

**WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2013  
7:00 P.M. – OPEN SESSION  
Woonsocket Middle School @ Hamlet, 60 Florence Drive  
Woonsocket, RI 02895**

**Call to Order by Vimala Phongsavanh**

**Moment of Silence**

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Roll Call: E. Nadeau, Present; A. McGuire-Forcier, Present; J. Donlon, Present; C. Roberts, Present. V. Phongsavanh, Absent (away on a previously planned trip).**

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**Public Good and Welfare:**

Sandra Costa who runs the CCF afterschool program introduced the WMS Glee Club students who performed two songs; their names are Zoie Cote, Lauren Brunelle, Ambra Montecalvo, Jared Brunelle, Ashley Swenson, and Marie Torres; WHS volunteers who help run Glee Club are Ricky Gramstorff, Michael O'Brien and Brianna Tavares; Richard Gramstorff and Trish L'Esperance are the adult volunteers who help out with Glee Club.

**Charles Lemoine, 174 St. Barnabe Street:** He stated he went to McFee to speak with the Superintendent and there was a WED truck parked in the handicapped parking area so he asked why. G. Donoyan said she will look into this. He said he talked with P. Fontaine and a district rep because we should not be parking in a handicapped place; this evening there is a truck blocking the handicapped ramp at the WMS and asked why. G. Donoyan said she will look into this and contact him tomorrow. He also said at McFee the handicapped ramp has about 30 boxes blocking the ramps and asked why. J. Donlon said the WED does not enforce the law in regards to handicapped parking only the WPD does this; we cannot give out parking tickets. P. Fontaine said when he returned to McFee he called Mr. Lemoine and explained to him that the truck was not parked in a handicapped area he was parked next to that area; the margins are just not clear because of all the snow and sand that was there; we will realign that spot and get a new sign; the boxes on the ramp were recently delivered and they are moved the next day; as far as the truck outside tonight, he did not see one.

**Alethia Forcier:** She has questions about the 5/6 academy for next year; at what point are the parents going to know; if this is going to happen or not happen, parents need to know as soon as possible because we need to help transition our children and there are also 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade celebrations; there are a lot of different factors that we need to prepare for so as soon you can give us an answer. She is doing a fundraiser right now for the WMS Girls Softball program books; there are advertising spots available for businesses, personal messages, etc. The WMS PTO is doing a fundraiser; they are selling brick pavers for \$25.00 and we will use the brick pavers to make walkways along the campus and also to make an edging around the flower beds. If you would like to participate in any of the fundraisers please see her after the meeting or email her.

**Superintendent Recognitions:** Harris Elementary Student Haylee Croteau was awarded an honorable mention in the RI State Elks Americanism Essay Contest. She won a \$50.00 Educational Scholarship as well as a participation certificate, a pin in acknowledgement of her participation in the program, and her school will receive a plaque. Congratulations Haylee! The following students were selected to perform in the RI All-State Music Festival at the Veteran's Auditorium this past weekend: Jacob Chippo, Alyson Picard, Samantha Smith, Emily Taft, and Brianna Tavares. These students bring great pride to Woonsocket High School! The Woonsocket High School Co-Ed Cheerleading Team won its first championship since 2006 at the annual Rhode Island Interscholastic League Team Competition Cheerleading State Championships on March 9<sup>th</sup>. We all commend you for your outstanding performance and great Teamwork! Ellen Shalvey, General Manager of Sodexo School Services is pleased to announce that on Saturday, March 23, 2013, fourteen Woonsocket Elementary students competed in Sodexo's 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Future Chef Competition. Our local event was one of 137 events held across the country, representing more than 920 elementary schools. Fourth and fifth grade students from Woonsocket Elementary Schools were invited, and encouraged, to submit recipes for Healthy Salad Recipes. More than 50 recipes were entered this year, and the finalists were selected to compete in a morning long "iron chef" style cook-off. All of the students did an amazing job, creating, preparing and presenting their special recipe to the panel of judges. She offers her hearty congratulations to all of the children for the superb job they did. They were focused, attentive, organized, and worked hard to create many wonderful dishes. I am pleased to announce that awards went to:

- Third Prize – Matthew Fraser, Grade 4 from Leo Savoie, for Fennel, Grape and Gorgonzola Salad.
- Second Prize – Rimel Pena, Grade 4 from Citizens Memorial, for Mouth Watering Greek Salad.
- First Prize – Aidan Forcier, Grade 4 from Leo Savoie, for Fruity Explosion.

I am honored to commend and congratulate all of the Woonsocket students who participated and made our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Future Chef event a great success. Ellen Shalvey is also pleased to tell you that the poster recognizing our students is now on display in our middle school cafeterias. The six W.A.C.T.C. students who worked as volunteers for our Summer Food Program during the summer of 2012 have been featured on a poster that is part of Sodexo's Performance Zone campaign. This poster is being displayed at more than 750 middle schools across the country during the month of March. Each

month Sodexo recognizes outstanding students or groups of students whose story can serve as an inspiration to other students across the country. I am pleased that Woonsocket's students are counted among this elite group.

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**Approval of March 13, 2013 Open Minutes:**

**Motion to Approve March 13, 2013 Open Minutes: J. Donlon**                      **2<sup>nd</sup>: C. Roberts**                      **Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes**

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**Consent Agenda:**

**Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda as a whole: C. Roberts**                      **2<sup>nd</sup>: J. Donlon**                      **Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes**

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**Communications – None.**

**Committee Reports – None.**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

1. None
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**E. Nadeau stated that P. Fontaine requested agenda item #6 to be moved to item #1. Committee is in favor of moving this agenda item.**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**6. Discussion/Vote of the Durham Bus Contract for the 2013-14 School year – G. Donoyan, P. Fontaine**

P. Fontaine said this is the fifth and final year of this contract; the contract amount is the same amount negotiated five years ago; it is a 2.5% increase from the current budget that has been allocated in the budget. They are currently looking for a location for their buses; he is working with them and the city to find a location for their buses. He is highly recommending to the Committee to renew the contract for the final year. Their contract ends June 2014.

**Motion to Approve the Durham Bus Contract for the 2013-14 School Year: C. Roberts**                      **2<sup>nd</sup>: E. Nadeau**  
**Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes**

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**1. Discussion/Vote of FY14 Budget – 1<sup>st</sup> Passage – R. Malafronte**

R. Malafronte said as the budget sits before the Committee this evening, it is in draft form; it remains in draft form while he works with the Committee and the Budget Commission. At the work session last week, the Committee requested the administration make some changes to the budget; there have been some adjustments based upon letters we have received from personnel because they have advised us that they will be retiring at the end of this fiscal year; we have adjusted our salaries to reflect attrition resulting from personnel retiring and being replaced by individuals on a lower level. Per your request, we increased postage to \$15,934.00; increased coaching/extracurricular activities upon a 1.5% increase on step 10 of the bachelors scale; increased energy items such as natural gas, gasoline/diesel, and fuel oil; even though it was not specified he assumed the Committee wanted to increase the electricity by 5%; those lines were all increased by 5%; increased snow/ice removal supplies to \$15,000; we have highlighted in our document that the medical and dental insurance rates used by the administration are the rates suggested by the Budget Commission Staff (see this on page 3). For some reason when he was making the copies this evening the cost for the medical and dental insurance did not carry forward to our summary sheet. They will have another draft to go before the Budget Commission on April 15<sup>th</sup>. J. Donlon said with the Budget Commission cutting down on the medical and dental, if the plan does not go through are they going to add that back into our budget for the year. R. Malafronte said he cannot speak for the Budget Commission but there is no question that the budget would have to be increased by that amount. J. Donlon said under the police and fire we have \$87,000; what part of that is fire and what do they do. R. Malafronte said none of this is fire it is all police details for during the day and after school program. E. Nadeau said the amount last week for the medical and dental and the amount you just handed us is different. R. Malafronte said when he redid this budget that amount did not carry forward; if he had a laptop he could tell you what the number is; very close to the number you had last week. E. Nadeau asked why it wasn't put in at the proposed rate we normally pay and then adjusted after the concessions occurred. R. Malafronte said the Budget Commission staff recommended that he use the rates that they were suggesting. E. Nadeau said how can we pass this budget for 1<sup>st</sup> passage when the number is not factual. R. Malafronte said the Committee can approve passing this budget onto the next authority and until it gets resolved it could come back to you as 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> passage. C. Roberts said he agrees with R. Malafronte because we do not have final authority over this budget the Budget Commission does by law; we have no control of the medical and dental numbers so that's why we agree to put in here that these are the numbers that were given by Budget Commission so no one could come back to us to say we were off by \$2M.

A. McGuire-Forcier said regardless of what everyone says our bylaws say we have to have 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> passage. G. Donoyan said we can have 1<sup>st</sup> passage this evening and 2<sup>nd</sup> passage at our next regularly scheduled meeting which is April 10<sup>th</sup>. A. McGuire-Forcier asked G. Donoyan to ask the Budget Commission if April 10<sup>th</sup> is good for 2<sup>nd</sup> passage or do they want us to have special meeting earlier than that for 2<sup>nd</sup> passage. C. Roberts asked R. Malafronte to confirm that if he took the total restricted income of \$63,481,782 and we are looking at proposed expenses of \$64,512,854 that we are unfunded a ballpark figure of \$1,030,000. R. Malafronte said to remember that the 64 number does not include the retirees. C. Roberts said which would be a \$14,000 increase or decrease. R. Malafronte said it would probably be in the thousands.

R. Malafronte said it is very important to everyone to note that this document and the local appropriation of \$12, 964,000 has not changed from FY12, FY13, and FY14; that's the number that the Budget Commission on April 15<sup>th</sup> will determine whether or not the city needs to increase their local appropriation.

A. McGuire-Forcier asked G. Donoyan if she could identify the worst financial pressures or any uncertainties facing the WED within the next year. G. Donoyan said the State of RI still does not have the total amount of funding that will be coming from the federal government; there are some issues that are in our federal grants that are requirements; we may have to increase local funding to cover this; there may be out of district tuition increases as well; we do not know the level of special education needs; these are some of the unknowns but there are a lot of unknowns. R. Malafronte said the funding formula is based upon enrollment and we based our budget on enrollment and we are anticipating 6000 students. We are scheduled to receive additional aid from the State of RI \$1.4M. A. McGuire-Forcier said to sum it up we need to watch our federal grants, collective bargaining could be another issue for medical and dental, out of district tuition, and state funding. G. Donoyan stated she would add one more thing which is a midyear tuition rate change from DCYF like last year; it almost doubled. A. McGuire-Forcier asked what school operation takes the most strain on the budget. R. Malafronte said the fact that we are self insured medical puts a strain. WED has made some major steps in developing the FY13 budget to put that more in line with what the expenses were versus whatever happened prior to that; he guessed that we were court ordered to lower our budget to \$59M and there was no Caruolo challenge that was an unrealistic amount. We now have some money in the budget where we can impact instruction. A. McGuire-Forcier said to R. Malafronte that he has been working here since May and does he feel that there is adequate staff to keep our financial department in line. R. Malafronte said yes we have adequate staff; if you ask if we have an adequate financial system his answer would be no. We do have money in the FY14 budget to address this issue; we are waiting for RIDE and the State of RI to finish their bid process so we can piggyback onto them and purchase the software and have this up and running between July and December.

R. Malafronte said we are current with all of our invoices but we should run out of money sometime in May or June because of the advance we received from RIDE in terms of State operational aid; we will no longer be receiving our monthly check from RIDE for April, May and June because we received it back in July; the Budget Commission oversees the expenditures from that and there is approximately \$2M left from that to be used; it is his understanding that sometime in May or June the city will not have these funds; the Budget Commission has taken the step of notifying our major vendors of the situation.

E. Nadeau said with the issues with medical and dental, the latest draft you presented to us shows the figures that the Budget Commission gave us which shows close to a 53% shortfall with those two line items. R. Malafronte said those figures are about a \$1.8M difference. E. Nadeau said regardless what the number is she will not support 1<sup>st</sup> passage of this budget because she does not agree that the Budget Commission's recommendation is a reality; she has an obligation as a member of the School Committee to present an accurate budget; she is not going to approve a budget that has this kind of shortfall in those two line items. C. Roberts said for the record that he does not want anyone to have the belief that for anyone who votes yes we are agreeing with the Budget Commission number and that is why he stipulated and at least four committee members voted yes and agreed at our work shop to asterisk these two items which states that the medical and dental rates are from the Budget Commission staff. He agrees with her principle this has not been accomplished yet but it is obvious that strategically this is part of their five year plan and he feels that he has protected himself in saying that these are not the Committee's figures; he wants the public to know that the draft document has those notations on it. J. Donlon agrees with E. Nadeau and he will not be supporting this until he knows the exact figures; the Budget Commission says they are going to do this and that but hasn't done anything for almost a year.

R. Malafronte said the medical insurance is \$7,101,838 and dental is \$508,145 which gives you a new bottom line of \$65,957,994. E. Nadeau asked what is the difference between the Budget Commission projected figure and those figures. R. Malafronte said the shortfall is still going to be about \$1.8M. R. Malafronte said you are below the FY13 budget based upon those numbers.

A. McGuire-Forcier said she is comfortable in passing for 1<sup>st</sup> passage of the budget with the stipulation that C. Roberts has requested that medical and dental rates are from the Budget Commission.

**Motion to Approve 1<sup>st</sup> Passage of the FY14 Budget: A. McGuire Forcier 2<sup>nd</sup>: C. Roberts**  
**Roll Call Vote: 2 Yes (AM, CR) 2 No (JD, EN) Motions dies, 1<sup>st</sup> passage not accepted.**

**R. Malafronte said for his own clarification, he will proceed to the Budget Commission and clearly let them know that the budget was not approved by the School Committee. E. Nadeau said yes.**

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## **2. Discussion/Vote - Status Update on Funding Equity Lawsuit – C. Roberts**

C. Roberts stated our joint lawsuit with the City of Pawtucket in regards to the state's funding formula had been modified; we authorized to move forward with this suit with a 60/40 split with a cap of \$20,000; he has asked the Superintendent to update us in regards to this suit. G. Donoyan stated that the bills that came in from Robinson and Clapman were

questioned by our finance department because there were previously billings that were earmarked 41% billed to Woonsocket and 59% to Pawtucket; over the last two months the bills did not reflect this; they called Robinson and Clapman and they stated they are working pro bono for Pawtucket but we were still paying our share; we totaled all the bills and we are close to the \$20,000 cap. C. Roberts said this should be presented to the Committee very shortly because we will be at the cap. G. Donoyan said correct. E. Nadeau said we have a \$20,000 for both the lawsuit and special education. G. Donoyan said correct. A. McGuire-Forcier said she called Robinson because a statement was made at the workshop that Pawtucket dropped out; he said that is not true and clarified this via the Superintendent's recent email; we are not paying anything more than what was approved and Robinson is Pawtucket's attorney for over 30 years and this is why he is doing it pro bono for them. C. Roberts said he is happy with the Superintendent's answer and the Committee will approach this again when they come closer to the cap.

**Discussion only, no vote was taken.**

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### **3. Resolution in Support of Change to R.I.G.L. 16-12-6.1 – C. Roberts**

C. Roberts said this is a resolution asking the general assembly to appeal this law; what this does is puts a unique set of burdens when it comes to the dismissals of teachers on not just Woonsocket but also the town of Cumberland; we are asking the general assembly to consider removing this extra set of rules that only these two towns have to comply with; he is seeking for Committee support because he thinks this is in the best interest of WED.

**Motion to Approve Resolution: C. Roberts                      2<sup>nd</sup>: A. McGuire-Forcier                      Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes**

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### **4. Legal Counsel – C. Roberts**

C. Roberts said the Committee has a letter from R. Ackerman in their packets; R. Ackerman has served Woonsocket for 42 consecutive years and will not be renewing his contract in June. C. Roberts read his letter. C. Roberts wanted to acknowledge receipt of this letter and thanked R. Ackerman for his work throughout the years, he has been pleasure to work with, and hopefully he will play a key role when we consider new council. He wanted to acknowledge this letter and ask for Committee thoughts on what the strategies should be moving forward. E. Nadeau said she would like to wait until this is a full committee before talking about this; E. Nadeau asked R. Ackerman if his last day of work is June 30<sup>th</sup>. R. Ackerman said his contract expires June 30<sup>th</sup> and beyond that time he will be around for the transition. A. McGuire-Forcier thanked R. Ackerman for the 42 years of service.

**Motion to receive and place on file: C. Roberts                      2<sup>nd</sup>: J. Donlon                      Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes**

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### **5. Approval of 2013-2014 School Year Calendar – 1<sup>st</sup> Passage –P. McGee**

P. McGee is seeking Committee approval on 1<sup>st</sup> Passage of the 2013-14 School Year Calendar. C. Roberts asked how many days do the seniors have to attend. P. McGee said 171 days of instruction. C. Roberts asked if there are any buffers to the graduation date if we have snow days because people will start booking things and we are not allowing any recovery days for snow days. G. Donoyan said this year we had to change the date of graduation because we had a lot of snow days. C. Roberts asked what is the harm for moving graduation to the 13<sup>th</sup> next year so we can plan in advance for snow days. G. Donoyan said they have been doing it this way for years, most school districts do it the same way, and this standardized calendar has also been approved by the RI Schools Superintendent Association and the Principal Association. J. Donlon said we cannot help it if we have to move graduation because of the weather; he asked G. Donoyan to ask the Commissioner of Education for a waiver to keep graduation to the same date. G. Donoyan said she will ask.

**Motion to Move the Graduation Date to Friday, June 13<sup>th</sup>: C. Roberts                      2<sup>nd</sup>: No one second. Motion dies.**  
**Motion to Approva1<sup>st</sup> Passage of the 2013-14 School Year Calendar: A. McGuire-Forcier                      2<sup>nd</sup>: E. Nadeau**  
**Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes**

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### **7. Request to Post for the Position of Secretary to the Director of Curriculum – G. Donoyan**

G. Donoyan said in your packet there is a job description for the position of secretary to the director of curriculum. She is seeking advice and consent to post for this position; she said this position has been vacant most of last year and this year and is in the budget for last year and this year as well.

Motion to Post for the position as written: J. Donlon                      2<sup>nd</sup>: A. McGuire-Forcier (for discussion only)

A. McGuire-Forcier said to G. Donoyan that she said she will not support this position but would support giving K. Blais a stipend because she has been doing both jobs all year long plus School Committee; she has taken on three roles in our district; she is more than capable of completing the tasks that she has been doing. She would like to motion to take some of the monies from this position to give K. Blais a stipend to continue to do all jobs and save money on this position. She motioned to give K. Blais a \$10,000 stipend. J. Donlon asked K. Blais if she feels that she can continue doing all three jobs or is this a burden on you and if so, does she think \$10,000 is enough because he does not think so. E. Nadeau said she cannot answer this because it is a personnel issue. G. Donoyan said she understands that this is a very tenuous place because the individual you are questioning is also here in public; she would like to have an executive session meeting to consider personnel issues; she also suggests that maybe the Committee look at the pay structures between the two positions but highly recommends that we keep this as two separate positions.

**Motion to Table the job description to the Secretary of the Director of Curriculum: A. McGuire-Forcier**  
**2<sup>nd</sup>: C. Roberts                      Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes**

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## **8. Update from Director of Curriculum – P. McGee**

P. McGee updated the Committee on WED Curricular Initiatives for the elementary schools; he will report out on the curricular initiatives for the WMS and WHS at the next regularly scheduled School Committee meeting.

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**Conferences** – A. McGuire-Forcier said she attended the conference at Bryant College regarding the Fair Funding Formula; she will exclude the word fair because it is not fair; there have been no changes and they are looking to accelerate it for next year with no guarantees.

**Superintendent’s Report** – G. Donoyan stated Harvard Business School recently published, *Immunity to Change*, coauthored by Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey. The authors focus on the obstacles that halt change. I quote, “A recent study showed that when doctors tell heart patients they will die if they don’t change their habits, only 1 in 7 will be able to follow through successfully. Desire and motivation aren’t enough; even when it’s literally a matter of life or death, the ability to change remains maddingly elusive.” End of quote. Given that the status quo is so potent, how can we change ourselves and our organizations?” A collective mindset, of a community or an organization, is a natural obstacle to change and holds us back. The collective mindset needs to unlock or release the obstacles that will allow us to move forward. Our mindset at the WED is changing slowly. With a consistent focus on student’s and the supports they need to be successful, I see a collective shift from an immunity to change to a welcoming of *something* that will lead to stability and success. And while there remains much anxiety in the community and school system (which, by the way, is one of the road blocks to change), we are slowly building a stronger school organization. Change doesn’t cause anxiety, though. It’s the feeling of being defenseless in the face of some unknown that causes anxiety. The school system should not be defenseless. We need to protect it and strengthen it. Constricting a system, human or otherwise, choking the breathe out of it, results in some pretty awful things. WED is slowly strengthening our system replacing the anxiety with a more healthy attitude to teaching and learning, providing stability and means of success. Consider the following healthy evidence: Consider how we have partnered with the Learning Community to escalate reading instruction in the elementary schools. That charter school is providing professional development, working with our teachers because our collective focus is on student success. I was privileged to see Union, Charter, and Management at the same table discussing problems and formulating solutions and plans. Consider our work with CCF. Their hard work providing summer learning programs has been revamped with a stronger focus on activities and curriculum that is aligned with the Common Core. In conjunction with our developing curriculum, CCF has improved its delivery to embrace strong academics. Consider how the WHS is planning and rethinking how to change supports in order to ensure all students graduate. We recognize and empathize with the community need for self-protection, but WED has an obligation to the children of Woonsocket. A stronger school in this City is a sure way to improve the status quo.

**Motion to Receive and Place on File: C. Roberts**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: J. Donlon (Unanimously Approved)**

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### **School Committee Good and Welfare:**

C. Roberts – thanked R. Ackerman for his 42 years of service.

J. Donlon – thanked R. Ackerman and stated he has been a stellar employee for WED and he will be missed. He thanked the WMS for their performance this evening; they worked very hard and did a nice job.

A. McGuire-Forcier – Passed.

E. Nadeau – thanked and extended her gratitude to R. Ackerman for his years of service. Wished everyone a happy and blessed Easter.

**Motion to Adjourn at 9:24 p.m.: A. McGuire-Forcier**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: J. Donlon (Unanimously Approved)**

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**Respectfully Submitted:**

**Kimberly Blais, WSC Recording Secretary**