

BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
BUUSD Central Office and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
December 20, 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) – joined at 6:10 p.m.
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
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus Stacie Boltin Sarah Helman Josh Howard Colleen Kresco

1. Call to Order

The Vice Chair, Mrs. Farrell, called the Thursday, December 20, 2022, Special meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was held at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.

2. Pledge and Mindfulness Moment

The Board held a Mindfulness Moment.

3. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 6.3 Nomination Petition Discussion. This item will be taken out of order.

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as amended. Mr. Boltin was not present for the vote.

4. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

4.1 Public Comment

None.

4.2 Student Voice

None.

5. Consent Agenda

5.1 Approval of Minutes – December 8, 2022 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mr. Reil, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the December 8, 2022 Regular Meeting. Mr. Boltin was not present for the vote.

6. Current Business

6.1 New Hires

No candidates were presented for hire.

6.2 FY24 Budget Draft 2

Four documents were distributed:

'FY24 Budget Development Narrative – Draft 2: Updated December 9, 2022'

'Barre Unified Union School District FY24 Budget Summary – Draft 2, 12/9/22' (expenses)

'Barre Unified Union School District FY24 Budget Summary – Draft 2, 12/13/22' (revenue)

'BUUSD Budget 2023-24 Proposed & Estimated Comparative 12/13/22 Tax Rate Calculations – Using \$700,000 Toward Revenue'

Mr. Hennessey advised regarding discussion at the Finance Committee, displayed a copy of the Considerations document on screen, and proceeded to provide an overview of the Considerations document for Draft 2. The document includes a little over \$900,000 in reductions. Lengthy discussion was held including; a request to consider adding the SHS SRO back into the budget, providing a behavioral interventionist at SHS in lieu of an SRO (more consistent involvement with students while continuing a positive relationship with Barre City PD), concern that in the past (due to staffing issues) the District was paying for an SRO but the SRO was not in the building, a suggestion to put the SHS SRO on the ballot as a Special Article, a request to add the Work Based Learning position back into the budget, the need for Board input (to assist administrators with further budget development), availability of the CLA (from the State), concern that a 6.67% increase is too much for tax payers, a request that the Board reach a consensus to provide administrators and the Business Manager with clarity/direction, a poll of the Board (flat budget, 1%, 2%, 5 to 5.5%, no opinion (2), Draft 2 as is or adding SRO back in, Draft 2 with SRO and WBL personnel added back in), a query regarding the budgeting process for salaries and benefits and other line items, concern regarding surpluses from the past 2 years, ESSER funding and staff shortages that greatly contributed to surpluses, a query regarding open positions and proposed new positions, a suggestion that some line items be reduced based on actuals from FY21 and F22, a suggestion to reduce the course reimbursement line item, a suggestion to utilize a supervising RN and hiring LPNs, reduction of non-filled positions, equity of custodial staff among schools, reductions of teaching staff at the high school, concern regarding loss of high school students (if students move to the technical center full time), the unresolved contracts (how will final resolution impact the budget and will many RIFS (reductions in force / lay-offs) need to be issued), the need to fill the many unfilled positions (all positions are needed), concerns that lack of staff negatively impacts the schools (school closures/classroom closures, and fatigue of staff who are present), concern over 'rampant' absenteeism of staff, a query regarding how filling positions will directly benefit students, a query regarding how the proposed increase (\$4,000,000) will benefit students, the obligation to meet the needs/plans of special education students, concern over staff who are performing 'double and triple' duties, a query regarding what the District is doing to encourage staff to obtain a special education endorsement, concern over the CLA impact, concern over the size of administrative growth, a suggestion to tighten down on administrative positions, a query regarding the necessity of moving ESSER positions to the general budget in FY24, a query regarding the value of using consultants for some of the professional development, concern that there may be 50 more students who qualify for special education, recognition that much of the surpluses from the past two years is attributed to COVID, concern that some of the input from the Board is negative, concern that though the tax rate may go down (due to funding from the state), the expense budget has increased, concern that contract settlement will severely impact the budget, concern that reserve funds are being drained, concern that the Board has not reached a consensus on a direction to give to administrators, concern that there is a lot of negativity around the budget, that the Board needs to 'sell' the budget, concern that there are Board Members who won't promote the budget, concern regarding what is being projected to the public, concern regarding retaining staff and attracting good candidates, concern that the Board is not providing clear directives regarding their budget goals, comments that the Board is asking tough questions (as they feel they need to) and have concerns with administrators making negative comments regarding Board Members' positions on the budget, concern that a flat budget is not possible given the rate of inflation, concern that the Board is nowhere near ready to approve a budget, a request to see expense and revenue reports on a more frequent basis, a suggestion that the Board agree to an increase percentage that is the average of the various percentages proposed by Board Members, concern that if the budget is cut too deeply there will be a negative impact on test scores, buyer's remorse entering into the \$7,000,000 HVAC project, historical information regarding the lack of surpluses in the years prior to COVID, concern regarding the negative impact staff shortages have on students, a query regarding savings that would be realized if the District reverted back to a 175 student day calendar (rather than 180 student days), a query regarding routine Federal grants (approximately \$6,000,000) received last year vs. this year (and how that impacts the surplus amount).

6.3 Nomination Petition Discussion

A copy of an email from Carol Dawes to Mr. Hennessey (dated 11/21/22) was distributed. (relates to the deadline for Board petitions)

A copy of the BUUSD Articles of Agreement – Amended February 19, 2019 was distributed.

Mr. Hennessey advised that he has not yet spoken with Ms. Dawes, and advised regarding discussion of this matter last year. For the 2022 election the following agreement was made; the deadline for all BUUSD petitions for Directors is the 6th Monday before Town Meeting Day. It is believed that the language in the Articles of Agreement pertained to the initial Board and that subsequent petitions would fall under statute. Mr. Hennessey will contact Ms. Dawes to confirm if last year's decision is the final decision. Mrs. Farrell advised that for those who wish to run for Board seats, it would be best to have petitions submitted to City and Town Clerks by 01/30/23. Mr. Hennessey reiterated that the final decision will be confirmed with Ms. Dawes on tomorrow (12/21/22).

Mrs. Spaulding reported that she advised Ms. Dawes that she would have the Board hold discussion regarding following statute rather than the Articles of Agreement. This issue has been raised by Ms. Dawes on numerous occasions. Mrs. Leclerc believes the BUUSD Articles of Agreement posted by the AOE need to be updated to show the correct Board 'make-up' (9 members, not 4).

Mrs. Spaulding noted that the AOE advised they will not update the Articles of Agreement that were posted during Act 46.

Mrs. Poulin voiced concern that the AOE's version of BUUSD Articles of Agreement, have never been the Articles of Agreement that the District operated under. The Articles posted on the BUUSD web site are accurate. Individuals who refer to the Articles of Agreement posted on the AOE website are making decisions based on inaccurate information. Ms. Helman queried regarding the proper nominating petition form to utilize as she has been informed that the BUUSD has its own unique form (which differs from the form on the Secretary of State's web site). Mr. Hennessey will look into this matter. Mr. Malone advised that the Secretary of State's form can be utilized in any city/town in Vermont, and additionally advised that there is a second form, a 'consent form' that must be completed by each candidate.

7. Old Business

None.

8. Other Business/Round Table

In response to a query, it was noted that the Policy Committee was to amend Policy A20 and present a First Reading of the amended policy to the Board. The Policy Committee will amend the policy at their January meeting.

Ms. Parker noted that the Policy Committee rescheduled their January meeting from 01/16/23 to 01/30/23.

Mrs. Spaulding advised that the Hedding United Methodist Church is putting on a Christmas dinner. Those interested in volunteering, donating, or participating in any way should contact Hedding United Methodist Church for details.

Mr. Cecchinelli thanked everyone for their input on the budget.

Mr. Malone expressed appreciation for this evening's budget discussion and wishes everyone a happy Christmas and a new year that is better than last year.

Mrs. Pregent expressed thanks and well wishes to staff and administrators.

Mr. Boltin advised that he has been made aware that there is much illness going around the schools and he hopes everyone can recover and rest over the vacation.

Mrs. Leclerc expressed appreciation to staff and administrators for their support and providing normalcy in 2022 and wishes everyone a merry Christmas and happy new year.

Mr. Reil wishes everyone happy holidays, and suggested that folks rest up and take a break from Board business.

Mrs. Farrell advised of the PAWS event at BCEMS on 12/22/22 advising that winter gear will be available. Mrs. Farrell also advised regarding the National Guard lighted truck parade happening this evening around 8:00 p.m.

Mr. Hennessey advised that on 12/21/22, prior to dismissing students, Mr. Allen will be sharing a video of students and staff expressing what they are thankful for.

Ms. Parker wished SHS well tomorrow as they begin preparations for the upcoming HVAC project. Work will begin after student dismissal.

9. Future Agenda Items

01/12/23:

- Asbestos Abatement (G from Parking Lot)
- Audit Presentation (A from Parking Lot)
- IT Presentation (B from Parking Lot)
- Second and Final Readings of Policies (D from Parking Lot)
- Rescind Policy D31 (E from Parking Lot)
- Finalize Budget
- Tuition Announcement (required by Statute)

Mr. Cecchinelli queried regarding an upcoming presentation by the SHS Jazz Band. Mr. Hennessey will inquire with Mr. Booth.

10. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is Thursday, January 12, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

11. Executive Session

No items were proposed for discussion in Executive Session.

12. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin