

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**BOARD MEETING**  
**BUUSD Central Office and Via Video Conference – Google Meet**  
November 11, 2021 - 5:30 p.m.

**MINUTES**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Sonya Spaulding (BC) – Chair  
Guy Isabelle (At-Large) - Clerk  
Gina Akley (BT)  
Renee Badeau (BT)  
Tim Boltin (BC)  
Chris Parker (BT)  
Abigayle Smith (BC)

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Alice Farrell (BT) – Vice Chair  
Sarah Pregent (BC)

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent  
Stacy Anderson, Director of Special Services  
Scott Griggs, CVCC Assistant Director  
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources  
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Tara Day	Venus Dean	Nora Duane	Kara Erwin
Jamie Frey	Marissa Greene	Josh Howard	Prudence Krasofski	Marcy Kreitz
Pietro Lynn	Terry Reil	Diane Solomon	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, November 11, 2021, Regular meeting to order at 5:31 p.m., which was held at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.**

Mrs. Spaulding provided an overview of Meeting Norms and protocols for communicating with the Board.

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

Delete 5.6 First Reading Fiscal Management and General Financial Accountability Policy – F20

This policy has been returned to the Policy Committee.

Add 8.3 Future Agenda Items

Add 10.3 Student Matter (under Executive Session)

Corrections:

The Agenda should indicate that there is a physical meeting location – The BUUSD Central Office

The December Board Meetings should be listed as Special Meetings

**On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, 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, on behalf of the Barre Educators Association, read a prepared statement providing insight into what life is like working in the schools this year and to ask for support from the Board and the community.

**3.2 Student Voice**

None.

#### **4. Approval of Minutes**

##### **4.1 Approval of Minutes – October 28, 2021 Regular Meeting**

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the October 28, 2021 Regular Meeting.**

#### **5. Current Business**

##### **5.1 New Hires**

No candidates were presented for hire.

##### **5.2 Resignations/Retires/New Hires**

Letters of resignation from Scott Griggs and Christie Mainart were distributed. Mr. Hennessey announced an additional resignation that is not in the Board Packet. Mary Ellen Simmons, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, has submitted her resignation, which is effective at the end of Thanksgiving week. Additional details will be provided in Executive Session. Mr. Hennessey advised regarding the letters of resignation. Ms. Mainart's resignation is effective 12/22/21. Ms. Mainart is the BCEMS elementary health teacher and garden coordinator. This position has been posted and a number of applications have been received. It is hoped that a candidate can be presented to the Board on 12/02/21. Mr. Griggs will be leaving the District at the end of the academic year (06/30/22). Mr. Hennessey advised of the different positions Mr. Griggs has held within the District, including his current position as Assistant Director of CVCC. Ms. Mainart and Mr. Griggs were thanked for their service and wished well in their future endeavors.

##### **5.3 CVCC/BUUSD Lease Agreement**

A document titled 'Facilities Use and Related Services Agreement' was distributed.

Mrs. Spaulding advised that Pietro Lynn (BUUSD counsel) and CVCC Director Jody Emerson are present to provide an overview of the proposed Agreement. Mr. Lynn advised that he was asked to review the lease. This is the third iteration of the contract drafted by Chris Leopold. Mr. Lynn did not draft the Agreement. The document provides legal rights and responsibilities for both parties (CVCC and the BUUSD). The contract places certain responsibilities on the BUUSD, as landlord. If responsibilities are not fulfilled, the District can be sued. Mr. Lynn answered questions from the Board, and advised that he did not draft the document, as that would be a conflict of interest. Mr. Lynn had reviewed the first iteration and felt it needed to be amended to reflect that being a landlord is not easy and that a division of responsibilities needed to be reflected in the Agreement. The operative section is Section 3 (Use Fee), which documents fees that CVCC is responsible for, including costs associated with the building. Mr. Lynn believes it is important for the Board to understand the terms of the lease, which lasts for 3 years, with an option for CVCC to renew for an additional 2 years. Mr. Lynn advised that sometimes landlords do not wish to offer the 2 year extension, as they may wish to renegotiate to address unforeseen issues. Mr. Lynn noted that the contract does not clearly document who pays for power. This Agreement only goes into effect if voters approve a new governance structure at the March 2022 Town Meeting. If a new governance structure is approved, it will go into effect on 07/01/2022. Mrs. Akley queried whether or not the Board should take a step back and get a more complete utility picture. Mrs. Akley also suggested that the Board may wish to revisit the renewal clause in the Agreement. Mrs. Perreault advised that in both the current and the proposed contracts, both include a provision that CVCC pays 18% of the building's utilities. What constitutes utilities is not specified in the Agreement. Mrs. Akley's preference is to see some sort of demonstration that 18% is accurate and actually covers the expenses generated by CVCC. Mrs. Akley would like to assure voters that due diligence was performed by the District. Mrs. Akley suggest that the Board may wish to consider a shorter lease term, or addition of a clause that allows for renegotiation should costs increase. Mrs. Akley believes there is adequate time to perform additional research prior to agreeing to the proposed lease agreement. The governance vote is not until March 2022 and any new form of governance would not go into effect until 07/01/22. In response to a query, Mr. Lynn advised that 'heat' is not typically considered a utility, though all parties can agree that heat is considered a utility for the purpose of this agreement. Mr. Lynn believes the intent of the contract is for CVCC to shoulder 18% of the operating costs, which would include heat and air conditioning, though those items are not usually considered utilities. It was confirmed that if heating costs were to rise, the 18% of operating costs would include the increase in heating costs. Mrs. Akley confirmed that the agreement does not include any renegotiation clause. Mr. Lynn noted that, as the BUUSD's attorney, the bottom line is that if things are not working out, the District is 'stuck' with a three year contract, and an additional 2 years if CVCC so desires (locked in for 5 years). Mrs. Akley believes that given this information, she is not comfortable moving forward this evening and would prefer to wait until at least the next meeting, so that she has more time to review the contract and contact Mr. Lynn with any additional questions. Mrs. Akley believes there is presently a lot uncertainty in markets, and should any extraordinary circumstances occur, this agreement does not allow for renegotiation.

**On a motion by Mr. Boltin, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Board voted 5 to 1 to approve the CVCC/BUUSD Lease Agreement.**

**Ms. Badeau, Mr. Boltin, Mr. Isabelle, Ms. Parker, and Ms. Smith voted for the motion. Mrs. Akley voted against the motion.**

##### **5.4 Recommendation Policy C26 – Tuition Payment (Recommended)**

A copy of the VSBA Policy was distributed. It was the Recommendation of the Policy Committee, not to adopt this policy as it does not pertain to the Districts' schools. Ms. Parker advised that this policy pertains to districts that don't have high schools and noted that

the VSBA recently rescinded the policy. Given that the VSBA removed this Model Policy, she does not believe the Board needs to take action to agree not to adopt the policy. It was agreed that no action is necessary.

### **5.5 First Reading Responsible Computer Internet & Network Use Policy – D3 (Required)**

A copy of a draft policy was distributed.

Ms. Parker advised that the BUUSD currently has an adopted version of Policy D3. VSBA has recently updated the Model Policy version with more current language and applicable situations. The Technology Director is in agreement that the new language be adopted. It was noted that the current version of the policy cannot be rescinded after adoption of this policy. Though the newer policy has a new title, it is not a 'new policy'. The approval of this policy is actually approving amendments to the existing policy (including amending the policy 'title'). Once the policy is adopted (after the second and final reading), there will be no policy to rescind. It was noted that the protocol for amending policies wasn't followed, as protocol calls for the existing policy to be presented and all amendments would be identified utilizing the recognized protocols. Mrs. Spaulding has requested that when the policy is presented for second and final reading, it contain the editing protocols.

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Reading of the Responsible Computer Internet & Network Use Policy – D3.**

### **~~5.6 First Reading Fiscal Management and General Financial Accountability Policy – F20 (Recommended)~~**

~~A copy of a draft policy was distributed.~~

### **5.7 Financial Management Questionnaire**

A document titled 'Financial Management Questionnaire – BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT' was distributed. Mrs. Perreault provided a brief overview of the document which is required by Statute. Board Members have reviewed the form which was developed by State Auditors. Mrs. Perreault answered questions from the Board.

**On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the BUUSD Board unanimously voted to approve the Financial Management Questionnaire and authorized the Business Manager to sign the document.**

### **5.8 Substitute Rates**

A document titled Regional Substitute Rates was distributed.

A document titled Vermont Sub Rates (updated 08/24/20) was distributed.

Mrs. Spaulding advised regarding the documents in the packet, noting that one of the documents is from August of 2020.

Mrs. Spaulding advised that substitute rates were part of budget development discussion at the Finance Committee meeting.

Mr. Hennessey advised that the document titled Regional Substitute Rates is more recent. Mr. Hennessey advised that the District is not the highest or lowest on the list. Mr. Hennessey noted the shortage of substitutes and applauds the Board for wanting to address this issue, but noted that there are some complications relative to the negotiated agreement with para-educators with going significantly higher. He would like to advocate for bumping up the rate, noting that substitute pay has not been addressed in a long time, and that looking at rates for those individuals who have subbed for a long time would be beneficial, though he is doubtful that increases in the rate will significantly increase the number of individual who apply to the District for substitute jobs. Mrs. Marold addressed the Board, and advised that some new subs are signing up, and those that are interested in working full time are being funneled towards para-educator jobs (most of those on the sub list are being funneled to SPED when possible). Mrs. Spaulding queried Mr. Hennessey regarding his recommendation for increases for subs with many years in the District, as well as an increase for newer subs. Mr. Hennessey advised that specific figures have not been discussed, and noted that they want to be sensitive to the para pay. It was noted that some licensed subs that have been hired, have been moved to professional roles, though that has reduced the number of subs. Mrs. Marold reported that the District is advertising \$25.00 per hour for licensed subs. This is a premium rate that is only in effect for the current year. Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding why the District pays an hourly rate when many other districts pay a daily rate. Mrs. Marold advised that depending on the role for the sub, they might be working between 6 and 7 1/2 hours per day, so in 'normal times' the hours can fluctuate. Mr. Isabelle queried regarding whether or not the Board approved the premium pay, and if not, should it have. Mrs. Marold noted that the figures were not brought before the Board. Mr. Hennessey noted that the substitute shortage is one of the biggest issues the District is facing right now. Mr. Isabelle believes it's shameful that the District pays substitutes the same rate as individuals who work 'flipping burgers', and advised that the District needs to 'up its game'.

Ms. Badeau noted that most of the schools in the area are using a base/daily pay, rather than an hourly rate, and she believes a switch to the daily rate would be beneficial as it guarantees substitutes a consistent pay. Mrs. Poulin noted that her comments at the Finance Committee did not address the entire Board, so she is commenting this evening to assure that the entire Board is aware of the situation. Mrs. Poulin advised that the last time substitutes received an increase was 5 years ago and the time before that it was at least a decade. For unknown reasons, every year, every employee in the district (except for substitutes), receives an increase. Though the District says it values substitutes, it demonstrates the opposite when it comes to substitute pay. The District refuses to give increases to substitutes until the substitute pool hits rock bottom. Substitutes feel this perceived lack of value and are aware of what is happening. Substitutes are moving to other districts where they feel more valued. Additionally, there has never been a pay differential between inexperienced substitutes and those with ten or twenty years of experience. Experienced substitutes have established relationships with students and staff, and know the workings of the schools. Mrs. Poulin believes experienced substitutes should receive a higher

rate of pay as they bring much more experience and value to the job. As of January 2022, minimum wage has gone up \$2.95, since substitutes last received an increase. That coupled with the increase in the cost of living means substitutes are losing money. Mrs. Poulin noted that the rate list for 2020 is inaccurate because many districts increased their rate of pay shortly after school started. Regarding sensitivity to para wages, it has been Mrs. Poulin's experience that if someone wants a full time job, or full time job with benefits, they generally won't take a substitute job, (for a slightly higher rate), to take a job that has no guarantee of any hours on any given week. For Mrs. Poulin, it just 'doesn't wash' to say that substitute pay should be kept very low to prevent para-educators or those applying for para jobs from switching to substitute positions. Substitutes should be paid based on their value. Mrs. Spaulding would like to have a recommendation presented at the next meeting. Mr. Hennessey noted that the District should also look into setting a guaranteed daily rate (as most surrounding districts do). Mrs. Spaulding would like to know why Harwood has two different rates. It was noted that when the District used to pay a per diem rate, there were two rates in effect, one for full days and one for half days. Mrs. Poulin noted that if the District reverts back to a per-diem method, they will save a mountain of paperwork for sub coordinators and payroll personnel. (timesheets, timesheet approval, timesheet data entry). Ms. Parker would like to see data that reflects the overall financial impact of various rates, noting that she would prefer to go with a higher rate if the financial impact isn't too large. This item will be an action item at the 12/02/21 meeting.

### **5.9 FY23 Budget Draft 1**

A document titled 'FY23 Draft 1 Budget Development Considerations/Highlights – Presented to the Finance Committee: November 2, 2021' was presented. Mrs. Perreault advised that she will answer questions from the Board, and advised that draft 2 is being worked on. Draft 2 will be presented to the Finance Committee on 12/07/21. At that point, it is hoped that additional information will be available (equalized pupil counts, revenue information, and the announced yield). This additional information is not available until 12/01 of each year, so it is not available when draft 1 is created. The proposed increase in draft 1 is approximately \$589,000, and it is known that the increase in wages, salaries and benefits is more than that amount. There has been much transition over the last year and a half. Mrs. Perreault noted that there is an approximate difference of \$30,000 between teachers at the start of the salary scale and those at the top. 'Breakage' is being reviewed, and it was noted that there will be a decrease in the HRA line item. It is anticipated that there will be savings in health insurance (the number of those choosing family plans is lower than expected), HRAs, and the salary and wages line item. A community member requested that the District look for more ways to achieve savings, and asked for additional information relating to finances surrounding the resignation of an employee. Mrs. Perreault advised that at this point in budget development, revenues are not being discussed. There is currently an unaudited fund balance of \$1.8 million, and it would make more sense to utilize some of those funds instead of utilizing the Tax Stabilization fund. When additional information becomes available, discussions will take place regarding the possible use of funds for revenue. Draft 1 budgets 75¢ SF for facilities. If the budgeted amount is increased to the Industry Standard of \$1 SF, the difference will be \$113,550. This will be discussed at the next Finance Committee meeting. There are outstanding questions related to the PSTL Program. There are no staff positions in the budget that were previously grant funded. Mrs. Perreault provided clarification regarding the increase for assistant coaches. The actual increase to provide paid assistant coaches for every SHS team is \$65,000 (not all teams had paid assistant coaches). In response to a query, Mrs. Perreault advised that planning is under way to transition grant funded positions into open positions (through attrition). In response to a query regarding possible changes to weighting (when calculating equalized pupil), Mrs. Perreault believes that a change to the weighting formula would probably be beneficial to the District. No weighting changes have been presented to the legislature, so any possible weighting changes would not be implemented in time to impact the FY23 budget.

### **5.10 Committee Structure**

A document titled 'Community members on BUUSD school board committee guidelines' was distributed. Mrs. Spaulding drafted the document based on the Board's previous discussion and the motion that was passed. Mrs. Spaulding queried the Board regarding the draft document, noting that she has also listed some questions. Mrs. Spaulding provided an overview of the document, including her list of questions. Board members provided feedback on the document. Clarification was provided that community member terms end at the Board Organization meeting in March, and then Committee openings will be advertised. It was agreed that the Board will interview candidates. Mrs. Spaulding will update the document based on feedback. It was suggested that once the guidelines are finalized, a policy be written.

### **5.11 Community Involvement Event**

A document titled 'Community Service Forum' was distributed. Mrs. Spaulding, in conversation with Peter Anthony, from All In For Barre, learned of an upcoming Community Involvement Event. The document included in the packet is being shared with the Board because Mr. Anthony would like to have the schools involved with the forum. Mrs. Spaulding would like community members to understand how they can participate (in Board meetings, on committees, and on a case by case basis). Mrs. Spaulding queried Mr. Hennessey and Mrs. Marold regarding other ways to encourage community volunteers. Mrs. Spaulding will participate in this event, which will be held on Sunday, 11/21/21 from 1:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. at the Labor Hall. Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding others who may wish to participate. Mr. Hennessey volunteered to attend the meeting. Increasing community involvement may assist with sparking community interest in serving on the Board. Mrs. Spaulding will attend the event and report back to the Board at the next meeting. Mrs. Spaulding asked Board Members to encourage community members to attend the forum.

## **6. Old Business**

### **6.1 Amendment of the Superintendent Committee Charge**

A document titled 'Superintendent Candidate Screening Committee Charge' was distributed.

Mrs. Spaulding advised that though the document is almost finalized, it does not include student names. The number of students to be involved is undecided. Mrs. Spaulding would like to amend the document, and receive Board Approval for adoption of the revised version. The proposed amendment is to add Spaulding High School student(s) to the Committee. Brief discussion was held.

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to adopt the amended version of the Superintendent Candidate Screening Committee Charge.**

### **6.2 COVID Update**

A copy of a letter from the Vermont Department of Health, to Parents and Guardians (dated 11/04/21) was distributed.

A community member queried regarding having work sent home from school, for students who are in quarantine, or out of school due to COVID. Mr. Hennessey advised regarding current cases (161 as of about a week ago), and advised that there have been 17 new cases since Halloween. COVID cases are on the rise around the State, with record high numbers of positives. Vaccination Clinics have been scheduled at BCEMS (11/16 and 11/17) and at BTMES (11/18 and 11/20). Details are included in the letter contained in the packet. Currently, most slots are filled, but additional vaccine may become available. It was noted that there are additional places where students can get vaccinated. Mr. Hennessey thanked the Barre District Health Office, which has been very involved in planning these clinics. Regarding 'Test to Stay', the District continues to lack the capacity to run this program and there are still supply chain issues. It is hoped that once more students get vaccinated, there will be fewer students who need to get tested. The Test to Stay initiative will remain on administrator's radar. Mr. Hennessey advised that for students who are quarantining, work is available on line. As there is no State of Emergency, remote learning days do not count as days in school. There is some pressure on the State to reconsider the remote attendance option. A community member queried regarding staffing for Test to Stay, specifically qualifications for 'testers (is a nursing degree necessary?) and whether or not the District is hiring for these positions, or asking for volunteers. Mr. Hennessey advised that the District is recruiting volunteers for various areas of need. Of those who have expressed interest in volunteering, most wish to volunteer in a capacity not related to testing. Given the volume of tests that need to be performed, and the overall lack of staffing for testing, it does not seem feasible at this time. If a large number of volunteers come forward, the District can consider implementing Test to Stay, but it was noted that there may be a shortage of test kits. Mr. Hennessey offered to speak with Ms. Kreitz after the meeting to inform her of the process for signing up to volunteer. It was noted that all volunteers need to go through the finger printing and background check process. Mrs. Akley has been receiving much community feedback relating to why remote learning is not occurring, and suggestions that the schools close for two weeks to allow the surge to calm down. Mrs. Akley reminded the community that because there is no State of Emergency in effect, laws prevent the schools from using these mitigation strategies. Mrs. Akley is also frustrated with current situation, and encourages community members to share their frustrations with the Governor and the State Board of Education. Mrs. Akley hopes that if enough voices are heard by the right individuals, it may help to move things in a different direction. The new case numbers are shocking and it will be difficult to make it through the winter unless other options are available. Mr. Hennessey advised that the leadership teams have been discussing various mitigation strategies, and are worried that a 2 week closure would not be beneficial, as once students leave the public school setting, they will be in an environment where there are no mandated safety measures, and many families, due to personal circumstances, can't quarantine. It is believed that the safest place for students is in the school, noting that the majority of students are being served. It was reiterated that the State currently does not allow remote options, and a closure of two weeks does require make up days.

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

Appreciation was expressed to Ms. Van Vliet for her opening statement. It is recognized that COVID fatigue has set in and staff are doing important work. The work that staff members are performing is very much appreciated. Appreciation was also express to students and parents for their continued support and flexibility.

Appreciation was expressed to Mr. Griggs for all he has contributed to many students and the District over the years.

Appreciation was given for the substitute discussion, and it is hoped that changes can be made that will result in hiring individuals that will stay with the District.

The SHS Drama Department's performances of Alice in Wonderland have been postponed due to COVID.

Staff, students and parents were thanked for all of their hard work in producing this play. It is hoped that the shows can be performed in December.

Mrs. Spaulding expressed her appreciation to all community members who contact her regarding school issues. Community involvement is important an appreciated.

Mr. Hennessey praised the SHS Band, led by Bobby Booth, and the talented JROTC Program, who participated in the Veterans' Day Parade and the Ceremony at the Youth Triumphant Statue. BCEMS and BTMES bands also participated. A number of students from the SEA Program also attended the parade. Students at school participated in a number of Veterans' Day activities. Photos can be viewed on the schools' websites.

## **8. Future Agenda Items**

### **8.1 Listening Session: Budget**

The Budget Listening Session and School Education Financing 101 Informational Session, will be held at the December 16, 2021 Board Meeting. Mrs. Spaulding will try to craft the Agenda such that other Board work is minimal and the majority of the meeting time can be spent discussing these two topics. It is hoped that additional budget information will be available by 12/16/21.

### **8.2 School Education Financing 101**

See Agenda Item 8.1

### **8.3 Future Agenda Items**

- Second and Final Reading of the Responsible Computer Internet & Network Use Policy – D3
- Substitute Rates
- FY23 Budget Development
- Guidelines for Committee Structure
- COVID Update
- Discussion on Current Committee Members
- Audit Presentation
- New Hires

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

**Thursday, November 25, 2021 Regular Meeting is cancelled**

**Special Board Meeting - Thursday, December 2, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.**

**Special Board Meeting – Thursday, December 16, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.**

## **10. Executive Session as Needed**

### **10.1 Negotiations Update**

### **10.2 Personnel Records – Status of Employment**

### **10.3 Student Matter**

Items proposed for discussion in Executive Session include a Negotiations Update, a Personnel Records Issue, a Status of Employment Issue, and a Student Matter.

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously agreed to find that premature general public knowledge of the item proposed for discussion, specifically the Negotiations Update, would clearly place the Barre Unified Union School District at a substantial disadvantage should the discussion be public.**

**On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Hennessey in attendance for Agenda Items 10.1, 10.2, and 10.3, and Mr. Coon and a parent in attendance for Agenda Item 10.3, at 8:03 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 to discuss the items proposed for discussion.**

It was agreed that Agenda Item 10.3 (Student Matter) will be discussed out of order, as the first item discussed in Executive Session.

The remaining information was provided by the Board Clerk.

**On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 10:01 p.m.**

## **11. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 10:02 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Andrea Poulin*