

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING**

Via Video Conference – Google Meet
June 3, 2021 - 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alice Farrell, Chair - (BT)
Abigayle Smith, Vice-Chair (BC)
Guy Isabelle – (At-Large)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sonya Spaulding

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Josh Allen, Communications Specialist
Chris Hennessey, BCEMS Principal

GUESTS PRESENT:

Josh Howard Sue Paxman

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Farrell, called the Thursday, June 3, 2021 BUUSD Communications Committee meeting to order at 5:31 p.m., which was held via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

None.

3. Public Comment

Mr. Hennessey advised that he is pleased to be attending the Facilities/Transportation Committee meeting.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Meeting Minutes for May 6, 2021 BUUSD Communications Committee Meeting

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Ms. Smith, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the May 6, 2021 BUUSD Communications Committee meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 Promotion of Budget Re-vote

Mr. Allen provided a re-cap of recent budget promotion activities, including; distribution of an exit survey (after the 2nd vote), review of survey results, website updates to include the Board approved budget data (for vote 3), distribution of absentee ballot information, distribution of general budget information (including a video), Front Porch Forum and Facebook posts (of messages from the Board), a Letter to the Editor of the Times Argus (from the Board), Mrs. Spaulding's participation in one of JD Green's recently aired "Aired Out" Podcasts, outreach to voters (when misinformation has become known), indirect promotion of the schools (Athletics, JROTC, Art, Music etc.), the filming of an SHS Awards Night presentation (will be first aired on 06/07/21), and videos from BCEMS, BTMES, and SHS which are in production. Additionally, Mr. Allen has been working on simplified graphics for posting on social media. On 06/02/21, Mr. Allen (and Work Base Coordinator, Michelle LaFrancis) met with local organizations to provide more information on Work Based Learning and on how to best highlight the BUUSD's partnership with these 90+ local business partners. A large 'thank you' will be sent to these organizations in the near future. Mr. Hennessey, who was also present at the meeting, reported that this Committee would be proud to see how area businesses are 'stepping up' to participate in this program, which is much more extensive than Mr. Hennessey realized. Brief discussion was held regarding a recent budget related article in the Times Argus which provided a good overview of the budget. Mr. Allen will share the article via the BUUSD's various platforms. Brief discussion was held regarding the complexity of the education funding formula. It was noted that the level of individuals who qualify for an income sensitivity tax credit is large (63%). Mrs. Spaulding voiced concern regarding some recent community social media postings that imply the Board is not being honest with budget promotion. Mrs. Spaulding clarified that the Board has been promoting budget information in the same manner as in the past, and that figures are always posted as accurately as possible. The recent reappraisal in Barre Town makes predicting the tax implication more complex. Ms. Smith advised that she is aware of anxiety in the Barre Town community, as their reappraisals are occurring during a time when the housing market is inflated due to the covid pandemic. Mr. Allen advised regarding the process, whereby he works with several individuals (Business Manager, Superintendent,

Board Chair) to assure budget numbers are accurate, prior to posting them on the web site or social media. A community member voiced concern that the tax increase (resulting from the budget) is too much for tax payers to bear, and though the impact of the reappraisal is not known at this time, taxes will increase based on the fact that the budget is increasing and the District needs more money than last year. Concern was voiced that there was a significant budget increase last year, and if taxes increase too much, the population will leave the area. It was reiterated that the District does not have control over the cost of healthcare; because those benefits are negotiated by the State. Many districts in the state have been negatively impacted by the state- wide negotiation of health care. Ms. Smith encouraged Mr. Howard to take this issue on at the State level, working to move healthcare negotiations back to the community level. It was suggested that during the next round of negotiations, teachers be asked to contribute more towards their healthcare costs. A community member requested that union contract negotiations be open to the public. The BUUSD will continue to promote the budget vote until the vote is held. It was agreed that the recent Times Argus article will be posted on Facebook (by Mr. Allen), and on Front Porch Forum (by Mrs. Farrell). Mrs. Spaulding has sent out a request (to Board Members) to participate in a “Honk & Wave” activity to promote voting. It was noted that some individuals are reporting difficulty finding links to Board/Committee meetings. Mr. Allen advised that the links are posted by the Superintendent’s Executive Assistant, but he will work to make the meeting post/links more visible on Facebook, and will contact Mrs. Gilbert regarding adding a ‘call-in’ number and meeting code to the meeting schedule on the BUUSD web site. It was noted that some of the links work/don’t work based on the technology being used (phones vs. computers etc). It was reported that there is some misinformation circulating regarding how the District will operate on 07/01/21 if no budget has been passed. It is misinformation that the District will have to operate at 87% of the FY21 budget for FY22. The correct information is that the District will operate at 87% of the current (FY21) budget **only until** a budget is passed for FY22.

6. Old Business

6.1 Vision, Mission, and Strategic Planning Update

Mr. Allen reported that the final meeting of the Design Team is 06/16/21. Following that meeting, a final presentation will be given to the Board. Mr. Goodrich sent out a survey to all of the stakeholders and collected feedback, which is being analyzed by the Design Team. Mr. Allen plans to strongly promote the Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan shortly before school begins. Promotion will include staff, students, families, and the community in general. Vision, Mission, and Strategic Planning was suggested as a topic for discussion at the Board Retreat.

7. Other Business

Brief discussion was held regarding upcoming promotion of summer camps and the return to school (full time in-person learning). Brief discussion was held regarding the possible renaming of the school district. It was clarified that the name was mandated by legislation, but that discussions have been held regarding the possibility of changing the name of the District. This item should be presented to the Board at a future time.

Mr. Isabelle thanked the Times Argus for recent athletic related articles, noting that SHS teams have been very successful and are breaking records. Recognition of this is much appreciated and should not go unnoticed.

Mr. Howard inquired regarding any recent fund- raising for athletics. It was noted that COVID restrictions have severely limited fund raising. Mr. Isabelle noted that in the past, community members and local businesses have been very supportive.

Mr. Isabelle encourages individuals to watch the CVCC Awards Night video which will be posted on 06/08/21.

8. Items to be Placed on Future Agendas

- Summer Activities (July)
- Vision, Mission, and Strategic Planning (July)
- Back to School Communication Report (July)
- Brainstorming Possible Name Change for the District including Re-branding (July)

- Work Based Learning (Add to Parking Lot)

9. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, July 1, 2021 at 5:30 p.m., via video conference.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Smith, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin