

**MINUTES**  
**WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2016**  
**Woonsocket Middle School @ Hamlet Building**  
**60 Florence Drive, Woonsocket, RI 02895**

**Call to Order by Chairman Soren Seale at 7:00 p.m. in Open Session**

**Moment of Silence**

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Roll Call by Superintendent Dr. Patrick McGee:**

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

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**PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:**

**Jeff Partington, WTG President:** He complimented a new member of the WED Administration, Al Notarianni, Technology Director, on the work he has done so far in the district. Partington was on the search committee for filling this position and we felt very strongly about his candidacy and he has shown that. "Mr. Notarianni has gone out school by school to all of the elementary schools to make sure they have everything they need and it's connected and working, which as we know in recent years, that has not always been the case." He noted that there has been some push-back from the teachers because they would like to hang onto some of the equipment they have and he has been very accommodating to them to help them through this. Kudos to Al. He's doing a great job and we are light years from where we were before," said Partington. (Applause).

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**RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Patrick McGee, Superintendent**

Sodexo Backpack Program - Sodexo School Services in the Woonsocket School District is ready to start its 2016 - 2017 Backpack Program. "If you know of a child at risk for hunger please feel free to contact the Sodexo office at ext. 757, your school social worker, nurse or administration with the referral information. The goal of the Backpack Program in Woonsocket is to eliminate hunger on weekends by providing the students with non-perishable food in bags or backpacks. Backpacks filled with nutritious, easy-to-prepare food are provided for students who are at-risk for hunger on weekends. Backpack food bags are discreetly distributed to at-risk students by school personnel, on the last day prior to a weekend or holiday vacation. We ask that they return the empty backpack to the school after the weekend. The Backpack Program is provided at no cost to the Woonsocket Education Department. The funding for much of the food products is donated by the Sodexo Foundation. Food is also donated by Sodexo's Woonsocket employees, WED employees and from WED students' canned good drives. During the 2015-2016 school year, Sodexo distributed 1,421 backpacks to more than 200 Woonsocket students in need. In the past year the need for emergency food sources in our community has soared. The statistics regarding food insecurity in Rhode Island and Woonsocket are disturbing: 12.7% (54,000 RI households) are food insecure; 4.7% (20,000 RI households) report very low food security (hunger); Woonsocket has one of the highest rates of poverty and extreme poverty for children in the state. In Woonsocket 42.8% of our children live in poverty - with their families often struggling to put food on the table." McGee encouraged people to contact Ellen Shalvey, General Manager of Sodexo School Services, if they'd like additional information or if would like to refer a student to the program.

High School Hero Event – The WHS recently secured first position (300-400 senior class category) in the Rhode Island Blood Center's High School Hero Challenge. The award winners from WHS will be honored on Thursday, September 29<sup>th</sup> at Dave and Buster's at the Providence Place Mall from 6-8 pm. Dr. McGee congratulated them.

PSAT Participation – On October 19<sup>th</sup> from 8-11:30 am all WHS 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students who are in attendance will take the PSAT. The state of Rhode Island will pay for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade students while the WED will pay for each 11<sup>th</sup> grade student. There will be a 10% discount for the fee for each Junior. Last year the WED paid for all 10<sup>th</sup> grade students who took the PSAT, and the number of students who took the PSAT from 2014-2015 to 2015-2016 increased by some 400 students.

Truancy Program – Dr. McGee read a letter submitted to him this summer from Magistrate Angela Paulhus after the WED reinstated its Truancy Program in December 2015.

Community Engagement – McGee reported that the WED is collaborating with the Nellie Mae Education Foundation as well as Everyday Democracy with the goal of increasing the partnership between our city schools and the community to help our students become successful learners, workers, and leaders. On September 12<sup>th</sup> a diverse group of community members, parents, students, and school district staff, totaling 58 met to strategize goals and objectives to improve communication and student achievement in Woonsocket. One result from the meeting was the establishment of a steering committee which will meet next week to further strategize the implementation plan.

Summer Reading Celebration – On Saturday, September 24<sup>th</sup> the WED held its Summer Reading Celebration at WMS from 11-1:00 pm. Mr. McGee reported that the celebration was held for all elementary students who completed last year’s Summer Reading Assignment and was a great success with 1,049 parents and students who registered. McGee thanked those people and organizations that dedicated their time to making this event a huge success: Kim Blais, Lisa Lanoue, Denise Phillips, Chris Depot, Bob and Nancy Phillips, Dawn Morelle, Woonsocket Harris Library, Nancy Giordano, student athletes from WHS, WHS students, WED Custodians, Sodexo Food Service, City of Woonsocket, WFD, WPD, Central Office Administrators, Cathy Kopec, and Elementary Principals. Mr. Burke stated that the attended the Summer Reading Celebration and it was great to see so many parents and children there. He thanked everyone involved, especially the Phillips who sat in the Dunk Tank that day.

Motion to receive and place on file: P. Bourget 2<sup>nd</sup>: V. Gonzalez (Unanimously Approved)

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**APPROVAL OF MINUTES: September 14, 2016 Open Minutes**

Motion to approve: P. Bourget 2<sup>nd</sup>: V. Gonzalez/D. Burke (Roll Call Vote: 4 yes) APPROVED

<b>CONSENT AGENDA:</b>	<b>Motion to approve: D. Burke</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup>: P. Bourget</b>
<b>*Removed for discussion: Home Schooling Requests – P. Bourget; Personnel Actions &amp; Field Trip – S. Seale</b>		
<b>Motion to withdraw the appointment of L. Spagnolo from Non-Certified Appointments: S. Seale</b>	<b>(Roll Call Vote: 4 yes)</b>	<b>Approved</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup>: P. Bourget</b>		
<b>ROLL CALL VOTE to approve Consent Agenda as Amended: 4 yes</b>		<b>APPROVED</b>

**ITEMS REMOVED FOR DISCUSSION:**

**Personnel Actions:** Mr. Seale made a motion to withdraw L. Spagnolo from the appointments since the candidate withdrew their candidacy between the time the agenda was put out and tonight’s meeting.

**Field Trip – Kigali, Rwanda Africa/WACTC Global Citizens Program:** Mr. Seale asked Mrs. Leonora Hughes and Karen Barbosa to answer some questions about this trip to refresh their memory. He noted that getting students to participate has been a challenge in the past. Mrs. Hughes said that it has been, adding that the applications have been given out and they are still taking applications up until Friday. Students have to get letters of recommendation, write an essay, and have their parents review everything before submitting an application. “The juniors held off last year but we feel confident there will be some 6 to 8 serious candidates – especially seniors. We put the request on the agenda early to get the fundraising going,” she said. Mr. Seale asked about the fundraising, saying that the impression he has gotten from the past is that the candidates can’t raise the money and so they don’t go. “What are the fundraising efforts that are planned?” he asked. “The parents really have to take ownership for the payment. It’s a combination of events, family support and students doing things on their own to raise money. In the past, we have had dinners and sold raffle tickets. We have to see what the students want to do and go forward with that. There isn’t anything that we necessarily do all the time,” said Hughes. “Do the chaperones pay for themselves?” asked Seale. Hughes stated that they

raise money for that as well. "How many students do you need to say you will do this trip?" he asked. Hughes stated that the WACTC/WHS partners with a group in Harwood, Vermont, that has been going for years and have a large group of about 30 or so. Mr. Seale asked what the safety considerations are and when do they determine whether or not to send students on this trip. Mrs. Hughes reported that they let Senator Jack Reed know of their plans right way so that he is aware and that they are constantly monitoring what's going on in Rwanda and its neighboring countries. "We have a contact there that is a member of the government and was one of the soldiers that freed Rwanda and is very connected there and has been doing this for 15 years. He is the one who takes us through the entire trip. There's virtually no crime and is very safe. It's a very warm and welcoming environment. I have been myself," said Hughes.

**Home Schooling Applications:** Mr. Bourget said that he sat with Jenny Chan-Remka, Linda Filomeno, and Senator Picard to go over this process. He also contacted people at the State House to see what the WSC is responsible for. "The letters are home schooling requests—that's all. I have a problem with that. We must follow the process. The parents must fill out the curriculum forms and that curriculum is approved by the school department. We are being requested to approve a request. Under the General Laws of RI for Attendance 16-19-1 it states that the course of at-home instruction must be approved by the WSC. We don't look at the program. At the General Assembly level maybe a word can be inserted and Senator Picard can take that and see what could be done. I think that it should be a "request" for at-home instruction must be approved by the WSC. We have 105 children that are home-schooled. At the end of the year, maybe we should have a meeting where we approve whether or not the parents have complied with the requirements. I want to see a sheet saying, 'we have 105 home-schooled students and they have complied.' General Laws of RI 16-19-2 contains all the curriculum that is required at all the grade levels. I think we should follow up with Senator Picard on this," said Bourget.

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#### COMMUNICATIONS:

- **The Learning Community's Education Fellowship Program: Ms. Alves and Ms. Beck**

Ms. Alves reported that The Learning Community is a public charter school in Central Falls, RI, that supports traditional public schools. They collaborate with public schools and work with the other public school teachers to help increase literacy. Over the past two school years, they had two fellows working with teachers at Leo Savoie Elementary and in 2014-2015, reading performance increased 90% in the students they served. In 2015-2016, 50% of 1<sup>st</sup> graders moved up to grade level, 60% grew 4+ levels; 60% of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders moved up to grade level, and 50% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders moved up to grade level. Ms. Beck outlined the extensive training that the fellows receive, which includes 1 week of training in August and 5 weeks of modeling and observations with content specialists in September. They came to share the results from the last two years and also to ask the WSC to cover the cost of health coverage, training, and coaching of the Americorps members for the year. The total cost would be \$4,000 per member and they were hoping to place four fellows in Woonsocket this year. Mr. Seale said that it sounds like a wonderful partnership but that the WSC couldn't vote on it tonight since it's not on the agenda for a vote. It can be placed on the next agenda. Mr. Burke asked what the backgrounds are of the Education Fellows. Ms. Beck reported that most of them are right out of college. "Most are taking a year off before going on to a Masters program. We screen them for working with students in multiple settings and spend a lot of time training them. "So they come to us to benefit themselves like a student teacher," observed Burke. "You could say that," agreed Beck. "Generally, we don't pay student teachers," continued Burke. Ms. Alves noted that student teachers do a lot of observation. The fellows provide direct service to the students. Burke asked if we didn't have reading specialists for this purpose. Mrs. Donna Coderre, Principal at Leo Savoie, stated that the Americorps people work with our kids that don't qualify for extra services. "It bridges the gap, We get a lot of PD that we don't pay for. I can't say enough about this program. I don't think it's an unreasonable amount. We have one reading teacher for 400 students. It's a win/win for both of us. They are supervised by the teacher and I have had no problems with them," maintained Coderre. "Having seen these Americorps people at work, any way we can get additional help to improve reading levels is a miracle and has to be done," said Mr. Bourget. Ms. Gonzalez added that the results look impressive at Savoie and asked how many there were. Beck reported that there were two fellows for the past two years there. The Learning Community has been working with the principal at Bernon Heights Elementary also. Mr. Seale said that there are other schools in the district that are probably in greater need than those two schools. He told them it would be good for them to come back when this item is on the agenda for a vote.

Motion to receive and place on file: P. Bourget

2<sup>nd</sup>: V. Gonzalez (Unanimously Approved)

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- **Technology Update: Dr. McGee / Alfred Notarianni**

Mr. Notarianni reviewed the Building Re-configuration graph he provided to the WSC showing the progress achieved in 5 different areas in each of the elementary schools between 9/2/16 and 10/31/16. The five areas being addressed in each building are: 1) New laptops distributed; 2) New printers installed; 3) Existing student computers updated; 4) Distribution of Chrome books; and 5) Copier set-up for print/scan/fax capabilities. He has submitted a tentative schedule has been sent to principals. "What happens on Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>?" asked Mr. Seale. Notarianni said that all documents need to be moved to the Google drive from the file servers by November 1<sup>st</sup>. He added that the tech department staff will go out to each school and that Michael Sexton and Heather Neil will follow behind to make sure the teachers feel comfortable with the transition. Mr. Bourget asked about the laptops and if they are for the teachers. Notarianni said that they are. Bourget asked if another column could be added for distribution of Chrome books to students. Notarianni said that will probably be another data sheet.

Motion to receive and place on file: P. Bourget

2<sup>nd</sup>: V. Gonzalez (Unanimously Approved)

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**SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- **Health and Wellness Sub-committee: D. Burke** Mr. Burke reported that they met on Monday with the school nurses and some community members to discuss their agenda for the school year regarding policy and important areas dealing with wellness and health, especially the mental health issues our population deals with. They are in the process of rewriting our policy and it has been sent to the RI Health Coalition to be reviewed. He is waiting to get it back and present it to the district. Mr. Seale said that because of the scrutiny the policy is getting now, he doesn't think it needs to go back before the subcommittee.

Motion to receive and place on file: P. Bourget

2<sup>nd</sup>: V. Gonzalez (Unanimously Approved)

- **Finance Sub-committee: S. Seale** They will be holding a meeting on Oct. 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm at McFee to talk about non-union employee pay increases and non-budgeted positions, and the process of WSC approval of purchases.

Motion to receive and place on file: D. Burke

2<sup>nd</sup>: P. Bourget (Unanimously Approved)

- **Technology Sub-committee: S. Seale** They are tentatively looking at a Finance subcommittee meeting in late October regarding finalizing the availability of the required members before they post the actual date of the next Technology Subcommittee meeting.

Motion to receive and place on file: V. Gonzalez

2<sup>nd</sup>: P. Bourget (Unanimously Approved)

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**CONFERENCES/DISCUSSIONS:** None

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None

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**NEW BUSINESS:**

**#1) Discussion/Approval on the .4 Health/Physical Education position: P. McGee**

Dr. McGee said that a substitute has been covering these classes. They have been waiting on the numbers in case the enrolled students don't show up. This position would be for 2 days a week. Mr. Seale has reservations about the quality of the candidates we will get for a .4 PE teacher position and hopes that if the candidates aren't what we expect them to be, that the administration comes back for a full-time PE teacher. Dr. McGee reported that they have a retired PE teacher who is interested in it.

Motion to approve: S. Seale

2<sup>nd</sup>: P. Bourget

Roll Call Vote: 4 yes

APPROVED

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**#2) Discussion/Approval on Bid #17-14 – Electrical Signage: P. McGee**

Dr. McGee explained that Harris Elementary is one of the only schools that doesn't have a marquee and that it's one way of communicating with the public and parents regarding events. Mr. Seale asked if the other

marquees were donated or paid for by the school department. Dr. McGee thinks that the WHS marquee was paid for by the WED and the WMS signs were part of the middle school construction. He's not sure about the others. Seale reported that the PTO has complained that this is being done and asked if there is a plan to recycle the non-electrical sign. Dr. McGee said that we don't plan to recycle them and will consult with the PTO. "I just don't want to penalize the schools that have active PTOs by giving signs to other schools that don't. He hopes some discussion is done with the principals of those schools and how the PTOs might feel about it. Mr. Bourget thought the bid was a good idea. Mr. Burke asked where the Harris sign would go because the school is placed back off the street. Karen MacBeth, Harris School Principal, reported that their sign was vandalized and they had a committee research a sign to put near the school. Harris School currently doesn't have a sign. "You wouldn't be able to see it from Blackstone Street?" asked Seale. Macbeth noted that it would be visible on High School Street.

Motion to approve: S. Seale                      2<sup>nd</sup>: P. Bourget                      Roll Call Vote: 4 yes                      APPROVED

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**#3) Discussion/Approval on Bid #17-15- Ford F350: P. McGee**

Mr. Peryea reported that this purchase is part of lifecycle planning. "We are trying to replace the old vehicles each year," he said. Mr. Burke asked if this went out to bid. "Absolutely," said Peryea. Burke asked if we try to negotiate a better price like with buying a car. "Not usually when it's a bid," answered Peryea.

Motion to approve: S. Seale                      2<sup>nd</sup>: P. Bourget                      Roll Call Vote: 4 yes                      APPROVED

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**#4) Discussion/Approval on Bid #17-16 – Painting @ WHS: P. McGee**

Dr. McGee reported that this bid is for painting the outside of the high school where there are formerly white panels (they are gray now). "It probably hasn't been done since the school was built," he said. Mr. Bourget added that the school department is doing a great job beautifying all the schools. "You see things like new ceiling tiles, floors, etc. inside at the high school, but the façade really needs work," said Bourget.

Motion to approve: S. Seale                      2<sup>nd</sup>: P. Bourget                      Roll Call Vote: 4 yes                      APPROVED

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**#5) Discussion/Approval on Bid #17-17 – Painting @ Pothier: P. McGee**

Dr. McGee reported that this bid is for the same thing as the high school. The hallways throughout the building at Pothier need to be done since little kids tend to drag their hands along the walls allot. "It's a large building so we decided to go out to bid," said McGee.

Motion to approve: S. Seale                      2<sup>nd</sup>: D. Burke                      Roll Call Vote: 4 yes                      APPROVED

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**#6) Discussion/Approval on Bid #17-18 – Acoustical Ceiling Replacement @ WHS: P. McGee**

Mr. Fontaine reported that this bid is for replacing the ceiling tiles in the cafeteria and the lobby. He noted that the library will be done in the spring because they are waiting for the roof to be fixed over that area. Mr. Bourget said he is glad they're doing the cafeteria since students are there a lot and collations and other events are held there.

Motion to approve: S. Seale                      2<sup>nd</sup>: P. Bourget/V. Gonzalez                      Roll Call Vote: 4 yes                      APPROVED

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**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Patrick McGee, Superintendent**

Dr. McGee gave the following report on the Rhode Island Diploma System, noting that under the current graduation requirements, Rhode Island students earn a diploma by earning 20 course credits and successfully completing either a senior project or a portfolio of their work. Over the past year, numerous meetings with several stakeholders and the Rhode Island Department of Education were convened to discuss the future of graduation requirements in the state of Rhode Island. The central themes from the meetings indicated the need for more than a one-size-fits-all diploma system. In the spring, based on feedback, RIDE proposed a revised set of graduation requirements to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. This proposal introduced two additional options that could lead to designations that personalize the diploma and to offer students multiple pathways through school. The following two options have been developed and have undergone the formal process for public comment:

- Option 1 – Commissioner’s Seal Endorsement: This designation would indicate that the student meet a statewide standard in literacy and numeracy on one or more of a menu of assessment options, such as PARCC, Advanced Placement, SAT, or an industry-based career and technical educational credential.
- Option 2 – Pathway Endorsement: This designation would indicate that the student completed a defined advanced course sequence based on his or her interests and strengths, such as the arts, world languages, science, or community service.

Dr. McGee said there were meetings he attended last year with some other administrators from the district, adding that right now our requirements haven’t changed so we have some time before these take effect. Mr. Bourget asked what is driving Option 2. “Not all students test well and this gives them another opportunity to take part in other courses of interest that the district would create. It’s another pathway to graduation,” clarified McGee. “If the student wants to go to college, that could hamper them though, would it not?” observed Bourget. “It certainly would depend on the college they choose to attend,” said McGee. “Do you think this is a way to appease the public who are opposed to high-stakes testing?” asked Seale. “It could be. Not all students learn the same way and travel the same path,” replied McGee. Seale stated that he personally is against high-stakes testing, adding that it seems absurd that students go through school for 13 years and it comes down to how they do on a test as to whether or not they graduate. Mr. Burke mentioned that the State of Massachusetts incorporated the MCAS as a graduation requirement several years ago, but the state put a lot of money into the test. “It can work if done correctly,” said Burke.

Motion to adjourn at 8:30 p.m.: P. Bourget

2<sup>nd</sup>: V. Gonzalez (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle  
Substitute WSC Recording Secretary