

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

250th MEETING

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Friday, February 13, 2009, at the Holiday Inn Town Lake, Austin, Texas.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Oliver Bell, Chairman
Gregory Coleman
Eric Gambrell
Pastor C. L. Jackson
Janice Harris Lord
Terrell McCombs
Tom Mechler
J. David Nelson
Leopoldo (Leo) Vasquez, III

WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Debbie Roberts, Superintendent
Don Lawrence
Linda Goerdel
Veronica Casanova

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL
JUSTICE (TDCJ) STAFF 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, February 13, 2009, at 11:12 a.m. in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the Open Meetings Act. A quorum was present and the 250th meeting of the Board was declared open.

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 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 December 8, 2008, meeting.

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 A
CONTRACT OVER \$1 MILLION**

Don Lawrence, WSD Director of Operational Support, explained the upcoming project proposal for upgrading the Human Resources (HR) and Business Office computer systems.

He explained the four (4) basic problems that were identified:

- Current WSD business office and HR technologies are not integrated;
- Current WSD Business Office and HR technologies are outdated, high risk of failure;
- Risk of current technology relies heavily on redundant manual efforts, high probability of user error;
- WSD current systems do not meet industry best practices standards.

Parts of the current operating system are 20 years old and replacements and/or support are no longer available. If system failure occurs, recovery/restoration in some cases is impossible. These systems are not internally integrated so gathering information for reports is difficult. He explained that some entries require a person to input the same information three (3) different times in three (3) different places. He explained that the systems were designed for the way WSD performed duties 20 years ago, not the way the world currently operates.

In March 2008, the District Technology Steering Committee began conducting interviews and site visits to various school districts and other entities in order to determine the best route for WSD to take. Numerous telephone interviews with other districts in other states were conducted. Site visits were made to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Houston Independent School District (ISD), Jefferson County ISD and St. Thomas University. People Soft was the product that surfaced as the most widely used software for financial and human resource management. People Soft is also the software being recommended by the State Comptroller's office for the Statewide Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solution.

With extensive assistance from TDCJ, a Request for Offer (RFO) was developed and posted to solicit the services of an expert in the implementation of People Soft. Critical elements were identified and incorporated into an objective weighted scoring rubric. These elements included knowledge transfer (training), cost, timeline adherence, direct related experience, references, dedicated personnel and post-implementation support.

Vendors prepared responses and finalists were determined based upon scoring criteria. These finalists had an opportunity to visit the District, make presentations and answer questions.

Through extensive and careful negotiations, the District selected a vendor for the Board's consideration.

Leo Vasquez stated he did not recall being informed that this process was underway. He asked if the major problem was the HR system or the financial system. He also asked why WSD could not use a module from TDCJ. The Department of Health and Human Services has 46,000 employees and is having its payroll information done on state contract without a one (1) million dollar up-front investment. Debbie Roberts, WSD Superintendent, responded that the basic problem is the HR system, which is also the most critical segment at this point. WSD cannot use the TDCJ system because WSD employees are different than state employees. TDCJ's program and those used by other state agencies are not designed to handle some of the employment issues associated with teachers. WSD is looking at incorporating something similar to other school districts. Ms. Roberts noted that many districts are going to People Soft because they have the same issues that Windham does.

Chairman Bell stated that Windham does not have the same option because their budget is a totally separate entity, with funding provided in a different manner, and this is the reason there is a distinction between the Board of Criminal Justice and the Board of Trustees. They are two (2) separate, unique operating entities for which the Board has oversight. Chairman Bell added, the money for this project has already been allocated, if the Board chooses to use it. It was incorporated into the budget following the State Auditor's Office (SAO) Report that pointed out WSD's system was quite antiquated.

Terrell McCombs asked if People Soft was selected during the Request for Offer (RFO) process, and what the timeframe was for implementation. Mr. Lawrence responded that People Soft was a component of the RFO because it became apparent that People Soft was the industry standard that the District wanted to implement. The vendors submitted bids based upon that product with implementation targeted at 18 months.

Tom Mechler asked if any of the education service centers could assist in this implementation to help offset some of the expense. Ms. Roberts stated that the education service center was contacted immediately after the SAO audit and it was found not to be a feasible alternative for the District. She added that she would get the specifics for the Board.

Mr. Mechler stated that if WSD were having these problems, would it be safe to assume that other districts have the same issues. Mr. Lawrence responded that was correct and that is why the People Soft product has become prevalent in its use in school districts around the country. Mr. Mechler asked if the money had already been allocated for this purchase. Ms. Roberts assured him that it had been allocated in the 2008-09 budget. Mr. Mechler inquired who within Windham would be in charge of making sure People Soft is being implemented properly and done according to the District's requirements. Mr. Lawrence responded that it would fall under his purview as the Division Director of Operational Support. He added that Felix Buxkemper is the project manager dedicated specifically to this project. Ms. Roberts assured the Board that she would also be paying very close attention to the project.

Ms. Roberts stated that this is a big project for the Windham School District and as such, exhaustive research has been done on it. Measures have been taken up front to reduce the cost as much as possible. Staff began mapping out all of the current business practices months ago, so the vendor would not have to come in and do that for the District. Windham did not want to pay

someone to do things that the District could do. If Windham tried to undertake this project itself, it would take ten (10) years and that would not be feasible. Mr. Mechler stated that he wanted the project to be scoped right and properly handled so WSD did not have to come back to the Board requesting cost overruns.

Chairman Bell asked if the Board postponed their decision for two (2) or three (3) months would it pose a major problem. Mr. Lawrence replied that the more volume of data that has to be carried over from one (1) year to the next would add cost to the project.

Mr. McCombs asked if this would enable the District to reduce any staff. Veronica Casanova, Director of Human Resources, responded that she envisions the new process helping the HR department do business in a better way. She has ten (10) staff members that assist 1,343 WSD employees and 125 RIO employees. She does not feel she will lose any staff but will be able to provide HR services in a more timely manner.

Ms. Roberts informed the Board that obtaining management information is a problem. Many of the reports have to be manually calculated, even for something as simple as the number of terminations in a year. It is a very cumbersome system. Mr. Vasquez stated that he did not think there is a dispute that something needs to be done. He added that the Board wants to help the District find a solution to the problem.

Linda Goerdel, Chief Financial Officer, addressed the question by Mr. McCombs about the timeline for implementation. The tentative start date was April 1st. The Human Resources module would be completed around November 30th because December payroll is dated January 1. The financial portion would follow and be completed by September 1, 2010.

Ms. Goerdel stated that WSD, through this presentation, is requesting approval of a purchase order in excess of one (1) million dollars. The purchase order is a service type order for implementation of human resource and financial modules of the People Soft software. The District recommends awarding this contract to RCM Technologies for \$1,310,380. This amount is for the complete project. The annual People Soft license is \$600,000 for a term of three (3) years. Annual cost of software support is \$134,000. RCM will be working with WSD for 18 months.

Chairman Bell stated that 90% of WSD's dollars go toward direct contact with students and only 10% goes to other things. The District needs to be careful not to create any inefficiencies that would actually diminish their service capacity. At this time, there are ten (10) people in HR serving 1,200 employees and that is about as lean as one can get in an operation. Ms. Roberts stated that each time a job is open, the District reviews to see if the job is needed before posting the position.

Greg Coleman asked if delaying the approval by two (2) or three (3) months would affect the goals of being able to turn over the W2's at the end of the calendar year and the implementation of the system in the new fiscal year. Ms. Goerdel indicated that based on the District goals and timelines, the vendors that WSD met with felt the timeline was very close to begin with so delays could cause some issues. Mr. Mechler noted to clarify that if the Board delays the decision until April, WSD already has \$600,000 in the project because of the software purchase. Ms. Goerdel responded that \$234,000 has been paid toward the purchase of the software.

Mr. Gambrell asked if the District was satisfied with the terms of the contract, adding that sometimes provisions can be included to deal with overruns. The Board does not want to get into a situation where Windham has to come back and request more funding because the vendor stated they need more money to complete the job. Ms. Roberts stated that the WSD General Counsel was very involved in the development of the contract. She also noted that she was satisfied with the terms of the contract and feels the District has made it very clear that the amount cannot be exceeded.

To allow members more time to review the proposal, Chairman Bell tabled this item until the April 3, 2009, Board meeting.

Mr. Gambrell asked if it was possible for him to see the proposed contract before the next meeting. Chairman Bell responded that he would check with Counsel on this matter.

Chairman Bell added that possibly a sub-committee could be put together or the Education Committee could review the details of this project and decide whether to bring it to the Board. Mr. McCombs asked if it was appropriate for the vendor to make a short presentation of the actual implementation. Chairman Bell noted he would check with Counsel.

Mr. McCombs asked that the questions raised at this meeting concerning the contract and the potential for additional charges be specifically addressed at the next meeting. He also asked that the Board be provided a copy of the budget document wherein funding for this item was approved.

OVERVIEW OF THE WSD HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION

Veronica Casanova thanked the Board for the opportunity to share information on the Windham School District.

Ms. Casanova reported 89% of Windham staff are located at the campus level, providing daily direct contact with offenders. Not only does the District provide educational services for those offenders enrolled in school but also library services, educational testing and Individualized Treatment Plans (ITPs) for offenders not enrolled in school.

In terms of ethnic diversity, 18% of WSD teachers are minorities compared to 32% in public schools. Although, this may seem low, during the 2007-2008 school year, 75% of the teachers hired were minorities.

In terms of staff by gender, males are strongly represented in WSD classrooms with 46.7% compared to 22.8% in public schools. During the 2007-2008 school year, WSD academic teachers averaged 19 years of total teaching experience while WSD vocational teachers averaged 14 years of service.

On September 1, 2008, Windham started the year with 733 classrooms led by well-qualified veteran teachers. Unfortunately, WSD lost more staff in the 2007-08 school year (turnover rate 12.5%) than any other year since the reduction in force (RIF) in 2003. The most common reasons cited were job separation, salaries and high gas prices. Windham teacher turnover is still slightly better (13.6%) than the turnover rate in public schools (15.2%). Despite the turnovers,

the HR Department was able to maintain an average of 45 teacher vacancies per month.

Human Resources is also responsible for the Professional Development Appraisal System (PDAS) as well as contracts, non-renewals, substitutes and HR policy revisions. HR is also currently working on a salary survey and the implementation of People Soft.

Noting the statistics compiled, Ms. Lord asked how long it took staff to prepare this report. Ms. Casanova responded that it took six (6) staff members to develop the first chart alone. She added that everything in the report had to be hand counted.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Ms. Roberts gave an update on the legislative session. She commented that 27 House Bills and 10 Senate Bills have been filed that concern WSD. The majority deal with teacher salaries and retirement benefits. None of the bills have been specific to WSD.

She is following the appropriations process closely. Windham has a couple of requests for additional funding. In addition to maintaining current funding for WSD, the TEA has also requested funds to expand the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program offerings by 54 classes. The District is hopeful about the request but understands the tight economic climate.

WSD also has a request to recoup funding for services that are being offered at San Saba and Marlin as Windham did not receive any additional funding when these facilities were transferred to TDCJ. Funding has been requested for those programs. WSD has also requested funding for the expansion of the Gang Renunciation and Disassociation (GRAD) program at the Ellis Unit.

In addition to TEA, Windham also receives funding from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) through an Inter-Agency Contract with TDCJ for Project RIO. As some units do not have the required staff to offer Project RIO, a request for additional funding through the TWC budget has been made to increase Project RIO staff. This would enable RIO to serve about 13,000 more offenders annually.

Ms. Roberts shared some interesting statistics that have been gathered during the legislative session. Of the population released in FY08, the number of offenders that participated in WSD programs at some point in their incarceration was 56.6%. Approximately 17.5% of the offenders released in FY08 actually received their GED while incarcerated in TDCJ. About 17% of those offenders went on to attend post-secondary programs. Approximately 72% of offenders who participated in any Windham program showed a gain in their educational achievement level.

Chairman Bell called for a five (5) minute recess. The Chairman reconvened the meeting at 12:32 p.m.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Bell discussed budget opportunities, staffing, and programs and services.

He stated that WSD is working diligently to be a good steward of state resources. Windham is a key component and support arm of TDCJ. It is the largest physical school district in Texas. The WSD budget touches two (2) of TDCJ key mission points - to promote change in offender

behavior and reintegrate offenders into society. WSD mission is to reduce recidivism, reduce the cost of confinement, increase the success of former offenders in obtaining and maintaining employment and provide an incentive to offenders to behave in positive ways while serving their term. He added that 92% of the WSD budget is staffing.

WSD has approximately 1,260 employees that work in 90 schools on TDCJ facilities. A total of 89% of all positions are dedicated to direct student contact at the campus level. The average teacher has 17 years of experience. Programming at WSD includes Literacy, GED, CTE and on-the-job training (OJT), Life Skills, Post Secondary, Project RIO, Recreation, Library Services and the ECHO Newsletter.

Windham had 82,449 offenders participate in programs in 2007-2008. Over 5,000 GEDs were awarded, almost 6,000 vocational certificates and over 3,000 industry certifications were awarded, and over 59,000 offenders participated in Project RIO. Participation is a privilege not a right so good behavior is one element in earning the right to attend education programs. Various studies have shown that recidivism rates for offenders participating in education are 29-41% lower.

Chairman Bell encouraged Board members to make site visits to the schools. He also encouraged WSD staff to participate in the Texas Round-Up.

He complimented the WSD staff on the wonderful job they do.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Bell adjourned the 250th meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees at 12:39 p.m.

Chairman

Secretary