

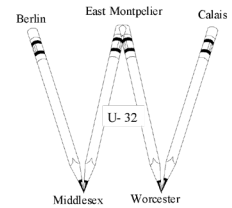
# Washington Central Unified Union School District

*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 U-32 Rm 128/131 930 Gallison Hill Rd. Montpelier, VT 6.21.23 5:30-8:15 PM

**Board Members:** Flor Diaz Smith, Jonas Eno-Van Fleet, Chris McVeigh, Kari Bradley, Maggie Weiss, Lindy Johnson, Mckalyn Leclerc, Natasha Eckart, Ursula Stanley, Joshua Sevits, Daniel Keeney, Eric Andersen, Jonas Eno-Van Fleet

**Others:** Superintendent Meagan Roy, Steven Dellinger-Pate, Mark Kline, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Kerra Holden, Michelle Ksepka, Susanne Gann, Barbara Korecki, David Delcore, David Hannigan, Laura Lafaille, Nichola Anderson, ORCA Media, Shane, Paul Hill, Don Fair, Melissa Tuller, Amy, Becky, Brian Emmons, Chris Temple, David Charles Lawrence, Julia Pritchard, Justine, Laura, Robert LeClair, Donna and Ryan Barr, Marianne and Matt Goodrich, Nancy Durgin, Jodi Parker, Jill Drury, Devin Smith, Jason Fielder, Carol Fielder Julia and David DeRosia, Jim Wild, David Butsch, Chris Butsch, Lori Hayer, Kathryn Lagerstedt, Traci Leibowitz, Matt Allen, Bonnie Pollard-Allen

- 1. Call to Order:** Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. She reviewed some of the happenings over the past few weeks at U-32. Flor Diaz Smith made a statement about the desire to hold space for each other and to acknowledge the commitment to a bright future for our children and the next generation, for the work of the school board tonight.
- 2. Welcome**
  - 2.1. Adjustments to the Agenda:** none

**2.2. Reception of Guests:** Flor Diaz Smith welcomed guests to the meeting and she invited public comments at this time for items that are not on the agenda. Public Comments: none at this time; please see below

**3. Presentation and Discussion: Post-Secondary Outcomes:** Jen Miller-Arsenault, Steven Dellinger-Pate, and Lisa LaPlante presented a slide deck: *Post-Secondary Outcomes*. Ursula Stanley invited board members to email if there are any details they would like represented in this presentation next time (next year) when this report is on the work calendar.

#### **4. Reports to the Board**

**4.1. Superintendent/Central Office Leadership Team (COLT) Report:** Superintendent Roy had provided a written report. She highlighted some of the details in the report. The board briefly discussed Strategic Planning. Daniel Keeney asked whether Steering Committee meetings are open to the public, including: are these meetings open to board members to attend? Flor Diaz Smith spoke about the desire to create focus groups, and that, yes, these meetings are open but they are not required to be publicly warned meetings.

**4.2. Central Vermont Career Center Report:** Flor Diaz Smith provided a 5-minute video from the Central Vermont Career Center.

#### **5. Finance Committee**

##### **5.1. Discussion/Action**

**5.1.1. Award Revenue Anticipation Note (RAN) and Reinvestment Bid:** Ursula Stanley moved to approve the revenue anticipation note for an amount not to exceed \$3,306,745 and investment bid with Union Bank and authorize the Board Chair to sign the loan documents on behalf of the Board. Seconded by Daniel Keeney, this motion carried unanimously.

**5.1.2. Authorize Scope, Budget, and Bid Document Development for FY-2024-25 Projects:** Ursula Stanley moved to authorize the use of capital reserve funds, not to exceed \$30,000, to develop the necessary scope, budget and bid documents for the Doty generator project in FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25 approved capital improvement projects. Seconded by Natasha Eckart this motion carried unanimously.

**5.1.3. Authorize Superintendent to Award Bids for Wood Chips:** Daniel Keeney moved to award the bid to supply fuel for the wood chip boilers at WCUUSD for the Fiscal Year 2023-24 to Cousineau Forest Products for \$72/ton. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried unanimously.

#### **6. Policy Committee**

**6.1. First Reading and Adoption for Policies: F3 Fire and Emergency Preparedness; F4 Access Control and Visitor Management:** Chris McVeigh shared that these policies are provided by VSBA as per legislature. **Lindy Johnson moved to adopt policies F3 and F4. Seconded by Natasha Eckart** Discussion: Kari Bradley asked about the verbiage that all of the community is responsible - what is meant by all of the community?

Chris McVeigh responded that this means that school staff as well as members of the community accept responsibility for safety, in the spirit of “see something, say something.” **This motion carried unanimously.**

- 6.2. Second Reading and Adoption for Policy: C29 District Equity Policy: Lindy Johnson moved to adopt Policy C29: District Equity. Seconded by Maggie Weiss.** Discussion: Kari Bradley asked whether it is wise to include language around the Humanities and Justice Coalition, since this might not be a long term entity. Superintendent Roy reminded the board that the language within the policy indicates that it is meant to be iterative and reviewed and updated on a regular basis. **This motion carried unanimously.**

## **7. Board Operations**

- 7.1. Berlin Nature Trails:** Superintendent Roy shared that the draft letter in the board packet had been vetted by legal counsel, to indicate the board’s support for the concept of walking trails. The walking trail would cross the land that is property of the school district. The town of Berlin had approached Superintendent Roy to ask for this letter of support. **Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to authorize the board chair to sign the draft letter as presented, with one edit: “Berlin School is...” Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously.**
- 7.2. IDEA-B Local Education Agency Plan (LEAP) Assurances:** This document had been provided in the board packet. Superintendent Roy indicated that this is a yearly authorization that the board takes. **Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to authorize the board chair to sign IDEA-B Local Education Agency Plan (LEAP) Assurances. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried unanimously.**

## **8. Consent Agenda**

- 8.1. Approve Minutes of 5.24.23: Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to approve the minutes of May 24, 2023. Seconded by Daniel Keeney, this motion carried unanimously.**
- 8.2. Approve Board Orders: Ursula Stanley moved to approve the board orders: dated June 1 - 21, 2023, in the amount of \$525,723.15, and dated May 18- May 31, 2023, in the amount of \$330,413.90. Seconded by Natasha Eckart, this motion carried unanimously.**

## **9. Personnel**

- 9.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE: Lindy Johnson moved to approve the following: New Teacher Nominations (for 23-24 school year)**
- **Nathaniel Schwartz - Library/Technology Integrationist – Calais**
  - **Lydia Faesy – Nurse - Doty**
  - **Michelle Lynch – PT Pre-K Teacher - Rumney**
  - **Christina Pollard - Interventionist – Doty**
- Seconded by Ursula Stanley.** Discussion: Daniel Keeney stated that he would like to know all of the staff turnover. Superintendent Roy indicated that the staff changes are reported at

each board meeting. He asked, when a community member asks him as a board rep a specific question about staff turnover or staff changes, where can he go for immediate information? Superintendent Roy suggested first going to the school principal. **This motion carried unanimously. New Principal Nomination (For FY 23-24 School Year): Lindy Johnson moved to approve the hire of Celia Guggemos - Berlin Principal. Seconded by Joshua Sevits.** Discussion: Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked whether there is a procedure in place for the hiring of building principals, and whether the procedure was followed in this case. Superintendent Roy indicated that the usual procedure was followed; there was a hiring consultant involved in the process, two nominees were provided to the Superintendent for the final selection. She described parts of the process including forums, interview questions, reference checks. Joshua Sevits asked whether it is clear to the staff that the final decision is made by the superintendent. Maggie Weiss asked how many staff members were on the interview committee? Superintendent Roy stated that there were three. **This motion carried; Maggie Weiss abstained from the vote.**

**Retirement: Robin Gannon – Classroom Teacher – EMES Lindy Johnson moved to approve the retirement of Robin Gannon, with great appreciation. Seconded by Daniel Keeney.** Discussion: Flor Diaz Smith shared that Robin Gannon had taught at EMES for over 40 years and her contribution especially to the science program is greatly appreciated. **This motion carried unanimously.** Resignations: **Lindy Johnson moved to accept the following resignations. Seconded by Ursula Stanley. This motion carried.** Chris McVeigh did not vote in favor of Deanna Murray's resignation.

Aaron Boynton – Principal – Berlin

Jeremy Avoli – Physical Education/Health Teacher – U-32

Mary Bove – English Teacher – U-32

Julie-Marie Bristol – Special Education Teacher – Berlin/Calais

Deanna Murray - Pre-K Teacher – Rumney

Sandra Wetzel – Special Education Teacher – Berlin

Shannon Miller - Classroom Teacher – Berlin

Jake Ploof – School Counselor – U-32

- 9.2. Update on Vacancies:** Superintendent Roy stated that we are moving through the hiring process, for example, as a result of some of the resignations from this evening. She stated that we are late in the hiring season at this point that we are moving candidates quickly through the process.

## **10. Future Agenda Items**

**10.1.** WCUUSD Board Retreat, August 8th

**10.2.** 2023-2024 Board Calendar: The board will discuss this at the board retreat on August 8th.

**11. Non-Discriminatory Mascots & Branding:** Flor Diaz Smith read from the Equity Policy.

**11.1. Traditions Protocol:** Jen Miller-Arsenault shared an overview of the use of the Traditions Protocol. Flor Diaz Smith explained that the board will use the protocol for discussion, followed by public comments, and the board will take action (and discuss further as needed.) Flor Diaz Smith reviewed the protocol:

**Ask yourself: “What is the identity of U-32? What is the purpose of this mascot and name?”**

- Use this rubric for deeper reflection:
- Is the name or mascot free of bias?
- Does this mascot or name deepen relationships with and among all students?
- This name or mascot activity disrupts systems of oppression.
- This name or mascot activity centers multiple perspectives and avoids marginalizing or oppressing others.

**What do students have to say about this? Consider the following:**

- Which aspects of the existing name can ensure the prohibition of school branding that directly or indirectly references other characteristics, references or stereotypes the likeness, features, symbols, traditions, or other characteristics that are specific to this name or branding might we keep as we actualize our commitment to humanity and justice?
- Which aspects of this branding might we tweak or modify as we actualize our commitment to humanity and justice?
- Which aspects of this branding might we stop or abandon as we actualize our commitment to humanity and justice?

George Gross is interested in the research of polling the student body? Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that the polling of the student body seemed to indicate that there was not a strong opinion one way or the other about the mascot. It did not appear that anyone was offended. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet reviewed that when the board had discussed this previously, a straw poll had indicated that the board members felt that the name “Raiders” does reference the repression of or violence toward others.

**11.2 Public Comment:**

**Julia DeRosia:** when she heard a board member report that the name “Raiders” made her cringe, it made her feel sad. She shared her experience with her children and the camaraderie and pride in the school and the Raiders. She explained that the concept of Raiders represented freedom, not violence. She stated that there is a better use of funds than to go down this avenue.

**Rob LeClair:** was part of the group of students who selected the Raiders name. He had served on the school board; his children were graduates and athletes; he was also in the Vermont legislature when this topic was discussed. He is troubled that someone is taking a

term that had been revered over the years and making it something that is not. He indicated that he has asked students and they do not feel that they have been given a voice. He feels that this is not an inclusive process and that the board is rushing to decision. He asked the board, if you are set on this route, to please take more time to consider. The name has held inspiration and pride for thousands of people. He reminded the board that they are representatives of the community.

**Jodi Parker:** she asked the board to allow the public to go over the two-minute mark. If the rebranding happens, who is paying for it? With the current shortage of para educators, custodial and kitchen staff, and the teaching staff not yet having a settled contract, spending this money would be a slap in the face to them. She stated that her child is a U-32 Raider and her husband is an alumnus. She stated that her daughter couldn't wait to become a U-32 Raider. She stated that the boosters will be asked to start over with a new brand, and to put to waste thousands of dollars of merchandise. She spoke about the definition of the word "raid." She stated that a shield (which the knight holds) represents protection.

**Carol Fielder:** Never once did she think of the Raider as oppressive; it was seen as a symbol of strength and pride.

**Dave Butsch:** spoke about what "raid" means to him, and that mascots are meant to be good luck charms. He stated that repression indicates hurting someone or creating damage. He hopes that when the board makes its decision they will make clear to all of the community why they feel that Raider indicates repression.

**Dave DeLarosia:** The pride that his children and family have taken: "Raider Nation" - is so powerful. It is family. He spoke about seeing students with their classmates, with their fellow athletes; the students are not exclusive, they are inclusive. He spoke about the students coming together for pride week, for raising the Black Lives Matter flag. He made the analogy of an emergency room - what people feel are personal emergencies are not always emergent. He noted when your only tool is a hammer, then everything looks like a nail. He stated that the students do not feel that the Raider name is oppressive.

**Kathryn Lagerstadt asked:** what is the board taking action on tonight? What are we trying to answer tonight? What would the timeline look like, should the board decide to move forward?

**Barbara Korecki:** taught art at U-32 for 30 years. She stated that 25 years ago the visual arts department had brought up this issue. The visuals of Raider and knight could be enhanced, for example, rather than carrying a jousting mallet (e.g. a musical instrument). She stated that these enhancements could make it more inclusive to everyone. The Raider is very important to U-32 and she would never want to change it, but U-32 is much more than a knight on a horse.

**Jim Wild:** U-32 Raiders have been in existence for over 50 years. He stated that this school is highly revered. He does not see how the school mascot of a Raider has any

impact on the school's positive culture and success. He is not in favor of changing the mascot.

**Bonnie Pollard-Allen:** Students love the Raider name; it represents family; it represents inclusivity. She stated that her children and their friends do not feel like they are being heard in the discussion. She asked that we spend our money more responsibly, for example, on increasing staff or increasing professional development opportunities for staff. She suggested changing the policy instead of changing the mascot. She feels this is a waste of time and resources. Flor Diaz Smith clarified: the board approved the policy. She noted that if the board decides to move forward, we would take an entire year and participate in a meaningful process (after strategic planning.) She noted that we have a schedule for how we replace uniforms, regardless; we do not have to consider spending all of the money at one time. Flor Diaz Smith read the sample verbiage for the board motion: "I move to determine that, after reviewing the Raider mascot and associated imagery, the Board finds that while the Raider has no history of discriminatory imagery, it is found to be in violation of Policy F2 because it "...directly or indirectly references or stereotypes the likeness, features, symbols, traditions, or other characteristics that are specific to....any person, group of persons, or organization associated with the repression of others. The Board will ask Administration to engage in a thoughtful process of re-naming ourselves with deep input from students. This will occur after the Strategic Planning Process." Flor Diaz Smith indicated that we are closing public comments and we will now move into board discussion and action. She asked board members to consider those who are not in the room and do not feel represented. She reminded those present that the policy began with the work of the legislature. We wouldn't change policy in order to change an outcome. She reiterated that we are not talking about money/ funding today when making this decision. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that he has paid a lot of attention to the name change discussion at the national level. He noted that the same arguments about tradition and what the names mean, have been made in the past about names that needed to be changed (e.g. "Indians"). It is the community, the school, not necessarily the name. He stated that there is not a cadre of people who are angry and want to change the name. We adopted the model policy without changes. A complaint was brought to us from outside; we received the complaint and considered it. The second part of the policy gave the board pause: "...directly or indirectly references or stereotypes the likeness, features, symbols, traditions, or other characteristics that are specific to.... any person, group of persons, or organization associated with the repression of others." He stated that we have heard a great deal of feedback about what Raiders can mean. He stated that this is a hand that was given to the board; this is not something we want to be spending our time on. He stated that any name that references violence to humans is problematic. He provided examples of team names and mascots. He shared that the reading of the policy would implicate many of the names that are currently in existence. It is about whether we think that this policy precludes us from having a mascot that references human violence. He hopes there is a way to acknowledge that the name is in tension with the policy; he also noted that the

policy has language to indicate that the superintendent or designee shall review the policy language and see if we want to edit. He suggested that one of the actions that the board could take is to ask the superintendent to review the policy language in light of the issue around violence. Maggie Weiss indicated that it has been helpful to have the past two months to discuss this and receive emails and have robust conversations with students and community members, faculty, etc. She stated that she takes seriously that she represents the will of the community and not her own personal feelings. She echoed Jonas Eno-Van Fleet's suggestion around asking the superintendent to review the policy language. Daniel Keeney stated that he *does* believe that financial implications are a consideration. He also indicated that there could be a financial implication if legal recourse were taken, if the board is found in violation of the policy which was drafted by the legislature. He stated that he does not want to ignore the fact that there can be others who have a different response to the mascot name, Raider. He indicated that the legislation is broad and that it seems it could be challenged. He stated that he still believes we are in violation of the policy but he does not feel we should change the mascot. Joshua Sevits stated he believes the name Raiders is in violation of our policy; he believes it is worthwhile to change it. He has spoken to community members and alumni; he believes there are many who are willing to examine their own bias and trust that others are not simply trying to stir something up. He reminded those present that this came from a complaint from an outside entity. He would not like for this decision to be taken away from the board, if legal recourse were sought. He shared his responses to the rubric which was provided: the Traditions Protocol. He stated that if we were to vote on the motion today he would vote in favor of it. Lindy Johnson stated that she does not believe it violates the policy. We have a mascot that does not agree with the name - we have a knight but we are the Raiders. She stated that based on the history when the name was created, there was no bias. She thinks of the mascot through the lens of sports - the goal in sports is to win; she does not see this as oppressive. Chris McVeigh stated that the word "Raiders" is ambiguous. It depends on how you are looking at it, whether it violates the policy. He stated that he appreciates Barb Korecki's suggestions around enhancing the mascot. He stated that he does not think we should change the policy; he thinks that if we want to emphasize the positive aspect of the Raiders we could change the name, e.g. "Raiders of Justice and Humanity." The name Raider has a lot of cache and resonance with the people that we have heard from. He stated that in order to right what is wrong in history, it will cost us. He stated if it were a yes or no vote tonight, he would vote to maintain the name as it is. Kari Bradley stated that this topic doesn't have much to do with the core mission of the board; he is not pleased as a board to be spending time addressing it. He stated that his favorite part of the public comment tonight was hearing how much it does mean to people. He stated that we really haven't heard any evidence from students that anyone has been harmed by the symbol, and yet the policy is clear. Raiders and knights are associated with violence. He feels that it violates our policy and that it is problematic - if we don't address it at this time he believes



it will come up in the future. If we were to vote tonight he would vote in favor of changing the name (after strategic planning takes precedence.) Eric Andersen indicated that this is a hard decision to make; the policy is an interpretation of the law; taken to the extreme you could make the argument that almost any name has a connotation of violence. What did it mean when it was chosen to be mascot and name? Sometimes when things are foggy with the law you look at intent. The intent of creating Raiders was not to harm; the intent was positive. He reiterated that he appreciates Barbara's suggestion to take the imagery to the next level to create a more inclusive image. If we were to vote tonight he would not vote in favor of changing the name. Ursula Stanley stated that her opinion has not changed; she feels that this name violates our policy. She stated that if we are considering the good and the bad and the innuendoes of the word, she is considering the bad; we do not have the luxury to explain to everyone what was the intent. She spoke that the population of Native Americans in Vermont is very small; they do not have a voice in this discussion; she would like to amplify their voices. As leaders in our community it is our duty. We can set an example; we can have a flexible mindset. Our students are strong and proud. She stated that it is not the intent but the impact that matters. That is where harm can happen. She stated that she would vote that the name/ mascot is in violation of our policy. Natasha Eckart thanked the public for their attendance and engagement and the email input. She is a U-32 alumni. She stated that the pride that she takes from U-32 is from the community she had here; it is not because of the name. Whether or not her children are U-32 Raiders, they are U-32 alumni. She stated that when she looks up the definitions of "Raider," she believes it is in violation of the policy. She stated that as a member of the community, some of the input and responses that she received did not make her feel safe. She does not think we need the name Raider in order to be a proud and unified community. She stated that it doesn't make her feel safe to have her children in this space, given some of the responses that were received. She believes the name Raider is in violation of the policy. Mckalyn Leclerc stated that this has been a difficult and interesting discussion. She stated that she has changed her mind more than once during the ongoing conversation. She stated that when she reads the policy narrowly, we do appear to be in violation. She thinks it needs to be a narrow definition of Raider in order to apply to a narrow portion of the policy. She believes it has been a great process to engage in these conversations. She does not feel it is clear cut enough to make an argument that it violates the policy. However, she does not think it should be the end of the conversation; she likes the idea of broadening or enhancing the mascot to make it more inclusive. Flor Diaz Smith stated that we cannot change the policy. The legislature provided the precise language. She spoke about the need for a sense of belonging. She asked the board to consider, how can we be agents of change? Matt Allen asked, how many people who were polled are members of the athletic programs? He asked his middle school baseball players, what they felt it meant to be a Raider and they responded that they think it is stupid to change the name. Chris McVeigh moved to vote on whether the Raider name is in violation of our policy. This motion was

not seconded and therefore died. Ursula Stanley would like to have the motion be declarative: move that the school brand name violates the policy. **Ursula Stanley moved that, after reviewing the Raider mascot and associated imagery, our branding, the board finds that the branding violates policy F2. Seconded by Kari Bradley.** Discussion: Chris McVeigh clarified that this refers to both parts A and part B of the policy.

A vote was called.

**Role call:**

Jonas: N

Maggie: Y

Daniel: N

Joshua: Y

Lindy: N

Chris: N

Kari: Y

Ursula: Y

Natasha: Y

Mckalyn: N

Eric: N

Flor: Y

**Tied vote; the motion does not carry.**

Flor Diaz Smith noted that we will take up this question at the next board meeting (August 23rd) since we do not have the full board present tonight for this vote. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked, is it practice to revisit a vote? We have not had a full board present for years, but it is not practice to revisit. Flor Diaz Smith stated that the board can decide at a future meeting whether and when to revisit this. This may be a topic of discussion at the board retreat.

## **11.2 Public Comments**

### **11.3 Action**

- 12 Executive Session: Student Residency Exception Request: At 8:51 p.m., Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to go into Executive Session, to include Superintendent Roy, for a student residency exception request. Seconded by Chris McVeigh; motion carried unanimously. At 9:12 Ursula Stanley moved to exit Executive Session. Daniel Keeney second. Motion carried unanimously. Daniel Keeney moved to accept the administration's recommendation regarding the Student Residency Exception Requests. Natasha Eckart seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**
- 13 Executive Session: Negotiations: Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved that as public discussion of negotiations would put the District in an adverse position, that the Board move into**

**Executive Session at 9:13, for the purpose of discussing negotiation strategy, to include Superintendent Roy. Mckalyn Leclerc seconded; this motion carried unanimously. At 9:29 Jonas moved to leave Executive Session; seconded by Lindy Johnson; motion carried unanimously.**

**14. Board Reflection**

**15. Adjourn: The board adjourned by consensus at 9:30.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary