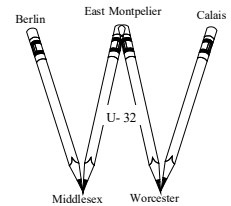


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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 - Approved Minutes July 15, 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, George Gross, Jaiel Pulskamp, Kari Bradley, Jill Olson, Jonathan Goddard

Administrators: Superintendent Bryan Olkowski, Business Administrator Lori Bibeau, Technology Director Keith MacMartin, U-32 Principal Steven Dellinger-Pate, U-32 Associate Principal Jody Emerson, U-32 Student Affairs Director Amy Molina, Principal Gillian Fuqua, Principal Casey Provost, Principal Aaron Boynton, Principal Cat Fair, Director of Curriculum Jen Miller-Arsenault, Director of Student Services Kelly Bushey, Special Education Coordinator Julia Pritchard

Other: ORCA videographer, David Lawrence, Glenn Gannon, Rick Kehne, Corinne Stridsberg, Kevin Nadzam, Alden Bird, Jacob Coakwell

1.0 Call to Order: Scott Thompson called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

2.0 Welcome: Scott Thompson welcomed those present.

2.1 Reception of Guests

2.2 Agenda Revisions: Scott Thompson would like to add item 3.3: discuss board meetings on site with a remote option. He invited board members to add to "Future Agenda Items" regarding the court's recent ruling around consolidation/ Act 46. Flor Diaz Smith suggested adding item 3.4: possible special board meeting.

2.3 Public Comments: Corinne Stridsberg had sent an email to board members. She reiterated from her email, her concerns about having a discussion on Front Porch Forum about school opening, when this has not been discussed or decided by the board. She feels that the board needs a more cohesive communication plan. She also asked, when considering bringing back staff and students - will there be widespread testing for everyone? Many can be asymptomatic. David Lawrence

stated that he has many questions about returning to school. He asked, does the board have the power to make its own decisions or does this come in the form of a mandate from a higher entity? Superintendent Olkowski stated that guidance from the Agency of Education and from public health officials continues to evolve, as do plans for August in light of COVID-19.

2.4 Student Report: no students present tonight

3.0 Board Operations (Discussion /Action)

- 3.1 Replacement Board Members for Middlesex and Worcester: Chris McVeigh suggested inviting letters of interest from community members and setting a “soft deadline” of, e.g., two to three weeks from now. Diane Nichols-Fleming indicated that the expectation is that we do this in collaboration with the select board. Dorothy Naylor stated that we need to communicate this through more than Front Porch Forum. Flor Diaz Smith recollected from the past that the board brought someone forward to the select board and asked whether they had a problem with the potential candidate; that was the nature of the collaboration. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that he thinks at some point it is worth discussing the possibility of reverting back to a ten person board. Jill Olson indicated that she would be in favor of discussing this, as it seems clear that we are having difficulty filling the board seats in the current configuration, possibly putting those towns at a disadvantage. Stephen Looke stated that it is important to have the same identical process in each town, for recruiting board members.
- 3.2 VSBA/VSA Virtual Conference: Flor Diaz Smith stated that she would like to create a “virtual team” to attend this conference, with a variety of participants, not limited to board members.
- 3.3 Board On Site meetings: Lindy Johnson had shared an article, asking the question - if we as a board are supporting sending students and teachers back in person, how does it appear to the public if the board is not willing to meet in person? The board discussed this issue. Superintendent Olkowski indicated that guidance has not been issued about meetings in person. He suggested reaching out to public health officials or legal counsel. He stated that the topic of returning to school as a whole is consideration of the Agency of Education, public health, and legal counsel. Stephen Looke suggested that the board create criteria for deciding to meet in person; this would make it clear for making the decision and for communicating with the community. Jill Olson suggested that the board grapple with this decision with other boards across the state, and not decide as a single board. Chris McVeigh indicated that, as much as it is a public health issue, it is also a perception issue. If the common theme is “we are all in this together” then the board should be willing to congregate. There was some discussion in the “chat” about this issue. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet reminded the board that this is July; we are not requiring students to congregate in person at this time, and he believes the board should adhere to public health guidance. Lindy Johnson stated that she appreciates this discussion, as when the topic comes up in the community she can

share that the board is discussing this issue. She feels that we need more coordination as a state.

- 3.4 Possible Special Board Meeting: Superintendent Olkowski would like to have an Executive Session next week, with legal counsel, specifically around the topic of leave requests. He noted that the situation with opening school is still very dynamic. He would like to follow the Executive Session with a board meeting with the public, to discuss the myriad of issues. He suggested next Wednesday, July 22, at 6 p.m., with a planned Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. Chris McVeigh asked for board members to get materials in advance of the meeting so that they can carefully consider beforehand.

4.0 Reports (Discussion/Action)

4.1 Superintendent

- 4.1.1 School Board Retreat: Superintendent Olkowski had provided a memo to the board. If possible, he would like to have the retreat in person. **Flor Diaz Smith moved to authorize the expenditure of \$2K plus travel, lodging, and food, for Nicholas Fischer to facilitate the board retreat. Seconded by Kari Bradley.** Discussion: Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether there will be a small group to work on the agenda/ focus of the meeting. She would like the board to be clear about its hope for the retreat's focus. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that he would prefer that the superintendent facilitate the retreat; he would prefer to not hire a facilitator. He shared his positive experience from the retreat last year, as a new board member. Some discussion followed around the topic of having a facilitator or not. **A vote was called. This motion carried unanimously.** Kari Bradley asked whether board members should email agenda ideas: the answer - yes. Stephen Looke reminded the board that this likely will need to be warned as a public meeting. Superintendent Olkowski will clarify.
- 4.1.2 Internet Access: Superintendent Olkowski had shared a memo with the board to provide an overall update around this ongoing challenging issue. The board discussed the issue of access.
- 4.1.3 Reopening Schools: Superintendent Olkowski had shared a memo. Stephen Looke indicated that he believes the fact that we know students learn better in person should be one of the underlying tenets for the discussion, rather than the statement that parents need to go to work. Chris McVeigh asked what is the entity that will make the decision about in person or online learning. He spoke about the conflicting messages around the CDC, federal government, local government, etc. Superintendent Olkowski stated that the Agency of Education is continuing to update guidelines based on the public health information that we have at the moment. Dorothy Naylor stated that, when parents opt to not send their students in person, we need to be sure that they have access to online learning. Some discussion followed. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated

that he would like to know information about availability of testing and that he would like to see daily bulletins to communicate, for example, “x” number of teachers are on sick leave or have tested, etc. Discussion followed around testing availability and protocols. Superintendent Olkowski shared some of the ongoing work of the Leadership Team and the various Task Force Teams.

4.1.4 Efficiency Vermont - HVAC: Superintendent Olkowski had provided a memo around “Refresh Air Ventilation and Isolation Rooms.” He shared that there is some grant money available through Efficiency Vermont. Jaiel Pulskamp asked whether the schools will be providing masks for students; she also noted that thermometers have been taking up to four weeks for delivery.

4.2 Finance Committee (Action)

4.2.1 Review FY 20 Financial Report: Lori Bibeau had prepared a list for the board’s consideration, explaining the CARES reimbursements. She is hoping this money will be received at the end of August. She has spoken with the accounting firm as the audit is not yet completed, but the books have closed for FY20.

4.2.2 Authorize the Finance Committee to award bids over \$15,000 for COVID-19 items: **Kari Bradley moved to authorize the Finance Committee to award COVID-19 related bids over \$15k per Vermont Title 16 § 559 up to \$100k per item. Seconded by Jonas Eno-Van Fleet.** Discussion: Flor Diaz Smith shared that the Finance Committee had discussed this earlier at their meeting. Lindy Johnson asked for some examples around items, for example, up to \$100K. Lori Bibeau shared the example of temperature equipment for all of the schools. Stephen Looke noted that he supports the Finance Committee’s recommendation but that he expects the board to continue to spend money with fiscal responsibility, and to continue to keep board members apprised. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet indicated that this is not the time to be penny wise and pound foolish, as we need to do what is needed to responsibly and safely open schools. Board members discussed the position they are currently in, to make urgent decisions based on the best possible current information, in a situation that is ever changing.

This motion carried unanimously.

4.2.3 School Reopening COVID-19 Expense: **Flor Diaz Smith moved to authorize to expedite orders for unbudgeted items related to COVID19, up to \$300K. Seconded by Chris McVeigh.** Lori Bibeau provided some specifics; she had provided a memo, dated July 10, 2020, with details. Lindy Johnson stated that she feels the Agency of Education is not doing its part in providing resources for students and teachers, and is leaving it to school boards which causes inequities across the state.

This motion carried unanimously.

- 4.2.4 Central Office Renovations: Flor Diaz Smith explained the impetus for this renovation, related to COVID19. She indicated that the Finance Committee did not have unanimous agreement on this; however the committee wanted the board as a whole to consider this proposal. **Kari Bradley moved that the Board authorize the Superintendent to spend up to \$26k for the health and safety measures for office renovations, with prompt consideration given to the other buildings across WCUUSD. The Central Office Capital Fund has sufficient funds to cover the cost of renovations if these costs are not eligible for COVID-19 reimbursement. Seconded by Jonas Eno-Van Fleet.** Discussion: Chris McVeigh suggested more direct language in the motion around other buildings. Gillian Fuqua share that she and Bill Ford have visited the schools and are preparing specific information. Board members felt that the language as it stands is sufficient. **This motion carried unanimously.**
- 4.2.5 Hire Retreat Facilitator: This action was taken earlier in the meeting.
- 4.2.6 Solar Net Metering: Flor Diaz Smith shared that the Finance Committee had discussed this. An overview had been shared in the July 10, 2020 memo. Dorothy Naylor moved to table this motion. This motion to table was not seconded. **Kari Bradley moved to decline the offer from Novus and proceed with the plan to hire an energy consultant and develop a comprehensive energy plan for the district. Seconded by Jaiel Pulskamp. This motion carried unanimously.** Superintendent Olkowski asked whether there is a timeline for hiring an energy consultant. Flor Diaz Smith suggested that this be a future agenda item; she would not want to add more to the plate of the superintendent at this time. Sometime after school, reopening is a suggested time frame to continue this discussion.
- 4.2.7 Berlin Driveway Reconstruction and Paving Project: Flor Diaz Smith shared information. **Flor Diaz Smith moved to award the bid to Avery Excavation Inc \$477,518. Seconded by Chris McVeigh.** Discussion: Stephen Looke asked whether the budget included a 10% contingency. The answer was “no.” Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked if there is a plan for upkeep and repair as necessary, to extend the life of the investment. Flor Diaz Smith replied that this is the work of the Facilities Committee. The question was raised around a retention pond/ storm water runoff. Principal Boynton shared that there has been a plan created; this was under the guidance of Debra Taylor. Stephen Looke stated that taking this action in essence is making the commitment to pave the parking lots in all of the schools. Other board members did not feel that this is a universal concern in other schools such as Rumney and East Montpelier (and Doty and Calais). Chris McVeigh indicated that “one size need not fit all” and these issues are case-by-case. Principal Boynton indicated that the retention pond is planned for the left of the front of the building, and thought has been given to aesthetics.

This motion carried unanimously.

Flor Diaz Smith moved to approve the transfer of \$126,020 from the Capital Fund for this project. Seconded by Jonas Eno-Van Fleet, this motion carried unanimously.

4.3 Policy (Action)

4.3.1 Second Reading of C47 Student Exchanges: **Dorothy Naylor moved to approve C47: Student Exchanges, on second reading. Seconded by Lindy Johnson. Chris McVeigh invited questions. This motion carried. Scott Thompson abstained from this vote.**

4.3.2 First Reading of C20 Student Conduct and Discipline, C46 Interrogation or Searches of Students By Law Enforcement or Other Non-School Personnel, C49 Kindergarten Entrance Age, D3 Responsible Computer, Internet & Network Use, D4 Title I Comparability, D5 Animal Dissection, D6 Class Size, E1 Title I Parent Involvement Compacts, E45 Role of Religion in the Schools. E46 Memorials, F1 Travel Reimbursement: Chris McVeigh invited questions or comments from these policies, for the first readings.

C20: Some of the language is specific to U32 and does not apply to the elementary schools. The Policy Committee will address this at the next meeting.

C46: Interrogation or Searches of Students by Law Enforcement or Other Non-School Personnel, some discussion followed. Chris McVeigh shared that this policy had been reviewed by legal counsel.

C49: Kindergarten Entrance Age: Aaron Boynton shared that the committee discussed this policy at length. Board members and some community members discussed this proposed draft.

D3: Responsible Computer, Internet & Network Use: no comments

D4 Title I Comparability: no comments

D5 Animal Dissection: no comments

D6 Class Size: Some discussion followed around the impact of COVID19 on class size. Stephen Looke stated that he believes the language in the policy is flexible enough to allow for something unprecedented such as COVID19.

E1 Title I Parent Involvement Compacts: no comments

E45 Role of Religion in the Schools: Some discussion followed around absences due to religious observations. The committee will reconsider the language.

E46 Memorials: Stephen Looke suggested that the committee reconsider this policy; he expressed some concerns. Discussion followed. Jody Emerson explained her understanding of the history behind the creation of this policy. Chris McVeigh asked for a straw poll to the board - this is not a required policy; would the board want to pursue this? The board agreed that this is worth pursuing. Stephen Looke suggested engaging the

community in the conversation around this policy. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet suggested using another term in place of “grandfathered.”

F1 Travel Reimbursement: no comments

Kari Bradley suggested that a calendar be created to track each policy that has a reporting mechanism included in the language.

5.0 Consent Agenda (Action)

5.1 Approve Minutes of 6.17.20 and 7.1.20: **Diane Nichols-Fleming moved to approve the minutes of June 17, 2020 and July 1, 2020. Seconded by Flor Diaz Smith, this motion carried unanimously.**

5.2 Approve Board Orders for 6.30.20 and 7.15.20: **Chris McVeigh moved to approve the board orders in the amounts of \$11,293,037.01 (6-30-20) and \$156,482.19 (7-15-20). Seconded by Lindy Johnson. This motion carried unanimously.**

6.0 Personnel (Action)

6.1 Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Retirements, Leave of Absence and Change in FTE: **Lindy Johnson moved to accept the following retirements (effective June 30, 2021): Susan Pryce (U-32 Special Educator, 1.0 FTE), Sue Anne Mayette (U-32 Speech/Language Pathologist, 1.0 FTE), Jane Badger (East Montpelier Administrative Assistant, 0.20 FTE/Paraeducator, 0.80 FTE), Katherine Stone (East Montpelier Pre-Kindergarten Assistant, 0.40 FTE). Seconded by Diane Nichols-Fleming.** Discussion: Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether these are a result of the early retirement offer? They are. **This motion carried unanimously.**

7.0 Future Agenda Items

- Memorials
- Energy consultant
- Act 46
- Business Administrator position
- VSBA dues
- (chat function during Zoom meetings - possible later date)

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet indicated that he does not think using the “chat” function during online board meetings is an effective way to communicate during the meeting. Some discussion followed around the July 1st meeting when the topic was discussed re: in person versus remote learning in the context of home schooling. At that time, we did not have firm guidance from the Agency of Education. Discussion followed. Jill Olson reminded the board that just today the guidance was received from the Agency of Education around a “hybrid” memo; this will be an ongoing conversation.

Stephen Looke asked that the Agenda committee discuss how the board handles the “chat” function during online board meetings, and to come to the board with a future

agenda item. Superintendent Olkowski would like to get some legal counsel around this issue as well.

Flor Diaz Smith reminded the board that we are going to need to continue to pivot, change, and be flexible, in light of COVID19.

8.0 Adjournment: The board adjourned by consensus at 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Stoudt, Board Recording Secretary