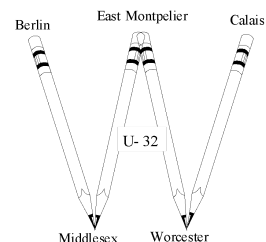


Washington Central Supervisory Union

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William Kimball
Superintendent



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

Washington Central Unified Union School District Board **Approved Meeting Minutes**

5.22.19
6 PM – 8:30 PM

U-32 Room 128/131, 930 Gallison Hill Rd, Montpelier

approved 6-5-19

Board Members Present: George Gross, Chris McVeigh, Lindy Johnson, Flor Diaz Smith, Scott Thompson, Dorothy Naylor, Jonas Eno-Van Fleet, Marylynne Strachan, Jaiel Pulskamp

Administrators Present: Bill Kimball, Superintendent; Jen Miller-Arsenault, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Kelly Bushey, Director of Special Services; Lori Bibeau, Business Administrator; Aaron Boynton, Berlin Principal; Cat Fair, Calais Principal; Matt Young, Doty Principal; Alicia Lyford, East Montpelier Principal; Aimee Toth, Rumney Principal; Steven Dellinger-Pate, U-32 Principal; Jody Emerson, U-32 Assistant Principal

Others Present: Matthew DeGroot (Worcester), Kyle Landis-Marinello (Middlesex), Rick Kehne (Calais), Michael Duane (East Montpelier), Jerome Lipani (ORCA), David Delcore (Times Argus), Ellen Knoedler (East Montpelier)

1.0 Call to Order: Superintendent Kimball called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. Board members and community members introduced themselves.

1.1 Reception of Guests: Superintendent Kimball thanked everyone for coming together on the board.

1.2 Agenda Revisions & Board Comments: Flor Diaz Smith shared that the East Montpelier School Board had met, and had prepared a statement of thanks to WCUUSD board members.

Scott Thompson stated that he intends to make a suggestion to the board at this meeting, to defer the action agenda.

1.3 Public Comments & Correspondence

2.0 Board Organization

2.1 Elect a Chairperson: **Dorothy Naylor nominated Scott Thompson. Seconded by Marylynne Strachan. Lindy Johnson nominated Jonas Eno-Van Fleet.** He asked what that entails;

Superintendent Kimball described the role of the chairperson, typically. **Jaiel Pulskamp seconded. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet nominated Flor Diaz Smith. Seconded by Lindy Johnson.** No more nominations were heard.

Scott Thompson shared his perspective that we are in this as equal partners. Chris McVeigh stated that he encourages a free flow of information between the chair and the other board members.

Flor Diaz Smith shared that she feels the boards have worked so hard together, she has been dreaming of this moment when the board comes together. She feels that the board is a learning community. She spoke about the need for collaborative leadership and engaging the community.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that if the board is interested in a board chair that is a “blank slate,” then he is; however, it may be that this board needs a chair who has experience in this first year. Chris McVeigh suggested that, if a vote results in a tie of two candidates then the bottom candidate(s) would not be included in a second vote. It was agreed by board members. A vote was called:

Votes: Jonas: 2

Scott: 5

Flor: 2

Scott Thompson was elected chair.

Scott Thompson asked whether any of the guests at the meeting had anything that they would like to contribute. Rick Kehne stated that he would like to participate but he wanted to ask whether the board will allow discussion throughout. Scott Thompson stated that it will.

Matthew DeGroot offered an update on the superintendent search. He explained the process to date which has resulted in two finalists. The Executive Committee will interview the two finalists tomorrow and bring one forward to the WCSU Supervisory Union Board next week. He noted that the Secretary of Education has signed off on both candidates. He invited board members to attend the meeting next week.

2.2 Elect a Vice-Chair: **Chris McVeigh nominated Flor Diaz Smith. Seconded by Lindy Johnson.** No more nominations were heard. This motion carried unanimously.

2.3 Elect a Clerk: Chris McVeigh nominated Jonas Eno-Van Fleet. Seconded by Flor Diaz Smith. No other nominations were heard. **This motion carried unanimously.**

2.4 Establish the Time and Day of Regular Monthly Meetings: Superintendent Kimball suggested that it helps to meet on the first and third week of the month. He suggests Wednesday or Tuesday - not Monday, since vacations and holidays often interfere with Monday.

Jaiel Pulskamp and Marylynne Strachan indicated that 6:30 start time would work. Flor Diaz Smith noted that a later start makes for a longer day for administrators.

Chris McVeigh moved to establish time and day of regular meetings: first and third Wednesday at 6:30. Seconded by Jonas Eno-Van Fleet, this motion carried unanimously.

2.5 Establish the Newspaper of Record and Locations for Official Posting: Superintendent Kimball suggested Times Argus. He suggested that two locations are named, but that others are included less formally (for example, schools.) **Flor Diaz Smith moved to establish newspaper of record, Times Argus, and two locations for official posting: U-32 and WCUUSD central office. Seconded by Lindy Johnson.** Discussion: Lindy Johnson suggested including all of the schools and

the town offices, as well as the website; however not included as official posting places. **This motion carried unanimously.**

3.0 Discussion Agenda

3.1 WCUUSD Budget

3.1.1 Overall Budget

3.1.2 WCUUSD Capital Fund

3.1.3 Warning: The board discussed and took action below.

3.1.4 Communication Plan & Annual Report

Scott Thompson explained why he had suggested deferring action. He indicated that as a brand new board, we are presented with a budget. He noted that even though he has been part of creating this budget, this new board needs to know it thoroughly and “own it,” and he feels that it is unfair to new members to ask them to make a decision that they are not prepared for.

Flor Diaz Smith indicated that she is surprised at this suggestion, after all of the work that has been done together; every board supports its piece of this budget. She feels that it is up to us as board members to study this, and later, when we have established the culture to work together, to discuss and develop a budget for the coming year. It is important to support our administrators.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked what would be the result if we do not approve this budget today. Superintendent Kimball explained that we need to post a warning for a vote on the budget, at least 30 days in advance. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked, how would Scott Thompson recommend we proceed if the action is deferred and a budget is not passed before July 1st. Scott Thompson explained his understanding that the board would be able to borrow funds under the statutory authorization, up to 87% of the current year budget. He stated his preference that the new board have the time to carefully consider this budget. Chris McVeigh expressed his concern around the timeline between now and the end of the school year, to allow for time to carefully consider a budget together, with need for input from administrators. He does not feel that funding, or having money to operate, is an obstacle to not voting a budget today; what he feels is the obstacle is having the time with administrative support to consider the budget.

Superintendent Kimball stated that in August the Executive Committee had discussed and made the recommendation that the budget be developed as it has, by each individual town and then combined together. That is the proposed action tonight.

Rick Kehne stated that, as a community member, and as a board member, he believes it is a mistake for this board as a new entity to “rubber stamp” a budget and to not do its due diligence and carefully consider the budget. Rick Kehne indicated that there is a court case around the issue that, for example, he as a Calais tax payer, is forced to take on the debt of other towns, for example, East Montpelier. He noted that we are in a tough place, and our students are in a tough place, but it is by the doing of the legislation.

Kyle Landis-Marinello stated that each local budget has been passed. The court case will have two more decisions before July 1st, one being about the “forced debt” issue, and secondly, whether everything should be on hold until the Vermont Supreme Court makes a decision. He noted that the budget has two components: the amount we are agreeing to spend, and how you collect the money. That is also being voted with this budget. He noted that according to the documents provided tonight, Calais and Worcester’s taxes will

increase significantly and East Montpelier's will decrease significantly. He suggested that the board wait until August to have a vote.

Chris McVeigh asked for clarification from Lori Bibeau, specifically around bidding to borrow money to start the school year. She noted that a bank takes at least two weeks to respond to a bid, and then the bank's board needs to approve.

Flor Diaz Smith stated that the process of creating a budget together collaboratively will take time. This is a unique circumstance and we are needing to take a leap of faith. She indicated that she is concerned with the morale of our administrators.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked - if the process of meshing the seven budgets together was not sufficient, then why are we addressing this now? Some discussion followed around some of the ongoing issues around the Act 46 process.

Dorothy Naylor indicated that she has been very concerned about the debt issue. She feels that by voting on this budget, it feels that we are accepting of the debt issue. She can't vote for the budget for this reason, and she can't ask her community members to vote for it. Matthew DeGroot stated that the conversation has trended away from being fiscally responsible to opposition to the merge, which he believes is more the "sticking point." He asked to hear from administrators, about the impact of not approving this budget tonight.

Rick Kehne stated that at this point, there is great debate on this issue in court. He stated that Calais is very much against it; this will create a rift between towns. If we waited until we had some clarity from the courts, then we are in a position to move forward. He stated that we are in an uncomfortable situation but it is the responsibility of the legislators. He feels that if the board approves this budget and backs us into a corner, then it is the responsibility of this board and it will create some problems between towns that are working hard to come together.

Superintendent Kimball shared that he has never seen the administrators so unraveled, over the prospect of having no funding mechanism in place on July first.

Chris McVeigh asked some logistical questions about the bidding process for accessing loans, considering, for instance, if a budget is not approved by voters. He asked about the idea of having a "proposed budget." Some discussion followed around the understanding of the 87% of current budget provision, if a budget is not approved by July 1st.

Matt Young (Doty Principal) stated that 87% of the current budget would cripple Doty School and feels the decision to defer approving a budget is risky for the kids.

Kelly Bushey (Director of Student Services) expressed concerns about the summer program which begins on July 9th. She indicated that not passing a budget is short sighted, as the summer program is required, and she believes if the program is not up and running as planned then the supervisory union will be faced with litigation around providing FAPE. As a Berlin resident, she is ok with her taxes going up as it is for the kids.

Kyle Landis-Marinello reiterated that the courts will be making a decision within the next month and he believes that will have an impact on the long haul.

Jaiel Pulskamp stated that she would appreciate time to look through the budget document carefully as she believes it is a matter of financial inequity. Jonas Enos-Van Fleet asked Dorothy Naylor and Jaiel Pulskamp whether they require closure on the tax issue before they are willing to vote to approve this budget.

Steven Dellinger-Pate (Principal, U-32) stated that in his experience, this is the least understood budget he has ever been asked to develop. He needs to know what funding is going to be available; the more uncertainty that exists in the system, the harder it is to plan forward. He stated that if the board does not come to consensus then it ties the hands of the administrators.

Scott Thompson moved to defer the vote on the budget and the warning. Seconded by Dorothy Naylor. Three in favor. This vote failed.

George Gross asked, would it make sense to reaffirm what was stated at the organizational meeting, that no decisions tonight shall be interpreted as consenting in any way to a forced merger.

Dorothy Naylor moved to approve the WCUUSD budget in the amount of \$33,854,769, and that this shall not be interpreted as consenting in any way to a forced merger. Seconded by Chris McVeigh. Discussion: Scott Thompson reviewed this budget, which, as he explained, is a “mash up” of the seven budgets from each of the schools and the central office.

Jonas Enos-Van Fleet indicated that he would like to spend some time tonight talking through this budget before taking action. Some board members indicated that staying late tonight is not tenable.

Michael Duane asked to remove funding from this budget for the Vermont School Board Association. Scott Thompson indicated that he would like to have this discussion item on a future agenda.

Kyle Landis-Marinello asked for clarification around tax rates. Lori Bibeau explained. Marylynne Strachan asked for clarification about the required timeline.

Jonas Enos-Van Fleet asked members of the Transition Board - was this budget approved for this board's consideration? Board members indicated that it had been, by unanimous vote. Lindy Johnson stated that her vote implied that she as a Transition Board member had considered this budget and was approving it. Other board members did not agree that this had been implied in their action on local boards. Jonas Enos-Van Fleet indicated that it seems this board is in a bind, because the board itself is here against the will of a great number of people. He asked what mitigation of the tax issue would be necessary to support this action. Scott Thompson stated that this has been discussed to a great degree and has not been mitigated. Bill Kimball stated that the state department of taxes is the only entity that sets tax rates and collects education tax dollars.

Jonas Enos-Van Fleet stated that this issue of debt seems to be the sticking point and yet it does not seem like an issue that will be resolved in the near future.

A vote was called. This motion carried unanimously. Dorothy Naylor stated that she believes some people believe that her opposition to the budget has been around a merger. Her problem is not about merging school districts; it is about debt.

Rick Kehne stated that, as a resident of Calais, that it is more than simply debt; it is not a “one issue” debate.

3.2 Amendments to the Articles of Agreement

3.2.1 Review Amendments

3.2.2 Warning

3.2.3 Communication Plan

3.3 Meeting Protocols: Superintendent Kimball suggested some meeting protocols. He suggested that board meetings rotate to the school buildings in the unified district, and that the school be responsible to have student and staff presentation. He suggested that the board enact policies about how they will operate - for example, what are the public participation practices going to be? How to get an item on the agenda? Superintendent Kimball and Scott Thompson will work on a list for the board to consider at future meetings. Chris McVeigh asked about student representation: how will this be determined? Steven Dellinger-Pate explained how student representation is determined at U-32. He recommends that this board take part in determining student representation.

3.4 Governance Processes & Committees: Superintendent Kimball suggests that the board wait to determine committees and committee membership until they have gotten their work as a whole board underway.

3.5 Plan for Policy Review & Adoption: Superintendent Kimball stated that this board will need to approve certain policies before July 1st; this will be on a future agenda.

4.0 Action Agenda

4.1 Approve the WCUUSD Budget: (please see action taken in 3.1)

4.2 Recommend Articles of Agreement: **Chris McVeigh moved to warn the amendments to the Articles of Agreement, so that voters have a chance to weigh in on them, whether to approve or not. Seconded by Marylynne Strachan.** Discussion: Chris McVeigh explained that the Amendments Committee had worked on these amendments to articles that voters are allowed to vote to amend. Discussion continued and action was taken below in 4.3 *

4.3 Approve Warning for Budget & Articles of Agreement: **Chris McVeigh moved to approve the warning and article as presented. Seconded by Lindy Johnson.** Discussion: Dorothy Naylor pointed out a typo in the warning - that it indicates Articles 1 through 5, but there is only 1 article.

Kyle Landis-Marinello stated that he believes there should be verbiage in the warning that indicates the sentiment that a vote in favor of this budget does not indicate consent in any way to a forced merger. He also stated that if the board is seeking transparency then it should share information about tax impact to the towns. Some discussion followed around

adding language to the warning. Superintendent Kimball stated that the language in the article is not allowed to change. Some discussion followed around adding language to other parts in the warning.

Superintendent Kimball reminded the board of the timeline and indicated that changing the language in the warning will push back the timeline.

Chris McVeigh suggested that the verbiage around “not indicating consent” be added in a paragraph immediately following the article. He suggested including tax impact information as well.

The warning is published but on the voting ballot, only the article is stated.

Flor Diaz Smith suggested that the board will discuss at a later date, how to roll out information to the public.

Rick Kehne suggested that the information around tax impact should be very clearly explained.

Chris McVeigh moved to amend the motion to include the language, after the article, on the warning: voting for this budget shall not be interpreted as consenting in any way to a forced merger. Seconded by Jonas Eno-Van Fleet. This amendment carried unanimously.

A vote was called on the motion. This motion carried unanimously. Chris McVeigh explained that he feels it is important to provide an opportunity for the voters to weigh in on these amendments.

Flor Diaz Smith stated that, after listening to discussion tonight, she thinks it might be wise to not act quickly on amendments, to let the default articles come into play and to address these amendments at a later time, to allow for thorough discussion.

Rick Kehne indicated that the original article and the amendment should be shared with the community.

Ellen Leonard stated that she feels these amendments need thoughtful explanation.

Chris McVeigh moved to amend the motion to remove Articles 16 (4) and 17 (5). Seconded by Dorothy Naylor. A vote was called on the amendment. This motion carried.

Jaeil Pulskamp stated that she has not had time to review these amendments, and that she is not comfortable taking action tonight.

Discussion followed around a timeline to work on amendments to articles.

***A vote was called on the amended warning. In favor: 5; Opposed: 4. This motion carried.**

4.4 Approve WCUUSD Annual Report:

Flor Diaz Smith moved to approve the WCUUSD Annual Report as presented.

Seconded by Lindy Johnson. Discussion: Jonas Eno-Ven Fleet stated that he would like the board to resolve that we are going to do everything possible to mitigate the debt issue. He indicated that he feels it is important to communicate this to the communities very clearly so that the voters of towns that are facing a tax increase know that the board is

aware and intends to do what is possible to mitigate this. **This motion carried unanimously.**

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet pointed out that the annual report lists Rumney and Doty as towns; this will be corrected.

4.5 Approve Minutes of District Organizational Meetings (will do this at next meeting).

5.0 Future Agenda Items

- capital fund
- VSBA
- retreat
- discussion of internal organization
- policy
- how to run meetings
- committee discussion
- update on litigation

June 5, June 12, then discuss June 19 (which has some conflicts/ graduations), June 26

Kyle Landis-Marinello indicated that the feeling of this meeting is much different from the local school meetings, where communication is more open and reciprocal, and that he will likely not attend future meetings. He stated that voters are being asked to come together to vote on the exact same budgets they have already voted on, except that the tax impact will be different for each town.

Rick Kehne indicated that he believes when people from the community come to meetings they should be provided time to engage in discussion with the board. He believes that this board will need to engage in very careful outreach to the communities.

6.0 Adjournment: **Dorothy Naylor moved to adjourn at 9:06 p.m. Seconded by Jaiel Pulskamp, this motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Stoudt, Board Recording Secretary