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
9.3.25
7:15-9:15 PM
(In-Person & Virtual)
U-32 Middle & High School
930 Gallison Hill Rd
Montpelier, VT

Present: Superintendent Dellinger-Pate, Flor Diaz Smith, Daisy Scarzello, Daniel Keeney, Chris McVeigh, Jeannie Phillips, Becca Tatistcheff, Patrick Whelley, Anna Matheson, Marilyn Martin, Deborah Bloom, Zach Sullivan, Amelia Contrada, Gillian Fuqua, Ursula Stanley, Kealy Sloan, Natasha Eckart, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Mckalyn Leclerc, Jen Miller Arsenault, Lisa McCarthy, Alison Fayle, Ari Preston, Beckah Mandel, David Delcore, David Lawrence, Ela Chapin, Michael Sherwin, Veronica Fair, Elizabeth Brown, Alicia Lyford, Ellen Knoedler, Elliot Burg, Susan Clark

1. **CONFIGURATION COMMITTEE COMBINED MEETING UNDER SEPARATE COVER**

2. **Call to Order: Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m.**

3. **Welcome**
   - **3.1. Adjustments to the Agenda:** no changes
   - **3.2. Reception of Guests**
   - **3.3. Public Comments-Time limit strictly enforced, see note 15 minutes:** Flor Diaz Smith noted that we are allowing 1.5 minutes for comments.

     Susan Clark, Middlesex - noted that over 125 people had signed and sent a letter to the board. She stated that the alternative to the state's imposed model is that we can state our own terms. She asked to consider a supervisory union model, which would allow us to govern through our existing boards. Other school boards around this state have made this request. She noted that the time for action is now. She stated that a supervisory union is a more democratic model.

     Beckah Mandel reiterated what Susan Clark had stated; she had sent the referenced letter to the board; she stated that she is already feeling some of the growing pains of our currently merged board, managing six schools. She asked about libraries across the district - wonders

whether there is a librarian or a library program at Rumney right now. She asked the board to urge the redistricting committee to allow us to form a supervisory union. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that there is a library program at Rumney at this time and he encouraged people to reach out to the school principal.

Lisa McCarthy, Calais resident, principal at Craftsbury Academy. Encouraged the board to pursue a supervisory union model; the potential implications of Act 73 will affect rural communities. What is the effect on small towns with no voice in a much larger configuration?

David Lawrence - spoke about the democratic process and the importance of all having a voice.

4. Board Operations

4.1. Review and Accept Board Norms: Flor Diaz Smith had shared an updated document based on previous discussions and comments. She invited discussion from the board.

Diane Nichols-Fleming asked to include the first bullet in the norms:

Amelia Contrada suggested adding it to the bullet: Respect Each Other. *Board members will address the topics up for debate and not the person. Personal attacks are out of order.*

Zach Sullivan suggested including the fourth on the list of the proposed new bullets around preparation for board meetings.

Daniel Keeney stated that if the "Respect Each Other" is expanded as discussed above, it seems redundant to have a separate "Assume Positive Intent."

Elizabeth Brown stated that "personal attack" is a subjective idea and she would like to include the "Assume Positive Intent" bullet to more clearly delineate.

Flor Diaz Smith suggested editing this document to reflect tonight's conversation so the board can consider it at the next board meeting.

Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that she feels it is important to spell out respectful exchange between board members, in light of the current climate in local and federal government.

Natasha Eckart indicated that she does not feel that the fourth bullet (about preparation in advance) should be included using that verbiage.

Daniel Keeney stated that this seems implicit in the role of the board and he is inclined to agree with Natasha on this.

Amelia Contrada suggested, "In good faith, exercise informed decisions responsibly."

Chris McVeigh does not agree with the changes to the second bullet around asking clarifying questions during public comment, and the responsibility of the steering committee. He also stated that the bullet re: "Role of the Board" assumes that everyone has the same understanding/ perception on the role of the board.

Ursula Stanley reminded the board that the norms are considered "aspirational" and she does not see them as a tool to be used to "call other board members out…"Discussion followed around public comment, dialogue, clarifying questions, etc.

Daniel Keeney suggested providing the policy committee with an opportunity to address this document. He suggested that a smaller group workshop this document.

Patrick Whelley spoke about public comment. There are times when dialogue is important and clarifying questions are needed. He feels that it is important to be clear about this in meetings so that the community knows what to expect during public comment.

Chris McVeigh stated that this is a governing document and does not belong within the work of the Policy Committee.

Diane Nichols-Fleming reminded the board that the context when these norms were created was during a time when we needed guardrails. We are in a different place now and it makes sense to tweak the document to reflect conversation tonight. Flor Diaz Smith noted that the Steering Committee would work on editing this document.

4.2. Updated Work Plan Review: Superintendent Dellinger-Pate had provided this document. Kealy Sloan noted that the Communications Committee meetings need to be included in this document.

4.3. Career Center Resolution: Daniel Keeney moved: **This board resolves, insofar as full-day educational programming in a single location best optimizes educational outcomes for our district's students, that the capital budget proposal for a new Central Vermont Career Center include sufficient facilities to accommodate that full-day programming, including a gymnasium. Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously.**

4.4. Legislative Update and Planning: Chris McVeigh suggested putting this on the next meeting agenda and that we consider advocating for a supervisory union model. He would like to invite a guest speaker to the meeting; Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether this information (proposed guest speaker) would be available for the next steering committee meeting. She stated that she believes this legislation is greatly flawed. Ursula Stanley suggested that the board not plan to take action until the October meeting, to give time to consider and digest information. Steven Dellinger-Pate asked the board, what kind of expertise/ guest speaker do you have in mind? Daniel Keeney: someone intimately familiar with the new legislation. Flor Diaz Smith shared intentions to have a meeting, invite legislators for dialogue and better understanding of this recent legislation. Patrick Whelley asked, what is the timeline of action? To have any hope of affecting any outcome? Flor Diaz Smith stated that there is a December deadline and there is an opportunity for public comment in October. The board will address this issue at the October 8 board meeting. Diane Nichols-Fleming asked, is there somewhere to compare what is going on, statewide, what is the response across the state?

5. Personnel

5.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE: Ursula Stanley moved to approve the new hire nomination: (for 25-26 school year) Phelps Griffin (U-32 Middle School Science) Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously. Ursula Stanley moved to accept the resignation of Jason Woodard - U-32

Classroom Teacher (Middle School Science). Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously. Ursula Stanley moved to approve the hire: Long-Term Substitute (25-26 School Year) James Lignos (LTS for MS Science and MS Math). Seconded by Amelia Contrada, this motion carried unanimously.

6. **Consent Agenda**
   6.1. **Approve Minutes of 8.20.25: Patrick Whelley moved to approve the minutes of August 20, 2025. Seconded by Zach Sullivan.** Chris McVeigh noted that the language in the minutes around "review and adopt board norms" does not accurately reflect what he stated. **This motion carried, with noted edit.**

7. **Future Agenda Items**

8. **Board Reflections**
   Zach Sullivan stated that, regarding the need for the board to be responsive to the public, he believes the board should work toward filling the vacant board seat from Berlin. He stated that last year, the student council had come to the board to present in advance of budget development. He would like to have that experience again.

   Natasha Eckart suggested that we invite the student council to the next board meeting so that they can be present for the discussion around Act 73. She stated that the agenda tonight was confusing, with the Configuration Committee agenda being from 6:15 - 7:00; however the intent was that it be a regular board meeting as well at that time. November 7 bond vote for career center - add this to the calendar

   Kealy Sloan stated that she is excited to have so many events and invitations across all of the school towns and thanked administrators for making this information available.

   Daniel Keeney stated that the work plan now has locations of community meetings. He expects that the Friends of Calais will collaborate at the January meeting in the same way that the Worcester town had created a joint event this past year.

9. **Public Comments: Time limit strictly enforced, see note 15 minutes:** Susan Clark shared information about other Vermont towns that have expressed the desire to form supervisory union in light of Act 73, and she encouraged this board to make this statement; she spoke again about the importance of democracy and local voice.

10. **Adjourn: The meeting adjourned by consensus at 8:50 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary