

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING**

Via Video Conference – Google Meet
January 28, 2021 - 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Paul Malone (BT) – Chair, joined the meeting at 6:25 p.m.
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, joined the meeting at 5:58 p.m.
Mary Ellen Simmons, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
Hayden Coon, BCEMS Principal
Chris Hennessey, BCEMS Principal
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Jennifer Nye, BTMES Principal
Erica Pearson, BTMES Principal
Brenda Waterhouse, SHS Principal

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Allison Courtemanche	Erika Dolan	Jody Emerson	Crystal Harvey
Prudence Krasofski	Jake Larrabee	Patrick Leene	Chas Legge	Penny Martin
Tara Martin	Ted Mills	Christine Parker	Amy Richard	Tim Sanborn
Jean Savoy	Diane Solomon	Megan Spaulding	Pierre Trepanier	Rachael Van Vliet

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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 Vice-Chair, Mrs. Spaulding, called the Thursday, January 28, 2021, Regular meeting to order at 5:32 p.m., which was held via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 4.2 Approval of Minutes – January 7, 2021 Special Meeting
Add 9.2 Employment of Employees – Elimination of Position Proposal – under Executive Session

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as amended. Mr. Malone was not present for the vote.

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 – January 14, 2021 Regular Meeting

Mrs. Spaulding advised that the deadline for submitting consent forms for Board seats is February 1, 2021, not January 25, 2021 as announced at the meeting.

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the January 14, 2021 Regular Meeting. Mr. Malone was not present for the vote.

4.2 Approval of Minutes – January 7, 2021 Special Meeting

Mrs. Spaulding advised she received an e-mail from a community member who would like the minutes amended. Mrs. Spaulding read the amendment requested by Mrs. Solomon, which includes additional detail regarding her statements at the meeting. Brief discussion was held.

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to approve as presented, the Minutes of the January 7, 2021 Special Meeting. Mr. Malone was not present for the vote.

5. Current Business

5.1 New Hire

The resume and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Form for Julie Bacher (BTMES 5-8 Spanish Teacher) was distributed. Ms. Pearson provided an overview of candidate's education and experience.

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Julie Bacher for the remainder of the 20/21 academic year. Mr. Malone was not present during the vote.

5.2 Administrator and Superintendent Evaluation Process

Mr. Wells advised that there are two portions of this agenda item. One item that needs to be brought to the Board's attention relates to retaining administrators. Mr. Wells would like this item discussed in Executive Session. Mr. Wells would also like to discuss the evaluation process in Executive Session, in this portion, he will be making evaluative statements. Information can be provided publicly after Executive Session.

Agenda Item 9.3 will be added for discussion of the Administrator and Superintendent Evaluation Process.

5.3 Instruction Delivery: Modes of Instruction

Three documents were distributed.

A document titled 'COVID-19 Delivery Model Comparison – January 2021'

A document titled 'Strong and Health Schools Survey' for Middle School

A document titled 'Strong and Health Schools Survey' for High School

Mr. Wells provided a brief overview of the documents, advising that many schools of similar size are operating in mainly the same mode as BUUSD schools. Mr. Wells advised regarding where the data is obtained (State collected), noting that only a very small percentage (less than 10%) of schools are operating fully in-person. Mr. Wells recommends that the work of the Re-opening Team shift to identifying steps to take to fill educational and social/emotional gaps (a Recovery Plan for the spring, summer and fall of 2021). Though the State may modify social distancing guidelines, the parameters haven't changed, and the Re-opening Team should work with the current guidelines. It was noted that it may have been beneficial to see the comparison data earlier. Mr. Malone began facilitating the meeting at 6:27 p.m. Mrs. Spaulding believes it would be beneficial if the comparison included the number of in-person learning hours that each school was providing and whether instruction is being provided synchronously. Mrs. Spaulding voiced concern that attendance at afternoon high school virtual classes is optional and that not enough students are attending. Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding why students are not required to attend remote instruction. Mrs. Spaulding believes more instruction should be provided. In response to a query regarding whether or not afternoon classes are mandatory, Mrs. Waterhouse advised that teachers and students are encouraged to engage in synchronous learning as appropriate, and provided some examples. Mr. Boltin expressed concern that students will be attending college, after receiving very little in-person instruction since 10th grade. Community members addressed the Board, requesting that additional thought be put into increasing in-person learning, and expressing frustration that more instruction time was provided under remote learning, than under the hybrid model of instruction. Mr. Wells suggested that parents with concerns contact their student's principal to look into what improvements/changes could be implemented to address their specific needs. A parent reported that their high school student is doing very well under the hybrid model and believes that SHS is doing a great job. An extension to the school day was acknowledged and it was noted that the increase in instruction time is appreciated. In response to a query, it was noted that response time for e-mail inquiries should generally be within the week. Mr. Wells advised he usually responds to e-mails within 24 hours. Mrs. Pompei queried regarding any changes to the State mandate that students be provided with 27.5 hours of instruction per week (given the inability to provide more in-person instruction). Mrs. Pompei expressed concern that the State requirement is not being met. Mr. Wells believes instruction time varies from class to class, and it is the goal of the District to meet the State requirement. In response to a query, it was noted that the State does not collect data on the amount of instructional time provided to students. Concern was raised that BTMES will be closed for some additional days due to Barre Town voting being held at BTMES (and the subsequent cleaning that must be performed). It was suggested that the

limited number of rooms used for voting (gym and restrooms) be cleaned in the evening after voting has ended, thus allowing students to return the next morning. In response to a query regarding making expedient changes to instruction modes (should State Guidelines lessen the social distance requirement), administrators advised that they believe the switch could be made relatively quickly.

5.4 First Reading of Personnel Recruitment, Selection, Appointment and Background Checks Policy (B20) - Recommended Policy)

Copies of all policies referenced in Agenda Items 5.4 – 5.8.4 were distributed.

Mrs. Spaulding voiced concern over portions of the VSBA policy that were removed by the Policy Committee. Mrs. Pompei also questioned the number of lines that were removed from the VSBA policy. It was noted that a lot of what was removed, is believed to exist in statute. It is not known why VSBA added certain items to the Model Policy. Mrs. Spaulding will contact VSBA for additional information and will report back to the Board.

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Reading of the Personnel Recruitment, Selection, Appointment and Background Checks Policy (B20). Mr. Malone was not present for the vote.

5.5 First Reading Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students Policy (C28) Recommended Policy

In response to a query, administrators advised regarding how alternative accommodations are provided (e.g. use of gender segregated facilities), including use of single user/single stall bathrooms, to keep transgender/gender non-conforming status confidential. Isabella Cecchinelli queried the Board regarding procedures/protocols for students who are not 'out' regarding their status, and do not outwardly appear to be transgender or gender non-conforming, and what would occur if a student appeared to be entering a bathroom that did not reflect their outward appearance. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that there may be a brief (private) check-in with the student to assure that everything was o.k. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that students only share what they are comfortable with and that students are advised that the school is a 'safe space' and that any student can use the single stall restrooms. Ms. Pearson advised that at BTMES administrators work with students to develop a plan they are comfortable with. Mr. Hennessey reiterated that communication is very important and that students should know that they are in a 'safe space'. In response to a query regarding non-legal name changes for files/records and e-mails, administrators advised that names are changed based on student preference, though some files must contain legal names. It was noted that some files are accessible to parents, and students should be aware of that (in the event that they do not want their parents to be advised regarding a name change). Each student's case is taken individually. It was noted that at the elementary/middle school level, sometimes conversations are held with parents regarding name changes, and it was clarified that not all name changes are transgender or gender conformance related. Mr. Boltin applauds the accommodations provided to students, and queried how administrators handle a situation where a student is not comfortable utilizing facilities when transgender or gender non-conforming students are present. It was noted that students who are uncomfortable sharing facilities, can use the single use/single stall restrooms. Mr. Boltin would like Administrators and the Board to give serious consideration regarding how to handle the situation where students are uncomfortable utilizing rest rooms and/or showers with transgender or gender non-conforming students.

On a motion by Ms. Cambel, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Reading of the Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students Policy (C28). Mr. Malone was not present for the vote.

5.6 First Reading Substitute Teachers Policy (B1)

Mr. Cecchinelli advised that the policy needs to be 'cleaned up' and formatted to the BUUSD standard format. In response to a query, it was noted that the policy does apply to long-term substitutes as well as day substitutes, though there are additional licensing requirements (for long-term substitutes), as defined by the State. It was noted that the current policy advises that substitute are to be paid per-diem, though the BUUSD changed to hourly pay several years ago. The existing policy also advises that the Superintendent will conduct an orientation, and that is not the current process. Mr. Wells advised that some of the changes relate to removing procedures from policies. Concern was voiced, for the record, that procedures/practices are being changed prior to policies being changed. Mr. Wells reminded the Board that the Policy Committee is working to develop a procedure section for website publishing, whereas policies have easily accessible associated procedures. Mrs. Pompei reiterated that internal procedures should not change until policies and procedures are changed.

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Reading of the Substitute Teachers Policy (B1). Mr. Malone was not present for the vote.

5.7 First Reading Electronic Communications Use & Retention Policy (F22) – Recommended Policy

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Pompei, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Reading of the Electronic Communications Use & Retention Policy (F22). Mr. Malone was not present for the vote.

5.8 Policies Not Recommended by Committee For Adoption

5.8.1 Staffing and Job Description Policy (B30) – Consider

Brief discussion was held regarding why the Committee is recommending not to adopt these policies (which look to be valuable). Mr. Wells advised that in some cases, these policies are covered in statute and that policies are not necessary. It was noted that a decision not to adopt these policies should be voted on for the record.

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously agreed to accept the recommendation of the Policy Committee and agreed not to adopt policies; B30, B31, B32, and B33. Mr. Malone was not present during the vote.

5.8.2 Educator Supervision & Evaluation: Probationary Teacher (B31) – Consider

Action was taken under Agenda Item 5.8.1.

5.8.3 Personnel Files Policy (B32) – Consider

Action was taken under Agenda Item 5.8.1.

5.8.4 Resignations Policy (B33) - Consider

Action was taken under Agenda Item 5.8.1.

6. Old Business

Copies of all policies referenced in Agenda Items 6.1 – 6.4 were distributed.

6.1 Second and Final Reading Firearms Policy (C5) – Required

Mrs. Pompei renewed her objection to removing the line that requires mandatory reporting to law enforcement.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Board voted 7 to 1 to approve the Second and Final Reading of the Firearms Policy (C5) and agreed to adopt said policy. Mr. Boltin, Ms. Cambel, Mr. Cecchinelli, Mrs. Farrell, Mr. Isabelle, Mr. Malone, and Mrs. Spaulding voted for the motion. Mrs. Pompei voted against the motion. Mrs. Akley was not present for the vote.

6.2 Second and Final Reading English Learners Policy (C4) – Required

Brief discussion was held.

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Second and Final Reading of the English Learners Policy (C4) and agreed to adopt said policy. Mrs. Akley was not present for the vote.

6.3 Second and Final Reading Electronic Communication Between Employees & Students Policy (B8) – Required

Brief discussion was held.

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Second and Final Reading of the Electronic Communication Between Employees & Students Policy (B8) and agreed to adopt said policy. Mrs. Akley and Mr. Cecchinelli were not present for the vote.

6.4 Second and Final Reading Prevention of Sexual Harassment as Prohibited by Title IX Policy (C12) – Required

Mrs. Spaulding advised that the outline of procedures has not been provided to the Board (as agreed upon). Ms. Simmons advised that she and Mr. Aither have been working on drafting an outline, though procedures have not been written yet. Mrs. Spaulding reiterated additional concerns relating to; code of conduct, handbooks, and possible loopholes in the policy. Mrs. Spaulding wants assurance that these items, which she considers major issues with the policy, will be addressed. Ms. Simmons committed to seeing that these items are addressed. Mr. Malone asked that Ms. Simmons submit copies of the outline and subsequent work to the Board. Mrs. Spaulding reiterated her concern that prevention of sexual harassment, though in the title of the policy, is not addressed in the policy.

Mrs. Spaulding stressed that prevention of sexual harassment is a critical component but is not addressed in the policy. Ms. Simmons agrees that "prevention" is a critical and essential piece and committed to assuring that prevention procedures are put in place.

On a motion by Mrs. Pompei, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board voted 7 to 1 to approve the Second and Final Reading of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment as Prohibited by Title IX Policy (C12) and agreed to adopt said policy. Mr. Boltin, Ms. Cambel, Mr. Cecchinelli, Mrs. Farrell, Mr. Isabelle, Mr. Malone, and Mrs. Pompei voted for the motion. Mrs. Spaulding voted against the motion. Mrs. Akley was not present for the vote.

6.5 Vision, Mission, & Strategic Goals

Mrs. Spaulding advised that the Design Team has met and stakeholder forums are being held. Great information is being provided in forums. The process is working well and the BUUSD is moving forward with this initiative.

7. Other Business/Round Table

There was no other business.

Round Table Discussion:

Mrs. Farrell would like to publicize that there are more buses out on the road and cautioned drivers to follow bus/traffic safety laws.

Mr. Boltin clarified that his earlier comments were not an attempt to criticize the high school, but rather to advise colleges that students may not be fully prepared for college entry.

Mrs. Spaulding advised regarding an email she received from a parent; reminding Board Members that they are elected officials, and though freedom of speech is covered under the Constitution, Board Members are representing the schools. It is very difficult for community members, students and staff to understand why Board Members may be posting (on social media) potentially offensive thoughts and feelings. Mrs. Spaulding cautioned all who are on social media, to think about what they are going to post, through the lens of those who may be viewing the posts.

Mr. Isabelle advised that there is still time for individuals to run for seats on the Board. This year only a Consent Form is required. These forms are due to the City/Town Clerks by 02/01/21. Mr. Isabelle appreciates the positive feedback received this evening and that community members are willing to provide feedback.

Mr. Cecchinelli queried administrators regarding changes to drop-off procedures (due to the colder weather). Mr. Wells advised regarding changes being implemented to accommodate the colder temperatures.

Mr. Malone conveyed his appreciation to Board Members for their work, and to members of the community for providing input. Additionally, Mr. Malone advised regarding information he has received from City/Town Clerks regarding individuals running for Board Seats.

Ms. Cambel advised regarding her learning experience working on the Board, and expressed her appreciation to fellow Board Members for their work and for listening generously to all thoughts and opinions.

8. Future Agenda Items

The next meeting is Thursday, February 11, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via Video Conference – Google Meet

- Policies
- New Hires
- Vision, Mission, and Strategic Goals

It was noted that if ‘School Re-Opening Update’ is not on the Agenda, community members understand that they will need to provide input under Public Comment.

9. Executive Session as Needed

9.1 Personnel Supervision: Superintendent’s Goals

9.2 Employment of Employees – Proposal for Elimination of a Position

9.3 Administrator and Superintendent Evaluation Process (including discussion of personnel performance)

Items proposed for discussion in Executive Session include Personnel Supervision (Superintendent’s Goals), Employment of Employees (Proposal for Elimination of a Position), and Administrator and Superintendent Evaluation Process, including discussion of personnel performance.

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Wells in attendance, at 7:33 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. Spaulding, seconded by Ms. Cambel, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 9:26 p.m.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mrs. Cambel, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin