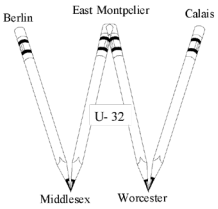
Washington Central Unified Union School District

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
3.12.25
6:15-8:15 PM
(Virtual and In-Person)
U-32 Middle & High School
930 Gallison Hill Rd
Montpelier, VT

Present: Flor Diaz Smith, Elizabeth Brown, Zach Sullivan, Daniel Keeney, Ursula Stanley, Chris McVeigh, Mckalyn Leclerc, Patrick Whelley, Natasha Eckart, Julia Hewitt, Kealy Sloan, Linnea Darrow, Michelle Ksepka

Administrators: Superintendent Steven Dellinger-Pate, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Gillian Fuqua, Lisa LaPlante

Others: Lila Richardson, ORCA Media, Allen Gilbert, Melissa Tuller, Noah Weinstein

1. **Call to Order: Superintendent Dellinger-Pate called the meeting to order at 6:16 p.m.** He noted that an item would be added to the agenda: 2.4 (Discussion) Consider RFP for consultant work with Montpelier.

2. **Board Reorganization**
   - **2.1. Election of Officers: Ursula Stanley nominated Flor Diaz Smith as board chair. Seconded by Chris McVeigh. No other nominations were heard. This motion carried unanimously.** At this point, Flor Diaz Smith facilitated the meeting as board chair. She congratulated everyone for their work resulting in passing the school budget. She thanked Melissa Tuller, District Clerk, for her work. She presented her with flowers as a gesture of gratitude.

Michelle Ksepka nominated Ursula Stanley as board vice chair. Seconded by Daniel Keeney. No other nominations were heard. This motion carried unanimously.

Kealy Sloane nominated Diane Nichols-Fleming as board clerk. Seconded by Chris McVeigh. No other nominations were heard. This motion carried unanimously.

2.2. Committee Appointments:

Steering Committee: Flor Diaz Smith noted that we try to have representation from each town. **Mckalyn Leclerc moved to appoint Elizabeth Brown (Calais), Natasha Eckart (Worcester), Ursula Stanley Middlesex), Diane Nichols-Fleming (Berlin), Flor Diaz Smith (East Montpelier). Seconded by Daniel Keeney, this motion carried unanimously.**

Policy Committee: Natasha Eckart moved to appoint Chris McVeigh, Natasha Eckart, Ursula Stanley, Mckalyn Leclerc, and Amelia Contrada. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka, this motion carried unanimously.

Negotiations Committee: Elizabeth Brown moved to appoint Chris McVeigh, Diane Nichols, Michelle Ksepka, and Patrick Whelley. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously.

Ed Quality Committee: (second Thursday of the month? 5-6 p.m.) The other option is to have the meeting on the night of a board meeting, carousel style. Some discussion around when to have the Ed Quality Committee meetings. **Patrick Whelley moved to appoint Daniel Keeney, Ursula Stanley, Zach Sullivan, and Flor Diaz Smith. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried unanimously.**

Finance Committee: Chris McVeigh moved to appoint Chris McVeigh, Zach Sullivan, Daniel Keeney, Ursula Stanley, and Flor Diaz Smith. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka, this motion carried unanimously.

Transportation Committee: Ursula Stanley moved to appoint Patrick Whelley, Michelle Ksepka, and Chris McVeigh. Seconded by Kealy Sloan, this motion carried unanimously.

Communications Committee: Chris McVeigh moved to appoint Kealy Sloan, Patrick Whelley, Elizabeth Brown, and Julia Hewitt. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously.

Flor Diaz Smith asked Linnea Darrow if she is interested in participating in one of the committees. Linnea will follow up, depending on the time of the meeting.

2.3. Appoint Career Center Representative: Daniel Keeney moved to appoint Patrick Whelley as representative to the Central Vermont Career Center. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried unanimously.

Board meetings: 1st - community engagement; 3rd - regular board meeting. **Elizabeth Brown moved to make the regular established board meetings on the first and third Wed of each month; the first rotates at each school, the second at U-32, all having a virtual option. Seconded by Kealy Sloan.** Discussion: Superintendent Dellinger-Pate noted that some of the dates would need adjustment due to falling on holidays. **This motion carried unanimously.** Daniel Keeney asked to make an effort to reach out to PTNOs or friends of the community where we meet to see if we can coordinate a community gathering to coincide with the 1st board meetings. For example, send our tentative schedule to these groups; also, the Communication Committee can take a part in reaching out. **Ursula Stanely moved to accept the holidays as listed in the memo, and to include Juneteenth, Yom Kippur and Passover. Seconded by Julia Hewitt, this motion carried unanimously.**

Ursula Stanley moved to accept Truancy Officers for each school: Berlin: Celia Guggemos, Calais: Jarrod Weiss Worcester: Gillian Fuqua; Middlesex: Karoline May; East Montpelier: Alicia Lyford U-32: JB Hilferty Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously.

Chris McVeigh moved to operate under Robert's Rules. Seconded by Kealy Sloan, this motion carried unanimously.

Board Norms: Flor Diaz Smith noted that we would update the norms at the retreat. **Patrick Whelley moved to adopt the board norms as accepted November 18, 2020, and to update at the board retreat in 2025. Seconded by Julia Hewitt, this motion carried unanimously.**

Board members discussed the "Board Communications Practices":

● *The Chair is spokesperson for the full Board and Superintendent is the spokesperson for the District*

● *Best practice is to copy Superintendent and chair on email communications.* Daniel Keeney suggested that we consider a more comprehensive document to explain practices.

Annual Board Work Session: Flor Diaz Smith stated that the potential dates are August 6 or August 7th. Mckalyn Leclerc expressed a preference for Wednesday, August 6.

Location for posting agendas: Daniel Keeney moved to designate for posting agendas: Each School, WCUUSD website, Town, Front Porch Forum. Posting of Minutes: WCUUSD Website. Seconded by Patrick Whelley. Discussion: Chris McVeigh asked whether Front Porch Forum should be designated. Some discussion followed about what the Communications Committee posts on FPF. Natasha Eckart stated that she feels it is important to post the agenda on FPF. Patrick Whelley noted that in an effort to "meet people where they are," many of our people use Front Porch Forum. Discussion followed, with differing opinions about including FPF on the designated list or posting. Steven Dellinger-Pate suggested that the responsibility to post agenda to FPF could be at central office, just as agendas are emailed to town clerks, etc. **This motion carried with one vote of "nay.** "Julia Hewitt stated that she has heard a desire to post videos from committee meetings. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that the open meeting law does not require that we video record or share video recordings of committee meetings, as they are considered advisory meetings. Some discussion followed around tasking administrative assistants with another follow-up duty after meetings if posting video recordings of each committee meeting becomes practice. Julie Hewitt stated that she believes we should post the video recordings in the spirit of full transparency. Natasha Eckart suggested that we make it known on the website that video recordings are available if people request them. This option to request video recording will be added to the website, as discussed.

Designate Newspaper of Record: Chris McVeigh moved to designate newspaper of record: Times Argus. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka, this motion carried unanimously.

Appoint board-voting delegate for statewide health insurance: Daniel Keeney moved to appoint Kealy and Flor Diaz Smith as board-voting delegate for statewide health insurance. Seconded by Kealy Sloan. This motion carried with one abstention.

Board members considered the Code of Ethics for School Board Members. Board members had the option to sign this document.

Board Development and other board information: Flor Diaz Smith had shared some links to board relevant information and resources in her memo to the board, dated March 12, 2025, *Board Reorganization /Operational and General Information.*

2.4. Information about discussion with Montpelier Roxbury: Steven Dellinger-Pate shared that he and Flor had met with Libby Bonesteel (Montpelier Roxbury School District) and their board co-chairs. There have been discussions of mergers since 1990. He stated that, given the challenges that we face with size and configuration, and given their challenges with building spaces, there is agreement that it is a good time to discuss this topic. As likely partners as a merger, it might be wise to begin to gather some information. He noted that the legislation that may be coming in the future might make all of this a moot point. He shared the discussion of an informal study to see the feasibility of a merged district, considering, for example:

- current statewide/ regional context
- summary existing facilities
- staffing comparisons
- grade structures
- enrollment
- transportation
- financial situations of each district
- high-level pro/ con list
- feasibility of other districts, other surrounding districts (e.g. Twinfield)
- current articles of agreement
- other considerations
- core values in each district

He stated that this is strictly informational for the board's consideration tonight. There is more information to come at the next board meeting. The hope is to have an RFP/ bid for a consultant. The ask will be for the board to approve half of the cost of consultant work. Flor Diaz Smith stated that this is a way for us to be proactive and take charge of our future. Zach Sullivan stated that it is beneficial to do the planning rather than waiting until after the fact, responding to a mandate. Kealy Sloan stated that it is something the communities are calling for and it is better for us to discuss and be proactive. Chris McVeigh noted that there had been an issue around governance with Roxbury and Montpelier and it will be important to keep this in mind. Chris McVeigh asked, if there were other districts that are expressing interest why wouldn't we be involving them from the outset? Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that it gets exponentially more complicated with other districts so the thought was to begin with these two. He noted we are not talking "just high schools;" we are including elementary schools in the considerations. Daniel Keeney stated that it would be wise to keep our legislators in the loop, and to not have assumptions on each sides, to prevent being in a position to have to "undo" work. Be communicative with the public and with the legislature as well. Steven Dellinger-Pate noted that the majority of the focus at this time would be gathering information. Flor Diaz Smith

noted that the VSBA website offers a lot of updated information on legislative happenings.

3. **Public Comments - Time limit strictly enforced, see note**: No public comments at this time

4. **Executive Sessions:**
   4.1. Student Residency Request: At 7:39 p.m. Ursula Stanley moved that the Board enter into Executive Session for the purpose of considering matters related to a residency exception request as authorized by Title 1 V.S.A Section 313 (a)(7) to include Steven Dellinger Pate. Seconded by Kealy Sloan, this motion carried unanimously. At 7:52, the board came out of Executive Session in motion by Ursula Stanley and seconded by Michelle Ksepka. Ursula Stanley moved to accept the recommendation of the administration regarding the student residency request. Seconded by Natasha Eckart, this motion carried unanimously.
   4.2. Contracts 1 VSA Paragraph 313(a) (1): At 7:54 p.m., Ursula Stanley moved to find that premature general public knowledge regarding the contract clearly places the board at a substantial disadvantage. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka, this motion carried unanimously. At 7:56, Ursula Stanley moved to enter executive session for the purpose of discussion of contracts as authorized by Title 1 313 (a) (1) to include Superintendent Steven Dellinger-Pate and Principal Gillian Fuqua. Seconded by Daniel Keeney, this motion carried unanimously.

5. **Adjourn: The board adjourned by consensus at 8:45 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary