

BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Via Video Conference – Google Meet
March 24, 2022 - 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sonya Spaulding (BC) – Chair
Alice Farrell (BT) – Vice Chair
Chris Parker (BT) - Clerk
Renee Badeau (BT)
Tim Boltin (BC)
Giuliano Cecchinelli, II (BC)
Nancy Leclerc (At-Large)
Terry Reil (BT)
Sarah Pregent (BC)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Hayden Coon, BCEMS Principal
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Mary Jane Aimsforth	Mel Battah	Alan Burnor	Stephanie Collins
Marisa Craige	Michael Deering, II	Nora Duane	Josh Howard	Linda Joyce
Thomas Kelly	Prudence Krasofski	Paul Malone	Jessica Maurais	Andy McMichael
Sarah Scribner	Diane Solomon	Therese Taylor	Jon Valsangiacomo	Tyler Watkins
Tasia Young	John Lyons	William Toborg		

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, March 24, 2022, Regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was held via video conference.

Mrs. Spaulding read the meeting norms.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

A question was raised regarding whether Agenda Item 11.1 meets the legal requirements of Executive Session. Mrs. Spaulding will advised she will seek advice of legal counsel.

Delete Agenda Item 11.1 – Community Members on Committees

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Ms. Badeau, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as amended.

3. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

3.1 Public Comment

Mrs. Spaulding read from a prepared statement, prefacing that she is reading a revised version of a statement that another local board chair reads at the start of each meeting (regarding public comment).

Mr. Watkins asked for a suspension of the rules, as he believes his comments will take more than 2 minutes. Mr. Watkins read his comments from a prepared statement, advocating for services for special needs students. Mr. Watkins provided some information relating to para-educator wages, the shortage of para-educators, the duties of para-educators, concern over the long-term shortage of para-educators, the negative impact this has on students and staff, the Districts failure to provide legally required services, and his

recommendations (short and long-term) for how to improve the situation. Mr. Watkins requested that a copy of his Freedom of Information Act request and the subsequent data provided by the District be available for review by any member of the public. Questions on this matter will be addressed under the Superintendent's Report (Agenda Item 7.1).

Mr. Toborg believes that nothing in Roberts Rules prevents the asking of questions.

Mr. Deering, II thanked board and community members for participating on the Barre Beat. In response to a query, it was noted that board spokespersons will be discussed under Agenda Item 6.2 Re-Organization Clean-up.

3.2 Student Voice

None.

4. Consent Agenda

4.1 Approval of Minutes – March 10, 2022 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board unanimously voted to approve as amended, the Minutes of the March 10, 2022 Regular Meeting, and the Minutes of the March 15, 2022 Special Meeting.

4.2 Approval of Minutes – March 15, 2022 Special Meeting

Approved under Agenda Item 4.1.

A revote of new hires will occur under Agenda Item 5.1 and will include names and start dates.

5. Current Business

5.1 New Hires

The resumes and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Forms for Jennifer Evans (BC Special Educator), Edda Concessi (BT World Language Teacher), Abigail Allen (CVCC School Counselor), Olivia Mauro (BT Special Educator), Pierre Laflamme (BC Principal), and Mari Goodridge Miller (SHS Assistant Principal) were distributed.

Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of the candidates. Ms. Leclerc requested clarification regarding the hiring process. It was noted that the Board interviews for Directors and Administrator positions, not teaching staff. Ms. Leclerc queried regarding the role of the Board, as in a previous meeting (02/24/22), it was announced that a Director had been offered and accepted a position prior to Board approval (03/15/22). Mrs. Spaulding advised that she believes the positions are offered contingent on Board approval.

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Jennifer Evans, Edda Concessi, Abigail Allen, Olivia Mauro, Mari Goodridge Miller, and Pierre Laflamme.

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Reil, the Board unanimously voted to rescind the 03/15/22 vote to accept the recommendation of the Superintendent for the hiring of employees for the positions of Director of Early Childhood Education, and Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment.

On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted accept the Superintendent's recommendation to approve the hiring of Elizabeth Brown for the position of Director of Early Childhood Education, and Karen Fredericks for the position of Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, with both positions effective 07/01/2022.

5.2 In-Person/Virtual Meetings Discussion

Mr. Hennessey advised that the District should be ready to host hybrid meetings beginning 04/14/22. Technology is currently being tested. The technology is 'plug and play' and can be used in all buildings. A rotating location can be accommodated. Ms. Parker queried regarding whether or not it is the expectation that Board Members attend in person, and whether there is an expectation that those who aren't feeling well, not attend in-person. In response to a query, it was noted that the SEA building is also available for use as a meeting location. Policy A20 will need to be modified if the SEA building is added to the rotation. Mr. Boltin prefers that all Board Members attend in-person. No in-person attendance expectation was agreed to.

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mr. Cecchinelli, the Board unanimously voted to begin hybrid meetings (in-person and virtual options) beginning with the next Regular Board Meeting (04/14/22).

5.3 Pledge of Allegiance

Mrs. Spaulding cautioned the Board that if the discussion is meant to be held as a way to distract and divide the Board, that the discussion not be held. Mrs. Spaulding wants the Board to move forward as a group and noted that in light of all that is happening in our community, specifically Barre City, she does not want people to be 'strung up' because of a decision they made and have it held against them for the rest of their lives. Mrs. Spaulding queried the Board regarding holding this discussion. It was clarified that the

discussion was solely regarding having the Board say the Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning of each Board meeting. There was no objection to holding the discussion. Mrs. Farrell provided some historical information and advised that she would like the Board to recite the Pledge of Allegiance to allow the Board to bond together, and have a minute of co-mingling prior to commencing the business of the Board. Brief discussion was held. Mrs. Spaulding polled the Board regarding their agreement to recite the Pledge of Allegiance at the start of Board meetings. The result was 4 in favor, 2 opposed, and 2 with no expressed opinion. Mrs. Pregent clarified her 'vote', noting that she is opposed because she does not believe the Pledge of Allegiance is something that needs to be said to help the Board focus on their duties. It was noted that Board Members would not be required to recite the Pledge. Other suggestions included having a moment silence or a 'mindful moment' at the start of each meeting. Mrs. Spaulding advised that she is not comfortable with some of the words in the Pledge of Allegiance and is not in favor of moving forward with something that not all Board Members are comfortable with, and she recommends that a compromise be agreed to. Mr. Reil suggested that; after the call to order, if time is available, each Board Member choose how they wish to participate; recite the Pledge, hold a moment of silence, etc. Mrs. Spaulding polled the Board and the majority agreed to that method. Mrs. Spaulding will add 'Pledge of Allegiance / Moment of Reflection' to future Agendas (after the Call to Order).

5.4 Community Members on Committees Interviews

Letters of interest from the following individuals were distributed; Tess Taylor, Tasia Young, Alan Burnor, John F. Lyons, Jr., Thomas Kelly, Jon Valsangiacomo, Gina Akley, Paul Malone, Linda Joyce, Cidney Bonneau, Andrew McMichael, William Toborg, Guy Isabelle, Rachel Aldrich-Whalen, Melissa Battah, and Mary Jane Ainsworth. Community members were thanked for their interest in serving on committees. Candidates were asked to introduce themselves, advise why they are interested in serving on committees, and advise as to why they believe they would be a beneficial member to the committee(s) they have expressed interest in. An updated list of interested community members was included in the addendum. Candidates introduced themselves and provided an overview of their interest in serving and how they felt they could positively contribute through committee work. Community members were thanked for attending the meeting. It is hoped that the Board will be able to make committee appointments by the end of next week.

5.5 Board Retreat Agenda and Discussion

The Retreat will be held on April 5, 2022 at Community National Bank in the Community Room, from 4:30 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. The Board discussed agenda items and what they hope to accomplish during the meeting. It was suggested that discussion in the Retreat be guided by the Strategic Plan. Agenda suggestions include; a round table segment for miscellaneous items, a 'get to know you' segment, committee work (define the Charge of committees and discuss creation of a policy on Committees), annual Board Assessment Survey, and an Annual Work Plan (using the Strategic Plan/Goals as a roadmap). No action will be taken during this meeting. Board Members should advise the Chair regarding any additional items they would like to see added.

6. Old Business

6.1 COVID Update

Mr. Hennessey advised that the implications of COVID have dropped significantly, but COVID is still present in the community and has impacted the ability to fully staff schools. The use of face coverings is optional. Many individuals are choosing to wear masks. Due to illness, the BCEMS 7/8 grade PEAK Team was closed today, and will be closed Friday as well. Test kits are still available to families that would like to pick them up.

6.2 Reorganization Clean Up

A copy of the Board Organization Meeting Data Sheet was distributed. Brief discussion was held regarding outstanding items to be determined or voted on. Policy A20 will need to be amended if the SEA Building is added as a meeting location. Discussion was held regarding Open Meeting Laws and it was requested that information received from outside sources be shared with Board Members and that the item remain open for discussion.

**On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board unanimously voted;
to designate Ms. Leclerc as the primary individual to sign warrants,
to designate Mr. Reil as the secondary individual to sign warrants,
to hold hybrid format Board meetings at the locations designated in Policy A20,
to post Warnings in the Times Argus and on Front Porch Forum,
to adopt the Code of Ethics,
to designate the Board Chair and Superintendent as designated spokespersons for the Board,
and to continue current practices relating to confidentiality of Executive Session and Open Meeting Laws.**

Discussion was held regarding the location for Committee meetings.

It was agreed that Committee meetings will be held at Spaulding High School, but it was noted that the Facilities Committee sometimes holds tours at various buildings.

7. Reports

7.1 Superintendent Report

A copy of the Superintendent's Report (dated 03/18/22) was distributed.

Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of the Superintendent's report, including an update on electric buses. Mr. Hennessey will report back regarding any concerns from VSBIT and the Fire Marshall regarding the buses' proximity to the building. Lengthy discussion was held regarding the challenges posed by the shortage of para-educators, the inability to provide all of the legally required services, and the possible need to change the model in which services are delivered. In response to a query from a community member, the Superintendent confirmed that in some cases, the District is not in compliance with providing services for those with IEPs or Behavior Plans, and administrators and the Board are aware of this. Mr. Watkins was thanked for advocating for the Districts' students. It was suggested that the District explore additional ways to recruit, educate, and retain para-educators. Mr. Hennessey provided a brief overview of the rise in homelessness, and the implications resulting from this situation, where the District is not only providing education, but is trying to assist students with meeting their most basic needs. A community member suggested that the District provide a wallet sized 'cheat sheet' containing information regarding available resources. It was suggested that the Board better prioritize spending (during budget development). Spaulding High School graduation is scheduled for Saturday, June 18, 2022. Traditionally, Board Members attend the graduation ceremony, and Board Members are encouraged to attend. The last day of school for students is Thursday, June 16, 2022. The last staff day is Friday, June 17, 2022.

7.2 Building Reports: SHS, CVCC, BCEMS and BTMES

Copies of the SHS, CVCC, BCEMS, and BTMES Building Reports were distributed.

Ry Hoffman was recognized for his nomination as an 'Outstanding Educator'.

7.3 Finance Committee

Minutes from the March 17, 2022 meeting were distributed.

Ms. Leclerc advised that discussion included election of a Chair and Vice-Chair, and the process for authorizing warrants.

The next meeting is Thursday, April 26, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. (Rescheduled from 04/21/22).

7.4 Facilities & Transportation Committee

Minutes from the March 14, 2022 meeting were distributed.

Mr. Cecchinelli reported that discussion included; projects for 2022, PCB testing, an electric bus update, storm water run-off update, and updates on the HVAC and sprinkler systems. In response to a query, Mr. Cecchinelli advised that the recreational road is functional (being used for drop-off and pick-ups), and the gate will be closed if the road becomes unusable.

The next meeting is Monday, April 11, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

7.5 Policy Committee

Ms. Parker reported that discussion included election of a Chair and Vice-Chair, review of policy indexes, and work on policies (Board Goal Setting and Evaluation, Electronic Surveillance, and Fiscal Management and General Financial Accountability).

The Parking Lot is growing due to a number of policies being changed by VSBA.

The next meeting is Monday, April 18, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

7.6 Curriculum Committee

Minutes from the January 25, 2022 meeting were distributed. The Committee has not met since January.

The next meeting is Thursday, April 7, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

7.7 Negotiations Committee

The Negotiations Committee will need to meet to elect a Chair, set meeting dates, and discuss upcoming negotiations for AFSCME.

The next meeting date is to be determined.

8. Other Business/Round Table

Mrs. Farrell recognized Christian Titus for his appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Mr. Reil voiced concern that, though sometimes necessary, large addendums, provided shortly prior to meetings are problematic.

Ms. Parker would like the Board to readdress the start time of Board meetings, noting that with the length of Board meetings, she would prefer they start at 5:30 p.m.

Ms. Badeau echoed Ms. Parker's sentiments regarding an earlier start time.

Mrs. Spaulding suggested that the start time be added to a future Agenda, or be discussed at the Board Retreat.

Mr. Hennessey echoed Mrs. Farrell's sentiment for Christian Titus.

9. Future Agenda Items

Special Meeting:

- SHS Principal Interview
- Community Members on Committees (may be added in either the public portion or executive session)

Board Retreat: Agenda Items were discussed under Agenda Item 5.5, but Meeting Start Time may be added.

Regular Meeting:

- COVID Update
- Follow-up on Para-educator Hiring

10. Next Meeting Dates

Special Meeting: Thursday, March 31, 2022

Board Retreat: Tuesday, April 5, 2022

Regular Meeting: Thursday, April 14, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

11. Executive Session as Needed

~~11.1 Administrator and Superintendent Evaluations~~ – deleted – kept as a place-holder.

11.2 Negotiations

Mr. Hennessey advised that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding providing ‘COVID Days’ under the Master Agreement has not been finalized, so discussion will need to be postponed until April 14, 2022

No items were proposed for discussion in Executive Session.

12. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin