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
9.2.26
6:15-9:15 PM
(In-Person & Virtual)

Present: Flor Diaz Smith, Chris McVeigh, Patrick Whelley, Ursula Stanley, Elizabeth Brown, Zach Sullivan, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Heidi Dimick, Marty McMahon, Julia Hewitt, Andrew Boye, Dan Keeney, Michelle Ksepka, Judy Buchanan, Natasha Eckart, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Alicia Lyford, Susanne Gann, Karoline May, Elijah Hawkes, Julia Pritchard, Linda Gray, Lila Richardson, Alison Fayle, David Delcore, David Lawrence, Denise Wheeler, D Rodgers, Jennifer Chambers, Jessica Maurais, Lisa Hanna, ORCA, Caitlin Usticke, Corrinne Cooper, Cubbon, Danielle Barclay, Emi Harlow, Jean, Michael Sherwin, Mark Brown, Veronica Fair, Kate, Maia Stone, Simon Stone, Katie Marshall, Fox Trace, Matisse Bustosi, Anna Matheson, Erica Zimmerman

1. **Call to Order: Diane Nichols Fleming called the meeting to order at 6:27 p.m.**

2. **Welcome and Invitation for Community Engagement:** Diane Nichols-Fleming clarified her conversation with Dave Delcore and the Times Argus article that followed. She spoke about two superintendents that had withdrawn from the process. When she spoke with Dave Delcore they did not "name names" and it turns out they were not talking about the same person/ people; she stated that we are continuing to explore an interim Superintendent for this school year 2026-27. **Change to agenda: Chris McVeigh moved to approve changing the agenda to include "Approve warning" under 3.2. Seconded by Patrick Whelley, this motion carried unanimously.**
   2.1. Collaborative Conversation: Diane Nichols-Fleming introduced this process, the purpose rooted in our core beliefs. Jen Miller-Arsenault and Alicia Lyford facilitated this collaborative exercise.
   Follow up processing: What are the possible opportunities and implications for our district? What worked well with this process?
   Elizabeth Brown liked the format - gave enough flexibility to have some parameters but also go broader or deeper. She appreciated the opportunities to hear from building administrators.
   From the community: Possibility of soliciting topics for future exercises? Also, how do we together complete the feedback loop to the group of people that can't be in the experience? Being able to share the outcomes might entice more to participate in the future but also might make the public feel more included.
   Zach Sullivan: The conversations with building principals was very valuable. Would like to structure so that you don't have to get to every station; otherwise it would take too long.

What might we change or improve?

Dan Keeney: Ambient noise is important to observe and manage. Also being clear about what this is, and what this is not. Do people feel that this is a true dialogue; he stated that this feels more organic; however, is this a sharing of information or is this actually asking for input?

Community member: publicizing this - what it is, what it isn't. The online experience was confusing - some others were trying to access the meeting while the breakout groups were going on. Also suggested an earlier start time for those of us who brought young children.

Diane Nichols-Fleming: regarding the ambient noise issue, might be nice to offer a separate spot for people who are distracted by outside noises and would like a smaller space for their "station." She also noted that having food ready at 6 so that people can have their food and the meeting can start on time would be effective.

What else? Chris McVeigh asked, who chooses the topic and who provides the presentation? Alicia Lyford stated that in the future these opportunities will happen at the various schools on the first board meeting of the month.

Kate (online) asked whether it is possible to send out a widespread email to share to a wider audience. Asked whether there was a review from Rumney/ Doty principal about how the transition to school has gone? Diane Nichols Fleming noted that Karoline May had been at one of the stations and had spoken to people about the beginning of the year happenings.

Question about online transportation information. Patrick Whelley asked when public comment occurs tonight - this is at the end of the agenda. It might be a time to discuss possible next topics.

3. **Board Operations**

3.1. **CVCC Lease Agreement:** Alicia Lyford shared that some updates to the lease agreement have been made based on feedback; it is now in the hands of Shawn Toohey to review. She stated that it has been difficult to get in touch with realtors to establish a rate but she hopes to have that for the next board meeting.

3.2. CVCC Ballot Language: Zach Sullivan asked, when will we be able to answer lease questions so that we can share more with the public - this is all information that we did not have when we had to vote on the ballot warning. Daniel Keeney stated that part of our communication is that the financial aspect is fairly minor and it is a big picture partnership - not to minimize the monetary value of the space we are sharing, but there is a bigger picture. Zach Sullivan indicated that he anticipates questions from our constituents that he can't answer yet. E.g. about area/ space. Chris McVeigh stated that he things all of this information will be available within a couple of weeks. **Approve ballot:** Board members considered the language for the ballot. **Flor Diaz Smith moved to approve the warning as prepared, Article 1, for 30 years. Seconded by Zach Sullivan. Zach Sullivan suggested a friendly amendment to allow for the polling places and times to be corrected. This was accepted.** Discussion: Patrick Whelley asked, what would be the argument for changing the 30-year timeframe? Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that the advice is to have the lease at least as long as the bond. **This motion carried with one abstention, Marty McMahon.** Board members signed this document. Diane Nichols-Fleming shared that because we do not have district clerk at this time, she is the designee.

3.3. Steering Committee Operations: Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that we have shared with both legal counsel and have checked the committee's designated charge, to address the concern that Steering Committee meetings should be warned, open meetings with minutes on record. Legal counsel has confirmed that this committee's meetings do not fall under open meeting rule. She stated: We wanted to respond on the record around the request for steering committee meetings to be public. We checked in with legal counsel and also reviewed the charge of the committee. The committee originated as a way to be sure that all towns were involved in the creation of the agenda. There is not a quorum at the meetings and so no actions can be done at these meetings. Our work centers on confirming the agenda and the manner of the presentation of information. The board has authorized the steering committee to

also establish the superintendent evaluation timeline and process to be brought forward to the board for final review and adoption. Agenda making occurs for all of our committees and are not done in a public meeting. Most recently the board did authorize the steering committee to explore and employ an interim. This is a different task. The meeting of the committee to review and do this work will be a warned meeting and we will move into executive session in order to discuss personnel and hiring. We wanted to be sure that these statements are on the record so that the intention and work of the steering committee is known.

3.4. Student Board Member Appointment Update: Jen Miller-Arsenault stated that we typically have two board members, a junior and a senior. She stated that the superintendents have reached out to Elijah Hawkes, U-32 Principal, to begin the process. Chris McVeigh asked whether this is open to all juniors and seniors. Jen Miller Arsenault stated that she believes it is put out to all students.

3.5. Appointment to Act 170 Merger Study Group: Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that Flor Diaz Smith had expressed interest in serving on this group. She asked if other board members were interested. **Chris McVeigh moved to appoint Flor Diaz Smith as representative to the Act 170 Merger Study Group, 20, Washington Central Unified Union School District. Seconded by Ursula Stanley.** Discussion: Chris McVeigh asked what is the charge that our representative is given? Some discussion followed around this being the beginning of the process, much is uncertain at this time. Chris McVeigh stated that it will be important to be kept informed as a board. He suggested that an update be a regular agenda item. Patrick Whelley stated that his hope is that our board's contribution, through the representative, would be to maintain as much local control as possible, as this merger study moves forward. **This motion carried unanimously.** Alicia Lyford shared that the first meeting of the bylaws committee via CESA occurs tomorrow; this is an open meeting and there is a link to attend virtually.

4. Reports:

4.1. Acting Superintendent Report: Alicia and Jen had provided a written report.

4.1.1. Transportation at WCUUSD: Alicia Lyford had shared, and reviewed, a memo that helps better explain some of the concerns around transportation as the new school year is underway. Marty McMahon asked about whether a smaller sized bus is not an option - or a van? Michelle Ksepka shared that the charge to U-32 is the same whether a large or small bus. And the smaller buses do not hold up well on our back roads. This has been discussed and considered over time.

5. Future Agenda Items: Diane Nichols-Fleming had shared that there is a hyperlink on the agenda to a running list of future agenda items. Additional suggestions tonight:

- Conversation about expectations for individual board members communicating to the public about for example warnings/ ballots - would like to have our legal counsel provide input and would like to revisit norms and discuss as a board what is the recourse when board members do not follow the norms.
- Equity in sports
- Technology - is this shared equitably?
- Budget discussion - sense of what type of budget shortfall we are looking at, to begin the preliminary work

6. Reflections: Daniel Keeney shared that the VSBA Resolutions Committee is having a webinar tomorrow and he is representing our board with regards to our early college resolution. He invites board feedback. Ursula Stanley suggested that all board members sign up for this; even if they can't attend, they will receive an email providing summary information. Marty McMahan asked for clarification about the resolution that this board worked to craft and edit - this is now under review by VSBA? Ursula explained the process and shared that the webinar is very helpful. Flor Diaz Smith expressed gratitude for the conversations we were able to have tonight as part of the Collaborative Conversation. She reminded the

board that the future agendas list is very long and she would like the board to keep a manageable work plan.

7. **Public Comments: Time limit strictly enforced, see note:** Linda Gray shared that the process earlier did not work for people online - that is what she is hearing from others. She also reminded the board that if the vote is not unanimous, a roll call vote should be held.

   Kate raised concerns about transportation; she indicated that the "MyRide" app is not working re: active data. She stated that some students are not arriving at school until after 9 a.m. She had contacted the bus company; she is not getting satisfactory answers, and she noted that this is a problem that needs to be addressed. This is why she had asked for transportation analysis before the school year was underway. She stated that it would be helpful for parents to know what time their children get dropped off, so they can be aware of how much instructional time is being lost.

   Zach Sullivan spoke about "MyRide" active data being difficult in towns that have spotty cell service. Kate reiterated that, regardless, it is important for parents to understand when their children are arriving at school. Alicia Lyford will follow up; she invited emails to be sent to the superintendents; she had not received Kate's email.

8. **Executive Session: Personnel: At 8:33 p.m., Dan Keeney moved that the board enter into Executive Session, to include Heidi Dimick, to discuss the employment and performance of specific public officers or employees. Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously.** At 8:45 the board came out of Executive Session. **Dan Keeney moved that the Board authorize the chair to sign an addendum to the letters of agreement with WCUUSD's acting superintendents extending their term of service--retroactive to September 1, 2026 and extending it to September 15, 2026, with great gratitude. Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried.** Chris McVeigh thanked Jen Miller-Arsenault and Alicia Lyford for their support to WCUUSD during this time of transition.

9. **Adjourn: The board adjourned at 8:46. Motion by Ursula Stanley; seconded by Andrew Whelley.**

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary