

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**
Via Video Conference – Google Meet
February 1, 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
Guy Isabelle
Sonya Spaulding

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Emmanuel Ajanma, Director of Technology
Josh Allen, Communications Specialist
Jody Emerson, Director Central Vermont Career Center
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Brenda Waterhouse, SHS Principal

PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tony Campos Mike Deering, II Josh Howard Nancy Leclerc Terry Reil

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Pregent, called the Tuesday, February 1, 2022 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:31 p.m., which was held via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

None.

3. Public Comment

Mr. Howard advised that he does not believe the budget is sound and would like to see if the Board could provide information to convince him that the budget is sound.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Meeting Minutes From January 4, 2022

On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Ms. Badeau, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the January 4, 2022 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 FY23 Budget Communication

Mr. Hennessey advised that Josh Allen will display the Annual Report on screen. The Report will be reviewed page by page and final updates will be made based on feedback.

Mr. Allen will be taking notes and will make changes to the document shortly after the meeting. Mr. Allen will post a copy of the edited/finalized version as an addendum to the committee meeting packet.

The cover page was displayed and a brief overview was provided. Brief discussion was held and it was suggested that some verbiage be added relating to 'heroes'. Discussion was held regarding a suggestion that additional staff, e.g. custodians, kitchen staff etc. be recognized as heroes. It was noted that in the near future, the District will be creating 'hero spotlights' videos that will recognize these staff members.

Page 2 Review – Page 2 contains voting information, including where, when, and how to vote. Additionally, the page contains information advising on how residents can register to vote. It was noted that on average, only 23% of registered voters participate in the March election. Mrs. Farrell would like the page amended to include some type of stimulus to encourage higher voter turnout, e.g. 50% (a challenge so to speak).

Page 3 Review – Page 3 includes the Superintendent’s Message. The message conveys where the District is and where it hopes to be (aspirational). This section is a narrative introduction to the Annual Report. It was suggested that the message is too wordy, with too much print and there is concern that community members will not read it in its entirety. Brief discussion was held regarding budget related videos that are planned for production.

Page 4 Review – Page 4 contains ‘three stories’; ‘Our Children’s Social-Emotional Well-Being’, ‘What Will Learning Look Like?’, and ‘High Quality & Fully Staffed Schools’. Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of the ‘stories’, advising that the intent of the stories is to inform community members on what the District hopes to accomplish with the proposed budget. Discussion was held and minor revisions were suggested.

Page 5 Review – Page 5 contains ‘Hero Highlights’ and recognizes some Barre alumni as well as school nurses. Discussion was held and meeting participants provided feedback. Mr. Allen continued to document suggested changes.

Page 6 Review – Page 6 contains FY23 Budget information, including a chart to clearly show spending per equalized pupil (by district), and charts indicating tax implications, including income sensitivity. Brief discussion was held, including discussion on the formulas districts must use when calculating cost per equalized pupil. It was noted that the current formula for calculating student counts involves a weighted formula and it is believed that the current weighting formula is not equitable.

Page 7 Review – Page 7 contains information on ‘Understanding the Ballot When You Vote’, which provides information on what the ballot will look like, and explains the difference between the State’s definition of how the increase is calculated (based on cost per equalized pupil), versus the actual increase percentage for the overall budget. The State requires that the ballot show only the change in cost per equalized pupil. This page also includes information on how ‘Income Sensitivity’ (taxes paid based on income rather than based on home value). Brief discussion was held and Mr. Allen documented amendments that need to be made. It was noted that the pupil count provided by the State is based on prior years’ data, not current data.

Back Page Review - This page is self-explanatory; containing a picture and space for the mailing information. Brief discussion was held and meeting participants provided input. Suggestions were provided regarding swapping out some of the photos throughout the Report.

In response to a query, Mr. Allen advised that the total cost of the project, with design costs removed, is \$8,000. This figure includes printing and mailing. Mr. Allen is completing the design work in-house. The Annual Report will be mailed to all households in the Barre area. The Annual Report will also be on the BUUSD website, on social media, and on Front Porch Forum. The Annual Report will be ‘flooded electronically’. Mr. Allen will develop a one-page summary of the Annual Report. This one page document will be easy to e-mail, share on social media, and print/distribute. Mr. Allen anticipates the document will include; ‘Greatest Hits’ from the Annual Report, and will also include the addition of a ‘tag line’. The document will also include; information about voting day, absentee ballots, ‘The Bottom Line’ section, the spending per equalized pupil information, as well as the section that advises how the budget will impact voters. If there is room, Mr. Allen would also like to add some frequently asked questions. The one page budget document could be distributed to parents during drop-off and pick-up. Mr. Campos advised that the short videos (being created), can be shown before and after school sports programming, after Select Board and City Council meetings, as well as after BUUSD Board meeting videos. Mr. Allen will be sending the videos to Mr. Campos. The video content will ‘follow’ the heroes theme and spotlight some of the ‘behind the scenes’ individuals, showing that this is a team/community effort. Mr. Allen will be making the Annual Report changes tonight and plans to send the document to the printer tomorrow (02/02/22). Mr. Allen advised that he will then begin work on the spotlight videos and he would like to produce one video per day. The goal is to have the videos ‘commercial length’ (60 to 90 seconds). Many great ideas have been received. Brief discussion was held regarding pins and stickers (that reinforce the budget). It was suggested that the Board Chair write an op-ed piece for the Times Argus. Mrs. Gilbert is drafting the ‘budget flyer’ (a more numbers heavy version of the Annual Report). This is a document that Mrs. Gilbert produces annually. Mr. Hennessey has visited with members of the Rotary Club. The Rotary Club has pledged to help promote the budget. Mr. Hennessey will be reaching out to other service organizations as well. Next Wednesday, (02/09/22) Mr. Hennessey will be joining JD Greene on his Aired Out podcast. There is much work to be performed within the next two weeks (prior to the February Break). The budget vote is one month from today. Mr. Allen advised that he has created a budget web site which contains all of the information that has been discussed this evening. Mr. Allen encourages Committee Members to direct individuals to this site; busd.org/budget. This site is a one-stop-shop for all things budget related.

6. Old Business

6.1 FY22 Expenses Update

A document titled BUUSD FY22 Expense Report – January 25, 2022 was distributed.

Mrs. Pregent reported that not much has changed since the Committee met last month. A small surplus is still anticipated. More detailed information will be provided at next month's meeting.

7. Other Business

Mrs. Spaulding advised that on 02/02/22, she will be testifying before the Senate Finance Committee regarding pupil weighting. A recent study showed that the current weighting formula is not correct and is not based on anything 'real'. Mrs. Spaulding will testify that the BUUSD is an underweighted district, and has been for over 20 years. There are other districts that are 'over-weighted' and receive more funding. The BUUSD has a higher population of students living in poverty. If a new weighting formula were implemented, it would increase the State determined equalized pupil count for the District. Mrs. Spaulding is going to advocate for using the amended weighting method.

Mrs. Pregent advised that this is the last Finance Committee meeting prior to Board Reorganization in March. Mrs. Pregent thanked Committee Members for their work on this Committee.

8. Items for Future Agendas

- FY22 Year-end Projections
- FY23 Budget Vote Results

9. Next Meeting Date

The Tuesday, March 1, 2022 meeting is cancelled.

The next meeting is Tuesday, March 15, 2022 at 5:30 p.m., via video conference.

The Board Chair will be appointing Committee members at or shortly after Board Re-organization. In the past, Board Members advised the Board Chair regarding what Committees they wanted to be appointed to. In the coming year, it is anticipated that committees will be larger, as more community members have expressed interest in serving. The Board has approved a process for the appointment of community members.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Ms. Badeau, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:08 p.m. Mrs. Akley was not present for the vote.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin