

BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
Spaulding High School Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
April 26, 2022 - 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Nancy Leclerc (BT) - Chair
Terry Reil (BT) – Vice Chair
John Lyons, Jr.
Paul Malone

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Sarah Pregent (BC)

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alice Farrell
Sonya Spaulding

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager

PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT:

David Delcore – Times Argus Josh Howard Diane Solomon

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Leclerc, called the Tuesday, April 26, 2022 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was held at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

Mrs. Leclerc welcomed new community Committee Members; John Lyons, Jr. and Paul Malone.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Change 7.1 to 6.1 (change from Other Business to Old Business).

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as amended.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Meeting Minutes From March 17, 2022

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the March 22, 2022 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 Act 173 Update

A document titled ‘Act 173 of 2018, an act relating to enhancing the effectiveness, availability and equity of services provided to students who require additional support’ was distributed. A document titled ‘Education Funding’ was distributed.

Mrs. Perreault provided a brief overview of the informational document, which was created based on discussion at a VASBO (Vermont Association of School Business Officials) meeting. Mrs. Perreault advised that the different funding structure under Act 173 enables a different type of service delivery, which allows for more students to be served, including students who do not have a defined disability. The previous source of funding was a service based model. Under Act 173 reimbursement is under a census block grant. Act 173 is effective 07/01/22, and the District’s reimbursement will be based on the average of the last three years’ actual expenditures. Under Act 173 less time will be needed for detailed paperwork, and there will be more time spent serving students. Mrs. Perreault noted that this is the first year of funding under the new formula, and there are concerns regarding reimbursement for future years. It was noted that the District has a higher number of students with special needs (compared with other districts). It is hoped that in the future, the SEA Program will serve 7th and 8 grade students. In response to a query, it was noted that the SEA Program allows for high needs students to receive services in a more cost effective way. Reporting of savings should be available after there is 2 years’ worth of data. In the future, it may be possible for the SEA Program to accept students from other districts.

Sending districts would pay tuition. Under Act 173, additional reimbursement can be received for students with extraordinary expenses.

Additional discussion included; the use of ESSER funds to provide additional services, the lack of available candidates to fill interventionist positions, economic benchmarks (for the SEA Program), and Maintenance of Effort (the ability to prove ongoing use of State and Federal funds from one year to the next). Mrs. Farrell noted that there are some 'holes' in Act 173 and it may be going back to the legislature. It will be important for the District to closely monitor proposed amendments.

5.2 Pupil Weighting/Funding Formula

It was noted that there may be possible adjustments to pupil weighting (used to determine the number of equalized pupils), but the funding formula remains the same. A new weighting formula may not be finalized this year and it is not known if the District will benefit from a new weighting structure. There is no known date for when the new weighting scale will be announced.

5.3 Procedures

A document titled BUUSD Grant Procedures Manual 2021 – 2022, was distributed.

Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of the Grant Procedures Manual which is a user friendly guide for use by administrators, grant managers, and teachers. The Manual contains several procedures. Both Federal and State grants require much documentation.

Mr. Hennessey recognized employees who stepped in to assist with documentation (because the District did not have a Curriculum Director for most of this year). The District is currently working to utilize ESSER III funding, and there is some concern that increases to material costs may impact some of the planned projects. ESSER funds must be spent by 09/30/2024. Mrs. Perreault advised regarding the amount of ESSER I, II, and III funds for the District (approximately \$16,000,000).

In response to a query, Mrs. Perreault advised that the Fiscal Monitoring Review (by the AOE) is ongoing.

5.4 Summer Projects/RFPs

A document titled 'BUUSD FY23 RFP Schedule, Facility Projects, etc...spring/Summer 2022, April 26, 2022' was distributed. The document included in the packet is a 'template' of sorts, used to track upcoming projects. The document does include funding sources, but the estimates are not currently in hand. It is estimated that the HVAC projects will cost approximately \$6,000,000 to \$8,000,000. Mrs. Perreault reiterated that all work funded by ESSER monies, has to be completed by 09/30/24. Given the limited number of qualified contractors, supply chain issues, and an increase in the cost of materials, it is not known if the District will be able to complete all of the projects by the deadline. HVAC bids are due by 05/10/22. A community member voiced concern that the last Facilities Committee meeting was cancelled. In response to a query, Mr. Hennessey advised that he believe the planned projects will bring the District into compliance with current air quality standards. RFPs for the BTMES roofing project will be presented to the Board on 04/28/22.

6. Old Business

6.1FY22 Year-end Projections

The BUUSD FY22 Expense Report (dated 04/26/22) was distributed.

The CVCC FY22 Year-end Projection Report (dated 04/26/22) was distributed.

Mrs. Perreault advised that the reports includes 'narrative' sections, which provide information for line items with a variance of \$20,000 or more. It was noted that the report does not reflect the \$600,000 fund balance that was dedicated as revenue for FY22.

Mr. Malone noted that the voters approved the budget with this revenue. After brief discussion, the Committee agreed that fund balance revenue should be included in future reports. Mrs. Perreault will adjust the report accordingly. Lengthy discussion was held regarding the number of open/unfilled positions (staffing gaps), including; the possibility of changing staffing models (to accommodate the lack of para-educators), the use of more professional special educators rather than para-educators, concern that the District is at risk of not being in compliance with IEPs (due to lack of staff), recent changes to State requirements for licensure of Special Educators, improvements to recruitment techniques, concern that a large increase in para-educator pay will still not 'move the needle', requirements for para-educators (high school diploma and pass the Para-Pro Exam), review of hiring practices by the 'Hiring Team', and a suggestion to provide career path training for para-educators. Brief discussion was held regarding a significant overage in a Facilities line item, which was due to emergency roof repair at BCEMS. In response to a query, it was noted that the four line items for transportation delineate; SEA Program transportation, SPED transportation, leased Suburbans, and general transportation. Brief discussion was held regarding the CVCC report and Mrs. Farrell advised that the new Board for the Regional Technical Center will hold its first meeting on 05/09/22.

7. Other Business

—7.1 FY22 Year-end Projections

Mr. Reil queried regarding any ongoing initiatives to identify cost savings for practices and/or process improvements. Mrs. Perreault advised that two years ago, efficiency studies were held to compare how the District's schools may differ and to identify possible areas for savings. Some areas where efficiencies were identified and implemented include; telephone services and copier services. Mr. Reil believes there should be a deliberate initiative (a goal), to have ongoing efficiency studies. Brief discussion was held relating to the approval process for purchasing and invoices. Mrs. Leclerc believes significant cost savings could be achieved by

implementing automatic clearinghouse payments (electronic payments). Mr. Malone queried regarding tracking of items in the Facilities 5 Year Plan. A revised 5 Year Plan will be discussed at the next Facilities Committee meeting.

8. Items for Future Agendas

- Pupil Weighting Update
- Grant Fiscal Monitoring Review Update
- Summer Projects Update
- FY 22 Year-end Projections

Add to Parking Lot:

- ESSER Fund Projects Update (including Estimates)
- Budget Development Process (August)
- Impact of CVCC Departure - Including Revenue Loss

9. Next Meeting Date

The Thursday, May 19, 2022 meeting is cancelled.

The next meeting is Tuesday, May 24, 2022 at 6:00 p.m., at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mr. Reil, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin