

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**
Via Video Conference – Google Meet
March 16, 2021 - 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sarah Pregent (BC) - Chair
Renee Badeau (BC) – Vice Chair
Gina Akley (BT)
Chris Parker (BT)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alice Farrell
Sonya Spaulding

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
Hayden Coon, BCEMS Principal
Chris Hennessey, BCEMS Principal
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Jennifer Nye, BTMES Principal
Erica Pearson, BTMES Principal
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager
Brenda Waterhouse, SHS Principal

PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT:

Josh Howard Paul Malone Ted Mills

1. Call to Order

The Superintendent, Mr. Wells, called the Tuesday, March 16, 2021 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:31 p.m., which was held via video conference.

2. Organize (Chair / Vice-Chair)

The Committee Agreed by consensus to appoint Sarah Pregent as the Finance Committee Chair.

The Committee agreed by consensus to appoint Renee Badeau as the Finance Committee Vice-Chair.

3. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 6.3 Recommendation of Board Members to Review Warrants

4. Public Comment

None.

5. Approval of Minutes

5.1 February 16, 2021 BUUSD Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

The Committee agreed by consensus to approve the Minutes of the February 16, 2021 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting.

6. New Business

6.1FY22 Budget Revisions

Three documents were distributed;
'FY22 BUUSD Proposed Budget Considerations – Draft 4, Revote May 11'
'BUUSD FY22 Proposed Budget, Expense Summary – Draft 3 – 1/7/21'
BUUSD FY22 Draft 3 Budget – Vote Failed 3/2/21

Mrs. Perrault advised that administrators identified some reductions in the budget. The overall result for Draft 4 is a reduction of \$ 565,000 (\$265,000 in reductions and utilizing \$300,000 more from the fund balance) and results in a 3.41% increase in per-pupil spending. Draft 4 includes using a total of \$500,000 from the Fund Balance. Documentation in the packet includes addressing the Board's goals and priorities. Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of how the Board's goals and priorities were considered when making reductions for Draft 4. It was noted that there is currently approximately \$644,000 available in the fund balance. Mr. Malone asked for confirmation that the bulk of the reduction in Draft 4 results from utilizing additional fund balances rather than making cuts to budget line items. Lengthy discussion was held, including; use of grant funds, concern of academic recovery, shifts in funding (from budget to grant funds), long term impacts of utilizing grant funds for special education positions (absorbing the financial impact when grant funds are no longer available), cuts to technology equipment (use ESSER funds) and supplies, purchasing supplies in June 2021 (for FY22) as a surplus is expected, tax rate calculations, per-pupil spending (\$15,554 an increase of 3.41%), concerns relating to the SEA Project (including the number of students served and the possibility for accepting tuition paying students from other districts), how long it will take the SEA Program to break even and/or result in savings, savings related to bringing outplaced students back into the district, the possibility of adding an additional administrative position (MTSS Coordinator), concern that the administrative budget at the Central Office is too high, lack of capacity at outside placement facilities, the impact of Act177 (SPED funding), purchasing practices, the scope of the required Recovery Plan, the possibility of reducing the anticipated increases for contracted, non-contracted, and administrative staff, possible savings due to attrition, adherence to class size policies, non-contracted salaries that are not comparable, feedback that many negative budget votes were due to dis-satisfaction with hybrid learning, feedback that some voters want an increase of less than 3%, concern that RIF notices are due by April 1, 2021 (which is prior to the vote) and that after April 1 the BUUSD will not be able cut staff, community input that last year's budget had a substantial increase, concern that the FY22 budget is too high and is not sustainable, the fact that salaries and benefits are too high due in part to required State-wide bargaining of Health Care Agreements that have had a substantial impact to the BUUSD budget, the substantial increase to the BCEMS principal's office (was due to shifting of positions – there is actually a savings of \$40,000 – office staff has decreased from 8 to 5 since the new Principal and Vice-Principal started), increases to athletics, funds for BTMES field trips transportation (BCEMS raises funds for field trips – so this is not equitable – it was suggested that the funds be cut from BTMES, or that an equal amount be added to the BCEMS budget), additional equity issues (only BTMES has a duplicating clerk), a suggestion that some line items be 'flat lined', reluctance to set a specific percentage of how much the budget can increase (may cause loss of necessary staff), the anticipated FY21 surplus of approximately \$640,000, the risk of cutting too much and then having significant increases in future budgets (in order to meet student needs), concern that the schools have too many principals (School Quality Standards from the State Board of Education advise regarding the number of principals a school should have and the BUUSD operates within those Standards), consideration for community members who do not have children in the school system (many of whom are on fixed incomes), and the possibility of presenting additional options to the Board. The Committee was polled and is comfortable presenting Draft 4 to the Board. It was suggested that additional cuts (necessary if the second vote fails) be identified and clearly identified so that voters understand what will be lost if additional cuts need to be made. It was suggested that voters be clearly informed regarding the portions of the budget that are not within control of the Board, specifically, the required State-wide Health Care Agreement and negotiations. It was suggested that the Communications Committee and the Communications Specialist work on ways to inform community members about the budget and to stress that the Board is working to develop a budget that is in the best interest of the students. Mr. Wells cautioned regarding protocols relating to budget promotion, and advised of a school district that experienced legal issues resulting from improper budget promotion. Based on a query, brief discussion was held regarding the possibility of adding community members to the Finance Committee and it was noted that procedures/protocols for adding community members to Committees has not been finalized. It was clarified that a decision had previously been made that community members who are officially on Committees do 'vote' on recommendations to the Board. If a Committee (regardless of the make-up of the committee, all Board Members or a mix of Board and Community Members) cannot reach consensus on a matter, that lack of consensus is what is reported back to the Board. The Board will need to hold discussions regarding the process for adding community members to committees. Discussion returned to the Draft budget. Mrs. Akley stressed the need to document a contingency plan so that community members are aware of what will be lost if the budget vote fails. It was noted that the list of possible cuts that was drafted earlier in the budget process, was not included in the meeting packet and that list should be revisited, with additional detail being provided (specific items that would be cut from categories identified for reductions).

The Committee agreed by consensus to recommend Draft 4 of the FY22 budget to the Board on 03/25/21, and to hold a Special Committee Meeting on Monday, March 22, 2021 for the purpose of identifying contingencies (a Draft 5), and that Warnings for both drafts be included in the Board packet.

6.2 Report of COVID Related Expenses, Funds and Grants

A document titled 'COVID-19 Funding – March 16, 2021' was distributed.

Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of the document which outlines grants (received thus far), allocations, expenses to date, and the use of funds. Mrs. Perreault advised that not all of the ESSER II funding detail is available at this time.

6.3 Designation of Board Members to Review Warrants

Mrs. Perreault provided a brief overview of the procedures for approval of AP Warrants and advised that the Committee is being asked to make a recommendation to the Board (for approval) regarding individuals who shall be named as primary and secondary designees for review of Warrants. It was noted that when neither designee is available, the Superintendent or the Business Manager are also authorized to approve the Warrants.

The Committee agreed by consensus to make a recommendation to the Board that Sarah Pregent be named as the primary designee for Warrant Review, and that Renee Badeau be named as the secondary/alternate designee for Warrant Review.

7. Old Business

7.1FY21 Year-end Projections

Two documents were distributed;

BUUSD – FY21 Year End Projection Report (03/16/21)

BUUSD Expense Report (dated 03/11/21)

The BUUSD has an anticipated surplus of approximately \$640,000. Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of the factors contributing to the surplus. Mrs. Perreault advised regarding the reduction of \$450,000 in Ed Spending (Line 135 of the narrative). There are two different types of expenditures relating to CRF (COVID Relief Funds). COVID related non-budgeted expenditures (masks etc.) and also budgeted expenditures (e.g. utilizing buses to deliver meals during COVID). Some of the budgeted expenses, such as transportation (that wasn't being provided while schools were closed) was repurposed for COVID related reasons. Because there was such a large deficit in the State Education Fund, the Agency asked that districts supplant some of those budgeted expenditures and charge them to COVID funding to off-set education spending.

8. Other Business

None.

9. Items for Future Agendas

- FY22 Budget Draft 4 – Options for Additional Reductions (Special Meeting on 03/22/21)

- Coordinated Supply Purchases/Procedures (non-custodial) Follow-up - TBD
- Staff Appreciation (under Efficiency Studies) - TBD
- FY21 Year-end Projections

10. Next Meeting Date

A Special Meeting of the Committee will be held on Monday, March 22, 2021 at 5:p.m. via Google Meet

The next Regular Committee Meeting is Tuesday, April 16, 2021 at 5:30 p.m., via Google Meet.

11. Adjournment

The Committee agreed by consensus to adjourn at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin