

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**
Spaulding High School Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
November 2, 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)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Sarah Pregent (BC)

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chris Parker
Sonya Spaulding

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Emmanuel Ajanma, Director of Technology
Stacy Anderson, Director of Special Services
Pierre Laflamme, BCEMS Principal
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Jennifer Nye, BTMES Principal
Erica Pearson, BTMES Principal
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager
Brenda Waterhouse, BCEMS Principal

PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus Josh Howard

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Leclerc, called the Thursday, November 2, 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 Mr. Malone, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the agenda as presented.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Meeting Minutes From October 20, 2022

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the October 20, 2022 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting.

The Committee agreed to take some agenda items out of order.

5. New Business

5.1 Communication Plan

Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of the phased Plan, which includes; a listening session (on-line and in person) on 11/17/22, a community on-line survey (to identify priorities), creation/ mailing of the Annual Report, creation of a more detailed budget flyer, posting of all information on the web site, other community outreach, and a ‘get out to vote’ campaign. Mr. Hennessey queried regarding what the Committee would like to see at the community forum. It was suggested that the listening session be held in the SHS Library, and to move the event to the SHS auditorium if it is determined there will be capacity issues. Discussion was held regarding the timing of the survey. A draft survey will be sent to Committee Members and possibly Board Members, to assist with working out any ‘bugs’. The survey will need to be well promoted to reach community members/tax payers, who do not have a

connection to the schools. Social media will be used to help promote the survey and both the listening session and survey will be promoted at the polls on 11/08/22. Possible changes to the format of the Annual Report (to include additional information) will be discussed with Mr. Allen.

5.2 Listening Session: Community Input on Budget

Discussed under Agenda Item 5.1.

5.3 IT Projection Costs and Plan

A document titled 'Technology Budget – Finance Committee' was distributed.

Committee Members have reviewed the document. Discussion was held, with Mr. Ajanma answering questions from the Committee, including; the technology replacement schedule (which helps keep the budget level funded), retention of long term staff (with no planned increases to staffing), wage increases, summer staff (to clean devices, which have increased three-fold), a more in-depth overview of student device replacement, the one-to-one student to device ratio, promotion of a Federal program to assist families who cannot afford internet (nothing in the IT budget supports the District providing internet for these families), discussion of cyber security (existing and proposed), staff security training, blocked sites, devices for staff (including laptops – though the AOE no longer approves remote learning days), VPN for Finance Department employees, insurance requirements for budgeted line items for cyber security, and the proposed \$20,000 increase for cyber security.

5.4 Cost Narrative

A document titled 'FY24 Budget Development Narrative – Updated 10/31/22' was distributed.

The Committee reviewed the 'school' sections of the narrative document, beginning with BTMES. Discussion included; the increase for permanent substitutes (based on actual needs), the need for additional classroom teachers (including student to teacher ratios and the class size policy), the addition of one behavior interventionist, an overview of current behavior related positions, clarification of the difference between classroom student counts and TA student counts, the need to increase Art and Tech Ed supply lines due to inflation, and the need to plan for inflation across the budget.

Discussion moved to the narrative for BCEMS with Mrs. Waterhouse and Mr. LaFlamme answering questions from the Committee. Discussion included; concern that the BCEMS budget only includes an increase for the addition of an administrative assistant, administrators shifting staff to better accommodate needs, shifting of ESSER funded positions into the budget, the stresses resulting from understaffing (many unfilled positions), difficulty hiring staff, the desperate need for therapeutic components (administrators are looking into grants), and the addition of one day-time custodian (\$50,000), which needs to be added to the document.

Discussion moved to the narrative for Special Education. Mrs. Anderson answered questions from the Committee. Discussion included; addition of staff members for the SEA Program (to accommodate expansion to include middle school students – no firm plans at this time), a query regarding the current use capacity, consideration of using alternative/flexible schedules, transitioning a special educator position to the budget, the importance of investing in the SEA Program, the impact of Act 173, confirmation that not all SEA expenses are in the SEA portion of the budget (e.g. psychological services), and the overall cost of the SEA Program (approximately \$2.3 million).

Discussion moved to the narrative for SHS. It was noted that SHS administrators were present at the last Finance Committee meeting. Discussion included; off-setting revenues from CVCCSD (e.g. rental and contracted services), reinstatement of the SRO, differences (between schools) for SRO services (e.g. BCEMS dedicated SRO funded at 69%, BTMES SRO is hourly/contracted), addition of a behavior specialist (previously funded by ESSER), and the plan for camera replacement (building safety/security).

Discussion moved to the narrative for the Central Office. Discussion included; confirmation that the Curriculum Coordinator positions were grant funded and are now being added into the budget, clarification on the profit made by the food service program (current surplus is approximately \$700,000) which covers annual maintenance and equipment purchases, and funding for the SHS lighting project (there may be alternatives to be considered).

5.5 Questions & Answers Shared Document

A document titled 'FY24 Budget Development Questions and Answers – Updated 10/31/22' was distributed.

Brief discussion was held and Mrs. Leclerc requested that dollar amounts be provided with the questions/answers.

6. Old Business

6.1 Budget FY24

A document titled 'BUUSD FY24 Budget Summary - Draft 1, 10-31-22' was distributed.

Mr. Reil advised that it is important to note that the Board is cognizant of the community's ability to pay (income sensitivity – lower median income than surrounding communities by \$8,000 to \$16,000). It will be very important to balance the needs of students and the community's ability to pay. Discussion was held regarding the FY24 Budget Development –Draft 1 (included in last month's packet) including; the increase to fuel costs (which could possibly be reduced), other possible line item reductions (electricity, propane, BTMES general instruction, custodial line items, course reimbursement, permanent substitutes, bus riders, and contracted

services). In trying to find a balance between the needs of the District and tax payers, Mr. Reil believes cuts need to be made to the draft budget. Mrs. Perreault queried regarding goals of the Committee and advised that administrators need as much lead time as possible to identify possible cuts. Mr. Malone cautioned that the District has not started negotiations yet, and noted that salaries and benefits make up the bulk of the budget. Mr. Reil believes the District needs to work to find a way in which the District can operate more efficiently and also stressed the need to invest in SEA program. Efficiencies are the ‘drivers’ to get the budget down. Brief discussion was held regarding how it is hoped that efficiencies will be beneficial to students and will boost educational outcomes. It was noted that there is a reduction in the para-educator line item, but those funds are likely being shifted to other positions. It was requested that reductions be made to line items that will not negatively impact students/academics. Mrs. Perreault reiterated that some increases in expenses will be off-set by CVCCSD revenue. Mr. Malone does not believe an increase of 8.3% will be approved by voters, and would like to see a draft that is at 5% or 6%. It was noted that it is early in the budget process and that the full Board and community members still need to weigh in.

6.2 Updated 5-Year Capital Plan

A copy of the 5 Year Capital Improvement Plan (2023 – 2028) was distributed.

Mr. Reil advised that the Plan grid was revised over the summer, but it should be reviewed to see that everything necessary has been included and dates are associated with each item.

7. Other Business

Mr. Hennessey expressed the District’s appreciation to Capital Candy for supplying water to the schools during the recent Barre City water system issues.

The first draft of the budget will be presented to the Board on 11/10/22. The presentation should include the Draft Budget Summary Report as well as the Narrative Report.

8. Items for Future Agendas

- FY24 Budget

9. Next Meeting Date

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

This meeting will be the public listening session. Brief discussion was held regarding how to warn the public listening session (if all Board Members are asked to attend). The appropriate Warning will be identified and posted accordingly.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Lyons, the Committee unanimously agreed to adjourn at 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin