

BARRE SUPERVISORY UNION #61 SCHOOL DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Spaulding High School - Library
June 20, 2018 - 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

J. Guy Isabelle (SHS) – Chair
Giuliano Cecchinelli, II (BC) – Vice Chair
Victoria Pompei (BT) – Clerk
Alice Farrell (BT)
Anthony Folland (SHS)
Paul Malone (SHS)
Tyler Smith (BC)
Sonya Spaulding (BC)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Rebecca Kerin-Hutchins (BT)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

John Pandolfo, Superintendent

GUESTS PRESENT:

Video Vision Tech Shelley Cochran Diane Soloman

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Isabelle, called the Thursday, June 20, 2018, meeting to order at 6:04 p.m., which was held at the Spaulding High School Library.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Discuss Agenda Item 5.7 out of order – after Agenda Item 5.1
Add 5.8 - Request to VSBA for Support

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Approval of Minutes – May 17, 2018 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mr. Cecchinelli, the Board unanimously voted to approve, as amended, the Minutes of the May 17, 2018 Regular Meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 Resignations/Retires/New Hires

No resignations or retirements were presented for approval.

The resumes and BSU Notification of Employment Status Forms for Paige Chouinard (Occupational Therapist BCEMS/BTMES) and Allison Fellows (Special Educator BCEMS) were distributed. The BSU Notification of Employment Status Form for Jennifer Trombly (Pre-k Teacher - BTMES – ECSE – one year interim position) was distributed.

Mr. Pandolfo provided an overview of Paige Chouinard’s education and experience.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mr. Folland, the Board voted 6 to 0 to approve the hiring of Paige Chouinard. Mr. Smith abstained citing a conflict of interest.

Mr. Pandolfo provided an overview of Allison Fellows’s, education and experience and advising regarding changes to staff resulting from the ‘domino effect’, as current staff are changing positions.

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mr. Smith, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Allison Fellows.

Mr. Pandolfo advised regarding Ms. Trombly’s education and experience, advising that Ms. Trombly is in the process of completing her ECSE (Early Childhood Special Education) Endorsement. Ms. Trombly is currently a Pre-k general education teacher at BTMES.

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mr. Cecchinelli, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Jennifer Trombly.

An additional document relating to a Special Education position at BTMES was distributed. Some concerns were raised by BTMES Board Members who previously reviewed the documentation relating to this possible hire. Mr. Pandolfo believes that BTMES Board concerns require discussion in Executive Session. A personnel issue, employment of employees, was proposed for discussion in Executive Session.

On a motion by Mr. Folland, seconded by Mr. Smith, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Pandolfo in attendance, at 6:16 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 to discuss the item proposed for discussion.

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mr. Smith, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 6:51 p.m.

5.2 District Management Group Cohort #2 Update

A document titled 'Barre SU Roles & Responsibilities Survey' was distributed. A document titled 'Revised Decision List', from the District Management Group, was also distributed. Mr. Pandolfo provided an overview of group and individual work being performed by members of the Cohort. The first item being addressed as a group is to define roles and responsibilities within the BSU. A survey was compiled for completion by administrative staff. The survey lists very specific questions to better define what is currently happening, and then, what would responders want in an ideal situation (what is currently happening / what do you want to happen?). Better clarification regarding perceived and desired roles and responsibilities should be most beneficial. The defining of roles and responsibilities will be the individual focus for the 1st year, with new topics to be presented/addressed in years 2 and 3. The work being performed within the cohort has allowed Mr. Pandolfo to perform much reflection. In response to a query, it was confirmed that this process is assisting with coordination of the centralization of Special Education. Mrs. Spaulding wanted to express that the centralization of Special Education is new and is currently a work in progress.

5.3 Revenue Anticipation Note Approval

A document titled 'FY19 Revenue Anticipation Note Comparison 5/14/18' was distributed. Individual Boards have already approved the recommendation. It is the Superintendent's recommendation to utilize Community Bank for the Revenue Anticipation Note (RAN).

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mr. Folland, the Board unanimously voted to accept the Superintendent's recommendation and agreed to contract with Community Bank for the Revenue Anticipation Note for FY2019.

5.4 FSMC Renewal Approval (Food Service Management Company)

A memorandum from Laurie M. Colgan, Director, Child Nutrition Programs, regarding 2018 – 2019 Program Renewals (dated 06/06/18) was distributed. Mr. Pandolfo advised that Board Meeting Minutes are required to reflect confirmation of the renewal of the food service contract, as this requirement is one of the components necessary to insure that the submission of the SFA's (School Food Authority) online Agreement/Application renewal packet is approved. It was noted that an RFP for a new food service contract will go out next year (for FY20).

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously agreed to approve renewal of the food service contracts.

5.5 Negotiations Update

The Committee negotiated with Para-educators on June 14th and reached a tentative 1 year Agreement, details of which cannot be released at this time. A few small details are being worked out. One challenge for negotiations was to have an Agreement before the start of the school year. It was determined that as long as all boards ratify by August 24, the payroll increases can be implemented before the first payroll of FY19. Negotiations for FY20 will begin shortly after ratification of the FY19 Agreement. Negotiations with teachers will also need to start shortly after the start of the FY19 school year.

5.6 Ratification of AFSCME Agreement

A document titled 'Highlights of Tentative Negotiated Agreement – Barre SU AFSCME Agreement – May 9, 2018' was distributed. Mr. Pandolfo provided a brief overview of the 'Highlights' document advising that a 2 year Agreement has been reached. All but four employees will be on a common wage schedule, and the remaining 4 employees will hopefully be added by the next Agreement, the Agreement moves all workers to a single work unit, vacation accrual and awarding of vacation time will change, and the Agreement allows for transition should the statewide negotiated health insurance plan pass and/or transition due to consolidation under Act 46.

Future negotiations will involve negotiations with one unit (BC/BT/SHS), rather than the current two units (BC/SHS, and BT). Mr. Pandolfo advised that the individual boards and the Union have ratified the Agreement. Mr. Pandolfo requested that the BSU Board approve ratification of the AFSCME Agreement.

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to ratify the AFSCME Agreement.
The Agreement was circulated for district Board Chairs to sign.

5.7 Special Education Staffing

This Agenda Item was discussed after Agenda Item 5.1. A document titled 'Barre Supervisory Union Special Educator Caseloads' was distributed. Mr. Pandolfo advised that this Agenda item has been added because of much discussion recently at BSU Finance Committee meetings and BTMES Board meetings. Discussion has been held to discuss what the BSU is doing to review Special Education Funding, Special Education staffing, equity among students, equity amongst the district schools, and decisions to, through attrition, not to replace two BTMES case managers. Mr. Pandolfo provided an overview of the document outlining the most current caseloads by Special Educators. Those labeled SPED are case managers, special educators, SLP is for speech language pathologists, IN is for Intensive Needs special educators (usually self-contained classrooms), and one ADMIN case where Stacey Anderson, BCEMS Special Education Director, has 2 students on her caseload. The report lists the most current averages, for case manager to student load ratios, as well numbers for BTMES (without 2 of the special educator positions). The range is from 8 (for a self-contained- emotional/behavioral classroom), to 22, with the average number being 15.6 students for BCEMS for case managers, 11.6 for BTMES, and 15.9 for SHS. In terms of SLPs, there are none listed at BCEMS with caseloads, but it was noted that BCEMS has a child count of 233, and though they are not case managers, some SLPs are seeing 30 to 50 students.

Numbers are also reported by total child count. The average at BCEMS is 11.1, BTMES is 9.9, and SHS is 12.4. An ongoing part of discussion has been the question; "What do we do long term as we look to serve all students in the best way possible?"

The reason for the decision not to replace 2 case managers at BTMES was to try to equalize out caseloads. With this change, the numbers go from 11.6 to 14.2, with the average overall by child count going from 9.9 to 11.3. These numbers put BTMES much more in line with what is being done across the district. We have heard concern regarding the possible impact. Some concerns are related to practice and at some level, cultural. Some special educators who have lower caseloads have sometimes been providing services to non-sped students, which can and probably should be handled by Tier 1 regular teachers or by Tier II interventionists. BTMES may be able to use some of their Medicaid funding (there is a surplus) to hire an additional literacy interventionist to provide Tier II services to students that special educators had previously been seeing. The report that the new legislation regarding sped funding is based on, leans towards increasing intervention services at Tier II using individuals who specialize. Looking at the need for that type of service at BTMES vs BCEMS, with a lower child count, and lower poverty level, there is less need at BTMES for Tier II and Tier III, and SPED services at BTMES. BCEMS, due to Title I funding, has a much higher level of literacy staffing, BT has 2 Tier II math interventionists in the math lab and an additional math interventionist at the middle school level. BTMES also has 2 literacy interventionists. Mr. Malone said that in addition to legislation, one of the incentives to make changes to Special Education delivery models, is the consistent occurrence of large deficits in Special Education line items. Mr. Pandolfo advised that for FY19, the budget for Special Education is finally in accordance with Act 153 (all of the expenses for the districts are compiled at the BSU and the revenue comes in to the BSU rather than the district schools). To be fair to districts, money should be allocated by child counts, and if caseloads aren't fairly equal, then it is not fair to say that students are receiving equitable services. Optimal caseloads are not really defined. The BSU is in a good position, due to a high child counts. Additional future changes will allow, through attrition, for para-educator positions to be replaced by special educators (with more expertise). Shifting this balance will help lower case load counts. With the recently passed legislation for SPED funding, the transition is moving away from only funding students on IEPs, and will allow for the servicing of a small number of non-special ed students. In an effort to provide equitable services to students and improve outcomes, there is a push for early interventions. New legislation begins in FY20 and will be a five year phase in. Vermont is ranked as one of the states with the highest spending for SPED, which is possibly one of the reasons for the new legislation.

Shelley Cochran, a BTMES parent is concerned that she is not able to find out the name of her child's case manager or who will be providing interventions for her child. She feels that just because something looks good on paper, does not mean it's going to work well. She is not comfortable with these changes, and advised regarding her concern that some services have shifted from 1 on 1 interventions to group services. What is the budgeted funding (for the unfilled positions) going to be used for? Ms. Cochran feels that caseloads ratios should vary much more due to the varying needs to students. Ms. Cochran is concerned regarding her belief that staffing is based on budgeting and 'ratios', not on student needs.

Mr. Malone asked Ms. Cochran if she believed that the BCEMS child count (233) for those identified for SPED, justifies the need for more special educators at that school. (BTMES has 169 identified students)

Ms. Solomon is concerned that the SPED Director may be spread too thin and can't give enough time to get to learn the educators and students very well. She agrees with early interventions. She is concerned regarding her belief that there is a large group of employees who left at the same time. Ms. Solomon advised that she is not concerned with equity for students between schools, but rather is concerned that her child receives the services he needs.

Mr. Malone, advised that on average years, there is always a good number of turnover that occurs, not just in SPED. Mr. Malone would hope that standards are driven by state and federal laws to meet the needs to the children. Focus is on the students. The BSU does need to keep balance throughout the schools. Mr. Malone is optimistic that replacing para-educators with special educators will be much more beneficial to students.

Mrs. Farrell advised that research has shown that a high turnover in special education is the norm/routine. The increase in teachers being dual certified (for special and regular education) also contributes to turnover.

Of the four special educators that resigned from BTMES, 1 is being replaced, one is under recruitment, and 2 will not be replaced. Though 2 will not be replaced, one of the positions will be filled differently, with the end result being 1 fewer staff member, not two. It was noted that some of the special educators who are leaving, were providing services to non-sped students. Those students will now receive assistance through Tier II providers (literacy interventionists and classroom teachers.). Mr. Pandolfo stressed that administrators do see students as individuals, not as numbers and special education students' plans are developed based on the each individual students' needs. Mr. Pandolfo advised that special educators need to do time studies on how they spend their time. Time studies need to be completed 2 times per year. Mrs. Pompei advised regarding her inquiry regarding why a particular (Tier II Pre-school) position was not being filled. Mrs. Pompei was advised that a time study proved that the position was not providing Tier II services for 56% of the day. It was noted that some case managers / special educators have been providing Tier II services. By taking some tier 2 services away from case managers/special educators, they will be free to do more specialized work.

Parents want better communication regarding changes in SPED. Ms. Solomon is skeptical that time studies will justify changes in the program. Mrs. Pompei believes it is best left up to the SPED Director to determine the best ways to serve the needs of the children. Mr. Isabelle encouraged folks to read the Special Education Report from UVM. Mr. Pandolfo clarified that the hiring of Tier II employees is decided at the 'building level', not by the BSU SPED Director. Additionally, Mr. Pandolfo advised that much coordinated work is performed by the SPED Director and many others, in a concentrated effort to create individualized plans for students.

Mrs. Cochran wants to know who her contact person is and who is providing services to her child. Mr. Pandolfo will follow up on that matter.

5.8 Request to VSBA for Support

Mr. Pandolfo distributed a copy of a letter to Nicole Mace, Executive Director of the Vermont School Board's Association, and advised regarding discussions with other superintendents, legal counsel, and VSBA regarding a request to VSBA that they provide support to the Board(s) in pursuing damages (possible class action law suit) against Future Planning Associates for FPA's failure to meet their obligations as the 3rd party administrator. The ultimate monetary cost to the BSU still needs to be determined.

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mr. Folland, the Board unanimously voted to authorize the Board Chair to sign the letter requesting VSBA support in pursuing damages, and agreed to send the signed letter to the VSBA.

6. Old Business

6.1 Board Communication

Two documents were distributed; an e-mail from Susan Holson (dated 05/31/18) regarding the Engaged, Equitable Governance Grant, and a document titled 'Public Agenda Phone Conference 6/12/2018 – Alice Farrell, Guy Isabelle, John Pandolfo-BSU – Nicole Cabral, Jennifer Orellana-PA'. Mr. Pandolfo advised that the BSU was awarded the Technical Assistance Grant with Public Agenda coordinating the technical assistance. Mr. Pandolfo provided a brief summary of the conference call held with Public Agenda personnel. Discussion included recommendations for the BSU Board to form a BSU Communications/Community Engagement Committee, create Site-Based Councils at each district school, and engaging the community in a sustainable manner.

The BSU Board agreed to meet in July. The next BSU Board Meeting is July 19, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. in the SHS Library. The Agenda should include discussion of the formation of a BSU Communications/Community Engagement Committee, formation of a BSU Facilities Committee, and possible formation of Site-Based Councils. The Communications Specialist should be invited to attend to meet the Board and participate in discussion.

6.2 Act 46

Mr. Smith advised that the Act 46 meetings have been eventful, with continued work on revised Articles of Agreement, and an amended Warning. The Articles and Warning are well 'polished up' to address community members' concerns. The Warning is being drafted such that specific Articles of Agreement cannot be changed in the future without voter approval. The Committee will meet on June 25, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. to discuss whether or not to hold a vote, a possible vote date, projected savings, and a list of possible negative aspects to merging. Given the requirements (timeframes) for voting, and the deadline for the State's Final Plan, the Committee is entering 'crunch time'. The State Board of Education has put Barre on the agenda for the August 15, 2018 State Board of Education Regional Meeting. Mr. Isabelle commended Co-Chairs Tyler Smith and Gina Akley for doing a great job facilitating meetings. Mr. Isabelle feels that the Superintendent was disrespected at a recent meeting and is concerned regarding the amount of work that Mr. Pandolfo has performed on behalf of the Committee. It was noted early on that the Superintendent was not supposed to perform work for the Committee, but rather his involvement was supposed to be limited to a 'supportive' capacity. Mr. Malone advised that after reading the Draft State Plan, he is convinced that the district will be compelled to merge. Mr. Malone does not want to give up tax incentives that will be lost if the merger is forced rather than voluntary. Mr. Malone also commended Mr. Pandolfo on the work he has performed on behalf of the Committee. Mr. Pandolfo appreciates the gratitude and support being conveyed and cautioned that if a Final Report (of the Committee) is to be written, it must be done as soon as possible. Mr. Pandolfo advised that the Twinfield Superintendent wants to speak with Board Chairs. Mr. Pandolfo will advise the Twinfield Superintendent to meet with the 706 Study Committee instead. It was noted that if Twinfield were to join the BSU, it would most likely be added as a separate district within the BSU.

6.3A.L.I.C.E. & School Safety

Mr. Pandolfo advised that CVCC, IT and SU staff have received A.L.I.C.E. training. Office staff will be trained over the summer. Educational staff training will occur in August. Work continues on the roll-out of curriculum for students. Work continues on the application for the Safety Grant, which is due for submission no later than June 30, 2018.

7. Other Business as Needed

None.

8. Reports to the Board

8.1 Superintendent

A copy of the Superintendent's report dated June 20, 2018 was distributed for review and discussion. The report included information pertaining to the Superintendent's Office, the Business Office, Curriculum, Special Services, Technology, Early Education, Human Resources, and Facilities. A document titled 'BSU FY19 CFP Expected Allocations' was also distributed. Mr. Pandolfo provided a brief overview of the CFP Expected Allocations document noting that the grant allocations were favorable this year (an increase of approximately \$159,000).

Mr. Pandolfo advised that he will be gone for 2 weeks after graduation. The Superintendent wished everyone a 'happy summer solstice' and wished the students a safe and enjoyable summer.

8.2 Committee Reports

8.2.1 Policy Committee

Minutes from the May 21, 2018 meeting were distributed. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 20, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. in the BSU 2nd Floor Conference Area.

8.2.2 Curriculum Committee

Minutes from the June 4, 2018 meeting were distributed. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 27, 2018 at 5:30 p.m. in the SHS Library.

8.2.3 Finance Committee

The Board met this evening, just prior to the BSU Board Meeting, where it was learned that there is now an unaudited anticipated deficit of \$8,000, rather than the \$13,244 projection listed on the report.

8.2.4 Negotiations Committee

See discussion under Agenda Items 5.5 and 5.6.

8.3 Financials

Three reports were distributed; the BSU FY18 Expenditures/Year-end Projection Report (dated 06/20/18), The BSU Expenditures-FY18 Report (dated 06/11/18), and the BSU General Fund Revenue Report (dated 06/11/18). There was no additional discussion. See Agenda Item 8.2.3.

9. Executive Session as Needed

No items were proposed for discussion in Executive Session.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin