

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

Barre City Elementary and Middle School – James Taffel Library  
and Via Video Conference – Google Meet  
September 8, 2022 - 6:00 p.m.

**MINUTES**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

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

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent  
Luke Aither, SHS Co-Principal  
Josh Allen, Communications Director  
Stacy Anderson, Director of Special Services  
Jason Derner, Alternative Education Administrator  
Karen Fredericks, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment  
Pierre Laflamme, BCEMS Principal  
Melissa Lindhiem, Assistant Director of Special Services  
Ted Mills, BTMES Assistant Principal  
Rebekah Mortensen, Assistant Director of Special Services  
Jennifer Nye, BTMES Principal  
Erica Pearson, BTMES Principal  
Brenda Waterhouse, BCEMS Principal

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Amelia Abraham	Rachel Aldrich-Whalen	Bridgett Apfel	Sarah Attig
Mel Battah	Shadi Battah	Paula Beaudet	Kim Benson	Lori Bernier
Martha Blaisdell	Jeff Blow	Michael Boutin	Amy Caffry	James Carpenter
Erin Carter	Amber Cheney	Stephanie Collins	Concerned Citizen	Tana Cosgrove
Allison Coutemanche	Mike Deering, II	Jordan Doctor	Erika Dolan	Pragya Donovan
Nora Duane	Kirsten Evans	Mary Fifield	Jamie Frey	Karen Gadapee
Gina Galfetti	Mary Gaudreau	Mary Gehlbach	Jaime Guilmette	Alice Harding
Karen Heath	Carol Hebert	Sarah Helman	Sarah Hill	Josh Howard
Mary-Ann Huang	Stacy Hubbell	Shannon Huda	Jenny Hyslop	Sharon Jacobs
Katie Jarvis	Ellen Kaye	Samantha Knudsen	Philip Kolling	Prudence Krasofski
Colleen Kresco	Laura Lagerstedt	Kerri Lamb	Kelsey LaPerle	Anne Leeds
Patrick Leene	Tara Martin	Kathleen Matthews	Jessica Maurais	Sara McCaffrey
Topper McFaun	Bonnie McIntosh	Roberta Melnick	Dan Morrison	Matt Mulligan
Joelen Mulvaney	Milika Neddo	Rachel Nelson	David Peterson	Shannon Planck
Michael Pope	Dean Preston	Joe Reil	Amy Richard	Nick Ross
Katie Saint Raymond	Tim Sanborn	Marge Sichel	Patricia Shane	Lauren Singer
Diane Solomon	Kevin Spaulding	Megan Spaulding	Michael Titus	Jon Valsangiacomo
Rachel Van Vliet	Trina Villa	R. Lee Walther	Teddy Waszazak	Jesse White
Jesse Willard				

## **1. Call to Order**

**The Chair, Mrs. Spaulding, called the Thursday, September 8, 2022, Regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was held at BCEMS 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 Meeting Norms. Mrs. Spaulding thanked community members for their attendance and read the public participation guidelines, noting that she has revised them in a minor way regarding 'raising hands' and signing up in the 'Chat' feature. Mrs. Spaulding advised that she will no longer take public comment on; Additions and Deletions to the Agenda, and Future Agenda Items and that the Chat section will no longer be used to sign up for public comment. At the request of the Chair, Mrs. Poulin provided a brief overview of some of Robert's Rules of Order.

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

**On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board voted 6 to 2 to delete Agenda Item 6.4 Reflections on Feedback from Staff and Superintendent. Mr. Boltin, Mr. Cecchinelli, Mrs. Farrell, Mrs. Leclerc, Mr. Malone, and Mr. Reil voted for the motion. Ms. Parker and Mrs. Pregent voted against the motion.**

**On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board voted 7 to 1 to add Agenda Item 6.5 Board Values and Goals for Budget Development. Mr. Boltin, Mr. Cecchinelli, Mrs. Farrell, Mrs. Leclerc, Mr. Malone, Mr. Reil, and Mrs. Pregent voted for the motion. Ms. Parker voted against the motion.**

**On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to add agenda items: 11.1 Personnel – Superintendent Evaluation, 11.2 Two Student Matters, and 11.3 Board Evaluation.**

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

## **4. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda**

### **4.1 Public Comment**

Copies of e-mails from Anastasia Douglas and David Gunn were distributed.

Mrs. Spaulding read emails from Anastasia Douglas, David Gunn, and Joelen Mulvaney.

A mix of administrators, staff, community members, and Board Members (Teddy Waszazak, Rachel VanVliet (speaking on behalf of the Barre Educators' Association), Jenny Hyslop, William Toborg, Lori Bernier, Matt Mulligan, Rachel Nelson, Michael Boutin, Jason Derner, Mary Fifield, Josh Howard, Terry Reil, Nancy Leclerc, Dean Preston, Marge Sichel, Roberta Melnick, and Sonya Spaulding) addressed the Board, thanked them for their service and expressed opinions pertaining to; support for the Superintendent and Chair, gratitude to the Board, administrators, and staff, information on the start of the school year, the need for respect and collaboration, the importance of promoting education (including for Board Members), concern over the spread of misinformation, concern over actions of the Board Chair and a call for the resignation of the Chair, a request that the Superintendent address the disparity between remarks in a meeting and a statement in one of his emails, concern that the Superintendent, Board Chair and others were involved in an orchestrated attack against other members of the Board, a request that there be an explanation regarding what a 'sustained effort' is and what is meant by the Superintendent's statement that it will be important 'keep this momentum going in future meetings', concern over obstruction of the work of the Board, concern that the budget is not sustainable and test scores don't reflect progress, that tax payers want change and accountability, the need for the Board to work together to meet the goals for effectively educating youth at a sustainable cost, accountability to tax payers, lack of trust of the Superintendent and Board Chair, concern over the situation the Superintendent has been put in (defending his reputation and integrity), concern over some of the comments made in public comment, concern that the Chair is not consistently applying meeting 'rules', support for how tax dollars are being spent, a request that the Board spend more time focusing on school board work and seeing that resources are available to students, a query regarding whether any Board Members posted on the 'Barre Values' page, appreciation for discussion of Board related business, concern that administrators need to run the school and are being distracted by Freedom of Information Act requests and the current culture, the need to do better as a 'whole', the need to 'meet students where they are at', a query regarding how bullying and harassment of students is being handled this year, appreciation to Board Members who attended a recent PTO meeting, concern that individuals who are stating that Board Members are not participating in training are misinformed, and that Board Members, especially new ones, should be receiving support from seasoned Board Members and should not be made to feel badly for asking questions, a request that the Board work as a group, appreciation for promotional videos, and the need to attract new families to the District.

Mr. Reil advised that Board Members are participating in various trainings and he has participated in 18 different Board trainings since March.

Mrs. Leclerc advised that she takes her role on the Board very seriously and she too has participated in much Board training, and advised that she has asked questions, and does so in an effort to learn and perform her responsibility as a Board Member, making informed decisions.

Mrs. Spaulding, speaking as a community member, read a prepared statement, regarding the ‘turmoil of the past few weeks’, advising regarding ‘her side of the story’, expressing concern that many assumptions have been made, but no one has approached her to hear ‘her truth’, concern that the ‘messages’ from administrators and staff are being disregarded and the need for the Board to work together for the good of the District.

#### **4.2 Student Voice**

None.

### **5. Consent Agenda**

#### **5.1 Approval of Minutes – August 25, 2022 Regular Meeting**

**On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the August 25, 2022 Regular Meeting.**

### **6. Current Business**

#### **6.1 New Hires**

The resume and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Form for Rachel Sterling (BCEMS Elementary Special Educator) was distributed. Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of the candidate, and answered questions from the Board including, but not limited to concerns regarding oversight of Math instruction. Mr. Hennessey needs to verify the job responsibilities assigned to Rachel Sterling. It was noted that there are currently six Case Manager openings. Mrs. Gilbert was lauded for her efforts in securing provisional and emergency licenses.

**On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Cecchinelli, the Board voted 7 to 1 to approve the hiring of Rachel Sterling. Mr. Boltin, Mr. Cecchinelli, Mrs. Farrell, Mrs. Leclerc, Ms. Parker, Mrs. Pregent, and Mr. Reil voted for the motion. Mr. Malone voted against the motion.**

#### **6.2 Strategic Plan Discussion**

A document titled ‘Vision, Mission & Beliefs’ was distributed.

The Strategic Plan was displayed on screen and Mr. Hennessey advised that a short walk-through of the Plan would be provided. Mr. Pope addressed the Board and provided a historical overview of how the Plan was crafted which included public forums and focus groups. All decisions being made within the District need to tie back to the Strategic Plan. Mr. Hennessey advised that the Strategic Plan is based on the District’s mission and vision, which is fueled by the District’s beliefs. Board Members were polled regarding which belief they find the most pertinent. The Strategic Plan includes five key goals; Equitable Access, Communications & Relationships, Curriculum & Career Pathways, Student Wellness, and Student Engagement. Ms. Fredericks addressed the Board advising of a ‘handout’ created by the Communications Director. The document identifies; Strategic Objectives, Action Steps, and Benchmarks (utilized to measure success) for each of the five key goals. Ms. Fredericks provided an overview of the information provided in the handout. The Board was advised regarding more detailed information (a road map) that includes a timeline with indicators for completed work, work in progress, and future work. Board and community members are encouraged to view the document in its entirety. The complete Strategic Plan is available on the BUUSD web site. Community and Board Member feedback was received and staff members answered questions from the Board. It was noted that the Strategic Plan is an excellent tool to be used to hold folks accountable.

The Board recessed from 8:10 p.m. until 8:15 p.m.

#### **6.3 Salary Metric Discussion**

A document titled ‘BUUSD Salary Schedules’ (dated 09/02/22) was distributed.

A copy of a letter from Mr. Hennessey to the School Board was distributed.

Three spreadsheets were also distributed; FY22 Vermont Principal Salary Survey, FY22 Vermont Central Office Survey, and FY22 Superintendent Survey.

Mr. Hennessey provided some context regarding the process of creating the salary metric, advised regarding the reasons for creating the metric, how the increases will be paid for in FY23, and the assumptions he was working under when creating the metrics. It was confirmed that the Board did not approve the new metric, though the Superintendent believes that salary increases are delegated to the Superintendents to make. Mr. Malone believes that salaries for contracted personnel must be approved by the Board and that it is the duty of the Board to approve those salaries. Mr. Malone queried regarding establishing salaries based on non-school work experience, and where that provision is located in the Master Agreement (as was previously stated). Mr. Hennessey advised that the District is currently performing an audit of all the contracts since the last year Superintendent Pandolfo worked in the District.

Mr. Hennessey advised that the Master Agreement does not define 'past experience' and that perhaps something should be added in the next contract. Mr. Malone advised that he has reviewed past hiring practices, and those do not show that credit is given for past non-school experience. Mr. Malone went on record that he does not believe using monies that come out of health insurance, breakage, grants, etc., is a good practice because those factors are not a 'given' going forward. Mr. Malone would like the Board to approve any metric increases going forward and it is his belief that that method complies with the law. Mr. Malone queried the use of a step system for certain employees, e.g. Behavioral Interventionists, who could in theory, end up making as much as principals. In response to a query from Mrs. Leclerc, it was noted that in the past there was no metric and that administrator salaries were negotiated. Mr. Hennessey reiterated the urgent need to hire and retain employees. Mrs. Farrell is concerned that individuals with very little experience are being paid as much as individuals with a lot of experience and is concerned that the local economy cannot sustain these types of raises and she believes individuals should be paid based on their education and experience. Mr. Reil would like to know the actual 'rules' regarding how salaries are determined and expressed concern regarding changes to the metric since it was originally presented. Mrs. Pregent advised that she was surprised that the metric is being discussed, as she believes it was previously discussed in an Executive Session and she thought the Board was in agreement that it be used. Mrs. Pregent believes the Board sets the budget and that as long as the Superintendent is working within the budget, she is unclear why there are concerns being raised. Mr. Hennessey provided additional information regarding some positions that are sometimes hourly and sometimes salary. Mrs. Pregent queried regarding removing unfilled positions from future budgets. It was noted that there are trust issues.

It was agreed that clarity in the form of a written legal opinion is necessary regarding Board approval of salaries and the necessity of Board approval prior to any contracts being signed by the Chair. It was agreed that the Board will approve the phrasing of questions being sent to legal counsel and that counsel's response will be sent to all Board Members. Mr. Hennessey will take responsibility of seeking a legal opinion regarding statute, the setting of salaries and signing of contracts, but will first send out a draft of the questions to all Board Members so that the phrasing of the questions can be approved. A query was made regarding clarification of salary increases being enacted after a contract has been signed with a different salary.

#### **~~—6.4 Reflections on Feedback from Staff and Superintendent~~**

##### **6.5. Board Values and Goals for Budget Development.**

Mrs. Farrell advised she wants the budget to follow the Strategic Plan. Mrs. Spaulding advised that usually, Board Members advise of more specific values and goals, e.g. increase percentage limits, etc. Additional input included; a budget that reflects that the District wants to attract and retain highly qualified staff, guidance from the Board to the Negotiations Committee, a flat or reduced budget for FY24, discussion of unfilled positions, efficiency in purchasing, and standardized purchasing, use of surplus monies (to offset expenses or any increase in the budget, to complete large necessary projects, and to be used to expand the SEA Building to accommodate more students), for administrators to look for areas that could be reduced (be cost conscious), a review of numbers as soon as possible, creation of a budget that voters will want to approve, ways to inspire students, investments in before/after-school programming and investments in summer services

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

##### **7.1 Second and Final Reading Substitute Teachers Policy (B1)**

A copy of the policy was distributed.

**On a motion by Mrs. Leclerc, seconded by Mr. Boltin, the Board unanimously voted to table discussion of Agenda Items 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3 until the September 22, 2022 meeting.**

##### **7.2 Second and Final Reading Role and Adoption of School Board Policies Policy (A30)**

A copy of the policy was distributed.

Agenda Item tabled under Agenda Item 7.1.

##### **7.3 Second and Final Reading Board Member Education (A31)**

A copy of the policy was distributed.

Agenda Item tabled under Agenda Item 7.1.

##### **7.4 Second and Final Reading Policy Section 504 and ADA Grievance Protocol for Students and Staff Policy (C14)**

A copy of the policy was distributed.

Ms. Parker provided a brief overview of the required policy, and advised regarding previous discussion and updates to the policy since the First Reading.

**On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Second and Final Reading of the 'Policy Section 504 and ADA Grievance Protocol for Students and Staff' Policy (C14), and agreed to adopt said policy.**

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

Mrs. Farrell queried regarding the status of PBIS training and inquired regarding any assistance that may be needed. In response to a query from Mrs. Farrell, it was noted that parents should contact the Director of Curriculum for broad level questions and teachers for classroom level questions (syllabus related). Mrs. Leclerc believes it would be beneficial to post curriculum/syllabus information on the District web site.

Mr. Reil thanked Mrs. Anderson for providing clarifying information relating to special education and the number of students who qualify for special education.

Mr. Cecchinelli queried regarding whether or not Board Members are considered Mandated Reporters. This question will be posed to legal counsel (Pietro Lynn).

Mrs. Pregent requested that some surplus funds be dedicated to a site study for the athletic fields at SHS, which could in turn; provide some guidance to the SHS Foundation to start some fundraising for improving the athletic facilities.

Ms. Parker expressed gratitude to the Board advising that she thinks there was good discussion this evening, and thanked community members for attending this evening.

Mrs. Spaulding wants legal clarification regarding public commentary and whether or not members of the public can 'call out' Board Members by name. Barre Town Community Members were reminded of the opening on the Finance Committee.

Mr. Hennessey advised that he received a text praising this evening's discussion on the Strategic Plan.

Mrs. Poulin read from Robert's Rules relating to 'naming of names', and advised that she has heard a lot of serious changes being made during public comment (harassment and bullying etc by Board Members). Mrs. Poulin is present in every meeting and she does not believe there have been conversations that meet that criteria, and she wants folks to understand that if they attach names to such charges and cannot factually substantiate those charges, they are putting themselves in a very precarious position, possibly opening themselves up to slander suits.

## **9. Future Agenda Items**

### For September 22, 2022:

- New Hires
- Second and Final Reading Substitute Teachers Policy (B1)
- Second and Final Reading Role and Adoption of School Board Policies Policy (A30)
- Second and Final Reading Board Member Education (A31)
- Board Values and Goals for Budget Development
- Interview Barre Town Community Members for Finance Committee Opening – Appointment of new Member
- Behavioral Task Force Reporting/Student Behavior & Discipline
- Committee Reports
- Building Reports

### October:

- Educational Performance Update

### Add to Parking Lot:

- Community Input Regarding Budget Priorities

### Remove From Parking Lot:

- (M) Reconstitution of PTA/PTOs

## **10. Next Meeting Dates**

Thursday, September 22, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. at BCEMS in the James Taffel Library and via Google Meet  
Thursday, October 13, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. at the SEA Building and via Google Meet

## **11. Executive Session as Needed**

### **11.1 Personnel – Superintendent Evaluation**

### **11.2 Two Student Matters**

### **11.3 Board Evaluation**

Items proposed for discussion in Executive Session include a Personnel Matter – Superintendent’s Evaluation, two Student Matters and Board Evaluation.

**On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Hennessey in attendance (for Agenda Items 11.1 and 11.2), at 10:14 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 to discuss the items proposed for discussion.**

**On a motion by Mr. Boltin, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 1:18 a.m.**

**12. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 1:18 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Andrea Poulin*