

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING**

Via Video Conference – Google Meet
November 12, 2020 - 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Paul Malone (BT) - Chair
Sonya Spaulding (BC) – Vice-Chair
Victoria Pompei (BT) – Clerk
Gina Akley (BT)
Tim Boltin (BC)
Emel Cambel (BC)
Giuliano Cecchinelli (BC)
Alice Farrell (BT) – joined at 5:47 p.m.
Guy Isabelle (At-Large)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

David Wells, Superintendent
Mary Ellen Simmons, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
Stacy Anderson, Director of Special Services
Penny Chamberlin, Director Central Vermont Career Center
Hayden Coon, BCEMS Principal
Jason Derner, Alternative Education Administrator
Chris Hennessey, BCEMS Principal
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Jennifer Nye, BTMES Principal
Erica Pearson, BTMES Principal
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager
Brenda Waterhouse, SHS Principal

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Heather Battistoni	Emily Burgess	Ainsley Burroughs	David Cameron
Scott Cameron	Erin Carter	Natessa Cournoyer	Nora Duane	Brendan Eaton
Jamie Frey	Karen Gadapee	Chelsea Haberek	Prudence Krasofski	Colleen Kresco
Patrick Leene	Jennifer Luck-Hill	Ben Matthews	Kathleen Matthews	Allison Mills
Ted Mills	Rebekah Mortensen	Mary Newton	Christine Parker	Rhodene Premont
Jean Savoy	Melinda Schmalz	Megan Spaulding	Rachael Van Vliet	Jesse Willard

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, November 12, 2020, Regular meeting to order at 5:33 p.m., which was held via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 10.1 Negotiations – Labor Relations Agreements (this agenda item will be taken out of order)
Add 10.2 Employment of Employees

On a motion by Mr. Boltin, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as amended. Mrs. Farrell was not present for the vote.

An Executive Session was proposed for the discussion of Negotiations – Labor Relations Agreements. Agenda Item 10.1 was taken out of order.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously agreed to find that premature general public knowledge of the item proposed for discussion, specifically Labor Relations Agreements, would clearly place the Barre Unified Union School District at a substantial disadvantage should the discussion be public.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Wells, Scott Cameron, Mrs. Perreault, and Mrs. Marold in attendance, at 5:42 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 to discuss the items proposed for discussion.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 6:19 p.m.

3. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

3.1 Public Comment

None.

3.2 Student Voice

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Approval of Minutes – October 22, 2020 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to approve as amended, the Minutes of the October 22, 2020 Regular Meeting.

5. Reports to the Board

5.1 Central Office

The Superintendent's Report (dated November 2020) was distributed. The Report included information pertaining to; the Superintendent's Office, Curriculum, Technology, Communications, the Business Office, Early Education, Human Resources, Special Education, and Facilities. A copy of the BUUSD Central Office Newsletter for November 2020 was distributed. There were no questions from the Board.

5.2 Building Reports

5.2.1 Spaulding High School

The Principal's Report for November 2020 was distributed. A copy of the SHS Newsletter for 11/09/20 was distributed. Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding the survey results that were supposed to be included in the packet. Mrs. Waterhouse will distribute this information.

5.2.2 Central Vermont Career Center

The CVCC Director's Report for November 2020 was distributed. There were no questions from the Board.

5.2.3 Barre City Elementary and Middle School

The Co-Principals' Report dated November 6, 2020 was distributed. There were no questions from the Board.

5.2.4 Barre Town Middle and Elementary School

The BTMES Building Report dated November 12, 2020 was distributed. A copy of the BTMES Newsletter for November 2020 was distributed. There were no questions from the Board.

5.3 Committee Reports

5.3.1 Communications Committee

Minutes from the November 5, 2020 meeting were distributed.

Mrs. Farrell provided an overview of the meeting which included discussion of; communication tools, budget promotion, promotion of SHS to out of district students (with school choice), as well as promotion to individuals considering moving to the district, the recent full page 'ad' in the Times Argus (which featured all of the District schools), and the Mission/Vision/Strategic Planning initiative.

Mr. Allen is currently working on revisions to the BUUSD letterhead.

The next meeting is Thursday, December 10, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

5.3.2 Finance Committee

The Committee met on November 10, 2020.

The next meeting is Tuesday, December 1, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference. Mrs. Spaulding advised that the Committee discussed the CVCC site selection initiative (which is now on hold and no Special Article will be presented to voters in March 2021). Additional aspects of the project that require work include; completion of lab schematics, governance structures, and funding for a new building. Mrs. Spaulding advised that the Committee spent the majority of the meeting discussing the First Draft of the FY22 budget. This item will be discussed under Agenda Item 7.2.

5.3.3 Facilities & Transportation Committee

Minutes from the November 9, 2020 meeting were distributed. Mr. Cecchinelli provided an overview of the meeting which included discussion of; keys for BTMES substitutes, air testing/quality (PCBs), and possible efficiency upgrades. In response to a query, it was reported that Mr. Cecchinelli is obtaining a specialized tool and will perform the work to remove the discoloration on the bollards at SHS. Mrs. Pompei queried why BTMES hasn't had keys for substitutes, and voiced concern that card keys into BTMES may not work in the event of a power outage (if there is no generator). This issue needs to be looked into further. The next meeting is Monday, December 14, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

5.3.4 Policy Committee

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

5.3.5 Curriculum Committee

Mrs. Pompei advised that the Committee has been discussing leadership roles/responsibilities and SPED expenses. These discussions are expected to continue. The next meeting will include an introduction of the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, results of fall assessments, and updates on roles and responsibilities.

The next meeting is Tuesday, November 24, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

5.3.6 Negotiations Committee

The Committee met on 11/11/20, where all discussion was held in executive session. Labor Relations Agreements will be discussed more this evening in executive session. The next meeting date is to be determined.

5.3.7 Regional Advisory Board

The next meeting is Monday, December 7, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.

5.4 Financials

A document titled 'BUUSD FY21 Expense Report Summary' (dated 12/12/20) was distributed. There were no questions from the Board.

6. Current Business

6.1 Resignations/Retires/New Hires

A letter of resignation was received from Barb Shipman (BTMES Spanish teacher). Mr. Wells will have a copy of the letter submitted to Mrs. Gilbert for inclusion in the addendum. Ms. Shipman has advised that she is resigning effective at the end of December 2020.

The resume and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Form for Thelma (Tammy) Poitras (BCEMS Middle School Special Educator) was distributed. Mr. Wells provided an overview of the candidate, advising that she is currently working in New Hampshire and can obtain a Vermont Endorsement.

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Thelma Poitras.

6.2 Financial Management Questionnaire

A document titled 'Financial Management Questionnaire – BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT 2020 – 2021' was distributed. Mrs. Perreault provided a brief overview of the document which is required by Statute. Board Members have reviewed the form which was developed by State Auditors. Mrs. Perreault answered questions from the Board. Mrs. Spaulding would like to see VSBA offer financial training (perhaps a webinar) to Board Members, and will make this suggestion at the next VSBA meeting. Mr. Isabelle advised of two budget training sessions that were held in the past year.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the BUUSD Board unanimously voted to approve the Financial Management Questionnaire and authorized the BUUSD Board Chair to sign the document.

6.3 First Reading English Learners Policy (C4)

Two copies of the policy were distributed; a revised version (presented for First Read), and a copy of the current policy (with revisions noted). Mr. Wells provided a brief overview of the minor changes to this policy. Brief discussion was held.

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Reading of the English Learners Policy (C4). Mrs. Akley was not present during the vote.

6.4 First Reading Search and Seizure of Students by School Personnel Policy (C21)

Two copies of the policy were distributed; a revised version (presented for First Read), and a copy of the current policy (with revisions noted). Mr. Wells advised that VSBA has thinned the verbiage to include only essential wording. Mr. Valsangiacomo has reviewed the policy and has no issues with the shortened 'cleaner' language.

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board voted 8 to 0 to approve the First Reading of the Search and Seizure of Students by School Personnel Policy (C21). Mrs. Akley abstained, citing she was not present during the discussion.

6.5 Emergency Closing/Remote Learning

A document titled 'Emergency Remote Day Plan – BUUSD' was distributed. Mr. Wells advised that the plan outlined in the document will be used for emergency closures (1 to 2 days), where remote learning will be provided and the day(s) will take the place of the traditional 'snow day(s)' and counts as a day of school. Other districts are using this type of procedure. For emergency closure remote days to count as a student day, students must be provided with more than a half a day of learning activities. Mrs. Spaulding voiced concern that the K-8 plan includes a one half hour check in, and no actual instruction. Ms. Pearson advised regarding office hours for students. Mrs. Spaulding reiterated her concern citing that office hours are for students to receive additional help with questions, but is not actual instruction. Mrs. Spaulding advised that teachers should have already planned their curriculum (because these are last minute closures), and queried why they are not using the planned curriculum to provide instruction. Mrs. Spaulding is very concerned that the BUUSD is not providing instruction, and that students in K – 8 are receiving 'busy' work and no actual instruction. Mrs. Spaulding does not believe this model is acceptable and the BUUSD is not doing its job of providing instruction of students. Mrs. Spaulding will continue to push on this issue until the schools start providing instruction. Mrs. Nye noted that some students do not necessarily have access to the internet, especially during a 'snow' day. Mrs. Spaulding would like to see the schedule modified to include instruction time. Mr. Wells advised that it is the intent that instruction be provided in all remote learning. The SHS schedule looks different, as students need to check in with multiple teachers. Mr. Wells agrees with the Board that the intent is to provide instruction, and lauded teaching staff for their efforts. At the request of Mr. Boltin, Mr. Wells agreed to incorporate the inclusion of 'instruction' in the plan. Mrs. Anderson reported that the expectation for special education staff is that all instruction be moved to a remote modality and that all services continue to be provided during remote learning. Mr. Coon reported that most BCEMS elementary students received instruction and some synchronous learning. A staff member advised that she has inadequate internet service, which makes it difficult to instruct remotely. Ms. Simmons believes that because the plan covers K – 8, it is more of a generalized plan and more detail would require a breakdown by grade. Mrs. Nye advised that staff were going to meet to discuss how today's remote learning went and plans for Friday, and to have a more detailed plan that can be presented. Mrs. Nye stressed that it's important that teachers be part of the planning development process. Mrs. Spaulding requested that this item be placed on the next agenda, that the plan be revised, and that an amended version of the plan be shared with the Board. Mrs. Spaulding clarified that this plan pertains to emergency short term remote learning and that if the schools need to revert to full time remote learning, the plan will look much different. Discussion should also include what is being done to assist teachers who have inadequate Wi-Fi. Mrs. Spaulding wants assurance that Melinda Schmalz's Wi-Fi issues will be resolved. Mrs. Pompei reported that another teacher has notified her that he/she also have a Wi-Fi issue. It was noted that most students' Wi-Fi issues may be easier to resolve because they are local, but some staff members live in more remote areas. Mrs. Pompei queried regarding letting those teachers work from the school building during an emergency shut down. Mrs. Pompei would like alternatives identified. Mrs. Pompei will notify the staff member to contact their building principal so that their Wi-Fi issue can be addressed.

7. Old Business

7.1 School Re-opening Update

A document titled 'Superintendent Update on Modes of Instruction During State of Emergency Due To COVID-19 Pandemic per BUUSD Policy D22' (dated 11/12/20) was distributed. Mr. Wells advised that on the evening of 11/11/20, he was notified of a positive COVID case within the BUUSD. Mr. Wells met with building administrators and the COVID-19 Nurse Coordinator. Due to the nature of the situation, it was determined that all buildings were affected. Mr. Wells has since learned of two other individuals who have tested positive. The BUUSD is following the defined procedures and working with building administrators and the Covid-19 Nurse Coordinator, who has direct contacts at the Vermont Department of Health. Given the connected nature of our district, it was deemed that all schools in the District should move to remote learning for 11/12/20 and 11/13/20. The BUUSD will be following up with the Department of Health for more direction. Mr. Wells advised that schools within the state and especially within Washington County are in an extremely delicate situation right now. Having positive COVID cases in our schools, requires that additional individuals quarantine and have testing performed. Teachers and students are alarmed that there were individuals in the buildings that have tested positive. Other area district schools are experiencing the difficulties of COVID within their schools and it is becoming increasingly difficult to effectively run schools. The Department of Health contacted the BUUSD today and has advised that they are becoming overwhelmed with positive cases. It was stressed that the increase of positive cases is tied to social gatherings, attending sports events, etc., and these activities are putting the public at risk. Mr. Isabelle voiced concern that there may be a misconception that there are many unfilled positions. Mr. Isabelle believes the issue is that the BUUSD does not have the 'back-up' staff necessary to cover for absences, and that teachers are trying to teach in an entirely new and different way. Mr. Wells advised that a COVID event impacted the pre-school (which did not endanger the pre-school students), which required that staff members take time off and there was not enough staff available to run the program. Pre-school was closed for two days as a result of this staffing shortage. A COVID issue at the Career Center resulted in remote learning for CVCC students, but SHS was allowed to stay open. In response to a query, it was noted that sports teams are currently between seasons, so there are no practices or games at this time. The winter season is slated to begin on 11/30/20, and the high school is waiting for guidance from the State. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that at the present time, the school is very hesitant to hold winter sports. That sentiment was echoed by BCEMS and BTMES administrators. Ms. Pearson advised that there are local recreation teams (with students and adults from BTMES) that are still playing sports, and that today, the BOR was shut down, with a tentative reopening date of 11/28/20. Ms. Chamberlin provided an example of the impact within the schools

whenever a staff member shows any possible sign of COVID. Ms. Chamberlin reiterated that the schools are in a very fragile state. Mr. Boltin stressed that these issues are the reason that it is critical that plans for remote learning be solidified. Mr. Malone queried whether or not the schools have the capability for holding classes/providing instruction, in the same fashion as the Board meeting is being held (a teacher and many students all connected at the same time). Mr. Wells advised that the schools can use Google Meet, and that staff members are utilizing different platforms. Mrs. Pompei advised that her students participate in the Virtual Academy and the Virtual Academy is providing direct remote instruction via the internet. Mr. Coon reported that synchronous learning is being provided to BCEMS elementary school students who would have been at school for in-person learning on Thursday and Friday of this week. In response to a query, Mr. Wells advised that 3 individuals have tested positive and there are other individuals who are showing symptoms and will need to be tested. Mr. Wells advised of the process/protocols utilized by the Vermont Department of Health to determine risk levels and when they think exposure (defined close contact) to individuals warrants action (quarantine, testing, etc.). In response to a query, it was noted that the Department of Health has not yet determined if any positive cases of individuals from the BUUSD 'family' were the result of contracting COVID at one of the BUUSD schools. Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding when the Board will see the plan for fully remote learning (necessary if the District or one of its schools must return to all remote learning). Mr. Wells advised that the District is working on this plan and commits to the Board that he will share additional information in the future. There is currently no plan to share. Mrs. Spaulding began facilitating the meeting at 8:06 p.m.

7.2 FY22 Budget Development

Eight documents were distributed;

FY22 BUUSD Budget Development Considerations (11/10/20)

BUUSD FY22 Proposed Budget, Expense Summary – Draft 1 (11/10/20)

CVCC FY2019 – FY2022 Budget Expense Summary

FY22 BUUSD-CVCC Draft Budget Development Highlights (11/10/20)

SEA Program Estimated Costs Analysis (10/12/20)

BUUSD Draft 1 Budget (11/04/20)

CVCC FY22 Draft 1 Budget (11/03/20)

A printed copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled 'FY22 Budgets – Draft 1' (revised 11/12/20) was distributed.

Mrs. Perreault began the PowerPoint presentation which included information on draft 1 of the FY22 budget. The primary goal this year is to provide consistent and stable resources to the education community. The first draft includes a BUUSD expense budget of \$47,988,828 (a 6.57% increase), and a CVCC budget of \$3,377,415 (a 7.89% increase). The primary factor for the increase is salary and benefit increases which represent 5.2% of the overall 6.57% increase. Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of the considerable increases for health insurance. Mrs. Perreault advised of other benefits and payroll costs totaling \$3,291,854. The total cost for Special Education, including the new building for the SEA Program is \$14,115,927 (an increase of 8.37%). Mrs. Anderson provided an overview of Special Education costs, summarizing the past 10 years. Over the last 10 years, number of students who qualify for Special Education with Emotional Disturbance being the primary disability has doubled. The number of students with a specific learning disability has declined. Students with emotional disturbances require more services and more intensive services than students with specific learning disabilities. Staffing rates over the past 10 years have remained relatively stable. Tuition and contracted services have a significant impact on the budget. The expansion of the SEA Program, to a larger building and increasing capacity is one effort being undertaken to help lower the cost of Special Education. It is anticipated that some students who are outplaced will be able to return to the BUUSD, resulting in some significant savings. Mr. Derner provided an overview of the expanded SEA Program. The new program should allow the BUUSD to better serve its students, increase the number of students served, transition students back from outplacement, and expand services to middle school students. Mr. Derner provided an overview of improvements to be gained in the new building. A graph documenting the cost difference between out of district placement (\$75,000 - \$124,647 not including transportation) vs SEA placement (\$36,466) was displayed. It was noted that if the SEA expansion allows for accepting tuition students, that will be an added source of revenue. Mrs. Perreault advised of current debt and of the 5 contributing factors affecting the tax rate. Mrs. Perreault advised of the tax impact to Barre City (an increase of 12¢) and Barre Town (a decrease of 15¢). Barre Town recently completed a reappraisal. The projected BTMES tax decrease may not have an actual impact on the amount property owners pay in taxes, because the CLA will be adjusted to reflect the reappraisal. Mrs. Perreault advised of spending per-pupil for other schools in the region. Barre remains the district with the lowest spending per pupil. There is concern that the tax 'increase' for Barre City and the tax 'decrease' in Barre Town will need to be well explained to community members, as it may result in very different voting outcomes based on perception. Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of the highlights document. Mrs. Perreault and administrators answered questions from the Board. Mr. Malone returned to facilitate the remainder of the meeting. Mrs. Nye will perform some research regarding the added interventionist and added behavior specialist and will advise Mrs. Perreault so that the highlights document can be updated. Mr. Isabelle would like to hold discussion on the use of SROs in the district. Brief discussion was held regarding student counts and it was noted that BTMES has had a significant decline in enrollment. The budget is built on the equalized pupil count, which is a 'rolling average'. Because of COVID, recent legislation is holding all schools harmless (relative to pupil counts). Mr. Isabelle voiced concern that the tax rate differences between the city and the town is cause for concern. Community members need to understand that due to the recent property reappraisal in Barre Town, the listed tax rate decrease may not result in a reduction of taxes. Mr. Malone advised that at least one representative from each building should be in attendance at the next Finance Committee meeting.

7.3 Enrollment Update: Hybrid/Virtual Academy

A document titled District Enrollment/Staffing (November 2020) was distributed. It was noted that when schools return to 'normal', non-COVID times, it is anticipated that some students will shift back to in-person learning at the Barre schools.

7.4 Home Study Report Update

A document titled Home Study Report (AOE provided data) (11/01/20) was distributed. There were no questions from the Board.

7.5 SEA Update

This agenda item was discussed during Agenda Item 7.2 (FY22 Budget Development). Mr. Derner advised that the Building Team meets with the contractor on a weekly basis to review progress and answer open questions. The project is moving along pretty well.

7.6 Vision, Mission, & Strategic Goals

Mrs. Farrell reported that she continues to work with Winton Goodrich on this initiative.

8. Other Business/Round Table

Mr. Isabelle conveyed his appreciation to the Superintendent and staff members for answering questions and working hard during this difficult time.

9. Future Agenda Items

The 11/26/20 meeting has been cancelled.

The next meeting is Thursday, December 3, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via Video Conference.

The second meeting for December will be held on Thursday, December 17, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via Video Conference.

- FY22 Budget Development (December)
- Revisit Emergency Closing/Remote Learning (December)
- School Re-opening Update

10. Executive Session as Needed

10.1 Negotiations – Labor Relations Agreements

10.2 Employment of Employees

Items proposed for discussion in Executive Session include Negotiations – Labor Relations Agreements (revisit of Agenda Item 10.1), and Employment of Employees.

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously agreed to find that premature general public knowledge of the item proposed for discussion, specifically Labor Relations Agreements, would clearly place the Barre Unified Union School District at a substantial disadvantage should the discussion be public.

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Wells in attendance, at 9:16 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 to discuss the items proposed for discussion.

The remaining information was provided by the Board Clerk.

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 10:29 p.m.

11. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin