

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING**

Via Video Conference – Google Meet
September 24, 2020 - 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Paul Malone (BT) - Chair
Victoria Pompei (BT) – Clerk
Gina Akley (BT)
Tim Boltin (BC)
Emel Cambel (BC)
Giuliano Cecchinelli (BC)
Alice Farrell (BT)
Guy Isabelle (At-Large)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Sonya Spaulding (BC) – Vice-Chair

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

David Wells, Superintendent
Stacy Anderson, Director of Special Services
Penny Chamberlin, Director Central Vermont Career Center
Hayden Coon, BCEMS Principal
Chris Hennessey, BCEMS Principal
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Jennifer Nye, BTMES Principal
Erica Pearson, BTMES Principal
Brenda Waterhouse, SHS Principal

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Mel Battah	Jodi Bushway	Tara Day	Michael Douglas
Betsy Francis	Allyson Healey	Amber Larrabee	Ben Matthews	Molly McFaun
Nathan Philips	Tim Sanborn	Steven Simpson	Tara Simpson	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, September 24, 2020, Regular meeting to order at 5:30 p.m., which was held via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 5.2 A25 - Delegation of Authority During State of Emergency Due to COVID-19 Pandemic Policy
Add 5.3 C29 District Equity Policy
Add 5.4 D22 Modes of Instruction During State of Emergency Due to COVID-19 Pandemic
Take Agenda Item 7.2 out of order

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

3. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

3.1 Public Comment

Ms. McFaun queried regarding an update on the status of possible openings in the virtual academy. Mr. Wells advised that the deadline for ‘add/drops’ is today, and that the director at VTVLC has requested that Mr. Wells hold off on releasing any announcement relating to open spaces. Mr. Wells advised that the BUUSD has 11 teachers working in the VTVLC program, and that for each teacher, the BUUSD was supposed to allot 20 students. The BUUSD currently has 25 students allotted per teacher. Mr. Wells noted that there has been an uptick in the number of students exiting the program, so he does expect to hear of openings. Mr. Wells also noted that VTVLC is the only cooperative group that the BUUSD can use for virtual learning. Ms. McFaun queried regarding whether or not parents can use the VTVLC curriculum. Mr. Wells advised that he is not sure if this is allowed, and if it is allowed, what the associated costs would be. Mr. Wells will research this matter and report back. Mrs. Pompei queried regarding the status of the Board’s directive that the Superintendent and Administrators find accommodations for the 20 students currently on the wait list.

Mr. Wells advised that some of the 20 are home-schooling, some are utilizing the hybrid model, and some are still waiting to hear back regarding the wait list.

3.2 Student Voice

There were no students in attendance. Mr. Isabelle queried regarding students' knowledge of this agenda item and regarding what has been done to notify students that this standing agenda item exists.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Approval of Minutes – September 10, 2020 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to approve as amended, the Minutes of the September 10, 2020 Regular Meeting.

5. Reports to the Board

5.1 Committee Reports

5.1.1 Communications Committee

The next meeting is Thursday, October 1, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

5.1.2 Finance Committee

The next meeting is Tuesday, October 6, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

5.1.3 Facilities & Transportation Committee

Minutes from the September 14, 2020 meeting were distributed. Mr. Cecchinelli provided an overview of the meeting and reported new information regarding the BTMES Storm Water Run-off Containment project. Friends of the Winooski have advised that the State recently approved permits for 3 acre sites, and that additional information will be released in the near future.

The next meeting is Monday, October 12, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

5.1.4 Policy Committee

Minutes from the September 21, 2020 meeting were distributed. The Committee reviewed five VSBA policies, three of which will be presented to the Board this evening.

The next meeting is Monday, October 19, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

5.1.5 Curriculum Committee

The Committee met on September 22, 2020. Mrs. Farrell provided an overview of the meeting, and advised that information relating to the search for an Assistant Superintendent of Instruction will be provided later in the meeting.

The next meeting is Tuesday, October 27, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

5.1.6 Negotiations Committee

Mr. Wells advised that a mediation session is scheduled for Wednesday, September 30, 2020. To prepare for the mediation session, Mr. Wells will hold a meeting with legal counsel, the Director of Finance and the Director of HR.

The next committee meeting date is to be determined.

5.1.7 Regional Advisory Board

The next meeting is Monday, October 5, 2020 from 4:00 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. The meeting will be held remotely utilizing Google Meet. Phase II of the re-envisioning initiative will be discussed.

5.2 Policy A25 - Delegation of Authority During State of Emergency Due to COVID-19 Pandemic Policy

The VSBA version of the policy was distributed. This is a recommended policy.

Mr. Isabelle moved to approve the policy. Mrs. Pompei seconded the motion. Mrs. Pompei advised that she does not like how the policy is being presented, as it is not in the BUUSD standard format. Mrs. Pompei advised that she believes the high number of attendees at the meetings signifies dissatisfaction with school re-opening and she is reluctant to turn over full power to the Superintendent. Mr. Cecchinelli advised that he would have preferred the proper format be presented, but noted that there were time constraints, as the Policy Committee only recently met, and it was presented in VSBA format at that meeting. Mr. Isabelle advised that he also has concerns relating to the policy's content. **Mr. Isabelle withdrew the motion.** It was noted that this policy terminates automatically when the State of Emergency is lifted. Mrs. Pompei advised that she understands that the policy will terminate, but she believes there has been a lack of communication with the Board and members of the public, and she prefers that the Board maintain more control.

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously voted to table discussion until the 10/08/2020 Board meeting, and agreed that the policy shall be presented to the Board in the BUUSD standard format for policies.

5.3 Policy C29 - District Equity Policy

The VSBA version of the policy was distributed. This is a recommended policy. Brief discussion was held, and it was agreed that additional information is required, including information pertaining to how this policy relates to or replaces any existing policies. Mrs. Farrell suggested that the equity audit be performed prior to approving the policy, and that discussion of this policy be incorporated into the equity audit. It was noted that the equity audit will be a lengthy, involved and encompassing activity. It was noted that the policy is not a required policy, and there is no rush to approve it. The policy should be presented in the standard policy format with 'blanks' filled in.

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Board unanimously voted to table discussion until the 10/08/2020 Board meeting, and agreed that the policy shall be presented to the Board in the BUUSD standard format for policies.

5.4 Policy D22 – Modes of Instruction During State of Emergency Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

The VSBA version of the policy was distributed. This is a recommended policy.

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to table discussion until the 10/08/2020 Board meeting, and agreed that the policy shall be presented to the Board in the BUUSD standard format for policies.

6. Current Business

6.1 New Hires

The resumes and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Forms for Hayden Anderson (BTMES 8th grade social studies – for a term of one year), Colleen Cruise (BTMES 7th grade science teacher – for a term of one year), and Alison Palmer (BTMES Literacy Interventionist – for a term of one year) were distributed. Mr. Wells advised that due to lack of housing in the area, Colleen Cruise has withdrawn her acceptance of the position. Mr. Wells provided an overview of the candidates and noted that Mr. Anderson is presented to fill the position previously accepted by Mickey Strachota. Mr. Strachota resigned from the position. Mr. Wells advised that the Board does not need to approve resignations. It was noted that though the Board does not need to approve resignations, they have directed that all letters of resignation be presented to the Board.

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Hayden Anderson for a term of one year.

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Alison Palmer, for a term of one year.

6.2 Assistant Superintendent Search Process and Timeline

A document titled '2020 Assistant Superintendent Search Process and Timeline' was distributed. The Board advised that documents regarding this position should be labeled as the "Assistant Superintendent of Instruction" (as voted), rather than as "Assistant Superintendent." Mr. Wells provided an overview of the documentation currently on the BUUSD web site, which includes; Search Committee member names, target dates, and minutes from Search Committee meetings. Fifteen candidates submitted applications. Four candidates will be scheduled for interviews. Mr. Wells will interview the finalists, and two or three viable candidates will be presented to the Board on 10/08/2020. Mrs. Pompei reiterated that the Board would like to be presented with at least 2 candidates.

7. Old Business

7.1 FY22 Budget Development Update

Mrs. Pompei advised that the Finance Committee has nothing new to report at this time. Mr. Wells advised that Mrs. Perreault has been meeting with directors and administrators to perform the initial work on budget planning, using a framework of an Expense Budget increase of 5% or less.

7.2 School Re-opening Update

A copy of a letter from Winnie McCormick (dated 08/31/2020) was distributed.

A copy of the BTMES Newsletter for September 2020 was distributed.

Copies of the SHS Newsletters for 09/09/2020, and 09/14/2020 were distributed.

A document titled 'Considerations for Increasing In-Person Learning at BUUSD' was distributed.

A document titled 'A strong and Healthy Start FAQ: Transitioning from Step II to Step III' was distributed

Mr. Wells advised that the State has announced that schools can move to Phase III, but cautioned that moving to this phase does not mean that all students will be in school five days a week. Mr. Wells displayed the 'Considerations' document and provided an overview of the considerations, specifically, considerations for the BUUSD. Because of the student population, the BUUSD does not currently have the logistical capacity to accommodate student drop-off, pick-up, and transportation (for all students/every day) under the State's guidelines. The BUUSD does want to move toward more in-person learning, but will need to have a safe, well thought out plan in order to proceed in that direction. Mr. Wells noted that there are still some teacher vacancies, and that more para-educators and BIs are also needed. The BUUSD is short on Special Education para-educators. The BUUSD must also consider classroom structures

that continue to maintain social distancing guidelines. Mr. Wells advised regarding next steps, including work of the Re-Opening Committee, and soliciting input from staff and families. Mr. Wells advised of the make-up of the Committee, which includes approximately 23 individuals, including representatives from food service and transportation providers. Mrs. Pompei requested that Mr. Wells e-mail Mrs. Poulin a list of the individuals on the Re-Opening Committee (for inclusion in the minutes). Mrs. Pompei queried regarding possible changes to distancing guidelines and was advised that distance limitations remain in place. Mrs. Pompei conveyed her concern and disappointment that work to plan for Phase III has not started yet (as announced at the 08/10/20 Board meeting). Mr. Wells advised that administrators and teachers have been working an enormous amount of time to re-open schools successfully. Moving schools to more in-person learning is an enormous undertaking. Mr. Wells read a portion of the guidance from the Strong and Healthy Start Guidance from the State. Mr. Boltin queried regarding how many phases exist in the State's plan. Mr. Wells advised that he believes there are 3 phases, and the fourth is to return to pre-COVID learning structures. Mr. Wells advised that some smaller schools have been able to return to all in-person learning. Some schools are staying in virtual or hybrid models for older students and, per guidance, working on moving younger students (those younger than 10) to more in-person learning. Mrs. Akley expressed frustration that information is not more streamlined. Mrs. Akley conveyed some notes and expectations that she has documented. If the next step is not to have all students in school full time, could the district create an advance plan in anticipation of all in-person learning. Mrs. Akley would also like to see the plans that are in place in the event that all students must return to all remote instruction. Mrs. Akley would like the Board to receive information in advance of meetings/discussions. Having additional information will assist Mrs. Akley with responding to concerns that community members share with her. Mr. Wells will provide the requested information prior to the next meeting. Mr. Sanborn (6th grade Science instructor) advised that he appreciates the pace that the BUUSD is operating at, advising that teachers are still in the process of getting to know their students and learning routines (each group of students has only been in-person with staff 6 times). Mr. Sanborn appreciates moving forward with teacher in-put, as the in-person learning has been a bit different than what teachers expected. Mr. Sanborn did not expect that the schools would be moving to Phase III this soon, and it has come as a bit of a shock to some staff, thus Mr. Sanborn appreciates moving to Phase III using a thoughtful process. Mr. Sanborn appreciates that feedback is being received from different facets. Mr. Malone advised that input he has received includes pressure to move students back to more in-person learning. Megan Spaulding advised of her understanding that the schools educate students 5 days a week, but queried why students are having shorter days on their in-person days. Mrs. Spaulding would like to see the in-person days be full days. Mr. Wells advised that the shortened day allows teachers to provide feedback to the remote learning students. Mrs. Spaulding is frustrated that students are learning at too slow of a pace and is concerned regarding the long-term impact to students, who may enter next year with a significant deficit. Mrs. Spaulding is most concerned for the most vulnerable students, those in the lower grades, and those in unstable learning environments outside of the schools. Mr. Wells agrees with Mrs. Spaulding's concerns, and advised that moving forward, priority will be given to the younger students (grades k – 5). Mrs. Nye thanked community members for providing feedback and providing on-going support. Mrs. Nye reiterated that the schools very much want the students back to full time in-person learning. Tara Day addressed the Board regarding her concern that pre-school students are not being bused, the drop-off process takes too long, and there is no one there to meet her child. Mrs. Day believes that there is room for pre-school students on some of the buses. Mr. Wells advised that the reasoning behind not busing preschoolers relates to the capacity for screening and checking students prior to boarding (while maintaining physical distancing). The re-opening team believed that preschoolers would not receive the attention they need on the bus, as staff work to maintain social distancing. Mr. Wells will follow up with Mrs. Day. Mrs. Day also conveyed her concern regarding concerns specific to her children, and the lack of Chromebooks for younger students. Mr. Wells advised that Mrs. Anderson will contact Mrs. Day regarding child-specific concerns. Mr. Coon advised that small groups are working well (drop-off/pick-up), and that improvements to the process continue to be made. Mr. Coon advised that once students are on the buses, teaching staff are back in the classroom working with remote learners. Mr. Coon wants a safe thought out process for moving to more in-person learning. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that the high school works differently than the middle and elementary schools. High school curriculum differs and the school needs to prevent students from mixing. At the high school, students attend 2 classes per day, 2 days per week. In an effort to keep students engaged, the groupings do not meet two consecutive days. One group meets on Monday and Thursday, the other group meets on Tuesday and Friday. All students learn remotely on Wednesdays. Ms. Chamberlin provided an overview of the CVCC schedule, where students attend in person 4 days a week and have one virtual day. Megan Spaulding queried regarding what services are provided (in the afternoon) to hybrid students. It has been Mrs. Spaulding's experience that the Wednesday virtual learning day consists of a 10 minute check in with the teacher, no academics are provided, and no assignments or homework are given. Mrs. Spaulding would like to see something put in place academically, e.g. videos. Additionally, Mrs. Spaulding advised that parents are struggling to assist their students (e.g. math is being taught differently under Common Core), and that both parents and students need instruction from teachers. Mrs. Spaulding believes the schools need to do more to provide a strong education. Mrs. Nye advised that most students have only been in the buildings 6 times and that staff are still working on assessments to identify 'where kids are'. Mr. Isabelle appreciates that parents are providing feedback via meetings and e-mails. The Board understands the frustrations that parents are experiencing, and he encourages parents to continue providing feedback. Mr. Wells acknowledges that distance learning is very difficult for all involved, especially for students in younger grades, and reiterated that the District would like to move back to in-person learning as soon as safely possible. Amber Larrabee queried regarding specific reasons why the district hasn't moved forward with all in-person learning. In response to the query, it was noted that the BUUSD has a very large student population, with each school having upwards of 800 students. The volume of students makes it difficult to adhere to social distancing guidelines, and has many logistical factors in admitting a high population of students into the buildings each day (screening processes). Ms. Larrabee queried regarding utilizing additional buildings, or additional entry points for each building. Mr. Wells reiterated difficulties maintaining social distancing, the screening process, and a shortage of teaching staff. Ms. Larrabee suggested opening a discussion board, so that more community members can contribute feedback and additional ideas. Mr. Wells advised that the BUUSD is looking to hear more parent and community member feedback.

Re-Opening Committee Member List from the latest meeting invitation:

David Wells – Facilitator

Luke Aither

Emmanuel Ajanma

Josh Allen

Stacy Anderson

Erin Carter

Penny Chamberlin

Hayden Coon

Jason Derner

Jamie Evans

Allyson Healey

Chris Hennessey

Chelsey Hoyt

Scott Griggs

Nicole Ladd

Jennifer Lyon

Carol Marold

Lauren May

Erica Pearson

Lisa Perreault

Jennifer Nye

Jan Trepanier

Rachael Van Vliet

Brenda Waterhouse

Stacy Emerson (transportation representative)

Monica Tolman (food service representative)

7.3 Vision, Mission, & Strategic Goals

Mrs. Farrell advised that Winton Goodrich will be speaking with the Communications Committee at their next meeting. Planning will then move forward regarding forming the District Team.

8. Other Business/Round Table

Mrs. Poulin addressed the Board and advised regarding a new ‘norm’ where meeting information is not being submitted with Agenda packets, and that much additional work is involved posting information after meetings have occurred. Mrs. Poulin advised that timely posting of information is necessary to assure that members of the board, committees, and the public have adequate time to prepare for meetings. Packet Addendums should be limited to new urgent items or items that because of their nature (e.g. new hires), only become available shortly before meetings.

In response to a query regarding responses to e-mails from the public, Mr. Malone advised that he usually places phone calls to answer public inquiries. Mr. Malone advised that he received approximately 24 e-mails today. Mrs. Akley requested that Mr. Malone advise the Board, via e-mail, of the responses he has given.

Mrs. Farrell expressed concern that the BUUSD has suffered a loss of teacher candidates due to the housing shortage, and queried regarding ways the Board can assist with this problem.

Mrs. Pompei queried regarding posting minutes and/or Google videos of the School Re-opening Committee Meetings.

Mrs. Pompei believes having this information readily available would be good for the public.

Mr. Malone reported an intensity of communication from the public regarding their preference that in-person learning be increased as soon as possible. Mr. Malone queried regarding the possibility of a staggered process that increases in-person learning for younger students.

9. Future Agenda Items

The next meeting is Thursday, October 8, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

- Assistant Superintendent of Instruction Candidates
- First Reading Delegation of Authority During State of Emergency Due to COVID-19 Pandemic Policy (A25)
- First Reading District Equity Policy (C29)
- First Reading Modes of Instruction During State of Emergency Due to COVID-19 Pandemic (D22)
- School Re-opening Update

- Vision, Mission & Strategic Goals
- Update on Student Counts for Homeschooling/Virtual Academy/Hybrid Learning
- Update on Whether VTVLC Students are Included in Pupil Counts
- Feedback on How IEP Students are Doing (Stacy Anderson)
- Breakage Report
- SEA Project Update
- FY22 Budget Development Update
- Student Presentations (future meeting)

10. Executive Session as Needed

There were no items proposed for discussion in Executive Session.

11. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin