

LWV Observer Corps Report January 2024

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

Two Rivers City Council Meeting Observer Summary- Sue Matczynski

1-3-2024

Highlights:

- Several Council members noted they had received compliments from the public regarding downtown Two Rivers over Christmas, likening it to a Hallmark card.
- A swearing in and badge pinning was conducted for the City's newest police officer, Santos Torres.
- The City Manager announced that Joe Metzen is the City's new Tourism Director, and five individuals have filed nomination papers for the City's three at-large Council seats to be elected on April 2nd.
- The City Council:
 - Voted to oppose Wisconsin Senate Bill 691, the Urban Towns bill, due to concerns towns would be empowered to resist annexation and require neighboring cities to provide sewer and water services.
 - Adopted resolutions upon the retirements of Kim Pritzl, Police Department and Tim Bruder, Electric Utilities, recognizing their decades of dedicated service.
 - Adopted a resolution declaring official intent to reimburse expenditures from proceeds of borrowing for 2024 Capital Projects.
 - Authorized the Police Department to order two replacement squad cars – Ford Interceptor hybrid vehicles – at a total cost not to exceed \$120,000.

Meeting time: 1 hour

Two Rivers City Council Meeting

1-15-2024

Highlights:

- A couple of Council members were contacted by citizens regarding their concerns about Facebook comments made by City Council President Adam Wachowski and Council member Jeff Dahlke (who had opposed authorizing the Police Department to order replacement squad cars at the previous meeting). One Council member described the comments as “unprofessional” and expressed concern the code of conduct had been violated. Another Council member believed the comments were disrespectful to other Council members and called for the Council President to step down. The City Council Vice-President shared he had privately shared his concerns with the Council President.

- City Manager Greg Buckley introduced the new Executive Director for Explore Two Rivers, Joe Metzen.
- Kelli Tuttle of Bluestem Forestry Consulting, Inc. shared an overview of her recently completed Urban Forestry Plan and Tree Inventory for the city. She counted 3437 trees in the city and assessed that 432 trees needed to be removed due to disease or damage. While there will be a cost to the City for the removal of these trees, she estimated the total value of the trees as \$17 million.
- Police Chief Ben Meinnert addressed the Council regarding the January 14th accident which injured canine officer Xanti. The incident will be investigated by the Manitowoc County Sheriff's Department.
- The City Council:
 - Adopted a resolution to levy special assessments upon the properties fronting Roosevelt Street, from Lowell Street to 12th Street.
 - Adopted a resolution upon the retirement of Tammy Stadler, who recently retired after 30 years of dedicated employment with the Parks and Recreation Department.

Meeting time: 1 hour

**Two Rivers School District Meeting
Observer Summary – Mary Wallace**

1-8-2024

Highlights:

Information was given about the Angel Fund and Hope Kitchen. 46 students were helped by the Angel Fund during the year. 25 families received meals from the Hope Kitchen which were prepared by students.

Two parents and one grandparent spoke to complain about L B Clarke regarding student behavior, bullying and the school's poor state report card. One parent was also upset that she wasn't allowed to observe in the classroom.

A Diagnostician/Program Support specialist was hired to replace the 2 school psychologists who had left the district.

There are 2 candidates for 2 seats, one a current board member and one who will be new.

The superintendent stated that there are plans to have the school board have a joint session with the city council regarding finances.

The superintendent is working with CESA 7 to apply for a grant to establish a charter school which would be a school within a school to meet students' needs who don't fit in the regular programming.

The high school principal presented information re the high school's state report card score which was 61 and meets expectations. Factors that he thought pertained were the Professional Learning Circles, the establishment of a new curriculum and the school's two goals around academics and character. He also mentioned that ACT scores have gone up slightly but are still lower than the state average and that attendance is trending up.

Two Rivers School District Meeting

1-22-2024

Highlights:

One parent spoke to the Board about bullying and unsafe conditions at L B Clarke. She even homeschooled her son for one year because of this. This year he is back in school and she feels things haven't changed.

There was a discussion about open enrollment for the 2024 - 2025 school year. Open enrollment will not be capped for regular education students, but will be closed for special education students because the district is at capacity.

Classes offered in the upcoming summer school session were discussed and approved.

The two elementary school principals explained the state report card scores. Both schools met expectations. They expect higher scores next year as the new ELA curriculum has been in place awhile and attendance has improved.

Board members reported on their contacts with the schools they are assigned to and connect with regularly.

Manitowoc Public School District Meeting Observer Summary- Linda Gratz

1-9-2024

Highlights:

Public Input: A community member presented a letter from the ACLU regarding Mr. Feil's elimination of the IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Acceptance) club at Wilson Middle School in September and pointed out that this is a violation of the Equal Access Act. She

requested that the club be reinstated immediately and if not, there would be a law suit filed against the district for discrimination. The individual is still waiting for requested documents and final action by the administration.

Assistant Superintendent Jame McCall presented an update regarding the Student Behavior Plan. She stated that behaviors continue to interrupt learning in the classrooms. The behaviors may be the result of lagging skills, unclear expectations, lack of engagement, or lack of planning. The district has instituted a code of conduct and are training all classroom staff on verbal escalation skills. They are working to support staff in working with the children to reduce disruptive behaviors. This was a major concern among staff who completed the last two staff surveys.

The district is reviewing a new science curriculum for the district K-5 and a new art curriculum K-8.

Food Service revenue is down from last year because they are only serving breakfast before school starts rather than in the classrooms. The lunch totals are up this year.

Two policies that deal with non-discrimination and equal access were once again tabled until they seek further advice from the district's attorney. This has been tabled consistently since the November meeting.

The Lincoln High School Student Representative Pilot Program was approved by the board unanimously. This will allow a student representative and alternate to serve as non-voting members on the board.

The board voted to approve adding new positions - Special Education Transition Support Paraprofessionals and Teacher Interventionists to the district staff.

The new writing curriculum Being a Writer was approved by the board unanimously.

Many policies were reviewed by the board.

Manitowoc Public School District Meeting

1-23-2024

Highlights:

Personnel report: Some board members questioned whether they should be issuing 2-year contracts to administrators when some positions might be eliminated. They also questioned whether reassignments could be made rather than pay outs. It was decided that 2-year contracts are normal and they would move forward with the approval of those contracts.

Mr. Feil did a SWAT analysis that he presented to the board. He stated that they will be looking to continue to update the strategic plan for the district. The administration continues to meet with school staff to discuss their concerns. Mr. Feil stated that he was surprised by the extreme

behaviors in the schools and stated that it was a complex issue. (The recent staff survey and the prior survey both identified the student behaviors as a real concern in the schools.) The question about the former ad hoc committee on behaviors and whether or not they were still meeting was asked. They are no longer meeting as a group. Class sizes (30) and staffing shortages were also identified as contributing factors to behavior issues.

It was suggested that someone from Wisconsin Association of School Boards come and present to the community and the board how laws affect policies in the schools. Mathew Spaulding said if a policy goes against the law, but it's what he believes in, he would still support it. He won't vote for a policy that goes against his beliefs,, even if it is the law.

Policies continue to be reviewed and adopted.

Manitowoc County Board Meeting Observer Summary- JoEllen Gramling

1-16-2024

Highlights:

County Executive Bob Ziegelbauer and Chairperson Martell presented a Proclamation Honoring Jerome Vetting for years of service on Manitowoc County Expo-Ice Center Board.

The team of Jayna Hintz, Katrina Pionek, Angie Ulness, and Jace Purdy presented on the UWExtension's impact in Manitowoc County.

Personnel Director Chris Eisenschink presented on Manitowoc County's Health Insurance Plan. The County's plan is self-funded and has about 400 participants. A single employee pays a monthly premium of \$27.56 and has a \$3000 deductible.

PUBLIC INPUT: Patricia Klein presented a biblical perspective which would call for the County Board to repair or replace the items that need to be fixed in the courthouse within the County's budget.

APPOINTMENTS BY COUNTY EXECUTIVE The Board unanimously approved County Exec Ziegelbauer's 1) re-appointment of Tom Musial to the Ethics Board for a three-year term expiring February 28, 2027 and 2) appointment of Kristi Reynolds to the Joint Dispatch Board to succeed Theresa Becker to complete a term expiring August 2024.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL: Supervisor Falkowski reported that Drug Court has 17 participants with 2 additional applications pending, and the "TAD" grant (drug court) has been renewed. The next graduation is Jan. 17.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chairperson Martell announced that the Committee of the Whole would be meeting after the Board meeting.

EXPO-ICE CENTER BOARD: Supervisor Sitkiewitz reported that the next Rummage-o-Rama would take place on Feb. 10.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Supervisor Hansen moved, seconded by Supervisor Brey to adopt Resolution 2023/2024-57 Initial Resolution Authorizing General Obligation Courthouse Improvement Bonds in an Amount Not to Exceed \$4,075,000, as recommended by the Executive Committee. The amount covers only window and HVAC replacement. Approval of 75% of the Board is required. Upon discussion and vote, the motion carried with 20 ayes and 2 noes. Supervisors Klein and Phipps voted no.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE: The Board unanimously approved Resolution 2023/2024-58 Establishing Elected Official's Compensation (County Clerk, Register of Deeds, and Treasurer) for 2025 through 2028. County Clerk's salary for 2025 is set at \$72,700.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE: Supervisor Gerroll reported that enrollment at UWGB Manitowoc Campus is up. Wisconsin led the nation in collection of discarded medications for 2023; Manitowoc County's total was 2,023 lbs.

Meeting adjourned at 7:03 pm

This County Board meeting is available for viewing at:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/7mcwjbyOZPE?si=wSbGm6-hGyvff1G0?rel=0>

Following the regular meeting, the Board convened as the Committee of the Whole to discuss the Courthouse Dome Restoration Project and funding options of borrowing or a county-wide sales tax. Each supervisor expressed an opinion. A third option, of long-term savings to reach the required funding was introduced along with the option of delaying the project or not doing it at all. No consensus was reached

Manitowoc Common Council Meeting

Observer Summary-

Anyone Interested in Reporting on the Manitowoc Common Council?? Usually, one meeting a month and you can observe on line. If you are interested just let me know at llgratz47@gmail.com

Manitowoc County Human Services Board Monthly Meeting

Observer Summary- Suzanne Zipperer

1-2024