

**WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2013
OPEN SESSION MINUTES
Woonsocket Middle School @ Hamlet, 60 Florence Drive
Woonsocket, RI 02895**

Meeting called to order by Vimala Phongsavanh at 6:00 p.m. in Open Session.

Roll Call: V. Phongsavanh, Present; E. Nadeau, Present; J. Donlon, Present; C. Roberts, Present. A. McGuire-Forcier, Present.

Motion to convene into Closed Session in accordance with RI Law 42-46-5-(a)(1) – Job Performance; 42-46-5-(a)(2) - Collective Bargaining at 6:00: J. Donlon 2nd: C. Roberts Roll Call Vote: 5 Yes

The individual had the option of going into open session and has waived that option. At this time, the Committee convened into Closed Session.

Motion to come out of Closed Session: V. Phongsavanh 2nd: A. McGuire-Forcier Roll Call Vote: 5 Yes

Meeting called to order by Vimala Phongsavanh at 7:05 p.m. to reconvene in Open Session.

Moment of Silence

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call: V. Phongsavanh, Present; E. Nadeau, Present; J. Donlon, Present; C. Roberts, Present. A. McGuire-Forcier, Present.

**V. Phongsavanh stated to the public that the Committee voted to deny the grievance: C. Roberts
2nd: A. McGuire-Forcier Roll Call Vote: 5 Yes**

Public Good and Welfare:

Lorraine Corey, controller of Mywqoonsocket.com website – She said she is requesting video copies of the School Committee meetings because she cannot make every meeting due to the fact that she also attends City Council, Budget Commission, and special workshop meetings. She has received emails from interested parties asking her to start posting the videos of the School Committee meetings on her website. After speaking to the Dan, the video person, she realizes that the video goes to Ms. Blais and then she submits it to Cox the first thing the next morning and then when she submits it to Cox, Cox gives her the previous meeting video; therefore, she will always be one meeting behind and prefers to be current. Until we get all the details worked out, she is requesting permission to borrow the videos from the previous meetings to make a copy and then will return the original video right back.

Anthony Cosentino, Social Studies Teacher at the WHS - He said on behalf of the students traveling to Rwanda he would like to thank the Committee for the approval at their last School Committee meeting and would like to update the Committee on their fundraising efforts. He introduced 6 out of 10 students who would be traveling to Rwanda which are Amy, Vicky, Hailey, Emily, and April. Emily advised the Committee that one of the first fundraisers will be an all you can eat breakfast at Club ParX at 36 Stanley Avenue in Woonsocket on September 29th from 8:00 a.m. to noon and would love for the Committee to attend; if you cannot attend please buy a ticket to help; the proceeds will go towards 10 scholarships for the Teddy Elementary School in Rwanda and we also donate some money to the Government Genocide Museum to help improve it.

Elizabeth Santana, resident of Woonsocket - She would like to share with the Committee and the members of WED that she represents support groups for parents with any difficulties related to education; they are meeting at the library; she has reserved 4 months there. These meetings are to help parents who are having difficulties either with their children or helping them find resources to connect with if they are having problems emotionally and physically; we are helping with motivation and positive thinking. She is sharing this information in case we know anyone who is in need of this type of support. This Monday was our first meeting and it was a success. Their next meetings are October 7, November 4, and December 2; it is the first Monday of each month and, if it's a holiday, it will go the 2nd Monday of each month. Please spread the word and we are here to support the Woonsocket residents and make it a better place to live in; to help and share with each other.

Mark Ostrowski, Parent of a 10th grader at the WHS - He said he was at a meeting last week with some of the officials there and noticed that his daughter and all her classes had no books; he asked why there are no books and he was told because they don't have books. He asked who to speak to about this and they told him the School Committee. So he asked the Committee where are the books, this is the second week of school, and she does not have books for her classes. He believes they need books to take home to study in order to become successful. He just paid the supplemental tax, he just gave us money so where are the

books. His daughter has a contract with us and we are suppose to provide the services so where are these services. Can he ask for a rebate, how much does a book cost, you are not providing the services so can he ask for his money back just like when you are in college. G. Donoyan said she will find out by tomorrow morning at 9:00 so please call her office and she will find out exactly what happened at the WHS. He asked G. Donoyan that she will give him an answer as to when to expect the books. G. Donoyan said yes.

Stephanie Anderson, Parent of a 3rd grader at Leo A. Savoie - She said she was very excited at the beginning of the school year because her son had a small class size of 17 kids in his class; in kindergarten he son had the unfortunate timing of ending up being the first class to have half day kindergarten; the poor teacher had to fit a full kindergarten curriculum into half the time which is impossible; therefore, her son and his classmates did not finish the whole curriculum for kindergarten; they had 25 kids in 1st grade so now they cannot get through the whole 1st grade curriculum because they are behind from kindergarten and the same thing for 2nd grade and now in 3rd grade they are still behind. She did speak to the principal at the elementary school because she found out that they are getting rid of a 3rd grade teacher and moving her to 1st grade because the first grade classes were too big. Now her son has 28 kids in his class. The principal said this is not her decision. She is disappointed that she called the Superintendent three times and never received a call back. She was told that there was a resource teacher in the room for a half a day and then put into another class for the other half of the day. She said instead of spending the money on a resource teacher put a 3rd grade back there. So what is going to be done about this. G. Donoyan said her issues are heard over and over again in the school department. We are at capacity and we are also under the advisement of the Budget Commission so we cannot automatically hire even though she would love to hire more teachers. She would and thinks the Committee would love to see smaller class sizes because it is in the best interest of all children but we are under duress with some really tight financial issues. We have maxed out all of our classrooms but we are doing the best we possibly can. S. Anderson asked why are we not asking the city for more money. She owns her own home and pays taxes and her son keeps getting the shaft; this is not alright. G. Donoyan said the WED has advocated and justified last year for increases in the school budget. We went from a \$59M budget to a \$66M budget just to make sure we are meeting the basic needs. C. Roberts said he would ask her to go to a Budget Commission meeting and to echo what the Superintendent said; that we have for the first time received more money than prior but all five Committee Members voted not to close Fifth Avenue School and thinks this could be part of the capacity problems. We went to the Budget Commission to fight to keep that school open and that decision rests there. RIDE is talking about full day Kindergarten and part of the solution to fitting that into our buildings is by taking art and putting them on mobile carts. This is not a solution that he would embrace. We need parents at the Budget Commission meetings. He has questions for Joe Spagna, WED Finance Director who cannot give him answers because he is on a gag order from the Budget Commission not to discuss finances. He said he will go with her to a Budget Commission meeting.

Superintendent Recognitions: G. Donoyan asked if everyone can take a moment right now to remember that there are souls that perished in the attacks of September 11th. We are a strong, wonderful country but we are saddened by those losses that we will always feel. May our loved ones find solace in knowing that they were remembered by the Woonsocket Community. First, she would like to recognize the Director of Human Resources, Ms. Kathleen Lombardo. The WED would like to thank her at this point in time for her dedication of nearly 15 years to the WED. We wish her well during her retirement and hope good health and happiness follows her. Thank you Kathie for everything. We also recognize today the Teacher of the Year, Teacher Assistant of the Year, Clerical Employee of the Year, and Custodian of the Year. These are all very, very special people. The 2013 Teacher of the Year is Linda Barrette. Linda started with the WED in 1988 as a teacher assistant. Her love of the students and education prompted her to complete a teaching degree at RIC. In 2000, she began her first year as a teacher for our district, working as a Special Educator in an intermediate self-contained classroom, where she has worked ever since. Not only has Linda dedicated her years to the field of education but her two daughters, Jen Maiello and Melissa Olivier have been inspired by Linda to become educators and are both part of our Woonsocket staff. In fact, Jen was our 2010 Teacher of the Year. This past year her class performed "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" and is currently working on "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory". Linda's students performed this production for the entire school and also for the School Committee but what was really powerful was one of the statements made from one of her students. "I learned to be grateful and Ms. Barrette showed us to appreciate each other. She showed us how to be a good person and a good student in this world. She is the best teacher". Congratulations! The 2013 Teacher Assistant of the Year is Michael Davis. Michael was hired as a teacher assistant in September 2002. He went through Woonsocket's own teacher assistant training program in January of 2002 and began in a permanent position with us the following September. Over his years with us, he has worked as both a classroom assistant and as a one-on-one personal assistant. Some of the recognitions/nominations state that every student, staff and teacher at Harris School has benefited from having Mr. Mike be part of our school family. His dedication and caring outshines any and all of his job responsibilities that he so far exceeds. Every one knows and is thankful for Mr. Mike. Thank you Mr. Mike. The 2013 Clerical Employee of the Year is Nancy Belisle. Nancy started with the Woonsocket Education Department in November 1987 as a Guidance Clerk at the high school. In August of 1988 she transferred to the position of Secretary at the Career and Technical Center, where she has been ever since. She has also done a phenomenal job as secretary to the School Committee as well. Nancy is highly capable of accomplishing any job she is asked to perform, and the quality of her work is always excellent said by Dr. Bedard. Congratulations Nancy!

We are very proud to announce the 2013 Facilities Employee of the Year Nicholas McDowell. Nicholas joined the substitute ranks with WED in September 2008 and was a former student of Woonsocket. His dedicated work ethic soon became apparent and he was hired as a permanent custodian in October of 2009. G. Donoyan said this is really important for people to hear....Nicholas is an outstanding employee. He goes above and beyond his call of duty. He always has a positive attitude and a graceful presence. The McFee Administration Building is better organized and is cleared from other dust and debris. He always takes the time to welcome you throughout his busy day. He has been an asset to our staff. He takes pride in the appearance of our buildings. G. Donoyan said it is with such pride that she thanks him. Congratulations Nicholas!

Motion to receive and place on file: V. Phongsavanh 2nd: C. Roberts (Unanimously Approved)

Approval of August 28, 2013 Open Minutes:

Motion to approve August 28, 2013 Open Minutes: A. McGuire-Forcier 2nd: J. Donlon (Unanimously Approved)

Consent Agenda:

Motion to approve the consent agenda in its entirety: C. Roberts 2nd: A. McGuire-Forcier (Unanimously Approved)

Communications – None.

Committee Reports – None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Discussion/Vote on Keystone Information System Training - J. Spagna

J. Spagna said in a meeting with some Budget Commission Members and with the Department of Revenue, it was decided that we should forego the switch over of our financial management software system in hopes to save the \$225,000 that we had budgeted for that amount. We decided to expand the training on our existing system which is called Keystone; he has found that this system does have a lot of capabilities. He recommends to increase the training to implement some of the modules that we have owned and have been paying for over the past 10 or more years and see what this system can do during FY14; Maybe in FY15 we might decide that this system is not doing what we would like it to do.

Motion to approve: C. Roberts 2nd: A. McGuire-Forcier, J. Donlon Roll Call Vote: 5 Yes

2. Approval of Bid Awards: J. Spagna

Bid #14-02 Janitorial Supplies; Bid #14-03 Athletic Medical Supplies; Bid #14-04 Athletic Supplies; Bid #14-05 Athletic Uniforms; Bid #14-06 Nursing Medical Supplies

J. Spagna said all these bids were awarded by the Budget Commission on Monday except for Athletic Supplies. The reason why he had to go to the Budget Commission before the School Committee because it is a timing issue. His secretary was out throughout the summer and he found out that his secretary is responsible for the timing of these bids to be issued on time; therefore, they fell behind. The Budget Commission tabled the Athletic Supplies Bid because they had questions on quality of items being purchased and someone from the public questioned why we were purchasing certain items over others; in many of these awards we do not accept any substitutes. G. Nasuti said every year they put out these bid specs, have vendors who bid for these items, he reviews the bids, and in most cases takes the minimal bid if the product is of type quality that we need. At the Interscholastic League level we need equipment that is for competitive competition; for example, recreational tennis balls cannot be used for Interscholastic League Tennis. The bids in front of Committee tonight is what they need, within budget, and the proper process was done when it came along the line of bids. It is the quality of the item that is needed.

Motion to Approve all Bids in one passage: A. McGuire-Forcier 2nd: E. Nadeau, J. Donlon Roll Call Vote: 5 Yes

3. Discussion of Full Day Kindergarten - V. Phongsavanh

V. Phongsavanh said a little while ago we had a surprise grant from the general assembly in the amount of \$500,000 to help start and kick off full day kindergarten; she would like an update from the school department and from the state representatives and senators about the progress of this grant because she has not heard since two weeks before school started. She gave the Committee a highlighted email that was sent from the Superintendent about the updates. G. Donoyan said we all realize that the fiscal issues are under the privy of the Budget Commission at this time and we continue to work with them to ensure that full day kindergarten occurs and with the kick start of the \$500,000 it would be a wonderful complement to the services we provide our children. If we do not use this money by the end of this school year, we lose that money so we need to make sure kindergarten starts at least by January. If this does occur, she suggested to the Budget Commission that we would have to require full day kindergarten action before December 1st so the WED can prepare for ample space, moving, hiring, busing, and parent notification. She also asked them to consider the fact that the entire month of December has to be carved out because not only is

it winter but we may have snow or weather conditions that would impair any of our progress. We would have to hire about 10 to 11 new teachers. At this time we are having additional meetings with the Budget Commission to clarify when and if full day kindergarten will occur. V. Phongsavanh asked G. Donoyan if anyone received in writing anything about the \$500,000. G. Donoyan said not yet; it's been verbal and confidential. V. Phongsavanh said we need the time to plan and don't want this dropped on us at the last minute like they did for closing Fifth Avenue School; should the Committee put the pressure on the Budget Commission about how to start planning to bring full day Kindergarten back or what to do with the \$500,000. C. Roberts said it would be his recommendation that we instruct the Superintendent to contact RIDE because they have the task of implementing or overseeing how the money is spent; we need to ask if it is fully restricted to only full day kindergarten or can we purpose another use for this money and when the access to the funds expires; we need to know if there is a difference between the school year and the fiscal year. We have no actual details and we need clarification on these two items and to send a copy to the Budget Commission. G. Donoyan said she received verbal confirmation from RIDE that in their account they have received the \$500,000 from the general assembly and she has asked the Director of Finance for confirmation regarding the letter that must have accompanied the money but they have not forwarded this to her yet. C. Roberts said we need to be more proactive and if the state is incapable of sending us a letter then we say we sent it out; he would like something written on the record from the School Committee saying they verbally have said this and we need to know X, Y, Z and the timeline, etc and feels that this letter should go out tomorrow. V. Phongsavanh asked G. Donoyan to draft a letter and send out by the end of the week. G. Donoyan said yes.

Discussion only. No vote was taken.

4. Discussion/Vote to give a video copy of the School Committee Meetings to Lorraine Corey for the Mywoonsocket.com website - A. McGuire-Forcier

A. McGuire-Forcier said L. Corey spoke under good and welfare and is requesting a video copy of all School Committee meetings so she can put them on Mywoonsocket.com website. There are people from the community who cannot make the meetings and this would be an opportunity from them to look at it. J. Donlon said L. Corey said she is willing to pay for this so maybe the money can help to pay for the video recorder's salary. A. McGuire-Forcier said no and the money goes to pay for the dvd; actually if she requests this we would have to provide it to her. G. Donoyan said we do not get requests for dvds but we do get requests for paper reports but that's part of the open records. R. Ackerman said if the tapes are owned by the WED then they are public records and anyone is entitled to get them; they are not private so they would not be exempt from the access to public records requirements and the WED is entitled to charge for the tape, in this case, and the amount of time it would take and the cost to incur to retrieve the tape; he said if the tape is the property of WED then WED does not want to lose custody of the tape so a copy should be done by the WED if that is the only record that we have of these meetings. L. Corey said she thought the video recorder had possession of the tapes longer than what she thought so her initial request was to ask the video recorder to put it on a dvd and she would pay for whatever time it took to copy plus the cost of the disk. However, she learned the recorder gives the tape to Ms. Blais and she sends to Cox first thing in the morning at which time she receives the tape from the previous meeting. She will be one meeting behind and she is okay with this. However, after hearing R. Ackerman she feels that he is correct and does not want to take the only tape of the meeting. She would be happy if the WED could make a copy for her. At this time, she would like approval of her request.

Motion to Approve: A. McGuire-Forcier 2nd: V. Phongsavanh Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes (VP, EN, AM, CR) 1 No (JD)

5. Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare") Planning Update - C. Roberts

C. Roberts said there is no detailed planning on this tonight he simply put in an article which talks about a Pennsylvania School District. Obamacare is something that we need to start to determine a policy in how it may affect us. He did speak to the Superintendent and he is looking to get a better grasp on how this might affect us and what our plans are; other school districts are starting to take measures. Any employee that we do not currently provide health care to that works more than 30 hours per week would technically be eligible for this; therefore, we may have to review some of our policies as to how we hire some of our substitutes because we are definitely not prepared to start paying for medical insurance for them and their families. He suggests that the Committee gets an update from the Superintendent and J. Spagna as to what our exposure looks like and what ideas have been kicked around; he knows the Budget Commission has also started to talk about this. J. Spagna stated the division of finance will have a workshop specifically on this October 1, 2013 and he will be attending with T. Mallozzi.

Discussion only. No vote was taken.

6. Lunch Monitor Planning Update - C. Roberts

C. Roberts said last year the Committee talked about lunch monitors, their rate of pay, and how they were assigned. He requested an update on how the lunch fund was doing because we had a change of price since last year and wanted to know if we are headed in the right direction. However, J. Spagna was told by the Budget Commission that he cannot tell us any of this. He wants it on the record that they are inquiring about our own lunch fund but was told they cannot get any information. He would also like to know how we assign these individuals; there is nobody listed to Bernon School and some people work 5 hours and others work 18 hours. He is not requesting any action until they see how the lunch fund is doing because that is what pays for all these people.

Conferences – None.

Superintendent's Report – G. Donoyan said the school year has started smoothly. I've visited most all schools and noticed an upbeat attitude in all schools by teachers, students, and parents. Even at the Woonsocket Block Party, parents came up to introduce themselves and remarked that their child's teacher or Principal was great. So, I believe this year started very well and we intend to maintain positive accomplishments for the school year. We are at near capacity in our elementary schools, which is causing some logistical issues that we are trying to deal with. The High School is a safer place with teacher's scheduled duties as hall monitors. The seven period day, thanks to the SC approval, has made a tremendous impact on the culture of the learning community. Our operations are running smoothly thanks to Peter Fontaine and his crew. Grants and Assessments, Linda Filomeno has worked diligently in locating new grants as well as cooperate with our partners in designing stronger more effective supports for our students and their families. We want to piggy back o the success we've celebrated this past year by identifying the special revenue streams that can help move initiatives forward. We're investigating technology trends to see how we can expose our students to learning opportunities that hinge on STEAM experience – that is, science, technology, engineering, , arts, and mathematics. I encourage everyone to recognize the importance of valuing education in this community. Our credibility is slowly reestablished with the good things the students and schools are doing. Bernon Elementary will have its playground by the end of this month, NECAP assessments will begin October, and school will continue to run smoothly. Our work never ends, but the results are worthwhile. Woonsocket's public schools are getting stronger and better every day. That's something to celebrate! Thank you.

Motion to receive and place on file: V. Phongsavanh 2nd: A. McGuire-Forcier, J. Donlon (Unanimously Approved)

School Committee Good and Welfare:

V. Phongsavanh – She congratulated the teacher, teacher assistant the facilities custodian, and the clerical of the year Nancy Belisle who has been very helpful to us throughout the years. Congrats to them on well received and well deserved awards and recognitions. In addition, twelve years ago she was in a physics class with Ms. Ducette at the WHS when the September 11th terrorist attacks happened and it was a time when she was questioning why people would do this to our country and why they hated us so much. It made her think of a bigger picture of the world questioning our own policies and actions. It was a driver to look into why these things happen and there was a time where she did get involved in learning about foreign policy, learning about national policy, and looking at us locally. What makes our country great is that we are able to think on our own, able to have our own opinions. And for those men and women who sacrificed their lives, who gave the ultimate sacrifice and just recognizing them and all their families who were affected till this day. Our country has never been the same from technology to policy making and to a lot of things that have changed the world. We have to recognize this and thank those families.

C. Roberts – He said he has two requests for the Superintendent. One, after hearing from the community tonight, send out information about where we have the overages, enrollments, and what it looks like across the buildings so we can get a better handle on what those classrooms look like. The second request would be the dress code policy. This is obviously a parental issue and there is also a lot of chatter of who is following it and who is not, what the administrators do to enforce, and why some are in colors and the next kid is wearing his pants around his ankles. He would like to know a little more about the exact process; therefore, he requests an update for the next meeting as to how this exactly is suppose to play out for the high school.

J. Donlon – He said he agrees with C. Roberts that something has to be done. If the administrators are not enforcing this then they will have to take care of this; there has to be some kind of punishment. Thanked all the people who were recognized this evening; hopes everyone starts working a little bit harder so they can live up to the standards of these people. Barry Field looks remarkable; Dan Dailey is doing an excellent job at Barry Field. He wished Mr. Henry Trudeau a speedy recovery.

A.McGuire-Forcier – Passed.

E. Nadeau – Passed.

Motion to Adjourn at 8:13 p.m.: A. McGuire-Forcier 2nd: V. Phongsavanh, J. Donlon (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully Submitted:

Kimberly Blais, WSC Recording Secretary