

BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
Via Video Conference – Google Meet
January 18, 2021 – 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Giuliano Cecchinelli, Chair - (BC)
J. Guy Isabelle, Vice-Chair - (At-Large)
Emel Cambel (BC)
Jon Valsangiacomo – (BT Community Member) – departed the meeting at 7:14 p.m.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Andrew McMichael (BC Community Member)

ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF PRESENT:

David Wells, Superintendent
Luke Aither, SHS Assistant Principal
Emmanuel Ajanma, Director of Technology – departed the meeting at 6:25 p.m.
Josh Allen, Communications Specialist
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources – departed the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

GUESTS:

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Cecchinelli, called the Monday, January 18, 2021, meeting to order at 5:31 p.m., which was held via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add Agenda Item 6.1 Racial Equity Policy under Old Business

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Approval of Minutes – December 21, 2020 Policy Committee Meeting

The Committee agreed by consensus to approve the Minutes of the December 21, 2020 Policy Committee Meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 Review of BUUSD Policy Manual Index

A copy of the BUUSD Policy Manual Index (dated 01/12/21) was distributed.
Mr. Wells had nothing to add and advised that the document reflects tonight's meeting agenda.

5.2 VSBA Model Policies

A document titled 'VSBA Website Policies Reviewed – 01/12/2021' was distributed.
A copy of the VSBA Policy Manual Index was distributed.
There was nothing new to discuss.

5.3 Policies to Discuss

Copies of all policies referenced in Agenda Items 5.3.1 through 5.3.6 were distributed.

5.3.1 Substitute Teachers Policy (B1) – Required

Mr. Aither queried regarding possible formatting issues. Mrs. Marold advised that the Central Office keeps a list of substitutes by grade, not by subject. Mr. Aither proposed eliminating section 5 (Administrative Responsibilities). Mrs. Marold reiterated that the Central Office keeps a list of substitutes by grade, and that information is disseminated down to the schools. Each school has the option to choose any substitute in the district. The list is broader, but does specify some specialties, e.g. nurse. It was suggested to move the Administrative Responsibilities section to procedures. It was noted that this policy was approved as part of the mass of policies approved for the new District. It was noted that the current policy states that wages are paid per diem, but the practice of the BUUSD is to pay hourly. Mrs. Marold advised that the change from 'salary to hourly' was made as part of FLSA changes and everyone was moved from salary to hourly. It was noted that if the Administrative Responsibilities are removed, the policy will no longer require substitutes to complete annual training on the prevention, identification, and reporting of child sexual abuse. Brief

discussion was held, and Mrs. Marold advised that she would appreciate that the policy be as broad as possible and she believes the current wording differs from current practices. It was noted that statute requires some specific training. Mrs. Marold advised that substitutes now receive all of the same training as regular teaching staff (A.L.I.C.E. etc.). The Committee agreed to make changes to section 2 (Qualifications).

The Committee agreed by consensus to amend the Substitute Teachers Policy (B1), and to present a First Reading of the policy to the Board.

5.3.2 Public Complaints About Personnel Policy (B22) – Recommended

Mr. Aither is working on a draft that he does not believe is included in the packet. Mr. Aither presented (on screen) a copy of the draft policy and proceeded to provide an overview of the policy. Discussion was held regarding possible concerns / changes to the ‘chain of command’ area (not all direct supervisors are principals). Lengthy discussion was held regarding various types of complaints, other policies, the proper chain of command, how this policy may relate to contracts, and numerous changes to the draft. It was agreed that Mr. Aither will make some amendments to the draft. Mr. Aither will send a copy of the draft policy (that was presented this evening) to Mrs. Gilbert, for posting in the addendum. Mr. Aither will amend the document as discussed and forward a copy to Mr. Wells. Mr. Valsangiacomo suggested that given the number of changes that need to be made, the amended draft be reviewed at the next Policy Committee meeting prior to presentation to the Board.

The Committee agreed by consensus to table discussion until the next Policy Committee meeting

5.3.3 Personnel File Policy (B32) – Consider

It was noted that this policy is not required. It is believed that much of what is in this policy is covered in the Master Agreement, and that it may not be necessary to adopt this policy. Mrs. Marold expressed concern that the policy title refers to personnel files, but most of the policy pertains to background checks. Mrs. Marold advised that some of what is in the policy is not in agreement with the practices of the BUUSD, e.g., the BUUSD does not keep record checks. Record checks have to be destroyed after 3 years and are kept separately from personnel files. Mrs. Marold has reviewed the 3 contracts and though they differ some, they all reference personnel files. Mrs. Marold provided an overview of the procedures relating to when background checks are required, including protocols for background checks for volunteers.

The Committee agreed by consensus to recommend to the Board that this policy, Personnel File Policy B32, not be adopted.

5.3.4 District Equity Policy (C29) – Recommended

Brief discussion was held. The Committee believes this policy should be reviewed after implementation of the Racial Equity Policy.

The Committee agreed by consensus to table discussion of the District Equity Policy (C29) until the fall of 2021.

5.3.5 Electronic Communications Use and Retention Policy (F22) – Recommended

Discussion was held regarding formatting revisions. Mr. Ajanma advised that he has read the policy and noted that it is focused on e-mail communication more than anything else and he believes that electronic communication relates to much more than just e-mail. Mr. Ajanma queried regarding including other types of electronic communication in the policy. Mr. Ajanma advised regarding other types of electronic communication and records. Discussion included the definition of ‘school district business’ and how the policy relates to use/retention/access/disclosure to data stored or sent/received from personal devices. Mr. Valsangiacomo provided some input relating to ‘targeted’ requests for disclosure of information from personal devices and e-mail accounts. In response to a query regarding retention of information posted on social media, Mr. Aither advised that the BUUSD does not retain social media postings made by staff members. Mr. Aither advised that if something posted on social media is provided to the school for use in a possible investigation, the copy of the post now belongs to the BUUSD and would be retained. Mr. Aither advised that many of his investigations do pertain to complaints of items posted on social media. Mr. Aither believes the policy is in line with current practices. Mr. Aither noted that the BUUSD has software that monitors for threats to self and others. Mr. Ajanma believes the policy is consistent with the Acceptable Use Agreement. The Committee made some minor amendments to the policy. Mr. Ajanma advised that all data is retained, even after employees leave the BUUSD. The ‘vault’ has unlimited retention ability. It was confirmed that when the BUUSD changes software, e.g. Power School to Infinite Campus, the transition to the new company includes transferring of data to a storage system and the data is retrievable. Mr. Valsangiacomo cautioned that if individuals use their personal accounts, they need to preserve any school business data. Mr. Wells suggested that at some point, it might be beneficial to advise employees to use Google Chat for school business related correspondence. Mr. Valsangiacomo advised regarding issues that other boards have experienced due to utilizing their phones for messaging during board meetings. Mr. Isabelle requested clarification that procedures rather than policies are being used for operations. The Acceptable Use Agreement is what is currently being used (in lieu of a policy). Mr. Ajanma clarified that the Acceptable Use Agreement is referenced in Policy D3 (Acceptable Use Of Electronic Resources & The Internet Policy). Policy F22 is consistent with Policy D3.

The Committee agreed by consensus to amend the Electronic Communications Use and Retention Policy (F22), and to present a First Reading of the policy to the Board.

5.3.6 Community Use of School Facilities (E20) – Recommended

It was noted that this policy contains many footnotes that may not be necessary. Discussion was held regarding fees charged at the different facilities, who is charged, who uses facilities for free, a possible review of the fee schedules, and how fees were determined (based on costs associated with expenses related to use of different buildings/sections of buildings). It was suggested that the fee schedules be determined by the Facilities Committee. It was noted that costs most likely vary between buildings based on the cost to maintain/clean different areas, necessary supervision, and security issues. It was suggested that additional information (including Fee Schedules and Rental Request Forms) be obtained and that the Committee review the policy at their next regular meeting with Mr. Evans in attendance. It was noted that this policy is currently adopted and there are no substantive changes noted in the VSBA revised version.

The Committee agreed by consensus to table discussion of the Community Use of School Facilities Policy (E20) until the next Policy Committee meeting.

5.4 Website – Policy to Procedure Link Discussion

Mr. Allen advised that he has been briefed on the topic. Mr. Allen advised of his understanding of what is being requested (links from policies to associated procedures and vice versa). Mr. Allen is currently aware of only one policy with a linked procedure (C10 and C10-P). It was noted that Title IX will need a similar link. Mr. Allen queried regarding additional procedures that are not yet on the web site. Mr. Aither advised that many procedures are verbal and haven't been documented. It will be a large undertaking to write all of the necessary procedures. Procedures may vary between schools. Mr. Allen believes the links can be established quite quickly after they are developed/written. Mr. Allen queried regarding whether or not adding a link to procedures is considered altering the policy. It may be possible to add a 'procedures' column in the 'policy index'. Mr. Wells advised that whenever possible/feasible, procedures should be the same for all schools. Mr. Aither is concerned that it may not look good to have many policies on the web site, with only a few having associated procedures. Mr. Allen advised that he can create subfolders (for procedures) under each policy. This method would be very easy to put in place and would maintain consistency. This method would make the lack of written procedures (for most policies) less visible. It is important to assure that procedures are readily accessible. The process of documenting procedures should be prioritized by policies with the highest liability. Mr. Aither will begin the process of identifying high liability policies and will start writing procedures. Mr. Allen and Mr. Aither will work together to develop templates for procedures. It was suggested that all schools develop procedures for the same policies at the same time. It may be possible that some schools already have written procedures that do not exist at other schools. Mr. Wells would like the Policy Committee to review procedures for consistency, and prefers that procedures be as broad as possible. Mr. Wells would like to work with Mr. Aither to develop procedures, and utilize any existing school level procedures for informational purposes. It was noted that there is some procedural information in student handbooks. It is hoped that many procedures can be copied from VSBA policies or student handbooks. There is concern that many procedures are not documented and could be 'lost' if an employee leaves the BUUSD. It was agreed that Mr. Aither will work with Mr. Allen regarding the web site layout and will work to prioritize procedures to be written, and work with Mr. Wells on developing procedures.

6. Old Business

6.1 Racial Equity Policy

Mr. Wells advised that the Policy Committee informed the Board that they will move forward with using the services of Arielle King and Jameson Davis to engage in a process to develop a racial equity policy. Mr. Isabelle queried regarding weaving this project in with the Vision, Mission, and Strategic Goal initiative. Mr. Wells reported that he believes some conversation of this has been occurring. Mr. Isabelle will raise this question at the upcoming Communications Committee meeting. A timetable has not yet been established for creation of the Racial Equity Policy.

7. Other Business

Mr. Isabelle suggested that Mr. Valsangiacomo run for a BUUSD School Board Seat.

It was noted that generally the Policy Committee tries to have policies approved (First and Second Readings), by the same Board, so if there are policies for approval, the Committee may wish to present policies (to the Board) that can have both readings occur prior to the election of new Board Members. This is an existing protocol, but is not mandatory.

8. Future Agenda Items

- BUUSD Policy Index Review
- VSBA Policy Index Review
- Public Complaints About Personnel Policy (B22)
- Community Use of School Facilities Policy (E20)
- Field Trips (D30) – Spring 2021 – TBD
- District Equity Policy (C29) - Fall of 2021 - TBD

9. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is Monday, February 15, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

10. Adjournment

The Committee agreed by consensus to adjourn at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin