

Blackstone-Millville Regional District School Committee
Minutes of Virtual Meeting
December 10, 2020
6:00 p.m.

Introduction of Members:

Jane C Reggio, Chairperson
Erin P. Vinacco, Vice Chairperson
Caryn D. Vernon, District Treasurer
Tara L. Larkin, District Secretary
Sarah E. Williams, Member
Keri Gaudette, Member
Tammy A. Lemieux, Member
Jack R. Keefe, Member

Also in attendance were Jason DeFalco, EdD, Superintendent of Schools, Matthew J. Ehrenworth, Assistant Superintendent of Schools and Karen Young, Lead Nurse,

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Williams and unanimously voted to approve Consent Agenda A which includes Warrants and Minutes of November 12, 2020.

There were no items for **Public Forum**

Mrs. Reggio stated if folks in the future want to comment at a school committee meeting they may do so in our public forum by contacting any member of the school committee or leadership team. All zoom meetings are on live stream.

Karen Young lead nurse Covid update - Mrs. Young stated the nursing staff has overseen over 600 individuals between staff and students which includes people who are positive, close contact, etc.

They did get in the rapid test this week. She will be attending a training tomorrow and she will individually work with all the nurses. This is only for people in the buildings that are experiencing symptoms, then consent will be signed and they can test in the school. The rapid test is not considered diagnostic. It is good so they can get any close contacts out of the building that much quicker.

They will re-evaluate in mid January to see if they should change the quarantine period or not. They quarantine for 14 days only if you are close contact. If the PCR test is positive they are out for 10 days. If they test negative they need a doctor's note to return to school. If they test positive on a rapid test and refuse to get the full test outside of school they cannot return to school for 14 days.

Robert McNulty - Athletic Director -

If a player tests positive during a game the entire team will all be considered close contact and they will all need to quarantine. He will send out a form to parents to be sure they are aware of this.

They will host Boys Basketball and Girls Varsity and JV teams if they have enough for a J.V. team. They will host Boys and possibly girls hockey. Boys will be in Bellingham and girls hockey would be in Auburn.

Mr. McNulty gave the schedule for the games.

They will operate under MIAA guidelines. They will wear face masks throughout the game. They will have a designated area for a face mask break. They can drink water when needed. Practices will be 1.5 hours as to not over exert themselves with the face mask.

Basketball and Ice Hockey tryouts will be held on December 14th.

He asks parents to bring multiple face masks with them. They will have hand sanitation as well. All students bring their own water bottles. There will be no access to locker rooms. Players change prior to practices or games.

There will be no spectators allowed to limit exposure.

Mr. Ehrenworth and Dr. DeFalco will discuss how they will have parents sign a waiver so they can drive their kids to and from games. Mrs. Lemieux is concerned about this.

Mr. McNulty will help out with this. He will try to find out the type of waiver to complete for this.

Mrs. Reggio believes the MIAA should have this available.

Locker rooms are allowed during school time for P.E. classes but not for games.

Mr. McNulty is trying to have the games live streamed so parents can watch the games.

Hopefully by mid season they will be able to allow spectators.

High School Principal Search

Mr. Dudek has given notice that he will not seek an extension of his contract and they are now searching for a new High School Principal for our system.

Mr. Ehrenworth - Screening Search - they have had meetings with union leadership and teachers who had initial conversations. They are looking at the qualities they are seeking in the next high school principal.

They want to focus on getting feedback upfront. They have surveys that will go out on Monday, December 14th for faculty, parents and students. They have faculty listening sessions to be held on Monday the 14th and Wednesday the 16th at 2:00 p.m. after the high school day.

They will then have time to get people on board for the screening panel. He will send out communication to the community and put together the committee which will include parents, committee members and faculty members.

January 6th and January 14th convene the panel and review all survey results and do a paper screening of all candidates. The 14th - 19th they will develop questions via email and put together a Google doc.

On January 20th they hope to interview the first batch of candidates and also on the 21st.

They are looking for 6 good quality candidates to interview. Once they have the interviews they will identify their top choices and pick finalists. This is where they have tried to put a major focus on to really see what the candidates bring to the table. They want to see how they interact with students and what they can bring to the community. They will be brought to the site for faculty observations. Prior to them coming they will have a data analysis so Dr. DeFalco will put together assessment data and they will be asked to put together an action plan for the data.

They want to have student focus groups. A concern from teachers was how will they select the students. They will talk to faculty to get a really good stand from our student body.

After the visits they will have Community Forums on January 28th. They will bring forward 2 or 3 finalists for the Committee. On the 27th and 28th of January they will come back to the high school for faculty presentations. There will be feedback collected at each step of the process. They are looking for rubrics for scoring and data sheets to calculate what the screeners are sharing. It is about all of the voices that need to be heard.

February 1st and 2nd - Final Interviews

February 12th - Offer and Negotiations.

Mrs. Reggio is a bit concerned about the timeline. She feels it is a very short timeline.

Dr. DeFalco - we will post the position tomorrow for one month. They will have time over the holiday break to submit their packets. He wants everyone to understand that they went out for the complex principal 3 times. It took this long for them to find Dr. Chan-Remka. They will not settle by any stretch.

A list of duties and responsibilities was presented. They are trying to find the strong skills set around instructional leadership and help our staff and push forward the academic agenda at the high school. The work is the work. In our case we have a small team at the high school.

Operations management and understanding the whole child, strong communication are all important skills. We need someone with high school experience. Classroom experience is critically important. Need to make students ready for career and college.

The high school principal does oversee the Athletic director. He did not focus on athletics and did not capitalize on it in his job description. He will add it to the responsibilities of the principal at the high school.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Larkin and unanimously voted to post for the High School principal position and approve the job description with a line about supervisory responsibilities.

Initial FY22 budget priorities - Dr. DeFalco

Eager to talk with the committee and community about where we are thinking we are going during this budget cycle. They tend to take this first meeting to talk about big picture items to get a sense where we are going. It all starts with our district improvement strategy. They want to improve outcomes for students. What is driving the FY22 budget?

Last year we talked out the fiscal sense but this year there is a very different feel and driver. Our focus for FY22 must be anchored in return and recovery. This is not return and recovery what we are doing now in FY21. We need to plan out the needs for the next school year. Many students will be returning with academic gaps in various areas of study (hybrid, remote, homeschooled, private school). Kindergarten is not required and some families passed on sending their children to Kindergarten this year. They need to focus on closing the gap on all of this. The seniors this year are a big worry for him as well as Juniors. They need to focus on literacy and numeracy skills for our youngest learners (8 is too late). There will be increased social and emotional demands on our students and families. Mental health crisis is hitting our state. Children are filing the E.R. with mental health issues from being out of school.

Mr. Ehrenworth - Budget process to date

They have a timeline agreed upon. They met with leadership team members and asked them to focus on remediating academic and social emotional gaps while fostering the work around his/her school's instructional focus.

Building and department. based needs were assessed by staff and cost center managers.

Cost center managers developed department school budgets to support school improvement plans. The District blueprint for improvement and address future needs based on our pandemic response (return and recovery).

FY21 Priorities:

Materials and Resources
Math Curriculum review and renewal
Literacy materials to PK-12
Additional Wilson Training
Completion of 1:1 initiative
Continue enhancement of security systems
Additional Teaching and learning coach
1 high school teacher for ELA intervention
2 elementary specialists to increase STEAM offerings
1 School district social worker
1 math interventionist elementary level

Where we are at:

Comprehensive literacy program and materials procured
Additional teachers received wilson training
Completed 1-1 initiative on Chromebooks K-12
Expanded security systems HS Vestibule, 360 degree external coverage
Preparing for math curriculum review and renewal process

FY22 where they want to be:

Math Curriculum materials PK-12 possibly only 1 year
Continued support of the new ELA program implementation
Enhancement of our career readiness program
Social emotional learning resources
Diversity and social equity programs and materials
Facility/grounds work connected to capital planning study

Staffing FY22:

1 planning teaching and learning coach Pre-K -2 and 3-5
1 Pre K teacher program funded through expansion
Intervention specialist PK-12 ELA and Math
1 reading specialist .5 elem. and .5 middle school
3 Math Interventionists 2 Elem and 1 High School
2 Elementary specialists increase STEAM offerings K-5
Dept/Curriculum heads at the HS
1 School District Social Worker - 12 month to address the increased needs and provide wraparound services
1 evening custodian split between MES and Complex

FY22 draft budget presentation at the January 14th school committee meeting
Setup budget workshop sessions with Cost Center Managers

Joint meeting with the Boards of Selectmen, Finance Sub Committee from the Towns.

Mrs. Reggio - We have a need in the budget process to include the OPEB line. We must vote to create the fund and fund it. We have put off Mr. Watson for too long now.

Mr. Ehrenworth - has been investigating OPEB trust providers. He is trying to set up meetings and presentations they will get from 3 different providers. They will bring some potential policy language forward. They are understanding the need to do this and are moving forward.

Dr. DeFalco - Proposed Elementary School Re-Configuration

Regional Agreement Amendment Committee work began on 1/2019

Millville Town Meeting 10/3 and Blackstone on 11/16

First Family Survey on 11/23 general feedback on what reconfiguring would be

Facebook live session on 12/1 shared feedback - most folks were in between - want to learn more - put together a model

Reconfigured Elementary School survey will be open from 12/4 - 12/9

Meetings took place from 12/1 - 12/8 all grade levels and support

We appreciate all feedback and insight we have received on this shortened timeline

We can't put off the conversation. Language in Regional Agreement is clear that all grade assignment changes must be voted on by Dec. 31st of the prior year.

We must keep moving with the process and we can't pause.

Why are we recommending the proposed changes?

All teachers and students across the same grades learning and working together

Integrating students before Middle School

Equity among class size and enrichment opportunities

It is a difficult transition to Middle School for students

What is being proposed?

The ultimate goal is to create a PK-2 school at MES and grades 3-5 at the JFK/AFM Complex.

Common Themes from Survey #1 from 192 Participants

All from both Towns learning together

More educational possibilities

Some are not interested in the change and state they never heard about this before

Once we had initial thoughts the proposed model came together

For year FY22 the next school year:

2 year model

MES - All district students grades PK, K, and 1

JFK/AFM Complex - All district students grades 2, 3, 4, 5. We propose having Grade 2 at the Complex next year so we do not have to move all current Grade 1 students from the Complex to MES for 2nd grade and then back to the Complex for Grade 3.

All K students are at Millville during the pandemic. In order for us not to shift K students back and forth we need to leave them there. We don't want current 1st graders ping ponging back and forth. They are doing it in this way for a specific well thought out reason.

FY22 -23

MES - all district students PK, K, 1 and 2

Complex - All students grades 3,4,5

Common Themes from Survey #2

122 responses - 12/8

total of 32 faculty from both buildings have responded

Biggest concern about the proposal was:

Worried about transportation

School start and end time

Facilities

Maintaining high standards

Siblings staying together

Bathrooms in classrooms

Safety of narrow roads

I don't want my child attending that school

Nothing concerns me

Asked for thoughts:

98 new comments were submitted

All sorts of comments were sent in

Next steps:

Will have a facebook live to talk to families on a Q & A on 12/14

To get into the weeds of the model

On the 17th there will be a public forum for our community to have direct conversation with the Committee. Direct facetime with the School Committee before a vote is taken on this particular plan.

Anyone who wants to speak directly can get the zoom link to do so.

The Committee will be voting on the communities behalf.

They will be making a decision on the reconfiguration on Dec. 17th.

All large events are being canceled live. They did try to get it in person but it was not approved.

Transportation and start and end of the day are the biggest issues that Mrs. Vinacco sees. When will information on this come out?

Dr. DeFalco stated that Mr. Ehrenworth has been working with Neil Tellstone on bus routes to get a sense of what the flow will be.

Mr. Ehrenworth stated that by Monday they should have an idea about what the start and stop times will be only between a 10 - 15 minute difference. Maybe a shift of 5 to 10 minutes between each school. Looking at non dramatic changes.

They have timed the bus routes and are hoping to not have a bus ride past a maximum of 45 minutes. The routes will not be available by next Thursday. They depend on who will be in attendance next year. The majority of the bus routes will continue to be the same.

There are parents concerns over having students in 2 schools.

They are having a few buses at a time come up and unload.

Drop off by parents should not be more than 15 minutes. There will be a drop off time at each school. The drop off times should not make students late. Parents should not have to change their own schedules dramatically. They are trying to minimize the impact. They will also consider having students arrive earlier to give parents plenty of time to go between schools.

The plan right now is to stop at both schools similar to the MS and HS drop off plan. There are thoughts of making some of the roads one way at certain times. They are even looking at elimination of trees on Town property to widen roads. They would work with the Town on widening space. There are some very narrow roads.

Concerns on how the buildings were chosen:

The gym at the Complex is on the smaller size for the bigger kids.

Dr. DeFalco stated if we had PreK, K and 1 here at the Complex the K students wouldn't have bathrooms in their classrooms.

Having Pre K teachers down the hall is a very strong point at MES.

The more significant issue is having the younger students at that playground is a big concern when you drive by and see the small kids running around at the Complex with two busy streets.

At MES the safety is so much better not worrying about the traffic issue.

They don't want the little kids near the main street.

He understands the gym is an issue but feels more strongly about the issue of the outdoor playground.

Mrs. Reggio stated we won't please everyone but we need to do what is best for students in their charge. Please feel free to reach out.

Business Report Assistant Superintendent Mr. Ehrenworth:

Revenue review:

Things are looking good and as expected. Transportation aid has not come in. It is coming. We should see it in the next report.

Expense Report:

Split the report into two sections.

We are in a decent place and spending is in alignment in what we budgeted for.

When a line is over extended it is red and black when under extended.

Looks like we still have 920,000 to expend. This is not the case. We will have 378,000 in costs as of right now that will not be able to be charged to that grant and will come out of the general fund. While we are hoping for reimbursement on 183,000 as of right now these are on our books and offsetting funds from the general fund.

We are able to fund faculty, covid support and supplies that we have.

Personnel report: for the Committee review

Facilities:

We had heating issues and the majority of heating coils have been repaired.

MES finishing touches today. Tank needs to be inspected by the State fire marshall. Hope to have it filled next week.

Security Cameras - finished equipping all buildings with 360 degree coverage on outside of buildings. Already accessible by administration and police.

Boiler project update - has been on and running for some time now in Millville. Temporary propane tank in use. The tank that was in the ground was purged this past weekend done on Saturday and now finishing with paving and filling the tank before next week. We are filling it to capacity and we contracted with Osterman Propane and have a delivery they are waiting to fill. There will then be a full run through of the entire system for commissioning. When kids return

from the break they should be all set. It has been an inconvenience for parent drop off but hopefully the better system will help to offset the pain.

School Committee forum

Mrs. Lemieux - thank you to teachers and students for hanging in there. Doing best to both teach and learn in the District. She appreciates how hard teachers are working and students are so resilient in so many ways in just plugging along.

Mrs. Reggio - Walsh's Warrior Shirts - students who took on the special project on how we need to all be warriors.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mr. Keefe to move into Executive Session at 8:10 p.m. and not to return to the regular meeting. The motion was followed by a roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,



Monique Simard
Recording Secretary

ATTEST:



Tara L. Larkin, District Secretary