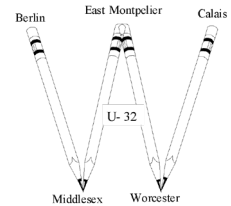


# Washington Central Unified Union School District

*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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## WCUUSD Finance Committee Meeting 10.16.24 5:00-6:00 PM U-32 930 Gallison Hill Rd Montpelier, VT In-Person /Virtual

**Present:** Flor Diaz Smith, Elizabeth Brown, Zach Sullivan, Daniel Keeney, Ursula Stanley, Michelle Ksepka, Chris McVeigh, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Julia Hewitt, Superintendent Steven Dellinger-Pate, Principal Becca Tatistcheff, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Julia Pritchard, Honi Bean Barrett, Allison, Robert M, Lila Richardson, Noah Weinstein, David Delcore, ORCA Media, Chani Waterhouse, Erika Zimmerman, Caitlin Howansky

1. **Call to Order:** Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

### 2. Discussion/Action

2.1. **Configuration Next Steps:** Flor Diaz Smith reviewed the previous meeting and she reviewed information that had been shared on Front Porch Forum because of the meeting. Flor Diaz Smith reviewed the Strategic Plan and affirmed the commitment to use it as a guidepost. Dan Keeney stated that what came from the previous meeting is how important it is to delineate what is the charge. We will need to have “our ducks in a row” to move through the process - e.g. what are the greatest priorities - financial? Opportunities? Equity? He stated that Act 46 was brought up as well and he believes that we need to provide some background information about that as well. He brought up the issue of foodservice. Is there a way to coordinate, save money, provide a better product? Flor Diaz Smith stated that this would be part of the budget conversation. She noted that we used the strategic plan and core beliefs to create the criteria. She would like to clarify with the committee that we will continue to be guided by these criteria. Zach Sullivan stated that the board is not the only actor here; there is citizen activity. The board will need to plan forward keeping this dynamic in mind. Can we agree that the criteria stands? Can we agree that the budget conversation we are going to have occurs during a stressful time? The conversation will be fluid and configuration will be an integral part of the budgeting discussion. Chris McVeigh asked, does this mean that we are considering moving grades of

students from one campus to another, as part of the solution? Ursula Stanley stated that the leaders are going to present a sustainable budget with efficient use of taxpayer money, with improved student outcomes. We have been discussing this for two years at least. Daniel Keeney said what he heard is that we are looking through the budget at the configuration, and everything is on the table - we are just using the budget as a lens at this time through which we consider configuration. Elizabeth Brown thinks of configuration as a tool for WCUUSD to be creative and think outside of the box because thinking outside of the box will be required to create a financially sustainable solution - does this meet the community's needs and our financial needs as well? Steven Dellinger-Pate said we will need to look not as much through the "dollars" but through instructional programming. The goal in presenting the budget will be to help the board connect the programs to the dollars and to help understand discretionary versus non-discretionary spending. Michelle Ksepka stated that she does not feel that anything is off the table - we need to look at everything across the board. We are in for another very hard budget season. Chris McVeigh stated that we have witnessed a strong attachment between our communities and their local schools. We want the community on our side. We will need to be very blunt and clear with what we are doing, and not bring it up at the last minute. We should be clear about what we are seriously considering. Ursula Stanley stated that we have a responsibility as a board in how we discuss these options and why they are beneficial and we need to be careful as board members as to whether our language is helpful or inciting. We need to start talking about the positive benefits that our students can see - but there has been a large focus on the negative, including from members of the board. Chris McVeigh stated that it is a balance. We cannot ignore the sacrifice that we are asking of our communities for the benefit of the whole. Flor Diaz Smith stated that she has created space for the will of the board to be heard, for example in the Steering Committee. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate clarified that the administration is not necessarily proposing these configurations, but working together with the board to create proposals. This was a request from the committee; he would like to continue to go forward working together - board and administration. Flor Diaz Smith stated that we will continue to take this work forward and will continue to engage the community in the conversation. Dan Keeney would like to bring up some dimensions of what this committee can be thinking about with the next steps. One thing that continued to come up was the development of the concept of working with/potentially merging with another district - this committee seems like the right place to begin this conversation. He also stated that it would be important to develop a specific plan for transition, should we come up with a solution that includes the closure of one of the campuses. He asked, regarding the work of the committee/ work of the board - could it be supported by some external partners. Some kind of third party (being careful about how we incorporate a third party.) For example, regarding the budgetary implications of proposals - might be helpful to have a third party consider those implications to legitimize the information that is brought forward. Flor Diaz Smith suggested reviewing some of the documents from over the years (e.g. an Efficiency Study - this has been done in the past.) In an effort to be careful with our resources and to not repeat work that has already been done - she suggested the possibility of someone reviewing and summarizing some of the other documents/ studies. Ursula Stanley suggested having an online repository for documents to make them easily accessible and searchable. Flor Diaz Smith suggested that the committee work on revising the charge. Zach Sullivan stated that it would be valuable to set out a larger vision of "what would that look like" (e.g.

if we were to combine with another district). Some discussion followed around what having discussion between two school districts about the possibility of considering some sort of merge would entail. It is complicated and time consuming. Chris McVeigh stated that we should still come together with another district or other districts to consider the possibilities. Some discussion followed about whether the Configuration Committee should continue to meet - in light of budget development underway. The Finance Committee will need to spend a great deal of bandwidth at this time on budget development. Daniel Keeney suggested that, regarding further meetings - would it make sense to separate Configuration Committee from the Finance Committee. He feels that it is its own distinct thing. Elizabeth Brown reflected after the meeting at Calais - people approached her after and stated that it was not just about finances - she feels that semantics are important - tying configuration and finance together makes it appear that it is the main focus. If our charge is not just finances (if it is tied to student outcomes) then we need to find a way to communicate it that way. Semantics/ optics/ the way we are communicating is very important. We got a lot of good information from the community about how they understood the work of the committee and the situation. Chris McVeigh stated that we could not ignore the fact that one of the emphases of configuration was that it would save money. It was a focus. Dan Keeney stated that this is why it will be important to create a very clear charge. Everything will flow from there, including what we call the Committee. Ursula Stanley stated that we need to make sure we are checking in as a committee and as a board regarding what has been presented to us and how we are sharing information out - check in regularly throughout the process to make sure we agree in our understanding of the information that is provided.

### 3. **Future Agenda Items**

4. **Public Comment:** Erika Zimmerman encourages big thinking and not necessarily thinking that the next steps. They need to be small iterations from where you were before. There is interest in the community in thinking big. If the charge is to think about configuration broadly, regionalization is an important question. The best ideas (e.g. around housing) are coming from areas that are thinking regionally. She stated that food service is a good example of how we look at the bigger picture and create efficiencies and a better product.

### 5. **Adjourn: The committee adjourned by consensus at 5:55 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa Grace, Committee Recording Secretary