

**MINUTES**  
**WEST WARWICK SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**SPECIAL MEETING**  
**OCTOBER 30, 2012**  
**JOHN F. DEERING MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
**WEBSTER KNIGHT DRIVE**  
**6:00 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:** Andrew Henneous, Esquire

**Administrators Present:** Kenneth M. Sheehan, Superintendent of Schools  
Margaret Baker, Director of Financial Operations  
Paul Vigeant, Director of Special Education

**Recording Secretary:** Michelle M. Colozzo

**1. Open Session** **Open Session**

Mr. Williamson opened the meeting at 4:08 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 2**

**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 2.** 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.

## 4. Executive Session

### Executive Session: Contracts:

#### **Discussion: Contract between West Warwick School Committee and R.I. Council 94**

The School Committee met in Executive Session.

## 5. Open Session

### Open Session

## 6. Roll Call

### Roll Call

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

## 7. Motion to Close Executive Session Minutes

### Motion to Close Executive Session Minutes

**MOTION MADE BY ELIZABETH B. BRUNERO THAT THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE CLOSE THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES.** 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.

### MOTION

## 8. Approval: Contract between West Warwick School Committee and R.I. Council 94 Local 3546

### Approval: Contract between West Warwick School Committee and R.I. Council 94 Local 3546

Mr. Bradley asked in the public interest if we could have a summary of what is in front of us expressed by the solicitor. Mr. Williamson said Mr. Bradley would like a summary.

Attorney Andrew Henneous summarized the following elements of the new contract:

- It is a three-year contract.

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- There is a sub-committee working on the requirements of the BEP as it relates to the bargaining unit members that have to adhere to the BEP—that's moving forward. Mr. Sheehan noted that this only applies to teacher assistants.
- Health insurance co-pay: going from currently paying 10% to 13%, 14%, and 16%.
- Other than that, it's basically language issues. Talking about the BEP, this contract previously reflected pure seniority to transfer positions, and that has changed—positions no longer will be seniority-based.

Mr. Sheehan asked about the evaluation piece with regard to longevity.

Mr. Henneous noted the following:

- Management has responsibility for creating a more comprehensive evaluation process for this body of employees. What this involves is sitting down and getting some input from the union. Ultimately management will create a new evaluation tool and the union will come and sit down with us and will talk about how we will use it. In the teacher contract, if they get two poor evaluations, they forfeit longevity. This union was open to that but felt we should have a more fair evaluation tool and we will look at developing this because there is currently no comprehensive evaluation system for Council 94 members in the state—one has to be developed. Mr. Florio noted that he thinks Mr. Vigeant will handle it very well.
- The projected savings over three years will be, \$87,604 said Mrs. Baker. She said originally it was only \$32,000.

### MOTION

**MOTION MADE BY SEAN M. MURPHY  
THAT THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE  
THE CONTRACT BETWEEN WEST**

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**WARWICK SCHOOL COMMITTEE AND R.I. COUNCIL 94 LOCAL 3546.** Motion seconded by Elizabeth B. Brunero, for discussion.

Mr. Bradley said he was not clear on one point, how much a completely new employee would pay.

Mr. Henneous said they would pay the 13 or 14%.

Mr. Murphy said he thought they were going to pay 20%. Mr. Henneous said at one time, we had it on the table, but right now it's not part of it. Mr. Bradley said if you had a 20% co-pay, he can't imagine any employee that would refuse to take the job. He said really we should have 20% for a brand new employee. Mr. Henneous said that's not here. Mr. Murphy said that wouldn't affect the bottom line savings.

Mr. Henneous said we couldn't even factor that in.

Mr. Murphy said he does like that point that we don't think anyone would turn down a job, but they are still paying more than the previous three-year agreement.

Mr. Bradley said he just wants to establish that our objective should be 20% under these conditions, and that's a fact.

Mr. Williamson asked if there was any further discussion. Mr. Florio said he know that this is a palatable agreement: not getting raises over a three-year period, but he also thinks going to 20% on the co-pay on the last day of the contract is something he was pushing for and also Delta Dental—he thinks the Delta Dental should be tied into the last day of the contract. He said we just went through \$1.7 of budgetary constraints on the school side—they had to cut programs and lay off people and then we had to do another \$555,000 taking away money for future programs that the state gives us to budget that \$555,000 over the next three years. He said he feels we have made a lot of concessions and been very fair and he thinks it should be going to 20% and including Delta Dental on the last day.

Regarding the pension, Mr. Williamson said we had already paid \$1,000,000 and it's \$1.5 and next year we have budgeted \$1.3 and \$1.6. Mr. Williamson said in reality we have to pay less than a million; in a three-

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year window, we actually make out in that deal. Mr. Florio said we still have to put money aside for that. Mr. Williamson said but not as much as we thought.

Mr. Florio said we had to adjust our programs and teachers in the amount of \$2.2 million, going from a 7-period day to a 6-period day and do all kinds of contortions to get to that. We feel that 20% on the last day is not costing anyone and should have been realized. Mr. Bradley said he has the same objections that Mr. Florio does. To start with, he thinks the objective we all have to reach is 20% co-pay, so having it happen on the last day gets us there, in light of the reality of the economic situation we are in. He said he was shocked that Delta Dental was not part of the whole health care, that for Delta Dental there was no co-pay at all, so they should pay 20% on health and dental.

Mr. Bradley respectfully suggested that the wording should be changed where it says she, referring to the Director of Financial Operations; he would like to take gender out of the contract. Mr. Williamson said he is sure we can do that and any other language we have – he is sure we can do a memorandum—it's a good point.

Mr. Sheehan said in May or June of last year, Mr. Bradley was adamant about Judge Rubine's number of \$29.9 be our starting point in the budget. Mr. Sheehan said we were in the negotiation process with the teachers and we wanted to end before the ruling because we thought we would prevail. He said we should never have had a situation where the \$1.7 created a deficit in the school department when you prevailed in court and gave back to the town \$4.6 million—you shouldn't have to worry about the \$555,000 and the \$1.7—you should have been solvent. He said you did what you had to do in the settlement, gave money back to the town in a good faith effort. Mr. Bradley said if he had been there, he would have insisted that it come out of the Rainy Day Fund.

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Mr. Florio said it's not that Council 94 hasn't come to the table, they will be six years without a raise—he thinks they have done a good part. In these economic times with the pension, when the budget commission comes in, we might be in a world of hurt, and by doing certain things . . . Mr. Philip Kelly said you don't think three zero's should be impressive, and if you had come to the table in better faith, we would have finished three or four months ago.

Mr. Williamson said he can appreciate that, but we want to maintain a civil tone.

Mr. Williamson said they will have gone six years with zeroes. Mr. Sheehan added: and lost 41 positions. Mr. Sheehan said \$1.1 million in concessions—one million in the last contract and \$87,000 in this one. Mr. Williamson asked about the average salary. Mr. Sheehan said because of the co-pays and taking zeros they will take home less in their paychecks. Mrs. Baker said \$2,000 less. She said 60% of the members make between \$27,000 and \$28,000. Mr. Williamson asked full-time?

Mrs. Baker said yes.

Mr. Murphy asked how many live in West Warwick—they are paying taxes back to the community.

Mr. Kelly said 65-70% of the members live in town.

Mr. Florio said we are about 60% as far as pay is concerned—we are not paying lower wages than any other community—we are paying a fair wage.

Mr. Florio said he knows a school bus driver in Warwick who transferred to West Warwick because they pay better than Warwick. Mrs. Baker said we don't have bus drivers—they work for First Student.

Mr. Florio asked why they would make more money to drive in West Warwick.

Mr. Bradley said he joined this committee in February and his rationale about dealing with unions in this working class community in deep economic trouble is they are our employees and he has no problem with our employees receiving the median salary of 39 cities and towns. He said his understanding is that after all

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the sacrifices the teachers and Council 94 are making, they are close to the median. Mr. Sheehan said 26<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Bradley said he seems to be saying our people are treated fairly and he doesn't want to squeeze the union people tighter than that. He said somehow he ended up wearing a badge of honor that he is anti-union, and that is not true.

Mr. Williamson asked if anyone else had anything to add. Mr. Murphy said he wanted to thank Mr. Florio and Mr. Bradley for being on the sub-committee. He said even if they haven't gotten to 20%, he still thinks it's in the right direction and he thinks it's remarkable that you got three years of zero's across the board. Mr. Murphy said overall the end result of \$90,000 savings in three years is justification of another win for the budget. He said he can't disagree with anything he sees with this contract; he thinks it was negotiated in good faith. Mr. Murphy said he thinks it's remarkable that 41 positions have been taken from the union and the school system is still cleaner than ever and there are no issues with bus monitors or grounds. He said everything still runs and he thinks that's due to the great people we still have in Council 94.

Mrs. Brunero said she is happy with the contract and she thinks Mr. Florio and Mr. Bradley worked very hard and she knows they wanted more, but it's a good contract. Mrs. Brunero said she is happy and she is satisfied with it.

Mr. Williamson asked if there were any other comments or discussion.

Mrs. Alice Losasso addressed the School Committee. She said that she understands that everyone is having a hard time, but she is still very concerned because of the situation in the town. Mrs. Losasso said we are in very deep trouble and she doesn't think that a 20% co-pay for new hires is an unreasonable demand. She said she thinks if you continue as you are going, it's going to continue becoming a problem. Mrs. Losasso said she thinks you have done a great job on both

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sides negotiating, but she agrees with Mr. Florio and Mr. Bradley that it's not an unreasonable request considering people in the private sector, those numbers flip when they retire—if they are paying 20-80 when they are working, they are going to pay 80-20 when they retire. Mrs. Losasso said she doesn't think it's an unreasonable request with the financial problem the town is having. She said we don't have a lot of time; she definitely doesn't think the town can afford a tax increase, and the pension funding problem is so great, she doesn't think we have time to correct the problem.

Mr. Murphy asked Mrs. Losasso if she knows how much Council 94 on the police and fire side pay for a co-pay. Mrs. Losasso said she has a problem with them as well. Mr. Sheehan said we know what their raises were. Mrs. Losasso said she is not discussing what's going on over there—they are not any better—she is not saying that it's o.k. for them to get raises or pay less, but she is addressing the School Committee. Mr. Murphy asked would you agree it is in the right direction, but you don't think we have the time to do what you want to do. Mrs. Losasso said she doesn't think 16 to 20 is a real drastic jump because of the financial situation of the town and the financial situation of most taxpayers in the town.

Mrs. Losasso said she was just at the Town Council meeting and they were discussing several businesses are planning to move across the street to Warwick to pay less taxes. She said we will have more vacant homes, and eventually we won't have the money to pay what we have agreed to. Mrs. Losasso said she is just concerned that it's not fast enough to stop the problem we have; it's not because she is cruel or that she hates unions because she doesn't. She said the town has to give a corrective action plan by the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, she understands.

Mr. Murphy said we are going to be up-to-date completely for the pension with the extra increase of \$555,000 which we will be taking care with what we are budgeting; we will be current. Mr. Sheehan said

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the school department will be completely caught up after the next school year. Mr. Williamson said we thought we were caught up this summer until about a month ago we received a notice from the Town Manager. Mr. Florio said we cut programs and laid off people. Mrs. Losasso said you cut programs for kids—if you had people pay more for their medical benefits.

Mr. Sheehan said if the teachers' union in 2007 and Council 94 in 2007, if they had not made concessions of over \$7,100,000, the programs would have been cut three or four years ago and this school system would have been educationally bankrupt. They had raises in their contracts, but they gave them up. Mrs. Losasso said they are continuing to make the same payments for medical and they can retire very young.

Mr. Sheehan said 65 years old.

Mr. Williamson asked for a roll call vote. A roll call vote was taken and the following members voted in the affirmative: Elizabeth B. Brunero, Sean M. Murphy, and James A. Williamson, Jr. The following members voted in the negative: Vincent D. Bradley and Joseph Florio, Jr. Motion passed 3 to 2.

## 9. Informational Item: Municipal Quarterly Report

### Informational Item: Municipal Quarterly Report

Mr. Williamson said that Mr. Petrarca had done this report on a regular basis, but Mrs. Baker feels more comfortable bringing this to the School Committee.

Mrs. Baker said that every month she does a report that gets sent to the town, and on a monthly basis, the report gets sent to the Auditor General. She said when she brings this back in December, there will be more information and we will have a better idea of where we stand. Mr. Williamson asked if there were any other questions regarding this report; there were none.

## 10. Adjournment

### Adjournment

MOTION

**MOTION MADE BY ELIZABETH B. BRUNERO  
THAT THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ADJOURN**

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**THE MEETING.** Motion seconded by Elizabeth B. Brunero. The following members voted in the affirmative: Sean M. Murphy, Vincent D. Bradley, Elizabeth B. Brunero, Joseph Florio, Jr., and James A. Williamson, Jr. Motion unanimously passed.

Meeting adjourned at: 7:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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Elizabeth B. Brunero, Clerk

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Michelle M. Colozzo, Recorder