

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

Via Video Conference – Google Meet
December 10, 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:

Winton Goodrich

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Farrell, called the Thursday, December 10, 2020 BUUSD Communications Committee meeting to order at 5:38 p.m., which was held via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Mr. Isabelle queried regarding communications protocols used when a student passes away. Discussion will be documented under Agenda Item 5, New Business.

Agenda Item 6.2 Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning Update will be taken out of order (after Agenda Item 4.1).

Mrs. Poulin advised that new items proposed under Additions and/Deletions to the Agenda, should be added to the agenda and discussed under the newly assigned Agenda Item. Discussion under Agenda Item 2 is limited to amendments to the Agenda itself.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Meeting Minutes for November 5, 2020 BUUSD Communications Committee Meeting

The Committee agreed by consensus to approve as amended, the Minutes of the November 5, 2020 BUUSD Communications Committee meeting.

5. New Business

In light of the recent loss of a student, Mr. Isabelle queried whether or not protocols/procedures are in place. Should the school communicate anything when a student has passed away. Mr. Isabelle would like to know how to respond if anyone makes an inquiry to him as a Board Member. Mr. Allen advised regarding the recent event, reporting that both administrators and guidance counselors have reached out to the family privately to offer support. Mr. Allen is not aware of past practices regarding whether or not the schools have done anything at a public level. Mr. Wells has discussed this matter with Mr. Malone and Mr. Wells has been advised that he can reach out to the Board to make them aware of what has happened. Mrs. Waterhouse has advised that action surrounding a student's death varies. Sometimes, given the circumstance around a student's untimely death, the family wishes to maintain privacy. Mrs. Poulin advised that in the past, there have been circumstances when the schools have offered counseling to all students because the tragedy has had a large impact on many students. Mrs. Farrell suggested that a practice be developed as part of strategic planning. Mr. Isabelle suggested that an e-mail (without details) be sent to Board Members, so that if they are questioned by anyone, they do have knowledge that a death occurred. Mr. Goodrich advised that he has a document, a simplistic form, that advises who the communication contact is, and anyone who receives inquiries, directs the inquiry to the contact individual. There is also a form that is to be completed (filling in bullet points), for releasing information to the press. This procedure allows for using a consistent protocol. The creator of the form is Bob Howard. Mr. Goodrich will forward the documents to the Board.

6. Old Business

6.1 Budget Promotion

Mr. Allen advised that he has received a quote for the Annual Report Project. Last year the quote was approximately \$7,000. This year's quote is approximately \$6,500. The reduction is due to a reduction in design work, most of which was performed last year. This year's report will use roughly the same layouts. The overall cost for the Annual Report project includes printing and mailing costs. A little over 9000 copies will be printed and will be mailed to all residential houses in Barre, East Barre, South Barre, Graniteville, and Websterville. The report will be in color on glossy paper (same as last year). Because of an increase in early voting, the mailing is anticipated to go out earlier. Mr. Allen would like to send out the Annual Report as soon as possible after the budget is warned. Mr. Allen has already created working documents for all of the pages in the report. Because of remote learning, it has been difficult to obtain high quality photos, but Mr. Allen is hopeful that if in-person learning resumes, he will be able to obtain the necessary photos. The scheduled filming of budget videos did not occur because schools reverted to all remote instruction. Mr. Allen hopes that school will return on 01/04/21 and filming can resume then. If schools remain in remote mode, Mr. Allen anticipates scaling back the project and producing one video. If filming cannot be performed, Mr. Allen hopes that individuals can send him some short video clips (though the quality will probably not be optimum). Mr. Isabelle suggested that release of budget promotion materials will have a more positive impact if it occurs when school is in session.

6.2 Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning Update

A Design Team needs to be discussed, and finalized at the Board meeting next Thursday. Mrs. Spaulding has shared a document that outlines the 'make-up' and expectations of the Design Team. Mrs. Spaulding will forward the documents to Mrs. Gilbert for posting as part of the meeting packet. Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding sending an e-mail to the individuals listed on the 'brainstorming' document. Mr. Goodrich recommends sending an e-mail to everyone on the list, and advised that there be a diverse group of individuals on the Design Team. The Design Team should include some who have dissenting opinions, in order to assure that the Design Team has 'adequate voices' guiding the process. Mr. Goodrich advised that the Design team should not be handpicked. Communication should be sent to those on the list, and also be sent to 'everyone'. Mr. Allen reported that he has drafted a letter (which has been shared with Mrs. Farrell), and created a link to the newly produced videos. The link will be included in the e-mailed letter and can also be add to Facebook and Front Porch Forum posts. The message that will be e-mailed includes an introduction into what the Design Team is, and advises that interested individuals should contact Mrs. Spaulding. Mrs. Spaulding advised that she would like the Team finalized next Thursday (12/17/20), and suggested that a deadline for expressing interest be included in the message. It was agreed that interested parties should contact Mrs. Spaulding no later than Wednesday, December 16, 2020. Mr. Allen will add this information to the message and will also indicate a time of day (e.g. by 4:00 p.m.). The message will be sent to all parents, staff, and the individuals identified on the brainstorming work sheet. Brief discussion was held regarding the make-up of the design team. It was agreed that the Design Team be increased from 12 to 15 individuals by adding a middle school staff member, a middle school parent, and a CVCC representative. Mr. Allen wanted to touch base with Mr. Campos prior to releasing the videos, as he wanted to avoid any conflict with when Mr. Campos was planning to air the videos. Mrs. Farrell advised that Mr. Allen should proceed with releasing the videos. It was agreed that the e-mail and video links will be released tomorrow (12/11/20). Mr. Allen will share the draft with Committee Members, modify the document based on feedback, and plan to release the e-mails and video links late afternoon. Mr. Allen will assure that the letter contains the link to the CVTV videos and the initial meeting dates/times. Mr. Wells will check with administrators to see who is interested in serving on the Design Team. Mrs. Spaulding suggested that in light of the principals' current work load, it might be beneficial to have assistant principals (rather than principals) join the Team for the 'administrator' positions. Mr. Wells advised that he will send an abbreviated version of the letter to teaching and administrative staff. It was agreed that Mrs. Spaulding will post to the Barre City Front Porch Forum, Mrs. Farrell will post to the Barre Town Front Porch Forum, and Mr. Isabelle will send the link to the Times Argus for posting in the Talk of the Town section. The letter and link will also be posted in The World. Mrs. Spaulding will ask Ms. LaFrancis to send a copy of the letter to all of the business contacts from the Work Based Learning Program. Additional stakeholder groups that should be explored include non-profit organizations, and the City/Town Councils. It may also be beneficial to send letters to CVCC business partners. Mr. Wells will see that the letter is sent to the Rotary. Mrs. Spaulding advised that the letter should be sent to all local service groups. In response to concerns regarding the timeframe for recruitment, Mr. Goodrich advised that there is flexibility in the timeline because he will not be able to meet with the Design Team until 01/06/2021. It was agreed that the first two meetings will be held on 01/06/21 and 01/20/21 from 6:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. Mr. Goodrich advised that he will expedite the project going forward, so that time can be made up. Mr. Goodrich suggested that additional meetings be held on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month, though the schedule may need to be refined at a later day. The informative/recruitment letter should include meeting dates/times. Mr. Goodrich will need to collect Design Team member names, commitments, e-mail addresses, and possibly phone numbers. Mrs. Farrell clarified that at next week's Board meeting, the Board may not be able to fill all of the slots on the Design Team, though the make-up of the team will definitely be confirmed. Mr. Isabelle reminded the Committee that BTMES middle school teacher Michael Pope had reached out to the Board and is very interested in being a team member. Mrs. Spaulding has notified Ms. Pearson of Mr. Pope's interest. Mr. Pope can fill the 'middle school' slot. It was suggested that the Equity Audit be included in strategic planning. Mr. Goodrich will weave some equity related questions into the feedback forums. Mrs. Farrell and Mr. Goodrich were thanked for their efforts to produce the videos.

7. Other Business

Mr. Allen advised that the next full page Times Argus ad will be in the 01/15/2021 paper. The subsequent ad will occur shortly after the vote (Friday, 03/12/21), and it is hoped that the ad can be used to thank tax payers for their support. If the budget has not yet passed, the ad will be used to help promote a new vote.

Mr. Allen has been reviewing MailChimp reports and advised that in November; a little over 47,000 e-mails were sent by Mr. Allen and Mr. Wells. Personalized e-mails were utilized to notify individuals of possible COVID exposure. The MailChimp tracking tool allowed the BUUSD to identify individuals who did not open their e-mails. A handful of families did not open the e-mail, so the BUUSD made phone calls to notify those individuals. Mr. Isabelle would like to see this positive information included in the next Central Office Report.

In response to a query, Mr. Allen advised that he has not worked on the Central Office letterhead, but plans to work on that soon.

Mr. Allen advised that Ry Hoffman is taking the lead on promotion of SHS to out of district schools. Mr. Allen suggested that an update on this item be discussed in the spring. Mrs. Farrell requested that Mr. Hoffman provide a report at that meeting. Mr. Allen is hopeful that the Mission, Vision & Strategic Planning initiative will assist in promotion of SHS. Mr. Isabelle suggested that SHS have a presence at CVCC Open House events. Mr. Allen has recently been asked to assist with promotion of CVCC to 7th and 8th graders. SHS can be promoted at the same time.

Mr. Allen advised that he has been assisting Mrs. Waterhouse with creation of a remote learning survey. Mrs. Waterhouse plans to share the results at the next Board meeting. Mr. Allen advised that the MailChimp tracking tool allowed for a resend of surveys to those who hadn't opened it yet. MailChimp reporting tools also allow Mr. Allen to ascertain the number of individuals who have opened the survey e-mail.

8. Items to be Placed on Future Agendas

- Budget Communications - January
- Vision, Mission, and Strategic Planning Update - January
- Logo/Branding – future
- SHS Promotion to Out of District Schools Update- Spring 2021

9. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 5:30 p.m., via video conference.

10. Adjournment

The Committee agreed by consensus to adjourn at 6:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin