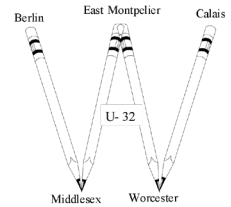


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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 Board Meeting
11.6.24 6:15-9:15 PM
Doty Memorial School
24 Calais Road
Worcester, VT 05682**

Present: Flor Diaz Smith, Elizabeth Brown, Zach Sullivan, Daniel Keeney, Ursula Stanley, Chris McVeigh, Mckalyn Leclerc, Patrick Whelley, Jonathan Goddard, Natasha Eckart, Linnea Darrow, Lei DeGroot, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Julia Hewitt, Superintendent Steven Dellinger-Pate, Principal Becca Tatistcheff, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Julia Pritchard, Susanne Gann, Celia Guggemos, Alicia Lyford, Jarrod Weiss, Amy, April Davis, David Hannigan, Denise Roy, Edie, Erica Zimmerman, Karen Wiseman, Kathleen Bookchin, Michael Sherwin, Scott Hess, Susan Forge, Thomas Hanna, Jeannie Phillips, Lila Richardson, Noah Weinstein, Lisa Hanna, Lauren Chabot, Katie Spring, Chani Waterhouse, Caitlin Howansky, Heidi Dimick, Anya Skibbie, Dell Waterhouse, Allison Mindel, Matthew DeGroot, Brenda Vernile, Megan McLane, Allen Gilbert, Jordan Nobler, Virginia Humphreys, Carter Stowell, Deborah Bloom, Carrie Riker, Leigh Garrity, Joe Howansky, Tom Kaeding, Jennifer Chambers

1. **Call to Order:** Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 6:23 p.m.
2. **Welcome**
 - 2.1. **Adjustments to the Agenda:** Flor Diaz Smith noted that an Executive Session for personnel would be needed at the end of the meeting. **Patrick Whelley moved to approve this adjustment to the agenda. Seconded by Elizabeth Brown, this motion carried unanimously.**
 - 2.2. **Reception of Guests:** Flor Diaz Smith welcomed those present and spoke about the common purpose of what is best for our students.
 - 2.3. **Public Comments-Time limit strictly enforced, see note :** (none at this time)
3. **Presentation: Math Program:** This presentation did not take place tonight

4. **Presentation: Instructional and Administrative Frameworks for Budget Development:**

Steven Dellinger-Pate prefaced the presentation with an explanation that this will focus on what programs we would like in place, to begin the budget development process.

He presented a slide deck: *Instructional and Administrative Frameworks for Budget Development*

Chris McVeigh asked whether the slide referring to class size recommendations is updated, and whether it is a requirement or a goal. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate indicated that this is guidance that will frame configuration within each school; he invited feedback or questions.

Patrick Whelley asked for clarification around staff/ student ratios for building administrators. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate explained the sources from which these numbers originated.

Chris McVeigh asked whether there is additional funding available should unexpected needs arise, e.g. around centralized services funding. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate indicated that fund balance is a source for this.

Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that she is not sure we are capturing all of the roles/ tasks/ services in the central office - she would like to have this specific information. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate indicated that this information is forthcoming.

Elizabeth Brown asked for clarification about distributing money among the schools based on ADM. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that we consider the size of the school, free and reduced lunch, and other factors that help equitably distribute the funding.

Daniel Keeney asked for more specific information about community connections programs.

Chris McVeigh asked for clarification about schools' decision-making regarding how to spend certain funds - for example, a school deciding to hire a social worker. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that the decisions about these services are best made at the school level; however, the hiring process occurs at the central office.

Diane Nichols-Fleming asked what is the plan for showing the "slices of the pie" as presented, and how they are allocated.

Superintendent Dellinger-Pate shared that the intent is that the funding follows the need.

Chris McVeigh asked if this is the first time, we have used this process to determine funding around student needs. If so, do we have a safety net (of money) in case we underestimated the student needs? Some discussion followed around the use of fund balance in this case, hypothetically.

Daniel Keeney asked, where in this process, do we understand what the implications are for individual schools and how do we respond to someone claiming that this does not reflect the need in our school.

Steven Dellinger-Pate explained that we are building the budget from the bottom up, based on the needs in each school and that this will always be an ongoing conversation.

Elizabeth Brown asked what happens when a need is identified by a school itself but it is not supported by the numbers and the metrics - how do you have enough nimbleness to meet these fluctuations? Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that the desire is to have this flexibility.

Ursula Stanley asked when we are presented with a more specific budget, how will we have enough school specific information to understand the needs while still honoring student privacy, especially in smaller schools?

Daniel Keeney asked how the challenge of part-time staff, or staff that travels between schools, or provides multiple functions, is addressed? Superintendent Dellinger-Pate spoke about some creative solutions to this, such as dual certification for some teachers.

Diane Nichols-Fleming asked, regarding U-32, would there will be information around class sizes and program offerings.

Flor Diaz Smith expressed the importance of, e.g., facilities, and foodservice as they are also tied to student outcomes.

5. Community Input/Dialogue

Jeannie Phillips explained the format for community input/ dialogue in small groups.

One community member from Worcester indicated that breaking into small groups makes it harder to hear from the other community members as a whole.

Flor Diaz Smith stated that we are trying to use this format to ensure dialogue and to ensure that everyone's voice is heard, as some have expressed that it is difficult to share aloud in a larger group.

Jeannie Phillips reviewed the norms around equitable ways to look at data.

The three questions:

- What are your biggest take aways?
- What are your concerns?
- What seems especially important/ what would you like to prioritize?

A community member asked whether a compromise can be made and there can be an opportunity for the larger group to have dialogue as well - also could there be an opportunity to have question and answer back-and-forth with the superintendent, in the same way that board members were allowed after the budget presentation.

During the small group dialogue, notes were taken in each group and will be included in the public documents from this meeting.

Report outs (in brief) from groups:

Steven Dellinger-Pate: my group was more of a Q&A

Becca Tatistcheff: online group

- Pleased with clarity and simplicity of presentation; aware of the complexity
- Noted that it is helpful to start from the ground up rather than top down
- Concerns noted: question of apples to apples comparison; needs and priorities of individual students and individual schools are always in flux; how can we maintain transparency while also respecting privacy
- Was helpful to do this small group process; perhaps more will join in the future, knowing in advance what to expect

Alicia Lyford:

- Long term ADM - what does this mean, etc.
- Question around transparency to voters - at what level/ how much do we share?
- Appreciation for the ground-up approach
- Feeling unclear - what does this mean? hope for more specifics in the next iteration
- Concern around how difficult budget season was last year - will this year be as hard?
- How to honor the administrators' autonomy but also honor the board's role
- How to separate configuration/ school closing consideration/ budget conversation
- Remember that we are talking about buildings with people/ staff/ children - do not lose this in the details of the number.

Jarrold Weiss:

- Informative to see the new process/ framework around building from the ground up
- Excited to hear that band and chorus were not brought up first as a place to find savings
- Concerns: about the soul of the community. Schools are the souls of the communities.
- Accounting properly for small schools
- The community has to struggle for survival every couple of years
- Concern that this process might not give us the information that we need
- Discussion around busing/ transportation
- Concerns around sixth grade - what are the implications going forward - need to know more.

Karoline May:

- Some questions about MTSS: layers 1 through 6
- Concern: feels formulaic - need to be sure we are looking at real people
- How do numbers compare to previous allocations?
- One board looking at one school budget might be helpful
- Some wonderings about inequities
- Discussion around special education; concerns around reduction in special education staffing
- Priority - equities across the schools, transparency, quality of education at all schools, special education with quality special education staff
- Differences of opinion around full-time nursing

Julia Pritchard:

- Budget development is complicated, this is a big learning curve
- Some vagueness in the presentation; lacking some detail
- Concerns: miss the level of budget detail/ discussion from days past before consolidation
- Concerns around retaining staff
- Desire for consistency of services for students
- Some concerns around larger class sizes, along with growing student needs
- Concerns around changes to food services - this is important; also the desire for local foods
- Would like more opportunity for discussion (e.g. class size; how the leadership team making decisions around staffing etc is.)
- Would like to focus on first instruction/ universal design

Q&A:

Shared appreciation for this process. Question: what is different about this budget process from prior?

Steven Dellinger-Pate: The difference is that we used to begin from what we currently have, move it to next year, then peel away as needed to meet the bottom line dollar amount. This time we are starting with the baseline being: what do students need and what does that look like in each school?

Question: When and how do the conversations around high school restructuring happen?

Steven Dellinger-Pate: The leadership team is primarily focused on the budget right now. The configuration conversation is ongoing as we discuss the needs of students.

The topic of district consolidation with neighboring districts: Flor Diaz Smith stated that not only Montpelier - but also Twinfield is interested in conversation; this is more of a holistic process/ conversation and we are still awaiting guidance.

Question about the configuration of the committee - is there consideration of expanding the committee to include more community members?

Is it possible for the board to have its own Front Porch Forum account? Some discussion followed around the steering committee creating posts.

Superintendent Dellinger-Pate: We are allowed five posts per month as a district; beyond that, we ask board members to make individual posts.

Question/ clarification around timeline: will an updated draft of the budget be shared with the Finance Committee next week? Will the information be shared on Friday as part of the packet? Yes, but not at the school-level detail.

Follow up around the question of independent review: has this been pursued yet? Superintendent Dellinger-Pate: not at this time; he is expecting some feedback from the Agency of Education; discussed the possibility of an independent review next year.

Student Reports: Linnea and Lei provided some updates on student happenings:

- Winooski Valley Music Festival's upcoming fall concert
- Marine biology field trip
- Some discussion of fall sports
- Craft fair this Saturday

6. Board Operations

6.1. Board Learning: Improving School Board Effectiveness (Read Chapter 1): Mckalyn Leclerc suggested that we have this board learning during a time when we are not in open meeting. Flor Diaz Smith stated that in years past we agreed to do it during board meeting times because scheduling a separate meeting is challenging.

Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that the topic of board roles is complicated and it might be a place where we have some conflicting opinions; however, at this late hour on this day, she does not feel that she has the bandwidth to have this conversation.

Flor Diaz Smith will check in with the Steering Committee about planning a meeting or time during an existing meeting, to continue this board learning.

6.2. Communication & Engagement Plan: Elizabeth Brown stated that the questions that were asked tonight were pointed and it made for a richer conversation. She heard from some participants that they would like to have more opportunities to have these types of group work.

Daniel Keeney stated that Worcester came out in full force tonight; he noted that the food and the potluck were wonderful; he wonders how to replicate this in each town.

Elizabeth Brown stated that she felt that the opportunity for back-and-forth question and answers was very helpful for the community.

Patrick Whelley: there are three different types of public comment - the small groups, the larger groups, and the time when the board is quiet and listens to public comment without back and forth dialogue. How to incorporate all three?

Flor Diaz Smith stated that she would follow up with the Steering Committee. She shared that some districts have a monthly coffee hour where they invite back-and-forth dialogue with the superintendent, with a board member in attendance.

7. Consent Agenda

7.1. Approve Minutes of 10.16.24: Ursula Stanley moved to approve the minutes of October 16, 2024. Seconded by Chris McVeigh. (Edit: Julia Hewitt was present at the meeting.) **This motion carried, with noted edit.**

8. Personnel

8.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE: Ursula Stanley moved to accept the resignation of Maria Melekos, with deep appreciation. Seconded by Julia Hewitt. Discussion: Chris McVeigh asked whether we know why she has resigned. Some discussion followed around an exit interview, and hiring for this vacancy. **This motion carried unanimously.**

9. Future Agenda Items

9.1. Board Resolution Discussion

9.2. Board Learning

10. Board Reflection: Daniel Keeney stated that there has been some discussion about the loss of dialogue on Town Meeting Day - he would like to revisit how we approach community engagement after we have adopted a budget. For example, plan events in each of the communities.

11. Public Comment: Noah Weinstein provided feedback about the small group experience tonight. He spoke about the desire to have all communities represented on the Configuration Committee. Dell Waterhouse: There is a desire to get together and do some visioning about our school, and our community. She imagines that all of the towns would appreciate a similar opportunity. She thanked the board.

12. Executive Session: At 9:18, Chris McVeigh moved to go into Executive Session to discuss personnel, and to include the Superintendent. Seconded by Julia Hewitt, this motion carried and the board went into Executive Session. The board moved out of Executive Session at 9:28.The board discussed a personnel issue with no action taken.

13. Adjourn: At 9:28, Ursula Stanley moved to adjourn. Seconded by Elizabeth Brown, this motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary
And
Diane Nichols-Fleming, Board Clerk