

Windham School District
Board of Trustees
268th Meeting



Minutes

February 10, 2012
Austin, Texas

WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Crowne Plaza Hotel – Salons E-H
6121 North IH-35
Austin, Texas 78752**

**February 10, 2012
1:30 – 2:00 PM**

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Call to Order

Reconvene Windham School District (WSD) Board of Trustees (Board)

I. Regular Session

- A. Consideration of Approval of Consent Items
 - 1. Minutes of the December 9, 2011, WSD Board Meeting
 - 2. Personal Property Donations
 - 3. Excused Absences
- B. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Adoption of Repeal Title 19 Texas Administrative Code Section 300.3, Employment Referral Services for Offenders Memorandum of Understanding
- C. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Amendments to Board Rules, Title 19 Texas Administrative Code
 - 1. 300.1, Public Presentations and Comments to the Windham School District Board of Trustees
 - 2. 300.2, Windham School District Board of Trustees Operating Procedures
- D. WSD Employee Demographic Report and Employee Performance Evaluation Process
- E. Superintendent's Report – Overview of the Windham Program Recidivism Study
- F. Report from the Chairman, WSD Board
 - 1. Overview of WSD Education Operations and Efficiency and Performance Standards Committee Meeting, January 26, 2012
 - 2. Chairman's Olympic Fitness Challenge

Adjourn

The WSD Board may discuss and/or take action on any of the items of posted on this meeting agenda. The WSD Board may also convene into Executive Session on any of these matters when attorney-client privilege is warranted.

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

268th MEETING

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Friday, February 10, 2012, 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
Eric Gambrell
Janice Harris Lord
J. David Nelson

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Terrell McCombs
Carmen Villanueva-Hiles

WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Debbie Roberts, Superintendent
Michael Mondville
Veronica Casanova
Latreace Craig
Kevin Ainsworth
Allen Bourque
Linda Goerdel
Marjie Haynes
Sandra Nash
Mike Vickers

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

Brad Livingston
Bryan Collier
Melinda Bozarth

RECONVENED

Oliver Bell, Chairman, convened the meeting of the 268th Windham School District (WSD) Board of Trustees (Board) to order on Friday, February 10, 2012, at 1:49 p.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 meeting was declared open.

Chairman Bell recognized County Judge Dale Spurgin, of Jones County and Chloe Lieberknecht from the Sunset Commission.

The chairman reported the Windham School District Board of Trustees was committed to providing the opportunity for public presentations on posted agenda topics 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 minutes prior to the meeting's posted start time. For this meeting, no speaker registration cards were received by the board staff prior to the required deadline. Therefore, no public presentations would be heard on posted agenda topics.

CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEMS

Chairman Bell called the Board's attention to the Consent Items on the agenda which consisted of the minutes of the December 9, 2011, meeting, 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 ADOPTION OF REPEAL TITLE 19 TEXAS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE SECTION 300.3, EMPLOYMENT REFERRAL SERVICES FOR OFFENDERS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Mike Mondville, WSD General Counsel, explained that at the December 2011 meeting, the board voted to publish the proposed repeal of Board Rule 300.3 concerning Project RIO in the Texas Register. No public comments were received, and the repeal of Rule 300.3 is presented for adoption.

Tom Mechler moved that the WSD Board of Trustees adopt the repeal of Title 19 Texas Administrative Code Section 300.3, Employment Referral Services for Offenders Memorandum of Understanding as published in the Texas Register and that the Chairman sign the order to this effect.

David Nelson seconded the motion, which prevailed unanimously when called to a vote.

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO BOARD RULES, TITLE 19 TEXAS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

1. 300.1, Public Presentations and Comments to the Windham School District Board of Trustees

Mr. Mondville stated that WSD was proposing the Board approve the publication of revised Rule 300.1, Public Presentations and Comments to the Windham School District Board of Trustees. The revisions were minor, banning signs or placards inside the meeting and removing unnecessary language referring to the Board's defined areas of jurisdiction. He asked the Board to approve the publication of Rule 300.1 in the Texas Register for public comment.

Judge Larry Gist moved that the WSD Board of Trustees approve for publication in the Texas Register the proposed amendments to Title 19 Texas Administrative Code Section 300.1, Public Presentations and Comments to the Windham School District Board of Trustees, to receive public comments, as presented.

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

2. 300.2, Windham School District Board of Trustees Operating Procedures

Mr. Mondville stated this was a request to publish proposed revisions to Rule 300.2, Windham School District Board of Trustees Operating Procedures. Changes were minor and include restating videoconferencing attendance requirements and other language designed to increase the efficiency of the meetings. He asked the Board to approve the publication of revised Rule 300.2 in the Texas Register for public comment.

Janice Lord moved that the WSD Board of Trustees approve for publication in the Texas Register proposed amendments to Title 19 Texas Administrative Code, 300.2, Windham School District Board of Trustees Operating Procedures, to receive public comment, as presented.

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

WSD EMPLOYEE DEMOGRAPHIC REPORT AND THE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION PROCESS

Veronica Casanova, WSD Human Resources Director, shared information regarding WSD staffing for the current year. WSD is providing educational services across the state at 87 facilities with a total of 1,097 positions this year. 1,018 positions are funded by the foundation school program fund, of those positions 93% continue to be focused on providing services to students.

Some of the major changes that the district had this school year included librarian positions being reduced from 41 positions to 12 positions. Those 12 are funded through a memorandum of understanding with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). In order to maintain the level of services, additional librarian assistants and clerks were hired. The number of principals was reduced by 21 positions. The district has 46 principals and 28 of the principals oversee more than one campus. The district is concerned because some principals are responsible for two and three facilities; this decreases the number of staff working directly with students and impacts the district's ability to monitor the integrity of the education programs. The WSD administration hopes this arrangement will be effective, but if it is not, WSD will reassess and move forward. The turnover rate did increase this year because it is calculated including retirees and positions affected by the reduction in force (RIF). The RIF resulted in a 30% turnover, but the preventable turnover rate was shown to be 10.4%.

Ms. Casanova informed the Board that during the past school year the superintendent appointed a committee to review the performance evaluations of non-instructional staff. Latrece Craig, Assistant Director of Human Resources, who chaired that committee, was present to update the Board on the committee's work.

Ms. Craig provided some background information on the evaluation committee. The committee, which consists of six members, was established in the fall of 2010. The superintendent appointed the members, which includes principals and administrators from the regional offices, as well as representatives from information technology and human resources. Individuals were selected from various departments so the committee could benefit from its members' wide array of experiences.

The committee's task was to develop an evaluation instrument which measures skills and accomplishments with reasonable accuracy and uniformity based on research for all non-teaching positions in the district. The target date for implementation is September 2012. This will give the district enough time to revise the current policy and educate staff to changes in the evaluation instrument.

Ms. Craig explained the purpose and importance of performance evaluations. Performance evaluations are used to make administrative decisions related to promotions, salary and work assignments. Performance evaluations were used during the RIF process. They also help develop employees by providing feedback, critiquing performance, and setting goals. The most important purpose or goal of the evaluation is to improve performance in all employees.

Research indicates that an effective performance evaluation should include a self-evaluation and feedback. It should also address deficiencies in performance, specifically describing the problem and offering a plan for improvement. A self-evaluation allows the employee to self-critique, highlight their own achievements, review their performance during a certain time frame and have an active role in their own evaluation. Research has shown that employees will view the instrument as fair if they are allowed input in the evaluation.

Feedback should highlight strengths and also recommend methods for improvement to the employee. It should also allow for employee comment or rebuttal and communication between the supervisor and employee.

Ms. Craig detailed the committee's review process thus far which began by critiquing the performance evaluations currently used by WSD and identified deficiencies. The next step was to gather performance evaluations from other school districts and TDCJ, and then examine research on performance evaluations. The committee is currently in the development phase of the performance evaluations and policies.

The currently used performance evaluations list job responsibilities and have one general section at the end of the evaluation for the employee to respond. It has a three-point Likert scale of E = exceeds expectations, S = standard expectation, and N = needs improvement.

The proposed instrument will have three sections. Section I will list a set of ten core competencies for all positions, general responsibilities, and skills expected of all employees. This section will be the same for all proposed evaluations, which provides uniformity. Ms. Craig discussed the ten competencies.

Section II will have job specific responsibilities unique to each position, aligned with the current job description. Section III, which is optional, will provide a place for the supervisor or employee to set future goals for improvement or performance enhancement. The proposed instrument also has an indicator if further development is needed in an area. The proposed instrument is on a Likert five point scale and each rating is clearly defined. The five point rating scale consists of 1 = unsatisfactory, 2 = needs improvement, 3 = good solid performer, 4 = superior, 5 = distinguished. Each section is equally weighted and there is a section for the employee to respond to each. The instrument also includes a reviewer which will help increase reliability and validity.

Regarding the reviewer section on the proposed performance evaluation, Chairman Bell asked if the evaluations would be looked at by reviewer or by the region if it became necessary to down size again, and if so, how would the district assure that one supervisor's five was equivalent to another supervisor's five. Ms. Craig advised there was a clear definition for each of the five levels and with training on the new instrument, there will be uniformity in the evaluations.

The chairman asked if forced distribution would be used on these performance evaluations. He explained that forced distribution was like using a bell curve where a certain percentage of the employees would be five's, a certain number would be ones, and the rest would be two thru four. Ms. Craig responded that WSD evaluations will be an accurate reflection of the employee's performance.

Mr. Mechler inquired on the reason for the new performance evaluation format, and if it was due to some evaluators rating scales being different than others. Debbie Roberts, WSD Superintendent, responded that was not the purpose of revising the performance evaluations, but hopefully more consistency in ratings will be one of the outcomes.

Ms. Casanova added that the performance evaluations currently used are based strictly on the job description so there are evaluations of various lengths with different competencies measured. The district wanted uniformity in the evaluation instrument, so section I of the new performance evaluation measures core competencies of all employees across the board. The evaluations currently used do not have uniformity.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Ms. Roberts informed the Board that Windham is required by a rider to the appropriations bill to complete a recidivism study on the offenders who complete programming in 2010 and 2011. Early last fall, WSD administration began meeting with staff from Sam Houston State University (SHSU) to begin setting the groundwork for a recidivism study of Windham programs. An agreement was reached in November, and both Windham and SHSU staff immediately began gathering information necessary for the study.

Initially, SHSU gathered research studies from across the nation that had been completed on correctional education. In addition, university staff visited with WSD central office staff to

understand what data was currently gathered by WSD and available for the study. They also visited the Ferguson Unit school to experience a prison school setting first hand.

During the last several months, SHSU staff has been busy designing the study. The data for the study has been identified, and staff of the Windham Operational Support and Information Technology divisions as well as the TDCJ Executive Services, are in the process of gathering the data requested.

The study will evaluate the impact of Windham programs on the recidivism and employment rates of released offenders. Initially, the programs being evaluated will include literacy, career and technical education, CHANGES, and cognitive intervention.

The study will attempt to isolate the impact of each of the programs, as well as, the impact of multiple program participation. In addition, the study will evaluate the impact of dosage or the number of hours of participation on recidivism and employment.

Ms. Roberts noted she anticipates a preliminary report in May, with the final report due in June.

Mr. Bell thanked Ms. Roberts for her report and her efforts in this area.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN

1. Overview of WSD Education Operations and Efficiency and Performance Standards Committee Meeting, January 26, 2012

The Education Operations Efficiency and Performance Standards Committee met on January 26, 2012, in Austin. Windham administrative staff, principals and teachers presented and actively participated in the meeting. The agenda topics discussed included: research on providing effective correctional education programs; effectively meeting student needs; performance based assessment of staff and programs; and impact of current structure on operations and performance. As he did not have the opportunity to attend the meeting, Chairman Bell asked Mr. Mechler to provide brief comments.

Mr. Mechler stated he wanted to make a few personal comments regarding the meeting. He emphasized this was not the Board's position but his own personal observation. After the funding difficulties that occurred from the last legislative session, discussions have been held to explore possible alternative ways to educate offenders. Chairman Bell established the WSD Committee to facilitate those discussions and look at everything associated with the education of Texas offenders.

Mr. Mechler commended Ms. Roberts and the Windham staff on their positive attitudes towards this process. It is hard when someone is constantly looking over your shoulder because it makes you think you don't bring value to the table, but that is certainly not the case in this situation. With respect to looking at everything, the committee has been very helpful in that process. Originally, Mr. Mechler noted he was of the opinion, that if there are GED classes in the free world being taught by noncertified teachers, then certified teachers for WSD GED classes are not

necessary. However, as it was pointed out in the committee meeting, in the free world GED students are there because they want to be there. That is not the case with offenders, so it takes a special skill set to teach them, which only experienced teachers can provide.

The committee meeting helped the board members to understand the details of how WSD does business, and to also appreciate that Windham works closely with the teaching staff to be their best. At the same time, if an offender is having difficulty learning, there is an individualized approach to offender teaching that is commendable.

Chairman Bell noted the board is extremely supportive of Windham and if a member asks a question, there is a purpose in the question. Sometimes the questions are designed to be the precursor to change. Sometimes the questions are the precursor to validation that things are being done the right way. He thanked everyone that participated in the committee meeting.

2. Chairman's Olympic Fitness Challenge

The first quarter of 2012 of the Chairman’s Olympic Fitness Challenge was a great success. Participating WSD employees achieved some of the highest overall point scores. Within the district, the North Texas Region achieved the gold medal, earning over 293,000 points for the five week challenge. The silver medal was earned by the West Texas Region, and the bronze medal the Windham Administration. Congratulations to all participants and winners.

The second quarter challenge, called the Winter Olympic Games, began the past Monday, and it is off to a good start. Chairman Bell noted a half hour a day of fitness participation could reduce “what ails you” by 50%. He thanked participating employees for their support.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the 268th meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees adjourned at 2:37 p.m.

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Chairman

Secretary

****Signature on File***

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