

LWV Observer Corps Report April 2023

***Denotes things to watch for in the future.**

Two Rivers City Council Meeting Observer Summary- Sue Matczynski

4-3-2023

Highlights:

- A 79-year-old woman addressed the Council complaining about inadequately maintained city sidewalks and injuries she had sustained from falling when struck by a speeding bicyclist.
- Council members reported citizen contacts regarding the unavailability of WIFI at City Hot Spots (the IT Director attributed this to equipment failure which would be corrected within the next 30-60 days); concern that proposed “yarn bombing” would harm trees (it was explained the yarn bombing would be on concrete poles); and concern there was audio equipment in the halls of City Hall (there is not).
- A Council member stated the Two Rivers Senior Center has recovered from a reduction in attendance due to the pandemic and currently has 1013 members.
- The City Manager:
 - Learned that \$200,000 has been appropriated to undertake a Harbor Design Deficiency Study by the Army Corp of Engineers to determine whether design changes might alleviate longstanding problems with shoaling in the harbor channel and wave action causing hazardous conditions in the inner portion of the harbor.
 - The Police Department will obtain a Therapy Dog.
 - The Annual Utility Shut Off Moratorium ends on April 15th.
 - There will be an electric power cost adjustment reducing bills in March due to lower system purchases, less general costs and less need to purchase additional WPPI load from others.
 - Lester Public Library will have 3-day Wisconsin State Park passes available for check out.
 - On April 17th State Senator Andre Jacque will hold a listening session at City Hall from 3:30-5:00 pm, and he and State Representative Shae Sortwell will attend the 6 pm City Council meeting to discuss the 2023-2025 State Budget and other issues of importance to Two Rivers.
- The City Council:
 - Denied a Sex Offender Residency Appeal (upon the recommendation of the Assistant Police Chief) despite the request to reconsider from the offender and his girlfriend, who had recently purchased a home in the city.
 - Awarded a bid for repaving Zlatnik Drive to Northeast Asphalt.
 - Awarded a bid for replacement of private water and sanitary sewer laterals on Lincoln Street to Van Rite Plumbing, Inc.
 - Adopted a resolution amending the 2023 Streets and City Hall Capital Budgets to transfer funds needed for replacement of City Hall’s HVAC system (which is over 30 years old).

- Adopted a proclamation of Arbor Day 2023.
- Adopted a resolution amending the 2023 Industrial Park Development Capital Budget to provide funding for emergency replacement of the loading dock leveler at the city-owned Industrial Incubator at 1429A Wentker Court.
- Authorized the hiring of one additional full-time Firefighter/Paramedic to help meet staffing needs in light of anticipated shift vacancies due to employee medical leaves.

Meeting time: 1 hour, 50 minutes

Two Rivers City Council Meeting

4-17-2023

Highlights:

- There were no comments at the Public Hearing at which the Council authorized special assessments for costs incurred for re-surfacing Zlatnik Drive from 17th Street to Pierce Street.
- There were no comments at the Public Hearing at which the Council approved a conditional use permit for the operation of a U-Haul Truck Rental at 2005 Hawthorne Avenue.
- Council members reported contacts from citizens questioning why there is an ordinance against corrugated metal roofs on houses (city staff will research); the organization of Main Street wine walks (this needs to be addressed with Main Street); and the delay in broadcasting Council meetings on cable television (the delay is due to Charter Spectrum).
- New Recreation Supervisor Kenny Shillcox, who has been active in Two Rivers youth sports for years, was introduced to the Council.
- State Senator Andre Jacque and State Representative Shae Sortwell provided legislative updates to the Council. The City Manager stressed the importance of shared revenue in funding local services, requesting consideration be given to using the State budget surplus (estimated between \$3-7 billion dollars) to assist local governments.
- Three police staff were promoted and sworn into their new positions. The Police Department's new therapy dog, Daisy, was introduced.
- The City Manager noted the Central Park digital signs are temporarily out of service and in the process of being replaced.
- The City Council:
 - Scheduled a May 15th Public Hearing pertaining to drive-in and drive-through establishments in the downtown area.
 - Decided to uphold their previous decision to not fill the Council seat vacated by Jason Ring; various Council members volunteered to fill resulting empty assignments to standing committees.
 - Approved the City Manager's appointment of Shannon Derby to the Environmental Advisory Board.
 - Authorized modification to parking restrictions applicable to four on-street parking spaces in front of the U.S. Post Office on 18th Street from "12 Minute Parking" to "Post Office Customer Parking Only, 15 Minute Limit". The opening of Cool City Brewery and the construction of Central Park West in that area has impacted the availability of parking for postal patrons.

Meeting time: 2 hours, 10 minutes

Two Rivers School District Meeting Observer Summary – Mary Wallace

4-10-2023

Highlights:

A Spanish teacher came to talk about the planned 2025 class trip to Costa Rica which sounded wonderful. The Board doesn't have to approve of school trips so it was just informational.

The Board approved the addition of a Mental Health Navigator position at L B Clarke. The staff will be writing again for a \$75,000 two year grant to help cover the cost. This position will be a liaison to the community, a coach for teachers and will work with staff on student behavior and attendance.

The Board approved the addition of a Special Education teacher at Koenig. Presently, there are only 2 Special Education teachers at Koenig, and the caseload size indicates that 4 are needed.

The Board approved a stand-alone full-time position of an Associate Principal at the high school. They also approved combining the Athletic Director and a Health and Wellness Director into one position.

The new policy for requesting new textbooks was explained. A teacher will have to identify 3 textbook options that meet the identified need. The chosen option will be presented to the Board and available for viewing for 2 wks at the school central office before being approved.

Two Rivers School District Meeting

4-24-2023

Highlights:

Michelle Ring Hanson from CESA 7 was at the board meeting to talk about developing the district's strategic plan. It will be a 3 yr. plan implemented for the 2024 - 2025 school year. A big part of the plan is holding a community summit consisting of all stakeholders to provide input into the plan.

The two district social workers were present to give an update on their efforts which include continuing the Kids at Hope philosophy and a report on all the students and families that have been helped by the Angel Fund. They also work with homeless students and there are currently 28 homeless students in the district. They have started Kindness Groups with 4th graders to help them prepare for middle school and to learn how to interact with their peers in positive ways.

The Board members reported on their Adopt a School initiative and all the activities they have attended at their respective schools.

Staff turnover continues at L B Clarke Middle School with 2 teachers leaving and 3 new teachers hired.

Manitowoc Public School District Meeting Observer Summary- Linda Gratz

4-11-2023

Highlights:

Public Input: Three people addressed the school board praising them for all they have accomplished over the last year. One of those people did voice a concern over students being outside at Lincoln and not in class. He said he has observed up to 50 students outside the building during class time. The fact that 3 school board members ran on the platform of improving test scores should look into this. A student addressed the board regarding his concerns over the Gay/Straight Alliance club at the High School. He feels that this shouldn't be offered at the High School because it only confuses students rather than helping them. He also said that teachers who talk about their own sexuality are breaking the rules when it comes to the district policy on controversial topics in the classroom. In addition, he warned of the problem of students choosing to use different bathrooms that aren't in line with their gender at birth. If students use other bathrooms, it's only for immoral purposes.

Personnel Policy Update: Lee Thennes, current Lincoln High School Principal, has been chosen as the new Director of Programs and Assessment. The Manager of Buildings and Grounds has been filled, and the position of Educational Programs is still open.

The Superintendent gave a report that he has formed an advisory committee made up of the PTO/PTA parents from the elementary schools. He is also working to include students in an advisory capacity to the board and administration.

The board discussed the future of the Behavior Committee and decided that Kathy Willis should keep the group functioning as they move forward in their work on student handbooks.

The superintendent gave an update on the Success For All whole school reform model. He said the attorneys are still reviewing the contract and he will sign it soon. Kerry Trask asked if they were going to see the contract and Stacey Soeldner the board president said no. She said she could send him a copy if he wanted it, but the board wouldn't be approving the contract. The board members did not see the final contract or the final amount, even though at the March 15th Finance Committee meeting they said that the contract would be coming to the board at the April 11th meeting for final approval.

The board moved to go into closed session to discuss negotiation parameters and personnel matters. The meeting lasted one hour.

Manitowoc Public School District Meeting

4-26-2023

Highlights:

The first meeting was the reorganizational meeting. Stacey Soeldner was re-elected President of the board. The Vice President candidates were Paul Hansen and Mathew Spaulding. Spaulding won on a 4 to 3 vote. The Treasurer position was contested by Kerry Trask and Tony Vlastelica; Vlastelica won by a 4 to 3 vote. That meeting was adjourned and the regular meeting was called to order.

The consent agenda was approved with nothing being pulled out for further discussion.

The Personnel Report was passed without discussion.

The strategic plan update was given by Superintendent Feil. They are working on performance metrics. He will be meeting with his administrative team to develop these metrics. The administration has developed different community advisory committees consisting of parent leaders of the elementary school PTAs and PTOs, a special education parent group, and hopefully a student group. These groups are meeting for district updates and sharing questions they have regarding district happenings.

The Board governance restructuring was discussed once again. President Stacey Soeldner suggested that a committee made up of the executive team study how the new structure could be implemented in the future and use the committee as a whole approach until the plan is implemented. Board member Kerry Trask spoke against the new model because it will weaken the board. He called for using the committee of the whole approach to allow for more board input and discussion. He questioned what the role of the board is and his concern that the board never approved the contract for the Success For All program. Tony Vlastelica stated at first, he had misgivings about the structure but now he thinks they should explore it. New board member Paul Hansen questioned why they need a new structure and added that if a committee is formed it should include others and not just the executive committee, because the board needs to work together. The other new board member, Chris Able, noted that the district bylaws does not seem to address committee structure and that's where one would usually find the governance structure explained. Soeldner said that the board meetings were previously very Director oriented and this gives the board more input. She stated that the board should not micromanage the administration. Matt Spaulding stated that they are looking for more efficiencies. It was agreed that they will meet as a committee of the whole and then set up an Ad Hoc Committee to look at a potential restructuring of the board governance.

After much discussion the board approved the hiring of a new School Psychologist to bring the student/psychologist numbers more in line with state recommendations. The school psychologist's primary role is to provide diagnostic evaluation, and academic and social/emotional support for children in the school setting. This is not a clinical position.

The board also voted to offer teachers a 4.5% consumer price index increase for the 2023-24 school year and a step increase of \$1,800.

The board will meet the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 6:00. The meeting adjourned at 7:08.

All meetings are available for watching at the district web site. Go to MPSD click District, click board of education, click live stream, click live.

**Manitowoc County Board Meeting
Observer Summary- JoEllen Gramling**

4-2023 (On Vacation will add to next month's report)

Highlights:

**Manitowoc Common Council Meeting
Observer Summary- Darian Kaderabek**

4-2023

Highlights:

Report Pending

(All supporting documents are attached to the agenda that can be found on the city website.)

**Manitowoc County Human Services Board Monthly Meeting
Observer Summary- Suzanne Zipperer**

4/23/2023 (On Vacation, will add to next month's report.)

Highlights: