

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT  
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING  
Via Video Conference – Google Meet  
March 21, 2022 – 6:00 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Chris Parker, Chair (BT)  
Giuliano Cecchinelli, II, Vice Chair (BC)  
Tim Boltin (BC)  
Alice Farrell (BT)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Sonya Spaulding

**ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF PRESENT:**

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent  
Luke Aither, SHS Assistant Principal  
Jamie Evans, Facilities Director  
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager

**GUESTS:**

Jeff Blow            Josh Howard            Andrew McMichael            William Toborg            Jon Valsangiacomo

**1. Call To Order**

**The Superintendent, Mr. Hennessey, called the Monday, March 21, 2022 BUUSD Policy Committee meeting to order at 6:07 p.m., which was held via video conference.**

**2. Organize**

**2.1 Elect Chair**

Mr. Hennessey requested nominations for the position of Policy Committee Chair  
**Mr. Cecchinelli nominated Ms. Parker for the position of Policy Committee Chair. Mrs. Farrell seconded the motion.**

There were no additional nominations.

**On a motion by Mr. Cecchinelli, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Committee unanimously voted to elect Ms. Parker as Chair of the BUUSD Policy Committee.**

Ms. Parker facilitated the remainder of the meeting.

**2.2 Elect Vice Chair**

**Mr. Boltin nominated Mrs. Farrell for the position of Policy Committee Vice Chair. Mr. Cecchinelli seconded the motion.**

There were no additional nominations.

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

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

None.

**4. Public Comment**

Mr. Blow joined the meeting during Agenda Item 6.4. Mr. Blow conveyed that he was not able to join the meeting by video conference, with the only option being joining by phone. Mr. Blow is concerned that the Committee is meeting via video conference rather than in person, and voiced concern that five members of the Board are present in this meeting, which constitutes a quorum of the Board. Mr. Blow does not believe the meeting was warned as a Board meeting and he is very concerned regarding this matter. It was noted that Mrs. Spaulding is in the process of seeking a legal opinion regarding this matter.

## **5. Approval of Minutes**

### **5.1 Approval of Minutes – February 21, 2022 BUUSD Policy Committee Meeting**

**On a motion by Mr. Boltin, seconded by Mr. Cecchinelli, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the February 21, 2022 BUUSD Policy Committee meeting.**

## **6. New Business**

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

A copy of the BUUSD Policy Manual Index (dated 03/16/22) was distributed.

Ms. Parker advised that some of the policies slated for tonight's agenda were not included in the agenda and she has moved them back to the Parking Lot. The Policy Manual Index Comments section should be updated to reflect that change.

### **6.2 VSBA Model Policy Index Review**

A copy of the VSBA Model Policy Index was distributed.

A copy of a document titled Current VSBA Work – BUUSD Status – Updated 03/13/22 was distributed.

After brief discussion it was agreed that the Committee should prioritize their work based on policies that are legally required (including Required Policies recently updated by the VSBA). The second priority should probably be 'Recommended' policies.

### **6.3 Board Goal-Setting and Evaluation Policy (A32) (Consider) (VSBA Removed)**

Copies of policies referenced in Agenda Items 6.3 through 6.5 were distributed.

This policy was recently removed from the VSBA web site. It was noted that the VSBA does not indicate why they are deleting policies and this information would be helpful for the Committee. Mrs. Spaulding suggested that the policy be rescinded and that procedures be added to the District web site. Brief discussion was held regarding policies and procedures. Mrs. Spaulding reported that Sandra Cameron from VSBA sent her an e-mail advising that she viewed last month's Policy Committee meeting video, and seems to believe there are some questions on the line between policies and procedures, with the term 'Implementation' causing some confusion. Mrs. Cameron is reaching out to ask if VSBA can assist in any way to help provide clarification. Mrs. Spaulding will forward a copy of the e-mail to Ms. Parker. Mr. Hennessey advised that a big take-away he got from last month's meeting; is that it is the responsibility of the Superintendent and the administrative team, to see that procedural manuals are accurate and up to date. The topic of procedural manuals is on the Agenda for an upcoming in-service day, and discussion will take place regarding mapping out where the District is currently at, and to devise a plan to see that consistent, accurate, and up to date manuals are available at each school. In addition to student and staff handbooks, procedures will be posted to the District web site.

**On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Committee unanimously voted to recommend that the Board rescind the Board Goal-Setting and Evaluation Policy and remove it from the handbook (A32).**

### **6.4 Electronic Surveillance Policy (F26) (Recommended) (Board Returned)**

Ms. Parker noted that this policy was returned to Committee from the Board, with comments that the drafted policy contains many differences from the VSBA Model Policy. It was noted that the Board was uncomfortable with the number of differences between the proposed policy and the VSBA policy. It was noted that the District created a local policy (F41) because VSBA did not have a Model Policy to address this issue. VSBA has now created Model Policy F26 to cover this topic. Mr. Aither advised that the Model Policy does not match up with how the District approaches electronic surveillance, so the Model policy was 'tweaked' to match what is done in the District, including information relating to SROs. After the policy was amended it was legally vetted. Ms. Parker reiterated that the Board advised they were uncomfortable with the number of differences between the Model Policy and the current draft of the policy. Mrs. Spaulding advised regarding items on the VSBA policy that are not addressed in the current draft and were concerns of the Board, including; notification that security cameras will be in use, posting of signs at each building, policies regarding the confidentiality of student records, and security cameras being used only for the security purposes. Additional discussion was held.

**On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mr. Cecchinelli, the Committee unanimously voted to accept the policy as presented this evening, and to return the policy (F26) to the Board for a First Reading, along with the Committee's reasons for not modifying it.**

### **6.5 Fiscal Management and General Financial Accountability Policy (F20) (Recommended) (Board Returned)**

Ms. Parker provided a historical overview of what has been discussed thus far, advising that the Board returned the policy to committee, citing that the Board was not comfortable with a \$150,000 threshold and that there was concern regarding lack of transparency. Mr. Blow believes that increasing the (Board approval) threshold from \$15,000 to \$150,000 is very irresponsible of the Committee and the Board. Mr. Blow advised that the Board is responsible for managing the expenses of the school system and he does not think that obligation is fulfilled when the limit is raised to \$150,000. Mr. Blow would like the Policy Committee to recommend that the limit remain at \$15,000 or only be raised slightly. Mr. Howard queried regarding how often the Board has had to approve spending over \$15,000, advising that he doesn't recall that happening often. Ms. Parker advised regarding confusion relating to this policy, how it pertains to bidding laws, and that the current policy had been being utilized for facilities matters only, not as it

was written. It was noted that this policy and the VSBA Model policy contain significant differences. Mrs. Farrell cautioned that the policy not be written to cause a significant increase in purchases that necessitate Board approval. The Board has discussed many different possible threshold amounts to be in the policy. Mr. Evans advised that he is present to discuss the bid law which has been raised from \$15,000 to \$40,000, noting that the State has recognized the increase in costs and raised the bid law to accommodate the change in the cost of construction. Ms. Parker noted that the policy in place advises that the District will follow the bid law (and will go out to bid for items in excess of \$40,000). Mr. Howard queried regarding any cost of bringing projects to the Board for approval. There are no costs associated with that process. Mrs. Perreault addressed the Board regarding the bid law, which only pertains to specific items. Mrs. Perreault read a portion of the bid law pertaining to when three qualified bids must be obtained. Instructional supplies are not encompassed by the bid law. The bid law does not address what needs to be brought to the Board for approval. Mrs. Perreault has performed research of other districts and noted that the board threshold amount is an internal control. Mrs. Perreault advised that the bid law will be followed, but not everything that goes out to bid needs to be presented to the Board (that is part of internal controls). Ms. Parker noted information included in the Model Policy, but not in the draft version, and queried regarding utilizing the VSBA Policy rather than the current policy, citing that the Board has expressed concern. It was noted that the VSBA policy does not have an approval threshold amount, but rather leaves it blank for districts to complete. Mr. Boltin supports using the VSBA policy and leaving the threshold at \$15,000. Mr. Cecchinelli believes the Committee should use which ever policy is most clear. Mr. Evans advised that the State bid law is \$40,000 and he is unclear where 'the clarity is missing'.

Mr. Evans provided an overview of projects performed at the District, and advised that 'we are not going to be able to tow the line and keep our buildings the way we need to with a \$15,000 threshold'. Mr. Evans does not believe other districts have uncertainty regarding how to spend this money. Mrs. Spaulding noted that according to the Model Policy, summer projects are already in the budget, and would not need Board approval, and that the Model Policy pertains to expenditures in excess of that amount, or items that are not planned for in the budget. Mrs. Spaulding noted that it is her understanding that Board approval is only necessary for unexpected, unbudgeted items over the threshold amount listed in the policy. Mrs. Spaulding reiterated that items already in the budget do not require Board approval. Mr. Evans advised that a \$40,000 threshold will allow him to spend tax payer dollars to get work done. Mr. Evans advised that questions, issues and unexpected expenses are brought to the Board, so the Board is informed regarding what is going on. Mrs. Poulin believes that under the VSBA policy, the number of RFPs requiring Board approval would remain minimal and she believes keeping a lower approval threshold would be more satisfactory to community members who have expressed concern regarding financial oversight. Mr. Hennessey advised that the goal is not to push through large expensive items that are not planned for. Mr. Evans went on record to say that unplanned expenses have come up in the past, and funds have always been in the budget to deal with these unplanned expenses. There has not been an issue of not having funds because funds were spent carefully, allowing availability of funds for unplanned expenses. If no unplanned expenses occur, the money is spent on other necessary projects. Ms. Parker suggested that the \$15,000 board approval threshold be changed to \$40,000 to recognize the bid law, and be equal to the bid law, even though the board threshold is addressed separately in the policy. Ms. Parker queried regarding whether the Committee wishes to use the VSBA Model Policy or the current BUUSD version, with the threshold amount changed to \$40,000. Ms. Parker read from the current policy, noting that it contains some detail that is not included in the Model Policy. Mrs. Poulin cautioned that the current policy does not confine the threshold clause to facilities related expenses, but rather pertains to all expenses, and that has been an area of concern (that the policy was only being followed for facilities related expenses). Ms. Parker noted that the policy does state that the Superintendent shall assure that the district does not materially deviate from the approved spending plan. Mrs. Farrell believes that in past practices, items not in the budget have been brought to the Board and she believes the District needs to be in coordination with legislation and that additional language and interpretation is not included. Mr. Evans advised that each school has a maintenance budget, and when unexpected issues arise (e.g. BTMES fire alarm system) there are monies in the budget to cover those expenses. Mr. Evans clarified that there is money in the maintenance budget to cover unexpected expenses. Mr. Evans believes the law pertaining to the bid threshold (\$40,000) also states that board approval is not necessary for amounts less than the bid threshold. In response to a query regarding any negative impact of having a lower threshold, Mr. Evans advised that the harm would be that it is very hard and time consuming to write RFPs. It was clarified that RFPs only pertain to the \$40,000 limit, not the board approval. No RFPs would be required for amounts under \$40,000, even though Board approval would be necessary. Mr. Evans advised that bringing those projects to the Board would create a lot of delays and add another step to the process and is a matter of efficiency of time. Mrs. Spaulding reminded the Committee of Board discussions that included policies from other districts that are more in alignment with the Model Policy and read from another district's policy with a threshold of \$150,000 for budgeted items and \$15,000 for items not in the budget. Ms. Parker expressed concern that the \$150,000 threshold for budgeted items would raise concern for community members. Ms. Parker does not believe the Board will approve any amount other than \$15,000 or \$40,000. Mr. Hennessey believes the Board expressed some level of comfort in using the \$40,000 threshold. Mr. Cecchinelli likes the wording in the 'Harwood' policy, utilizing \$40,000 rather than \$150,000. Mr. Evans and Mrs. Perreault are comfortable with a \$40,000 threshold. Mr. Blow requested an answer to the question of how many facilities RFP's the Board approves annually (for items not included in the budget), and requested that the information be provided at the next meeting. Mr. Evans advised that Board approval of projects over \$15,000 is approximately 2 to 3 projects and varies year to year. Mr. Evans advised that there is always money in the budget. Mr. Blow expressed concern that if there is always money in the budget, perhaps the district has over budgeted. Mr. Blows believes in fiscal oversight and does not feel that the fiscal oversight he would like to see is happening. Mr. Evans believes that the budget needs to include enough money to cover unplanned expenses, and advised that 'left over' funds are used for necessary expenses. It was suggested that if only 3 or 4 RFPs are approved by the Board each year, consideration may want to be given as to the pros and cons of raising the limit (e.g. work involved vs. public perception). Mrs. Perreault advised that the

Board would not want to ‘put itself on the line’ by using a threshold larger than the bid law, and noted that the district has the lowest per pupil spending in the state and there has been some very diligent oversight by administrators.

**On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Committee unanimously voted to use a modified version of the VSBA Model Policy (F20), including some of the language from the Harwood policy, replacing the \$150,000 threshold with a \$40,000 threshold and to have the Policy Committee review a copy of the amended policy at the next Committee meeting.**

#### **7. Old Business**

None.

#### **8. Other Business**

None.

#### **9. Future Agenda Items**

Mrs. Spaulding believes procedures need to be discussed, and that the Committee needs to discuss a plan for development of procedures for new policies, as well as for policies that are already in place. Mrs. Spaulding believes the Committee should develop a plan and then present it to the Board. This item is listed in the previous minutes. Mr. Toborg suggested that the Committee discuss including the ‘purpose’ of each policy within each policy. Clarification was requested on what the agenda item relating to procedures is so it can be worded correctly. Mr. Hennessey advised that the administrative team will be discussing procedure development at an upcoming meeting. Mr. Valsangiacomo advised that he believes, based on discussion at the previous meeting, the VSBA was clear that procedures are the responsibility of administrators and the work to develop procedures needs to get done outside of the Policy Committee. Mr. Hennessey confirmed that BUUSD counsel was clear that procedures need to be developed. Ms. Parker advised that going forward; she believes the Committee should recommend policies that are as close to VSBA Model Policies as possible and that the administrative team should write the procedures. Ms. Parker is of the understanding that the Board wants policies that are as closely aligned to Model Policies as possible. Ms. Parker believes this is the most efficient method for policy development, noting that changes should only occur for items that truly don’t align for the District. Mrs. Farrell noted that the VSBA is an assisting organization. When VSBA advises that a policy is required, it is required because of information they have gleaned from other places (e.g. legislature, Federal Government). VSBA is not dictating what needs to be done, but is rather assisting districts with what needs to be done, because they have the staffing to perform that function. Model Policies are based in statute, legislation, and other requirements of the government.

- Fiscal Management and General Financial Accountability Policy (F20) (Recommended)
- Procedures Development Work Plan Update
- C1 – Student Records
- C7 – Student Attendance
- C8 – Pupil Privacy
- B6 – HIPAA Compliance
- D2 – Grade Advancement
- C14 – Policy on Section 504 and ADA Grievance Protocol for Students and Staff

#### **10. Next Meeting Date**

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

#### **11. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Committee unanimously agreed to adjourn at 7:57 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Andrea Poulin*