

BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Barre City Elementary and Middle School – James Taffel Library
and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
June 9, 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
Jamie Evans, Facilities Director
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Michael Boutin	Jeff Blow	Abby Blum	Karen Burnor
Cassie Deering	Michael Deering, II	Eric Lafayette (EEI)	Carol Hebert	Sarah Helman
Josh Howard	Baylee Lawrence	Paul Malone	Laurel Maurer	Raylene Meunier
Gary Morin	Bern Rose	William Toborg		

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Spaulding, called the Thursday, June 9, 2022, Regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was held at Barre City Elementary and Middle School in the James Taffel Library and via video conference.

2. Pledge and Mindfulness Moment

The Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The Board held a Mindfulness Moment. Mrs. Spaulding read the Board Norms. Mrs. Spaulding thanked community member for their attendance and read the public comment protocols.

3. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 6.7 Central Vermont Career Center School District Board Update
Add 11.1 Negotiations Update (Executive Session)

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Cecchinelli, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as amended.

4. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

4.1 Public Comment

Mr. Boutin thanked Board Members and the Superintendent for responding to his e-mail in a timely manner.

Ms. Rose advised that she very much enjoyed the schools' bands playing at the Memorial Day Parade, and noted that a parent who is new to the District expressed great satisfaction with the District's schools.

Mr. Deering echoed Ms. Rose's sentiments pertaining to band performances at the Memorial Day Parade, and expressed frustration that the seat belt issue, which has been raised in numerous meetings, has not been addressed. Mr. Hennessey advised that he has information from STA and will share the information with Mr. Deering after the meeting.

Mr. Toborg addressed the Board, thanking Ms. Badeau for assisting him with locating the syllabi, but noted that the syllabi he reviewed do not appear to be complete and he does not have a good idea of whether or not what is being taught in K – 3 is appropriate. Additionally, Mr. Toborg advised that he has not heard back from the Superintendent as to whether or not parents are notified if students ‘walk-out’, and what the consequences might be. Additionally, Mr. Toborg believes the policy related to gender identity, and use of facilities, might open the school to law suits. Mr. Toborg believes that the summer reading program does not include books of a scholarly nature. Additionally, Mr. Toborg, noting the tragedy in Uvalde, TX, queried regarding any additional safety practices that may be put in place.

Mr. Malone requested that the Board reconsider reinstating the SRO position at Spaulding High School. Mr. Malone queried regarding the use of A.L.I.C.E. Training and the extent to which students and staff members are trained. Mr. Malone noted that the Engagement with the Board document advises that inquiries will usually be responded to by the Board Chair within two days, and he does not believe this is happening.

4.2 Student Voice

None.

5. Consent Agenda

5.1 Approval of Minutes – May 26, 2022 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to approve as amended, the Minutes of the May 26, 2022 Regular Meeting. Mrs. Leclerc was not present for the vote.

6. Current Business

6.1 New Hires

The resumes and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Forms for Edward Sheehan (BCEMS 5/6 Social Studies), Katja Thomalla (BTMES Grade 2), Andrew Duddy (SHS STEM Science), Baylee Lawrence (BCEMS Grade 4), Kelly Young (SHS Guidance Counselor), and Janice Tehie (BTMES Grade 5) were distributed.

Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of the candidates and answered questions from the Board. Mr. Hennessey advised that 27 professional positions remain open and the District is working to fill these positions.

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Cecchinelli, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Edward Sheehan, Katja Thomalla, Andrew Duddy, Baylee Lawrence, Kelly Young, and Janice Tehie. Mrs. Leclerc was not present for the vote.

6.2 Presentation: EEI – HVAC Upgrades

A document titled ‘HVAC/Sprinkler Projects Contractor, 6/9/22’ was distributed.

A copy of the EEI (Energy Efficient Investments, Inc.) presentation to the BUUSD was distributed.

Eric Lafayette introduced himself and advised regarding the energy efficiency projects that EEI tries to identify for schools.

Mr. Lafayette provided an overview of the services provided by EEI. The presentation was displayed on screen and Mr. Lafayette proceeded with the presentation which included; EEI’s approach, project success stories (including COVID ventilation improvements), examples of energy savings achieved at other schools, financial benefits (savings pay for improvements), and proposed ESSER projects for the District (including a proposed timeline). Mrs. Spaulding clarified that she does not anticipate the Board taking action on this item at tonight’s meeting. Mr. Lafayette and Mrs. Perreault answered questions from the public and the Board. Mr. Lafayette advised that a contract would not be presented for approval until EEI presents a ‘project board’, but noted that prior to moving forward, EEI needs Board approval to confirm that EEI is selected as the ‘performance contractor’. Once Board approval is received, EEI can begin performing energy audits. Mr. Lafayette recommends that EEI work with the Facilities Committee, leading up to a contract being presented to the Board (in August).

6.3 Presentation: Financial Accounting Software

A document titled ‘Migrating our financial accounting system to the next generation: School ERP Pro’ was distributed.

A copy of a sales quote from Tyler Technologies was distributed.

Mr. Hennessey noted that the Finance Committee discussed conversion to this software, and supports converting to this platform. Mrs. Perreault noted that ESSER funds will be utilized for this software upgrade, and advised that conversion (conversion of data and training) would begin in January 1, 2023, with the expectation of going live on 07/01/23. It was noted that there is wide dissatisfaction with the software originally required by the State, and given the numerous complaints regarding deficiencies in that software, the State put a ‘pause’ on its implementation. It is anticipated that the State (during the upcoming legislative session), will remove the requirement for the previously required software. Mrs. Perreault advised that given the number of districts converting to School ERP Pro, it will be important for the District to commit and be added to the list for conversion. Mrs. Perreault will need to

sign a contract so that a 'place will be held' for the District. Mrs. Spaulding noted that there does not appear to be any objection by the Board, and advised that no vote will be held this evening as the agenda item is not marked as an 'ACTION' item.

6.4 RAN Clarification

A document titled 'Revenue Anticipation Note, 6/9/22 was distributed.

The RAN was approved at the 05/26/22 meeting. This agenda item was added for informational purposes, to provide additional clarification regarding the RAN.

6.5 WBL Quick Data Report

A copy of an email from Michelle LaFrancis to Brenda Waterhouse (dated 05/25/22) was distributed.

A document titled 'FY2021/2022 – QUICK DATA' was distributed.

A document titled 'WBL STEM Rotation – Block 2 Class with Band A' was distributed.

This agenda item is for informational purposes. Mr. Hennessey noted that during COVID, the Work Based Learning Program took a 'big hit'. With removal of COVID restrictions, this valuable Program is now recovering and expanding.

6.6 Committee Charge

A document titled 'Committees' from the 2022 Essential Work of Vermont School Boards (page 87) publication was distributed.

A document titled 'Expectations for Montpelier Roxbury School District Board Members (A03)' was distributed.

Mrs. Spaulding advised that no action is necessary this evening, but she would like to achieve some level of agreement regarding committees. Mrs. Spaulding would like the Board to focus on the top four items (from the VSBA document); committee purpose, authority, responsibilities, limitations, and specific tasks. Mrs. Spaulding would like the Board to discuss each committee singularly, beginning with the Policy Committee. Ms. Parker advised regarding her understanding of the role of the Policy Committee. Mrs. Pregent provided additional input regarding presenting policies to the board for adoption and assurance that policies are legally vetted. Mr. Reil believes that regardless of the particular committee, the purpose is to complete the work of the board, perform, review, evaluate, and develop items in the context of the particular committee, and then present items to the Board. Mrs. Spaulding agrees with Mr. Reil, but advised that she would argue that, under the documentation from the Montpelier Roxbury School District (section on Committee Structure), it states that "Charge: A description of the purpose of the committee. Care must be taken to create a specific charge to assure committee authority does not conflict with authority of the Superintendent or deal directly with district operations at the staff level", and it is her opinion that the lines are being blurred between the Board's responsibility, and the Superintendent's responsibility. Mrs. Spaulding believes the Policy Committee is the easiest to define as the Board is clearly charged with setting policies. Mrs. Spaulding reiterated that as a Board, we have very specific roles as elected officials, and one of those is not to do the Superintendent's job, and the other is not to deal directly with operations at the staff level. Mrs. Spaulding wants Board Members to be clear on the specific charges of the committees. Mrs. Spaulding does not want the definition to be nebulous, e.g. the Board is going to oversee things, because she believes that is too nebulous, steps on toes and blurs lines with the superintendent's and administrators' jobs. Mrs. Spaulding reiterated that she wants clear definition in place so that the Board can do its job and the Superintendent can do his job. Mrs. Pregent noted that committees are not supposed to help or advise staff. Mr. Reil advised that he believes Board Members know where the 'lines' are and that he does not feel it is his responsibility to direct anyone, and he believes there can be 'general purposes' for committees, especially the standing committees. Additionally, Mr. Reil noted that when he reads the VSBA language he believes it pertains more to ad-hoc committees (committees addressing specific items). Mr. Reil reiterated that committees do not make final decisions, but rather make recommendations to the Board and he does not believe the work of standing committees needs to be very specifically defined. Ms. Badeau queried if past practices are 'right' or 'best practice', and she is not aware of districts in central Vermont that have many standing committees. Ms. Badeau believes that because board members like hearing the detail that is presented at the committee level, it does not mean that it is appropriate or the role/job of Board Members. Ms. Badeau advised that she has been in many meetings where she believes many Board Members have been advising staff on how to do their jobs. Ms. Badeau queried regarding the need for standing committees. Mrs. Spaulding requested input from the public. Mr. Malone advised regarding concern that elimination of committees will have a negative impact on Board meetings (increased meeting length), reduce public input (community members on committees) and result in a lack of transparency and loss of public trust. Mrs. Spaulding responded to Mr. Malone, advising that she believes it is Mr. Malone's assumption that the Board is trying to get rid of committees. Mrs. Spaulding is looking to define the charge of the committees and the job of the Board and Board Members on committees, other than, what she believes is 'grilling', and putting administrators in a 'firing line' so that they can be peppered with questions. Mr. Reil called Point Of Order. It was clarified that Point of Order requires that discussion cease immediately and that the individual who 'called' Point of Order, needs to state what they believe is being done to cause the violation. Mr. Reil advised that he believes the Chair is participating in debate and that is not allowed unless the Chair steps down from the position of Chair for that matter. Mr. Toborg voiced concern regarding what was stated as the role of the Policy Committee, and advised that he has a number of items that he would like discussed at the committee level, where he believes more lengthy discussion can be held (with more community input). Additionally, Mr. Toborg advised that regarding his query on student walk-outs; though Mr. Aither responded to his inquiry, the response did not answer the question being asked. Mr. Toborg encourages the Board to continue with the standing committees. Mr. Boutin addressed the Board, advising that he hopes the Board is not considering eliminating the committees, and suggested that committee charge discussion be 'bumped' back to the individual committees, so that they can hold discussion and

define what they believe is their specific committee's charge. Mrs. Spaulding reiterated that she wants the Board to define each committee's charge and identify if the committees have an actual role to play, rather than sitting through presentations that are then presented to the full board. Mr. Boutin advised regarding the value Barre City's standing committees and asked for confirmation of his understanding that committees (without board approval) are directing that policies be changed. Mrs. Spaulding advised that some of that is happening and that there are some areas where there is very strong direction and suggestions by individual board members. Mr. Boutin would like to hear some examples of when that has happened and asked that it be addressed. Mr. Boutin clarified that there is a difference between a suggestion and telling someone to do something. Mr. Boutin reiterated that a suggestion is ok, but a 'do this' (directive) is not. Ms. Helman believes there is a perception that if there is no defined role for a committee, that committee should be eliminated. Mrs. Spaulding replied that if the role of a committee cannot be defined, why does that committee meet? Ms. Helman believes committees do have a purpose and perform much of the 'leg work' for the Board. Mr. Deering believes the committees have a fine charge in doing 'general things' for various committees, and advised that the City does the same thing (a number of committees, each with a 'generous' charge). Mr. Deering questions why there is a need for items to be specifically defined. A community member queried regarding the issue presented, if committees funnel information to the Board, which he believes would allow for more limited discussion at the Board level. Mrs. Spaulding responded that there is much discussion at the committee level and committees present information and recommendations to the Board. The Board may still hold lengthy discussion on items recommended by committees. Mrs. Spaulding is concerned that redundant work is being performed. Mrs. Spaulding ended public comment. Mr. Reil voiced concern that the Chair and Superintendent have made accusations that individual Board Members are making strong directives and suggestions to staff members, and he does not believe this agenda item can be resolved this evening. **Mr. Reil moved to table discussion until a later time.** Mrs. Farrell requested that Mr. Reil hold his motion until discussion has concluded around the table. Board Members continued lengthy discussion regarding Committee Charge. Regarding question #2 relating to committee authority, it was noted that the District's committees are advisory committees and do not have any authority. **The Board agreed to utilize a survey to gather Board Member feedback. Feedback will be compiled and presented to the Board at a future meeting. There was no second to the motion to table discussion.**

6.7 Central Vermont Career Center School District Board Update

Mrs. Farrell advised that Central Vermont Career Center is now renamed the Central Vermont Career Center School District and has its own Board. This new Board will move forward with creation of committees, policies, etc. The Board appointed an individual to fill a vacant At-Large Board seat. Minutes to all meetings will be sent to all sending school Superintendents and Board Chairs. The new Board looks forward to moving forward with implementing a full day program effective 07/01/24. Mr. Deering queried regarding why administrator salaries are significantly higher than the current rates. Mrs. Farrell will present this question to the CVCCSD Board. In response to a query, Mrs. Farrell reported that Ms. Emerson will fill a 'dual' role as Superintendent and Director.

7. Old Business

7.1 Educational Performance Update

A document titled 'Proportional Reasoning (Grade 6)' BCEMS was distributed.

Mr. Hennessey provided a brief overview, advising that the District is providing small monthly snapshots of progress.

7.2 Staff Exit Survey Update

An untitled/undated document consisting of exit survey data was distributed.

Mrs. Marold provided a brief overview of the results noting that 52 of 120 surveys have been returned. Additional responses are expected. Mrs. Marold advised that the survey is the actual Exit Survey, which is fairly lengthy. The document is a summary of data received. In response to a query, Mrs. Marold advised that the surveys are submitted via email, so they are not 'anonymous', but are anonymous in the sense that the information is only shared in aggregate form. Mr. Boutin suggested that it would be beneficial to have a survey for active employees, as it is a way to get 'the pulse' of how things are going. Additionally, Mr. Boutin suggested that an active employee survey include a freeform section for written comments. Mr. Howard voiced concern regarding the survey, noting that results can be skewed based on the questions that are asked. Mr. Howard is also concerned that the volume of responses can skew results. Mr. Howard would like the Board to return to the practice of reviewing resignation letters. Mrs. Spaulding advised regarding her beliefs in how individuals respond to surveys, and what they may write in resignation letters. It was noted that the Board made a decision to stop reviewing resignation letters. Mr. Deering advised he would like to make a comment. Mrs. Spaulding advised that she was closing public comment. Mr. Reil believes the survey results raise more questions than answers and he would like to have additional discussion at a later date. Ms. Parker noted that the highest responses to why staff are leaving are; compensation/benefits and culture/environment. Ms. Parker queried regarding whether staff members are given the opportunity to meet face to face with administrators or Board Members, and if Board Members are not included, could that option be added? Mrs. Marold advised that the survey asks if employees would like to meet to talk about their exit interview/resignation, and are also asked whether they would like to provide anonymous feedback to the Board. Mrs. Marold advised that staff members are answering those questions and she could share that information. Mr. Hennessey advised that an anonymous PBIS Survey is going out to all staff, students, and families. This survey is being developed by Karen Fredericks and is a requirement of the Improvement Plan.

8. Other Business/Round Table

Mr. Reil queried regarding when Board Members would receive copies of the training Power Point Presentation. Mr. Hennessey advised that he reached out to Pietro Lynn's administrative assistant today and the copies should be available a.s.a.p. Additionally, Mr. Reil noted that in light of the Committee Charge discussion including mention that some individuals believe Board Members are doing things that they should not be doing, he noted that one of the slides shared during training, was a slide that advised that the Board should not meet with the Superintendent outside of Board meetings. Mr. Reil noted that after the last meeting (the training which included this information), members of the Board and the Superintendent continued to meet for 45 minutes to one hour after the training concluded. Mr. Reil expressed frustration that during Board meetings, he's hearing that Board Members are doing things that they shouldn't be, when there are Board Members who are doing things they should not be doing, and doing it immediately following training with District counsel. Mr. Reil noted that when individuals are speaking of trust and transparency, they need to 'talk-the-talk-and walk-the-walk'.

Mrs. Farrell expressed her appreciation to the Rotary Club for providing 5th and 6th graders with dictionaries and atlases.

Mrs. Farrell requested that the amended CIP (Continuous Improvement Plan) and CFP (Consolidated Federal Programs) investment feedback information be shared with the Board.

Ms. Parker thanked those who shared exciting and positive things they have seen coming from the District.

Ms. Parker advised that the SHS Jazz Band is a top ten finalist to open at the Do Good Fest in Montpelier. All were encouraged to vote on-line for SHS as the finalist. It was noted that the winner of this competition receives a \$5000 prize to be used in their Program.

Mrs. Spaulding advised that the SHS Men's Baseball Team is playing in the State Championship game on Saturday, 06/11/22.

Mrs. Spaulding advised that she now has access to the evaluation sheets from a previous Board Meeting, and noted that only 5 Board Members responded. Mrs. Spaulding would like to have all Board Members complete an evaluation form for tonight's meeting. Completion of the evaluation form will assist the Board with identifying areas of struggle and identify areas that need to be worked on.

Mr. Hennessey noted that the SHS Baseball Team is well coached and the team is 'rock solid'. The Championship Game will be held on 06/11/22 at Centennial Field. Tickets need to be purchased in advance. Information is available on-line. Mr. Hennessey lauded out-going Athletic Director Natalie Soffen for her outstanding work.

Mrs. Poulin provided clarification regarding an issue raised earlier in the meeting (the inability to vote on an issue). Mrs. Poulin advised that if any Board Member wants to vote on an issue/item, they must make a motion. The motion requires a second. If a motion is not made and seconded, no vote can be held. No member of the Board can prevent the Board from voting on a matter that has a motion and second. Regarding adding/removing/changing agenda items; If there is a motion on the floor to approve the agenda as presented and someone would like to alter the agenda, they can propose their change. If the 'mover' and 'second' are ok with the proposed change, the vote can proceed with the proposed amendment. If the 'mover' and 'second' are not ok with the proposed change, the individual who wants to propose the change is required to make a motion stating the agenda amendment they want, and the motion must be seconded. The 'secondary' motion (to amend the agenda), must be voted on prior to the vote of the primary motion (to approve the agenda). All voting requires a motion and a second. Agendas are approved by vote of the entire Board.

9. Future Agenda Items

Mr. Boltin advised that he has received numerous complaints/concerns from students, staff, and parents who are afraid to come forward because they feel their input is not anonymous. Teachers don't come forward because the Teacher's Union does not like it, and administrators don't come forward because they don't want their boss to know. Mr. Boltin believes it is time to find a way to allow individuals to come forward without being fearful of their union, fearful for their jobs, and fearful of their supervisors.

Mr. Boltin wants a different way to allow people to come forward with the complaints and concerns of the school system. Mr. Boltin wants Discussion of an Anonymous Survey added to a future agenda. Ms. Badeau would like the Board to review the PBIS Survey to see if that survey cover's Mr. Boltin's concerns. Mr. Reil noted that Mr. Boltin's request this evening (for an anonymous survey) is the third time he has requested discussion of this topic. Mr. Reil believes that the original request was for there to be an anonymous e-mail account that anyone could use to submit feedback directly to the Board. Mrs. Farrell would like to share a document (developed by a Social Worker) which includes points for productive meeting and working together as a team. This document is used at the Career Center as their Board Norms. Mrs. Farrell provided a copy of the document to Mr. Hennessey, for distribution by Mrs. Gilbert. Mrs. Farrell advised that she has received an inquiry from a community member regarding the cost for utilizing the District's fields for non-school related activities. The inquiry Mrs. Farrell received included a question on how costs are determined and concern that the cost has risen significantly. Mr. Hennessey will confer with the Facilities Director regarding this matter.

- Review of PBIS Survey (including questions for all demographics and age levels)
- Discussion of an Anonymous Survey (TBD)
- Productive Meetings, Board Norms

- Electric Bus Update
- Salary Metrics
- Resignations/New Hires
- Committee Charge (TBD)
- CVCCSD Report
- Educational Performance Update (TBD)
- Staff Exit Survey Information (TBD)
- First Reading Board Meetings, Agenda Preparation & Distribution Policy (A20)
- Rescind Field Trips Policy (D30)
- Rescind Budgeting Policy (F30)
- Board Procedures and Engagement
- Review Board Meeting Start Time

10. Next Meeting Dates

Regular Board Meetings:

Thursday, June 23, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. at BCEMS in the James Taffel Library and via video conference.

Thursday, July 14, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. at BTMES in the Library and via video conference.

Brief discussion was held regarding whether or not to cancel the second meeting in July. Some Board Members expressed agreement to cancelling the second meeting, so long as ‘everything is in place’ (a plan in place to see that the District’s students are where they need to be) for the start of the new school year. Mr. Boltin advised that as long as the District can advise that they have done all that they can to get students ‘back on track’, he is agreeable to cancelling the second meeting.

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board voted 6 to 2 to cancel the Thursday, July 28, 2022 Regular Board Meeting. Mr. Boltin and Mr. Reil voted against the motion.

11. Executive Session as Needed

11.1 Negotiations Update

A negotiations update was proposed for discussion in Executive Session.

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously agreed to find that premature general public knowledge of the item proposed for discussion, specifically, Negotiations, would clearly place the Barre Unified Union School District at a substantial disadvantage should the discussion be public.

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Hennessey and Mrs. Marold in attendance, at 9:35 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 to discuss the items proposed for discussion.

The remaining information was provided by the Board Clerk.

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Reil, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 10:09 p.m.

12. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin