

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING**

Spaulding High School Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
November 29, 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)
Sarah Pregent (BC)
Terry Reil (BT)
Emily Reynolds (BT)
Sonya Spaulding (BC)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Luke Aither, SHS Co-Principal
Emmanuel Ajanma, Director of Technology
Stacy Anderson, Director of Special Services
Jamie Evans, Facilities Director
Melissa Greenwood, BCEMS Assistant Principal
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Mari Miller, SHS Assistant Principal
Ted Mills, BTMES Assistant Principal
Jennifer Nye, BTMES Principal
Erica Pearson, BTMES Principal
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager
Brenda Waterhouse, BCEMS Principal
Ashley Young, Assistant Business Manager

GUESTS PRESENT:

| | | | | |
|---------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Peter Anthony | Bridgett Apfel | Mel Battah | Martha Blaisdell | James Carpenter |
| Alice Farrell | Michael Gilbar | Josh Howard | Tyler Kimberly | Prudence Krasofski |
| Sherry Lewton | Reed McCracken | Joelen Mulvaney | Victoria Pompei | Andrea Poulin |
| Brody Priddey | Rachel Van Vliet | Brittany Wood | | |

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Cecchinelli, called the Wednesday, November 29, 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 8.7 Appoint Board Member to Open Position on Superintendent Evaluation Committee
Add 13.2 Administrator Contracts 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(a)
Add 13.3 Personnel – 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3)
Take Agenda Item 8.3 (Audit Presentation) out of order.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as amended.

4. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

4.1 Public Comment

Mr. Boutin reported he had fun at the Student Council sponsored Basketball Tournament.

4.2 Student Voice

None.

5. Faculty/Staff – Reports/Presentations

Discussion moved to Agenda Item 8.3

6. Consent Agenda

6.1 Approval of Minutes – November 8, 2023 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the November 8, 2023 Regular Meeting.

6.2 Warrant Approval (11/09, 11/16)

Copies of the Warrants were distributed.

Concern was voiced regarding the ongoing amount expended for course reimbursement (significantly higher than in previous years). Mr. Hennessey advised that there are many employees under provisional and emergency licenses that require coursework in order to obtain licensure. In response to a query, the Superintendent advised he can provide the anticipated dollar amount at a later date. Brief discussion was held regarding coursework/timing of coursework, that less course reimbursement occurred during COVID, and a belief that the CBA does not contain limitations/restrictions on course reimbursement.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to approve as presented, the Warrants dated 11/09/23 and 11/16/2023.

7. Building Reports

7.1 Building Reports; BCEMS, BTMES, SHS

Copies of Building Reports were distributed.

Concern was raised that behavior data is included in Building Reports, and a suggestion, that the topic of Behavior deserves its own agenda item where more thoughtful discussion can be held. It was requested that Behavior Reporting be added to the next agenda. It was requested that behavior data be provided in a uniform manner for all schools. It was confirmed that SEA will be providing a report in the near future. There was a request that behavioral data include historical data. Brief discussion was held regarding how to interpret behavioral data. There was a request that the behavioral report include definitions of the various tiers. It was requested that data be broken down between elementary and middle school students. Brief discussion was held regarding the large discrepancy of substantiated HHB cases between the two elementary/middle schools; both schools utilize the same HHB Policy and procedures, each case/situation is unique and must be investigated to see if it meets HHB criteria, issues that don't qualify as HHB are still addressed as conduct issues, discrepancies in the number of suspensions, the need for more information to assist with identifying trends, a suggestion that the Administrative Team go back to the drawing board regarding report formatting/information, the difficulty in compiling all schools' data into one report format, the lack of a software program to provide reports, a request for the Board to specifically define the information they would like to see on reports and the 'need/intent' for/of the reports, possible budgetary considerations, consideration of possible next steps to address 'high-flyers/frequent-flyers' (students with 3 or more incidents), a suggestion that the Board work to provide clear guidelines for reporting, documentation to support the addition of full-time HHB Coordinators, the need to review the process/procedures to assure that the needs of students are being met, a query regarding how information is reported to the State, a request to utilize the BCEMS format and include Title IX, a suggestion that the report format be discussed at a future Board meeting, and a request from Mr. Cecchinelli for Board Members to send him an email with the list of information they want to see on behavior reports (including historical information). Appreciation was expressed for the inclusion of food for the BCEMS holiday concert, to administrators and staff for the work they perform to keep the schools running, for the letter sent to BTMES families, and for inclusion of the late start schedule and information relating to grading (SHS). Additional discussion included; a query regarding Tier I instruction at the 9th and 10th grade levels, implementation/availability of 6 Seconds training, the benefit of proactive steps for 9th and 10th graders, a query regarding the Crimson Block (previously Tide Time - intentional time for students to get assistance from teachers), ongoing work around the topic of Proficiency Based Grade Reporting (which differs from grading), an update on the SHS lighting project (should be completed by 01/01/2024), a query regarding potential electricity savings (after converting to LED), a query regarding SHS scholarship applications (submission and review), the awarding of scholarships to every student who applied in 2023, acknowledgement that the SHS Scholarship Program has one of the largest endowments for scholarships in New England, and appreciation for upgrades to the multi-purpose and wrestling rooms.

8. Current Business

8.1 New Hires

No candidates were presented for hire.

8.2 FY25 Budget Presentation

A copy of the FY25 Budget Information Presentation (dated 11/29/23) was distributed.

A copy of the FY 25 Budget Development Narrative (updated 11/29/23) was distributed.

A document titled Proposed FY25 Revenue Budget (11/29/23) was distributed.

A document titled Proposed FY25 Expenses Budget (11/29/23) was distributed.

Appreciation was extended to Mrs. Perreault and the Business Office for their work on the Audit. The Budget Presentation, as was presented to the Finance Committee, was displayed on screen. Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of the presentation, including but not limited to; an overview of the budget timeline, the FY24 / FY25 budget expense and revenues comparison, education spending, the investment in instruction, Act 127 (goes into effect in FY25), the change in student counts based on the new weighting formula (a gain of approximately 892 students (ADM – Average Daily Membership), tax implications of Act 127, other tax rate factors (Yield, CLA), District and Homestead Tax Rate calculations, and the General Fund Expenditure increase of 11.7%.

The Board reviewed the Budget Narrative, held discussion and presented questions to administration, including but not limited to; continuation of positions created to mitigate the impact of COVID (previously funded by ESSER), the budget impact of moving grant funded positions to the general fund, concern regarding the bottom line ramifications given the proposed tax rate increase in Barre City, contracted services for the Virtual High School, appreciation for the addition of a grant writer, a suggestion to spend FY24 surplus monies for FY25 supplies, keeping the SHS SRO in the budget, clarification that 3 ESSER positions are slated to be cut, an explanation of how mental health professionals are utilized/how roles differ, the importance that mental health professionals with providing supports to students and families, the possibility of equity issues (library services and principal offices), appreciation for funding for field trips, a query regarding CVCCSD tuition (hasn't been set yet), a query regarding the lack of increase for extracurricular transportation, a request for the document to show the actual increase in dollar amount for each school, a query regarding the number of students to be served with increased programs/services at BCEMS, custodial line items (electricity, overtime, and playground equipment), the increase for the grant writing position, structure of and skills necessary for the grant writing position, the increase for staff appreciation supplies and refreshments under multiple line items, the increase for a .5 FTE Hiring Coordinator, the decrease in general instruction at BTMES (positions shifted to Central Office), the addition of an ELL position, a query regarding the snow removal contract, a request for the detailed line item budget report, discomfort with the increase of almost 12% and the ability of the community to afford such an increase, the need to have difficult discussions regarding items that are required vs. those that are niceties, concern over significant increases for salaries at the Central Office, Mr. Reil went on record to oppose the Central Office increases, including one for \$19,500, a query regarding when the CVCCSD tuition increase will be available (concern that last year's issue not be repeated – under budgeted by \$300,000), the possibility of using different SRO models, a query regarding a possible multi-year plan for playground equipment replacement, a query regarding any option to utilize the Washington County Sheriff's Office for an SRO at SHS, concern that renters will be negatively impacted by a large increase in the budget, the possibility of billing insurance for mental health services provided by the District, caution about using a different model for an SRO and the need for an SRO to have specialized training, acknowledgement that the current increase is daunting, and a suggestion that the Board wait for all of the numbers to come in, to recognize that the District has been underweighted for many years, should take advantage of an increase in taxing capacity, and confirmation that Central Office salary increases are included in the draft budget.

The meeting recessed at 8:53 p.m. and reconvened at 8:59 p.m.

8.3 FY23 Draft Audit Presentation

A copy of a draft letter from Mudgett, Jennett & Krogh-Wisner, P.C. (dated 11/21/23) was distributed.

A draft document titled BUUSD Financial Statements June 30, 2023 and Independent Auditor's Reports was distributed.

Tyler Kimberly of Mudgett, Jennett & Krogh-Wisner, P.C addressed the Board, advising that he performed the bulk of the audit and that the audit went smoothly, including the timeline. The audit was mostly completed in October. A few audit adjustments were proposed, with the largest item being an adjustment related to the HVAC Project. Reconciliations and recordings are current.

Mr. Kimberly and Mrs. Perreault answered questions from the Board related to; the impact of the HVAC adjustment recommendation (auditors propose it be moved to FY23, as it should not be reflected as an FY24 expense), an explanation for how the Government-wide Statement of Net Position is derived, confirmation of the accuracy of surplus account balances, restrictions on the Food Service fund balance, an explanation of the Special Revenue fund, information related to the Capital Improvement Fund (details are contained in the Audit notes), information related to the Tax Stabilization Fund, an explanation related to the Finding related to the proposed HVAC related adjustment and whether or not procedures are in place to prevent this in the future, confirmation that business type activities (related to the Career Center) should be included in the audit because of residual funds, a request that the audit include a notation that that Career Center balances will be closed out in FY24, confirmation that balances were not transferred to the new financial system until recently, confirmation that the District is behind on escheatment (the process of turning over unclaimed assets to the State – approximately \$54,000), a recommendation to re-issue stale-dated checks, confirmation that some Capital Improvement Fund projects were performed after the close of FY23 (resulting in the funds being present at the end of FY23), and a request to research the timeframe allowed for escheatment.

Mrs. Spaulding moved to approve the Audit as presented. Mrs. Pregent seconded the motion.

Brief discussion was held regarding approving the Audit prior to its finalization. **Mrs. Spaulding amended the motion to approve the Draft version of the Audit as presented and then when we get the Final, we can make a motion to approve the Final version. The motion was not seconded.**

Mr. Kimberly was thanked for his attendance at the meeting.

Discussion moved to Agenda Item 6.1.

8.4 Discussion: Level of Detail and Frequency of Financial Reports

Mr. Hennessey advised that he and the Business Manager are looking for clarity regarding what reporting should be included in the packets. Mrs. Perreault advised that financial reports are typically provided at the Finance Committee meetings. It was noted that some Board Members prefer summary information (with notations for variances) and some prefer detailed information. It was suggested that the Warrants be distributed via e-mail or as a link in the packet. It was confirmed that generation of detailed reports are 'canned' and easy to produce. The summary report requires manual input. It was clarified that, as a Board, the Board should determine what reports they want and how they want to receive them. For the record, Mrs. Spaulding advised that she trusts that the summary report reflects what the line by line report says and she doesn't need to go through the line by line because that is the Business Manager/Business Office's job. Mrs. Spaulding believes there is a difference in philosophy between Board Members. Mr. Hennessey believes that the audit shows that the District is handling the finances as it should and he does not believe there is a reason for the degree of scrutiny being requested by some on the Board. Mr. Hennessey believes the Board should explore the definition of 'oversight'. Mrs. Perreault advised that some days she receives multiple email inquiries, which requires her to put other work on hold. Brief discussion was held regarding 'oversight' and it was clarified that anyone can request copies of detailed reports at any time.

Mr. Boutin moved that the Business Manger proactively provide the line by line item report once a month at the beginning of the month. Mr. Malone seconded the motion.

Discussion included; the need/or not, to review detailed reports, the responsibility of the Board (what is the definition of oversight), and a suggestion to amend the motion to provide the detailed report to the Finance Committee.

Mr. Boutin amended the motion to have the Business Manager proactively provide the line by line item report monthly, prior to the Finance Committee meeting. Mr. Malone agreed with the friendly amendment.

Brief discussion was held including concern that answering questions from the Board is time consuming, possible discussion on ways to reduce the number of questions (be judicial), that by law, reports can be requested and questions need to be answered, a belief that distribution of the line by line report will eliminate a lot of questions, whether the report should be part of the Finance Committee Agenda/ Packet, or just emailed to Board Members, a query if the motion should include that questions can only be asked at Finance Committee meetings, clarification that the Business Manger had requested that all questions be sent to her via email, and clarification that most questions are generated from the Warrants, not from reports.

Mr. Boutin amended the motion to read; to ask the Business Manager to provide a line by line item report prior to the Finance Committee Meeting, in the Finance Committee packet, and questions will be asked at the Finance Committee meeting. Mr. Malone agreed to the friendly amendment.

On a motion by Mr. Boutin, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board voted 7 to 1 to ask the Business Manager to provide a line by line item report prior to the Finance Committee Meeting, in the Finance Committee packet, and questions will be asked at the Finance Committee meeting.

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

8.5 Future of Curriculum Committee

A document titled BUUSD Action Item Briefing Memo was distributed.

Mr. Boutin advised that over a number of months, the Curriculum Committee has been struggling to 'find its place in the world'. The Committee agreed to send this matter back to the Board for a decision. Options discussed were: remove the Committee completely, modify the Committee, or keep the Committee the same. Mr. Boutin directed the Board to the Action Memo in the packet which clearly explains the matter. Mr. Boutin's recommendation as Chair of the Committee, is to modify the Committee and to ask the Board to assign work. Lengthy discussion was held, including but not limited to; concern regarding telling administrators how to do their jobs, an overview of some other Committees throughout the state, a suggestion that the Committee be modeled after a Committee at UVM, or Kingdom East's Academic Excellence Committee, a belief that the Board of Education (the BUUSD Board) should deal with curriculum, concern that under the current structure the Committee has not been dealing with solving issues, the Strategic Plan's

reference to the Curriculum Committee, opposition to disbanding the Curriculum Committee, a belief that disbanding the Committee does not reflect that the Board believes curriculum is not important, the current lack of work for the Committee, acknowledgement that the Committee has not been making recommendations to the Board and doesn't have direction from the Board, discussion of the use of the Action Memo form, suggestions of various topics the Committee could discuss, a belief that there is value to the Committee, a suggestion to modify the Strategic Plan and/or the Continuous Improvement Plan (based on deteriorating results), and a suggestion to change the Committee to be a more outcome based Committee,

Mr. Boutin moved to adopt the Charge to discuss and make recommendations to the BUUSD Board regarding improvement opportunities to enhance quality of education and outcomes. Discussion items will be advanced to the Committee by the BUUSD Board for discussion and community and staff engagement. Recommendations will be presented to the Board for discussion and approval. Send to the Committee; discuss local assessments for tracking of the quality of education, providing feedback on public facing curriculum frameworks, and electronic devices and equipment.

Mrs. Pregent seconded the motion.

Brief discussion was held including, but not limited to; concern about the Board assigning things to the Committee, the Committee making recommendations to the Board (when there are professionals in the District to do that), concern that the Board and Committee will be overstepping when making recommendations, clarification that the items in the motion are not 'curriculum', a belief that the items listed in the motion are items the Board should be concerned about, reiteration that the Committee agreed that this topic be discussed at the Board level (the Committee is asking for direction/guidance), a suggestion to change the name of the Committee, reiteration that the Committee has held interesting discussions, but is not making any recommendations or taking any action, a suggestion that the Charge be adopted, then the Board hold discussion regarding re-naming the Committee and discussing its work, concern that work would be duplicated (sharing of assessment data) at the Board and Committee levels, information relating to past work of the Committee, and acknowledgement that work of other committees (finance, policy, etc.) is also presented at the Board level.

On a motion by Mr. Boutin, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board voted 7 to 1 against adopting the Charge to discuss and make recommendations to the BUUSD Board regarding improvement opportunities to enhance quality of education and outcomes. Discussion items will be advanced to the Committee by the BUUSD Board for discussion and community and staff engagement. Recommendations will be presented to the Board for discussion and approval. Send to the Committee; discuss local assessments for tracking of the quality of education, providing feedback on public facing curriculum frameworks, and electronic devices and equipment.

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

Mrs. Pregent moved to dissolve the Curriculum Committee and take up the named assignments at the Board level. Mrs. Spaulding seconded the motion.

Brief discussion was held, including; opposition to disbanding the Committee, community input that curriculum and instruction is the heart of what the schools do, that the Committee should spend time discussing what the Committee should be doing, establish a calendar of topics, provided a list of suggested topics, and the belief that it would be unwise to disband the Committee.

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board voted 4 to 4 to dissolve the Curriculum Committee and take up the named assignments at the Board level. The motion failed.

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

Mr. Boutin advised he is resigning as Chair of the Curriculum Committee and is also resigning from the Committee.

8.6 Community Building Discussion

A document titled BUUSD Action Item Briefing Memo was distributed.

A document titled The Case For Community Engagement was distributed.

Ms. Reynolds addressed the Board and advised regarding discussion at the VSBA Fall Conference pertaining to how to get the community involved in the school community and make it a welcoming place. Ms. Reynolds queried the Board regarding interest in forming a community engagement committee with the possibility of having an intersection with events planned by the Curriculum Department, and presenting budget information. Ms. Reynolds provided a brief overview of the documents contained in the packet and how they tie into the new Governance Plan. Brief discussion was held, including discussions held at the conference, learning how

other districts engage their communities, the importance of having students active in the community, activities that are advertised to the whole community, ways to educate the community on various events and the budget, well attended community events that have been held in the District (since COVID), support for community engagement and how community engagement ties to the Strategic Plan. It was agreed to add this item to a future agenda.

8.7 Appoint Board Member to Open Position on Superintendent Evaluation Committee

Mr. Cecchinelli advised that a Board Member needs to be appointed to fill the position vacated by Mr. Moore. Individuals currently on the Committee are; Mrs. Leclerc, Mr. Malone, and Ms. Parker.

Mrs. Leclerc nominated Mr. Reil. Mr. Reil declined the nomination.

On a motion by Mrs. Leclerc, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board unanimously voted to appoint Ms. Reynolds to the Superintendent Evaluation Committee.

9. Old Business

9.1 Second and Final Reading Board Member Conflict of Interest Policy (A1)

A copy of the policy was distributed.

Ms. Parker suggested that this item be postponed until the next meeting, to allow time for Board Members to read the legal opinion provided by Pietro Lynn. The legal opinion will be shared via email.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to postpone this Agenda item until the next Regular Board meeting.

9.2 Second and Final Reading Home Study Students Policy (C6)

A copy of the policy was distributed.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Second and Final Readings of the Home Study Students Policy (C6), the Title One Comparability Policy (D4), the Animal Dissection Policy (D5), the Class Size Policy (D6), and the Travel Reimbursement Policy (F1).

9.3 Second and Final Reading Title One Comparability Policy (D4)

A copy of the policy was distributed.

See Action under Agenda Item 9.2.

9.4 Second and Final Reading Animal Dissection Policy (D5)

A copy of the policy was distributed.

See Action under Agenda Item 9.2.

9.5 Second and Final Reading Class Size Policy (D6)

A copy of the policy was distributed.

See Action under Agenda Item 9.2.

9.6 Second and Final Reading Travel Reimbursement Policy (F1)

A copy of the policy was distributed.

See Action under Agenda Item 9.2.

10. Committee Reports

10.1 Finance Committee

Minutes from the 11/13/23 meeting were distributed.

The next meeting is Monday, December 11, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

10.2 Facilities & Transportation Committee

Minutes from the 11/06/23 meeting were distributed.

The next meeting is Monday, December 4, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

10.3 Policy Committee

Minutes from the 11/15/23 meeting were distributed.

The December meeting is cancelled.

The next meeting is Wednesday, January 17, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

10.4 Curriculum Committee

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

10.5 CVCCSD Board Meeting

Minutes from the 11/13/23 meeting were distributed.

The next meeting is December 11, 2023.

11. Future Agenda Items

- Behavioral Reporting (January 2024 – Board Members should email Mr. Cecchinelli regarding the formatting/content)
- Community Building
- Second and Final Reading Board Member Conflict of Interest Policy (A1)
- FY25 Budget Development
- Creation of a Student Outcome Committee
- Revisit Formation of a Behavioral Committee
- Legislative Breakfast
- Superintendent Evaluation Update
- Length of Meeting Times / Exploration of a Policy Related to Meeting Times

12. Next Meeting Dates

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

Wednesday, December 20, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

13. Executive Session as Needed

13.1 Personnel – 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3)

13.2 Administrator Contracts 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(a)

13.3 Personnel – 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3)

Items proposed for discussion in Executive Session include two Personnel Matters and Administrator Contracts.

In response to queries, Mr. Cecchinelli advised that all of the items listed qualify for Executive Session and that the motion for findings is not necessary for any of the listed items.

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mr. Boutin, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Hennessey and Mrs. Marold in attendance, at 10:31 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. Boutin, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 11:01 p.m.

15. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Boutin, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 11:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin