

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD MEETING**

Via Video Conference – Google Meet  
March 25, 2021 - 5:30 p.m.

**MINUTES**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Sonya Spaulding (BC) – Chair  
Alice Farrell (BT) – Vice Chair  
Guy Isabelle (At-Large) - Clerk  
Gina Akley (BT)  
Renee Badeau (BC)  
Tim Boltin (BC)  
Christine Parker (BT)  
Sarah Pregent (BC)  
Abigayle Smith (BT)

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

David Wells, Superintendent  
Mary Ellen Simmons, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction  
Emmanuel Ajanma, Director of Technology  
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

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Ken Christman	Allison Courtemanche	Erika Dolan	Josh Howard
Jenny Hyslop	Stefanie Kingzett	Colleen Kresco	Jake Larrabee	Patrick Leene
Ted Mills	Rebekah Mortenson	Megan Spaulding	Jan Trepanier	Rachael Van Vliet

**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 Chair, Mrs. Spaulding, called the Thursday, March 25, 2021, Regular meeting to order at 5:31 p.m., which was held via video conference.

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

Add 5.6 Addition of Budget Informational Session to Warning

In response to a query regarding whether Board training meets the legal requirement for Executive Session, Mr. Wells advised that legal counsel believes that training does meet requirements for Executive Session.

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as amended.**

**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 – March 11, 2021 Regular Meeting**

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to approve as amended, the Minutes of the March 11, 2021 Regular Meeting.**

## **5. Current Business**

### **5.1 New Hires**

The resumes and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Forms for Erica Theisen (BTMES Special Educator – Middles School), Katherine Weisheit (BUUSD Special Services – School Psychologist), and Stephanie Olsen (CVCC Exploratory Tech Instructor) were distributed. Mr. Wells provided an overview of the candidates' education and experience and advised that these candidates are being hired for the 2021/2022 academic year.

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Erica Theisen, Katherine Weisheit, and Stephanie Olsen.**

### **5.2 FY22 Budget Approval (Draft 4) for Revote**

A document titled 'FY22 BUUSD Proposed Budget Considerations – Draft 4, Revote May 11' was distributed.

A document titled BUUSD Budget 2021 – 2022 – Draft 4 Revote May 11, 2021 – Projected Comparative Tax Rate Calculations Revised 03/16/21' was distributed.

Mrs. Pregent provided an overview of budget changes made to reduce the budget, including; using an additional \$300,000 from the Tax Stabilization Fund, and an additional \$265,000 in reductions. It was noted that no positions were cut, but rather some positions were shifted to grant funding. Additionally, reductions were made to technology equipment at the Central Office, Transportation, and Supplies (items that can be purchased in June 2021). Draft 4 results in an increase of 3.8%. Mrs. Perreault advised that the Barre City tax rate will increase by 2¢, and the Barre Town Tax Rate will decrease by 27¢ (due to the reappraisal / CLA at 100%). The new cost per pupil is \$15,554, an increase in per-pupil spending of 3.41% (over FY21), 10% lower than the state average of \$17,133. In response to a query regarding the contingency plan in the event the vote fails, Mr. Wells advised that Draft 4 Options 2 and 3 are available. It was noted that should the budget vote fail, another vote could be held by 07/01/21. It was confirmed that RIF notices must go out by 04/01/21, which is prior to the vote. Mr. Wells advised that it is believed that all current staff are necessary for the upcoming school year (and ratios are in line with teacher/student ratios in policy), and that administrators and the Board would need to look for reductions in other areas (employees not under contract, repairs, supplies etc.). Concern was voiced regarding funding of positions utilizing ESSER grants, and how those positions will be financed once grant funding is no longer available. Additional discussion included possible reasons for the budget vote failure (the increase is too high and/or tax payers are not pleased with the current product), calculation of tax increases/decreases based on the most recent appraisal, possible relief for tax payers under income sensitivity equations (approximately 68% of tax payers in the City and the Town will fall under the category of qualifying for tax credits), concern related to the elimination of a position in Technology (it was recommended that an employee with concern regarding the possible elimination of a position, contact HR regarding their concern), concern that 75% of the budget is attributed to salaries and benefits, policy related to staff/student ratios, concern that some high school students may opt for Adult Basic Education, concern that student counts for next year have not been finalized, a query regarding use of contracted staff should student counts drop dramatically, and concerns that budget cuts will not help the budget pass because many are not happy with the current hybrid learning product. It was clarified that the budget being presented to voters is for the next academic year and it is anticipated that all students will be back to full time in-person learning. Mrs. Perreault advised that an analysis performed for an 8 year period indicates the average tax increase for that timeframe was 3% for Barre City and 0% for Barre Town.

**On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board voted 8 to 1 to approve FY22 Budget Draft 4 for an expenditure budget of \$ 50,372,954.**

**Mrs. Akley, Ms. Badeau, Mrs. Farrell, Mr. Isabelle, Ms. Parker, Mrs. Pregent, Ms. Smith and Mrs. Spaulding voted for the motion. Mr. Boltin voted against the motion.**

### **5.3 Warning Approval for Revote**

Three BUUSD Warnings for the May 11, 2021 Vote were distributed. Based on the Board's approval of a draft budget, the Board will approve the appropriate Warning. Mrs. Perreault advised that the required Budget Informational Meeting will need to be added to the Warning. The Warning will be amended to include the appropriate language to advise of the Informational Meeting that will be held on Tuesday, May 10, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

**On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Board unanimously voted to approve as amended, with appropriate language to advise of the Budget Informational Meeting, the 'Barre Unified Union School District Warning for the May 11, 2021 Vote', with an expenditure budget of \$ 50,372,954.**

### **5.4 Approval of Designated and Alternative Finance Committee Persons to Sign Warrant**

Mrs. Perreault provided a brief overview of the Warrant procedures, and advised that it is the recommendation of the Finance Committee to designate Mrs. Pregent as the primary Board Member to sign Warrants, and to designate Ms. Badeau as the Alternative Board Member to sign Warrants.

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Ms. Parker the Board unanimously agreed to accept the Finance Committee's recommendation, and voted to designate Mrs. Pregent as the primary Board Member to sign Warrants, and to designate Ms. Badeau as the Alternative Board Member to sign Warrants.**

### **5.5 Process and Timeline for CVCC Director Search**

A document titled 'Director of Central Vermont Career Center Search Process' was distributed. Mrs. Marold advised that the BUUSD has started putting the Hiring Committee together. Mr. Wells provided an overview of the timeline and process of the hiring process. There are currently four candidates for the position.

**There will be a Special Meeting of the Board on 04/15/21 for the purpose of approving the hiring of a candidate.**

### **5.6 Addition of Budget Informational Session to Warning**

This item was discussed and action was taken under Agenda Item 5.3

## **6. Old Business**

### **6.1 Vision, Mission, & Strategic Goals**

The Design Team met on 03/24/21 and is in the process of analyzing the data. Most of the feedback falls into one of four main categories. The Team is beginning to work on defining the Vision and Mission. The Design Team would like to present to the Board on 04/08/21. This date will be confirmed with the Design Team.

### **6.2 Modes of Instruction Update**

A document titled 'Modes of Instruction Update' was distributed. Mr. Wells provided an overview of the information provided in the addendum. The CDC has updated guidance at the Federal level. Mr. Wells provided an overview of the changes. Mr. Wells anticipates revised guidelines from the State of Vermont. Dependent on new guidelines from the State (anticipated 04/04/21), it is anticipated that in-person learning will be increased beginning on 04/12/21. The principals within the district have been working together to plan for the change in social distancing guidelines. Once plans are finalized, they will be shared with the Board and the community. A community member voiced concern regarding not combining Friday's in-service day with the COVID-19 vaccination day. Mr. Wells advised that the in-service day will involve reviewing data and working on the Recovery Plan. A number of the programs slated for professional development involve the use of outside personnel and those individuals could not be rescheduled. The date for the second vaccine was determined by the State. Concern was expressed that the change to social distancing guidelines by the CDC is not being implemented immediately. Mr. Wells advised that the BUUSD must follow the guidance issued by the State of Vermont. In addition to reconfiguration of classrooms, changes will also need to be made to transportation services. Mr. Wells advised that the Secretary of Education will be providing additional information on guidance the first week in April. Ms. Parker would have preferred that professional development and vaccinations have been coordinated, citing concern that many students will only receive one day of in-person learning the week of 03/29/21.

## **7. Other Business/Round Table**

Mrs. Pregent thanked Mrs. Perreault and administrators for their work on budget Draft 4 and is pleased that the Board approved the latest draft.

Mrs. Farrell queried regarding future discussion on high school students who are not participating in hybrid learning. This item is listed as a future agenda item and will be included as part of the Recovery Plan.

Mrs. Akley reported that she has heard from a teacher who is feeling 'a bit beat up lately', and she publicly thanked the teachers for all of the work they have performed during this challenging year.

Ms. Parker thanked Mrs. Pregent for her work on the Finance Committee and for serving as Chair of that Committee.

Ms. Parker is excited about the upcoming 04/12/21 date of a return to more in-person learning.

Ms. Badeau and Ms. Smith echoed the sentiments of Mrs. Akley, and thanked the Finance Committee for the extra meeting and the work they performed to allow budget Draft 4 to be presented this evening.

Mrs. Spaulding advised that she sent a poll regarding availability for a Board Retreat. Given the responses she has received, she will be sending out an additional poll with expanded dates.

## **8. Future Agenda Items**

The next meeting is Thursday, April 8, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference – Google Meet

A Special Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, April 15, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. for the purpose of selecting a new Director for the Central Vermont Career Center

- Administrator and Superintendent Evaluations (04/08/21)
- Presentation by Design Team – Vision, Mission & Strategic Goals Initiative (04/08/21)
- Administrative Job Descriptions: Superintendent of Schools & Assistant Superintendent of Instruction (TBD)
- Policy B20 – Personnel Recruitment, Selection, Appointment and Background Check – Legal Counsel Review (TBD)
- Use of Facilities: Consistent Fee Schedule and Rental Application Form (TBD)
- Change in Articles of Agreement (TBD)
- Negotiations/Personnel Committee (TBD)
- Discussion of Students Opting Not To Participate/Attend School During COVID/Student Engagement (roll this item into the State Required Recovery Plan (TBD)

## **9. Executive Session as Needed**

### **9.1 Student Matter (Appeal to Board)**

### **9.2 Open Meeting Laws and Robert’s Rules of Order – Basics for Boards Training**

Items proposed for discussion in Executive Session include a Student Matter (Appeal to the Board), and Basics for Boards Training (Open Meeting Laws and Robert’s Rules of Order).

Mr. Delcore voiced concern that the entire discussion of Board Training meets the qualifying requirements for Executive Session. Mrs. Poulin read from 1 VSA §. Executive Sessions (excerpts) requirements that state “Confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the body”. It was noted that Board training has, in the past, been held in a public forum.

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Wells and Pietro Lynn in attendance, at 6:42 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 to discuss the items proposed for discussion.**

Mr. Wells briefly exited Executive Session and reported that BUUSD counsel, Pietro Lynn, has advised that training session with the attorney is not a public meeting, and is not an Executive Session matter, but stated that Board training can be private. Only the Student Matter will be discussed in Executive Session. Board training will occur after the Board exits Executive Session, but training will not be open to the public (in an open meeting).

Mr. Delcore, for the record, objects to holding the training meeting in private, “How does the Board legally meet, without legally meeting”. Mr. Delcore advised that when the Board meets, they are either in open session or closed session (Executive Session). On a matter of principle, Mr. Delcore reiterated his objection for the record.

The remaining information was provided by the Board Clerk.

**On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 7:01 p.m.**

## **10. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:02 p.m.**

**The Board went into training.**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Andrea Poulin*