

# Washington Central Unified Union School District

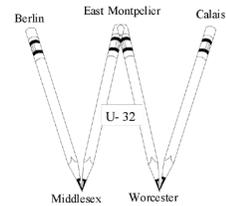
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*WCUUSD exists to nurture and inspire in all students the passion, creativity and power to contribute to their local and global communities.*

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Meagan Roy  
Superintendent



## WCUUSD Finance Committee

### Meeting Minutes

5.22.24 5:00-6:00 PM

In-Person

U-32

Rm 128/131

930 Gallison Hill Rd

Montpelier, VT

**Present:** Flor Diaz Smith, Superintendent Roy, Principal Dellinger-Pate, Daniel Keeney, Zach Sullivan, Ursula Stanley, Mckalyn Leclerc, Susanne Gann, Mark Kline, Michelle Ksepka, Chris McVeigh, Kealy Sloan, Ellen Knoedler, Robert M, Allen Gilbert, Lauren, Brian, Deborah Bloom, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Alicia Lyford

**1. Call to Order:** Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. She acknowledged that this is the first meeting of the Finance Committee to talk about configuration, after the budget vote, and that the committee and board have a great deal of work ahead but the potential for creative problem-solving to ensure opportunities for all of our students is great.

## 2. Discussion/Action

**2.1. Configuration Study:** The committee considered the document *Communication & Engagement Planning - Configuration*. Some discussion followed about the desire to engage the public and the concept of "marketing." At Phase 2, (the goal date is September 18), the decision forward will have been made and the board will need to inform the public about what will be on the ballot for November. Chris McVeigh stated that it would be important to engage with Select boards of towns that may be affected; we will need a good deal of time to have these conversations and receive input. Mckalyn Leclerc asked whether we will have time to create a "Plan B." For example, a parallel process, in case the feedback we are receiving (for example, from Calais and Worcester) is not in favor of the option. Superintendent Roy stated that if there is a desire to create another model, aside from the models that came from the process to date, it is still a possibility. She also stated that board meetings might need to communicate to the public that the board went through a process of community engagement and of modeling different scenarios and the two models "on the table" resulted from that process. Mckalyn Leclerc asked, for clarification, as these are questions she is getting, whether it was considered to close just one school, considering all five of the elementary schools, and not just Doty and Calais. Superintendent Roy stated that all of the various options were considered and that all of these considerations were fleshed out in open meetings, with input from stakeholders. She stated that it might be necessary for board members to "push back" on the narrative that there is work going on behind closed doors. Flor Diaz Smith reminded the board of the criteria that was established in order to consider configuration going forward.

Daniel Keeney stated that this feels a bit like a straightjacket. He stated that his impulse is to break the process open because he thinks that some of the communities that are likely to be affected would like to see the process openly. He suggested, e.g. a phase one event having the entire board inviting the entire select board (for example, Calais and Worcester), for an open work session. Ursula Stanley stated that this plan as laid out is meant to “break the process open” for example, engaging with the public in forums. Mckalyn Leclerc stated that people are asking for more specific details such as cost savings. Susanne Gann stated that we have included some information about cost savings in the slide deck that was shared previously; Superintendent Roy stated that more work will need to be done to build a mock budget with a hypothetical configuration and we have not yet gotten to that grain size, as the focus has been to pass the 2024-25 budget. She stated that we could create a more specific mock-up based on the model(s); she would need to know when the board wants this information. Discussion followed around the idea of cost savings. Superintendent Roy stated that we could affirmatively say that, even with expanded opportunities, there will be cost savings, with either of the two models. Zach Sullivan offered to work up talking points for board members. Superintendent Roy asked whether the board would like the administration to build the mock-up budgets for both models and by which date.

The committee discussed the following timeline:

- a round of forums by June 30 (this information would not be available by then)
- second round of forums by end of August (this information could be available by then)

Steven Dellinger Pate stated that we would be building from the estimates that we currently have created to date, and we will be able to flesh out more details as the process moves along. Chris McVeigh asked about considering the option of merging central office systems with Montpelier. This topic has come up. Superintendent Roy stated that this would be a merge process similar to Act 46. Susanne Gann stated that we are already currently exploring the idea of sharing resources with Montpelier by contracting some services (for example, the possibility of tech services?). That is different from a merge. Flor Diaz Smith stated that she would like to get clarity for our administration so that they know what is asked of them, and some responsibility from committee members as far as the next steps. Chris McVeigh suggested scheduling forums with Select boards on evenings when they are already planning to meet. Daniel Keeney, Mckalyn Leclerc, and Chris McVeigh will work on planning the forums. Zach Sullivan will work on talking points (with Flor Diaz Smith) period:

- End of July - finishing forums
  - During August - narrowing down options and creating models with specific information
- Flor Diaz Smith would like to engage consultants in the process, the purpose being to organize and facilitate. She suggested using the consultants who had helped with the Strategic Planning process. (during phases two and three) Chris McVeigh suggested also engaging moderators from each town to participate in each forum. Ursula Stanley stated that it is important that we communicate to the community who is stating that the board is not listening - that we have listened and have considered various options and feedback and have determined that some of the suggestions/ creative thinking won't work in reality, and we have continued to discuss this in open session. Chris McVeigh stated that it is a function of dialogue - which is why it is important to give communication plenty of time and consideration. Daniel Keeney suggested planning forums based on focus groups. (E.g., select boards, unions, students)

**3. Future Agenda Items**

**3.1. Next Regular Meeting:** June 11, 2024

**4. Adjourn:** The committee adjourned by consensus at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Lisa Grace