

**Addendum
Board Meeting
January 13, 2022**



Spaulding High School
Central Vermont Career Center
Barre City Elementary and Middle School
Barre Town Middle and Elementary School

Chris Hennessey, M.Ed.
 Superintendent of Schools

A rock solid education for a lifetime of discovery

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January 12, 2022

Dear BUUSD School Board,

I write to you this Wednesday morning in the middle of a truly extraordinary stretch for our school community. After months of doing our absolute best to keep our schools open despite unprecedented staff shortages and very high Covid case counts, we finally reached a point this week where we had to close schools on Tuesday. As I write this we are fully open, and our plan going forward is to take a "day to day" approach looking at each school and the situation each faces in the morning. The decision to close any of our schools is one we take very seriously.

There has been a lot shared in the media about the crisis facing schools this year, and the reporting has really escalated statewide and nationally since we returned to school last week. It seems like the daily crises schools are facing are in our face every day! So, I will forgo rehashing with you the Covid confusion and chaos that has hit us hard since returning - we are all experiencing it in real time every day and night. Instead, I'll share my thoughts about where I hope to see us once we begin to move beyond this pandemic. We need to eventually get to a place where we can shift our thinking and be prepared for how we will meet the needs of our kids, families, and staff once we come out of this.

I have heard the board repeatedly ask what they can do to help these last six months, and the simple fact that you are asking this means so much to our entire staff! It has been both noticed and much appreciated! The continued recognition and public acknowledgement that our principals, teachers, and staff are working under extreme conditions has been very warmly received. Please continue to do this.

Going beyond this of course are the action steps - what can we do? As in *now*. In my view, all of us as school leaders need to immediately focus on two major concerns that face pretty much every school district in the country: attracting, supporting, and retaining the most highly qualified teachers and staff possible, and prioritizing the social and emotional well-being of every child and staff member in our school community. There will be other issues coming at us in the months and years ahead, but if those two aren't our main priorities going forward, this crisis we are facing right now will not get better. People of all ages are really, really hurting, and we need talented people in place to take care of them.

I wrote above that the media has been flooding the airwaves and internet with stories about both the current and impending crises coming at schools. The sheer number of articles and stories can be overwhelming, and I sometimes find myself tuning them out! As an eternal optimist, I find the "doom and gloom" tone of some of these pieces demoralizing and off the mark. I found one below however that I'd like to share with you. The title isn't exactly uplifting, but the content offers hope and speaks clearly to the priorities I outlined above. This piece comes from [Forbes](#) (a reliable source, in my opinion) and it's short.

[Why Education Is About To Reach A Crisis Of Epic Proportions](#)

If you can't imagine diving into another big article, I'd recommend at least scrolling about half way through to the "What To Do Now?" section. As board members, I believe you will find it helpful, and please know that the approach promoted in this article is exactly what our leadership team believes is the right course as we move into the next stages of the pandemic.

Meanwhile, the pandemic *does* rage on, and we are very much in the thick of it. Our "present" is very much about making sure the very basics of running a school can happen each day so we can safely be open. I mentioned in a recent update that the miraculous teamwork and flexibility being exhibited by our principals and staff every day should make our community both proud and grateful. The Weekly School Showcase that we are about to share shows that our students are still experiencing fun, engaging, and challenging opportunities every single day. BCEMS Art Teacher **Kate Hawley** is just one of hundreds performing these miracles daily for our kids. Check out the showcase here:

[January 12 Weekly School Showcase](#)

That's a good place to end! I will have Covid related details and updates to share with you tomorrow evening, and we hope to be in a better and clearer place by the end of the week. I anticipate the next community Covid update being ready by Friday, and a link to all communications from my office can be found on our website here: [2021-22 Superintendent Updates](#).

I welcome your thoughts and questions. I am honored to be leading my colleagues and serving the Barre community as your superintendent, and I thank you for your support.

Respectfully,

Chris

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**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING**
BUUSD Central Office and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
January 6, 2022 - 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alice Farrell, Chair - (BT)
Giuliano Cecchinelli, II, (BC)
Guy Isabelle – (At-Large)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Josh Allen, Communications Specialist

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sonya Spaulding

GUESTS PRESENT:

Josh Howard Ben Matthews

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Farrell, called the Thursday, January 6, 2022 BUUSD Communications Committee meeting to order at 5:38 p.m., which was held at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.

Mr. Hennessey advised that due to unforeseen pressing activities that require administrators' attention, he is requesting that the meeting be postponed. Brief discussion was held and it was agreed that the meeting could be postponed. This information will be conveyed to the Board.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

No discussion.

3. Public Comment

No discussion.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Meeting Minutes for December 9, 2021 BUUSD Communications Committee Meeting

No discussion.

5. New Business

5.1 Budget Communications

No discussion.

5.2 Publicizing School Activities Report

No discussion.

5.3 Superintendent Search Committee Forums

No discussion.

6. Old Business

6.1 Mobile App Update

No discussion.

7. Other Business

No discussion.

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8. Items to be Placed on Future Agendas

No discussion.

9. Next Meeting Date

No discussion.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mr. Cecchinelli, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 5:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin

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FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**

BUUSD Central Office and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
January 4, 2022 - 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Sarah Pregent (BC) - Chair
Renee Badeau (BT) – Vice Chair
Gina Akley (BT)
Chris Parker (BT)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Alice Farrell
Sonya Spaulding

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

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

PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT:

David Delcore, Times Argus Carol Hebert Josh Howard Nancy Leclerc Paul Malone
Sue Paxman

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Pregent, called the Tuesday, January 4, 2022 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:33 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

A community member requested an explanation regarding the \$100,000 difference between the budgeted amount and the ‘actual’ amount (for 2021) for the ‘BUUSD Superintendent’ line in the BUUSD FY23 Proposed Budget, Expense Summary Report.

4. Approval of Minutes**4.1 Meeting Minutes From December 7, 2021**

On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the December 7, 2021 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting.

5. New Business**5.1 Surplus Funds Article**

A document titled ‘BUUSD FY23 Budget Information – 12/28/21’ was distributed. This document is listed for Agenda item 5.2, but is also being used for discussion of this agenda item.

Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of the two draft Special Articles included in the packet, requesting that the Committee consider making a recommendation to the Board that these Articles be presented to voters. The first proposed Article relates to the FY21 audited surplus and asks voters to approve approximately \$600k to both the Capital Improvement Fund and the Tax Stabilization Fund. The second proposed Article relates to any potential FY22 surplus, and asks voters to approve allowing the Board to determine how surplus funds will be spent. The document also includes a draft of the annual Article that seeks voter approval of the Expenditure Budget. Mrs. Perreault advised that the intent of discussion this evening is to bring a recommendation to the Board at their 01/13/22 meeting. Mr. Hennessey advised that he was just notified that the BUUSD website is down, preventing additional individuals from viewing the Agenda/Packet, and from joining the meeting via the website. Individuals can still join the meeting on-line via Face Book or Front Porch Forum. Lengthy discussion was held regarding the proposed Special Articles, and included discussion of questions from Committee and community members.

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On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Committee unanimously voted to recommend to the Board that they present voters with a Special Article asking voters to authorize the Board to transfer FY21 surplus funds as follows; \$600,000 to the Tax Stabilization Fund, and \$614,807 to the Capital Improvement Fund.

The Committee agreed that they do not wish to send a recommendation to the Board that it present voters with a Special Article related to use of a potential future surplus (FY22).

The FY23 Draft budget Article will be discussed as part of Agenda Item 5.2

5.2 FY23 Budget

Twelve documents were distributed.

A document titled 'BUUSD FY23 Budget Information – 12/28/21'

An untitled document containing various budget information.

The BUUSD FY23 Proposed Budget, Expense Summary Report for Draft 2 – dated 12/28/21

A document titled CVCC Budget Expenses – 12/28/21

A second document titled CVCC Budget Expenses – 12/28/21 (received in the packet addendum)

A document titled FY23 CVCC Projected Tuition Draft 12/28/21

A second document titled FY23 CVCC Projected Tuition Draft 12/28/21 (received in the packet addendum)

A document titled BUUSD Budget 2022-23 – Draft 2, 12-28-21 – Comparative Tax Rate Calculations

A document titled BUUSD Budget 2022-23 – Draft 2, 12-28-21 – Comparative Tax Rate Calculations With \$700,000 Revenue Letters to Barre City and Barre Town Clerks regarding the 2021 Equalization Study Results (CLA information)

An untitled document listing CLAs and Tax Rates for cities/towns throughout Vermont

Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of the documents included in the packet, noting that Draft #2 equates to a per-pupil spending amount of \$16,595, an increase of 8.22%. It was noted that the equalized pupil count received from the State indicates the loss of approximately 125 equalized pupils (approximately 100 actual students). The decrease in the equalized pupil count has a negative impact on the budget. This number reflects a 2 year decline in enrollment. It is believed that the loss of students is related to COVID, as more students are being home schooled or sent to private schools. The Yield was announced as being much higher than last year, which helps the tax rate (a 4¢ decrease in Barre City and a 1¢ increase in Barre Town). These amounts are calculated with a draft budget that uses \$600k of the surplus towards revenue. There is concern that the increase in per-pupil spending, which is higher than the actual budget increase, will be negatively received by voters. It was noted that the wording of the budget article is specifically defined by statute and cannot be altered. It was stressed that budget information provided to voters must clearly explain the difference, as well as document specific items that caused the budget to increase. It was noted that even with the proposed increase, the BUUSD remains a district with one of the lowest per-pupil spending amounts in the State. Concern was raised that having one of the lowest cost per-pupil amounts in the state is not something to be 'proud of', and may contribute to difficulty in hiring/retaining highly qualified staff and may deter families from moving to the District. Lengthy discussion ensued and included comments and questions from Committee and community members. It was noted that the option to use \$700k of surplus funds would keep the Barre City Tax Rate the same (a 4¢ decrease), but change the Barre Town Tax Rate from a 1¢ increase to zero increase. Both of these options (using \$600k and using \$700k) will be presented to the Board. The option to use an additional \$100k of surplus funds changes the per-pupil increase to 7.93%.

On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Ms. Badeau, the Committee unanimously voted to recommend that the Board approve Budget Draft #2 with an Expenditure amount of \$53,254,319 (using \$600k in surplus funds) for the Barre Unified Union School District for FY23, and to also present information pertaining to using \$700k of surplus funds and that two draft Articles will be presented to the Board. Mrs. Akley was not present for the vote.

Brief discussion was held regarding the CVCC FY23 draft budget. Ms. Emerson answered questions from meeting participants and advised that the RAB Board has approved this budget and recommends that the District approve the budget as presented. It was noted that regardless of the outcome of the governance vote, Barre voters need to approve an FY23 budget.

On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Ms. Badeau, the Committee unanimously agreed to recommend that the Board approve an Expenditure Budget of \$3,512,050 for CVCC for FY23.

6. Old Business

6.1 FY22 Expenses

A document titled BUUSD FY22 Expense Report – December 28, 2021 was distributed

In response to a query, it was noted that the balance listed on the report (\$237,503) is not an anticipated surplus. Mrs. Perreault has been reviewing expenses only, not revenues. Mrs. Perreault is not making surplus/deficit projections at this point. It was noted that most of the balance is the result of open staff positions. There were no questions from the Committee.

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6.2 ESSER Update

Three documents were distributed;

‘BUUSD Public Plan for ARP ESSER Spending

A letter to the Superintendent regarding Conceptual Approval for the BCEMS HVAC Project

A letter to the Superintendent regarding Conceptual Approval for the BTMES HVAC Project

Mrs. Perreault advised regarding ESSER funding, including the requirement to show evidence that the District has held meaningful consultation with the various stakeholders. Mrs. Perreault advised that the document is quite lengthy and includes links to additional information. Mrs. Perreault encourages individuals to review the document, including the links. Mrs. Perreault advised of the different categories which are required to be included in the document, and provided an overview of some of the improvements that have been completed utilizing ESSER funds. Thus far Conceptual Approval has been received for BCEMS and BTMES, and the District anticipates receiving Conceptual Approval for the SHS Plan, which includes completion of the sprinkler system as part of HVAC upgrades. Mrs. Perreault is currently waiting to receive a letter from one of the State Fire Marshalls. That letter is the final piece of required documentation. Ms. Parker queried regarding sign-on bonuses to attract bus drivers. It was noted that the District has been aggressively helping STA recruit bus drivers, but no one has expressed interest in filling these positions. It was noted that public input included requests for After-School Care Programs, but there are currently issues with attracting staffing. Brief discussion was held regarding the request (from BCEMS) for installation of a Ropes Course. Mrs. Perreault advised that currently, requested items are being prioritized and staffing needs have taken priority. It was noted that the SHS Athletic Fields and auditorium are in need of much repair, and that use of those areas is very beneficial to students.

7. Other Business

None.

8. Items for Future Agendas

- FY23 Budget Communication (working session)
- Update on FY22 Expenses

Mrs. Perreault advised that she will not be in attendance at the next Finance Committee meeting. It is anticipated that Josh Allen, will attend to assist with FY23 Budget Communication planning.

9. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is Tuesday, February 1, 2022 at 5:30 p.m., at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Committee unanimously agreed to adjourn at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin

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**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
FACILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING
BUUSD Central Office and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
January 10, 2022 - 5:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Guy Isabelle, Chair – (At-Large)
Gina Akley, Vice Chair - (BT)
Sarah Pregent - (BC)
Andrew McMichael

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sonya Spaulding

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Jamie Evans, Facilities Director

GUESTS PRESENT:

Josh Howard Nancy Leclerc Terry Reil

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Isabelle, called the Monday, January 10, 2022 BUUSD Facilities and Transportation 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 Approval of Minutes – November 8, 2021 BUUSD Facilities and Transportation Committee Meeting

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Committee unanimously voted to approve as amended, the Minutes of the November 8, 2021 BUUSD Facilities and Transportation Committee meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 Bus/Transportation Review

Mrs. Akley addressed the Committee regarding a situation she experiences as a parent of a pre-school student, expressing frustration regarding transportation issues for her child who attends pre-school at Barre Town, but attends daycare in Barre City. Because the daycare is in Barre City, and the Barre Town bus does not make stops in Barre City, it is necessary for her to transport her child from a BTMES bus stop, to his daycare (mid-day), even though the BTMES bus drives right by the daycare on its route. Mrs. Akley believes there are numerous parents who face this kind of transportation issue, and would appreciate it if the District could find a way to accommodate students/parents who are in a similar situation. Mrs. Akley expressed her appreciation to bus drivers and the transportation coordinator. Mr. Hennessey advised that the District would like to accommodate more students in Barre City and Barre Town (pre-k through 8), and that this situation will be looked into over the summer. In response to a query, a brief historical overview of bussing was provided, including; the State statute to consolidate transportation to one provider, route determination, based on safety and efficiency (coordinated between STA, using route software, and the BCEMS and BTMES transportation coordinators, and also involving law enforcement), the switch from two runs (for each AM and PM route), to one run (for each AM and PM route), and the ongoing shortage of bus drivers. It was noted that bus drivers are employed and paid by STA, not the District. It was also noted that due to COVID, many parents are not allowing their children to ride the buses, resulting in buses that are not full. Once COVID is no longer an issue, it is anticipated that ridership will increase and buses will be much fuller. In response to concern over the use of the Barre Town Recreational Area's parking lot during BTMES drop-off/pick-up, it was noted that cars were routed there as a safety measure because of traffic backing up on Websterville Road. Mr. Isabelle advised that he would like to see GMTA plan routes that

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would accommodate SHS students (who are not currently provided with bus service). It was noted that STA currently has enough bus drivers to cover the routes, but if one of them is out, it does cause issues. Brief discussion was held regarding SROs at BTMES.

5.2 Electric Bus Update

Mr. Evans advised that STA recently advised that the buses are ready to go (inspected, registered, cameras installed) and the charging stations are installed, though aren't 'on line' (programmed) yet. Mr. Evans anticipates that the buses will be in service within a few days. When these buses are put in service, two non-electric buses will be pulled out of service (a requirement of the grant). It will take a little bit of time to learn how the buses function (how many miles on a charge, how they work on hills, etc...). The long term goal is to have two electric buses for each of the two middle and elementary schools. STA does have spare buses that can be used when a bus is out of service. In response to a query, it was noted that the charging stations were relocated to allow them to be on a separate electrical service (a cost efficiency move for STA). In response to a concern that some electric vehicle batteries explode, Mr. Evans advised that given that the buses are not stored close to the school, are in close proximity to the Fire Station, and the school is fully sprinkled, VSBIT does not have concern.

5.3 Storm Water Run-off Update

Mr. Evans advised that the District has been approved for funding to cover the cost of the initial design and feasibility studies as well as construction. The grants provide 100% funding for all phases. A Notice of Intent (step one in the process of obtaining a permit from the State) is being worked on by the engineering firms. If during the feasibility studies, it is determined that a school or schools cannot accommodate installation of a retention pond, or other option, the District can pay a onetime opt-out fee, and would no longer be required to perform storm water run-off mitigation. It was noted that Mr. Evans and Mr. Hennessey have had some discussions with Barre Town officials regarding actions that the District and the Town are planning. The Town does own a number of properties that fall within the purview of the new storm water run-off regulations (all commercial land that has three acres or more of impervious surface).

5.4 ESSER Grant Applications Update

Mr. Evans advised that all ventilation systems in the schools are fully functional, but might not meet today's Healthy Building Standards. The District applied for grants, and has received conceptual approval for both BCEMS and BTMES. It is anticipated that approval will be received soon for SHS. The SHS project involves installation of sprinklers (to the portion of the building that is not currently sprinkled), and requires more paperwork. Today, Mr. Evans received the last required document (a letter from the State Fire Marshalls' Office), and he will give the letter to Mrs. Perreault, who will forward it on to the appropriate individual, to be included in the grant application.

6. Old Business

6.1 SHS Track Update

Mrs. Pregent advised that the most recent update from Mr. Rousse, is that this initiative is currently on hold.

7. Other Business

Mr. Evans advised that based on the Finance Committee's recommendation that the Board present voters with a Special Article allocating \$614,807 to the Capital Improvement fund, he anticipates that the money will be allocated to Facilities and in anticipation of that, he has reached out to architects for preliminary work on roofing projects (at BCEMS and BTMES). Mr. Evans advised that site visits with architects were conducted last week, and he is trying to get estimates and be prepared to 'put shovels to ground' if the voters approve the request to transfer funds to the Capital Improvement Fund.

8. Items to be Placed on Future Agendas

- Electric Bus Update
- Conceptual Facilities Plan for Next Year
- Storm Water Run-off Update
- PCB Testing Update

- SHS Track Update – Add to Parking Lot
- Transportation Update – Add to Parking Lot

9. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is Monday, February 14, 2022 at 5:30 p.m., at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 6:31p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin