

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING**
BUUSD Central Office and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
August 5, 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:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Josh Allen, Communications Specialist

GUESTS PRESENT:

Josh Howard Sue Paxman

1. Call to Order

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

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 5.4 Communication Regarding Engaging With The Board

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Meeting Minutes for June 3, 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 June 3, 2021 BUUSD Communications Committee meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 Summer Activities

Mr. Allen advised regarding upcoming events. ESSER 3 Community Forum: In-Put on How to Spend Grant Money. This event will take place on 08/18/21 at 5:30 p.m. and will be held in the SHS Auditorium. This public forum will include a brief presentation regarding how previous grant monies (ESSER 1 and ESSER 2) were spent, and on how grant money can be used, and will then include a community in-put session. A survey regarding this matter was recently sent to community members, and many responses have already been received. The week after this presentation, there will be an event called “All In For Barre”. The BUUSD is not a sponsor of this event, but will have representatives in attendance. This event is sponsored by the Vermont Rural Consortium, and will include many different sessions. One session is an open discussion on Supporting Barre Families and Students. Mr. Allen and Mr. Hennessey will be attending this session, providing in-put and taking notes of the suggestions. Mr. Hennessey will be discussing this at the Board meeting and invites Board Members to attend.

Mr. Hennessey reported that over 300 students were served in various capacities by summer programs. Programs were conducted beginning the week of 07/04/21, and are ending this week. The school-run programs ended last week. There were very few ‘snags’ in the programs. One small cohort of third graders did experience a COVID outbreak, but were soon able to return to the program. The partnership with the YMCA worked very well, but last week, the YMCA did not have enough employees, and one camp ended three days early. The Barre Buds Program (for students on IEPs) was able to run for all planned weeks. Students had a great experience. In response to a query, Mr. Hennessey advised that a report will be generated regarding academic services provided to students over the summer. It was noted that Summer Programs were part of the State required Recovery Plan. Mr. Isabelle would like the Times Argus to run a follow-up article regarding these programs. Mr. Isabelle also suggested that Mr. Hennessey write an Op-Ed on the summer programs. Mrs. Farrell suggested that the BUUSD utilize “Fly on the Wall” and “Aired Out” to further promote the District. The Facilities Committee will be meeting next week, and it is anticipated that Mr. Evans will provide a big update. Mrs. Farrell would like promotion of facilities work completed over the summer so that community members are educated on work being performed at the buildings. It was noted that the SEA construction project is coming along nicely. Mr. Allen has reached out to the Barre Partnership regarding holding a ribbon cutting ceremony at the SEA building, and holding building tours for those in attendance.

Mr. Isabelle would like to see that former Board Members, who were very involved in this project, are recognized for their efforts on behalf of this initiative.

5.2 Back to School Communication Report

Mr. Hennessey advised that in-person learning will resume, but there are still many unknowns as the District awaits guidance from the Agency of Education. Once the guidelines have been received from the Agency of Education, clear communication will be sent out. Much discussion on this topic will occur at the administrative retreat meetings (08/09/21 & 08/10/21). Mr. Allen has committed to providing weekly communication updates to the community. Community updates will be provided on Wednesdays. The District has also committed to providing regular updates on Front Porch Forum. On 08/15/21, from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., the Vermont National Guard will be holding a vaccination clinic at Spaulding High School. This clinic will be open to all individuals age 12 and over who have not yet received the vaccine. As these clinics have been held at SHS in the past, the school is very well prepared to hold this event. It is hoped that this event will help raise the number of BUUSD community members who are vaccinated, and push the percentage up to or over 80% in the District. It was suggested that it may be helpful to post the percentage of employees who are fully vaccinated. It was noted that the State has reported that over 80% of adults are vaccinated, and the State is trying to focus on vaccinating eligible students. Administrators have started compiling data regarding the number of high school students that are vaccinated. Mr. Allen is also working on updating the website to include back to school information (including bus schedules). It was noted that the free lunch program is continuing this year, but, is grant funded and families still need to complete the Free and Reduced Lunch forms. It has been difficult to get this information in the past, and it is very important that all families complete the form. The District will need to heavily promote this information to the school community. It was reported that STA (transportation provider), is struggling to find bus drivers and it was noted that transportation for SHS students will not be available at the start of the school year. It would be beneficial to promote the availability of transportation for out of district tuition students (Washington, Orange, and Chelsea).

5.3 District Name Brainstorming/Re-Branding

It was suggested that Re-Branding will require input from many individuals. Some discussion of Re-Branding was held as part of the Vision/Mission/Strategic Planning Initiative, but it is not believed that this topic was a goal, though it may have been an objective. Mr. Allen advised that there are currently many more issues in play, but he believes this initiative can be a very good opportunity to solicit community involvement. It would also be a good opportunity to get CVCC Digital Media Arts students involved. There are many talented students in the DMA program, and they have assisted in past projects.

5.4 Communication Regarding Engaging With The Board

It will be beneficial to Board and Community Members, if a specific communication format is clearly communicated to all. Mr. Allen has been performing research on how other districts address this matter. Mrs. Spaulding has requested that specific information be added to the Board section of the website. Additional discussion will be necessary. Brief discussion was held regarding the current practice of appointing spokespersons for the District. Currently, the Superintendent and Board Chair are designated/appointed as official District Spokespersons. The official designation of spokespersons for the District is voted on as part of the annual Board Re-organization. In response to a query, Mr. Allen reported that his research shows that the protocol the District is following (annual appointment of spokespersons) is pretty much the standard in all/most districts.

6. Old Business

6.1 Vision, Mission, and Strategic Planning

It was suggested that the Vision/Mission/Strategic Plan be incorporated into the ESSER 3 Public Forum presentation. V/N/SP will also be incorporated into the All Staff Kick-off program. There are no plans to distribute paper copies of the Strategic Plan (to staff), but staff will be made aware of a link to the V/M/SP documentation. Mr. Allen is in the planning stage for creation of posters to promote the V/M/SP within the schools. It is anticipated that the posters will include the five agreed upon themes.

7. Other Business

In response to a query on the status of a community member's concern over the SHS nickname "Crimson Tide", it was noted that Mrs. Spaulding (at the 07/22/21 Board Meeting) advised she was removing this item from the Agenda Parking Lot.

8. Items to be Placed on Future Agendas

Mr. Hennessey is looking for community feedback, with the goal of finding a balance between providing the community with information they need, without overwhelming them with too much information/detail.

- Strengthening/Improving Communication with All Community Members
- Back to School Communication Report
- Re-cap of Board Engagement Document

9. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 2, 2021 at 5:30 p.m., at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Ms. Smith, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin