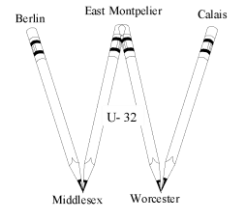


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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 September 2, 2020

Present by Teleconference*:

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

Administrators: Superintendent Bryan Olkowski, Technology Director Keith MacMartin, Principal Cat Fair, Business Administrator Lori Bibeau, Principal Alicia Lyford, Curriculum Director Jen Miller-Arsenault, Principal Gillan Fuqua, Student Services Director Kelly Bushey, Principal Cat Fair, Principal Casey Provost, Associate Principal Jody Emerson, Principal Aaron Boynton, Guidance Director Lisa LaPlante, Student Affairs Director Amy Molina, Special Services Coordinator Julia Pritchard

Others/Public: Glenn Gannon, Ellen Knoedler, David Lawrence ORCA Media, David Delcore, Corinne Stridsberg, Jill Drury, Bruce Johnson, Pat Fair, Ursula Stanley, Michael Sherwin, "worcesterhannas "meg," Kelly MacMartin,

1. **Call to Order:** Scott Thompson called the meeting to order at 6:01.
2. **Welcome:** Scott Thompson reviewed some logistics about online meeting norms.
 - 2.1. **Reception of Guests:** Scott Thompson welcomed those present. He noted the passing of Rumney custodian Nate Picard, and said the board and the district honor Nate's life and his contributions to the education of our children.
 - 2.2. **Public Comments:** Ellen Knoedler strongly urged the board to not pay the VSBA fees. She expressed her concerns about VSBA in that four of our five schools were appealing Act 46, and she takes issue with how VSBA responded. She suggested that maybe the board does not wish to participate with VSBA. She suggested that if we are going to go forward with VSBA, she would like to have school board representation that has no past ties and can come with fresh eyes.

Corinne Stridsberg asked that the board will continue to focus on community engagement - or more appropriately, community involvement. She echoed Ellen Knoedler's sentiments about not paying dues to VSBA, noting that the board's Policy Committee's work with policies over this past year, in the absence of VSBA, went quite well.

2.3. Agenda Revisions: none

2.4. Student Reports: none

3. Board Operations (Discussion/Action)

3.1. Board Retreat Check-in: Flor Diaz Smith reminded board members to respond about food choices for the retreat. An agenda has been created; it will be shared with board members early next week, in advance of the retreat: September 12, 8:30 a.m. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet thanked Flor for making arrangements and for accommodating his remote participation.

3.2. VSBA Dues: Scott Thompson reviewed the history of the past year's discussion about VSBA dues. He had prepared a summary document for the board. He suggested that if desired, the board can discuss this issue at the board retreat, from the perspective of "board interest;" he hopes to frame a board discussion/ decision through that lens. He invited input.

Stephen Looke stated that he believes it is inappropriate to do "interest based" problem solving around this, as it requires some training and some universal buy-in.

Some discussion followed around whether this is an appropriate topic for the retreat, in light of time constraints and an already planned/ packed agenda. Jill Olson stated that she appreciated Scott Thompson's summary of the issues from the past. She spoke from the perspective of a person who has worked in the field of associations. She noted that it is worth noting that VSBA has new staff and leadership. She is in favor of joining. She does not think the board can influence the VSBA by not joining. She stated that she sees value in joining, and little value and impact in not joining.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that, on the surface it may not feel that we missed a lot in the past year, not being part of VSBA. However, aside from the organizational benefits to this board, he has missed having an organization to which he can reach out, about his own particular concerns, being a school board member. He supports joining the VSBA. He does not think it benefits our students or advances our cause to not be members of VSBA.

Chris McVeigh reviewed that he had voted against joining last year. He noted that he is under the impression that board members on VSBA are required to sign an agreement to not speak ill of the association. He asked whether there is an ability to pay dues over time so that we are more able to "keep a finger on the pulse" of whether we as a board feel that they are representing our interest.

Karoline May shared that she felt that the summary was slightly biased. She believes that the guidance from VSBA will be critical, in light of COVID19.

Lindy Johnson shared that she had been in favor of joining last year, and as other board members have indicated, she would like to avoid making a big deal out of it; make a decision and move on.

Kari Bradley stated that VSBA helps with board development, in his mind, more so than board representation. He noted that the VSBA's Orientation for school board members is very helpful.

Dorothy Naylor stated that she has lost trust in the VSBA and finds it difficult to spend the taxpayers' money on an association that she does not trust. She does not support paying the dues; she might be willing to consider paying in installments over the course of a year, quarterly, as Chris McVeigh had suggested.

Flor Diaz Smith reviewed the mission of the VSBA. She noted that there is no pledge that members are not allowed to speak against the decisions of the association. She explained her membership at the VSBA, which represents more than WCUUSD. She shared that a membership outreach committee has been formed to improve VSBA's relationship with members.

Chris McVeigh noted that the new Executive Director has been within the organization for a number of years. He noted that we do not have to be members in order to access the resources of VSBA; some can be purchased separate from membership.

Lindy Johnson moved to join VSBA. Seconded by Jonas Eno-Van Fleet. This motion carried, with eight in favor; four against.

3.3. ESP Contract Update: Superintendent Olkowski stated that the ESP agreement has been signed and is in effect. The hope is that by September 11th, updated contracts will be provided to ESP employees. It is hoped that by October, 2020, back-pay will have been provided and all will be up-to-date. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet indicated that he is very glad we were able to get this agreement. He thanked ESP representatives for working openly and in good faith effort. Superintendent Olkowski thanked Carla Messier and Virginia Breer for the work they have done to help accomplish this.

3.4. Schedule Negotiations Committee: Jonas Eno-Van Fleet would like to meet with Stephen Looke and Diane Nichols-Fleming, and the superintendent, to plan to work ahead.

4. Reports (Discussion/Action)

4.1. Superintendent

4.1.1. School Reopening Update: Superintendent Olwkoski thanked Kelly Bushey, Jen Miller-Arsenault and Casey Provost for coming together this week to support the Rumney Community. He also noted that he had participated in training through the VSBA and he thanked Scott Thompson and Flor Diaz Smith for their support during this beginning of his tenure as superintendent. He had prepared written updates for the board regarding school reopening; he reviewed some of the most recent news from the legislature regarding COVID19.

Chris McVeigh asked for clarification about the ventilation funding issues. Lori Bibeau stated that she still believes the ventilation projects will be grant funded, with the exception of the central office ventilation renovations. She applied today for a backup funding source should the original grant fall through.

Superintendent Olkowski spoke about projected class sizes, both in-person and virtually. He had done some outreach with other districts about class sizes for virtual classrooms.

Stephen Looke expressed his support of waiting to see how this plays out in the next few weeks or months before considering, for example, additional hires to accommodate growing virtual classroom sizes.

Chris McVeigh indicated that he does not think WCUUSD should consider eliminating the remote learning option at any point during the school year, as parents have made plans for this and he would like to stay consistent for the duration of the school year.

Discussion continued around the issue of class sizes, especially virtual class sizes.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet shared a Vermont Digger article that indicated the desire for Vermont to have come up with a state-wide policy around return to school. He also noted that the article did not make mention of the creative solutions that some Vermont districts have implemented, to provide spaces or hubs for children, learning remotely or in hybrid fashion and in need of supervision, of employees of WCUUSD.

He asked the district to consider some flexibility in the future, regarding children moving from remote to in-person, or from in-person to remote.

He expressed support for the teachers and the administrators, for their work through this pandemic. Superintendent Olkowski echoed his praise for principals and teachers for what he described as heroic work.

Superintendent Olkowski shared that all children in the US are now eligible for free meals until December 2020 or until funds are depleted. He explained that this is a big shift to be figuring out, with the start of school just days away. He believes that the number of people participating in the free meals program will increase. The logistics, when considering both remote students and in-person students, will be challenging. He is planning to communicate with families, hopefully tomorrow, to explain this opportunity. He explained some of the complexities, and he believes that principals and food service staff will be working to address this during the next couple of weeks. Steven Dellinger-Pate explained that meals will be delivered to elementary age students as desired, but that U32 families will pick up meals from the school. He noted that this includes breakfast and lunch.

Diane Nichols-Fleming indicated that this reflects the need that we see in our communities, even as she realizes it is a new logistical challenge for the

schools. Food insecurity is prevalent and she is glad we are addressing it.

Superintendent Olkowski shared an early retirement update: was sent to 55 people; 23 have responded; 11 have accepted the offer; the deadline is Tuesday, September 15th. He had projected 22 staff would accept the offer; he will know the final number at the September 16th board meeting.

Diane Nichols-Fleming noted that some of these positions may be difficult to fill. It will be interesting to see if this plays out as a cost saving measure.

4.2. Finance Committee (Discussion/Action)

4.2.1. Calais Road Sign Request: Flor Diaz Smith shared that the Finance Committee had met earlier and had discussed this request. The committee does not recommend supporting this request, but would like to create a policy for going forward around such requests. Future agenda items for the committee: researching property tax collection; replacement for Business Administrator.

Stephen Looke moved to fund the Calais Road Sign request as presented.

Dorothy Naylor seconded. Discussion: Stephen Looke asked whether a school district can jointly own property with a town. Lori Bibeau questioned whether this was in compliance with an educational expense until Title 16. Some board discussion followed. Board members agreed that the Policy Committee should address this issue.

A vote was called. This motion failed, with one in favor; the rest “nay.”

5. Consent Agenda (Action)

5.1. Approve Minutes 8.19.2020: Diane Nichols-Fleming moved to approve the minutes of August 19, 2020. Seconded by Jonas Eno-Van Fleet. This motion carried unanimously.

5.2. Approve Board Orders: Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to approve the board orders in the amounts of \$667,785.59, and \$256,868.98. Seconded by Flor Diaz Smith, this motion carried unanimously.

6. Personnel (Action)

6.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Retirements, Leave of Absence and Changes in FTE

Lindy Johnson moved to accept the following retirements, effective June 30, 2021:

Kathryn Christy - EMES Classroom Teacher

Elizabeth Wirth - WCUUSD COVID 19 Coordinator

James Nichols-Fleming - Berlin Special Education Teacher

Patricia Fair - U-32 Admin Assistant

Lauren Van Deren - U-32 Admin Assistant

Mary Ellen Hill - U-32 Admin Assistant

Seconded by Flor Diaz Smith. Discussion: Flor Diaz Smith thanked Kathie Christy for her work at EMES, as well as Elizabeth Wirth. This motion carried unanimously.

Lindy Johnson moved to approve the following increases in full time equivalency:

Karen Lieberman 0.7 to 1.0 FTE

Heather Clark Warner 0.4 to 0.8 FTE.

Seconded by Flor Diaz Smith, this motion carried unanimously.

7. Public Comments: Scott Thompson invited public comments at this time.

Jill Drury stated that she felt that families had to make commitments about in-person versus remote learning, without enough information, and in a situation that can be changing. How can we put a cap or a deadline on an issue like this, when we don't know yet how this will play out? It's hard for parents to go into it blindly. She asked what if your child goes to school for the first few weeks and it becomes clear that a different option is more fitting - do parents reach out to the principal? Or to the superintendent? Superintendent Olkowski suggested first reaching out to the principal to talk about what is not working. He reiterated that this situation is dynamic and we are all going forward without knowing what it will look like. Ms. Drury asked to consider having a grace period during which families can change their minds (e.g., the first few weeks).

8. Executive Session for legal matters and student matter: At 8:15, Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing legal matters and student matters. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried.

At 8:57, Chris McVeigh moved to leave Executive Session. Seconded by Diane Nichols-Fleming, this motion carried unanimously.

During Executive Session the Board discussed legal matters and student matters.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to allow the Superintendent to sign a settlement agreement with a designated agency, as discussed in Executive Session. Seconded by Lindy Johnson, this motion carried unanimously.

Stephen Looke moved to allow the Superintendent to sign an employee-related settlement agreement, as discussed in Executive Session. Seconded by Dorothy Naylor, this motion carried unanimously.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to approve the Superintendent's recommendation regarding a student matter, as discussed in Executive Session. Seconded by Diane Nichols-Fleming, this motion carried unanimously.

9. Future Agenda Items

10. Adjourn: The board adjourned by consensus at 9:03.

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