

Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting
August 17, 2023

The regular meeting of the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee was held in the school cafeteria. The following members, staff and others were present:

Joseph M. Hall of Bellingham, Chair
 Joseph A. Broderick of Blackstone
 Mark J. Potter of Douglas
 Anthony M. Yitts of Grafton
 Mitchell A. Intinarelli of Hopedale
 Chester P. Hanratty, Jr. of Millbury
 Gerald M. Finn of Millville, Vice Chair
 Jeff T. Koopman of Northbridge
 James M. Mitchell of Sutton
 Tyler D. Bartlett of Upton
 James H. Ebbeling of Uxbridge

Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick, Superintendent-Director
 Christopher C. Pilla, Treasurer
 Anthony E. Steele, Asst. Superintendent/Principal
 Robert Dolegiewicz, Facilities Manager
 Michael Denise, Director of Athletics & Student Activities
 Sosie DerKosrofia, Student Council Representative
 Elise Bogdan, Recording Secretary
 Patrick Morris of Sutton, Sutton Finance Committee Chair

Members Absent:

Edward D. Cray, III of Mendon
 Paul J. Braza of Milford

Item 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by the Chair, Mr. Hall. Dr. Fitzpatrick was notified in advance that Mr. Cray and Mr. Braza would be unable to attend. A moment of silence in remembrance of former District School Committee Chair Roger N. Garceau (years of service: 1970-1983) was held. Mr. Garceau, 89, passed away on July 3, 2023.

Item 2. Secretary's Report – A. Yitts

2.1. On a motion by Mr. Yitts seconded by Mr. Intinarelli, it was unanimously voted to waive reading of the minutes of the regular School Committee meeting of June 15, 2023 and to accept the minutes as written.

Item 3. Treasurer's Report – C. Pilla

3.1. The Treasurer's Report was presented dated May 31, 2023. The report reflected an ending balance of \$5,118,096.69 for Total Funds, including \$1,348,382.34 in Project Funds, and \$3,769,714.35 in Local Funds. On a motion by Mr. Hanratty, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was unanimously voted to approve the May 31, 2023 Treasurer's Report as presented.

3.2. The Treasurer's Report was presented dated June 30, 2023. The report reflected an ending balance of \$1,753,016.07 for Total Funds, including \$1,255,402.97 in Project Funds, and \$497,613.10 in Local Funds. On a motion by Mr. Hanratty, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was unanimously voted to approve the June 30, 2023 Treasurer's Report as presented.

3.3. Mr. Pilla informed the Committee that more time was needed to prepare the Treasurer's Report, dated July 31, 2023, and that he would present the July 31, 2023, Treasurer's

Report at the September 14, 2023, School Committee Meeting.

Dr. Fitzpatrick reported that additional time was necessary with key personnel in the Business Office out on medical leave.

Item 4. Comments by Student Council Representatives - Ellie Poitras & Sosie DerKosrofia

The Student Council Representative, Sosie DerKosrofia, reported that the Council was excited about the return to school and welcoming activities they had planned. E-board members attended the Freshmen Cookout on the evening of August 16, 2023. Council members volunteered as mentors for the Freshmen Orientation Days on August 17 and 18, 2023. They created and placed personalized paper flowers with each student's name on appropriate homeroom doors to make the new students feel welcome. They handed out Freshmen T-shirts. They are excited to bring high energy into this school year. The next Student Council meeting is on August 30, 2023.

Mr. Koopman conveyed that his daughter, an incoming Class of 2027 freshman, noticed how much the Student Council Members love BVT and do a great job making the new students feel welcome.

Item 5. Business Manager - L. Mangano

5.1. Dr. Fitzpatrick informed the Committee that with the Line Item Transfer(s) not needed, he would cover Ms. Mangano's section.

5.2. Donation Approval:

a. On a motion by Mr. Intinarelli, seconded by Mr. Koopman, it was voted to approve the vehicle donation of a 2009 Honda Civic from the donor, Mr. Steven E. Lagomarsino. The vehicle will be used for instructional and valuable training purposes in BVT's automotive programs.

Item 6. Assistant Superintendent-Director's Report - A. Steele

6.1. 2023-24 School Year Opening – Mr. Steele reported that the school year began on Monday, August 14th, with new staff orientation. On Tuesday, August 15th, all staff returned to campus. On Wednesday, August 16th, the Class of 2027 attended the freshmen cookout with near-perfect attendance. Today was Day 1 of Freshmen Orientation. It was a full school day; students rotated through their seven exploratory shops and met vocational teachers. Students had lunch and practiced the bus routine. Tomorrow is Day 2 of Freshmen Orientation. Again, it will be a full day of school. Students will meet administrators, faculty, staff, and academic teachers by walking through their academic schedules. August 21st is the first day of school for all of BVT. The new school year is off to a very smooth start.

6.2. Mr. Steele introduced Robert Dolegiewicz, Facilities Manager, who had prepared the 2023 School Building Enhancement Summary List (Item 6.2.). The list included summer projects and preventative maintenance. Mr. Dolegiewicz spoke about the tasks completed over the summer break: The original gym renovation, tank removal project, new storage, workstations for the Technology Department within the DLC, improved access for the Technology Department to their server room, two grease traps were replaced in Culinary Arts and the Cafe, and a new dishwasher installed. Mr. Steele spoke about the in-progress field projects, the

baseball infield replacement (due to overuse and limited options, the field was deemed unplayable), and the resod of Postma Football Field. Both field projects are being addressed with the help of a BVT alum, donated equipment, volunteers, and in-house talent, helping keep costs low. Mr. Steele and Mr. Dolegiewicz were proud of the work completed over the summer and their impressive crew, which included student workers.

6.3. The School Committee members received an updated new personnel listing of FY24 Appointments and complimented the Human Resources department on their recruitment process.

6.4. SkillsUSA Nationals Update – Mr. Steele reported that the SkillsUSA competition series' third and final stage was held from June 19 to June 23, 2023, at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta, Georgia. The National Conference resulted in 7 medals: 1 Gold, 3 Silver, and 3 Bronze for BVT students. Mr. Steele also noted that our sophomore student was elected to hold the office of the SkillsUSA Massachusetts State President.

6.5. Mr. Denise, Director of Athletics & Student Activities, spoke to the Committee about MIAA Realignments, and a new tool to determine MIAA alignment has been used to determine the current alignment cycle, which will go into effect for the 2023-24 school year. Mr. Denise distributed a document created by Fitchburg Director of Athletics Craig Antocci with the help of the Urban AD Data Subcommittee to provide a Competitive Equity Tool (CET) to be used by all member schools to help properly align schools using enrollment stability percentage rates and high needs percentage. Mr. Denise, in a PowerPoint slide presentation, showed that while the goal of (CET) is to properly align member schools based on enrollment stability percentage rates and high needs percentage, the Washington State Model differs significantly in the participation of its vocational-technical student-athletes. The Competitive Equity Modifier for BVT Total Enrollment for Alignments: 1231, Co-ed or Single Gender: Co-ed, Enrollment Base: 1231, Stability % from DESE Website: 98.70%, Enrollment Base multiplied by DESE Stability %: 1215, High Needs % from DESE Website: 24.00%, High Needs Modifier: 24:00%, Enrollment used for Proposed Alignments: 1215. All BVT stand-alone programs were re-aligned to higher divisions.

Mr. Denise thanked Dr. Fitzpatrick and Mr. Steele for their help and support over the previous school year during the alignment appeal process. There were three separate appeals – fall, winter, and spring. The alignment appeal process included looking at the profile of BVT, and its 13 sending – School enrollments showing a Mean and Median enrollment. Educating the appeal board on vocational-technical education – Mission, Academics/Shops, Co-op. BVT DESE Information. Statewide Tournament History of BVT Athletics. Power Ranking System for Statewide Tournament (Current Division vs. Proposed Division). Analyzed 2-yr. Data of the new MIAA Statewide Championship. Participation Trends of BVT Student-Athletes (from freshman to senior year). Challenges facing Vocational Athletic Programs. Inequities posed to Vocational Athletic Programs and the need for more transparency.

In conclusion, Mr. Denise said the school's position is in the best interest of student-athletes and that we did alright, considering where the MIAA wanted to put us to where we are

for the next two-year alignment. It will be interesting to see how vocational-technical schools do now in new divisions. Mr. Denise reported that he joined the MIAA Tournament Management Committee, where he will continue to advocate for the best interest of student-athletes.

Mr. Finn asked if the other vocational schools were vocal about the challenges facing vocational, athletic programs and the interest of its student-athletes in the Statewide Tournament rankings. Mr. Denise answered yes, but also recognized the need to be patient with the proposed divisions right now and look at year one and see where our vocational schools end up. Currently, people are looking to leave leagues. Football schedules are changing. It's a super challenge.

Dr. Fitzpatrick expressed his appreciation to Mr. Denise.

6.6. The 2023-24 School Year Student Handbook was distributed to School Committee Members. It was noted that the cover was designed in-house.

6.7. The School Committee members received the 2022 School Resource Officer Memorandum of Understanding between Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School and the Upton Police Department as a reference. The purpose of the agreement is to formalize and clarify the implementation of the partnership between the school and the School Resource Officer/the District and a Police Department regarding the placements of a police officer at BVT in order to promote school safety; help maintain a positive school climate for all students, families, and staff; enhance cultural understanding between students and law enforcement. Mr. Steele reported that the partnership with the Upton Police Department continues to work well and that there would be an updated memorandum of understanding.

Dr. Fitzpatrick expressed his appreciation to Mr. Steele and recognized the numerous campus-wide improvements completed with grants, donations, and in-house talent when possible and the support received within the State's discretionary budget: \$83,000 committed to the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District for removing and replacing an underground storage tank. Dr. Fitzpatrick expressed his appreciation for the support of the Senators who made that possible.

Item 7. Capital Planning Subcommittee Status Report – J. Hall

7.1. Stabilization Discussion – Mr. Hall shared with the members of the Committee, Item 7.1. Section 16G1/2., which highlighted the following information: A regional school district may, upon a majority vote of all members of the regional district school committee and, with the approval of a majority of the local appropriating authorities of the member municipalities, establish a stabilization fund and may, in any year, include in its annual budget for deposit in the stabilization fund an amount not exceeding five per cent of the aggregate amount apportioned to the member municipalities for the preceding fiscal year or such larger amount as may be approved by the commissioner of elementary and secondary education.

Dr. Fitzpatrick asked the Treasurer, Mr. Pilla to provide background on the purpose of the stabilization fund. Mr. Pilla reported that the stabilization fund may be appropriated by vote

of two-thirds of all the members of the regional district school committee for any purpose for which regional school districts may borrow money or for such other district purpose as the commissioner of elementary and secondary education may approve.

Dr. Fitzpatrick explained that we've previously self-funded roof repairs by participating in the MSBA Accelerated Repair Program to make improvements when needed, making our building more energy-efficient and generating substantial cost savings for the District. However, self-funding the last and final phase of needed roof repair is not feasible. It is time to investigate a bond to address capital planning projects such as, an essential repair to the oldest, largest section that involves replacing approximately 60,000 square feet of the 100-wing.

Item 8. Superintendent-Director's Report - Michael F. Fitzpatrick

8.1. Dr. Fitzpatrick shared the School Committee Member Directory and asked if any member needed to make any changes to the information listed in the directory that they inform his office of the changes.

8.2. The Committee is in receipt of a sample letter and the listing of 2023-24 Solicitations for Van Subsidies. Dr. Fitzpatrick noted that a commitment in marketing of community charitable funds through solicitation helps offset transportation and maintenance costs of student vans during the school year.

8.3. Dr. Fitzpatrick shared his annual Welcome Back letter with the Committee.

8.4. A draft of the FY23 Annual Report was shared. On a motion by Mr. Hanratty, seconded by Mr. Koopman, it was voted to approve the draft as presented.

8.5. An FY24 Grants To Date (as of July 28, 2023) document was shared with the Committee. The FY24 in-progress total is \$754,232.

8.6. Summer Professional Development Update:

a. Dr. Fitzpatrick attended the M.A.S.S. Executive Institute event, which took place in Mashpee on July 10–13, 2023. The Institute program features three days of outstanding keynote speakers, break-out presentations, collegial meetings and evening social activities.

b. The Leadership Retreat on July 17–19, 2023, was well attended. The annual retreat centers on campus-wide improvements, technology upgrades, recruitment of new personnel, and structural enhancements.

8.7. Informational Session:

a. Dr. Fitzpatrick noted that Patrick Morris, Chair of the Sutton Finance Committee, joins us this evening. But on June 22, 2023, Mr. Morris requested and attended an informational session with me, and it was a productive and cordial meeting. He asked Mr. Morris if that was an accurate interpretation.

Mr. Morris, Chair of the Sutton Finance Committee, responded that Dr. Fitzpatrick has always answered every question. But the Sutton Finance Committee found that it was late asking the questions. Mr. Morris was interested in attending the Capital Planning Subcommittee meeting. But he, and Dr. Fitzpatrick, had an excellent conversation about the wants and the needs of the school regarding capital planning. If you have a real need like the roof repair project, Mr. Morris will help support it.

8.8. Tour:

a. Mitchell Ruscitti, Hopedale Town Administrator, met Dr. Fitzpatrick and toured the school grounds with him on July 21, 2023.

8.9. Dr. Fitzpatrick shared with the Committee that at the invitation of Mr. Ruscitti, Hopedale Town Administrator, he and Mr. Intinarelli of Hopedale, BVT-Hopedale School Committee Member, attended the Hopedale Board of Selectpersons Meeting on July 24, 2023. Mr. Intinarelli, who had changed his phone number, shared his updated contact information with the Hopedale Board of Selectpersons.

8.10. The Committee is in receipt of an invitation to attend the 2023 MASC/MASS Joint Conference in Hyannis on November 8–11, 2023. In addition to over sixty-panel sessions, the event will feature keynote speakers, including MA Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler; Dr. Darnisa Amante-Jackson, CEO, Disruptive Education Equity Project; and Justin Reich, director, MIT Teaching Systems Lab, who will present a not-to-be-missed session on Friday on Artificial Intelligence and its role in teaching and learning: what school leaders need to know.

Mr. Hanratty remarked that it is a good conference to consider attending with beneficial information. Mr. Hall agreed it was a helpful conference.

8.11. Solar Project Update – Dr. Fitzpatrick shared an e-mail with the Committee. The e-mail from Todd J. Bard, President of LEE Energy Group, LLC, was sent to him and Lorna Mangano dated July 13, 2023, regarding solar alternatives on bill credits/savings analysis.

8.12. FY24 Budget Conference Committee Excerpt– Dr. Fitzpatrick shared an excerpt from the FY24 budget conference committee report, which indicated that BVT is in the FY24 State Budget: \$83,000 shall be expended to the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District for the removal and replacement of an underground storage tank.

8.13. Notification of Resignations:

a. A Notification of Resignation letter dated June 29, 2023, from Meghan Cunningham – Administrative Secretary-Central Office, was accepted with an effective date of July, 14, 2023.

b. A Notification of Resignation letter dated July 6, 2023, from Jenna M. Brault – Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent-Director, was accepted with an effective date of August 11, 2023.

c. A Notification of Resignation letter dated July 6, 2023, from Charlene Howland – Procurement Officer, was accepted with an effective date of July 19, 2023.

8.14. Notification of Retirements:

a. A Notification of Retirement letter dated June 19, 2023, from Michael Swanick – Vocational Instructor-Carpentry, was accepted with an effective date of June 30, 2023.

b. A Notification of Retirement letter dated July 27, 2023, from Christine Cote – Career Enrichment Teacher, was accepted with an effective date of July 31, 2023.

8.15. The Fall 2023 Parent Newsletter - The Link was available at the meeting.

8.16. The 2023 Selected Massachusetts General Laws were available for those members desiring to have a copy of the book for reference.

Item 9. New Business

Dr. Fitzpatrick informed the Committee that there was new business, the following items were discussed:

A Notification of Resignation letter dated August 10, 2023, from Jessica Paldino – Reading/Writing Elective Teacher, was accepted with an effective immediately date of August 10, 2023.

A Notification of Retirement letter dated August 11, 2023, from Eileen Odell – Behavioral Resource Center Coordinator, was accepted with an effective immediately date of August 11, 2023.

The Superintendent-Director informed the Committee that copies of an article published today, August 17, 2023, in the Millbury-Sutton Chronicle titled BVT Takes its Place in a Changing World is available at the meeting.

The Superintendent-Director informed the Committee that he recently became aware of a vocational technical colleague's experience where the colleague encountered public criticism for allegedly "gifting" school services to local citizens. In somewhat of a nontraditional approach, he made the Committee aware of the reverse techniques utilized via a Donations Report that he shared during the meeting.

Item 10. Items for the Good of the Committee:

The monthly compilation of news clippings and correspondence packet was provided at the meeting for members to review individually.

Item 11. Next Regularly Scheduled School Committee Meeting - J. Hall

The next regularly scheduled School Committee meeting will be held on September 14, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

Item 12. Meeting Closure:

12.1. The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 7:38 p.m.

12.2. On a motion by Mr. Hanratty, seconded by Mr. Koopman, it was voted to adjourn at 7:38 p.m.

Listing of materials used in the meeting:

- Item 2.1. Minutes of Meeting of June 15, 2023
- Item 3.1. Treasurer's Report dated May 31, 2023
- Item 3.2. Treasurer's Report dated June 30, 2023
- Item 5.2.a. Vehicle Donation Approval
- Item 6.2. 2023 School Building Enhancement Summary List (handout at meeting)
- Item 6.3. Update on New Personnel (handout at meeting)
- Item 6.4. SkillsUSA Nationals Update
- Item 6.5. MIAA Realignment (handout at meeting)
- Item 6.6. Student Handbook
- Item 6.7. Memorandum of Understanding – SRO/Upton Police Department (handout at meeting)
- Item 7.1. Stabilization Fund Section 16G1/2
- Item 8.1. School Committee Member Directory
- Item 8.2. Van Subsidies Sample Letter
- Item 8.3. Welcome Back Letter
- Item 8.4. FY23 Draft Annual Report
- Item 8.5. FY24 Grant Listing
- Item 8.10. 2023 MASC/MASS Joint Conference
- Item 8.11. Solar Project Update: LEE Energy Group, LLC E-mail
- Item 8.12. FY24 Budget Conference Committee Excerpt
- Item 8.13.a. Notification of Resignation: Meghan Cunningham
- Item 8.13.b. Notification of Resignation: Jenna M. Brault
- Item 8.13.c. Notification of Resignation: Charlene Howland
- Item 8.14.a. Notification of Retirement: Michael Swanick
- Item 8.14.b. Notification of Retirement: Christine Cote
- Item 8.15. Parent Newsletter: The Link – available at meeting
- Item 8.16. 2023 Selected Massachusetts General Laws – available at meeting
- Item 9. Notification of Resignation: Jessica Paldino; Notification of Retirement: Eileen Odell; and MFF Donations Report were made available during meeting under new business
- Item 10. Items for the Good of the Committee

Respectfully submitted by,

Anthony M. Yitts, Secretary