

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT  
REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

Spaulding High School Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet  
August 11, 2022 - 6:00 p.m.

**MINUTES**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

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

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Sonya Spaulding (BC) – Chair  
Vacant Seat (BT)

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent  
Jamie Evans, Facilities Director  
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Rachel Aldrich-Whalen	Mel Battah	Martha Blaisdell
Abby Blum	Michael Boutin	Linda Couture	Cassie Deering
Michael Deering, II	Ulysse (Pete) Fournier, Jr.	Sarah Helman	Josh Howard
Stacy Hubbell	Tom Kelly	Brandy Kolling	Prudence Krasofski
Colleen Kresco	Kerri Lamb	Paul Malone	Dan Morrison
Emily Reynolds	Cohen Slayton	Heather Slayton	William Toborg
Jonathan Williams			

A tour of the HVAC Project was held at Spaulding High School prior to the meeting.

**1. Call to Order**

**The Vice-Chair, Mrs. Farrell, called the Thursday, August 11, 2022, Regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was held in the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.**

**2. Pledge and Mindfulness Moment**

The Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The Board held a Mindfulness Moment.

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

Ms. Leclerc requested that discussion of Board candidates be held in open session, noting that the interviews were being held in open session. Brief discussion was held, which included discussion of the appointment process, which no longer requires that city/town officials approve the appointment of a candidate. Mrs. Farrell advised that the intent was to decide on a candidate to present to the Select Board, meet with the Select Board, and then hold a Special Meeting to officially make the appointment. It was noted that a vote to make a recommendation to the Select Board needs to be made in public. The Board can vote to recommend a candidate or to appoint a candidate, but voting needs to be done in open session. It was noted that the Board did not vote to hold a Special Meeting. Mrs. Farrell advised that the Board can proceed with appointing a candidate this evening, but will still send a representative to the Select Board to advise them regarding this evening's discussion and the Board's appointment. It was agreed that the Board will hold discussion in Executive Session, and then return to Agenda Item 6.2 to vote on an appointment.

Add 6.4 Board Statement Pertaining to the Public Information Request (FOIA)

**On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Mr. Reil, 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 addressed the Board, advising that he appreciates being provided with Exit Interview information and queried regarding when the Board will hold discussion on this matter. Mr. Hennessey believes this item will be added to the 08/25/22 Agenda.

#### **4.2 Student Voice**

None.

### **5. Consent Agenda**

#### **5.1 Approval of Minutes – July 14, 2022 Regular Meeting**

**On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to approve as amended, the Minutes of the July 14, 2022 Regular Meeting.**

### **6. Current Business**

#### **6.1 New Hires**

The resumes and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Forms for Jennifer Conover (BTMES 4<sup>th</sup> Grade), Adam Jacobs (BCEMS 5/6 Grade), Mackenzie Rice (BTMES 4<sup>th</sup> Grade), Paul Angell (BCEMS Interim Special Educator), Alina Schenkman (BCEMS 3/4 Grade), Colleen Springer (BTMES 4<sup>th</sup> Grade), and Rebecca Steward (BTMES 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Science) were distributed. A BUUSD Transfer notification for Kirstin Morrison (BCEMS Assistant Principal) was distributed.

Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of the candidates, and answered questions from the Board. Mr. Boltin queried regarding the percentage of all new hires that do not currently have a teaching license. Mr. Hennessey advised that all teaching staff must have a license or provisional license prior to the start of school. Mr. Reil believes that approximately 50% of new hires will be teaching under provisional licenses. There is one individual with an emergency license. Mrs. Farrell is very concerned that this candidate lacks classroom experience. Mr. Cecchinelli queried regarding recreating the DOD Star Base Program in the District. It was noted that the hire sheet for Mr. Angell should not indicate that he is an Interim employee. Concern was voiced that the individual with the emergency license is being paid significantly more than the outgoing licensed teacher. Mr. Hennessey advised that the pay is based on the contract. Mrs. Farrell is very concerned regarding the candidate who is lacking math experience teaching math.

**On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Jennifer Conover, Adam Jacobs, Mackenzie Rice, Paul Angell, Alina Schenkman, Colleen Springer, and Rebecca Steward.**

Mr. Hennessey advised that Kirstin Morrison is presented for the position of BCEMS Assistant Principal. Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of Mrs. Morrison's background advising that Mrs. Morrison is currently a District employee and will be changing positions from Behavior Specialist to BCEMS Assistant Principal. Mrs. Morrison qualifies for a provisional license for this position. Mr. Reil voiced concern that the job description requires 3 years teaching experience and the candidate does not meet that qualification. Mr. Reil advised that the rate of pay does not match the salary metric. Mr. Hennessey advised that he is trying to get the salaries in line with each other. Mr. Reil voiced concern that at the Finance Committee meeting lengthy discussion was held regarding the metrics and Mr. Hennessey announced that a salary metric was in place and there would be no negotiation, yet a 2 days after the meeting, the metric is not being followed. As a Board Member and a community member, Mr. Reil believes these types of actions undermine trust and that the District needs to follow processes and do what it says it is going to do. In response to a query from Mrs. Leclerc regarding licensure for this position, Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of the process of obtaining licensure from the AOE. Mrs. Leclerc queried why an individual who does not have the licensure/certificate for the position is being given a salary at a higher level. In response to a query from Mr. Cecchinelli, Mr. Hennessey advised that all salaries are now locked in and moving forward, the metric will be followed. Mr. Deering voiced concern that the metric is not being followed and that deviation from the metric could occur in the future.

**On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Cecchinelli, the Board voted 4 to 2 to approve the hiring of Kirstin Morrison for the position of BCEMS Assistant Principal. Mr. Boltin, Mr. Cecchinelli, Ms. Parker and Mrs. Pregent voted for the motion. Mrs. Leclerc and Mr. Reil voted against the motion.**

#### **6.2 BUUSD Board Seat Interviews**

Letters of interest from Brandy Kolling, Paul Malone, Dan Morrison, and Emily Wheeler were distributed. Mrs. Farrell read the list of potential interview questions and polled the Board on which three questions they wanted to ask. The Board decided that each candidate would be asked questions 1, 2, and 4. Each candidate provided a brief overview of their background and answered the Board's questions. Interviews were conducted with Brandy Kolling, Dan Morrison, Emily Wheeler, and Paul Malone. Candidates were thanked for their interest and participation in the meeting and advised that the Board will revisit this agenda item after Executive Session. Discussion moved to Agenda item 6.3

The Board returned to Agenda Item 6.2 at approximately 8:58 p.m.

Mrs. Farrell advised that discussion has now returned to Agenda Item 6.2 for discussion of filling the vacant Barre Town position on the school Board.

**On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board voted 3 to 3 to appoint Brandy Kolling to the BUUSD Board to serve until the March 2023 election. Mr. Cecchinelli, Ms. Parker, and Mrs. Pregent voted for the motion. Mr. Boltin, Mrs. Leclerc, and Mr. Reil voted against the motion. Mrs. Farrell declined to vote (to break the tie). The motion failed.**

**On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board voted 4 to 2 to appoint Paul Malone to the BUUSD Board to serve until the March 2023 election. Mr. Boltin, Mr. Cecchinelli, Mrs. Leclerc, and Mr. Reil voted for the motion. Ms. Parker and Mrs. Pregent voted against the motion. The motion passed.**

Mrs. Farrell announced that Mr. Paul Malone will serve on the Board until the March 2023 election. There was no other business to put before the Board. Discussion moved to Agenda Item 13 (Adjournment).

### **6.3 EEI-HVAC Proposal**

A tour of SHS occurred prior to the start of the meeting.

Four documents were distributed;

A copy of a letter from Michael Davey – EEI (dated 07/28/22)

A document titled ‘Spaulding HS Preliminary ECM Matrix – 7-26-22’

A copy of the presentation titled ‘EEI – Barre Unified Union School District’

A document titled ‘HVAC/Sprinkler Projects Contractor’ dated 08/11/22

Mr. Cecchinelli addressed the Board and provided an overview of the process used by the Facilities Committee to reach a recommendation for the Board. The Committee recommends that the ARP ESSER funds be used at SHS for upgraded electrical service, DDC Controls, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor dehumidification, an upgrade to cafeteria ventilation, and adding fire suppression (ECM#s 1a, 2a, 3a, 3f, 4). Additionally, the Committee recommends introducing new (LED) lighting to the school. Mr. Evans provided additional information regarding the use of ESSER funds to improve ventilation in school buildings. An application for use of ESSER funds was submitted and conceptual approval was obtained. The original application included ventilation upgrades in all buildings. The projects were put out to bid and only one official bid was received. EEI (a performance contractor) submitted the only bid. Mr. Evans advised that the proposed dehumidification will greatly improve air quality. Mr. Evans advised that lighting can be replaced during this project, but lighting upgrades are not included in ESSER funding. Mr. Evans advised that currently 25% to 30% of the building is sprinkled. The proposed sprinkler installation will complete sprinkler installation for the remainder SHS. Mr. Cecchinelli advised that the project will take approximately two years to complete and will involve coordination between EEI and administrators regarding how to progress through the building and temporary relocation of some classrooms. Mrs. Pregent noted that if additional safety concerns are uncovered during the construction phase, the District should be able to receive more ESSER funds to mitigate those issues. Mr. Reil advised that the Facilities Committee spent much time discussing the various project options and advised regarding how the Committee reached its recommendation. Information regarding work and expenses related to upgrading lighting will be forthcoming from EEI. It was reiterated that financing for lighting upgrades is not included in the ESSER approved projects or funding. Mr. Malone provided an overview of the recommended projects and their respective estimates. EEI has suggested a ‘lease’ for the lighting upgrade. Mr. Evans provided additional information regarding the decision to allocate all ESSER funds to SHS projects. Mr. Reil clarified that the Board is voting to move forward with the design phase of the project with EEI. Once the design phase is complete, the projects will again be brought before the Board for approval of the construction phase. In response to a query, it was confirmed that no one at EEI is related to District administrators.

**On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Committee unanimously voted to present the Board with a recommendation to approve the EEI proposal to move forward with project options (ECM #s) 1a, 2a, 3a, 3f, 4, and the required Payment Performance Bond of 1% of the overall cost. (1a: New Electrical Service High School Main and power panels for upper floor A/c, 2a: DDC Controls and valves building window, 3a: 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor and Partial 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Dehumidification with Energy Rec Rooms 116 – 100, 3f: Improved Ventilation Cafeteria, and 4: Add Fire Suppression).**

### **6.4 Board Statement Pertaining to the Public Information Request**

Mrs. Farrell read a prepared statement (Attachment A) from District counsel Pietro Lynn. Mrs. Farrell is making the statement based on public input and press related to a public information request. Mr. Boutin addressed the Board advising that he received an email that made him feel like he was doing something ‘wrong’ by making the public records request. Mr. Boutin wanted to clarify that he has a ‘platform’, that his intentions were good, he appreciates the statement that was read, and he believes that releasing the information he requested helps put the issue to rest. Mr. Fournier addressed the Board advising that he sent a letter to the Board and that he concurs with Mr. Boutin, advising that as a taxpayer he was dismayed and disappointed about the information that came out in the Times Argus. Mr. Fournier is also disappointed that as a public body, the Board has an obligation to disclose information and it is his impression that the vote that was taken on Superintendent Wells, was done privately. Mr. Fournier advised that as a tax payer, he is extremely disappointed about the fact that the Board was not forthcoming and informational regarding the requested information. Mr. Fournier is asking the Board to pay more attention to what the tax payers of the community are asking.

In response to a query from Mrs. Leclerc, Mr. Hennessey advised that he is not aware of any other similar situations during his tenure (terminations that resulted in agreements that were not made public).

## **7. Old Business**

### **7.1 Listening Session Reflections**

In response to a query, Mr. Hennessey advised that there have been two meetings of the joint Task Force with the Barre City Police Department. Mr. Hennessey agreed to provide a report of those meetings. Mr. Reil reiterated his strong belief that an ad-hoc committee should be formed for addressing student behaviors/bullying/harassment. Mr. Reil feels very strongly that doing more than “normal business” is warranted and is what the community has asked for. Mrs. Leclerc believes all of the schools’ policies, procedures, and guidelines should be reviewed by the Board so that the Board can determine if they are being followed. Mrs. Leclerc queried regarding documentation of issues and how they were dealt with. Mrs. Leclerc agrees with the formation of an ad-hoc committee to address behavior issues and determine if the Board can offer additional support. Mrs. Leclerc believes if the matter is not adequately addressed, it will have a detrimental impact on the academic performance of all students. In response to a query from Mrs. Farrell regarding leadership team plans for the opening of school (to address long term behavioral issues), Mr. Hennessey advised that BCEMS administrators are working with behavioral teams to see that policies and procedures are being followed. BCEMS administrators are reviewing parent/student handbooks. Mrs. Farrell believes it is beneficial for the Board to know what is happening so that they can respond to inquiries from the community and to understand the balance between schools, to reach a positive ‘platform’ so that students can come to school feeling safe and that discipline is equitable for all students. Mr. Hennessey advised that over the summer, the District has been looking into forming strong parent/teacher organizations. Mrs. Farrell would like administrators to share reports that provide information relating to struggles and successes. Ms. Parker requested that building reports contain information pertaining to the PBIS system and what is being done in each school for the start of the year, to reinforce positive behaviors and learning. Ms. Parker reported there has been much positive energy on social media regarding formation of PTO groups and that the Heritage Festival was very positive. Mrs. Pregent advised that the District’s presence at the Heritage Festival was phenomenal and included information regarding participation in PTOs and substituting. Mr. Boltin, noting that behavioral issues are long-standing, queried regarding what is being done to assure that staff know they will be held accountable for non-action on behavioral issues. Mr. Boltin reiterated that behavioral issues have been ongoing for at least 3 or 4 years and queried regarding what staff are doing to mitigate the problem. Mrs. Leclerc queried regarding something tangible from the Superintendent, to parents regarding their concerns, what is being done to address concerns and whether or not policies and procedures are being followed. Mr. Hennessey advised that over the summer, teams have been working with policies and procedures, and that it is part of the principals’ communication plans to inform parents and invite them in to participate in the process. Concern was raised regarding generalization of the student behavior, as many students are not causing the issues. General discussion began and Point of Order was called as unrecognized individuals were speaking and comments were being directed to other Board Members rather than the Chair of the meeting. Mrs. Farrell advised that she believes the Board needs to receive a significant report from administrators so that the Board is aware of what is going on and what is being done to address issues and to help lay the foundation for moving forward. Mrs. Pregent noted that there are two separate issues at play (bullying/harassment and classroom behaviors impacting learning). Mrs. Pregent requested clarification regarding what the Board is looking for in the way of information. Mrs. Farrell believes the Board is looking at the overall scope of the issues including how administration and faculty are communicating to students/parents. Mr. Deering queried regarding how the community can directly get involved in volunteering to work together with the school community to get actionable things done. It was suggested that participation in PTO would be beneficial. Mr. Hennessey advised that the schools need volunteers to assist with recesses and lunch. Mr. Hennessey advised that volunteers are needed from mid-morning until mid-afternoon and that the District web site includes information regarding the process for signing up to volunteer. Ms. Hubbell queried regarding whether or not staff are aware of the dynamic they are entering into (on-going behavioral issues) and if assemblies will be reinstated. Mr. Hennessey advised that there are no COVID restrictions in place at this time. Ms. Hubbell believes that individuals who are not very involved in the internet are uninformed. Mrs. Farrell advised that the building reports should include a section regarding how information is shared with those who do not have internet access.

## **8. Reports**

### **8.1 CVCCSD Board Report**

The CVCCSD Board met on August 1, 2022.

Mrs. Farrell reported that CVCCSD is continuing with the staff hiring process, but is over-all ready for the start of the school year. The CVCCSD has received more student applications (over 300) than they have openings for (a little under 300). CVCCSD is looking for better ways to become more efficient with use of time and space. CVCCSD is also accommodating ‘adult’ students. Mrs. Farrell advised that CVCCSD is waiting for the signed lease. Mr. Hennessey advised that the District is waiting on legal counsel. A Stone Arts program has been added. This new program will be run at the Barre Granite Museum.

## **9. Other Business/Round Table**

Mr. Cecchinelli queried regarding documentation of tour attendees. Attendees do not need to be documented as the tour occurred prior to the meeting being called to order. The minutes will reflect that a tour took place.

Mr. Reil, referring back to ‘New Hires’ noted that he would very much like to visit Rebecca Steward’s 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Science class, as her resume is most impressive, particularly in the study of ‘Space’.

Mrs. Pregent announced that BCEMS will be holding an Open House on 08/25/22.

## **10. Future Agenda Items**

### Items for 08/25/22:

- Review Employee Exit Surveys (from Parking Lot)
- Special Education Summative Report for FY22 (from Parking Lot)
- Updated Enrollment/Home Study Reports (June 22 and Present) (from Parking Lot)
- Draft Budget Development Schedule and Preliminary Budget Discussion (from Parking Lot)
- Clarification of Salary Metric
- Heating/Plowing/Wood Chip/Fuel Bid Recommendation Approval (from Parking Lot)
- Summer Projects Update (from Parking Lot)
- Approval of 2<sup>nd</sup> HHB Designee for BCEMS (from Parking Lot)

### Additional Items:

- Report on Advance Placement Courses (available courses and student counts) (TBD)
- PTO Overview (TBD)
- Behavioral Task Force Reporting (September)

Mrs. Leclerc queried regarding the 'meeting format', noting that there is no documentation available to those who attend in person and that most documents are not displayed on screen. It was noted that in the past, Agendas and full Agenda Packets were always made available at the meeting in printed format and that policies do state that paper copies are to be provided for those who request them, so there is an obligation on the part of the District to have printed copies available at meetings.

## **11. Next Meeting Date**

The next Regular Board Meeting is Thursday, August 25, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. in the SHS Library and via video conference.

## **12. Executive Session as Needed**

### **12.1 BUUSD Board Seat Candidate Review**

Discussion of Consideration of Board Seat Candidates was proposed for discussion in Executive Session.

**On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session at 8:28 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 to discuss the item proposed for discussion.**

**On a motion by Mr. Boltin, seconded by Mr. Reil, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 8:58 p.m.**

Discussion returned to Agenda Item 6.2

## **13. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:03 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Andrea Poulin*

## ATTACHMENT A

### Board Statement from Pietro Lyn

At the time that the 2020-2021 Superintendent agreed to a buy-out, the Board seated at that time voted in open session to accept the Superintendent's resignation. We should have voted in open session to approve all terms of the contract. That was a mistake.

The Board Chair then signed the agreement on behalf of the Board. That document is a public record and if requested had to be produced under the Vermont Public Records Act. When it was recently requested by the public, we produced it. We have complied with the law.

There are concerns that have been expressed that we did not publicly announce the amount of the buy-out. There was no legal obligation to make that kind of public statement. Nonetheless, we acknowledge with the benefit of retrospect that we should have publicly announced the amount of the payments made.

It was our judgment at the time that the best interests of the former Superintendent and, most importantly, the District were better served by not engaging in public statements about the agreement. We thought it was important for the District to be focused on the future and student learning, not the events that led to the change in District leadership.

We, the Board, are eager to demonstrate our commitment to transparency. We always do our best to follow the Open Meeting Law and to produce requested public documents. Further, we are glad to have information sharing agenda items for future meetings if the public wants them. For example, we could ask the Business Manager to come to a meeting to answer the public's questions about our budget or our Facilities Director to speak about playgrounds or principals to report the unique activities at their schools. We hope that those kinds of reports will assure the community that we are careful when it comes to the public's money and the District's children.

If anyone would like a particular matter to be discussed at a meeting, please bring your request to public comment or notify the Chair or Superintendent. The Chair and the Superintendent have the authority to place an item on a future agenda under the Open Meeting Law.

We thank all of the members of the community, including the press, for their concern about our schools, our students, our staff and most assuredly us, we, your Board members. We will continue to strive for the excellence we all desire and look forward to the continued interest and involvement from all our constituents.