

**MINUTES OF THE WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

249th MEETING

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Tuesday, December 2, 2008, at the Sheraton Hotel in Austin, Texas.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Oliver Bell, Chairman
Eric Gambrell
Pastor C. L. Jackson
Janice Harris Lord
Terrell McCombs
Tom Mechler
J. David Nelson
Leopoldo (Leo) Vasquez, III

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Gregory (Greg) Coleman

WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Debbie Roberts, Superintendent
Don Lawrence
Michael Mondville
Linda Goerdel
Cathy Martin

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL
JUSTICE STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Brad Livingston
Bryan Collier
Melinda Bozarth

CONVENED

Oliver Bell, Chairman, called the meeting of the Windham School District (WSD/District) Board of Trustees (Board) to order on Tuesday, December 2, 2008, at 2:17 p.m. in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the Open Meetings Act. A quorum was present and the 249th meeting of the Board was declared open.

Chairman Bell recognized Kyle Mitchell of the Governor's Office and Susan Dow of the Legislative Budget Board as special guests in attendance and thanked them for their continued support.

Chairman Bell reported that the Board was committed to providing the opportunity for public presentations on topics posted on the meeting agenda (Attachment A), as well as public comment on issues within its jurisdiction as provided in Board Rule 300.1. Persons interested in providing presentations at the meeting were required to complete a registration card and submit it at least ten (10) minutes prior to the meeting's posted start time. As no cards were received prior to the required deadline, the Board would not hear public presentations on posted agenda topics.

RECOGNITIONS

Debbie Roberts, WSD Superintendent, stated in May 2008 the Board nominated Reporter Christal Bennett and Photographer Aaron Drury of Fox Channel 34 of Lubbock to the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) Media Honor Roll for a five (5) part special report on educating offenders behind bars. Since the nomination, certificates were received for these individuals however they were unable to attend this meeting for presentation. As such, David Nelson offered to take the certificates and present them at their station in Lubbock.

Ms. Roberts recognized Cathy Martin for her 35 years of service to the District and thanked her for her continued commitment to WSD.

Chairman Bell stated, effective this meeting, the Board will annually recognize WSD employees who have dedicated 20, 25, 30 and 35 plus years of service to the State of Texas. These individuals represent the strong commitment of the District staff system-wide. He along with the rest of the Board members and Ms. Roberts, expressed their deepest gratitude for the continued service of these employees. During the 2007-2008 school year, 17 Windham employees attained 20 years of service, nine (9) employees attained 25 years of service, four (4) employees attained 30 years of service and one (1) employee, Mrs. Martin, who was introduced earlier, attained 35 years of service. As a symbol of appreciation, these individuals will receive a Board certificate along with a personal letter of gratitude. (Attachment B – Employee Names).

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING CONSENT ITEMS

Chairman Bell called the Board's attention to the Consent Items on the agenda, which consisted of the minutes of the September 26, 2008 meeting, appraisers for the 2008-2009 school year, multiple employment authorizations and the approval of excused absences.

Chairman Bell asked if there were any comments, objections or amendments to the Consent Items. Noting there were none, he stated the Consent Items were approved as submitted.

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING WSD BOARD POLICIES (WBP)

1. WBP-2.00, “Windham School District Board of Trustee Responsibilities”

Michael Mondville, WSD General Counsel, stated that WBP 2.00, “Windham School District Board of Trustees Responsibilities” was being modified to reflect three (3) changes. First is the removal of the requirement for the Board to approve multiple employment authorizations, which is no longer required by statute. Second is the addition of a requirement to approve appraisers under the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS), which provides greater flexibility for the District. The third change removes the requirement for bimonthly division reports, which is now provided quarterly, separate from Board meeting materials.

Mr. Mondville requested that the Board approve the revisions as submitted.

Janice Harris Lord moved that the Windham School District Board of Trustees approve the revisions to WBP-02.00 regarding the “Windham School District Board of Trustees Responsibilities” as presented.

Terrell McCombs seconded the motion, which prevailed unanimously when called to a vote.

2. Annual Review of WBP-11.12, “Windham School District Investment Policy” and Resolution Adopting the Investment Policy

Linda Goerdel, WSD Chief Financial Officer, stated the only revisions to WBP-11.12, “Windham School District Investment Policy” were changes in the policy date and signature line.

Mr. Nelson moved that the WSD Board of Trustees approve the revisions to WBP-11.12 “Windham School District Investment Policy,” and approve the resolution adopting the Investment Policy as presented and that the Chairman and Secretary sign a resolution adopting the policy.

Leo Vasquez seconded the motion, which prevailed unanimously when called to a vote.

PRESENTATION ON STUDENT PLACEMENT PRACTICES

Don Lawrence, WSD Director of Operational Support, discussed the general guidelines on how WSD places offenders into educational programs (Attachment B – PowerPoint Presentation). The WSD’s placement guidelines meet all federal guidelines and provide free appropriate education to all eligible offenders. Windham designed its educational services to meet the unique needs of a correctional setting and legislatively mandated goals are used as a foundation for its programs.

Generally, offenders that are Levels 1, 2 and 3 are eligible to participate in WSD programs. Level 4 and 5 offenders are considered on a case-by-case basis. Administrative segregation and death row offenders are excluded from participation in WSD programs. Offenders who have not yet earned a GED or high school diploma have a higher priority for placement.

Offenders are assessed at the time of intake. This assessment is referred to as an Individualized Treatment Plan (ITP). The ITP is the cornerstone for placement in all Windham programs. The ITP determines the offenders’ needs as well as their prioritization for placement in WSD programs. As far as priority, an offender that is less than 22 years of age is the highest priority offender.

Ms. Roberts explained that WSD is required by the Legislature to prioritize offenders who are most likely to recidivate. Previous evaluations of education programs in prisons indicate that the offenders most likely to recidivate are those that are the youngest. This is why the priority system places younger offenders in a higher priority group.

Mr. Lawrence explained that offenders with no prior work history, no consistent work history or no evidence of a skill, have the highest need for vocational education. Age also plays a significant factor in vocational placement. In addition, the District targets offenders whose release is most imminent.

The District has been experimenting with a new vocational ITP that will track the number of vocational programs completed, provide for ease in reporting and focus on more offenders getting at least one (1) vocational program.

WSD offers programming in a wide variety of educational services to include literacy, vocational, life skills, cognitive and pre-release. Each program has its own unique method of determining both need and prioritization.

Mr. Mechler asked if the offenders with more education and vocational skills are less likely to be problem offenders on the units. Mr. Lawrence responded that generally that was true. Mr. Mechler stated that with these guidelines an offender sentenced to life and not eligible for parole for 60 years, would not qualify for any type of education program. He wondered if there was a way they could be included as to benefit from the program. Mr. Lawrence responded education staff often sit on unit classification committees and this type of offender is commonly referred for educational services.

Ms. Roberts stated that two (2) years ago the District changed its policy regarding academic education to remove time before release as a prioritization factor. Time before release however is still considered for vocational programs so offender training can be current.

Ms. Lord noted that some states offer academic and vocational training for death row inmates and asked if this was common. Mr. Lawrence stated that he did not know.

Mr. McCombs asked if academic education is always given a priority over vocational. He also asked, given there is an offender with a third grade education, how WSD keeps that offender from feeling stigmatized by other offenders in the classroom. In regards to academic vs. vocational, Mr. Lawrence responded there is no hierarchy as to which is more important. Each program stands on its own merit based upon what the individual offenders needs are. In response to the second question, Windham differs in this area from most traditional public schools. The way WSD operates is on an assessment basis and not a promotion type basis. Everybody in the class has the same ability regardless of what age they are. You might have a 20 year old with the equivalent of a third grade education who is sitting beside a 60 year old man with the same level of education. As the offenders are assessed throughout the year, they display what they have learned and are able to move up the ladder regardless of how old they are or how long they have been in the class.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Ms. Roberts reported WSD has experienced a very interesting start to the school year. As WSD receives its appropriation through the Texas Education Agency, it is actually reimbursed for services provided. Unlike regular school districts that are reimbursed on average daily attendance, Windham is reimbursed for contact hours that are earned. The rate for contact hours is established by the Legislature and the District earns its appropriation based on the best 180

days of the 210-day instructional school year. Windham teachers are required to work 220 days per school year (210 instructional days and 10 planning and staff development days). WSD adopts a school calendar each year that identifies instructional days, planning days, staff development days and vacation days. Theoretically, there are 30 days within the calendar to allow for adjustments in case a school needs to close for inclement weather, unit lockdowns or other unexpected occurrences.

This year has been a challenge because of Hurricane Ike and its impact on such a large geographical area. As a result, several WSD schools lost a number of instructional days in September.

In October, the system-wide lockdown to search for contraband brought forth the potential for several additional lost instructional days. Inasmuch, Ms. Roberts asked the principals to approach their staff about moving some vacation days, which were scheduled for later in the year, to the lockdown timeframe. The response was overwhelmingly positive from the teachers. As a result, 54 campuses moved vacation days to the lockdown period, 31 of which actually moved five days.

Ms. Roberts noted she was proud of the unit staff and their willingness to, not only do what was in the best interest of the District, but what was in the best interest of their students.

Chairman Bell stated the Board would like to stay informed of this issue in order that the District can fulfill its instructional day requirement.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Bell adjourned the 249th meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees at 3:52 p.m.

Chairman

Secretary