

**Windham School District
Board of Trustees
257th Meeting**



Minutes

**April 8, 2010
Austin, Texas**

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

257th MEETING

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Thursday, April 8, 2010, 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
Pastor C.L. Jackson
Janice Harris Lord
Terrell McCombs
Carmen Villanueva-Hiles

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: J. David Nelson

WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Debbie Roberts, Superintendent
Marjie Haynes
Allen Bourque
Mike Mondville

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL
JUSTICE STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:** Brad Livingston, Executive Director
Bryan Collier
Melinda Bozarth

CONVENED

Oliver Bell, Chairman, called the meeting of the Windham School District (WSD or district) Board of Trustees (Board) to order on Thursday, April 8, 2010, at 2:30 p.m. in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the *Open Meetings Act*. A quorum was present and the 257th meeting of the Board was declared open. During the regular session, the Board conducted business from the agenda posted in the Texas Register.

Chairman Bell recognized Kyle Mitchell from the Governor's Office and Angela Issack from the Legislative Budget Board, and thanked them for their continued support.

The Chairman reported the Board was committed to providing the opportunity for public presentations on topics posted on the meeting agenda, as well as public comment on issues

within its jurisdiction as provided in 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 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 or public comments.

RECOGNITIONS

Debbie Roberts, Superintendent, introduced Allen Bourque as the WSD division director for Information Technology (IT). Ms. Roberts noted that he comes to WSD with 24 years of experience across various disciplines within IT. His experience was developed through a variety of industries including forest products manufacturing, electric utility, IT retail services, state healthcare, and aerospace aviation. Most recently, he was the senior manager for the City of Fort Worth. Mr. Bourque will be responsible for the strategic planning, development, evaluation, and coordination of the IT systems for the district.

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 8, 2010, meeting, appraisers for the 2009-2010 school year, personal property donations, and approval of excused absences for Eric Gambrell, Janice Lord, Tom Mechler, and David Nelson who were unable to attend the February meeting due to weather and travel delays. It also included an excused absence for this meeting as Mr. Nelson is traveling out of the country.

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

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING REVISIONS TO WINDHAM BOARD POLICY, WBP-03.02, "WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITY"

Mike Mondville, WSD General Counsel, informed the Board that WBP-03.02 defines the superintendent's responsibilities and authority. It has been revised to include grammatical updates and formatting. Revisions also include a tighter definition of the litigation settlement authority of the superintendent. The change did not however affect the superintendent's settlement authority, which remains at \$50,000, with settlements in excess of that amount to be discussed with the Board in executive session.

Leo Vasquez made a motion for the Windham School District Board of Trustees to approve the revisions to WBP-03.02 concerning "Windham School District Superintendent Responsibilities and Authority" as presented.

Eric Gambrell seconded the motion, which prevailed unanimously when called to a vote.

PRESENTATION ON WSD ADMINISTRATORS' MEETING

Marjie Haynes, WSD Division Director for Instruction, reported the WSD Administrators' meeting was held in Austin in February. The meeting is held every other year to provide professional development for all principals, regional office, and central office administrators. The agenda is based on a needs assessment that is conducted each year.

This year, Chairman Bell and Brad Livingston, TDCJ Executive Director, were present to address the principals. Joanie Rethlake, State Director for Texas Learns (which is the adult education provider in Texas), was the guest speaker. Ms. Rethlake discussed ways WSD can collaborate with adult education programs in the state of Texas.

The theme of the meeting was: Committed to Excellence. Focus group sessions on sharing best practices included topics such as campus planning, attendance procedures, coaching teachers, personnel, instruction, operations, and coordinating efforts with TDCJ.

There was also a division update with a question and answer session. A desk manual will be developed from information gathered in the focus group sessions on sharing best practices.

Ms. Haynes stated that at the last Board meeting, Veronica Casanova, Director of WSD Human Resources, was asked how WSD compared to other states in staff development. Ms. Haynes stated that the last time she checked WSD compared very favorably with other states in staff development. She added that she recently made a presentation at a conference in Dallas where most of the attendees were from the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBP). After the presentation, many of those attendees approached her and asked for copies of our curriculum. They also asked, as the FBP does not provide staff development, if WSD could provide them training and if they could participate in WSD's staff development trainings.

Attachment – PowerPoint Presentation

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Ms. Roberts attended the Correctional Education Association (CEA) Leadership Forum held in Annapolis, Maryland, on March 28-30. As part of that conference, CEA always conducts a day-long state directors meeting, which provides the directors an opportunity to share what is happening in their respective states. This year, the focus was on the economy and what that means to various correctional education departments across the nation. In many states the news is not good, especially in California and Hawaii, where correctional education programs have been decimated.

In addition to directors of state correctional educational programs, the U. S. Department of Education's correctional education coordinator also attends the meeting and provides information relative to national trends in correctional education and grant opportunities. This year he shared the results of a report by the state of Washington's Institute for Public Policy entitled *Evidence-Based Public Policy Options to Reduce Crime and Criminal Justice Costs*:

Implications in Washington State . The institute conducted a systematic review of all research that could be located to determine what works, if anything, to reduce crime. Using 545 research studies, the Institute grouped programs according to category and then rated them in terms of cost effectiveness. Out of the 20 categories of programs evaluated, vocational education in prison was rated number one in terms of cost effectiveness. General education in prison (either basic education or post secondary) was rated number four, with cognitive-behavioral treatment in prison or in the community rated number five. Ms. Roberts noted she would provide a copy of the report or a link to the Institute's website to the board office in case members were interested in reading it in its entirety.

While at the forum, Ms. Roberts also attended a session relative to some recommended changes to the GED test. Historically, the GED has been based on the skills of graduating seniors. The standard is for 60% of graduating seniors to pass the test on their first attempt. The recommended change is that the test be based on college readiness standards. In addition, the GED Testing Service is recommending that paper and pencil GED testing be eliminated, which is the way that WSD currently administers the test. Initially, the recommendation was for the test to be taken online, but this presents serious problems to criminal justice agencies that operate secure facilities. In recognition of the problems that this presents, the GED Testing Service is developing alternative methods for giving the test, to include a local network solution that does not require live internet access. The testing service has recognized that it may not be possible to entirely eliminate paper and pencil GED testing.

This year's CEA leadership forum was very informative. In addition to networking and sharing ideas and information, a huge benefit in attending these forums is the opportunity that it provides directors to have input into the process. Without that input, changes would be made to various initiatives that would be difficult or even impossible to implement in a correctional environment. Ms. Roberts noted she appreciates the opportunity to attend and represent the state of Texas at these meetings.

Mr. Mechler asked what percentage of GEDs in Texas are awarded by WSD. Ms. Roberts responded, 17%. Mr. Mechler noted he hoped WSD would have some influence on the decision because of the high percentage of GEDs the district awards. Ms. Roberts advised she felt WSD would have some influence in the decision.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN, WSD BOARD

Chairman Bell informed the Board that he had the opportunity to address the WSD administrators at their meeting in February, and to visit with several of them during their break. He commented that he left the meeting with a clear feeling that WSD is an outstanding school district operating in TDCJ's prison setting. He added that it was a privilege to talk with the principals.

Chairman Bell stated the district and agency are coming to the closing part of the 2010 Texas Round-Up, the governor's fitness and wellness initiative. Employees can still participate by walking or running in the 5K, 10K or Family-mile, or by volunteering at the Governor's Annual Fitness Festival, all scheduled on Saturday, April 24th, in Austin.

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 257th meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees at 2:48 p.m.

C

Chairman

Secretary