

Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District

Budget Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes December 7, 2023

Members in Attendance:

Gerald Finn of Millville
Chester Hanratty of Millbury
Joseph Hall of Bellingham
Tyler Bartlett of Upton
Edward Cray of Mendon

Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick, Superintendent-Director
Anthony Steele, Asst. Superintendent-Principal
Christopher Pilla, District Treasurer
Nicole Ferguson, Business Manager
Jacquenette Raad, Assistant Business Manager
Jamie Patriarca, Assistant Business Manager

Members Absent:

None

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 4:38 p.m. by Dr. Fitzpatrick in the Superintendent's Conference Room.

Agenda items

Dr. Fitzpatrick opened the meeting with a recommendation to accept nominations for chair and vice-chair.

The floor was then open for chair and vice-chair. Mr. Finn nominated Mr. Hall for chair, seconded by Mr. Hanratty. Hearing no other nominations, the motion was voted and unanimously carried. Mr. Hanratty then nominated Mr. Finn vice-chair of the Budget Subcommittee, seconded by Mr. Hall. Hearing no other nominations, the motion was voted and unanimously carried. Mrs. Ferguson nominated Ms. Raad as Recording Secretary, seconded by Mr. Pilla. Hearing no other nominations, the motion was voted and unanimously carried.

Mr. Hall asked subcommittee members to review the proposed budget meeting dates. Hearing no conflicts, Mr. Hall made a motion to approve the budget subcommittee meeting schedule as originally presented, seconded by Mr. Finn. The motion was unanimously carried.

Next, Mr. Pilla presented the Debt budget (8000 Series) which showed a \$16,100 reduction from the previous year. Compared to prior year, the principal payment decreased by \$5,000 and interest decreased by \$11,100. As FY2025 is the final year of the current debt, both Dr. Fitzpatrick and Mr. Pilla noted that additional long term debt needs may surface through upcoming FY2025 Budget Subcommittee Meetings.

Mrs. Ferguson directed attention to October 1st enrollment information. She noted the FY24 School Choice count is preliminary, pending updated information from DESE that should be available in late December 2023.

Next, Mrs. Ferguson presented the Administration budget (1000 series). This budget series was level funded to the prior year budget.

Ms. Ferguson then presented the Fixed Charge/Benefits budget (5000 series) which increased \$629,759 or 12.10% from the prior year budget. The major components of this change consisted of:

- \$ 318.3K Active Employee Medical – Rate increase based upon experience and trends
- \$ 231.7K Retiree Medical – Increase driven by a combination of additional retirees, mortality, Medicare eligibility and other state GIC (Group Insurance Commission) plan adjustments
- \$ 35.7K Retirement Contributions – Increase in estimated ‘pay as you go’ cost for Non-MTRS retiree benefit payments
- \$ 26.6K Employer Medicare – Increase directly related to FY25 proposed gross wage base
- \$ 18.4K Insurance – Related to anticipated 5.5% increase in workers compensation and 10% increase in property and casualty coverage based on experience trends
- \$ 1.0K Unemployment Insurance – Increase due to proposed gross wage base, offset by 0.1% reduction in experience rating
- (\$ 2.4K) DW Other Fixed Charges – Decreased mainly for Medicaid admin. and contingency fees, based on anticipated revenue decreases

The active-employee health plan increase was indicative of medical experience and trends provided by the District’s health insurance broker. The change reflects a preliminary rate increase of 9% for both Harvard Pilgrim HMO and high deductible plans. Mrs. Ferguson went on to explain the increase in GIC (Group Insurance Commission) health costs for professional retirees in MTRS are challenging to predict due to GIC plan adjustments. The District assumed the most recent GIC assessment, added estimated assessments for five new retirees and assumed a rate increase of 8.25%.

It was also noted that the proposed Benefits budget also contained a \$458,185 contribution to the State Retirement System for non-MTRS staff, which reflects a \$35,731 increase over the prior year budget. This budget line item was based on the current ‘pay as you go’ billing being assessed, in addition to consideration of recent retirees.

The discussion shifted to the final area of review, the Salary and Wage budget, which represented an increase versus the prior year by \$932,624 or 5.42%. Mr. Steele opened by noting staffing changes reflective of varying needs and elaborated on the increase. Mrs. Ferguson demonstrated to the Subcommittee that anticipated pay increases made up the majority of the planned change; while, to a lesser extent, level changes and the net impact of other staffing changes (i.e. new, eliminated, replacement positions) made up the balance of the increase. The FTE comparison document included in the meeting materials showed an overall full-time equivalent (FTE) increase was limited to 1.71 positions. In summary, the net change in FTE’s consists of an increase of 5.00 positions (3.0 SPED, 1.0 Academic, and 1.0 Facility Maintenance), offset by a reduction of 2.29 positions (1.0 Vocational, 1.0 Technology, and 0.29 District Wide) and a 1.0 transferred position in Technology.

The next scheduled meeting is set for Thursday December 14, 2023 at 5:00 in the Superintendent’s Conference Room.

Areas for follow-up:

Mr. Hanratty request’s for dollar increase in step increases.

Open Item at this time

Adjournment

Motion: to adjourn made by Mr. Hall at 6:36 p.m.; seconded by Dr. Fitzpatrick; motion voted and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted by,
Jacqueline Raad, Recording Secretary