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
5.21.25
6:15-9:15 PM
(In-Person & Virtual)
U-32 Middle & High School
930 Gallison Hill Rd
Montpelier, VT

Present: Elizabeth Brown, Zach Sullivan, Daniel Keeney, Ursula Stanley, Chris McVeigh, Patrick Whelley, Natasha Eckart, Julia Hewitt, Kealy Sloan, Flor Diaz Smith, Linnea Darrow, Michelle Ksepka, Mckalyn Leclerc, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Kealy Sloan, Lei DeGroot, Linnea Darrow, Superintendent Steven Dellinger-Pate, Susanne Gann, Julia Pritchard, Alicia Lyford, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Gillian Fuqua, Becca Tatistcheff, Celia Guggemos, Jarrod Weiss, Karoline May, Lisa LaPlante, Peter Bogart, Sarah Callahan, Ainsley, Alison Byrnes, Allen Gilbert, Allison Fayle, April Davis, Becca Webb, Ben, Brian Slopey, Cash, Chani Waterhouse, Christina, D Crowell, Daniel Mackay, David Delcore, David Hershey, David Lawrence, Dell Waterhouse, Edith Lane, Ellen Knoedler, Hanna Howard, Jaiel Pulskamp, Jamie Bohn, Jessica Heinz, Jessica Maurais, Jill, Joe H, Katie O'Rourke, Meg Allison, Mike Webster, ORCA Media, Sam, Shelley Vermilya, Sonya Rhodes, Vanessa Weinstein, Veronica Fair, Kathleen Bookchin, Larraby Fellows, Lynn, Marilyn Martin, Lisa Hanna, M. McLane, Noah Weinstein, Perry Bellow-Handelman, Honi Bean Barrett, Kathryn Biggam, Caitlin Howansky, Noah Weinstein, Sophia, Michael Close, Lauren Chabot, Martha, Andy Shapiro, Will Baker, Lila Richardson

1. **Call to Order: Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.**

2. **Welcome:** Flor Diaz Smith read a statement. She invited a moment of silence in honor of a loss in the community.
   2.1. Adjustments to The Agenda: Flor Diaz Smith noted that "Pride Flag Request" would be changed to reflect more than the pride flag. Chris McVeigh suggested changing the agenda to discuss decoupling moving fifth and sixth grade students from Doty, from the Turtle Island partnership. This will be Item: 4.2.3 Julia Hewitt would like to move public comment to earlier in the meeting and to extend the time to 30 minutes. **Chris McVeigh moved to**

accept the agenda amendments. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously.

2.2. Reception of Guests

2.3. Board Correspondence

2.4. Public Comments-Time limit strictly enforced, see note: Flor Diaz Smith reminded guests that a time limit of 1.5 minutes would be imposed tonight to allow all voices to be heard within a reasonable period.

Lisa Hanna asked for data to support the anecdotal discussions about fifth and sixth-grade students' experiences, outcomes/ concerns. She asked for more specifics.

David Hershey thanked the board for its hard work on this topic.

Noah Weinsten read a statement expressing opposition to the idea of moving Doty's fifth/sixth-grade students from the Doty School.

A student read from a statement.

Joe H asked for some specifics around the Turtle Island proposal, specifically the parking lot expansion.

Jaiel Pulskamp spoke about her children's experiences at Doty and the connection to the Worcester community, through the lens of the proposed 5th/ 6th grade student relocation to Rumney.

Michael Close stated that he works in the district but did not know this meeting was happening; he feels it should be more widely publicized. He spoke about the stress to students with the proposal for the Doty students. He stated that this would be a difficult thing to undo if it does not work out; it feels like a rushed timeline, based on Turtle Island's needs. He spoke about the unique opportunities to students in the Doty community.

Lauren Chabot had shared various letters to the board. She asked how this proposal is a benefit to Doty students. She expressed concern with the language in the MOU around preschool enrollment. She stated that the calendars with Turtle Island and WCUUSD do not align; she asked to see a cost comparison between Community Connections offerings and the Turtle Island offerings. She spoke about the shortage of childcare.

Andrew Callahan stated that it sounds like we are trading two public school grades in exchange for a two-year lease. He stated that it feels like we are whittling away at Doty and we are moving toward consolidation.

Caitlin Howansky read from a statement to the board, asking the board to consider keeping fifth and 6th grade students at Doty.

Lila Richardson spoke about the MOU and lease drafts. She shared that it is a confusing concept and she pointed out some of the language in the documents that is confusing and concerns around some of the shared spaces.

Andy Shapiro read a statement and expressed opposition to the proposal for 5th and 6th grade students to join Rumney 5th and 6th grade.

Sophia shared a collective vision scenario where the board separates the lease with Turtle Island from moving fifth and sixth grade students, takes the time to make decisions, students feel stable, and stay in their town. The Turtle Island agreement could uplift both parties.

Will Baker spoke about the lease, $5800 monthly? He spoke about the additional costs to the Doty buildings. He stated that there has been no competitive bidding. He stated that the parking situation is a safety issue; Worcester has no sidewalks.

Larraby reiterated the concern that the board had not raised the question of moving fifth and sixth-grade students until the Turtle Island proposal. She spoke about the hardships to the families of Worcester with the proposal, she spoke about transportation concerns, and the impact the proposal will have on working Vermonters.

Martha spoke about her family's experience; her children will be new to Doty in the fall, and had she known the proposed change, her family would likely not have chosen to move to the Worcester community.

Sarah Callahan asked the board to slow down and consider this proposal; she feels there are logistical problems to the plan that need to be considered. She stated that this is being presented as a "golden parachute" to the district; however, the parachute has not been examined for holes. She stated that we have witnessed deeply thoughtful and caring parents and she asked the board to listen to the creative input from this community, many of the proposals involve not moving fifth and 6th grade students to Rumney.

3. Reports

3.1. Student Report: Linnea Darrow shared her experience of having attended Doty. She spoke about Mentor Appreciation Night, earlier this evening. She shared some of the sports results from the past weeks/ month. Prom was this past weekend; SAT and AP exams are upcoming. She shared about "Senior Splash-In," which is an annual tradition.

3.2. Superintendent/Central Office Leadership Team (COLT) Report: This written report had been provided in the board information packet. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate shared that the data from the Climate Survey will be shared at the next board meeting. Jen Miller-Arsenault shared that the Continuous Improvement Plan has been created, aligned with the district's Strategic Plan; the board is asked to approve this plan. Heidi Dimick provided an update to hiring and recruiting. **Ursula Stanley moved to accept the Continuous Improvement Plan(s) included in the board packet. Seconded by Kealy Sloan, this motion carried unanimously.**

3.3. Community Schools Report: This written report had been included in the packet; Superintendent Dellinger-Pate invited questions or feedback.

3.4. Principal Report: Karoline May, Rumney Principal, provided a brief update from the written report. Principals from the elementary schools each provided a brief update from the report. Patrick Whelley asked what is the plan for information/ preparing parents for the "Run Drill" and "Relocation Drill" as part of "Run, Hide, and Fight." Gillian Fuqua spoke to express her full support for the proposal that has been discussed, to collaborate with Turtle Island and to have Doty's fifth and 6th grade students join Rumney's fifth and 6th grade students. She spoke about the topic of equity and the need for equity to be applied across all students. She stated that she believes that Doty's long-term viability is equally fragile, with or without the 5th and 6th grade students in attendance. She spoke about Doty's significantly declining enrollment. She stated that the best chance a small school has to remain open is to do something creative and student-centered.

3.5. Configuration Committee Update: Flor Diaz Smith shared that the committee had met earlier this evening. She spoke about Becca Tatistcheff's presentation about the future of middle schools. Patrick Whelley asked for clarification around backward planning for September. Flor Diaz Smith shared that by September, the hope is that a fleshed-out model can be provided to the board, with action in October. Diane Nichols-Fleming spoke about the idea of community engagement in the process. She hopes for an open opportunity for the community to be engaged in the process, and not just informed. Chris McVeigh reiterated the desire for community engagement in the process.

3.6. Central Vermont Career Center Report: Patrick Whelley shared that there is a proposal for a new location for CVCC in Barre. He shared that there will be facilities forums (one on June 11 at 6 pm at Montpelier High School.) He shared some student accomplishments.

3.7. VSBA Report: Flor Diaz Smith shared that there is a weekly update provided on Tuesdays. She stated that the recent legislation H.454, is an urgent matter and important for board members to keep abreast. She stated that there are some webinars on the VSBA website, for board member professional development. Kealy Sloan thanked Superintendent Dellinger-Pate for the email alert reminders to keep abreast of legislative happenings.

4. Board Operations

4.1. Flag Requests: Amelia Garland, sophomore at U-32, from Seeking Social Justice presented a flag proposal. She spoke briefly about the request that had been submitted in writing. Edith Lane, senior at U-32, spoke on behalf of this request. **Julie Hewitt moved, enthusiastically, to approve the proposal to raise both flags. Seconded by Mckalyn Leclerc. This motion carried unanimously**. Shelley Vermilya thanked the board for showing support to the students.

4.2. Turtle Island Partnership: Flor Diaz Smith asked for a motion to approve the Lease and MOU and then discuss this issue. **Daniel Keeney moved to approve the superintendent to sign the lease as presented. Seconded by Amelia Contrada.** Discussion: Natasha Eckart stated that she had a comment to make before the motion was made and seconded. She stated confusion about why we as a board cannot have discussion and take action to speak to the idea of disconnecting 5/6 grade proposal from the Turtle Island proposal. She stated that we as a board have the authority to have some management over this, based on our community's feedback. Daniel Keeney stated that he agrees with that. Ursula Stanley stated that this district has a precedent in the past of moving students amongst campuses based on student enrollment; this was a decision made by the administration, supported by the board; this in her mind is the day-to-day operations of the schools and not within the purview of the board. The board does not get to dictate how we configure our grade levels.

Patrick Whelley expressed confusion that we are talking about the possibility of signing a lease without the movement of students to Rumney. He asked what had happened in the meantime from the previous board meeting. He stated that in order to support these documents in the motion, he needs to have some understanding. Is moving five and six from Doty necessary to accommodate Turtle Island? Superintendent Dellinger Pate stated that the administration would like to reserve the right to configure in a way that provides the best opportunity to students. He spoke about the use of the art/ music space in the Doty building. He asked, Is this even the will of the board to have a lease and MOU? He also heard the possibility of tabling this motion and putting this to the Configuration Committee. He stated that since the previous meeting, we had located the building plans and consulted with an engineer to discover that we can put a doorway in place to create room. Kealy Sloan stated that at this point, it feels like we are being asked to take action, not in good faith. We are being asked to consider an "either/ or" and that both are a "lose/ lose. Flor Diaz Smith stated that we do not want to be in the position to tell the administration what to do with student configuration. Mckalyn Leclerc suggested that we table the motion and rescind the motion from the last time, which alluded to ⅝, and then address the lease and MOU. **Daniel Keeney withdrew the motion. Amelia Contrada accepted this withdrawal.**

Michelle Ksepka stated, regarding moving fifth and sixth-grade students, we do not dictate to the administration how to configure students. She stated that she feels that the Turtle Island issue is separate. How classroom configuration happens, or where students go, we have not dictated that in any other case; this is not a precedent we should set. **Julie Hewitt moved to rescind the motion from the previous meeting (*to support the proposal as presented in the memo, May 6, 2025, by Superintendent Dellinger Pate and Gillian Fuqua, contingent on an acceptable lease and MOU.*), based on updated information.** We have discovered that there is room at Doty for the full cohort of students through 6th grade. We also discovered that the money involved is greater than was originally presented. **Seconded by Mckalyn Leclerc.** Flor Diaz Smith stated that there is no need according to Roberts Rules to rescind the motion. Some discussion followed. **This motion carried. Chris McVeigh moved that we have a specific conversation about the configuration of 5th and 6th grade students at Doty School, transferred to Rumney School for the upcoming school year.** Daniel Keeney asked him to consider amending the motion. **Chris McVeigh moved that we would not authorize the moving of 5th and 6th grade students from Doty. Seconded by Julia Hewitt.** Discussion: Michelle Ksepka asked that we follow the agenda; she stated that if we do not take action on the lease and MOU then there is no reason to take action regarding fifth and sixth grade students.

Zach Sullivan stated that there is a significant amount of research from public comment that was misrepresented (about the welfare of fifth and sixth grade students). Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that one of the big factors in this determination is in the timing. Patrick Whelley stated, regarding the research that had been presented, there is a lot of opinion on both sides; his suggestion is to use the Configuration Committee to flesh out this discussion.

Ursula Stanley stated that the board has a limited time to be able to discuss together this issue while at the same time being inundated with emails and supporting documents. She spoke about the difficulty of the board to do its work under these circumstances. She spoke

again of equity and stated that the 6th grade cohort that will go to U-32 from Doty in two years will be six students, among a cohort of 100 seventh-grade students.
Daniel Keeney appreciated the feedback that we have received from the community; it is important to realize that we are all amateurs who bring our love and passion for students and for the community to the table. He expressed opposition to the motion because he does not feel it is within the purview of the board; he would prefer a resolution.
Amelia Contrada read the description of the roles of superintendent and board.
Kealy Sloan expressed support for Daniel's idea of a resolution. She stated that, with the new information that we have, it is a bad time to move fifth and sixth-grade students.
Superintendent Dellinger Pate stated that because of the difficulty that we are having, and because of his desire that the board not overstep, he would propose that this go to the Configuration Committee (the lease, MOU) - we are not in a place where we are ready to make a decision. He feels that it is our best option. That way, the administration reserves its role and the board reserves its role. **Chris McVeigh suggested amending his motion to transform it into a resolution that the Doty 5th 6th grade students should not be moved to Rumney School as part of a partnership with Turtle Island. Seconded by Julia Hewitt.**
Superintendent Dellinger Pate stated that, whether this is a motion by the board or a resolution, it still puts the administration in a position to go against the will of the board.
Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether it would make most sense in this case to withdraw the motion/ resolution and take action to table this. **Chris McVeigh retracted his motion/ resolution. Seconded by Julia Hewitt. Chris McVeigh moved to not table this.** He feels that it is important to move forward with the lease and MOU so that we can move forward with Turtle Island. Ursula Stanley suggested that the motion have affirmative language.
Chris McVeigh moved to approve the lease and MOU. Seconded by Zach Sullivan.
Patrick Whelley asked for clarification regarding parking, in the MOU. He asked whether twelve spots are enough for Turtle Island. He would like to have "or designee" added to the Emergency Preparedness in the MOU.
Diane Nichols-Fleming expressed concern about the fire lane. She asked is there a way to adjust in the lease, the monthly rental cost, based on actual costs? E.g., a six month review of the monthly rental rate.
Julia Hewitt asked a question regarding designated play space, next to the fire lane. The suggestion was made that the fire marshal be consulted on this. Daniel Keeney asked if we have a cost estimate on the building improvements that are needed. Diane Nichols-Fleming expressed concern that we do not have an estimate, especially at this time with construction costs. It is not how we would typically do business. She is not comfortable with a "guesstimate."
Chris McVeigh had made some proposals for changes in the language of the lease and MOU. He stated that allowing 24/7 access to the building is not desirable; he spoke about the percentage of utilities for which Turtle Island would be responsible. Inconsistency between lease and MOU with internet service.
Daniel Keeney stated that he believes they should be granted 24/7 access. He stated that a certain amount of predictability of cost increases should be provided to the lessee, and he suggested that we create a cap, e.g. up to 10% within a one-year window. (Chris McVeigh asked how you would quantify cost. Daniel: increase in trash, increase in utilities, a review of actual costs)

Lease being tied to CPI is reasonable; however, the suggestion around shared utilities cost is unusual for a commercial lease. **Board agreement to tie the rent to CPI: consumer price index.**
Zach Sullivan stated, thinking in the longer term, further down the road, we want to be a good partner if we are looking to do this on other campuses at WCUUSD. Susanne Gann cautioned against attributing cost increases to Turtle Island exclusively, rather than to the entire building. Julia Hewitt asked whether air conditioning is included in the MOU.

Julie Hewitt asked whether we would see an updated lease/ MOU, based on the discussion tonight. She asked whether there is any language within the MOU about prioritizing Worcester students. She would include that in any MOU.

Natasha Eckart asked whether the use of the building for town meeting or election, etc., would be impacted. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate: No Natasha Eckart - are we going to get any specific information about the number of families, cars, etc., and the flow of traffic for drop off/ pick up? Flor Diaz Smith - This is included in the MOU, that the administration will provide a procedure. Julia Hewitt confirmed: Did Superintendent Dellinger-Pate suggest that the discussion of 5th and 6th grade students go to the Configuration Committee? Yes

Chris McVeigh asked about nursing services. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that this would be provided as needed, if needed, at an hourly rate. Julia Hewitt asked: Can we host Turtle Island and have fifth and sixth grade students at Doty, in your opinion, to Superintendent Dellinger-Pate? He replied that yes, it is possible; however, it will have an impact on programming.

Ursula Stanley asked, regarding shared spaces, how would this align with the district's policy about building use? Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that he does not think the use of the building under these circumstances would fall under the same policy.

Daniel Keeney: Can we say unequivocally that the fifth and sixth grade will remain at Doty for the coming year? Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that this is an issue that needs to be discussed with the administration and staff at Doty. Daniel Keeney stated that it feels like an impasse at this time.

Kealy Sloan stated that the Configuration Committee does not meet until June - that is too long to wait to answer the question of 5th and 6th grade at Doty or joining Rumney. Kealy Sloan stated that we have formed a Configuration Committee (in second iteration) so we have acknowledged in creating this committee that the board representation does in fact have some say in configuration.

Flor Diaz Smith reminded the board that they had decided earlier to address the lease and MOU. Chris McVeigh moved to amend his original motion to add: contingent upon keeping 5th 6th grade at Doty for the next year. The person who seconded the motion did not accept this amendment.

Natasha Eckart asked for clarification about what is happening right now regarding fifth and sixth grade next year, and regarding the work of the Configuration Committee. Daniel Keeney stated that his understanding of the work of the Configuration Committee at this time is to vision configuration over a longer timeline, one of the considerations being sixth grade at U-32 under a middle school model. He is not comfortable with the destiny of fifth sixth graders at Doty/ Rumney next school year falling under the purview of the Configuration Committee.

Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that she is not comfortable with discussing the MOU and lease in detail and approving a working document in process, especially given the confusion this evening about how different people are hearing what is discussed.

Mckalyn Leclerc called the question. Seconded by Zach Sullivan. Ursula Stanley clarified that we are approving the superintendent moving forward to negotiate a lease and MOU with Turtle Island, with edits as discussed. **The motion to call the question carried with a ⅔ or greater vote of the board. A vote was called on the motion.** Natasha Eckart clarified that voting on the lease/ MOU is separate from the fifth and sixth grade issue. Chris McVeigh indicated that it is not.
Nine in favor
Four voted no
Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that, due to the lack of specificity, she votes against this.
This motion carried.

Superintendent Dellinger Pate stated that we would keep fifth and sixth at Doty for fall 2025 and put the question to the Configuration Committee about what comes next; however, he would like to be clear that this will affect programming; this will require resolution via discussion amongst administration and teaching staff at Doty. Julia Hewitt thanked Superintendent Dellinger Pate and Principal Fuqua for responding to the community.

4.2.1. Lease

4.2.2. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

4.2.3. Disconnect 5th/ 6th grade move to Rumney from the Lease/ MOU

Flor Diaz Smith thanked Linnea Darrow for her participation on the board as student representative. The board thanked and applauded her!

4.3. Advocating as a Board

5. **Ed Quality:** Ursula Stanley would like to table this report until the June meeting, given the late hour.
   5.1. Student Monitoring Report (Winter 2025)

6. **Finance Committee**
   6.1. FY 2024-25 Financial Update: Susanne Gann had provided a written report. She invited questions or comments from board members.
   6.2. Accept Annual Fiscal Management Questionnaire: Zach Sullivan moved to accept the annual financial management questionnaire prepared by the Business Administrator and included in the Board packet. Seconded by Ursula Stanley; this motion carried unanimously.

6.3. Authorize Superintendent to Sign Contracts and Accept Grants for WCUUSD: Zach Sullivan moved to authorize the appointed Superintendent to sign all contracts and accept grants on behalf of Washington Central Unified Union School District effective throughout FY 2025 - 2026. Seconded by Patrick Whelley; this motion carried unanimously.

6.4. Blanket Authorization for Board Warrants / Check Orders: Zach Sullivan moved to approve this blanket authorization through FY25-26, as provided in the board packet. Seconded by Ursula Stanley; this motion carried unanimously.

6.5. Review Capital Improvement Project Plan and Multi-year Budget: at the next meeting

7. Policy Committee: Chris McVeigh moved to approve the following slate of policies. Seconded by Amelia Contrada. Discussion: Ursula Stanley asked to assign a number to the first policy following the current system. **This motion carried unanimously.**

7.1. Second Readings

7.1.1. Procurement Conflict of Interest

7.1.2. B30 Staffing & Job Descriptions

7.1.3. A32 Board Goal Setting & Evaluation

7.1.4. A34 Board Relations with School Personnel

7.1.5. A24 Board/Superintendent Relationship

8. Personnel

8.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE: Ursula Stanley moved to approve the following new hires: Kathryn Saunders – School Nurse 1.0 FTE – Calais and Doty; Jessica Maurais – Special Educator 1.0 FTE - Berlin; Jessie Dall – Library Media Specialist/Technology Integrationist (1.0 FTE .8 Berlin/.2 Rumney); Maryellen Munday - Math Interventionist 1.0 FTE - Calais; Rory Woodard - Librarian - Calais/EMES. Seconded by Zach Sullivan. Discussion: Daniel Keeney asked for clarification around the shared school nurse position: .4 Calais .6 Doty. **This motion carried unanimously.** Ursula Stanley expressed an excited welcome to the new hires. **Ursula Stanley moved to approve the following long-term substitute for the 2025-26 school year: John Dube – LTS Social Studies-U-32. Seconded by Amelia Contrada, this motion carried unanimously.**

9. Consent Agenda

9.1. Approve Minutes of 5.7.25: Chris McVeigh moved to approve the minutes from May 7, 2025, as presented. Seconded by Amelia Contrada, this motion carried unanimously.

9.2. Board Orders: Diane Nichols-Fleming moved to approve the board orders for a total amount of $923,549.82. Seconded by Kealy Sloan, this motion carried unanimously.

10. Future Agenda Items

10.1. Review Capital Improvement Project Plan and Multi-year Budget

10.2. Ed Quality Report from tonight

11. Board Reflections

12. Public Comments Time limit strictly enforced, see note 15 minutes: Debra Bloom thanked the board and stated that the Configuration Committee has a lot of work to do around integrating our fifth and sixth grade students with other campuses. Lisa Hanna rehashed the confusion from tonight's meeting. Concerns around space at the Doty building have been discussed, ongoing. She stated that tonight's meeting was an embarrassment, and she feels that Doty students will suffer.

13. Executive Session: Student Residency Request: Julia Hewitt moved to go into Executive Session at 10:14 to discuss a Student Residency Request. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously. At 10:23, Ursula Stanley moved to come out of executive session and seconded by Patrick Whelley. Diane Nichols-Fleming moved to accept the administration's recommendation regarding both student residency requests. Kealy Sloan seconded. Approved unanimously.

14. Adjourn: Zach Sullivan moved to adjourn at 10:24. Seconded by at Kealy Sloan. Approved unanimously.

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