

BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
Spaulding High School Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
December 20, 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
Jamie Evans, Facilities Director
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	Sam Alexander	Sarah Attig	Peter Anthony	Mary Bowers
James Carpenter	Bella Cecchinelli	Cassandra Demarais	Michael Gilbar	Marissa Hebert
Sarah Hill	Prudence Krasofski	Danny M.	Kristen Martin	Karen Moran
Joelen Mulvaney	Brodey Priddy	Andrea Poulin	Bern Rose	Rachel Van Vliet

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Cecchinelli, called the Wednesday, December 20, 2023, Special 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

Ms. Parker moved to accept the Agenda as presented. Seconded by Mrs. Spaulding.

Mr. Reil requested taking Agenda Item 11.1 out of order (after Agenda Item 5), and taking Agenda Item 7.3 out of order (before Agenda Item 7.2). Mrs. Spaulding, who seconded the motion, voiced objection to the first request, but approves of the second request.

Mrs. Pregent moved to call the question. The motion was not seconded. The motion to approve the agenda, with one modification was explained. The vote was called by the Chair.

On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board voted 5 to 1 to approve the Agenda as amended.

Mr. Malone, Ms. Parker, Mrs. Pregent, Ms. Reynolds, and Mrs. Spaulding voted for the motion.

Mr. Reil voted against the motion.

Mr. Boutin and Mrs. Leclerc abstained.

4. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

4.1 Public Comment

Mrs. Spaulding advised of the Christmas Dinner being held at the Hedding Methodist Church.

4.2 Student Voice

None.

5. Student Presentation: Connecting Barre Youth

A copy of a presentation titled 'Connecting Barre Youth' (by Brodey Priddy and Camille Marineau) was distributed. The presentation was displayed on screen. Brodey Priddy and Bella Cecchinelli presented the slide show included in the packet. The presentation included the goals of Student Council, grant funding for youth services/programs, working with Elle Stanforth, the VYP Community Coordinator for Barre, the voting system in place (for programs/use of funds), the timeline, a proposed mentorship program, benefits of proposed programs, the suggestion to start a program at only one of the elementary/middle schools (with expansion at a later time), and reasons for sharing this information with the Board. Student presenters answered questions from the Board and were thanked for presenting this evening.

6. Consent Agenda

6.1 Approval of Minutes – December 13, 2023 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the December 13, 2023 Regular Meeting.

6.2 Warrant Approvals – December 13, 2023

Mr. Reil queried regarding asbestos and lighting warrants (being paid based on when invoices are received and as work is completed).

On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Warrants dated December 13, 2023.

7. Current Business

7.1 New Hires

There were no candidates presented for hire.

Discussion moved to Agenda Item 7.3.

7.2 Special Articles

A document titled 'Audited General Fund Balance: \$995,741- Suggested Special Articles' was distributed.

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, the Board unanimously voted to postpone discussion of Special Articles until CLAs are received.

Discussion moved to Agenda Item 9.

7.3 FY25 Budget

Six documents were distributed:

'Budget Modeling, December 15, 2023'

'BUUSD Budget 2024-25 – Proposed & Estimated 12/15/23 – Comparative Tax Rate Calculations – Using \$700,000 Toward Revenue'

'FY25 Budget Development Narrative' (Updated 12/15/23)

'FY25 Budget Information' Presentation

'How Common Level of Appraisal Impacts Your Taxes'

'Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office'

Mr. Hennessey provided an introduction, displayed the distributed documents on screen, and he and Mrs. Perreault provided an overview of the presentation, receiving comments and answering questions from the Board and community members during the presentation. The lengthy presentation and discussion included, but was not limited to; Budget Modeling, the Comparative Tax Rate Calculations (which don't include municipal taxes), the profound impact of the CLA (Common Level of Appraisal) which is currently unknown, clarification that the Narrative does not include all budget increases, clarification of the new grant writer position, Act 127 (the importance of understanding that the AOE does not know where funding will come from to fill the gap between the 5% cap and the remainder of the money needed), acknowledgement that CLAs won't rise until reappraisals occur, a query regarding the total amount of the budget, (\$58,921,430), a belief that the total expense amount is closer to \$70,000,000 with everything added in, acknowledgement that if the budget increase was 9% or below, there would be a reduction in the tax impact, reiterated concern of the belief that there are some exorbitant salary increases proposed for the Central Office, concern that there be a budget that is responsible to students and the community and concern that this is not the first year of these increases, a belief that it's irresponsible to prioritize these positions over students and other staff, a request that District Office salaries be frozen, acknowledgement that the increases are reflected in the line by line budget draft (and an invitation for the community to review that information), appreciation to Mrs. Perreault for the budget modeling, acknowledgement that cutting \$1.4 million dollars won't change the tax rate (because of the cap, but it is not known where the money will come from), a request to 'push the cap' as responsibly as possible, a review of the line

by line budget for several years (on a 3 year basis), a query related to a reduction to the JROTC line item (the DOD pays .5 of the salary and benefits for JROTC), equity concerns between BCEMS and BTMES (library (staff experience) and principals' offices (different structures)), a request to update the line for tuition to the tech center (will be done when counts are in), a suggestion that some items listed in the narrative be funded from the FY24 budget or surplus funds, a query related to increased revenue (SPED extraordinary expenses), a request to be more mindful that the difference between the cap and what is needed to fund the budget, needs to come from somewhere, concern that the budget increase is going to be a burden on the community, the need to be sensitive to the community, a query regarding what the budget reductions would impact (people and programs), a belief that a reduction will impact behavior issues and academic success, acknowledgement that the BUUSD is not the only district to take advantage of the 5% cap, a belief that the budget as drafted allows BUUSD students the opportunity to have what they need (what they've needed all along) and that Act 127 is 'righting the ship' and a belief that it doesn't make any sense to cut \$1.3 or \$1.4 million when the District can give them what they need for the same amount of money, a query regarding the SHS SRO/Security Services (any other ideas if BCPD cannot provide an officer), the understanding that BCPD will not be able to provide an officer anytime in the near future (SHS administrators are looking at potential private security teams, which does come with other caveats/concerns), a query regarding BCEMS general education outplacements (currently looking to expand internal capacity to provide services in-house), a query regarding evaluation of students with issues that can't be served in-house (to see if they qualify for special education services), the reading of a statement from Mr. Malone (see Attachment A in addendum on website- which included tax rate impacts for residential and non-residential property owners, unsustainable budget growth, the increase in the municipal rate, and concern regarding when the 5% cap runs out), concern that academic assessment results have not been presented to the Board, concern over retaining ESSER positions that were supposed to go away or be absorbed by attrition, concern on how the increase will impact housing, support for the 11.7% budget, a belief that it is fiscally responsible for the District's students, that students' needs are increasing, surprise over a belief that some school directors think it's the job of the Board to create tax breaks for the wealthy at the expense of students, concern that cuts would occur to lower positions, concern that recently, students were asked to stay home because of lack of staff and lack of substitutes, staff concerns regarding lack of staffing, student struggles, increased student needs, and retention of staff, and clarification that by reallocating how certain items are funded, the budget could be reduced from 11.7% to approximately 11% and retain everything that's in the draft. Discussion shifted to Board guidance, as previously requested. Mr. Cecchinelli polled the Board and responses included; 9%, 5%, 11.7%, 11% (utilizing the current surplus to fund some FY25 expenses), 4%, and 4.5% (utilizing surplus funds resulting in a total expense increase of 6.5%). Additional discussion included how to provide clarity to the Business Manager so that she and administrators know how to proceed, the spirit and intent of Act 127 (to increase delivery of services), a reminder that 50% of Barre City housing is rental units and tax increases are passed on to renters (and don't provide tax breaks to the wealthy), a request to see how reductions would impact positions, a suggestion that the District take advantage of the benefits of Act 127, a suggestion to see what the budget would look like at 6.5% (an administrator team effort), acknowledgement that Board goals should have been discussed prior to budget development, and disappointment that it did not occur. Mrs. Spaulding advised that one of the charges of the Finance Committee is to recommend a budget to the Board, and she would hope the Board would accept that recommendation.

Mr. Malone noted that time is running out for approval of a budget.

The Board recessed from 8:03 p.m. and reconvened at 8:08 p.m. Discussion moved to Agenda Item 7.2

8. Old Business

None.

9. Future Agenda Items

- Test Scores
- Add Community Building to Parking Lot (SS – second request)

Brief discussion was held regarding Board parameters/data being requested for behavior reporting. Mr. Boutin and Mr. Reil requested that administrators advise regarding what data/reporting is available to assist the Board with clarification on what they'd like to see. Mr. Hennessey suggested that administrators present information regarding procedures at each school as well as definitions relating to Title IX.

10. Next Meeting Dates

Wednesday, January 10, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the Spaulding High School Library and via Video Conference (Google Meet).

Wednesday, January 24, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the Spaulding High School Library and via Video Conference (Google Meet).

11. Executive Session

11.1 Administrator Contracts

Mr. Cecchinelli advised that there was a need for Executive Session to discuss Administrator Contracts under 1 VSA section 313 (a) (1) (a).

In response to a query regarding clarification on the requirement for Findings, Mr. Cecchinelli advised that Findings are not necessary for this agenda item.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Hennessey and Mrs. Marold in attendance, at 8:14 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 (a) (1) (a) to discuss the items proposed for discussion.

The remaining information is as provided by the Board Clerk.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Ms. Reynolds, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 9:34 p.m.

On a motion by Mrs. Pregent, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board voted 5 to 4 to approve the recommendation of the Superintendent regarding the Administrator Salary Sheets.

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. Cecchinelli broke the tie vote by voting for the motion.

12. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mrs. Pregent, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Poulin