

**MINUTES**  
**WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 2012**  
**7:00 P.M. – OPEN SESSION**  
**Woonsocket Middle School @ Hamlet**  
**60 Florence Drive, Woonsocket, RI 02895**

**Call to Order by Anita McGuire-Forcier**

**Moment of Silence**

**Pledge of Allegiance**

<b>Roll Call:</b>	<b>A. McGuire-Forcier</b>	<b>Present</b>
	<b>V. Phongsavanh</b>	<b>Present</b>
	<b>E. Nadeau</b>	<b>Present</b>
	<b>J. Donlon</b>	<b>Present</b>
	<b>C. Roberts</b>	<b>Present</b>

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**Good and Welfare:**

Rob Desrosiers, Principal, Globe Park School: Thanked G. Donoyan and the School Committee members for their support. He noted Globe Park staff and parents for creative thinking and planning, hard work, and opportunities for students. He congratulated science fair winners and introduced Cindy –Sue Girard, 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and SIT Chair who explained some SIT initiatives and introduced the three science fair winners.

Cindy-Sue Girard, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher, Globe Park School: C. Girard spoke about the productive and exciting work of the Globe Park SIT. One action step in the School Improvement plan was to engage students and families in learning experiences throughout the school year. Subcommittees planned several weeks to celebrate academics. In October, under the guidance of Kathy Palmieri, the math sub committee held math related activities. In February, the math and science sub-committees under the leadership of Kathy and Jennifer Polacek sponsored a math and science week. All classrooms participated. During that week, a 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade Science Fair was held as part of the second annual MARS night: Math, Art, Reading and Science. Each subcommittee planned hands-on activities for students and families. Over 150 students and their families participated. Woonsocket High School students judged the projects. C. Girard acknowledged attendance of School Committee members. In April, the Literacy Committee under the leadership of Michelle Lacourse sponsored a reading week including a presentation from story teller Len Cabral, a Barnes and Nobel night at Smithfield Crossings where students engaged in literacy activities. Over 50 students and their families attended. C. Girard acknowledged Globe Park SIT members and staff for their collaboration and dedication. C. Girard introduced the three science fair winners who presented their projects and answered questions: 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner, 4<sup>th</sup> grader Tyler Ethier; 2<sup>nd</sup> place winner, Michael Lavallee; 1<sup>st</sup> place winner, Jyotishka Gosh. Thanked G. Donoyan and School Committee for having them this evening and said we are all here for the students. At this time, a presentation from science fair winners was given.

George Nasuti, Athletic Director: Announced that Woonsocket Athletic Department and coaches will be hosting a fundraiser to support the athletic department during these hard times. The funds will go towards equipment and facilities, not to pay for the program but to support the programs. Our first fundraiser is going to be held on Tuesday, May 29<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Ciro's Tavern with a wine and food fundraiser from the chefs of Hampton Court. The evening will include various raffles and a silent auction benefiting high school and middle school student athletes. The cost is a donation of \$40 or \$75 per couple. This is open to the public, we are encouraging parents, coaches, teachers, everyone to come to help support the athletic department. You can contact me at 767-4754 or email me at [gwasuti@woonsocketschools.com](mailto:gwasuti@woonsocketschools.com). A. McGuire-Forcier advised George to go to City Council on Monday to advertise as well.

Lynn Boudry, Oakton Street: Here tonight on behalf of the Bernon community. Thank you for holding off on your proposed plans. We know your plans might come into affect at some point so we encourage you to invite parents to come to you as a group to address our concerns.

**Anita McGuire-Forcier announced that the Committee will be taking New Business on the agenda out of order.**

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**NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. Power Point Presentation on State Funding - Attorney Steve Robinson**

Mr. Robinson said he is an attorney in RI and he is representing Woonsocket and Pawtucket in the matter of the funding of education in RI. It was my privilege 17 years ago to try the first case of over the constitution of funding. Virtually with every state in the union this case has gone on. Where there are disparities between the opportunities provided to children in poor districts vs. the opportunities in the rich districts. General theory, in RI is that it should not matter where you live as to the qualities and opportunities in your education. There was a 10% cut in state aid formula.

What they have is a foundation aid formula which is a fairly complicated formula but it puts everything in like what is the wealth of the community, how much taxable property do they have, etc; all of these factors go in to determine how much the state should pay in each community and how much the local taxpayer could afford in each community. Communities like Woonsocket, Pawtucket, North Providence, Central Falls who have high poverty rate, would receive almost 70% of their funds from the state. When Governor Sudlun cut 10% across the board for Woonsocket that was devastating. Remember that 70% of your budget is now down 10% which is millions of dollars lost. The rich communities got about \$100,000 state aid because they had so much taxable income properties so taking away 10% was nothing to those rich communities.

Mr. Robinson started with his powerpoint presentation. From 1995 until very recently, they abandoned the formula. What the legislators would do and say is if you got \$1M last year you will get a \$1M plus 3% which didn't take into account the wealthier vs. the poorer communities and as a result, disparity crept back in. Legislation realized that but failed to take any action. In 2010 when we filed action, the State of RI did not have any formula then Commissioner Gist pushed to adopt a formula. Three years after the Wood report said that you need \$10,600 per student, the Commissioner of Education said the amount you need is \$8,333 per student. It is interesting to know, and I think we are the only state in the union where they have done this, that the state argued that children do not have the right to education in RI, no constitutional rights to education and it was put in writing on paper.

Woonsocket and Pawtucket try harder and tax ourselves harder than a rich community to give our children less. Our problem is the lack of revenue from the State of Rhode Island. As it stands now, we are waiting for an answer from the judge, anticipate an answer within a month and from there we have to see where this goes. If we win, we are going to get a trial. There was another case going when we tried ours 17 years ago, which was the McDuff case in Massachusetts and they won and as a result, the legislator was forced to put in a reform program, they were forced to put in a fair funding. Since that time, Massachusetts has become the highest performing public school system. In NY State they lost their first lawsuit and 15 years later they brought another one and won. The second time they created an organization called the campaign for fiscal equity and it was a grass roots campaign of interested people who got together and said it's not right and we have to lobby the media outlets to get the community to come together to realize that it's not fair and we need to have a fair funding formula. The way we are going to win this case is if enough community members around the State to gather together to say goals of this lawsuit we support and we think everyone that is fair minded person should support the goal of this lawsuit. Whether we get a trial or not we will be at the Supreme Court on this. We want a trial so people can see how unfair this is. We need community support. A. McGuire-Forcier thanked S. Robinson for his presentation and that the community needed to hear this information.

**At this time, the committee went back to the consent agenda.**

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#### **CONSENT AGENDA:**

**Recognitions and Announcements:** G. Donoyan thanked the Globe Park students for the presentation and recognized the following people:

- KayInn Pitts, Window Nation Indoor Track and Field All American Team., as the state record holder in the triple jump.
- Ellen Sharvey of Sodexo will award a \$3,000 scholarship to a deserving senior who is enrolled in the Culinary Arts program at the WACTC to be announced at senior recognition night, June 5th.
- Construction Technology and Green Technology students at the WACTC will work with factory representatives Anthony L. Truppi and Rick Arnold to install the first Solar Hot Water Training Lab in a High School in Rhode Island providing supplemental free heat for the construction classroom as well as invaluable tools for employment in the emerging green construction market.
- Mr. George Nasuti recognized Mr. Richard Harnois, WED custodian, organized a motor cycle run to fundraise which raised \$2500 for a field lining paint machine for Bary Field. Mr. Harnois and Mr. Bill Larose maintain the Barry Field Athletic Complex.
- Grade 5, Chai Norsavanh and Kyle Roberts, winners of the Woonsocket Rotary Club's "Reading Rocks" book review.,
- Kevin K. Coleman and Fifth Avenue Schools have been rated the sixth most improved school in the state according to the RI Campaign for Achievement Now!
- Citizens' Memorial highlighted by Commissioner Gist for exceptional educational achievements during her State of Education address to the General Assembly.
- Thanked all the teachers for their continued dedication, the administrators for their diligence, and certainly the children, they continue to achieve despite the adult problems of finances.

**Announcements:** The WHS Air Force Junior ROTC Awards Banquet will be held on Friday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. at the Bocce Club, 226 St. Louis Avenue in Woonsocket.

**Motion to receive on file: E. Nadeau 2<sup>nd</sup>: J. Donlon (unanimously approved).**

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**NEW BUSINESS:**

**2. Discussion/Vote to Adopt the RIDE’s Statewide Bullying Policy – A. McGuire-Forcier**

Discussion: G. Donoyan said she would love for us to also suggest that the statewide bullying policy also extend to the community at large. I think it is really important if the children of our system also have role models in the community and we all adhere to it antibullying we might have more stability; just a comment on my end. E. Nadeau said with all our policies I think the most calls I ever receive is about their child being bullied at school. A lot of kids don’t go to their teachers or principals, they try to work it out and then it gets really bad. It just doesn’t seem to end no matter what we do. So I don’t know what all these policies are going to do if we can’t change people’s attitudes. A. McGuire-Forcier said she agrees with E. Nadeau but what this statewide policy will do it to see how schools will be handling the situation so all the principals need copies and go over this with the staff. This policy should make it more consistent, better documented to follow through. A. McGuire-Forcier invited the committee to attend a Good Touch Bad Touch presentation which also relates to bullying. J. Donlon said he believes this policy will reinforce the zero tolerance policy and I feel the teachers and principals will also enforce this policy like they did with the zero tolerance policy. V. Phongsavanh thanked A. McGuire-Forcier for presenting this policy so we can align our bullying policy with the state. There is a streamline of process and I think bullying is a national issue, it is bigger than us and I think social media plays a lot in this and I think the country is moving as fast as they can to catch up to the technology. A. McGuire-Forcier said if every school adopts this and adheres to this, no matter what schools kids go to they will know what to expect.

**Motion to approve: A. McGuire-Forcier                      2<sup>nd</sup>: V. Phongsavanh                      Roll Call Vote: 5 Yes**

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**3. Update on FY13 School Budget – G. Donoyan**

G. Donoyan said that B&E Consulting continues to work on putting together a draft of FY13 Budget. Mr. Edge, CPA of B&E has promised us that the draft will be ready on May 11<sup>th</sup>. I want you to know that we are working as diligently as possible and I want to thank all the directors that have worked beyond belief to add information as B&E required to submit a zero based budget to you.

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**4. Discussion/Vote to Appoint a Part-Time Finance Director – G. Donoyan**

G. Donoyan said that everyone knows that Mrs. Dutremble has finished her work for the city effective yesterday. Prior to that, I have been in constant communication with the RIDE knowing that the day would come when we didn’t have anyone on board. What they did was share the finance director that they placed in Central Falls. His name is Ralph Malafronte who was the former Superintendent in Barrington and also its finance director. A couple of weeks back (April 11), the committee approved \$10,000 to be put aside for Mrs. Dutremble to act as our finance director after she finishes with the city. What I am asking is that rather than paying Mrs. Dutremble that we allot those funds to Mr. Malafronte. In the meantime, I am starting the interview process tomorrow and Friday for the Finance Department Director. My request is that the School Committee supports a change in the request to allot the \$10,000 to Mr. Malafronte rather to pay Mrs. Dutremble for financial services. E. Nadeau said that G. Donoyan will start the interviews for business manager. Will there be some overlapping with Mr. Malafronte. G. Donoyan said she hopes so and is looking to ensure that we have consistency in leadership within that department. I will try to coordinate that so when we do hire someone they can work in conjunction with Mr. Malafronte.

**Motion to approve: V. Phongsavanh and J. Donlon                      2<sup>nd</sup>: E. Nadeau                      Roll Call Vote: 5 Yes**

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**CONFERENCES:** A. McGuire-Forcier said that Dr. Donoyan, Jeff Partington, and she will be attending a conference in Ohio, therefore, they will not be at the next School Committee meeting and V. Phongsavanh will be chair of the meeting. G. Donoyan said they have been invited by the secretary of education, Ernie Duncan, to attend a national conference; discussion will be help about important issues on education but more than that to escalate innovation and the next steps in assuring our children get all the education requirements as necessary.

**SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT:** G. Donoyan said that she wants to put into the record a letter she sent to Mayor Fontaine today (attached) and it is important for me to read this letter to the committee and the community for transparency purposes. G. Donoyan said that she does have to mention that our vendors have been nothing short than exemplary with us. Such individuals like Durham Bus and Superior Oil I do have to recognize. We ran out of oil at Bernon Heights last week, it was a cold day, and even though we owe over \$200,000, the good folks at Superior Oil brought a delivery and the children and staff were warm that day. Route 146A Auto released our trash truck even though we owe them over \$3000. Again, while we are in a dire financial position, we really need to thank everyone that is working with us.

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD AND WELFARE:**

**A. McGuire-Forcier** - echoed what G. Donoyan said about our vendors, hopes this continues until we get the supplemental tax bill, if we get one. We have been told that we could get shut off on our electricity, bussing could stop at any time, and if that happens I don’t know how we will manage. Told G. Donoyan that it was mentioned that Durham Bussing will bus to the end of the year even though we owe them a lot of money and my understanding was that if we have money we would give them some. G. Donoyan said they offered Durham \$150,000, cut a check, and they were happy and it was a good faith effort on our end.

Reminded public about the three upcoming School Committee meetings and hopes everyone could come. Also gave praise to Fifth Avenue School for reading week. Ms. Miello put on a show at the WHS called the Time Warp, it was excellent. I have to give credit to Ms. Barrett who held a play at Citizens' called the Bullying Magnet which was amazing. My advice to everyone is to try to make it to a show at least once a year.

**E. Nadeau** - thanked everyone who called her during her recent incarceration at Landmark Medical Center and would like to give a shout out and a special thanks to the staff at Landmark for the excellent care they have given her which was above and beyond, they provided a top notch service.

**V. Phongsavanh** – announced the upcoming community bus tour hosted by the Woonsocket Afterschool Coalition on May 16<sup>th</sup> starting at 2:30 p.m. The bus will picking everyone up at the WHS, fourth annual bus tour where teachers, educators, and community members get on a yellow school bus and take a tour of the community organizations to learn about afterschool programs and other services they provide. Please RSVP by contacting Kyle Gergan at NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley. Lastly, between threatening to close schools down and laying off all our teachers to possibly changing our school system around, We are currently running out of cash, most bills are 90 days overdue. There are so many moving pieces with the supplemental tax bill that it is hard to predict what is actually going to happen in this city. We are living through history, by many years of bad decision making and I think the most important question that we start to ask ourselves is what we do about tomorrow. Where do we want to see this city and what do we envision for this city. We need to make big bold plans and I truly believe in this community and that is why I choose to stay. I look forward to the day that we can say we have the best city in the state, our schools are amazing, and we are providing an equitable education. I have been working with a small community group with the mission to bring creditability back into our schools, the group met only twice but the energy is positive. The two things we are doing is not making excuses and not blaming anyone. I encourage everyone to get involved in this and the group is called the Woonsocket Innovative Solutions to Education and if you want to join, leave the negative energy at the door. Lastly, I would like to congratulate Tri Ha and Citizen's School for getting a shout out from the Commissioner of Education in her state of education speech at the state house. Tri Ha is our outstanding WHS student and the pride of the ESL department because he won Who Wants to be a Math Mathematician competition this year and only been in this country for a very short time. Citizens' was mentioned because they increased their scores by 19% in the last two years so great things are happening in this district.

**C. Roberts** – thanked Dina Dutremble for her all her time and hard work. Echoed Mr. Nasuti's commentary about the athletic fundraiser, I have spoken to him numerous times and knows that they have some significant gifts that have been pledged for the silent auction part. Rumor has it that City Councilman Chris Beauchamp will be auctioning off a driveway as one of the silent auction items. I ask that people come down and consider supporting our athletic endeavors that night. The Superintendent and I spoke this afternoon and so that the whole committee knows I brought up an issue regarding the city's administration having given authority for Barry Field to be used for a circus. It is my current understanding that it is their intention that the money raised from that will go to the city so I have asked the Superintendent and Mr. Fontaine if they can draft a letter to the administration clarifying the position that Barry Field is a WED facility and in keeping with the recent rates that we decided to charge that money raised from that field goes half to facilities and half to the athletic teams and I look forward to their response.

**J. Donlon** – At the last School Committee meeting we had the chorus from Pothier and I think they did a wonderful job, a lot of practice went into that, and they presented themselves and their school in a very positive manner. Tonight we had the presenters from Globe Park, very smart children and hopefully when they get to high school they become valedictorian and salutatorian but I understand that the girl is going back to India at the end of this month so we will be losing a good student. In our packets tonight we have three retirees, I noticed that there is a lot of experience, years of dedication from these individuals and it will be hard to replace them. Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank G. Donoyan for the exceptional job she is performing for the WED. She does not have an assistant superintendent nor does she have a business manager, which hopefully we can hire one shortly. She does all the work that is asked of her with no questions asked, she didn't create this problem instead she has taken reigns and is working diligently to solve the many problems within the district. Her days have been spent dealing with calls from vendors looking for payment and has also attempted to institute a new program for the benefit of our children but has found that change is not always easy. I give her full credit for these unique approaches to education and I feel that as a board we should study these recommendations further during the next school year and feel that the students, parents, and taxpayers of the city are fortunate to have such a dedicated superintendent.

**Motion to Adjourn at 9:03 p.m.: A. McGuire-Forcier**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: C. Roberts (unanimously approved)**

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**Respectfully Submitted:**

**Kimberly Blais, WSC Recording Secretary**