

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**
Via Video Conference Google Meet
August 4, 2020 - 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sonya Spaulding (BC) - Chair
Victoria Pompei (BT) – Vice Chair
Gina Akley (BT) – joined at 6:00 p.m.
Emel Cambel (BC)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Paul Malone

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

David Wells, Superintendent
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager

PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Spaulding, called the Tuesday, August 4, 2020 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:34 p.m., which was held via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

The meeting should be labeled as being held via Google Meet.
Agenda Item 5.3.2 should read FMDA, not FDMA.
Add 5.3.4 Staff Appreciation Expenses under Efficiency Studies

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 July 7, 2020 BUUSD Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

The Committee agreed by consensus to approve the Minutes of the July 7, 2020 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 COVID-19 Update

A document titled ‘Barre has been awarded \$1,006,964 in ESSER funds.....’ was distributed.

A document titled ‘BUUSD COVID-19 EXPENSES FY21’ dated 07/29/2020 was distributed.

Mrs. Perreault advised regarding the ESSER allocation, noting that additional information is received daily regarding funds and accounting for funds. The \$1,000,000 ESSER allocation amount is for before the BUUSD gives an equitable share to independent schools. The BUUSD is working on that process now. The award comes to the BUUSD and the BUUSD is responsible for creation of the application and the grant management system. The BUUSD is required to assure that all of the uniform guidance for Federal funds is followed (procurement etc...). The BUUSD manages the money and receives invoices from the independent schools. Mrs. Perreault provided examples of independent schools (Montessori and St. Monica’s School), and advised that ‘independent schools’ does not pertain to the schools utilized for outplacement of students.

CRF funds will be utilized for two different types of expenditures; budgeted and unbudgeted (unplanned). The district will be made whole on unbudgeted expenses (e.g. PPE). Budgeted expenses (e.g. salary and benefit costs for employees who are spending significant time on COVID related work) will be used to supplant the State’s Education Fund. Examples of budgeted and unbudgeted expenses are provided in the documentation. In response to a query, Mrs. Perreault provided a brief overview between the use of ESSER and CRF funds, noting that Federal funds have many different rules and regulations that must be adhered to.

In response to a query regarding the end of year projections, Mrs. Perreault advised that she is always very conservative and includes known encumbrances, etc. in the projections. This past year, due to COVID there were savings in a few different lines items, including transportation and Special Education. Also, though SPED went over budget, the deficit was lower because of COVID

related reductions and a higher amount of extraordinary expenses that were reimbursed at a higher rate. Additionally, Mrs. Perreault advised that there will be a minimal amount left in the Tax Stabilization and Capital Funds.

In response to a query, Mr. Wells advised that the Burlington YMCA is interested in expanding care to the students in Barre. Mr. Wells will be meeting with YMCA representatives on Thursday, and will be in contact with Barre City officials regarding the possibility of utilizing space at the Barre City Auditorium. Utilizing STA to transport students to the YMCA program is also being considered. This separate 'daycare' would be considered COVID related. Mrs. Pompei expressed concern regarding co-mingling groups of students at the daycare and believes it would be best to hold daycares at the respective schools. Mr. Wells advised that the district school administrators do not believe there is adequate extra space available in their buildings, to be used for this purpose. Brief discussion was held regarding possible inequity issues, as not all students receive transportation to their non-YMCA daycares. Mr. Wells will hold discussions as reported and will report back once additional information is received. It was noted that discussion of transportation should occur under the purview of the Facilities/Transportation Committee.

5.2 FY22 Budget Development

A document titled 'BUUSD FY22 Budget Development Schedule – August 4, 2020' was distributed. Mrs. Perreault advised that administrators usually receive Board input late in the budget development process (after much of the budget work has been performed), and would like to receive guidance from the Board early on in the process. It would be very helpful for the Committee/Board to identify values and goals early in the budget development process. Discussion of values and goals included; having the district be functioning as one district for everything, better alignment between buildings, improved equity for students, including some 'padding', and parsing as much as possible (without letting go of education goals/values). Mrs. Perreault advised that the BUUSD per pupil spending (approximately \$15,000) is much lower than the average across the state (approximately \$18,000). This also needs to be factored in to budget development. There is concern that there will be another large increase this year, including increases for state negotiated health insurance, and teacher contracts (which are still in negotiations). It was noted that other than salaries, COVID related expenses are tracked separately. Concern was raised that due to COVID, there are unspent budget lines in FY20, (e.g. no spring sports). Budget development needs to recognize that these budget lines should not be cut as it is anticipated that they will be needed in FY22. Concern was expressed that the community has not yet felt the full economic impact of COVID-19 and that it will be much more difficult to pass a budget next March. Mr. Wells stressed that it will be important to separate out things that the BUUSD has no control over, and not let those items/issues be a distraction. Mrs. Spaulding advised that she would like to see increases for programs for students, rather than have increases solely to fund increases for staff salaries and benefits, but do nothing to benefit students. Mr. Wells advised that the BUUSD should try to build some reserves from funds not spent because of COVID. Mrs. Perreault will share the budget development schedule with the Board, and will solicit additional feedback to share with administrators. Mrs. Perreault stressed the need to hold more joint administrative meetings for budget development, and to work towards more consistency for equity and alignment purposes. Mrs. Spaulding believes there needs to be a push to other directors to work together for alignment across all buildings. Mr. Wells advised that the COVID related work being performed involves much coordination between buildings, including setting up and planning for virtual learning. Mr. Malone suggested that if temporary cuts need to be made, perhaps reductions should be made to the 'square foot' budgeted amount.

5.3 Efficiency Studies

5.3.1 Coordinated Supply Purchases/Procedures (non-custodial)

Concern was raised that though current practices include some alignment, purchasing practices at some schools is very disjointed. Mrs. Perreault suggested that this item be discussed with administrators together in one meeting and advised that there are joint administrator meetings being planned. It was noted that each building does have a book keeper and utilizes purchasing procedures that follow accounting standards and statutes. Discussion was held regarding the possibility of having parents provide some supplies, or have a list of supplies that could be donated to the schools. Mrs. Pompei has heard from some parents, after receiving a supply list (middle school) who believe the financial burden to parents is too great. Mr. Wells cautioned that he believes statute requires that schools provide basic supplies to students, but he will seek confirmation on this issue. Mr. Wells believes supply purchasing is a good topic for discussion during budget development, and would like to see coordination by teams and across schools, to look for purchasing efficiencies. The Curriculum Committee should discuss issues related to consistency with professional development, curriculum, supplies for curriculum, and increased achievement. Alignment of purchases will be added to future Finance Committee Agendas (beginning in October). As part of budget development, Mrs. Perreault will try to improve supply line item alignment, and make it more uniform.

5.3.2 Custodial Supply Purchasing – FMDA Preferred List (Facilities Maintenance and Directors Association)

A document titled 'Supply question.xlsx' was distributed. Mrs. Perreault reported that she has discussed coordinated purchasing with Mr. Evans. Mr. Evans has been holding discussions with facilities personnel and they are working towards coordinated purchasing (buying the same supplies). More district-wide COVID related purchasing has been happening. In response to a concern that different departments have been ordering COVID supplies differently (e.g. gloves ordered by IT vs. Nurses, etc.), Mrs. Perreault advised that she believes these purchases occurred prior to the bulk ordering for the District.

5.3.3 Substitutes

Mrs. Perreault advised that there is concern that there may be more requests for leave and it will be difficult to predict what the substitute pool will look like. Mr. Wells advised that all teachers/staff have been advised to notify HR if they need to request a leave.

There is a mixture of requests, some related to serious medical issues, and some are related to issues not as serious. There have been approximately 20 requests (from staff) for leave because of COVID-19. HR is working on these requests and is trying to determine how many of the staff members may want to teach virtual courses. Surveys were sent out to parents regarding how many parents want their students to participate in virtual learning (no in-person learning). It was noted that long term absences need to be filled by licensed teachers and there are only a limited amount of licensed substitutes available. It has become difficult to fill regular teaching positions as well. The BUUSD is trying to determine the need for substitutes. Mrs. Pompei queried regarding consideration being given for increases in substitute wages and or increases for substitutes who are returning to the district (employee loyalty). Mr. Wells advised that this has not been discussed, but that he can perform some research and present something to the Board next week. Mrs. Perreault advised that substitute wages were changed in the past based on comparisons to other schools in the area and she believes it is fairly consistent in this area. Mrs. Pompei advised that the shortened day, coupled with no increase, does not incentivize substitutes to return. Mrs. Poulin advised that she has been substituting for over a decade and receives the same pay rate as a new substitute. Mrs. Poulin advised that because of her experience and established relationships with students and staff, she is expected to do more than substitutes with less experience and believes the pay rate should be relative to experience. Mrs. Spaulding raised concern that some schools will be open 5 days a week and that may attract substitutes away from the BUUSD. Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding whether or not substitutes will perform virtual teaching, and regarding the rules and regulations relating to filling long term absences. Mr. Wells will perform research regarding wages for experienced substitutes as well as wages that will assist with attracting new substitutes to the district.

5.3.4 Staff Appreciation Expenses

Mrs. Pompei advised that in reviewing the warrants, she noted staff appreciation expenses under the Board budget, and wondered why the Board was not involved in employee appreciation. Additionally, Mrs. Pompei advised that the 'awards' are not consistent throughout the district. Mrs. Pompei would like to see alignment of gifts throughout the district, assurance that the Board is properly acknowledging personnel, and that the Board is kept aware of recognitions. Mrs. Perreault advised regarding past practices when each district had its own budget for staff appreciation expenses. Mrs. Perreault can reach out to the various administrators to obtain information regarding their current practices. Mrs. Spaulding advised that because the expenses are taken from a Board budget line item, she feels that the Board should be more aware of the various awards/recognitions. Mrs. Pompei reiterated that she believes the gifts should also be aligned. Ms. Cambel queried regarding Board recognition of those who retire. It was agreed that this type of recognition should be added to procedures. The Committee will follow up on this topic at the November meeting.

6. Old Business

6.1 Summer Projects Update

A document titled 'BUUSD FY20/21 RFP Schedule, Facility Projects, etc...Spring/Summer 2020' dated 08/04/20 was distributed. Project #5 – SHS Auditorium Audio-Video Update – Though this project was approved by the Board in June, it has been decided, due to budget considerations, to put the project on hold.

Project # 6 – BTMES Roof – A recommendation will be presented to the Board on 08/13/2020.

Project #7 – BTMES Canopy Removal – The project is complete and within budget.

Project #9 – BCEMS Bus Loop – After the project was started, clay was discovered and much more work is involved. Change orders totaling \$28,500 have been submitted. The cost is now estimated to be \$70,000. It was noted that there is still approximately \$40,000 in the construction line of the budget and no other projects are planned at this point.

6.2 FY20 Projections

A document titled 'BUUSD FY20 Year End Projection Report' (dated 08/04/20) was distributed.

A document titled 'CVCC FY20 Year-end Projections (dated 08/04/20) was distributed.

Mrs. Perreault advised that there are some changes to the previous projection as the BUUSD was still negotiating with Washington County Mental Health. The SEER Report (Special Education Expense Report) has been submitted. No significant changes are expected at this time. The BUUSD has an anticipated deficit of \$244,870. CVCC has an anticipated surplus of \$139,911. It was noted that the BUUSD does have a fund balance and that the Tax Stabilization Fund will offset the deficit.

6.3 FY21 Budget

There is nothing to report at this time.

7. Other Business

None.

8. Items for Future Agendas

The Committee was asked to brainstorm ideas for additional efficiency studies, but agreed that studies should not be performed at this time, as administrators will need time to adjust to the new academic year.

- FY22 Budget Development
- FY21 Budget
- COVID-19 Update
- Solar Management for FY20

- Alignment of Purchasing (October)
- Coordinated Supply Purchases/Procedures (non-custodial) (October)
- Custodial Supply Purchasing – FMDA Preferred List (November)
- Staff Appreciation (under Efficiency Studies – November)

9. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 1, 2020 at 5:30 p.m., via video conference

10. Adjournment

The Committee agreed by consensus to adjourn at 7:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin