

**Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional
School District Committee**

**Minutes of Regular Meeting
May 20, 2021**

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

Joseph M. Hall of Bellingham, Chairman,
Gerald M. Finn of Millville, Vice Chairman
David R. Bartlett of Upton
Paul J. Braza of Milford
Joseph A. Broderick of Blackstone
Edward D. Cray, III of Mendon
James H. Ebbeling of Uxbridge
Chester P. Hanratty, Jr. of Millbury
Julie H. Mitchell of Sutton
Mark J. Potter of Douglas
Anthony M. Yitts of Grafton

Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick, Superintendent-Director
Barbara Auger, Treasurer, arrived 6:30 p.m.
Anthony Steele, Asst. Superintendent/Principal
Lorna Mangano, Business Manager
Rohit Kaushik, Student & Parent
Brad DiDio, Upton Men's Club, arrived 6:30 p.m.
Leah Cook, Student Representative
Becky Corda, SkillsUSA Advisor
Robert Jordan, SkillsUSA Advisor
Kat Manoogian, SkillsUSA Advisor
Joann Monks, Practical Nursing Program
Coordinator
Rosetta Spino, Technology Director
Elise Bogdan, Communications Specialist
Diana Pedersen, Acting Recording Secretary

Members Absent:

Mitchell A. Intinarelli of Hopedale
Jeff T. Koopman of Northbridge

Item 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:08 p.m. by Chairman Hall. Dr. Fitzpatrick reported that Mr. Intinarelli had advised he was unavailable and Mr. Koopman was expected to be delayed. The two newly appointed members of the committee, Messrs. Cray and Potter, were introduced and welcomed.

Item 2. Secretary's Report - A. Yitts

2.1. On a motion by Mr. Yitts, seconded by Mrs. Mitchell, it was voted to waive reading the minutes of the regular meeting of April 15, 2021 and to accept them as written.

As Treasurer Auger had advised she would be delayed, it was agreed to postpone the treasurer's report until her arrival.

Item 4. School Committee Fiscal Year 2022 Appointments

4.1. On a motion by Mrs. Mitchell, seconded by Mr. Finn, and pending voiced acceptance by the nominee, it was voted to appoint Barbara A. Auger as District Treasurer for the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District for the period of July 1, 2021 through and including June 30, 2022. The motion included the recommendation that remuneration for this position be at the current rate with an adjustment to be decided at a later date by the School Committee. Dr. Fitzpatrick spoke in favor of the nomination.

Item 5. Student Recognitions

5.1. Dr. Fitzpatrick reported that Rensselaer Medalist Madison Gannon was unable to attend.

5.2. The superintendent introduced senior Rohit Kaushik, who was selected by MAVA as the 2021 Walter J. Markham Award recipient. He noted that this was a remarkable achievement and expressed the District's pride in such a rare accomplishment. Mr. Steele displayed the award plaque which lists all the statewide winners since the award's inception and which will be displayed at BVT for the coming year.

It was agreed to take up the Upton Fireworks Festival request of the Upton Men's Club upon the arrival of that organization's representative.

Item 7. Comments by Student Representatives - Leah Cook & Emma Conkey

Dr. Fitzpatrick noted that Leah Cook was the sole student representative available this evening. He invited her to report on student activities. As the representative from the Student Council, Ms. Cook reported that students participated in a virtual conference this year and were recognized with a top ten award for a project. She also reported on various other activities of the Student Council.

Item 8. SkillsUSA State Competition Results - Becky Corda, Robert Jordan, & Kat Manoogian

The SkillsUSA Advisors shared their report on the impressive results of BVT students in the various SkillsUSA competitions this school year. Noting that the events were virtual, they reported on the Fall Leadership Conference, the Sail Conference, the District Leadership and Skills Conference, and the State Leadership Conference. Both the district and state events were hosted by BVT and resulted in record numbers of medals for our students. The advisors reported that 32 gold medalists, state officer elect Hunter Claflin, and seven national voting delegates will participate in the National SkillsUSA Leadership Conference in June. They indicated it was fortunate this event is being held virtually this year, as they would not be able to afford to send this many students to the national event if it involved the usual out of state travel. They also extended thanks to Mrs. Denise for her assistance with organizing many events this year. Dr. Fitzpatrick offered congratulations on behalf of the School Committee and leadership team for such success in a challenging year. He acknowledged a special commitment to encourage students during the pandemic. Mr. Jordan also recognized Leah and Rohit, who were in attendance, and who will be among those medalists competing at the national event.

Item 9. Business Manager's Report - L. Mangano

9.1. Ms. Mangano brought forward two requests for approval of line item transfers.

9.1.a. The business manager identified savings from appropriations which are available to provide funding for implementation/conversion to a new student information system. She noted that the district has been experiencing a decline in customer support related to functionality from the current SIS provider and is concerned about the company's ongoing sustainability. The plan is to transition from iPass to PowerSchool. Mrs. Mitchell asked why PowerSchool was selected over Aspen and Ms. Mangano replied that the committee tasked with making this recommendation liked some of the features and the cost savings of approximately \$40,000. She

noted that PowerSchool has a better scheduling platform and a sorting capability that others do not. She also indicated the presenter responded professionally to all questions. On a motion by Mrs. Mitchell, seconded by Mr. Bartlett, it was voted to transfer available funds totaling \$63,200 as detailed in the suggested motion identified as Item 9.1.(a).

9.1.b. Ms. Mangano identified savings from appropriations to be used to fund certain vocational program computer devices, which require specialized software, and which have reached the end of their expected useful life. She noted the requested transfer would also provide for the purchase of some additional one-to-one computer devices. On a motion by Mr. Hanratty, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was voted to transfer \$33,000 from Athletic Contract Services (account 1000.51.3510.400.8) to Tech Dept. (Tech Hardware) (account 1000.50.2250.580.8).

9.2. Ms. Mangano reported that a donation of various tools and supplies for the Automotive Technology program, valued at about \$3,600, was received from P & B Auto and Truck Repair of Worcester. On a motion by Mr. Braza, seconded by Mrs. Mitchell, it was voted unanimously to accept this donation.

Item 10. Assistant Superintendent-Director's Report - A. Steele

10.1. Principal Steele provided a distance learning update. He noted that the district was only the seventh high school in the state to be granted a waiver from the requirement to return to full in-person learning this month. Copies of the district's waiver request and the DESE response were shared. He noted that the DESE visiting team came to BVT and agreed with our calculations and proposal to continue with a hybrid plan for the remainder of this school year. He reported that a 100' x 120' tent has been leased through June 18th to accommodate the plan. The tent will serve as the cafeteria as both the competition center and cafeteria will be turned into classroom space in order to maintain the required distancing of students. He also noted that the annual Ring Ceremony was taking place in the tent at this time, and that the ring vendor confirmed that BVT was the only school planning to distribute class rings in the typical ceremony this year. Mr. Steele noted that Covid regulations are changing daily and he hopes the distance constraints will go away by the return to school in August. At this juncture, BVT's Covid status is good and trending in the right direction. There are no students in quarantine at this time.

10.2. Mr. Steele provided the calendar for May and June 2021.

10.2.a. The senior calendar was shared. The principal reported that two proms will be held in two sessions each in the tent on BVT grounds. He also reported that none of the seniors are in jeopardy of not graduating. Highlighting the SkillsUSA and MCAS results, he said he is confident the students were still learning a normal year's worth of skills despite the less than ideal conditions of the pandemic.

10.2.b. A pamphlet on the planned annual golf tournament was shared. The event is scheduled for June 14, 2021 and more participation is needed at this time. Mr. Steele encouraged each member to consider pulling together a foursome for this event.

10.3. Mr. Steele reported on Faculty and Nurses Appreciation Day, which took place on May 6, 2021. He noted that the nurses played an extremely pivotal role this year. They worked long hours and effectively case managed every Covid case. He also advised that the teachers are tired, but in good spirits. All are looking forward to a well-deserved summer break and hope to get back to more normal status in August. Mr. Finn acknowledged the custodial staff for keeping the campus clean and sterile throughout the pandemic. The principal agreed and also acknowledged the kitchen staff who maintained operations throughout, and the Technology Department, whose work was vital to the distance learning that was required. He called them the unsung heroes of the pandemic response.

10.4. The principal reported that Electrical instructor Craig Allen has been selected as BVT's nominee for Promising Practices recognition by the Blackstone Valley Superintendents' Consortium. This recognition event, which is alternated annually between an academic and vocational teacher at BVT, has been postponed until the fall.

Dr. Fitzpatrick again recognized Mr. Steel for his exceptional handling of the daily operations throughout the challenges of the past year. He noted that the DESE visiting team offered high praise.

Item 3. Treasurer's Report - B. Auger

3.1. Treasurer Auger called attention to the April 30 treasurer's report, which had a cash balance of \$8,052,743.44, including \$7,178,355.47 in local funds and \$874,387.97 in project funds. She noted that member town assessments were due May 1 and many were paid in late April for inclusion in this report. All have since been paid. She also noted that final payments have been made from the project fund, and the district is now awaiting the MSBA audit and payment. She advised that Ms. Mangano is monitoring fiscal year-end budget expenditures and the district's financial status looks good. Dr. Fitzpatrick commented that the district's ability to self-fund is worthy of recognition and he will look for an opportunity to promote this endeavor when the MSBA reimbursement is made.

Treasurer Auger advised that she has been tasked with an interim audit of the Student Activities Fund. She has completed the audit of the expenditure side and training of new staff regarding expected controls. She thanked Mr. Steele for his support of that effort.

On a motion by Mr. Hanratty, seconded by Mr. Braza, it was voted to approve the treasurer's report for April as presented.

Item 6. Upton Fireworks Festival - August 21-22, 2021

On the arrival of Brad DiDio, Upton Men's Club representative, he was invited to present the club's proposal for its annual fireworks festival on school grounds. Mr. DiDio advised that the typical late June event has been postponed until August in light of Covid restrictions. They have been coordinating with the Town and will make some adjustments, such as foregoing the inflatables and perhaps having fewer food vendors. They will still have the band and fireworks, and hope to schedule this event for Saturday, August 21, with a rain date of Sunday, August 22. Dr. Fitzpatrick spoke in favor of the proposal and discussion ensued. Mr. Yitts expressed

concern that this date was so close to the date of return to school and suggested we need to look at implications for the start of school. A motion was originally made by Mr. Broderick and seconded by Mr. Bartlett to approve the event, but the motion was retracted given the concerns raised by Mr. Yitts. Following additional discussion, on a motion by Mr. Hanratty, seconded by Mr. Broderick, it was voted to approve the event on BVT grounds pending further review. Mr. DiDio assured the committee that such a vote would not impede the club's ability to proceed with planning for the event. Dr. Fitzpatrick commented that he trusts the discussion showcased the priority of the school committee on education.

Item 11. Policy Subcommittee Report

A handout was provided detailing changes to various handbooks which require School Committee approval. Mr. Hanratty confirmed that the Policy Subcommittee has reviewed the proposed changes and recommends approval. He noted that there were no concerns as the changes were mostly simple housekeeping matters. On a motion by Mr. Hanratty, seconded by Mr. Bartlett, it was voted to approve all the suggested changes to handbooks as outlined in the handout labeled Item 11.1.

Item 12. Budget Report - J. Mitchell.

12.1.a. The superintendent reported that the Uxbridge fincom meeting was held April 20th. He described the event as an extended Q & A session. BVT responded to all questions raised, including a concern that the system utilizes an E & D account to make capital improvements and secure cash matching competitive grants.

12.2. An updated Annual Town Meeting Status Report was shared.

12.3. Dr. Fitzpatrick invited the members to share information on recent town meeting actions on the District's budget

12.3.a. Mr. Hanratty reported that the Millbury town meeting held on May 4th went smoothly and the budget was approved without question.

12.3.b. Dr. Fitzpatrick reported on the May 4th town meeting in Northbridge, noting favorable action, and a supportive public whose only concern was wanting additional tickets to graduation.

12.3.c. Mr. Cray reported on the Mendon town meeting on May 8th. He said the budget was readily approved and the discussion focused on the neighboring school system, not BVT.

12.3.d. Dr. Fitzpatrick reported that the Upton Town Meeting was held outside on May 8th and, as in Mendon, much discussion focused on the local school system budget request, He said the BVT budget request was approved without issue.

12.3.e. Mr. Finn reported the request of Millville was approved without incident on May 10th.

12.3.f. Mr. Steele reported that he attended the town meeting in Douglas on May 15th with Mr. Potter. The vote to approve BVT's budget request was approved 28 to 18. The only question raised was why the Finance Committee was split 3 to 3 on whether or not to approve the request.

12.3.g. Mrs. Mitchell reported that she was unable to attend the May 15th meeting in Sutton, but she heard it was a smooth process. Dr. Fitzpatrick was present and described a favorable interaction among town officials.

12.3.h. Dr. Fitzpatrick reported the Uxbridge town meeting had a good turnout on May 15th and offered full support for the budget request. He was joined by Mr. Ebbeling at the gathering.

The superintendent said the budget is now 8 for 8, with Hopedale expected to provide approval on Saturday as that Finance Committee is in support of the request. He advised that he will still attend the remaining town meetings, even if the budget has already secured a two-thirds majority, as a professional courtesy to those member towns.

Item 13. Superintendent-Director's Report - M. Fitzpatrick

13.1. The superintendent reported that the recording secretary has indicated she can no longer continue in that role due to a scheduling conflict. He noted that retired longtime former recording secretary Diana Pedersen and Communications Specialist Elise Bogdan have agreed to fill in as available until more permanent arrangements can be made.

13.2. Dr. Fitzpatrick reported that the 27th fundraising annual gourmet dinner was a success. He described it as a great opportunity to enhance student portfolios. Mr. Yitts, who attended the event, called it a great night and a special one for the Culinary Arts seniors.

13.3. Dr. Fitzpatrick provided an update on the fence repair project for Maplewood Cemetery. He noted there has been ongoing conversation with the school's abutters and Maplewood Cemetery is in the process of turning its property over to the Town of Upton Cemetery Commission. He is most interested in gaining access to some undeveloped town land that abuts both the school and the cemetery and talks thus far have been fruitful.

13.4. Dr. Fitzpatrick noted that the NESDEC Annual Meeting was held recently. He has been renewed as a member of Board of Directors of that organization, noting that BVT has been the beneficiary of grant funding from them in the past.

13.5. The retirement notification of Vocational Director Tom Belland was shared. Dr. Fitzpatrick recognized his 27 years of service and noted it has been an honor to work with him.

Item 14. New Business

14.1.a. The resignation of Special Education Teaching Assistant Lori Siefert was shared. Dr. Fitzpatrick reported that he accepted it with regret.

Item 15. Items for the Good of the Committee:

The traditional sampling of news clippings and correspondence was provided for the committee to review individually.

Item 16. Next Regularly Scheduled School Committee Meeting - J. Hall

The next regularly scheduled School Committee meeting will be held on June 17, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in the Cafeteria.

Item 17. Executive Session Per MGL Chpt. 30A, §21(a) #2

On a motion by Mr. Hanratty, seconded by Mrs. Mitchell, a roll call vote was taken to go into executive session at 7:32 p.m. to approve prior executive session minutes and discuss contract negotiations with non union personnel. The roll call was as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Mr. Hall - Yes | Mr. Ebbeling - Yes |
| Mr. Finn - Yes | Mr. Hanratty - Yes |
| Mr. Bartlett - Yes | Mrs. Mitchell - Yes |
| Mr. Braza - Yes | Mr. Potter - Yes |
| Mr. Broderick - Yes | Mr. Yitts - Yes |
| Mr. Cray - Yes | |

On a motion by Mr. Bartlett, seconded by Mr. Broderick, a roll call vote was taken to come out of executive session at 8:02 p.m. The roll call was as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Mr. Hall - Yes | Mr. Ebbeling - Yes |
| Mr. Finn - Yes | Mr. Hanratty - Yes |
| Mr. Bartlett - Yes | Mrs. Mitchell - Yes |
| Mr. Braza - Yes | Mr. Potter - Yes |
| Mr. Broderick - Yes | Mr. Yitts - Yes |
| Mr. Cray - Yes | |

Item 18. Decide: Release Status of Executive Session Minutes of 6/18/20

On a motion by Mr. Yitts, seconded by Mrs. Mitchell, it was voted not to release the minutes of the executive session of June 18, 2020 as it could be detrimental to future negotiations.

Item 19. Recommendation of Negotiation Subcommittee

On the recommendation of the Negotiation Subcommittee, and by roll call during the executive session, it was voted to accept the renewal of the contract with Superintendent-Director Dr. Michael Fitzpatrick for FY22 through FY24.

Item 20. Meeting Closure:

20.1. The meeting was declared closed by the chair at 8:04 p.m.

20.2. On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Braza, it was voted to adjourn at 8:04 p.m.

Listing of materials used in the meeting:

Item 2.1. Minutes of Meeting of April 15, 2021

Item 3.1. Treasurer’s Report dated April 30, 2021

Item 4.1. Suggested Motion for Appointment of BVVR District Treasurer

- Item 8. Listing of SkillsUSA Medalists at State Conference
- Item 8.1. SkillsUSA Competition Results and Annual Report
- Item 9.1.a. Suggested Motion for Line Item Transfer
- Item 9.1.b. Suggested Motion for Line Item Transfer
- Item 9.2. Donation Acceptance Letter
- Item 10.1. Waiver Request to DESE & DESE Response Letter
- Item 10.2. May & June 2021 Calendar
- Item 10.2.a. 2021 Senior Calendar
- Item 10.2.b. Pamphlet on 22nd Annual Golf Tournament
- Item 11.1. Report on Proposed Handbook Approvals
- Item 12.2. FY22 Budget Status Report
- Item 13.4. NESDEC Appointment Letter
- Item 13.5.a. Retirement Notification of Vocational Director Thomas Belland
- Item 14.1.a. Resignation Letter of Teaching Assistant Lori Siefert
- Item 15. Items for the Good of the Committee packet dated May 20, 2021
- Item 17.1. Minutes of Executive Session of June 18, 2020
- Item 19. Suggested Motion for FY22 Contract Renewal

Respectfully submitted by,

Anthony Yitts, Secretary