

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING**

Via Video Conference – Google Meet
August 27, 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) – joined at 6:00 p.m.
Guy Isabelle (At-Large)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

David Wells, Superintendent
Chris Hennessey, BCEMS Principal
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Jennifer Nye, BTMES Principal
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager
Brenda Waterhouse, SHS Principal

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Venus Dean	Erika Dolan	Anastasia Douglas	Winton Goodrich
Susan Holson	Sara Jacobs	Kerri Lamb	Megan Spaulding	

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, August 27, 2020, Regular meeting to order at 5:31p.m., which was held via video conference – Google Meet.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Packet documentation labeled 6.2 should read 6.3. Packet documentation labeled 6.3 should be labeled 6.4.

Take Agenda Item 7.2 out of order – this item will be discussed after Agenda Item 5.4

Add 6.5 In-Person Board/Committee Meetings

Add two items for discussion under Executive Session:

10.1 Student Residency Matter

10.2 Negotiations/Labor Relations Agreements

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

3. Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

3.1 Public Comment

None.

3.2 Student Voice

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Approval of Minutes – August 13, 2020 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the August 13, 2020 Regular Meeting.

5. Reports to the Board

5.1 Committee Reports

5.1.1 Communications Committee

The next meeting is Thursday, September 4, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. No discussion.

5.1.2 Finance Committee

The next meeting is Tuesday, September 1, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. No discussion.

5.1.3 Facilities & Transportation Committee

The next meeting is Monday, September 14, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. No discussion.

5.1.4 Policy Committee

The next meeting is Monday, September 21, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. No discussion.

5.1.5 Curriculum Committee

The Committee met on August 25, 2020. Mrs. Pompei reported that the Committee discussed hybrid and virtual learning options, and the Work Plan for the Curriculum Committee. The Work Plan will require additional discussion at the next meeting.

The next meeting is Tuesday, September 22, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

5.1.6 Negotiations Committee

The next meeting date is to be determined. The status of negotiations will be discussed in Executive Session.

5.1.7 Regional Advisory Board

The next meeting is Monday, October 5, 2020. No discussion.

5.4 Financials

No discussion.

6. Current Business

6.1 Resignations/Retires/New Hires

A letter of resignation from Danielle Kehlmann was distributed. Mr. Wells advised regarding the letter of resignation. Mrs. Pompei believes it is unprofessional for employees to leave this close to the school year and does not feel that the resignation should be accepted. Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding a possible cut-off date for accepting resignations, and voiced concern that though the BUUSD is bound by contracts, the contracts do not contain any clauses that prevent teachers/administrators from leaving. There is concern regarding hiring qualified personnel this late in the hiring season. Mr. Wells advised that during this difficult time, it is very difficult to hold teachers to contracts, though if circumstances were different, he would try to hold staff to their contracts. Mr. Wells will consult with BUUSD legal counsel to obtain a legal opinion regarding what the BUUSD could win in court should it deny a resignation request and wish to proceed legally. Mrs. Marold advised that there are currently 2 open classroom positions. Mrs. Marold advised that the 'teeth' in contracts, is the stipulation that teachers cannot teach for a period of one year. Mr. Wells advised that today he denied a request from an individual who wanted to resign from the BUUSD to teach in another district.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Board voted 5 to 4 to accept the resignation of Danielle Kehlmann. Mrs. Akley, Ms. Cambel, Mr. Cecchinelli, Mr. Isabelle, and Mrs. Spaulding voted for the motion. Mr. Boltin, Mrs. Farrell, Mr. Malone, and Mrs. Pompei voted against the motion.

The resumes and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Forms for Carter Semple (SHS Social Studies) and Micky Michael John Strachota (BTMES 8th grade Social Studies for a 1 year term to cover for Ben Feld) were distributed. Mr. Wells provided an overview of the candidates, and advised that Mr. Feld will be a Virtual Academy instructor for the 2020 – 2021 academic year.

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Carter Semple and Micky Michael John Strachota, with Mr. Strachota's contract being for a term of one year.

6.2 Curriculum Coordinator Position

A document titled BUUSD Central Office (a flow chart) was distributed. Mr. Wells provided an overview of the proposed plan for reorganization of the BUUSD Central Office. The proposal was created after the resignation of the Curriculum Director. Mr. Wells has been working with the Curriculum Coordinator to assure that grants are in place and that Professional Development has been planned. Mr. Wells advised that he also led the new teacher orientation days. Mr. Wells presented the document on screen and advised regarding his recommendation that he believes is more efficient for the district and is designed to save at least \$90,000. The restructure involves hiring an Assistant Superintendent, rather than hiring a Curriculum Director. Mr. Wells would be responsible for BCMES and BTMES Curriculum and Professional Development, and those building administrators would report to him. The Assistant Superintendent would be in charge of grant management, Curriculum, assessments, and Professional Development for SHS,

and would also oversee the Director of Special Services and the Director of Early Education. In response to a query, Mr. Wells advised that the proposed structure does meet legal requirements. Mr. Wells believes there is a good candidate pool from which this position could be filled. In response to a query regarding where the \$90,000 savings is being realized, it was noted that the savings result from restructuring of the Business Office (reduction of one staff accountant at \$45,000), and a reduction of one assistant in the Special Services Department (this is a position that was unfilled over the summer). Mr. Wells is also anticipating some attrition of assistants in the Central Office. Ms. Cambel clarified that no savings result from creating the new Assistant Superintendent position. The salary for the Assistant Superintendent would be similar to that of the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. It was noted that in the current structure, building principals report to the Superintendent, though this chain of command was not specifically listed in the current organizational chart. Ms. Cambel expressed that she believes the new structure is too administratively heavy, and that the addition of this new title could be concerning. Mrs. Akley expressed concern that the Superintendent would be taking on 50% of the curriculum position, but probably not off-loading 50% of the Superintendent's responsibilities and she is concerned that Mr. Wells will be over-extended. Mrs. Akley also expressed concern that the district was recently merged, and it was the intent to have one individual to oversee and align curriculum pre-k – 12. There is concern that dividing the curriculum responsibilities will have a negative impact on curriculum alignment. Mrs. Spaulding reiterated the concern that prior to alignment, high school was not aligned with elementary/middle school curriculum, and that the necessary alignment is still a work in progress. Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding reverting back to the current structure if the proposed structure is approved, but doesn't work well. Mrs. Spaulding also expressed concern that the one goal of the school is to educate students, and that parsing out the oversight of curriculum to individuals who have multiple focuses (job responsibilities) will be detrimental to curriculum. Mr. Boltin queried regarding the ability to terminate the Assistant Superintendent, and revert back to the current structure by hiring a Curriculum Director. Mr. Wells advised that rather than eliminating the Assistant Superintendent position, he would try to reassign responsibilities. Mrs. Pompei reiterated that plan to hire an Assistant Superintendent is not saving \$90,000. Savings outlined in the new organizational chart are realized from changes to the Business Office. Mrs. Pompei also expressed concern that the Act 166 Coordinator (SPED related), and the Early Education Director will be reporting to the Assistant Superintendent who is responsible for high school curriculum, rather than the Superintendent who is responsible for curriculum for grades pre-k – 8. Ms. Dean is concerned because at the end of the last school year, there was a reduction in curriculum coordinators (from 3 to 2.2), which resulted in reduced concentration on curriculum for the K – 8 level and curriculum progress was halted. Ms. Dean advised that there hasn't been proper communication recently regarding the 8 days of professional development. Ms. Dean is worried that under the proposed structure, curriculum will fall through the cracks, not getting the attention it deserves, and that content leaders will continue to be underutilized. Past practice has involved curriculum coordinators meeting often with the Curriculum Director, and she believes much progress was being made. Ms. Dean is concerned that curriculum would be overseen by an "outside hire", and a Superintendent who is new to the district. Ms. Dean believes that knowledge of BUUSD curriculum and alignment efforts/progress is vital to improving curriculum. Ms. Dean is concerned that aligning middle school with high school will not be successful. Ms. Dean also expressed concern that the Superintendent will have to split his time between superintendent duties and curriculum. Mr. Wells has seen how things fell apart, curriculum wise, and that continuity of work did not happen. Mr. Wells believes curriculum is most important and would like to work as a team to identify goals and make work plans. Continuity and quality of curriculum are paramount and he believes the k – 8 schools need to work more in concert. Mr. Wells advised that he has experience with curriculum and he would like to have someone else focus on Flexible Pathways and proficiencies at the high school level. Mr. Wells advised that the goal is to achieve continuity. Erika Dolan (parent of a 7th grade BTMES student) expressed concern that there is a new superintendent who has not yet been evaluated by the board, and she is concerned that taking on curriculum duties may be too much work. Ms. Dolan clarified that when the Superintendent's (annual) evaluation needs to be performed, he will be evaluated on work that he was not initially hired to do. Mrs. Farrell suggested that the organizational chart be broken down one more layer, including the impact to the individual buildings. Mrs. Spaulding does not want to wait to hire a Curriculum Director. Mrs. Spaulding advised that the Superintendent was hired for the position of Superintendent duties only, not curriculum duties, and she believes the Curriculum Director position needs to be filled. Mrs. Spaulding is concerned that the majority of the work will fall on the curriculum coordinators. Mrs. Spaulding advised that the content of curriculum is of the utmost importance, given the current hybrid learning model. Mr. Malone expressed concern that the BUUSD has gone through 2 Curriculum Directors in 3 years, and he wants to see continuity. Mrs. Pompei agrees that from January on, the BUUSD essentially did not have anyone leading curriculum, and remote learning was highly dependent on curriculum coordinators. Mrs. Pompei has heard that curriculum leadership was lacking, and she believes that the BUUSD needs to heavily concentrate on curriculum. Mrs. Farrell suggested that the Assistant Superintendent title be modified to reflect Assistant Superintendent of Instruction. Ms. Cambel queried regarding how other school districts handle curriculum, advising that she is used to working for a district that had a Director of Curriculum. Ms. Cambel has serious concerns regarding splitting the Superintendent's duties. Ms. Cambel is uncomfortable hiring an Assistant Superintendent who handles roles other than curriculum. Ms. Cambel believes that adding curriculum duties to the Superintendent's role will be overwhelming. Ms. Dean feels this is a large foundational picture to change at the start of the school year and believes it would be beneficial to hire someone in-house, with lots of BUUSD experience, to fill the one-year interim curriculum director position, and later in the year, decide if it should become an Assistant Superintendent position. Ms. Dean advised that she has been interested in the Curriculum Director Position and in serving in that capacity. Mr. Wells noted some other job titles he has considered for the new position, and advised that some other districts do have Assistant Superintendents whose main focus is curriculum. Mr. Wells does not believe the current structure mirrors most other districts structures. Mr. Wells advised that the Assistant Director position is flexible, as it is an "At Will" employee position.

Mr. Cecchinelli suggested that an executive session be held for additional discussion. Mrs. Poulin cautioned that Executive Sessions must follow open meeting laws and can be held to discuss evaluation of specific employees, but not for general discussion pertaining to organizational structure. Mrs. Akley would like to review additional information prior to making a decision.

The Board agreed to table discussion until a Special Meeting can be held. The Board agreed to hold a Special Meeting on Wednesday, August 2, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. via Google Meet.

6.3 Substitute Rates

A document titled 'Vermont Sub Rates' was distributed. In response to a query regarding the number of hours substitutes will be in buildings under COVID learning, Mrs. Marold advised that substitutes spend at most, 7 hours in the buildings per day, but it varies by building. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that with re-opening under COVID guidelines, substitutes will spend a maximum of 3.5 hours per day at Spaulding High School. In response to Mrs. Pompei's concern that other districts pay substitutes \$100 - \$126 per day, Mrs. Marold advised that during COVID learning, the district may wish to set a minimum number of hours and would try to find full-day work during COVID.

Mrs. Marold advised that raising the hourly rate concerns her because it gets into the para rate, which has been an issue in the past. Mrs. Pompei believes para educators are a totally different issue because in addition to their pay, para educators receive stellar benefits that cost the district much more than their pay. Additionally, para educators are guaranteed full time work. When schools closed due to COVID in March 2020, para educators continued to get paid, while substitutes received nothing. Mrs. Pompei queried regarding prior discussion that long term substitutes are being paid the same rate as newly hired substitutes and that the BUUSD needs to create a better pay scale in order to retain substitutes. Mrs. Pompei advised that permanent substitutes receive higher wages and benefits, but the BUUSD should also be rewarding the loyalty of substitutes who return year after year, by creating a better pay scale to compensate substitutes' experience. Mrs. Perreault agrees with creating a minimum pay under COVID. Mrs. Marold acknowledges that the BUUSD continues to have difficulty hiring substitutes and that she believes there are still 2 open permanent substitute positions. In response to a query from Mrs. Akley, it was noted that this issue can be revisited any time during the school-year. Rates do not have to be set at the start of the year.

Mrs. Poulin advised that the last increase in substitute pay was in 2016, and that entering the 2020-2021 academic year, makes it the 4th year in which there have been no increases for substitutes. All other employees within the district receive annual increases. Additionally, Mrs. Poulin advised that the increase implemented in 2016 is believed to be the first increase in a decade, and advised that with the January 2021 increase in minimum wage, minimum wage will have increased by \$2.15 since the last increase for substitutes. Mrs. Poulin advised that discussions held in 2016 raised concerns that the BUUSD only increases sub wages when it hits 'rock bottom' and can't find enough substitutes. Mrs. Poulin believes that substitutes play a valuable role within the BUUSD and that more consideration should be given to their wages. Mrs. Poulin noted that teachers have told her that they write more robust sub plans when they know an experienced substitute will be in their room, and that the expectations of what students will achieve are greater when there is an experienced substitute in the classroom. Mrs. Poulin believes longevity and experience should be considered when determining substitute wages. Mrs. Pompei advised that she would like to see substitute rates addressed now. Mrs. Waterhouse advised of an incredible shortage of substitutes at the high school, advised that many substitutes do not want to work at the high school, and she believes there will continue to be a shortage. Because of this, SHS relies heavily on permanent substitutes. Mr. Hennessey advised that BCEMS is also short on substitutes and needs to rely heavily on permanent substitutes and shifting employees around to cover classes. The substitute shortage is a concern everywhere. Mr. Hennessey agrees that it is time to raise wages, and especially for long term subs, he does not believe an increase will assist with hiring substitutes during COVID. Mrs. Nye advised that BTMES is also having to rely heavily on permanent subs, and as they fill open teaching positions, the need for day subs is increasing. BTMES currently has approximately 20 subs available, but usually has many, many more. Mrs. Nye believes that COVID is playing a role in the lack of substitutes, and hopes that more become available when COVID subsides. Mr. Wells believes pay is an issue, and that COVID is also playing a role in the lack of substitutes. Mr. Malone believes increases need to be considered soon. Mrs. Spaulding believes rates should be discussed as part of FY22 budget development, including how to build in different levels based on experience. The more pressing need is addressing the current need and discussing a minimum. Mrs. Perreault suggested that she and Mrs. Marold review this issue over the next few weeks and bring it back to the Board.

6.4 Business Office Proposal

A document titled 'Business Office Proposal – Efficiency Consideration 8/27/20' was distributed. Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of the proposal, and advised that had Kris Gilbar not submitted her resignation, she would not have been seeking to re-organize the department. Mrs. Perreault advised that with new efficiencies, and having a unified budget/district, it will be possible to perform the necessary work utilizing 2 staff accountants (as opposed to 3). Mrs. Perreault advised that current staff members (Michelle Leeman- lead accounts payable and Ann Baker – lead payroll) are very skilled, and that they will be performing parallel jobs.

Mrs. Perreault proposes leaving \$10,000 in the budget to bring Kris Gilbar back as a consultant, on an as needed basis. Mrs. Perreault has identified times of the year that are labor intensive. Mrs. Perreault noted that the BUUSD is in the last round of implementing e-finance, and will begin the implementation in July 2021. Implementation involves one year of training and conversion of files. This project is very intensive and is the equivalent of building a system from the ground up. Ms. Gilbar's knowledge and experience will

greatly assist with completion of this implementation. No Board action is required to implement the new structure. Mrs. Pompei supports the proposal. There were no objections from the Board.

6.5 In-Person Board/Committee Meetings

As schools are about to re-open for some in-person learning, shouldn't the Board and Committees begin meeting in person? Mrs. Pompei advised that the Agency of Education does not want any 'additional' individuals in the buildings because having additional individuals in the buildings poses an added risk to students and staff. Also, as meetings are 'open meetings', allowing members of the public to attend, there would be an additional risk to students and staff, and social distancing requirements would have to be met.

7. Old Business

7.1 School Re-opening Update

A document titled 'Reopening Plan for Barre Unified Union School District' was distributed. A copy of the 2020-2021 Regional Calendar for the BUUSD (dated 07/22/20) was also distributed. Mr. Wells provided an overview of the re-opening plan that was recently reported to the Curriculum Committee, including increased in-service days (8 prior to re-opening), expectations relating to attendance, academics, and assessment. Learning expectations and requirements will be much more robust than they were under the emergency closure, and include more connections with students. Mr. Wells advised regarding the Virtual Academy, including a wait list. Most of K – 8 students who requested the Virtual Academy were accommodated. Only two families have requested to withdraw from the Virtual Academy. There are only a handful of families that have inquired about homeschooling. VTVC continues to sort through applications and they may have the flexibility to take on more middle school students, but as of today, they cannot. Mr. Wells will provide an update as more information becomes available. Schools are ready, PPE is on hand and meal distribution is planned. School re-opening videos have been produced. Mr. Allen was lauded for his efforts with this endeavor. In response to a query regarding students who can no longer participate in the hybrid model (e.g. can't wear face coverings or can't meet other safety requirements), Mr. Wells advised that accommodations will be provided, in the same manner that accommodations are provided to students during non-COVID times. Individualized plans will be made to accommodate students, including those with social, emotional, or behavioral concerns/issues. Mr. Wells answered questions from the Board, including protocols when students don't pass the temperature check, isolation rooms, transportation (including possible waivers for older students whose parents who don't/can't wait at bus stop, - safety and liability concerns, documentation of cleaning – Mr. Wells will follow up with Stacy Emerson at STA and new requests for transportation– Mr. Wells will consult with Josh regarding the transportation surveys), students/staff who test positive (or possibly positive), special education, transportation/orientation for younger students, appropriate face coverings (exceptions to, safety, and dress code related), ongoing work of the Re-opening Committee, requests to switch from hybrid to Virtual Academy learning (accommodations are required under 504 and will be provided), expectations on Wednesdays (all virtual day – expectations have been clearly defined to staff), YMCA Childcare (will be opening, but won't be ready at the very start of school), and reasons behind scheduling differences between the high school and the elementary/middle schools. Mrs. Pompei noted that not all information is coming directly to the Board (communication breakdown), and advised that she believes the re-opening videos should have been forwarded to Board Members. Mrs. Pompei queried regarding increasing the capacity of the Virtual Academy by possibly hiring another teacher (Mr. Wells can post an anticipated middle school teacher position). It was noted that the temperature ceiling for non-admittance is 100, not 100.4. This change is necessary due to issues with contactless thermometers. Students who have a temperature close to the temperature limit will continue to be monitored throughout the day. Documentation needs to be updated to reflect the 100 degree limit.

7.2 Vision, Mission, & Strategic Goals

A document titled BUUSD VSBA Strategic Planning Proposal – Presented by Winton Goodrich – Leadership Development Consultant – May 7, 2020 – Strategic Plan Development Process and Timeline, was distributed. Mr. Goodrich provided an overview of the proposal, including discussion of the original timeline. It was noted that the original timeline was crafted such that the project would be completed before budget development was finalized. The Board acknowledges that COVID does have an impact of the project, and that meetings would need to be held virtually rather than in person. There is concern that adding this project's work to those working to open schools during COVID, presents too large of a burden. Lengthy discussion was held regarding possible postponement of the start of this project, extending the timeline of the project, concern that COVID related issues may skew answers, and concern that this project will continue to be postponed indefinitely. School administrators believe the best course of action would be to postpone the project until the spring of 2021, and expressed concern that parents, community members, and staff, are very overwhelmed at this time. The Board agreed to delay the start of the project until January, but the Board should be thinking of possible design team members and be prepared to provide input in November or December. Mr. Goodrich will adjust the timeline accordingly. It was agreed that the Design Team should be expanded to 13 members to assure that there is parental representation from both the City and the Town. Mrs. Farrell suggested the Communications Committee disseminate information regarding this initiative. Mrs. Spaulding would like a firm commitment from the Board that they will not postpone the project start date beyond January.

8. Other Business/Round Table

Mrs. Farrell advised that it's important that the public know the importance of completing their census. The census can be found at census.gov. Mrs. Farrell will assist anyone who needs help.

It was noted that SHS will soon be releasing a 'day in the life' school re-opening video.

Mr. Isabelle thanked Mr. Wells and Mrs. Perreault for looking into personnel alternatives for the Central Office.

9. Future Agenda Items

Board Members were advised to contact Mr. Wells with any items they wish to place on the next meeting's Agenda.

10. Executive Session as Needed

10.1 Student Residency Matter

10.2 Negotiations/Labor Relations Agreements.

Items proposed for discussion in Executive Session include a Student Residency Matter and Negotiations/Labor Relations Agreements.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously agreed to find that premature general public knowledge of Negotiations/Labor Relations Agreements proposed for discussion, would clearly place the Barre Unified Union School District at a substantial disadvantage should the discussion be public.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Wells in attendance, at 9:03 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 to discuss the items proposed for discussion.

The remaining information was provided by the Board Clerk.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 9:22 p.m.

11. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin