

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING**

Via Video Conference – Google Meet
August 6, 2020 - 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alice Farrell, Chair - (BT)
Guy Isabelle – (At-Large)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Sonya Spaulding, Vice-Chair - (BC)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Josh Allen, Communications Specialist

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Farrell, called the Thursday, August 6, 2020 BUUSD Communications Committee meeting to order at 5:32 p.m., which was held via video conference (Google Meet).

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

None.

3. Public Comment

Mrs. Poulin advised that she believes promotion of SHS to students from outlying areas needs to be greater. She reported that she was recently informed that the availability of transportation of out of district students was not conveyed to all parents of incoming freshmen and that there is at least one student that would have been tuitioned to SHS had their parents known that transportation was available. Mrs. Poulin advised that she strongly supports SHS and believes that the school needs much greater promotion, including at the ‘high school fairs’. Over the years, much revenue has been lost because of other districts offering transportation (when SHS was not), and though it may take some time to start regaining the out of district population, the possible financial benefit is very substantial (hundreds of thousands of dollars per year). This item will be added to a future Communications Committee agenda. Mrs. Poulin also advised that her family has not received the tuition payment form for academic year 2020/2021. Mrs. Poulin will contact Mrs. Waterhouse regarding this issue.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Meeting Minutes of June 4, 2020 Meeting

The Committee agreed by consensus to approve the Minutes of the June 4, 2020 BUUSD Communications Committee meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 Re-Opening Communication

Mr. Allen advised that the BUUSD now has the capability to send text messages to families, and today, sent text messages to approximately 2,900 families, reminding them that the survey to choose virtual or hybrid learning needs to be submitted. The main communication tool being used to promote re-opening is the website. Much information is being posted, but the Communications Department is trying not to overwhelm families with too much information. Early next week FAQs pages will be posted. The FAQs pages will include many questions with dated detailed answers. Users will have the ability to comment and ask additional questions. Information will be provided regarding the various learning modules, special education, and health/safety. Additionally, there will be a FAQs page for staff, and a third page for principals. The page for principals will be a private page/reference sheet. Additional promotion is being provided via social media. In response to a query regarding holding public forums, Mr. Allen advised that a public forum should probably be postponed until more of the details are finalized. Mr. Allen advised that the BUUSD could probably hold a Google Meet forum to answer questions, and suggested that Superintendent Wells take the lead on answering questions. Mr. Allen advised that within the next few weeks, he plans to produce a video with Mr. Wells. The video will run approximately 3 minutes. The purpose of the video is to introduce Mr. Wells to the community. Mr. Allen also plans to produce another video with Mr. Wells for the All Staff School Year Kick-off. Mr. Isabelle expressed concern regarding an e-mail he received today, and advised that he believes there is confusion amongst the general public. He believes that many in the general public do not fully understand that schools’ re-opening plans must follow specific directives from the State and that the directives are constantly changing as new information is learned. Mr. Isabelle believes many community members are nervous because they don’t currently have all of the details involved with re-opening plans. Mr. Allen advised that the Communications Department has been writing pre-written statements to deal with various scenarios that may occur (student or staff exposure at one or more schools, etc.). Mr. Allen advised that classroom layout logistics are currently being worked on and that additional communications will go out soon. Other information to be publicized includes: food service details (school specific), and information pertaining to ventilation systems, etc.

5.2 Communications Department

There have been previous discussions regarding hiring additional help for the Communications Department. Mr. Allen advised that he has discussed this expansion with Mr. Malone and Mr. Wells, and both support the idea. Mr. Allen provided an overview of the current make-up, advising that there are two individuals who are paid stipends to do postings for schools (Mike Emmons and Dan Smith). Mr. Allen displayed a document titled BUUSD Communications Department Mockup. Mr. Allen provided an overview of the document that shows the breakdown of duties between the Communications Specialist and the proposed Communication Assistant. The addition of an assistant would allow Mr. Allen to focus on larger items/higher priorities, and would allow for more promotion of the schools, e.g. Tide Pride etc. Mr. Allen would like to have high quality merchandise for display/sale around the town/city. Mr. Allen also advised that there is new software that will be utilized as a 'one-stop-shop'. Using the customizable application, once an item is posted to Facebook, it automatically posts to any of the district's web sites and social medial accounts.

Mr. Allen displayed a document titled Typical Year Communications Tasks and identified the various periods of the year as light work, regular work, and hectic work (e.g. February – all work is budget promotion related). Having additional staff will also allow for more promotion of sports and other school events that are often occurring simultaneously, or during a 'hectic' period, where all of Mr. Allen's work must be focused on other tasks and he is unavailable to attend and photograph or video tape events.

Mr. Allen advised that he will begin work on writing policy/guidelines regarding social media posts. There will need to be several different sets of policies/guidelines; school accounts (district run), team accounts (coach/school run), and personal accounts.

Mr. Allen advised that at the very most, the Communications Department could utilize a total of 3 individuals, but could probably perform most of the work with 2. Mr. Allen stressed that expanding the department would be most beneficial, as it would free up his time and allow him to focus on the larger projects. Mr. Allen will forward the displayed documents to Tina Gilbert so they can be posted with the agenda. This item will be posted on future agendas and will be presented to the Board.

6. Old Business

6.1 Budget Process Communication

The last meeting included discussion of free PR. Mr. Allen advised that there is not much new to report at this time. Mr. Allen will be working with Mrs. Perreault, and wants to continue last year's mailing to all households in the district. Mr. Allen plans to continue with promotional videos and for the FY2022 budget promotion, the goal is to create at least 4 very targeted videos. Mr. Allen advised that he would like to release one video per week, leading up to the vote. It is anticipated that each video will address a different item. Mr. Isabelle cautioned that the timeframe for promotion may need to start early as many voters will be voting early via absentee ballot.

6.2 Mission, Vision, and Strategic Goals

There is no additional information regarding interested candidates. The Committee is committed to creation of project team(s). The work involved for that process is currently being facilitated by Mrs. Spaulding. This item is on hold for now as re-opening of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic has taken priority.

7. Other Business

None.

8. Items to be Placed on Future Agendas

- Logo/Branding (may be delayed until after completion of Mission/Vision/Strategic Goals Statement)
- Mission/Vision/Strategic Plan
- Communications Department
- Budget Promotion
- Promotion of SHS to Out of District Students

9. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 3, 2020 at 5:30 p.m., via video conference.

10. Adjournment

The Committee agreed by consensus to adjourn at 6:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin