

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
Woodstock Academy Board of Trustees
September 22, 2009

PRESENT: H. Barlow, M. Beckwith, R. Blackmer, G. Carabeau (E), E. Cartier (P), S. Fredrickson, G. Garabrant, J. Gerardi-Voccio (B), E. Higgins, R. Holland, K. Johnston, P. Kelly, W. Loftus (W), P. Lynn, J. Miragliuolo (P), D. Morse, Joe Musumeci (7:34), P. Paquette, J. Rauh, A. Spalding, T. Stokes, C. Swenson (W), D. Teed, S. Young (7:54)

ADMINISTRATION: J. Campbell, K. Caron, A. Cormier, J. Grossman, H. Singleton

GUESTS: Dr. Frank Baran, Mrs. Merry Burke, Ms. Sara Dziedzic, Mrs. Jackie Rose
Student: Amy Lusa

ABSENT EXCUSED: B. Child, H. Folsom, J. Kaeding, Jeri Musumeci

ABSENT: M. Lyons (B), K. Page (E)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by President Sandra Fredrickson at 7:12 p.m.

2. Citizen's Participation

None.

3. Student Council Report

Amy Lusa, President of the SC reported on events that have taken place since the opening of school. The annual Freshmen Traditions days and orientation went well. The keynote speaker, Aaron Davis, was well received. Feedback on the event has been positive. The roast beef booth at the Woodstock Fair seems to have profited well this year. Final tallies are yet to be announced. The first dance of the year is next week which is usually well attended. Freshmen elections were held today. The Fall Foliage Fling will be held on Columbus Day. The format is changing to accommodate seating of more people. Trick or Treat Street planning will start on Thursday.

Mrs. Fredrickson congratulated the council on a job well done for freshmen and family traditions days.

4. Faculty Report

a. Senegalese Exchange

Mrs. Merry Burke reviewed the plans for the upcoming visit by students and teachers from Mariama Ba School on Goree Island in Senegal. This is the 3rd exchange with Senegal. 11 students and 3 teachers will be visiting and staying with host families. WA teachers are hosting the Senegalese teachers. A welcome reception will be held on Thursday in the faculty lounge and all are invited. Mrs. Burke reviewed the schedule of events for 15-day visit. She invited Trustees to participate in any way that they can.

b. Faculty Report

Mrs. Jackie Rose gave a brief report on behalf of the faculty. 10 students signed up this semester to study Ancient Greek. The NHS Induction will be held next Tuesday. 39 applications were received and 21 students were qualified and chosen.

5. Correspondence

A copy of a letter was received from Mr. Caron to Dr. Baran, informing the WBOE of the status of the draft of a tuition contract with Woodstock.

6. Secretary's Report

Minutes of the annual meeting of August 25, 2009 were provided for reference and will be brought forward for approval at the next annual meeting in August of 2010.

7. Administrative Reports

a. Headmaster

Mr. Caron thanked the Board for the wonderful reception hosted by Trustee Kelly.

1) Draft – Administrative Reorganization

Mr. Caron provided a draft in the packet. He stated that this reorganization is part of the plan to position the Academy as an independent school of excellence with a focus on development by the Headmaster. He stated that this echoes the Framework for Advancement that the Board has adopted and covers the four categories of responsibilities in teaching and learning, daily management, business and operations, and resource development. This draft is a result of the work accomplished over the summer.

Mr. Miragliuolo asked about the Technology Coordinator. He stated that there was discussion about whether it should be business or teaching and learning and what the primary role of the Technology Coordinator is. Mr. Caron stated that this was discussed and it will be addressed as to where it belongs. For the time being, and in terms of division of labor, it was determined that it would stay where it is for now, under business and operations.

Mr. Johnston asked what was happening with special education. Mr. Caron stated that with Mrs. Mitra's retirement this past June, she has been asked to serve in an interim basis until a replacement can be found. The special education program has been contracted with EASTCONN for a number of years and Mrs. Mitra has been their employee. There has been discussion with sending town superintendents as to whether special education should be brought under the Academy. They are in the process of putting a letter together requesting that Trustees look into the possibility.

Mr. Garabrant asked if in Mr. Caron's discussions with staff in the spring, if there were specific issues brought up that led to the idea of reorganization. He asked if something was not working. Mr. Caron stated that it was in part, discussions with staff and in working with administration over the summer. He stated that primarily, it was the strategic shift in direction when he was hired with the Headmaster to focus on long term and strategic issues, and less on day to day operations. That is what is driving the reorganization. He stated that some time needs to pass in working with it and adjustments will be made as we move along. He felt it was working well at this point. He stated that good leadership is about building capacity in your staff and not every key decision has to be made by the Headmaster. Mr. Higgins stated that this makes sense, particularly with the movement with development. He hoped that it continued to move forward.

2) Dean of Students

Mr. Caron reviewed the proposal included in the packet for a second Dean of Students. He stated that there are two fundamental issues, one of which is the change in focus of the Headmaster, and the second being the need to increase the focus on instruction – particularly to focus the Dean of Curriculum on school improvement. This proposal was also a result of three major NEASC recommendations. Mr. Caron provided data from regional high schools with similar enrollment. Schools of similar size have 2 or 3 assistant principals which would be the equivalent of a dean. He stated that the data, combined with the NEASC recommendations, clearly supports the need for an additional dean of students. Mr. Caron stated that the administrative staff reviewed the current budget and how to redeploy resources and staff to accommodate an additional dean and remain within the footprint of the current budget. Shifts in personnel and teaching assignments could be made to be able to fund a teaching dean on an interim basis for the remainder of the school year. The position will be posted internally, and appointed for a year. It will be opened up again with the new budget year 2010-11. Mr. Caron stated that he is taking the necessary steps to add this position at the appropriate point in the year and within the current budget. He stated that it more appropriately aligns administrative duties and responsibilities.

Mr. Garabrant asked of this would have any effect on the WAEA contract with the shifts in staff duties or assignments that would have to be made. Mr. Caron stated that there is restrictive language in terms of the ability to change teaching assignments during the school year. He stated that Mrs. Rose has agreed to talk about those shifts well before they happen and come to some agreement before something is decided for 2nd semester. The idea is to balance out class sizes without highs and lows for 2nd semester and then for next year. Mr. Garabrant expressed concern for the upcoming contract negotiations with the WAEA and noted that communication about this issue ahead of time will be critical.

Mr. Lynn asked what structure NFA had. Mr. Caron stated that it was different, with a superintendent/head of school, assistant superintendent/head of school, director of special education, director of curriculum instruction, four building principals, and four half-time teacher/administrators to assist each principal.

Mr. Johnston asked what the timeframe would be if organized and within budget. Mr. Caron stated that he wants to check again with the WAEA on the process that will be used and try to get the teacher's association to partner with us to make this successful. He stated that it is a bit unusual to be starting at this point in the school year. He hoped to begin within the month. Mr. Musumeci asked what will happen next year with the internal person that will potentially fill this interim position. Mr. Caron stated that they will know up front what the process is going to be and they will be able to apply when the positions opens up for next year. They will have the inside track if they are good and want the position. Mr. Musumeci stated that this will look like new money going into the new budget year. Mrs. Fredrickson stated that it is a reallocation of funds this year and could follow the same path next year. Mr. Musumeci stated that people need to be made aware that there will be variables for consideration next year.

3) Administrative Assistant

Mr. Caron stated that he will need to hire an assistant on a part time basis to support the Headmaster's office. Currently, Mrs. Willis is assisting but needs to step back fully into her role in development and fundraising. Mr. Caron is working on a job description.

b. Assistant Headmaster

Mr. Cormier reported on the smooth school opening and the success of the freshmen and family traditions days. He commented on the great job done by the Student Council. He stated that students' schedules are locked in and freshmen are doing well. They are a good group, cooperative and energetic.

Mr. Cormier announced that John Bartolotta has been selected to the State Board of Education Advisory Council and the Academy is pleased to have John representing most of northeastern Connecticut on the council.

Mr. Cormier also announced that a college admissions night is being held for seniors and their parents; a military recruiters orientation meeting is being scheduled through the Career Center which will give all the services an understanding of what our chain of command is, protocol, process for records, etc.; and October 1st is the undergraduate Convocation.

Mr. Cormier and 6 Student Council members, along with advisor, Mrs. Nancy Beauregard-Waldron, represented 170 high schools in Connecticut at Gillette Stadium. An invitation was extended to the Academy as a reward for their outstanding leadership and success hosting blood drives for the American Red Cross. The event was sponsored by the Red Cross, Bob's Discount Furniture, Bob's Outreach, and the New England Patriots. Students were given full access to the stadium and the opportunity to meet with the football players.

c. Dean of Curriculum

Mrs. Singleton gave a power point presentation of the Academic Report for 2008-09. It can be accessed on the Academy website as well. Mrs. Singleton will be presenting an individualized report to each sending town on how their students are performing.

Mr. Garabrant asked if there was a way to see whether students attending 2-year colleges were moving on to 4-year programs. Mrs. Singleton stated that she did not have an easy way to track that. Discussion took place about utilizing technology and strengthening connections with alumni to find out what they are doing in this regard. Mr. Garabrant stated that he would like to be able to determine whether a decision to go to a 2-year program was economic or academic, or otherwise. Mr. Blackmer stated that he felt that there would be several factors determining those decisions and that 91% of our students continuing on to some post-secondary program was a step in the right direction. Mr. Holland stated that his only concern is that the figure of 55% going on to 4-year schools has existed for some time, perhaps 30 years, and is an extraordinary statistic. He did not think that it should happen this way and that it seemed like the problem is that these students are not qualifying academically for scholarships and financial aid. He expressed concern that there are not more students entering 4-year programs and that we need to change this. Mrs. Swenson stated that she would like to see the number of students who are applying and not getting accepted, and if it is a number to be concerned about. She would be more concerned about the non-acceptance, than the number of students applying, and why they aren't being accepted. The result may result in an effort from the Counseling Department in guiding students toward a different outcome. Mr. Holland stated that it would be useful information that Counseling should be able to supply us with. Mrs. Swenson stated that it

should be noted that there is a population of students who like this area and stay here. There is a demographic of students that went away and have returned to school in this area. Mr. Holland stated that there is a good reason to return, it is a good area with strong families. He was not sure how it would affect the numbers for college matriculation, etc. He stated that it would take personal interviews to find out from students why they have made the decisions they have. Mrs. Swenson stated that we should also be able to secure that information from Counseling. Mr. Morse asked how our numbers compared to other schools in the state and if it was a state-wide trend or something that we can change.

Mr. Musumeci asked if the 91% was college acceptances or actual matriculation. Mrs. Singleton stated that it represented acceptance and attendance. Mrs. Paquette thanked Mrs. Singleton for the clear and concise report. Mr. Caron expressed pleasure with the good questions being asked. He stated that indicators of excellence go beyond these scores and getting that data is important. He stated that is also related to our development efforts and we want to maintain a connection with our students. We can use that data to improve our programs and when students are successful, we want to them to give back. He stated that with respect to comparisons to Windham County, the state, and DRG, our goal should be to be the best of the best top 1-2% of secondary schools across the country. He stated that we need to look at schools that are doing that over a long period of time and not be satisfied with where we are. He would rather see more students taking AP courses and tests and doing not quite so well, than a small number doing well. He wants to show that we are providing the rigor. Mr. Caron stated that the Academy has great potential and one key is through Mrs. Singleton and a focus on teaching and learning. He wants to get her out of day to day operations and focused on curriculum. He stated that, in addition, if we want to be the best of the best, we can't rely on public money and we must reduce our dependence on public.

d. Dean of Students

Mr. Grossman noted that most activities had been covered. He stated that he is working with an administrative intern, Ms. Sara Dziedzic. Individual classes are working on their activity and fundraising calendars. The school newspaper, the Centaurion, is in process.

e. Business Manager

Mr. Campbell noted the financial report ending August 2009 included with the Finance Committee minutes. He stated that it is too early to discuss where we are in the budget but that it seems to be in line at the moment. Investments are settling down and have started to come back. The Finance Committee has decided not to take any action on the bonds in the portfolio.

Mr. Campbell provided the draft of the 2008-09 audit for review. Questions should be directed to Mr. Campbell between now and the next Board meeting. It will be presented for approval in October. Mr. Campbell stated that one of the requirements of the IRS this year is that members of the Board review the informational tax return, form 990. Mr. Campbell will be forwarding, via email, a copy of the form when it is received from the auditors. He asked Trustees to anticipate receiving it within the next month. This is a new requirement this year.

8. President's Report

Mrs. Fredrickson reviewed upcoming events for Trustee participation including the Academic Convocation on October 1st, the Educational Summit with sending town superintendents and board chairs on October 13th, and the Trustee/Staff Reception on October 16th.

Mrs. Fredrickson reported that she and Mr. Caron had met with Mrs. Paul and Dr. Baran to discuss global issues in a relaxed atmosphere. She stated that they are working on relationship building between boards.

Mrs. Fredrickson informed the Board that emailing of Board packets, as opposed to the postal service, will begin with the November meetings. If anyone has difficulties with email, they should make arrangements to receive their packets via regular mail with Mrs. Willis.

Mrs. Fredrickson stated that an issue that has come up in the past has been not knowing how to deal with public attendance at committee meetings. We do not have a process to handle this as there is usually no place on the agenda for public comment. It has been suggested that committee meetings include a time for citizen's participation. This will be standardized for all committee meetings.

9. Old Business

None.

10. New Business

a. 2009-10 Yearbook Ad

MOTION: (Garabrant, Johnston) To approve a full-page ad in the yearbook from the Board of Trustees.

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11. Committee Reports

a. Finance Committee

Mr. Kelly referred to the minutes in the packet and that most items had been covered. He added that the committee discussed transparency in the budget as a part of the adopted Framework for Advancement. The Finance Committee has directed the administration to include more detail in the upcoming budget review process. Mr. Kelly reiterated that the 990 form that Mr. Campbell referred to is something that the Finance Committee need only show that Board members have received it.

b. Building & Grounds Committee

Mr. Blackmer reported that the committee met and discussed the Bentley project and the sewer project. The Army Corps is planning to meet on the Bentley plan this month and then needs to confer with the DEP. They have promised something, at least by correspondence, by mid October. The sewer application is proceeding through the WPCA. On a less positive note, the Inn at Woodstock Hill has decided not to grant the Academy an easement. The committee is looking at alternatives such as proceeding down Rte. 169, therefore negating the need for an easement. CME has begun work on this. Preliminary test results were positive with respect to ledge tests. The committee also discussed the results of the NEASC report and how they related to the facility. Obvious issues were the sewer, handicapped issues that need to be addressed, and the need for an enrollment management plan and how it would relate to the facility and what we would need to do from a planning perspective.

Mr. Garabrant asked why the change of heart with the easement on the part of the Inn. Mr. Blackmer stated the he would be reluctant to speak for them and really did not know. Mr. Caron stated that he and Mr. Campbell met with Mr. Naumann after trying for weeks to get a response. Mr. Naumann indicated that he did not see any benefit or value to arranging an easement for the Academy for the sewer project and that the connection fee for him is far too high for the Inn to handle. Mr. Caron stated that as a result, and whatever other issues Mr. Naumann may have, he has decided not to grant us the easement. Mr. Caron stated that it is fairly clear that this is a dead end for us.

Mr. Loftus asked if this would change projection costs. Mr. Campbell stated that the numbers are preliminary at this point and complete engineering has not been done for an alternative. He stated that test borings have been done along Rte. 169 to determine if there was ledge and none was found at a level that would interfere. Indications are that there may not be or very minimal additional cost for the construction portion of the sewer line. Engineering fees however need to be redone for half the line. This seems to be the only additional cost factor at this time, yet to be determined.

Mr. Rauh asked if ownership had changed in any way at the Inn. Mr. Campbell stated that to the best of our knowledge, it had not. Mr. Rauh stated that this is the same person then that came to the Board and said that we were dragging our feet on the project and pushed for us to get moving. He stated that he was very disappointed that it has come to this point and that it was very short sighted on Mr. Naumann's part. Mr. Holland asked about the hookup fees and how they have changed. Mr. Campbell stated that when we first got to almost the same point of approval two years ago, the connection fee was less than \$100,000. The connection fees now are at \$1.2 million. Mr. Johnston asked if granting us an easement would force the Inn into a situation to have to pay any fees. Mrs. Fredrickson stated that they would only pay connection fees if they decided to connect. Mr. Johnston thought this should be a non-issue. Mr. Caron stated that he suspected that there were other reasons. Mr. Higgins suggested that the Board state their displeasure in the form of a resolution and perhaps give Mr. Naumann some pause to reconsider. Mr. Rauh noted that the Academy also gave Mr. Naumann a tax break by accepting the plans he donated so that he could write them off. He stated they are now totally worthless. Mrs. Fredrickson suggested that Mr. Higgins draft a resolution but in the essence of time, have the Board approve in concept and then allow the Executive Committee to approve it. She stated that it would be circulated thereafter to seek approval by Board members to include their names.

MOTION: (Musumeci, Carabeau) To recommend that a resolution be drafted, approved by the Executive Committee, and circulated to Board members for approval and names.

**Abstained – Young
All Others in Favor**

Mr. Blackmer stated that the sewer project will need to move forward one way or another. The committee will continue to look at alternatives in the meantime. Mr. Miragliuolo stated that even if there is no change with Mr. Naumann’s perspective, he should be made aware of the Board’s displeasure.

c. Resource Development Committee

1) Foundation

Mrs. Beckwith stated that the committee is meeting regularly. Minutes of September 1st were distributed. The committee has been discussing establishment of a foundation and has been preparing a recommendation for the full Board. Mrs. Beckwith reviewed a memo of September 16th explaining the background and general understanding of what a foundation is all about. A subcommittee was formed to explore the prospects of forming a foundation in further depth. Mr. Caron reviewed the strategic benefits and rationale behind the proposal.

MOTION: (Kelly Holland) To approve the concept of forming a Woodstock Academy Foundation.

Discussion:

It was clarified that the Board was not approving the establishment of a foundation, but the concept to pursue it. Mr. Lynn stated that his is a great move for the Academy and will be a great advantage. Mr. Garabrant stated that Mr. Caron’s predecessor was very high on NFA’s ability to raise money. He asked if this is the same format that they have. Mr. Caron stated that it is similar in concept but not structurally the same. NFA has a slightly different structure for their foundation and corporation relationship. He stated that the key to success is not taking the NFA model and transporting it to WA, but tailoring it with our needs to raise funds. He stated that it is the same concept that the Gilbert School has with the Gilbert Trust. The Trust pays for facility and improvements. Debt services are zero. He stated that you can build through leverage of an endowment and that is the strength of the academy model. He wants the Academy to get there as soon as possible. He stated that there is no doubt in his mind that a foundation is the key to getting there and that there seems to be no doubt in the minds of the Resource Development Committee either.

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d. Executive Committee

Mrs. Fredrickson reviewed the minutes. The largest discussion was the Framework for Advancement and assignments to committees for the work to begin. A list was distributed.

e. Academic Committee

Mrs. Paquette reviewed the minutes and noted that Mrs. Singleton’s academic report was the highlight of their meeting. They also discussed math alignment with sending schools. Concerns had been raised by one particular school and the committee agreed to include placement meetings in the process to deal with math placement on a case by case basis if needed. The process seems to have worked well. CAPT scores were also discussed and it is not just an Academy problem, but a sending town problem as well. We are working to align sending towns for improvement. Student attendance was also discussed. The attendance procedure and guidelines have been tightened up.

f. Negotiation Committee

Mr. Young reported that the committee met on September 8th. October 5th they will be meeting with the WAEA to establish ground rules for negotiations.

g. Sending Town Contract Negotiations Committee

Mr. Rauh stated that the committee met on September 15th. Minutes were included in the packet. Contracts for Brooklyn and Woodstock are being worked on. They hope to have something completed for Brooklyn in the next two weeks. Woodstock will follow.

MOTION: (Garabrant Paquette) To move to Executive Session at 9:33 p.m. to discuss a personnel matter.

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A personnel matter was discussed. The meeting returned to Regular Session at 9:38 p.m.

MOTION: (Holland, Johnston) to grant a leave of absence to the requesting teacher for the first semester.

Discussion:

Mr. Musumeci suggested a friendly amendment to give the Headmaster permission to extend the leave of absence if necessary into the second semester. Mr. Holland and Mr. Johnston accepted.

Vote on the motion as amended:

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MOTION: (Paquette, Fredrickson) To adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen Willis
Board Secretary