

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

Via Video Conference – Google Meet
February 24, 2021 - 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sonya Spaulding (BC) – Chair
Alice Farrell (BT) – Vice Chair
Guy Isabelle (At-Large) - Clerk
Renee Badeau (BT)
Tim Boltin (BC) – joined at 6:18 p.m.
Giuliano Cecchinelli, II (BC)
Sarah Pregent (BC)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Gina Akley (BT)
Chris Parker (BT)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus James Carpenter Prudence Krasofski Rebekah Mortensen Terry Reil

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, February 24, 2021, Regular meeting to order at 5:32 p.m., which was held via video conference.

Mrs. Spaulding provided an overview of the Meeting Norms and procedures for public comment, advising that though the Board listens to public input, they don't necessarily engage in discussion.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 10.1 – Advice and Consultation Regarding Personnel (Executive Session)

On a motion by Mr. Isabelle, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as amended. Mr. Boltin was not present for the vote.

3. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

3.1 Public Comment

Terry Reil thanked the Board for their patience and explanations over the past year.

James Carpenter spoke of behalf of the Problem Solving Through Literature Program (PSTL) at BTMES. Mr. Carpenter would like to see this ELA Program (which has been in place for approximately 30 years) brought back to the school. Mr. Carpenter provided a brief overview of the Program, including; community service items which benefit students and the public, as well as the intensive literacy portion of the program, which challenges the District's most gifted students. This Program has been a great source of pride within the community and Mr. Carpenter would like to have a public discussion regarding this program and would like to see it reinstated. It was noted that the last time this Program was discussed publicly; it drew over 50 supportive community members. Mrs. Spaulding advised that this program will be added to a future Board or Curriculum Committee meeting.

3.2 Student Voice

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Approval of Minutes – February 10, 2021 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the February 10, 2021 Regular Meeting. Mr. Boltin was not present for the vote.

5. Current Business

5.1 New Hires

The resume and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Form for Jennifer Cote (BCEMS SPED SLP) was distributed. Mr. Hennessey advised that he has two new hires to discuss, one of which was interviewed just prior to this meeting, and that her information is not included in the packet. That individual is Elizabeth Brown (hired for the position of Director of Early Childhood Education - to fill the position being vacated by Lauren May). Mr. Hennessey would like the Board to meet this candidate in March and will include her information in that board packet. Mr. Hennessey advised that the District has made Ms. Brown an offer and she has accepted that offer. Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of Ms. Cote's education and experience. Mr. Hennessey answered questions from the Board.

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Jennifer Cote. Mr. Boltin was not present for the vote.

5.2 Curriculum Director Search Update

A document titled 'Admin Search Committee – Director of Curriculum' was distributed.

Mr. Hennessey displayed a portion of the District's web site that lists all current openings and the hiring process. The Director of Curriculum Search Committee page was displayed. Mrs. Marold provided an overview of the Director of Curriculum web page. There were 13 candidates for this position. Surveys of staff and community members were part of the hiring process. Mrs. Marold provided an overview of survey feedback from teachers. Mr. Hennessey hopes to have a Board approved candidate by the next Curriculum Committee meeting in March. There were no questions from the Board. Mrs. Spaulding noted that the 03/24/22 meeting will be very full, and the Board may wish to schedule an additional meeting that week, for the purpose of holding interviews.

5.3 Administrator Search Timeline (BC/SHS Principals)

A document titled 'Admin Search Committee – BCEMS Co-Principal' was distributed.

A document titled 'Admin Search Committee – SHS Principal' was distributed.

Mr. Hennessey displayed the web page for the BCEMS Co-Principal position. Mrs. Marold noted that the hiring committee has completed its work for this position. There were 10 candidates for the position. There were 4 viable candidates, but 2 withdrew prior to interviews. Mr. Hennessey advised that the candidate being brought forward for interview with the Superintendent, is Interim Co-Principal Pierre Laflamme. Mr. Hennessey noted that the Board previously interviewed this candidate last year. Mrs. Marold answered questions from the Board. Mrs. Spaulding suggested that the 'new' Board (elections are 03/01/22) make the decision on whether or not Mr. Laflamme should be interviewed again.

Mr. Hennessey displayed the web page for the SHS Principal position. Mrs. Marold provided an overview of the process, noting that the posting closes on 03/01/22. Currently there are 8 candidates for this position. The Committee will hold their first meeting on 03/02/22. This hiring committee is large and has a wide variety of members. Mrs. Marold noted that there were 5 SHS students who wanted to be involved in the hiring process.

Mr. Hennessey provided a brief overview of the BUUSD website, advising that it contains much information, and he encourages community members to access the site.

Mrs. Marold advised regarding open assistant principal positions (at BCEMS and SHS), noting that there are few candidates for these positions. The BCEMS Assistant Principal position is being posted in anticipation that Pierre Laflamme will be hired as a BCEMS Co-Principal. The SHS position is to fill the position vacated by Jim Ferland. The SHS position was posted on 01/31/21 and closes on 02/28/22. There were 18 candidates, 3 have withdrawn. Some candidates applied for both the BCEMS and SHS positions.

In response to a query regarding the timeline for this hiring process, Mrs. Marold advised that the posting for the SHS Assistant Principal position closes on 03/07/22, and the search for the SHS Principal Position was started by Mrs. Waterhouse before she decided to move to BCEMS, and is well underway. Mrs. Marold hopes that hiring for the BCEMS position will be completed by late March.

5.4 Community Members on Committees

A document titled 'Guidelines for Community Members on BUUSD School Board Committees' was distributed.

Mrs. Spaulding provided a brief overview of the guidelines approved by the Board on 12/02/21, advising that she wants community members to be prepared to submit letters of interest for these committee seats. Committee openings will be posted for two weeks. Mrs. Spaulding will consult with legal counsel regarding whether or not community members can serve on the Negotiations Committee. In response to a query, it was noted that community members who are currently serving as committee members, will need to apply (committees are re-formed each year). Community members may serve on multiple committees. There are no term limits, though interested parties need to apply annually.

5.5 FY23 Budget

Mrs. Spaulding has added this item to the Agenda because she believes there is confusion and concern within the community regarding the budget numbers. Mr. Hennessey displayed the 'comparison' screen from the web site. Mrs. Spaulding provided an overview of the comparison information, including; General Fund Expenses, Grant Expenses, Total Expenses (which is the number that needs to be put on the ballot), Revenue, and Proposed Estimated Tax Rates. The Tax Rate Calculation page was displayed, and Mrs. Spaulding provided an overview of the document, advising which items are determined by the State. The Yield is set by the Legislature and has not been set yet. Mrs. Spaulding provided an overview of the formula used to calculate the proposed tax rates. Brief discussion was held regarding the process for securing grants, and the work involved in remaining in compliance with grant stipulations. Mrs. Spaulding responded to ascertain that the budget is only going down because of the Yield, noting that the Board decided to apply \$700,000 towards revenue. Mrs. Spaulding believes the Board is making good decisions on behalf of tax payers. Mrs. Spaulding reminded community members that a budget informational session is being held on Monday, February 28, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. Mrs. Spaulding encourages community members to vote to support the District's schools.

6. Old Business

6.1 COVID Update

A copy of a letter from Mr. Hennessey to BUUSD Community Members, dated 02/17/22 was distributed.

Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of the distributed letter. Mr. Hennessey advised that the recommendation to keep mask mandates in place until the vaccination rate is 80% will be followed. Mr. Hennessey believes that the State will provide more clear guidance by 03/11/22. It was noted that the State has provided all school districts with enough COVID tests for all students. Though most tests were distributed on Thursday, 02/17/22, due to the snow day on 02/18/22, not all tests were distributed. Test kits were available for pick up at the Central Office today, and given the inclement weather anticipated for tomorrow, will also be available on Monday 02/28/22. In response to a query regarding a contingency plan for students or staff members who refuse to wear a mask, Mr. Hennessey noted that the schools have not had any issues with staff, and most students have been very respectful of the mandate. Mr. Hennessey does not want to enact punitive measures, but would rather appeal to individuals' sense of community. Pre-k students (not eligible for vaccinations) and Pre-k staff will continue to follow the mask mandate. Federal regulations still require that masks be worn by individuals riding on buses.

7. Other Business/Round Table

Board Members gave a 'shout out' to Guy Isabelle, who has served on many of the District's Boards for many years. Mr. Isabelle is not running for re-election. This is Mr. Isabelle's last Board meeting for the District. Mr. Isabelle has contributed greatly to the District for many years, including assisting with educating new board members. Mr. Isabelle was thanked for his contribution to the District and was wished well in the future, including his bid for a seat on the regional technical center board.

Mr. Isabelle expressed his great concern for the citizens of Ukraine. Mr. Isabelle lauded the SHS Wrestling Team for their recent win over Mount Anthony. The SHS Wrestling Team has won the State Title. Mr. Isabelle noted that all of the SHS sports teams are having a terrific year. Mr. Isabelle encouraged community members to vote, and wished all of the candidates luck in their bids for election.

Mr. Cecchinelli hopes that the vote for a regional technical center is passed and that Mr. Isabelle is allowed to continue his contribution by serving on the regional board. Mr. Cecchinelli also encourages community members to vote.

Mrs. Farrell noted that Mr. Isabelle is running for the regional technical center board and she hopes the vote to form a regional technical center passes. Mrs. Farrell noted that military members are being moved around (as a result of what is transpiring in Ukraine), and asked that individuals keep military members, and their families in their thoughts.

Mrs. Spaulding also noted that Mr. Isabelle is running for the regional technical center board (should a regional center be approved), and that he has been a great supporter of CVCC for many years. Mrs. Spaulding also encourages community members to vote.

Mr. Hennessey advised that CVCC Director Jody Emerson is very hopeful that Mr. Isabelle will be able to work with the technical center. Mr. Hennessey also expressed gratitude to Mr. Isabelle for his years of service and wishes him well.

8. Future Agenda Items

Informational Meeting:

- FY23 Budget

Reorganizational Meeting:

- Board Reorganization
- Administrator Position Interview Discussion

Regular Meeting:

- New Hires
- Combining of BCEMS and BTMES Athletic Programs
- Interviews for Community Members Applying for Committee Seats

- Revisit In-Person Meetings
- Administrator Evaluations (may need to be moved to April)

9. Next Meeting Dates

Mrs. Spaulding reiterated that a budget informational meeting will be held on Monday, February 28, 2022 at 5:30 p.m., and encourages community members to attend to hear information on the budget and to get any questions answered.

The Reorganizational Board Meeting is Thursday, March 10, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.

Mrs. Spaulding noted that Reorganization of the Board does take a significant amount of time and she wants to clearly define which meeting, items will be discussed at (Reorganizational Meeting or Regular Meeting).

A Regular Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, March 24, 2022.

10. Executive Session as Needed

10.1 Advice and Consultation Regarding Personnel

Mrs. Poulin advised that she does not believe the topic presented for discussion meets the legal requirement for meeting in Executive Session. Mrs. Poulin read from Statute, the items the Board may legally discuss in Executive Session. After this review of the Statute which restricts what can be discussed in Executive Session, it was determined that the item proposed does not meet the legal requirements for discussion in Executive Session. In response to a query regarding how Mrs. Farrell wishes to proceed, she confirmed that her question does not meet the defined criteria. Mrs. Farrell withdrew her request, and advised that she will contemplate how to reach a solution to the matter she had wished to discuss. Mrs. Farrell believes the item is something that needs to be addressed, but does not need to be addressed in public. Mrs. Spaulding advised that Executive Session will not be held.

11. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Isabelle, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin