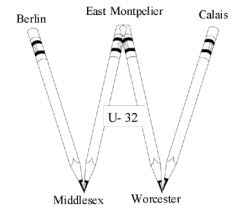


Washington Central UniUnion School District

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

1130 Gallison Hill Road
Montpelier, VT 05602
Phone (802) 229-0553

Meagan Roy Ed.D.
Fax (802) 229-2761



**Washington Central Unified Union
School District
School Board Meeting
U-32
Gallison Hill Rd. Montpelier, VT
2.21.24 6:15-9:00 PM**

Board Members: Flor Diaz Smith, Kari Bradley, Amelia Contrada, Mckalyn_Leclerc, Ursula Stanley, Daniel Keeney, Zach Sullivan, Joshua Sevits, Natasha Eckart, Diane Nichols Fleming, Jonathan Goddard

Others: Superintendent Meagan Roy, Steven Dellinger-Pate, Jen Miller-Arsenault, ORCA Media, Beth Parker, David Delcore, David Lawrence, Jes Wills, Jody Emerson, Lisa Hanna, Lisa LaPlante, Don, Sonya Rhodes, Susanne Gann, Amy Molina, Alycia Lyford, Honi Bean Barret, Allen Gilbert, Celia Guggemos, Shannon Miller, Shelley Vermilya, Kerra Holden, Gillian Fuqua, Michael Sherwin, Linnea Darrow, Willow Mashkuri, Maggie Weiss, Jonas Eno Van Fleet, Michelle Ksepka

1. Call to Order: Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 6:19 p.m.

2. Welcome

2.1. Adjustments to the Agenda: Flor Diaz Smith would like to add an opportunity for public comment after Act 127 discussion as well as report out from the Finance/ Configuration Committee earlier this evening. **Mckalyn Leclerc moved to accept these agenda changes. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously.**

2.2. Reception of Guests: Flor Diaz Smith welcomed those present and thanked them for their engagement.

2.3. Public Comments: Jonas Eno-Van Fleet urged the public to support the school budget.

2.4. Celebration of School Board Members: Flor Diaz Smith presented a token of appreciation to board members: Jonas Eno-Van Fleet, Maggie Weiss, Kari Bradley, and Willow Mashkuri. Kari Bradley expressed appreciation and gratitude to Steven Dellinger-Pate and to Jen Miller-Arsenault; to Flor Diaz Smith and to Adrienne Magida. He stated that what we do is collective and cumulative. He also thanked his family, especially his wife; he indicated that sacrifices are made to serve on the board! Jonas Eno-Van Fleet acknowledged

Scott Thompson, Stephen Looke and Diane Nichols-Fleming. Maggie Weiss indicated that she is hopeful for our district during really challenging times. Hopeful that people will feel ready and available to work with the board; hoping for some write-ins for board seats on this coming Town Meeting Day.

3. Reports to The Board

- 3.1. Student Report:** Willow Mashkuri and Linnea Darrow reported to the board about recent student happenings.
- 3.2. Superintendent/Central Office Leadership Team (COLT) Report:** Superintendent Roy shared some highlights from the written report; she also invited Kerra Holden to share from the report: Ability Challenge
- 3.3. Central Vermont Career Center Report:** This written report was included in the board packet. Questions/ comments were invited.
- 3.4. Principals' Report:** This written report was included in the board packet. Questions/ comments were invited.
- 3.5. VSBA Report:** Flor Diaz Smith shared from the written report. She stated that there are several webinars offered by VSBA and that Ursula intends to attend the webinar related to onboarding new board members.

4. Board Operations

- 4.1. Act 127 Discussion: Mckalyn Leclerc moved to maintain our proposed budget. Seconded by Ursula Stanley.** Discussion: Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that the information that was shared makes it very clear and understandable. Joshua Sevitts stated that he does not support this proposed budget, as he does not feel that it is responsive to the feedback we have received from our public. Mckalyn Leclerc stated that she supports the proposed budget, as she does not think there are any cuts that we can make to the budget at this point that will have a significant impact on the tax rate. Daniel Keeney shared that leaving it up to the voters to make an unequivocal statement (vote) about the budget as it stands makes the most sense to him at this time. Natasha Eckart passed. Kari Bradley stated that he is in favor of reducing the budget. He is compelled by the other reasons that have been shared; however, he feels that we should do everything feasible to avoid a budget vote of defeat the first time around. He proposed to accept the original proposals (for reduction) and then identify at least another \$500K to remove; he realizes it does not have a very significant impact on the tax rate but he feels that it demonstrates responsiveness and fiscal responsibility. In order to do that we would need to empower our administration to propose the reductions and then plan to accept the administration's recommendations at this point. Ursula Stanley has felt conflicted about this; she feels that we need to be fiscally responsible and responsive and yet she is very concerned about the timeframe. Jonathan Goddard is in favor of supporting the budget as it stands. The state of Vermont has been part of the problem in that education spending is so heavily weighted on localities. He realizes this is a gamble - some of the rates and increases are significant - but there are ways

to address this going forward which includes the legislature looking at ways school funding works in Vermont. Part of the responsibility for the position we are in lies with the legislature and has for a long time. We are scrambling to fix a situation that we did not create. He goes with the will of the voters. Amelia Contrada indicated that cutting the positions of nursing and counselors during one of the worst mental health crises of our times is a challenge, but it has pushed our communities to be creative and to come together to address this burden. She feels that we need to consider how to lower the budget. Looking at the data and the models that have been implemented, we can reduce the budget and we can meet the needs of our students. Zach Sullivan is skeptical that any cuts will have an impact on the budget. He feels that cutting nursing and counseling positions will cause people to vote against the budget. He also stated that he feels some people are going to vote against the budget because it is so large, regardless of whether we bring the tax rate down one percent. He suggests leaving the budget as proposed in its current iteration. Mckalyn Leclerc does not feel that we can make any significant changes to the budget that will have a big tax impact; she feels that we should leave the budget in its current form.

- 4.2. Public Comment:** Flor Diaz Smith invited public comment. Michelle Ksepka stated that changing the process now would do nothing but confuse the voters. People have their ballots already. She stated that at this time, she suggests leaving it to the voters, and if the budget is voted down, the work begins to come up with possibilities. Shannon Miller asked, what the plans of the board are, moving forward, to address future years and future budgets. We are currently facing an unprecedented challenge. Flor Diaz Smith stated that there is a configuration study underway and the board will begin to consider ways to address the budget in future years. Flor Diaz Smith stated that, at this time, in the 11th hour, we do not have the time to make a systematic change; we are not in the position to micromanage positions, etc. She stated that the board could consider the budget as it is but also discuss a scenario, should the budget fail. The board at that point would have clear information that we need to do something, taking the administration's recommendations and making further cuts. Kari Bradley stated that if the budget fails and the board has to consider cuts, we still might be facing the possibility of/ the question of "is this too much? Is this enough?" He suggested that we begin to gather information from our constituents to inform next steps, should we have to consider a failed vote. Daniel Keeney stated that he worries about the message to the community. He might not agree with, but would understand why, someone would vote against it. We are talking about serious proposals about reconfiguration and some major systemic changes; we need to share this information with our communities. Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that we are considering the impact to our communities, and once we hear the will of the voters, we will do the hard work that comes next. Mckalyn Leclerc stated that she prefers to approach this work with an optimistic outlook and not come from a place of fear; Flor Diaz Smith stated this is the budget that we as a board came to after months of deliberation and consideration of data. **Vote: The motion carried with one vote of "nay."**

Kari Bradley asked if the budget fails, when is the next board meeting? Superintendent Roy stated that last year the plan had been to call an emergency/ special board meeting if the budget fails, to reorganize the board and get started on the next iteration of the budget. Amelia Contrada asked would the next step be, hypothetically, to revert to the budget that had been discussed in the past. Superintendent Roy indicated that what the board would do is provide a dollar amount to reduce the budget, and plan for a special election. Flor Diaz Smith stated that at that point (hypothetically) the board would be in a position to make a dollar amount parameter to the administration but be prepared to accept the budget that the administration comes back with.

4.3. Process for Board Self-Evaluation: Flor Diaz Smith shared that this is part of the board work plan; the hope is for 100% board participation.

5. Finance Committee

5.1. Award Bid for U-32 Baseball Refurbishment Project: Ursula Stanley moved that the Board authorize the allocation of \$73,921 additional capital reserve funds to the budget for the completion of the U-32 Baseball Field Refurbishment Project and approve awarding the U-32 Baseball Field Refurbishment Project contract to Dirt Tech Company, LLC in an amount not to exceed \$201,170. Seconded by Zach Sullivan. Discussion: Diane Nichols-Fleming asked, is this in addition to what is in our budget? Susanne Gann explained that the bids all came in above the amount that was planned. **This motion carried unanimously.**

5.2. Award Bid for District Combined Capital Projects: Ursula Stanley moved that the Board approve awarding the WCUUSD 2024 Combined Construction Project contract to E.F. Wall & Assoc., Inc. in an amount not to exceed \$591,147. Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously.

5.3. Review & Approve Project Manager Contract: Ursula Stanley moved that the Board authorize the superintendent to sign the contract with WF Project Inspections for his services as Owner Project Manager and Clerk of the Works through 2/9/25, not to exceed \$87,500. Seconded by Daniel Keeney. Mckalyn Leclerc asked for clarification around the role of the Clerk of the Works. Some discussion followed around the critical role. **This motion carried unanimously.**

5.4. Configuration Study: Flor Diaz Smith gave an overview from the work of the Finance Committee/ Configuration Study - we would like to present to the board at the April 3 meeting. She shared some excitement over some of the opportunities that were shared, for example, the possibility of moving 6th grade students to U-32. Zach Sullivan stated that, in light of our discussion of the budget tonight, we need to put enough “meat on the bones” in the plan so that people can see we are truly addressing the budget and student enrollment concerns. Superintendent Roy wondered about sharing some of the work to the community at the Annual meeting, for example, the timeline, the criteria or priorities, our plans for messaging. Board members agreed this is a solid plan. Daniel Keeney suggested that we indicate: there are savings but we do not have specifics yet. Zach Sullivan stated that there are some real positives and opportunities. Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that the gist of the

discussion earlier was around opportunities and a sustainable system and less about cost savings.

6. Personnel

- 6.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE: Ursula Stanley moved to accept the following resignations: James Haseltine – 5/6 Classroom Teacher – EMES; Uriah Proctor Mattingly – School Wide Student Support – Calais; Daisy Scarzello – Classroom Teacher – U-32 1.0 FTE; Kim McKellar – Work Based Learning Coordinator – U-32 .8 FTE. Seconded by Daniel Keeney; this motion carried unanimously. Ursula Stanley moved to approve long-term substitute for the 2023/24 school year: Bernadette “Bernie” Skrocki – Interventionist/Special Educator – EMES. Seconded by Zach Sullivan; this motion carried unanimously.**
- 6.2. Superintendent Search Update:** Flor Diaz Smith shared that the minutes are shared in the board packet; the steering committee has come together; there is still room for one more student. March 27, 2024 is the hope for “Gauntlet Day.”

7. Consent Agenda

- 7.1. Approve Minutes of 2.7.24: Ursula Stanley moved to approve the minutes of February 7, 2024 Seconded by Kari Bradley; this motion carried unanimously.**
- 7.2. Board Orders: Daniel Keeney moved to approve the board orders in the total amount of \$ 654,651.10 Seconded by Diane Nichols-Fleming, this motion carried unanimously.**
- 7.3. 2023-2024 Board Work Plan:** Next meeting is board reorganization; will provide update on strategic planning. Kari Bradley reviewed the communication that will be shared with the public about the board’s action around the budget.

- 8. Executive Session: Performance Evaluation: Diane Nichols-Fleming moved at 7:34 to go into Executive Session, to include Superintendent Roy. Seconded by Mckalyn Leclerc. This motion carried unanimously. At 8:23, Diane Nichols-Fleming moved to exit Executive Session, Seconded by Mckalyn Leclerc, this motion carried unanimously.**
- 9. Adjourn: At 8:24, Ursula Stanley moved to adjourn. Seconded by Amelia Contrada, this motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary