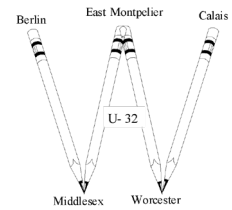


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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

1130 Gallison Hill Road
Montpelier, VT 05602
Phone (802) 229-0553
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**Washington Central Unified Union
School District
School Board Meeting
6.11.24 6:15-7:45 PM
U-32
Rm 128/131
930 Gallison Hill Rd
Montpelier, VT**

Board Members Present: Flor Diaz Smith, Ursula Stanley, Mckalyn Leclerc, Chris McVeigh, Zach Sullivan, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Kealy Sloane, Daniel Keeney, Natasha Eckart, Michelle Ksepka, Amelia Contrada, Elizabeth Brown

Others Present: Superintendent Meagan Roy, Susanne Gann, Principal Steven Dellinger-Pate, Gillian Fuqua, Celia Guggemos, Chani Waterhouse, Alicia Lyford, Allison Fayle, Anya Skibbie, Brenda Vernile, Deborah Bloom, Elise Walsh, Ellen Knoedler, Harriet Buchucchio, Honi Bean Barrett, Jamie Moorby, Dena Cox, Julia, Kathleen Bookchin, Kerra Holden, Krysta Zabriskie, Lila Richardson, Maggie Ericksen, Robert M, Russ and Marla Edson, Scott S, April Davis, Caitlin Howansky, David Lawrence, Dell Waterhouse, Ginnie Humphreys, Jennifer Chambers, Thomas Hanna, Vanessa Weinstein, Will Baker, Joran Nobler, Lisa Hanna, Deborah Bogart, Rosemary Leach, Sarah, Heather Scandale

- 1. Call to Order:** Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.
- 2. Welcome:** Flor Diaz Smith thanked Superintendent Meagan Roy for her work at WCUUSD. She also thanked Mark Kline for his work and wished him well as he retires.
 - 2.1. Adjustments to the Agenda:** Mckalyn Leclerc asked if we could allot a longer period for public comments. Flor Diaz Smith stated that we have allotted 30 minutes (as opposed to 15 minutes.)
 - 2.2. Reception of Guests:** Flor Diaz Smith welcomed the guests present and thanked them for their participation; she invited public comments at this time and reminded them of the two-minute time limit.
 - 2.3. Public Comments:** Jordan Nobler read a letter from Worcester community members that had been shared with the board. He asked to consider creative solutions; believes the board is moving too quickly toward school closures of Doty and Calais. Five asks: (1) create new timeline, (2) concrete data that will illuminate pros and cons, (3) get “real” about equity, (4) explore other options (e.g. community schools) beyond school closures, (5) engage with communities authentically (more channels to engage with the board). Lisa Hanna asked for more details that are specific about the public forums. Specific data points that will address questions that have already been asked. Discuss shared community engagement plan.

Language in “phase 3” in the document that has been shared assumes predetermined outcomes (speaks about RIFs). Deborah Bogart stated some of the Worcester community does not own a cell phone and is not connected online so misses FPF news - there needs to be a better way to communicate and include all. Noah Weinstein asked what are projected net tax savings? How would potential net savings affect actual tax burdens? What is the cost per student breakdown per school? What are class size recommendations? Will there actually be cost savings? What are opportunities for students if consolidation occurs? Has WCUUSD explored merging with Montpelier? What does research say about students being bussed to attend schools in towns outside their own? Does the board have any thoughts about what they would do if Worcester or Calais does not pass a school closure vote? Chani Waterhouse expressed a heartfelt thanks to Superintendent Roy for her vision and her expertise. She shared that Worcester does not have declining student enrollment. Pre-merger, Doty had lowest per pupil spending for 6 out of 7 years leading to merger. Pre-merger, Doty students performed well academically compared to peers, most notably students on free/ reduced lunches and on IEPs. “The writing on the wall” for Doty - what does this mean? What is the writing? She thanked the board and honored their work, having served on the Doty board in the past. Rosemary Leach s heard there is cost savings but in the goals for reconfiguration there is no mention of cost savings. She stated that the main thing in Worcester that would make people consider school closure would be a huge cost savings; that being said, she really does not want to consider Doty closing. Sarah stated we are here in support of our school; it is not an “us” versus “them” - she feels that the school is crucial as far as a hub to our community. For the sake of moving forward, our goal is for the betterment of our kids, excited about creating a new future. Would be in favor of considering other creative options versus closing schools. Very excited for the June 26 meeting. How can we all “win” together? Deborah Bloom had sent an email to the board in May, had asked to slow down the timeline. She shared Flor Diaz Smith’s response to her email. She stated that she fears that the hypothetical models we are considering will have the greatest impact on the neediest of communities. Caitlin Howansky feels the timeline is incredibly rushed and not sufficient to consider the future impact of the students currently in the school and the children in the community who are not yet school age. She stated that it is important to hear from all of the residents; she herself cannot make it to a meeting at this time. Flor Diaz Smith stated that the board is listening to the questions and is creating a FAQ document. The aim that has been created from the work of the committee is the September date; this does not have to be static, we can change our mind when we get there. Chris McVeigh reiterated that the timeline has been created, but we can allow for more time if that is what is needed. He invited people to attend the forums later this month and to come with concrete solutions, and prepared to brainstorm.

3. Board Operations

3.1. Review Communications Plan: Flor Diaz Smith shared that the Configuration Committee had met before this meeting. She reviewed:

- The goal of the public forum is to listen 70% and share information less than 30%
- We will create a goal as a board: what are we going to focus on? We want to listen, we are open to new ideas, we are going to gather data, some questions will go into the “parking lot,” and some questions will be able to be addressed based on the criteria that has been created.

She reviewed the structure of the meeting: the majority being an interactive process; how to use the information that we gather from the forum? She reiterated that September is an aim but we do not want to tie our hands to that if needed. She spoke about the budgeting process being year -round. Chris McVeigh stated that the goal of the forums is to have dialogue with the communities, to have ideas going back and forth, concerns, ideas for different structure, all with the idea that we are facing difficult economic times with overall declining enrollment and increase in expenses. He assured people that there is no option that is chosen; we are looking for open dialogue. He thanked Worcester folks for being engaged and invited them to remain engaged and attend the forum. Flor Diaz Smith spoke about the idea of “World Cafe” for the forum interactive process. She noted that we had agreed to share some information before the meeting so people could consider it. Natasha Eckart asked, could we think about other ways to get information available to community members in paper form, outside of electronics, so that they can consider the information before the meeting. Superintendent Roy stated that we have some of the previous presentations, in PDF form, in video form, etc.; we can talk about how to share this information in advance of the meeting. Regarding World Cafe: having some structure to the conversation creates a process so that everyone can have a voice. She noted that some of the early Strategic Planning meetings were structured as such. She briefly explained the World Cafe process. Some discussion followed about dividing board members for forum meetings, including some discussion about offering an online option - would this be on the same night? Zach Sullivan stated that it could be spreading the board members thinly. Suggestion to have the online offering on a different night since people might not be able to attend the June 26. Diane Nichols-Fleming stated it is more about the structure of the meeting versus the number of board members who attend each. Mckalyn Leclerc proposed that two members from each town be at their town forum. Natasha Eckart stated that she feels it is important that both she and Mckalyn attend the Worcester town forum. Daniel Keeney emphasized that, for as many board members as there are, there are many different ways of approaching this problem. Nobody intends to go into the forum with a defensive posture; we are looking forward to exploring and visualizing change with folks who show up. Hopes for a lot of positivity. It is in everyone’s best interest to have all of the best possible options on the table for consideration. Flor Diaz Smith stated that she feels that it is important for other members of the board to attend the Worcester forum to get their perspective. Chris McVeigh stated that since we are planning multiple forums, it would be important to combine towns at future forums, for a different perspective, “cross-pollination.” He also noted that he believes for the towns that are potentially affected, it will be important to have the board representatives from their towns to be present. Zach Sullivan noted two issues - (1) we have not spent time considering other options, and (2) give airtime to the idea of transforming Berlin, e.g., childcare. Do we need to have two separate sets to consider both? Flor Diaz Smith stated that the purpose of the June community forum is to be open to conversation, using the parameters that have been set, to hear from the community versus sharing simulations that have been created. Diane Nichols-Fleming asked for clarification around what is meant by “parameters.” (This list was created from work at a previous board meeting.) Superintendent Roy suggested that, at the forum, asking the question “these are the parameters that have been set. What else? What are responses to these parameters?” Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that sometimes when thinking about what you want, you think more about what you don’t want - is it important to ask the question, what are you afraid of? What are you afraid that you will lose?

Natasha Eckart stated that we have heard from the community - here are the things that you say we might gain, but here are the things that we could lose. Ursula Stanley - what are you afraid would be lost? What concerns do you have? (Not to belabor the “fear” concept.) Kealy Sloan said the flip side of the question could be “What are your concerns with the status quo?” There is a reason we are exploring these things and it is because of the last few years of budgeting. She would like to understand what is substantively different with a longer timeline. What are the costs? Chris McVeigh suggested following up “What are you concerned about” with “Why?” What would make the potential transition easier for your community/ for your students? If there is closure, there is an incredible sacrifice that the community is asked to make? What will you gain in return? Ursula Stanley suggests asking, if consolidation happened, what would you hope for the students/ what would you want for them? Michelle Ksepka suggests - what opportunities would you want to see for your children? Superintendent Roy suggested that the questions be shared back with the board so that they can consider the meeting. Amelia Contrada stated that the first forum is not to share simulations or data based on the letters/ data we have received, could we categorize what we have already heard as a way of prepping, in the spirit of staying with a data-focused way of synthesizing; to acknowledge that we have the bare bones of how to get started. Flor Diaz Smith suggested having chart paper to collect “parking lot” issues/ questions. Some discussion about the FAQ document - can this be a living document? Kealy Sloan said since the first forum is about getting more ideas, how are we looking at streams of answers on the two proposals that had originally come out, versus having an open community forum? This could be dissatisfying to people who attend the forum and feel we are not addressing the elephant in the room (not addressing the two proposals/ simulations.) Superintendent Roy clarified that her understanding is that the committee had pivoted and decided this first forum would not be used to talk specifics about the two simulations. Daniel Keeney suggested after the community forum, the Configuration Committee meet and create a rubric for preliminary consideration for some of the brainstormed solutions. Then whatever rises to the top, we ask the administration to do their best to model. Mckalyn Leclerc likes the idea of a rubric but would like people to know it in advance. Flor Diaz Smith stated that the parameters that have been agreed upon would be the gist of the rubric. Daniel Keeney stated that having a very specific rubric in advance might stifle creativity. Natasha Eckart stated we had originally indicated in our parameters that finances were not one of them; now we are changing this and saying finances are part of it - if we are asking the community to give ideas, there should be something more tangible than just the parameters. Are these the right parameters? She does not think they are; she thinks there are other things we should be considering as well. She stated that asking the community to come up with ideas for what they want to look at feels like saying, “You didn’t like what we came up with, so what do you want?” She thinks it is important: if we are asking the community for their ideas then we need to be willing to carefully consider their ideas. Superintendent Roy suggested using the checklist that had been used in the past when considering models, and possibly adding to the checklist. She suggested a balance of structure and openness. She feels that we have the pieces already in place to provide a rubric for consideration. Flor Diaz Smith asked how many board members would attend June 26. She stated that we would do our best to have board members representing their towns at the forum. The Steering Committee will meet to iron out the logistics for the June 26 forums.

4. Reports to the Board

- 4.1. **Student Report:** Natasha Eckart shared that the middle school track team went to states; she shared some of the student records that were achieved. She expressed great pride in the middle school track and field team. Principal Dellinger-Pate shared some of the end-of-year activities, e.g. Senior Awards; Unity Day (Move up Day) which is led by upperclassmen, Sports Banquet, Girls Lacrosse will be playing for the championship this weekend at Norwich, graduation on Friday. Daniel Keeney shared that the Art Show was held last Friday.
- 4.2. **Superintendent/Central Office Leadership Team (COLT) Report:** Superintendent Roy shared a written report. She shared that Heidi Dimick has had a great impact in the short amount of time she has been at the central office. Superintendent Roy shared that we are continuing to work on reporting procedures to the board. Daniel Keeney asked if there was a place where board members could access procedures. Superintendent Roy stated that we have not yet published our procedures manual but that is something that we intend to do.
- 4.3. **Central Vermont Career Center (CVCC) Report:** Flor Diaz Smith shared some of the updated information.
- 4.4. **Configuration Committee Update:** (this had been discussed at length at tonight's meeting)
- 4.5. **Education Quality Committee Update:** Ursula Stanley has included the memo that outlines the work of the committee from the previous meeting. She reviewed the discussion about equity indicators.
- 4.6. **VSBA Update:** Flor Diaz Smith stated that there is an action alert right now and she encouraged board members to write to their local representatives. Superintendent Roy stated that the Yield Bill that was vetoed has a blue ribbon committee in place to follow up; she also encouraged board members to contact their representatives, as this will be a very important issue.

5. Finance Committee: Susanne Gann shared that we will end the year with a healthy fund balance, better than had been projected. She had provided an updated quarterly financial report.

- 5.1. **Award Revenue Anticipation Note (RAN) and Reinvestment Bid:** Daniel Keeney moved that the board approve the revenue anticipation note for an amount not to exceed \$2,938,750 and investment bid with Union Bank and authorize the Board Chair, Board Clerk and District Treasurer to sign the necessary loan documents. Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously.
- 5.2. **Award Wood Chip Bid for FY 25:** Kealy Sloan moved to award the bid to supply and deliver wood chips for WCUUSD for the Fiscal Year 2024-25 to Cousin Au Forest Products for \$74/ton, and to award the bid to supply and deliver wood pellets for WCUUSD for the Fiscal Year 2024-25 to Vermont Renewable Fuels for \$295/ton. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously.
- 5.3. **Authorize Superintendent to Award Bids for Fuel for FY 25:** Ursula Stanley moved to authorize the Superintendent to award bids for propane and #2 fuel oil on behalf of Washington Central Unified Union School District (WCUUSD) for Fiscal Year 2024-25. Seconded by Daniel Keeney, this motion carried unanimously.

6. Personnel

6.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE: Ursula Stanley moved to approve the following: Amy Koenigbauer – U-32 Pilot Program, Anna Gerretson – U-32 Social Studies Teacher, Cat Fair - U-32 Assistant Principal for Special Education Discussion: Diane Nichols-Fleming asked for clarification for the position of Assistant Principal/ Special Education Director at U-32. Steven Dellinger Pate shared plans for a principal search for Calais Elementary School. Some discussion followed about the transition plan. A contract begins on July 1. Superintendent Roy stated that the board's role is to take action yes or no on hires and the administration's role is to ensure a seamless transition. Michelle Ksepka pointed out that the name and the salary are missing from one of the nomination forms. Natasha Eckart asked for specifics about one of the positions. This information needs to be shared in the Executive Session. Elizabeth Brown stated that this is an important year for the little school of Calais. She hopes that there will be many opportunities for the community to have a voice in the hiring process. Ursula Stanley amended the motion to include Anna, Amy; and Dane. Kealy Sloan accepted the amendment. This motion: **Approve the following: Amy Koenigbauer – U-32 Pilot Program, Anna Gerretson – U-32 Social Studies Teacher, carried unanimously. Michelle Ksepka moved to accept the following resignations: Kevin Richards – U-32 Social Studies Teacher, Julia Pritchard – U-32 Special Services Coordinator Seconded by Natasha Eckart. Discussion: There was some clarification as to why Cat Fair's resignation is not included. Her contract ends so there is no need. This motion carried unanimously.**

7. Consent Agenda

- 7.1. Approve Minutes of 5.22.24 Kealy Sloan moved to approve the minutes of May 22, 2024. Seconded by Mckalyn Leclerc. Discussion: Natasha Eckart noted that she was not present at that meeting. This motion carried, with this noted edit.**
- 7.2. Approve Board Orders: Ursula Stanley moved to approve the board orders from 5-16-24 through 6-12-24 for \$884,233.59 Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried unanimously.**

8. Future Agenda Items:

- 8.1. School Board Retreat : August 8, all day, (12-6) retreat**

Flor Diaz Smith invited community input. Meg Dawkins had sent a letter requesting unpaid leave of absence in February 2025; this was not included in tonight's board packet and agenda. Superintendent Roy forwarded the information via email to board members at this time. **Mckalyn Leclerc moved to approve leave of absence as requested by Meg Dawkins for February 2025. Seconded by Amelia Contrada, this motion carried unanimously.** Noah Weinstein shared concern around timeline of community forum - this is during summer when people are on vacation - would it be possible to have at least one forum before the end of the school year (e.g. before next Tuesday.) What was the decision about how to include people virtually? Daniel Keeney shared that the idea is to have a virtual session on an alternate day (aside from June 26) and the committee will plan for this.

Lisa Hanna asked, before June 26 - make very clear what the goals for the meeting are. Very important for the community to have parameters. Clarify for the community whether money and finances frame this conversation, or not. Honor the 150+ people who have signed a letter that has specific questions; this is significant number of people who have already provided questions. She asked that the viability of options be considered with equity, in the way that the previous models were considered. What we would gain by a longer time frame - feels like so much is “parking lot” all the time - people are desperate for answers, if we don’t have answers before we are asked to engage, then we need the answers and then an opportunity to engage again and again. Another person asked if there was a way for folks who can’t come in person or virtually, to answer the same questions that will be on the tables, so they can have input, and that the outcome of the meeting be shared as quickly as possible, even if it is a photo of the chart paper, etc. Childcare is a barrier for some. She asked to consider offering childcare. Heather Scandale asked about EQS and class size. She stated that her daughter is in a class of 27 students, a multi-age class. She asked how this occurred this year; are we required to follow the EQS? Flor Diaz Smith suggested first reaching out to the teacher and then reaching out to the building principal. Heather Scandale stated that she does not believe that class size issues are a school-specific question but more a WCUUSD issue.

9. Executive Session: Student Residency: At 8:17, Chris McVeigh moved to go into Executive Session, and invited Superintendent Roy and Principal Dellinger-Pate, to discuss a personnel issue. Seconded by Daniel Keeney, this motion carried unanimously. At 8:23, Chris McVeigh moved to come out of Executive Session. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously. Michelle Ksepka moved to approve the new hire (Cat Fair) as presented. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously. At 8:26, Michelle Ksepka moved to go into Executive Session and to invite Superintendent Roy, for a student residency hearing. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried unanimously. At 8:44, the board came out of the Executive Session in a motion made by Ursula Stanley and seconded by Daniel Keeney. Diane Nichols-Fleming moved to accept residency request #1. Seconded by Kealy Sloane. One in favor; this motion failed. Chris McVeigh abstained from this vote. Daniel Keeney moved to accept residency request #2. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously.

10. Adjourn: Daniel Keeney moved Kealy Sloan seconded to adjourn at 8:47 p.m. This motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary

Lisa Hanna - Worcester, VT

Thank you for all of your continued hard work and dedication on the board to our students and communities.

I am confident that tonight during the Communication Plan and Configuration Update portions of tonight's meeting you will share more specific details about what the community engagement plan will look like. Thank you in advance.

I believe that we share with you the goal of meaningful and thorough conversation about this important moment for our district. As you are aware, the community of Worcester is already engaging RIGHT NOW in important dialogue and question-asking with each other and with you about the options on the table. The board has said that in regards to school closures, "the data may necessitate difficult choices."

1. I ask that TONIGHT you please discuss the **specific** data points that will be brought to community forums that will address questions that have already been asked and inform any difficult choices that are to be made.
2. I ask that TONIGHT you discuss the specifics of how these community forums will be tailored to best meet communities where they are at in the process. Given the questions and feedback already given by Worcester residents, new information must be brought to our forum in response to the questions that have been posed, rather than just gathering questions and feedback.
3. I ask that TONIGHT you discuss specifically if the shared Community Engagement Plan will go beyond 2-3 community forums in order to achieve the level of conversation that has been the stated goal of this process. How will the feedback received in these forums be shared with the wider community who may not be able to attend?

Additionally, I would like to ask for discussion TONIGHT around the language in Phase 3 of the Communications Document. We have received word from the board that you "recognized the need for additional input and are now considering options beyond the initial three simulations." Currently the language in Phase 3 of the plan includes: "Host Board meetings at Calais and Doty in October" and "Central office needs to clearly articulate how... RIFs and reassignments will occur with new configurations." This language assumes some predetermined outcomes. If we envision authentic community engagement, the community needs to be confident that they are indeed stakeholders with a voice in the process and that decisions have not already been assumed.

Thank you so much for your time and all the incredibly difficult work that you are doing.

Sincerely,
Lisa Hanna
Worcester



WCUUSD Clerk <wcuusdclerk@u32.org>

Proposed School Closures

Catherine Coteus <catherinecoteus@gmail.com>

Fri, Jun 7, 2024 at 8:43 AM

To: wcuusdsb@u32.org

Cc: sd pate@u32.org, Lisa Hanna <Lhanna397@gmail.com>, Chani Waterhouse <chaniwater@gmail.com>

Dear School Board Members:

I live in Worcester and I am a parent of a Doty pre-schooler and a younger child who will be in the school system soon. I am deeply troubled by the fact that both of the elementary configurations the Board has put forth include the proposal to close Doty Elementary School, and to have Worcester residents vote on one of those two proposals this coming November.

The Board states that cost savings was not one of the goals considered in creating its configurations, but in its slides explaining the two configurations, the cost savings of closing Doty and Calais Elementary Schools seems to be the only evidence weighing in favor of closure, other than a vague statement that merging schools will "provide opportunity for expanded offerings." It very much seems like cost savings is driving these decisions. And yet, I have seen no evidence that there will actually be cost savings from closing these small schools. The Board cites the cost savings from not operating the two schools, but it does not provide the projected short-term and long-term increased costs of other categories as a result of these proposed mergers, such as transportation and additional wear and tear on Middlesex and E. Mont. schools. Without complete information, citizens cannot make informed decisions about these proposals. It is worth noting that in 2015, an efficiency study was performed for the Washington Central districts, and one of the conclusions (I believe it related to Opportunity 50 of Phase II of the study) was that merging all of the districts into one would save very little, if any, money. Now, several years into being a fully merged district, [new research](#) shows that this prediction was correct. The administrative cost savings have been nearly or completely offset by increases in transportation, among other costs. I'm not sure what was gained by consolidating districts. I would like to see complete information about cost increases from the proposed school closures side by side with the claimed cost savings.

On the qualitative side, having access to a small but vibrant school with smaller classroom sizes and lower teacher to student ratios is a major reason why my family recently moved to Worcester from Montpelier. I feel strongly (and I know studies have shown) that a small school like Doty provides benefits that are lost at a larger merged school. Kids receive focused attention and the intangible, invaluable feeling of a community within the school walls, where everyone knows everyone's name and their family and what's going on at home. At Doty, all the staff and teachers--not just the teacher assigned to my son's classroom--know who he is as a person and will step in to help at a moment's notice if he's having a hard day for whatever reason. That is community and that is the value of a small, rural school. The school is the glue that holds Worcester together, and we would be devastated if it were to close down completely.

Please present at least one configuration that does not involve closing Doty, and let the community decide. I would also urge the Board to slow down its timeline. Clearly, more data needs to be collected about the impact (financial and otherwise) that closing Doty and Calais schools will have. I understand that the Board is planning to move forward with community forums this summer, but I have heard that more complete budgetary and financial information pertaining to these configurations will not be available until the end of August. I think it makes little sense to hold community discussions before the community has all of the relevant information.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I truly appreciate your service on the school board and the enormously difficult work you've put in. I look forward to continuing the discussion.

Best,
Steve (and Catherine) Coteus

--

Once the bees go, we all go.
Catherine Amelia Coteus



WCUUSD Clerk <wcuusdclerk@u32.org>

Doty School

G2 <g2@bontempsgourmet.com>
To: "wcuusdsb@u32.org" <wcuusdsb@u32.org>

Mon, Jun 10, 2024 at 1:10 PM

Hello to the WCUUSD school board,

I'm writing today to let you know my thoughts about the proposal for restructuring local schools, particularly the apparently-present-in-all-options closing of Doty Elementary in Worcester.

I think it would be a mistake to close our local school, as it is the heart of our community in many ways.

I think it is good to have small village schools, good for the students, good for the educators and good for the village.

I do not believe there will be significant savings/decreased pressure on our property taxes, and this is born out by historical data where this type of savings-through-closures has been attempted; in fact towns suffer financially from decreased home values as who wants to buy a home in a village without a school? Our already graying-villages will become even more bereft of children if we close their village school.

My analogy is that our school system has a disease, say cancer or better yet diabetes. Closing small schools is like chopping off a toe or two at a time as their blood/cash flow becomes compromised, which is seen as necessary but in fact is only treating a symptom of the diabetes not the disease itself. The problem with this approach is that pretty soon you have no toes left, then no foot, then no leg – but you still have diabetes. No matter how we fund our schools it will continue to be expensive to give our children a quality education, and Vermonters will struggle with how to pay for it, but right now it seems to me that funding our schools through property taxes is the disease. As long as we have this disease the clinicians in charge of the educational-body will have to keep sacrificing vital-if-seen-as-expendable parts of the body.

This doesn't seem like a smart way to decide to close a town's school.

If we are really at the point where it is felt necessary to perform amputations, then I would like to see much more public discussion and participation in the decision making process, as this decision impacts not just the school system but entire communities as well.

The disease is throughout the entire state educational system, so I would hope that the state legislature and administration are working on ways to radically change how we fund our education, otherwise we will continue to put our local school boards in the nearly-impossible situation of trying to manage unyielding costs with a rapidly drying out source of funding.

As my wife and I approach retirement we are seriously considering selling our big old house that we've lived in for more than three decades, not least because of our high and ever-rising property taxes; we have paid over \$300,000 in property taxes since she bought our house, twice what our family paid for it in the first place! Does this really seem like a fair and reasonable way to fund our education system?!?

Yet I have never until this spring voted against a school budget, as I believe that public education is one of the best investments we can possible make. This year I voted No, not because I don't trust the numbers that the local board provided me with on how much it will cost to educate our children, but rather as a protest vote against the ridiculous last-minute-confusion-as-usual about how the numbers are being added up and what we will truly owe.

I hope I can feel good about voting yes to fund our schools in the future.

Thanks for taking the time to read my comments today,

Greg Labarthe

Worcester

Rumney class of '84

U-32 class of '90



WCUUSD Clerk <wcuusdclerk@u32.org>

Opposition to elementary school closures

'Rosemary Leach' via WCUUSD School Board <wcuusdsb@u32.org>

Fri, Jun 7, 2024 at 7:08 AM

Reply-To: Rosemary Leach <essential_pilates@yahoo.com>

To: "wcuusdsb@u32.org" <wcuusdsb@u32.org>, Steven Dellinger-Pate <sdpate@u32.org>

Dear Board Members and Superintendent,

Thank you for your service.

I am a Worcester resident, taxpayer and former employee of WCUUSD. Both of my children attended Doty from preschool through 6th grade. I was a very active participant in the Worcester Parent Teacher Neighbor Organization in the early 2000's. I now teach PE in 3 very small rural elementary schools in the Mountain View School District within the OSSU. I believe these experiences give me a well-rounded perspective on our town, our school district, and the value and importance of our local small elementary schools.

I am vehemently opposed to closing Doty Memorial School. If there was strong evidence that closing Doty would offer significant savings to my neighbors' property taxes, I would be compelled to consider it, but so far you have not offered strong evidence for tax savings. In fact, it is not even included on the list of goals for your reconfiguration models. In regard to some of your articulated goals for reconfiguration-

"-Maintain or expand enrichment opportunities that are consistent across the system (music, art, world language, etc)" In my experience, consistency is not as important as meeting the needs of each community in the best way possible at each location, which might actually mean different, not the same, enrichment opportunities.

"- Limit (or eliminate) shared positions across schools and very small FTE" In my experience, shared positions are actually a valuable and workable solution to keeping our small schools open and should not be eliminated. Shared positions can also mean shared resources which saves money (such as shared PE equipment). Shared positions also connect communities together as teachers in those positions often create programs and opportunities for all of the schools they work in.

"- Allow class sizes that meet Education Quality Standards and are sufficient to provide rich instruction" In my experience, rich instruction is best provided through smaller class sizes, not larger ones.

As of now, the only reconfiguration options you are putting forward include closing Doty Memorial School. I am asking you to come up with options that do not include closing elementary schools in our district.

Sincerely,
Rosemary Leach



WCUUSD Clerk <wcuusdclerk@u32.org>

Concerns regarding reconfiguration

Sarah Callahan <scallahan512@gmail.com>
To: wcuusdsb@u32.org

Sat, Jun 8, 2024 at 6:39 AM

To the members of the board,

Hello, my name is Sarah Bell and I am a mother of two children who attend Doty and a Worcester resident. I attended our last board meeting and had some thoughts that I wanted to share at the end of the meeting but ran out of time.

To begin, I wanted to thank you all again for your dedication to our schools & communities. This year especially that is no small task and I wanted to extend my gratitude to you all for picking up that baton and doing your best to lead with grace & integrity.

During the meeting I spoke about my concerns for the emotional/mental health & well being of our children if the Doty (and Calais elementary) schools were closed.

I wanted to add to my comment specifically regarding the vulnerability of the Doty school district. From what I have gathered, our community of Worcester has the largest percentage of low-income families of the schools in our district. This brings up two concerns of mine.

One, is that the voices of our community are not being heard not because there is a lack of concern/attention but because many families are strapped for resources- not only fiscal resources, but resources such as time, mental/emotional bandwidth, and childcare. I am very fortunate to have a supportive spouse who could watch our children in order for me to come out to the board meeting a couple weeks ago and it is not lost on me that I am very privileged to have such flexibility. Many families do not have that luxury, even if the desire to be involved is there. I fear that as we continue these discussions, decisions are being made without the critical perspectives of these families.

Two, I am concerned that restructuring by merging Doty with Rumney will negatively impact the already stretched resources of many of our Doty families. Doty is THE hub of our community which many families, like my own, lean on for support, guidance, and aid. I fear that these already vulnerable Doty families will be the ones who will take the brunt of the strain caused by restructuring by removing the backbone of our community.

My ask of the board are as follows:

1. An extended timeline for the Sept 18th vote to decide on reconfiguration. This feels far too soon for our families' to make an informed decision on school closures.
2. More avenues for community engagement from the board. As I said above, many of our families do not have the luxury to attend board meetings. I propose more family friendly avenues to ensure as many voices as possible are heard in this process.
3. I ask that other creative options are explored besides the two options that include school closures. If cost truly is what's driving these decisions, what creative ways are there to use the current buildings to provide additional income for the district? Community programs? Classes? I fully understand that the most consistent part of life is change, but in these moments of transformation we have the opportunity to get in touch with our creativity & passions to bring in a new, vibrant future for our communities. Moving beyond fear and into possibility we can create these visions together.

Thank you, to all of you on the board, for your time and consideration of these words. And thank you for your dedication to the continuing creation of an equitable, safe and stimulating learning environment for our children. This task is not an easy one and I want to reiterate my gratitude for your commitment to the highest good for our children and communities.

Sincerely and with much gratitude,
Sarah Bell (Worcester)



WCUUSD Clerk <wcuusdclerk@u32.org>

Please extend timeline to vote on school closures

neha shukla <shuklaneha@hotmail.com>

Fri, Jun 7, 2024 at 9:30 AM

To: "wcuusdsb@u32.org" <wcuusdsb@u32.org>, Steven Dellinger-Pate <sdpate@u32.org>

Good morning,

I am writing to request more time for our towns to fully and thoroughly consider the impact of potential school closures, as well as possible alternative scenarios, through robust and real community engagement. The proposed timeline to vote on this does not leave nearly enough time for our district and our communities to do any of this well.

Please give our local Worcester community, and the broader community encompassed by our district, the opportunity to shape our collective futures using concrete data, adequate time to envision alternate options, as well as the time necessary for our communities to engage in real dialogue.

Sending this with hope that we as a district are truly valuing the importance of sustaining vibrant and whole communities.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Neha Shukla
(parent of Ruby and Jack Eaton)

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