

BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
Via Video Conference – Google Meet
October 19, 2020 – 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Giuliano Cecchinelli, Chair - (BC)
J. Guy Isabelle, Vice-Chair - (At-Large)
Jon Valsangiacomo – (BT Community Member) – departed meeting at 7:29 p.m.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Emel Cambel (BC)
Andrew McMichael (BC Community Member)

ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF PRESENT:

David Wells, Superintendent
Luke Aither, SHS Assistant Principal
Pierre Laflamme, BCEMS Assistant Principal

GUESTS:

Ted Mills

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Cecchinelli, called the Monday, October 19, 2020, meeting to order at 5:31 p.m., which was held via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 5.3 New Procedure for Opting Out of the Virtual Academy
Add 6.1 Field Trip Policy
Add 6.2 Policy Format and Procedure

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Approval of Minutes – September 21, 2020 Policy Committee Meeting

The Committee agreed by consensus to approve the Minutes of the September 21, 2020 Policy Committee Meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 Policies to Review

5.1.1 B8 - Electronic Communications Between Employees and Students

VSBA Required Policy. A copy of the policy was distributed. Mr. Wells advised that this policy does not address the issue of employees posting comments (e.g. political statements), but rather, relates to communication between employees and students. Mr. Aither advised that he globally agrees with the policy, but has concerns related to the details. Mr. Isabelle queried regarding how this policy may relate to the recent termination of a principal from another district.

Mr. Aither advised regarding some of his concerns;

Implementation section #1 – there are times when school social workers and counselors work with students on issues related to sexual, gender identity, or relationship matters (providing advice and counseling) – it was suggested that ‘under the scope of their duties’ be added to the policy (though Mr. Wells believes the majority of discussion of these matters should be in person),

Policy section “H” which pertains to time of day limitations for electronic communication (there could be emergencies that occur in the prohibited time, as well as teachers grading papers and providing feedback during the prohibited time). It was suggested that section H begin with the word “Direct”, and the possible addition of “I” to include the LMS (Learning Management System),

Policy section “D”, pertaining to profanities (sometimes students who are very frustrated use some ‘inappropriate’ language when contacting employees) – it was suggested that the word ‘profanities’ be removed and that the wording “obscene language” be replaced with the word “obscenities”,

Definitions section (#s 1 and 4) – It was suggested that #1 be amended to include the word “devices”, and that #4 be amended to include ‘persons contracted by the district’. Mr. Aither will perform research regarding definitions.

Implementation section #1 - It was suggested that #1 be amended by adding the wording “up to and including dismissal”.

Mr. Valsangiacomo advised that the BUUSD should be working to see that all policies use consistent language, and that definitions need to be expanded, e.g. define ‘profane’ etc. Mr. Aither is not sure exactly what has been defined. Mr. Aither will run this issue by BUUSD counsel, and may also review statute and/or policies.

Mr. Valsangiacomo also noted that the BUUSD needs to be careful regarding feedback given to students, as many times, grooming of students includes positive behavior and feedback.

Once the policy is adopted by the Board, Mr. Aither, Mr. LaFlamme, and a BTMES representative will draft procedures and will share their work with Mr. Wells.

Mr. Isabelle queried regarding the impact this policy has on current remote learning and the virtual learning academy, and what ‘policy’ is currently in place. Mr. Aither believes that currently, electronic communications is addressed by statute and the code of conduct.

Mr. Wells will provide Mrs. Gilbert with all agreed upon policy changes.

5.1.2 C29 - District Equity Policy

VSBA Recommended Policy. A copy of the policy was distributed. Brief discussion was held.

It was agreed that discussion of this policy is tabled until additional work is done on the Equity initiative (January).

5.2 Policy Index Review – Highlighted Policies (A22, B5, B7, B21, B40, C8, D3, D4, D21, D32, and E1)

A copy of the BUUSD Policy Manual Index (dated 06/02/20) was distributed. It was noted that the BUUSD is waiting for updates from the VSBA. Mr. Wells provided an overview advising that VSBA has revised three policies, which are on the agenda for tonight’s meeting; A22 (agenda item 5.2.1), C4 (agenda item 5.2.2), and C21 (agenda item 5.2.3). Mr. Aither advised that VSBA had 3 categories of updates; new, amended, and rescinded policies. New policies are; A25, B8, C12, C13, C29 and D22. Revised policies are; A22, C4, C21, and F22. Removed/rescinded policies are; D30, E31, and F31.

Mrs. Poulin advised that there are some ‘housekeeping’ issues that should be addressed. Each Policy Committee meeting packet should include an updated BUUSD Policy Index. It has not yet been determined who is going to be updating this internal document. Also, many packets also include an up-to-date version of the VSBA policy listing. Other housekeeping issues include designating someone to be responsible for an ongoing review of the VSBA policy index, and bringing those policies to the committee (each policy as a separate Agenda Item). It was noted that Pam Wark used to perform much of the policy work. When Mrs. Wark left the BUUSD, Mr. Pandolfo took over those responsibilities. It was noted that Mrs. Wark was not the Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, but rather held a different position in the District. It will be important to designate an individual to monitor VSBA policies and update the internal Policy Index Manual, and be responsible for seeing that all policies are posted on-line. Mrs. Gilbert’s involvement in policy was limited to removing the legal references (a one-time project). **Mr. Wells advised that he will assume the role for ongoing review of policies, with Mrs. Gilbert’s involvement limited to some conversions and simple editing tasks.** Mr. Wells will touch base with Mr. Aither and/or Mr. Cecchinelli in an effort to get up to speed on policy work. Mr. Aither will send an updated list to Mr. Wells.

5.2.1 A22 – Notice of Non Discrimination Policy

VSBA Revised – Recommended Policy. A copy of the policy was distributed. This policy was revised by VSBA. It was noted that the Barre Unified Union School Union, should read “Barre Unified Union School District”, and the District is identified in the policy as “07”, the BUUSD is “097”. It was agreed to take the District number out of the policy. Mr. Aither is concerned that most of the policies adopted in June of 2019 have an implementation section and he is concerned that the implementation section blurs with the procedural piece. Mr. Aither would like the Implementation section removed from all policies. It was noted that the model policy does not break out policy and implementation. Mr. Aither will provide a summary of policies that contain an implementation section, and identify if the implementation section is only in the policies adopted in June 2019. Mrs. Poulin queried regarding whether or not the Board had asked for an implementation section when adopting policies for the new consolidated district. It was noted that at least one VSBA policy, which hasn’t been adopted yet, contains an implementation section that may contain information that is more procedural in nature. BUUSD policies should be reviewed to assure they do not contain specific procedural instructions. Keeping procedures out of policies allows for changes to procedures without having to present the (already approved) policies to the Board for re-approval. For the next meeting, Mr. Aither will review policies and identify those which contain procedures. Policy A22 will be put on hold until Mr. Aither can perform additional investigation and will be added to the November agenda.

Mr. Aither advised that Policy B5 Prevention of Employee Harassment is not aligned with the VSBA model policy and does contain a procedure section. Mr. Aither suggested that procedures be removed from policy B5 and that a separate B5-P be created. B5-P being

procedures and would not require Board approval. Policy B5 is currently waiting for VSBA revision. It was noted that the BUUSD policy B5 still contains legal references. It is not known who at VSBA is working on policy.

Mr. Aither noted that policy B7 Tobacco Prohibition has sections for definitions and implementation. Mr. Aither believes that at some point there was some deliberate shifting/changing of format. Mr. Aither will review policies for inconsistencies and create a timeline for noted changes in formatting.

5.2.2 C4 – Limited English Proficiency Students

VSBA Revised – Required Policy. A copy of the currently adopted policy was distributed. A copy of the VSBA model policy was displayed. Minor revisions were made to the VSBA policy; a title change (to English Learners), ages are defined as 3 - 21 and the addition of ‘immigrant students’. The current policy will be revised to reflect the VSBA changes and ‘implementation’ will be removed. **It was agreed that policies should be in the BUUSD format for presentation to the Committee.** Mr. Aither would like the word ‘Implementation’ deleted. **When existing policies are being modified, copies presented to the Committee and Board should have deleted words ‘struck out’ and new wording underlined.** It was noted that changes to this policy do contain substantive changes and will need to be presented to the Board. The word ‘Implementation’ will be removed.

The Committee agreed that the revised policy will be presented to the Board for approval of a First Reading.

5.2.3 C21 – Search, Seizure, and Interrogation of Students by School Personnel

VSBA Revised – Recommended Policy. A copy of the policy was distributed. Mr. Aither advised that the VSBA update (08/30/2020) significantly shortens the policy. The VSBA policy is one page, as opposed to our current 4 page policy. Mr. Aither believes most of the current BUUSD policy could be written as procedures. Mr. Aither is not opposed to shortening our policy. In response to a query, Mr. Valsangiacomo advised that policies should be as detailed as possible if the BUUSD wants to avoid people circumventing the language. Policies that invoke more disciplinary actions should be very well defined and clear. Policies that don’t involve disciplinary issues can have more ‘gray’ areas. It was noted that the revised VSBA policy does not reference interrogation. The policy which relates to searches and seizures by non-school staff will reference interrogation. Mr. Aither advised that he is in the process of writing procedures to correspond with each policy. It was noted that there is no implementation section in this policy.

It was agreed that policy C21 (revised) will be presented to the Board for approval of a First Reading.

5.3 New Procedure for Opting Out of the Virtual Academy

A document titled ‘Request to Transfer from BVA to In-Person Instruction – DRAFT – 10/07/20’ was displayed. Mr. Wells advised that this draft document is included in the Board packet. Mr. Wells provided an overview of the procedural document which is based on the inter-district transfer procedure. Mr. Wells advised that given guidance in the State’s Strong and Healthy Start documentation, if too many students ask to leave the virtual academy (and return to hybrid learning), there will be too many students in the school to allow for adhering to social distancing guidelines. These procedures should assist with alleviating the issue of too many students returning to hybrid learning. It was noted that the BUUSD currently exceeds the ‘students per classroom’ limitations at VTVLC. The BUUSD has approximately 25 students per class. The limit set by VTVLC is 20 students per class. The number of students in VTVLC was 260, and is now 235 (there was an open add/drop time period which has since closed). There are currently fewer than 6 requests to transfer to hybrid learning.

6. Old Business

6.1 D30 Field Trip Policy

This is a ‘to be considered’ policy. Mr. Aither advised that VSBA rescinded this model policy. Mr. Aither proposes that the BUUSD also rescind this policy. It is believed that the requirement for Board approval of out of state field trips was deleted from the policy. It is not known if the entire policy was rescinded. Mr. Aither provided an overview of what is believed to be the policy in place, and that it is mainly procedures listed under implementation. This policy will be added to the next agenda.

6.2 Policy Format and Procedure

All policies should be presented to the Committee and Board in the BUUSD format. For policies that are being amended, verbiage that is slated for deletion is ‘struck out’ and new verbiage is underlined. Additional formatting information is contained under other agenda items.

7. Other Business

Mrs. Poulin reminded the Committee that any documents displayed on the screen should be forwarded to Mrs. Gilbert and Mr. Allen to be posted as an addendum. Mrs. Poulin reminded the Committee that all documents to be reviewed in meetings should be posted with the agenda whenever possible.

8. Future Agenda Items

- A22 Notice of Non Discrimination Policy (November)
- C12 Prevention of Sexual Harassment As Prohibited by Title IX (November)
- C13 Homeless Policy (November)

- D30 Field Trips (November)
- F22 Electronic Communications Use and Retention (Recommended Policy) (November)
- Policies Containing Procedures (November)
- C29 District Equity Policy (January 2021)

9. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is Monday, November 16, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

10. Adjournment

The Committee agreed by consensus to adjourn at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin