

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2016
Woonsocket Middle School @ Hamlet
60 Florence Drive, Woonsocket, RI 02895

Meeting called to order by Chairman Soren Seale at 6:15 p.m. in Open Session.

Roll Call by Superintendent Patrick McGee:

Soren Seale, Chairman	Present
Donald Burke, Vice-Chairman	Present
Susan Pawlina	Present
Paul Bourget	Present
Valerie Gonzalez	Absent

Motion to convene in closed session at 6:15 p.m. in accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-5(a)(2) for the purpose of discussing a litigation matter involving a former school department employee: P. Bourget 2nd: D. Burke
Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes APPROVED

Motion to re-convene into open session at 7:00 p.m.: S. Seale 2nd: S. Pawlina, P. Bourget
Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes APPROVED

Motion to seal the closed session minutes of March 9, 2016: P. Bourget 2nd: D. Burke
Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes APPROVED

Moment of Silence
Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call by Superintendent Patrick McGee:

Soren Seale, Chairman	Present
Donald Burke, Vice-Chairman	Present
Susan Pawlina	Present
Paul Bourget	Present
Valerie Gonzalez	Absent

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

Kevin K. Coleman Elementary School: Principal Angela Holt expressed her gratitude for being able to support students' emotional health and wellbeing with the Title I Social Worker assigned to Coleman Elementary. Students attended the bullying prevention play that was put on at the Stadium Theater. She introduced Ms. Menard, Social Worker, and presented a video that was made by the second grade students with a free app called Puppet Pets which addressed ideas about good ways to discourage bullying.

Nancy Benoit, Woonsocket Resident: Member of the RI coalition against gun violence and has asked the School Committee (SC) Chairman to put a resolution in support of the bill to ban all firearms from all elementary and secondary schools in the State of Rhode Island on the agenda. The bill did not pass last year and would like the support of the SC so it will hopefully pass this year.

Motion to take agenda item #4 under New Business out of order: S. Seale 2nd: P. Bourget
Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes APPROVED

4. Discussion/Approval on the WSC Resolution on Gun Free Schools – S. Seale
Motion for discussion and approval: S. Seale 2nd: P. Bourget
S. Seale stated that the school policy we have prohibits students from carrying guns but it does not address anyone else (i.e. teachers, members of the public, etc). With the escalating gun violence, especially in schools, this is a very important resolution to pass. This resolution will address the presence of guns in schools and by those that are authorized to carry a gun such as police. The coalition put in three bills last year, none of them passed.
Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes APPROVED

CONFERENCES/DISCUSSIONS – ELO Presentation – K. Barbosa

K. Barbosa, Coordinator for the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO) - This program provides students at the High School opportunities to earn credit outside of the traditional curriculum and classroom. This is a student centered program with expert support. The students are actually working out in the field and credits are earned on a proficiency based assessment. There are several community partners in this program including individuals, organizations, and colleges. The list is growing. This is a good opportunity for seniors that fall short of credits to make up the work in a more creative way and earn the credits (credit recovery) needed to graduate. Many students successfully earn the needed credits and are encouraged and able to attend college. This program also allows for students to get hands-on experience in the work field and to then determine if they like the field of work. This year is the first year Opportunities for Latin American Students (OLAS) is implemented. This program is great for building academic skills as well as promoting cultural diversity. The collaboration with Roger Williams University, Department of Health and Thundermist is going very well. They are invited to the High School Redesign Conference this year and will be debuting the tool kit for other schools to view. ELO needs to address the issue of data collection because they need to provide data to sustain funding. This program is not funded by WED. K. Barbosa is optimistic this program will continue to grow successfully. This programs provides services for all grades and all levels.

Motion to receive and place on file: P. Bourget

2nd: D. Burke (Unanimously approved by the SC)

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. None.
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NEW BUSINESS:

1. Financial Update – B. Peryea

B. Peryea said the monthly reports will now include comparison figures from prior months so it is easier to distinguish exactly what is shifting from month to month and welcomes any feedback the SC may have. Last month was unique because the old and new financial systems had to be meshed together. The new system handles some things differently, such as open positions and encumbers the open position at a median salary until the end of the year so there is a snapshot of how much money can be saved, which also includes employment benefits. The old system had under-encumbered the Occupational Therapist line and substitute lines; therefore, the salary line needed to be increased for that reason. Some adjustments were made for FICA, Pension, and Medicare lines. He will present this new format and provide a more in-depth review on a quarterly basis. S. Seale asked why the local revenue projections are going down. B. Peryea stated there was an error in the miscellaneous line, money was booked against it; nothing to do with our local or state funding. The audit results are made official and there is a positive balance as of June 30, 2015; we are sitting on a \$2M positive fund balance. He would like have another meeting with SC to discuss future plans for where these funds can best be applied.

Motion to receive and place on file: P. Bourget

2nd: D. Burke (Unanimously approved by the SC)

2. Discussion/Approval on the Amendment to the District's 2016-2017 School Year Calendar – P. McGee

Motion for discussion and approval: S. Seale

2nd: S. Pawlina

Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes

APPROVED

3. Discussion/Approval on Parent Involvement Policy – 1st Passage – P. McGee

Motion for discussion and approval: S. Seale

2nd: D. Burke

S. Seale said this is the policy that was approved by the Parent Advisory Council (PAC). In order to receive Title I funding, WED is required to have this policy in place every year. P. McGee thanked L. Filomeno for spearheading this project, and the many people that contributed their time and hard work.

Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes

APPROVED

4. Discussion/Approval on the WSC Resolution on Gun Free Schools – S. Seale

This agenda item was taken out of order and can be found after the "public" Good and Welfare on Page 1.

5. Discussion/Approval on the WSC Resolution in Support of a Charter Amendment regarding the School

Motion for discussion and approval: S. Seale

2nd: P. Bourget

S. Seale said this came to light from discussions with B. Peryea and more recently during the budget workshop. March 1st is a very early day in the budget cycle to put forth accurate projections. The school department expenses fluctuate month to month naturally. P. Bourget stated it makes more sense to give the city a budget with ten months of data, verses six. This is to ensure projections would be as accurate as they can be.

Roll Call Vote: 4 Yes

APPROVED

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

➤ **Graduation Rate** – On Wednesday, February 24th the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) released the 2015 high school graduation rates for all Rhode Island high schools. Although Woonsocket High School improved by 6%, increasing from 59% in 2014 to 65% in 2015, we are currently last in the state. Whether or not students graduate from high school is not just the high school's responsibility, but it is a systemic responsibility involving all staff from grades K-12, as well as parents, students and the community. I am not going to make excuses as to why our graduation rate is this low, it is unacceptable; however I would like to explain the work that is being done across our district by dedicated teachers, staff, and administrators to ensure success for ALL STUDENTS and, ultimately, improve our graduation rate. The WED has begun the work to ensure that all students are exposed to a RIGOROUS, guaranteed and viable curriculum. This means that we have a consistent curriculum in grades K-12. Specifically, we have adopted a K-2 phonics program, called Foundations, as well as a common Reading Workshop model in grades K-5. This year the WED adopted Eureka Mathematics in grades K-2, and will roll-out Eureka in grades 3-8 next year. This program is much more rigorous than the previous math curriculum. At the middle school and high school we have been working on common assessments, as well as a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Teachers have worked to align their curriculum to the Common Core and to create continuity across grades. In an effort to ensure a smooth transition for our in-coming 9th grade students, the middle school administration and staff have been collaborating with the high school on designing mid-term and final exams, as well as a modified Portfolio (a graduation requirement for students at WHS) for 8th grade students beginning next year. The Guidance Department at the high school has also been coordinating dates this year for high school students to visit the 8th graders at the middle school to answer questions about high school and provide valuable information.

Due to the fact that the 9th grade is the most critical year in high school for students to establish success, the high school has implemented a mandatory, year-long course for all 9th grade students called Success 101. This class offers students various strategies to better organize themselves in high school, create short-term and long-term goals, as well as teach study skills, to name a few. Ninth grade students also have peer mentors who are assigned to Freshmen advisories. This provides our 9th graders with a peer, in addition to a faculty member, to help them through their Freshmen year. The high school also has increased the number of academic supports for struggling students in the areas of math and reading. In closing, although we have a long way to go, I am proud of, and encouraged by the work we are doing across the district to increase academic rigor, student achievement and, ultimately, increase the graduation rate. We are committed to improving education in Woonsocket!

S. Seale stated that approximately two years ago we raised the pass grade at the WHS from a 60 to a 70; adding an important level of rigor for those students. Hopefully the trend will continue to go up. We had an entire year where we did not have a full-time superintendent. It is easier to acclimate to change when you have a full leadership team in place. It is the first time in years that we have had very few vacancies across the board from administrators to teachers. P. Bourget said what they plan to do over the next few months and years is to promote the branding.

Motion to receive and place on file: P. Bourget

2nd: D. Burke (Unanimously approved by the SC)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

- **Susan Pawlina** – She was unable to attend the last joint meeting in November due to personal reasons; for this upcoming joint meeting on Monday she will be out of town; however, she has conveyed with the SC Chairman the items she would like discussed. This morning she attended the kick off event of the RI Healthy Eating at Savoie School; there were a lot of dignitaries at this event and it was quite exciting having them there to help us kick off a state-wide initiative. Thanked Principal Coderre for inviting her. Mental Health Counseling - when the budget was reviewed and we brought up what positions needed to be added, social workers and the mental health of our students was overwhelmingly agreed upon as the area of need; we need to get these individuals into our schools for our students and find alternative resources to help us fund this. Thinks there are some opportunities out there that she would like to explore.

- **Soren Seale** – Joint meeting with City Council – As we have passed the budget for city council approval, he had a conversation with City Council President Al Brien. They agreed it would be an appropriate time to re-visit the joint meeting that they were struggling to have in the past. This joint meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 14th at 7:00 p.m. at the WMS-Hamlet Building. Best wishes to the Council President for a quick recovery; he has heard he has been sick recently.

Motion to adjourn at 8:19 p.m.: P. Bourget

2nd: S. Pawlina (Unanimously approved by the SC) _____

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly A. Blais
WSC Recording Secretary