

**BARRE SUPERVISORY UNION  
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**  
Spaulding High School Library  
December 5, 2017 - 6:00 p.m.

**MINUTES**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Paul Malone (SHS) - Chair  
Sonya Spaulding (BCEMS) – Vice Chair  
Alice Farrell – (BTMES) – arrived at 6:07 p.m.  
Sarah Pregent (BCEMS)  
Jay Paterson (BTMES)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Guy Isabelle (SHS)

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

John Pandolfo, Superintendent  
Donald McMahon, Special Services Director  
Lisa Perrault, Business Manager

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

**1. Call to Order**

**The Chair, Mr. Malone, called the Tuesday, December 5, 2017, BSU Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was held at the Spaulding High School Library.**

**2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda**

None.

**3. Approval of Minutes – October 26, 2017 BSU Finance Committee Meeting**

**On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the October 26, 2017 BSU Finance Committee meeting.**

**4. FY19 Budget**

Seven documents were distributed; ‘FY19 Barre Supervisory Union Assessment Information – 12/5/17’, the BSU FY19 Budget – Draft #2 – breakdown of assessment by district (dated 12/5/17), the BSU FY19 Budget Draft #2 line item report (dated 12/5/17), the ‘BSU Special Education Assessment’ document (dated 12/5/17), the ‘BSU FY19 Budget Considerations document, a memorandum from the State Department of Taxes titled ‘Commissioner of Taxes Releases FY2019 Education Yield Letter’, and a four page letter from the State of Vermont Department of Taxes to Representative Johnson, Speaker of the House (dated 11/30/17).

Mrs. Perreault began the discussion with an overview of the Budget Considerations document, noting significant reductions in Special Education. Mr. McMahon advised that he has significantly reduced the budget by transitioning some 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students from Granite Academy and ACT, to Spaulding High School. Mr. McMahon cautioned that there may be some ‘push-back’ from parents regarding this transition. Mr. McMahon advised regarding the elimination of a currently vacant Certified Behavior Analyst position. Reductions to the BCEMS Special Education expenses include elimination of 2 core para-educators, and a reduction of tuition to CHOICE Academy. The budget may be able to be reduced by one Special Education Director if a different model is acceptable. Mr. Pandolfo provided an overview of the current situation and possible models. Mr. McMahon has been acting as Special Education Director for both SHS and BTMES since the BTMES SPED Director position was vacated. Mr. McMahon advised that thus far, the dual role has been working. One model to consider is splitting the SPED Director work between the 2 SPED Directors (SHS and BCEMS). It was noted that Mr. McMahon is also the SPED Director for the Supervisory Union. Mr. Pandolfo advised that he has no recommendation at this time regarding cutting \$100,000 from the budget (for eliminating 1 Special Education Director position). Mr. Malone advised that he would present this item to the BSU Board. Mrs. Farrell cautioned that a new model should be agreed upon prior to making reductions, rather than reducing the budget, then trying to change the model to work within the reduced budget. Mr. Isabelle voiced concern regarding the tax increase resulting from the deficit in the State Education Fund and increased budgets. When pressed for a recommendation, the Superintendent advised he would recommend taking \$100,000 out of the budget. Mr. Paterson advised that a budget reduction, for elimination of the BTMES Special Education Director position, is more of a BTMES issue and he is not comfortable with the BSU Finance Committee or BSU Board making decisions at this time. There needs to be

more input/involvement from the BTMES Board and Administrators. BTMES Administrators, in an effort to find savings, have identified three items to consider; 1. Decrease the school year (student days) by 5 days, from 180 days to 175 days, 2. Eliminate the BSU Facilities Director position, and 3. Decrease teacher days (currently there are 190 teacher days).

Mrs. Perreault advised regarding the Curriculum Specialist budget increase at each district school. Discussion ensued regarding funding for Curriculum Specialist positions which have previously been grant funded. Next year, funding may be a combination of grant and local funds. Funding of these positions is pending receipt of information from the State, which is currently far behind schedule in providing grant eligibility information.

In response to a query regarding the new Financial Management System, Mrs. Perreault advised that a new system will be required for FY19, as the current system cannot be modified to meet new State Requirements. Mrs. Spaulding advised regarding her frustration with unfunded State mandates. Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of the process for selecting a new Financial Management System. It was noted that the State required 'Statewide Longitudinal Data System' is different from, and in addition to, the required Financial Management System. It is currently unknown, who is responsible for 'fixes' if the new data system breaks down.

It was noted that ideally, the BSU budget needs to be finalized by December 21, 2017.

Brief discussion was held regarding possible State requirements on staff to student ratios. Mrs. Spaulding reiterated her ongoing frustration with the cost of Special Education and would like to see a new model implemented. Mrs. Spaulding's frustration is compounded by her belief that regular education is being cut in the effort to support rising SPED costs.

Mr. Paterson voiced concern regarding the 6.17% increase and suggested that the budget be further reviewed. Mr. Paterson queried regarding the possible elimination of Curriculum Specialist positions, should grant funding be eliminated. Brief discussion was held regarding how curriculum was managed before the creation of the Curriculum Specialist positions. Mr. Paterson believes that due to the intense budget constraints, the newly created position of Communication Specialist should be eliminated.

Mrs. Spaulding advised that BCEMS has been discussing transportation costs, and would like to see more efficiency in transportation, including possible cuts to routes. Mrs. Spaulding advised that there is concern regarding the number of empty seats on BCEMS middle school buses. Mrs. Perreault advised that there will be monthly meetings to continue discussions regarding efficiencies in transportation. Mr. Pandolfo advised that brief discussions have been held with GMT regarding the possibility of transportation of some students. This discussion relates to transportation for SHS students who live quite a distance from the school and do not have reliable transportation to school. It is hoped that if affordable transportation is available, student attendance will increase. Mr. Malone advised regarding discussion of transporting outlier (out of district) students to SHS. Transportation of these students could bring in much needed revenue (tuition). Mrs. Waterhouse is currently 'marketing' SHS to Chelsea, as they will be closing their high school in the near future.

Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of the BSU SPED Assessment document, advising that she has padded the assessment by approximately \$100,000 for each school, while waiting for additional information. Additionally, Mrs. Perreault advised that the budget does not reflect any wage or benefit increases for FY19. There is no teacher settlement and the impact to FY18 and FY19 budgets is unknown. Additionally, Mrs. Perreault advised that the Equalized Pupil Count and CLA are not known at this time, but should be available in the near future. Brief discussion was held regarding the Governor's letter. Committee Members were advised regarding the upcoming Education Summit. Those who are interested are encouraged to register. Mr. Pandolfo advised that his work on the Vermont Educational Health Benefits Commission is almost done.

Mr. Malone queried regarding direction on the budget. Mrs. Spaulding voiced concern that the BCEMS budget will not pass and reiterated that she is very frustrated by the cost of special education, advising that the cost per pupil at BCEMS is one of the lowest and that it is not fair to make further cuts that impact regular education. Mr. Malone expressed concerns that many budgets will not pass this year, and challenged those creating budgets to be creative and innovative. Mr. Isabelle advised that he is very frustrated regarding budgets and the impact that the State Education Fund deficit will have on local budgets. Mr. Pandolfo advised that the 9 to 13 cent tax increase is helping pay for other, more expensive districts. Mr. Pandolfo advised that work with the PR Specialist is going well, including the identification of community members who are willing to assist with the effort. PR materials will help promote the strong quality of programs in the district, the low cost per pupil, and emphasize that schools in the BSU have much to offer. A good communication plan will be necessary to assure that the schools' positive attributes and budgets are promoted positively and effectively.

## **5. Other Business**

None.

## **6. Items to be placed on Future Agendas**

Committee Members were asked to contact Mr. Malone with any items they wish to have added to future agendas.

**7. Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 25, 2017 at 6:00 p.m., in the Spaulding High School Library.

**8. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mr. Paterson, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:40 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Andrea Poulin*