

BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Aldrich Public Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
July 24, 2024 - 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michael Boutin (BC) – Chair
Giuliano Cecchinelli II (BC) - Vice Chair
Sonya Spaulding (BC)- Clerk
Nancy Leclerc (At-Large) (joined online)
Emily Reynolds (BT)
Terry Reil (BT)
Garrett Grant (BC)
Alice Farrell (BT)
Catherine Whalen (BT)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

JoAn Canning, Superintendent
Michael Martin, Director of Technology
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Laura Ortiz, Benefits and Leave Manager
Laurie Smith, Assistant Special Services Director
Rebekah Mortensen, Assistant Special Services Director
Ashley Young, Asst. Business Manager

GUESTS PRESENT:

AJ Jones, Alex Alexander, Allison Mills, Amber Larrabee, Baylee Lawrence, Ben Matthews, Bernadette Rose, Brandi Dewey, Brodey Priddy, Cara Arduengo, Carrie Blodgett, Chris Moran, Christie Omodeo, Christine Parker, Colleen Kresco, Courtnie Lange, Dan Morrison, Danielle Owczarski, Darby Hiebert, Denise Lavalley, Eirene Mavodones, Ellen Kaye, Emily Thomas, Eric Blaisdell, Jackie Wheeler, James Carpenter, Jane Watson, Jasmine Wible, Jennifer Trombly, Jessica Maurais, Jody Leone, Joelen Mulvaney, Josh Howard, Jude Brister, Karen Heath, Karen Moran, Kristina Safford, Lindsey Wells, Lisa Liotta, Lola Duffort, Lorraine Morris, Maddy Cooley, Martha Blaisdell, Mary Bowers, Mary Gaudreau, Melissa Metayer, Michael Gilbar, Michaela Morris, Nicole Ladd, Nora Duane, Paige Chouinard, Paul Malone, Peter Anthony, Prudence Krasofski, Rachel Van Vliet, Roberta Melnick, Samn Stockwell, Sarah Capron, Sarah Hill, Shayna Guild, Sherry Aja, Stacie Jacques, Stephanie Collins, Tamara Cooley, Thomas Koch.

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Boutin called the Wednesday, July 24, 2024, Regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was held at the Aldrich Public Library, 6 Washington St, Barre and via video conference.

2. Pledge and Mindfulness Moment

The Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The Board held a Mindfulness Moment focused on those affected by the flood this year. Specifically the children and families impacted in the BUUSD.

3. Additions and/or Deletions with Motion to Approve the Agenda

Add to executive session an update for an item discussed at the June 12th Board meeting. Confidential Attorney-Client Communication update - VSA 313 (a)(1), requires findings.

Add round table (number 7)

Motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by (video froze), to approve the agenda with amendments, motion passed unanimously.

4. Comments for Items Not on the Agenda

This is for folks to come before the board for two minutes to make a comment for an item not on the agenda. Follow up questions will be directed to the superintendent. There will be an opportunity to comment before the board votes on other items.

4.1 Public Comment

- Mrs. Mulvaney shared the tax rate being a concern for folks and whether you think this is what's going to happen or not underfunding our schools is a way to defund them, **Mr. Reil called point of order**, Mr. Boutin interjected and reminded her budget revote is on 6.5. She stated it's not about the budget it's about people defunding the schools and about the whole move

toward funding education. I want people to understand that we can tell by who our governor appointed, **Mr. Reil called point of order again** stating she's out of order, she is talking about the budget. Mrs. Reynolds questioned if point of order applies to members of the public or just members of the Board. Mr. Reil stated everyone that attends a meeting is supposed to follow the rules. However, points of order can only be called by members of the board.

4.2 Student Voice

None

5. Consent Agenda

5.1 Regular Meeting Minutes - June 12, 2024

5.2 Special Meeting Minutes - June 6, 2024

5.3 Warrant Approval: June 13, June 19, June 27, July 3, and July 12, 2024

5.4 New Hires: E. Couture, K. Gates, K. Wissman, M. Ramsey, V. Bigglestone, M. Farrah, W. Paul

Ms. Canning reviewed the list: Kaleb Gates, Kirby Wissman, Melissa Ramsey, Valerie Bigglestone, Mariah Farrah, and Williene Paul.

5.5 Admin Resignation

Ms. Canning stated the resignation of Jarrod Weiss

Mr. Boutin stated a correction to the June 12th minutes to add the awards pages from the SHS Newsletter to the minutes.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Ms. Reynolds to approve the consent agenda, motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Reil has a bunch of questions and concerns about large purchases contained within the warrants but unfortunately it's mute because the purchases have all taken place and he will address them during budget discussion whether that's today or a formal future meeting.

6. New Business

6.1 Action Memo: Food Service Van

Question raised about leasing instead of buying. Ms. Canning shared, per the company, there's two types of sales, Fleet or Retail. Retail are regular, off the street customers and they get normal pricing. Fleet customers are businesses with 15 or more vehicles called a business fleet for government, cities, towns, etc. It's the category BUUSD falls under. Provides better discounts and better powertrain warranty. This particular company does not offer leases for the fleet. Concerning cost and analysis of the cost is in the packet. Van used for transporting goods in storage at SHS to other locations, not just Summer food programs. Allows transporting of equipment we share with other locations. Being paid through Food Service Surplus and the purpose of that money is to improve our food service program. General operating budget would pay for leases we need to continue with this expense. Currently Suburbans are being used which aren't available during the school year. Question raised about why the van wasn't discussed when the board approved the food service budget. Previous vendor owned a van and the new vendor doesn't but it probably should have been talked about. Mr. Reil thinks this is not what we should be doing. We've got enough equipment and we don't have an approved budget and to ask for something that hasn't been discussed or proposed or on a capital list for \$53,000. It was clarified that this doesn't impact the budget as it's being paid from the Food Service Surplus and approved by AOE. He disagreed, it's still district funds that sooner or later comes out of taxpayers pockets. Those funds if you trace them back came from taxpayer pockets. Mrs. Spaulding requested he speak with a little nicer tone, **Mr. Reil called point of order** for her being out of order.

Mrs. Spaulding made a motion, seconded by Mr. Grant to approve the purchase of the service van, motion passed 5 to 4.

It was confirmed there's an inventory of all the vehicles and how they're used. Mrs. Farrell shared concerns about expanding our fleet because of what goes with it. Insurance, maintenance, storage, tires, etc. Suggested the district look at shared opportunities, do they move stuff everyday or a schedule. Mrs. Perreault responded that maintenance and upkeep of this van would be exclusively food service and confirmed once school starts there won't be a vehicle available.

Mr. Grant, Ms. Reynolds, Mrs. Spaulding, Mr. Cecchinelli, Mr. Boutin voted for the motion

Mr. Reil, Mrs. Leclerc, Mrs. Farrell, Mrs. Whalen voted against the motion

6.2 Action Memo: Current Expense Note, Line of Credit

Mr. Cecchinelli made a motion, seconded by Mr. Reil to approve and authorize the full Board to sign the expense note with rate of 5.59%, motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Perreault was asked to explain the difference between Revenue Anticipation Note (RAN) and Current Expense Note. RAN we pay interest on so we receive some of the money at the start of the school year and have it to use throughout the year. We put it in an ICS high yield account. We also earned interest on that as well so we made money on RAN. Current expense note we will not have access to it unless we need it and therefore we won't incur any interest fees. We'll watch accounts closely and draw down what we need and only pay on what we use.

6.3 Action Memo: Storm Damages

Ms. Canning shared information about storm damage that happened at our concession and on the fields. Proposal is to authorize payment, pictures and timeline provided in the packet of what's been done. Being emergency status it was not required to be put out to bid. Process it takes to put it out for bid wouldn't have enough time before fall season sports begin which made it an emergency. Same company used for last year's conditions under emergency status which was the lowest bid then. Company provided a Good Faith Estimate of \$70,000 for cost. Only doing what we need to do, just immediate work, in hopes FEMA will assist. No Action at this time.

6.4 Action Memo: Playground

Ms. Reynolds made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding to approve a contract with Ultiplay Parks and Playgrounds, Inc., motion approved unanimously.

Confirmed it's not replacing any old stuff. All new stuff which has been on the radar to pay through ESSER funds. Structures are going to be more inclusive and accessible to everyone. A community member shared these are community playgrounds. When the school is not open during vacation some community members visit. So improving needs isn't just for our students, it's for the greater communities as well.

6.5 Budget Revote

Ms. Canning shared administration would like to recommend September 17th as a budget revote date. The date was chosen because we realize community members are away on vacations and we want to give an opportunity to develop a community engagement plan that requires some fact-to-face meetings with folks so we can answer some questions. Beginning of school open houses are a good time to connect with the parents and find different ways to engage with the community. Request of the Board is to give her direction on what the board wants for a full board support of this budget. This is needed in order for the community to support it. She's looking for a full community engagement that brings people out to understand what we're trying to accomplish and to support the students and the staff of BUUSD. If we have to continue to make cuts it's going to affect our students. What's acceptable to the community to pass this budget?

Board members shared affordability in this economy, not individuals who are anti-school or anti-children or anti-learning. They're looking at their own checkbooks and seeing what they can afford. Is it affordable for the whole community? Looking for data to back up significant increases. Many feel splitting the difference of the original 11% and meeting in the middle at 6.5% over last year is acceptable. Still an increase and people can get behind it plus there's large surpluses every year. Some would like to present the last budget and do a better job engaging and informing the community. If splitting the difference you really need to look at the priorities list and what it means to our schools. End results seems: Half the Board is in favor of 6.5%, half are in favor of 9%. The Chair listed items from the priority list unfilled positions and CARES program in particular.

Voting Date: Some support an earlier vote so 3 payments for homeowners to make up that gap versus 2 if the vote is later. The superintendent will check availability for Sept 10 and discuss the two options at the next Board meeting. Community comments were allowed. **Mr. Reil and Mrs. Leclerc called point of order** while Mrs. Mulvaney addressed the Board. It was stated she is out of order the topic being discussed is scheduling the budget revote so Project 2025 and defunding education is not the item on the table. Mrs. Spaulding shared that Mrs. Mulvaney should have had the opportunity to speak during public comment for items not on the agenda if not being allowed to speak now. The Board can't have it both ways, she has the right to speak. Mrs. Reynolds feels clear expectations of public comment and participation limitations need to be clear. Ms. Canning shared this will be addressed on August 7 at the Board's Open Meeting Law training. August 7th will also be the next budget discussion with documents available.

7. Round Table

- Mrs. Reynolds: BUUSD Central Office is holding a job fair on August 6th outside the central office. She encourages everyone to stop by and see the employment opportunities.
- Mr. Grant: Thanked everyone for joining them in the Aldrich Library. Highlighted all the work that goes on in the summer by our employees and staff. Thanks for all the work that keeps going even when the students aren't there.
- Mrs. Spaulding: Encouraged people to volunteer to help with Barre City Flood. Barre Up is the long-term recovery group in Barre City and their organizing volunteers. They have a variety of jobs, you can muck out basements or help with mold remediation or lighter duty jobs. Encourages people to get in touch with Barre Up if you'd like to help. Go to the Barre City website and across the top there's flood recovery information. Click the link for additional links to email them.
- Mrs. Farrell: Two years ago the Vermont School Board Association in association with the Agency of Education put together a task force to look at the District Quality Standards and wrote into that District Quality Standards were quality standards for school boards, and she had the honor of being on that task force. They've recently agreed to reconstitute that task force to look at a rubric for quality standards. In the third week in August that task force will be meeting again to finalize the suggested rubric for doing self-evaluations for school boards. She represents the Barre Unified Union School District on that task force. If you have any information that you would like to see in that rubric for evaluating school boards, you can let me know and she will bring it to the meeting.
- Mrs. Whalen: When one of the members online talked about shut-ins. She reminded everyone in the community that you can vote by absentee ballot. It's just sent right to your house. You don't have to leave, you can do it in the comfort of your home. You can get it early so you can look at all the different people running if you need to do research. She's heard people say they

sometimes show up at polls, and they don't know all the people on the ballot. It's such a good opportunity. If you're shut-in or you can't get out, please take advantage of early absentee ballots.

- Mr. Reil: Echoed there's lots of folks that need help. While they're helping someone else their lawn isn't getting mowed so certainly volunteer and help a neighbor. Last night in Barre City there was a Community Health Care meeting up at the Barre Auditorium and it was amazing.. The Green Mountain Care Board is undertaking a massive effort to improve access and affordability of healthcare and in our hospitals. When we talk about affordability and access this is one of the most expensive things that all of us have to deal with whether you're a single person or an employer that has to provide health care to your employees. Check out the Green Mountain Care Board. There's a lot of opportunities for each of us to participate. He's participated since the beginning, it is amazing. There's some incredibly intelligent people sitting around that table and they are listening and they understand that we have a problem with health care. Check out the Green Mountain Care Board in this initiative. It's really good.
- Ms. Canning: Thanked Mr. Reil for introducing her to the Barre Town Select Board. Nice to put names with faces. She will work with Mrs. Spaulding to get in front of the Barre City Council. Harvest Festival is this Saturday, July 27th. There will be a school district booth. She looks forward to meeting a lot of parents. If you're at the festival please stop by and say hello to the Superintendent of Schools and a variety of other administrators as well. There will be a booth at the Currier Park Music Festival on August 8th and possibly a September date. The Interim Secretary of Education will be visiting Barre Town School on August 7th from 2:00 - 2:45 p.m. Everyone is invited to be there. It's actually considered an open meeting and it will be warned as such. If you're interested please join us. Governor Scott's Clean Up Barre is going to be here with some of his cabinet. Welcome back convocation to staff is Aug. 22nd and she invites Board members to be there. Let her know so she can reserve a seat for you in the audience. She's been meeting all summer with the Directors and Administrators as you know we have a lot of new people on our team. She's slowly getting to know everyone and trying to get to know all of the details she needs to have in order to do a good job as your superintendent. Only three weeks on the job so be nice to her! Met a new friend today, Denise Lavalley, because when we cancelled our meeting on July 10th we did not put a note on the door and Denise showed up. Ms. Canning apologizes for that. Denise has requested getting the information out for changes in meetings in a variety of ways. Tomorrow she will be interviewed on VT Public by Lola Duffort. Lola wants to hear about what's going on with most of what we talked about tonight. Be on the lookout for that VPR.
- Mr. Boutin: When you're doing cleanup make sure that you wear proper gear, so you're not breathing anything toxic. You can't live with any toxic stuff. Otherwise, you'll find out just how expensive Health Care is but you might be able to get a nice ride down to the chest x-ray room. Air pushing against your face when you're pushing a temperature of 103. It's amazing. Apologies to Joelen Mulvahney for muting her. It was a mistake on his part and not right.

8. Executive Session

8.1 Attorney-Client Communication update - VSA 313 (a)(1)

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Grant, the Board unanimously agreed to find that premature general public knowledge of the items proposed for discussion would clearly place the Barre Unified Union School District at a substantial disadvantage should the discussion be public. Motion passed unanimously.

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mr. Grant, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Ms. Canning in attendance, at 7:40 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. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to exit the Executive Session at 7:51 p.m.

Mrs. Leclerc was not present

9. Future Agenda Items

Not discussed

10. Next Meeting Dates

July 31, 2024, Spaulding High School Library/via Google Meet (Special Meeting)

August 7, 2024, Spaulding High School Library/via Google Meet (Special Meeting)

August 14, 2024, Spaulding High School Library/via Google Meet (Regular Meeting)

August 21, 2024, Spaulding High School Library/via Google Meet (Special Meeting)

August 28, 2024, Spaulding High School Library/via Google Meet (Regular Meeting)

Not discussed

11. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Gilbert