

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**
Spaulding High School Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
October 16, 2023 - 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Vacant Position (BC Board Member)

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Nancy Leclerc
Chris Parker
Terry Reil

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Luke Aither, SHS Co-Principal
Emmanuel Ajanma, Director of Technology
Stacy Anderson, Director of Special Services
Karen Fredericks, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Jennifer Nye, BTMES Principal
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager
Brenda Waterhouse, BCEMS Principal
Ashley Young, Assistant Business Manager

PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT:

Stephanie Collins Philip Kolling Sarah Pregent Rachel Van Vliet

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Spaulding, called the Monday, October 16, 2023 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was held at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 5.3 Census Based Grant

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 August 21, 2023

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mr. Lyons, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the August 21, 2023 BUUSD Finance Committee meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 FY24 Expense/Revenues

A copy of the FY24 Expense/Revenue Report – dated 10/16/23, was distributed.

Mrs. Perreault provided a brief overview, advising that these are early projections and she is projecting very conservatively.

Mrs. Perreault advised that some areas are showing over-expenditures mainly due to salary and benefit changes, staffing changes and anticipated revenue (to off-set expenses). There is currently a slight deficit in expenditures and a considerable increase in revenues (primarily due to SPED extraordinary expenses). Under Act 173 extraordinary expenses are eligible for more reimbursement (anticipated revenue \$1,900,000). Mrs. Perreault advised that this report does not contain a narrative, but that information will be included in a couple of months. The Draft Audit (FY23) will be presented on 11/29/23. Concern was voiced regarding the amount expended for course reimbursement. Mr. Hennessey advised that there are many individuals on provisional or emergency licenses, who need course-work in order to obtain their licenses. In response to a query, it was noted that these expenses were not part of negotiations. There was also professional development that was paid for over the summer. Mr. Malone reiterated concern that the amount of course reimbursement is much higher than in other years, that teachers used to come out of school with all of the necessary requirements for licensure.

5.2 Revised Meeting Dates

After brief discussion, it was agreed that meetings will be held on; 11/13/23 (first draft) and 12/11/23. The 11/20/23 and 12/18/23 meetings are cancelled. The Committee will meet on 01/04/24 (**Thursday**). The 01/15/24 meeting is cancelled.

5.3 Census Based Grant

Mrs. Perreault advised that she received an e-mail from Brad James (AOE) informing the District that he made a mistake when advising about the Census Based Grant amount for FY24 (a misinterpretation of the law). The amount quoted (and budgeted for) was \$5,945,602, the amount of the error is \$139,320, and the District will actually receive \$5,806,282 (see line 120 of the report). Other districts in the state were impacted to various degrees. This matter was discussed at the VASBO meeting and it is anticipated that there will be some legislation introduced to assist with mitigation of this matter.

6. Old Business

6.1 FY25 Budget Development (including Act 127 Presentation)

A document titled 'FY25 Budget Development Narrative – Updated 10/11/23' was distributed.

A document titled 'FY25 Budgeting Information' was distributed.

Mrs. Perreault advised that many adjustments have made since the draft was shared. The increase with adjustments, results in an increase of just under 10%. The Committee agreed to review the Budget Narrative in school order. A firm number for health insurance increases will be known on 10/31/23. Mrs. Perreault provided a brief overview of the change to the VSTRS (Vermont State Teachers' Retirement System), noting that the District's contribution increases every year. Mrs. Perreault provided a brief overview of health insurance premium increases. Discussion started with the BTMES considerations. Discussion included a query regarding the addition of an HHB Coordinator, the dedicated leased vehicle, the addition of approximately 30 other staff members (including support for contracted services), reallocation of ELL services to the Central Office, the increase for overtime for Principal clerical personnel, acknowledgement that the BCEMS narrative does not include the addition of all of these staff, the issue of inadequate storage (for supplies, furniture, etc.), installation of a new sound system (a priority), the necessity of new playground equipment, acknowledgement that the financial impact of 'Other Considerations' is missing from the document and will be included in a future version, and pre-school tuition.

Discussion moved to the SHS narrative, including; the addition of a new leased vehicle (for Work Based Learning), consideration of hiring a driver for SEA, the addition of a .5 FTE para-educator for general education, increased stipends for coaches and assistant coaches, creation of a Distance Learning Coordinator (may be absorbed in CFP, previously funded with ESSER funds), a request that the next draft include more specific information on assistant coaches, and clarification that the BEA and the District are currently working on updating and negotiating Appendix B of the CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreement).

Discussion moved to the BCEMS narrative, including; the tuition increase for general education students (placed out of district), building/creation of an alternative school 'program', a suggestion that the SEA Program be expanded to accommodate these students, safety of playground equipment, absorption of ESSER positions, lack of capacity at out of district facilities, the expansion of outdoor/indoor space (including for the ECO Program), lack of storage for equipment, what happens with tuition funds when outplacement is not available, reiteration of the benefit of planning for and expanding regular education services in-house (rather than out-placement), anticipation of 3 to 5 students needing out-placement, Mr. Derner's intention to budget funds for a feasibility study (for the expansion of the SEA Program), and a query regarding the possibility of accepting tuition students from other districts (if capacity were increased).

Discussion moved to the Central Services narrative, including; absorbing Curriculum Coordinators (positions were funded by ESSER), the possibility of changing Coordinators to 'Coaches' (to qualify under the CFP Grant), a query relating to changes to the budgeted amounts for Curriculum Coordinators (budgeted differently under ESSER), a query regarding when it will be known if these positions qualify for CFP funding, prioritization of ESSER funded positions, prioritization of hiring a grant writer (to reduce the amount of items budgeted under the general fund), consideration of outsourcing some of the grant management, consideration of pursuing the 21st Century Grant, a query regarding researching the success of other district's grant writers, the proposed staff increase

(shifting of budgeted lines), addition of a Hiring Coordinator/Communications Support position, and increases for supplies, meals for staff, staff appreciation, and legal fees (it was noted that there will not be negotiations for three years).

Discussion move to the SPED and SEA narrative, including; increases for PT services, contracted services, and student tuition, the increase in the number of students qualifying for SPED, the transfer of ESSER positions to the general fund (is attrition occurring, as was the original plan?), the difficulty of drafting a budget that meets tax payer approval and meets student needs, the increase in the number of students qualifying for SPED and the rising costs associated with providing necessary services, a query regarding any legislation to address increasing SPED needs (none known), the increase in students who qualify for services due to emotional disturbance and developmental delay, FY24 budgeted amounts (tuition; \$2,400,000 and contracted services; \$2,258,694), and clarification on the difference between tuition and contracted services.

Discussion moved to the Facilities narrative, which included brief discussion regarding the increase from 75¢ SF to \$1.00 SF.

Discussion moved to the Technology narrative, which included clarification of the numbers presented in the document, an upgrade to Infinite Campus software, and that there are no known increases for software licenses.

Discussion moved to the Early Education narrative and it was noted that discussion of this budget area is in an early stage. More information will be provided at a future meeting, but it was noted that in FY24, the schools are seeing increased needs in the Early Education Department.

Enrollment data is currently unknown, work continues to be performed on grant funding, and it was noted that the dates for the Special Articles should be changed to read 2023. Special Articles will be discussed at a future meeting.

Mrs. Perreault advised regarding the Act 127 presentation, and it was noted that because free meals are provided to all students, there is no incentive for parents to complete the forms. Under-reporting of the number of families that qualify for free/reduced lunch, negatively impacts the District. The District is working on finding ways to incentivize families to complete the forms. In response to a query, Mrs. Perreault advised regarding changes to the weighting formula and how it is most likely having a negative impact on the District. Mrs. Perreault advised it's important to note that the District must stay under a 10% increase in per-pupil spending, or the District will need to go before a review board.

7. Items for Future Agendas

November 13, 2023:

- FY25 Budget Development (Draft 1)

8. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is Monday, November 13, 2023 at 6:00 p.m., at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference. Additional meetings are scheduled for; Monday, December 11, 2023, and **Thursday**, January 4, 2024.

9. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mr. Lyons, the Committee unanimously agreed to adjourn at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin