

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING**

BUUSD Central Office and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
July 26, 2023 - 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Giuliano Cecchinelli, II (BC) – Chair
Chris Parker (BT) – Vice Chair
Paul Malone (BT) - Clerk
Michael Boutin (BC)
Nancy Leclerc (At-Large)
Ben Moore (BC) – joined at 6:10 p.m.
Terry Reil (BT)
Sonya Spaulding (BC)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Emily Reynolds (BT)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Jamie Evans, Facilities Director
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Dale Burnash	Alice Farrell	Michael Gilbar	Sarah Helman
Josh Howard	Prudence Krasofski	Joelen Mulvaney		

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Cecchinelli, called the Wednesday, July 26, 2023, Regular 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

Discussion included requests to hold Executive Sessions at the end of the meeting (to accommodate members of the public), deletion of Agenda Item 7.2 (until after the Finance Committee has held discussion), to add 7.7 Accusation of Harassment by Board Chair, to amend 6.2 to include the Warrant dated 07/20/23, and to take Agenda Item 7.3 out of order.

Mrs. Spaulding made a motion to approve the Agenda. The motion was not seconded.

Brief discussion was held regarding the appropriateness of discussion of proposed item 7.7 in open vs. Executive Session.

Mrs. Spaulding withdrew the motion to approve the Agenda.

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board voted 4 to 2 to postpone discussion of ‘Accusation of Harassment by Board Chair’ to the next Regular meeting and to seek a legal opinion (prior to the meeting) on whether discussion can/should be held in the open portion of the meeting.

Mr. Boutin, Mrs. Leclerc, Mr. Malone, and Mr. Reil voted for the motion.

Ms. Parker and Mrs. Spaulding voted against the motion.

Mr. Moore was not present for the vote.

Mr. Moore joined the meeting.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board unanimously voted to approve the amended agenda with deletion of 7.2, taking 7.3 out of order, taking 7.7 off the agenda (which technically had not been added on), and amending 6.2 (the Warrant agenda item).

4. Executive Session

No items were proposed for discussion in Executive Session.

5. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

5.1 Public Comment

None.

5.2 Student Voice

None.

6. Consent Agenda

6.1 Approval of Minutes – June 28, 2023 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the June 28, 2023 Regular Meeting.

6.2 Warrant Approvals (6/28, 7/5, 7/13, and 7/20)

Lengthy discussion was held, including, but not limited to; staff use and associated membership fees, appreciation of the new format, concern that school identifiers are missing for some items, a request from Mrs. Perreault (for feedback on the new system), a request for clarity of GMP expenses and Novice payment history, monies spent on Staff Appreciation/awards, the SHS service contract for unit ventilators, the number of classrooms left for asbestos removal (approximately 15 at \$6,000 to \$7,000 each), tuition paid to Saint Michael's College, training by Tyler Technologies, food service expenses (tracked by building?), technology expenses vs. budget, dump trucks/dump trailer use, appropriateness of some of the questions/discussion under this agenda item (Warrant Approval) and if it is more appropriate for the Finance or Facilities Committees, coding for SEA under SHS, 2023 graduation expenses (booked in FY24), and the benefit of having Warrant questions presented prior to meetings.

On a motion by Mr. Boutin, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Warrants for 06/28/23, 07/05/23, 07/13/23, and 07/20/23.

Discussion moved to Agenda Item 7.3

7. Current Business

7.1 New Hires

The resumes and BUUSD Notification of Employment Status Forms for Kelsey Treat (BCEMS ECO teacher), Abigail Duncan (BTMES 4th grade), Samantha (Alex) Alexander (SEA Special Educator), and Mackenzie Kovaka (BCEMS Developmental Design Teacher) were distributed. Mr. Hennessey provided an overview of the candidates and it was noted that Ms. Treat has been hired to teach ECO, as the District has been unable to hire a Spanish teacher. Brief discussion ensued, which included concern regarding the lack of equity for BCEMS students (BTMES students will have Foreign Language), and a request to find a way to utilize the BTMES Spanish teacher at both BCEMS and BTMES, including possible virtual options. Mr. Hennessey advised that the District has had a very difficult time hiring foreign language teachers. Mr. Hennessey advised that there will be a new, more streamlined system for sharing employee candidate information. It was confirmed that the candidate information in the packet has personal information redacted. In response to a query, Mr. Hennessey advised that BCEMS is down 3 Special Educators, SHS needs a head of Guidance, and there are quite a few other openings, including support positions. Updated information will be presented to the Board at a later date. A community member suggested that the District consider ASL (American Sign Language) as a foreign language for BCEMS.

On a motion by Mr. Boutin, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board unanimously voted to approve the hiring of Kelsey Treat, Abigail Duncan, Samantha (Alex) Alexander, and Mackenzie Kovaka.

~~**7.2 Warrant Procedure**~~

~~A copy of the BUUSD Warrant Procedures (revised 07/05/23) was distributed.~~

7.3 Response to Student and Family Needs

A copy of a memo from Mr. Hennessey (dated 07/21/23) was distributed.

Mr. Hennessey acknowledged that the past few weeks have been incredibly challenging (due to the flood). It was noted that the facilities suffered minimal damage. The District is aware of the concerns voiced regarding the use of District facilities for emergency shelters. Mr. Hennessey advised that BCEMS administrators canvassed various neighborhoods checking on the welfare of students and families. The recovery process will most likely extend well into the school year. Lexington Foods was lauded for preparing meals for the community during this disaster. Lengthy discussion was held regarding the unavailability of BTMES as an emergency shelter (as had been agreed to when the generator was installed). It was noted that the showers and hot water at BTMES were not adequate to be used for an emergency shelter. Work has been performed to fix the showers (which have been unused for many years). It was noted that less hot water is available in the summer when the boiler is not in operation. The BCEMS gym floor is undergoing

renovations (preventing its use), and SHS is also in the midst of major renovations, which prevents its use as an emergency shelter. It was also noted that the 'men's locker room' showers at BTMES and SHS do not meet privacy standards (large, open shower areas – not private showers). Mr. Boutin queried regarding possible use of FEMA funds to renovate showers, and ways in which the District may be able to serve students in a location outside of the flooded areas (many are living in areas with toxic 'mud/sludge', and have no water or electricity in their homes). Staffing and transportation could be problematic. Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding what the District or the Board can do to assist students and families. It was noted that backpacks and school supplies are very much in need. There are systems in place at all schools to assist with dispersing supplies. Mr. Malone advised regarding discussion at the Barre Town Select Board meeting, including the Town's surprise that BTMES was not available as an emergency shelter, and inquired regarding the MOU between Barre Town and the school District. It was noted that there was also a document signed by the Red Cross and the District, which included a list of what the Red Cross requires of an emergency shelter. In response to a query, it was noted that the Town of Barre is responsible for monthly testing of the generator and that a protocol is necessary to assure this can occur. In response to a query, Mr. Evans advised that as of now, BTMES meets the necessary requirements. Mr. Boutin requested a list of what school supplies are needed for students. Mr. Hennessey noted that there are a lot of efforts to provide aid and that those efforts need to be coordinated. It was noted that each school has procedures in place for the distribution of school supplies. Mr. Boutin noted that it is important to register with both FEMA and 211. The District has been in contact with VSBIT. Mr. Evans lauded Don Lessard for his efforts to monitor and mitigate flood damage to SHS. Mr. Reil requested that once this crisis has passed the District work collaboratively with Barre City and Barre Town to plan for any future emergencies, and report the outcome of that collaboration to the Board. Ms. Parker advised that many students will be returning to school with flood related trauma and that the District needs to be prepared to deal with these social/emotional needs. Ms. Parker also stressed the need to coordinate distribution of necessities. Discussion moved to agenda item 7.1.

7.4 Behavior Committee/Task Force Charge

A document titled BUUSD Behavior Committee was distributed.

A copy of an email to the Board from Mr. Hennessey (dated 06/07/23) was distributed.

A copy of an email from Mr. Boutin to Mr. Hennessey (dated 05/26/23) was distributed.

A document titled BUUSD Action item Briefing Memo (for 07/26/23 meeting) was distributed.

Mr. Boutin provided an overview of the proposed Behavioral Committee/Task Force, and quoted the most recent response from legal counsel regarding formation of such a committee. Legal counsel, after reviewing the information provided, responded that he thinks it's excellent and loves the idea that the school board is diving into this issue. Outstanding questions include the make-up of committee members. Mr. Boutin is requesting Board support for the formation of this committee, and requested comments and questions from the Board. Lengthy discussion ensued, including; concern that Board Members do not have the expertise to participate on this type of a committee, that the committee might focus solely on data and that 'children will be left behind', concern that protected information might be shared or Board objectivity might be skewed (for when dealing with disciplinary matters in a judiciary capacity), clarification that no individual 'cases' would be shared at the committee level and reiteration that legal counsel does support this initiative, the importance of showing the community that the Board is taking steps to assist with behavioral issues, a suggestion that the District commit to having the majority of professional development geared toward behavior issues, confirmation that the scope of proposed committee is very narrow (to allow Board Members to meet their judiciary obligations), the responsibility to community members who have strongly voiced that the current system is not working, the benefits of reviewing data, policies, and procedures, acknowledgment that the District cannot fix the root of the matter (home/parenting situations), acknowledgement that 'behavior' has been continually voiced as a problem (by staff, parents, and students), accountability for outcomes of education, the need to review policies and procedures (to assure they are adequate and being followed), funding, supporting staff, restriction of education resulting from negative classroom behaviors of some students, the obligation to education all students, concern over committee membership (the need to include a mental health professional), concern of bias by committee members, the need for open mindedness of committee members, concern over possible micromanagement, a suggestion that the focus be narrowed, concern over the proposed timeframe for the committee, concern that participation on the committee is a burden for staff, reiteration of the most recent response from legal counsel "I've reviewed the document. I think it's excellent. I love the idea of the Board, with the assistance of other persons, drilling down into this kind of issue. Well done.", a belief that legal counsel has 'blessed' having this committee, a suggestion that the Board take the opportunity to see that what needs to be done (to address behavioral issues) is being done, a query regarding who will obtain the data, a query regarding the availability of funding (if the consensus is that more staff or programs are needed), administrative team concern that a lot of the work is being done and administrators want time to present what they have been working on, concern regarding ongoing behavioral issues that continually disrupt the learning of classmates, community members belief that they have followed the chain of command and are now asking the Board to step in, concern that students are being harmed academically, physically, and emotionally, and that discussion does not include how to assist/protect the 'victims', concern that individuals who are complaining may not have enough data, concern that 50% of students don't feel that they belong, a belief that hired professionals can address issues better than an ad-hoc committee, clarification of the make-up of the proposed committee (which does include professionals within the District), community member support for the committee and the need to find new ways to improve the system that many believe is not working, a belief that policies and procedures need to be reviewed, a suggestion that an element to be explored is how parenting impacts classroom behavior and working to improve the partnership between the school and parents (community connections), an offer from VSBIT to assist with this issue, a suggestion that

this item be tabled for now to allow time for administrators to present the work they are doing to address behavioral issues, concern that the Board has been made aware (by community members) that there are problems and the Board has not taken action

On a motion by Mr. Boutin, seconded by Mr. Reil, the Board voted 4 to 3 against the motion to move forward, to create a behavioral committee based on the presented behavioral committee charge and instruct staff to advertise the positions of membership which would be for one month, with the desired make-up of the committee to be two Board Members, one administrator, staff fluent in behavior, and three teachers, and one community member.

Mr. Boutin, Mrs. Leclerc, and Mr. Reil voted for the motion.

Mr. Moore, Mr. Malone, Ms. Parker, and Mrs. Spaulding voted against the motion.

7.5 Discuss Reinstatement of SHS SRO Position

Mr. Malone advised regarding his reasoning for reinstating the position of SRO at SHS. It was clarified that the request to reinstate the SRO should be done as soon as possible (the upcoming year) and that financing could be achieved by making shifts to the current budget.

Mr. Boutin moved to instruct the Superintendent to look to hire an SRO for Spaulding High School. Mr. Malone seconded the motion.

In response to a query, Mr. Malone advised regarding why the position was previously eliminated. It was noted that it is important to have the 'right fit'. It was noted that to hire an SRO requires contracting with the City of Barre. Mr. Boutin noted that contracting with Barre City presents a conflict of interest for him. **Mr. Boutin withdrew his motion.** Lengthy discussion ensued, including; the belief that behavior issues and an SRO go hand in hand, a query regarding whether the position is full-time or part-time (full-time), a belief that the SRO's responsibilities need to fit in with administrators' plans and has to fit in with the school's behavior plans (not the beliefs of the SRO), that the SRO needs to be a 'good fit' that supports the school's needs, discussion of the success of the SRO at BCEMS, extra training required of SRO's, the need to discuss this with the Barre City Chief of Police, does BCPD have the capacity to provide an SRO, confirmation that the BCEMS SRO does get pulled from the school to deal with other police matters, police response time when located off-site, concern over who would respond if there was a major event at SHS (and how quickly they could respond), a community member's concern that in the past, the presence of an SRO did not guarantee student safety, a community member's concern that in the past, the District paid for an SRO, but was not being provided with the services, a community member's request that any contract include a clause that does not require the District to pay for services that are not being received, a community member's input regarding the benefits of having an SRO (student safety, building positive relationships, and identifying potential problems), confirming that an SRO candidate can insure that they will build positive relationships with various populations of students (students with disabilities, students of color, etc.), a suggestion to look to the successful SRO Programs at BCEMS and BTMES, the opinion that given current discretionary spending, it appears there is enough money in the budget to fund an SRO, next steps, and a query regarding spending money on something different to support students (if an SRO can't be hired).

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board voted 5 to 1 to instruct the Superintendent to look to hire an SRO for Spaulding High School.

Mrs. Leclerc, Mr. Malone, Mr. Moore, Ms. Parker, Mr. Reil voted for the motion.

Mrs. Spaulding voted against the motion.

Mr. Boutin abstained.

7.6 Action Memos

A document titled BUUSD Action Item Briefing Memo was distributed.

Mr. Boutin provided clarification regarding his suggestion that the Board utilize Action Memos in an effort to streamline agendas.

Mr. Boutin provided an overview of the action memo form, how it is utilized, and requested that the Board consider implementing its use. Brief discussion was held regarding the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing the form. The Board did not make a formal decision regarding use of the form.

8. Old Business

8.1 Second and Final Reading of Fire Emergency Preparedness Drills Policy (F3) (Required)

A copy of the policy was distributed. A revised copy of the policy (from the addendum) was distributed.

A copy of an email from Sean M. Toohey to Mr. Cecchinelli and Ms. Parker (dated 06/29/23) was distributed.

Ms. Parker advised regarding legal counsel's recommendation to adopt the policies as written by VSBA, noting that the policy can be amended in the future to be 'more' than what is required by statute, but not less than statute requires. Regarding policy F4, it was noted that the optional section is not necessary, as there are no doors that need to be kept unlocked.

On a motion by Mr. Boutin, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Second and Final Readings of the Fire Emergency Preparedness Drills Policy (F3), and the Access Control and Visitor Management Policy (F4) as presented in the addendum, and agreed to adopt said policies.

8.2 Second and Final Reading of Access Control and Visitor Management Policy (F4) (Required)

A copy of the policy was distributed. A revised copy of the policy (from the addendum) was distributed.

Action taken under Agenda Item 8.1.

8.3 Rescind Access Control Policy (F25)

A copy of the policy was distributed.

With the adoption of Policy F4, this policy should be rescinded.

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mr. Reil, the Board unanimously voted to rescind the Access Control Policy (F25).

8.4 Superintendent Evaluation Service Agreement

A copy of a document titled Superintendent Evaluation Service Agreement Between the BUUSD and VSBA was distributed.

Mr. Cecchinelli advised regarding the date change made to the document.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board voted 4 to 3 to approve the Superintendent Evaluation Service Agreement and authorized the Board Chair to sign the document.

Mr. Boutin, Mr. Moore, Ms. Parker, and Mrs. Spaulding voted for the motion.

Mrs. Leclerc, Mr. Malone, and Mr. Reil voted against the motion.

9. Committee Reports

9.1 Finance Committee

The Committee did not meet in July.

The next meeting is Monday, August 21, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

9.2 Facilities & Transportation Committee

The next meeting is Monday, July 31, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

9.3 Policy Committee

The Committee did not meet in July.

The next meeting is Wednesday, August 16, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

9.4 Curriculum Committee

The Committee did not meet in July and will not meet in August.

The next meeting is Wednesday, September 6, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

9.5 Negotiations Committee

The next meeting date is to be determined

9.6 CVCCSD Board

The Board did not meet in July.

The next meeting is Monday, August 14, 2023.

10. Other Business/Round Table

Mr. Reil appreciates the new schedule for distribution of the packet and addendum. Mr. Reil queried regarding the delay in moving meetings back to SHS. Mr. Hennessey believes that SHS might be available for the August 23rd meeting. Mr. Reil requested the Board's permission to contact legal counsel (Pietro Lynn) with follow-up questions related to the topic of Administrator Contracts. Mrs. Spaulding requested that the Board discuss Mr. Reil's questions in Executive Session, prior to voting on whether or not to authorize permission. Mr. Cecchinelli added Agenda Item 13.1 – Administrator Contracts.

Mr. Boutin advised regarding employee engagement for current staff, noting that he is not sure if Gallup would be the best way to proceed, and he is still working on the best way to proceed. Mr. Boutin advised regarding a recent purchase that was paid for out of the facilities budget rather than the food service surplus account. Mr. Boutin recommends that future purchases should come out of more restrictive funds before coming out of less restrictive funds.

Mrs. Spaulding queried regarding utilizing supplies (popcorn, books, sunglasses etc.) that were planned for the Heritage Festival (which has now been postponed) for distribution to the areas affected by flooding. It was suggested that popcorn, books, etc., be distributed at the concerts in Currier Park. Mr. Hennessey will recirculate sign-up sheets for volunteers.

Mr. Malone noted that the flood was an interesting experience, as he got to see many individuals that he hasn't seen in years and there was a wonderful volunteer turnout. It was noted that the governor was at the north end of Barre today. Mr. Malone reported that the York Scholarship has changed its awards to be four \$90,000 awards, plus one \$50,000 award and the SHS Scholarship Board is looking into increase the Reynold's awards as well as other awards. Collectively, the District has one of the largest scholarship programs in the state. The District tracks almost \$1,000,000 in scholarship awards per year (for the graduating class). For the class of 2023, there were 60 applicants and each applicant received an award.

Mrs. Leclerc thanked Mr. Evans and Mr. Lessard for managing the water/flooding issues at Spaulding High School.

11. Future Agenda Items

Mr. Boutin would like to add a 'standing' agenda item for 'Discussion of Removing Articles 3 and 4 and Restructuring Plan' (Parking Lot Item F)

08/09/23 Meeting:

- Executive Session for Personnel Matter – Schedule Contract Performance Update (as discussed 06/14/23)
- Executive Session for Personnel Matter – Complete Evaluation Discussed on 06/28/23

08/23/23 Meeting:

- Procedures for Policies (Parking Lot Item D)
- 5-Year Capital Plan

Parking Lot:

- Warrant Signature Page (Parking Lot Item E) – modify to indicate to add to September Agenda
- Discuss Board Stipends (Parking Lot Item G) – modify to indicate to add to September Agenda
- Explanation from AOE on the Cost Per-Pupil Formula (Parking Lot Item J) – modify to indicate to add to September Agenda
- Add to Parking Lot – Food Service Presentation (Board added 07/26/23)
- Add to Parking Lot - Behavior Presentation – Including Reporting (Board added 07/26/23)

12. Next Meeting Dates

Wednesday, August 9, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.

Wednesday, August 23, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. – location to be announced.

Mr. Hennessey advised he has an unforeseen engagement and will not be available to attend the August 9, 2023 meeting. Mr. Hennessey will choose a representative dependent on the agenda items.

13. Executive Session as Needed

13.1 Administrator Contracts

Administrator Contract Questions was proposed for discussion in Executive Session.

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Hennessey in attendance, at 9:48 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 to discuss the item proposed for discussion.

The remaining information was provided by the Board Clerk.

On a motion by Mr. Boutin, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 10:05 p.m.

On a motion by Mr. Boutin, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board voted 4 to 3 to allow Mr. Reil, via e-mail, to send questions to Pietro Lynn regarding administrative contracts.

Mr. Boutin, Mrs. Leclerc, Mr. Malone, and Mr. Reil voted for the motion.

Ms. Parker and Mrs. Spaulding voted against the motion.

Mr. Moore abstained.

14. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mr. Reil, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 10:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin