

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**  
BUUSD Central Office and Via Video Conference – Google Meet  
November 2, 2021 - 5:30 p.m.

**MINUTES**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Sarah Pregent (BC) - Chair  
Renee Badeau (BT) – Vice Chair – arrived at 6:04 p.m.  
Gina Akley (BT)  
Chris Parker (BT)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Sonya Spaulding

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent

**PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT:**

David Delcore, Times Argus      Josh Howard      Diane Solomon

**1. Call to Order**

**The Chair, Mrs. Pregent, called the Tuesday, November 2, 2021 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:39 p.m., which was held at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.**

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

None.

**3. Public Comment**

None.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

**4.1 Meeting Minutes From October 5, 2021**

**On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the October 5, 2021 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting.**

**5. New Business**

**5.1FY23 Budget Development**

A document titled ‘Budget Development Considerations/Highlights – November 2, 2021’ was distributed. It was noted that Mrs. Perreault will not be attendance this evening. Mr. Hennessey will provide a brief overview of the considerations and highlights for budget draft #1. A copy of the document was displayed on screen. Budget draft #1 for the BUUSD is \$46,941,657, an overall budget increase of 1.27%, or \$589,156. The CVCC budget draft #1 is \$3,489,727, an increase of 4.75%, or \$158,285. Mr. Hennessey provided a brief overview of the budget development schedule, and noted that the budget aligns with the Strategic Plan. Mr. Hennessey advised of the ‘Beliefs’ associated with the Strategic Plan. Mrs. Akley queried regarding a possible adjustment to the fund balance. Mrs. Perreault will be consulted regarding this issue. Mrs. Akley would like documentation relating to how much of the increase is due to salary and benefit increases. It was noted that although salaries are negotiable, health insurance benefits are negotiated by the State and the District has no control. Mrs. Spaulding advised regarding information that is provided by the State, which includes the number of equalized pupils. Mr. Hennessey advised regarding the shortage of substitutes and para-educators, noting a planned change in the model, which includes hiring additional permanent substitutes. Mr. Hennessey advised regarding some of the ‘considerations’ and advised that increases at the individual schools are very limited in this draft. The sole ‘big ticket’ item for SHS is funding for assistant coaches, which includes compensation for all assistant coaches. In the past, only specified assistant coaching positions were paid positions. Ms. Parker queried regarding possible reinstatement of the PSTL Program at BTMES, and implementation of a PSTL Program at BCEMS (an equity issue). Ms. Parker also queried regarding the increase to full time support in the Principal’s Office. In response to a query regarding possible cuts to staff due to smaller pupil counts, it was noted that the drop in pupil counts is across grade levels, which makes it difficult to cut staff. Mrs. Spaulding advised that combining the elementary and middle schools (BC and BT) might result in the ability to cut staff, but she does not believe that approach would be very popular. The Committee would like additional information regarding when and why the PSTL Program was cut at BTMES. A

community member lauded the recent video related to Work Based Learning, and queried regarding a staffing cut to that Program. Mrs. Spaulding advised that the cut was due to COVID restrictions, and it is thought that the program will need to go through some 're-building' years. A community member queried regarding possible cuts to administrative positions. Mr. Hennessey clarified that there are not 40 administrator positions in the District, as one community member had believed. Mr. Hennessey advised that there are currently 17 open para-educator positions, and there are no applications for these positions. It is hoped that ESSER funding can be used to expand services in the SEA Program, and it is hoped that the SEA Program can be expanded to serve some of the younger students. It was noted that if the CVCC Governance change is approved by voters, the BUUSD would become a 'sending' school, and would no longer be responsible for budget creation. The District would continue to lease space to CVCC, and continue providing additional services (for a fee). If the Governance structure changes, all 'sending' districts would vote on the CVCC budget. It was noted that the positions listed under 'Special Education/SEA', are current budgeted, unfilled positions. These positions are necessary to provide legally required services to students. Mrs. Spaulding advised regarding progress being made (by a task force) relative to a possible change in weighting for student counts. The BUUSD has a higher population of students living in poverty as well as students with intensive needs. Mrs. Poulin went on record to state that although all employees in the District (except substitutes) receive increases every year, substitutes have not had an increase in 5 years, noting that minimum wage has increased substantially over the past five years and that there are many entry level jobs that are paying more than the substitute wage. Though the Substitute Policy states that there can be a different level of pay for substitutes with longevity, the District has never implemented differing pay scales (entry level subs, and those with many years of experience receive the same wage). The District only provides increases for substitutes when they 'hit rock bottom', and does not show substitutes that they are valued. Substitutes are leaving the BUUSD District to work in other districts that have higher compensation. Mrs. Poulin believes the District needs to take a serious look at how substitutes are compensated. Mrs. Poulin believes the cost of wages and benefits for full time substitutes is very costly, and that increasing the daily sub rate, could help reduce the substitute shortage and do so at less cost to the District. The current hourly rate for substitutes is \$14.00 per hour. Mrs. Spaulding requested that discussion be held (outside of this meeting) regarding substitute pay for the current year, in addition to any discussion that may be held during budget development. Additional discussion was held, including; a community member's request that the Board look for additional cuts to the budget, tax rates, property values, equalized pupil numbers, the CLA, and the tax rate.

## **5.2 FY22 Expense Report**

The BUUSD FY22 Expense Report (dated 11/02/021) was distributed.

Mrs. Pregent advised of an anticipated surplus of approximately \$200,000 (due mainly to unfilled positions), but noted that it is very early in the year to make end-of-year projections. A community member queried regarding what happens to the budgeted funds if the vacant positions are not filled. A community member expressed thanks to administrators and staff for working under the current difficult conditions, and also expressed that she believes small class sizes are the best way to support students' learning and social/emotional development. It was noted that at this time, it is premature to discuss surplus funds for FY22.

## **5.3 FY21 Audit Update**

Mrs. Pregent advised that auditors have been in the Central Office working on the audit. Mrs. Pregent believes that the auditors have not found any adverse findings or material weaknesses. The draft audit will be presented to the Board in December.

## **5.4 ARP ESSER Conceptual Applications**

A document titled 'ARP ESSER HVAC Conceptual Applications have been submitted for:' (SHS, BCEMS & BTMES) was distributed. In Mr. Evan's absence from the meeting, Mr. Hennessey advised that he would provide an overview.

Mr. Hennessey displayed the document that was included in the meeting packet, and provided a brief overview of the cost for upgrades at each school. Mr. Hennessey noted that HVAC upgrades were a popular item for discussion at the community forum. Mrs. Pregent advised that the ESSER Conceptual Applications for BCEMS and BTMES should be submitted by the end of the week. The application for SHS has been submitted and does include the addition of the sprinkler system, which is most likely required if the HVAC system is to be upgraded. Mr. Hennessey hopes to have a response (for the SHS application) within a week.

## **5.5 Vermont Green School Initiatives – Phase I**

A document titled 'Vermont Green Schools Initiative' was distributed.

In Mr. Evans absence, Mr. Hennessey advised that this initiative is to help impacted schools access funding to pay for green storm water infrastructure design. The District is looking to see what it might qualify for. This will be a long term process. The District hopes to hear what it may qualify for, by this winter or next spring. Mrs. Spaulding provided additional information regarding the storm water legislation and its requirements for infrastructure enhancements. There was a brief overview of previous discussions/work that occurred in Barre Town (under the BTMES Board) relative to possible infrastructure improvements at BTMES. The organization 'Friends of the Winooski' was instrumental in the initial work at BTMES. This item will be discussed further at Facilities Committee meetings.

## **6. Old Business**

None.

## **7. Other Business**

Mr. Hennessey reiterated how difficult it is for staff to work in the current environment, noting that everyone is going to need to learn how to work with less and really focus on retention of staff. It is believed that the difficulty in hiring for positions will continue and the District will need to build capacity from within. These issues are statewide.

## **8. Items for Future Agendas**

- FY23 Budget
- FY22 Expenditure Report
- FY21 Audit Update

Add two items to the Parking Lot:

- ARP ESSER Conceptual Applications
- Vermont Green Schools Initiatives – Phase I

## **9. Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 7, 2021 at 5:30 p.m., at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.

## **10. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Committee unanimously agreed to adjourn at 6:50 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Andrea Poulin*