

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

Via Video Conference – Google Meet
October 15, 2020 - 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alice Farrell, Chair - (BT)
Sonya Spaulding, Vice-Chair - (BC)
Guy Isabelle – (At-Large)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

David Wells, Superintendent
Josh Allen, Communications Specialist

GUESTS PRESENT:

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Farrell, called the Thursday, October 15, 2020 BUUSD Communications Committee meeting to order at 5:32 p.m., which was held via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 5.2 COVID-19 Notification of First Positive Case

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Meeting Minutes for September 3, 2020 BUUSD Communications Committee Meeting

The Committee agreed by consensus to approve the Minutes of the September 3, 2020 BUUSD Communications Committee meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 Social Media/Web Analytics

A document titled 'BUUSD Facebook Page Growth in the Past Year' was distributed.

Mr. Allen advised that the position of Communications Specialist started one year ago today. At that time, a survey indicated that social media was not one of the main sources where parents obtained information. Since that time, the BUUSD has tremendously increased the use of its social media platform. Mr. Allen provided an overview of the statistical document, advising that the report documents a large growth in use of social media. The district page had the highest increase in Facebook followers; growing from 200 to 678. BCEMS increased from 1,100 to 1,340. The other main social media platform used in the BUUSD is Instagram. Mr. Allen advised that last year at this time, only SHS had an Instagram account. The Instagram follower counts are currently as follows; BC 250, BT 500, and SHS 900. Mr. Allen advised that the more active we become on social media, the more useful those platforms become in reaching parents/students/community members. Though some postings stay on Instagram indefinitely, "Instagram Stories" last 24 hours. Instagram Stories are used to convey information such as scheduled assemblies. Web site traffic has also increased, including a large increase since COVID hit.

Mr. Isabelle queried regarding individuals using social media to post negative comments. Mr. Allen advised that he does monitor the schools' social media accounts, and he does receive notifications when comments are posted. Mr. Allen has no control over information posted to sites not owned by the BUUSD. There is a BUUSD School Parents Group page, not owned by the BUUSD. Mr. Allen reviews that page occasionally and finds it's beneficial to learn of parents' opinions regarding matters involving the BUUSD. Postings to this page are very limited, usually only one post per week.

Mr. Allen may bring website analytics to the next Committee meeting.

5.2 COVID-19 Notification of First Positive Case

Mr. Wells advised regarding a notification that went out to parents. Mr. Wells stressed the need to maintain privacy, noting that notifications will not advise regarding who tested positive (e.g. student, parent, teacher). As winter approaches, more cases may arise. Notification of positive cases may not always go out. Notification is based on input from the Vermont Department of Health. The Department of Health determines possible exposures, factors in precautions taken, and when a positive individual was last in the building. In the case that arose today, the BUUSD contacted the Department of Health, and they advised that with today's case, they do not believe the individual was contagious when they were last in the building. Today's notice was sent out based on staff concerns, and in an abundance of caution. BCEMS will be closed for in-person learning on Friday (10/16/20). Deep cleaning will be performed at the school. All learning will be remote on Friday and classes will resume in-person on Monday 10/19/20. Mr. Wells lauded Heather Douglas (School Nurse), Mr. Coon, and Mr. Hennessey for doing everything right regarding precautionary measures and contact tracing. The school is ready to provide the Department of Health with contact information (if it is requested). Mr. Allen had previously prepared COVID related communications documents, and it was very easy to modify one of the documents for the given situation. Mr. Wells advised that the communication went out to all three school buildings, but it is not known if substitutes were informed. Mr. Allen will research on whether or not substitutes are receiving notifications. Mr. Isabelle commented that there has been an increase in the number of cases in the community, and that given this increase; parents who were pushing for more in-person learning may have a change of heart.

6. Old Business

6.1 Mission, Vision, Strategic Planning

Mrs. Farrell reported that the first recorded pod cast will be run next week. The pod cast will center on what is involved with Strategic Planning and why does the District believe it needs to be done at this time. Mrs. Farrell advised that pod casts will be used to promote recruitment of Design Team Members. Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding other types of recruitment that could be run in tandem with pod casts. It was agreed that pod cast links should be sent to community members that the Board has been cultivating for Design Team Membership. Mr. Allen will be posting the pod casts to all social media accounts and will also be posting them to the YouTube account. Mr. Isabelle noted that the Board meeting audience has been increasing and there may be additional community members who are interested in serving on the team.

6.2 Budget Promotion

A document titled 'BUUSD Budget Video Project' was distributed. Mr. Allen reported that he has been working with the CVCC Digital Media Arts II class regarding creation of budget promotion videos. The distributed document was created by the class. Last year's budget promotion included creation of one rather lengthy video of an interview with the Superintendent. This year the plan is to create (with the Digital Media Arts II class) 3 shorter videos, each approximately 2 minutes in length. Each video will encompass a different topic; 1. Showcase technology (pre-k – 12 and CVCC), 2. College & Career Preparation (SHS & CVCC), and 3. COVID-19 adaptations. The main goal is to promote schools and give tax payers a visual insight of the BUUSD. Videos will have an underlying budget theme. The videos will be all student made (filming and editing). Work will be performed under the guidance of Cal Hopwood (Digital Media Arts II instructor) and Josh Allen. There are some restrictions due to COVID, but Mr. Allen will work with administrators at the middle and elementary schools regarding access to those buildings. Filming will begin in mid to late November, with editing to be performed in December. It is anticipated that the videos will be finalized by mid-January so that promotion can begin early (to reach early voters). Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding contingency plans in the event that the schools revert to a total shut down. Mr. Allen has some ideas (use of web cams etc.), but has not documented them yet. Mr. Wells is pleased that students are creating the videos. Additionally, Mr. Wells cautioned that school districts need to be careful not to 'cross the fine line' between promoting schools and trying to influence voters on how to vote. It was reiterated that the BUUSD can promote voting, but cannot promote "how to vote".

Mr. Allen advised that next Friday's Times Argus will include a full page back cover 'ad' promoting the BUUSD schools.

Other budget promotion should include some positive letters to the editor, and possibly newspaper articles that promote positive happenings in the schools.

Mr. Allen will also be publishing the Annual Report, which will be sent to all households (as was done last year).

Budget Promotion will be added to future agendas.

6.3 SHS Promotion to Out of District Students

Mr. Allen advised that next week's promotional ad in the Times Argus highlights the SHS community service graduation requirement and how community service has changed during COVID.

Mr. Allen has been working with Ry Hoffman on a four page school profile document (which he believes was started over the summer. Though this document is great when conveying information to colleges (regarding what SHS students are learning), it's probably not the best tool to use for recruiting out of district students. Mr. Allen and Mr. Hoffman are working on creating a separate document that can be used for promotion. There is currently no direct marketing material to be used for recruiting out of district

middle school students. Mr. Isabelle highlighted the need to promote that SHS now provides transportation for out of district students, and that SHS tuition is lower than the other districts. It should also be promoted that those who attend SHS have less travel time on buses, and have access to CVCC without additional travel.

Mr. Wells suggested that copies of promotional materials (including the Times Argus ads) be provided to real estate offices.

It was agreed that more promotion needs to be done. Mr. Allen noted that there hasn't been much action related to promotion (other than what he has been working on with Mr. Hoffman). When time permits, Mr. Allen would like to work more with Mr. Hoffman on promoting SHS.

6.4 Communications Department

Over the past month, Mrs. Perreault has been working with all departments regarding the FY22 budget. Mr. Allen has been discussing increasing the stipends for those who assist with the web sites (Michael Emmons and Dan Smith - who work in the IT department). The first draft of the FY22 budget includes stipend increases, relating to increased responsibility to assist the Communications Specialist. The BUUSD has a new e-mail marketing tool, and Mr. Emmons and Mr. Smith were recently assisting Mr. Allen with preparing for its implementation, including the conversion of data. Mr. Allen acknowledged that ideally, having additional personnel in his department would be beneficial, but he recognizes that current budgetary constraints preclude the addition of personnel.

7. Other Business

Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding the status of parent/student surveys, as discussed in the last Board meeting. Mr. Wells advised that work on the parent survey has started. Mr. Allen will send parent surveys via e-mail. Administrators are aware of some parents who do not have access to reliable internet access. It may be possible to call those individuals and obtain survey answers over the phone. The survey questions are mainly concentrated on gauging parents comfort level on increasing in-person learning. A few other questions relate to transportation needs with increased in-person learning. The survey is broken out by school, so that each schools' administrators will have a good sense of the needs for their individual school. Mrs. Spaulding is concerned regarding sending too many surveys, and would like this survey to contain questions relating to the overriding issue of complaints (at the last meeting), that being: complaints that academics are severely lacking. Mrs. Spaulding felt strongly that the majority of parental concerns were academic related and she wants the survey to contain questions relating to that issue, and improvements to remote learning. Mr. Allen will add a remote learning rating scale question as well as an additional open ended question regarding remote learning. Mr. Wells advised that for targeting purposes, the current survey is for students in grades K – 4. Once this information is collected, two additional surveys will go out targeting other grades (5 through 8 & 9 through 12).

Mr. Allen advised that the groundbreaking ceremony for the SEA building project occurred today. Unfortunately, the Times Argus photographer arrived late and missed the ceremony. The photographer requested that Mr. Allen forward photos and captions from the groundbreaking. It is hoped that there will be something in the paper in the near future.

8. Items to be Placed on Future Agendas

- Budget Promotion
- SHS Promotion to Out of District Schools
- Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning Update
- Logo/Branding

9. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, November 5, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

10. Adjournment

The Committee agreed by consensus to adjourn at 6:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin