

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

Via Video Conference (Zoom)
May 18, 2020 – 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Giuliano Cecchinelli, Chair - (BC)
J. Guy Isabelle, Vice-Chair - (At-Large)
Emel Cambel (BC)
Andrew McMichael (BC Community Member) – joined the meeting at 5:40 p.m.
Jon Valsangiacomo – (BT Community Member) – joined the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF PRESENT:

John Pandolfo, Superintendent
Luke Aither, SHS Assistant Principal
Scott Griggs, CVCC Assistant Director
Pierre Laflamme, BCEMS Assistant Principal

GUESTS:

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Cecchinelli, called the Monday, May 18, 2020, meeting to order at 5:30 p.m., which was held via video conference (Zoom).

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

There were no changes to the Agenda.

Mr. Isabelle queried Mr. Pandolfo regarding an e-mail sent to staff and Board Members on 04/19/2020. It was noted that this matter is not on the Agenda and not related to the Policy Committee. Mr. Pandolfo advised that boundaries are not clear for folks, and though everyone wants to do what is best, people are entering a grey area in terms of what is allowable. Mr. Pandolfo had advised, at the Board meeting, that there have been a couple of things that happened with staff, one of which was that staff planned a fairly sizable event that was not allowable under social distancing rules. Staff felt it was allowed because it was not on school property and was done after normal school hours. Mr. Pandolfo stressed that any organized interface between staff and students and families, is considered a school event. That was clarified to staff. There are many different issues in trying to determine what is allowable and what is not under social distancing guidelines. The event that was planned but didn't happen, was planned without approval from administrators. It is difficult for staff to know all of the guidance, even though updates are sent daily. The guidance document is very long and complex. Administrators keep up on the guidance and need to be consulted for any event. When staff members don't follow guidance, it does not set a good example for the community. Mr. Pandolfo would prefer that staff follow the directives they are given, rather than him having to spend extensive amounts of time investigating reports of alleged policy violations. Mr. Pandolfo has advised that if staff have an issue with anything, they should e-mail or call him directly. There is nothing related to the recent issues that would fall under Policy Committee discussion/action. Mr. Griggs advised that CVCC staff have needed to connect with students, e.g. to drop off student kits and lab equipment, but have strict protocols in place for the pick-up and drop-off of these supplies. Mr. Laflamme advised that he has spoken with the BCEMS Behavioral Team regarding reaching out to the community. Mr. Laflamme made it very clear that they need to keep finding ways to reach out to the community, but cautioned that they are acting as agents for the school and must follow social distancing guidelines. Mr. Coon has sent follow-up e-mails to staff and has advised staff that they must go through Mr. Coon or Mr. Hennessey for approval prior to any engagement being conducted. Mr. Pandolfo is concerned that some people will be questioning that if staff are not following social distancing rules outside of school, why can't students be back in school. The tone being set now for paying close attention to guidelines and following procedures is going to be way more important when we get back into the situation of being back in the schools and running things differently.

Mr. Isabelle queried regarding an e-mail he sent to Mr. Pandolfo regarding nepotism concerns raised by Randy Edmonds. Mr. Pandolfo advised that there is nothing in the Master Agreement or in Policy that relates to nepotism. Much of the situation being raised pre-dates involvement of the members sitting on this Committee. There are family members spread across the district (outside of the AFSCME unit, and within the AFSCME unit). At times it has presented as an issue, but at times is used to mask someone's own behavior, when they have been 'called out' by someone who is part of the supposed nepotism issue. Whenever there is a possible issue, the BUUSD performs a thorough investigation, and investigations are not performed by those who are parties of supposed nepotism. Mr. Pandolfo understands the concern, and believes it is something to explore when hiring, but stressed that the BUUSD hires the best candidates. Behaviors are dealt with when needed.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Approval of Minutes – April 20, 2019 Policy Committee Meeting

The Committee agreed by consensus to approve the Minutes the April 20, 2019 Policy Committee Meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 Review of BUUSD Policy Manual Index

A copy of the BUUSD Policy Manual Index (dated 05/12/20) was distributed.

In addition to what was in the packet, Mr. Pandolfo displayed a screen of the VSBA Model web page. There is no good way to download and print this information until the VSBA makes some fixes to their site. Mr. Pandolfo noted that there are very few policies that the Committee was feeling needed to be updated, and there are a few policies that the Committee is waiting for VSBA to revise. Any changes made by VSBA have been cross-referenced to BUUSD policies and it was found that the changes made by VSBA related to legal references. The BUUSD has already made the decision to remove legal references, so the VSBA changes will not apply to BUUSD policies. Tina Gilbert is in the process of removing all legal references. The policies we believe need to be changed are on hold pending changes from VSBA. There are a few policies that related to SHS only, but are also pending input from VSBA. It was agreed that Agenda Items 5.1 and 5.2 will be discussed under Agenda Item 5.1.

Section A (Board Operations):

Mr. Pandolfo displayed the VSBA Index and advised that the policies in Section A were updated last fall or in early spring. Those that weren't recently updated are policies that have not been changed by VSBA since the BUUSD adopted them. Changes to policies that were updated in the spring and fall, are changes limited to legal references. Mr. Pandolfo advised that if you try to print from the site, the dates and titles do not print. All work must be done from the screen. The Acrobat format does not include updates, so it is not of use. The MS Word version is also not available at this time. Mr. Pandolfo has advised Kerri Lamb (at VSBA) that fixes need to be made. Mr. Pandolfo displayed the BUUSD Model Policy Index. Mr. Pandolfo has added two columns (Date of Last VSBA Model Policy Update & Date BUUSD Policy was Checked Against the VSBA Policy). With the exception of Policy A22 (Non-discrimination policy), all policies were checked after the last VSBA update. We are currently waiting for VSBA to revise policy A22. In section A, everything in the Model Policy Index listed as required, recommended, or to be considered, are in our manual.

Section B – Personnel

B6 – HIPAA Compliance - VSBA deleted B6 because it is no longer legally required

Other VSBA policies;

B20 – Personnel Recruitment, Selection, Appointment, and Background Checks

B22 – Complaints about Personnel & Instructional Materials

B30 – Staffing and Job Descriptions

B31 – Educator Supervision & Evaluation: Probationary Teachers

B32 – Personnel Files

B33 - Resignations

B20, B22, B30, B31, B32, and B33 do not exist at the BUUSD, but it is not necessary for the BUUSD to have all of the VSBA policies. Mr. Pandolfo has checked our policy against VSBA policy for policies B1 (Substitute Teachers) and B2 (Volunteers and Work Study Students). We are currently waiting for VSBA to make a minor change to B3 (Alcohol & Drug-free Workplace).

The cross-checking procedure will need to be performed for all policies, but as we adopted most of the policies after the last VSBA revision date, the cross-checking should be a fairly small task. Mr. Pandolfo does not believe there will be many policies that the Committee will need to be concerned with. Mr. Pandolfo has been performing most of the cross-check work, but advised that he does not know who will be charged with that task under the new Superintendent. Mr. Pandolfo advised that there are a number of policies with the comment "Awaiting VSBA Revision". VSBA advised many months ago that those policies were being revised, but due to limited capacity, have been unable to make the revisions. Mr. Pandolfo will try to complete the cross-checking of policies prior to June 30, 2020. Mr. Wells has not yet been advised that Mr. Pandolfo has been very involved in policy. Mr. Pandolfo advised that it is very important that the Superintendent be aware of all policies. Brief discussion was held regarding possible ways to restructure responsibility for policy review.

In response to a query from Mr. Aither, Mr. Pandolfo displayed section "B", noting that the BUUSD doesn't have a policy equivalent of some of the policies, but instead, has procedures. It may be worth performing more investigation in the future. Sections B, E, and F, may need some review. For the remaining sections, the BUUSD has all or most of the model policies.

Mr. Isabelle suggested that administrative staff members continue to give a heads up regarding day to day issues for which no policy exists. Mr. Isabelle reiterated the need to continue to work with the VSBA regarding policy. Mr. Pandolfo advised that Carol Marold

(HR Director) should be included in discussion of policies in the “B” section. When reviewing section E, Lisa Perreault (Business Manager) needs to be involved.

Discussion returned to Section B (Personnel), where Mr. Pandolfo reiterated that though having some of these policies might be helpful, there are procedures in place

Section C (Students):

The BUUSD has all policies in place except for C28 (Transgender and Gender Non-conforming Students), which we have been discussing recently. We have been advised different ways regarding this policy. Legal counsel recommended that the BUUSD may not wish to use a VSBA policy on this matter. Mr. Aither advised that legal counsel recommends that we follow the law, not a policy. There is much new case law on this issue, so it is surprising that VSBA has a policy at this point. Mr. Isabelle queried regarding when/if students would be giving a presentation. Mr. Aither advised that work being performed with the group of students and administrators relates more to procedures than policy. Mr. Aither advised that the Board will continue to be updated, but it will be a significant amount of time before the group will be ready to give a presentation. Mr. Pandolfo attempted to pull up the policy but the link did not work. Mr. Pandolfo reiterated that the Adobe link and the Word link do not work and that the issue has been reported to Kerri Lamb. Mr. Pandolfo advised that the BUUSD has not adopted VSBA Policy C22 (Student Activities – Elementary), but rather has one policy dealing with all students. VSBA has two separate policies on this matter and their policies contain specific grade range ‘breaks’ that don’t fit with the make-up BUUSD students. It was reiterated that the BUUSD has not adopted VSBA policy C28.

Section D (Instruction):

D2 – Grade Advancement
D33 – Local Action Plan

The two policies listed have not been adopted by the BUUSD;

D2 – VSBA removed this policy as it is obsolete.

D33, refers to Action Plans and is very outdated. Continuous Improvement Plans, (rather than Action Plans) have been used for years.

Section E (Non-Instructional Operations) (VSBA has Section E labeled as School-Community Relations)

E21 – Distribution of Non-School Sponsored Literature in Schools

E31- Parental Involvement

E32 – Visits by Parents, Community Members, or Media (The BUUSD does have procedures relating to visits)

These policies (E21, E31 and E32) don’t have updated dates, which may mean that they are new, or they are still working on implementing/writing/revising. These policies warrant review once they become available, but they are probably not high priority.

Section F (Finance) (Note – VSBA has Section F labeled as Non-Instructional Operations)

F22 - Financial Reports and Statements

F23 – Electronic Communications Use and Retention

F25 – Access Control

F26 - Security Cameras

F31 – Emergency Closings

F32 – School Crisis Prevention & Response/Procedures for Bomb Threats

The BUUSD has not adopted these policies. These policies are very old and the links are not working. It may be worth reviewing these in the future, and possibly adding some of them to the BUUSD Policy Manual.

Mr. Pandolfo advised regarding historical information relating to VSBA personnel involved with policy, and advised that the current contact individual to whom questions should be addressed is Sue Ceglowski, VSBA Executive Director.

Mr. Pandolfo provided a brief overview of the BUUSD Index –

B40 Social/Digital/On-line Communications for Staff

D3 Acceptable Use of Electronic Resources & the Internet

These two policies are highlighted in yellow, and are flagged as such as we are currently waiting for VSBA to create Model Policies.

Mr. Pandolfo advised that he believes the two new columns on the spreadsheet will be very useful in tracking policies.

It was suggested that a new column be created to identify VSBA Policy Approval Dates. This column could be compared to the BUUSD Approval Date, and if greater than the BUUSD Approval Date, the policy should be flagged for review. Mr. Pandolfo advised he could write that into the spreadsheet. The date VSBA changes policies on their web site can be problematic.

Mr. Pandolfo displayed BUUSD Policy B3 (Alcohol and Drug-free Workplace) that was adopted approximately one year ago. The model policy was recently updated. The Model policy ends with “disciplinary action”, the BUUSD policy advises; “including but not limited to non-renewal, suspension, or termination at the discretion of the Superintendent, or, if required, the BUUSD Board”. The BUUSD policy also includes a section on Employer Responsibilities, which is not included in the VSBA Model Policy. Mr. Pandolfo displayed the VSBA Policy and advised though it may be worth looking at; he believes the BUUSD policy is good. It may be beneficial to run the BUUSD policy by legal counsel.

Mr. Cecchinelli reiterated that upon Mr. Pandolfo’s departure from the BUUSD, someone will need to be charged with overseeing policy review.

5.2 Review VSBA Model Policy – Identify those with Substantive Changes

Discussion held under Agenda Item 5.1

5.3 Policies to Review

Discussion held under Agenda Item 5.1

6. Old Business

None.

7. Other Business

None.

8. Future Agenda Items

Committee Members were advised to notify Mr. Cecchinelli (by e-mail) of any items they wish to have added to future agendas.

9. Next Meeting Date

After brief discussion, the Committee agreed that they may not need to meet until after school is in session.

The next meeting is Monday, September 21, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

Mr. Pandolfo will try to complete his review of the policies prior to his departure from the BUUSD.

Mr. Pandolfo will keep Mr. Cecchinelli apprised of the review and will send a completed spreadsheet to the Committee and/or the Board, as of July 1, 2020.

10. Adjournment

The Committee agreed by consensus to adjourn at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin