

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING**

Via Video Conference – Google Meet
July 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:

David Wells, Superintendent
Stacy Anderson, Co-Director of Special Services
Penny Chamberlin, Director Central Vermont Career Center
Hayden Coon, BCEMS Principal
Chris Hennessey, BCEMS Principal
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Lauren May, Director of Early Education
Jennifer Nye, BTMES Principal
Erica Pearson, BTMES Principal
Brenda Waterhouse, SHS Principal

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Melissa Anderson	Nancy Benoit	Tori Berry	Jennifer Bisson
Mataya Brooks	Emily Burgess	Shannon Bussiere	Jacqueline Cassell	Traci Clark
Allison Courtemanche	Marisa Craig	Christina Currier	Ariel Duquette	Brendan Eaton
Molly Emerson	Kirsten Evans	Jamie Frey	Karen Gadapee	Nicole Gallup
Tara Grenier	Chelsea Haberek	Prudence Krasofski	Jake Larrabee	Mikayla LeBlanc
Jennifer Luck-Hill	Penny Martin	Kathleen Mathews	Alexander Maurice	Denise Maurice
Lauren May	Rebecca McSheffrey	MollyMcFaun	Jenesis Meyer	Rebekah Mortensen
Chris Parker	Brian Paton	Jean Savoy	D. Scribner	Cohen Slayton
Heather Slayton	Christine Smith	Dan Spaulding	Megan Spaulding	Ben Thomas
Emily Thomas	Jenna Townsend	Jennifer Usle	Jess VanOrman	Rachael VanVliet
Sarah Watkins	Jesse White	Missy Wiggins	Pamela Wilson	

It is known that some guests are not listed. Those not listed are guests who joined the meeting via telephone and did not identify themselves.

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, July 23, 2020, Special meeting to order at 5:45 p.m., which was held via video conference (Google Meet).

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

The meeting title will be changed from Special Meeting to Regular Meeting
Agenda Item 4.3 – School Calendar Changes – remove ‘Action’

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as amended.

3. Comments for Items Not on the Agenda

3.1 Public Comment

None.

3.2 Student Voice

None.

4. Current Business

4.1 Resignations/Retires/New Hires

The resume and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Form for Mary “Lizzy” Fanning (BCEMS 5/6 Social Studies) was distributed. Mr. Wells provided a brief overview of the candidate’s experience and advised that he recommends hiring this candidate.

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Mary Fanning.

A letter of resignation from Jennifer Schoenig (BCEMS Intensive Needs Special Educator) was distributed.

On a motion by Ms. Cambel, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board unanimously voted to accept the resignation of Jennifer Schoenig.

4.2 Food Service Management Company Contract Renewal/Meal Prices

A letter from George Carone, District Manager (Aladdin and Lexington Independents) dated 07/13/2020 was distributed. Mr. Wells provided a brief overview of the request and advised that it is customary for price increases to be submitted annually. Brief discussion was held. It was noted that the increase in meal prices is not related to COVID, but is a normal increase necessary to cover increases in salaries and food prices.

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to renew the Food Service Contract with Aladdin, and agreed to the requested increase in meal prices.

4.3 School Calendar Changes

A document titled ‘Modified calendar to allow for safety and remote learning training for staff’ (dated 07/23/2020) was distributed. A document titled ‘BUUSD Calendar and School Schedule Modifications – A Strong & Health Start: Reducing COVID-19 Risks – 2020 – 2021 School Year’ was distributed. This document will also be referenced under Agenda 4.4. Mr. Wells advised he would provide a brief overview of calendar changes and the modified daily schedule, then would take questions from the Board and community members and hold discussion regarding agenda items 4.3 and 4.4. Though some discussion may be held regarding hybrid learning, the rules and procedures are currently in development and are not ready for distribution. Mr. Wells advised that due to the pandemic, many changes are being implemented in all schools across the state. The BUUSD is making changes based on guidance from the State of Vermont, the AOE, and the Vermont Department of Health. Given the number of changes that need to be made, more time is needed for training staff and making changes in district buildings, transportation and food service. The amended calendar reflects a change to 177 student days, and adds more professional development. Teachers will have 13 days of training and para-educators will have 8 days of training. All schools within the region have changed their first student day to be 08/31/2020. The amended calendar is intended for the 2020/2021 academic year and it is anticipated that next year’s calendar will revert back to 180 student days. Mr. Wells stressed the requirements to use a common calendar for all sending districts, and to meet AOE regulations relating to the school calendar. No Board action is involved with school calendar creation or changes.

4.4 Modified Daily Schedule

The modified calendar was distributed under Agenda Item 4.3. A document titled Modified daily schedules that facilitate social distancing and other safety practices was distributed. Mr. Wells will provide an overview, then entertain questions from the Board, then accept questions from meeting guests. Mr. Wells reiterated that the BUUSD is receiving guidance from the State of Vermont (guidelines have not been finalized), the AOE and the Department of Health. Given the fluid nature of the pandemic, guidance changes are frequent. The Department of Health and the AOE have identified a number of considerations, including; the importance off all students receiving some amount of in-person learning, use of buildings, logistics of students getting on buses and into school buildings (both will require answering health questions and the taking of temperatures), adequate spacing to assure social distancing, reduced class sizes (resulting from social distancing guidelines), and the prevention of congregation of students/staff. In response to a query regarding protocols for when an individual tests positive for COVID-19, Mr. Wells advised that use of the classroom of the student or staff member will be discontinued until a deep cleaning can be performed. Individuals who have been in close contact with someone who tested positive may need to quarantine for 14 days (guidance will be provided by the Dept. of Health). It will not be necessary to close the district or any of the district schools based on a limited number of COVID-19 positive tests. Mr. Wells advised that the BUUSD must adhere to state rules regarding attendance and hours of instruction per week (27.5 hours per week per student). The expectations are higher than they were during the emergency remote learning that occurred in the spring. It was noted that the 27.5 hours includes in-person learning, assignments, remote learning, and any additional work that may be assigned.

Mr. Wells provided an overview of the SHS schedule, which includes providing students with bagged lunches. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that there cannot be lines of students waiting for food, so there will be multiple pick up points, and students will be able to take multiple meals. Half days of in-person instruction was chosen in an effort to reduce the amount of interaction between students, and students/staff. Another consideration for holding half day sessions is the requirement that all students and staff wear face coverings. It may be very difficult for individuals to wear face coverings for extended periods of time. Though students in pre-k through grade 4 spend most of their time in one room, it is very different for middle school and high school. The many different interactions they are used to will need to be very limited. Each high school day of in-person learning will include two blocks of classes, student contact needs to be minimized during transition, and high touch areas of classrooms need to be cleaned between classes. Entry into the building and transitions between classrooms will both be staggered. Remote instruction will include a combination of assignments, recorded presentations from teachers, and on-line meetings. It was noted that remote learning, for the most part, will not require students to be on-line at a specific time, therefore if there are delays in transportation home from school, students should still be able to complete the 'afternoon's' work. In response to a query regarding consideration of paying parents stipends to homeschool, Mr. Wells advised that he would not recommend that the Board encourage homeschooling because it will result in lower student counts and will have negative fiscal ramifications. Mr. Boltin would like to highlight learning opportunities that work well for students who are more successful learning on-line. In response to a query regarding extending the school day, Mr. Wells advised that preparation demands on staff are already higher because of the hybrid model. There are currently no transportation arrangements for high school students, though it is understood that the schedule change will cause difficulty for some parents.

In response to a query regarding concerns of adequate staffing, Mr. Wells advised that this is a concern throughout the state. It is known that some staff members may not return due to COVID-19. HR personnel are following policies and procedures, including COVID regulations. It was noted that regulations changed effective 07/01/20, and schools are to operate under regular policies/procedures. If a staff member has documented reasons for not being able to return, they will follow the paid time off procedures through HR. Once staff members have exhausted leave time, there will not be extensions granted on their jobs. It was noted that the BUUSD is already short of substitutes, and finding new substitutes will be very difficult. Mr. Coon advised that support staff can be utilized for other roles, including substitute work.

In response to concern that on-line learning under the emergency guidelines did not adequately serve students, Mr. Wells advised that planning and re-opening is a monumental task and that there are much higher expectations (including rigorous academics – designed instruction) than there were during the emergency closing last spring. There are enough devices available for all high school students. Mrs. Waterhouse provided clarification of the SHS schedule, advising that students will have in-person instruction with each teacher once a week, with the remainder of learning being performed remotely.

A brief overview of the CVCC schedule was provided. CVCC students will also have an abbreviated day (8:22 – 12:30), with a bagged lunch provided at 12:30. All students will attend on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. The programs, by nature are more conducive to social distancing. Wednesday is reserved for remote learning, with teachers being available from 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

Mr. Wells provided an overview of the elementary and middle school schedule, which includes a day that is a little bit longer (8:30 a.m. until 2:00). One group of students will attend on Monday and Tuesday, Wednesday is for remote work, and the second group of students will attend in-person on Thursday and Friday. Students will follow the same constraints regarding entry into the buildings and social distancing. Students will eat lunch in their classrooms. Different PE and recess options will be offered. Mr. Wells advised regarding busing changes

Parents will sign up if their children need transportation. Students will have assigned seating and will be seated in cohort groups (by family and/or grade). The schedule is meant to reduce the number of students on the buses. Buses will carry both elementary and middle school students at the same time (necessary for logistical purposes) and buses will be cleaned before each run. Mrs. Nye advised regarding how student groups (A & B) will be determined. Administrators are reviewing enrollment (445 students constitutes half of the student population), and trying to break out groups by households, services being provided, and then alphabetically. Administrators are fine tuning the breakdown of students. Mr. Coon advised that BCEMS is following a similar method to determine the breakdown of student groupings. It was noted that all students (elementary and middle school) will use the same arrival and dismissal times (this is also a logistical decision based on protocols for cleaning buses and the time it will take to complete temperature taking and contact tracing information). It is not currently known how long the temperature checks and screening process will take. Parents will need to stay with their children until they have been screened. If a child does have a temperature, they cannot be allowed on the bus and will have to be taken home by the parent. Parental concerns relating to child care were expressed. With the proposed schedule, students will be dismissed earlier and will not be in school for 3 days each week. It was noted that though some schools outside of the BUUSD may be able to open for 5 days of in-person learning, the BUUSD's student population is too great to allow all students into the buildings, and maintain the required social distancing. This issue may also impact teachers and other staff who also have school age children. Concern was raised that parents were not surveyed regarding their preference for virtual learning (specific classes, held on-line at specific times) and in-person learning. Mr. Wells advised that virtual learning is an option that can be explored.

Additional concerns include;

- Children have gone without necessary human interaction for too long.
- Will special education services be provided, and if so how will they be provided (the BUUSD is committed to providing services required under IEPs and maintaining student privacy)
- ‘Independent’ learning for younger children (academic content for remote learning for younger children is still being explored)
- Measures being taken to mitigate issues caused by the BTMES open classroom structure (additional walls have not been built and if existing walls were extended, the HVAC system would not work properly. The Facilities Director has been working with building maintenance supervisors to see that all ventilators are in proper working order and that additional ventilation will be provided, as recommended in guidelines. Additionally, the Facilities Director is working with Efficiency Vermont to determine if more robust filters can be installed and if additional fresh air can be brought into the buildings)
- Whether the plan has been vetted by the AOE (Secretary French has advised that the AOE is not going to vet or approve re-opening plans – but schools are expected to follow the guidance provided)
- Use of space and utilizing rooms not in normal use (other rooms, e.g. gymnasiums and libraries may be used to increase social distancing)
- Concern that the shortened day will have a negative impact on students taking advanced/AP courses (full day classes were explored, but it was deemed that given the limited number of students that can be present in a classroom, the teachers would not have time to work with the students who are working remotely – due to safety protocols, some concessions had to be made)
- Completion of Driver’s Education courses (extra driving time has been fast tracked all summer – began as soon as it was allowed – it is anticipated that all students will be caught up by fall)
- Spring learning was not robust enough (remote learning in the spring was implemented under emergency circumstances with little time for planning. Fall remote learning will be much more robust)
- Meeting social/emotional health of students and staff (planning for this topic is beginning and will be included in professional development. The first areas explored by the planning committee were safety (protections for students and staff) and learning)
- Planning for a change back to all remote learning if necessary (teachers are planning their instruction with two different scenarios in mind, including reverting back to phase 1, and are also planning for phase 3 which will be implemented if restrictions are lowered)
- Consideration of a survey to parents regarding their plans for the upcoming school year (the BUUSD is now better prepared to send this type of survey, as parameters are better known).
- Consider increasing outdoor classrooms (the schools are looking into outdoor opportunities and plan to hold outdoor PE and outdoor lunches weather permitting)
- Concern for children who live in unsafe situations and consider school their safe place.
- Possible consideration of use of other facilities in the community e.g. Barre Auditorium and the BOR (this option can be explored, though there is no guarantee that alternate spaces could be used)
- Why the BUUSD isn’t going back to full day in-person learning like some other schools (the schools that are going back to full time learning have much smaller student populations and can meet social distancing guidelines. The BUUSD has a population that prevents allowing all students back in the building. The BUUSD’s re-opening plan is almost identical to plans from other large school districts)
- Is consideration of in school population based on building size or classroom size? (both, though primarily classroom size as only a certain number of students can be present at one time – BTMES measurements indicate that classrooms, utilizing phase 2 social distancing guidelines, can only accommodate 9 to 12 students at one time.

- Planning for acquisition and use of PPE (personal protection equipment) – (phase 2 requirements require facial coverings for all students and staff – parents may send children with approved facial coverings, the school is ordering cloth facial coverings for students and staff (which will be washed between uses), the State is acquiring sanitizer and disposable face coverings for staff, and the BUUSD has ordered hand sanitizer)
- Difficulty of maintaining employment while needing to provide care for children or assist with remote learning of children.
- Known exposure and possible exposure notifications – (guidance from State advises to use contact tracing protocols and require that students/staff who test positive or were exposed, remain out of school until symptom free. HIPAA guidelines must be adhered to and no information will be released that could identify the student or staff member who tested positive. This protocol is no different than the protocol used for other communicable diseases, e.g. strep throat. In response to concern that not every parent in the school is notified, Mr. Wells advised that a generic notification could go out to all parents/staff advising that there has been possible exposure or a positive test within the building and that those individuals with possible contact have been specifically notified).
- Addressing mental health needs of students who normally receive mental health services in school by outside entities – (this concern has been discussed and is being addressed – student mental health needs are a priority – one option is to provide students with tele-therapy – all services remain confidential – if it is necessary for a student to receive in-person services (as decided by the parent(s) and school team), those services will be provided)
- Increased mental health screening for students and staff – (mental health needs are being reviewed as part of the planning process)
- Continuation of fire drills, lock-down practices etc. – (safety drills will continue and will include continuation of social distancing – the school safety teams are involved in the planning of safety drills)
- Will fully remote learning be available for medically ‘at risk/high risk’ students – (guidance advises that students with well controlled asthma can attend in-person learning. Students with high risk/needs will be provided with plans that accommodate their needs (as agreed upon by parents and the school team). Accommodations may include more distance learning, providing in-person instruction in a different manner, and expanding the school day hours if necessary. These types of accommodations are also for individuals who have intensive needs other than COVID related risks. It was noted that providing accommodations is the norm during non-COVID related times and decisions involve parents and the school team.
- Will students who attend school in intensive needs classrooms, with specified students, be allowed to attend school for the full school week (5 days) – (this will be reviewed on a case by case basis and will receive the utmost attention during planning). For confidentiality purposes, a parent was advised to contact the Superintendent directly to discuss specific special education concerns. Contact information was provided. In response to a query regarding whom to contact to address special needs, it was noted that during the summer, parents first point of contact is their student’s building principal, and during the school year, contact should begin with the student’s teacher.

Mrs. Pompei advised that survey results (from the survey sent at the end of remote learning in the spring) indicated that approximately 25% of responders wished to continue with remote learning. Mrs. Pompei queried regarding whether Jessica Barewicz (Curriculum Director) provided the breakdown (by grade level) of those responses to the planning committee. This information has not been provided yet. Mrs. Pompei queried regarding whether or not a fully remote option is being considered/offered, and is concerned that if it is not offered, some parents may opt for homeschooling. At this point 100% remote learning has not been offered. Mrs. Pompei would like the Curriculum Director to share information regarding how remote learning will be different in the fall as compared to during the spring under the emergency closure of schools. Mrs. Barewicz is not in attendance at the meeting. Mr. Wells plans to review the data at future planning committee meetings and also advised that the planning committee will explore virtual learning options. The committee is doing its best to follow State Guidelines, including attendance requirements and length of school day. The State and the VSA will be providing guidance on remote/distance learning.

Mr. Wells provided an overview of the questions posed in the ‘chat’ room, and provided answers where possible for questions that had not already been addressed in the earlier discussion. Additional areas of concern in the chat section are as follows:

- A CVCC student is transporting a freshman and wants to know if the freshman can remain in the building until CVCC students are released (12:30). Both students may remain in the building in accordance with their individual schedules.
- Can students be enrolled in the district and be taking on-line classes – (some students do take classes on-line and the district will be receiving additional guidance regarding flexibility of distance learning for students)

- Student liability after leaving the building (liability is no different than it is when students leave the building under non-COVID circumstances. If a student had walked to school and is suspected of having COVID, a parent would be contacted to pick up the child. The schools (based on guidance) will have isolation rooms (with different ventilation) available so that students suspected of having COVID may safely wait for parent pick-up)
- One-on-one support that is normally offered will continue to be provided.
- Changes since spring remote learning (expectations for attendance and academics is higher)
- Will teachers remain in the building after 1:00 p.m. (staff will stay to address needs of students – In pre-k through 8 schools, teachers will be allowed to go home so that they can address students who are distance learning.
- Elementary and middle school students will be in the buildings at the same time, but will enter using separate entrances.
- Will a child care facility be opened for staff? (This question was raised, and the option was explored. The YMCA will be contacted regarding what additional support they may be able to offer to families)
- Will there be consistency between classrooms and buildings? (Yes, the plan is to have consistency in platforms and best practice methods for providing instruction)
- CVCC students 4th block classes necessary to meet graduation requirements (CVCC personnel are looking into ways to be flexible in providing the necessary instruction to assure that graduation requirements are met)
- Staff Sick Leave - (staff will follow normal leave procedures which includes usual leave, extended leave, FLMA, and 504 (guidance is in existence for those without enough leave time in their bank, and the BUUSD will follow those procedures). There are also a few additional rules relating to COVID-19. The HR Department will see that rules and procedures are followed)
- Staff who are expected to work in schools but have children at home - (it is recognized that this will pose difficulties)
- A link to homeschooling was added to the chat room
- A virtual academy will be explored, but no promises are being made that one will be implemented
- Transportation surveys went out to Pre-K – 8, but not for out of district, tuition paying high school students – (this matter needs to be addressed).
- Was the community surveyed regarding an interest in live on-line classes – (a survey was not conducted, though statewide guidance has included parent input. It is not possible to video tape a class as a live feed because that violates privacy rights, but the BUUSD can explore other virtual options to meet students' needs)
- How can one-on-one support staff be utilized as substitutes if they are supposed to be supporting students in-person or on-line? (one-on-one work is and will be the priority for these employees, but if there are opportunities for para-professionals to substitute, the district will utilize them in the best way possible)
- Can a one-on-one professional come to the home - (that would be up to the IEP team, though it is something that rarely occurs)
- There was a suggestion that para-educators hold Google Meet sessions to help students with work.

Mr. Isabelle advised that the Facilities/Transportation Committee had previously discussed sending a survey to high school parents regarding interest in transportation. Mr. Isabelle will check on the status of this matter.

In response to a query, it was noted that hydration stations in each school will be available for use, but training in the proper/safe way to use them will be necessary. Hydration stations will also be subject to cleaning under COVID guidelines.

It was agreed that a survey will be sent to parents to inquire regarding any preference for all remote learning vs. a hybrid model of learning.

Mrs. Pompei voiced concern that once the plan comes out, parents who wish to switch to home schooling will have missed the deadline for filing plans. Mr. Wells advised that given the current situation the AOE may grant an extension on the filing deadline. Mr. Wells will contact the AOE regarding this matter.

Mr. Wells advised that he hopes to have the re-opening plan completed by the end of next week. Mrs. Pompei suggested that a Special or Emergency meeting may need to be called to review the final re-opening plan.

Mrs. Spaulding conveyed her appreciation for all of the feedback and questions that were posed this evening, and advised that the Board understands that there is no plan that will suit everyone's needs, but the BUUSD will make the best decisions it can under the circumstances. Mrs. Spaulding asks that staff, students, and community members remain patient while the district works to re-open schools and reminded everyone that keeping students safe is the main objective.

The Planning Committee will be meeting on Monday and Tuesday of next week, where they will discuss possible changes to the plan. The original deadline for formally sharing the plan with the community was 07/29/20, but that date may need to be extended a bit (to ensure that all options are explored). The original goal of the committee was to have as much in-person learning as possible, but given the constraints involved and the number of students, the phase 2 re-opening plan has less in-person learning than desired.

4.5 Hybrid Learning: Rules/Procedures

Rules and Procedures have not been defined and will be discussed in more detail at another meeting.

5. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Cambel, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin