

MINUTES
WEST WARWICK SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 13, 2012
WEST WARWICK PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
10 HARRIS AVENUE
4:00 P.M.

This meeting was called to order by James A. Williamson, Jr., Chairman.

Members Present:

James A. Williamson, Jr., Chairman
Sean M. Murphy, Vice-Chairman
Elizabeth B. Brunero, Clerk
Joseph Florio, Jr.
Vincent D. Bradley

Attorney Present:

David G. Lussier, Esquire

Administrators Present:

Kenneth M. Sheehan, Superintendent of Schools

Recording Secretary:

Michelle M. Colozzo

1. Open Session

Open Session

Mr. Williamson opened the meeting at 4:09 P.M.

2. Roll Call

Roll Call

The following members were present:
Mr. Williamson, Mrs. Brunero, Mr. Murphy,
Mr. Florio, and Mr. Bradley.

**3. Motion to go into
Executive Session**

**Motion to go into Executive Session according to
RI General Laws 42-46-4 and 42-46-5, Subsection
(a) Paragraph 1**

MOTION

**MOTION MADE BY ELIZABETH B. BRUNERO
THAT THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE GO INTO
EXECUTIVE SESSION ACCORDING TO RI
GENERAL LAWS 42-46-4 AND 42-46-5,**

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SUBSECTION (a), PARAGRAPH 1. Motion seconded by Sean M. Murphy. The following members voted in the affirmative: Vincent D. Bradley, Joseph Florio, Jr., Sean M. Murphy, Elizabeth B. Brunero, and James A. Williamson, Jr. Motion unanimously passed.

4. Executive Session

Executive Session: Personnel/Greenbush Principal

The School Committee met in Executive Session.

5. Open Session

Open Session

6. Roll Call

Roll Call

The following members were present:
Mr. Williamson, Mr. Murphy, Mrs. Brunero,
Mr. Florio, and Mr. Bradley.

**7. Motion to Close
Executive Session
Minutes**

Motion to Close Executive Session Minutes

MOTION

**MOTION MADE BY JOSEPH FLORIO, JR.
THAT THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE CLOSE
THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES.** Motion seconded by Elizabeth B. Brunero, Jr. The following members voted in the affirmative: Sean M. Murphy, Elizabeth B. Brunero, Joseph Florio, Jr., Vincent D. Bradley, and James A. Williamson, Jr. Motion unanimously passed.

**8. Discussion and
Development of a
Corrective Action Plan**

Discussion and Development of a Corrective Action Plan

Mr. Williamson said this is our second open session for developing a corrective action plan, but it is more of a deficit reduction plan. He said just to recap, we have an accumulated deficit of \$1.7, and the state is looking for us to come up with a five-year plan to eliminate that. Mr. Williamson said 1/5 of \$1.7 is approximately \$340,000 per year.

Mr. Sheehan said we should not be using the term corrective action plan—the corrective action plan is when you know you are in deficit going forward and

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you develop a plan to correct that. He said this is in fact a deficit reduction plan because we have had it for a period of time.

Mr. Sheehan read the following to the School Committee:

WEST WARWICK PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Deficit Reduction Plan (DRAFT)

September 13, 2012

The West Warwick Public Schools recognize, through a settlement agreement with the West Warwick Town Council, a school department unaudited negative fund balance of \$1,662,892 (Ref. September 3, 2012 letter from Michael Petrarca).

The proposed Deficit Reduction Plan should cover a 5-year period of time (FY 12-13 through FY 16-17) (Ref. August 21, 2012 letter from Michael Stampfler, West Warwick Town Manager).

If we view this deficit over a 5-year period of time, \$332,579. must be cut from the school department budget each year for 5 years.

In addition, it would be shortsighted to look at this deficit in isolation.

For example, the extended projection for the 2013-14 school year is \$50,645,054 or an increase in the school department budget of \$1,562,754 (Ref. Page 12 of WWPS Educational Budget Plan FY 13 dated June 11, 2012).

At a special school committee meeting on Tuesday, September 4, 2012, I provided the committee with a list of possible reductions for the school department.

This list is not in a priority order, and the amount of money saved in most cases are approximations.

- Increase Transportation Distances – \$65,000
- Reduce Middle School Sports Program 20% – \$10,040
- Reduce High School Sports Program 20% – \$77,220.
- Reduce 5 Teaching Positions (FY 13-14) – \$338,049
- Extend a Special Education Program to bring back (2) Alternative Placement Students – \$88,000

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- Privatize Maintenance/Custodial Services (RFP) –
\$400,000
- Anticipated Increase in State Aid Funds – \$372,340
- Anticipated Savings from Council 94 Negotiations –
\$60,000
- One-Year (2013) 50% Town's Potential Surplus - ?
- Increase in Town Appropriation to School Department - ?

During FY 2012-13, additional cost saving measures will also be explored. (examples)

- Conduct an Education Program Audit
- Review policies/protocols for students applying to the
Warwick Career Center
- Possible reorganization of the Business Office
- Exploration of Town/School Department consolidation
of departments
- Review state mandates for possible waiver submission,
(Ex) Bus Monitors
School Nurse-Teachers
Vocational/Career Centers
Private School Transportation/Textbooks
Athletic User Fees
- Freeze all non-union employees salaries (2012-14)
- Review possible legislative relief

The West Warwick Town Manager will need an authorized and approved Deficit Reduction Plan from the West Warwick School Committee no later than September 30, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth M. Sheehan
Superintendent of Schools

The School Committee discussed the following:

Savings from Council 94 negotiations – Mr. Florio said this is based on a 20% co-pay. Mr. Murphy said you are in contract negotiations, so should you be

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talking about negotiations? Mr. Sheehan said he conferred with counsel who said he could put that on this document.

Mr. Lussier said you have two items on here that are not realistic: the negotiations savings and privatization. Mr. Bradley indicated that he was against privatization and against cutting sports.

Mr. Williamson said he thinks the idea is to explore the areas that could potentially be cut.

Vocational Education –Mr. Bradley said Mr. Murphy and he would like to see more kids at the Career Center and he is hearing that’s a negative thing. Mr. Sheehan said students have the right to go to another career and vocational school if our career center doesn’t offer the same opportunity and we provide transportation. Mr. Sheehan said what the legislature and the Board of Regents passed this summer, our children don’t even have to go to the Warwick Career Center any more—they can go anywhere they want—this new legislation could potentially bankrupt this school department.

Mrs. Rose Boucher asked about criteria for students going into the vocational center. Mr. Sheehan said we have criteria for our students going into the Warwick Career Center. Mrs. Boucher said if they are not meeting the criteria to get into the Warwick Career Center, they can still go somewhere else?

Mr. Sheehan said this will end up in litigation because superintendents are looking at this. Mrs. Boucher said it will be a big hit for everyone, and Mr. Sheehan said it will be a big plum for Coventry. Mrs. Boucher asked so if there is litigation, will we share litigation? Mr. Sheehan said yes. Mrs. Boucher said maybe we should build up our own voc-tech. Mr. Sheehan said there would be a \$20 million start-up cost.

Overtime – Mr. Florio asked about looking at overtime. Mr. Sheehan said we already have—it’s been cut 66%.

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Mrs. Boucher asked about the grandparent association—is that something we do—it's free, all voluntary. Mr. Sheehan said we do have the Foster Grandparents coming into the schools, but they can't supplant jobs—because we have teacher assistants out on layoff, we are not supposed to have the grandparents in the schools. Mr. Sheehan said he has three grievances right now, and the bottom line is you can't supplant non-union labor when you have a group of people who are laid off. Mr. Bradley said we either have to change the contract or stop doing it—change the language—that's the way to go. Mr. Lussier said if there was no one on layoff, you could do—that makes the difference. Mr. Murphy asked how long do you have to wait, and Mr. Sheehan said until they are called back.

Mr. Bradley said he thinks we should instruct the Superintendent on the things he doesn't have three votes to do—he said put him down for a no on sports. Mr. Williamson said that's only half the work—he thinks we need to instruct the superintendent on what we are in agreement with and what we are not in agreement with. He said let's say the deficit is \$1.5 and with the \$340,000, let's call it \$1.9, and say everything here comes up to \$1.9, and we are saying we are not touching sports or privatizing, what are we going to do? Mr. Bradley said maybe we will say we have done our best and this is it. Mr. Murphy said we did the best for the taxpayers last year. Mr. Bradley said he thinks it should have come out of the Rainy Day Fund. Mr. Florio said they took \$4 million to pay the fire code. Mr. Sheehan said the Town Council put forth a resolution for \$150,000 for the fire code renovations and they need \$3.9 million. Mr. Florio said it was his understanding that they put \$4 million. Mr. Williamson said he doesn't think there is \$4 million in the Rainy Day Fund.

Mr. Lussier said the Town Manager doesn't want to hear about the Fire Code until after the November 22nd corrective action plan. Mr. Sheehan said the Town Manager is looking at the big picture—what comes into play is that the commission is coming back in the

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middle of November and the Council needs to have answers. The Fire Marshall is saying he will close the middle school and the Town Manager is saying he doesn't have the authority, but he does.

Mr. Sheehan said he hopes what Mr. Murphy and Mr. Bradley said didn't fall on deaf ears—sooner or later the School Committee has to realize that we have gone as far as you can possibly go and keep this school system afloat. Mr. Bradley said he didn't sit here to liquidate the school system—we squeeze as much as we can and then we say we are out of money. Mr. Sheehan said Mr. Bradley said something at the last meeting—what should have been paid from the Rainy Day Fund was the \$1.7 because you gave back the \$4.6 from the judge.

Mrs. Boucher asked about Maisie Quinn—she said she knows we rent out space to Briggs and she asked if there is a possibility that we could go to them and ask them if they want to rent more space from us. Mr. Sheehan said he met with Ken Foley who runs the Briggs Program and he will be meeting with Corey from the YMCA to talk about renting space to them for after-school programs, so we are trying to address it the best we can.

Mr. Williamson said what the Town Manager is looking for from us by September 30th only deals with the \$1.7. Mr. Sheehan said when he spoke to the Town Manager, he recognized the fact that there has to be an increase in appropriation to the school department if we are to survive.

Mr. Williamson said why don't we say we will take the increased revenue and apply it to the \$1.7 deficit; however be aware that this is coming down the road as reported and documented at the June 8th meeting.

Mr. Sheehan said if we did everything here, you would still be in deficit

Mrs. Boucher asked about Council 94 negotiations—that's ongoing? Mr. Williamson said yes, the

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classified union. Mrs. Boucher asked if it would be possible to go back to the teachers' union.

Mr. Sheehan said four years ago, we got \$7 million from the teachers and the classified union, and we just picked up \$2.75 million more with the new three-year contract—in reality, do you think you will get more concessions from the teacher unions?

Mr. Bradley said our teachers make less than the median salary. Mr. Sheehan said with the five teaching positions, unless we have a lot of people move out, he doesn't see how we can realize this.

Mr. Williamson asked can we cover ourselves by addressing the \$340,000? Mr. Sheehan said if we did it that way, do you think Mary-Beth Gallogly and Dennis Hoyle and the people from the Finance Department will accept it—will they say where's the other \$1.5? Mrs. Baker said Dennis Hoyle will say it's not technically a deficit until it's an audited deficit, but by law, we are supposed to let them know.

Mr. Lussier said the state is looking for a plan from the school department and the council.

Mr. Williamson said we could say we need \$340,000 from the town, and Mr. Lussier said what about the 5% cut? Mr. Florio said that was part of the agreement.

Increase transportation – Mr. Sheehan asked are you going to increase distances from homes by a half-mile for kids, ice storms, snow, no sidewalks, etc., is that worth \$65,000? Mr. Lussier said when you increase walking distances, there will be a hearing before the commissioner, and if there are no sidewalks, it's a safety issue. Mr. Sheehan said if you take it off the list, you have to be prepared to put something in its place.

The School Committee went through the list to indicate if the items were agreeable.

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- Increase Transportation Distances - \$65,000.—
Mr. Williamson, Mrs. Brunero, and Mr. Bradley were not in favor of this.
- Reduce Middle School Sports Program 20% - \$10,040 –
The five School Committee members were not in favor of this.
- Reduce High School Sports Program 20% - \$77,220 –
The five School Committee members were not in favor of this.
- Reduce 5 Teaching Positions (FY 13-14) - \$338,049 –
The School Committee members agreed to try to do this.
- Extend a Special Education Program to bring back (2) Alternative Placement Students - \$88,000 – The School Committee members agreed to try to do this.
- Privatize Maintenance/Custodial Services (RFP) - \$400,000 – Mr. Williamson, Mr. Murphy, Mrs. Brunero, and Mr. Bradley were not in favor of this.

Mr. Murphy indicated that the School Committee should meet with local elected officials.

Adjournment

9. Adjournment

MOTION

MOTION MADE BY ELIZABETH B. BRUNERO THAT THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ADJOURN THE MEETING. Motion seconded by Sean M. Murphy. The following members voted in the affirmative: Joseph Florio, Jr., Vincent D. Bradley, Sean M. Murphy, Elizabeth B. Brunero, and James A. Williamson, Jr. Motion unanimously passed.

Meeting adjourned at: 6:03 P.M.

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Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth B. Brunero, Clerk

Michelle M. Colozzo, Recorder