

Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting
October 12, 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 A. Broderick of Blackstone	Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick, Superintendent-Director
Mark J. Potter of Douglas – 6:26 p.m.	Anthony E. Steele, Asst. Superintendent/Principal
Anthony M. Yitts of Grafton	Edward Evans, Academic Curriculum Coordinator
Edward D. Cray, III of Mendon – 6:04 p.m.	Christopher C. Pilla, Treasurer
Paul J. Braza of Milford	Lorna M. Mangano, Business Manager
Chester P. Hanratty, Jr. of Millbury	Nicole M. Ferguson, Business Manager
Gerald M. Finn of Millville, Vice Chair	Ellie Poitras, Student Council Representative
James M. Mitchell of Sutton	Sosie DerKosrofia, Student Council Representative
Tyler D. Bartlett of Upton	Elise Bogdan, Recording Secretary
James H. Ebbeling of Uxbridge	

Members Absent:

Joseph M. Hall of Bellingham, Chair
Mitchell A. Intinarelli of Hopedale
Jeff T. Koopman of Northbridge

Item 1. Call to Order

Vice Chair Finn, functioning as temporary Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and informed the Committee before conducting official business, the body needed to adopt a special motion. Dr. Fitzpatrick said he was notified in advance that Chair Hall, Mr. Koopman, and Mr. Intinarelli would be unable to attend. Mr. Cray (arrived at 6:04 p.m.) and Mr. Potter (arrived at 6:26 p.m.) would be late.

Meeting Chair Finn presented the suggested motion: Fully aware that the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee traditionally complies with the Commonwealth's Open Meeting Law posting requirements via its website and timely (at least 48-hour advance notification) to its thirteen town clerks I Mr. Braza, move to formally approve use of the alternative method of notice when and if necessary. Thus, by majority vote, the district shall adopt the ability to formerly modify its official posting method yet strive to also continue its traditional postings in each member community as an additional form of transparency.

Within the spirit of the motion, a copy of each meeting notice shall be kept by the Chair of the public body or the Chair's designee in accordance with the applicable records retention schedules. The public body shall file and post notice of the website address, as well as directions on how to locate notices on the website, in each city and town within the region or district in the manner prescribed for local public bodies in that city or town.

On a motion by Mr. Braza, seconded by Mr. Ebbeling, it was voted to approve the suggested motion as presented above. Mr. Cray arrived late and opted to abstain. A majority vote approved the motion, and the motion carried.

Dr. Fitzpatrick informed the Committee that he had alerted all thirteen Town Clerks in the District as a professional courtesy that BVT would utilize the alternative Open Meeting Law posting requirement for its October 12, 2023 meeting. The meeting and detailed agenda had been fully displayed and posted on the regional website at <https://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/page/764> well before the 48-hour requirement. The District plans to keep its established practice and will continue going above and beyond to provide the Town Clerks with timely notices.

Special note: Following this meeting, the Superintendent reached out to the long-term (now retired) Administrative Assistant to the District. She confirmed that the voted action described above reinforced previous historical action taken by the District during their regular school committee meeting on December 16, 2010.

Item 2. Secretary's Report – A. Yitts

2.1. On a motion by Mr. Yitts seconded by Mr. Hanratty, it was unanimously voted to waive reading of the minutes of the regular School Committee meeting of September 14, 2023 and to accept the minutes as written.

Item 3. Treasurer's Reports – C. Pilla

3.1. The Treasurer's Report was presented dated August 31, 2023. The report reflected an ending balance of \$5,157,943.04 for Total Funds, \$1,147,236.55 in Project Funds, and \$4,010,706.49 in Local Funds. On a motion by Mr. Hanratty, seconded by Mr. Braza, it was unanimously voted to approve the August 31, 2023 Treasurer's Report as presented.

3.2. The September 30, 2023 Treasurer's Report was not ready to be presented. The report will be presented at the next regularly scheduled School Committee meeting to be held on November 16, 2023.

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

The Student Council Representatives provided an update on Council activities. First, Homecoming, a weeklong celebration, will start on October 16th with Homecoming Spirit Days: Monday - Comfy Cozy Day, Tuesday - Barbie vs. Ken Day, Wednesday - Rhyme Without Reason Day, Thursday - Decades Day, and Friday - Class Color Day. In addition to a bonfire (many clubs & activities plan to set up at the bonfire), a pep rally, a dance, and athletic competitions. The Student Council is raising money (through its Turkey Run and BINGO activity) for grocery store gift cards that families can use to purchase everything they need to prepare a Thanksgiving dinner at home. Lastly, the Council is planning to attend officer shops. Mr. Finn commended the Student Council Representatives on giving back through community service projects. He particularly liked their upcycling of old t-shirts into dog toys that the Council donated to a local animal shelter. Mr. Finn asked the student representatives to consider showing the Millville Council On Aging members how to do that activity and assisting those older adults in upcycling t-shirts into dog toys. They said they would be open to doing a project like that in the future.

Item 5. Student Recognition - Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick

5.1. Dr. Fitzpatrick had planned to recognize Vanessa Lizotte of Bellingham, a senior in the Information Technology program at BVT, for receiving the College Board's National African American Recognition Program award. However, due to a conflict with her soccer schedule, this recognition was rescheduled to the next school committee meeting on November 16, 2023.

Item 6. Business Manager - L. Mangano

6.1. E & D Certification: The School Committee is in receipt of a certification letter from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR). The letter certified that the amount of excess and deficiency, or "E & D" as of July 1, 2023, for Blackstone Valley is: General Fund \$1,117,275.00. This certification is in accordance with the provisions of G. L. Chapter 71, §16B½, as amended. The unencumbered funds certified above in excess of five percent of the operating budget and budgeted capital costs for the succeeding fiscal year must be applied to reduce the current fiscal year's assessment in accordance with the joint guidance issued by the Division of Local Services and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education dated May 2023. For the District, this excess amount equals \$0.00. The DOR certification confirmed that the District is some \$350,000 under the 5% threshold. E & D funds are attributable to BVT's aggressive and successful grant pursuits and numerous cost-saving techniques.

6.2. The School Committee was presented with the District's proposed FY25 Budget Subcommittee Meeting dates. The first meeting is scheduled for November 16, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. This meeting will include electing the Chair of the FY2025 Budget Subcommittee and verifying subsequent meeting dates.

6.3. Donation Approval:

a. On a motion by Mr. Braza, seconded by Mr. Broderick, it was voted to approve the donation acceptance of a 2008 Ford Focus from Mr. Derek Stienstra. The vehicle would be used for instructional and valuable training in BVT's Automotive Programs.

6.4. Line-Item Transfer:

a. On a motion made by Mr. Hanratty, seconded by Mr. Ebbeling, it was voted and unanimously approved to transfer \$9,000 in available funds from Account 1000.50.2250.580.8 Tech Dept. (Tech Hardware) into the identified Account 1000.54.3300.300.4 Transportation Contract Day Support. Ms. Mangano, in the suggested motion, explained that identified savings from available appropriations will be used to provide funding for a 7D licensed van driver to transport school pupils to and from school in a wheelchair-accessible van. There is one student in the Class of 2027 requiring wheelchair-accessible transportation service. In accordance with M.G.L. c.90 §8A1/2, the driver must carry a 7D license to transport school pupils. The van is owned and operated by the District.

Item 7. Assistant Superintendent-Director's Report - A. Steele

7.1. Mr. Evans presented the Committee with an MCAS report. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released the 2023 Massachusetts Comprehensive

Assessment System (MCAS) results on September 19th, providing the state with its third overview of statewide learning since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Evans explained the recent MCAS data reflects the scores of the current juniors (the Class of 2025) who took the MCAS exam as sophomores. The MCAS data showed improved achievement and growth. For example, 80 percent of students in English Language Arts were in the Exceeding or Meeting Expectations category. In Mathematics, 62 percent of students were in the Exceeding or Meeting Expectations category. In Science (Biology and Physics combined), 70 percent of students were in the Exceeding or Meeting Expectations category. All were well above the reported state averages. Mr. Evans remarked that the positive outcomes were no accident. Instead, he credited the consistent improvement to the hard-working students and dedicated teachers for participating in MCAS Boot Camp to prepare. The Committee was also impressed with the consistent results. Mr. Evans shared that the current comparative data between the 8th and 10th grade MCAS results showed the highest class achievement and a growth percentile well above the State average.

7.2. The Academic Curriculum Night for parents of sophomores and seniors was held on September 13, 2023, and for parents of freshmen and juniors on September 20, 2023. Mr. Evans reported that both evenings were well-attended and ran smoothly.

7.3. Mr. Steele informed the members that this year's homecoming is a weeklong celebration that begins October 16th includes spirit days, a bonfire, pep rally, a dance, and culminates on October 21st with a day of athletic competitions. Mr. Steele distributed a master schedule of the athletic events. The football field grass has been cut and it is looking good for Homecoming. The baseball field has an end of October completion date.

7.4. Out-of-State Field Trip Request:

a. On a motion by Mr. Hanratty, seconded by Mr. Ebbeling, it was voted to approve the proposed DECA field trip to Austin, Texas, from November 16, 2023, to November 19, 2023, for two chaperons and two students to attend the Ultimate DECA Power Trip Austin Marriott Downtown, where attendees will learn leadership skills necessary to succeed in local, state, and national competitions.

7.5. The Committee received the preliminary BVT enrollment comparison by town and grade as of October 1, 2023. The FY23-24 total enrollment was 1,263 students attending BVT. While there is an ebb and flow to the enrollment data, students continue to be interested in attending BVT.

7.6. Admissions Update

Mr. Steele informed the Committee that the Admissions cycle is underway for the next school with three one-hour online admission information sessions to give prospective new students and families an overview of BVT. The sessions are at 6:00 p.m. on October 18th and 24th and again on November 1st (in Portuguese) and 2nd. The traditional in-person open house is November 8th, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The online application portal opened on October 1st,

and there are already applicants.

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

8.1. A proposed 2024 School Committee meeting calendar was provided to all members.

8.2. The 2023 Blackstone Valley Tech Annual Report was given to all members.

8.3. Presentations/Meetings:

a. National Defense University International Fellows program members visited the school on September 20, 2023. The visiting group of veterans and active-duty military officials representing 83 countries enjoyed touring the school and speaking with the students and staff to learn what education is like at a regional vocational high school in the United States.

b. Dr. Fitzpatrick attended the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce breakfast held in Millbury on September 27, 2023. Speakers focused on innovation and pathways to student success through the intersection of education and opportunities for young people to gain the technical skills needed to get a job and create a career pathway. The featured speaker for the group of innovative educators was Patrick Tutwiler, PhD, the state Secretary of the Executive Office of Education and Gov. Maura Healey's top advisor on education.

c. Dr. Fitzpatrick joined other leadership team members and attended a meeting with Vendetti Bus Company on September 28, 2023. BVT, in partnership with the bus company, BVT has agreed to be the host site for a Vendetti Bus Company training activity with Homeland Security on a forthcoming date in December.

d. Dr. Fitzpatrick participated in a MAVA Leadership Academy as a panelist on September 29, 2023.

e. Dr. Fitzpatrick attended the NESDEC Fall Conference and Board Meeting held in Newport, Rhode Island from October 4, 2023 to October 5, 2023.

f. Dr. Fitzpatrick attended a MARS Meeting held on October 10, 2023. Key legislators were in attendance.

g. Dr. Fitzpatrick will attend and participate in a MAVA Leadership Academy I on November 8, 2023.

8.4. New Partnerships Updates/Visits/Tours:

a. Dr. Fitzpatrick met with Mr. Tony Khoury, a Bellingham businessperson, on September 27, 2023. Mr. Khoury, the CEO of Khoury Industries, toured the BVT campus.

b. Dr. Fitzpatrick met with Uxbridge Superintendent Dr. Michael Baldassarre at his request on October 6, 2023.

c. Dr. Fitzpatrick met with Hopedale Finance Committee Chair Ian Michelson on October 12, 2023.

d. Dr. Fitzpatrick informed the Committee that he had facilitated a request from Pamela Otunnu Thomsen, Director of Secondary Academic Access and Outcomes at Portland Public Schools in Maine, to tour BVT on Tuesday, October 24, 2023. It was recommended to Pamela, who oversees a high school redesign project, to visit BVT to see what is possible when thinking about how they can change the student experience and do school differently. The visiting team of approximately ten people is interested in hearing about the architectural design/layout of the school as well as the programs, and offered-structures and systems in place at BVT.

e. Dr. Fitzpatrick is working with his staff to coordinate a mutually agreeable tour date for Uxbridge Finance Committee Chair Jim Hogan in November.

f. Dr. Fitzpatrick reported that Medway Public Schools Superintendent Armand Pires, Ph.D., contacted him after learning that BVT has an outstanding School-Based Health Center. Dr. Fitzpatrick suggested that a visit and tour of our facility may be insightful and is coordinating a date for that visit. It was agreed that Medway colleagues will alert us of potential dates.

Item 9. New Business

Dr. Fitzpatrick informed the Committee that BVT had received a financial donation of \$1,000 from Charles River Bank to help support one of the school's passenger vans during the 2023-2024 school year. Mr. Finn asked the Committee to look at the Superintendents draft goals that had been shared at the last meeting and to read, review, and asked any questions. Mr. Hanratty also asked the members to consider joining the Budget Subcommittee.

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 November 16, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

Item 12. Meeting Closure:

12.1. The meeting was declared closed by the chair at 7:23 p.m.

12.2. On a motion by Mr. Hanratty, seconded by Mr. Broderick, it was voted to adjourn at 7:23 p.m.

Listing of materials used in the meeting:

Item 2.1. Minutes of Meeting of September 14, 2023

Item 3.1. Treasurer's Report dated August 31, 2023

Item 6.1. E & D Certification

Item 6.2. Proposed Budget Subcommittee Meeting Dates

Item 6.3.a. Donation Approval Mr. Derek Stienstra - Automotive Programs (Vehicle)

Item 6.4.a. Suggested Motion: Wheelchair-accessible Van Driver

Item 7.1. Fall 2023 MCAS Update (available at meeting)

Item 7.2. Academic Curriculum Nights: 9/13/23 and 9/20/23

Item 7.3. Homecoming master schedule of 10/21/23 athletic events (available at meeting)

Item 7.4.a. Out-of-State Field Trip Request DECA Conference 11/16/23 - 11/19/23 (Austin, TX)

Item 7.5. Preliminary BVT enrollment comparison by town and grade

Item 8.1. Proposed Calendar - 2024 School Committee Meetings

Item 10. Items for the Good of the Committee

Respectfully submitted by,

Anthony M. Yitts, Secretary