

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**BOARD MEETING**

BUUSD Central Office and Via Video Conference – Google Meet

January 27, 2022 - 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)  
Giuliano Cecchinelli, II (BC)  
Chris Parker (BT)  
Sarah Pregent (BC)

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Mike Deering, II	Prudence Krasofski	Nancy Leclerc	Paul Malone
Victoria Pompei	Nancy Pope	Terry Reil	Rachael Van Vliet	

**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, January 27, 2022, Regular meeting to order at 5:31 p.m., which was held at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.

Mrs. Spaulding reviewed the Meeting Norms and the procedures for engaging with the Board.

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

Add 5.7 Meeting Options (In-person, Virtual, Hybrid)

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

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

**3.1 Public Comment**

Barre Town resident Nancy Pope addressed the Board, advising that she was reaching out to the Board to express her appreciation for three items; hiring Chris Hennessey as Superintendent, congratulating all who worked to finalize the labor contract, and for the work performed drafting the 2023 budget.

Mike Deering, II expressed concerns he has, based on a recent Curriculum Committee meeting. Discussion at that meeting included staffing issues, and Mr. Deering would like to know, given the staffing shortages, what is the plan moving forward. Mrs. Spaulding suggested that Mr. Deering touch base with Mr. Hennessey on this matter. Mr. Deering reiterated that this matter needs to be addressed and that members of the community need to be advised regarding what is planned to deal with these staffing shortages.

**3.2 Student Voice**

None.

**4. Consent Agenda**

**4.1 Approval of Minutes –January 13, 2022 Regular Meeting**

**On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the January 13, 2022 Regular Meeting, and the Minutes of the January 19, 2022 Special Meeting, as amended.**

#### **4.2 Approval of Minutes – January 19, 2022 Special Meeting**

Approved under Agenda Item 4.1.

#### **5. Current Business**

##### **5.1 New Hires**

No candidates were presented for hire.

##### **5.2 First Reading Access Control Policy (F25)**

Copies of all policies referenced in Agenda Items 5.2 through 5.6 were distributed.

Ms. Parker provided a brief overview of this VSBA Model Policy, advising that the only change to the Model Policy was to add the District name.

**On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Reading of the Access Control Policy (F25).**

##### **5.3 First Reading Fiscal Management and General Financial Accountability Policy (F20)**

Policy F20 is a current policy, but is being presented with an amendment, changing the threshold amount requiring Board approval. Ms. Parker advised that there have been many different thoughts on what the amount should be, including input received from community and Board members. Policy discussion has involved many different individuals (committee members, administrators, community members). There was a change to the bidding requirement. Policy Guideline #6 advises that bidding laws will be followed. The threshold for Board approval is Guideline #1. The Committee was shown examples of policies from other districts. Community members on the Policy Committee did not feel it was their place to set the dollar threshold for Board approval. Ms. Parker believes that 'local' Policy F30 should be rescinded after a new version of this policy is adopted. Brief discussion was held regarding this policy. This policy requires additional research. Lengthy discussion was held, including: what the threshold amount should be, concern that this policy does not clearly identify what purchases/projects require approval, that the policy as written was misinterpreted by administrators and wasn't being followed (only projects/purchases covered under the bid law were being brought to the Board for approval), that the policy doesn't match the VSBA Model Policy, the importance of the policy to show clear expectations, the importance of transparency and building trust with the community, the need for legal vetting if the Model Policy is altered, the importance of following VSBA policies which were written as they are 'for a reason', a consensus that the threshold amount needs to be lower than \$150,000, a suggestion that VSBA be contacted for clarity on the intent of the model policy, and a suggestion that this policy be returned to the Policy Committee for discussion and revision (including discussion of including a provision pertaining to SPED services).

**On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to send the policy, with Board comments, back to the Policy Committee.**

##### **5.4 First Reading Electronic Surveillance Policy (F26)**

In addition to the policy presented for a First Read, copies of the VSBA Model Policy (F26 – Security Cameras) and local policy (F41 – Video Surveillance) were distributed. Ms. Parker advised regarding the documents distributed, and advised that the First Reading being presented has been legally vetted. Ms. Parker noted that if this policy is adopted, local policy F41 should be rescinded. Ms. Parker advised regarding changes to the model policy (pertaining to SROs). Brief discussion was held regarding which schools currently have SROs. At the present time, BCEMS has a full time SRO, BTMES has an SRO (police presence) part time, and SHS does not currently have an SRO. Mrs. Akley raised concerns regarding provisions in the model policy which have been removed from the draft version being presented (parental notification, posting of signs, confidentiality and other student protection clauses). Mrs. Akley queried as to why the model policy, which is clear, is being modified/deleted. Ms. Parker believes some of the changes are being done in an effort to simplify policies, and to accommodate areas that are unique to the District. Ms. Parker noted that if the Board wishes to follow the model policies more as written, the Policy Committee can proceed in that mode. It was noted that though administrator input is valued, it is important that the Board adopt policies that follow the law and are in the best interest of the District. It was suggested that if model policies were used with only minor modifications, the process of policy development and adoption would be smoother, would follow the recommendations of the VSBA, and would eliminate the issue of policies continually being sent back and forth between the Policy Committee and the Board. Mrs. Poulin provided some historical background, noting that the Board had agreed to use VSBA Model Policies, with only minor revisions (as necessary for items unique to the District), but noted that beginning with policy development under the previous superintendent, the agreed upon policy development protocol has no longer been being followed.

**On a motion by Mrs. Akley, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board voted 7 to 1 to return the Electronic Surveillance Policy (F26) back to the Policy Committee for discussion and revisions based concerns raised as part of discussion.**

**Mrs. Akley, Ms. Badeau, Mr. Boltin, Mr. Cecchinelli, Mrs. Farrell, Mr. Isabelle, and Mrs. Pregent voted for the motion. Ms. Parker voted against the motion.**

Mrs. Spaulding recommends that individuals review policies that are up for discussion and attend Policy Committee meetings to provide input and have their questions answered. The Policy Committee meets on the third Monday of each month.

#### **5.5 First Reading Complaints About Personnel Policy (B22)**

Ms. Parker provided a brief overview of the policy being presented, noting that the draft being presented has been legally vetted. Ms. Parker provided a brief overview of the modifications to the policy, and noted that the District has a separate policy (D32) relating to complaints about instructional materials.

**On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Reading of the Complaints About Personnel Policy (B22).**

#### **5.6 First Reading Firearms Policy (C5)**

Ms. Parker provided a brief overview of the policy, noting that this existing policy needed to be amended to comply with statute.

**On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Reading of the Firearms Policy (C5).**

#### **5.7 Meeting Options (In-person, Virtual, Hybrid)**

Mrs. Spaulding advised that recent legislation allows for meetings to be held without an in-person option. This legislation allows for virtual only meetings until January 2023. Mrs. Spaulding polled Board Members regarding their preference. Brief discussion was held.

**The Board agreed that for the present time, it will hold “virtual only” meetings, and agreed that this matter will be revisited at the second meeting in March.**

### **6. Old Business**

#### **6.1 COVID Update**

Mr. Hennessey noted that every day, staff and students are, (for seven hours), in the equivalent of ‘large in-person meetings’. The schools are a white hot zone of COVID cases. Mr. Hennessey advised that the strategy for school closures, is to do anything possible to keep schools open. With the exception of one day, and for some specific classes, schools have remained open. The feedback regarding the strategy for keeping schools open has been well received by the community. Contact tracing is no longer taking place and has been replaced by a test at home program. Thus far, the District has had enough test kits (supplied by the State), but there are concerns regarding the shortage of test kits. If the number of positive cases increases, the supplies will need to increase. The school has received a sizable amount of KN95 masks (some for adults and some in smaller sizes). There are 3 vaccine clinics planned (including one booster clinic). COVID has had a significant impact on attendance for both staff and students. Currently, the District is averaging 60 to 100 staff absences per day.

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

Mrs. Farrell requested that buses be washed, as the salt coating on lights poses a safety issue.

Mr. Isabelle thanked Mrs. Pope for her input at the start of the meeting, thanked Mr. Hennessey for accepting the Superintendent position, expressed his appreciation for the document thanking Board Members for their work, suggested having students name the city and town trucks, gave a huge ‘shout out’ to the Districts’ sports teams, thanked Ms. Parker for her work this evening (acknowledging that she had to answer some tough questions), and expressed his appreciation for those Board Members who have opted to run for an additional term. Mr. Isabelle noted that it is good to see that this year there is competition for Board seats.

Mrs. Pregent thanked Ms. Parker for her work this evening, answering many policy related questions.

Ms. Parker thanked those who expressed appreciation for her work, advising that she also appreciates the historical perspective being provided, and requested that individuals e-mail her with input whenever they see upcoming policies they would like to provide feedback on.

Ms. Badeau recognized the Superintendent and teachers, who have been able to keep the schools open despite the number of staff absences.

Mrs. Akley echoed Ms. Badeau’s comments.

Mrs. Spaulding noted it is School Board Recognition Month and expressed her appreciation to Board Members for all of their hard work and commitment.

Mr. Hennessey displayed the School Board Appreciation document, and acknowledged Board Members for all of their work and support.

### **8. Future Agenda Items**

- COVID Update
- FY23 Budget Communication
- Annual Assessment Report/Data
- Administrator Evaluations (March meeting)

- Building Reports
- New Hires (if applicable)

**9. Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting is Thursday, February 10, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

There is also a meeting scheduled for Thursday, February 24, at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

**10. Executive Session as Needed**

No items were proposed for discussion in Executive Session.

**11. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Akley, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:02 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Andrea Poulin*