

# DRAFT

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT  
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING**  
BUUSD Central Office and Via Video Conference – Google Meet  
December 9, 2021 - 5:30 p.m.

## MINUTES

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alice Farrell, Chair - (BT)  
Guy Isabelle – (At-Large)

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Vacant - (BC)

### OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sonya Spaulding

### ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Josh Allen, Communications Specialist

### GUESTS PRESENT:

Josh Howard

#### **1. Call to Order**

**The Chair, Mrs. Farrell, called the Thursday, December 9, 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**

None.

#### **3. Public Comment**

None.

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

##### **4.1 Meeting Minutes for November 4, 2021 BUUSD Communications Committee Meeting**

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the November 4, 2021 BUUSD Communications Committee meeting.**

#### **5. New Business**

##### **5.1 Budget Communication**

Mr. Allen reported that a quote for the Annual Report has been received and that it does fall within the budget. The Annual Report is an 8 page booklet that is sent to every household in the Barre area. The service, provided by the post office is called Every Door Direct Mailing. Mr. Allen and Mr. Hennessey are producing a budget video series that goes along with the booklet. There will be a four episode series. Each video will focus on a particular item in the budget and the impact that item has on students. Mr. Allen will also write four articles (for the Annual Report) that will align with the videos. Each article will have a QR code which will allow for viewing of the corresponding video. Mr. Allen will coordinate with Digital Media Arts for creation of the videos. Once the Board approves a draft budget, he'll begin work on the 'budget content' of the Annual Report. It is Mr. Allen's goal, to make the budget information as straightforward as possible. Mrs. Farrell advised that last year there were many private social media groups commenting on the budget, and she queried regarding how to counter those commentaries/discussions. Mr. Allen advised that it is possible for the BUUSD website to have a web form where community members can submit comments and questions. This option could be set up to send comments/questions to specified individuals, who could respond. Mrs. Spaulding advised regarding discussion at the Finance Committee, including review of the draft budget presentation. The Finance Committee agreed that the presentation of the Education Tax Formula should be simplified as much as possible. It was noted that due to early voting, information should be distributed as early as possible. Mrs. Spaulding believes it would also be beneficial to participate in an Aired Out podcast. Brief discussion was held regarding whether or not the tax rate calculation should be shared (whether or not it is helpful). It was confirmed that the Board is slated to vote on the draft budget in January. Mr. Isabelle suggested that it may be beneficial to advise the community regarding the impact COVID has had on the schools/budget. Mrs. Poulin queried regarding whether or not the PSTL (Problem Solving Through Literacy) Program is included in the budget, advising that she has confirmed it was never cut from prior budgets, rather the program could not be held because COVID restrictions prevented the co-mingling of students. Mr. Allen advised that he will be in attendance at next week's Listening Session.

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Mr. Allen advised that CVCC plans to have a one page version of the annual report. CVCC budget information is not normally included in the BUUSD Annual Report, but perhaps something could be added, or a CVCC mailing could be looped in to the BUUSD mailing. It was noted that for the first time, sending schools will also be voting on a CVCC item (change to governance structure). Budget changes resulting from a change in governance structure are unknown at this time. Mr. Allen will reach out to Ms. Emerson regarding any planned CVCC budget communications. Mrs. Spaulding advised regarding other discussion at the Finance Committee, which included a suggestion that an FAQ page be created, and that Mr. Allen assist with creation and updates to this page. It was noted that an FAQ page did exist in the past, and it can be updated. Facebook and Front Page Forum platforms will also be used to promote the budget and can include links to the FAQs page.

## 5.2 Mobile App Update

Mr. Allen shared his screen to provide an update on the new mobile application. The app is not on the Apple App Store or Android App Store yet. This mobile app is basically an extension of the District's web site, and reads content directly from the District's web site. Access to information on the various schools' web sites will be added. Users can filter the information they wish to view. The app will include the items that parents/students normally use the most. The app is still being developed. Mr. Allen showed a preview of what is currently in place. It was noted that app users can customize the app to display items that they like to look at. Mr. Allen reported that the set-up of this application has not been overly labor intensive. Thus far, Mr. Allen is very pleased with how development is progressing, and appreciates modernization of the District's communication. It is Mr. Allen's goal, to have the app finalized by the beginning of January. Mr. Allen is currently waiting for 'Finalsite' to respond to him regarding one of the last steps, and he anticipates the app will be available in app stores within a few weeks. The District will need have a campaign to heavily promote this free app.

## 6. Old Business

### 6.1 Promotion of Out of District Students – Student Recruitment

Mr. Allen advised that Ry Hoffman attended an in-person event for Chelsea/Tunbridge, and will be attending a virtual event for Washington/Orange. Additionally, Mr. Hoffman noted that some schools use 'flashy swag' to promote their schools, and he is looking for ways to better promote SHS. Mr. Allen is working on development of an interactive course catalog to assist with promotion of SHS. Development of this interactive feature will allow for Mr. Hoffman to share it with potential students at live events. Mr. Allen displayed the interactive Course Catalog on his screen and showed an example of how it works. Courses can be selected based on grade or subject area. This interactive feature is much more user friendly than the existing Program of Studies. The interactive feature is not live yet, but is close to completion. Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding identifying required courses. Mr. Allen advised that discussion has been held (with Mr. Hoffman) regarding courses to take for 'common career' paths. Mrs. Spaulding suggested that it would also be helpful to add a 'path' for those wanting to attend college. A community member suggested adding the District's test scores (as a tool to assist parents who are considering moving to the District). Mr. Isabelle queried regarding the process for enrolling at SHS and whether or not it can be done on line.

### 6.2 COVID Communication Update

Mr. Allen advised that he has fully moved to Infinite Campus (from Mail Chimp) as his main source for messaging COVID updates (close contact emails). This switch has streamlined the process and saved much time. Though COVID cases do take a lot of Mr. Allen's time, this new method has been much more efficient. A community member reported that he received a text message regarding a COVID exposure (for one of his children), but that he did not receive an email. Mr. Allen will research this issue. Mr. Allen has been receiving positive feedback regarding the new system for communicating COVID exposures. Turn-around time is much faster. Mr. Allen noted that if the District implements Test-To-Stay, many volunteers will be necessary. There is currently a pool of approximately 40 volunteers. Volunteer efforts are being coordinated.

## 7. Other Business

In response to a query, Mr. Allen advised that the Times Argus is no longer providing the free one page ads to school districts. A community member queried regarding the budget development process, stressing that community members are struggling financially. It was suggested that budget development include a line by line review of the budget, with consideration of each line item and what the district schools would look like without specific line items or reduced line items. Mrs. Farrell suggested that this suggestion be brought up at the Public Listening Session.

## 8. Items to be Placed on Future Agendas

- Budget Promotion
- Publicizing School Activities (general report)
- Superintendent Search Committee Public Forums
- Mobile App Update
  
- Promotion of SHS to Out of District Schools – Add back to Parking Lot

Brief discussion was held regarding Logo/Re-branding. It was agreed that discussion of this item should be postponed until a permanent Superintendent is hired.

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## **9. Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting is Thursday, January 6, 2022 at 5:30 p.m., at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.

## **10. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 6:45 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Andrea Poulin*