

LWV OBSERVER REPORT FORM

Board or Commission: West Hartford Board of Education

Date of Meeting: November 16, 2010

Members present: All

Nature of meeting Routine X

Special _____

Called to order (time): 7:02 p.m.

Adjourned (time): 8:34 p.m.

Action taken:

The main items on the agenda were the election of board officers, adoption of two revised board policies, approval of a grant for immigrant students, and a report on multi-year enrollment projections. Documents pertinent to this meeting may be found at <http://www.whps.org/whps/primary-offices/boe-page/documents>.

The board unanimously elected Claire Kindall as Board Chair, Bruce Putterman as Vice Chair, Naogan Ma as Secretary, and Elin Katz and Diane Mudge as Financial Examiners. They will hold these offices for one year. The election and terms of office are pursuant to state statute, the town charter, and board policy.

The board adopted unanimously as a second and final reading revised Policy 6120 – School Day and Length of School Year and an amended version of revised Policy 6130 – Emergency Closing. Policy 6120 specifies that the school year shall consist of at least 180 days and 900 hours of school work. The board considered adding language declaring its intent that West Hartford should exceed these state statutory minimums, but decided to postpone any such action pending revamping of the high school curriculum and schedule as necessitated by recent state secondary school reform legislation. Policy 6130 authorizes the superintendent or his/her designee to decide whether to close school because of unsafe weather or other conditions. The amended version shortens a statement of the board’s desire that school be kept open if at all possible.

The board unanimously approved the Immigrant Children and Youth Program Grant for 2010-2011. This is a federal grant program administered by the state that provides funds to districts that experienced 2% or greater growth in the enrollment of immigrant students over the previous two years. West Hartford will receive \$67,280, which was not anticipated in our 2010-11 budget and will be used for 3 part-time tutors, instructional materials for elementary English Language Learners that complements our regular reading program, and software for older students who read below grade level. Board approval was required in order for the district to accept the grant monies.

Director of Finance and Planning Chip Ward presented the Multi-Year Enrollment Projections, which estimate student enrollment and space requirements at all levels for the next 10 years. Mr. Ward is projecting a total of 9,954 K-12 students next year, a decline of 80 (.8%) from this year’s 10,034. Thereafter he expects enrollment to decline gradually to 9,600 students by 2020-21. Space is expected to be more than adequate throughout this period at all schools except Conard, where enrollment is projected to peak in 2015-16 at 1,709 students, considerably above

its current maximum capacity of about 1,550. Space will also be tight at Sedgwick, which is projected to be at maximum capacity for the next 5 years before enrollment declines there. Conard's capacity issues will be addressed in the forthcoming long term Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Excess capacity at other schools, some of it in the form of modular classrooms currently in use, will also need to be evaluated on a cost/benefit basis. These classrooms require maintenance as they age, but they are also costly to dismantle.

In her Superintendent's Report, Karen List discussed the difficulty of setting a date for high school graduation given our shorter school year and February break this year. The date will not be set until early April and will depend on the number of snow days used. She expressed regret for scheduling problems this may create for families and for Safe Grad Party arrangements, but said it is unavoidable under the circumstances. Dr. List also announced that she and Clare Kindall will be participating in meetings during December and January regarding what the state must do to meet requirements of the settlement in the Scheff desegregation case. The case affects West Hartford because it is one of the towns in the region covered by the Scheff decision. With the holidays approaching, she also reminded residents that donations are needed for the West Hartford food pantry and that numerous school musical programs are open to the public. A schedule of the latter may be found on the WHPS website at <http://www.whps.org/whps/>.

In reports from other boards and organizations, Elin Katz announced that a group of parents has been working with Nutrition Services, two local chefs, and Doug Jackson from Westmoor Park in a variety of efforts aimed at educating students about food and incorporating more local, fresh food into school menus. A program on "The Foods Our Kids Eat" will be presented by the West Hartford Parent/Teacher Council at Bristow Middle School on Monday, November 29 at 7:00 p.m. and is open to all.

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

Observer name: Kathy Wilson