

## **LWV Observer Corps Report January 2023**

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

**ATTENTION: We have a possible volunteer for our Manitowoc Common Council Reporting starting in February**

### **Two Rivers City Council Meeting Observer Summary- Sue Matczynski**

**1-3-2023**

#### Highlights:

- There was no citizen input during the public hearing to amend the City's Municipal Code related to Floodplain Zoning. The amendment, which was adopted by the Council, continued the City's eligibility for FEMA's flood insurance program.
- Three new staff were introduced to the Council. The City has experienced staff turnover due to retirements and employees leaving for positions elsewhere.
- The City Manager:
  - Reviewed the 2022 State of the City Report.
  - Announced the three incumbent Council members up for re-election in April 2023 had all filed paperwork stating their intent to run, as well as three other citizens.
  - Announced Absentee Ballot Requests for 2023 calendar year are now being accepted in the City Clerk's Office or online at [www.myvote.wi.gov](http://www.myvote.wi.gov)
  - Shared the Environmental Advisory Board continues development of a proposal for a Front Yard Vegetable Garden Pilot Program.
- The City Council:
  - Adopted a resolution upon retirement for Police Chief Brian Kohlmeier, completing a 33-year career with the Two Rivers Police Department.
  - Authorized the City Manager and Clerk to execute an amendment to modify several deadline dates contained in an agreement between the City and The Confluence, LLC.
  - Approved a resolution authorizing borrowing \$900,000 from the Wisconsin State Trust Fund Loan Program for the purposes of funding a developer grant to The Confluence, LLC.
  - Approved a resolution authorizing application to the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's Vibrant Spaces Grant program for funding to assist the Central Park West 365 Project.

Meeting time: 1 hour, 30 minutes

## Two Rivers City Council Meeting

1-16-2023

### Highlights:

- City Council members reported numerous communications from the public regarding possible changes to the golf cart ordinance.
- Senior Center Director Heather Ihlenfeldt appeared with her staff and reported there has been complete staff turnover during the past year. There are currently 968 active paid members of the Senior Center. Membership is available for anyone age 50 or older with an annual membership fee of \$15 and a lifetime membership fee of \$225.
- The City Manager:
  - Noted, with regret, that City Clerk Jamie Jackson has resigned for another position. Other staff vacancies include the Director of Public Works, Fire Chief and Recreation Supervisor.
  - Vinton Construction will begin construction of the City Park West 365 project in April with planned completion in June.
  - 20 citizens participated in Neshotah Park Master Planning and a unanimous decision was made to place the \$400,000 new playground equipment in the location of the current baseball diamond.
  - The Spring Primary Election will be held on February 21<sup>st</sup> to winnow the field of Wisconsin Supreme Court candidates from four to two. There are six candidates for three City Council seats in the April election.
- The City Council:
  - Agreed to have City staff prepare an ordinance amendment to make the City's current golf cart ordinance (which allows operation of golf carts on city streets posted up to 35 mph) consistent with State Statutes (which limit operation to city streets posted at 25 mph). After lengthy discussion it was decided to gather additional data to consider requirements related to seat belt restraint for children under age 8/80 pounds and posting of visible tags on the front and back of golf carts.
  - Adopted resolutions to levy special assessments upon properties on Zlatnick Drive and Lincoln Street for planned road work.
  - Adopted a resolution authorizing application to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Wisconsin Assessment Monies (WAM) Program for the property at 1621 14<sup>th</sup> Street (the location for the proposed West River Apartments).
  - Adopted an ordinance codifying the existing practice of having the Police Department conduct criminal records and background checks on employment applicants.
  - Adopted an ordinance codifying the existing practice of having the Police Department conduct criminal records and background checks on Licensing applicants.

Meeting time: 2 hours

## **Two Rivers School District Meeting Observer Summary- Mary Wallace**

**1-9-2023**

### **Highlights:**

The Career and College Readiness Coordinator came to give a report on the Youth Apprenticeship program. There are currently 35 students participating and 3 came to describe their experiences and future plans. Several more Two Rivers companies are now participating in the program which helps with transportation to the job site which is an issue.

Diane Johnson reported that 135 students and their families were helped with the community's generosity over the holidays.

Teams from the school buildings, along with the architects are going to tour several recently remodeled schools with most projects here not starting until summer.

The enrollment of special education students is closed for the next school year based on current enrollment and student to teacher ratios.

The school board disagreed with 3 proposed resolutions of the WASB. They were against the resolution for universal free school lunch, wanted to make sure the resolution on voting was only educating students on voting, not who to vote for and didn't think testing for prospective teachers should be eliminated. They would be open to substituting a different test than the one currently given.

Two more teachers resigned in mid-year from L B Clarke. There was no discussion re why so many teachers have left that school.

The school district received a \$25,000 Industrial Foundation Grant to upgrade equipment in technology related classrooms.

## **Two Rivers School District Meeting**

**1-23-2023**

### **Highlights:**

The fifth-grade teachers from L B Clarke attended the meeting to describe the changes they have made which have had an impact on reducing behavioral problems. The fifth graders stay in one home room rather than changing classes. In general, the incidents of defiance, disruption and

distraction are down at Clarke in the last few months. This is the first-time behavioral problems at Clarke have been addressed at a board meeting.

Attendance is also an issue as it is below the state average. A team has been formed at Clarke including staff and parents to deal with chronic absenteeism.

Two girls only classes at the high school have to be modified as they are out of compliance with Title 9 which says you can't have single gender classes. The classes are welding and car and home repairs and are very popular. They will be re branded as Beginning Tech Ed and open to all.

The city is in the process of giving land adjacent to L B Clarke to the district to be used in the referendum approved changes to the school and may also be used for a varsity baseball field.

A demonstration of the new math curriculum called Illustrative Math was given.

**Manitowoc Public School District Meeting  
Observer Summary- Linda Gratz**

\* **There have been some questions about the legality of going into closed session to discuss the restructuring of the Administrative office. Closed sessions are limited to certain topics under the law and general staffing discussions aren't covered and should be in open session. Groups and individuals in Manitowoc are requesting open records, and have filed complaints with the DOJ and District Attorney's office regarding the legality of certain closed sessions.**

**1-10-2023**

Highlights:

**Public Input:**

A variety of people spoke regarding the Success For All (SFA) whole school reform program. Most comments questioned the cost of over a million dollars, travel costs for staff to fly to Kansas and drive to Ohio to visit schools, SFA doesn't include a writing curriculum which will add another \$600,000, allegations that SFA restricts reading choices for students, and question over access for public review of the curriculum.

The high spending for the SFA and the costs of travel being paid for the Assistant Superintendent to travel from her home in Traverse City were questioned, which lead to a concern that with this spending people are questioning their support for the referendum.

## **Personnel Report:**

The district had several resignations in January, but they have been able to fill those positions.

## **Success For All Update:**

They extended the deadline to vote on SFA until February. The staff who traveled to Ohio and Kansas have observed elementary and middle schools asking questions and observing and will report back to the board at the next meeting. The curriculum is available for review by the community. Board member Kerry Trask was concerned that we need to get everyone on board and that we need a better plan. He's not convinced that this is what we need. Mathew Spaulding stated that he believes that they have gone through a good process and that it's too political.

A donation to replace the score board at Municipal Field was approved.

The proposed referendum for the April 4<sup>th</sup> election was discussed and approved. The vote was 6 to 1 with Matt Phipps voting against.

## ***Taken from the MPSD website:***

*Manitowoc - The Board of Education voted Jan. 10 to place an operating referendum on the April 4, 2023 election ballot seeking funds to maintain K-12 educational programming and opportunities, including staffing, facilities and technology needs.*

*As a renewal to operating referendums approved by voters in 2015, 2018 and 2021, the district is asking to exceed the state's revenue limits to sustain programs and services amid rising inflation and inadequate state aid as a low-revenue district under state funding formulas.*

*If approved, the five-year operating referendum would increase the school property tax levy rate from its 38-year record low but keep the rate through 2027-2028 lower than it was in 2015-2016.*

*The projected school tax increase on a \$100,000 home would be \$169 in the first year, \$17 in the second, \$33 in the third, \$34 in the fourth, and \$46 in the fifth year, for a total five-year increase of \$299. However, these projections are fiscally conservative and actual MPSD tax rates and increases have been lower than projected in each of the past eight years.*

*More information will be shared in the next two months and the district will hold public informational sessions.*

*The referendum would allow the district to exceed state revenue limits in the following amounts to support the district's operations:*

- *\$5,200,000\* for the 2023-2024 school year*
- *\$11,000,000 for the 2024-2025 school year*
- *\$13,000,000 for the 2025-2026 school year*
- *\$15,000,000 for the 2026-2027 school year*
- *\$17,500,000 for the 2027-2028 school year*

*\* This amount is in addition to the \$4,300,000 voters approved in the April 2021 operating referendum, bringing the 2023-2024 total to \$9,500,000.*

*Referendum funds would be used to maintain programs and educational opportunities, with the district applying feedback from the strategic plan survey results from all MPSD stakeholders. The referendum would:*

- *Offer a wide range of academic courses, programs and services for all students*
- *Provide competitive wages/benefits to attract and retain highly qualified staff, as well as employee training and development*
- *Address capital improvement projects on our aging buildings on an annual basis*
- *Update technology Infrastructure and implement a technology device replacement system*

*The MPSD takes pride in being fiscally responsible and has been a low-spending school district for more than two decades. MPSD's school property tax rate is the second-lowest in Manitowoc County and among the lowest in the state. MPSD's rate for 2022-2023 is \$5.51 per \$1,000 of equalized property value, compared to the county average rate of \$6.51 and the state average rate for K-12 districts of \$7.68.*

*If the referendum passes, the district's overall budget in the first year will have a decrease in both revenues (down \$546,893 or -0.75%) and expenditures (down \$620,050 or -0.85%), partly due to the expiration of federal ESSER funds provided for pandemic support along with extensive inflationary impacts. The proposed referendum amounts are based on projections that the state will provide an increase in per-pupil funding. The last two years the state provided no per-pupil increase.*

*MPSD Superintendent Jim Feil said the district would only use the funds necessary to meet its operational needs with the oversight of the Board of Education through the annual budget process.*

The Board voted to go into closed session. Kerry Trask voted "No" questioning the legality of going into closed session. Superintendent Feil said he has checked with legal counsel and they believe it is legal. Roll call vote was 6 to 1.

## **Manitowoc Public School District Meeting**

**1-25-2023**

Highlights:

**No Public Input:**

**Personnel Report:** Passed

**Administrative Contracts:** Trask moved that the new Assistant Superintendent contract be removed from the list to be discussed separately because they hadn't seen the contract and he wanted it to be a transparent process before they issued a two-year contract. The HR Director said it's standard practice to issue two-year contracts and this wasn't unusual. The motion failed by a 6-1 vote and the contracts were approved as presented.

**Presentation by staff regarding visits to Kansas and Ohio to observe SFA schools.** The district started out by proposing to use SFA at an elementary and a middle school. Now they are looking to use the program district wide. The reports given were generally positive and lead to much discussion. There were questions over specials, electives, cost, training, whether or not the district is capable of implementing the program to ensure fidelity, concerns regarding placement of special education students, having students from one grade level being sent to a lower grade for instruction, do we have the space and staffing we would need, on-going costs and training, some of the districts don't use SFA at the middle school levels.

**Administrative Restructuring:** The Board voted to eliminate 4 central office positions and replace them with 3 new positions. This is part of the District reorganizational plan that earlier included the addition of an Assistant Superintendent.

The meeting was adjourned and went into closed session with board member Trask questioning if they were only going to talk about the Superintendent's evaluation. He was assured that they would be doing that and the vote passed 7-0.

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

**1-17-2023**

Highlights:

**PUBLIC INPUT:** Sulynn Moore expressed disappointment that only two citizens are to be appointed to the Courthouse Dome Advisory Committee and that there are no criteria for selection to the committee, also that the Dome Project resolution contains no mention of considering the feasibility of the project and no mention of alternatives. Maura Yost continues to advocate for a county-wide half-cent additional sales tax with a sunset clause targeted to a

specific purpose, noted that the county has a bad credit rating, and advocated for an advisory referendum pertaining to the courthouse dome project.

**APPOINTMENTS BY COUNTY EXECUTIVE** The Board unanimously approved County Executive Ziegelbauer's appointment of Natasha Khan to the Manitowoc-Calumet Library System Board of Trustees to succeed Cheryl Kjelstrup for a three-year term expiring January 2026. .

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Board of Health:** Supv Metzger reported covid statistics showing number of cases stable at 7 per day while covid remains the #1 disease in the county. The Health Dept is giving a variety of vaccines including at the jail.

**Criminal Justice Coordinating Council:** Supervisor Falkowski reported that the drug court currently has 17 active members. Three applicants are waiting. A graduate of the drug court died of an overdose in December.

**Executive Committee:** The Board voted 23 to one (Supv Phipps voted no) to approve a resolution creating a Courthouse Dome Advisory Committee. The resolution had been amended to add the bullet point "to go ahead, or not go ahead, with the project..." The two citizen members of the committee will be appointed by Chairperson Martell, subject to the approval of the Board. Chair Martell indicated that he will look for people with experience in construction.

**Expo-Ice Center Board:** Supervisor Sitkiewitz gave a brief report. (There was no audio of his report.)

**Finance Committee:** The Board voted unanimously to deny the claim of the Wisconsin Realtors Association against the County to repeal Manitowoc County Code §13.32(2).

**Land Conservation Committee/UW-Extension Education and Agriculture Committee:** The Board unanimously approved Resolution 2022/2023-50 Authorizing West Foundation Grant Application. The grant, in the amount of \$30,000, is in support of the farmers' market and community gardens.

**Public Safety Committee:** Supv Falkowski reported that the committee is planning to tour the Joint Dispatch Center at its next meeting on Feb. 8 and invited any interested Board members to join them.

**Public Works Committee:** Supervisor Geroll reported that the Drug Disposal Program collected 2.111 pound of medications, a new record, and the Tire Collection Program collected over 20 tons of tires. The Committee made a \$67,000 payment to Hammond Construction on the Courthouse Project.

**ANNOUNCEMENT** Chairperson Martell announced the next County Board meeting will be February 21, 2023 with a start time of 5:30 p.m. because of the February Primary Election.



Board members who are interested in being one of the six Boards members on the Courthouse Dome Committee should speak to the Board Chair. The committee will also include the Finance Chair, the Public Works Chair and the Executive Committee.

Meeting adjourned at 6:31 pm This County Board meeting is available for viewing at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4d7bN2yKLM>

## **Manitowoc Common Council Meeting Observer Summary-**

**New reporter starting in February**

**No January Report**

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

**1/26/2023**

Highlights:

*Please note: I was unable to make this meeting. The following is taken from the recorded minutes.*

### **Education Topic: Supervised Visitation**

Child protection is mandated to do supervised visitation for families with children placed out of their care. There are 5 full-time and 1 part-time Parent Coaches who provide approximately 40-50 supervised visits per week, each about 2 hours long. When a family is closer to reunification, they will have more visits and extended visit times. Supervised visitation occurs in the home, the respite house, we rent space at Lakeshore CAP and also public places like the library. The Parent Coaches also provide parent education at separate meetings with the parent. There is a pre and post-tests. Coaches bridge between the social worker and the parents. Starting in 2021, parents were offered education services after a safety assessment was done that did not indicate the children needed to be removed. This is voluntary. Twenty-nine families took advantage of the training and only three had subsequent reports of suspected abuse/neglect.

### **Workload**

There was a 34% increase in substance use referrals, but the involuntary hospitalizations went down. It is uncertain if the new 988 general suicide prevention national phone number was the reason for the increase.

### **Mental Health Court**

NAMI has received a grant to start a Mental Health Court in Manitowoc County, will Human Services be working with them. **County Executive Ziegelbauer stated that there are many demands on staff, and questioned if the community can support a mental health court.** Donna Firman, the League member heading the court initiative, will meet with HS management

in February. It will also take a while for NAMI to make plans and set up how the court would work.

**Staffing**

- Staffing the substance use area will be fully staffed by May.
- Openings include Clinical Services Manager, CPS Initial Assessment Social Worker, CPS Ongoing Case Management Social Worker, Daytime Crisis Worker, Treatment Alternative Diversion Counselor.

**New Office Location**

The Lakeside Packing Company building has been purchased by the county. Staff will have input into the redesign.

**Mental Health Crisis Beds**

At least six beds are needed. These have been scattered around providers. It is desirable that they are all in one place.

**Manitowoc County CJCC (Criminal Justice Coordinating Council) Executive Committee Meeting**

**Observer Summary- Nancy Slattery**

**1-2023 No Report**

**Manitowoc County CJCC (Criminal Justice Coordinating Council) Meeting**

**Observer Summary- Nancy Slattery**

**1-2023 No Report**