

BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Spaulding High School Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
November 13, 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)
Terry Reil (BT)
Garrett Grant (BC)
Alice Farrell (BT)
Catherine Whalen (BT)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

JoAn Canning, Superintendent
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager
Denise Maurice, Principal SHS

GUESTS PRESENT:

Adam Jacobs, AJ Jones, Ben Matthews, Caitlin, Cass Lang, Christine Parker, Dan Morrison, David Delcore - Times Argus, Jackie Wheeler, Jen Cote, Joe Reil, June Babel, Kirsten Evans, Lindsey Wells, Lisa Liotta, Martha Blaisdell, Paul Malone, Prudence Krasofski, Rachel Van Vliet, Raylene Meunier, Sarah Capron, Sarah Helman, Sarah Hill, Sharon Jacobs, Steven Thompson

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Boutin, called the Wednesday, November 13, 2024, Regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., held at the Spaulding High School Library, Barre, and via video conference.

2. Pledge and Mindfulness Moment

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

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

Add under Executive Session 11.1 Contracts 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)(a)

Mrs. Farrell made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, to approve the agenda with the amendment, the motion passed unanimously.

4. Executive Session

4.1 Contract and Personnel 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)(A)

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc to enter into executive session to discuss Contract and Personnel 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)(A),

**Mrs. Spaulding called Point of Order, findings are needed.
Mrs. Farrell withdrew her motion, Mrs. Leclerc agreed.**

On a motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mr. Grant, the Board 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. Spaulding, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, to enter into Executive Session, with the superintendent in attendance to discuss Contract and Personnel, under the provisions of 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)(A), motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Mrs. Farrell, seconded by Mrs. Whalen to exit executive session at 6:29 p.m., motion passed unanimously.

5. Comments for Items Not on the Agenda

5.1 Public Comment

Dan Morrison - Appreciated the opportunity as a town resident parent to participate in the feedback loop through the budget process and have a viewpoint from parents and caregivers at Barre Town. I was able to provide that feedback to a number of people who couldn't participate but wanted me to share their views and just really appreciate that opportunity in this cycle. Wanted to acknowledge that.

Rachel Van Vliet - Agrees CVCC is a great resource in Barre and appreciates the Board can recognize that but also recognize we need to make an investment also in the BUUSD schools and that our whole community will benefit just as we benefit and we have benefited from CVCC.

5.2 Student Voice

None

6. Consent Agenda

6.1 Regular Meeting Minutes - October 23, 2024, October 30, 2024.

6.2 Warrant Approval: October 24, 2024, October 31, 2024, November 6, 2024

Mrs. Spaulding made a motion to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, motion passed unanimously.

7. New Business

7.1 Superintendent's Briefing Memos

- **FY26 Budget Process**
 - **Enrollment/Home Study History/Projections**
 - **Class Size Policy**
 - **Quarterly Special Ed Staff/Child Count Data Report**
 - **Education Quality Standards**

Ms. Canning shared and reviewed a slideshow. [Slideshow Link](#)

Each board member is encouraged to share how they can help with the budget. Focus on how to efficiently advise the administration on budget parameters while considering student needs and program effectiveness. It's important to review the school's vision and mission, focusing on providing a strong education. Discussed the expired strategic plan (June 2024) and identified five important areas: - Equal access to learning resources for all students. - Promoting excitement and engagement in learning. - Building partnerships with the community. - Creating pathways for student success. - Providing necessary support for students' emotional needs. Based on parent interest, it is suggested that grade-level field trips be implemented. The need for more time in reading and math, with a recommendation of 90 minutes for younger students. Encouraging teachers to work together to enhance student learning and create clear ways to track student progress. The importance of connecting with the community and providing job programs throughout the district. Continuous training for teachers and leaders is essential for staying updated in education. The goal is to provide healthy meals and emotional support for students, recognizing the challenge of finding qualified staff. There are increasing demands from new government regulations that add pressure on school resources. Recognition of declining student enrollment and staffing shortages may necessitate a discussion around resource consolidation. The decrease in student numbers creates financial challenges for schools, even with growing needs. Ms. Canning seeks input from board members on budget priorities and encourages questions to help shape the budget plan.

Discussion:

Approximately \$14 to \$15 million is allocated for special education within the budget, highlighting its importance. New data includes requirements for staff such as principals, assistant principals, and support personnel. There is an ongoing assessment of how the district aligns with these standards. Commit to prioritizing student education and ensuring budget decisions align with strategic goals. There are some contractual requirements, but current staff are committed to their specific schools but could be reassigned based on changing student needs enhancing instructional support. Maintaining class size policies should reflect the diversity of student needs, including those with special education requirements. The acknowledgment that while class size matters, the quality of instruction and the competence of educators are crucial for student success. Exploring the idea of flexibility in class sizes by potentially moving students for better resource allocation and engaging parents in the discussion. Emphasis on ongoing professional development to enhance instructional quality and remain current with educational practices. It is important to keep parents and the community informed about student progress through standardized reporting methods. Clear communication with the community regarding budget decisions and rationale is important while gathering input from various stakeholders. Acknowledgment that while aiming for a level-funded budget is ideal, it may not be realistic due to existing contractual obligations and rising costs. Emphasis on applying insights from the Picus report to operational practices and decision-making. The need for continued discussions about the budget and its impact on student opportunities and academic success. Encouragement to maintain open lines of communication among board members, staff, and the community to refine priorities effectively.

- **Public Comment (Policy A21)**

Point of discussion at Retreat. Existing five documents that govern public participation, emphasizing their sufficiency for maintaining transparency and accountability.

Two-Minute Rule: Mixed feelings about the enforcement of the two-minute speaking rule, noting it can be restrictive but generally helps manage meeting time. Meeting Accessibility: Concerns are raised about long meetings impacting public accessibility, suggesting modifications to the public comment policy to ensure meetings don't extend too late. Proposed two actions: - Maintain the current public comment policy. - Send the policy to the Policy Committee for further consideration and potential modifications. Respect for Community Input: Board members discuss ensuring community members feel respected and engaged when addressing the board, emphasizing active listening and responsiveness. Streamlined Process: Some members advocate for allowing public comments at the beginning of meetings to improve efficiency and keep public engagement relevant to the agenda. Role of Board Chair: Discussion underscores the board chair's responsibility for managing the public comments and maintaining order during meetings.

Mr. Reil made the motion to keep public comment as is, seconded by Mrs. Farrel, motion passed 5 to 4. Mr. Reil, Mrs. Farrell, Mrs. Leclerc, Mrs. Whalen, and Mr. Boutin voted for the motion. Ms. Reynolds, Mrs. Spaulding, Mr. Grant, and Mr. Cecchinelli voted against the motion.

Mr. Cecchinelli called point of order, dialogue between board members without chair recognition.

There's a clarification about the distinction between procedures and policies, with the board being responsible for developing its policies and procedures regarding public participation.

Mr. Reil called the question, seconded by Mrs. Farrell, motion passed unanimously. Returned to original motion for vote.

- **School Board Committees**

Reinstatement of Committees - The Superintendent recommends reinstating the Policy and Facilities Committees until the school board's reorganization meeting in March. - Monthly Policy Committee: Focus on reviewing, updating, and developing policies in collaboration with the superintendent. - Bimonthly Facilities Committee: Tasked with developing a long-range facilities master plan, including an annual building schedule and equipment inventory. Instead of a Curriculum Committee, the Directors of Curriculum and Special Education will hold two meetings in FY25 for parents to discuss goals and plans regarding curriculum and special education improvements. Proposed to disband the Finance Committee until the Board's reorganization.

Mr. Reil made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc to reinstate the monthly Policy Committee and bi-monthly Facilities Committee, motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Spaulding made a motion to disband the Finance Committee, seconded by Ms. Reynolds, motion passed 5 to 3, Mrs. Farrell, Mrs. Leclerc, and Mrs. Whalen voted against the motion.

Mr. Reil made a motion to amend the motion on the floor to have the monthly financial statements at the second monthly meeting yet provided at the first monthly meeting, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, motion passed 7 to 1, Mrs. Spaulding voted against the motion.

Mr. Boutin acknowledged point of order for Mr. Reil, discussion is not about the amended motion on the floor.

Discussion about what the motion is ensued.

Mrs. Spaulding called point of order, she asked for clarification, and that was not the clarification. What was the point of having this conversation if we're going to disband the committee and Mr. Reil agreed the way the chair explained it wouldn't matter because it was contingent on whether this motion passed and now saying that it's not.

Mr. Reil called the question, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Reynolds asked if she could ask a procedural question, **Mrs. Leclerc called point of order.** meeting returned to vote on the amended motion. Mr. Boutin returned to the original motion additional discussion was provided, **Mr. Grant called the question, seconded by Mrs. Farrell.** Mr. Boutin recited the motion, **Mrs. Spaulding called point of order, the motion on the table is call the question.**

Mr. Grant made a motion to follow the recommendation to disband the Curriculum Committee until reorganization with the caveat that we provide those informational meetings to parents, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, motion passed 7 to 2, Mr. Reil and Mr. Boutin voted against the motion.

Mrs. Spaulding would like to discuss the number of committee assignments per member, **Mr. Reil called point of order, the matter on the table is done and closed. That being discussed by another member was not what was warned.**

Mrs. Spaulding made a motion to override the Board Chair's decision of the point of order to move on, seconded by Mr. Cecchinelli, motion failed for lack of two-thirds vote. Mr. Reil, Mrs. Farrell, Mrs. Leclerc, and Mrs. Whalen voted against the motion. Ms. Reynolds, Mrs. Spaulding, Mr. Grant, and Mr. Cecchinelli voted for the motion.

- **Financial Management Questionnaire [ACTION]**

The agency of education requires a financial management questionnaire to be completed and submitted annually.

Mr. Grant made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Farrell to authorize the chair to sign the Financial Management Questionnaire, motion passed unanimously.

Discussion - Clarification was sought regarding the role of the treasurer, noting that Jake resigned and Natalie Soften is now the treasurer. - Discussion about whether an assistant treasurer is needed and the importance of training for board members on financial matters. Question raised about records maintained in manual forms. Confirmed that an electronic financial system is in place and that manual reports are also received.

Mrs. Spaulding called point of order, to vote on a ruling by the chair can be decided by a majority, just for the record.

A procedural question was raised about who would sign warrants following the disbanding of the finance committee. The conclusion was that the chair and vice chair would do so. Warrants will be sent electronically for signatures.

The board took a 5-minute break.

- **Monthly General Fund Report and Quarterly Grant Reports**

Discussion: two extensive financial reports (70 pages each) were presented in a short timeframe, which felt overwhelming, question was raised regarding the ARP ESSER funds, noting that the current revenue figures didn't show any dollar amounts, although expenses were listed. Compared to the ARP ESSER to other ESSER funds, there were dollar amounts associated with the revenue in previous reports. **Mrs. Spaulding called point of order, has no idea what the other board member is talking about.** It's item 7, 7.1 the link for superintendent briefing memos. Scroll down it's on the one that's associated.

Mrs. Perreault attributed to its multi-year span, -\$2 million is revenue. She clarified that grants are reimbursed based on expenses incurred, specifically mentioning a pending \$7 million reimbursement for HVAC expenses.

Mr. Cecchinelli circled back on the facilities committee and needed guidance on scheduling future committee meetings, proposing a schedule starting in December and continuing through February and April. Also, the facilities committee needs a third board member if anyone wants to jump on board.

7.2 Quarterly CIA Plan Update

There's a focus on developing a BUSD curriculum website aimed at providing parents and the community with clarity on what their children will learn in different subjects without going into detailed instructional plans. The intention of upcoming meetings with parents is to address their questions regarding the curriculum and to help them navigate the new website easier. Parents expressed the desire for clear and concise information on what students will learn in literacy, math, social studies, and science, avoiding unnecessary embellishments. The superintendent pointed out concerns about the aggressive timeline for curriculum development, with potential adjustments needed due to unforeseen circumstances, such as canceled professional development days. There's a need to connect the new curriculum report format to previous ones for better understanding and continuity without increasing workload. Upcoming reports will include assessment data, which hasn't been seen for some time, and there's a desire for consistency in the reporting format for comparability. The current curriculum report is appreciated for its concise presentation, allowing board members to grasp the high-level summary without being overwhelmed by data. Vertical and Horizontal Alignment, Emphasis on the importance of maintaining equal educational opportunities across schools through proper alignment in the curriculum continues to be a priority.

8. Round Table/Superintendent Report

- Mr. Reil - The information we got from CVCC at our last meeting was eye-opening and had a big impact on our district and community. Disappointed we are behind the eight ball in participating. Emails and letters had been sent out asking for each sending school's participation in the meeting, and we haven't done that, which was very disappointing. I hope we can get on that soon. It was very enlightening to go to their meeting. There's a lot of excitement over there about this. We as a community, not necessarily a district, but as a district as well, should be doing whatever we can to keep that here. It's a crown jewel we need to keep. Thank you to the administration, especially Nancy Leclerc, for the best board retreat that I've been to in a long time. To piggyback on what Ms. Reynolds said about finances, we had a wonderful discussion as a group. Don't think it's been done in months and months. It was amazing. Thank you, Nancy, everyone on the board, and the administration. That was a great retreat.

- Mrs. Farrell - As a board representative to CVCC, I recommend that board members attend CVCC meetings to understand what's going on and offer their input. CVCC Board has somewhat been doing this in isolation from the Barre board, but other boards have contributed their idea, Washington Central, Twinfield, etc. It would be nice to have the Barre Board offering their ideas. This was a dream of a Regional Technical High School that began six years ago, and six years ago could very well be a different century as things have changed so drastically with education and the economy. It's really important, and we would be very welcoming if anyone from the board could attend our meetings. We meet on the 2nd Monday of the month, 6:00 pm at CVCC. A suggestion was made for the board to review committee decisions after six months to assess effectiveness and satisfaction. There is an eight-hour school board training, an opportunity for members to fulfill in one swoop, and a number of webinars. Requested page numbers and numbering for agenda items. Sometimes, I look in great apprehension of coming to these meetings, and I don't anymore.
- Mrs. Leclerc - The Board retreat we had was very successful: It met its objectives, and we engaged as a group in productive and meaningful dialogue. It contributed to me and produced a positive experience. Hoping Garrett and Catherine you witnessed firsthand how the board can work together and collaborate. The retreat offered valuable learning opportunities for them and myself, and I'm hoping the other board members also. We didn't get to discuss committees, which we did tonight, but I still feel it was a very productive retreat. I would like to reach out to VSBA again and have a more in-depth discussion of our board governance. Robert's Rules of Order conversation was wonderful and I would entertain having further discussion if the board so desires. Congratulations to Spaulding High School students Taylor Keel, Sophia Guarriello, Mollie Moran, and Mia Dolan. They were all selected to the all-star soccer team for Division II. Consider creating a special committee focused on finance. If the budget gets too overwhelming, we could go that route.
- Mrs. Whalen - Also enjoyed the retreat very much and looking forward to the next one. A few other members here and I attended the VSBA conference in Fairlee, which was interesting. One of the things that came out that I would like to discuss with the board at a later date would be a policy on cell phones. They had a little Symposium, which I found very interesting. Some of the data and things they spoke about were unbelievable. They had Lamoille South, the superintendent, the principal, and a parent there discussing how the policy had affected their school for the better. It was fun to go to, and I appreciate the opportunity. I feel like I learned a lot.
- Ms Reynolds - Recognize all the amazing events our school community participates in and hosts. Students are in parades, PTO is busy with bingo nights, Math and Literacy night is coming up, skit night, talent show, and High school play "Dracula." There are all kinds of ways to be involved in our school community, and I've been trying to go to as many as I can. It's been such a fun, positive thing. Students are wonderful, and there's so much support for our schools.
- Mrs. Spaulding—I attended the Veterans Day parade on Monday; without Mr. Watkins here, I'd like to thank the veterans. It was a lovely ceremony, and we got to see the bands from Barre City, Barre Town, and Spaulding, and they're wonderful as always. They do a really good job, considering it's November. I don't know how to play an instrument, let alone play an instrument and walk. I found that amazing and applauded them, it was great.
- Ms. Canning - Also at the Veteran's Day parade and in addition to our bands, which I was very proud of. Groups of young men were part of the JROTC program, and they were extremely proud walking alongside. Weather in Our Schools program in the city and town and the kids had a blast. They loved it, and we had a lot of viewers from the parents. It will create an opportunity for us to do it annually; the kids really enjoyed it. The water problem is resolved, and we have a lot of bottled water left. We will reschedule our PD day, which was affected by it. Two teachers were recognized last week at the annual Teacher of the Year ceremony at UVM. Mary Gaudreau and Jodi Bushway, both teachers, put their students first every day. Very lucky to have these high-quality teachers. and I publicly want to recognize them for all their efforts. There will be an Audit Presentation on December 19th. You will receive the report in advance, so you have an opportunity to read it. David from Robert's Rules training contacted me to do a follow-up with you. Some of you were interested in having him evaluate the board meetings. He can do that by reviewing a recording or joining us, whatever the board prefers. (The board agreed both would be good). Deb followed up regarding board standards, which we will discuss on a future agenda.
- Mr. Boutin - VSBA meeting - Cell phone - Knowing my take on cell phones, it was confirmational bias, and everything I believe was completely validated. It was very educational to see how it impacted their school system. I think I would highly recommend folks looking into it. I went to the virtual learning session, which was also very educational, and we use it here. It would be awesome if we could capitalize on that because I learned that the student may not be here, but we still get credit for that student. We don't get credit for college courses, but with virtual learning, we still maintain that credit. Very educational, and enjoyed myself at the VSBA. Lake Morey is beautiful. With that being said, folks should absolutely try to come. Thank you to everyone who did. Elections were last week, and you now have an embedded lobbyist in the legislature.

9. Next Meeting Dates

December 4, 2024, Spaulding High School Library/via Google Meet

December 19, 2024, Spaulding High School Library/via Google Meet

10. Executive Session

10.1 Contracts 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)

On a motion by Mr. Grant, seconded by Mr. Cecchinelli, the Board 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.

Motion by Mr. Grant, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc, to go into executive session to discuss 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), motion passed unanimously.

Following information provided by the Board Clerk

Motion by Ms. Reynolds, seconded by Mr. Grant to exit executive session at 9:03 p.m., motion passed unanimously.

11. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Grant, seconded by Mrs. Whalen, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Gilbert