

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL BOARD
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2014
7:00 PM – OPEN SESSION
Woonsocket Middle School @ Hamlet
60 Florence Drive, Woonsocket, RI 02895

Call to Order by Soren Seale.
Moment of Silence
Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call:	George Lacouture, Chairman	Absent
	Soren Seale, Vice-Chairman	Present
	Daniel Chattman	Present
	Susan Pawlina	Present
	Jose Rivera	Present

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

Rob Desrosiers, Globe Park Elementary Principal: Introduced Jessica Frechette, teacher of medically-fragile students, and Don Poli, a first grade teacher, both of whom created an interactive video showing how their students worked together in a peer buddy reading program. The students were introduced and the book adaptations for the medically fragile students were presented, then the video was shown.

Ellen Shalvey, Sodexo: Extended an invitation to the public and the school board to attend a Future Chefs competition being held at 10 am at the Hamlet Middle School Cafetorium. The competition is for 4th, 5th and 6th graders that submitted recipes.

Rachel Zielinski, Parent: Stated that her son is currently attending the WACTC and noted that she had appeared before the school board at their last regular meeting requesting a closed session in regards to some issues he has been having at school. The chairman had told her to follow the proper protocol and she told him she had done that. Zielinski asked the board if they knew she had filed a complaint to RIDE and had received a findings letter from them. When she approached them previously, she had assumed the school board had seen the findings letter from the state. Mr. Seale wasn't aware of the complaint through RIDE. Zielinski said she filed it in January and asked Dr. Donoyan if there was a reason the school board never got to see it. Mr. Seale said that this wasn't the appropriate forum to hear this complaint. "That is why I asked for a closed meeting about this," said Zielinski. Seale said he didn't want to downplay the issue, but said that Mr. Lacouture probably meant that the proper channel would be to have the principal address the issue. If she wasn't satisfied with the decision there, then she would go through the superintendent. If she wasn't satisfied with the superintendent's response, then the issue would come before the school board. Zielinski noted that there are so many issues overlapping that they are getting confused. "I don't think my son should be getting death threats and be afraid to go to school. I have it here on my phone and can play it for you. I have done everything I possibly can to get something done and just keep getting the run-around. There are no notes from some of the meetings that were held. It's absurd! All I care about is my son getting an education and being safe and happy. Then you want to put him in an alternative assessment class. I don't believe he needs to be in an alternative assessment class. The school department has even hired a one-on-one assistant for him and it's still happening. That doesn't sit well with me. Then when I was at the high school today, there were four fights and two kids in handcuffs in the office! I have had a conversation with the superintendent about this," explained Zielinski. Mr. Seale said he isn't aware of all the conversations she has had with various people. Dr. Donoyan agreed that they have had several meetings and that there are findings that have been reported to and from RIDE Special Education Department. They are being dealt with by legal counsel at this time. Donoyan said she will not speak about confidential student matters in an open forum. Mrs. Zielinski stressed again that this is why she had asked for a closed meeting. Mr. Seale told her that his phone number is on the website and asked her to call him tomorrow and they can go over the whole thing. Zielinski stressed again that she has all the letters and is following the protocol. Seale said if they don't have anything at their level, then there has been a breakdown in the process somewhere. Zielinski said she keeps going up against a brick wall when she asks for things in writing from people and they won't do it. "It's like nobody wants to listen. How can a child be threatened like this and they are getting paid for this? My taxes are paying for this? If it was your son coming home with death threats saying they know where he lives, etc., and he was afraid to go to school wouldn't you do the same thing?" asked Zielinski. Mr. Seale said that all he has to offer is for her to call him tomorrow and hopefully they can get her issue resolved or at least on the right path to be being resolved. She said she would like a closed hearing because otherwise, she is afraid the school board will never see the letters and information.

David Trenuf, 175 Bayberry Road: Said it's the time of year when schools get NECAP scores back and students are placed in classes for next year. He is a parent of a middle school student and asked the school board if he can be involved in any discussions that come up regarding this policy as it pertains to the middle school level. He has some concerns about this placement policy and heterogeneous and homogenous grouping. He said he has some ideas to share about this and believes the same policy has been used for decades and makes no sense to him.

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Giovanna Donoyan, Superintendent

Dr. Donoyan recognized the honor guards and athletes that were present at the celebration for George Nasuti, saying they gave everyone goose bumps. She also recognized the school principals for the hard work they do every day. "Their plates are full and they are diligent to make sure the students are safe."

Motion to receive and place on file: J. Rivera

2nd: S. Pawlina (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

• **February 26, 2014 Open Minutes-**

Motion to approve: D. Chattman
Roll Call Vote: 4 yes

2nd: S. Pawlina
Approved

CONSENT AGENDA: Motion to approve: D. Chattman 2nd: S. Pawlina

- **Removed for discussion by S. Pawlina: Whelan, Kinder & Siket, LLP (Personnel Actions)** – Ms. Pawlina noted the 90-day overdue invoices to this firm and asked if we are still using them or not. Mr. Joseph Spagna said that they were used for contract negotiations. He doesn't believe we are still using them. Dr. Donoyan confirmed that it has ended and we are very close to solidifying the negotiations at this point. Ms. Pawlina stressed that we cannot go over \$5,000 from this point on.
- **Removed for discussion by S. Pawlina: EPE-Leaders to Learn Event/Washington DC (Field Trip/Conf.)** – Ms. Pawlina asked about using Teaching Partners as substitutes and whether or not they could be used for this. Dr. Donoyan said that there are no teachers going so there is no need to use the teaching partners.

ROLL CALL VOTE ON ENTIRE CONSENT AGENDA: 4 YES.

APPROVED AS SUBMITTED.

COMMUNICATIONS: None

SCHOOL BOARD REPORTS REPORTS: Mr. Seale announced that the first public Curriculum meeting will be held on Monday, March 17th, at the Hamlet Middle School at 6 p.m.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Discussion/Vote on the FY15 Budget – Dr. G. Donoyan, J. Spagna

Motion to remove from the table: D. Chattman

2nd: S. Pawlina (Unanimously Approved)

Motion to approve the FY15 Budget: D. Chattman

2nd: S. Pawlina

Ms. Pawlina questioned Page 5, Line 30, of the Personnel Supplement for a Resource Teacher, saying there was no salary listed. Mr. Spagna said he had also spoken to someone today who was concerned that there was a person being removed, but that position is not that particular person's vacancy. "With this personnel supplement, it is very, very fluid. It is the position that is important. We have not cut any positions—in fact, we have added positions. We have added four teachers in the FY15 budget," said Spagna. "When we vote on this budget, we are not voting on the people—we are voting on the dollar amount, is that correct?" asked Seale. "Correct," confirmed Spagna.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 4 yes.

FY15 BUDGET APPROVED.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Discussion/Vote on Job Description for WHS Principal/WACTC Director – G. Donoyan

Motion to approve the job description: S. Pawlina

2nd: D. Chattman

Mr. Rivera asked if once the job description is approved, it would be posted with a deadline for April added to it. Dr. Donoyan explained that first they have to have it go before the Budget Commission to have them approve it and post a timeline and the fiscal impact. "Applications are due by Noon on April 11th," said Donoyan. "If your goal is April 11th, that is 30 days from today. Is that feasible? How long is the posting for this job?" asked Mr. Seale. Dr. Donoyan noted that the next Budget Commission Meeting is on March 17th and then we could post it the next day if it's approved and have two weeks to screen candidates. "Given the problems we have had filling other positions, I suggest interviewing more than three candidates at a time," said Seale. Rivera asked, "Is there anyone in mind in-house? You seem pretty confident that you will be able to fill this position." "We always have individuals in mind and encourage them to apply and go through the process," answered Donoyan. "In other words—read between the lines," noted Rivera. "Once the principal is selected, when they need to hire a teacher, I think they need to look at hiring more minorities because a large proportion of the student body is minorities. We have a very small percentage of minority teachers. I think if we had more minority teachers, we would have less of a dropout rate," said Mr. Chattman. Dr. Donoyan agreed with him, saying it's paramount that whoever is hired as principal is mindful of this.

VOTE ON MAIN MOTION: 4 yes

APPROVED

CONFERENCES: None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Giovanna Donoyan, Superintendent

Dr. Donoyan said that the WED has continued to find alternative models in which to bring all-day Kindergarten to Woonsocket. At all times, the WED is being prudent to the citizens of Woonsocket. The WED has also continued to investigate new pathways to help students graduate. We are also in the final stages with our choice of a Human Resources Director and hope to recommend the candidate for appointment at the next meeting. We are continuing our search for a Technology Director. As far as the water issue at the middle schools, the hot water is clear of sediment. According to the school principals, teacher supplies throughout the district have been purchased and supplies are fully stocked. Donoyan also reported that working relations with each municipal department have been nothing short of smooth with the new administration.

Motion to receive & place on file: J. Rivera

2nd: S. Pawlina (Unan. Approved)

SCHOOL BOARD GOOD & WELFARE:

J. RIVERA: In regards to the report of the teachers' supplies being purchased—he saw teachers in the back of the room shaking their heads. "If the statement from the principals to the superintendent that supplies are fully stocked is not accurate, please contact your principal or us. Reach out to us, because if it isn't accurate, we want to know." Rivera reported that he visited Bernon Elementary this week to read for Reading Week. "It was a pleasure reading to them and to realize how smart these kids are—especially the special needs students." He encouraged his fellow board members to do this also. "It's important to get into the classrooms to see for yourself what's going on out there."

S. PAWLINA: On behalf of the Bernon PTO Co-Chairs, she thanked everyone for making today's event a great one. Mr. Rivera was the highlight of the event. Ms. Pawlina did get a report that teachers did get in their mail slots a form to order supplies. Spoke about last week's budget meeting being held the same night as parent/teacher conferences in the building. She received a lot of feedback on that and her thought was that if the workshop could have been held in the hallway, it would have been held in the hallway. She wants people to be able to be a part of every decision. Former School Committee Member Allen Auclair has asked Rep. Steven Casey to submit a bill requiring that a student must attend at least 80% of the school year in order to be able to receive state assistance. Call him if you support this bill.

S. SEALE: Asked what the status was of Mr. Malenfant. "When is he due to leave?" Dr. Donoyan said that the position has been budgeted for the entire year, but the Budget Commission hasn't determined when that would be. She believes it will be shortly. Mr. Seale was disappointed that he wasn't the favorite at the Reading Day today. "It was very fun. The children were a little bit older than my own kids. It was a great reminder of why we do what we do." Regarding the FY15 Budget Workshop, Seale thanked Tom Bruce, Dina Dutremble, Chris Beauchamp, and Garrett Mancieri for participating and said it was very helpful. Mr. Seale said he attended a Beer and Dynamite Fundraiser the other night to raise money for a playground at Leo Savoie Elementary School. He reported that the last PAC meeting was cancelled and the next one will be a week from today. He encouraged everyone to attend. They will be talking about ways in which parents can be involved and school policies.

D. CHATTMAN: He was glad to hear that some corporations in the state are interested in starting programs with students at the high school. "Not all kids want to go to college. At the budget workshop, it was a little depressing

because it was mentioned that there are 6,000 students in the Woonsocket School district and over 4,000 of them live in poverty.” In regards to Title I funds, he asked how long we have had it. He was told over 40 years. “If this money has been invested for 40 years at the elementary level and students aren’t doing better, then we should invest it somewhere else. If you invest it in elementary and by the 8th grade these students aren’t prepared for the 9th grade, we need to look at some other ways to reach them. Maybe we should invest it at the middle school level instead.” He was glad to hear that the supplies are being ordered. “If kids are going home telling their parents they have no paper, then they must be hearing it from the teachers. If you need supplies, tell your principals.

Motion to adjourn: S. Pawlina

2nd: D. Chattman (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, Substitute WSB Recording Secretary