

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**
Via Video Conference – Google Meet
September 1, 2020 - 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sonya Spaulding (BC) - Chair
Victoria Pompei (BT) – Vice Chair
Gina Akley (BT)
Emel Cambel (BC)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Giuliano Cecchinelli

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

David Wells, Superintendent
Penny Chamberlin, Director Central Vermont Career Center
Jason Derner, Alternative Education Administrator
Jamie Evans, Facilities Director – departed the meeting at 6:50 p.m.
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager

PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT:

David Delcore – Times Argus

1. Call to Order

Vice-Chair, Mrs. Pompei, called the Tuesday, September 1, 2020 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:34 p.m., which was held via video conference – Google Meet.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

None.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 August 4, 2020 BUUSD Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

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

5. New Business

5.1 Homeless Meal Contract with Aladdin/Lexington

A document titled ‘BUUSD Finance Committee Meeting Summary – September 1, 2020’ was distributed. Mrs. Perreault advised that Lexington (formally Aladdin) has been asked to provide meals for the homeless in Franklin, Lamoille and Washington counties. Lexington has asked to use the schools’ kitchens (BCEMS and SHS) for meal preparation. A price of \$1.00 per meal has been negotiated. The revenue, for ‘use of the facility’ will go to the General Fund, as it is not school food service related. It was confirmed that meals will be prepared by the usual kitchen staff. Preparation of the additional meals is not expected to be problematic. If the service becomes problematic, there is a 2 week termination clause in the contract. The contract goes until the end of December 2020, but could possibly go longer. Mrs. Perreault advised that if, towards the end of the year, it looks like there is going to be too big of a surplus, the Board may wish to vote to move funds to the Reserves Fund.

It was also noted that the summer meals program has been extended, and free meals will be provided to all students (universal free meals). The logistics and details will be worked out and then additional information will be provided to the public.

Mrs. Spaulding began facilitating the meeting at 5:44 p.m.

5.2 Assoc. Letter to Legislative Representatives

A document titled 'DRAFT for review by Representative Kate Webb' dated 08/19/20, was distributed. Mrs. Perreault believes this issue may become a 'hot topic', and that the BUUSD will most likely hear from VSBA, VSA, and VASBO within the next few months. It was noted that the Legislative Breakfast, which is normally held in October or November, will probably have to be virtual this year. There were no questions pertaining to the letter.

5.3 Solar Management for FY20

A document titled 'BUUSD Summary of Electric Bills and Solar Credits – July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020' was distributed. Mrs. Perreault advised that the documentation has been updated to include a full fiscal year, as requested. Mrs. Pompei queried regarding the difference between the excess kilowatt credits and solar credits. Mrs. Perreault will reach out to the solar management companies for additional information. Mrs. Pompei queried regarding commitments to specific solar fields, as it appears that the Barre Town solar field does not produce as much power. Mrs. Perreault believes the contracts are for terms of 10 to 20 years, and that the contracts were entered into under Superintendent, Dr. Bacon. Mrs. Pompei would like to see additional information so that individual bills can be matched up to specific months of credits. Mrs. Spaulding questioned why Barre Town has no excess kilowatt or solar credits for December, January and February. Mrs. Pompei advised that she was informed that the issue may be a simple as one of the solar field switches was not 'flipped'. Mrs. Perreault advised that under the contracts, the schools should expect to receive approximately 10% in savings for power bills. It was clarified that the first page of the report contains data for the Central Office only; it is not a summary of all of the buildings. Mrs. Spaulding would like to see a summary report containing net savings data for all of the buildings. Mrs. Perreault will obtain additional information from her contacts at GMP and the different solar management companies. There are questions related to savings reflected on the BTMES Summary report. Mrs. Perreault will also review this data with the various representatives, as well as review how the report was generated. Due to the amount of research involved, these issues will be added to the December Agenda. Mrs. Pompei requested that one year's worth of bills be pulled, so that she can also perform some research to assist with her understanding of how savings are calculated. Solar Management will be added to the October and December Agendas

6. Old Business

6.1 SEA Bid Update/Next Steps

A document titled 'SEA Bid Tab' was distributed. Mrs. Perreault advised that in January, the estimated budget for new construction was 1.8 million dollars (approximately 2 million with contingencies). The other monies in the bond were for architectural services, engineering, testing, permitting etc....(for a total of 2.5 million). Now that bids have been received, the BUUSD is short approximately 1 million dollars. Mrs. Perreault and Mr. Evans had met with architect David Laurin, and, as requested, made changes to the design to accommodate additional students, and to include installation of a kitchen. Mrs. Perreault has spoken with the BUUSD's bond counsel, Paul Giuliani, and he has advised of 2 different options; 1. Seek voter approval to increase the amount of the bond, or 2. Have the Board issue a 1 year current expense note, structured similar to a line of credit. The Board has the authority to issue a one year expense note, and at its maturity, can renew the expense note in successive one year increments. The expense note can also be converted into a long-term refunding loan or bond. Mrs. Perreault advised regarding interest rates. In response to a query regarding revisiting the scope of the project, Mrs. Perreault advised that the Building Committee has not met since the bids were very recently received. Lengthy discussion was held regarding possible redesign changes, the cost of out-placing students, the current 'basic design' (concrete flooring, open ceilings), equity and safety of food service to students, use of a kitchen for life skills and possibly a culinary program (career skill related), the current design (intentionally designed to allow for future expansion), requests that the building serve additional students (from 30 to 45, then 60), long-term savings, the substantial impact that the COVID economy has had on the cost of construction materials, importance of keeping the project on schedule for opening in the 2021/2022, financing options, other areas where possible savings could be achieved, the impact of Act 177 on SPED funding, costs for outplacement, the student cost analysis (for in district and out of district placement), impact of delaying the project, review by the Building Committee (to identify possible savings), savings resulting from providing services in-house, cost of adding the kitchen (approximately \$100,000), monies already invested in the project, and clarification that the intent of the building is to serve students with emotional and behavioral issues. In response to a query relating to current costs, Mrs. Perreault advised that the BUUSD currently spends 3.5 to 4 million dollars per year for tuition and transportation for students placed out of district. The cost is usually over \$100,000 per student. Mrs. Perreault advised that under Act 177, receiving a per student allotment, it will be difficult to fund all of the necessary outplacements. Additional information (including possible alternatives) will be obtained and this issue will be discussed by the Board.

6.2 COVID-19 Update – Funding

A copy of a letter to Independent School Directors, from Lisa Perreault (dated 08/07/20) was distributed. Mrs. Perreault advised regarding various funding sources related to COVID. The BUUSD was recently advised regarding monies available through FEMA, and was asked to submit a survey relating to COVID expenses (incurred 03/17/2020 – 06/30/2020). The survey has been submitted. An application for public assistance has also been submitted. Additional information will be sent to Mrs. Perreault advising on how to request the 75% reimbursement. There are a limited amount of items that are covered (thermometers, Plexiglas barriers, additional cleaning and disinfecting supplies, PPE, face masks, temporary nurses, and software to assist parents/students prescreen, and some wrap around meal costs (items necessary to assist with meal delivery). The Corona Relief Funds application was submitted 08/31/20. The BUUSD had just over \$524,000 in expenses. The expenses were those that were currently incurred as well as some estimated expenses. That grant runs until 12/31/2020. The BUUSD has not yet submitted the Elementary and Secondary School Relief Fund

Grant. Mrs. Perreault is continuing to gather information for this grant which is meant to off-set education spending. Mrs. Perreault has previously advised regarding grant monies that are to be sent to independent schools. The BUUSD was advised that the deadline for submission to the CRF grant was 09/02/2020. The CRF grant application can be revised as more information becomes available/known. Mrs. Spaulding expressed frustration that the BUUSD is struggling to receive guidance from the AOE, and believes strongly that this information needs to be conveyed to legislators at the Legislative Breakfast.

6.3 FY22 Budget Development

A document titled 'BUUSD FY22 Budget Development Schedule' (dated 09/01/2020) was distributed. Mrs. Perreault advised that not much has changed on the schedule. Mrs. Perreault stressed that administrators want to receive budget parameters from the Board. Mrs. Perreault advised that meetings with administrators and directors are scheduled throughout the month of September. Mrs. Spaulding will ask the Board for input at the September 10th meeting. Mrs. Spaulding requested input at the last Board meeting, but did not receive any feedback. Mrs. Perreault provided examples of different types of parameters that could be provided by the Board to provide guidance to administrators. It was noted that per pupil spending in the BUUSD is \$15,041. The state average estimated per pupil spending amount is \$17,133. Mrs. Perreault advised that if \$2,000,000 were added to the budget, per pupil spending would increase to \$15,880 (presuming revenues are level). Budget Development will be added to the 09/10/20 Agenda. Mrs. Spaulding will e-mail Board Members in advance so they have time to prepare.

6.4 FY21 Budget

Three documents were distributed:

Unaudited FY20 BUUSD Fund Balances – September 1, 2020

BUUSD Expense Report (dated 08/28/20)

BUUSD Central Vermont Career Center FY21 Budget (dated 08/28/20)

The cost for the Virtual Academy is \$3,600 per teacher. With 11 teachers, the cost is estimated to be \$40K – \$45K. Mrs. Perreault advised that Virtual Academy expenses (teacher salary and benefits) will be reimbursed under ESSER funding, but the State will hold back that amount from the Education Spending allocation (essentially it will net to 0). Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding the loss of programs due to COVID, e.g. Work Based Learning....Mrs. Perreault believes there will be some savings in different areas, noting that budgeted supply lines are being spent very cautiously. It is early in the academic/fiscal year, and staff have been asked to watch spending very carefully. Mr. Wells advised that administrators and teachers are working on alternative ways to provide certain classes (e.g. band, chorus), and that it is hoped that under phase 3 opening, those programs can be reinstated in full status. Mr. Wells will inquire regarding professional development and lesson plans. It was noted that during the current re-opening phase, Work Based Learning students will not be placed out in the community. The staffing impact will need to be reviewed. It may be possible to reassign staff. In response to a query, Mrs. Perreault advised that she does not have specifics relating to changes in transportation costs (due to COVID). Mr. Wells advised that research can be performed and information provided at the next meeting. It was noted that buses will also be used for food deliveries. Mr. Wells will provide bus rider counts and student enrollment data at the 09/10/2020 Board meeting. Mrs. Spaulding would like to see data broken out by school, including a breakdown (by school) of students who chose the Virtual Academy. Ms. Chamberlin advised that she currently has no concerns relating to CVCC. Ms. Chamberlin advised that CVCC will run from 8:22 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., with virtual learning on Wednesdays 8:22 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Ms. Chamberlin noted that CVCC tried to keep its schedule in line with sending schools' schedules. Ms. Chamberlin has been encumbering funds in the supplies line item, so as to be prepared in the event that CVCC needs to revert to remote learning.

7. Other Business

None.

8. Items for Future Agendas

Mrs. Pompei would like a future agenda to include clarification/specifics regarding SPED charges and reimbursement, including the different rates charged by contracted programs (e.g. B.I.'s from WCMH vs. B.I.'s from Green Mountain Behavioral Consultants), SPED charges and reimbursement, and contracted programs (billed vs. paid). Mrs. Perreault advised that she could share the Special Education Expenditure Report, which is submitted to the State 3 times per year. Mrs. Perreault advised that the report shows expenses and all revenue sources (IDEA, SPED Block Grant, SPED Block Match, EEE, Extraordinary Expenses, and State Placed Students). The calculation is all expenses, less all revenue sources equals net spending. Net spending is then reimbursed at approximately 56%. In response to a query regarding purchase of a computer at a rate that seemed higher than usual, Mrs. Perreault advised that the computer order being referred to was e-rate and was reimbursed at 100%. It was noted that revenues are included in the projection reports, in the section that identifies revenues. Information provided in this section of the report includes; solar management rebates, e-rate etc.... Mrs. Perreault generally doesn't run a projection report until November or December, but can run something for October.

October:

- Alignment of Purchasing
- Coordinated Supply Purchases/Procedures (non-custodial)

- Solar Management for FY2020 (Mrs. Pompei's research)
- SEA Bid Update / Next Steps
- COVID-19 Funding Update
- FY22 Budget Development
- FY21 Budget
- Understanding SPED Charges/Revenue (under New Business)

November:

- Custodial Supply Purchasing – FMDA Preferred List
- Efficiency Studies - Staff Appreciation

December:

- Solar Management (Mrs. Perreault's research)

9. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 6, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

10. Adjournment

The Committee agreed by consensus to adjourn at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin