

LWV OBSERVER REPORT FORM

Board or Commission: **West Hartford Board of Education**

Date of Meeting: **March 3, 2009**

Members present: *All but Lib Spinella*

Nature of meeting Routine X

Special _____

Called to order (time): 7:04 pm

Adjourned (time): 8:39 pm

Action taken:

On the agenda: Presentation of the superintendent's budget recommendations for 2009-10 and a report on implementing the recommendations of the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative regarding West Hartford's special education programs.

Superintendent David Sklarz presented a recommended budget for 2009-10 of \$126.85 million, a \$3.54 million, 2.87% increase over 2008-09. This amount was developed as follows.

- A "roll-forward" budget that keeps all existing programs and services in place would require an increase in spending of \$5.07 million, or 4.11%.
 - Salary Increases - 3% \$2.56 Million
 - Benefits Costs - 12% \$2.29 Million
 - Services & Supplies – 1.6% \$.35 Million
- Projected increases in high school enrollment and returning elementary class sizes to contractual guidelines would require another .65 million, or .45%.
 - MS/HS Enrollment – -2.4MS/+4.4HS \$.13 Million
 - Elementary Class Sizes – 7.9 staff \$.52 Million
- Savings were found totaling \$2.11 million, or 1.7%.
 - Non-Union Wage Freeze \$ 84,000
 - Central Office Staff – 3.8 \$184,000
 - Maintenance & Custodial – 2 FT, 20 PT \$330,000
 - Supplies \$754,000
 - Department Supervisors – 2.65 \$245,000
 - Special Ed – 8 Paras, 2 TAs \$276,000
 - 1 Less School Day per WHEA Contract \$ 68,000
 - Security Staff – 1 Elem, 2 MS \$115,000
 - Consolidate HS Career/Activities Para \$ 78,000
 - \$25 MS/HS Activity Fee \$ 50,000

Further potential savings could reduce the budget below the 2.87% increase recommended, and these were placed into four groups.

- Federal Stimulus Funds, which might allow some current General Fund expenditures to be funded with IDEA or Title I grant monies - \$1.3 Million.
- Trimming of programs and services, such as elementary world language and Quest, pupil services staff, maintenance staff, middle school sports - \$1.217 Million.
- Significant support services cuts, such as middle school STRIVE/AIMS, kindergarten paras, guidance counselors, media specialists, assistant principals - \$682,000.

- Core program cuts, such as full-day K, K-8 Quest, elementary world language, high school class sizes/course offerings, guidance counselors, REACH - \$2.225 million.

To see the superintendent's full presentation, plus the budget and all related documents, go to <http://www.whps.org/whps/budget>.

Assistant Superintendent Karen List and Director of Pupil Services Glenn McGrath presented a report on the plan for implementing the recommendations made last fall by the consultant hired to evaluate West Hartford's special education programs and services. The overall goal of the plan is to improve performance and outcomes for all students, not just those with disabilities, by providing a more unified system for delivering educational programs and services throughout the district. This will mean ending, or at least significantly scaling back, centralized special education programs for elementary students and providing instruction instead in their neighborhood schools. Phase-out of the Adjusted Curriculum Program housed at Duffy has already begun.

A core team of the district's leadership has been formed and that team has developed a comprehensive seven-year implementation plan that addresses the district's culture, infrastructure, curriculum, and instruction in the context of the consultant's recommendations. The plan aligns with our District Goals, our state-mandated District Improvement Plan, and our new Scientifically Research Based Initiative. It also includes a structure and timeline so that the district's progress can be reviewed annually. To see the plan go to <http://www.whps.org/board/agenda-documents/20090303/EDC%20RECOMMENDATION%20GRID%203-3-09.pdf>.

Despite its enormous scope and length, the plan itself does not require board approval because it is perceived to be mostly a matter of regulation rather than policy. However, certain of its components, such as revision of the district mission statement and goals to proactively embrace children of all backgrounds and learning styles in an integrated setting, will require board approval along the way.

Future board meetings will take place as follows:

1. Budget Workshops - all at 7:00 p.m., Town Hall, Room 314.
 - Wednesday, March 11, 2009 – Workshop #1
 - Thursday, March 12, 2009 – Workshop #2
 - Thursday, March 26, 2009 – Public Hearing
 - Thursday, March 26, 2009 – Workshop #3, immediately following public hearing
2. Next Regular Board meeting, Tuesday, March 17, 2009, 7:00 p.m., Town Hall, Room 314.
3. Budget adoption at April 7 Regular Board Meeting.

Observer name: Kathy Wilson