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BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD MEETING

Spaulding High School Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
February 23, 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
Stacy Anderson, Director of Special Services
Jason Derner, Alternative Education Administrator
Jamie Evans, Facilities Director
Karen Fredericks, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Pierre Laflamme, BCEMS Principal
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Marlon Maylor, SHS Co-Principal
Mari Miller, SHS Assistant Principal
Ted Mills, BTMES Assistant Principal
Kristin Morrison, BCEMS 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
Ashley Young, Assistant Business Manager

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Martha Blaisdell	Jeff Blow	Stacey Boltin	Michael Boutin
Cassandra Demarais	Pragya Donovan	Nathaniel Fredericks	Andrew Frey	Sarah Helman
Josh Howard	Mariah Jacobs	Prudence Krasofski	Amber Larrabee	Colleen LeFebvre
John Lyon	Dan Morrison	Dean Preston	Lori Robinson	Daniel Spaulding
William Toborg	Emily Wheeler	Mindy Woodworth		

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Spaulding, called the Thursday, February 23, 2023, Regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was held at the Spaulding High School 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 comment guidelines.

3. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Delete Agenda Item 6.2
Delete Agenda Item 6.3
Delete Agenda item 6.4
Building Reports will be taken out of order.

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

4. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

4.1 Public Comment

A copy of an email from Jeff Blow to the Board Chair (dated 02/14/23) was distributed.

In response to multiple queries regarding Point of Order, Mrs. Poulin provided an overview of why Point of Order is called and the steps to be taken when Point of Order is called. It was noted that political endorsements are not allowed as they are not business of the Board. Mrs. Spaulding believes that only elected Board Members should call point of order. Mr. Boutin advised of his belief that individuals can attend Board meetings anonymously. Mrs. Spaulding read the letter from Mr. Blow. Mrs. Leclerc voiced concern regarding the reading of a letter that was not included in the packet and why the email was not forwarded on to the entire Board. The e-mail from James Carpenter will be read under Agenda Item 7.1 FY24 Budget.

4.2 Student Voice

None.

5. Consent Agenda

5.1 Approval of Minutes – February 9, 2023 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the February 9, 2023 Regular Meeting, and the Minutes of the February 6, 2023 Special Meeting.

5.2 Approval of Minutes – February 6, 2023 Special Meeting

Approved under Agenda Item 5.1.

6. Current Business

6.1 New Hires

The resume and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Form for William Lucero (BCEMS Special Educator) was distributed. Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of the candidate and answered questions from the Board.

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Reil, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of William Lucero.

~~**6.2 First Reading Board Meeting, Agenda Preparation, and Distribution Policy (A20)**~~

A copy of the policy was distributed.

~~**6.3 First Reading Student Athletics, Clubs, and Activities Policy (C22)**~~

A copy of the policy was distributed.

~~**6.4 First Reading English Learners Policy (C4)**~~

A copy of the policy was distributed.

7. Old Business

7.1 FY24 Budget

A document titled 'FY24 Budget, Draft 4, Version 2, UPDATE 02/22/23' was distributed.

A copy of a letter from the Superintendent to the Board dated 02/22/24 was distributed.

A document titled 'AFSCME APPENDIX A - WAGES – Base Rate of Pay Schedule' was distributed

A document titled 'Para-Educator – 2022 – 2023 (Effective As Of July 1, 2022 For New Hires' was distributed.

A document titled 'SD#97 2022 – 2023 Salary Schedule' was distributed.

A document titled 'BUUSD Non Contracted Hourly Schedule – FY23 – Final/FY24 Draft' was distributed.

A document titled 'Non Contracted Salary' was distributed.

A document titled 'BUUSD Non Contracted Salary Schedules – FY23 – Final/FY24 Draft' was distributed.

A copy of an email from James Carpenter was distributed.

Mr. Hennessey and Mrs. Perreault provided a brief overview of some of the new reductions that will allow for reinstatement of items previously slated for elimination (including K – 8 clubs and athletics). Mr. Reil advised regarding some additional potential cuts identified by members of the Finance Committee. These reductions, include elimination of 4 positions that have remained unfilled for years), and could result in reinstatement of positions slated for elimination by administrators (IT Technician, IT Clerical Position, 3 Technology Integrationists, Sports Programs and transportation, Clubs and Co-Curricular activities and the Board Secretary). Mr. Reil believes these possible changes need to be discussed. Lengthy discussion was held, including; risks associated with eliminating some para-educator positions, the need to provide services with or without para-educators (utilizing other staff members or contracted services), confirmation that no school-year para-educators are funded by ESSER, and concern regarding low wages for para-educators.

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Mrs. Spaulding read an email from James Carpenter. Mr. Reil voiced concern that being out of compliance due to unfilled positions, has been ongoing for years, yet is only being raised during budget discussions, and reiterated that these positions have remained unfilled for years. Mr. Malone voiced extreme concern that administrators did not provide information to the Board that was requested by the Finance Committee in early January, that the cuts the Superintendent said took 3 days to make were not provided for 30 days, thus delaying discussion, and he believes this is insubordinate behavior. Additionally, Mr. Malone advised that administrators are not returning phone calls and providing requested information. Mr. Malone advised that the Board had until 01/30/23 to approve a budget, but did not receive information until 02/03/23. Mr. Malone stressed that administrators have a duty to provide information as requested, and that the issues surrounding the FY24 budget process, can never be allowed to happen again. Mr. Malone advised that it makes no sense to have 30 to 40 open slots in the District, yet administrators say that existing staff need to be fired to stay within the budget. Mr. Malone noted that he was informed by an outside source that one administrator is a finalist to work in another district, and queried why the Board was not advised regarding this matter. Mrs. Leclerc advised that she has received conflicting information regarding the number of para-educators, and queried regarding what information drove the decision to reduce the number of open para-educator positions by 6, rather than another number. Mr. Hennessey advised that he and administrators discussed elimination of para positions, and noted that para-educators are currently in negotiations. Mrs. Leclerc advised that she is trying to reconcile how administrators can say that 6 positions can be eliminated, yet also say that no positions can be eliminated without putting the District in legal jeopardy. It was noted that elimination of the \$91,000 10-year note (lighting project) was not reflected in the budget. Mrs. Perreault believes this was a ‘timing’ issue. Mrs. Perreault has been ‘flabbergasted’ at how this year’s budget process has proceeded, advising that administrators asked the Board for a directive early on, and didn’t receive input until December and even then, there was no clear directive (consensus) from the Board. Mr. Malone agrees that the Board should have provided clear direction early on, and reiterated his frustration that the 1.5% budget was not presented for 30 days. Additional discussion was held regarding the timeframe and the various percentages that were presented. Mrs. Farrell suggested that a more thorough review of the budget process occur at a Finance Committee meeting and requested that the Board move on to the next agenda item. Mrs. Leclerc expressed appreciation that the schools are making a good ‘comeback’ from the pandemic. Mrs. Pregent appreciates the time it takes to reduce the budget and expressed her appreciation to administrators for their work on the budget. Mrs. Pregent advised that the cuts being proposed are perceived as ‘fluff’ and that she believes it makes sense to see the cuts that were presented. Ms. Parker is concerned by unfilled positions cutting of unfilled positions, and how students’ needs will be met. Mrs. Spaulding does not believe that at this point, anyone is pleased with the budget. Mrs. Spaulding advised regarding the District’s Annual Meeting and Budget Informational Session on 03/06/23. Ms. Parker requested that these meetings be added to the District Calendar.

8. Reports

8.1 Superintendent Report

A copy of the Superintendent’s Report (dated 02/17/23) was distributed.

Mr. Hennessey responded to comments that were made under Agenda Item 7.1, advising that administrators did not have a clear understanding of parameters from the Board, that it was a timely process to arrive at a 1.5% budget, and he does not believe there was ill intent on anyone’s part. Mr. Hennessey advised regarding the information included in the Superintendent’s Report. Mr. Hennessey advised regarding resignations from Harry Marek, Josh Allen, Pierre Laflamme, Melissa Lindhiem, and Joann Adams (retirement). Ms. Adams was thanked for her years of service and wished well in retirement. Mr. Reil queried regarding reporting of resignations and retirements. Mrs. Leclerc queried regarding possible new positions, including the HHB Coordinator position. Mr. Hennessey advised that a Behavioral Specialist position was shifted to an HHB Coordinator position. Mr. Hennessey provided additional information pertaining to the salary metrics provided in the report. Mrs. Leclerc queried regarding struggles with the FY24 1.5% increase when the FY23 budget increase of 1.95% did not seem to be so controversial or difficult.

8.2 Building Reports; BCEMS, BTMES, SHS, SEA

Copies of the Building Reports were distributed.

BCEMS – Mr. Laflamme thanked outgoing Board Members for their time and service. Mrs. Waterhouse advised that parent/teacher conferences could not be held today, and advised that individuals interested in registering for YMCA after-school care may contact her or Mr. Leflamme for assistance. Parent/Teacher Conferences have been rescheduled for 03/16/23. In response to query regarding PBIS training, Mrs. Waterhouse advised that training is on-going.

BTMES – Mrs. Nye and Ms. Pearson had nothing to add to the report. In response to a query regarding ‘cold pockets’ in the school, Ms. Pearson advised that a heating issue was resolved during the last cold snap, and that like most larger buildings temperatures fluctuate throughout the building. Mrs. Leclerc advised regarding the upcoming lip sync competition.

SHS – There is nothing to add to the report. Mr. Hennessey reported that all winter sports teams have had very successful season.

SEA – Mr. Derner advised that there are potentially 9 incoming students (for next year – incoming 9th graders). Mr. Derner apologized for his conduct the last time he was addressing the Board. In response to a query regarding assessment of reading levels, Mr. Derner advised that there is no ongoing measurement, but advised that most students join the SEA Program with significant deficiencies in math and reading. Mr. Derner will look into this matter further, noting that the English teacher does perform testing when students join SEA. Mrs. Pregent appreciates the information regarding the transition program for students, which allows them to

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build skills in preparation for employment and life after school. In response to a query regarding student population, Mr. Derner advised there are currently 47 students enrolled at SEA and an attendance rate of approximately 75% to 78%. Mr. Derner was thanked for his apology.

8.3 CVCCSD Board Report

Minutes from the February 6, 2023 CVCCSD Board Meeting were distributed.

Mrs. Farrell provided an overview of the minutes including; a presentation by Brandon Morris (Electrical Instructor), the Superintendent's evaluation, re-envisioning of CVCCSD, student applications, and the FY24 budget.

8.4 Finance Committee

Minutes from the February 16, 2023 meeting were distributed.

The next meeting is Thursday, March 16, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

Mrs. Leclerc provided a brief overview of the meeting which focused mainly on the FY24 budget, FY23 year-end projections, and the warrant process.

8.5 Facilities & Transportation Committee

Minutes from the February 13, 2023 meeting were distributed.

The next meeting is Monday, March 13, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

Mr. Reil provided an overview of the meeting, including; updates to SHS facilities, possible room shifts to allow CVCCSD to utilize more space, restroom concerns, a review of past maintenance projects, bidding and outside vendor procedures, transportation, an update on the HVAC Project, storm water remediation, and a tour (HVAC construction area) that will be held prior to the next meeting. Funding sources for storm water remediation are unknown at this time.

8.6 Policy Committee

The next meeting is Monday, March 20, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

Ms. Parker advised regarding upcoming First Readings that will be presented to the Board. Ms. Parker advised that earlier this week, the Committee discussed D32, D23, B20, and a way in which to retain a policy on the teaching of sensitive issues.

8.7 Curriculum Committee

Minutes from the February 2, 2023 meeting were distributed.

The March 2, 2023 meeting is cancelled.

Mrs. Pregent provided an overview of the minutes including; an overview of spelling analysis, professional development, and utilization of outside personnel (vs in-house personnel) for professional development. Brief discussion was held regarding the release of SBAC data (which has been embargoed by the State).

The next meeting date is to be determined.

8.8 Negotiations Committee

Minutes from the February 8, 2023 meeting were distributed.

Mrs. Pregent advised that the Committee met to discuss strategies and details. The Committee met with BEA representatives on 02/22/23 and will be meeting with them again on 03/22/23.

The next Negotiations Committee meeting date is to be determined

9. Other Business/Round Table

Mr. Malone queried regarding presentation of information relating to ESSER funds and queried regarding use of Tax Stabilization Funds for the FY24 budget, noting that this has not been approved by the Board.

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board voted 7 to 1 to approve utilizing \$700,000 from the Tax Stabilization Fund, as revenue for the FY24 budget. Mrs. Pregent voted against the motion.

Mrs. Leclerc is looking forward to upcoming basketball and hockey games, advising that she looks forward to seeing the reinstatement of fun activities for the students (field trips, art show, etc.). Mrs. Leclerc congratulated Olivia Badger for being selected to serve as a Vermont Statehouse Page.

Mrs. Farrell advised regarding the upcoming Barre Heritage Festival, and Mrs. Marold's request for supplies for that event. Mrs. Farrell would like the supply request added to a future agenda.

Mrs. Pregent queried regarding the reorganization meeting being held on 03/09/23 (2 days after the election).

Mr. Boltin advised that the budget is worked on every year, and he believes this year the process has been dragged out.

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Mrs. Pregent and Mr. Boltin were thanked for their service on the Board.

Mrs. Spaulding congratulated and recognized impressive student athletes; Rebecca McKelvey, Nick Kidder, and Coy Lyford.

Mr. Hennessey advised regarding the District Art Show (at Aldrich Library), and commended Art teachers for working with students on this exhibit.

10. Future Agenda Items

March 9, 2023:

- Board Reorganization

March 23, 2023:

- New Hires
- First Readings of Policies
- Special Education Changes
- Pre-K Changes
- Heritage Festival Discussion

Add to Parking Lot:

- Student Led Survey Results (added by Mr. Cecchinelli Feb 2023)

Remove from Parking Lot:

D. Barre City Before and After School Care Concept or Plan

Modify Parking Lot Item:

G. Change 'Special Education Student Count' to 'Special Education Student Count / Evaluations etc.' (Discuss at Curriculum Committee prior to presentation to the Board)

11. Next Meeting Dates

Thursday, March 9, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

Thursday, March 23, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

12. Executive Session as Needed

12.1 Superintendent Evaluation

12.2 Report on FOIA Investigation

Items proposed for discussion in Executive Session include the Superintendent's Evaluation and a Report on the FOIA Investigation. Ms. Parker will not be in attendance for Executive Session. Mrs. Farrell will provide the end of meeting notes.

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Hennessey in attendance (for portions of the session), at 8:19 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 to discuss the items proposed for discussion.

The remaining information was provided by the Vice Chair, Mrs. Farrell.

On a motion by Mrs. Leclerc, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 9:50 p.m. Ms. Parker was not present for the vote.

13. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:52 p.m. Ms. Parker was not present for the vote.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin