

LWV OBSERVER REPORT FORM

Board or Commission: West Hartford Board of Education

Date of Meeting: May 5, 2009

Members present: Al:

Nature of meeting Routine X

Special _____

Called to order (time): 7:10 pm

Adjourned (time): 9:56 pm

Action taken:

Superintendent David Sklarz introduced the three 2009 Teacher of the Year finalists. They are: Steve Boyle, a guidance counselor at Hall; Kristi Luetjen, a special ed teacher at Whiting Lane, and Jenn Nagel, a special ed teacher at Sedgwick.

The board approved unanimously plans for a partial roof replacement at Norfeldt and boiler room asbestos abatement at Aiken. The Norfeldt tar and gravel roof covers the entire original building and will be taken down to the deck and replaced with a more energy efficient rubber one. The Aiken boilers are 27 year-old gas/oil combination units that will be replaced with gas ones, and in the process asbestos insulation will be removed. The entire Norfeldt project and the asbestos portion of the Aiken project are reimbursable by the state.

The board also approved unanimously a revised meeting schedule for the 2009-10 school year. The one change the board made was in the second April meeting, moving it from the 29th to the 15th.

After a long, emotional discussion, the board voted 6-1 to modify the schools calendars and open school on Veterans Day in 2010 and 2011. Lib Spinella cast the dissenting vote. The adopted calendars for those years had observed the holiday by closing school, but at the request of two local veterans groups the board decided that opening school and engaging in classroom activities and assemblies designed to increase awareness of veterans' contributions to the nation was a better way to honor West Hartford's veterans.

Steve Huleatt, Director of the West Hartford-Bloomfield Health District, reported on local efforts to cope with the swine flu outbreak. The Health District is responsible for local case follow-up and there were no reported cases in West Hartford so far. He said that the disease appears to be no more severe than normal flu and that new recommendations are not to close schools unless illness becomes widespread.

Dr. Sklarz reported that West Hartford has its first ever Presidential Scholar this year, Conard senior Emmett Gilles. Two students from each state are chosen annually and are honored at ceremonies in Washington D.C.

Assistant Superintendent Tim Dunn reported on progress in updating regulations implementing board policy 1250 – Community Use of School Facilities. Currently the district receives about \$80,000 in annual revenue from the rental of school facilities, mostly to day care providers, and

another \$6,000 to \$7,000 from rental to community and private groups. Mr. Dunn stated that revised regulation will centralize the rental process to provide consistency in rules for use, permitting, and charges. Each school now handles its own rentals. He said that the district will update its rates and will now charge all groups for weekend use of the schools so that the district can recoup the staffing costs incurred. Restrictions regarding the use of classrooms, prohibited unless there is compelling need, will be retained. Revenues from rentals will go to the schools used.

Assistant Superintendent Karen List, Technology Department Supervisor Pat Drago, and School Counseling Department Supervisor Bob Segee reported on efforts to develop a joint Career Pathways Planning program that, beginning in middle school, will provide each student with a personal success plan. The planning process will help students understand today's economic and career realities, assess their strengths and interests, and then provide an appropriate sequence of academic and career-related courses leading to either a post-secondary degree or industry-recognized certification or licensure. The Career Planning Pathways program arose out of West Hartford's 5-year curriculum review process and is still in development. The proposed state High School Reform plan requires something along these lines, and West Hartford is ahead of the curve in its efforts.

Board Member Clare Kindall, in her capacity as Financial Examiner, and Director of Finance and Planning Chip Ward presented the district Financial Statement for the period ending March 31, 2009. The report projects a balance as of June 30 of \$270,000, which the district plans to return to the town council. This balance remains after prefunding \$1.1 million of 2010 and 2011 utilities expenses from this year's heating and electricity accounts.

The next board meeting will take place on May 19 at 7:00 pm in room 314 at Town Hall.

Observer name: Kathy Wilson