

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING**  
BUUSD Central Office and Via Video Conference – Google Meet  
December 16, 2021 - 5:30 p.m.

**MINUTES**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Sonya Spaulding (BC) – Chair  
Alice Farrell (BT) – Vice Chair  
Guy Isabelle (At-Large) - Clerk  
Gina Akley (BT)  
Renee Badeau (BT)  
Tim Boltin (BC)  
Chris Parker (BT)  
Sarah Pregent (BC)

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Vacant Seat (BC)

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent  
Emmanuel Ajanma, Director of Technology  
Josh Allen, Communications Specialist  
Stacy Anderson, Director of Special Services  
Hayden Coon, BCEMS Principal  
Jason Derner, Alternative Education Administrator  
Pierre Laflamme, BCEMS Principal  
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources  
Lauren May, Director of Early Education  
Rebekah Mortensen, Assistant Director of Special Services  
Jennifer Nye, BTMES Principal  
Erica Pearson, BTMES Principal  
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager  
Brenda Waterhouse, SHS Principal

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Shannon Alexander	Jeff Blow	Giuliano Cecchinelli,II	Venus Dean
Mike Deering, II	Michelle Donnelly	Marissa Greene	Carol Hebert	Josh Howard
Meredith Kerin	Tyler Kimberly	Yoko Kishishita	Thomas Koch	Marcy Kreitz
Ali Kuhlman	Randall Kuhlman	Kerri Lamb	Nancy Leclerc	Abigail Lindhiem
Becky Mackin	Dan Morrison	Terry Reil	Bernadette Rose	Rachel Rouleau
Heather Slayton	Diane Solomon	Janelle Starr	William Toborg	Jan Trepanier
Rachel Van Vliet	Kristine Wolfrom			

**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 16, 2021, Special meeting to order at 5:30 p.m., which was held at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.**

Mrs. Spaulding provided an overview of the Meeting Norms, and board engagement protocols.

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

Add 6.4 Updates for Upcoming Events - Superintendent Search - Board Interviews

Add 8.2 Round Table

Agenda item 11.1 Change from Ratification of the Teacher Collective Bargaining Agreement, to Update on Negotiations for the Teacher Collective Bargaining Agreement.

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as amended.**

### **3. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda**

#### **3.1 Public Comment**

Josh Howard requested that the Board answer questions that are asked at Board Meetings.

Yoko Kishishita, on behalf of the Barre Educators' Association, read a prepared statement regarding the challenges that teachers are facing this year. Ms. Kishishita read a letter from a member of the teaching staff relating to challenges faced by staff members who have children in the District who need to quarantine due to COVID exposure.

#### **3.2 Student Voice**

None.

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

#### **4.1 Approval of Minutes – December 2, 2021 Special Meeting**

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the December 2, 2021 Special Meeting.**

### **5. Current Business**

#### **5.1 Audit Presentation**

A copy of the Draft Audit for FY2021 was distributed.

Mrs. Perreault introduced auditor Tyler Kimberly, who addressed the Board, providing a brief overview of the audit, including timing, and inclusion of documents in the packet (the Governance Letter, and the Financial Statements/Audit Report). Thirteen audit adjustments were proposed by the auditors and an additional ten were proposed by management. The most significant adjustments relate to some bond activity (the new bond for the SEA building), and adjustments related to the Vermont State Teachers' Retirement System activity, VMERS (Vermont Municipal Employees' Retirement System) activity, and timing related to receipt of grant funds. Mr. Kimberly noted that Federal funding increased by approximately 80% due to the pandemic. This funding covered much of what would have been covered under the budget by taxpayers and resulted in a significant surplus. It was noted that the Board approved the transfer of \$1,000,000 to fund a SEA Project overrun. There were no significant difficulties or significant findings or deficiencies identified. Mr. Kimberly provided a brief overview of the Financial Statements included in the packet, and highlighted some activity related to timing. Mr. Kimberly advised that overall, management did a good job considering the environment of the year. Mr. Kimberly answered questions from the Board. Brief discussion was held regarding the remaining surplus in the General Fund (\$1,214,807 as indicated on page 14 in the audit). It was noted that the General Fund started in a deficit, and \$600,000 has been assigned to the FY22 budget.

**On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Draft FY21 Audit as presented.**

Mr. Kimberly, Mrs. Perreault, and Business Office staff members were thanked for their efforts on behalf of the audit.

#### **5.2 New Hires**

There were no candidates presented for hire.

#### **5.3 Resignations / Retirements**

No letters of resignation were distributed. Mr. Hennessey has one resignation to announce. He will announce the resignation under Agenda Item 7.1 (Superintendent's Report).

#### **5.4 FY23 Budget Development Draft 2**

Four Documents were distributed;

BUUSD Budget 2022 – 2023 – Draft 2, 12/06/21 – Comparative Tax Rate Calculations document

BUUSD FY23 Budget Information – 12/7/21 REVISED

BUUSD FY23 Proposed Budget, Revenue Summary – Draft 2 (dated 12/14/21)

CVCC Budget Expenses (dated 12/14/21)

Mrs. Perreault advised that the final tax rate calculation cannot be determined until the State provides the Equalized Pupil Count and the CLA. Draft 2 has a total expense increase of 1.95%, for an expense budget total of \$4.2 million dollars, an increase of \$901,000. More details will be provided in the Public Listening Session. In response to a query, Mrs. Perreault provided a brief overview of what ESSER funds can be used for (only COVID related expenses). Mrs. Perreault believes the Board needs to receive more information from the State prior to determining if some of the Tax Stabilization Funds should be assigned to the FY23 budget.

#### **5.5 Listening Session: Budget/School Education Financing 101**

Mr. LaFlamme will moderate discussion under this Agenda Item. A brief 'slide show' will be presented prior to taking questions/comments from community members. A 'slide show' titled 'Budget Listening Session' was shared on screen and

was presented by Mr. Hennessey. Mr. LaFlamme began moderating the public input session. Community members provided input which included; supportive comments thanking staff within the District for all they do to support students, a suggestion to use surplus funds to bring some AP and Honors classes back to SHS, concern that the District has the lowest cost per pupil (not something to be proud of), a request that the Board acknowledge for the record, the budget increase and provide an explanation as to why the increase is necessary when there is such a large surplus, concern that Barre community members are struggling financially, concern that the Board did not question any of the 23 adjustments that occurred as part of the audit, concern that the Board does not answer questions posed to them at Board meetings (answering questions from the public is standard in public meetings, community members deserve answers to their questions), a request that funds be utilized to cover the expense of much needed SHS auditorium renovations, a request to identify efficiencies that could help reduce the budget, a request to review staffing and possible reductions that could be made due to positions that remain unfilled, concern that regardless of the budget, test scores are not improving, a request to see test scores, concern that providing tax rates is misleading (as it doesn't reflect what tax bills will be), concern that negotiations need to be stronger (many employers have cut benefits and salary increases), expressed mistrust in the Board, concern of understaffing, concern that the District does not pay staff a comparable salary, a request that the District's schools be funded better, both opposition and support was expressed regarding tax increases to fund schools, concern over hiring and retention of staff, appreciation for communication from the District, a request to compare the District's salary ranges with that of other districts, appreciation for the Strategic Plan, a request to look into using more Instructional Coaches, appreciation for Interventionists, concern over behavioral issues, a suggestion to review curriculum and develop talent in-house and develop teacher leaders, a suggestion that parents be utilized to assist with various tasks within the school (delegation of some tasks), concern that teachers are being asked to do too much, support to fully staff the schools to provide the best education and supports possible (an investment in our future), concern that some people are choosing to live outside of Barre because of the low per pupil spending, appreciation to the Board for their service, a request that voters approve the use of surplus funds (other than what might be used for the FY23 budget), a query regarding the possibility of using ESSER funds to help assist families that are affected by "long-covid", and concern that teachers don't currently have a contract.

Mr. LaFlamme thanked participants for their input. The Board was polled for comments and questions. Mrs. Akley noted that teacher contracts result from a negotiation process and teachers are not being 'snubbed'. Negotiations are in progress and the Board also believes that having contracts is very important. Mr. Isabelle addressed his concern that some community members are "dropping bombs", making comments that are very negative and are not true/accurate. Mrs. Pregent responded to a claim (from a previous meeting) that the Board mismanages funds; advising that given the District has the lowest cost per pupil in the state, that statement cannot possibly be true, and also noted that the audit letter advised that there were no significant findings. Additionally, Mrs. Pregent, noting that the District has the lowest cost per pupil, advised that a 0% budget increase will not serve the needs of students and that the District should not be proud that it is providing a 'discounted' education. Mrs. Pregent read from page 9 of the Auditors' Report "The District has one of the lowest per pupil spending compared to other schools in Vermont. The District will likely not be able to continue to sustain this low spending in future years because of collective bargaining agreement increases as well as the double-digit health insurance increases over the past 3 years". Ms. Parker thanked those who are in attendance and advised that she looks forward to having an opportunity for community members to get to know Board Members better. Mrs. Spaulding thanked participants, and advised that the Board will do its best to provide the best information in a way that is easy to understand. Participants were encouraged to contact the members of the Board or the Superintendent with additional questions or comments. Ms. Parker thanked students for attending this evening's meeting, and expressed her appreciation that there were varying opinions being shared throughout the discussion.

## **6. Old Business**

### **6.1 Second and Final Reading special Education Policy (D7) – Required**

A copy of the policy was distributed. Brief discussion was held.

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Second and Final Reading of the Special Education Policy (D7), and agreed to adopt said policy.**

### **6.2 Rescind Policy D40 Special Education**

A copy of the policy was distributed. Brief discussion was held.

**On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to rescind the Special Education Policy D40.**

### **6.3 COVID Update**

The Superintendent advised that COVID numbers remain high, with 26 new cases in the district in one week. The total cases for the year are in the high 200's, resulting in many students being absent from school. A roster of volunteers has been created. Volunteers can assist with a possible "Test-to-Stay" program that may be initiated after the winter break, though it will still be challenging, given the number of positive cases. It is hoped that vaccination of younger students (approximately 250 of them so far), will help reduce the number of absences as those students will be able to return to school in a shorter timeframe. Mr. Hennessey notified the community today that there was a non-credible Tik-Tok threat to violence in schools (nation-wide). This information was shared with Districts by the AOE. It is not believed that anyone's safety is compromised and schools will remain open on Friday, 12/17/21. Mr. Hennessey

encourages parents to try to be aware of what is going on with their children's social media accounts. Mr. Hennessey advised that Amanda Garland (National Resources Coordinator at CVCC) has resigned effective 06/30/22. Mr. Hennessey met with SHS Student Council, advised them of tonight's meeting and encouraged student participation. Mr. Hennessey requested that at least one student attend each Board meeting. Mrs. Poulin reminded the Board that under Roberts Rules, items should be discussed under the Agenda Items for which they are listed, and also reminded the Board that there is a mandate that all resignations be included in the Board packet. Marcy Kreitz advised that her name should be on the volunteer roster, but she has not been contacted regarding assisting with the potential Test-to-Stay program. Mr. Hennessey confirmed that Ms. Kreitz is on the roster and will look into why she has not been contacted. In response to a query, Mr. Hennessey advised that he does not have data to define if COVID transmissions are school related or not. Ms. Parker queried regarding improved school practices to limit the spread of COVID, noting that the BCEMS report advises of over 10,000 absences this year. Mr. Hennessey advised that mitigation factors are always being looked into, but noted that within the community, only the schools have rules. The manpower required for contact tracing has been the leading factor in why Test-to-Stay has not been implemented. A community member queried why the District has different quarantine rules for vaccinated and unvaccinated students/staff. Mr. Hennessey advised that the District is following rules as required by the Vermont Department of Health, and the CDC. The rules are clearly spelled out and need to be followed. Mrs. Pregent voiced concern that the rules for vaccinated and unvaccinated students may result in a difference in education (as the unvaccinated may miss much more school). In response to a query, Mr. Hennessey advised that children who haven't received boosters are still considered to be fully vaccinated. Mr. Isabelle quoted the Governor, advising that "The unvaccinated people are the problem".

#### **6.4 Updates for Upcoming Events - Superintendent Search – Board Interviews**

As part of the Superintendent Search process, there will be a community forum (Meet the Candidates) on 01/11/22.

A forum for staff members will also be held on that date.

The Board needs to schedule an interview date. Mrs. Spaulding polled the Board and it was agreed that a Special Meeting will be held on 01/19/22 at 5:30 p.m. for the purpose of Board interviews with candidates.

### **7. Reports**

#### **7.1 Superintendent Report**

Discussed under Agenda Item 6.3

#### **7.2 Building Reports; BCEMS, BTMES, SHS, and CVCC**

Copies of the BCEMS, BTMES, SHS, and CVCC Building Reports were distributed.

Ms. Parker expressed her appreciation that the reports are highlighting the reality of the impact COVID is having on the schools and that during these difficult times, amazing celebrations are being held, and students are achieving amazing accomplishments.

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

#### **8.1 Board Seat Interviews**

Letters of interest from Michael Deering II, William Toborg, and Giuliano Cecchinelli, II were distributed.

The candidates introduced themselves, advised the Board regarding their interest in serving on the Board, and answered questions from the Board. The Board will discuss the candidates in Executive Session, and will then vote in open session, to recommend one of the candidates to the Barre City Council. As the District is comprised of multiple communities, the Barre City Council is required to make the official appointment to the Board (to fill a vacated Barre City resident board seat). Mrs. Spaulding will notify candidates regarding the Board's recommendation. Mrs. Spaulding advised that there will be open seats in March 2022, and she encourages those who are interested in running, to obtain petitions.

#### **8.2 Round Table**

Mrs. Pregent thanked all those who were in attendance at tonight's meeting.

Mr. Boltin would like to see a written list of answers to the questions that were posed this evening.

Mr. Isabelle noted that the State Board of Education accepted the proposal for a new governance structure for CVCC, and expressed his appreciation for the diversity of opinions shared this evening. Mr. Isabelle congratulated the SHS basketball team for their win over Burlington.

Ms. Badeau thanked this evening's participants, noting that it has been invaluable to hear the different opinions.

Ms. Parker has been enjoying the videos that highlight the positive things that are happening in the schools. Ms. Parker congratulated the cast and crew of the most recent SHS Drama Club presentation. Ms. Parker noted that there were so many students interested in playing basketball, that a third team was created. Ms. Parker is very pleased that the school accommodated all of the students, allowing them to be physically and socially active and enjoy the different opportunities afforded to students who play team sports.

Mrs. Farrell was very pleased with this evening's turnout, and the opportunity to hear various points of view

Mrs. Ackley echoed the appreciation expressed by other Board Members and shared her hope that administrators will be able to take a restful, recharging rest during the winter break.

Mrs. Spaulding thanked all those in attendance, and expressed her appreciation for the diversity of responses. Additionally,

Mrs. Spaulding thanked the three candidates who have expressed interest in filling the vacant board seat. Additionally, Mrs. Spaulding thanked the students, parents, and staff who continue to struggle during this challenging time.

## **9. Future Agenda Items**

- New Hires
- Resignations
- Finalization of the FY23 Budget
- Policies (TBD)
- COVID Update

Additional items may be added from the Parking Lot.

## **10. Next Meeting Date: Regular Board Meeting, January 13, 2022 at 5:30**

The next Regular Meeting is Thursday, January 13, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. at the BUUSD Central Office, and via video conference.

## **11. Executive Session as Needed**

### **11.1 Update on Negotiations for the Teacher Collective Bargaining Agreement**

### **11.2 BUUSD Open BC Seat Candidate Review**

Items proposed for discussion in Executive Session include an update on Negotiations for the Teacher Collective Bargaining Agreement, and review of the candidates for the open Barre City BUUSD Board seat.

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

**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 8:30 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 to discuss the items proposed for discussion.**

The remaining information was provided by the Board Clerk.

**On a motion by Mr. Boltin, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 9:26 p.m. Mrs. Akley was not present for the vote.**

**On a motion by Mr. Boltin, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board voted 6 to 1 to name Giuliani Cecchinelli to the Barre City Council, as the Board's recommendation to fill the vacant BUUSD Barre City Board seat.**

**Ms. Badeau, Mr. Boltin, Mr. Isabelle, Ms. Parker, Mrs. Pregent, and Mrs. Spaulding voted for the motion. Mrs. Farrell voted against the motion. Mrs. Akley was not present for the vote.**

## **12. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:29 p.m. Mrs. Akley was not present for the vote.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Andrea Poulin*