

LWV OBSERVER REPORT FORM

Board or Commission: West Hartford Board of Education

Date of Meeting: November 22, 2011

Members present: All (Lib Brassil Spinella left at 6:50 p.m.)

Nature of meeting Routine X

Special _____

Called to order (time): 6:05 p.m.

Adjourned (time): 7:40

Action taken:

The main items on the agenda were induction of newly elected board members, the election of board officers, recognition of an outgoing board member, appointment of a new board member, approval of three revised and one new board policy, and multi-year enrollment projections. All documents from this meeting are available at <http://www.whps.org/whps/primary-offices/boe-page/documents>.

Before proceeding to the agenda, Board Chair Clare Kindall thanked administrators, staff, and volunteers for their outstanding service to the public in the aftermath of the October 31 snowstorm and power outage. She also announced that the board will decide at its December 6 meeting on modifications to the school calendar in order to compensate for the days missed due to the power outage. The administration has recommended shortening the February vacation by three days.

Town Clerk Essie Labrot inducted newly elected board members Ellen Brassil, Bruce Putterman, and Terry Schmitt, and the board unanimously elected Mr. Putterman as the new Board Chair. Also elected unanimously were Elin Katz to serve as Vice Chair, Naogan Ma as Secretary, and Terry Schmitt and Ms. Brassil as Financial Examiners. Board members and Superintendent Karen List then recognized outgoing board member Clare Kindall, who is resigning in order to serve on the Town Council. Ms. Kindall expressed her appreciation to everyone she has worked with during her tenure on the board, and thanked the public for its support and input over the years. She said that she will serve as a strong advocate for West Hartford schools on the council. Mark Overmyer-Velazquez was unanimously appointed to fill the vacancy left by Ms. Kindall's resignation and was duly sworn in by Ms. Labrot. Mr. Overmyer-Velazquez is a professor at UConn and co-president of the Smith PTO.

The board approved unanimously as a second and final reading revised Board Policies 6236 – Instruction About Religion, 6240 – Extracurricular Activities, and 6260 – Field Trips. Policy 6236 expresses the Board's support for objective, curriculum-related instruction regarding the development and influence of major world religions. Policy 6240 states the board's belief that offering a wide range of extracurricular activities is important, and outlines the broad principles governing their administration. Policy 6260 provides guidance for the offering of both educational and enrichment field trips. The board also approved unanimously new Board Policy 6236.1 – Observance of Religious Holidays, whose subject matter was formerly part of Policy 6236. This policy recognizes the importance of religious holidays to students and directs the administration to ensure that observance is not penalized.

Director of Finance and Planning Chip Ward presented his annual report on multi-year enrollment projections. Mr. Ward is currently projecting enrollment to remain essentially flat next year at 9,982 (+7), and then to gradually decline over the next ten years to 9,450, or about 5%. He expects next year's enrollment to average 776 students per grade in grades 3 through 12, and 712 students per grade in K through 2. Future incoming grades should average near 700 students, resulting in a decline of about 45 students per year over the next decade. Space should be adequate overall throughout the period, though there may be shortfalls at individual schools, particularly Bugbee and Webster Hill, and Hall is expected to hit building capacity in 2017-18.

In her Superintendent's Report, Dr. Karen List expressed her thanks to all the administrators and staff who worked at the Conard shelter in the aftermath of the October snowstorm and who labored to make the schools safe for a successful reopening on November 8. She showed a short video paying tribute to the success of the Conard shelter.

The Financial Statement for the period ending September 30 is projecting an end-of-year surplus of \$210,000 (.16%), which is driven mainly by lower than budgeted teacher salaries. More teachers than expected retired, resulting in a savings to the district of about \$30,000 per retiree.

The next board meeting will take place December 6 at 7:00 p.m. in room 314 at Town Hall.

Observer name: Kathy Wilson