

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD MEETING**

Spaulding High School Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet  
November 8, 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)  
Terry Reil (BT)  
Emily Reynolds (BT)  
Sonya Spaulding (BC)

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Vacant Position (BC)

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

**Chris Hennessey, Superintendent**

Stacy Anderson, Director of Special Services  
Karen Fredericks, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment  
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

|                            |                    |                |                 |                  |
|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Dave Delcore – Times Argus | Nancy Benoit       | Alice Farrell  | Michael Gilbar  | Sarah Helman     |
| Josh Howard                | Prudence Krasofski | Colleen Kresco | John Lyons, Jr. | Raylene Meunier  |
| Andrea Poulin              | Sarah Pregent      | Brody Priddy   | Megan Spaulding | Rachel Van Vliet |

**1. Call to Order**

The Chair, Mr. Cecchinelli, called the Wednesday, November 8, 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.

**3. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda**

Add 8.3 Explanation From Board Chair Regarding Three Agenda Items Requested by Mr. Reil

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

**4. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda**

**4.1 Public Comment**

None.

**4.2 Student Voice**

Brody Priddy advised regarding an upcoming Student Council (Class of 2025) Fund Raiser (3 on 3 Basketball Tournament) that will be held Friday, immediately after school. Students and staff members are excited to participate in this tournament. Mr. Cecchinelli advised that he would like to sponsor a team, he is willing to pay the entry fee, and is looking for two other individuals to participate.

**5. Faculty/Staff - Reports/Presentations**

**5.1 CIA Plan**

A document titled ‘5-year Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Plan: 11/8/23 Update’ was distributed. The CIA Plan was displayed on screen and Ms. Fredericks provided an overview of updates to the Plan, noting that the Plan is still aligned with the 5 goals of the strategic plan. Comments, resources, and strategies are building from what was accomplished in year one. Ms. Fredericks advised regarding changes to the Plan, including, but not limited to; progress and future plans for coordinated curriculum, a presentation planned for the Curriculum Committee, Act 173 requirements for targeted instruction and plans to meet those requirements, hiring of an instructional coach with special education experience, creation of communication systems that foster collaborative internal and external relationships, literacy and math events, a planned climate survey, development of creative and

flexible curriculum and career pathways, plans to define reporting standards and performance indicators, a revised assessment table, support for administrators, SHS learning modules, planning of unique experiences for students attending the SEA Program, improvements in the provision of physical, mental, emotional, and environmental resources, promotion of student engagement and ownership of learning, including coordination of educational support teams, targeted instruction for K – 8 faculty as part of progress monitoring, and a new database to track interventions. Ms. Fredericks took comments and answered questions from the Board and community members, including; budgetary needs, how students are individually impacted by items in the Plan, Plan changes made in response to Act 173, the confidence level in meeting emotional and behavioral needs, responsibility for MTSS (including AOE comfort level of progress), the location of data that documents levels of improvement (for Board Member review), supports for students (while planning is going on), appreciation for local assessment data (included in the presentation), recognition that local assessments are beneficial, patterns identified in assessment data, a query regarding the number of students tested at various grades, a query relating to availability of data for students who have been in the District for their entire education (local assessment data is available beginning with the year 2019), alignment of curriculum (between the two elementary/middle schools), and any identified areas for focused attention. Ms. Fredericks was thanked for her participation in the meeting.

## **5.2 Special Education Staff and Child Count Data Report**

A document titled BUUSD Special Services Board Report November 2023 was distributed.

The Special Services Report was displayed. Mrs. Anderson addressed the Board and provided an overview of the report, including but not limited to; historical staffing and student count numbers, the significant increase in the number of students who qualify for special services / IEPs, a reduction in the number of special educators and support staff, an overview of the monitoring report (monitoring by the AOE), the monitoring process (the District is currently in ‘targeted’ monitoring), significant progress in Indicator 13 (100% compliance), progress updates for other indicators, implementation of new procedures and expectations (to assist with meeting Indicator requirements), the expectation that the District will meet compliance by the next reporting date (11/15/23), and training related to Special Education rule changes. Mrs. Anderson took comments and answered questions from the Board and community members, including, but not limited to; standards for staff to student ratios (no known national standard – caseloads of 15 to 18 would be ideal), a request to share new compliance numbers when available, monitoring maintenance after Indicators are met (out of Targeted), statewide growing pains with new compliance rules, the increase in case counts at SHS, kudos to Ms. Fredericks for revamping the MTSS system, a theory that the SEA Program may have increased the number of high school students staying in school, 13 unfilled positions (special educators and para-educators), the ability to meet students’ needs (without being fully staffed), use of contracted services and out-placements, use of math and literacy interventionists to help fill gaps and fulfill IEPs, concerns over trends (increased special needs students), confirmation that weighting is not impacted by the number of special needs students, a request for the number of students who have been declassified (no longer in need of an IEP), and ways to assure that those entering high school have the necessary skills.

## **6. Consent Agenda**

### **6.1 Approval of Minutes – October 25, 2023 Regular Meeting**

**On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to approve as amended, the Minutes of the October 25, 2023 Regular Meeting.**

### **6.2 Warrant Approval (10/26, 11/02)**

Mrs. Leclerc queried regarding a warrant for snow removal. Ms. Parker queried regarding a warrant for course reimbursement.

**On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board voted 6 to 1 to approve the Warrants dated 10/26/23 and 11/02/23.**

**Mr. Boutin, Mrs. Leclerc, Mr. Malone, Ms. Parker, Ms. Reynolds, and Mrs. Spaulding voted for the motion.  
Mr. Reil voted against the motion.**

## **7. Current Business**

### **7.1 BUUSD Board Seat Interviews**

Letters of Interest from; John Lyons, Jr., Sarah Pregent, Shellie Stevens, and Sarah Helman were distributed.

Candidates (Sarah Pregent, John Lyons, Jr., and Sarah Helman) were interviewed by the Board (Ms. Stevens was not in attendance). Candidates introduced themselves, advising regarding their interest in serving on the Board, and provided an overview of their experience and qualifications. Candidates answered questions from the Board, were thanked for applying, and were advised that a decision will be made after discussion in Executive Session.

### **7.2 New Hires**

There were no candidates presented for hire.

### **7.3 First Reading Board Member Conflict of Interest Policy (A1)**

A copy of the policy was distributed.

Ms. Parker advised that most of the policies presented this evening are due to VSBA formatting changes. The largest portion of discussion on this policy pertains to the use of the word ‘impression’ vs. ‘appearance’. The committee recommends using the word ‘appearance’ which agrees with the verbiage in the Statement of Policy. Brief discussion was held regarding various other VSBA wording amendments/deletions and previous discussions relating to use of VSBA Model Policies. Additional discussion was held regarding Section 8, b, ii, and whether or not the word ‘should’ or ‘shall’ is most appropriate for use in this defined situation and any statutory requirements.

**On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Ms. Reynolds, the Board unanimously voted to approve, as presented, the First Reading of the Board Member Conflict of Interest Policy (A1).**

**On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board unanimously voted to have Ms. Parker reach out to Pietro Lynn regarding proper wording for section 8, b ii.**

At Mr. Cecchinelli’s request, Ms. Parker began to Chair the meeting at 7:55 p.m. Mr. Cecchinelli briefly departed the meeting.

#### **7.4 First Reading Home Study Students Policy (C6)**

A copy of the policy was distributed.

Ms. Parker advised regarding policy amendments, reading from the VSBA policy notes.

**On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Reading of the Home Study Students Policy (C6).**

Mr. Cecchinelli returned to the meeting at 7:57 p.m. Ms. Parker continued to Chair the meeting.

#### **7.5 First Reading Title One Comparability Policy (D4)**

A copy of the policy was distributed.

Ms. Parker provided a brief overview of the changes, reading from the VSBA policy notes. Brief discussion was held pertaining to the documentation of compliance clause.

**On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Reading of the Title One Comparability Policy (D4). Mr. Boutin was not present for the vote.**

#### **7.6 First Reading Animal Dissection Policy (D5)**

A copy of the policy was distributed.

Ms. Parker advised that only formatting changes were made.

**On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Ms. Reynolds, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Reading of the Animal Dissection Policy (D5). Mr. Boutin was not present for the vote.**

#### **7.7 First Reading Class Size Policy (D6)**

A copy of the policy was distributed.

Ms. Parker provided an overview of the notes from VSBA. Brief discussion was held regarding the District’s recommendations and AOE recommendations, noting that class size recommendations may vary throughout the state dependent on school populations, thus there is leeway in setting class sizes. Class sizes are based on ‘best practices’.

**On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Ms. Reynolds, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Reading of the Class Size Policy (D6).**

#### **7.8 First Reading Travel Reimbursement Policy (F1)**

A copy of the policy was distributed.

Ms. Parker advised regarding formatting changes and additional details that were added by VSBA. Discussion was held regarding conflicts between the policy and the CBA (Collaborative Bargaining Agreement).

**On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to approve the First Reading of the Travel Reimbursement Policy (F1).**

Mr. Cecchinelli returned to chairing the meeting. The Board recessed at 8:10 p.m. and reconvened at 8:16 p.m.

### **9. Old Business**

#### **8.1 Second and Final Reading Transportation Policy (C3)**

Ms. Parker noted a small change to section D of the Policy.

**On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Second and Final Reading of the Transportation Policy (C3) and agreed to adopt said policy.**

### **8.2 Enrollment/Home Study Update**

A document titled District Enrollment/Staffing – November 2023 was distributed.

A document titled Home Study Report (AOE provided data) was distributed.

Mr. Hennessey provided a brief overview of the quarterly report, noting that there is an increase of approximately 85 students. Student counts have increased at BTMES and remained fairly stable at SHS and BCEMS. Mr. Hennessey lauded the BCEMS registrar for her work with onboarding new students. Clarification was provided regarding outplaced and pre-k numbers. Brief discussion was held regarding the increase in the number of homeschooled students and whether outreach is performed for these students (to determine why they chose homeschooling), who parents should contact if they want their students to participate in some of the schools' activities, clarification of the number of students waiting to be approved for homeschooling, and data on the number of homeschool students who participate in District activities. Additional discussion included technical center student counts and the increase in pre-school counts (there is currently a waiting list for admission to pre-k).

### **8.3 Explanation From Board Chair Regarding Three Agenda Items Requested by Mr. Reil**

Mr. Reil requested an explanation for why agenda items he has asked for, have not been added to agendas. Mr. Reil requested that the record reflect the reasons provided by the Chair. Discussion of the vote to postpone indefinitely – Mr. Cecchinelli advised that the vote was decided by the Board and that any revote would result in the same result and he believes it would be a waste of time. Mr. Reil advised that the Chair previously advised that it was an error. Mr. Cecchinelli agreed that it was in error and Mr. Reil believes it's important for the Board to recognize that it was an error (procedurally). Mr. Reil noted the second item relates to an Executive Session that was held (where he challenged whether the subject qualified for Executive Session). Mr. Reil advised that it was determined to qualify for Executive Session because exempt records were going to be provided. Mr. Reil advised that exempt records were never provided in Executive Session, and believes the Board needs to do a better job of identifying when items do qualify for Executive Session. Mr. Reil noted that legal counsel has advised that there may be items that though uncomfortable to discuss, don't belong in Executive Session. Mr. Reil reiterated that the exempt records were never distributed, reviewed, or even referenced, so technically the matter did not qualify for Executive Session. Mr. Cecchinelli advised that the matter was related to personnel and that the Board will not discuss any individual who works for the District, in open session. Mr. Reil noted that the Board cannot override statute. Mr. Reil's last item is that the Board Chair is not communicating or responding to certain members (e-mail communications and requested agenda items). Mr. Reil noted that if the Chair had advised he would not add requested items to the agenda, he would have stopped asking for them to be added. Mr. Reil advised that in a discussion relating to not responding to emails, Mr. Cecchinelli advised that he will not respond to emails that don't specifically have to do with educating kids or Board business. Mr. Reil advised that every email he sends to the Chair relates to Board business or education and he wants it on the record that the Chair is deciding not to communicate with Board Members. Mr. Cecchinelli believes Mr. Reil is incorrect and advised that he does communicate with Board Members and it's based on the topic and he will continue not responding if the topic does not deal with the District or educating kids, or if it's trivial, e.g. not following Open Meeting Law, or anything else not directly related to the District. Mr. Reil noted for the record that following Open Meeting Law or policies and procedures, is not trivial and the Board is not doing a good job at following the rules and procedures, and he believes that was discussed a couple of weeks ago and the Board needs to do a better job of it. Mr. Cecchinelli advised that if Mr. Reil believes the Chair has violated Open Meeting Law, it is incumbent on him to prove it. Mr. Reil would like the Chair to read and embrace VSBA Role of the Chair documentation.

### **9. Future Agenda Items**

- Second and Final Readings of Policies (Including legal information on Policy A1)
- FY25 Budget – First Draft
- Quarterly Disciplinary Data

Discussion was held regarding the previous request for the addition of Electronic Storage of Records, Total Compensation Package, and Update on New Accounting Software. It was noted that these items will be discussed at the Committee level and will move to the Board level when appropriate. Lengthy discussion ensued, including opposing views as to whether or not these items should start at the Committee, then go to the Board, or Board level then down to Committee. **Mr. Reil called Point of Order – reason - the Board had held 10 minutes of discussion rather than identifying agenda items and if debate is necessary, the discussion should be held under an agenda item.** Discussion returned to future agenda items. Mrs. Leclerc advised she would like her 3 agenda items added. It was confirmed that Parking Lot Items H, I, and J will remain in the Parking Lot because they are quarterly items.

### **10. Next Meeting Dates**

Wednesday, November 29, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

Wednesday, December 13, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

## **11. Executive Session**

### **11.1 BUUSD Board Seat Candidate Review – 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3)**

### **11.2 Personnel - 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(4)**

Items proposed for discussion in Executive Session include Review of Board Seat Candidates and a Personnel Matter - 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(4).

Brief discussion was held regarding the addition of another personnel item that was not part of the Agenda and a request was made that the Board receive clarification on Executive Session, specifically; what can be added and when it can be added and whether or not non-actionable items (updates) can be added at the end of the meeting. In response to a query, it was noted that final approval of a Board candidate does not have to go through City Council. The City Council just needs to be notified of the Board's decision. A decision to appoint a candidate to the vacant Board seat will be made tonight and the appointed individual should then go the Barre City Clerk to be sworn in. A background check can be performed after the individual has been sworn in. Mrs. Spaulding requested that a Personnel Item be added to a future agenda.

**On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Ms. Reynolds, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Hennessey in attendance, at 8:51 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 to discuss the items proposed for discussion.**

The remaining information was provided by the Board Clerk.

**On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 9:25 p.m.**

**On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board voted 4 to 3 to appoint Sarah Pregent to fill the vacant Board seat.**

**Mr. Boutin, Ms. Parker, Ms. Reynolds, and Mrs. Spaulding voted for the motion.  
Mrs. Leclerc, Mr. Malone, and Mr. Reil voted against the motion.**

## **12. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:29 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Andrea Poulin*