

BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
Via Video Conference
April 23, 2020 - 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Paul Malone (BT) - Chair
Sonya Spaulding (BC) – Vice-Chair
Victoria Pompei (BT) – Clerk
Gina Akley (BT)
Tim Boltin (BC)
Emel Cambel (BC)
Giuliano Cecchinelli (BC)
Alice Farrell (BT)
Guy Isabelle (At-Large)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

John Pandolfo, Superintendent
Stacy Anderson, Co-Director of Special Services
Jamie Evans, Facilities Director
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Brenda Waterhouse, SHS Principal

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus David Wells

As the meeting was held via video conferencing, a roll-call vote was taken for each action item. Each Board Member was individually polled and voted to approve all motions that are listed as unanimously approved.

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Malone, called the Thursday, April 23, 2020, Regular meeting to order at 5:33 p.m., which was held via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 5.1.3.a Possible Creation of SEA Project Committee
Add 6.4 First Reading Federal Child Nutrition Act Wellness Policy (C9)
Add 6.5 First Reading Field Trips Policy (D30)
Add 6.6 First Reading Class Size Policy (D6)
Add 6.7 First Reading Intra District School Transfer (C41)
Delete 7.1 Personnel Committee

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as amended.

3. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Approval of Minutes – April 9, 2020 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Board unanimously voted to approve as amended, the Minutes of the April 9, 2020 Regular Meeting.

5. Reports to the Board

5.1 Committee Reports

5.1.1 Communications Committee

The next meeting is Thursday, May 7, 2020 at 5:30 p.m., via video conference. Portrait of a Graduate will be discussed.

5.1.2 Finance Committee

Minutes from the April 14, 2020 meeting were distributed. Mrs. Spaulding provided an overview of the discussion which included; efficiency studies, solar management, generator off-sets, FY20 year-end projections, FY21 budget implications, and a SEA Project update. The next meeting is Tuesday, May 5, 2020 at 5:30 p.m., via video conference, and will include discussion of toner and printer usage.

5.1.3 Facilities & Transportation Committee

Minutes from the April 13, 2020 meeting were distributed. Mr. Cecchinelli provided an overview of the discussion which focused on upcoming summer projects, including the underground heating line work at SHS. Brief discussion was held regarding possible savings to be gained by utilizing oil, vs wood chips for the upcoming heating season. It is believed that the woodchip contract is a two year contract. Clarification was provided regarding whether projects were determined (based on a budget of 75¢/SF or \$1 SF). The Committee also held discussion regarding projects that could possibly be delayed in light of the projected deficit in the Education Fund. The next meeting is Monday, May 11, 2020 at 5:30 p.m., via video conference.

5.1.3.a Possible Creation of SEA Project Committee

Mr. Aither has voiced concern that there needs to be more input relating to accommodating middle school students (a future expansion) in the new building, and it has been suggested that a SEA Project Committee be created. Mr. Pandolfo advised that there is currently a project team consisting of Mrs. Perreault, Mr. Evans, Mr. Derner, Mr. Laurin (architect), Mrs. Anderson, the Superintendent, and the general contractor. As the building is initially being constructed for high school students, Mrs. Waterhouse should also be added to the project team, and she may wish to delegate Mr. Aither or Mr. Ferland to attend the meetings. It was noted that anyone can attend the meetings. The building is being set up in anticipation of future expansion, so it is not anticipated that middle school administration needs to be involved at this time. Mr. Malone queried regarding adding one or two Board Members to the project team. Mr. Malone would like to attend the meetings. Mr. Cecchinelli will most likely attend some, but not all meetings. Mr. Pandolfo advised that the Board will be informed of the meeting schedule, and that the meeting schedule will be publicized. The surveyors have begun working on the project. It is not known if Act 173 implementation is being delayed.

5.1.4 Policy Committee

The Committee met on April 13, 2020. Mr. Cecchinelli reported that the Policy Manual Index was reviewed. More work will be performed after VSBA updates additional policies. It was agreed that legal references can be removed from policies (VSBA recommendation), and this change will not require Board approval of the individual policies. The next meeting is Monday, May 18, 2020 at 5:30 p.m., via video conference.

5.1.5 Curriculum Committee

The next meeting is Tuesday, April 28, 2020 at 5:30 p.m., via video conference.

5.1.6 Negotiations Committee

The next meeting date is to be determined. Mrs. Akley advised that negotiation sessions were suspended for this week. Weekly negotiation sessions will resume next week and are planned for the next 5 weeks. Mrs. Akley read the jointly approved public statement.

5.3.7 Regional Advisory Board

The next meeting date is to be determined. CVCC had an all-staff meeting regarding re-visioning. Ms. Chamberlin will send the latest information to the RAB Board. It is anticipated that there will be a small change in the Perkins grant.

5.2 Financials

A document titled 'BUUSD FY20 Expense Comparison – March 10, April 14' was distributed. The 'BUUSD FY20 Year-end Projection Report – April 14, 2020' was also distributed. There is a projected deficit of approximately \$789,222. Mr. Pandolfo provided an overview of the balances of the General Fund and Tax Stabilization fund, and advised that it may be possible to cost shift to utilize some of the funds in the Capital Improvement Fund. It was noted that the BUUSD will be using most of their reserves. Mrs. Spaulding advised that additional information will be presented at the next Finance Committee meeting.

6. Current Business

6.1 School Closure Update

A document titled 'Messages From District Staff' was distributed. A document titled 'CVCC Student Essential Workers' was distributed. Mr. Pandolfo advised that remote learning is on 'pause' for April Break and that he has encouraged staff to also take a break. New guidelines were received from the AOE today, including Educator Resilience tips for Self-Care. The State is making considerations for end of year plans and has advised that official information will be provided on 05/08/20. Next Thursday, the VPA will make an official announcement regarding spring sports. The State has advised that outdoor work (construction/maintenance) can begin. The current remote learning order has an impact on three time periods; now, summer school (will not be held), and fall. Though general education summer school will not be held, some extended year services will occur. We will know more once additional guidance is received from the AOE. The BUUSD may need to consider that fall may not bring all on-site learning. The BUUSD will need to start thinking about the possibility that school may not begin the academic year with in the normal fashion.

Additional discussion on this issue may occur in May if additional information is received from the State. The BUUSD currently has 180 days of student learning, though the state requirement is 175. There are also contractual in-service days that have not occurred. Teachers could possibly perform some of their work after the end of the student year. We may be receiving additional guidance from the State on this matter. Mr. Pandolfo advised that all students in grades 5 and up, who need computers have them. Administrators and Tech Support personnel have gone above and beyond in helping to support students, including those who need assistance with connectivity. This is normally the time of year when the BUUSD is buying Chromebooks in large quantities, but at this time, availability of hardware is down. It is not known if remote learning has had an impact on Chromebook lifespan, but damage and turnover may have gone up. There is no new official information regarding the deficit to the Education Fund, though there has been talk that the deficit could go as high as \$150,000,000. The CARES money (expected from the Federal Department of Education) is being received. Board Members may wish to speak with their Representatives regarding finances. It is not known if Chromebooks can be bought with 'COVID-19' money. It is not known where legislators feel the Education Fund shortfall can be made up. Mr. Pandolfo provided two options that might be considered ("do more with less" and get money from the tax base). The budget approved by voters was a set number. The tax rate is not set. The Legislature has the option to change the yield, which in turn, would change the tax rate. Much is unknown at this time. We have been advised that we should not be 'short-changed' on revenue in FY 20 (due to changes in duties). In response to a query regarding 'wobble room' utilizing personnel changes, it was noted that contracts are already in place and that the BUUSD is bound by negotiated contracts and statutes. Much is unknown, and next steps may be dependent on how drastic government wants to be regarding how to fix financial problems. The Board's 'hands are tied' personnel wise for FY20 and FY21, and healthcare is negotiated by the State. The State will need to help decide how to address the financial shortfalls. VSBA has a meeting scheduled for next week, and it may be beneficial to 'attend' and listen to what other schools are doing. Food/meal delivery has been very successful and participation is increasing. The system is very well coordinated. In response to a query regarding the financial impact of completing the SEA Project, it was noted that voters have already approved the bond for that specific project, and it is unknown what steps would need to be taken if the Board wanted to postpone or cancel the project. Mrs. Pompei advised that it was her understanding that there would not be an additional burden on the taxpayers because the cost of the project will be offset by moving students out of the Wall Street complex (the BUUSD would no longer be paying rent). Mrs. Pompei believes it is in the BUUSD's best interest to continue with the project, which will, in the long term, cost less to keep more students in-house. The long term goal of the project is to save money and have more control over students' environment/academics.

6.2 Resignations/Retires/New Hires

Letters of resignation from Lorna Corbett, RN (BTMES School Nurse), Ruth Hicks (BCEMS ELL Teacher), Jeremi Lyford (CVCC Electrical Technology Instructor), Melissa Wheeler (BCMES – middle school Special Educator), and Brandi Bohn (BCEMS and BTMES middle school Speech Language Pathologist) were distributed.

Mr. Pandolfo provided a brief overview of the letters of resignation, noting that Ruth Hicks is retiring.

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to accept the resignations of Lorna Corbett, RN, Ruth Hicks (retirement), Jeremi Lyford, Melissa Wheeler, and Brandi Bohn.

The resumes and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Forms for Jennifer Curtin (BCEMS Librarian), Jon Strazza (Assistant Director of Special Services), Sara Dorr (SHS Science Teacher), Lyman Castle (SHS Social Studies Teacher), and Christie Mainart (BCEMS Elementary Health Education Teacher) were distributed.

Mr. Pandolfo provided a brief overview of the candidates being presented, and requested that a separate motion be made for the approval of Jon Strazza, as his position is an administrative position.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Jennifer Curtin, Sara Dorr, Lyman Castle, and Christie Mainart.

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Jon Strazza.

6.3 Summer Project Update

A document titled 'Summer Project List 2020 – BCEMS, SHS/CVCC, BTMES, BUUSD' was distributed. Mr. Evans provided an overview of the projects identified in the document. The current BCEMS bus loop presents safety challenges. Phase 1 of the project involves creating a bus lane, which should alleviate safety issues. Though the original estimate for the project was between \$50,000 and \$60,000, it is hoped that the project will come in lower. Phase 2 is more costly and there are many permits involved. Only Phase 1 is slated for this year. Mrs. Akley queried regarding whether or not this project could be postponed. At SHS, replacement of the hot water storage tank is in progress. Replacement of underground heat supply lines is scheduled to be completed over the summer. The CVCC Bake Shop located in downtown Barre, is being dissolved. All of the equipment in the downtown location will be moved to SHS in the 'LunchBox' section at SHS.

At BTMES, the project to remove the canopy roof structure will go out to bid in the near future. Some sidewalk repair was completed last summer, and any necessary repairs will be completed. Sidewalk replacement is not currently in the schedule. The current plan is

to maintain the existing sidewalks to assure they are safe and functional. The electronic bus grant is still available and installation of charging stations will be completed over the summer though it is not known when the electric buses will be delivered. Parking lot expansion work for the lot behind the Central Office will continue. The SEA Project continues to move forward. Surveyors have started their work. After survey work is completed, permit applications will be submitted. The design phase continues, and Board Members are invited to attend weekly project meetings. Construction is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2020.

In response to a query regarding air quality issues in the 'closed' schools, Mr. Evans advised that because there are minimal people utilizing the buildings, air quality issues have not been reported or tested.

6.4 First Reading Federal Child Nutrition Act Wellness Policy (C9)

Copies of policies referenced in Agenda Items 6.4 through 6.7 were distributed. Mr. Pandolfo provided an overview of the minor policy changes and answered questions from the Board. Mrs. Spaulding was advised to contact Mrs. Perreault with any concerns regarding food/drinks being offered at SHS. Mrs. Perrault will have Ashley Young perform any necessary research.

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Readings of the Federal Child Nutrition Act Wellness Policy (C9), and the Field Trips Policy (D30).

6.5 First Reading Field Trips Policy (D30)

Procedures will be updated to include reporting of out of state and overnight field trips to the Board.
Approved under Agenda Item 6.4.

6.6 First Reading Class Size Policy (D6)

Mr. Pandolfo provided an overview of the minor changes being made to the policies, and emphasized that the policy on class size provides recommended guidelines, not "hard and fast rules". Lengthy discussion was held and it was stressed that there are many different variables involved in decisions related to class size and intra-district transfers. Flexibility is crucial in making these types of decisions. It was noted that the recommended guidelines are based on Education Quality Standards. BTMES used to provide a monthly class size count by teacher. If the Board believes it would be beneficial, each school could provide a monthly class size report.

On a motion by Ms. Cambel, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Readings of the Class Size Policy (D6), and the Intra District School Transfer Policy (C41) as amended.

6.7 First Reading Intra District School Transfer (C41)

Approved under Agenda Item 6.6.

7. Old Business

~~7.1 Personnel Committee~~ Agenda Item was deleted and is being kept as a place-holder.

7.2 Superintendent Transition

Mr. Pandolfo advised that he and Mr. Wells are coordinating the transition. Mr. Wells was able to attend a portion of this meeting. Mr. Wells is aware of the Board meeting schedule and plans to sit in on future Board meetings. Weekly transition meetings have been scheduled. Mr. Pandolfo obtained, for Mr. Wells, a copy of the "The Superintendent's Rulebook", as recommended by Mrs. Farrell. Mr. Pandolfo encourages Committee Board Chairs to invite Mr. Wells to attend Committee meetings. The VSA has reached out to Mr. Wells to discuss his interest in attending the New Superintendent Academy, and membership in the Association. The VSA is also working towards finding a mentor for Mr. Wells.

8. Other Business/Round Table

In response to a query about posting a telephone number for meetings (for those without internet access), Mr. Pandolfo advised that providing a telephone number can be problematic if meetings are not held from the office. At this time, Mr. Pandolfo feels it is best not to include a telephone number. Provision of a telephone number for meetings is a recommendation, but not a requirement at this time.

The Integrated Field Reviews draft was received early in January. The AOE sent the final report today. Integrated Field Reviews will be added to the May Agenda. Due to weather issues and COVID-19, there has been an issue completing integrated field reviews.

Mrs. Akley advised that she has been receiving inquiries from the community related to grading for high school students (for work in the 3rd and 4th quarters). It was noted that information on this topic has been distributed. Mrs. Akley would like an update at the next meeting. Mrs. Waterhouse will follow up on this item.

Mrs. Akley advised that the next Board meeting will likely be her last for a while, and that she will most likely not be able to attend committee meetings or the June retreat.

9. Future Agenda Items

- Central Office and Building Reports (05/14/20)
- School Closure Update
- Resignations/Retirements/New Hires
- Summer Project Updates (as needed)
- Enrollment and Staffing Projections / Class Size Reports
- Integrated Field Reviews
- Second and Final Readings of Policies (C9, D30, D6, and C41)
- First Readings (for any new policies – 2nd meeting in May)

10. Executive Session as Needed

No items were proposed for discussion in Executive Session.

11. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin