

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**
BUUSD Central Office and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
August 21, 2023 - 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sonya Spaulding (BC) – Chair
Paul Malone (BT) – Vice Chair
Michelle Hebert
John Lyons, Jr.
Ben Moore (BC)
Emily Reynolds (BT)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michael Boutin – joined at 6:06 p.m.
Giuliano Cecchinelli
Nancy Leclerc
Terry Reil

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager
Ashley Young, Assistant Business Manager

PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Spaulding, called the Monday, August 21, 2023 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was held at the BUUSD Central Office and via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 5.3 Committee Charge

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mr. Lyons, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the agenda as amended.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Meeting Minutes From June 19, 2023

On a motion by Mr. Moore, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the June 19, 2023 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 Warrant Signature Page/Warrant Procedure

A copy of Policy F20 was distributed.

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

A copy of a document titled Barre Unified Union School District Voucher was distributed.

The Committee held lengthy discussion, including, but not limited to; an overview of the pages included in the packet, confirmation that the Business Manager's signature is approving the Warrants (approval for the Business Manager's authorization of Warrants was granted at the re-organization meeting), a query regarding whether or not the current procedure agrees with statute, a request that a written legal opinion be obtained, a brief overview of the current and previous practices, a query regarding whether or not the Board can delegate administrators authority to approve warrants and is not neglecting its responsibilities as a Board, concern that there is

oversight and accountability, as well as evidence, concern that the signature page was changed without Board approval, a request to add Board Member names to the signature page, a request that auditors also be involved in a review of the current process, clarification that the new financial system generates the signature page and cannot be changed, a query regarding the availability of an electronic signature feature “Sign Now”, a request that auditors be contacted to assure that the current signature page is valid, a query regarding fund ‘605’ data (fund 605 is new and was only created 2 weeks ago), discussion regarding the benefit of emailing questions to the Business Office and whether or not questions should be filtered through the Committee Chair and who the response should go to (the individual who submitted the question?, all committee members?, all board members?), confirmation that questions can still be asked at Board meetings, a query regarding the possibility of possible open meeting law violations, steps to take to assure open meeting law is not violated, and a query regarding whether or not the warrants should continue to be included in Board packets.

5.2 Discuss Board Stipends

A copy of a document titled Board Member/Treasurer Pay – FY2023/2024 was distributed.

Mr. Boutin requested this item be added to the agenda to discuss details and logistics of Board stipends being donated back to the District. Mrs. Perreault, advised that in the past, Board Members who wanted to donate their stipend back to the District, have been asked to first accept the stipend, noting that until a Board Member actually ‘owns the funds’, the funds technically belong to the District. Mrs. Perreault advised that if a Board Member didn’t want to accept a stipend, that would have to be a Board decision. Mrs. Poulin provided clarification that stipends are specifically voted on by members of the public and they are specifically designated to be paid to Board Members, similar to votes designating funds to the Capital Improvement Fund, so it makes sense that they need to be paid out first, and then it would be a personal and private decision of each Board Member, whether or not they wish to donate the funds back to the District. The vote for stipends occurs at the District Annual Meeting and is voted on by registered voters, not the Board. Mr. Malone confirmed the vote occurs at the Annual Meeting and advised that any change to the stipend amount needs to be approved by voters. Mr. Boutin advised that rather than go through the ‘tax’ process, and only donate a portion of the stipend (back to the District), he would prefer a method that allows him to donate all of the stipend and not pay a portion of it to the government. Mr. Boutin advised regarding a process utilized by the Barre City Council. Mrs. Perreault advised that Mr. Boutin could refuse/decline the stipend and the Board would then have the authority to designate where those funds were allocated. Mrs. Spaulding advised that there will need to be a process put in place if the Board would like to allow refusal and reallocation of stipends. In response to a query from Mr. Boutin, Mrs. Spaulding provided clarification regarding the Annual Meeting, with voting ‘from the floor’. This item should be presented to the Board Chair for addition to a future agenda.

6. Old Business

6.1 FY23 Year-End Projections

A copy of the BUUSD FY23 Expense/Revenue Year-End Projection Summary Report (updated 08/21/23) was distributed.

Mrs. Perreault advised that the surplus stated in the packet (\$892,031) is understated as she neglected to include a \$63,000 solar audit payment. Additionally, the extraordinary special education payment was calculated at \$1,300,000 million, but she believes the District will be receiving close to \$2,000,000. It is believed that the surplus will end up being closer to \$1,500,000. Mrs. Perreault answered questions, including but not limited to; special education funding, education spending, reconciliation for CVCC (the merger was approved after budget creation), moving \$700,000 back to the Tax Stabilization Fund Balance (Tax Stabilization funds were not needed), clarification regarding the General Fund Balance, and a belief that the Capital Fund Balance appears to be lower than it should be. Mr. Reil noted that all but \$10,000 of the general budget appeared to be spent, and queried the Superintendent regarding whether or not the amount spent included \$750,000 budgeted for open para and BI positions. Mr. Hennessey advised that the \$750,000 had been spent, and deferred to Mrs. Perreault regarding how those funds were spent. Mrs. Perreault advised that there were overages in salaries and benefits for general education. Mr. Reil voiced concern that it was stated several times, and put in writing, that the \$750,000 for open para and BI positions, could not be touched and needed to ‘sit there’, and that if it were spent, the District would be out of compliance with regulations. Mr. Reil queried as to how that money could have been spent without being out of compliance. Mr. Hennessey noted that going forward into the coming year, there are still 19 open para positions and he believes that carried over, over the course of the year. Mrs. Perreault advised that the District had over spent in tuition and contracted services. Mr. Reil reiterated his concern that during budget season, it was repeatedly stated that the money had to be maintained and could not be spent. Mr. Hennessey advised that services still needed to be provided. Mr. Reil believes in providing the services, but believes the community was misled. Mr. Hennessey believes there was misinterpretation. In response to a query from Mr. Malone, Mrs. Perreault advised regarding the schedule for auditing services and noted that the audit is usually presented to the Board in December.

6.2 Budget Workshops

A document titled FY25 Budget Development Planning Proposal, August 21, 2023 was distributed.

Mrs. Perreault has developed a proposal with a detailed outline. Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of budget reflection discussion and proposed workshops. The schedule and timeline were developed in collaboration with administrators. Mrs. Perreault provided a brief overview of the plan for budget workshops. It was noted that the Finance Committee Chair and Vice Chair will be invited to attend the workshops to participate in the deliberations. It was noted that one of the charges of the Committee is to present a budget to the Board. The first presentation to the Finance Committee will be on 10/16/23 and administrators will be in attendance. Discussion

was held regarding the number of presentations that will need to be given (based on the number of different schools and departments within the District).

The budget and warnings will be presented to the Board for final approval on 01/10/24. Brief discussion was held regarding when the equalized pupil, CLA, and Yield numbers will be available. Additional discussion was held regarding the number of meetings that will be necessary, combining multiple departments in single meetings, and it was noted that tonight's document is a proposal and that the schedule will be finalized at a later date. More details will be provided in September. It was noted that health insurance increases are not known at this time. Mrs. Perreault will be suggesting meeting date changes to accommodate the number of meetings and holidays. Additional discussion will be held under Agenda Item 8.

6.3 Updated ESSER Report & Grant Funding Report

A document titled Grant Funded Employees, 8-11-2023 was distributed.

Mrs. Perreault advised that an ESSER presentation occurred in May. Tonight's discussion is to provide an update. Mrs. Perreault advised that a couple of ESSER funded positions were absorbed into the FY24 budget and that next year (FY25), the bulk of the positions will need to be absorbed or RIFed. There are many staffing implications and though funding is drying up, student needs are not. It was confirmed that all of the ESSER funds will be spent by the deadline, but the District will not go over budget. Mrs. Leclerc advised that the documentation does not include detailed information. Mrs. Perreault advised that she had not wanted to put the information in a public document. Mrs. Leclerc advised that all of the information is public information. Brief discussion was held regarding the documents (encumbered amounts). Mrs. Perreault advised that the encumbered amounts are amounts that were submitted for the grant.

7. Items for Future Agendas

Brief discussion was held relating to Total Compensation Package (Parking Lot Item C). The new financial system allows employees to see this information, but it may be beneficial for the Finance Committee to see it also. Mrs. Perreault may put together something to be reviewed during budget development. This item will be left in the Parking Lot and will be added to a future agenda. Brief discussion was also held relating to Parking Lot item E (Explanation from AOE and the Cost Per-Pupil Formula). This item will also be added to a future agenda.

- Audit Process Update / Timeline
- Act 173 Update
- Budget Workshop Schedule

8. Next Meeting Date

Monday, September 18, 2023 at 6:00 p.m., at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

Monday, October 16, 2023 at 6:00 p.m., at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

Monday, November 13, 2023 at 6:00 p.m., at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference. **(11/20/23 cancelled)**

It was suggested that the December meeting also be changed. November and December meeting date changes will be discussed by the full Board.

9. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Lyons, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Committee unanimously agreed to adjourn at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin