

**Windham School District
Board of Trustees
264th Meeting**



Minutes

**June 10, 2011
Austin, Texas**

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

263rd MEETING

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Friday, April 8, 2011, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Austin, Texas.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Oliver Bell, Chairman
Tom Mechler, Vice Chairman
Leopoldo (Leo) Vasquez, III, Secretary
Judge Larry Gist
Janice Harris Lord
Terrell McCombs
J. David Nelson
Carmen Villanueva-Hiles

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Eric Gambrell

WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Debbie Roberts, Superintendent
Marjie Haynes
Linda Goerdel
Mike Mondville
Veronica Casanova
Virginia Price

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

Bryan Collier
Melinda Bozarth

CONVENED

Oliver Bell, Chairman, called the meeting of the Windham School District (WSD) Board of Trustees (Board) to order on Friday, April 8, 2011, at 10:37 a.m. in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the *Open Meetings Act*. During the regular session, the board conducted business from the agenda posted in the Texas Register. A quorum was present and the 263rd meeting of the board was declared open.

Chairman Bell recognized County Judge Dale Sturgeon from Jones County, Angela Isaack from the Legislative Budget Board, and Marsha McLane from Representative Jerry Madden's office.

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 at the meeting were required to complete a registration card and submit it at least ten 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 February 11, 2011, meeting, appraisers for the 2010-2011 school year, personal property donations, and 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
PROPOSED NEW WINDHAM BOARD POLICY, WBP-07.51,
“REDUCTION IN FORCE”**

Michael Mondville, WSD General Counsel, informed the board that WBP-07.51 was a new policy. The Reduction In Force (RIF) procedures that were part of WBP-07.08, Contract Employees, are being moved to a separate policy as are other sections of WBP-07.08. With the establishment as a new policy, an authority section and a policy statement were added to WBP-07.51. In addition, some procedural changes were made to reflect the current organizational structure of the WSD and minor changes were made to the grammar. Mr. Mondville asked for Board approval of the policy as presented.

David Nelson made a motion that the Windham School District Board of Trustees approve the proposed new Windham Board Policy 07.51 “Reduction in Force,” as presented.

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

(Attachment – Windham Board Policy 07.51, “Reduction in Force”)

**DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING
EXTENSION OF DEPOSITORY CONTRACT**

Linda Goerdel, WSD Chief Financial Officer, stated that the current depository contract was awarded for the 2009-2011 school years. With this contract came the option of two additional extensions with each extension being two years in length. This proposed extension is the first to the current 2009-2011 depository contract, and would expire August 31, 2013.

Mr. McCombs made a motion that the Windham School District Board of Trustees approve the extension of the depository contract for the 2012-2013 biennium, as presented.

Tom Mechler seconded the motion, which prevailed unanimously when called to a vote.

(Attachment – Depository Contract Extension)

REPORT ON CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION FORUM ACTIVITIES

Marjie Haynes, Director of Instruction for WSD, informed the Board about a study that is underway related to correctional education. There is a large body of research which indicates that having a low level of education is a major risk factor for criminal behavior. To this end, the criminal justice system provides educational services to offenders during incarceration, with the goal of reducing recidivism by improving offenders' employment prospects when they return to their communities. However, questions always seem to arise about how effective the programs are.

In recognition of this, and as part of the Second Chance Act, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, awarded the RAND Corporation a two-year research grant to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of correctional education and where it is headed, which correctional education programs are effective, and how effective programs can be implemented across settings.

RAND is a research organization with expertise in education, public safety and other public policy areas. It is considered a nationally recognized non-partisan, non-profit public policy think tank. The RAND Corporation collaborated with the Correctional Education Association (CEA) as a partner in the grant application. CEA is a non-profit professional association serving educators and administrators who provide services to students in correctional settings.

The project's goal is to improve correctional education and its delivery by providing objective, empirical evidence about the efficiency of different programs and their curricular components. To accomplish the goal, the RAND Corporation will be working closely with correctional education policymakers, experts, administrators, educators, and academic researchers to understand how correctional education is being provided across the United States, the unique challenges involved in doing so, and how correctional education is adapting in response to changing budgetary constraints, political pressures, and emerging technologies. The project includes both a systematic scientific review of research on existing programs and a series of in-depth case studies of new and innovative programs. The work will culminate in a series of publications, including a website designed specifically for practitioners. It will provide information about the range of correctional education programs and strategies available and rate their effectiveness; identify which program components are most closely associated with positive outcomes; highlight innovative programs and approaches; and provide guidance on how to develop and administer high-quality education in a correctional setting.

The RAND project team began conducting telephone interviews several weeks ago, and contacted the Windham School District to discuss the school district and the programs offered. That conversation led to an invitation to participate in a focus group study at the CEA Leadership Forum in Annapolis, Maryland last week. Focus group participants were selected based on a stratified sampling process and on the recommendations of experts in the field.

Ms. Haynes noted she attended the CEA Leadership Forum on behalf of WSD and participated in the focus group that addressed vocational education. Approximately seven states were represented in the group. They were asked questions about the trades offered, the curriculum used, the certificates that are available, and their collaboration with other entities. The focus group touched on key issues and challenges facing correctional education as well as innovative programs or strategies that are being developed.

Ms. Haynes stated that the principal investigator at RAND was very interested in the vocational effectiveness studies that WSD has been presenting to the Legislative Budget Board for the past five years. After returning from the forum, Ms. Haynes provided that investigator with the website links to those reports.

Ms. Haynes noted that the RAND project team may select states and programs for on-site visits, and hopefully will select WSD as a site to visit.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – 82ND LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Debbie Roberts, WSD Superintendent, reported that at this point there is a large discrepancy between the House and Senate versions of the appropriations bill relative to WSD. The WSD staff will continue to provide information and answer questions from the various legislative offices as they arise.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN, WSD BOARD

1. Impact of WSD Programs

Chairman Bell shared some statistics recently gathered by WSD staff in preparation for a recidivism study due to the 83rd Legislature. This report is for offenders that were released in 2010.

Nonreaders participating in WSD programs gained an average of 2.5 grade levels on their educational achievement reading scores with an average of 1,173 hours of instruction.

Functionally illiterate offenders advanced an average of 2.2 grade levels with an average of 933 hours of instruction.

Offenders in WSD's GED path earned an average of 2.5 grade levels with an average of only 719 hours of instruction. Approximately 53% of these program's participants earn their GED. Approximately 18% of the GED's in Texas are awarded by the Windham School District.

He added that WSD is the only entity in the state that is allowed to directly administer the GED. Everyone else must have the test administered through the GED corporate body. There is a lot of respect for the security processes that WSD has and the integrity of the people delivering the tests.

As reported at the last WSD Board meeting, the annual Legislative Budget Board Effectiveness Study once again reported that releasees who receive vocational training while incarcerated are 25% more likely to be employed and earn 15.5% more than their non-participant counterparts.

He thanked the Windham staff for their hard work and dedication in helping to improve the lives of the offenders through education.

Chairman Bell stated that as an overall recidivism impact issue, Texas has watched recidivism numbers consistently get better. No one program can be responsible for the improvement of those numbers but when you look at the combination of programs that are offered, that whole dynamic has led to the best recidivism numbers in years. The overall calculated three

year recidivism rate for Texas is currently 24.3% for the year ending 2007. California's three year recidivism rate is 58.9%, Colorado 53.2%, Florida 32.9%, Illinois 51.8%, New York 41.3%, and Pennsylvania 46.3%. All of those states have visited Texas at some time, asking what WSD and TDCJ are doing in reducing recidivism.

The Texas prison system has diversion programs, treatment programs, and the Windham School District, which provides educational programs in terms of academic, vocational, cognitive and life skills programs. The combination of the diversion programs, treatment programs and education programs has resulted in this 24.3% recidivism rate which is arguably the best in the nation.

2. Chairman's Fitness Challenge Update

Chairman Bell noted he was remiss and welcomed Judge Larry Gist to the Board.

In regards to the Chairman's Fitness Challenge, he added it was going well.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

As no registration cards were received, no public comments were heard by the Board.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Bell adjourned the 263rd meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees at 10:55 a.m.

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Chairman

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Secretary

*Signature on File

Note: Referenced Attachments for the approved minutes are available upon request from the Office of Record, Executive Services.