

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

BUUSD Central Office and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
January 18, 2023 - 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
Emmanuel Ajanma, Director of Technology
Josh Allen, Communications Director
Stacy Anderson, Director of Special Services
Jason Derner, Alternative Education Administrator
Jamie Evans, Facilities Director
Karen Fredericks, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Mari Goodridge Miller, SHS Assistant Principal
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Ted Mills, BTMES Assistant Principal
Rebekah Mortensen, Assistant Director of Special Services
Jennifer Nye, BTMES Principal
Erica Pearson, BTMES Principal
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager
Brenda Waterhouse, BCEMS Principal

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Peter Anthony	Bridgett Apfel	Mel Battah	Battah Family
Cassie Bell	Danielle Berg	Stacey Boltin	Amy Caffry	Emel Cambel
Erin Carter	Stephanie Collins	Michael Deering, II	Cassandra Demarais	Nora Duane
Andrew Duddy	Brendan Eaton	Stephen Finner	Jamie Frey	Miranda Green
Shayna Guild	Chelsea Haberek	Michelle Hebert	Sarah Helman	Josh Howard
Mariah Jacobs	Joseph Kill	Brandy Kolling	Prudence Krasofski	Michelle LaFrancis
Pat MacAskill	Ben Matthews	Raylene Meunier	Sue Paxman	Nick Ross
Diane Solomon	Rachel Van Vliet	Leslie Walz	Ashley Young	Jan Z

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Spaulding, called the Wednesday, January 18, 2023, Special meeting to order at 6:03 p.m., which was held at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.

2. Pledge and Mindfulness Moment

Mrs. Spaulding read the Meeting Norms. The Board held a Mindfulness Moment.
Mrs. Spaulding thanked community members for their attendance and read the public comment guidelines.

3. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as presented.

4. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

4.1 Public Comment

Ms. Fredericks announced that there is currently an Open House taking place at BCEMS and the event is very well attended.

Ms. LaFrancis advised that Think Pink games will begin next week. There will be a Make-A-Wish kick-off game honoring alumni and colleague Jenn Bisson and her sons. Ms. LaFrancis encourages everyone to attend and sends best wishes to the Bisson family.

4.2 Student Voice

None.

5. New Business

5.1 Discussion BUUSD FY24 Budget

Mrs. Spaulding advised that this item is on the agenda to give individuals the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers they have related to the FY24 Budget. Mrs. Spaulding advised that after discussion, the Board will move on to Agenda Item 5.2 (Approval of the Warning). Mrs. Spaulding advised that the Warning must be submitted to the City and Town Clerks by Friday, January 20, 2023, which necessitates this Special Meeting. Lengthy discussion was held including; a query regarding cost of living 'numbers' for teachers, and supplies, expenses etc., concern that community member input was not given consideration, concern that there are those who are impacted by the budget who can't vote, a suggestion to put forth a higher budget and let voters decide, concern that the budget does not support the children, input from some voters that they will vote the budget down because it is too low, concern about using surplus funds, concern regarding conflicting information regarding cuts, concern that staff will leave and be difficult to replace, an expression of gratitude for those who have been working on the budget, a query regarding whether those who oppose the budget have reviewed the line items of the budget or are making uninformed decisions based on the increase percentage alone, a query regarding use of unaudited surplus funds, information regarding how deficits were handled in the past (the Tax Stabilization Fund was used to offset the deficit, if no funds in Tax Stabilization or the General Fund, deficits need to be added to the next year's budget. Capital Improvement Funds cannot be used to offset taxes or deficits), acknowledgement that the budget includes using \$700,000 in revenue from the tax stabilization fund, a query regarding future budgets if there is deficit spending, concern that use of \$700,000 from the Tax Stabilization fund has not been discussed, information that the proposed budget includes everything that is in place this year, information regarding the anticipated FY23 surplus, information relating to the 1.9% increase (for FY23) that was approved by the voters, historical information regarding past surpluses/deficits, the difficulty (nation-wide) of hiring special educators, historical information regarding FY24 budget development, the \$1,500,000 increase for salaries and benefits, concern regarding current and future difficulties in serving special education students, concern that the line item budget for the 1.5% increase has not been presented, concern that the budgetary process has not been followed, concern that guidance has not been provided by the Finance Committee, concern regarding how the proposed budget will address salary and benefit increases, concern regarding unknown special education expenses which may result in deficit spending, concern that middle school programming at SEA is not supported by the proposed budget, concern regarding the cost of outplacement for students whose needs cannot be met within the District, gratitude to the business office for the FY22 audit, reiteration of the legal and ethical obligation to meet the needs to all students, acknowledgement that intensive needs are increasing, the need to attract top quality educators, a reminder that discussion of the FY24 budget will be held at the 01/19/23 Finance Committee meeting, the work involved (line item review) in determining the proposed budget (1.5%), the need to plan for future budgets, a query regarding whether or not the SEA Program is adequately staffed (yes and 5 middle school students will be added to the program next week), concern regarding the lack of special education staff across the state, a possible increased need to utilize outside contractors and outplacement for special education students, concern regarding staff retention, and concern regarding the number of Board Members who voted.

Mr. Cecchinelli moved to accept the Administrative Team's plan for a \$49,603,687 budget, an increase of \$2,349,368, or 4.97%. Mrs. Pregent seconded the motion.

It was noted that as the budget has already been voted on, a vote to reconsider that vote needs to be made by a Board Member who was on the prevailing side of the vote. It is believed that this motion to overthrow the previous vote is in violation of Robert's rules. Mrs. Spaulding advised she would have voted against the original motion. Mrs. Farrell advised she would have voted for the original motion (1.5% increase).

5.2 Approval of BUUSD FY24 Budget Warning

A document titled 'Barre Unified Union School District Warning For March 7, 2023 Vote' were distributed. Mrs. Spaulding read the Warning that was included in the packet.

Discussion of the Warning included; concern that the Board is approving a Warning for a budget that has not been reviewed (line items) by the Board, concern that Board Members have 'ignored the will of the voters', a request for a discussion with specific Board Members regarding activities at the SEA Program, concern that some individuals are making comments and decisions without factual information, concern that the Board as a whole did not provide parameters for budget development and that a line by line budget has not been presented (for review) by administrators, a belief that FY23 will end with a surplus, a concern that a prior version of the budget did not include reductions for line items that have been underspent for years, a query regarding what will be done to meet

students' needs if positions are cut, clarification that the proposed budget does not cut any existing positions, concern that there will be difficulty in hiring additional staff (for the SEA Program) to accommodate additional students, concern that the motion on the floor pertains to the Warning and the discussion being held is off-topic (discussion the budget), the belief that the deadline for the Warning is 01/30/23, not 01/20/23, a request that if the deadline is 01/30/23, the Finance Committee provide information regarding how the 1.5% increase was arrived at, a belief that per information provided by the Barre City Clerk, the deadline is 01/30/23,

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board voted 4 to 3 to approve the Barre Unified Union School District Warning For March 7, 2023 Vote.

Mr. Boltin, Mrs. Farrell, Mrs. Leclerc, and Mr. Malone voted for the motion. Mr. Cecchinelli, Ms. Parker, and Mrs. Pregent voted against the motion. Mr. Reil was not present for the vote.

Mrs. Spaulding, for the record, advised that she is not voting, but if she did vote, she would vote against the motion. Additional discussion included; disappointment that though Board Members may not agree with the budget increase amount, they are not meeting their legal obligation to see that the District follows the law by not approving a Warning that is legally required, a comment that Board Members who vote against the motion, do not sign the Warning, and concern that Board Members are not following 'Board Norms' (supporting decisions of the Board). Mr. Reil advised that had he been present for the vote, he would have voted for the motion. A community member suggested that the Board Norms be 'thrown out' as they are not followed. A staff member advised that he does not believe the Board is in compliance with what the State has 'set out'. After objection by Board Members regarding the discussion that was ensuing, discussion was ended.

6. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board voted 6 to 1 to adjourn at 7:13 p.m.

Mr. Boltin, Mrs. Farrell, Mrs. Leclerc, Mr. Malone, Ms. Parker, Mrs. Pregent voted for the motion. Mr. Cecchinelli voted against the motion. Mr. Reil was not present for the vote.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin