

## LWV OBSERVER REPORT FORM

*Board or Commission: West Hartford Board of Education*

*Date of Meeting: June 2, 2009*

*Members present: All but Jack Darcey; Lib Spinella left early*

*Nature of meeting Routine X*

*Special \_\_\_\_\_*

*Called to order (time): 7:05 p.m.*

*Adjourned (time): 9:14 p.m.*

*Action taken:*

Main items on the agenda were approval of final plans for the Norfeldt boiler replacement, application for an adult education grant, state healthy food certification, an update on progress on the EDC's special ed recommendations, and the annual discipline report.

The board approved 6-0 the final plans for replacing the boiler at Norfeldt elementary school. A description of the project may be found in the observer report May 19.

The board approved 6-0 the application for a 2009-10 Adult Education Program Improvement Project grant, which is a continuation of a \$60,000 federal grant administered by the state board of education and received by the Continuing Education Department. The project is a collaboration between the department and the Family Resource Center at Charter Oak that provides daytime ESOL classes to parents of young children and English immersion activities for the youngsters. An evening class will be added in 2009-10. Because of the grant, the program entails no incremental cost to the West Hartford school district. 90% of participants have recorded "significant" gains in their language skills, superior to results achieved by those in regular adult ed classes.

The board approved 6-0 action by the district to re-certify that all food items sold to students will meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards. Since 2007 WHPS has been following state guidelines for fat, sugar, and portion size, which pertain to all foods and beverages sold on school grounds during school hours. Recertification is necessary each year, and the state compensates all certifying districts an additional 10 cents per student meal served, providing \$96,000 to West Hartford Nutrition Services this year. Beyond this incentive program, the state has not increased school lunch funding for about 20 years, and proposals to reduce compensation under this program to either 5 cents or 7.5 cents are pending before the legislature. About two-thirds of Connecticut school districts participate in the healthy foods program. Director of Finance and Planning Chip Ward reported that, due to cost-cutting efforts by Nutrition Services, an anticipated 25-cent price increase for school lunch will not be necessary in 2009-10 after all.

Assistant Superintendent Karen List, Pupil Services Director Glenn McGrath, Wolcott Principal Plato Karafelis, and Pupil Services Department Supervisor Lynn Griswold presented a report on progress on the EDC's special ed recommendations. The Pupil Services leadership team has met with each school's administration and curriculum specialists to review, assess, and plan how the EDC's recommendations will be implemented. While each school's efforts will be individualized to the school, all will be building on their current best practices for inclusion of students within general education and will be incorporating the EDC's recommendations as part

of their School Improvement Plan (SIP). School based teams are being established to expand efforts and fold in parents and staff in their planning. The district's specific steps so far to implement the EDC's recommendations may be viewed at <http://www.whps.org/board/agenda-documents/20090602/EDC%20Implementation%206-2-09.pdf>. Mr. Karafelis and Ms. Griswold gave a presentation on Wolcott's progress, which may be viewed through the same link. Dr. List praised Wolcott's energy, creativity, and collaborative spirit in embracing the changes recommended in the EDC's report.

Dr. List announced that Dr. Eileen Howley, presently Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in Farmington, will be assuming the corresponding position in West Hartford this summer. She will be replacing Dr. List, who will become the district's new superintendent July 1. For more on Dr. Howley, see <http://www.whps.org/whps/news/133/57>.

Superintendent David Sklarz sought to quell a rumor that redistricting is being considered as a solution to racial imbalance in West Hartford's elementary schools. He stated unequivocally that the rumor is false, and that the policy of the district is to support neighborhood schools and parental choice. He pointed out that redistricting was not one of the options put forward for dealing with racial imbalance in the district's letter to the state commissioner of education, nor was it considered in the board's discussion of options at its May 19 meeting.

Assistant Superintendent Tim Dunn presented the district's annual discipline report to the board. The report contains information about the percentage of students who were suspended from the secondary schools and the number of students who were suspended for serious infractions. There has been a decline in both suspensions and expulsions over the past four years. The complete report is available at <http://www.whps.org/board/agenda-documents/20090602/discipline%20report%202008-09%206-2-09%20BOE%20Mtg.pdf>.

The next board meeting will take place June 16 at 7:00 p.m. in room 314 at Town Hall.

*Observer name: Kathy Wilson*