

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**
Spaulding High School Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
October 20, 2022 - 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Nancy Leclerc (BT) - Chair
Terry Reil (BT) – Vice Chair
Michelle Hebert
John Lyons, Jr.
Paul Malone (BC)
Sarah Pregent (BC)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sonya Spaulding

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Luke Aither, SHS Co-Principal
Mary Goodridge Miller, SHS Assistant Principal
Marlon Maylor, SHS Co-Principal
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager

PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Leclerc, called the Thursday, October 20, 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.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the agenda as presented, with some items to be taken out of order.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Meeting Minutes From September 15, 2022

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the September 15, 2022 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting.

5. New Business

None.

6. Old Business

6.1 FY24 Budget and Schedule

A document titled BUUSD FY24 Budget Development Schedule – REVISED, 09/02/22 was distributed.

A document titled Draft Meeting Schedule was distributed.

After brief discussion of the Budget Schedule, the Committee agreed to; add a November 17, 2022 Regular Finance Committee meeting and to add ‘Committee Listening Session’ to that meeting. The label for the November 2, 2022 meeting will be changed to read ‘Additional Meeting’, and it will be noted that the 1st draft of the expense budget will be presented to the Board on November 10, 2022. The December 8, 2022 listing will be removed or labeled as ‘Regular Board Meeting’. Discussion moved to Agenda Item 6.1.2.

6.1.1 Budget Template

A document titled BUUSD FY 24 Budget Development – Draft 1 (10/02/22) was distributed. Discussion contained within Agenda Item 6.1.2.

6.1.2 Budget Numbers

A document titled FY24 Budget Development – 10/20/22 was distributed.

The Committee reviewed the Board's values and goals (for the budget) section of the document. It was noted that the budget considerations listed in the document have been submitted by administrators, based on how they feel the District can best serve students and staff. The draft budget increase is approximately 9.11%. The budget draft does not include the \$6,000,000 grant. Mrs. Perreault advised regarding a shift in expenses at SHS now that CVCC is independent (the CVCCSD). This shift is for the most part, 'a wash'. The Committee discussed District-wide considerations, including; salary and wage increases, and health/dental insurance premium increases (13% and 4% respectively). Concern was raised that the funding source for administrative salary increases no longer exists, and it was confirmed that the increase will need to be added to the budget. Insurance premium rates are usually set by the end of November. Mr. Lyons queried whether or not the total compensation package (salary/wages, benefits, tuition payments, contributions, HRA's, HSA's etc.) is calculated yearly. Mrs. Perreault advised that during negotiations, the salary increase and benefits are calculated, though that information is not typically shared with individuals. Mr. Lyons believes it's important that the total compensation package is shared. Mr. Malone noted that the mandated state-wide negotiation for health care has had a negative financial impact on the District. Mrs. Perreault advised that she will document the Committee's questions and areas of interest so that a list of questions can be centralized. Additional District-wide discussion included Fixed Facilities costs. The Committee agreed to lower the draft 1 proposed construction line increase from \$1 SF to 85¢ SF (currently funded at 75¢ SF). Mr. Reil believes the reporting of facilities expenses needs to be revised as he does not believe the number provided are accurate (too low). Brief discussion was held regarding the upcoming lighting project (that was recently approved by the Board). It was noted that Mrs. Perreault was able to secure a good price for fuel for the current year. The FY23 fuel budget is a little short due to the significant increase in fuel prices. The draft FY24 budget has an increase of approximately \$20,000 for fuel oil and wood chips. Mrs. Leclerc believes that amount may need to be increased. The draft includes an additional \$30,000 for security upgrades (cameras) at BCEMS, BTMES, and SHS (\$10,000 per building). Mrs. Perreault will amend the Considerations document to include dollar amounts associated with each increase/decrease being considered. The District anticipates an increase for snow plowing (a fixed cost expense). The current contract expires in FY23. It was noted that kitchen repairs and maintenance are funded by the food service surplus. Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of the how the food service program is managed, advising that the District makes a profit from the managed food service program. Early Education considerations include an increase to permanent substitute lines (addition of 2 permanent substitutes) and addition of District-wide English-Language Learners support personnel (the District is looking for grant funding for this position).

The Committee discussed the BTMES considerations (an increase of 8.25%). Mr. Hennessey noted that the consideration of 9.5 interventionists is not a change or addition (no budget impact). There is currently a 1.5 FTE vacancy, but these positions need to be filled. Mr. Hennessey cautioned that this document is an initial draft and that additional changes should be anticipated. Mr. Reil queried regarding the availability of an overall staffing report. Brief discussion was held regarding staff-to-student ratios, and whether class sizes which are below the ideal student-to-teacher ratio, could be 'bulked' up to the ideal ratio in an effort to eliminate the need for additional teachers. Brief discussion was held regarding shifting staff positions, by eliminating consistently unfilled support staff positions (para-educators), and having more professional staff (interventionists) provide services. The district currently has 15 to 17 unfilled para-educator positions. There are currently 6 vacant special educator positions. Special educator positions are very difficult to fill. In response to a query, Mr. Hennessey advised that he can find out the number of substitutes in the District. Mrs. Marold should have a master list of substitutes. Mrs. Perreault advised that over the past few years, the schools have been hiring more permanent substitutes. Permanent substitute positions are deemed as more attractive as they include benefits. Brief discussion was held regarding the addition of 1 FTE behavior interventionist (a non-contracted, unlicensed, hourly position). Hiring for this position in-house is much less expensive than using an outside contractor. It was noted that increased capacity at the SEA Building, would be much less expensive than sending students out of district, but many students would benefit more from remaining at BTMES (if additional support is in place).

The Committee discussed the SHS considerations (an increase of 6.80%). Brief discussion was held regarding off-sets related to the Career Center becoming a separate school district, reinstatement of a music accompanist, reinstatement of an SRO, the increase of a .5 FTE Work Based Learning Community Service Coordinator, an increase to Work-Based Learning contracted services, the addition of a behavior specialist (previously ESSER funded), camera replacement, and the lighting project lease payment (which should be offset by reduced power bills). It was noted that the Barre City Police Department is also dealing with staffing shortages, and Mr. Malone queried regarding paying for services that are not provided. In the past, the District paid for an SRO who was often pulled off site for Barre City police matters. Mr. Aither advised that an SRO plays many roles within the building and assists with building community comfort and community awareness. Mr. Aither stressed that the school will need an SRO who is consistently on site. Additional discussion was held regarding the proposal to add staff to the Work-Based Learning Program (including transportation and promotion), addition of a behavior specialist and a student support specialist, as well as camera replacements and the Lighting Project, which should be off-set by savings in electricity costs. Concern was voiced that the District has advised that ESSER funded positions would, in the future, be funded by attrition, but some of these positions are now being added to the budget, which may cause push-

back from the community. Administrators from BCEMS and BTMES will be invited to a future meeting to provide feedback regarding their budget considerations.

The Committee discussed the BCEMS consideration (an increase of 5.93%) for the addition of an administrative assistant. BCEMS used to have an office manager in the budget. The position was cut from the budget, and it has become apparent that it needs to be added back in.

The Committee discussed the Central Services and Special Education considerations (an increase of 12.11%). Mrs. Leclerc requested a breakdown of the increase between the Central Office and SPED increases. It was noted that the heading does not reflect the considerations. Special Education considerations are included in a different section of the document. The Committee discussed the addition of 2 Curriculum Coordinators, the addition of a Grants & Data Coordinator, Technology (including addition of a cybersecurity line item, an increase for software for online and blended learning, and classroom instructional technology hardware (which has not been increased, but is necessary to assure that technology remains current)). An increase is proposed for the Business Office (.5 FTE) to accommodate additional work involved with administering the Food Service Program. There is a reduction for the Board line item, as the expense of audit services has decreased under the unification of the District. The HR Department proposes an increase for advertising related to job posting/recruitment. It is likely that universal free meals will be continued in 2024, but if they are not, the cost to continuing to provide breakfast and lunch to students is approximately \$800,000 (this amount has not been added to draft 1).

The Committee discussed Special Education Services considerations (including the SEA Program). Discussion included an overview of incorporating instructional interventionist services into the SPED budget, the addition of 2 Special Services Assistants, a decrease to the para-educator line item (to more accurately reflect the current status – unfilled positions), an increase for Extended School Year services (summer school), an increase for occupational therapy contracted services (due to need), and the addition of 2 student support specialists and 2 special educators for the SEA Program (to support the addition of middle school students).

Brief discussion was held regarding student counts and it was noted that students enrolled in ‘early college’ does cause a reduction in the equalized pupil count.

Brief discussion was held regarding the estimated \$6,000,000 in grant funding. This amount includes ESSER funding. In response to a query, Mrs. Perreault advised that the \$7,000,000 in ESSER funding for HVAC Projects will be spent over three years (FY23, FY24, and FY25). The IDEA grant is approximately \$800,000 and the CFP grant is approximately \$2,000,000.

In response to a request, it was agreed that Mr. Hennessey will contact administrators to provide additional detail regarding budget considerations and that numbers will be ‘attached’ to considerations. Administrators will be available for discussion at a future Board meeting.

Mrs. Leclerc advised that she will send her questions to Mrs. Perreault, and advised others to send their questions to her or Mr. Reil. Mrs. Leclerc and Mr. Reil will coordinate submission of questions so that duplicate questions are not submitted. Mrs. Perreault plans to create a shared Google document that contains a record of all questions and answers.

6.2 Special Articles - Surplus

A document titled Special Articles was distributed.

The Committee discussed FY22 unaudited fund balances. Mrs. Leclerc provided an overview of the funds by account. It was noted that the \$600,000 not utilized in FY22 is included in the listed amount of the Tax Stabilization fund, though \$700,000 is reserved for FY23. Mrs. Perreault recommends that the FY24 budget also utilized a similar amount (to FY23), and that the remaining anticipated surplus amount be split as follows; 500,000 to Tax Stabilization and the remaining balance to Capital Projects.

6.3 Funding for School ERP Pro

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

Mrs. Perreault advised that she was notified in late September that it was not allowable to use ESSER funds for the new financial accounting system. Mrs. Perreault advised that there is \$450,000 in ‘Indirect’ funding which can be used for any type of general expense. Mrs. Perreault suggested that \$88,000 to \$90,000 of implementation costs be funded through ‘Indirect’. The annual license fee of \$12,000 is less than the cost of the current system and is built into the Business Office budget. The system that the District is migrating to is not the ‘failed’ system that the State was mandating.

6.4 Fuel Update

A document titled Irving Fuel Oil and Propane – Update 10/20/22 was distributed.

Discussed under 6.1.2

6.5 Lighting Project Financing Update

A copy of a letter from MLC (Municipal Leasing Consultants) to Lisa Perreault (dated 09/21/22) was distributed.

Mr. Reil advised that more accurate numbers are now available. Mrs. Perreault has provided all the requested information and the District has a signed contract. Mr. Malone voiced concern regarding the numbers associated with lighting upgrades at SHS. Mr. Reil advised that the Facilities Committee will be holding a special meeting on Tuesday 10/25/22 at 2:00 p.m. to discuss the project and components that have increased the cost.

7. Other Business

None.

8. Items for Future Agendas

November 2, 2022:

- FY24 Budget Development
- Plan for Listening Session for FY24 Budget

9. Next Meeting Date

Upcoming meetings;

Wednesday, November 2, 2022 at 6:00 p.m., at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

Thursday, November 17, 2022 at 6:00 p.m., at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 6:00 p.m., at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin