

DRAFT

BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD MEETING

Via Video Conference – Google Meet
May 13, 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 (BT)
Tim Boltin (BC)
Chris Parker (BT)
Sarah Pregent (BC)
Abigayle Smith (BC)

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	Tamara Cooley	Jody Emerson	Josh Howard	Joseph Kill
Prudence Krasofski	Patrick Leene	Ben Matthews	Jessica Maurais	Ted Mills
Rebekah Mortensen	Jessica Roy	Heather Slayton	Diane Solomon	Megan Spaulding
Jan Trepanier	Pierre 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, May 13, 2021, Regular meeting to order at 5:30 p.m., which was held via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 6.3 FY22 Budget

Add 7.8 Career Center Governance Committee Meeting Update

Delete 11.3 Personnel – Negotiations – Total Compensation Benefit. 11.3 will be kept as a placeholder.

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, 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

Rachael Van Vliet, from the Barre Educator's Association read a prepared statement conveying the BEA's position that it is essential to have educators involved in the Superintendent hiring process. The BEA believes it is in the best interest of the District to have a committee of stakeholders involved in the decision making process. The BEA has reached out to administrators and HR regarding

DRAFT

this matter and is of the understanding that no hiring committee has been initiated. The BEA is requesting that a hiring committee, (with the necessary stakeholders) be formed, to assure the hiring process is successful.

3.2 Student Voice

None.

4. Consent Agenda

4.1 Approval of Minutes – April 29, 2021 Special Meeting

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to approve as amended, the Minutes of the April 29, 2021 Special Meeting.

5. Current Business

5.1 Personnel Memorandum

5.1.1 New Hires

The resumes and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Forms for Marcus Holmes (SHS PE), Carrie Cook (CVCC Special Needs Coordinator), Nathan Phelps (BTMES 5th Grade), Eirene Mavodones (BCEMS Art 5th – 8th), Adam Rosen (SHS Special Educator), Elysha Thurston (BTMES Pre-K), and Stephanie Dungan (BTMES 7th grade Science) were distributed.

Mr. Wells provided a brief overview of the candidates and whose position they were hired to fill. A community member queried regarding whether or not discussion had been held regarding the need to fill all of these positions. It was noted that filling of these existing positions is necessary.

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Marcus Holmes, Carrie Cook, Nathan Phelps, Eirene Mavodones, Adam Rosen, Elysha Thurston, and Stephanie Dungan.

The vote for hiring an individual to fill one of two Assistant Director of Special Education positions will occur at a future meeting and the necessary documentation will be provided. Some discussion may occur during the Budget discussion (Agenda Item 6.3).

5.1.2 Resignations/Retirements

Letters of resignation from Rebekah Mortensen, Michelle Lynch, Alison Grogan, Jennifer Bisson, Richard Turvey, Mikayla LeBlanc, Aliza Benoit, Allison Payette, Elizabeth (Liz) Ather, Andrea Bixler, and Brian Burgess were distributed.

The Board thanked the resigning/retiring employees for their time and service, and wished them well.

5.2 Summer Camp

Mr. Wells advised that plans are progressing well for the K – age 12 program and that hiring of staff is nearly complete. Registration of students “in need” (as identified by staff), is going well with approximately 180 students registered. It is anticipated that approximately 200 students will participate in this program which is being run in partnership with the Burlington YMCA. Milika Neddo is the Summer Camp Coordinator for the BUUSD. The Program runs five days a week, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and includes integrated academic support. The Program will run through July and the first week of August. In response to a query, Mr. Wells advised that this Program is not specifically for students who ‘fell behind’ during COVID, advising that the overall need related to that is much greater, encompassing approximately 400 students. Additional discussion to address that matter will be held under Agenda Item 5.4. In response to a query regarding opportunities for older students, it was noted that middle school administrators are finalizing a plan for a technology program. Administrators at the high school are working on services for proficiency recovery and keeping students engaged. Ms. Parker conveyed that she believes students need additional services/programs that will assist with social/emotional/mental well-being. Mr. Hennessey advised that the program Future Genius, for middle school students includes many components which address some of these concerns.

5.3 Graduation Dates, Plans, & Participation

A document titled BUUSD Graduation and Step-Up Night Plans – 2021’ was distributed.

Mrs. Waterhouse addressed the Board, advising regarding SHS graduation, which is planned for Saturday, June 26, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. Administrators would like graduation to be ‘as normal’ as possible, and to meet that goal, have included 2 contingency plans in the event of inclement weather. One change this year will include seating students in the bleachers, and parents in the field. A weather delay contingency will allow for outdoor graduation to be held at 3:00 p.m., and if weather continues to be an issue, a 3rd contingency is being planned. It was noted that Board Members traditionally attend graduation and Mrs. Spaulding requested that Board Members make every effort to attend. Mr. Wells advised that CVCC will hold an awards night on June 8, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. at the Barre Auditorium. COVID safety regulations will be in place. The event will be live streamed for those who cannot attend. The event will also be recorded for future viewing. Invitations are being created and will include information related to viewing the ceremony Ms. Pearson advised regarding 8th grade Step-up night on June 17, 2021, with a contingency plan of holding the ceremony on

DRAFT

June 18, 2021. Mr. Hennessey advised that the 8th grade Step-up ceremony for the Ujamaa Team will be June 17, 2021 and the ceremony for the PEAK Team is June 18, 2021. Both ceremonies will be held from 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Due to the success of last year's more personalized celebration, it was agreed to hold a similar presentation this year. Additional details will be forthcoming. Mr. Isabelle queried regarding whether or not the local public access channel has been asked to be present to record the ceremonies for those who cannot attend, and encouraged all Board Members to attend these celebrations. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that the high school is working on both streaming and taping of their graduation ceremony.

5.4 State Required Recovery Plan (including Student Engagement)

A document titled 'Student Engagement Report – Spring, 2021' was distributed.

A document titled 'Vermont Education Recovery Plan' was distributed.

Mr. Wells provided an overview of the State required Recovery Plan work that has been performed thus far. This plan replaces the Continuous Improvement Plan for the upcoming year. The plan includes development of strategies to assist students with recovering social/emotional and academic losses (resulting from the pandemic). The plan has components to address social/emotional learning, student engagement, academic success, and equity. The Recovery Team has been meeting weekly and their work has involved reviewing the Goal Matrix developed by the Vision, Mission, and Strategic Planning Design Team, and aligning the Plan with those goals. Additionally, the team reviewed proposals from administrators regarding the spending of ESSER funds. The Plan also involves utilizing data. The State has advised that for each of the stated categories, the Recovery Plan include no more than two strategies (investments) to improve outcomes for students. The Recovery Plan is in the process of being finalized and will be submitted to the State by the defined deadline. The State will allow the Plan to be revised in the future (for valid reasons). Mr. Wells advised regarding the Student Engagement Report, and provided a summary of the data. It was confirmed that students in the Virtual Academy are not included in the data. Data for SHS virtual learners is included. It was noted that gaps existed prior to the pandemic, but were exacerbated by the pandemic. A community member advised regarding concerns relating to the depth of learning gaps and lack of documentation/definition of what steps will be taken to assure recovery. Additional transparency was requested. It was noted that full recovery will be a multi-year process and more details will be available in the future. Prior to the meeting, Mrs. Spaulding e-mailed a list of Recovery Plan questions to Mr. Wells and Ms. Simmons (and has copied the Board as well), and inquired regarding whether or not all of her questions would be answered in the Final Plan (due to the State 06/01/21). Mr. Wells reiterated that the State wants to see only one or two action steps for each category. The Recovery Plan falls under State and Federal requirements and has specific parameters, and the Recovery Plan will not address all of Mrs. Spaulding's questions. Mrs. Spaulding will present her questions to the Curriculum Committee. Mrs. Spaulding would like additional details communicated to parents, regarding how the BUUSD plans to help their children recover. Mrs. Farrell would like a member/members of the Recovery Team present at the Curriculum Committee meeting, to address questions. Additionally, it would be beneficial to have information provided to the Communications Committee and Communications Office. Mr. Wells advised that the Engagement Report documents engagement since students have returned to full in-person learning.

6. Old Business

6.1 Enrollment/Home Study Update

The District Enrollment/Staffing Report for March 2021 was distributed.

A report titled 'Home Study Report (AOE provided data)' (undated) was distributed.

Brief discussion was held regarding projections for student enrollment for the 2021 / 2022 academic year. SHS is in the process of planning to assist with engaging the home-school community, potentially utilizing ESSER funds. The BCEMS Registrar has been in contact with all home-school families. As there is no Virtual Academy being offered next year, it's presumed that students enrolled in that option will be returning. Students who have traditionally been home-schooled (for several years) were not contacted. BTMES has also reached out to families in a similar fashion. It is believed that enrollment will be higher than anticipated during budget planning. If numbers increase and social distancing requirements are still in place, there may be an issue. Mr. Wells advised that the State has unofficially advised that they believe social distancing guidelines will not be in place during the next academic year.

6.2 Modes of Instruction

Mr. Wells advised that student engagement is high under the in-person instruction model, and he does not anticipate changes to the model at this time. Administrators advised that since the return to in-person learning for older students, all is going very smoothly, though it did take students a little time to adjust to being back in school and starting a new routine. Though not all students will be able to catch up in the remainder of the year, students are very engaged at this time. Academic deficits will continue to be addressed this year and when school starts in the fall.

6.3 FY22 Budget

Five documents were distributed;

'2015 – 2021 BarreCity and Barre Town Homestead Tax Rates/CLS'

'BUUSD Staff-Student Enrollment, May 13, 2021'

'BUUSD May 11, 2021 – Re-vote Exit Survey'

'BUUSD Budget Revote Schedule, May 11th & June 8th'

DRAFT

‘Job Postings | printed May 12, 2021’

Mr. Wells advised that the 2 additional options developed during Draft 4 can be used as a starting point. Mr. Wells and Mrs. Perreault are in the process of meeting with administrators regarding other possible reductions. Mr. Wells advised that he has been in contact with the City and Town Clerks regarding changing the next vote date from 06/08/21 to 06/09/21, as the 9th falls on a Wednesday and would allow for less disruption at BTMES (Wednesdays are half days). Mrs. Spaulding requested that Board Members provide guidance to the Finance Committee and administrators. In response to a query regarding a ‘standard’ for surpluses and deficits for large budgets (approximately \$50,000,000), Mrs. Perreault advised that she is not aware of a ‘standard’ and believes that budgets should be as accurate as possible, based on anticipated revenue and expenses. Mrs. Pregent reported that this year’s anticipated surplus (approximately \$1,400,000) is largely due to changes that occurred due to COVID. Mrs. Pregent has reviewed past and present data, and identified line items that had surpluses in FY20 and FY21. Mrs. Pregent advised that though the budget failed by only 12 votes, there were a large amount of votes against the budget. Board Members provided their personal feedback as well as feedback they have received from community members, including; that the Board consider that the school budget is only a portion of tax bills and there are many other economic factors impacting the community, teacher and administrator contracts are already signed (cutting those positions is not an option), the inability to cut benefits (State negotiated / the Board has no control over benefits – of the 3.41% increase in draft 4, 3% was salaries/benefits), the conflict of trying to increase achievement/proficiency while being asked to cut staff, sports, specials etc., claims that the BUUSD has too many administrators (without documentation to support that claim), proposed simple solutions to very complicated issues, concern that additional cuts will negatively impact students, a suggestion to make many smaller cuts, rather than one large cut, clarification that the budget being drafted/voted on is for FY22, not the current year (teacher increases of 3% are in the current year – no contracts have been negotiated yet for FY22), clarification that teacher contracts needed to be offered prior to the first re-vote date, a request that the list of open positions be reviewed for possible reductions, clarification that teachers do not currently have a contract, but rather have signed letters of intent.

Mrs. Spaulding provided an overview of the proposed budget development/re-vote schedule and advised that a Special Board Meeting will need to be held on 05/20/21. The Board confirmed their agreement to move the re-vote date to 06/09/2021. The Board agreed to distribute an Exit Survey, with results being presented at the 05/18/21 Finance Committee meeting. Mrs. Spaulding provided an overview of the Homestead Tax Rate/CLA report and advised that she believes the Board is being fiscally responsible. A community member expressed concern that the Homestead Tax Rate report is misleading and doesn’t accurately reflect the amount that tax bills will increase.

Budget guidance suggestions from the Board included; consideration of utilizing some of the FY21 surplus for FY22, reviewing open positions, consideration of putting a hold on hiring (except for required teaching staff) until there is a budget in place, a request that adequate time/discussion is held regarding SPED needs (staff and administrative positions), a request to keep the budget increase at or below the cost of living, a request that school budget development be kept in context with what is happening economically and try to keep a level tax rate for everyone (an increase of 0% or at least under 1% increase), a request that consideration also be given to bigger issues (e.g. the BUUSD student population, maintenance costs, and debt service etc.), a request that the BUUSD be able to clearly show what tax bills will look like, a request to keep the budget at an amount that community members can pay for, a request to create a side by side comparison of the FY21 budget to the FY22 budget draft (for comparison purposes), and a request to consider that approximately 60% of tax payers qualify for tax sensitivity credits.

It was announced that the community should be reminded that when the Barre Town community voted down Act 46 (resulting in a forced merger), a lot of money was “left on the table”, including tax stabilization incentives that would have been granted under a voluntary merger.

7. Committee Reports

7.1 Communications Committee

Minutes from the May 6, 2021 meeting were distributed. Mrs. Farrell advised that the majority of the discussion involved promotion of the budget vote, with some discussion being held on the topics of creating an Annual Communications Calendar, and the Vision, Mission, and Strategic Planning Initiative.

The next meeting is Thursday, June 3, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

7.2 Finance Committee

Minutes from the April 6, 2021 meeting were distributed. No discussion was held.

The next meeting is Tuesday, May 18, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

7.3 Facilities & Transportation Committee

Minutes from the April 12, 2021 meeting were distributed. No discussion was held.

The next meeting is Monday, May 24, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

DRAFT

7.4 Policy Committee

Minutes from the April 26, 2021 meeting were distributed. No discussion was held. The next meeting is Monday, May 17, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

7.5 Curriculum Committee

Minutes from the April 27, 2021 meeting were distributed. No discussion was held. The next meeting is Tuesday, May 25, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

7.6 Negotiations Committee

Minutes from the May 3, 2021 meeting were distributed.

Mrs. Akley advised that the Committee met with BEA Representatives on 05/10/21, where they established ground rules and set dates for the next 4 negotiation sessions. Both parties agreed to exchange proposals during those meetings.

The next meeting date is to be determined.

7.7 Regional Advisory Board

Minutes from the May 3, 2021 meeting were distributed. It was noted that there was a very positive report on the Cosmetology Program, with students now able to work in the labs. Ms. Chamberlin is moving on to a new position, and she was thanked for the success of CVCC under her leadership. All classes for next year are full.

The next meeting is October 11, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

7.8 Career Center Governance Committee Update

The Committee met on 05/11/21 and reviewed the board structure of 3 technical centers that have freestanding boards. The Committee reviewed those board structures and held discussion on possible structures for a freestanding CVCC Board. Information regarding these various board structures will be shared in the near future.

8. Other Business/Round Table

The BUUSD FY21 Year-end Projection Report (dated 05/18/21) was distributed.

The BUUSD Central Office Newsletter for May 2021 was distributed.

The SHS Principal's Report (dated 05/06/21) was distributed.

The SHS Newsletter (dated 05/10/21) was distributed.

The SHS Library Newsletter for May 2021 was distributed.

The CVCC Director CTE Bytes Report for May 2021 was distributed.

The BCEMS Co-Principal's Report (dated 05/07/21) was distributed.

The BTMES Building Report (dated 05/13/21) was distributed.

Mrs. Spaulding advised that she moved Board reports off the Agenda, though the reports are included in the Board packet.

Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding any questions on the reports included in the packet and asked administrators if they have anything to add to their reports.

Mrs. Pregent requested that community members with budget questions contact her and advised that her contact information is available on the BUUSD web site.

Mr. Isabelle thanked the Board and staff for their patience and willingness to listen to extensive budget discussions.

Mrs. Akley congratulated administrators and district schools for the anticipated in-person graduation and step-up ceremonies.

Mrs. Farrell advised that she is very pleased to see the students back in school for in-person learning and activities.

Mrs. Farrell requested that administrators advise the Board regarding any anticipated out of state field trips.

Ms. Smith is pleased to learn that the BUUSD will be sponsoring an Orton Gillingham Course.

Ms. Parker advised that her 8th grade students are very excited to be back in school and are able to have an in-person 8th grade graduation. Ms. Parker thanked all who were involved in making this happen.

Ms. Badeau thanked everyone for their efforts on the budget and asked that all involved remember that the budget needs to reflect what is in the best interest of the children.

Ms. Simmons queried regarding moving forward with hiring for one of the Assistant Director of Special Education positions, citing concerns that the 'market' is scarce and delays can result in the loss of candidates, as they accept positions elsewhere. Mr. Wells advised that he will speak with the candidate regarding the Board's intentions. Hiring for this position will be added to the Agenda for

DRAFT

the Special Meeting on 05/20/21. Mrs. Spaulding advised that the Superintendent could move forward with the hiring in accordance with established protocol, but the actual hiring is contingent upon the results of budget discussion.

Mr. Wells thanked everyone for their commitment and work on behalf of the students of Barre.

Mr. Hennessey recognized Josh Allen, who has been working diligently to promote the District schools, by creatively reaching out to the community and posting many videos on social media.

Mr. Coon advised that BCEMS is working creatively to plan a kindergarten celebration. Though plans are not finalized, it is anticipated that a celebration will be held at Playground 2000 as part of Field Days.

Mrs. Waterhouse thanked the Board for their support of Teacher Appreciation Week, and recognized Jeff Bergeron, Director of Buildings and Community Service for the City of Barre. When SHS was short of tables needed for SBAC testing, Mr. Bergeron assisted by lending (free of charge) all the needed tables. The City delivered the tables, allowed SHS to use them for three weeks, and also transported the tables back to the Barre Auditorium. Their efforts were greatly appreciated.

Mrs. Spaulding reiterated that transportation (home) is available for SHS students. This service is underutilized and Mrs. Spaulding encourages those who need transportation to contact the school. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that ridership has been so low that the number of buses has been reduced and routes have been altered. Mrs. Waterhouse reiterated that she believes that it's important to offer this service and she would like it to continue next year, in an expanded form that includes transportation to school as well. Mrs. Waterhouse will be working with the Business Manager and the transportation service provider regarding possible services for next year.

9. Future Agenda Items

Agenda Items for the Special Meeting:

- FY22 Budget
- Warning for Budget Vote
- New Hires

10. Next Meeting Date

There will be a Special Meeting of the Board on Thursday, May 20, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference – Google Meet. The next Regular meeting is Thursday, May 27, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference – Google Meet

11. Executive Session as Needed

11.1 Personnel – Status of Employment

11.2 Personnel – Superintendent Search

~~**11.3 Personnel – Negotiations – Total Compensation Benefit**~~

Items proposed for discussion in Executive Session include two Personnel Matters; Status of Employment and Superintendent Search.

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Wells (Agenda Item 11.1) and Mrs. Marold (Agenda Item 11.1 and 11.2) in attendance, at 8:28 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. Pregent, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 10:20 p.m.

12. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 10:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin