

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT  
FACILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING**

Via Video Conference – Google Meet  
June 14, 2021 - 5:30 p.m.

**MINUTES**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Guy Isabelle, Chair – (At-Large)  
Sarah Pregent - (BC)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Gina Akley, Vice Chair - (BT)  
Andrew McMichael

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

Hayden Coon, BCEMS Principal  
Jamie Evans, Facilities Director  
Jennifer Nye, BTMES Principal  
Erica Pearson, BTMES Principal  
Brenda Waterhouse, SHS Principal

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

**1. Call to Order**

The Chair, Mr. Isabelle, called the Monday, June 14, 2021 BUUSD Facilities and Transportation 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**

None.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

**4.1 Approval of Minutes – May 24, 2021 BUUSD Facilities and Transportation Committee Meeting**

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the May 24, 2021 BUUSD Facilities and Transportation Committee meeting.

**5. New Business**

**5.1 SHS Transportation**

Mr. Isabelle provided a brief overview, advising regarding interest in providing transportation to SHS students. Due to the pandemic, the surveys did not go out and that item was put on hold. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that during the pandemic, ESSER funds became available to use for transportation home during the early releases due to COVID. Morning transportation could not be offered using these funds because the buses were already committed. (A survey was sent out. 27 students committed to using the transportation and drop-off sites were determined). Ridership went down, and instead of using 9 buses, only 4 were needed. At this point, there are typically 4 to 12 students utilizing the buses. Though ridership is not high, administrators wanted to continue to provide transportation to the students in need, and to possibly carry transportation over into next year. Another survey was sent out to determine interest in transportation for next year. The survey was sent to all families of all students in the high school (except seniors), and to 8<sup>th</sup> grade parents from BCEMS and BTMES. Results were; 100 responses, with approximately 80 expressing interest in receiving transportation services. Of the 80 expressing an interest, additional information was collected regarding morning transportation. JROTC, Band, and Chorus start at 7:35 in the morning and would require a 6:45 a.m. pick-up. All other programs start at 8:20 and would require a 7:30 pick-up time. About 1/3 of responders prefer the earlier run. About 2/3 of responders prefer the later run. It was realized that if the school chose the earlier run, those preferring the later run time would probably not access transportation, even though students would benefit from receiving breakfast at the school, and have access to academic supports. Administrators recommend considering the 7:30 run. The challenge at this point is the limitation of available buses and drivers, as buses are needed for BCEMS and BTMES. Originally it was estimated that between 2 and 4 buses would be needed. A faster route would require 4 buses. Mrs. Waterhouse was just notified by Stacy Emerson (STA) that she does not think she can accommodate the Spaulding High School morning run based on the needs of the other schools (BCEMS and BTMES). Mrs. Waterhouse advised that perhaps if additional drivers were available these runs might be possible. STA's main issue is a lack of drivers. STA is having difficulty hiring and retaining drivers. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that new employees are being asked if they are interested in being trained as bus

drivers (in addition to their other duties). Driver's Education teachers are also needed. Mr. Isabelle believes that Green Mountain Transit, which has fixed routes in Barre, might be a potential partner, at least for the students on GMT routes. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that she has spoken with Green Mountain Transit twice in the past (the most recent conversation was probably 3 years ago), and discussed bus passes at a reduced rate and "hot spots" (areas of greatest need), but their bus schedule does not coincide with the SHS schedule. Mr. Isabelle believes GMT is interested in improving their services, and perhaps would be willing to accommodate students at this time. It was also noted that there is perhaps a culture issue, as high school students have never been bused before, families have established routines for transportation of their students, and some students don't believe that riding a bus 'is cool'. It is believed that if the school continues to offer transportation, ridership would increase over time, as ridership would become more of a 'norm'. STA suggested that SHS change their start/end times. Mrs. Waterhouse does not believe the school should change hours based on STA's bus availability. Mrs. Waterhouse is also concerned regarding the expense associated with having buses while trying to increase ridership. It could take a number of years to increase ridership. Mrs. Pregent queried regarding the possibility of adding high school students to the elementary/middle school buses. Mrs. Nye advised that the buses will be carrying pre-school students, which causes seating limitation due to the use of 5 point harnesses for pre-school students. Mr. Coon cautioned against having too wide of an age span on buses. In response to a query, Mrs. Waterhouse advised that the bus for out of district students is running (a Suburban, rather than a regular bus) and ridership has varied between 0 and 3 on different days. There are other out of district students attending Spaulding, but they are not riding the bus. There is a lease for 2 Suburbans (one for Work Based Learning, and one for Special Education). One of the Suburbans is used to transport out of district students. Ridership has not grown, over the past few years, but Mrs. Waterhouse is discounting this past year (during COVID). It was noted that the 'break even' point was 5 or 6 students. Mrs. Waterhouse said that SHS does have more out of district students, and the total number of students does meet the student count threshold. Mr. Isabelle believes it takes a long time to establish ridership. Mrs. Waterhouse believes transportation is a real struggle for about ¼ of the student population. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that at this point, her recommendation is to work with public transportation, or work with STA to have 2 buses that could perform general sweeps of 'big stop' areas which would allow for a transportation option for some students. Even with 'big stops' some students may have to walk 2 miles to reach stops. Transportation will not meet the needs of all students exactly as they would prefer, but it would be beneficial to provide transportation to those in the outer reaches where there is the most need. Transportation for SHS students is not part of the current contract and would be covered by COVID funds. Mr. Isabelle recommends that Mrs. Waterhouse reach out to STA to determine the cost associated with providing service to the outer areas. Mrs. Nye reported that in the past Green Mountain Transit has advised that their buses are not built for hills, and they may not be able to reach the areas that require service. Ms. Pearson advised that the current school buses do not travel on some of the outer roads, and there are some students in the elementary/middle school that need to travel 2 miles to reach a bus stop. Mrs. Nye believes the District is in the midst of contract negotiations for transportation, but this should be confirmed. If the BUUSD is in the process of transportation negotiations, the Business Manager should look into working SHS buses into the contract. Mr. Isabelle believes at this point, that transportation for SHS would be a minimal service and cannot meet everyone's needs.

### **5.2 SEA Project Update**

The SEA Project continues to be on schedule. Trades people are working in the building, and starting to close up walls and begin priming. The flag pole is set. Work on the kitchen will begin next week. The project is on schedule and progressing nicely, with completion scheduled for the end of July. After completion, it is expected, as with any new building, that there will be loose ends to work out, including; installation of furniture, telephone lines etc. Some of the trades people are anticipated to still be working in August. Mr. Evans would like to hold a community open house, but has not scheduled one yet.

### **5.3 Electric Buses**

Chargers are on site and installed. Buses are expected to arrive mid to late July. It will take about a month for STA to train drivers. STA will be reimbursing the District for the cost of electricity to charge the buses. Jamie is working with Green Mountain Power for installation of a separate meter for bus charging. One of the buses is slated for BCMES and one for BTMES. The buses should not have any issues with hills. Mr. Evans advised that most of the cost of the buses is being funded through the Volkswagon money (grant). In response to a query regarding consideration of installing charging stations for employee vehicles, it was noted that this item has not been explored further. There are concerns regarding where personal vehicle charging stations could be placed, and the implications of the school paying the cost to charge personal vehicles.

### **5.4 Review Summer Projects**

Mr. Evans advised that the start of projects has been delayed due to the lack of an approved budget. The BCEMS roof project was slated for this summer, but due to a delay in receiving materials, the project may not be able to be completed. Materials aren't expected to be received until sometime in August. It is unknown if this project can be completed prior to the opening of school. Mr. Evans advised that there are 3 roof sections that make up the project. The gym section is the easiest section, and can probably be completed prior to the start of school. Mr. Evans suggests buying all of the materials now, having the contractor store the materials, and that funds be put aside for labor. If the money can't be held until next year, try to get as much work done as possible before next summer. Best case scenario is that the materials arrive early August and the work can be completed. Mr. Evans anticipates that only ½ to 1/3 of the project will be completed this summer. The contractor has been in frequent contact with Mr. Evans, providing frequent updates. Mr. Evans advised that for the most part, it is not safe to perform the work when school is in session. Mr. Evans advised that the roof is not in dire need of repair, and that the existing leaks are being contained.

Supplies for the SHS Auditorium are available and Mr. Evans believes that project will go smoothly. Mr. Evans advised that the necessary summer cleaning/maintenance supplies are on hand. Service work to elevators and other equipment should proceed in the normal fashion. Additional sections of flooring and victalite fittings will probably be replaced, though securing contractors is still under way. Mr. Evans advised that some of the summer work may be completed over the winter and spring breaks. The BTMES bleacher project is planned, but the bleachers may not be available until sometime in October. Installation of the bleachers may require some adjustments to class schedules as the contractor will need to be in the gym for approximately one week. It was noted that production and delivery of materials has been problematic for several projects.

### **5.5 Review Updated List of Deferred/Long Term Maintenance**

A document titled 'BUUSD 5 Year Facility Draft Plan' (dated 06/07/21) was distributed. Four documents titled BUUSD Capital Improvements & Major Repairs' (one for each building) were also distributed. Mr. Evans clarified that 'deferred' maintenance is not work that has been ignored, it is work for which there has not been financing. Mr. Evans provided a building by building overview of the larger projects, including the SHS Auditorium (stage curtains alone are tens of thousands of dollars and seating will run into six figures), wall fixtures, lighting and rigging are also involved. A past study suggests that it could take roughly one million dollars to renovate the auditorium, if done right. Renovations to the SHS Athletic fields (built in 1964) are estimated to be four million dollars. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that the track does not meet code and that legal meets cannot be held. The soccer and baseball fields are not regulation size. The track needs to be rubberized, and the football field needs artificial turf. Mr. Evans believes the sprinkler system will resurface again, though it was noted that years ago SHS received a waiver from the State (on file at the Central Office), that sprinklers would only be required if a major expansion was performed. Mr. Evans advised that there are other documents pertaining to providing a multi-year plan regarding phases of sprinkler implementation. Mr. Evans is concerned that the sprinkler system will be raised again. Mr. Evans advised that the fire alarm system protects people, the sprinkler system protects property. If asked to pick and choose which of the two to have, Mr. Evans would choose the fire alarm system over a sprinkler system. BTMES still has sections of roof to replace and ongoing upgrades and maintenance for roof top air conditioner units (due to normal wear and tear) will be necessary in the future. Asbestos floor tiles and carpeting need replacement and there is most likely asbestos tile under the carpeting. The canopy structure was removed due to safety concerns and the front entry point will need to be revamped to improve efficiency and safety for bus drop off and pick up. Mr. Isabelle queried regarding whether or not ESSER funds could be used for some of these improvements. Mr. Coon advised that phase one of ESSER funding was for academic supports, guidelines for phase two, have not yet been defined. Mr. Isabelle is hopeful that some ESSER funds can be used for facilities issues. Mrs. Pregent advised that there is a projected 1.9 million dollar surplus and she would like to see a significant amount of those surplus funds moved to the Capital Improvement Reserve Fund. Transferring surplus funds will be discussed at the next Finance Committee meeting. Mr. Evans advised that his two top priorities would be roofing and flooring as he considers those to be safety issues. Mrs. Pregent noted that roofing and flooring costs for all of the buildings totals almost two million dollars. It was noted that if building maintenance was budgeted at the industry standard of \$1 SF, the annual cost would be approximately \$500,000, and perhaps that amount should be used as a starting point when discussing the transfer of surplus funds (a one year cushion). It was noted that in the past few years, the \$1 SF industry standard has not been budgeted, resulting in fewer projects being completed.

## **6. Old Business**

### **6.1 Substitute Keys BTMES**

Mr. Isabelle advised that he added this agenda item because he doesn't recall the final discussion around issuing keys for substitutes. Mr. Isabelle recalls discussions regarding card keys (exterior doors), and door keys (classroom doors – believed to be more extensive undertaking). Mr. Isabelle would like to catch people up on the status of where we are. Mr. Isabelle queried regarding whether or not these issues are dealt with consistently throughout the three buildings. Ms. Pearson addressed the card key system at BTMES, advising that in January BTMES began using swipe cards for day subs, noting that permanent substitutes are full time employees and have everything that they need. During COVID, not many day substitutes have been utilized. Swipe cards (which access 8 exterior doors) are handed out at the start of the day and are turned in at the end of the day. Ms. Pearson advised that not all doors have been re-tooled, as it would cost tens of thousands of dollars to re-tool all classroom doors. Ms. Pearson reported that there a question of master keys going to substitute teachers, and advised that regular teaching staff does not have access to master keys and that is not something they are prepared to do, nor plan to do at this time, and that eventually, maybe, in time, if millions of dollars were available, it might be possible to use swipe keys on regular door entries. Ms. Pearson advised that there was a question of master keys being distributed at SHS, and advised that SHS does not issue master keys to substitute teachers either. Ms. Pearson noted that issuance of master keys goes against ALICE training. If every key opened every door in the building, anyone that intended harm, could make anyone open any door, and that presents a conflict. In response to a query from Mr. Isabelle, Ms. Pearson confirmed that permanent substitutes and day substitutes all have access to the swipe card system. In response to a query, Mr. Coon advised that at BCEMS, there is the same process of using card swipe access (for entering through exterior doors). Swipe cards are issued to everyone, including staff, permanent substitutes, day substitutes, and outside support staff (e.g. Green Mountain Behavioral consultants). Cards are 'turned off' at the end of the day. Class room keys, which are different than master keys, are given to teachers and other staff. When day substitutes arrive, they are given a classroom key for the day, which may differ depending on which room they are working in (there is a key system). It was noted that BTMES has an issue with parts of the building having an open classroom layouts. Mr. Evans advised that no teachers have master keys, which would contradict ALICE protocols. Mr. Evans advised that if a teacher were in the hall with students (e.g. going to or from a Specials class), and were not near their individual classroom when an emergency situation arose, a teacher who is in a dangerous situation, might try to use a master classroom key to enter another classroom, subjecting tens or hundreds of students and staff to harm. Mr. Evans stressed that it is important that classroom doors remain locked,

and that he regularly advises teachers that they must carry their keys on their person at all times, and that classroom doors are to be locked every time a teacher leaves the room, even if only for a couple of minutes (lunch, restroom breaks, walking students to specials...). Mr. Evans stressed that even leaving a classroom door unlocked, even for a short period of time, exposes tens to hundreds of students and staff to harm. Mr. Coon advised that sometimes keys are lost. If a lost key is reported, and it is determined that the loss of the key was possibly due to an unauthorized person taking a key, they may need to rekey doors to keep things safe. If the key were a master key, the cost would be much higher. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that the keys inside the building are limited, and master keys are issued to administrators. There are a variety of keys, with keys opening a specific series of doors. If one key were lost, the entirety of doors within the building would not need to be rekeyed. The swipe access system on exterior doors allows for much more controlled access to the building. There are a high number of food service personnel that access the building and the swipe access cards allow for control over the hours in which the building can be accessed. Swipe card keys can be easily be turned off if necessary. Individuals, even if they had interior keys, could not gain entry to the building if their card key has been disabled. Mr. Coon clarified that permanent and day substitutes turn in their keys every day, but staff members don't turn in their keys until they leave employment. Ms. Pearson confirmed that at BTMES, substitutes are not issued room keys for a number of reasons; each door has its own key and there are few classrooms that have doors, advising that only 2 of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms have doors (because of the open door concept). Ms. Pearson advised that there are 4 individuals upstairs and 6 individuals downstairs that can open doors when necessary. Mr. Isabelle queried regarding how Mr. Evans would prioritize what has been characterized as a safety issue, the rekeying of doors at BTMES. Mr. Evans advised that rekeying of doors is pretty high on the list, but will be expensive, and some of the door hardware (on many of the double doors leading into common areas) is old enough that BTMES needs to redo the crash bars and locking systems. It may be necessary to replace the doors. A local vendor had provided a quote of \$15,000 to \$20,000 to do that work. Due to the expense, this issue is hard to act on quickly. Mr. Evans advised that it has been a busy hectic year, and there hasn't been much time to put in for figuring out how to resolve the very complicated situation of locking the doors in that building (BTMES). Mr. Evans advised that the situation hasn't been being ignored, but that it has been a very difficult school year. Ms. Pearson advised that they have had discussion with the police and fire safety marshals, and there are many issues that would be prioritized over providing classroom keys for substitutes, including moving to swipe cards on all of the doors and installing an emergency release. Ms. Pearson advised that if exterior doors are properly secured, it should not be easy to breach the building. An emergency release system would allow for office staff to, with the push of a button, close and lock all of the lobby doors that lead into the building. Ms. Pearson said that there are other ways to explore the use of safety funds, that don't involve 'hard keys', which is an old technology. Mr. Evans advised that any time action is taken to mitigate a safety issue, it can present other issues. Mr. Evans provided an example: use of an emergency release, locking all lobby doors, could trap someone on the wrong side of the door in the event of a fire. Mr. Evans reiterated that safety concerns are not being ignored, but rather, security of BTMES is a very complicated situation because of the way the school is designed with an open concept. Mr. Isabelle requested any additional feedback. Mrs. Poulin queried regarding when swipe card keys were issued, as she has substituted at BTMES as late as May of this year, and she was not given a key for the day. Mrs. Poulin advised that she had inquired regarding any changes to check-in procedures, and was told there were no changes. Mr. Evans noted that Ms. Pearson had left the meeting, so he would need to check in with her regarding how/when keys are being provided to substitutes. Mr. Evans will confirm that keys have been issued and will report back to Mr. Isabelle.

## **7. Other Business**

Mr. Evans reported that today he learned that legislation has been passed that increases the bid requirement from \$15,000 to \$40,000. This new threshold will simplify the RFP process.

Mr. Evans advised that installation of a new entrance to the SHS athletic fields has been tabled for now. Mr. Evans provided some historical information relating to this item, which was first proposed by Kerri Lamb. When and if a new entrance is built, it will be part of a much larger renovation to the athletic fields. This item will no longer be kept on the agenda/parking lot.

Mr. Evans advised that he was recently notified that the Barre Ravens have been using the BCEMS baseball fields for practices. Mr. Evans confirmed with the Vermont Raven's coach and the team owner that this has been occurring. The Ravens have been utilizing the field(s) for 2 months, without permission. Mr. Evans advised Raven's representatives that there are policies and procedures that must be followed, for anyone wishing to use school property/buildings. Permission needs to be received, there are forms to be completed, and there are sometimes fees associated with community use of school property. These policies and procedures have not been followed by the Ravens. Mr. Evans advised that the Ravens used to use the high school football fields, but it was found that the Raven's use of the fields was causing much wear and tear and that fields were becoming unsafe for student athletes.

Mr. Evans advised that he received a call from an additional Raven's representative and they were having difficulty accepting the use of District policies/procedures. Towards the end of the conversation, Mr. Evans was advised that it would be very bad PR for the BUUSD, if it became known that the District would not let the Raven's use school property for practice. Mr. Evans advised that Barre City tax payers should not shoulder the expense for a 'for profit' team to hold practices. Mr. Evans perceived the "bad PR" comment as a threat and believes it was inappropriate. Mr. Evans reiterated his concern over the perceived threat of bad PR, and the threat that bad PR would have a negative impact on the upcoming budget vote. Mr. Evans advised that the team coach and owners were respectful and polite throughout their conversations, and appeared to understand the issue. The third individual who contacted him called implying they had clout, and threatened bad PR over not allowing the Ravens to practice at BCEMS, which could have a negative impact on the upcoming budget vote. In response to a query regarding where they could dispute the decision, Mr. Evans

directed the individual to BCEMS principals. Mr. Isabelle confirmed that there are Use of Facilities policies and procedures, and this team has not followed those policies and procedures. Essentially, the Ravens were trespassing on school property. Mr. Isabelle believes the threat of bad PR may be more of a personnel issue.

Storm Water Run-off: Mr. Evans will be meeting with engineers as the next step. This will be a feasibility study and will cost approximately \$5000. The study will, through engineering terms, drawings, etc., study the property / topography to determine if, how, and when the project could be done. If it is determined that the property can support some sort of run-off system, there will be a fee for hiring an engineering firm (at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars), to design a system. To construct the project could cost tens of thousands of dollars, and possibly run into six figures. It is Mr. Evans' hope/plan; to have the engineering firm, with his persuasion, report that the school is not suitable for any type of retention pond, and then pursue paying the opt out fee ( a one-time fee) in lieu of constructing and maintaining a storm water run-off system. It was noted that BCEMS, which is newer, does have a storm water permit. SHS and BTMES are older and don't currently have storm water permits.

At BCEMS, there is a significant issue with custodial staff. There were 6 custodial staff, and 5 were 'lost'. Mr. Evans has since hired 3 of the 5, and still needs to hire 2. The latest hire is very recent and there will be a 2 week training period. Mr. Evans advised that school staff have been pitching in to help.

Brief discussion was held regarding the use of temp agencies for hiring custodial help. Mr. Isabelle suggested considering offering sign-on bonuses for various positions. Mrs. Pregent supports this, but believes we need to be sensitive to custodians with longevity in the District (especially during COVID), and that these employees should know that the District's appreciation for their commitment is noted. Mr. Evans advised that some long-term employees have inquired regarding receiving bonuses for working through COVID, and advised that those employees would be offended if the District offered bonuses to new employees.

Mr. Evans advised regarding BCEMS custodian John Walker (Head of Maintenance), who elected to stay at the school every day during COVID and even performed additional projects as well. Mr. Walker deserves recognition for his efforts during COVID, where he has gone well above and beyond what is expected of him. Though recognition is being given in this meeting, Mr. Evans would like to have a more formal recognition. Mr. Isabelle suggested that if recognition is made, it should be made for everyone. Mr. Coon advised that Mr. Walker has done an outstanding job, working diligently to keep BCEMS well maintained, and that he performs his job well above what is expected. Mr. Coon advised that staff recognition will occur this Friday (06/18/21) and that Mr. Walker will be a part of that recognition. Mr. Isabelle asked that this evening's discussion be shared with Mr. Walker, and that Mr. Coon convey the Committee's appreciation.

#### **8. Items to be Placed on Future Agendas**

- Update on Finance Committee Discussions Relating to Facilities
- Summer Projects Update
- Update (if available) on Use of Federal Funds (ESSER) for Facilities (safety and possibly outdoor projects)

Mr. Isabelle thanked Mr. Coon and Mrs. Waterhouse for their attendance at this meeting.

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

The next meeting is Monday, July 12, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. The meeting location will be announced.

#### **10. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:09 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Andrea Poulin*