

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

Via Video Conference – Google Meet  
January 21, 2021 - 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:**

Amber Larrabee

**1. Call to Order**

**The Chair, Mrs. Farrell, called the Thursday, January 21, 2021 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**

None.

**3. Public Comment**

None.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

**4.1 Meeting Minutes for December 10, 2020 BUUSD Communications Committee Meeting**

**The Committee agreed by consensus to approve the Minutes of the December 10, 2020 BUUSD Communications Committee meeting.**

**5. New Business**

**5.1 Budget Communications**

Mr. Allen advised that he is making good progress on the Annual Report, and reported that he is 2 weeks ahead of last year. Mr. Allen is in the process of wrapping up the final stories, including an update on the SEA Project, thanking tax payers for their support last year, and providing a status of construction, including when students are expected to be in the new building and new opportunities for students. Mr. Allen has been working with Mr. Wells on the Superintendent's message. Selected alumni are submitting write ups, including photos. Mr. Allen has been working with Mrs. Perreault to assure that all of the required budget numbers are correct in the draft report. There has been one change from last year, relating to the chart that reflects how the budget impacts taxes. It was felt that the chart should be simplified because the Barre Town CLA is currently unknown (due to the reappraisal). After discussions with Mrs. Perreault, it was felt that it would be better to publish numbers that were known to be correct. The numbers can change any day now. Mr. Allen and Mrs. Perreault decided it may be best to publish the equalized tax rate, which is the tax rate if all properties are appraised at full value. The numbers to be included in the chart will reflect the tax impact before the CLA is applied. The plan is to include a QR code that will be a link to the Vermont State Tax Calculator, so community members can calculate exactly what they will pay in educational taxes vs property taxes. The link will also be included on the BUUSD web site on the budget page. Lengthy discussion was held regarding the change to the tax impact chart, including; confusion for tax payers, being accused of trying to mislead tax payers, information that conflicts with information previously provided (regarding this year's tax increase), noting that the change is being implemented for Barre Town tax payers (the Barre City tax rate can be published correctly because the City's CLA is known), not having confidence that the reappraisal will be lodged in a timely manner, the impact of abatements, concern that some citizens don't have access or the skills to use the QR code, and a suggestion that the chart reflect with CLA from the State, with a note that it may change. Mr. Allen advised that he could fairly easily create 2 versions of the chart and a decision can be made later. Mr. Allen advised that the goal is to be ready to send the Annual Report to the printer by the end of January. It was noted that City/Town Clerks will be sending out reminder cards instructing voters on how to receive absentee ballots. Given that it is believed that many voters will vote early, Mr. Allen would like the Annual Report mailed as soon as possible. After additional discussion it was agreed that Mr. Allen will create 2 charts; one with the information as it is known now, and one with what we think the numbers will be. Mr. Allen will send these two charts to Committee Members for review and comparison. It was clarified that the chart will

include the QR code. Mr. Allen advised regarding the alumni members who are submitting write ups. One of the alumni members, Shannon Alexander, a professional photographer, is also assisting with photography for the Annual Report. Mr. Allen will be presenting a rough draft at the next Committee meeting (in two weeks). Mr. Allen advised that last year's report addressed income sensitivity. Mr. Allen has not heard back from the City, but the Town has reported that 60% of residents will be receiving a tax credit. It is believed that this year's combined number will be greater than last year's number. Mr. Allen hopes to hear back from Carol Dawes in the near future (regarding the Barre City income sensitivity numbers). The layout for this year's Annual Report will be similar to last year's. The similar design helps to control costs because much of the design work has already been completed. Mr. Allen advised that this has been a tough year to get quality photos. Mr. Allen and Ms. Alexander will be working to take some professional quality photos. Mrs. Spaulding would like to promote last year's girls hockey team. If a photo of last year's team is published, Mr. Allen will include a date so that those viewing the photo will understand that the lack of 'face coverings' is due to the photo being taken before COVID. The Report will also include information regarding how students returned to school during COVID. In addition to the Annual Report, Mr. Allen has been partnering with CVCC to create a video that will be released in February. The original plan was to start this in November, but that needed to be postponed due to the return to remote learning. The original plan was to create 3 short videos. The plan now is to create one video which includes students from both BCEMS and BTMES. Students will share their 'journey' from middle/elementary schools to high school and CVCC, noting the positive impact of attending Barre schools. The video will not necessarily mention the budget, but will be used to generate positivity for the schools. One of the students will be filming and will also be one of the on-camera speakers. Next week (Thursday), it is hoped that filming can be completed and the video will be released as soon as it is completed. By not including budget information in the video, it will be a 'timeless' video that can be used for years. Mr. Wells believes this video may be helpful in promoting SHS to out of district schools. Mr. Allen reiterated that all budget information will also be available for viewing on the BUUSD web site.

## **6. Old Business**

### **6.1 Vision, Mission, and Strategic Planning Update**

The Design Team met on 01/20/21. Discussion included a walk-through of stakeholder feedback groups, assignment of roles, the possibility of adding an alumni stakeholder group, possible dates for forums, creation of surveys (Mr. Allen will assist), concern that those answering surveys will check off multiple different categories (community member, grandparent, alumni, business owner etc.), how to communicate the survey to the community, use of the application 'sticky notes', and concerns over collaboration for creation of the racial equity and anti-racism policies. The next meeting is February 9, 2021. Ms. Simmons will be present at the next meeting and will provide an update on that initiative. Racial equity questions will be added to surveys. Mr. Allen will be working on creation of the surveys tomorrow. Mrs. Spaulding advised that Mr. Allen has been very helpful on this project, assisting with most of the communication pieces.

## **7. Other Business**

Mr. Allen provided a brief overview of progress related to changes to BUUSD letterhead. Mr. Allen displayed an example of the work in progress, advising that it has not been finalized. In response to a query, Mr. Allen advised that he hadn't planned on adding the schools' names, advising that the letterhead can quickly become 'wordy'. In response to a query, Mr. Allen advised that the template will be available on Google Drive so that it will be easily accessible to those who need it. Mr. Wells suggested that consideration be given to providing similar letterheads to each of the District's schools. Committee Members were reminded that there may be a future initiative to change the name of the District.

## **8. Items to be Placed on Future Agendas**

- Budget Presentation - February
- Vision, Mission, Strategic Planning - February
  
- Logo/Branding (TBD)
- SHS Promotion to Out of District Schools Update – Spring 2021

## **9. Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, February 4, 2021 at 5:30 p.m., via video conference.

## **10. Adjournment**

**The Committee agreed by consensus to adjourn at 6:29 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Andrea Poulin*