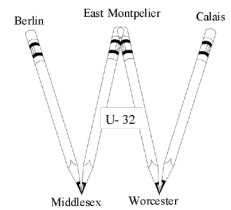


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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
12.17.25
6:15-9:15 PM
(In-Person & Virtual)
U-32 Middle & High School
930 Gallison Hill Rd
Montpelier, VT**

Approved 1-7-26

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, Elise O'Brien and Kathryn Stauffer, Lei DeGroot, Jeannie Phillips, Karoline May, Celia Guggemos, Lisa LaPlante, Alicia Lyford, Susanne Gann, Julia Pritchard, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Gillian Fuqua, Jarrod Weiss, Becca Tatischeff, Many community members, in person and online (169+ online)

1. Call to Order: Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 6:21 p.m.

2. Welcome

2.1. Adjustments to The Agenda: Flor Diaz Smith stated that an Executive Session will be needed during 5.1 on the agenda. She indicated that the board may move to go into executive session to include our Superintendent for purposes of confidential attorney-client communications per 1 VSA 313(a)(1)(F), provided it makes the required finding that public knowledge would clearly place the board (or another party) at a substantial disadvantage. **Chris McVeigh moved to accept this change to the agenda. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously.**

2.2. Reception of Guests

2.3. Public Comments-Time limit strictly enforced, see note: Barry Bernstein spoke about a point of order - 90 seconds is not long enough and he referred to legislation that recommends three minutes per person. Flor Diaz Smith stated that there is 15 minutes allowed for public comment at this time and also at the end of the meeting. Members of the public lined up to make public comments.

Comment from fifth grade student to not close schools.

Comment from community member/ parent - do not reduce teachers.

Long list of unanswered questions were displayed - do not rush into this decision.

Emotions are very high - pause, step back

Doty parent expressed grief at the forcefulness of the decision without due process.

Presentation from someone about the music/ band programs.

One parent spoke about the benefit of consolidating schools; the challenge of five separate schools in a forced merger.

Parent and teacher at U-32 spoke about the impact of proposed reductions in positions at U-32 - it will not be the same school.

Calais student gave an impassioned plea to the board to reconsider school closure.

Parent spoke about the benefits/ positives of Berlin School.

Doty student spoke about "Community Lunch" at Doty.

Many people spoke against the idea of moving ahead with reconfiguration in the form of small school consolidation.

Many people urged the board to move forward to a vote for the towns and then honor the vote.

3. **Presentations: Budget:** Superintendent Dellinger-Pate provided a preview and shared slide deck *FY27 Budget Presentation*.
- 3.1. **Budget Draft # 2a Current Configuration:**
- 3.2. **Budget Draft # 2b Three Elementary Configuration:** Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that what we need from the board is guidance - which direction to go. There are still some unknowns (in the legislature, e.g. yield) so precise final tax data is not yet available.
- 3.3. **Community Q&A (Time strictly enforced, see note):** Some members of the community asked for clarification from the two configuration scenarios that were shared.

Some discussion regarding Act 73. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate clarified that none of our schools meet the criteria of “small by necessity.” Will information be shared describing how staffing patterns were determined in the scenarios?

4. Reports

- 4.1. **Student Report:** The students provided an update on student happenings, as well as a slide deck summarizing student issues around budget development and student priorities. Kealy Sloan asked how many students took the survey? (38)

5. Board Operations

- 5.1. **Board Budget Discussion:** Ursula Stanley indicated that public knowledge about the following board discussion would clearly place the board (or another party) at a substantial disadvantage. **Diane Nichols-Fleming moved to go into Executive Session at 8:52, for the purpose of confidential attorney-client communications, per 1VSA313, and to invite the superintendent. Seconded by Kealy Sloan, this motion carried unanimously. At 9:36, Michelle Ksepka moved to come out of Executive Session. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously.**

Flor Diaz Smith invited questions from board members to follow up the budget presentation. Patrick Whelley asked for clarification around the increase in health care expenses this year.

Elizabeth Brown asked about a possible four school configuration - this has come up several times from constituents.

Natasha Eckart asked why is there such a significant difference in version 2A and 2B, for U-32. Some explanation followed of the staffing patterns in both draft versions as presented earlier. Natasha Eckart stated that it is difficult to make hard decisions that will impact two towns, and we are not certain of what is coming down the pike and whether/ what will be the positive outcomes.

Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that we will continue to have to make difficult decisions in the coming years as population continues to decline, restructuring our schools for declining enrollment. Discussion continued around licensure for teachers (i.e. middle school licensure).

Daniel Keeney asked for clarification about CLA figures.

Chris McVeigh asked for follow up around impacts on interventionists and multi-layered systems of support, and possibly the special education evaluation process.

Mckalyn Leclerc expressed concerns about substantial cuts to U32 in both versions, 2A and 2B.

5.2. Vote on Configuration Model: Amelia Contrada moved to adopt the Configuration Model of 3 Multi-town Elementary Schools, 1 Middle school and 1 High School. Seconded by Kealy Sloan. Discussion: Mckalyn Leclerc stated that as a Worcester resident, she accepts with sadness that this three-school model is what is right as far as student opportunities and in light of declining enrollment.

Zach Sullivan expressed support for the 3 elementary school model.

Patrick Whelley asked whether the Configuration Committee had considered other models before coming to this configuration. He noted that if this new configuration passes, there are going to be some hurt feelings and some worry and he stated that he and many members on the board want to hear and respond to that. He stated that the articles of agreement indicate that both the board and the towns need to come to this agreement. He stated that we have some work to do, to communicate this. He stated that he has empathy for the sadness and worry but that he supports the three school model.

Natasha Eckart expressed concerns about the transition plan as it is written. She read a statement she had prepared. She stated that the towns should have a voice in the transition process. She will not vote in favor of the 3 school model.

Zach Sullivan stated that he is in support of the school model.

Elizabeth Brown echoed many of Natasha Eckart's sentiments. She stated that she does not agree with the 3 school configuration; however, she does not believe we should remain in a five school configuration - we have more work to do. She stated that she does support sending the votes to the town.

Amelia Contrada expressed support for the 3 school model - it is the best one that we have right now. She stated that this can't be made into a moral issue for us as individuals. She spoke about the difference between morals and ethics. She urged to heed the advice of experts on this.

Kealy Sloan expressed support for the 3 school model and supports this going to a vote.

Chris McVeigh offered an amendment: If any of the towns vote not to close a school, this board will honor the vote and not work to circumvent the town's vote.

He referred to the Articles of Agreement. We have not heard anything about the impact on towns should their schools close. **Seconded by Julia Hewitt.**

Discussion: Ursula Stanley asked how this is relevant to the motion on the floor, since we are not voting on school closure at this time.

Dan Keeney expressed support for this amendment; he realizes it applies to the school closure vote; however, he believes it is an appropriate amendment. He asked Superintendent Dellinger-Pate if he would like to speak to this. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that we intend to honor the votes of the towns; however, the administration reserves the right to move students, for example, if a kindergarten class has two students, a grade level can be moved to configure an appropriate kindergarten class size. He suggested, pushing a vote to the towns is the best way to know what is the path forward. The best thing to do right now is to know what is the path.

Kealy Sloan suggested that the amendment be less vague.

Chris McVeigh suggested amending to “board or administration.” Superintendent Dellinger-Pate suggested not adding administration to the language. **A vote on the amendment was held. This motion to the original amendment carried.**

Ursula Stanley stated that the board has heard the concerns from the towns; she supports the 3 school model - this is a conversation about preservation. If we don't move forward with this configuration, the consequences will be felt through all of the towns.

Chris McVeigh indicated that he is not in favor of the model, but that he is in favor of letting the towns vote.

Dan Keeney expressed that he is in favor of the model and in favor of letting the towns vote. He spoke about some of the programmatic discussions from the Configuration Committee's work, e.g. equitable planning time and instructional time.

Michelle Ksepka indicated that she is in support of the three school model and of sending it to the voters.

Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that she does want to send it to the voters; however she is not in support of the 3 school model. She believes we have not fully thought out the transition and how this plays out. She has concerns about whether both towns vote “no.” So, while she is not in support of the configuration model, she would like to put the vote into the hands of the voters.

Julia Hewitt stated that we have already established that there are not huge tax savings in the 3 school model. She spoke about the impact on home values should a school in a town close. She urged the board not to move forward without much more information. Amelia Contrada stated that she believes the amendment is too vague.

Flor Diaz Smith counted the roll call vote:

Mckalyn Leclerc: Y

Natasha Eckart: N

Zach Sullivan : Y

Elizabeth Brown: N

Amelia Contrada: Y

Kealy Sloan : Y

Ursula Stanley : Y

Chris McVeigh: N

Daniel Keeney: Y

Michelle Ksepka: Y

Diane Nichols-Fleming: N

Julia Hewitt: N

Patrick Whelley: Y

This motion carried in favor of the amended motion.

- 5.3. Vote on School Closure if Necessary: Chris McVeigh moved to close the Doty Memorial School, effective June 30, 2026. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka. This motion carried. Ursula Stanley moved that we submit the issue of closure of the Doty Memorial School to the voters of the Town of Worcester as required by the Washington Central Unified Union School District Articles of Agreement, said question to be warned in the following form: “*Shall the Washington Central Unified Union School District close the Doty Memorial School effective June 30, 2026.*” Seconded by Michelle Ksepka, this motion carried. Ursula Stanley moved to close the Calais Elementary School, effective June 30, 2026. Seconded by Daniel Keeney. Discussion: Zach Sullivan asked whether this motion is clear. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that at this time he believes the language is clear. **This motion carried. Ursula Stanley moved to submit the issue of closure of the Calais Elementary School to the voters of the Town of Calais as required by the Washington Central Unified Union School District Articles of Agreement, said question to be warned in the following form: “*Shall the Washington Central Unified Union School District close the Calais Elementary School effective June 30, 2026.*” Seconded by Daniel Keeney, this motion carried unanimously.****
- 5.4. Vote on Ballot Language for School Closure Article if Necessary (please see above):**

- 5.5. Ed Quality Committee Schedule (tabled)**
- 5.6. Ed Quality Spring Student Data (tabled)**
- 5.7. Configuration Committee Meeting Schedule (tabled)**

Zach Sullivan moved that the board direct the clerk to put the questions approved at this meeting to the voters of Worcester and Calais for a special election on January 20, 2026. Seconded by Daniel Keeney. Discussion: Chris McVeigh asked why this vote needs to happen so quickly. Why would this vote not take place on Town Meeting Day. Mckalyn Leclerc shared that the date is following Martin Luther King weekend. Dan Keeney had suggested a vote on school closure on Town Meeting Day, followed by a vote on the school budget.

Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that if we don't have ample time to share information, we run the risk of the vote being not in favor.

Patrick Whelley indicated that there are still many questions, and more time gives us a better chance to share information.

Flor Diaz Smith spoke about the desire to vote first on school closure, in time for a vote on Town Meeting Day for the budget.

Chris McVeigh stated that the budget is not tied to this configuration vote - he feels like January 20th is too soon. More information and more meetings are needed.

Kealy Sloan suggested a configuration (closure) vote at a later date, but still earlier than Town Meeting Day.

Chris McVeigh moved to amend the motion to the date February 10th. Zach Sullivan/ Daniel Keeney accepted the amendment. This amended motion (Feb 10th date) carried unanimously.

- 5.8. Approve Mail-In Ballots for Town Meeting: Chris McVeigh moved to mail ballots to all registered voters in our towns, with the assistance of the Town Clerks. Seconded by Diane Nichols-Fleming.**
- 5.9. Approve participation in the Winooski Valley School Choice Lottery: Chris McVeigh moved to participate in the Winooski Valley School Choice Lottery, and to accept no more than 10 students, and we will send no more than 40, for the 2025-26 school year. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka, this motion carried unanimously.**
- 5.10. Superintendent Evaluation Process**
- 5.11. Board Feedback Survey for Superintendent Evaluation**

5.12. Superintendent Evaluation Process Timeline

5.13. Climate Survey Discussion (tabled)

6. Policy (tabled)

6.1. Second Readings

6.1.1. D23 Selection of and Access to Instructional Materials

6.2. Finance Committee

6.2.1. Approve Copier Bid: Chris McVeigh moved that the Board award the fixed blanket servicing contract for July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027 that includes all consumables, except staples and paper, to Symquest, with an annual renewal option for four more years. Seconded by Daniel Keeney, this motion carried unanimously. Ursula Stanley moved that the Board approve the proposed tax-exempt lease with M.S.T. Government Leasing, LLC, for the purposes of refinancing, and funding photocopy equipment leases including consultant fees, and related costs of issuances of such leases in an amount not to exceed One Hundred Ninety-Nine Thousand Three Hundred Twenty-Two dollars and Forty-Seven Cents (\$199,322.47) and an interest rate of 5.19% per year through August 1, 2030. Seconded by Natasha Eckart, this motion carried unanimously. Chris McVeigh moved that the Board authorizes the Superintendent to execute and deliver the tax-exempt lease with M.S.T. Government Leasing, LLC, on such terms and conditions discussed and provided to the Board and to execute and deliver any such documents required to execute the contract with Specialized Purchasing Consultants, Inc. Seconded by Daniel Keeney, this motion carried unanimously.

7. Personnel

7.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE –

Ursula Stanley moved to accept resignations of: Dakota Garrow – U-32 PE/Health Teacher (effective January 9, 2026) , Rebecca Tatistcheff – U-32 Principal (effective June 30, 2026), with gratitude. Discussion: Natasha Eckart stated that Becca Tatistcheff has been exceptional in her work and vision and it will be difficult to find a replacement. Seconded by Kealy Sloan, this motion carried. Ursula Stanley moved to approve the hire of long term substitutes: Hayden Roberge – LTS Physical Education Teacher - U-32, Blakely Gilmore – LTS Grade 2/3 – EMES. Seconded by Kealy Sloan, this motion carried unanimously. Ursula Stanley moved to approve extended leave of absence for Christa Danyew – U-32 Paraeducator. Seconded by Kealy Sloan, this motion carried.

8. Consent Agenda

8.1. Approve Minutes of 12.3.25: Kealy Sloan moved to approve the minutes of December 3, 2025, as presented. Seconded by Dan Keeney, this motion carried unanimously.

8.2. Board Orders: Dan Keeney moved to approve the following board orders, dated: 11-20-25 to 12-17-25, 11-13-25 to 11-19-25, 11-13-25 to 12-19-25, in the total amount of \$1,922,617.64. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka, this motion carried unanimously.

9. Future Agenda Items

10. Board Reflections

11. Public Comments: Time limit strictly enforced, see note: A member of the public asked the board to wait until after Town Meeting Day for a vote on the budget. We do not have enough time to gather and share information to make an informed vote.

Question: is there going to be space for art in all three of the elementary buildings? Also referred to the students' presentation tonight and the fact that their focus was not on nurse staff, guidance counselors - it was on issues such as AP courses and flexible pathways to graduation.

Parent asked the board to consider not separating groups of students in moves, e.g. not to keep one cohort of students as Pre-K at Calais if all of the others are moving to another school.

Noah Weinstein suggested hiring a transition coordinator who could also act as a communications coordinator.

Community member spoke about having to make a hard choice between two very hard options.

Bo Carey spoke about students going to career center or early college and he asked the board to think outside of the current system.

12. Executive Session: Negotiations: Ursula Stanley indicated that public knowledge about the following board discussion would clearly place the board (or another party) at a substantial disadvantage. **At 12:02 a.m., Diane Nichols-Fleming moved to go into Executive Session to discuss matters of negotiations and to invite the superintendent. Seconded by**

Michelle Ksepka. At 12:14, Michelle Ksepka moved, Ursula Stanley seconded, to come out Executive Session. Diane Nichols-Fleming moved to accept the board issues for negotiations. Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously.

13. Adjourn: Ursula Stanley moved to adjourn at 12:16 a.m. This motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary