

Blackstone-Millville Regional District School Committee
Minutes of Virtual Meeting
January 14, 2021
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 Karen Young, Lead Nurse and Jill Pilla-Gallerani.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Vinacco, seconded by Mrs. Vernon and unanimously voted to approve Consent Agenda A which includes Warrants and Minutes of December 10, 2020.

There were no items for **Public Forum**

Discussion on Extra Curricular Activities and Athletics:

Mrs. Vinacco - Commends kids for strictly following procedures we put in place for them. They are enjoying the opportunity to be able to participate. Thank you to coaches, support staff and band directors.

Hockey is on quarantine because of close contact from a student on the other team. They came back for five days from a close contact and then had another close contact.

Mrs. Reggio sees the tremendous benefit of the social interaction of sports but also knows there is a risk. Parents in the district need to understand it is an option they chose but there is a risk to those playing sports and a risk to the cohorts.

Mrs. Williams feels we should be careful about engaging in the optional activities that may be revisited when the budget comes up.

Report of the Superintendent

Dr. DeFalco wants to do the capital report first.

Mr. Ehrenworth - we have been engaging in a capital study project. We engaged a design firm that has done a tremendous job to do a thorough analysis in the District.

We have with us representatives from DRA (Drummeay Rosane Anderson, Inc.) from Waltham MA who are a dedicated team of architects, planners, interior designers and staff who make positive impacts in the communities they serve.

The 4 buildings represent some good design thinking when they were built but there are some issues:

- Aging Educational Facilities
- Supporting 21st century learning
- Decreasing Student Enrollment

Three avenues:

- Opinion of Student, Teachers, Parents
- Facilities Assessment
- Appropriateness for the future

Who uses and supports the buildings by taking blind opinion polls.
Insight into facilities conditions and appropriateness

In general consensus positive input:

- Communication
- Athletic fields
- Lack of crowding in facilities
- Some aspects of curricular offerings

Negatives:

- Conditions of Facilities
- Age of facilities and configuration
- Lack of Technology
- Lack of heating and air conditioning
- Roofing Issues

Existing Conditions of buildings:

MES - Well maintained building, situated well.

They are concerned with immediate needs:

- pavement and sidewalks

- Not accessible playground area

Inside the building: issues on code

- Railings on stair wells are not to code
- security for the front door
- There are temperature complaints in the classrooms. Older control system is known for these failures. Could be replacement of electronic control systems.

Complex -

- Deterioration on the exterior of building
- Access to playground ADA code requirement
- Staircase issues

Inside the building: issues on code

- Asbestos containing floor tiles under carpet and issues making the tile move.
- Problems start to compound.
- Does not have sprinklers - it is grandfathered but they recommend them.
- Older control systems that don't always work.
- Fire alarm system could use an upgrade.
- Energy efficiency should be discussed.
- Some areas are undersized - cafeteria.
- how to get the moisture out from under the building. They feel it is coming down the hill and getting under the building.

Hartnett Middle School

- Issues with accessibility to the site. Need an accessible path to the bleachers.
- Drainage systems issues to walkways.
- Roof has had patching and is at the end of its life span.
- Windows may need to be re-glazed or if may need to be changed out.

Inside:

- Concerns with floor tiles moving
- Carpets are wearing out
- Access to stage
- Classroom technology is lacking a bit
- Mechanical systems get tired. Not a high priority to replace boilers.

High School

- The track is aging out. Not ADA compliant.
- Stairs and parking lots are in tough shape

Inside:

- Doorway access is a big undertaking
- Auditorium and stair railings
- Indoor environmental problems
- Kitchen aging equipment. Size is good.
- Hot water heater. No sprinkler system.
- Unit ventilators past useful life

- Everything wants attention in this building

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Up in the 40 to 50 million dollar range on the needs of this building.

Next 5 to 10 years pose quite a need in the buildings.

With decreasing enrollment they want to look at better use of the buildings.

MES

- Capacity is much more than how many students occupy it.
- Gym Auditorium oversized. Cafe undersized.
- Capacity 495 kids
- 255 projected enrollment
- need 45,000 square feet and have 78,000 - oversized

JFK

- Capacity is again more than how many students occupy it.
- cafe, gym undersized
- Capacity 795 kids
- Projected Enrollment 590
- using 75% capacity

HMS

- gym cafe library oversized
- Capacity 840 kids
- Projected enrollment 413
- using ½ of design capacity

HS

- All classrooms are oversized by MSBA guidelines.
- Configuration of rooms is the issue
- Capacity 900 kids
- Projected enrollment 400

You have excess capacity. Running between 60-80% of design capacity for all buildings.

Mr. Ehrenworth - thank you for presentation- This is accompanied by a very thorough, detailed report. It helps put us on trajectory and when to fix all specific issues. Gives a firm starting point for a long term plan for the district.

Dr. DeFalco - there is a lot of conversation we need to have on where do we start? Looking at reports they are trying to wrap arms around where to go from here.

When you look at the number we are running at such a lower capacity we will need to be creative in how we approach this. If you are feeling overwhelmed it means you are paying attention. What is the best strategy for short term and long term? Parents and students are important in how we move forward with this.

They are fixing many of the small things they can.

Mr. Ehrenworth - These individuals can help us in where do we start with this? They have a few debt service pieces coming to an end in a few years. The Middle School project is almost paid off.

Mrs. Reggio - this was long overdue. It needs to become a top priority.

Mrs. Vinacco - back to High School. What would the cost of a new high school be versus these long term capital projects to piece things together? How long does it take from start to finish?

The representatives understand it can be overwhelming and how do you start becomes the question. You need to have a full understanding of the school district before selecting where to begin. Currently their firm has had the opportunity to be part of 4 high school projects that are currently underway. High schools can be 475 dollars per square foot to 700 dollars per square foot. The square footage of the high school is 100,000.

Recent project is Middleboro high school. They just concluded the Stoughton high school project.

Are there some potential benefits to looking at one of them as a Middle/High School setup? MSBA will ask you if you have considered this option.

Mr. Ehrenworth - timeframe - could be 14 -18 months for planning and 2 years for construction. 3 - 3.5 years from start to finish.

How do you manage students while construction is happening? It is beneficial if you can use the existing building while building the new one. You need to get people in the buildings and have them see what condition the buildings are in today.

Mrs. Vinacco - in the last nine years we replaced the roof and resurfaced the track at the high school.

The field is draining under the track and there is nothing catching the water right now. Mostly from snow melt and big rain storms. If you get 9 years out of a track service that is not bad.

You could almost connect the 2 schools if you use the MS as the Middle/High School and the High school as the sports complex. This plan could possibly work.

This is a great way to start and we are heading in the right direction and able to give capital planning information to our two Towns.

Should the Committee channel their questions and concerns through Mr. Ehrenworth, they will certainly answer all of them.

Update on Covid 19 situation with Mrs. Karen Young, Lead Nurse

Travel - 10 day quarantine after travel. If you travel you need to quarantine up to 10 days after return or provide a negative test to return sooner.

Close Contact - CDC came out with different guidelines. 7, 10 and 14 day protocols - we have a modified proposal. BMR will have a 10 day quarantine and get PCR test day 5 or later and be symptom free. If you don't have the test you need to quarantine for the full 14 days.

She came out with all steps to follow for close contact.

Up to 900 staff and students that the health offices have dealt with, 50 positive cases and 325 close contacts. Sept. and Oct. were relatively quiet but lately they have a larger number with Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Keefe, seconded by Mrs. Williams and unanimously voted to approve the amended Covid-19 protocols as outlined by lead nurse, Karen Young and to change should to must.

The school testing has been used a few times. As time goes on they may be seeing more.

Pool testing:

Everyone would do an individual swab testing and it all goes into one test together. It comes back with one result rather than individual results. If you get a positive it means one of the persons in the classroom is positive.

Require us to test every student and staff. Responsible for data entry, contact tracing, and after the first 6 weeks it will be a minimum of \$5 per test.

It does not sound very productive for where we are trying to get.

School nurses are now eligible for the vaccine but looking at February to April for educators. She feels the timeline will be delayed since they are not finished with health care workers and first responders yet. They have now added more elderly into the first phase.

Preliminary FY22 Budget Presentation

The capital plan is not reflected in the budget they are presenting tonight.

We are not in the return and recovery phase yet.

Total enrollment is 1585 students down from 1607 in September. We see a large uptake in home schooling and those that are postponing Kindergarten.

Demographics:

- 84.7% white
- 8.5% hispanic
- 1.7% black/african american
- .8% asian
- 4.3% multi-race

- 1.5% ELL students
- 6% 1st Language is not english
- 17.5% Special Needs
- 38% high needs
- 38% free/reduced lunch

How often are our children in front of their teachers? Out of 271 districts in MA that have some level of live learning we are doing very well. There are 11 districts out of 271 that have more live learning time than BMR and 6 of them have only 3 more hours than BMR.

There are no new state determined measures this year because we did not have MCAS in 2020 due to the pandemic.

We have internal measures.

New programs and grant acquisition is important to note.

- New Biomedical pathway at BMRHS with a 75K grant
- Applying for new Engineering/Manufacturing Pathway at BMRHS with a 75K grant
- New Welding and Cybersecurity Courses through BV Superintendent Consortium
- Process of writing a new grant for up to 300K for career pathway expansion at BMRHS
- MS Career Exploration Pathways 100K grant
- Safer Schools and Communities grant 15K
- MIIA Risk management grant 14K
- Elem/Sec School Emergency Relief Grant 142K
- Coronavirus Relief Fund Grant 383K
- Remote Learning Technology Essentials Grant 80K

Special Education is applying for grants at this time.

They want the community to know they are working hard to fund new and existing programs through grants.

Dr. DeFalco walked the community through the Impact of the Pandemic on Student Learning - Beginning of Year Testing 20/19.

We have significant issues in the learning loss that has transpired. We have put forward requests for significant supports in Math for our students.

In most cases the 2020 score is lower than 2019.

Grade Level	ELA Meeting/Exceeding Fall 20/Fall 19	Math Meeting/Exceeding Fall 20/Fall 19
2	-3	+8
3	-8	-12
4	-3	-23
5	-3	-5
6	-12	-20
7	+5	-9
8	-9	-13

What is driving the FY22 Budget? Return and Recovery

- Serving Approx. 1585 students PK - 12 (down 115 student)
- 36% of students are classified as high needs
- All of our families have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic
- Many students will be returning to school with academic gaps in various areas of study
- Need to focus on literacy and numeracy skills for our youngest learners (8 is too late)
- Increased social and emotional demands on our students and families

The needs are severely increased as we plan to return to school next year.

264,000 meals have been served between March 2020 and now.

Budget Process to date:

- District Leadership and School Committee Agreed upon FY22 timeline
- Each principal was asked to identify ways to remediate academic and social emotional gaps while fostering the work around their school's instructional focus
- Building and dept. based needs were assessed by staff and cost center managers
- Cost center managers developed dept./school budgets to support school improvement plans, the district blueprint for improvement and address future needs based on our pandemic response (return and recovery)
- Superintendent and Asst. Superintendent met with each Cost Center Manager to review FY22 budget requests in detail
- Initial Draft of 2 different FY22 Budgets.

Development of 2 Budgets

Zero based budget

- Built by school and district leadership to reflect pre-covid staffing and materials at anticipated FY22 rates
- This includes salary adjustments

Needs Based Budget Including return and recovery needs

- Continue our focus on teaching and learning
- Implement needed remediation programs
- Develop pre-school and early childhood programs

Materials and Resources needed for FY22

- Math curriculum materials Pre-K-12
- Continued support for 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
- Funding other post employment benefits (OPEB)

We have set aside small amounts of funds to address certain capital issues we have.

Strategic Staffing

Unfilled/Reconfigured

- 1 planning, teaching and learning coach for Pre K -2/early childhood redistributed from associate principal position at the Complex.
- 1 district social worker (twelve month position to address increased needs and provide wraparound services - left vacant for FY21 to fill covid related positions.

- PE/Wellness teacher at HS (adaptive PE and additional sections)

Strategic Staffing

Programmatic Needs and Growth - new positions

- Substantially separate kindergarten teacher
- Teacher of the deaf
- 1:1 nurse (RP)
- Preschool teacher (partially funded through increased tuition revenue)
- Applied behavior analysis (ABA) technician at the preschool level
- Custodian (.5 MES/.5 Complex)
- 2 STEM teachers (1 MES/1 Complex)
- Early childhood coordinator (.5 FTE)
- Dept./curriculum heads at high school

Strategic Staffing

Return and Recovery

Close instructional gaps and not forever positions - possibly a 2 near need- applying for additional covid grant funds that may be able to be applied here.

- 1 High School math interventionist
- 1 high school english language arts interventionist
- 1 reading specialist (.5 MES/.5 Middle School)
- 2 elementary math interventionists (1 MES/1 Complex)

Each School Committee member has a PDF of the Zero Based and Needs Based Budget spreadsheet.

\$384,000 increase for Zero based budget

\$900,000 more than zero based budget for needs based budget

Major Considerations to Note

- The state budget for FY21 was just completed - Initial Cherry sheet numbers are not in for FY22. Hoping numbers come out on January 27, 2021. Coincides with our joint town meeting. Whatever information Mr. Ehrenworth gets that day he will bring to the table that evening.
- Minimum Local Contribution (MLC) has not been established for the Towns. Shifting cost from Chapter 70 aid to local contributions from the Towns. Not knowing what they will be he worked with the numbers he had.
- We will only receive minimal aid increases due to declined enrollment (hold harmless) kicks in and saves us. We will not receive less than we received this year. This is where the hold harmless comes in.

- Transportation reimbursement will be significantly lower, due to decreased costs in FY20. Reimbursement will be received from FY20.
- Charter reimbursement may be significantly lower.

Hypothetical Assessment Summaries

- Minimum local contribution is based upon last year's numbers
- Assumptions with respect to both revenue and costs
- Excess and deficiency has been utilized (not certified)
- Application of additional Covid 19 funds (not awarded yet)

District budget Zero Based - 1.1% increase in total over FY21 budget

\$13,412,000 remains for Towns

Blackstone - 5.62% increase to assessment

Millville - 5.24% increase to assessment

Capital expenses are not in these numbers.They will have them at the joint town meeting.

Needs based - 4.52% increase in total over FY21 budget

They would look to utilize other funds - additional Circuit Breaker funds
Covid 19 funding and some E&D

Blackstone - 5.23% increase to assessment

Millville - 4.84 % increase to assessment

They will use additional funding to offset this budget which is why it brings the Towns percentages lower than the zero based budget. The funds were not applied to the Zero based model. The funds are specific. The greater the Special Education costs in the Needs based budget, the greater the reimbursement. Also, in Covid 19 we can't apply this to the general fund but to return and recovery steps and programs. Millville's percent will always go down more than Blackstone's percent.

FY22 Budget Next Steps

- Elem Schools and Music 1/20
- Sec. Schools and Athletics - 1/21
- Special Education, Tech, District - 1/26
- Joint Meeting - 1/27
- Continued revision - 3/10
- Public Hearing and School Committee Adoption - 3/11

Note: These are our first run numbers and very preliminary.

OPEB

\$50,000 allocated to OPEB.

OPEB Other Post Employment Benefits - trust fund established to fund the post employment benefits. Invest long term money into this fund. Look to start putting money away. Long run pay for retirees benefits. It can only be used for funding retiree benefits. Helps to secure for retirees benefits. Strictly for health, dental and life portions of their benefits. They are future liabilities but are not current costs we incur.

They are looking into the OPEB process. Met with multiple providers and got an analysis on how each firm is doing financially and chose Rockland Trust. They did the presentation for the School Committee Association and Superintendent's Association this year.

Must adopt a policy to use in OPEB trust fund as well as a strategy to be sure they are putting money away in a proper method.

There is a 90 day waiting period for depositing funds. They allow us to make the decision to put away sums of money.

They will do initial readings and eventually adopt the plan. Funding would not be put in before July 1, 2021.

Revenue Review - moving along as it should be.

Town Assessments, Covid 19 assessments collected \$300,000. ESSER funding brought in \$92,000. Technology Essentials Chromebooks and Hotspots -

Expenditure Review - General Fund - going well. Seeing savings in salaries because we did not fund specific positions. If we go to the second page which includes covid expenses we are going to over spend our covid relief grants. Thank you to the Towns who are picking up portions of this as well.

We need funds for the live streaming teachers are doing as well.

We are looking to finish the year with some funds but not those seen on the 1st expenditure page.

Looking at E & D applied for next year. We will need additional funding for the next 2 to 3 years to be sure we address the needs that Covid has brought forth for our kids.

Personnel Report enclosed for the School Committee's review.

Facilities Report - nothing additional this evening.

School Committee Forum - there were no items.

Next School Committee meeting will be held on January 26, 2021.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Williams, seconded by Mrs. Vernon and unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Monique F. Simard
Recording Secretary

ATTEST:



Tara L. Larkin, District Secretary