

# Washington Central Unified Union School District

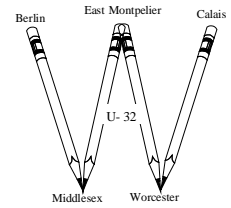
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*WCUUSD exists to nurture and inspire in all students the passion, creativity and power to contribute to their local and global communities.*

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Bryan Olkowski  
Superintendent



## Washington Central Unified Union School District Board Meeting - Unapproved Minutes July 1, 2020

*Approved 7-15-20*

**Present by Teleconference\*:**

**Board Members:** Flor Diaz Smith, Lindy Johnson, Scott Thompson, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Dorothy Naylor, Stephen Looke, Chris McVeigh, Marylynne Strachan, Kari Bradley, Jonas Eno-Van Fleet, George Gross, Jaiel Pulskamp

**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, Doty Principal Gillian Fuqua, Rumney Principal Casey Provost

**Other:** ORCA videographer, David Lawrence, Glenn Gannon, Rick Kehne, Kelly MacMartin, Elizabeth Wirth, Addie Pritchard, Maria Melekos, Corinne Stridsberg

**1.0 Call to Order:** Scott Thompson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**2.0 Welcome:** Scott Thompson welcomed new superintendent Bryan Olkowski. Scott Thompson noted that this is a special board meeting to focus on issues related to the opening of school in light of COVID-19.

2.1 Reception of Guests

2.2 Public Comments: Scott Thompson invited comments from the public, regarding the reopening of school. Rick Kehne noted that, with very cautious effort, he believes we need to move forward with opening of school, using protective gear (such as masks) and social distancing. He asked about the position of COVID-19 Coordinator position. The direction for the duties of this position should be coming from the state level; why would we be creating a new position and using revenue toward this? He stated that the position is redundant.

David Lawrence asked the board to consider that some families will not be sending their children to school, given their uniquely health-compromised circumstances.

Scott Thompson noted that he has heard some feedback from the public - including asking to NOT alternate school days for elementary aged students. There have been different opinions from the public about masks for children or for adults only. He has heard some suggestions around changes to the school calendar, and some questions about the possibility of using "flipped classroom."

2.3 Student Reports: no student present

### 3.0 **Board Operations (Discussion/Action)**

3.1 New Superintendent Introduction: Scott Thompson introduced Bryan Olkowski. Superintendent Olkowski provided an introduction to those present, via Powerpoint.

3.2 Superintendent Report: Superintendent Olkowski reviewed the written reports he had provided. He stated that more guidance is expected to be coming from the AOE in mid-July, re: COVID-19. He explained that he is expecting to have to purchase some items during the summer to prepare for opening in the fall. Marylynne Strachan explained her perspective as a nurse, as to why the position of COVID-19 Coordinator is critical at WCUUSD, for the amount of time that we are having to deal with COVID-19, over the next one to two years.

Flor Diaz Smith asked that when building and office renovations are considered, in light of COVID-19, long-term visions and designs are considered as well. She stated that one of the visions has been to increase the position of a school nurse as a leader for the entire WCUUSD, so she believes the position of COVID-19 Coordinator can be considered in that vein.

Jaiel Pulskamp asked what is the plan to help students and families with poor internet, as we think about remote learning to some degree next year. She also asked about how to address students who have hearing issues, if teachers wear masks. Lindy Johnson stated that she has looked into clear masks; she indicated that they not only benefit students who have hearing issues. Some discussion followed around bulk ordering. Marylynne Strachan stated that she hopes there will be some planning and consideration for students who need to take a break from masks - for example, creating a designated space.

3.3 Board Retreat: Currently scheduled for August 8th, half day, breakfast and lunch. The board discussed the idea of having this meeting in person versus remotely. Superintendent Olkowski expressed that he would like to prioritize that all board members are able to attend. The board may use a poll to decide on a date for the retreat that all board members can attend. Superintendent Olkowski stated that, if needed (for all board members' availability), September or October might be chosen for a board retreat date. He has a facilitator in mind. Board members expressed support in having a facilitator. Stephen Looke asked about the cost of a facilitator. Superintendent Olkowski will provide more details.

### 4.0 **Finance (Discussion/Action)**

4.1 COVID-19 School Coordinator and Additional School Nurse: Lindy Johnson indicated that she likes the idea of a leader within the district and she thinks that the increase of school nurse positions at the elementary schools is critical. She wonders if within that capacity, we can designate the position of COVID-19 Coordinator without hiring an additional position. Maria Melekos stated that she believes the position is critical and needs to be separate from the school nurse positions. Stephen Looke shared his experience with how Norwich is approaching this position. The Facilities Director position was discussed; Marylynne Strachan reiterated that she believes this position being separate from, but working collaboratively with, Facilities Director, is critical. Superintendent Olkowski stated that, while he appreciates the desire to be careful stewards of education funds, he believes that this situation is unique and the safety of the students is

paramount. George Gross indicated that he also thinks the position can be critical in the role of communication with families. Flor Diaz Smith stated that a

Community Health Coordinator position might be a more appropriate job title, with a focus on health care coordination and communication. Stephen Looke asked if this is a teacher position or a staff position. Lori Bibeau stated that this is considered a teacher contract. Stephen Looke stated that he thinks it is important that the person that is hired is able to carry out the duties, as it sounds like more of an administrative position. Superintendent Olkowski explained that an administrative position in schools would require additional certification and he believes it is most important that the person have nursing experience and credentials.

School nurse position: Some discussion followed around designating that this is a one-year position. Superintendent Olkowski indicated that it is difficult to fill a position when it indicates one year only. Some discussion followed. Stephen Looke stated that these positions benefit from the merged district; this is a shared expense that can easily be distributed, and can serve the communities as needed. Lori Bibeau stated that when a position is approved off-cycle, such as this, the contract that is offered is always a one-year contract.

- 4.2 **Authorize Central Office Safety Renovations for COVID-19:** Flor Diaz Smith moved to authorize the Business Administrator and Central Office Facility Committee to complete the short-term renovations as delineated in the July 1 memo, and to examine long-term solutions for space shortage for central office. Seconded by Chris McVeigh. Lori Bibeau described the planning that has occurred to date, and she reminded the board that at a later board meeting, the board will be asked to take additional action about appropriation of funds. Jaiel Pulskamp asked if there is the option of working remotely for central office staff. Lori Bibeau explained that some staff have been working remotely; however, there are days when a greater number of staff are sharing the space. She anticipates that in the fall, assuming students and staff are back on site, the central office staff will be back on site as well. Kari Bradley indicated that he would like information about why items #3 and #4 are appropriate long-term action items. Lori Bibeau explained that the air circulation issue is related to an air conditioning unit that is located in a space that will be closed in as part of the renovation, therefore needing to be relocated. Flor Diaz Smith stated that while she agrees with items #1 and #2, she does not think now is the time to consider items #3 and #4.

Chris McVeigh moved to amend the motion to authorize completing the process of exploring short term renovations noted in 1, 2, and 3 above. Flor Diaz Smith agreed with this amendment. The amended motion reads: **Flor Diaz Smith moved to authorize the Superintendent to continue the process of exploring short-term renovations noted in 1, 2, and 3 as delineated in the July 1 memo from Superintendent Olkowski.**

**Seconded by Chris McVeigh.** Lindy Johnson stated that she would like to be conservative in considering plexiglass as a solution. Diane Nichols-Fleming indicated that when the building was initially constructed, it was touted as sustainable and state of the art and she thinks that the board needs to be mindful of that.

**This motion carried unanimously.**

- 4.3 Finance Committee Meetings: Flor Diaz Smith asked whether it makes sense to schedule a Finance Committee meeting in light of these proposed changes. Superintendent Olkowski shared that the task force committees are creating long lists of items and he will be looking to the Finance Committee and the board for recommendations and decisions about funding. Stephen Looke stated that he would appreciate having as

comprehensive a list as possible, as these request items will need to be prioritized. He would like to extend the maximum flexibility possible to the Superintendent around the

purchase of protective equipment, as guidance comes out. He suggested that the Finance Committee create a recommendation to that effect. Flor Diaz Smith would like for the Finance Committee to meet before July 15th as there is a lot of information to consider.

5.0 Personnel (Action)

5.1 **Approve COVID-19 Coordinator: Chris McVeigh moved to authorize the hiring of COVID-19 Coordinator, who would be a nurse, to serve for the next school year. Marylynn Strachan seconded. This motion carried.**

5.2 **Approve Additional School Nurse: Marylynn Strachan moved to authorize the hiring of additional school nurse positions as described. Seconded by Dorothy Naylor. This motion carried unanimously.**

6.0 Future Agenda Items:

- Marylynn Strachan shared that she is resigning from the board as her family is moving to Massachusetts. She stated that her children have not been able to access education here. She asked the board to continue to carefully consider access to education for all students; she recommended that the board utilize the expertise of Dan French and to consider data in the work ahead.
- Scott Thompson stated that the board will need to fill the Middlesex board vacancy.
- Jonas Eno-Van Fleet reminded the board that we still need to fill a Worcester board vacancy.
- Lindy Johnson had forwarded an email about solar power credits; she suggests that the board take action at the July 15 meeting. Stephen Looke stated that the board should not be negotiating these contracts. He feels that an administrator should be bringing a recommendation to the board for action; the board should not be deliberating with a contractor at board meetings.
- Dorothy Naylor stated that she would like to participate in the discussion.
- Chris McVeigh suggested that we begin the search for a new Business Manager and to consider an extended contract so that they might overlap with Lori Bibeau before her tenure ends.
- Board retreat
- COVID-19: Corinne Stridsberg asked whether there will be more information shared at the July 15th meeting about school opening in the fall.  
Diane Nichols-Fleming indicated that August 1st is the deadline for parents to submit plans for home schooling, so additional information by July 15th would be critical. Corinne Stridsberg indicated that she has not heard yet from the board whether parents will have the option to not homeschool but to keep their children home for distance learning.

7.0 **Adjournment:** The board adjourned by consensus at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa Stoudt, Board Recording Secretary