

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**REGULAR BOARD MEETING**  
Aldrich Public Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet  
August 28, 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)  
Emily Reynolds (BT) (arrived at 6:05 p.m.)  
Terry Reil (BT)  
Garrett Grant (BC)  
Alice Farrell (BT)  
Catherine Whalen (BT)

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

JoAn Canning, Superintendent  
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources  
Jennifer Bisson, Asst. Principal  
Laurie Smith, Asst. Director of Special Services  
Melissa Greenwood, Asst. Principal

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Alex Alexander, Allison Mills, Amy Scalabrini, Ben Matthews, Cassandra Demarais, Catherine Franks, Chris Moran, Christie Omodeo, Christine Parker, Colleen Kresco, Colleen LeFebvre, Courtnie Lange, David Delcore - Times Argus, Erika Dolan, Heather Hicks, Jackie Wheeler, Jan Trepanier, Jasmine Wible, Jessica Maurais, Erica Reil, Jude Brister, Julie Burns, Kirsten Evans, Laura Lagerstedt, Lexie Murray, Mackenzie Kovaka, Mariah Routhier, Martha Blaisdell, Megan Spaulding, Melissa Metayer, Michaela Morris, Morgan Cerasoli, Patt Miscavage, Peter Anthony, Prudence Krasofski, Rachel Van Vliet, Sarah Attig, Sarah Brownell, Sarah Hill, Shara Vitagliano, Sharon Jacobs, Stephanie Collins, Victoria Pompei, Wendy Hannigan, Wendy Sell

**1. Call to Order**

The Chair, Mr. Boutin, called the Wednesday, August 28, 2024, Regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., held at the Spaulding High School Library, Barre, and via video conference.

The chair reminded everyone that it's his duty to maintain order during the meeting. Public comment is welcomed and limited to two minutes per agenda item. The board will hear public comments and questions but will not respond directly during public comments. It is in place to allow the board to stay on task and address the work of the board for that meeting. For questions, provide the superintendent with your contact information or email her so that she can respond to the questions.

The chair read the board norms

**2. Pledge and Mindfulness Moment**

The Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The Board held a Mindfulness Moment.

**3. Additions or Deletions with Motion to Approve the Agenda**

Added Executive Session - Personnel 1 VSA 313 (a)(3)  
Remove 5.1 - Minutes not included  
Combine 6.1 and 6.2

**Motion by Mr. Grant, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, to approve the agenda with amendments, motion passed unanimously.**

**4. Comments for Items Not on the Agenda**

Mr. Boutin reminded these are comments that are about anything but the fuel and the budget.

**4.1 Public Comment**

- Anastasia Douglas expressed her disgust with the elimination of para-educator positions. As they are legally required to comply with student IEPs, supporting their elimination is a violation of state and federal law. The administration should be ashamed of the lack of communication it has had with parents regarding the last-minute notification regarding support issues.
- June Babel asked about nameplates or the possibility of Board members identifying themselves at the beginning of meetings.
- Tyler Watkins thanked veterans, their family members and spouses, and military brats. Again, challenging each board member to visit one school each month. See what's going on and see what still needs to be improved upon, changed, or become better. More community outreach each month, recognizing a local business student or community member, and thanks to the superintendent for looking into mandating First Aid/CPR for every staff.
- Jasmine Wible addressed the Special Education email, stating there would not be support staff for children. The district's dismal communication and collaboration have led to this oversight, resulting in unmet needs and non-compliance with students with IEPs. This situation has further eroded the already fragile trust parents have in the administration. Effective communication and collaboration are crucial. Unfortunately, this has not been demonstrated.
- Erica Reil is with all the parents outraged about this lack of notification of not having support services. Clearly states in the Individuals with Disabilities, Education Act (IDEA) that the school must provide these services or reach out for alternatives for these services. If schools can not financially do this, they must reach out to the state for other budgets.

#### **4.2 Student Voice**

None

### **5. Consent Agenda**

#### **5.1 Regular Meeting Minutes – August 14, 2024**

#### **5.2 Special Meeting Minutes - August 7, 2024**

#### **5.3 Warrant Approval: August 15, 2024, August 22, 2024**

#### **5.4 New Hires - No New Hires**

**Mrs. Farrell made a motion, seconded by Mr. Cechinelli to approve the consent agenda items 5.2 and 5.3, motion passed unanimously.**

#### **Discussion - Warrant questions**

- Course Reimbursement—HR Department, no money budgeted. How are we booking expenses to an account that isn't there?
- Paving in BC parking lot for about \$6000, not on capital list.
- A garage door was installed at Barre Town. The warrant lists the cost of the door; it doesn't list the cost of the total project, which easily exceeds \$5000, not on the capital list.
- The warrant shows we're buying supplies. Are we buying from one place or spot buying? Using one may yield savings.

Ms. Canning shared that she had also looked into the warrant but had come up with other topics to discuss.

- Roof payment - large item previously approved
- EEI - HVAC project is on schedule
- Technology Equipment - a large amount - mainly replacement computers
- Many invoices for coursework tuition, technology software expenses, etc.
- Finals site subscription - the company used for the website, annual cost.
- Monthly copier lease cost in the amount of \$5,101. .

Minutes for August 7th, page 3, 2nd set of bullets has ELA change to CLA.

### **6. Current Business**

#### **6.1 Action Memo: Board Retreat- NESDEC**

#### **6.2 Action Memo: Board Training - VSBA**

Combined 6.1 and 6.2 - Discussion on Board Retreat and request for training.

How do we want to proceed with the Board Retreat? Should we outsource it or have the superintendent do something?

Suggestions from Board members.

- No funds were budgeted for the Board Retreat. Mr. Boutin is willing to give half of his stipend if outsourcing is chosen.
- It is recommended that they create their own. Another suggested that if the board has its own, there be a facilitator, and it is recorded.
- A suggested facilitator with a very tight agenda for what the retreat will encompass is a good idea. Solid foundation and a good road map of where we're going for the rest of the year and years to come. Build on good activities we have had so far
- Focus on the proper welcome of new members and the superintendent, Board Governance, work on Vision, Mission, and goals, Strategic planning, and an overview of our committees.

Governance - need to meet quality standards by July 1, 2025 it's not so much training as facilitated work sessions to make sure if we haven't met the standard, we have a plan to be able to meet them. The rubric created will be published once passed through AOE. Boards will be able to do a self-evaluation and find any needs that would be a good stepping-off point for any kind of facilitated training, but it's up to the board and will go into effect on July 1, 2025. Can start working before the rubric provided on July 1, 2025.

Ms. Canning will come back with a couple of proposals to consider.

### 6.3 Policy A20

Board Meetings, Agenda Preparation & Distribution (A20) - Just a discussion tonight; no changes.

Ms. Canning would like the board to consider changing the three days in A20 to five days before a meeting for packet distribution. If Action Memos are kept, they should be changed to Memos and added to A20. Modifications will be reviewed and brought back to the board for policy A20, and the Board can make a decision on them.

## 7. Old Business

None

## 8. Round Table

- Mrs. Farrell - Think about our practice for responding to emails from the public to every member of the board. Have a statement, or how do we respond. Christina Titus graduated from SHS two years ago and has completed two years at the United States Military Academy at West Point. He was moved into his junior year and committed to the United States Army, and I think we should be very proud of his work not only here at SHS and ROTC but his work at that great place
- Mr. Reil - The Ron York Foundation just had an annual meeting. The foundation is generating a lot of money. The investment team has done a really good job there. Only three people applied for this amazing opportunity last year. Encourage all the students to do lots of science and stuff and apply for that great scholarship. Ms. Canning learned about it this week. Three students are going into engineering is really impressive. She is going to do more research on how it gets out to families because it really puts Barre on the map. Mrs Kresco has two children who received this scholarship. Put out through the SHS guidance office and preference is given to students who are applying for either electrical engineering degrees or aeronautic engineering. Mr. York was a local business owner who owned an electrical company called Bates and Murray. He was an electrician and an avid aviation person. He's dearly departed, but he had the foresight to do this and invest in our community and our kids. It's really cool, to talk about a guy in our community giving back and should get recognized. That's the guy. York Branch in East Barre was another thing he did.
- Mrs. Leclerc shared that there is a procedure for community response. It outlines when we get emails for any kind of correspondence how it needs to be handled, who needs to respond, and so on. It is under Procedures on the website.
- Mrs. Whalen shared her daughter had her first last day of school and wanted to give a shout-out to seniors who are graduating this year. Here's to a great senior year.
- Ms. Reynolds, thank you to the educators and staff for the first day of school. I hope it was exciting and exhilarating, everyone gets a lot of rest, and they're ready to do it again tomorrow. Thank you very much.
- Mrs. Spaulding attended the convocation with other board members, and it was a great opportunity to kick off the school year with the staff. Talked to some staff and heard different presentations. Loved the shared video. It was fantastic. Reminder about the Budget vote coming up on September 17th. Absentee ballots are available now. There still seems to be a lot of confusion about the budget and how much people's taxes are going up. When we tell you your taxes are going up by 1 cent or 3 cent that's what it's really going up. It's not an additional 14% that's coming up. You've received your tax bill, and it has your municipal portion once we get our budget set, that's what your tax rate will be. There are no additional state taxes coming down. That 14% was an average across the state for property taxes. This is Barre, and we are deciding when we get to vote whether we can accept a 1-cent or 3-cent property tax increase for the education portion of your budget. Please get out there and vote.
- Mr. Grant wished a happy first day to our Barre students, teachers, and faculty. Grand reopening of The Aldrich Public Library's new Teen Lounge this Friday, August 30th, from 3:30- 6:00 p.m. Thanks to federal funding given out to Vermont After School and the Vermont Youth Project, which made some investments here at the school as well. New furniture, live, real plants, light therapy lamps, games, arts and crafts, and all sorts of wonderful opportunities for our kids, so please come to the opening. There will be food, open mic, crafts, and activities, and we're going to have a lot of fun. Thank you to Vermont After School and Vermont Youth Project for making that happen.
- Mr. Cecchinelli—Today was Don Lessard's first day of his 50th year here in the district, and I would like to say a big thank you to Don for everything he's done. Hopefully, we can plan something big for him this year. A round of applause was given.
- Mr. Boutin introduced Ms. Canning last night to the City Council. It was a very good conversation, and appreciated our mayor talking about the budget. Huge endorsement from him saying he supports the budget, and I really appreciate that. Very thankful for that strong, ringing endorsement that he gave. Adorable video that one of our kids in our district made, and Jasmine (mom) is online, and wanted to say thank you so very much. That was really great, and he did share it on social media and folks can share it as well. It supports the budget, and it's just a cute video. Congratulations to Burlington for making some decisions on cell phone policies, and I think the way things are going in our state, I'm really excited to see all those changes coming and who knows what will happen in the future. Maybe it will happen here, maybe not, but wanted to say congratulations to them. September 17th, ask people to come out and vote, preferably yes, and if you want to see where we are in the state. There is a map on the State of Vermont website that shows the different percentages that each community is going up. Granville is going up 38% compared to what we're going up, that's really high.
- Ms. Canning -
  - Acknowledged the parents who spoke this evening about the Special Education issue and their frustration, and I apologize for that. I do have many years under my belt as a Special Education Director I've worked with a lot of

different parents and kids in my life, and I have a very high respect and regard for parents who want to advocate for their students. It's been very difficult for our new Special Education Director to start a new job and try to collect information. There are over 600 kids with IEPs in our district, and this is not an excuse. This is the reality we've been going through. She needs to go through many, many IEPs to determine the level of service that we are supposed to be providing to our students. She did that without a lot of support over the summer. The letter sent out is being used in other school districts around the state in a way to be transparent. We want to acknowledge what we're not able to do right now. With that said, we have a plan for how to meet with each individual IEP team, with the parents involved, to talk about how we can make things better. Unfortunately, that did not happen before school started, and I apologize for that personally, and I will monitor this situation very closely. If a student has service in an IEP we will provide those services. If we don't have staff for that, we will provide some alternatives. We will do what we can. Positions that we were talking about previously in budget discussions had to do with positions that were no longer needed. Sounds funny with the state of affairs we're in right now, but it was not that we're reducing any students' need for individual support. We lost 17 support staff end of June. That is a significant number where we were already behind in trying to hire support staff so it has been challenging. Last two Board meetings, there haven't been any new hires, and even though you wouldn't be approving para-educators I'm not approving any in the office. We do have some interviews set up, and I feel hopeful that we're going to be able to uptick that a little bit, but we are behind the eight-ball in our hiring of support staff. The Special Services Director is working with teachers on what we can do and how to be creative with our schedules.

- The convocation went very well. Positive feedback, smiling faces, it was energetic. It is fantastic to visit the schools and get around to many classrooms. I saw only 9th graders today at SHS, but I am planning to visit tomorrow when others arrive, as well as SEA.
- Community engagement - Thanked the board for five members who've stepped up to be on the community engagement effort. Asked for feedback through email because having you at a meeting would require a warning. If you're interested in joining me at an event or reviewing written work or any other way you'd like to be involved. I'm not keeping anyone from this just the dilemma that I had around setting up a meeting with five board members interested. Community Engagement draft plan is in your packet and it's a working document.
- I had a good meeting with the City council last night. I was really very happy that the mayor himself endorsed the budget and asked the community to help us turn the page, and she thanked him for that. Thanks, staff, for all their hard work today. It is difficult coming back to a new routine when there are changes, and they've done a really fine job of that. I hope that we continue to work together to address some of our challenges.

## **9. Future Agenda Items**

### **9.1 Budget Information Night September 11, 2024**

- **ESSER Funding Update (Mr. Reil)**
- **Facilities Project Update (HVAC, Lighting, Asbestos Remediation, Stormwater - Mr. Reil)**
- **Solar Credits (Mrs. Leclerc)**
- **EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer) for Vendor Payments (Mrs. Leclerc)**
- **Parking Lot List (Mrs. Leclerc)**
- **Curriculum Committee Report (Mrs. Farrell)**

## **10. Next Meeting Dates**

September 11, 2024, Spaulding High School Library/via Google Meet

September 25, 2024, Spaulding High School Library/via Google Meet

## **11. Executive Session**

### **11.1 Personnel 1 VSA 313 (a)(3)**

**Motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mr. Grant to enter into executive session at 7:18 p.m. for Personnel - 1 VSA 313 (a)(3), inviting in superintendent, motion passed unanimously.**

Following information provided by the Board Clerk

**Motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc to exit executive session at 7:37 p.m., motion passed unanimously.**

## **12. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mr. Grant, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:39 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Tina Gilbert*