

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD MEETING**

Spaulding High School Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet  
August 12, 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)  
Chris Parker (BT)  
Abigayle Smith (BC)

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Tim Boltin (BC)  
Sarah Pregent (BC)

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent  
Jody Emerson, Director Central Vermont Career Center  
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources  
Lauren May, Director of Early Education  
Mary Ellen Simmons, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Nicole Gallup	Josh Howard	Prudence Krasofski
Colleen Kresco	Terri Reil	Sharon Toborg	Rachel 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, August 12, 2021, Regular meeting to order at 5:31 p.m., which was held at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

Mrs. Spaulding provided a reminder of public participation guidelines for input on non-agenda items as well as for items listed on the agenda.

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

5.7 Transportation Changes – will be discussed out of order (as the first item under 5. Current Business)  
5.4 Community Input – discussion postponed until the August 26, 2021 Regular Board Meeting  
5.6 Surplus Funds – discussion postponed until the August 26, 2021 Regular Board Meeting

**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. Consent Agenda**

**4.1 Approval of Minutes – July 22, 2021 Regular Meeting, and July 29, 2021 Special Meeting (Retreat)**

**On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to approve as presented, the Minutes of the July 22, 2021 Regular Meeting, and the July 29, 2021 Special Meeting (Retreat).**

## **5. Current Business**

### **5.1 New Hires**

The resumes and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Forms for Christina Keegan (BCEMS Grade 5/6 ELA), Kristin Porrazzo (SHS SPED School Psychologist), Rebecca Henry (BTMES Grade 2 Teacher), Jennifer Evans (BCEMS Special Educator), and Harry Marek (SHS/SEA Program Special Educator) were distributed.

Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of the candidates and answered questions from the Board. It was noted that an increase in enrollment requires the hiring of an additional 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher at BTMES.

In response to a query, Mrs. Marold advised that there are 11 professional vacancies, and with the exception of Special Education, she is feeling positive about the ability to fill positions. Mrs. Marold advised that this week, the Vermont Standards Board gave a waiver for Special Educators, resulting in looser criteria. Mr. Hennessey advised that there is a statewide shortage of Special Educators and Early Childhood Education Professionals, and the State is looking into alternate pathways to licensure for these specialties. The Agency of Education is also reviewing other positions including; Language, English Language Learners, allied arts, etc. Mrs. Marold reported that there are a large amount of support staff vacancies, especially para-educators, and a shortage of substitutes as well.

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Christina Keegan, Kristin Porrazzo, Rebecca Henry, Jennifer Evans, and Harry Marek.**

### **5.2 Resignations**

Letters of resignation from Emily Loughlin (Technology Integration Specialist), Samantha Loesch (SHS ELA), and Mary Reardon (SHS Art Teacher – early retirement) were distributed.

Mr. Hennessey advised regarding the letters of resignation/retirement. Brief discussion was held regarding concern over filling vacancies for resignations that occur this late in the hiring season, close to the opening of school. It was noted that there is a candidate for the Art position and that the ELA position may be able to be absorbed. In response to a query, Mr. Hennessey advised that per statute, a teacher with a contract/letter of agreement cannot leave a district to go work in another Vermont school. None of the resignations are for teachers leaving for another Vermont school. It is believed that COVID and COVID related stress is causing individuals to leave the teaching profession. The Board wished resigning staff well in their new endeavors.

### **5.3 Ratification of Master Para Agreement**

Mr. Hennessey congratulated para-educators on the Collective Bargaining Agreement, and provided an overview of changes to the Agreement, including; a two year agreement (rather than one), an increase in personal days for para-educators with 3 or more years of service (from 2 to 3), salary increases for credits earned (21 credit increments / 60¢ increase, and wage increases: effective 07/01/21 (for employees who worked in the District last year – FY21) an increase of \$1.15, effective 07/01/22 (for employees who worked in the district in FY22) an increase of \$1.00. Wage ranges are as follows: FY21 \$14.30 - \$15.75, FY22 \$15.00 – \$16.40, and FY23 \$15.50 - \$16.90. The Master Para Agreement is now called a Collective Bargaining Agreement.

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to ratify the Collective Bargaining Agreement for Para-educators.**

### **5.4 Community Input**

Postponed until the August 26, 2021 Regular Board Meeting.

### **5.5 Projected Student Enrollment**

A document titled ‘Student Population by Race/Ethnicity and Grade Level (Male/Female/Total) – dated 08/07/21, was distributed.

A document titled ‘Home Study Report (AOE provided data) was also retired.

A slight decrease in Home Study counts is anticipated. Updated numbers will be provided by the AOE. This item will be added to the August 26, 2021 Agenda for additional review and discussion.

### **5.6 Surplus Funds**

A document titled ‘Superintendent’s Recommendation for Use of Surplus Funds-Revised 08/11/21’ was distributed.

Postponed until the August 26, 2021 Regular Board Meeting.

### **5.7 Transportation Changes**

Mr. Hennessey introduced Lauren May, Director of Early Education. Ms. May addressed the Board, advising of changes related to the use of 5 point harnesses. It was noted that transportation was not provided to pre-school students in academic year 2020 – 2021, due to COVID concerns. Ms. May advised regarding pre-school transportation changes for 2021 – 2022. Changes are necessary due to a shortage of ‘riders’ to buckle and unbuckle students. Other options were explored and were deemed to be not viable. It was noted that BCEMS has not been using car seats. BTMES has used car seats for approximately 6 or 7 years. Ms. May has confirmed that the law does not require that car seats be used on Type 1 buses. Ms. May advised regarding bus design, specifically how the structure of

the seating is supposed to minimize injury. In response to a query, Mr. Hennessey reported that the busing schedules for BCEMS and BTMES are changing from two staggered runs per school, to one run for each school. Start times at the schools will be staggered. Mr. Hennessey noted that there is a shortage of bus drivers this year. Due to the shortage of drivers, no transportation can be provided to SHS students at the start of the school year. Board Members expressed concerns regarding the safety of students who will be transported without seatbelts.

### **5.8 Re-opening/COVID Update – Guidelines/Restrictions**

A document titled ‘Vermont Education Recovery Plan’ was distributed.

Mr. Hennessey provided a brief overview, advising that he will only be sharing what is known. The BUUSD has been receiving COVID Reminder Memos from the State. The State is no longer issuing ‘Guidelines’. Mr. Hennessey has been working with the Winooski Valley Superintendent’s Association, to assure that re-opening plans are student centered and consistent. There are two guiding principles; Safety and Health of Students and Staff, and Keep Schools Open for Full-time In-person Instruction. BUUSD schools will open on 08/30/21 for full time (5 days a week) in-person instruction. Schools will re-open following the recommended advice: from 08/30/21 – 09/13/21 all students and staff will be required to wear masks (regardless of vaccination status). Social distancing will not be required. No guidance has been provided regarding plans for after 09/13/21. Folks should be prepared for longer term masking. Mr. Hennessey recommends that individuals try to keep the proper perspective, noting that things have come a long way since last year. In response to a query, Mr. Hennessey advised that the target for vaccination of eligible students (age 12 and up), is 80%. At the present time, the District cannot require that students get vaccinated or require that they disclose their vaccination information. There is an assumption that the adult vaccination rate in the state is over 80%, and there is no tracking of vaccinations for staff. Mr. Hennessey supports an initiative to have the State work with schools to compile a database to track the vaccination status of students. Mr. Hennessey expects to hear more on this initiative next week. Mr. Hennessey announced that a walk-in vaccination clinic is scheduled on Sunday 08/15/21, from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. at Spaulding High School. This event is sponsored by the Vermont National Guard, and does not require appointments. There is a possibility that in September, there will be a vaccination for individuals under 12 years of age. It is presumed that approximately half of sixth graders are eligible for the current vaccine. There has not been guidance specific to students/grades, which are on the cusp of vaccine eligibility. In response to a query regarding a ‘back up’ plan (should there be a surge in COVID cases), it was noted that there is no plan to return to remote learning. Any switch to remote learning would need to be approved by the Agency of Education.

## **6. Old Business**

### **6.1 Second and Final Reading of Professional Development Policy (B21)**

A copy of the policy was distributed.

**On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Second and Final Reading of the Professional Development Policy (B21), and agreed to adopt said policy as presented.**

### **6.2 FY21 Financials Update**

Copies of the BUUSD and CVCC FY21 Year-end Projection Reports (dated 08/03/21) were distributed.

As of the Finance Committee meeting on 08/03/21 the BUUSD had an unaudited projected surplus of \$3.2 million. It is not known if the projection has been updated since that date. CVCC has an unaudited projected deficit of \$20,000. CVCC has a Fund Balance of approximately \$180,000, some of which can be used to cover the deficit.

### **6.3 Strategic Goals Update**

A document titled ‘Barre Unified Union School District Vision, Mission, and Beliefs’ was distributed.

A document titled ‘Barre Unified Union School District Strategic Plan Goal Matrix’ was distributed.

The Board was advised that the documents are ‘living’ documents and will be revised as necessary. Mrs. Farrell wants assurance that all action being taken going forward, loops back to the Strategic Plan, and reiterated that she wants assurance that this ‘road map’ is adhered to. It was noted that the Board will receive regular updates throughout the years, and will review progress to see that goals are being reached, or are actively being worked towards. Review of progress will be regularly placed on Board Agendas.

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to accept the Vision, Mission, and Beliefs Statements, and Strategic Plan as presented, with the understanding that the strategic goals will be revised as necessary.**

Appreciation was expressed to all the individuals who worked on this initiative.

## **7. Reports**

### **7.1 Building Reports; Central Office, SHS, CVCC, BCEMS, and BTMES**

Copies of the Building Reports for SHS, CVCC, BCEMS and BTMES were distributed.

Mr. Hennessey provided a verbal report to the Board, and advised that he is looking at revamping and improving the communications systems all around, including building reports. Mr. Hennessey would like to create a ‘more digestible’ report format. Ms. Smith advised that she would like communication of Board and Committee packets to be timely, citing that information is not being received with enough lead time for Board Members to prepare. It was noted that addendums to meeting packets are very large, and that addendums should be the exception for emergent issues, not the rule. Mr. Hennessey agrees with this request and advised that his

office is committed to improving the timing of packet distribution. It was noted that it would be beneficial to have administrators present to answer questions on building reports. Brief discussion was held regarding the necessity of principals' attendance Board meetings. This matter will be discussed/decided at a future meeting. Discussion was held regarding lack of equity between BTMES (which has a before-school and after-school program), and BCEMS, which does not. It was noted that the new later start time at BCEMS will cause a hardship to families if before-care is not offered. Mr. Hennessey advised that in the past (pre-COVID), there was a successful donation funded after-school program at BCEMS. Mr. Coon and Mr. LaFlamme are working on the creation of a program for BCEMS, but nothing has been finalized. Mr. Hennessey would like to create a program with the capacity to serve many students. Mrs. Spaulding noted that the lack of transportation for SHS students (due to a shortage of bus drivers), is an additional example of inequity that needs to be addressed.

### **7.2 Communications Committee**

The Committee met on 08/05/21. A copy of the minutes was distributed. Mrs. Farrell reported that discussion centered mainly on providing prompt, accurate, strong communication for the District. The Committee also discussed communication pertaining to school re-opening, COVID related restrictions/guidelines, and communication on "How to Communicate with the Board". The next meeting is Thursday, September 2, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

### **7.3 Finance Committee**

The Committee met on August 3, 2021. A copy of the minutes was distributed. The next meeting is Tuesday, September 7, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

### **7.4 Facilities & Transportation Committee**

The Committee met on August 11, 2021.

The Committee discussed potential uses for surplus funds, including the key system at BTMES, the successful construction of the SEA Building which is slated to open on time, summer projects, including delays due to materials being delivered late.

Mr. Hennessey advised that a 'ribbon cutting' ceremony will be held at the SEA Building sometime in September. The date is to be announced. Mr. Isabelle would like assurance that previous Board Members, who were instrumental in this project, are invited to attend the ribbon cutting ceremony.

The next meeting is Monday, September 13, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

### **7.5 Policy Committee**

The next meeting is Monday, August 16, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

It was announced at the Finance Committee meeting, that there are two finance related policies which may need to be amended. These policies will be discussed at the 08/16/21 meeting.

### **7.6 Curriculum Committee**

The next meeting is Tuesday, August 17, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

### **7.7 Negotiations Committee**

The next meeting date is to be determined.

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

Mr. Isabelle reiterated his thanks for finalization of the para-educator contract, citing positive negotiations. Additionally, Mr. Isabelle thanked Mr. Hennessey for his interactions with the Board, and for his accomplishments to date. Mr. Isabelle stressed the importance of individuals getting vaccinated against COVID19.

Ms. Parker is very pleased with the success of summer programs, which served many students and included many different opportunities for the children. Ms. Parker extended her thanks to the many staff members who worked to make these programs possible.

Mrs. Akley thanked administrators for working to follow safe protocols for COVID, and making decisions to support the safety and well-being of our students.

Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding recommendations to allow or not allow visitors into the schools (with a goal of having more in-person Board meetings). Mr. Hennessey advised that there are no restrictions in place at this time, other than the requirement to wear masks. Mr. Hennessey recommends that if the Board would like to continue with hybrid meetings, that all meetings take place at one school.

Jody Emerson reported that a Governance Meeting was held this week and the Committee continues to work on Articles of Agreement and By-laws (that would be necessary if CVCC changes its governance structure). These documents will be provided to the AOE so that they can determine if the option of a separate board (for CVCC) is viable. The CVCC re-visioning piece is moving slowly at this time, as work is focused on governance re-structure option.

Mr. Hennessey reported that his daughter enjoyed working at the summer programs, and based on her experience with the programs, is considering a career in education.

A community member inquired regarding an item in the 'Parking Lot'. Mrs. Spaulding advised regarding the "Parking Lot" section of the Agenda, which is intended to document, as a reminder, items that will be added to future agendas.

#### **9. Future Agenda Items**

- Community Input
- Surplus Funds
- Projected Student Enrollment
- Re-opening/COVID Updates

Mrs. Farrell requested that the agenda item for Projected Student Enrollment, include a report on the maximum building capacity (student capacity) for each school.

#### **10. Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting is Thursday, August 26, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. The physical location for the meeting will be posted on the Agenda.

#### **11. Executive Session as Needed**

No items were proposed for discussion in Executive Session.

#### **12. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:35 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Andrea Poulin*