

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING**

Via Video Conference – Google Meet
December 3, 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)
Guy Isabelle (At-Large)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

David Wells, Superintendent
Mary Ellen Simmons, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
Josh Allen, Communications Specialist
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
Lauren May, Director of Early Education
Jennifer Nye, BTMES Principal
Erica Pearson, BTMES Principal
Jon Strazza, Assistant Director of Special Services
Brenda Waterhouse, SHS Principal

GUESTS PRESENT:

Ken Christman	Allison Courtemanche	Christine Farnham	Jessica Foster	Karen Fredericks
Jamie Frey	Chelsea Haberek	Brandi Kolling	Prudence Krasofski	Jake Larrabee
Jennifer Luck-Hill	Ben Matthews	Kathleen Matthews	Kellie Mead	Ted Mills
Tim Sanborn	Gage Simpson	Diane Solomon	Megan Spaulding	Jan Trepanier
Rachael Van Vliet	Missy Wiggins			

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, December 3, 2020, Regular meeting to order at 5:37 p.m., which was held via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Two meeting date corrections were noted.

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

3. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

3.1 Public Comment

Parental concern was voiced regarding what is being done to address the issues that are preventing more in-person learning, including staffing, spacing, and transportation. Mr. Wells advised that the Re-opening Team has been working with the transportation coordinator at BTMES, and have also been working with building administrators regarding spacing concerns. An outline for a return to in-person instruction has been started. Discussion also included information relating to use of non-classroom space within the

school buildings, and research into housing students in other local facilities. It was clarified that the Burlington School system has not moved into a new building and that they are continuing to work on student relocation (due to non-covid related issues at their school). It was also clarified that PE is being held. To clarify another misconception, it was noted that PE is a quarterly class, not all students have PE during this quarter. Discussion also included concerns relating to staffing issues (lack of staff due to open positions and quarantine are two separate issues). All positions within the schools could be filled, but a number of staff could be absent due to quarantine requirements or other issues. The number of staff absent due to quarantine requirements fluctuates and the count was approximately 30 employees prior to Thanksgiving break. The Re-opening Team is considering the ramifications of remote learning, especially with students in the lower grades (K – 4). A parent voiced concern that the children are being failed under the current mode of operation. A parent queried regarding future action steps being taken to assist students with ‘catching up’, stressing concerns over math, ELA, and writing. Mr. Wells advised regarding work of interventionists, professional development, and implementation of instructional adjustments to assist with filling academic gaps. Mr. Malone advised that this has been a very difficult year, with many challenges to accommodate learning under COVID, guidance changing on a regular basis, and staff absences due to quarantine requirements. The Board supports full time in-person instruction, but is obligated to assure that the return to in-person learning be accomplished safely and within State guidelines. A parent (and teacher from another district) advised that switching back and forth between remote/hybrid learning is very challenging, and reported that remote instruction has greatly improved. Appreciation was expressed for the improvements that have been implemented. The Board was reminded that the discussion held under this agenda item, should be taking place under agenda items 6.3 and 7.3. Public Comment is reserved for items not on the agenda.

3.2 Student Voice

Gabe Simpson (SHS student) advised that he does not believe remote learning is working for him; he is not absorbing enough of the learning materials and misses interaction with his friends. Mr. Simpson would like to return to full time in-person learning.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Approval of Minutes – November 12, 2020 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the November 12, 2020 Regular Meeting.

5. Reports to the Board

5.1 Central Office

A copy of the BUUSD Central Office Newsletter for December 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 December 2020 was distributed. A copy of the SHS Newsletter for November 30, 2020 was also distributed. In response to a query, Mrs. Waterhouse advised that survey results were forwarded to be included in the last Board meeting packet. As they were not included, and may now be considered outdated (the survey was conducted in October), Mrs. Waterhouse will perform another survey and will forward the results to Board Members. The survey will include questions pertaining to remote learning and re-opening for more in-person learning.

As requested by Mr. Malone, Mrs. Spaulding will send her list of budget questions to administrators so that they will have time to prepare for the upcoming Finance Committee meeting.

5.2.2 Central Vermont Career Center

The CVCC Director’s Report for December 2020 was distributed. Documents titled CVCC Student Recognition (Quarter 1 Awards) and Near Perfect Attendance Quarter 1 were also distributed. In response to a query, Ms. Chamberlin provided clarification regarding remote learning and staff responsibilities.

5.2.3 Barre City Elementary and Middle School

Mr. Hennessey and Mr. Coon provided a verbal report to the Board which included praise to the new librarian, Jennifer Curtin for her efforts to see that students are able to access library materials, activity pertaining to the Patriots Foundation, masks provided by parent Heather Silk, continued improvement to remote instruction (including a balance of screen time and off-screen time), efforts of the Student Support Team in assisting remote learners, and gratitude to parents and students for their patience and work efforts during this challenging time of remote learning.

5.2.4 Barre Town Middle and Elementary School

Mrs. Nye and Ms. Pearson provided a verbal report to the Board which included; PCB testing (with an ‘all clear’ result), removal of carpets (with tile replacement), the highlight of the Crops by Kids program, and library access during remote learning.

5.3 Committee Reports

5.3.1 Communications Committee

Mrs. Farrell reported that she and Mr. Campos have been working on the videos for recruitment of Design Team Members for the Vision, Mission, and Strategic Planning initiative. Mr. Goodrich will attend the next Communications Committee meeting.

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

5.3.2 Finance Committee

The next meeting is Tuesday, December 15, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

5.3.3 Facilities & Transportation Committee

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, December 21, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

5.3.5 Curriculum Committee

Mrs. Pompei reported that discussion at the last meeting included review of assessment data, use of technology in remote instruction, and interventions for students. The next meeting will include discussion of an Equity Audit, an update from the RAB Board, and the plan for transitioning from hybrid/remote instruction, to all in-person instruction.

The Committee met on December 1, 2020. The meeting scheduled for December 22, 2020 has been cancelled.

The next meeting is Tuesday, January 26, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

5.3.6 Negotiations Committee

Discussion will be held 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. via video conference.

5.4 Financials

The BUUSD FY21 Expense Report Summary (dated 12/03/20) was distributed. There were no questions from the Board.

6. Current Business

6.1 Resignations/Retires/New Hires

There were no resignations, retirements, or new hires presented.

6.2 FY22 Budget Development

A document titled FY22 BUUSD Budget Development Considerations – December 3, 2020 was distributed.

A copy of a letter from the Vermont Department of Taxes titled ‘Commissioner of Taxes Releases FY2022 Education Yield Letter’ was also distributed. Mrs. Spaulding advised that the draft budget does contain updates, but the changes have not been discussed by the Committee. Mrs. Spaulding advised regarding the Education Yield Letter contained in the Board packet. The Yield, which will most likely result in tax increases, may be changed in the spring of 2021. Mrs. Perreault has been meeting with administrators to assure that they are informed of feedback from the Finance Committee, and has also provided recommendations to administrators. Mrs. Perreault continues to work on the draft budget. In response to a query regarding elimination of the SRO position at SHS, it was clarified that discussions have been held relating to this matter, and that there are no plans to eliminate SROs at BCEMS or BTMES.

6.3 Remote Learning Update

A document titled BUUSD Extended Remote Learning Plan 2020 – 2021 was distributed. Ms. Simmons advised that the Extended Remote Plan was a collaborative effort and thanked all those that were involved in drafting the document. Ms. Simmons provided an overview of the document, advising that it focuses on 5 or 6 areas; communication, learning opportunities, supporting students who struggle (academically and emotionally), identification of grade level priorities, SPED, and equity. It was noted that the minimum hourly expectations for grade groupings includes all instruction (group instruction, independent work and small group instruction). In response to a query, Ms. Simmons provided clarification on the difference between lessons and mini-lessons. The smaller groups of instruction are put in place to address learning gaps. Ms. Simmons advised that essential standards have been identified for each grade level and are vertically aligned (essential standards that students must master prior to moving on to the next grade). Mrs. Farrell advised that based on the assessment results, there are many students who moved forward without learning the essentials (particularly 3rd grade students who moved on to 4th grade and haven’t mastered certain math skills). Mrs. Farrell is very concerned that students are receiving too much new instruction prior to mastering the previous grades’ skills. Ms. Simmons advised that the school can provide supports to increase skills to the appropriate grade level. Mr. Wells, Mr. Coon, and Mr. Hennessey provided additional information on how teaching staff identify these students, and that interventions are put in place to assist students with bridging gaps, including specific individual lessons and supports to help students catch up. Mrs. Nye provided an overview of ‘a day in the life of’ 3rd grade students at BTMES. Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of ‘a day in the life’ of 5th grade students at

BCEMS, and Mr. Coon advised regarding accommodations made to assist students who are not available during 'regular' hours. It was noted that flexibility is critical at all grade levels. Mrs. Waterhouse advised regarding the SHS schedule, which is being run as close to the regular block schedule as possible, and noted that classes normally held early in the morning (band, chorus, JROTC) are now being held in the afternoon. Attendance levels fluctuate, and are not as high as administrators would like, though there are attendance challenges during non-covid times. Mrs. Waterhouse noted an increase in student engagement under the fully remote model. The fully remote model is providing a more consistent schedule for students (than the hybrid model). Ms. Pearson advised that BTMES middle school attendance is at almost 100% under remote learning. Internet access issues for students and staff are being addressed in several different ways. Ms. Chamberlin provided an overview of a typical day at CVCC, and noted that students are provided with the necessary kits and supplies. Ms. Chamberlin noted that under the fully remote model, the length of the 'school day' has increased (over the hybrid model) because students don't need 'transportation' time.

7. Old Business

7.1 Second and Final Reading of English Learners Policy (C4)

A copy of the policy was distributed. Mrs. Spaulding advised that she has contacted VSBA regarding her concerns on this policy. VSBA may be revising the Model Policy. It was noted that the Board agreed to remove legal references from policies and Mrs. Gilbert is in the process of updating all policies. This policy will be referred back to the Policy Committee for additional discussion.

7.2 Second and Final Reading of Search and Seizure of Students by School Personnel Policy (C21)

A copy of the policy was distributed.

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Second and Final Reading of the Search and Seizure of Students by School Personnel Policy (C21) and agreed to ratify said policy. Mrs. Akley was not present for the vote.

7.3 School Re-opening Update

Mr. Wells reported that the Re-opening Committee is working on a draft of a concrete plan to move to a return to hybrid instruction, and then to transition to in-person learning five days per week, with in-person learning being in compliance with the State guidelines outlined in the Strong and Health Start Guide. The Re-opening Committee will continue to work on these plans, including the addition of dates.

Mr. Isabelle reported that for now, the BUUSD is waiting for the VPA to approve the start of winter sports. It was noted that winter sports practices cannot begin while students are in all-remote instruction. Mr. Wells advised that the State is 'looking' at winter sports, and has paused the start sports indefinitely. This issue is reviewed by the State on a weekly basis.

In response to a query regarding the closure of all BUUSD schools, Mr. Wells provided an overview of the circumstances that led to that decision. Mrs. Spaulding expressed frustration that all schools were closed (rather than individual classrooms or schools). Lauren May advised that within the BUUSD, there are a significant number of staff that work across buildings, or have students in one or more of the other buildings.

A parent addressed the Board advising that they were not present during the discussion held under Public Comment, and expressed concern that the BUUSD made a quick decision to close the schools for a month, which is contrary to State guidance that stresses the importance of in-person learning. There is concern that the closure will encourage students/staff to travel over the December holiday season, and may result in a longer closure. Mr. Wells advised that it is the BUUSD's goal, to return to 5 days a week of in-person learning. Mr. Wells will be presenting a plan at the 12/17/2020 meeting. At this time, it is still anticipated that students will return to in-person learning on 01/04/2021.

A parent queried regarding the number of individuals in each school that has been diagnosed with COVID or is in quarantine. Mr. Wells provided a school by school update (as of 12/01/20) of the number of cases and the number of those in quarantine. It was noted that while in fully remote mode, the BUUSD may not know of additional cases or quarantines because staff and students may still be participating in instruction/learning. The number of staff/students who traveled over the holiday week is unknown. Concern was voiced over the negative impact that remote learning has on the social/emotional well-being of students. In response to a query, it was noted that the BUUSD is reaching out to other large size districts and sharing strategies.

7.4 Vision, Mission & Strategic Goals

In addition to discussion held under Agenda Item 5.3.1, Mrs. Spaulding advised that she had hoped the Board would finalize the Design Team this evening. It is hoped that the Design Team can be finalized at the 12/17/2020 Board Meeting.

8. Other Business/Round Table

Mr. Boltin expressed concern that he does not feel a sense of urgency for returning to in-person learning. Remote learning is a significant issue for working parents.

Mrs. Farrell would like students back in the schools, and urged the Re-opening Team not to be overly cautious when planning for a return to hybrid or all in-person learning.

Mrs. Spaulding reiterated Mrs. Farrell's sentiment for a return to in-person learning, advising that she believes the BUUSD is currently being overly cautious. Mrs. Spaulding would like the Re-opening Team to re-examine various ways to increase in-person instruction e.g. (more days, longer days).

Mr. Isabelle reported that there was no good news today, relating to COVID, with Vermont setting a record for the highest number of new positive cases.

Mr. Isabelle congratulated Rob Moran (Varsity Girls Soccer Coach) for being named the Large School Coach of the Year by the Vermont Soccer Coaches Association.

9. Future Agenda Items

The next meeting is Thursday, December 17, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference (Google Meet).

- Governance White Paper – CTE Governance
- Vision, Mission, and Strategic Planning - Design Team
- Policies (First Reads)

10. Executive Session as Needed

10.1 Collective Bargaining – Labor Relations Agreements

10.2 Personnel Matter

Items proposed for discussion in Executive Session include Collective Bargaining (Labor Relations Agreements, and a Personnel Matter.

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously agreed to find that premature general public knowledge of an 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 Ms. Cambel, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mrs. Marold (for agenda item 10.1 only), and Mr. Wells (for both agenda items) in attendance, at 8:13 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 Ms. Cambel, seconded by Mr. Cecchinelli, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 9:04 p.m.

On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board voted 6 to 3 to ratify the Master Teacher Agreement. Mrs. Akley, Ms. Cambel, Mr. Cecchinelli, Mrs. Farrell, Mr. Isabelle, and Mrs. Pompei voted for the motion. Mr. Boltin, Mr. Malone, and Mrs. Spaulding voted against the motion.

Mrs. Akley was designated to be the Board spokesperson to the press for matters relating to the most recent Labor Relations Agreement.

11. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin