

# 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  
1.7.26  
6:15-9:15 PM  
(In-Person & Virtual)  
U-32 Middle & High School  
930 Gallison Hill Rd  
Montpelier, VT**

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

**Others:** Allison Fayle, April Davis, Deborah Bloom, David Delcore, David Lawrence, Dell Waterhouse, Dena Brown, Denise Wheeler, Emilie Connor, Emi Harlow, Erica Zimmerman, Giuliana Jensen, Hanna Brown, Hans, Honi Bean Barrett, Laura Ashikaga, Lila Richardson, Lisa Hanna, Mallory Russell, Mark Brown, Marilyn Martin, Matthew Thomas, Noah Weinstein, ORCA Media, Scott Hess, Teegan Dykeman-Brown, Felicia Soto, Danielle Barclay, Melissa Tuller

**Administrators:** Karoline May, Celia Guggemos, Lisa LaPlante, Alicia Lyford, Susanne Gann, Julia Pritchard, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Gillian Fuqua, Jarrod Weiss

- 1. Call to Order: Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 6:17 p.m.**
- 2. Welcome:** Flor Diaz Smith expressed gratitude to all present.
  - 2.1. Adjustments to The Agenda:** Flor Diaz Smith suggested some changes to the agenda: Eliminate item 5.5 and move item 5.2 to 5.1 on the agenda. **Chris McVeigh moved to accept the changes to the agenda. Seconded by Kealy Sloan, this motion carried unanimously.**
  - 2.2. Reception of Guests**
  - 2.3. Public Comments: Time strictly enforced, see note:** Shane, resident of East Montpelier: spoke about the music programs and his concerns about decreasing positions and programs in music, at U-32 and in other neighboring districts. He shared some resources with the board for consideration.

Noah Weinstein asked the board to consider the meetings around transition, to include both towns at the meetings in the building facility.

Emilie Connor, East Montpelier: reminded that the choice to be made is to retain teachers but close buildings. She stated that as a resident of East Montpelier she is putting out a welcome mat to those from Calais.

Deborah Bloom reminded the board and community that our focus is on educational outcomes for our students - how to prepare and support our students for the future that they all deserve.

Member of the community spoke about the different perspectives that people have about what constitutes a quality education.

Cynthia Gardner-Morse spoke about an amendment at the previous meeting and asked why it is not part of the language in the warning.

3. **Presentation: CVCC Budget Presentation (Jody Emerson):** Jody Emerson presented a slide deck: *FY27 Central Vermont Career Center Budget Presentation*. She invited questions. Daniel Keeney asked what would be involved in a shorter term for average student attendance. She stated that this is at the legislative level at this time, but is under discussion. Chris McVeigh asked for some details about short term space discussions. Jody Emerson shared that there may be some federal grant money available and there is some discussion about purchasing an auto shop close to the Spaulding campus, for a short-term solution.
4. **Presentation: Budget Input:** Superintendent Dellinger-Pate shared some information about the budget at this point in its development. He shared that the administration is working on a Draft #3. He noted that the final draft will be brought to the next board meeting for approval (January 21)
  - 4.1. **Q & A:** Mckalyn Leclerc asked for clarification: which model should the board consider - the three (preK-6) school model? She also asked for clarification about adjusting of the bus transportation (late buses). If late buses are canceled on certain days, will that mean that some activities will not take place on those days? He stated that it might be that some students will not be able to participate on days if the late bus does not run and transportation is an issue. Discussion followed about the budget including Principal and Assistant Principal at both Berlin and East Montpelier - however this includes some reduction in behavior staff at those schools, and the assistant principals will be school year positions. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate noted that Assistant Principals would take on some of the supervision/ evaluation of staff.

Daniel Keeney asked to see what the staffing at each school is moving from and to (the delta) - this feels like an important detail.

Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether the detail that Daniel was looking for is around number of staff at each school. He clarified.

Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that the charts do not look like there are major cuts in interventionists; this does not seem to match what we were told at the previous meeting.

Zach Sullivan stated that it is important to clarify not only positions but also what those positions are doing/ what are their roles.

Patrick Whelley asked for clarification around Pre-K programs at the schools, and the structure of after school offerings.

Elizabeth Brown asked what the contingency plan is if one-town votes against this proposed plan; Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that we would default to something like Draft 2B, a four-school model. Some discussion followed around how to convey information about different contingencies.

## 5. Board Operations:

- 5.1. **Budget Warning Language:** Michelle Ksepka moved to elect Melissa Tuller as WCUUSD Clerk. Seconded by Kealy Sloan, this motion carried unanimously. Kealy Sloan moved to increase the pay for WCUUSD Clerk from \$1K to \$2K on the budget warning language, and to approve the budget warning language, with noted change. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka. Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether there is a time study around how many hours of work this position involves, to determine whether the stipend is appropriate. Some discussion followed around the hours required; Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that it would be appropriate to consider whether the stipend is consistent with at least minimum wage. The board will consider this at a later date. **This motion carried unanimously and the warning for the February vote was circulated for signatures.**
- 5.2. **School Board Vacancies:** Flor Diaz Smith noted that Mckalyn Leclerc would not continue on the board, creating a vacancy in Worcester. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate reminded that Berlin continues to have a vacancy.
- 5.3. **Annual Report Format:** Flor Diaz Smith reviewed that the annual report is not mailed to each address; some paper copies are available at local places like post offices, and a QR code is provided to access the document digitally.
- 5.4. **Superintendent Evaluation: Reflection on Goals:** Superintendent Dellinger-Pate provided some feedback to the board around his progress toward goals.
- 5.5. **Approve School Choice Numbers:**(removed from the agenda tonight)
- 5.6. **Communication & Engagement Planning:** Flor Diaz Smith suggested two possible dates for informational meeting: **Chris McVeigh moved to set the following days for Informational Meetings: February 4, 2026 at Doty School (before Policy meeting) Saturday, February 7, 2026 (9-10:30 a.m.) at Calais School. Seconded by Mckalyn Leclerc.** Discussion: Elizabeth Brown indicated that 9-10:30 a.m. is a hard period for families. **Daniel Keeney made a friendly amendment to change the time from 2:00 - 3:30 p.m. This amendment was accepted by Chris McVeigh. This motion carried unanimously.** Flor Diaz Smith had suggested smaller, more informal meetings in the communities in between the meetings and between the next board meeting and early February.

Zach Sullivan stated that it is incumbent on the board members to use the smaller meeting opportunities to find times that work for community members. Natasha Eckart asked what the vision for the small groups is. Flor Diaz Smith stated that what we have been hearing from community members is a desire for smaller groups, so the idea was to use locations resulting from a community mapping activity from the past, for small gatherings, for example, fire station, four corners store, red hen bakery, people's homes, town halls, town offices. Mckalyn Leclerc asked for some clarification around what is the intention of the smaller groups. Flor Diaz Smith stated that the board as a whole voted for a configuration, and we can share with the smaller groups why we as a board, support this going forward as the best path.

Ursula Stanley stated that while the board does not tell people to vote one way or the other, we could share information about the process and how we arrived at this proposal.

Elizabeth Brown stated that it would be helpful to have some talking points for board members for these gatherings. Flor Diaz Smith shared that a handout/ brochure will be prepared with information and bullet points.

Some discussion followed among board members about how to discuss this in the smaller group format. Daniel Keeney stated that it would be helpful to have members of the Configuration Committee take part in the gatherings so that they can help speak to the process and how the conclusion was made.

Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that he would like to plan open houses but will wait to hear what the dates that the smaller groups will meet, to coordinate.

Julia Hewitt stated that the vote was 8-5 and so there are five board members who did not vote in favor for this model, and it will be difficult for them to advocate for a position that they did not take.

Flor Diaz Smith reminded her that the board ultimately voted in favor of this and all board members come together at this point to move the work of the board forward.

Ursula Stanley asked if the small groups will be sharing their meeting times and places for coordination. Flor Diaz Smith reminded that, for agenda items only, e.g. time and location, the board is allowed to communicate via email. Natasha Eckart suggested creating a shared spreadsheet.

## 6. Policy

### 6.1. Second Reading

**6.1.1. D23 Selection of & Access to Instructional Materials:** Chris McVeigh shared this policy with the board. He stated that this is largely matched with the Library Materials policy. **Chris McVeigh moved that the board adopt Policy D23: Selection of and Access to Instructional Materials. Seconded by Patrick Whelley.** Discussion: Kealy Sloan asked whether this is a new policy. Yes, this is a new policy but very similar to the Library Materials policy. **This motion carried unanimously.**

**7. Personnel**

**7.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE: Kealy Sloan moved to accept the resignation of John Boyd, Special Educator at U-32. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried.** Steven Dellinger-Pate shared that Melissa Tuller, has accepted a position in Accounts Payable. He thanked her for all of her work.

**8. Consent Agenda**

**8.1. Approve Minutes of 12.17.25: Chris McVeigh moved to adopt the consent agenda. Seconded by Ursula Stanley. Discussion: Michelle Ksepka noted that she had voted “yes” but was recorded as “no.” This will be changed in the minutes. Zach Sullivan pointed out an edit in the minutes regarding the board’s action to close Calais and Doty schools. This error will be corrected in the minutes. This motion carried with noted edits.**

**9. Future Agenda Items**

- 9.1.** U-32 Schedule
- 9.2.** Ed Quality
- 9.3.** Multiple Pathways/ College and Career

**10. Board Reflections:** Natasha Eckart spoke about her experience shadowing a student at U-32. She encouraged board members to take advantage of this opportunity. Natasha Eckart reflected on the December meeting, that she appreciates all of the comments that board members made, whether in agreement or not, she felt that the board was able to have a productive conversation around a difficult topic.

Diane Nichols-Fleming thanked Spencer, as the audio for tonight’s meeting was very clear.

Mckalyn Leclerc urged Worcester residents to consider taking her place on the WCUUSD Board. She stated that her mindset has shifted over the years and she has come to embrace us as one board, one district. All of our kids are going to end up together at U-32, so we need to also take good care of U-32 and all of our students and communities.

**11. Public Comments: Time limit strictly enforced, see note 15 minutes:** John Brabant thanked Michelle Ksepka for pointing out the error on the roll call vote in the minutes. He reiterated Ursula Stanley’s statement that the small group meetings are not a sales pitch or a lobbying; they are an opportunity to share information. He stated that it is important for people to know that the vote was not unanimous; it was an 8 to 5 vote. Board members who voted “no” have a right to share their reasons “why” and each board member represents their constituents, so each vote counts, yes or no.

Barry Bernstein asked for some clarification around the numbers within the different versions of building configuration.

Denise Wheeler asked for clarity around the statement about standing behind the position of the board. If she asks a board member how they voted, she would expect them to tell their honest answer, and why.

Felicia Soto asked how the district decides where the cuts occur. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate explained the budget development process.

**12. Adjourn: At 8:41, Ursula Stanley moved to adjourn. Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary