is important to have and get along and work hard.

V. Phongsavanh: It has been a tough year and I feel it when I go to the schools and talk to the teachers. The days of the past have been brighter and we had more program and money. This is a challenge and we need to work together to fix it. What we are trying to fix mistakes that are bigger than us. Education has to go on and must go on. I am glad we had these conversations tonight about improving our system. I look forward to more workshops and presentations to keep us educated about solutions on how to fix our system in Woonsocket. I don't want us to give up and there is so much mistrust. We have to work

together and try to solve these challenges and problems. There are many things that we may not all agree on, but we are here to solve what is best for the children and what is best for our education system. I am an advocate about doing what is right for the kids and this past month and year has been very depressing. The decisions that we had to make have been very hard, but I want to assure you that there is light at the end of the tunnel and I am determined more than ever to get us there. I can't do it alone and I believe that there is a better day and a better way for Woonsocket. We have to keep believing in our students and educators. We have to keep stating that Education is important in Woonsocket and we will get there. We need to trust our Administration and keep the faith and keep the dream alive for our students and do what is right for them. Thank you,

Motion to Adjourn: A. Forcier
ALL IN FAVOR:

Seconded: C. Roberts

Meeting adjourned at 9:30pm

Respectfully submitted

Dorothy DeRemer
Recording Clerk