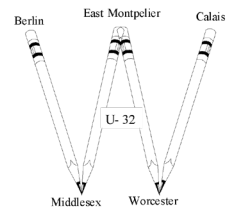


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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
Fax (802) 229-2761



Washington Central Unified Union School Board Meeting 11.20.24 6:15-9:15 PM U-32 1130 Gallison Hill Rd. Montpelier, VT

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

Administrators: Superintendent Steven Dellinger-Pate, Principal Becca Tatistscheff, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Julia Pritchard, Susanne Gann, Celia Guggemos, Alicia Lyford, Jarrod Weiss, Karoline May, Heidi Dimick, Lisa LaPlante

Others: April Davis, Noah Weinstein, Caitlin Howansky, Dell Waterhouse, Allen Gilbert, Leigh Garrity, Adrienne Magida, Allison Fayle, Amber Larrabee, Amy, Annie Ledue, Arlyn Bruccoli, Ashley Ballard, Ashley Lachance, Bekah Mandell, Ben, Brigitte Kalat, Brittany Perry, Cam, Carrie Fitz, Cash, Chartrand, Daisy Scarzello, David Delcore, David Hannigan, David Lawrence, Edith Lane, Elizabeth Marks, Erin Mullaney, Ellen Dorsey, Hannah Brown, Hollis St Peter, Honi Bean Barrett, Jamie Bohn, Jen Pelletier, Jenn Ingersoll, Jennifer Fitch, Jill Abair, John Riley, Kara Rosenberg, Karen Lieberman, Kate McCann, Kathryn Biggam, Lauralea Curavoo, Lisa Garibaldi, Lila Richardson, Mark Brown, Mary Smith, Matt Pelkey, Maya Elliot, Meg Allison, Melanie Kehne, Melissa Purchase, Michael Sherwin, Nicolle Schaeffer, Penny Andrews, Rachel, Robert M, Ross Lieblappen, Rubin Bennett, Scott Isham, Sharon, Tim C, Tyler Smith, Veronica Eldred, ORCA Media, Cathy G, Cindy Griffith, Heather Scandale, Anna Matheson

1. **Call to Order:** Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

2. **Welcome**

2.1. Adjustments to the Agenda: Flor Diaz Smith stated that an Executive Session is needed; she would like to add it to the agenda, item 2.3, before Public Comment.

Ursula Stanley moved to accept this amendment to the agenda. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka, this motion carried unanimously.

2.2. Reception of Guests: Flor Diaz Smith welcomed those present from the community, and the leadership team. She expressed gratitude to the administrative team, and for

the community that is staying engaged in this work, and she thanked the board members and staff, for the shared commitment to public education. She spoke about the principles of equity, justice, and freedom.

2.3. EXECUTIVE SESSION: At 6:20, Ursula Stanley moved to go into Executive Session, for the purpose of discussing employment of an employee, pursuant to 1 VSA section 313(a)(3), and to invite Steven Dellinger-Pate, Heidi Dimick, and legal counsel, Bernie Lambek. Seconded by Patrick Whelley, this motion carried. Chris McVeigh and Daniel Keeney recused themselves from Executive Session on the grounds of potential conflict of interest. **This motion carried unanimously. At 6:41, Michelle Ksepka moved to come out of Executive Session. Seconded by Mckalyn Leclerc, this motion carried unanimously. Diane Nichols-Fleming moved that the board agreed with the recommendation of the administration to enter into a settlement agreement permitting the resignation of an employee, and we authorize the Superintendent to complete the settlement agreement. Seconded by Patrick Whelley, this motion carried. Chris McVeigh and Dan Keeney abstained from this vote.**

2.4. Public Comments-Time limit strictly enforced, see note: Jay spoke to reinforce the importance of libraries. He stated that they are the pillars of the schools and he wanted to reinforce that so that the board would move forward with supporting those resources. He stated that as an attorney, libraries have been his life, his source of research, and his lifeline to his work. Jill Abair spoke about proposed cuts to library positions. She spoke about the technology-related roles of the librarians. She listed the many roles of the library staff in each school. Arlyn Bruccoli spoke about the proposed cuts to the library positions. She stated that this year the programs in our school libraries are already different, due to cuts from the previous budget. She warned the board that these proposed cuts would make it harder to retain qualified staff. Edith Lane, 12th-grade student at U-32, spoke about the role of libraries in her learning experience.

3. Presentation

3.1. Budget Draft # 1: Superintendent Steven Dellinger-Pate, along with other members of the leadership team, presented the slide deck: *FY26 Budget Presentation*.

3.2. Long-term Weighted Average Daily Membership (LTW ADM) Information:

3.3. Community Q &A: Kara Rosenberg asked whether we could be made aware of a specific staffing cut in each school. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that we can create this chart but at this time, we do not have specifics. Chris McVeigh stated that this is information that is important to the public. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that he could have this information prepared for the next draft.

Bekah Mandell asked whether there could be specific information about allied arts positions. She asked for more information about transportation costs since they are affected by special education spending/ funding. She asked what are the plans from the board to address the legislature to advocate for some categorical aid to offset some of the costs such as healthcare. Flor Diaz Smith stated that the Superintendents

Association, Vermont Principals Association and the VSBA are lobbying to the legislature around these issues.

Lauralea Curavoo asked for some information about the foodservice plans for the schools. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that the first step would be to have the position of district-wide Food Service Director. Susanne Gann explained the creation of this job description in more detail.

Heather Scandale asked about the student to staff ratio for example, for the positions of school counselor. She asked how the roles and responsibilities of the position vary from school to school, based on the staffing proposal. She asked whether the full or part time staffing patterns allow for teaching and planning time, and how this varies from school to school. Gillian Fuqua explained that classroom teachers participate during guidance class, so this does not allow for planning time for teachers (as PE, for example, does.) She explained that roles and responsibilities vary from school to school.

Rubin Bennett thanked the board and administration and acknowledged that these conversations are difficult. He noted that it is important to focus on positions and student outcomes and to not personalize. He stated that we have professional administrators who make the hard decisions, and the board should take the work that comes from the administration. He spoke about sustainability over time. Noah Weinstein spoke about sustainability and asked the question of whether shared positions among schools is a possibility, or whether dual licensed teachers, for example, could teach music and art, both, in one school. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that we try, whenever possible, to hire/ create full-time positions.

4. Reports

4.1. Superintendent/COLT Report: A written report has been provided. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate highlighted that we are making some changes to the website. Julie Pritchard shared that para educators had received trauma-informed training on November 11 in service.

4.2. Principal Report: The principals had prepared a written report. Some highlights were shared. Jarrod Weiss shared some of the community-building activities at Calais School. Alicia Lyford shared some of the curriculum work from East Montpelier Elementary School, using the “data wall.” Chris McVeigh asked whether the use of “data wall” is unique to EMES, and what the positive outcomes of this process are. Alicia Lyford shared some of the details.

4.3. Student Report: Lei DeGroot shared some of the student happenings, including the most recent “Word of Mouth” performance in the high school atrium.

4.4. Central VT Career Center Report: (tabled until next meeting)

4.5. VSBA Report: (tabled until next meeting)

5. Board Operations

5.1. Budget Draft # 1: Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that she appreciates the layout and the information that was shared. She would like to have a more detailed explanation of proposed cuts in positions.

Mckalyn Leclerc appreciates the detail in the presentation. She reiterated that she would like to know more specifics around position cuts. She asked for clarification around FTE for administrative assistant positions at each school. She asked how a 0.6 FTE nurse position would work out over a five-day week. She asked how health education is taught. Gillian Fuqua explained that finding a certified Health Educator is a challenge; she explained how Doty School taught health education with a shared position (e.g. with a school counselor).

Dan Keeney asked for specifics about Rumney School's health education position.

Patrick Whelley asked for specific information around weighted student ADM; specifically, the two-year average.

Dan Keeney spoke about the challenge of this creating potentially more part-time FTE positions. How do we expect this budget to compare to past budgets, as far as shared positions or part-time positions? Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that the size of the schools is driving the FTE of positions, and he reiterated that we strive to create/ hire full-time positions. He stated that one of the harder parts of budgeting is determining the FTE of positions and how to ensure that the positions are sustainable for teachers - for example, teachers who have to work amongst three different schools.

Michelle Ksepka stated that food service should be listed at each school, too. She suggested that the Doty school counselor be shown how much time is spent on behavior and how much on the school counselor position. She asked whether there was an investigation into sourcing our food service to an outside agency. She stated that it seemed that the number of economically disadvantaged families' number is artificially small, and she wondered whether there was a concerted push to get families to complete the paperwork certification.

Chris McVeigh stated that he believes the EQS statistics are hard to apply wholesale to the smaller schools in our district. Steven Dellinger-Pate explained that we begin with EQS as a guideline but we also consider other factors, including per pupil spending which he assumes indicate that the students have greater needs and services may need to increase. Rebecca Tatistscheff spoke about the budget development at U-32, redistributing the work that is happening within a different structure, to think about long-term sustainability. This is ongoing programmatic work, and she reminded the board that it is only November and she continues to get to know U-32.

Jonathan Goddard asked whether, with the new incoming federal administration, are we considering how this affects education funding. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that we would continue to keep in mind what positions are funded by federal funds.

Dan Keeney asked for some clarification about funds and co-curriculars. Becca Tatistcheff stated that she continues to look at how we keep our school building active during after-school hours, including after-school programming, especially keeping in mind if sixth graders end up attending U-32 - that athletics are not the only "third space." Dan Keeney stated that he believes this could be an area of growth - more specifically spelling out these co-curricular opportunities.

Amelia Contrada expressed appreciation for the administration and the positive framework with which the information tonight was shared.

Ursula Stanley reiterated Amelia Contrada's sentiment; she also asked whether there is some flexibility in the program planning if there is some shift in average daily membership as the start of the school year approaches. Steven Dellinger-Pate shared that the use of fund balance can address this "shock to the system" if the budget does not support it.

Lei DeGroot asked whether we allocate funds to "third spaces" aside from sports. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that there are limited funds allocated to "third spaces" at all of the schools. He stated that we do need to plan for broader third space opportunities such as after school, look at grants, and plan future budgets. This is a priority in the future. He spoke about the idea of Community School.

Flor Diaz Smith asked, what is our plan going forward, for example, a two-year plan? Where do we have duplication of services? Steven Dellinger-Pate spoke about, in addition to third spaces, the need for instructional coaches. He stated that part of this budgeting process does bring to light some aspects that would be affected by reconfiguring - for example, part-time/shared positions. Some discussion followed around transportation. Gillian Fuqua spoke about the challenges of the bus routes in Worcester.

Some discussion followed around the school nurse positions. Jarrod Weiss spoke about the challenge at Calais Elementary with the shortage of nurse staff.

Draft 2 will include some updates to the budget based on new data, and some details based on the notes from tonight. Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether questions or comments could be sent directly to the Superintendent or Business Director.

5.2. Mailing Ballots: A letter had been included in the board packet. Flor Diaz Smith asked volunteers to attend the town Select board meetings. Dan Keeney - Calais, Kealy Sloan - Berlin, Chris McVeigh - Middlesex, Julia Hewitt - Worcester, Zach Sullivan - East Montpelier. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate would like to join as well, if possible.

5.3. Configuration Committee: A draft memo has been provided for board members to consider. Flor Diaz Smith shared the draft charge for the committee. She stated that a criterion for committee member selection has not been developed yet; she suggested that the board hold off on this discussion, due to the late hour. Some discussion followed about this. Diane Nichols-Fleming asked where we stand around the suggestion to bring in a third party to facilitate. Flor Diaz Smith stated that Jeanie Phillips will continue to be available but at this point, we do not want to be prescriptive. Dan Keeney suggested tasking the Steering Committee with drafting a rubric for selecting committee members, and depending on interest from the community, we wait to decide on appointing additional board members. Anna Matheson stated that at some point we need to consider enlisting help from a third party around communication because it continues to be an ongoing problem.

5.4. District Clerk Candidates: Flor Diaz Smith asked board members to consider whether they might know someone who would be interested. This will be posted on the website and Front Porch Forum.

5.5. School Board Member Elections: Flor handed out petitions to Board members whose term is up this year if they want to run for re-election.

5.6. Ed Quality Update: Ursula Stanley stated that the committee would be sharing in December, as they are not yet prepared to share this month.

6. Finance Committee

6.1. Multi-year Capital Improvement Project Budget Review: Ursula Stanley moved to authorize the reduction in the allocation of capital reserve funds from \$1,561,749 to \$932,066 for the completion of the projects as identified in the 11-15-2024 memo 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 to change the amount to budget in the general fund to transfer to the capital reserve fund in FY 2025-26 as \$500,000. Seconded by Daniel Keeney, this motion carried unanimously.

7. Policy Committee

7.1. First Reading: F45 Fundraising: Chris McVeigh stated that this is an updated draft; he shared the changes in the policy. Ursula Stanley pointed out a typo (“solely”); she asked for clarification around principal or designee versus superintendent or designee. This detail in the policy remains accurate.

8. Personnel

8.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE:
(none tonight)

9. Consent Agenda

9.1. Approve Minutes of 11.6.24: Diane Nichols-Fleming moved to approve the minutes of November 6, 2024. Seconded by Patrick Whelley, this motion carried unanimously.

9.2. Approve Board Orders: Elizabeth Brown moved to approve the board orders dated 10-1-24 to 11-17-24, in the total amount of \$919,411.93. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka, this motion carried unanimously

10. Future Agenda Items

10.1. Board Resolution Discussion: Chris McVeigh offered to withdraw the resolution that he had presented; he stated the importance of the board chair wearing different hats and being sure to not appear to represent the board versus representing VSBA or other when presenting to the legislature.

11. Board Reflection

12. Public Comment: Bekah Mandell stated regarding library services - they are far more than books for children and teachers. She spoke about equity - for example, one school has a more robust tech position and she wonders how this plays out with respect to equity.

Noah Weinsten stated, regarding the charge of the Configuration Committee - it is not clear whether the committee is considering configuration within WCUUSD or whether it is also considering configuration outside of WCUUSD (e.g. Montpelier). Flor Diaz Smith stated that hypothetically the work of the configuration committee could be informed by the work of a larger committee that considers configuration with other districts.

Superintendent Dellinger-Pate thanked Susanne Gann for the work she put into this budget development.

13. Adjourn: The board adjourned by consensus at 10:00.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary