

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

251st MEETING

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Friday, April 3, 2009, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Austin, Texas.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Oliver Bell, Chairman
Greg Coleman
Eric Gambrell
Janice Harris Lord
Terrell McCombs
Tom Mechler
J. David Nelson
Leopoldo (Leo) Vasquez, III

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Pastor C. L. Jackson

WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Debbie Roberts, Superintendent
Marjie Haynes
Don Lawrence
Linda Goerdel
Veronica Casanova
Michael Mondville
Paul Brown

**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 Friday, April 3, 2009, at 10:25 a.m. in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the Open Meetings Act. A quorum was present and the 251st meeting of the Board was declared open. The Board adjourned into executive session which is closed to the public in accordance with the Texas Government Code §551.071 and §551.074.

Chairman Bell reconvened the regular session of the Windham School District Board of Trustees in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the Open Meetings Act, noting that during the regular session the Board would conducted business from the agenda posted in the Texas Register. A quorum of the Board was present and the meeting was declared open at 1:42 p.m.

Chairman Bell recognized Kyle Mitchell of the Governor's Office as a special guest in attendance and thanked him for his 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 or comments 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 or public comments.

Chairman Bell introduced Carmen Hiles as a new member of Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ). Ms. Hiles is the owner and chief operations officer of A+ Therapy and is a speech language pathologist. She is a member of the American and Texas Speech Language Hearing Associations, the Valley Network of Speech and Language Pathologists and Audiologists, and the Outpatient Independent Rehabilitation Association. She is also an annual participant in the Relay for Life and a member of the First Baptist Church in Rio Grande City. She has a bachelor's and master's degree in communication disorders from the University of Texas Pan American. Upon her confirmation by the Senate, Ms. Hiles will replace Greg Coleman on the TBCJ.

**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 February 13, 2009, meeting 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 ON THE RESOLUTION
REGARDING TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARD (TASB) – SPONSORED
MEDIA HONOR ROLL**

Debbie Roberts, WSD Superintendent, stated that WSD was nominating a media crew from Midland, KWES Channel 9, to the TASB Sponsored Media Honor Roll, for their 2008 two-part series "Locked Up and Learning," which covered WSD programs at the Lynaugh Unit. Reporter Camaron Abundes and photographer Mike Miranda visited the Lynaugh Unit to prepare a fair and balanced report about a variety of correctional education programs and their benefits to offenders. The result is impressive, featuring final reports by anchors Michael Stafford and Crystal Crews, which aired in November, 2008.

Ms. Roberts stated that it was her pleasure to nominate Camaron Abundes, Mike Miranda, Michael Stafford and Crystal Crews to the Texas Association of School Boards Media Honor Roll.

Janice Harris Lord moved that the Windham School District Board of Trustees approve the nominations for the Texas Association of School Board Sponsored Media Honor Roll as presented.

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

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING A CONTRACT OVER \$1 MILLION

Linda Goerdel, WSD Chief Financial Officer, stated approximately seven (7) weeks ago, Windham staff had asked the Board to consider and possibly take action regarding a contract over \$1 million. Questions were raised at that meeting and the decision was made to table the motion until this meeting. She informed the Board that WSD staff did not take this project lightly. The implementation was competitively bid. Five (5) offers were reviewed and negotiations were conducted with three (3) vendors. The vendor that is being proposed was selected because they had superior experience and offered the best value. The WSD also networked with other school districts and state agencies that use the PeopleSoft software to insure WSD received a good price and to discuss any problems experienced in their implementations. She stated that she felt all previously expressed questions of the Board had been addressed but if there were any additional questions, she was prepared to respond.

David Nelson thanked the District staff for responding to all of the Board's questions. Leo Vasquez stated for the record that he appreciated the effort the WSD staff had put into researching and answering the Board's questions. He stated that he knew it took a great deal of effort.

Terrell McCombs moved that the Windham School District Board of Trustees approve the contract over \$1 million as presented.

Eric Gambrell seconded the motion, which prevailed when called to a vote. Leo Vasquez non-concurred.

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE WSD PLAN TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES REQUIRED BY SECTION 7.056 (b) (1) TEXAS EDUCATION CODE

Chairman Bell explained that agenda items D and E are actually tied together. Agenda item D is a plan for the District to achieve objectives that needs to be approved for processing agenda item E. The plan was presented to the Board and discussed in Executive Session as it pertains to a personnel matter related to the superintendent. The plan reiterates the mission of the District and emphasizes the benefits to continuing under the District's current leadership (Attachment B). Chairman Bell commented that under the leadership of Ms. Roberts, the District had improved considerably over the course of the last 2½ years. Chairman Bell opened the topic for discussion if any of the Board had comments regarding the direction of the District.

Mr. Mechler commended Ms. Roberts and the WSD staff District on a job well done. Mr. McCombs seconded the comments by Mr. Mechler.

Mr. Nelson moved that the Windham School District Board of Trustees approve the Windham School District Plan to Achieve Objectives required by Section 7.056 (b) (1) of the Texas Education Code as presented.

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

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING A REQUEST FOR WAIVER FROM THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION TO SECTION 21.003 (a), TEXAS EDUCATION CODE, AS IT RELATES TO THE SUPERINTENDENT OF WSD

Chairman Bell stated that typically, when a person serves as a superintendent in the State of Texas there is a certification required. The Board has the option to have that certificate waived by the Commissioner of Education. In the case of the Windham School District, the Board is looking for a strong leader who understands education and program management. Three (3) years ago, the Board applied for and was granted a three (3) year waiver by the Commissioner of Education. That waiver will expire shortly and the Board must apply for another.

Ms. Lord moved that the Windham School District Board of Trustees approve the request for waiver from the Commissioner of Education to Section 21.003 (a), Texas Education Code, as it relates to the Superintendent of Windham School District.

Greg Coleman seconded the motion, which prevailed unanimously when called to a vote.

OVERVIEW OF THE WSD DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION

Marjie Haynes, WSD Director, Division of Instruction, gave a presentation on the Division of Instruction. She explained that the division is comprised of academic and life skills programs; Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs; counseling, testing and records; library services and the media center. She stated that the Division of Instruction was responsible for the curricular framework, curricular resources, pre-service training of new teachers, staff development and technical assistance for the District. It is also responsible for the Title I and Special Education grant applications. Life skills programs are also under the supervision of the Instructional Division and include Cognitive Intervention, CHANGES, Parenting, and Perspectives & Solutions. Staff in the Instructional Division travel statewide to conduct staff development training for teachers, administrators and other WSD personnel at the unit, regional, and even District level. They are also responsible for the volunteer program.

The CTE department develops and submits the grant application for Carl Perkins Funds each year and coordinates those grant funds. They are responsible for the development of policies and procedures to ensure compliance with federal and state guidelines. Shops are operated in the

vocational programs, so there is a lot of emphasis on tool and equipment control, safety, chemicals and refrigerant management. Curricular resources are selected based on industry standards. Staff monitors employment data from the Texas Workforce Commission to make sure WSD is training in areas where ex-offenders can gain employment. Staff development, safety training and technical assistance are constantly provided. The CTE department is also responsible for the production of the annual HB 2837 effectiveness study report. The District is very proud that WSD vocational programs lead to nationally recognized industry certifications.

The Counseling, Testing and Records Department is under the coordination of Gail Swik, who also serves as the Chief GED examiner for the District. This department coordinates all of the training for WSD counselors as well as all of the achievement testing that is done in the District, which is a massive undertaking. The records office takes care of the image scanning of permanent records for the District and handles all requests for records.

Libraries Services coordinates 88 unit libraries. Thousands of books are in each library so operational policies and procedures are in place for the librarians. The Division of Instruction also trains and provides technical assistance to the librarians. Purchasing, receiving, cataloging, bar coding and distributing books to each of these libraries is a major undertaking.

The Media Center is responsible for printing, copying, video production and making posters for WSD programs. Media Center staff supervises an offender work crew through an apprenticeship program. Offenders who work there are earning credit for on-the-job training.

Mr. Mechler asked on the average educational level of offenders that come into the system. Ms. Haynes responded the average was 6.0 educational achievement. Mr. Mechler inquired if it was fair to say that all offenders who leave the system can read. Ms. Haynes stated that if they do not know how to read, it could be because WSD does not have space for them in classrooms or they refused services. Offenders are prioritized by their release date.

Mr. Nelson asked in regards to industry certifications, of the percentage of industries that do not allow offenders to get a license or certificate because they are convicted felons. Ms. Haynes noted licensing boards consider each ex-offender on a case-by-case basis. According to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations (TDLR), it is not impossible for ex-offenders to obtain a license but they want them to be out of prison a while and to show they are productive citizens. She explained WSD tells the offenders that it could take a while, but they are still encouraged to pursue the licensing. Ms. Haynes advised there are some obstacles to employment. For example, some employers will hire ex-offenders but do not want the community to know they hire ex-offenders, so they do not publicize it.

Ms. Lord commented that once the offenders are released, many funding sources for college exclude ex-offenders. She asked if there were free world programs where offenders can obtain funding for college once they are released. Ms. Haynes stated that at one time, offenders were eligible for Pell Grants but that option is no longer available to them. However, a youthful offender grant is available to them through the continuing education program while they are incarcerated.

**OVERVIEW OF THE GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (GED)
TESTING PROGRAM**

Ms. Haynes stated that Texas is one of the states that has the highest percentage of U.S. adults without a high school diploma (22.6 %+). The GED tests provide adults who did not complete a formal high school program the opportunity to certify their attainment of high school-level academic knowledge and skills. Only 60% of graduating high school seniors pass the GED tests on their first attempt. The GED test battery consists of five (5) content area tests: reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies. Completing the entire test battery takes approximately seven (7) hours. The Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) is used to determine an offender's eligibility to take the GED.

The GED test is developed, controlled and coordinated by the GED Testing Service in Washington, D.C. The Texas Education Agency has a component that coordinates GED testing for the State of Texas. WSD is a testing center, and because of its uniqueness in being statewide, WSD has 20 satellite centers.

In 2007-2008, there were approximately 40,000 participants in WSD literacy programs. Only about 14,000 of those were enrolled in Literacy III programs. Of those, 5,039 GEDs were awarded.

Nationally the GED pass rate is between 65-75%. In Texas, the pass rate is usually below 70%. In WSD, the pass rate is usually 80% or above. WSD screens for eligibility as the District pays the cost for offenders to take the GED test.

WSD was responsible for testing 12% of the State's total GED examinees in 2008. In Texas, 16% of all GED recipients in 2008 earned their certificates through the WSD. The GED Testing Service is scheduled to release a new GED test on January 1, 2012. Emphasis on the new test will be on informational texts and higher order thinking skills. Any examinee who has started taking the GED tests, but has not taken or met the passing standard on all five (5) content area tests by December 31, 2011, will have to retake all five (5) tests.

Ms. Roberts thanked Ms. Haynes for her dedication and for the example she sets for her staff. One of the first things she learned when she came to Windham was that the GED Test Centers are like Fort Knox. The security and procedures associated with running the GED centers are unbelievable. If a GED test is misplaced, the National GED Center can shut the entire program down.

Mr. Mechler stated that he was under the impression that the GED exams were supposed to replicate high school education. If so, he inquired if the GED test was being changed because high school education has changed dramatically. Ms. Haynes responded that curriculum changes constantly in public schools and degree programs are very intensive. Many courses at the high school level are dual credit, wherein students can get college credit for those courses. Public education has gotten more difficult so she feels the GED testing center is wise to revise the GED exam.

Chairman Bell complimented the GED program and staff.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Ms. Roberts informed the Board that on February 23rd, she, Marjie Haynes and Don Lawrence from Windham, along with Becky Price from TDCJ Rehabilitation and Reentry Division, met with the TDLR staff. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss requirements and procedures relative to licensing of released offenders. Ms. Roberts thanked Mr. Vasquez for helping set up the meeting. TDLR staff were very interested in insuring that incarcerated offenders were given the right information about processing of licensing applications. They had a lengthy discussion concerning TDLR's evaluation of the application process and their expectation that offenders will have a positive period of adjustment after incarceration prior to a license being granted. In addition, offenders who are not approved can reapply as many times as they want, and each of those applications will be reviewed individually based on its own merits. They also discussed obtaining information from the TDLR electronically on the offenders who actually apply and get licenses so WSD can use that data in the CTE evaluation.

As a result of that meeting, staff from TDLR will visit WSD on Wednesday, April 8th, and make a presentation to a group of WSD staff. The presentation, and the question and answer session will be videotaped and then shared with field staff and CTE offenders.

Ms. Roberts stated that WSD continues to monitor legislation and follow the budget process as the current session progresses. The funds for the expansion of the CTE program and funds to cover the cost of providing services to San Saba and Marlin are continuing to be considered and will be considered in conference committee. WSD continues to be hopeful although staff is aware of the current economic climate. WSD plans to continue to monitor the process and will be available to answer questions and provide any additional information that the legislature requires.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN WSD BOARD

Chairman Bell stated there were more than 156,000 offenders incarcerated in TDCJ, and over 82,000 are in some way involved with the WSD. More than 39,000 participate in the literacy programs, 51,000 are involved in life skills programs, and 12,000 offenders participate in CTE programs. There were more than 5,000 GED certificates awarded last year, almost 6,000 vocational certificates awarded and more than 3,000 industry certificates awarded.

Chairman Bell noted that by positively impacting the offender, WSD is making a major contribution toward reducing recidivism.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

As noted earlier, no cards were received; therefore, no public comments were made.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Beil adjourned the 251st meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees at 2:37 p.m.

*Signature on File
Chairman

*Signature on File
Secretary