

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT  
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING**  
BUUSD Central Office and Via Video Conference – Google Meet  
November 4, 2021 - 5:30 p.m.

**MINUTES**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Abigayle Smith, Vice-Chair (BC)  
Guy Isabelle – (At-Large)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Alice Farrell, Chair - (BT)

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent  
Josh Allen, Communications Specialist

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Josh Howard

**1. Call to Order**

**The Vice-Chair, Ms. Smith, called the Thursday, November 4, 2021 BUUSD Communications Committee meeting to order at 5:30 p.m., which was held at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.**

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

Preliminary discussion on Budget Promotion will be held under Other Business.

**3. Public Comment**

None.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

**4.1 Meeting Minutes for September 2, 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 September 2, 2021 BUUSD Communications Committee meeting.**

**5. New Business**

**5.1 Strengthening/Improving Communication with All Community Members**

Mr. Allen reported that over the past few months, he's been doubling down on video creation and is getting videos out on a weekly basis. This week, a video was created at 802 Honda, with three students from the Co-op Program at CVCC. This video promotes many positive aspects of the Program. Mr. Allen has a list of future videos. Next week, a video will be filmed at BCEMS, focusing on Academics and Interventions at the middle school level. Mr. Hennessey reported that the videos have been very popular and can also be used to help promote the budget.

Mr. Allen has been spending much time working to improve communications systems, including an upgrade to the Infinite Campus messaging system. Mr. Allen has been collaborating with the Technology Department to consolidate ways to communicate more efficiently.

In response to a query, it was noted that Covid Updates are normally sent after 4:00 p.m. because notifications of new covid cases are rarely received prior to 2:00 p.m. or 3:00 p.m. Some notifications are not being received until after 9:00 p.m.

Mr. Allen advised that a mobile application is in the works and he hopes to have a demonstration for the December meeting. This application will make communication more convenient, and is basically an easier version of the web site.

Mr. Isabelle shared that he is enjoying the videos highlighting the students, and also likes the personal touch that Mr. Hennessey is adding to communications (e.g. signing using only his first name). Mr. Isabelle queried regarding any 'teachable moments' during communications. Mr. Allen advised that lately, during urgent events, he and Mr. Hennessey are working to 'slow things down', use the voice of reason, and 'not get ahead of ourselves'. Mr. Hennessey advised regarding a recent event related to a possible threat. Mr. Hennessey and Mr. Allen are vetting messages with each other and being very thorough. Mr. Allen reported that lately there is a large volume of 'need to know' information that must be shared.

## **5.2 Feedback on COVID Related Communication**

Since the Committee last met, Mr. Allen has sent out 130 different close-contact covid letters. Though new cases are identified almost daily, the numbers are declining (from 4 or 5 a day, to 1 or 2 a day).

School vaccination clinics are starting to open. Specific information related to vaccine clinics was communicated today, including vaccination information, registration information, consent forms, etc.

The State is setting up school based clinics, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose clinics set up for early December. Slots are filling quickly. Thus far approximately ¼ of eligible individuals have signed up for vaccination.

## **5.3 Promotion of SHS to Out of District Students**

More videos have been made at the high school level (e.g. Work Based Learning, The Generator – Maker Space, various events occurring at SHS, etc.), including testimonial videos. The end goal is to have a play list of videos of everything SHS offers. It is thought that this method will be more engaging to students. Student testimonials are very important. The video content needs to get out to the sending schools. Mr. Allen has been working with Mr. Hoffman for video distribution. Videos made this year, can be used in future years. Recruitment visits have been occurring. Mr. Hoffman is the lead on out of district school promotion. A community member suggested that SHS strongly promote what they do ‘better’ or ‘different’ than other schools. Transportation and the Career Center are big draws for SHS. It was suggested that the tax payer impact to sending districts (SHS tuition is lower than many other high schools), be highlighted more. Other items to promote include; the Scholarship Program, CVCC, JROTC, the Music/Band Programs, and the offering of AP courses. Mr. Allen advised that there will be a second piece to the Work Based Learning video, which will highlight that SHS (using grant funds) is creating a mini Maker-Space. It was suggested that students and families that chose SHS be interviewed/surveyed, and asked why they chose SHS. It was suggested that interviews also be conducted with students who first chose a different high school, then transferred to SHS. Mrs. Poulin noted that though spring promotion was discussed, families make the high school decision in December and January, so spring promotion to 8<sup>th</sup> graders is too late. Promotion needs to begin much earlier in the year. Ms. Smith noted that many students in the Washington/Orange District have already been visited by other high schools and they have already made their decision. Brief discussion was held regarding discussions being held in the Washington/Orange District, regarding the possibility of removing school choice and having a designated high school. It was suggested that a holiday gift with a promotional, personalized note, be provided to 8<sup>th</sup> graders in sending districts. Mr. Allen advised regarding pre-covid ‘high school fairs’ where in-person events were held, with recruiting high schools each having a booth. It was reiterated that heavy promotion of SHS needs to begin early. It was suggested that it may be beneficial to have the SHS Athletic Director present during promotion of SHS.

## **6. Old Business**

Preliminary discussion was held regarding budget promotion. Mr. Allen will be reaching out to printers soon, to obtain quotes for printing of the Annual Report. The videos being produced have been helping to document and promote the great things happening/offered in the District. Mr. Allen has been in touch with the Digital Media Arts instructor regarding creating a budget promotion video series (a 4 to 5 episode series, leading up to the early voting period). Mr. Allen noted that the video equipment at CVCC is top quality/studio quality equipment. In addition to the equipment, there is much talent in the Digital Media Arts Program. It was suggested that promotion stay away from ‘tax rate’ information, and focus on what the budget includes, and specific items that are causing the increase. Promotion should also highlight that our schools are assets.

## **7. Other Business**

In response to a query, it was noted that CVTV is not currently videoing meetings because they are held remotely. The District provides CVTV with videos from Board meetings. CVTV was downloading meeting videos from YouTube, but their tool, used to download videos, broke. Mr. Allen now has to send the videos to CVTV. CVTV used to video Board meetings, but never videoed committee meetings. Mr. Isabelle advocates for CVTV uploading committee meetings (in addition to Board meetings). Mr. Allen will contact CVTV to see if they are interested in receiving committee meeting videos.

The SEA Open House will be held in the near future. Mr. Isabelle believes promotion of the SEA Program would be beneficial.

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

- Promotion to Out of District Students - Student Recruitment
- Budget Communication
- COVID Communication Update
- Mobil App Update (if available)

## **9. Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, December 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 6:26 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Andrea Poulin*