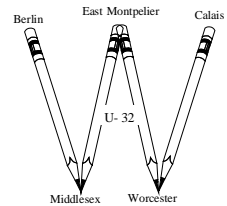


Washington Central Unified Union School District

WCUUSD exists to nurture and inspire in all students the passion, creativity and power to contribute to their local and global communities.

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Bryan Olkowski
Superintendent



Washington Central Unified Union School District Board Meeting Minutes Approved 12.16.20 5:00 PM – 9:30 PM

Board Members: Flor Diaz Smith, Lindy Johnson, Scott Thompson, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Kari Bradley, Jonas Eno-Van Fleet, Jaiel Pulskamp, Karoline May, Townes DeGroot, Anna Farber, Stephen Looke, Chris McVeigh, Dorothy Naylor, Jill Olson, Jonathan Goddard

Administrators: Superintendent Bryan Olkowski, Technology Consultant Jim Garrity, Business Administrator Lori Bibeau, Principal Alicia Lyford, Curriculum Director Jen Miller-Arsenault, Principal Gillian Fuqua, Student Services Director Kelly Bushey, Principal Cat Fair, Associate Principal Jody Emerson, Principal Casey Provost, Principal Steven Dellinger-Pate, Amy Molina, Principal Aaron Boynton, Student Services Director Lisa LaPlante

Others/Public: ORCA Media, Elizabeth Wirth, Ellen Dorsey, David Delcore, Sonya Rhodes, Pat Fair, Lisa Hanna, Kelly MacMartin, Julia Pritchard, Hollis St. Peter, DHann, Janine G, Michael Sherwin, Susan, Amanda Morse

1. **Call to Order:** Scott Thompson called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m.
2. **Executive Session for Superintendent Evaluation:**

At 5:04, Flor Diaz Smith moved to go into Executive Session for the purpose of Superintendent Evaluation; seconded by Dorothy Naylor. Discussion: Superintendent Olkowski had invited Carla Messier to join the Executive Session. This motion carried unanimously.

The board came out of Executive Session at 5:53 p.m. **Stephen Looke moved to approve the superintendent evaluation process as discussed during Executive Session, incorporating the three question protocol as presented by Kari Bradley. Seconded by Karoline May, this motion carried unanimously.**
3. **Welcome**
 - 3.1. **Reception of Guests:** Scott Thompson welcomed those present.
 - 3.2. **Agenda Revisions:** None
4. **Reports**
 - 4.1. **Student Reports:** Townes DeGroot and Anna Farber reported on student happenings, for example, senior college application deadlines and decisions. They also shared that students have been submitting journalism pieces for the U-32 Chronicle as well as to VT Digger.

4.2. Superintendent

4.2.1. COVID –Update: Superintendent Olkowski shared that the monthly COVID19 testing of staff has resulted in no new cases, which is a celebration for WCUUSD.

4.2.2. Coordinator of Early Education and Expanded Learning Opportunities: Lindy Johnson moved to authorize the creation of the Coordinator of Early Education and Expanded Learning Opportunities position. Seconded by Kari Bradley. Superintendent Olkowski explained that this position would be overseeing Community Connections programs as well as supporting and growing a more robust pre-K program. Discussion: Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that this is indeed a need, and has been for years, but she wonders whether now is the time to build this into the budget, given the unique circumstances of this year. Some discussion followed around this position. Superintendent Olkowski indicated that this would not be considered an administrative position; however it requires a teaching license. **This motion carried with 10 in favor; 1 against.**

4.2.3. Winooski Valley High School Choice Agreement: Chris McVeigh moved to accept this agreement and to authorize the superintendent to sign on the board’s behalf. Seconded by Flor Diaz Smith. This motion carried unanimously.

4.3. Leadership Team Report: A written report had been submitted. Questions or comments from board members were invited. Lindy Johnson thanked administrators for providing information so that board members could see activities that were going on across the district. Board members expressed appreciation for the links to weekly newsletters for each school.

4.4. Education Quality: Kari Bradley shared the most recent work from the Education Quality Committee, around “transferable skills.” The committee had shared the presentation slides from the meeting.

4.4.1. Presentation of Transferable Skills Student Learning Outcomes: Jen Miller-Arsenault provided a brief overview of the presentation that the Education Quality Committee had studied. Kari Bradley shared some key points that the committee had discussed after processing this information at the meeting. The board discussed the topic of “ethical behavior” and leadership skills as transferable skills. Kari Bradley and Jen Miller-Arsenault responded that the work is thought of as “iterative” and ongoing; the transferable skills may evolve as the needs of students change. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that he believes an important goal is to develop engaged citizens as well as scholars. He stated that the data that is shared indicates that we are working toward those outcomes.

4.5. Finance Committee

4.5.1. Approve issuing a dental premium refund and fund balance transfer to the General Fund: Flor Diaz Smith moved to 1) Authorize a Dental Fund Refund to active employees for the amount of their 5 payroll dental premium deductions in the amount of \$23,870., and to 2) Authorize a Dental Fund transfer to the General Fund in the amount of \$125,000. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried unanimously.

4.5.2. Review recommended changes to the Health Reimbursement Account Budget FY21-22: Flor Diaz Smith moved to authorize the revised Health Reimbursement Account Budget using the rates of \$1,500/\$3,000. Seconded by Kari Bradley. This motion carried unanimously.

4.5.3. Review Tax and Comparative Information: Board members had received the following documents for review:

4.5.3.1. Tax Commissioner Letter

4.5.3.2. Tax Rate Projections

4.5.3.3. Comparative Information

4.5.4. Review Budget Draft 2

4.5.4.1. Draft 2 Budget: Superintendent Olkowski shared this draft. He reminded the board of the parameters that had been provided: 1) Establish a budget that is less than 3%” Net Impact on Taxes.” 2) Find ways to pay for the three initiatives: Strategic Planning process, Facility Director and Health Instructors (Using Fund Balances where appropriate). 3) Prepare a list of contingencies if needed. 4) Establish a budget that is less than the “Excess Spending Threshold Amount per equalized pupil”. 5) Establish a budget that will move toward supporting a strong multi-tiered system of support in all schools”. Superintendent Olkowski and Lori Bibeau presented and shared details related to the second draft of the budget. Superintendent Olkowski noted that the early retirement offerings that the board had approved were helpful in creating this budget; he thanked the board for this action.

Flor Diaz Smith, on behalf of the Finance Committee, invited questions or comments from board members.

Karoline May understands the budget but is still unclear about the impact.

It is hard to know whether she can support the budget without knowing the impact.

Unfilled vacancies: would we have to move staff from one school to another to fill some vacancies that are not being filled? Superintendent Olkowski stated that this may be the case. Are we considering sharing positions between schools for any under the “administrative” category? Superintendent Olkowski indicated that this is possible.

Chris McVeigh is having a hard time understanding how we are cutting the budget by over \$600K and yet not having a reduction in the level of services. He would like to have a better understanding. Jill Olson “It is hard to understand some of the implications of positions in this budget without being able to discuss due to personnel confidentiality.

Lindy Johnson expressed concern about reducing administrative positions. She wants building administrators to be able to continue to focus their attention on being instructional leaders. She would want more information about position reductions before being able to support this budget draft.

Diane Nichols-Fleming echoed the concern that she would like a better understanding of administrative positions that are proposed to be reduced and would like to understand the collaboration that went into this proposal and would like to know what this will look like in daily practice at the schools.

Jaiel Pulskamp would like to understand using more real-life examples, how this budget will impact practice. She asked, how

does the funding mechanism work, regarding, for example, stimulus payments or student enrollment increases.

Dorothy Naylor spoke about the unprecedented challenges we are facing; she spoke about the Great Depression. We are faced with making some uncomfortable decisions when considering the budget. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet commended the schools and communities for the safety measures around COVID19. He would like to know total impact on FTE positions across the district. Will services remain level? Would like to understand what the down side “may” be, even if we don’t know for certain.

Stephen Looke indicated that this budget has met the parameters that were set and that he supports this budget.

Scott Thompson stated that he can support this budget but that he suggests being prepared and having contingencies.

Kari Bradley indicated that this draft meets the parameters that were set. He supports this draft. He suggested that, when considering reductions, carefully consider savings versus impact and be clear with the board so that we can have a sense of the impact. He stated that he believes next year will be as hard, or worse, in budget development, and that reductions made in the short term could also benefit in the long term.

Flor Diaz Smith shared her worry - did we set an unrealistic parameter? We need to keep instructional leaders; she worries about reducing administrative positions. She stated that if there was ever a time when our community understands what schools do for our families, it is now.

Jonathan Goddard stated that he believes declining student enrollment does not translate directly to declining student needs. He feels that teachers and all who directly support students are the framework of our schools. He would have a hard time supporting cuts to these critical positions.

4.5.4.2. Fund Balance Reservations

4.5.5. Review Town Meeting Items

4.5.5.1. Town Meeting Warnings – Draft: Lori Bibeau stated that, typically, the Board takes action and approves the warning at the same time that they approve the budget amount (in January.) This is a draft for the board to review at this time. Any questions or issues can be directed to Michelle Ksepka. Scott Thompson reminded board members of the plan for March 1, 2021, Virtual Public Hearing. Chris McVeigh asked, if Congress passes a stimulus package that includes aid to states, will there be an impact on this budget? This is unknown at this time. Townes DeGroot asked the board to consider increasing compensation that board members receive. He feels that being a board member should be accessible to all members of the public; in an effort to make it more accessible and to increase community interest, he would like the board to consider this. Scott Thompson stated that this might be a good discussion item for a future board meeting.

4.5.5.2. School Board Member Vacancies: Flor Diaz Smith reviewed this information and reminded school board members of these vacancies.

4.5.5.3. Town Report/Annual Report Format: Lindy Johnson shared that East Montpelier has always planned to include information in their annual book. Last year there was some confusion and the information was not received in time to be included. She suggests that there be direct communication with the Town Administrator. Karoline May stated that what she heard last year was dissatisfaction that salaries were not shared as they have been in the past. Scott Thompson stated that salaries are public information and could be shared in other venues. Chris McVeigh stated that it is a frequent request, every year, and that he believes we should make it easily available. He suggested providing a link to an electronic file.

Dorothy Naylor indicated that she has always objected to printing salaries in the annual report, even though it is public information.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet shared feedback from last year that the annual report should not be a glossy publication but a more traditional, cardstock, informational publication.

5. Board Operations

5.1. Community Engagement during the Pandemic: Scott Thompson had shared information with the board and hoped to have discussion around community engagement. Diane Nichols-Fleming shared her desire, too, to engage the community as we look toward a virtual town meeting which will be an opportunity to do things differently, but also bridge a gap for those who may not be comfortable with this (online/ virtual) way of meeting.

6. Consent Agenda

6.1. Approve Minutes of 12.2.20: Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to approve the minutes of December 2, 2020. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried unanimously.

6.2. Approve Board Orders: Lindy Johnson moved to approve board orders in the grand total amount: \$374,899.60. Seconded by Karoline May, this motion carried unanimously.

7. Personnel: none tonight

7.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Retirements, Leave of Absence and changes in FTE

8. Public Comments:

Daisy Scarzello: Shared with the board what early release on Wednesdays has meant for teaching staff. She stated that she is worried about this valuable opportunity going away after the New Year.

Elizabeth Marks: Spoke as a middle school teacher to echo Daisy's experiences with using the half-days on Wednesdays for collaboration and planning.

Ellen Dorsey: Shared that she values the Wednesday opportunities as well.

Scott Thompson wished everyone a happy holiday season.

9. Executive Session about Personnel and Negotiations: At 8:39, Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel and negotiations. Seconded by Flor Diaz Smith, this motion carried unanimously.

At 10:00 Jaiel Pulskamp moved to come out of Executive Session. Seconded by Stephen Looke, this motion carried unanimously.

During Executive Session the Board discussed personnel issues and negotiations.

10. Future Agenda Items

- 10.1.** WCUUSD Name
- 10.2.** Assessment Needs for Building Bright Futures
- 10.3.** Diversifying Educator Work Force
- 10.4.** Board Compensation
- 10.5.** Extension of half-day Wednesdays

11. Board Reflection

Scott Thompson said estimates for the duration of Executive Sessions are too low. Lindy Johnson addressed the length of the meeting. Karoline May said the use of discussion protocol during the budget discussion was valuable and may be useful moving forward.

12. Adjourn: The board adjourned by consensus at 10:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Stoudt, Board Recording Secretary
Jonas Eno-Van Fleet, Board Clerk