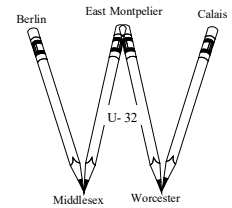


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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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Meagan Roy Ed.D.
Superintendent



**Washington Central Unified Union School District
School Board Meeting
In-Person with Virtual Option
U-32
930 Gallison Hill Rd. Montpelier, VT
1.4.23 6:00-9:00 PM**

Board Members Present: Diane Nichols-Fleming, Ursula Stanley, Lindy Johnson, Daniel Keeney, Mckalyn Leclerc, Kari Bradley, Flor Diaz Smith, Maggie Weiss, Ursula Stanley, Jonas Eno-Van Fleet, Natasha Eckart Baning, Eric Andersen

Administrators Present: Superintendent Meagan Roy, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Principal Steven Dellinger-Pate, Technology Director Mark Kline, District Operations Manager Michelle Ksepka

Others: ORCA Media, David Delcore, Michael Duane, David Lawrence

1. Call to Order: Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 6:00.

2. Welcome

2.1. Adjustments to the Agenda: no adjustments

2.2. Reception of Guests: Flor Diaz Smith welcomed Phil Gore.

2.3. Public Comments: no public comments at this time

3. Presentation and Discussion: *Board Learning (Phil Gore)* Phil Gore presented to the board on the topic of school board impact on student outcomes, and school board self-assessment. Phil Gore asked for board feedback about the topics that he discussed.

- What is your board doing to affect student achievement?
- How is your board making decisions?

Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that the topic of clarity is important - e.g. setting parameters around budget development. Clarity has been identified as important in the start of our work. We have worked hard to agree to disagree. We are able to see all perspectives and we know that this is part of our journey. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet - this board has hard-won solidarity - we understand that we are all working in good faith. People follow an effective leader if they feel the process has occurred in good faith. We should protect and cherish that culture on the

board. Re: effect on student learning: We have provided clarity to administration about our goals/ parameters - where we want the focus/ the trend to go. Flor Diaz Smith - we have made strides, e.g. our Ed Quality Committee strives to be data-informed. The board has made strides over the past few years to be informed, to know what are best practices, how to support administrators (remove obstacles rather than create obstacles.) Through our Justice Coalition, we continue working toward equity. The power of the board comes from all of us working together. Regarding clarity - simplify and be more clear in what we are asking of our administration. We have diversity of thought; she feels very hopeful. Phil Gore asked the board to consider: what would improvement look like? Diane Nichols-Fleming stated: Change in redundancy of conversations. Mckalyn Leclerc: We could be better at transparency, as a board. There is still some degree of mystery, specifically, recently, about the budget process. Moving toward year-round budgeting, being clear about the process and getting input from the community along the way. Ursula Stanley: Working on improving community engagement - how to get information back from the community - how to have them join us in conversations. This is something we talk about a lot as a board. Phil Gore: Part of the conversation around superintendent supervision, is to ask the question - what can we do to improve as a board? Are we doing anything as a board that is hindering your job? Kari Bradley: Being more effective would look like "more clarity." Maggie Weiss: We have a fair amount of turnover, there is a need for mentorship, continue to make that a priority so that we can avoid the redundancy and maximize our efficiency and clarity. We might not be as informed because we don't have "institutional memory." The way a school board functions is very unique and nuanced. Board members thanked Phil Gore.

4. Reports to the Board

4.1. Student Report: Student representatives were not able to attend tonight.

4.2. Superintendent/Central Office Leadership Team (COLT) Report: Superintendent Roy had provided a written report. She noted that we are heading into "hiring season." She invited questions or comments from the board. Lindy Johnson asked how much response do we get from the national job posting sites? Superintendent Roy stated that we have begun to track this data (just recently); she noted that, qualitatively, we get a better response from School spring. Diane Nichols-Fleming asked, would it be helpful to have the collective bargaining agreement language in the document that she had provided (explaining the hiring process)? Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked whether the document she had provided is a legacy or whether it was created by her; she noted that she had created this document based on discussions she had with central office staff and administrators, based on how this has been done in the past. Lindy Johnson stated that, if we are keeping data, we should keep data on longevity of people that we hire. Are exit interviews ever conducted? Superintendent Roy stated that they are provided when they are requested. There has been discussion of an exit survey for everyone. Maggie Weiss asked whether an issue earlier this year re: ambiguity in the hiring process at one of the schools has been resolved and is reflected in this document? Superintendent Roy stated that the hope is that this document clarifies the

process, but it will be tested as we move into hiring season. Superintendent Roy stated that part of the climate right now requires that hiring moves along fast and the hiring committee is comprised of members that can pull together quickly. Superintendent Roy indicated that this is a work in progress. Natasha Eckart Baning asked, what will be the process for allowing current staff to move around and fill positions before they are posted. Superintendent Roy referred to the contractual language that requires that a position is posted for at least seven days before hiring action can take place. Natasha Eckart Baning asked whether parents are included in the hiring committee for support staff. Superintendent Roy stated that at this time we are trying to turn the hiring process around so quickly that it is difficult to involve parents. Principal Dellinger-Pate shared that whenever possible at U-32, a student is included in the hiring committee.

- 4.3. Central Vermont Career Center Report:** Flor Diaz Smith shared that the CVCC is in the midst of negotiations and continues to work on the budget; at the next meeting, the second draft will be considered. February 27th is scheduled for budget informational meeting for CVCC.

5. Board Operations

- 5.1. Review of School Board Vacancies:** Diane Nichols-Fleming shared that the (30) signatures required for school board members can come from voters from any of the five towns within the district. Monday January 30 at 5 p.m. is the deadline for submitting paperwork to the town clerk. Flor Diaz Smith asked for board members to let her or other board members know if they don't intend to run for board. Ursula Stanley stated that she believes we should post on Front Porch Forum the information for running for the board. Kari Bradley stated that he feels we should be having these conversations and reaching out to the community much earlier than now (e.g. in October.) Some discussion followed around civic engagement. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that we have talked over the years about increasing the stipend offered to school board members in an attempt to attract members. **Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to increase the board member stipend from \$1050 to \$1100, and chairperson stipend from \$2100 to \$2200. Seconded by Kari Bradley.** Discussion: Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that she feels the bigger factor is around childcare expenses and this amount does not cover that cost. Do we have a pocket of money for people that would access childcare and eldercare financial assistance? That being said, she stated that, when considering a budget where we have to consider cutting positions, she is not comfortable with increasing the board stipend. Mckalyn Leclerc stated that she would be more supportive of providing supports for childcare or eldercare or, she has suggested in the past, providing a movie night for children of board members etc. to provide childcare while they attend a meeting. Superintendent Roy stated that the reality at this time is that we don't have the people to come in and provide child care (how would we staff it?) Having the ability to reimburse those costs to people might be more realistic at this time than providing the care. Kari Bradley asked, would a pool of money that is available to reimburse board members for child care or elder care be something we have to put to the voters? (No, this would not.) Mckalyn Leclerc stated that we could think creatively; e.g. we might enlist students to volunteer or use hours for community service to provide child care.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that he is disappointed; we talked about this last year and we agreed to ratchet up the amount each year. Some discussion followed around what would happen if the voters did not approve the amount that is listed on the ballot. Diane Nichols-Fleming suggested that the language on the ballot could reflect that we will increase each stipend by \$50. **The question was called. This motion carried with two votes of “nay.”** Diane Nichols-Fleming would like to be sure that we, going forward, begin these conversations earlier in the year: trouble shooting around barriers to serving on the board. If we are in agreement that we are going to ratchet up the amount each year, then we can discuss this in an ongoing way. Lindy Johnson shared that she had expressed concern around the way payment was made to board members; this had not been made clear. Flor Diaz Smith stated that this topic is on the Finance Committee agenda.

- 5.2. Budget Warning Language:** Board members reviewed the warning language including how their names are listed on the ballot. Flor Diaz Smith suggested that board members send an email to herself or Superintendent Roy indicating how they would like their names written on the warning.
- 5.3. Annual Report Format:** Review from the language from last year. Each principal had provided a brief write up. A table had been included regarding tax impact for each town. Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that people had been clear that they wanted to know what the staffing impacts are for each school; stating with clarity. Superintendent Roy indicated that the problem with highlighting reductions is that it doesn't explain what remains in place. Annual reports do not list all of the staffing that exists. She asked to what extent do we wrap this into the budget communication? Lindy Johnson stated, regarding the portion in annual report: “facts and figures” - she feels it is important to share enrollment numbers (she referred to the slide deck that Superintendent Roy and Susanne Gann had shared with the board). The board suggested keeping facts and figures for each school but also including a table to show enrollment trends.
- 5.4. Superintendent Evaluation Timeline:** Kari Bradley had provided an evaluation timeline. He reminded the board that we had set a goal that 100% of board members will participate in the survey. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet thanked Jen Miller-Arsenault for the work she did with the board last year to help create this document. Lindy Johnson also thanked Jen for her work in helping us transition.
- 5.5. Approve School Choice Numbers: Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved that U-32 Middle and High School agrees to join the Winooski Valley & Statewide Choice of Public High School Collaborative for the 2022-2023 school year, and to abide by the conditions outlined in the Articles of Agreement. U-32 will agree to accept no more than 10 students and will send no more than 40 students for the 2023-2024 school year. Seconded by Lindy Johnson.** Discussion: The board discussed the history of this annual board action. **This motion carried unanimously.**

- 6. Policy Committee:** Flor Diaz Smith shared that Chris McVeigh was not able to attend tonight. Superintendent Roy reviewed the following:

6.1. First Reading for Policy to be approved January 4, 2023: C13 Homeless Students; C5 Weapons & Firearms; E20 Building Use: Some discussion followed around the homeless students policy, including the McKinney Vento act. Superintendent Roy reviewed that the language in the Weapons and Firearms policy leaves some discretion when it comes to knives. Student conduct policy defines “weapon” in the same way that this policy defines weapon. Natasha Eckart Banning stated that the Policy Committee had discussed this policy at great length. Ursula Stanley asked how many people (and who) are involved in the discussion about what constitutes a weapon. Principal Dellinger-Pate indicated that it varies depending on the student and the situation - it is never one person - but sometimes if a student is on a plan there are more people at the table. Jen Miller-Arsenault stated that at the elementary school it has typically been at least three people. Ursula Stanley stated that when the board considers these things, there are at least eight people, but otherwise there can be as few as three people considering it and she worries about bias. Superintendent Roy shared some of the discussion that had occurred at the committee level - one of the concern was how much time is required to bring each issue to the board. Some discussion followed around ways to inform the board about the occurrences versus bringing each to the board. Ursula Stanley asked, if we are to adopt this policy, will it require a procedure update, and if so, when would this updated procedure be shared with families. Superintendent Roy indicated that the updated information would be shared with families upon adoption. Flor Diaz Smith asked whether this would be vetted by legal counsel. Some discussion followed around the definition of dangerous weapons. Superintendent Roy reviewed that not all dangerous weapons require by law a board hearing. She shared that we are required to provide data to the state around discipline and around fire arm expulsions but not around all dangerous weapon details. In regards to the Building Use policy, Ursula Stanley asked for clarification around the fee schedule/ rate sheet. Superintendent Roy stated that U-32 will have a rate sheet, and the elementary schools will have one consistent rate sheet. The rate sheet will be included in procedure, not in the body of the policy. Ursula Stanley noted that if the policy indicates that the board will approve the rules, she would like to see the rules to consider in advance. Ursula Stanley asked about specifics about various groups that use the buildings. She noted that some of the paperwork requirements put an onus on the volunteer groups as well as creates paperwork requirements for office staff. Superintendent Roy shared that this draft was modeled after what is currently working for U-32. Some discussion followed around Priorities of Use. For example, emergency shelter spaces, voting in school buildings. Flor Diaz Smith suggested that under “scope” the superintendent be included? Superintendent Roy noted that verbiage is included in the “easement” section that allows people to appeal the principal’s decision to the superintendent. Superintendent Roy stated that the idea of the policy is under “normal” circumstances, and for example, in the case of COVID-19, the circumstances were unusual and an emergency.

7. Consent Agenda

7.1. Approve Minutes of 12.15.22, 12.21.22 Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to approve the minutes of December 15th and December 21st. Seconded by Ursula Stanley. A few edits were suggested: one was to clarify people present at the meeting (some were excluded); there was some clarification around language so that the message is more clear. **This motion carried with noted edits.**

8. Future Agenda Items

8.1. Board Goals and Calendar: Board members reviewed the calendar. January 11th (6:15) will be warned as a community forum and will be virtual. Kari Bradley will share information about the upcoming board meetings including budget action and forum opportunities, as well as information about board elections, petitions, consents, candidate forms, etc. Maggie Weiss would like to include the stipend information in outreach efforts as well.

8.2. Central Vermont Career Center Budgeting

9. Board Reflection: Flor asked board members to reflect in the spirit of gratitude and appreciation. Mckalyn Leclerc stated she is grateful for the work we have done with Phil Gore, specifically around board membership as service and the importance of instilling that in our children. Natasha Eckart Baning spoke regarding adaptive elements - something we as a board strive to do: we want to look at things creatively and outside the box. We can always improve in that area but we are doing amazing work toward this. Ursula Stanley stated we can have differences of opinion and still have civil conversations and listen to each other; this is refreshing and positive. Also appreciated that we had more time tonight to dive into policy discussion. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet said that this board should be very grateful for the skills and dedication of chair and vice chair, and superintendent. Maggie Weiss stated she appreciates having the opportunity to have dialog before making decisions versus rubber stamping committee work - we are a working board, both in committees and when we meet as a full group. She appreciates the opportunity to work with Phil and to work with the Scholars in Residence; this is enriching. Daniel Keeney is appreciative of the size of the board - how many of us come engaged and ready to speak. Reflecting on clarity and regarding strategic planning, the self-awareness that we have to bring to the process is daunting - Superintendent turnover, COVID-19, consolidation - all of these things have created a daunting context. Kari Bradley stated that given the complexity of what we do, he gives us high marks for how we deal with things collectively - part of it is "Central Vermont culture" - some of it is leadership and much of it is the people. Another factor is that we are more alike than different, we are not exactly a "cross section" - this is a challenge; would like to see more diversity/ wider representation on the board. Diane Nichols-Fleming stated it's a chance to get to know people that I don't see in everyday activities, great appreciation for what Superintendent Roy brings to the table. Consistently responsive, that is very calming - we know we can get answers. Appreciates that Flor keeps us going! Lindy Johnson appreciates the trust in the group and also has trust that the information we are getting from the administration is accurate, and when she has questions, she gets a clear response. As a

board, we can say what we want and we are civil. Eric Andersen stated that we can have civil conversations when we don't agree; also thankful for the opportunity of hybrid meetings. He feels that the opportunity to participate in a hybrid manner will be appealing to people considering serving on the board. He expressed gratitude to Flor as chairperson. Flor Diaz Smith expressed appreciation to everyone on the board; she noted that we are all "learning to dance" together. She feels that we talked about this when we were interviewing for a superintendent: what would it feel like? And we are feeling it now. Superintendent Roy echoed what board members had said - this is a very high functioning board and she is grateful for the patience during her first year as superintendent.

10. Public Comments: Mckalyn Leclerc asked, is Doty the only school in the district that does not have a generator? Superintendent Roy stated that we will have an after-action review (re: the recent storm/ power outages). She gave kudos to the facilities crew. We also uncovered other things like which school is a shelter, issues around generators, etc., how to communicate with select boards and town offices - all of these issues will be reviewed.

11. Adjourn: The board adjourned by consensus at 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary