

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING**
BUUSD Central Office and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
December 20, 2021 – 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chris Parker, Chair (BT)
Andrew McMichael (BC Community Member)
Jon Valsangiacomo – (BT Community Member)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Tim Boltin (BC)

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sonya Spaulding

ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Luke Aither, SHS Assistant Principal
Pierre Laflamme, BCEMS Principal
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager

GUESTS:

Josh Howard

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Ms. Parker, called the Monday, December 20, 2021, meeting to order at 5:37 p.m., which was held at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference - Google Meet.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

None.

3. Public Comment

A member of the public queried regarding open positions that remain in the budget, what those positions are and where they are located and whether or not there is a policy that requires that those positions remain in the budget. No specific information relating to this question is known.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Approval of Minutes – November 15, 2021 Policy Committee Meeting

On a motion by Mr. Valsangiacomo, seconded by Mr. McMichael the Committee unanimously agreed to approve the Minutes of the November 15, 2021 Policy Committee Meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 Review of BUUSD Policy Manual Index

A copy of the BUUSD Policy Manual Index (dated 12/13/21) was distributed.

Ms. Parker noted that there are updates to the document relating to a number of policies that are under review by the VSBA, and a number of policies that are included on tonight's agenda.

5.2 VSBA Model Policy Index

A copy of the VSBA Model Policy Index was distributed.

A document titled Current VSBA Work – BUUSD Status – Updated 12/13/21 was distributed

No discussion.

5.3 Visits by Parents, Community Members or Media Policy (E32) (Consider)

Copies of all policies referenced in Agenda Items 5.3 through 5.6 were distributed.

In response to a query regarding whether or not all visitors are escorted in the building, Mr. LaFlamme advised that at BCEMS, individuals from outside agencies that aren't normally in the buildings are escorted. Mr. Hennessey advised that the same practice is followed at BTMES. Discussion was held regarding whether or not detail relating to sign-in procedures should remain in the policy, policy vs. procedure. Ms. Parker advised that as a parent, or member of the public, she appreciates this information being contained in

the policy. Mrs. Poulin advised that the policy as written means that the Board is dictating, via policy, that all visitors sign in. If the Board does not wish to dictate that visitors sign in, then that section could be removed from the policy. What is in the policy is what the Board is requiring, 'setting the District's policy'. The Board had dictated that Implementation sections remain in policies and the Board has not rescinded that mandate. For unknown reasons, it was announced that the Board had asked that implementation sections be removed, though that directive was never given. Ms. Parker advised regarding recent discussion of planning related to documentation of procedures, and queried regarding the possibility of setting up a timeframe in which procedures are written and linked to policies, and then, perhaps after procedures are written, implementation sections could be removed. Ms. Parker is concerned regarding removing information when written procedures are not in place. Mr. Hennessey queried regarding the purpose of the Policy Committee, and believes the Implementation sections are procedural matters/guidelines and should be in the hands of the schools and be in the handbooks. Mr. Hennessey believes the work of the Committee and the Board, would be easier in general, if the granule detail information is not in the policies. Mr. Aither believes it would be easy to copy the Implementation section into a procedural document. Mr. Aither doesn't recall when the Board made the decision to keep Implementation sections in policies and he would like that decision revisited. Mr. Valsangiacomo queried regarding how procedures would be linked to policies, and how parents would be directed to find the procedural information. Discussions have been held regarding links to procedures via the policy section on the web site. Mrs. Poulin clarified that when discussions were held regarding leaving the Implementation sections in the policies, it was discussed that the information contained in the Implementation sections was stating the Board's policy, the policy of the District. e.g. in this policy, the Implementation section is stating that it is the policy of the District, that visitors sign in. If that section is removed, visitor sign in is no longer part of the District's policy, so if at some point someone forgets that it was supposed to be required, or wants to eliminate the sign in procedure, then can because it is not stated as required in the policy. Anything that is removed from policy is no longer part of the District's policy. Procedures are not controlled or reviewed by the Board, and can be changed at any time. If a sign in requirement is documented in the policy, all schools will need to require sign-in, but how they go about sign-ins and retention of sign-in records etc., would be written in each individual school's procedures. Keeping the sign-in requirement in the policy defines that the District requires visitors to sign in. As this is a requirement that is unlikely to change, it does not hurt to keep it in the policy. Procedures at the individual schools can change at will and are part of the day to day business of the schools. Keeping this type of information in policies is also helpful to parents, as they don't have to read both policies and procedures to know what is expected. Ms. Parker, noted that the policy indicates that there is a section of the policy that advises that administrators may regulate visits, and believes that points to administrators having additional procedures in place, and she is comfortable leaving the policy as it is presented in the packet tonight and queried regarding the possibility of having a vote to send a First Reading to the Board. Mr. Hennessey queried regarding whether or not the District obtained legal counsel on this matter in the past, and he believes other district's policies don't contain as much detail. Mr. Hennessey wonders if the Committee is doing too much work by leaving Implementation sections in policies and is concerned that leaving them in makes for longer discussions and more work for the Board. Mr. Aither suggested that legal counsel attend a meeting, and advised that he believes that in policy "less is more" and that having too much in written policy, holds the District accountable to the 'written word', and is concerned that if too much is in writing it could be troublesome. Mrs. Spaulding is concerned that what Pietro (BUUSD legal counsel) gives as advice, and what the VSBA Model Policy is showing could be at odds with each other, and that poses a struggle for the Board because the Board goes to the VSBA Model Policies, to see what has been recommended and is already legally vetted. How does the Board decide which way to lean? Mrs. Spaulding questions why the BUUSD is stripping out policy language that has already been legally vetted, and she would like some clarity on this matter. Mr. Aither is concerned that though the Model Policies are vetted, they don't take into account, unique circumstances for individual schools. Mr. Aither does not wish to move forward with this policy until after discussion with legal counsel.

On a motion by Mr. Valsangiacomo, seconded by Mr. McMichael, the Committee voted 2 to 1 to move this policy back to the Parking Lot. Mr. McMichael and Mr. Valsangiacomo voted for the motion. Ms. Parker voted against the motion.

It was agreed that Pietro Lynn should be invited to the January Policy Committee meeting.

5.4 School Crisis Prevention and Response Policy (F32) (Consider)

In response to a query, Mr. Aither advised that he is the individual who reviewed the policy and edited it with his recommendations. Mr. Aither advised regarding why he made some of the edits. Ms. Parker voiced some concern that much of the VSBA Model Policy verbiage has been stricken out. It was noted that the VSBA has not updated this 'to consider' policy since 2009. Ms. Parker queried regarding any existing crisis plans within the District. Mr. Aither advised that SHS has a Crisis Manual, based on an AOE template, but the AOE template is antiquated and does not contain 'option based' responses (the current standard). Mr. Aither advised that the SHS Crisis Manual is frequently updated based on current protocols. Mr. Valsangiacomo believes the current Model Policy is not well written and contains too much verbiage, leading to possible legal exposure. Mr. Valsangiacomo believes this policy needs much work. It was noted that this Model Policy does contain written procedures. Ms. Parker reiterated that the model policy is very old, last reviewed in 2009. Mr. Aither agreed to review the policy further and make additional edits. Mr. Hennessey will have the amended policy legally vetted prior to presenting it back to the Committee. It is anticipated that this policy will be ready for presentation at the February meeting.

5.5 Access Control Policy (F25) (Recommended)

Mrs. Spaulding raised concern regarding the lack of written documentation for procedures, and queried whether or not adoption of the policy should be put on hold because the District already lacks written procedures for most policies. Concern was raised regarding the backlog of policies that don't have written procedures. It was noted that this policy does include a requirement that written procedures be in place and Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding liability of the District if the policy is adopted, but no procedures are in place. If no written procedures are in place, it would be difficult to defend any legal challenge. It was suggested that the District confer with legal counsel on this matter. It was noted that procedures need to be written to match policy, not policies written to match procedures. It was agreed that policies need to be in place before procedures are written. It was suggested that there be a specific timeframe given, for the creation of written procedures.

On motion by Mr. Valsangiacomo, seconded by Mr. McMichael, the Committee unanimously agreed to send the Access Control Policy (F25) to the Board for approval of a First Reading.

5.6 Searches, Seizures, and Interrogation of Students By Law Enforcement Personnel or Other Non-School Personnel (C42) (Local Policy)

Mr. Aither provided a brief overview of this existing policy, advising that he believes it is in the packet because it relates to other 'safety' type policies being discussed. Mr. Aither advised that this policy was one of the policies adopted as part of the major batch adoption in 2019. Mr. Valsangiacomo believes that the Committee should not get 'caught up' in the date that policies were adopted, and he believes the ongoing references to the batch adoption in 2019, gives the perception that those 'batch policies' were not adequately reviewed. Mr. Valsangiacomo provided clarification that the batch of policies adopted in 2019, was the result of much work, performed under the direction of then Superintendent, John Pandolfo. The extensive policy work was done to assure that the District was prepared for the Act 46 consolidation. Mr. Valsangiacomo advised that a lot of time and effort was spent on creation/adoption of these policies and that references to the 'batch adoption' of these policies, does not reflect the work involved in their creation, and kind of invalidates the work involved, causing some to believe that these policies were 'rubber stamped'. Mrs. Poulin thanked Mr. Valsangiacomo for his comments, as she has also had concerns regarding the references to the 'batch adoption' of policies. Mrs. Poulin advised that the reason so many policies were adopted on one date was a purposeful decision, made at the recommendation of John Pandolfo, in an effort to reduce the number of times the Interim Board had to meet. Mr. Aither confirmed that much work was involved in the creation of these policies and that he was involved in that process. Mr. LaFlamme voiced concern regarding the line in the policy that advises that administrators shall review the scope of a warrant before it's executed. Mr. Valsangiacomo believes that if administrators review a warrant and have any questions, they should immediately contact legal counsel. Mr. Aither believes some training would be beneficial to administrators. It was noted that administrators should have a clear understanding of what the warrant allows be searched, so that they don't inadvertently allow access to areas not covered under the warrant. A community member voiced concern that the policy does not reference contacting parents. Ms. Parker noted that the policy does reference parents in several places. Mr. Valsangiacomo advised that search warrants have been presented to and approved by judges and there is really no discussion point from the school, other than to understand the scope of the warrant and only allow access in accordance with the warrant. Warrants are normally executed swiftly for evidentiary purposes.

The Committee agreed that this policy can remain as is, and that a notation can be added to the BUUSD Policy Index, to advise that the Committee reviewed the policy in December 2021.

5.7 Fiscal Management and General Financial Accountability Policy (F20) (Recommended)

Ms. Parker provided a brief overview of the policy, which is currently adopted, but is being presented for possible changes to Guideline #1, which pertains to the threshold of expenditures which the Board wants to approve. The current limit is \$15,000, and the proposed limit is \$150,000. Mrs. Perreault advised that this policy was presented to the Committee a few months ago when the State changed the bid threshold from \$15,000 to \$40,000. At that time the Committee recommended keeping the Board oversight threshold at \$15,000. Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of the bid law, which raised the threshold for requiring qualified bids, and read from the law, a section pertaining to areas that the law encompasses, and noted that the law does not indicate that Boards have to approved bid, just that the bidding process must occur. The VSBA Model Policy leaves the Board Approval threshold blank (to be filled in by each individual District). Mrs. Perreault advised regarding policies from other local districts that don't include a board approval clause, and another district which set the threshold at \$150,000. Mrs. Perreault advised that she used the \$150,000 threshold tonight based on the amount the other district uses, but also that she recommends revising Guideline #1 to remove board approval in its entirety. Mrs. Perreault advised regarding the existence of purchasing procedures and review of warrants by a member of the Finance Committee. Mrs. Perreault believes there are enough internal controls in place and she does not believe board approval of purchases should be necessary regardless of the dollar amount. Ms. Parker clarified that she believes there was confusion at some point, whereas some individuals thought the board threshold and the bid threshold needed to match in the policy. The bid threshold and the threshold that a board wishes to approve are two separate issues and are listed separately in the policy. Mrs. Perreault provided additional clarification regarding what the bid law doesn't encompass (textbooks, supplies, etc.). A community member expressed support for keeping the board approval threshold at \$15,000. Mr. Hennessey noted that expenses are shared and known. Ms. Parker noted that spending cannot exceed the budget. Mrs. Spaulding believes that the two major charges of the Board are fiscal oversight and creation of policies. Mrs. Spaulding advised that she is conflicted with how to proceed. She is concerned that if the board approval threshold is taken out of the policy, oversight falls to the superintendent, and though the Board does not want to micro-manage, they do have

responsibility for fiscal oversight. Mrs. Spaulding advised that she does overview the warrants each week, and submits any questions to the Business Office. The Board is able to pose questions after review of warrants, though it was noted that once warrants have been created, the supplies/services have already been bought/supplied. Ms. Parker advised that some individuals had raised concern regarding whether or not a board approval threshold amount would cause the Board to perform more work (more time in Board meetings giving approvals). Ms. Parker advised of that there are numerous options the Committee can choose from (e.g. leave threshold at \$15K, change threshold to \$40K, or \$150K, choose a different amount entirely, or remove the board threshold altogether). Mr. Valsangiacomo and Mr. McMichael don't believe it's appropriate for them, as Committee members, to set the limit and believe it would be best to advance it to the Board and let the Board hold discussion and make a decision relating to the threshold. It was noted that one Committee Member had expressed concern that given the current climate from community members (regarding finances), he was not comfortable raising the threshold. After brief discussion, the committee agreed to advance the policy to the Board using \$150K, and at that time, the Board would hold discussion on what limitation they would like.

On a motion by Mr. Valsangiacomo, seconded by Mr. McMichael, the Committee unanimously voted to send the amended policy (\$150,000 threshold) to the Board for a First Reading.

At the Board meeting, Ms. Parker will provide an overview of the Committee's discussion.

6. Old Business

Copies of all policies referenced in Agenda Items 6.1 through 6.5 were distributed.

6.1 Electronic Surveillance Policy (F26) (Recommended)

Mr. Aither provided a brief overview of the policy, and advised that changes have been vetted by legal counsel. Mr. Aither noted that the District currently has a similar policy (F41). The policy presented tonight does not contain the regular editing protocols. The most recent changes to this policy are under the section titled 'Viewing of Live Video'. Mr. Aither advised that Mrs. Spaulding requested that if this policy is presented to the Board, a copy of the VSBA Model Policy should also be presented. If this policy (F26) is adopted, the local policy, F41, should be rescinded. Mr. Aither provided clarification regarding viewing of live video vs. viewing of recorded video. In response to a query from a community member, Mr. Aither and Mr. Hennessey advised that neither SHS nor BTMES have SROs, therefore the videos and live feeds are only viewed by law enforcement when necessary.

On a motion by Mr. Valsangiacomo, seconded by Mr. McMichael, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Electronic Surveillance Policy (F26) as presented, and to present it to the Board for a First Reading.

Presentation to the Board will include a copy of the amended Model Policy (for first read), a copy of an unedited version of the VSBA Model policy F26, and a copy of the local policy, F41. Policy F41 can be rescinded after Policy F26 is adopted.

6.2 Selection of Instructional Materials and Sensitive Issues Policy (D32) (Consider) (vetted)

Ms. Parker noted that the VSBA currently has this policy under review. Ms. Parker queried whether the Committee wished to proceed reviewing the edited policy, or if the Committee should wait until after VSBA has complete their review. This policy does currently exist for the District. It was agreed that the amendments to this policy are minimal and there is no rush to get this updated version adopted.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to move Policy D32 back to the Parking Lot with future discussion to be held after the VSBA has completed its review/revisions.

6.3 Complaints About Personnel Policy (B22) (Recommended)

Ms. Parker provided a brief overview of the policy, noting that it is proposed to remove 'Instructional Materials' from this policy. Mr. Aither advised that this policy is kind of a companion policy to Policy D32. There is some concern regarding how to define biased and unbiased.

On a motion by Mr. Valsangiacomo, seconded by Mr. McMichael, the Committee unanimously voted to approve, as presented, the edited version of the Complaints About Personnel Policy (B22), and to present the policy as to the Board as a First Reading.

6.4 Personnel Recruitment, Selection, Appointment and Background Checks Policy (B20) (Recommended) (vetted)

It is not known why this policy is included in the packet. No action is necessary. This policy was adopted by the Board on 02/11/21. **Ms. Parker will check with Mrs. Gilbert regarding any additional information.**

6.5 Firearms Policy (C5) (Required) (vetted)

Mr. Aither advised that when the implementation of this policy was removed, the policy was no longer in compliance with the law. The policy has been amended to put it back in compliance with the law. Brief discussion was held and it was determined that the amended version does constitute a substantive change and does require Board approval.

On a motion by Mr. Valsangiacomo, seconded by Mr. McMichael, the Committee unanimously voted to send the amended versions of the Firearms Policy (C5) to the Board for a First Reading.

7. Other Business

None.

8. Future Agenda Items

- Personnel Recruitment, Selection, Appointment and Background Checks Policy (B20) (Recommended) (vetted) – once Ms. Parker has followed up with Mrs. Gilbert
- Meeting with District Counsel Regarding Policy/Procedures/VSBA Model Policies

9. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is Monday, January 17, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Valsangiacomo, seconded by Mr. McMichael, the Committee unanimously agreed to adjourn at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin