

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2011
8:00 PM – OPEN SESSION
Woonsocket Middle School @ Hamlet
60 Florence Drive, Woonsocket, RI 02895

Call to Order by Mr. Dubois.
Moment of Silence
Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call:	Marc Dubois, Chairman	Present
	Eleanor Nadeau, Vice Chairwoman	Present
	Linda Majewski	Present
	Anita McGuire-Forcier	Present
	Vimala Phongsavanh	Present

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

Jason Marzini, WACTC Teacher, & Global Citizenship Program Students: Marzini and the students came to thank the school committee for approving their request to go to Rwanda, Africa in February 2012. Marzini reported that they just went up to Vermont to shadow those students and then the Vermont students will be coming to Woonsocket to shadow our students. Marzini announced that the Rotary Club gave them a generous donation of \$6,000. Tony Cosentino, Social Studies Teacher at WHS, thanked the committee for the opportunity to go to Rwanda. Olivia Asgarian, student, thanked the WSC for their support. She wanted to go to Rwanda as soon as she heard about the trip and was willing to endure whatever hardship might come because it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Another student named Nicole thanked the committee for the opportunity and said this is what she wants to go to college for. It's the first step in realizing her dream. Cory Nordby, WHS student, thanked the school committee saying they will be learning more than just about the Rwandan culture. "We will be able to see things from their point of view and bring back what we have learned to others in Woonsocket," he said. Justina Pietras, another Global Citizenship Program student, said that it will be great to learn about the African culture and put forth a humanitarian effort. She knows it will be a life-changing trip for them. She thanked the school committee for their support and for letting them become part of something that is bigger than themselves.

Rachel Murray, Woonsocket Resident: She has two children who are both autistic and she couldn't be happier with their progress. However, she said there is a small issue. She lives on 8th Avenue and she walks her son to school and back. When they walk past the school yard, she sees a lot of children fighting and children crying. "There are maybe 40 kids in the schoolyard with maybe 4 parents around. One of the parents used profanity to tell the kids to stop. That's unacceptable. I spoke to the secretary because the principal was at another school. The secretary took my name and number and told me that kids aren't supposed to be in the schoolyard until 8:55 a.m. Mr. Celio called me and we discussed the issue. He has tried very hard to tell the parents that they can't drop the kids off so early. I even volunteered that I would stand at that gate at 8:30 a.m. to tell parents they can't come so early and also watch the kids that are left. I'll do whatever I can do to get the situation solved."

Jeff Partington, WTG President: Reported that they have been looking at several issues since the start of the school year. "One difficult issue is the lack of substitutes at the middle and high school levels. The decision to not have permanent subs has really caused a lot of problems at the high school, especially. Teachers are losing their prep time to cover classes. From a financial standpoint, it's probably costing more to hire daily subs and paying teachers to cover classes." Partington asked that the school committee consider restoring some permanent subs in the schools. He believes it's affecting the education of the kids and the morale of the staff.

Denise Auclair, PAC Co-Chair: She vouched for what Mr. Partington said. "Even at the elementary level, classes get merged together and gym classes don't get held, etc." She said they missed Mrs. Majewski at their PAC meeting and wanted to thank her for her support over the past few years. She hopes she will still attend. Auclair wished Mr. Dubois well on the City Council. Reported that Mr. Donlon and Mr. Roberts joined them at their meeting to see what goes on.

Dr. Lynne Bedard, WACTC/WHS Principal: She supported Mr. Partington's proposal for long-term subs, saying they are in dire need. "We have lost excellent subs to Providence because the pay is more. We would like to be the ones with the good offer for them to stay here."

Estelle Bubble, Parent: Said there has been some damage done to the playground and it happened after school hours. She reported that Mr. Beauchamp and the police are going to work on investigating it. She thanked the outgoing school committee members for their service.

Jessica Desrosiers, Taxpayer: Said she heard that the school committee may be approving raises for administrators at tonight's meeting. "If the City is facing possible bankruptcy, where is the money coming from?" she asked. Mr. Dubois said that it's on the agenda as part of a reorganization and will be discussed at that time.

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Giovanna Donoyan, Superintendent

Dr. Donoyan reported that during the last 52 days on the job, she has witnessed members of our Woonsocket Education Community who are devoted professionals. She recognized the Woonsocket Police Department, Police Chief Carey and his team of officers, who did a remarkable job maintaining order and did a thorough investigation of a potentially dangerous situation. She thanked Chief Carey for his leadership, adding that we all appreciate officers' commitment in maintaining law and order. Dr. Donoyan also recognized all the wonderful ladies and gentlemen who work at the Central Office, saying that their dedication in ensuring that school operations run smoothly is noted. She made specific recognition of Ms. Kimberly Blais for her willingness to give 110% attention to her responsibilities and her willingness to help.

Motion to receive and place on file: E. Nadeau

2nd: A. Forcier (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: October 12, 2011 OPEN/CLOSED; October 26, 2011 OPEN

Motion to approve: V. Phongsavanh

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion to approve Consent Agenda w/ the following exemptions: A. Forcier

*Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000: City of Woonsocket, Delta Mechanical Contractors, Doreen Corrente, Pawtucket, School Dept. removed by L. Majewski

2nd: M. Dubois/E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Personnel Actions

Certified Appointments/Non-Certified Appointments: *(Dr. Donoyan tabled the hourly position of FOCUS Social Worker at the WHS)*

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

Cayer Caccia, LLP/Prof. Serv./Business Office/Local
City of Woonsocket/Police Detail-Focus/WH/Local - removed by L. Majewski
Delta Mechanical Contractors, LLC/Repairs/Fac., WMS/Local – removed by L. Majewski
Doreen Corrente/Consultant/WACTC/Perkins Grant – removed by L. Majewski
Global/Ed. Supplies/WACTC/Perkins Grant
Mentor, Inc.,dba RIRAL/ABE,GED,ESL Classes/Grants,PD & Assess/WIA Adult Ed. Grant
Ockers Company/Prof. Develop Supplies/Grants, PD & Assess/Title II Grant
Pawtucket School Dept./Tuition/District/Local – removed by L. Majewski
Pearson North America/Software/Grants,PD & Assess/IDEA Grant-EIS
RI Interlocal Trust/Property & Liability Ins/Bus. Office/Local
Robinson & Clapham/Legal Serv./Business Office/Local
Sound Tree/Ed. Supplies/WH/Perkins Grant
The Met/Bus Passes/Business Office/Local
United Rentals/Equipment/Facilities/Local

3. Field Trip/Conference Requests - None

4. Home Schooling Requests

5. Disposal of Obsolete Equipment

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:

2) Purchases/Transfers over \$2,000:

- **City of Woonsocket Police Detail-FOCUS @ WHS (\$28,800 - LOCAL):** Mrs. Majewski asked if this was a similar salary rate as we give to our Resource officer. Mrs. Busby said she would have to look into that. Majewski asked if there is some way this can be supported through some grant funds. "No, because it was originally in local and if we move it, it would be supplanting," said Busby.

- **Delta Mechanical Contractors, LLC for Emergency Pipe Repairs @ Villa Nova (\$3,000 – LOCAL):** Mrs. Majewski asked if these repairs were under warranty. Mrs. Busby believed that it is past the one-year warranty period. Mrs. Forcier confirmed that it was.

- **Doreen Corrente, Consultant for WACTC Perkins Grant (\$4,950 – Perkins):** Mrs. Majewski asked why this isn't part of the district negotiated grant since it's required by RIDE. Dr. Bedard said that it's required in the Perkins grant. She has called around to see what the other career centers are paying and who they were using and found that we have the best price and always get a great report from Ms. Corrente. "Every district hires their own person. It's a federal audit, even though it goes through RIDE," said Bedard.

- **Pawtucket School Dept. for Tuition (\$21,863.00 – LOCAL):** Mrs. Busby explained that this particular student was approved before Dr. Gerardi left. It came across his desk in April or May. Mrs. Forcier said it's for the WACTC and we have to let them go to any vocational center they choose.

Motion to approve the exemptions: A. Forcier

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

COMMUNICATIONS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Ms. Phongsavanh reported that the Health and Wellness Committee will meet on November 21st at 3:30 p.m. at McFee. They plan to give updates on "Good Touch/Bad Touch", bullying and suicide prevention. Mrs. Forcier reported that the Building Committee met last Thursday and discussed the Guard Station that has been renovated. "We thought we could use it for Technology, but we can't because there's no handicapped ramp. We are going to appeal that decision, but we can rent it out if we can't use it," said Forcier. Mrs. Majewski reported that the Curriculum Committee Meeting will be rescheduled. She thanked the PAC for their kind words, saying it has been a pleasure. Unfortunately, she was unable to attend the meeting last night.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Discussion of Secondary Teacher Coverage – Dr. Donoyan

Dr. Donoyan reported that the change from block scheduling to a 6-period day has had some more unintended consequences. "It's costing more money than we thought originally. Substitute coverage is a district-wide issue, but it's most problematic at the high school. If we raise the substitute pay to \$100 per day, the total annualized cost for subs at the WHS would be \$108,000, saving us \$54,000," said Donoyan, referring to a table that was provided. She requested raising the sub pay or reinstating permanent substitute teachers. Mrs. Majewski spoke about the long-term subs that worked out very well. "We had to cut the budget and we cut the sub line in half. I'm not sure raising the sub pay rate will give us the help we need. I think we need more analysis and would like to know what we were paying the long-term subs that we used to have," said Majewski. Mrs. Busby said it was a little over \$300,000 including fringe. "I've looked over the figures and with these numbers, what percent of periods were actually covered by subs because teachers get paid at a higher rate to sub. How much was each teacher making for a block?" asked Mrs. Forcier. She was told they got \$25. "Why are they making \$25 for less time now?" asked Forcier. Busby explained that it's a contractual rate. Forcier would like to table this to get more data. Dr. Donoyan said that Woonsocket is an urban community. "In Northern RI, a substitute can choose to go to Cumberland, Lincoln, North Smithfield or Burrillville, where they don't have as many issues as we have here and for more money. From what I understand, the subs that have gone elsewhere for more money would come back here if the rate was raised," said Donoyan. Ms. Phongsavanh appreciated Dr. Donoyan's efforts. "Do we have classes unattended?" she asked. Dr. Donoyan said, "No. If we didn't get a TA, sometimes it might be an issue." Ms. Phongsavanh would also like to table this item to investigate it further. Mrs. Majewski asked if AESOP has helped bring more subs in. "The problem is not with the teachers, it's that we don't have enough subs to fill the vacancies," said Donoyan. Mrs. Busby said that the

subs pick and choose where they want to go. Majewski asked if Dr. Donoyan thought RIDE might entertain certifying people as subs who have Associate's degrees since there is such a shortage of subs and there are many, many people out of work. Dr. Donoyan can ask, but the minimum requirement for Teacher Assistant certification is an Associate's degree as well. She can ask if we could get a waiver, however.

Motion to TABLE: A. Forcier
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes

2nd: L. Majewski

2. Discussion of Reinstatement of Attendance Officer-Dr. Donoyan

Dr. Donoyan informed the committee that she would be posting for two part-time attendance/residency verification officers, for which the funds were budgeted and approved. Mrs. Forcier asked if they would be receiving benefits. Mrs. Busby said, "No." "We do have major truancy problems, even at the elementary level," noted Forcier. "What is the stipend?" asked Phongsavanh. Busby said they would be paid \$25,000 for each part-time position or \$50,000 if it is one person full-time. "There were concerns about people coming to the district who don't actually live here. These people will be investigating these issues," said Majewski. "If we do one full-time person, we would have to provide benefits with that. I would rather they be two part-time positions," said Mrs. Forcier.

3. Discussion of City Council Resolution Requesting the WSC Drop Pending Litigation Against the City of Woonsocket – Dr. Donoyan

Dr. Donoyan explained that Mr. Dubois checked with Atty. Ackerman about whether this item could be discussed even though the agenda says Pension Reform and it's actually the Resolution from the City Council asking that the school committee drop this suit. Mr. Dubois said it was discussed briefly in closed session and determined that it could be discussed as part of this agenda. Mrs. Forcier asked Atty. Ackerman to explain what the lawsuit was about and he did. "If the School Committee wants to withdraw the matter, that will be it. Otherwise, the judge will decide if it will go forward," he said. Mrs. Forcier said she wouldn't support going forward with the lawsuit. She thinks the court will decide to dismiss it since we balanced our budget. "It's moot now," she added. Mrs. Nadeau was in favor of continuing the litigation against the City of Woonsocket. "It's funny that they want us to drop it when they are the ones that sued us in the first place. I would like a decision on this issue one way or another," said Mrs. Nadeau. Ms. Phongsavanh said she wouldn't support it because, now more than ever, we need to work with the City Council during the next few years. She can't see continuing this and thinks it's a bigger issue than just Woonsocket. Mrs. Majewski said she would not support the withdrawal of this litigation because she believes there are fundamental legal questions that need to be answered. "Students went without supplies because of these issues," she said. She believes that Russ Olivo did a good job presenting the questions on this issue. "If the court dismisses it, then at least we brought the issues forward," said Majewski. "\$25,000 extra has been paid to Atty. Ackerman so far on this issue—not that he hasn't earned it, but that money could have been spent on paper," said Forcier. "It was only \$20,000," quipped Ackerman. "It was a very time-consuming case and if this case goes forward, do you believe it could set a precedent?" Mr. Dubois asked Ackerman. "If it goes to court, it could. It depends on whether they bring it forward or decide to drop the issue. It wouldn't surprise me if the court decides that the case is moot," said Ackerman. "The only reason our budget was balanced was because of stimulus funds and cuts. We have two people who want to go forward and two people that don't and I am leaving to go onto the City Council. I will vote to support going forward with the lawsuit," said Dubois. Mrs. Nadeau recalled all the problems we had at the start of school last year because our bills weren't being paid by the City. "We can't lay down and play dead!" she said. Mrs. Forcier said that she also sat in court time after time. "The judge said it's not a Caruolo action and to balance our budget. I don't feel it's going to be any different. The odds aren't in our favor," said Mrs. Forcier. Ms. Phongsavanh believes our focus should be on things that are within our control. "We just heard from our attorney that most likely, the judge will dismiss this case," she added. "I would like to go ahead and let the judge decide," said Dubois.

Motion to withdraw pending litigation against the City of Woonsocket: A. Forcier

2nd: V. Phongsavanh

Roll Call Vote: 2 yes – 3 no (MD/EN/LM)

MOTION FAILS.

4. Re-organization Chart – Dr. Donoyan

Dr. Donoyan read her memo to the committee explaining her new organizational chart, which divides the administration into three areas of responsibility--Educational, Innovation, and Financial. Each responsibility is led by an Executive Director. She recommends that the position of WMS Principal be changed to the Director of Secondary Schools and each middle school retain a separate principal acting as Co-Principals. This can be accomplished by promoting the current Assistant Principals to the position of Co-Principals. The organization of the Innovation department will include a central registration to ease the flow for parents and students. Dr. Donoyan also

recommended a salary increase for administrators and principals using \$56,000 from an unfilled position in the budget. Another \$100,000 for a Special Projects Coordinator would come out of grant funds. She noted that they do not have contracts and have not received a salary increase in 5 or 6 years.

Mrs. Forcier made a motion to separate the two items. Mr. Dubois said they would be voting on each item separately. Mrs. Majewski asked for clarification on the recommended new organization at the middle schools. Dr. Donoyan explained that the current principal would become the Director of Secondary Schools and both assistant principals would be elevated to co-principals. "We would need to have assistant principals to support them or disciplinary officers," said Donoyan. "That would be two new positions and RI doesn't currently have a certification for behavior specialist," said Majewski. Dr. Donoyan said that a behavior specialist or discipline specialist could be funded under IDEA. "Would these positions be reposted?" What procedures will be followed?" asked Majewski. "There are no names attached to the plan. We have some phenomenal directors that we want to keep," said Donoyan. "As far as the additional salaries for the middle school and high school—some are 12-month and some are 10-month. Have you figured that in when you are giving them the same amount of pay increase?" asked Mrs. Nadeau. Dr. Donoyan said that the high school principal has support staff and assistant principals to help, whereas the elementary principals don't. "I just can't approve expending this money at this time in light of all the services we have cut from kids. The teachers haven't received raises in years and they work just as hard as these people do. I don't think it's fair overall to the rank and file. Dr. Gerardi had a proposal before he left for giving increases to directors and it was shot down. I don't feel we are in any better a position now to do it. I don't know anyone who has gotten a raise lately. They have only gotten more co-pays," said Nadeau. "Under the new chart, your Assistant Special Education Director will report to the Special Education Director?" asked Mrs. Forcier. "Yes. All the special education staff and administrators will," said Donoyan. "When will this chart go into effect if it's approved?" asked Forcier. Dr. Donoyan said she would like it to go into effect "yesterday". Forcier said she wasn't comfortable entering into any financial agreement at this time. She wanted to table it and get an updated budget. "They do deserve to have a contract and I have been requesting it for years. I would be more than willing to give them contracts," said Forcier. Ms. Phongsavanh thought there has been a big issue of everyone reporting to the superintendent and even some school committee members. "It makes it very clear who reports to whom and will make things more efficient. With the raises—I can't support those right now. Financially we can't do it. It isn't fair to the kids," said Phongsavanh. Mrs. Nadeau asked if we would have the funds for the two new positions that would be needed at the middle schools. Dr. Donoyan said that she will try to get them paid through grant funds. She will make it happen. She listed the names of who would be in the positions currently filled after being pressured to do so. Donoyan would not name a Deputy Superintendent because it's a personnel matter. Under instructional leaders, in terms of instruction, Majewski feels that the people teaching grades 6-12 provide additional expertise in their particular areas. She thinks streamlining it to just grades 6-12 we are going to miss the continuity from K-12. Dr. Donoyan explained that her feelings are that we have stretched the Instructional Leaders too far. She has inherited an incredible staff of people who keep adding to their plate. "We have stretched them too far," said Donoyan. Majewski requested a copy of the semi-annual budget in January. She told Dr. Gerardi she understood that he had an obligation to let them know that we are losing people because we are no longer competitive. "There is also the pension uncertainty and we have lost people to Massachusetts due to that issue. This money could possibly go towards hiring more long-term subs. I appreciate you bringing this concern forward," said Majewski. Mr. Dubois really liked the new organizational chart. "It's very explicit," he said. He supported what Mrs. Forcier said earlier about giving the administrators and principals contracts and some sort of security. "It's the least we can do. As far as the raises, with the finances the way they are, I don't think it's the right time to give out raises. I think job security is more important to them than the money," said Dubois.

Motion to accept the new organizational chart: A. Forcier	2nd: E. Nadeau
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes	APPROVED

Motion to the raises that were requested:	No Motion.
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CONFERENCES: None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Giovanna Donoyan, Superintendent (TABLED)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

L. Majewski: Thanked the people of Woonsocket for the opportunity to serve them on the school committee. "It has been a wonderful experience and I have learned a great deal. I am humbled by everyone's well-wishes tonight." She thanked her husband for coming tonight. "When you run for school committee, your family runs with you." She thanked her family for their support. She thanked Dr. Donoyan, Dr. Gerardi, and Dr. Traylor. She wished Dr.

Donoyan well and told her she would be glad to assist in any way she can as a community member. Majewski thanked Ms. Belisle for all her hard work on the minutes. She thanked the parents of PAC and SELAC. Urged parents to join and volunteer in the schools. Wished Mr. Dubois well on the City Council. "It should be interesting for you to go from serving on a committee with all women to serving on a committee with all men." Thanked Mrs. Nadeau for the flowers and for all her hard work. Wished Mrs. Forcier and Ms. Phongsavanh well in their upcoming term. Welcomed Mr. Donlon and Mr. Roberts to the school committee and wished them well.

A. Forcier: Thanked the community for giving her another two years. Wished Mrs. Majewski the best in all her endeavors. Gave best wishes to Mr. Dubois on the City Council. Welcomed Chris Roberts and John Donlon and looks forward to working with them the next two years. Thanked the Rotary Club for giving our kids \$6,000 for their trip to Rwanda.

E. Nadeau: Said she had a request from a constituent that when our agendas are posted online, that there are some substance to them. "That way people will know what is behind a certain line item. It may alleviate some concerns such as happened with something on the agenda tonight." She congratulated the two new school committee members, adding that they have their work cut out for them. Thanked Mr. Dubois for being a steady, very straight chairman. "He has been fair and available. He will be missed. I am sure he will do well on the City Council. I'm also sure that I will never find another working partner as good as Mrs. Majewski. We have very different personalities, but always found a common ground." She thanked the voters of Woonsocket for placing their confidence and trust in her again and promised to never let them down.

V. Phongsavanh: Wished Mr. Donlon and Mr. Roberts aboard. "It will be a fun ride and I think we will work well together. We have some challenges ahead and will need to work together." She wants to make the school committee more efficient and find ways to work together. Her main concerns will be governance and policy during the next two years. She wished Mr. Dubois well and thanked Mrs. Majewski for her service.

M. Dubois: Dubois announced that there is only one school committee meeting in November and one in December. December 14th is the next meeting. "After eight years on the school committee, it's with mixed emotions that I leave the committee." Mr. Dubois read a statement he had prepared. He thanked the department heads and Stacey Busby and Mr. Fontaine. He said that Stacey was a Godsend to this city. He hopes she is with us for many more years to come. He thanked Ms. Belisle and Atty. Ackerman, saying Atty. Ackerman has been with the WED for 40 years. One of his biggest mistakes on the committee was when he voted not to renew Ackerman's contract and he was glad that they ended up renewing it. Dubois thanked Dotty DeRemer and Kim Blais. He gave a special thanks to Henry Trudeau for bringing the packets to them. Gave a special thanks to Dr. Donoyan and believes she will serve the education department well. He recognized Dr. Gerardi, our previous superintendent for three years. He thanked the administrators, principals, TAs and teachers. Thanked the three unions for serving us well and being willing to re-negotiate contracts. Dubois thanked the PAC and those who faithfully attend the school committee meetings. Acknowledged Mrs. Majewski for serving on the school committee and many difficult subcommittees. He hopes she considers running again in the future. He thanked Mrs. Forcier and Ms. Phongsavanh. He thanked Mrs. Nadeau for all her hard work, adding that she was the hardest working vice-chairman he has worked with. Wished them all well. Welcomed Mr. Donlon and Mr. Roberts aboard. Thanked the voters of Woonsocket for their faith in him. He will continue the hard work and diligence as he has on the school committee.

Dubois reported that there was a vote taken in closed session on collective bargaining that was passed 5 to 0.

Motion to adjourn at 10:15 p.m.: L. Majewski

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary