

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

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sonya Spaulding (BC) – Chair
Alice Farrell (BT) – Vice Chair – arrived at 5:41 p.m.
Guy Isabelle (At-Large) - Clerk
Gina Akley (BT)
Renee Badeau (BT)
Tim Boltin (BC)
Sarah Pregent (BC)
Abigayle Smith (BC)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Chris Parker (BT)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Jody Emerson, Director Central Vermont Career Center
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources

GUESTS PRESENT:

Venus Dean	Marissa Greene	Josh Howard	Joseph Kill	Prudence Krasofski
Marcy Kreitz	Terri Reil	Rachael Van Vliet	Porter Walbridge, Jr.	

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, December 2, 2021, Special meeting to order at 5:32 p.m., which was held at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.

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

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 11.1 Personnel – Status of Employment (under Executive Session)

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as amended. Mrs. Farrell was not present for the vote.

3. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

3.1 Public Comment

Rachael Van Vliet, addressed the Board, speaking on behalf of the Barre Educators' Association. Ms. Van Vliet read a prepared statement, which included commentaries from various staff members, advising of the many challenges of the school year and on-going needs. The lack of capacity to serve students is a major stressor. Other items include; challenges posed by quarantine requirements, loss of staff, and the inability to hire and retain staff. BEA Members request support from the Board and community members, to assist with dealing with the many challenges the District is facing.

A community member expressed concern that although more money is spent each year, students are not showing the necessary improvements, and that he believes a different approach is necessary.

3.2 Student Voice

None.

4. Consent Agenda

4.1 Approval of Minutes – November 11, 2021 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the November 11, 2021 Regular Meeting. Mrs. Farrell was not present for the vote.

5. Current Business

5.1 New Hires

The resumes and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Forms for Marty McMahon (CVCC – part-time Literacy Interventionist) and Angelique Marie Fairbrother (SHS – Technology Integration Specialist) were distributed. Mr. Hennessey advised regarding the difficulty hiring personnel outside of the traditional hiring season. The hiring process is now going year-round. Mr. Hennessey lauded administrators for expediting the hiring process, as the District competes with other districts to fill positions. Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of the candidates. In response to a question regarding hiring personnel from other districts (in the middle of the school year), Mr. Hennessey advised that the pandemic has changed operating procedures between districts. Currently, given the staffing shortages, districts are trying to meet the needs of professional staff, and are making accommodations to assist with keeping professionals in the field of education. Superintendents hold much discussion prior to any individual changing districts. There is much ‘behind the scenes’ work. It was noted that the AOE is also making accommodations by loosening certification requirements.

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Marty McMahon and Angelique Fairbrother.

5.2 Resignations/Retirements

No letters of resignation were presented.

Mr. Hennessey advised that the Superintendent’s Report contains names of recent resignations. He will discuss these resignations under Agenda Item 7.1. (Jim Ferland – SHS Assistant Principal, Viviana Hardy BTMES Spanish Teacher, and Erica Gongloff, BTMES Pre-k Interventionist).

5.3 First Reading Special Education Policy (D7)

A copy of the policy was distributed. Ms. Smith provided a brief overview of this required policy, whose adoption is required by 01/15/2022. Once this policy has been adopted, local Policy D40 should be rescinded.

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Reading of the Special Education Policy (D7).

5.4 Enrollment/Home Study Report

Two reports were distributed; ‘District Enrollment/Staffing – for December 2021’, and the ‘Home Study Report (AOE provided data)’. Mr. Hennessey advised regarding a ‘glitch’ with middle school numbers (total # of TA teachers, vs. total # of core instructors). This item has been fixed and should not occur on future reports. Mr. Isabelle queried regarding how the District’s home study counts compare with those from other districts. Mrs. Farrell queried regarding whether or not new enrollees are coming from out of state. Mr. Hennessey will look into the number of transfers from out of state. Discussion was held regarding how often this report should be presented to the Board. Mrs. Spaulding requested that comparison data be provided, so that the Board will have a clear picture of the overall change since the start of the academic year. It was agreed that this report will be presented at the January meeting, at which time the Board may wish to begin receiving the report quarterly rather than monthly.

5.5 Superintendent/Administrator Evaluation Process

A document titled ‘Professional Standards for Educational Leaders’ was distributed.

A document titled ‘BUUSD Admin Evaluation Feedback Survey Distribution Lists’ was distributed.

Mrs. Spaulding provided an overview of the evaluation process for the Superintendent, which includes input from numerous individuals throughout the District. Feedback is required by the last day before Winter Break. Mrs. Gilbert will post a link for individuals to submit feedback. It was noted that the Superintendent’s evaluation is always completed prior to Town Meeting Day, so that all Board Members the Superintendent has worked under, can provide feedback. Mr. Hennessey advised regarding Administrator evaluations, including past practices and his proposed change to be implemented due to COVID. Mr. Hennessey has been working with a consultant regarding a ‘pandemic related approach’ to evaluations. Mr. Hennessey would like evaluations to be powerful and authentic. It is anticipated that administrator evaluations will start in early December and be completed before the February Break. This year’s evaluation will focus on four of the ten Professional Standards listed in the distributed documentation. The four standards are; #3 – Equity and Cultural Responsiveness, #5 – Community of Care and Support for Students, #7 – Professional Community for Teachers and Staff, and #8 – Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community. Input was provided by Board and community members, including questions relating to identifying if positions are necessary, and concern that the proposed evaluation process does not focus enough on student achievement, the need to identify measurable student achievement standards, the possibility of having student achievement reflected in salary increases, belief that the evaluation process is a growth and improvement process, rather than a punitive process, belief that the evaluation process has improved greatly over the years, a suggestion to add a portion of the Strategic

Plan to the evaluation form, and whether or not a structured Action Plan is being developed to address gaps. It was noted that this year's evaluation process is a 'pandemic approach', and there may be a different process next year. Mrs. Spaulding requested input on the Superintendent Evaluation Process. Mrs. Spaulding will ask Mrs. Gilbert to move forward with sending out the email which will include a link to the evaluation form. It was noted that Board Members will be submitting meaningful feedback for individuals that they interact with. Feedback is due before the December Break.

6. Old Business

6.1 Second and Final Reading Responsible Computer Internet & Network Use Policy (D3)

Copies of the draft policy and the existing BUUSD policy (Acceptable Use of Electronic Resources & The Internet Policy) were distributed. It was noted that the District currently has a policy in place (D3), but this version from the VSBA reflects more current language.

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Second and Final Reading of the Responsible Computer Internet & Network Use Policy (D3), and agreed to adopt said policy.

6.2 Substitute Rate Recommendation

An untitled/undated document listing Substitute categories and pay rates was distributed.

Mr. Hennessey advised that Mrs. Perreault drafted the document included in the packet. Mr. Hennessey strongly recommends increasing day substitute rates to \$135.00 (\$18.00 per hour). Recruitment of daily and permanent substitutes is one of the District's largest struggles. Ms. Badeau reported that another school in the state increases substitute pay for each additional day they work in one week. In response to a query regarding long term substitute rates, it was noted that long term substitutes (e.g. filling a maternity leave) already receive a higher rate of pay. Permanent substitutes also have a higher rate of pay and are eligible for benefits. In response to a query, Mr. Hennessey advised that he is looking to keep day sub pay at an hourly rate, rather than change it to a daily rate. It is not known if the proposed rate will increase the number of substitutes. It was noted that substitutes deal with the increasing behavioral issues, and, given the nature of their work, have more exposure to COVID. These factors may also be impacting recruitment and retention. Mr. Isabelle noted the high number of job openings in general, many of which also offer sign-on bonuses and starting pay of \$19.00 per hour. It was noted that the figures provided by the Business Manager should be lower. The figures were calculated based on 190 days, though substitutes only work student days, a maximum of 180 days per year. The increase to \$18/hourly amounts to an increase of \$5,400 annually for each substitute working 180 days per year. In response to a query, it was noted that permanent substitutes have been receiving a higher rate than day substitutes, and also receive benefits. Those rates could also be 'tweaked' if necessary. A query was posed regarding whether or not the amount listed as the Current Hourly Rate for permanent subs includes benefits. Mr. Hennessey noted that part of last year's surplus, as well as this year's projected surplus, is due to lack of substitutes. It was noted that in the past, the Board has not approved substitute pay rates. The Substitute Policy, under the Implementation Section, advised that the Superintendent shall set the substitute rate each year. In the most recent version of the policy, the Implementation Section was removed, therefore the part of the policy where the Board dictated who sets the rates, has 'disappeared' and is no longer defined in policy. It was cautioned that this is one of the dangers of removing Implementation Sections from policies.

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Board unanimously voted that they support the Superintendent's recommendation to increase the Daily Substitute rate, as presented, to \$18.00 per hour.

6.3FY23 Budget

There were no budget documents included in the packet. Mrs. Spaulding advised that administrators are currently working on Draft 2, which will be presented to the Finance Committee on 12/07/21. Mrs. Spaulding encourages everyone to attend, whether to provide feedback, or just to become more informed about the budget process. The Thursday, 12/16/21 Board meeting will include a public listening session, which will include receiving community feedback and comments. A community member believes many in the community are questioning a budget increase, when there is such a large surplus. A community member queried regarding a personnel matter relating to an administrator who has left the District. Mr. Hennessey advised that there will be a lot of promotion of the FY23 Budget, and strongly encouraged students and community members to attend the Public Listening Session. The District has received the Yield Amount (from the State), but is still waiting to receive the CLA and number of equalized pupils.

6.4 Committee Structure Update

A document titled 'Community members on BUUSD school board committee guidelines revised 11/22/21' was distributed.

Mrs. Spaulding advised regarding the amended version that was included in the packet and queried regarding whether or not the Board would like to create a policy on this matter. A Board Member queried regarding any existing policy relating to Board Members being assigned to Committees. Mrs. Akley believes it should be codified, but is undecided on whether that should be in policy or some other way. Clarification was provided regarding the length of terms, and the number of terms an individual can serve. Terms will end on Town Meeting day, and there are no term limits. Small amendments to paragraphs 3 and 4 were requested to help clarify terms and limits. It was agreed that the information included in this document be added to the Board Engagement document.

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Community Members on BUUSD School Board Committees Guidelines as amended and agreed to have the information added to the Board Engagement document.

6.5 Community Involvement Event Update

Due to increased numbers of COVID in the community, this meeting was postponed. Mrs. Spaulding will advise the Board when it is rescheduled.

6.6 COVID Update

Community members queried regarding implementation of Test to Stay, and about services for students who test positive and/or are in quarantine due to exposure. Mr. Hennessey advised regarding two topics addressed in the Superintendent's Report, including selection of a Volunteer Coordinator (Linda Rodriguez), and the delay in Test to Stay resulting from high exposure counts and lack of staffing. It is hoped that coordination of volunteers will assist with implementation of Test to Stay (approximately 20 volunteers per day), as well as assistance with contact tracing, lunch duties, and morning check-ins. Acquisition of enough test kits remains a concern. There is concern that case counts may rise due to the Thanksgiving and Christmas Breaks. The vaccination clinics have been very successful. Line lists are expected to drop dramatically once more students (ages 5 – 11) are vaccinated. It was noted that COVID cases in Vermont are hitting record highs. A Board Member queried regarding assistance that can be provided to employees who have reached or almost reached the end of their sick leave days, due to quarantine rules.

7. Reports

7.1 Superintendent Report

The Superintendent's Report for December 2, 2021 was distributed.

Mr. Hennessey highlighted his visit to Veronica Eldred's 2nd grade classroom, and encourages Board Members to visit the schools and connect with students and staff. The District is dealing with some very large struggles related to staffing. There are 3 resignations noted in the Superintendent's Report, two of which are based on 'complete burn-out'; Jim Ferland (Assistant Principal at SHS), and BTMES Spanish Teacher, Viviana Hardy. Erica Gongloff is leaving because she has had an opportunity to work for a district much closer to her home. It was determined that the pre-school program is not understaffed and Mr. Hennessey was able to work with the other district to allow them to hire her. Ms. Hardy resigned effective 11/22/21, as the current situation was not working well for her. Jim Ferland, who is a highly respected, incredibly talented educator, resigned because he believes he has reached a point where he is no longer able to do the job, and do it well, to serve the needs of students. The District has respectfully accommodated his resignation. These resignations are a very serious matter and are occurring throughout the state. Mr. Hennessey reiterated the importance of carefully choosing the language we use, and the support we need to show to staff, faculty and leadership, in order to get through this year. We need to make sure we are there for our staff and leadership team. Mr. Hennessey is finding that a majority of his time is spent 'taking care' of students and staff. Staff are being stretched too thin, and aren't able to take the normal proactive measures to stop little issues from turning into large issues.

7.2 Communications Committee

Minutes from the 11/04/21 meeting were distributed. Mrs. Farrell had nothing to add.

The next meeting is Thursday, December 9, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. at the BUUSD Central Office, and via video conference.

7.3 Finance Committee

Minutes from the November 2, 2021 meeting were distributed.

Mrs. Pregent provided a brief overview of the meeting which focused mainly on budget development, and also included discussion of the FY22 Expense Report, the ESSER application, and the Green School Initiative.

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

7.4 Facilities & Transportation Committee

Minutes from the November 8, 2021 meeting were distributed.

Mr. Isabelle provided an overview of the meeting which included discussion on; electric buses (expected soon), and use of ESSER funds for facilities purposes.

The Monday, December 13, 2021 meeting has been cancelled. The next meeting date is to be determined.

7.5 Policy Committee

Minutes from the November 15, 2021 meeting were distributed.

Board Members should review the minutes and contact Ms. Parker with any questions.

The next meeting is Monday, December 20, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. at the BUUSD Central Office, and via video conference.

7.6 Curriculum Committee

Minutes from the November 16, 2021 meeting were distributed.

Ms. Badeau provided a brief overview of the meeting, which included discussion with the Curriculum Team, including plans for moving forward. Great Schools Partnership will continue to work with the District on curriculum improvements and staff development.

The next meeting is Tuesday, January 25, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. at the BUUSD Central Office, and via video conference.

7.7 Negotiations Committee

Mrs. Akley advised that negotiations are still in progress. The next mediation session is scheduled for Monday, December 6, 2021. No other meetings have been scheduled at this time.

8. Other Business/Round Table

Mr. Isabelle expressed his frustration that no one from the SHS football team received even an honorable mention for the Division II All-star Team. Mr. Isabelle thanked the Board for working on the initiative for creating a process to bring community members onto Committees. Mr. Isabelle thanked Mr. Hennessey for providing up to date reporting on the status of events, expressed his appreciation that Linda Rodriguez is assisting with the evaluation process, and expressed his disappointment over the loss of Jim Ferland, who 'wears the SHS heart on his sleeve'. Mr. Ferland has been a wonderful supporter of students and his departure is a large loss for SHS.

Mrs. Pregent echoed some of her previous comments, and advised that in consideration of the mid-year resignations, believes everyone should show more kindness towards our teachers and staff, and all those who are doing the best they can in these unprecedented times.

Ms. Badeau echoed the sentiments expressed by Mrs. Isabelle and Mrs. Pregent.

Ms. Smith has reached the decision that she needs to resign from her position as BUUSD Board Member. Shortly after her election to the Board, she was offered a career opportunity that required her to enter an accelerated internship program, and she no longer has the time needed to dedicate herself to the Board. This will be Ms. Smith's last Board Meeting.

Mrs. Farrell queried regarding whether or not the Board can assist students, parents, and teachers, in overcoming the challenging behavior issues.

Mrs. Spaulding expressed regret over the resignation of Ms. Smith, noting appreciation for the time and effort she has given to the Board. Ms. Smith was thanked for her service to the District and wished the best of luck in her new position. Mrs. Spaulding expressed regret over the loss of Mr. Ferland, she wishes him the best in the future and thanks him for his service to the District. Mrs. Spaulding advised that the SHS production of the play Alice In Wonderland is being presented this evening and again on Friday and Saturday (12/02/21 through 12/04/21).

Mr. Hennessey will be attending the SHS play on Friday night.

9. Future Agenda Items

- Second and Final Reading of Special Education Policy (D7)
- Rescind Policy D40 (after Policy D7 is adopted)
- FY23 Budget Development, including a Budget Listening Session
- COVID Update
- Open Barre City Board Seat
- SHS Foundation Report (to be determined)
- FY21 Draft Audit (to be determined)

The SEA Financial Analysis will be discussed at next Tuesday's Finance Committee Meeting.

10. Next Meeting Date

Special Board Meeting, Thursday, December 16, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference. This meeting is primarily dedicated to discussion of the Draft FY23 Budget, including public input.

11. Executive Session as Needed

11.1 Personnel – Status of Employment

A personnel issue, Status of Employment, was proposed for discussion in Executive Session.

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Hennessey in attendance, at 7:42 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 to discuss the item proposed for discussion.

The remaining information was provided by the Board Clerk.

On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 8:06 p.m.

12. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Boltin, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin