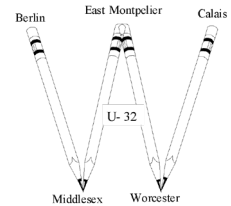


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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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**Washington Central Unified Union
School District
School Board Meeting
9.18.24 6:15-9:00 PM
U-32
Rm 128/131
930 Gallison Hill Rd
Montpelier, VT**

Board Members Present: Flor Diaz Smith, Ursula Stanley, Chris McVeigh, Zach Sullivan, Kealy Sloan, Daniel Keeney, Amelia Contrada, Elizabeth Brown, Patrick Whelley, Michelle Ksepka, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Mckalyn Leclerc, Natasha Eckart, Julia Hewitt, Jonathan Goddard, Student Representatives Linnea Darrow, Lei DeGroot

Others Present: Superintendent Steven Dellinger-Pate, Susanne Gann, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Julia Pritchard, Alicia Lyford, Lila Richardson, Lisa Hanna, Caitlin Howansky, Noah Weinstein, R David Delcore, Robert M, David Lawrence, Honi Bean Barrett, Allison Fayle, Deborah Bloom, Gillian Fuqua, Karoline May, Michael Sherwin, ORCA Media, Leigh Garrity, Bekah Mandel, Rachel, Lauralea Curavoo, Allen Gilbert, Andrea Tucker, April Davis, Arlyn Bruccoli, Blakely Gilmore, Carter Stowell, Celia Guggemos, Daisy Scarzello, Lauren Chabot, Callie Weller, Dorinda, Ellen Knoedler, Hannah Brown, Hans Melhus, Holly Weiss, Jarrod Weiss, Jenna Howard, John Riley, Marc Mihaly, Maria Melekos, Marianne Miller, Mark Brown, Michael Duane, Michele Hill, Will Baker, Veronica Eldred, Susan DeForge, Justin Kenney, Steve Coteus, Sonya Rhodes, Samantha Jackson, Ralph, Catherine McCauley-Flippin, J Franz, Jane Dudley, Jamie Bohn, Alan Erdossy, Jaiel Pulskamp, Megan McLane, Christina Pollard, Lauren Chabot, Cynthia Gardner-Morse, John Kaeding, Toni Kaeding, Rosemary Leach, Anya Skibbie, Dell Waterhouse, Chani Waterhouse, Bodo Carey, Rachel

1. **Call to Order:** Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.
2. **Welcome:** Flor Diaz Smith welcomed those present and made a statement about our shared interests in ensuring success for our students.
 - 2.1. **Adjustments to the Agenda:** no adjustments to the agenda
 - 2.2. **Reception of Guests**

2.3. Public Comments-Time limit strictly enforced, see note: Anya Skibbie: read a letter that had been presented to the board, on behalf of the community at Doty School. They asked for the letter to be made part of public record for tonight's meeting. Over 200 residents sign the letter. Rosemary Leach continued to read from the letter. Caitlin Howansky continued to read from the letter. Dell Waterhouse continued to read from the letter. Noah Weinstein read to explain context for the request to the board to affirm the articles of agreement. Chani Waterhouse spoke about the concept of "legacy" in the context of closing schools in small towns. Lauren Chabot read a letter to the board about the concept of "equity." Rachel had provided a letter to the board, examining data. Lauralea Curavo spoke about the lack of district concern for Calais right now. She spoke about staffing shortages at the school and the impact on staff and students. Flor Diaz Smith invited people to write letters to the board to follow up, or as desired.

3. Presentation: Configuration Data: Steven Dellinger-Pate shared a slide deck: *Enrollment Updates and Criteria Matrix*. Feedback/ questions from the presentation: Diane Nichols-Fleming asked, for example, if sixth graders remain in the elementary schools, would there be enough classroom space? Superintendent Dellinger-Pate indicated that for a five-school model, yes, but for a three-school model, not likely for all of the schools. Diane Nichols-Fleming asked, when looking at the three-school model, grades PreK - 5, do we have enough data to answer "yes" to access to afterschool opportunities? Julia Hewitt indicated that she would like to be able to see the assessments that are the source of the data in the charts. Flor Diaz Smith indicated that the board has spoken about opportunities with a three-school model, for example, foreign language. Mckalyn Leclerc asked a specific question about building capacity. Some discussion followed around preschool enrollment, including the possibility of a four-year-old full-day program. Natasha Eckart asked for specifics about using a shared classroom in Middlesex for art and music. She asked, for the classroom configuration that is shown, this depends on sixth graders attending U-32. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate indicated yes, especially for Rumney School. Chris McVeigh clarified that the estimate is that school bus routes will not change drastically. Some discussion followed around town lines versus student proximity to one or another school. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that this would be a board decision. Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether any building modifications would need to take place to accommodate sixth-grade students. Steven Dellinger-Pate answered that no substantial building modifications would be needed. Patrick Whelley asked for more specific information about the impact on property values. Closing a school will inevitably affect property values in the town. Property value, community viability, impact on town - those criteria should be noted that they would be negatively impacted in the matrix. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that he continues to try to find data related to this. Ursula Stanley suggested looking at other towns that have had similar experiences. Natasha Eckart asked, if we go to three elementary schools and our population increases, are the buildings, as is, able to absorb new students? She asked why having more than three elementary schools is noted as a barrier under the consideration to work together with other neighboring districts. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that, during preliminary conversations with neighboring districts, there is a hesitation to take on the expense of smaller schools. Natasha Eckart stated that the two smaller schools do not have debt. Some conversation followed around the facilities of the five elementary schools, the capital improvements over the past year, and the debt or lack thereof for each campus. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that he believes the buildings under the new configuration would be able to

incorporate a growth in student population. Natasha Eckart stated that she hears the benefit of multi-age classroom consideration for some of the proposed models going forward, while at the same time has heard that multi-age classrooms are a negative factor, for example, currently, in Doty School. She stated that data can be presented in a way to support what is desired, and that she feels the matrices as presented are not a fair and accurate representation. Chris McVeigh spoke about assumptions. Ursula Stanley stated that we have heard from administrators that intentional multi age grades are more beneficial than reacting year to year and combining classes. Flor Diaz Smith stated that none of our schools are at capacity.

3.1. Public Comments: Lila Richardson stated that she and another Worcester resident had presented a letter to the board. She feels that some of the data related to classroom capacity/ size/ configuration was provided at the last minute and she has not had time to consider it; she finds this information inconsistent and confusing. Chani Waterhouse stated, related to the idea that small schools are expensive, and based on data, Doty is not one of the more expensive schools. She stated that we should stop saying that we cannot afford small schools when data shows we can do it well. Lauralea Curavoo spoke about the difference between larger and smaller schools, based on her experience working in both types. The feel of the community in a smaller school is nothing like community in a larger school. Christina Pollard stated that when Doty had a full-day preschool offering, the numbers of attendance were much larger. She wonders whether families will be put on, waiting lists because of, misestimating how many families will opt for preschool (if a full day were offered); Deborah Bloom spoke about systemic classism. She stated that small can be beautiful and effective and asked the district to consider keeping our small schools. Bodo Carey spoke about the concept of equity through the lens of U-32 and class sizes. He stated that consolidation means organizing and putting things together, but to consolidate, you need to separate. He stated that the separation that will come from “pulling the thread” from Worcester and Calais will have a negative impact. Lauren Chabot echoed Christina’s statement about full-day preschool. She cautions the district about filling schools. From her own experience, she worries about the ability to accommodate student and staff needs with a full-to-the-capacity building. Noah Weinstein spoke about the need for trust and care for our most precious beings. He stated that the numbers that are shared do not show trust and care. They are sloppy. Caitlin Howansky asked for information that is more specific about transportation/ bussing under the proposed models. Linnea Darrow spoke, as a former Doty student, of the value of a small school. She noted that she is now taking AP courses and early college. Cindy Gardner-Morse stated, that as an adult who also attended a small school, she cannot believe that the board is considering the closure of the two most financially viable schools.

4. Board Operations

4.1. Appoint Student Representative: Becca Tatischeff introduced Linnea Darrow and Lei DeGroot, student representatives. **Michele Ksepka/ Natasha Eckart moved to appoint Linnea Darrow and Lei DeGroot as student representatives. This motion carried unanimously.** Linnea Darrow gave a brief update of student happenings as of late.

4.2. Budget Learning: Steven Dellinger-Pate and Susanne Gann provided a slide deck: *WCUUSD Board Budget Training*. Mckalyn Leclerc asked for an estimate of “real numbers” of tax impact, for example, per \$1K property. Susanne Gann noted that we do not have enough specific information yet to be able to make that estimate. She indicated that it would

be irresponsible to make an estimate that might be misleading. Mckalyn Leclerc stated that she feels it is irresponsible to vote on configuration without more specific information. Flor Diaz Smith distributed the text to board members who are new to the board. In the future, she would like the board to include a study of this book on board agendas.

4.3. Approve Budget Development Timeline & Priorities: Ursula Stanel moved to approve the budget development timeline as provided. Seconded by Zach Sullivan. This motion carried unanimously.

4.4. Budget Parameters: Flor Diaz Smith asked board members to consider this draft document. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that this document should reflect the will of the collective board, even as individuals might have their preferences. Chris McVeigh stated that the difficulty with the parameters is that they are vague. If there were a specific link from budget items or areas, to the parameters, it would be more meaningful. Flor Diaz Smith stated that for the past few years we have not necessarily stood by the parameters that we set initially. The hope is that these parameters will be more specific and will help the board make decisions about budget development, and stay within parameters. Elizabeth Brown asked for more information: how are we as a board defining equitable distribution of resources? There is broadness in the document, and being able to break down into more specifics. Diane Nichols-Fleming said coming in below the threshold is a specific and universally accepted parameter. Daniel Keeney stated everything flows from our directive around numbers, and the only numbers so far, at a minimum, are to come in below the threshold. If a cut is proposed, we need to know how it reflects to the list of budget parameters. Chris McVeigh needs to understand the “why” and “how”. Ursula Stanley - sounds like we want the leadership team to provide the recommended budget and explain why they think it is important to have the pieces in the budget. How can the information they provide be different from in years past? Diane Nichols-Fleming - There is a need for dialogue, does not know what to ask for before having something presented to which I can respond. Zach Sullivan - it was helpful last year to have various versions: e.g., 6%, and 9% increase budget scenarios. Amelia Contrada - appreciates the conversation because it will be helpful when it comes time to vote - even if we stay with broad parameters but have a chart that shows more specifics. Michelle Ksepka - agrees with Zach Sullivan - the document from last year where versions of the budget were provided, representing different percentage increases. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that, last year, providing the list of scenarios created a sort of list from which positions or programs were cut, to pare down, and he would like to avoid that process. Natasha Eckart asked to consider positions that spend time with direct interaction/ services to students. She repeated her concern that cutting administrative positions is not seriously considered. Ursula Stanley - suggested changing the verbiage to “all positions” rather than naming administrators. Patrick Whelley suggested making a change to the verbiage in item #2, as well. Daniel Keeney stated that the guidance from this conversation tonight is almost more meaningful than the list of parameters. He suggested that, in a first draft, positions that are “on the margins” be considered and explained. Chris McVeigh: “there are the things that we absolutely need in order to meet core needs of students.” Patrick Whelley stated that now that we have seen the criteria table in action, we have some work to do around clarifying. He indicated that we approved the criteria through the lens of considering configuration models, not specifically through the lens of budget development. Natasha Eckart - when speaking about equitable distribution would like to be sure we are giving the elementary schools the same consideration that the middle and high

school gets. Patrick Whelley stated that he feels giving a few percentages to consider is not meaningful without some context first, without some budget to begin with. Ursula Stanley - multiple levels of budgets versus percentages would be more helpful. Kealy Sloan stated that coming back with the lowest increase and close to threshold is a helpful place to start. Natasha Eckart asked for an option that represents four elementary schools. We keep coming back to this and some keep asking for this. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate: it is the responsibility of the leadership team to consider some of the other options when developing the budget versions. Daniel Keeney: consider “partial reconfiguration changes” on #7. Michelle Ksepka - a reminder that configuration can mean many things; e.g. last year we worked on configuration changes by making some changes to preschool. Julia Hewitt: “Consider configurations that realize.....” on #7. Kealy Sloan cautioned against the lowest percentage representing three elementary schools and the threshold version representing five. Some discussion of #8: long-term sustainability. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate: we are not having a conversation about a decrease in spending; we are talking about what is an appropriate level of increase that we can sustain in our communities. Daniel Keeney: include in the parameters: transportation equity - we need to look at the disparity between Doty and the rest of the SU regarding bus routes; also understand the costs of implementing before and after care, in the configuration model. Patrick Whelley: can we have a conversation about bringing in more money; and opportunities to earn revenue? Steven Dellinger-Pate suggested that the topic of bringing in more money could be the work of a small workgroup of board and community members. Diane Nichols-Fleming: as we move forward, having conversations, we need to give grace to each other that we think forward, and sideways, and we can change and evolve along the way. Board members considered this document together as it was edited “in real time” based on discussion and feedback. **Patrick Whelley moved to approve the budget parameters, as discussed and edited. Seconded by Elizabeth Brown, this motion carried unanimously.**

4.5. Affirm Policy Work Plan Cycle: Chris McVeigh moved to affirm this plan. Seconded by Amelia Contrada. This motion carried unanimously.

4.6. Affirming Articles of Agreement Discussion: Flor Diaz Smith shared that legal counsel had indicated that the board could not bind a future board. Additionally, the articles of agreement are already what the board abides by. The board could create, for example, a position statement about the articles, but affirming by board action has no effect. Chris McVeigh stated that it is more of a political statement. Julia Hewitt: the request was that the board would promise to honor and abide by the decision by any town to not close their school. She spoke about the need for our communities to trust us. She feels it is important that we make this statement as a board. **Mckalyn Leclerc moved to affirm to make a commitment to honor and not attempt to override any WCUUSD town’s vote regarding the closure of its own school. Seconded by Julia Hewitt.** Discussion: Flor Diaz Smith reminded the board that the only way to change the articles of agreement is by the process that is outlined in the articles. Diane Nichols-Fleming clarified that this affirms that we believe in the articles of agreement and that we are going to honor the votes that the towns make regarding closure. Zach Sullivan noted that there are a great number of people who are not showing up to meetings and that they are feeling disenfranchised by this process. **Daniel Keeney called the vote. Seconded by Patrick Whelley; this motion carried with two opposed. A vote was had on the original motion. 10 in favor; 4 opposed; this motion carried.**

4.7. Appoint VSBA Proxy for Annual Meeting: Michelle Ksepka moved to appoint Ursula Stanley as proxy for VSBA Annual meeting. Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously.

5. Reports to the Board

5.1. Superintendent/Central Office Leadership Team (COLT) Report: Superintendent Dellinger-Pate provided a written report. He reviewed a news release from Central Vermont Career Center about the possible location of a new site. Patrick Whelley reported from the most recent meeting.

5.2. Student Report: Natasha Eckart asked whether, during student reports, we could hear from some elementary-aged students. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate will reach out to student representatives to offer opportunities to visit the elementary schools.

5.3. Principal's Report: Celia Guggemos shared some of the PBIS happenings at Berlin School because of attending BEST; she noted that Joelle Van Lent has been working with the school on supporting students' social and emotional skills.

5.4. Central Vermont Career Center (CVCC) Report: Patrick Whelley shared from the most recent CVCC Board meeting.

5.5. VSBA Update: Flor Diaz Smith encouraged board members to read this report.

6. Finance Committee

6.1. Multi-year Capital Improvement Project Budget Update and Approval: Ursula Stanley moved to authorize the allocation of \$267,174 additional capital reserve funds to the completion of the projects as identified above and approve the District moving forward with bid document and bidding as necessary. Seconded by Daniel Keeney, this motion carried unanimously. Ursula Stanley moved to approve the amount to budget in the general fund to transfer to the capital reserve fund in FY 2025-26 as \$1,047,964. Seconded by Daniel Keeney; this motion carried unanimously.

7. Policy Committee

7.1. First Reading for Policy Educational Philosophy: tabled

8. Personnel

8.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE: Diane Nichols-Fleming moved: Change in FTE: Kristina Snook - (.2) for Library Media Specialist/Technology Integrationist – Rumney, and Long-Term Substitutes (24-25 School Year) MacKenzie Wardell – (.8 FTE) LTS Pre-K Classroom Teacher – EMES. Seconded by Natasha Eckart, this motion carried unanimously.

9. Consent Agenda

9.1. Approve Minutes of 9.4.24: Patrick Whelley moved to approve the minutes from September 4, 2024. Seconded by Chris McVeigh; this motion carried unanimously.

9.2. Approve Board Orders: Ursula Stanley moved to approve the board orders in the total amount of \$1,295,550.93. Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously.

10. Future Agenda Items

10.1. Board Resolution Discussion

10.2. VSBA Resolution/ bylaws

10.3. Doty Bus Route Data

11. Board Reflection: Chris McVeigh: a provocative but good meeting!

12. Public Comment: Chani Waterhouse referred to the budget-training slide show with corrected student numbers. She stated that some of the communications that are going out feel like scapegoating of Worcester as a town whose school is too expensive to run when in fact it has the lowest per-pupil spending. Dell Waterhouse is not sure the projected preschool student enrollment number is accurate; she thinks that some parents are not sure of what is coming down the pike for Doty so they are not enrolling their children. Allen Gilbert stated that the disparities of per pupil spending among the five elementary schools is something that needs to be more closely examined. We have repeatedly asked for per-pupil cost numbers to no avail, and now the data shared are inconsistent.

13. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned by consensus at 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary

NOTE: To ensure the board has time to conduct its business, the board will adhere to a strict 1.5-minute public comment time limit per person. Microphones will be muted when time is up. If there is not enough time on the agenda for all members of the public wishing to comment at the beginning of the meeting, there is additional public comment at the end of the meeting.

WCUUSD Board Norms - Adopted November 18, 2020

- **Public input** – Notify the community about public forums and opportunities for public comment at board meetings.
- **Community involvement during regular meetings of the board** – Every meeting will include at least one opportunity for public comment. Public comment is an opportunity for board members to listen and ask clarifying questions. If a board member feels a concern raised in public comment warrants further board discussion, they may request that the issue be added to a future agenda.
- **Community dialogue** – The board may periodically schedule community forums that allow for dialogue, questions and answers from the board or the district leadership team.
- **Stay on time** – Start and end on time. The chair may appoint a timekeeper.
- **All voices will be heard** – Every board member gets a chance to speak. Some topics warrant having each board member speak in turn to ensure full representation.
- **Reflection** – To allow time for reflection, the chair and agenda steering committee will plan time for complex or contentious issues to be discussed at more than one meeting before the board votes, except where a decision is urgent.
- **Announcements in reports** – Announcements from the administration will appear in the reports and not as discussion items.
- **Role of the board** – At the end of each board meeting reflect on whether the board remained focused on its policy-making and oversight role during the meeting, rather than operational details that are the responsibility of leadership team.
- **Respect each other** – Listen, allow others to be heard, share concerns, assume positive intentions, be present, and celebrate successes.

AGENDA KEY

| Agenda Section | Examples | Role/ Responsibility | Description |
|----------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| Call to Order | n/a | Board Chair or designee | Formal opening to meeting. Superintendent calls to order during annual reorganization |
| Public Comment | | | Opportunity for public comment on items not on the agenda. Board will adhere to a strict 1.5-minute public comment time limit per person. Microphones will be muted when time is up. If there is not enough time on the agenda for all members of the public wishing to comment at the beginning of the meeting, there is additional public comment at the end of the meeting. |
| Executive Session | Personnel Student Matter Negotiations | | Only for discussion of items covered in VSA §313. Formal actions not taken in Executive Session |
| Reports to the Board | Superintendent/ COLT Student Report | Administration | Both regular/recurring reports and one-time reports happen here. One-time reports are determined by the Board work plan or requested by the will of the Board. Generally, reports invite clarifying questions but not formal discussion/action |
| Committee Reports | Finance Policy Education Quality | Board | Chair of the committee reports on substance of most recent committee meeting. Generally, reports invite clarifying questions; any discussion or action items would be listed in the respective section of the agenda |
| Discussion Items | | Board with input from administration | Items on the agenda specifically for discussion of the Board. Chair can seek input from audience during discussions. Generally not intended for action (although nothing prevents the Board from taking an action) |
| Action Items | Personnel approvals | Board | Items formally on the agenda for Board action. Discussion can occur after a motion is on the table |
| Consent Agenda | Board Orders Minutes | Board | Designed for items that need proforma approval and/or are routine. Board acts on all items in the Consent agenda and does not discuss any item unless it is pulled out during Agenda Adjustments |