MINUTES OF THE WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

252nd MEETING

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Thursday, June 18, 2009, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Austin, Texas.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Oliver Bell, Chairman
Eric Gambrell
Carmen Villanueva-Hiles
Pastor C. J. Jackson
Janice Harris Lord
Terrell McCombs
J. David Nelson

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Tom Mechsler
Leopoldo (Leo) Vasquez, III

WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Debbie Roberts, Superintendent
Bob Evans
Linda Goerdel
Michael Mondville

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Brad Livingston
Bryan Collier
Melinda Bozarth

CONVENE

Oliver Bell, Chairman, called the meeting of the Windham School District (WSD/District) Board of Trustees (Board) to order on Thursday, June 18, 2009, at 2:07 p.m. in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the Open Meetings Act. During the regular session the board would be conducting business from the agenda posted in the Texas Register. A quorum was present and the 252nd meeting of the board was declared open.

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.
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 April 3, 2009, meeting, appraisers for 2008-2009 school year, personal property donations 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 THE DEPOSITORY CONTRACT FOR 2010-2011 BIENNUM

Linda Goerdel, WSD Chief Financial Officer, stated that a summary of the bids for the September 2009 through August 2011 depository contract were provided in the board agenda packet. Windham received one “Bid”, one “No Bid” and six “No Responses” from the eight “Invitation to Bid” packets that were sent to local banks.

The one bid received was from the First National Bank of Huntsville. First National is WSD’s current bank depository and has performed well in all respects of the current contract. First National’s bid for the 2010-2011 biennium is in line with current contract charges for services and interest paid to WSD for account balances.

On the documentation in the agenda packet, Ms. Goerdel noted that First Convenience Bank should have been included in the list of banks that were sent invitations to bid. They receive a bid packet but did not respond.

_Eric Gambrell moved that the Windham School District Board of Trustees approve the depository contract for the 2010-2011 biennium, as presented._

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

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE WSD STRATEGIC PLAN 2010-2014

Debbie Roberts, WSD Superintendent, stated that Chapter 19 of the Texas Education Code requires Windham to develop and the board to approve a district strategic plan. The strategic plan contains the district’s mission statement and is organized around the district’s four legislatively mandated goals. The plan also includes objectives and strategies to assist the district in achieving those legislative goals. It will become the basis for the district improvement plan and the individual campus improvement plans that are completed annually. Ms. Roberts requested board approval of the WSD 2010-2014 Strategic Plan.

_Carmen Villanueva-Hiles moved that the Windham School District Board of Trustees approve the Windham School District Strategic Plan 2010-2014, as presented._

_David Nelson seconded the motion, which prevailed._
DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING
REVISIONS TO WINDHAM BOARD POLICY 2.00 – WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES RESPONSIBILITIES

Mike Mondville, WSD General Counsel, stated that the proposed revisions include textural changes to bring the policy in line with current usage as in TDCJ policies. More importantly, the purchase amounts that require board approval have been lowered from $1 million to $500 thousand. It also requires board notification of purchases that exceed $250 thousand. The prior limit was $500 thousand. He requested board approval for the policy as amended.

Mr. Nelson asked what the reason was for the changes to the policy. Mr. Mondville responded that Chairman Bell had requested the policy changes. Chairman Bell gave a brief history on the reason for the policy changes. He reminded the board that Leo Vasquez had a question at a previous meeting concerning a purchase that came before the board in excess of $1 million dollars. The issue was whether TDCJ and Windham should have the same million dollar threshold for board approval given the disparity in the size of their respective budgets. Mr. Bell took that under advisement and asked the WSD staff to look at the policy and Windham made the following recommendations on decreasing the threshold. They were trying to strike a balance between the need for the board to have information to exercise appropriate fiscal oversight without taking the levels down to such a number that the board would be doing day to day operations with the school district.

Mr. Nelson asked if there had been an inquiry into the independent school districts throughout the state to determine their thresholds and if it is was based upon budget or the size of district. Mr. Mondville replied that he had not made an inquiry. Mr. Nelson felt the level was fine but asked Mr. Mondville and Ms. Roberts to research what school districts do across the state.

Mr. Bell noted that as a matter of practice, often with contracting items if there are certain things that may have a floating value such as a variance value that may bring the cost above or close to the authorization amount, the Board would consider those items for approval.

Janice Harris Lord moved that the Windham School District Board of Trustees approve the revisions to Windham Board Policy 2.00, Windham School District Board of Trustees Responsibilities, as presented.

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

OVERVIEW OF THE DIVISION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

Project RIO (Re-Integration of Offenders) Program

Bob Evans, WSD Director of Continuing Education, gave an overview of the Division of Continuing Education including Project RIO, recreation and post-secondary programs (PowerPoint presentation attached). He explained the goal of the Project RIO program and eligibility requirements. In order to participate in Project RIO participants must be assigned as general population offenders, be enrolled in educational and other treatment programs as required, be initially released in the State of Texas, not have a felony or immigration (ICE)
detainer, and be within 18 to 24 months of projected release date.

Project RIO participants are assisted in obtaining the following documents, if available: driver's license (2-3%), birth certificate (65-70%), social security card (80-90%), selective service information, military records and program completion certificates. The goal is to assist offenders so they can be totally ready to go to work when they walk out the door. The documents are gathered and given to the offender as they are released from the system.

He explained the orientation process, quarterly reviews and exit interviews. Project RIO is available on 84 TDCJ facilities. In FY 08, 59,318 offenders participated in Project RIO and 28,327 offender participants were released.

As a requirement of HB 2837, which was passed during the 2005 legislative session, RIO participant data is electronically transmitted to the Texas Workforce Commission. The data includes: offender identification, background, address upon release, offense history, and educational achievement level and work history while incarcerated.

During the past 18 months, RIO staff has visited 24 of the 28 TWC Workforce Boards around the state.

Recreation Programs

Mr. Evans reported there are 142 gymnasiums, 343 recreation yards and 43 trusty camp yards. The minimum requirements of activities in the gym and recreation yards are: basketball, handball, table tennis, volleyball and weightlifting machines. The dayrooms are required to have at least three types of table games. He added that dominoes, checkers and chess are the most popular. The recreation staff trains correctional officers to familiarize them with the requirements, objectives and goals of agency's recreational activities.

The Television Communications Operations repair facility is located at the Huntsville Unit. There is a staff of seven employees and 10 offenders working in that program. They are mainly responsible for repairing televisions, headphones and remote controls throughout the system. There are 5,243 25-inch color televisions and 1,806 black and white in-cell televisions operating daily. As part of the Ruiz agreement many years ago, in lieu of building day rooms, black and white sets were installed in cells at the Huntsville and Ramsey Units. These black and white televisions are 10-inch sets without speakers so the offenders to listen to them through headphones.

Mr. Evans reviewed the repair work that was completed during fiscal year 2008 (FY 08). The security cameras, camcorders and monitors used on the units are also repaired by the Television Communications Shop. The units are being converted from analog to digital service and 77 facilities have been converted so far. The networks that the units are required to have are NBC, CBS, ABC, and FOX. Most units go beyond that in station offerings.

Post Secondary Programs

Post Secondary programs are provided through contracts with colleges and universities serving the geographic area where TDCJ facilities are located. In 2008, 8,205 offenders were served in
the post secondary program. The community colleges teach freshman and sophomore level courses and the universities teach junior and senior level courses. The vast majority of the money in the post secondary programs goes to vocational credit courses and academic classes at the community college level. The masters program is offered by The University of Houston – Clear Lake.

One academic course per semester is paid at the state’s expense. That course must be reimbursed by the offender after release. Additional courses are allowed if the offender uses personal funds, veteran’s benefits, or other college grants or scholarships. Federal grants are available for youthful offenders. Offenders are targeted for participation in the college programs according to their projected release dates.

During 2008, community college academic programs, leading to four types of associate degrees, were offered on 37 TDCJ facilities. There were 509 associate degrees awarded in FY 08. This program has been in existence since the late 1960s. Four types of bachelor’s degrees and two types of master’s degrees are offered. Bachelor’s degrees are available on four facilities and master’s are available on one facility. During FY 08 there were 56 bachelors and 15 master’s degrees awarded.

There are 25 trades taught at the college vocational level and these trades are offered on 32 units. Offenders may take two college vocational trades and one of them must be within five years of release. Offenders are targeted for enrollment based upon their projected release dates. The number of certificates awarded for vocational credit was 1,732. Mr. Evans reviewed a list of the college vocational programs that are offered. He also reviewed a list of the colleges that contract with TDCJ/WSD and the types of funding that were available for the post-secondary program during FY 2008. He discussed post-secondary eligibility requirements, noting the requirements are very strict.

The Youthful Offender Grant is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and began in 1998. This is a formula based grant and is based on the number of offenders eligible that are 25 years old and under. These individuals must have a high school diploma or GED, must be within five years of release. These grants are limited to $1,500 per year per offender. Changes to the grant that go into effect October 1, 2009, include increasing the age limit to 35 years and under, expanding release parole eligibility to within seven years and raising the funding limit to $3,000 per year per offender. Offenders with the following offenses are not eligible to receive this grant: murder convictions, sexual offenses and certain types of kidnapping convictions.

Mr. Evans informed the Board about the potential partnership with the Houston Community College and the Houston Food Bank and a bachelor’s program at the Briscoe Unit in South Texas with Sul Ross State University in Uvalde.

Mr. Nelson asked regarding the driver’s license, if the main problem with the offenders getting their license was the need for them to retake the test. Mr. Evans responded that was correct. Mr. Nelson asked the District to explore the possibility of partnering with the Texas Department of Public Safety to administer the driver’s license exam to the offenders before they are released. Mr. Evans stated they would definitely look into it. He added that an offender needs two forms of identification to go to work. If WSD was able to get the driver’s license and social security card there would be a lot more offenders walking out the door ready to go to work.
Ms. Lord asked why the recreation program is being overseen by Windham and not the Correctional Institutions Division. Mr. Evans explained that at one time, Windham had a physical education program. That program went away approximately 20 years ago. At that time, Windham oversaw both the physical education program and the recreation program. The system was much smaller and the units had teams that would travel around and compete against each other. Windham organized all of that. The recreation/education funds are utilized for the recreation program.

Ms. Lord also inquired if the incarcerated individuals grant was available to the offenders after they released from TDCJ. Mr. Evans responded that offenders are eligible only while incarcerated. Once released, the offenders are eligible for financial aid when they enroll in the community college or university system.

Mr. McCombs asked for an explanation of “serve all.” Mr. Evans responded that a serve all is when an offender has to complete his entire sentence and not be released under parole.

Mr. Bell inquired why 39,000 offenders participated in Project RIO but only 28,000 were released. Mr. Evans responded those individuals that enter the program at 24 months and 18 months are working their way through the program toward release. There will always be a larger number that are in the program than are released.

Mr. Bell asked Mr. Evans what his views were on recreation for offenders versus requiring offenders to work. Mr. Evans responded that when he worked on the unit, it was required that an offender work or they were not allowed to recreate. Recreation should be viewed as a privilege that can be taken away if an offender misbehaves. He felt offenders should work and recreation should be used as a management tool and privilege.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Ms. Roberts gave an overview of the legislative session. At the beginning of the session, WSD prepared an exceptional item list that was included in the Texas Education Agency budget. An exceptional item was also included in the Texas Workforce Commission’s budget. Windham began the session needing $2.1 million dollars to recoup some of the salaries that were actually implemented during the 2006 school year but not fully appropriated. Early in the session, the $2.1 million was included in the base budget. WSD also requested $600,000 per year to continue services at San Saba and Marlin. Those funds were included in the general appropriations act. Part of the legislative request was funding to expand Career and Technology Education (CTE) programming by 54 classes. The legislature approved funding for 27 additional CTE classes and also approved funding for WSD to pay for industry certifications for offenders that complete CTE programs.

Funding for 42 additional Project RIO staff positions was approved through the TWC’s budget appropriation. It is anticipated that the additional staff will result in 13,000 to 14,000 more offenders being served.

Funds were appropriated for teachers, counselors and librarians to receive a pay raise of $80 per
month. Windham will be able to provide every staff member in Windham at least an $80 per month salary increase.

Ms. Roberts explained a requirement that was attached to one of the riders in the appropriations bill requiring the district to do a recidivism study. Windham is working with TDCJ and feels they will be able to assist with the study.

Chairman Bell asked how many units would have RIO services with the addition of the new staff. Ms. Roberts responded that RIO is currently offered on 84 state operated facilities and with the additional staff all state operated facilities will have RIO services.

**REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN WSD BOARD**

WSD receives its appropriations through the Texas Education Agency, and is actually reimbursed for services provided. Unlike regular school districts that are reimbursed on average daily attendance, WSD is reimbursed for contact hours earned. The rate of contact hours is set by the Legislature and Windham earns its appropriations based on the best 180 days of the 210-day instructional school year.

This school year, due to the impact of Hurricane Ike and the system-wide lockdown due to contraband activities, the district was challenged to meet its targeted instructional hours. A lot of creative thinking went into this. Due to the willingness of the principals and teachers to move vacation days, and the help of TDCJ staff, the district was able to make up several lost contact hours through the early part of the school year.

In October and November 2008, the district averaged 23% less contact hours than the previous year of the same time period. By April and May however that loss was reduced to an average 7.5%. The cumulative total of contact hours at the end of May 2008 was 13,336,803. in comparison to May 2007 which was 14,415,314. The best hours target for the district is just over 16,600,000, which due to the efforts of the WSD staff, should be able to be met in August.

Mr. Bell stated that Ms. Roberts had mentioned the additional funding that was approved by the Legislature for the WSD CTE program during her report. This was a topic he wished to expand on to address the importance of this legislative action.

CTE vocational training for offenders has a significant impact on post-release employment. Based on the findings of a study conducted by WSD:

- Ex-offenders who completed vocational training while incarcerated are:
  - 21% more likely to be employed in the year following release;
  - 14.45% more likely to retain that employment after one year;
  - 22% more likely to have an increase in earnings over the 1st year of employment; and
  - 20% more likely to have higher average annual earnings.

- Over 70% of vocationally-trained ex-offenders who were employed earned income working in one or more occupations related to the training they obtained while enrolled in WSD.
• Obtaining an Industry Certification also appears to enhance job retention and increase annual earnings.

The increased funding received to expand the CTE program will help Windham continue to pursue serving more offenders and avoid negative outcomes, such as:

• 66.3% of all offenders released in FY 08 met initial vocational training eligibility criteria but had no record of any vocational training at the time of release.

• Approximately 17,000 to 18,000 offenders are pending vocational placement at any given time. These are offenders who meet the recommended academic achievement levels, have no previous vocational training and are within five years of release.

• As with literacy program prioritization, younger offenders are given highest priority for placement in vocational programming. Of the 17,000 to 18,000 offenders referenced prior, offenders younger than 35 were pending CTE participation an average of 17.1 months, while offenders 35 and older were pending an average of 29.3 months.

Chairman Bell concluded his report by expressing appreciation to the state’s leadership for the consideration and support given to this program and to Windham, and for the opportunity to be able to provide more educational services to the offenders.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Bell adjourned the 252nd meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees at 3:10 p.m.

Chairman

Secretary

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.