

**Windham School District
Board of Trustees
*275th Meeting***



Minutes

June 21, 2013

Austin, Texas

WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Crowne Plaza Austin – Salons A-D
6121 North IH-35
Austin, Texas 78752**

**June 21, 2013
1:00 – 1:30 PM**

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Call to Order

Convene Windham School District (WSD) Board of Trustees (Board)

I. Regular Session

- A. Consideration of Approval of Consent Items
 - 1. Minutes of the April 5, 2013, WSD Board Meeting
 - 2. Personal Property Donations
 - 3. Excused Absences
- B. Interim Superintendent's Report
- C. Report from the Chairman, WSD Board
- D. Update on Career and Technical Education (CTE) Initiatives

Recess WSD Board

The WSD Board may discuss and/or take action on any of the items posted on this meeting agenda. The WSD Board may also convene into Executive Session on any of these matters when attorney-client privilege is warranted.

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

Meeting No. 275

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Friday, June 21, 2013, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Austin, Texas.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Oliver Bell, Chairman
Tom Mechler, Vice Chairman
Leopoldo (Leo) Vasquez, III, Secretary
Eric Gambrell
Terrell McCombs
Carmen Villanueva-Hiles
Tom Wingate

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Judge Larry Gist
Janice Harris Lord

WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Veronica Casanova, Interim Superintendent
Linda Goerdel
Sandra Nash
Latreace Craig
Karen Koenning
Michael Mondville
Virginia Price
Karin Ruppelius
Mike Vickers

CONVENED

Oliver Bell, Chairman, convened the meeting of the 275th Windham School District (WSD) Board of Trustees (Board) to order on Friday, June 21, 2013, at 1:31 p.m. in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the *Open Meetings Act*. A quorum was present and the meeting was declared open. During the regular session, the Board conducted business from the agenda posted in the Texas Register.

The Chairman reported the WSD Board was committed to providing the opportunity for public comments and public presentations on posted agenda topics as provided in Board Rule 300.1. As no speaker registration cards were received by the board staff, no public presentations were heard.

RECOGNITIONS

Chairman Bell recognized from the audience Jared Staples with the Governor's Office.

CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEMS

Chairman Bell called the Board's attention to the Consent Items on the agenda, which consisted of the minutes of the April 5, 2013, meeting, personal property donations and excused absences. There being no comments, objections or amendments, the Consent Items were approved as submitted.

INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Veronica Casanova, Interim Superintendent, reported that during this past school year two sections of WSD's educational programs were audited by outside organizations.

The National Center for Construction Education and Research Audit

An accreditation audit was conducted on the construction-related vocational classes that issue industry certificates from the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER). NCCER staff visited vocational classes, interviewed Windham staff and students, and audited documentation at both the campus and district level. Although some areas of improvement were identified, NCCER reaccredited Windham through December 2015.

Texas Education Agency Special Education Audit

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) conducted a special education audit process with on-site visits to six locations. TEA staff visited WSD schools, interviewed staff and students, and reviewed documentation in order to monitor implementation of special education requirements. At the exit conference, TEA was very complimentary of the programs and specifically cited the transitional services that WSD provides and the high level of engagement between Windham staff and students who are unable to attend school because of their custody status. TEA also complimented the use of technology in WSD computer assisted instructional labs. The audit identified three areas of non-compliance. The district developed and submitted a corrective action plan and Ms. Casanova anticipates all three areas to be resolved within the next few months.

Update on 2013 Legislative Session

Ms. Casanova gave an update on legislation that affects WSD.

- SB 213 adds a sunset provision to Chapter 19 of the Texas Education Code, which states the district will be reviewed during the same period that TDCJ is reviewed. The Sunset Bill also updated some reporting requirements for WSD programs and formalized specific items to include in the next recidivism study.

Two bills were passed directly related to WSD vocational programs.

- HB 797 requires Windham to inform an eligible offender in writing, prior to enrollment, of certain information, such as the rules or policies regarding an offender obtaining a license from the state, the number of licenses issued and denied, and the number of released offenders who have completed specific vocational programs over the past ten years. The district does not anticipate any issues as the provisions of the bill are implemented.
- HB 799 requires Windham to continually assess the Texas job market and tailor vocational programs as necessary to provide relevant and marketable skills to meet the needs of employers across the state. This process is already underway within the district.

With the approved appropriations, Windham will receive \$8 million in additional funding over the next two years to assist efforts to keep current programs in place and to expand literacy programs on additional facilities where schools were closed two years ago. WSD is investigating the possibility of expanding to four locations. The additional funds will also help the district prepare for computer-based GED testing over the next few years.

Referring back to the audits, Terrell McCombs asked about the significance of the audit findings. Ms. Casanova responded that the audit by TEA concentrated on special education services that the district provides to offenders under the age of 22. Windham had always considered Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming for all special education students, but not every special education student should be considered for vocational training. The district has purchased software for the special education diagnosticians which will help the district be in compliance with all special education requirements.

Chairman Bell thanked Ms. Casanova for the time she spent this past session making sure legislators and other agencies understood the focus, priorities and mission of WSD.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN, WSD BOARD

Update on WSD's Technology Initiatives

Chairman Bell stated that WSD has made a number of technical enhancements to the delivery of instruction during the past year. The district:

- Introduced document cameras and mobile interactive white boards in classrooms.
- Upgraded the Read 180 software for Title I students. Within WSD, the Title I program provides supplemental instruction in reading and math to students who are under the age of 22 and do not have a GED or high school diploma.
- Updated the Compass Learning Odyssey Program to include the addition of an on-line teaching academy that will provide staff development webinars for teachers.

Additional advancements are underway for the upcoming school year. Laptop computers are being deployed with new preloaded software programs. The programs include FileMate Academics, which covers Grammar, Vocabulary, Basic Math and Pre-algebra; Kahn Academy Videos focused on math concepts; Typing Master Pro 7 to build computer literacy skills; and GED 2014 Testing Service Item Samplers to help students prepare for the new computer based test.

WSD has also recently purchased NewsCurrents, an instructional tool for students to develop strong reasoning skills, a critical component for GED 2014. In addition, CTE grant funds allowed the WSD to purchase two internet simulation programs, a Google search simulator and an e-mail simulator. These programs are currently used in CTE classes that offer industry certification in the construction trades. The district also purchased eSPED. This software program will enable the WSD to more efficiently organize and maintain special education documentation. It is a cloud based application that streamlines the preparation of reports and documents, validates and verifies data and allows the filtering of information to facilitate data driven decision making.

Staff continues to research additional software with a focus on enhancing instruction through the use of technology. A program of particular interest is EDUSS. It consists of five individual content and software segments which together comprise a complete curriculum covering math, reading and phonics. Built entirely in Artificial Intelligence, the program diagnoses learning gaps and adapts its assessment to a style best suited for the student.

Chairman Bell commended WSD on its efforts to expand the use of technology for education, noting the board looks forward to hearing more on this initiative and its impact on student performance.

Recognition of National Teacher Appreciation Week, May 6-10, 2013

National Teacher Appreciation Week is celebrated each year during the first full week of May. The week is set aside by the National Education Association and the National Parent Teacher Association to appreciate teachers across the nation. Even though the event has passed, Chairman Bell wanted to express gratitude for the work of the WSD teachers. WSD teachers help transform the lives of thousands of offenders through education and training. They are role models, motivators and mentors. They provide the opportunity for offenders to learn the skills and knowledge needed to achieve and be successful upon release.

UPDATE ON CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) INITIATIVES

Virginia Price, WSD Administrator for CTE, presented an update on the program's workforce initiatives for the 2012-13 school year. The presentation included a list of employers the CTE staff had met, along with the names of employers who hire or are willing to hire ex-offenders.

As a part of the initiative, some instructors and staff had the opportunity to attend various workshops and conferences, and participate in training, making contact with numerous companies. These contacts led to the discussion and exploration of several CTE areas not currently offered by WSD, such as computer help desk, fiber optic cabling, and auto fundamentals.

The CTE department has also met with a number of workforce development boards across the state. Topics of discussion included high demand occupations, and career opportunities and services provided to ex-offenders in the geographical areas. From those discussions, WSD learned there is a strong need for soft skills training. To address, WSD is making a concerted effort to expand its teaching of soft skills.

During the past school year, the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation presented licensing information to Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) and electrical students, and their instructors at 26 unit locations throughout the state. The group answered questions the offenders had about the certification process as well as how to address their criminal history. They have plans to continue these unit visits biannually. The Plumbing, Heating and Cooling Contractors Association, along with the State Board of Plumbing Examiners, also met with plumbing instructors to share information about licensing.

In addition to these activities, WSD staff hosted a booth at the Texas Workforce Commission Conference, making contact with numerous employers and board members to educate them about the services WSD provides. They also distributed employer surveys at the conference in an effort to evaluate the effectiveness of WSD programs from the employers' perspective. Another initiative

included NCCER Training being provided to all construction related instructors who participated in staff development.

WSD staff continues to visit industries across the state, as well as regional workforce sites. They have identified several areas of employment that are promising careers for ex-offenders, to include: Cabinetmaking/Construction Carpentry; Bricklaying/Stone Masonry; Sheetrock Installation and Painting; Plumbing (industrial and new construction); Auto/Diesel Mechanics; Welding/Sheetmetal; Machinists; and the Food Service Industry. Currently all these programs are offered by WSD, with the exception of the machinist program.

To assist offenders once released, WSD has added a reentry tool, JOBview, on the WSD website. Through JOBview, an ex-offender may select several options to assist them in their job search. JOBview provides information on the number of jobs that are available, application information, and also provides the ability to submit an application through the website. Another feature also recently added to the WSD website is an e-mail address and phone number for former students to contact WSD with their employment information. It also provides a venue for families and ex-offenders to request information regarding CTE programs and industry certification.

Ms. Price noted she recently received a telephone call from the meat market and bakery director of the Lowes Supermarket, which has 146 stores in four states. He was inquiring about WSD and the training provided, and the possibility of employing some of WSD's former students. He is sending company information that can be shared with the culinary and restaurant management classes.

Future plans for the district include:

- Installing JOBview kiosks, which will allow offenders to search for available jobs prior to release. Currently, these kiosks have been deployed at five locations.
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Training for instructors and students
- Exploration of career opportunities in motorcycle/ATV repair, power line worker, machinists and auto fundamentals.

Mr. Mechler inquired on the number of contacts received from former students. Ms. Price advised it varies from week to week. The contact information was just recently released to students, so it is relatively new.

Mr. Mechler asked how Lowes Supermarket learned about WSD. Ms. Price responded that a former student applied for a position at the supermarket and had presented a WSD certificate. The Lowe's manager contacted Ms. Price about the certificate and about WSD's programs. Ms. Price noted she frequently receives calls from companies inquiring on how to get in touch with WSD students for jobs.

Mr. Mechler asked if WSD keeps a contact list of companies that might be interested in hiring ex-offenders. Mr. Price replied affirmatively. She added that as staff travel and meet with instructors, they try to incorporate conference attendance or a trip to a particular industry. That has been most helpful because staff has met many companies that had never heard of WSD and did not know the training that is provided for offenders.

Chairman Bell noted that the WSD and the TDCJ Reentry and Integration and Parole divisions need to work collaboratively on employment for ex-offenders. He stated that a WSD Board committee needs to be established to start looking at employment opportunities.

Referring back to the need for soft skills, Mr. Mechler asked what type of soft skills that employers felt were lacking. Ms. Price responded it included people skills, such as learning how to dress appropriately, how to report to work on time, and how to work well with others. Some of these areas are covered in the cognitive intervention classes however WSD plans to incorporate more soft skills training into both the academic and vocational programs.

Ms. Price commented there are opportunities for WSD students, but informing businesses and employers about WSD and the services it offers seems to be significant in opening the doors to those opportunities.

Mr. Bell thanked everyone for attending the meeting and stated the next meeting of the WSD Board would be held on August 23, 2013, at the Wyndham Garden Hotel in Austin.

The 275th meeting of the WSD Board recessed at 2:05 p.m. The WSD Board reconvened at 2:48 p.m. to conduct executive session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the 275th meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees adjourned at 3:16 p.m.

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Chairman

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Secretary

*Signature on file

Note: Referenced attachments for draft minutes are available upon request. Following approval of the minutes, attachments will be maintained with the signed minutes in the Office of Record.