

LWV OBSERVER REPORT FORM

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

Date of Meeting: **April 6, 2010**

Members present: All (Bruce Putterman via speakerphone)

Nature of meeting Routine X Special X

Called to order (time): 6:05 p.m. (workshop) Adjourned (time): 9:34 p.m.
7:21 p.m. (regular meeting)

Action taken:

An extra budget workshop to discuss possible reductions proposed by board members Lib Spinella and Diane Mudge was held prior to the regular board meeting. The list of those proposals and the administration's responses to them may be viewed at <http://www.whps.org/budget/1011/Suggestions%20for%20savings.pdf>.

The main item on the agenda for the regular meeting was adoption of a budget for the 2010-11 school year. Prior to adopting the budget the board considered a list of possible changes to the original proposal made by Superintendent Karen List. Those changes, voting results, and their effect on the final adopted budget are outlined below.

Description	FTE's	Amount	Vote	Result
Add back World Language for grades 3-5 in 10 elementary schools (Charter Oak keeps K-5 Spanish no matter what)	6.1	\$412,000	7-0	\$412,000
Reduce High School FTE's an additional 1.8 for a total reduction of 3.8 from 09-10 levels	(1.8)	(\$123,000)	7-0	(\$123,000)
Eliminate Summer School - ESOL, HANOC, Charter Oak, Smith		(\$109,200)	no vote	
Transportation Efficiencies - Use 2 fewer buses		(\$87,500)	7-0	(\$87,500)
Eliminate 1 Maintenance Position (incl salary & benefits) - 18 now, 17 in budget, 16 proposed here	(1.0)	(\$77,500)	7-0	(\$77,500)
Reduce textbook purchases		(\$54,000)	7-0	(\$54,000)
Shorten 09-10 calendar by 1 day - use savings to prefund 10-11 textbooks		(\$51,600)	7-0	(\$51,600)
Eliminate Homework Centers except at Title I Schools		(\$41,300)	0-7	
Increase revenue from rental of school facilities		(\$25,000)	7-0	(\$25,000)
Provide Middle School late buses only 2 days/wk vs. current 4/wk		(\$23,800)	0-7	
Make Middle School cross-country & track intramural vs. interscholastic		(\$18,000)	7-0	(\$18,000)
Do not offer Leadership Academy in 10-11			1-6	
Suspend Implementation of IB program at Charter Oak for 1 year		(\$30,000)	2-5	
Superintendent's Proposed Budget Total (+4.37%)				\$126,697,218
Total Adopted Changes (-.2%)				(\$24,600)
Adopted Budget Total (+4.35%)			5-2	\$126,672,618

The board adopted the modified budget by a 5-2 vote, with Republicans Lib Spinella and Diane Mudge voting no. Both stated prior to the vote that they would like to see the budget reduced further in light of current economic conditions, preferably to a zero spending increase, but

offered nothing when invited by board chair Clare Kindall to propose additional amendments in furtherance of this goal. An acrimonious discussion ensued, with Democrats accusing the Republicans of playing politics with children's education and failing to offer timely, workable alternatives to the proposed spending plan. The Republicans countered that they had made an exhaustive list of suggestions, virtually all of which were dismissed by either the administration, the Democrats, or both. Democrats replied that several Republican ideas were among the changes adopted, but the Republicans maintained that these were minor and that their ideas for fundamental changes in the way the district operates were never given serious consideration. The vote took place with the standoff unresolved.

In her Superintendent's Report, Karen List announced the appointment of a new principal for Conard High School. He is Peter Cummings of West Hartford, who currently serves as principal of West Woods Upper Elementary School in Farmington. A detailed write-up on Dr. Cummings may be found at <http://www.courant.com/community/west-hartford/hc-west-hartford-conard-0407.artapr06,0,5095828.story>. Dr. List also announced that Morley Principal Ellen Stokoe has been named a Distinguished Principal by the CT Association of Schools. More information on this and Dr. Cummings' appointment may be found at <http://www.whps.org/whps/news/179/57>.

The next regular board meeting will take place April 15 at 7:00 p.m. in room 314 at Town Hall. It deviates from the normal 1st-and-3rd-Tuesday-of-the-month pattern because of April vacation and the town council meeting schedule.

Observer name: Kathy Wilson