

BSU Communications Committee

Barre Supervisory Union
2nd Floor Conference Room
November 8, 2018 – 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sonya Spaulding
Anthony Folland

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Alice Farrell

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

John Pandolfo, Superintendent
Ben Merrill Communications

GUESTS PRESENT:

none

1. Call to Order

Chair Sonya Spaulding called the Thursday, November 8 2018 meeting of the BSU Communications Committee to order at 6:03, which was held in the 2nd Floor Conference area of the Technology Dept.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

3. Review/Approve Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the October 11 meeting were reviewed and approved.

4. Committee Business

4.1 Ben Merrill gave the Committee a progress report on the creation of the new website, and gave board members a demonstration of what's been done to date. We are well into the construction phase, and meetings are being held with the various schools to identify what content they want to see on the site, as well as the navigation. Members expressed concern about being able to easily find links to important subjects (e.g. Work Based Learning, Calendars, etc.) and how to organize the navigation to make the site intuitive to visitors. To help them understand the ease with which the new site is updated, Merrill showed them how quickly a page can be edited to provide helpful links. Sonya Spaulding suggested that each page could have a "Contact the Webmaster" navigation button for people who have questions about where information is stored on the site; or should they encounter broken links or pages. There was also discussion around links to Facebook and Twitter; and who will or won't be keeping those social media platforms updated. We are still working towards a January 1 launch date, but the committee agreed it would be better to launch a complete site a couple weeks late than an unfinished site on time.

4.2 [4.2 was taken out order and discussed last, but is reported here, in order] Picking up from last month's discussion of ways the committee might communicate with a wide range of audiences prior to the budget vote, the committee agreed that putting together an informational piece highlighting the many opportunities offered to Barre students, including but not limited to: Academic programs, work based learning pathways, athletic teams, extra-curricular clubs, mentoring, updated facilities, state of the art technology...the list is fairly long. The theme of the communication would be; "Thank You." The message is, essentially, an expression of the appreciation students have for what the taxpayers of Barre are providing them. It's no secret that there are disagreements between taxpayers in both municipalities over how to best manage the schools; but the end result is a great deal of work by a lot of committed people, all undertaken on behalf of the students of both towns. The hope is that despite their political differences, taxpayers will pass the budgets, knowing they are preparing the next generation of Barre business and trades people. The information piece would be created and then distributed in a number of ways prior to the budget vote(s).

4.3 [4.3 was taken out of order and discussed after 4.1] The balance of the meeting was spent discussing the Barre Education Coalition; the timing of its work; and whether it's best to wait until after the State Board makes its decision on whether or not to merge the districts before scheduling another meeting. It was agreed that tensions might be running a little high this close to the recent vote and that it might be better to wait until January to meet, when it is more likely we'll have more direction from the state. As well, the state-imposed articles of agreement (should they be imposed on us) do not call for the creation of Site Councils by July 1, which was one of the original goals of the Coalition. While Site Councils may still be the preferable way to go, especially given the 4-member size of the state-imposed board, this committee felt it made better sense to wait until January before moving forward. This will also give the committee time to determine who is and is not committed to serving on the Coalition. Sonya Spaulding noted that recent work similar to this was recently undertaken in Essex, VT with good results – the two sides discovering they shared some common ground despite their historical and political differences. She expressed hope that Barre taxpayers might find similar common ground and be able to move forward. Superintendent John Pandolfo will be in contact with VSBA and Public Agenda to discuss next steps.

6. Other Business

There was no other business

7. Items to be placed on future agenda

An agenda item for the next meeting, currently scheduled for December 13, will be to discuss issues and topics raised under 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 above.

8. Next meeting date

The next meeting of the Committee was set for Thursday, December 13, at 6 pm

9. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mr. Folland, the Committee voted to adjourn at 7:40 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Ben Merrill