

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT  
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
Via Video Conference – Google Meet  
January 17, 2022 – 5:30 p.m.

**MINUTES**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Chris Parker, Chair (BT)  
Giuliano Cecchinelli, II, Vice Chair (BC)  
Tim Boltin (BC)  
Andrew McMichael (BC Community Member)  
Jon Valsangiacomo – (BT Community Member)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Sonya Spaulding

**ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF PRESENT:**

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent  
Pierre Laflamme, BCEMS Principal

**GUESTS:**

**1. Call to Order**

The Chair, Ms. Parker, called the Monday, January 17, 2022, meeting to order at 5:31p.m., which was held via video conference - Google Meet.

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

Add Agenda Item 5.7 Election of Committee Vice Chair.

**3. Public Comment**

None.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

**4.1 Approval of Minutes – December 20, 2021 Policy Committee Meeting**

**On a motion by Mr. Valsangiacomo, seconded by Mr. Cecchinelli, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the December 20, 2021 Policy Committee Meeting.**

**5. New Business**

**5.1 District Counsel – Policy/Procedures/VSBA Model Policies**

Mr. Hennessey advised that Pietro Lynn might not be able to make it to the meeting this evening. Mr. Hennessey advised that he attended a recent VSBA presentation for new and prospective superintendents. The presentation included information on the superintendent's role in policy and policy development. Mr. Hennessey advised that the presentation included information on basic definitions, including information regarding the roles of boards and superintendents. The Board's role and responsibilities in the process, is to set clear direction, establish parameters for administrators, staff, and the board through policies, direct administration to draft language consistent with the board's broad policy goals, seek input from affected groups and individuals, give feedback on draft policies, insure legal compliance through legal counsel, adopt final policies and monitor them, including periodic review. The Superintendents' role is to ensure policies and procedures are accessible, distribute policies and procedures, and inform the board when the need for new policies arises. There was nothing in the presentation forbidding boards from getting into procedural work, but it is clear that the board does not need to be involved in procedures. There was nothing definitive or clear regarding this specific matter, but the presentation did clearly define the roles of boards and superintendents. Mrs. Spaulding clarified that she recalls that the Board does not want to be involved in writing procedures, but as policies are being passed and the implementation sections are being stripped out, the procedures which should be falling under the superintendent and administrators, are supposed to be in written form and accessible, and they are not. The Board and the Committee is pushing for procedures to be written. The problem is that procedures are not being written, and Mrs. Spaulding reiterated her belief that the Board does not want to be involved in writing procedures. When implementation sections are stripped out and there are no procedures to be found, it is problematic. Mr. Hennessey advised that it is important for procedures to be written and easily accessible via the web site and in handbooks. Mrs. Poulin advised that when the decision was made to keep the implementation sections in policies, it was under the guidance and recommendation of

Superintendent Pandolfo, utilizing the Model Policies. It was determined that the VSBA Model Policies implementation sections were not procedures, but rather were providing clear definition of policies for administrators, staff, students, and parents. Mrs. Poulin referred to the VSBA web site on policies and read from that site; "Our model policies closely adhere to the policy/procedure distinction, and frequently require that administrative rules or procedures to accompany specific policies be developed by administrators. In those cases, this is a step that must not be overlooked". A review of the 56 policies adopted in preparation for the Act 46 consolidation, all include the implementation sections from the VSBA Model Policies. Ms. Parker believes Mr. Lynn was invited to the meeting to help provide some additional information on this matter and she hopes that he will be able to attend the February meeting to provide input. Mrs. Poulin reiterated that the decision to keep the implementation sections occurred under the guidance of Mr. Pandolfo and that the Board did make a directive (to include the implementation sections), and that the directive is not being followed. Mrs. Poulin advised that it was determined that the implementation sections are not procedures and are not intended to replace procedures (written by administrators), but rather are in the policies to provide clear definition, and set clear direction for administrators, staff, students, and parents. Mrs. Poulin cautioned that anything not included in the actual policy, is not policy and is subject to change at any time (within procedures) without Board knowledge or approval. When the policies are clearly defined, advising that 'x, y, z' needs to be done, it is the expectation the procedures will be written to follow the directive written in the policies. One recent issue relating to removal of an implementation section involves removal of the implementation section of the Substitute Policy. At the Board meeting where a new substitute rate was going to be implemented, neither the Board nor the Superintendent realized that the Superintendent is supposed to set the substitute rate annually. That directive was part of the implementation section of the policy, and had been removed from the policy. With the implementation section removed from the policy, neither the Board nor the Superintendent knew what the policy used to define. Mrs. Poulin reiterated that things not defined in policy, get forgotten, and are subject to change without notification to the Board or Board approval. It is Mrs. Poulin's understanding, that the decision to leave implementation sections in policies, was to make sure that policies are strong, clearly define the Board's expectations, and provide clear direction to administrators when they are writing procedures. Mrs. Poulin believes the Board's directive to leave the implementation sections in policy was a wise decision. Additionally, Mrs. Poulin advised that removal of the implementation section of the Firearms policy, has resulted in the District having a policy that is not in compliance with the law. There are very valid reasons why the directive was given to keep implementation sections in policies. It was noted that the Firearms policy has now been modified and is ready to be presented to the Board. Mr. Valsangiacomo suggested that there be a directive in place to assure that administrators write procedures within a set timeframe after policy adoption and that procedure development be tracked. Ms. Parker is hopeful that Mr. Lynn can provide additional information, including information on how other districts develop, publish, and monitor policies. Mr. Cecchinelli advised that creation of procedures has been discussed in the past, and that Mr. Aither advised that because he is present at Policy Committee meetings, it would probably be quite easy for him to create procedures, but that procedures also need to be developed at the elementary/middle schools as well. It is possible that each policy will have three procedures attached to it. Mr. Hennessey advised that review of up to date procedures can be worked into administrative meetings to assure that procedures are also up to date. Mr. Laflamme suggested that a hybrid type model be implemented, a model where administrators write procedures in the month of time between Committee meetings. It was understood that much work needs to be performed to catch up on the 50+ policies that do not have written procedures.

### **5.2 Review of BUUSD Policy Manual Index**

A copy of the BUUSD Policy Manual Index (dated 01/11/22) was distributed.

Ms. Parker noted that some of the policies slated for First Reads on 01/13/22, have been moved to the 01/27/22 Board meeting.

Ms. Parker noted that items in the 'Parking Lot' are 'in red' and that the document contains dates indicating when the Board addressed adoption of the policies.

### **5.3 VSBA Model Policy Index Review**

A copy of the VSBA Model Policy Index was distributed.

Ms. Parker noted that the policies slated for discussion this evening are on the VSBA Index as recently revised, or recommended for deletion.

### **5.4 Role and Adoption of School Board Policies (A30) (Consider)**

Copies of the existing policy and the revised VSBA Model Policy were distributed.

Ms. Parker advised regarding the documents contained in the packet, and queried regarding committee members' review of the policies (current and revised VSBA Model Policy). It was noted that the VSBA Model Policy contains a section pertaining to policy adoption. The Model Policy advises regarding a ten day warning for adoption of policies. The District does not warn meetings ten days in advance, and instead uses the protocol of holding First and Second Readings. Both methods are legal. Ms. Parker queried regarding references to member boards and it was noted that the BUUSD District only has one Board. Discussion was held regarding the section of the policy that pertains to the public's ability to view the policies. It was noted that copies of policies are currently available for viewing at each of the schools' offices, and are also available on line. Student and Staff handbooks do contain relevant policies, though it is not known if the procedures are up to date. It was suggested that the draft policy be amended to reflect that policies are available for viewing on line. Ms. Parker suggested keeping the policies at the Committee level so that Mr. Aither can provide input. The Committee agreed to add this policy to the February agenda.

### **5.5 Board member Education (A31) (Consider)**

Copies of the existing policy and the revised VSBA Model Policy were distributed.

Ms. Parker advised regarding the policies contained in the packet, noting that the VSBA policy has been revised to reflect that the Board Chair and Superintendent are required to jointly participate in at least eight hours of professional training each year. This information is included in the implementation section. Mrs. Spaulding advised that she believes that the training is required by law. Mrs. Poulin reiterated that the implementation section is part of the policy, and is providing clarity by defining what is necessary to comply with the law. Discussion was held regarding whether or not policies contain clauses that generically state that applicable laws will be followed. Mrs. Poulin reiterated that the implementation sections are not procedures, but are part of the policy, the part that further defines the policy. If policies only contain a generic statement regarding following laws, anyone who reads the policy would have to find, read, and interpret statutes in order to know what they are required to do (administrators, staff, students and parents). Brief discussion was held regarding the legal references contained at the bottom of the VSBA Model Policies. It was noted that the District has been removing legal references from all policies. The original policies were adopted with legal references. At a later time, the VSBA recommended that districts remove legal references when adopting policies. Mr. Pandolfo advised the Board of the VSBA recommendation and the Board voted to remove all legal references. The VSBA has since updated their web site to advise boards not to keep legal references in policies. The removal of legal references from existing policies was assigned to Mrs. Gilbert. Mrs. Poulin read the verbiage from the VSBA web site. The Board agreed to keep this policy at the Committee level and to add it to the February agenda.

### **5.6 Board Goal-Setting and Evaluation (A32) (Consider)**

A copy of the existing policy was distributed.

Ms. Parker advised that the VSBA removed this policy on 10/21/21, and queried regarding whether or not the Board should rescind this policy or keep it. Mrs. Poulin advised that if the Board wishes to continue with a policy to evaluate themselves and set goals, they would keep the policy in place. If they don't feel performing these functions is necessary, the Board would rescind the policy. Mrs. Spaulding advised that she believes this is a great policy, but does not believe that the Board is currently following this policy (setting goals and evaluating annually). It was noted that prior to COVID, the Board was following this policy, with goal setting and evaluation occurring at board retreats. Mr. Cecchinelli advised that although the Board cannot adopt anything less than the required policies, it can adopt policies in addition to those, including policies that the VSBA doesn't have a model policy for. Mr. Valsangiacomo agrees this is a good policy, and noted that he is on boards that perform goal setting and evaluations annually. Mr. Valsangiacomo agrees that in addition to required policies, the Board can also adopt other policies (recommended, to consider, or ones for which VSBA does not have a policy). Mr. Valsangiacomo believes this policy is sound, but expressed concern that the implementation section may be too limiting in setting forth what the Board should do. Mr. Valsangiacomo suggested that the implementation section be modified to give emphasis to particular areas, and perhaps expand on the list of bulleted items. Mr. Hennessey also agrees that board goal setting and evaluation is beneficial, and he would like to learn more about what his role would be in this process. In response to a query, Mrs. Spaulding suggested that the Committee notify the Board that VSBA has rescinded this policy, and inquire regarding whether or not the Board wishes to keep the existing policy. This policy will be 'set aside' until the Committee determines if policies A30 and A31 need to go to the Board, at which time, all three policies will be presented for First Reads at the same time.

### **5.7 Election of a Committee Vice Chair**

**On a motion by Mr. Boltin, seconded by Mr. McMichael, the Community unanimously voted to elect Mr. Cecchinelli as Vice Chair of the Policy Committee.**

### **6. Old Business**

None.

### **7. Other Business**

None.

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

- District Counsel – Policy/Procedures/VSBA Model Policies
- Role and Adoption of School Board Policies (A30) (Consider)
- Board member Education (A31) (Consider)
- Board Goal-Setting and Evaluation (A32) (Consider)

### **9. Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting is Monday, February 21, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference  
As this meeting falls within the February Break, it may be rescheduled.

### **10. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mr. Valsangiacomo, seconded by Mr. Boltin the Committee unanimously agreed to adjourn at 6:20 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Andrea Poulin*