

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

Via Video Conference
September 21, 2020 – 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Giuliano Cecchinelli, Chair - (BC)
J. Guy Isabelle, Vice-Chair - (At-Large)
Andrew McMichael (BC Community Member)
Jon Valsangiacomo – (BT Community Member)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Emel Cambel (BC)

ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF PRESENT:

David Wells, Superintendent
Scott Griggs, CVCC Assistant Director
Pierre Laflamme, BCEMS Assistant Principal

GUESTS:

Linda Radzvilla

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Cecchinelli, called the Monday, September 21, 2020, meeting to order at 5:30 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 Approval of Minutes – May 18, 2020 Policy Committee Meeting

The Committee agreed by consensus to approve the Minutes of the May 18, 2020 Policy Committee Meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 Review of BSU Policy Manual Index

A copy of the BUUSD Policy Manual Index (dated 06/02/20) was distributed.

Mr. Wells advised that there were no updates to the Index. It was noted that the highlighted policies advise of pending minor revisions and the Committee may need to add these policies to a ‘to do’ list. Mr. Isabelle also suggested that the Committee look to Mr. Wells and staff for recommendations regarding possible policy issues that they encounter on a day to day basis. Mr. Wells advised that he is not aware of any policy concerns being raised since the start of school. Mr. Wells suggested that the Committee review some COVID related VSBA policies that were recently published.

5.2 Review VSBA Model Policy – Identify Those with Substantive Changes

A copy of the VSBA Model Policies list was distributed. Mr. Wells advised that he wants to present 5 VSBA policies, and he will display each policy as it is presented for discussion.

A25 – Delegation of Authority During State of Emergency Due to COVID-19 Pandemic (Recommended Policy)

Mr. Wells advised that much of what is mentioned in the policy, are things that the District has done, and that the Board has been advised of. This policy gives superintendents more authority under emergency situations. Brief discussion was held which included agreement that it may be beneficial to adopt a written policy that could be referred to, and that would serve to strengthen decisions made by the superintendent. Section F of the policy does advise that districts must follow labor master agreements. It was noted that this policy is only in effect for the duration of the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

The Committee agreed by consensus that Policy A25 be presented to the Board for approval.

B8 – Electronic Communications Between Employees and Students (Required Policy)

Mr. Wells advised that this policy sends a strong message that the District takes this matter seriously and will take action if the policy is violated. This policy stresses the importance of the focus to protect students. It was suggested that administrators review the policy

and provide feedback. Prior discussions relating to an electronic communications policy focused on a larger picture, including communications not intended to be between employees and students, but general postings through social media. A policy relating to those types of communications will most likely need to be discussed, but prior discussions involved concern over freedom of speech rights. In previous discussions, Mr. Pandolfo advised that the BUUSD was waiting for the VSBA to develop a policy relating to this matter, and would then review the model policy to see if it addressed all of the areas of concern (policy with internal code of B40). It was noted that this policy is very targeted and is intended to apply to communications strictly between employees and students. It is believed that these two types of communication are very different from each other. Mr. Wells advised that another district had a 'code of conduct' policy relating to social media postings, but it no longer appears in their policy listing. It may have been rescinded due to freedom of speech concerns. Mr. Valsangiacomo reiterated that this policy is very clear and targeted on the specific areas of communication. Mr. LaFlamme raised concern regarding whether or not this policy might be problematic for guidance counselors, school social workers, and behavioral interventionists (those who are charged with building relationships with families). **The Committee agreed by consensus to table discussion until administrators have had time to review the policy and provide feedback.** This policy will be added to the October agenda.

C12 - Prevention of Sexual Harassment As Prohibited by Title IX (Required Policy)

See agenda item 5.3.1.

C29 – District Equity Policy (Recommended Policy)

Mr. Wells recommends that this policy be presented to the Board for approval. The policy echoes conversations within the district and around the state (relating to equity/equity issues). Having this policy in place might assist when writing grants for equity work. This policy will most likely involve substantial discussion with the Board. It was noted that the BUUSD has money in the Federal Grant (\$10,000 or \$15,000) to consult with an equity coordinator.

The Committee agreed by consensus that Policy C29 be presented to the Board for approval.

D22 – Modes of Instruction During State of Emergency Due to COVID-19 Pandemic (Recommended Policy)

Mr. Wells strongly recommends that this policy be adopted by the Board. In response to a query, it was noted that the Board did not vote to approve a re-opening plan. Mr. Wells advised that earlier guidance from the AOE required Board approval of re-opening plans, but the AOE has since reversed itself, and board approval of instructional models is no longer necessary. Mr. Wells advised that he discussed this matter with the Board Chair and Vice-Chair. Mr. Cecchinelli believes it would be beneficial for the Board to approve the re-opening plan and that by its approval; the Board is showing accountability and support. It was noted that this policy is only in effect for the duration of the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

The Committee agreed by consensus that Policy D22 be presented to the Board for approval.

5.3 Policies to Review

5.3.1 C12 Prevention of Sexual Harassment As Prohibited by Title IX

A copy of the policy was distributed. This is a VSBA 'Required' policy. The policy is very lengthy and contains much information relating to definitions and other 'boiler plate' types of information. It was noted that the policy seems to contain a lot of procedural information. Mr. Isabelle queried regarding how much of the policy is 'policy' and how much of it is 'law'. It was noted that the policy requires the District to designate and authorize a Title IX Coordinator, but the policy does not have a section where that individual is named. Existing policy C10 (Prevention of Harassment, Hazing & Bulling) has a corresponding Procedures policy (C10-P). The BUUSD appoints designated reporting individuals annually. Mr. Griggs believes policies C10 and C12 relate to each other. Mr. Valsangiacomo advised that this policy appears to be consistent with policies he sees instituted at colleges. The policy also mandates that the District 'shall ensure training' (of specified individuals/groups of employees) though Mr. Valsangiacomo does not know what types of training are currently in place for the district's schools. Mr. Wells will contact VSBA to obtain additional information regarding the creation of this policy. **This policy will be placed on the October agenda.**

6. Old Business

None.

7. Other Business

None.

8. Future Agenda Items

It was noted that copies of policies slated for discussion in meetings should be distributed as part of the Agenda packet.

- B8 - Electronic Communications Between Employees and Students (Required Policy)
- C12 - Prevention of Sexual Harassment As Prohibited by Title IX
- Policies highlighted on the BUUSD Index (A22, B5, B7, B21, B40, C8, D3, D4, D21, D32, and E1)

Committee Members were advised to notify Mr. Cecchinelli or Mr. Wells regarding any additional items for discussion.

9. Next Meeting Date

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

10. Adjournment

The Committee agreed by consensus to adjourn at 6:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin