

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

**MINUTES**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Sonya Spaulding (BC) - Chair  
Victoria Pompei (BT) – Vice Chair  
Gina Akley (BT)  
Emel Cambel (BC)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Paul Malone

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

David Wells, Superintendent  
Mary Ellen Simmons, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction  
Emmanuel Ajanma, Director of Technology  
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  
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager  
Brenda Waterhouse, SHS Principal

**PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT:**

David Delcore – Times Argus	Jennifer Luck-Hill	Alexander Maurice	Ted Mills	Tim Sanborn
Jan Trepanier	Diane Solomon	Rachael VanVliet		

**1. Call to Order**

The Chair, Mrs. Spaulding, called the Tuesday, January 5, 2021 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:31 p.m., which was held via video conference.

**2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda**

Add 3.1 Public Comment  
Add 3.2 Student Voice

**3. Public Comment**

**3.1 Public Comment**

None.

**3.2 Student Voice**

Alexander Maurice addressed the Committee and gave a presentation titled ‘My Concerns Regarding the Proposed BUUSD Budget’. The presentation outlined his concerns; including his primary concern regarding how decisions are made regarding fund allocations that affect everyday resources and activities of the student population, concern that cost per-pupil numbers are inaccurate, how the Board will cut 1% off salaries, questioning the purpose of having SROs in middle/elementary schools, concern over substantial increases for Behavior Support and the BTMES Principal’s Office, inconsistency in budgets between schools, concern over the expense of the SEA Program, and difficulty in reading/interpreting the budget document, including the inability to perform a search function. Mr. Maurice concluded his presentation by providing his suggestions for how the budget should be modified. Mr. Maurice was thanked for his presentation. Mrs. Spaulding advised that she believes some of his information may be incorrect or require clarification, and volunteered to provide Mr. Maurice with additional information/clarification. Mrs. Spaulding would like to address

all of Mr. Maurice's questions, and asked that he send a copy of the presentation document to her so that she may identify each question and provide an answer via e-mail. The Committee will answer some of Mr. Maurice's questions under agenda item 5.2.

#### **4. Approval of Minutes**

##### **4.1 December 15, 2020 BUUSD Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

**The Committee agreed by consensus to approve the Minutes of the December 15, 2020 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting.**

#### **5. New Business**

##### **5.1FY21 Year-end Projections**

Mrs. Perreault advised that there are no significant changes since the last report. Expenses and encumbrances have been updated as appropriate and balances have been changed to reflect those changes. Mrs. Perreault cautioned that it is early in the budget year, during a pandemic, so trends may be skewed some. With increased in-person learning, it is expected that there will be some increases in supply expenses. The projections have been very conservative. Mrs. Perreault believes the 'budget to actuals' will be favorable. There is currently a projected surplus of approximately \$300,000. In response to a query regarding the impact of COVID monies, Mrs. Perreault advised that COVID expenses are not included in this budget/projection. COVID expenses are tracked separately. Mrs. Perreault advised regarding how COVID expenses are covered and the resulting reduction from the State Education Fund (for budgeted monies that were spent on COVID related items).

##### **5.2 FY22 Budget Development**

The Committee responded to Mr. Maurice's questions and concerns. Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of how the cost per pupil is determined, including the calculations required by the State in determining the 'equalized pupil' count, including 'weighting'. Additionally, Mrs. Perreault provided additional information relating to Special Education expenses, which are separate from General Education expenses. Mrs. Perreault clarified that pupil counts do include students who are placed out of district. Mrs. Perreault will perform additional research to determine the cause of a significant change in pupil counts. Mrs. Spaulding clarified that the budget being discussed is for next school year, not the current year, thus the reduction does not impact this year's budget, but rather is a number to be used during negotiations for next year. Administrators advised regarding the purpose that SRO's serve in the elementary and middle schools. The main role of the SRO is not 'law enforcement', but rather involves building relationships with students, parents, and community members. The SRO acts, in part, as a social worker and provides services year round, not just during the academic year. The SRO's position is essential to the school community. In addition to an inquiry regarding the possible reduction to sports, it was noted that administrators also believe that sports are important, but there are other sports options available in Barre. It was also clarified that the draft of the budget that includes a possible reduction in sports is not part of the budget that will be presented to the Board. The cuts identified under the '2% budget' are possible cuts that may be made if the budget does not pass. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that the sports transportation reduction under the proposed budget relates to a recent change that allows for SHS students to compete against teams that are located closer to Barre, thus resulting in approximately \$10,000 less in transportation costs. Mrs. Spaulding acknowledged that the budget document can be challenging to read, but that the BUUSD is required to use a certain reporting format and Mrs. Perreault provides additional documents to outline changes. Mrs. Perreault advised regarding changes to the budget (5 budgets into 1 under consolidation). The budget report is presented based on the financial system and State requirements, though Mrs. Perreault is open to feedback. Mrs. Perreault will research to see if the entire budget can be presented in a different format so that a search function would be possible. Mrs. Anderson provided an overview of the SEA Program, which has been in existence under different names for approximately a decade. Some of the increase for the SEA Program involves voter approved construction of a new building to house the program. Expansion of the Program is to serve additional students from within the district, and then if there is space available, bring in tuitioned students. Mr. Malone provided a brief overview of changes to Special Education including; changes to reimbursement, a shortage of available openings at outplacement facilities, and various State requirements. It was noted that Special Education costs increase significantly every year due to requirements that must be met. Mrs. Anderson advised that statewide, the needs of students are changing and increasing. It is very costly when students need to be sent to an out of district placement. The BUUSD is trying to develop a more intensive program to allow the BUUSD to serve more of its students. Mrs. Pompei wants the record to reflect that in previous meetings, tuitioning of out of district students to the SEA Program has been discussed as a source of revenue. Mr. Maurice was thanked for attending the meeting and providing feedback. Mrs. Spaulding will review Mr. Maurice's presentation and respond to Mr. Maurice on any questions that were not answered in this discussion.

Mrs. Perreault advised that Draft 3 is well organized/documented and she has nothing to add at this time. Mrs. Pompei queried regarding pupil counts. Mrs. Perreault advised that 2019 counts were used because this year's counts are a bit confusing and may not reflect what the population will be next year. Due to COVID, student counts have been reduced because some parents have sent their students to private schools or are home schooling (but may be returning). Mr. Wells advised that a survey is going out to parents regarding whether or not they plan to return next year. Mrs. Pompei advised that SHS is already presenting a negative budget and that if items need to be cut, she does not feel any additional cuts should be made to the SHS portion of the budget. Mrs. Pompei queried regarding the possible reductions to staff, and is concerned that savings reflect cuts of long-term (higher paid staff), and may not accurately reflect savings, as any staff cuts, due to union rules, would require the reduction of newer hires that are probably making less money.

Mrs. Perreault advised that the proposed cuts are an estimate only. Mrs. Akley reiterated the Board's responsibility to set the budget, and administrator's responsibility to utilize the budget. Mrs. Akley acknowledged that a budget increase of 2% is not what she wants

and she does not believe the 2% version provides enough detail. Ms. Cambel would like more information regarding how these cuts will impact education. Mr. Wells advised that creation of the budget draft was a team effort, taken very seriously by all involved in its creation. Mr. Wells went on record to voice concern that a 2% budget increase would have a negative impact. Mr. Coon provided an overview of reductions to the BCEMS portion of the budget. Mrs. Anderson provided clarification regarding a \$20,000 reduction in SPED, which does not result in the loss of a staff member. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that there is a reduction to a program that has been reduced due to the impact of COVID. It will most likely take a while to re-build the program, so it was thought that this reduction in FY22 would not cause much of a negative impact. Brief discussion was held regarding the letters from the State relating to '2020 Equalization Study Results' (these documents were included in the packet). Mrs. Perreault advised that the Barre Town reappraisal will be lodged in April 2021 and will have an impact. Mrs. Perreault and Mr. Allen will work to provide community members with information related to the CLA (which will be closer to 100% after the Barre Town reappraisal has been lodged). Mr. Malone is concerned that both communities will have double digit tax increases. Brief discussion was held regarding the SEA Program, including the return of some students (to an in-house program). Mrs. Spaulding would like the Comparative Tax Rate Calculations presented to the communities, and would like to see revised information that reflects how the tax rate will change in Barre Town once the reappraisal is lodged. Mrs. Perreault advised that she can add an additional column to assist with explaining how the tax rate will impact community members.

**The Committee agreed by consensus to present Budget Draft #3 as is, to the Board on 01/07/21, with a recommendation for its approval.**

#### **6. Old Business**

Mrs. Perreault advised that the Audit has been finalized and will be presented to the Board for approval on 01/15/2021.

#### **7. Other Business**

None.

#### **8. Items for Future Agendas**

- FY21 Year-end Projections - February
- Solar Management Follow-up – February
- Staff Appreciation (under Efficiency Studies) – March
- Coordinated Supply Purchases/Procedures (non-custodial) Follow-up (April)

#### **9. Next Meeting Date**

Mrs. Perreault will not be available to meet on 02/02/2021.

The Tuesday, February 2, 2021 meeting has been cancelled.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at 5:30 p.m., via video conference.

Board reorganization will not occur until 03/11/2021.

The Tuesday, March 2, 2021 meeting has been cancelled.

The March meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 16, 2021 at 5:30 p.m., via video conference.

#### **10. Adjournment**

**The Committee agreed by consensus to adjourn at 7:18 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Andrea Poulin*