

**Blackstone-Millville Regional District School Committee**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**Frederick Hartnett Middle School**  
**March 11, 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 and Jill Pilla-Gallerani.

**Open Public Hearing for budget**

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Vinacco, seconded by Mrs. Lemieux and unanimously voted to enter into the Open Hearing for the FY22 budget.

**Dr. DeFalco**

Public Presentation and conversation on FY22 budget. It is anchored in our district improvement strategy. They need the staffing and right resources to create happy, healthy and proficient students that are ready for college, career and community.

Their strategy helped them to stay focused during the Pandemic.

Student Enrollment - 1600 students. Expecting it to go back to roughly 1800 students.

**Demographics by race:**

- 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% students with Special Needs
- 38% high needs

- 38% Free/Reduced Lunch

**New Programs and Acquisition**

New Biomedical Pathway at BMRHS - Grant 75,000

Engineering/Manufacturing Pathway at BMRHS - Grant 40,000

New Welding and Cybersecurity Courses through Blackstone Valley Superintendent Consortium

In process of writing a new grant for up to \$450K for career pathway expansion at BMRHS

Middle School Career Exploration Pathways - Grant 100,000

Safer Schools and Communities - Grant 15,000

MIIA - Risk Management Grants - Grant 14,000

Elem. and Sec. School Emergency Relief Grant - Grant 142,000

Coronavirus Relief Fund Grant - \$383,000

Improved Core Programming and Pathways for our children.

Main pieces are to meet the academic and social emotional needs of our students.

Dr. DeFalco has visited classrooms recently and it is very obvious who the students are who have just returned to the classroom. They need to settle in and do school. Return and Recover in such a way to meet the needs of the students. We have significant academic needs that need to be met.

**Budget Process to Date:**

Each principal was asked to identify ways to remediate 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 dept./school budgets to support school improvement plans, the district blueprint for improvement and address future needs based on our pandemic response.

Cost center managers presented the budget to the school committee.

The School Committee and administration worked to reduce the "needs based" budget by \$350,000.

Math Curriculum materials

Continued support for new ELA program implementation

Enhancement of our career readiness program

Social emotional Learning resources

Diversity and social equity programs and materials

Funding for other post employment benefits (OPEB)

**Strategic Staffing**

- 1 Planning, teaching and learning Coach
- 1 HS math interventionist
- 1 Elem. math interventionist
- .5 Reading Teacher
- 2 new STEM Teachers at MES and Complex
- 1 PK Teacher - Pre-school expansion
- Substantially separate K/1 teacher
- 1:1 Nurse
- Applied Behavioral Analysis ABA technician at Pre-K
- Custodial Position (.5 FTE) MES

**FY22 Budget for Certification:**

Bottom line - 25,975,000 represents the budget developed at the district level. There are other expenses that need to be incorporated into the budget. The total number is **\$27,300,693** which includes School Choice Placements.

This includes all current programming and activities and what we need to do to get to the next level. It also includes the work for Return and Recovery. Running the district, advancing the district and closing the gaps due to the Pandemic. It is 2.73% higher than the last budget. Brought it to the place where it is palatable to the community.

**Assessment Summaries for FY22**

Blackstone \$10,226,689  
3.87% increase over last year's total includes the capital which needs to be noted.

Millville \$3,368,019  
1% increase with capital.

14 million of the 27 million dollar budget. 13 million is from state funding and grants. About ½ comes from the Towns.

**Open Discussion to the public**

**Mr. Watson:** How are the expenses running on the per pupil basis? How was it last year for the numbers?

Mr. Ehrenworth - the budget book will have the per pupil number. It will include the in and out of district expenditures per pupil. It will be part of the information when they bring it to the Towns.

Mr. Watson stated that the 1% increase in budget sounds very good but if you have a drop in the number of students it is not so good. He has a letter from Norfolk Aggie. They say 9 students are getting ready to go there from BMR. Is this normal for this time of year? They look to be sure that the course of study for the child is not offered by BVT. They can only go to Norfolk if BVT doesn't have the course of study. It costs \$24,000 per student, per year. BMR is about half this cost.

Mr. Ehrenworth stated that OPEB is not a BMR specific concern. Most districts around the state are just now beginning the funding of OPEB.

Mrs. Vinacco wants to put more attention on the fact that we have over \$850,000 in grant money. There were many years in the beginning that were not grant funded. This is huge. Shows a lot of growth for us.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mr. Keefe, seconded by Mrs. Vinacco and unanimously voted to Close the Public Hearing.

### **Open Regular Meeting**

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Gaudette and unanimously voted to approve Consent Agenda A which includes warrants and the Minutes of February 11, 2021.

There were no items for Public Forum.

### **School Admissions Policy Update - Mrs. Lemieux**

The School Admissions policy must include the homeless population or those in foster care. Special circumstances exist in certain circumstances.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mrs. Vinacco and unanimously voted to approve adding to paragraph 3 the homeless population and those in foster care to the current School Admissions Policy

### **Approve the Warrants to go to the Towns:**

**Thursday, March 11, 2021**

**6:00 pm**

**Certification of the FY Budget**

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Vinacco, seconded by Mrs. Williams and unanimously voted to adopt a gross operating budget for the 2021-2022 school year in the amount of \$26,405,152.

**Note:** This motion was amended to the correct amount of \$27,300,693 and approved by the Committee by 6-0 in an emergency poll vote on 3/15/21.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Vinacco and unanimously voted to apply the following reimbursements to reduce said gross operating budget for the 2021-2022 year:

- Chapter 70 \$ 11,035,489
- Regional Transportation \$ 537,488
- School Choice Tuition \$ 277,842
- Charter School Reimbursement \$ 109,194

Above reimbursements total \$11,960,013. The total operating budget for 2021-2022 is \$27,300,693.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Williams, seconded by Mr. Keefe and unanimously voted to assess the amount of \$9,865,799 to the Town of Blackstone to be applied to the operating budget for the 2021-2022 year which includes \$7,044,849 for the minimum contribution, \$1,255,656 in exclusionary costs and \$1,565,294 in supplemental investments.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Gaudette, seconded by Mrs. Larkin and unanimously voted to assess the amount of \$3,239,741 to the Town of Millville to be applied to the operating budget for the 2021-2022 year which includes \$2,270,111 for the minimum contribution, \$431,600 in exclusionary costs and \$538,030 in supplemental investments.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mr. Keefe, seconded by Mrs. Larkin and unanimously voted to apply the following amounts to the gross operating budget for the year 2021-2022:

- Excess and Deficiency (E&D) \$ 140,000
- Medicaid \$ 82,000
- Revenue (User Fees) \$ 89,000
- Revenue (Gate Fees) \$ 15,000
- Revenue (Classroom Rental) \$ 47,000
- Revenue (Pre-K Tuition) \$ 100,000

**\$ 473,000**

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Vinacco, seconded by Mrs. Gaudette and unanimously voted to adopt a capital and interest budget in the amount of \$360,890 to be assessed solely to the Town of Blackstone which includes \$138,449 for the FWH Middle School, \$61,539 for the JFK boiler/windows project, and \$160,902 for the roof projects.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Vinacco and unanimously voted to adopt a capital and interest budget in the amount of \$128,278 to be assessed solely to

the Town of Millville which includes \$47,588 for the FWH Middle School, \$2,792 for the Millville Boiler project, and \$77,898 for the roof projects.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mrs. Vinacco and unanimously voted to certify the alternate presentation of the total budget, representing only monies moving into and out of the general fund. This presentation will be used by the Department of Revenue (DOR) in the calculation of Excess and Deficiency (E&D). Move to executive session Karen Erin Roll call vote. at 8:40 p.m.

If you take a look at the column to the left it is the district established budget. In our presentation to the public we show all of the use of grant funds, user fees, classroom rentals, circuit breaker funds. The Department of Revenue only wants to see the use of general fund monies.

Mrs. Larkin needs to sign and then it will be delivered to both communities to put on their warrants.

#### **School Committee stipend -**

This stipend is authorized by the member towns. Send a warrant article to the Towns in order to have a school committee member stipend.

Authorize school committee members compensated for services and set the amount at \$1500 for each member and \$1800 for chairman.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Larkin and unanimously voted to send a warrant article to the Towns asking them to authorize compensation for school committee members in the amount of \$1500 for members and \$1800 for chairman.

Blackstone has had a warrant item and Millville has not. Millville Council was under the assumption that if the Town approves the budget they are also authorizing the stipend.

Their counsel said they need to have the Towns vote annually giving permission to have a stipend.

The law does not dictate that they need to attend so many meetings to get their stipend.

Mrs. Vinacco feels that they need to attend so many meetings.

#### **School Committee Scholarship -**

Each year the School Committee offers 2 \$500 dollar scholarships to graduating seniors. They are interested in continuing to do this and keep the amount the same and allow the scholarship committee to choose the recipients.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mrs. Lemieux and voted 7 in favor, 1 abstain - to offer 2 \$500 scholarships to graduating seniors and allow the scholarship committee to choose the recipients.

**School Calendar -**

The academic calendar begins on August 31st with the 1st day of school on Sept. 2nd. The last day of school without snow days would be June 17th with graduation on June 3rd. P.D. days were discussed.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mrs. Lemieux and unanimously voted to approve the FY22 Academic Calendar.

**Superintendent Mid-Cycle Evaluation- Presented by Mrs. Vinacco**

Out of all of the goals Dr. DeFalco is working on 8 members responded. All agree that he is meeting his goals except for student learning goals which is not a surprise. All students show progress. The pandemic is having an impact on student learning. All staff must know the expectation is still there. He has made this clear to all. Recovery year - no fault of Dr. DeFalco. We could change the goal to the planning ahead goal. Last professional practice goal - He is on target and took comments on that section. There were 8 comments and 8 members feel he is taking us in the right direction and support him and feel he is doing a great job.

Mrs. Reggio knows it has been a year of challenge and would not change the direction that the district has gone. She is really proud of the work that has been done.

**Report of the Superintendent**

State Representative Soter is putting together an initiative where meals will be served. His work is being supported in our community. He is very passionate about doing this for our two Towns. Get student art work together, getting the meals together for a grab and go. Pleased he is taking on this huge project. There is a link on his website to volunteer. Last year the Complex did a digital video at the same time that the meals were delivered.

**Reopening plans-**

Return of our students to classrooms for grades 4 -12 and what it will look like to remove the hybrid model. The Commissioner and Governor have taken a strong position on when they expect to see the students back in the classrooms. Our students are ahead of those dates starting with the hybrid students first. A model is being proposed.

For students in a full remote program it will not be eliminated for the remainder of the school year.

Remind the school community about the guideposts around working around the pandemic. What are the priorities in which they will make the right decisions.

Identified the 3 guiding principles.

During unprecedented times such as this, the health of our students, families and staff will remain our top priority.

We will continue to support our students, families and staff to empower our students through additional learning resources and enrichment opportunities with the utmost flexibility.

Everyone in our community has the responsibility to collaborate, engage and respond to this challenge.

### **Goals for Safely reopening our schools**

Focus on our students physical, intellectual and social emotional and behavioral health.

To get as many students back into our classrooms as we can while focusing on everyone's safety.

Slow, methodical intentional moves are used.

### **Where are we now?**

Full in person or full remote grade PK-3

3x2/2x3 hybrid or full remote grade 4-12

Boys and Girls Club - the last day will be tomorrow

Limited transportation

Full complement of health and safety protocols.

Added a Covid 19 data dashboard.

The community can check it anytime.

82 total Covid cases to date.

Rapid testing right here in our school.

### **Communication**

Had quite a bit of conversation. Surveyed 4-12 grade families.

744 responses. 133 staff survey responses.

Get all feedback received out there.

Many different responses.

Staff meetings in all buildings.

Formal discussion with Teachers and Support Staff bargaining units.

Conversations with the Blackstone and Millville Boards of Health.



Asked the families what are the most important things to them? They were looking for direct feedback.

**Parent comments - If the hybrid model was eliminated, what learning model would you choose for your child?**

In person 5 days per week - 62.1%

Full Remote 5 days a week - 17.1%

Not sure yet - 10.9%

Neither - Do not Eliminate hybrid - 9.9%

If parents have 4 children in the district they will get 4 surveys and only if they are participating in the hybrid model. You need to fill them all out. This is a student specific thing. They will have a facebook live, if approved, next Tuesday. They will try to answer all the questions that families have at that time. They will do their best to minimize changes for students. We are currently 10-15% fully remote in the District at this time. Hybrid is eliminated by the Commissioner and Governor of Massachusetts. They will be full time remote or full time in school.

**Recommendations: For families who choose to have their children return to the classroom full time:**

Remove hybrid model in grades 4 and 5 for Monday, March 29th

Remove hybrid model in grades 6-8 for Monday, April 5th

Remove hybrid model for grades 12 and 9 for Monday, April 12th

Remove hybrid model for grades 10 and 11 for Monday, April 26th

Increase in health and safety provisions - custodial time, face shields, air filtration and plexiglass (as needed)

Keeping desks between 4 ft. and 6 ft. apart

Our freshman class is struggling academically.

25% of freshmen are not passing their core courses.

Our seniors last day is May 27th and many have internships. We need to get them back in the building. The seniors missed all beginning of year activities. They missed out on so many things.

All teachers will have face shields provided to them.

Plexi-glass will be used for conferencing with students.

We are currently at 6 ft. with separation of desks. Research states that 3 ft. is just as safe as 6 ft. We are working very hard to keep all desks between 4-6 ft. apart.

In most cases we can have 22 desks all four feet apart in classrooms.

If this is approved once we get through all of this we will look at having these conversations with our fully remote families.

**Next steps:**

Principals send out surveys to current hybrid families  
Reconfigure our master schedules  
Rework transportation  
Facebook live on Tuesday with all administration present.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Williams, seconded by Mrs. Vinacco to approve the Reopening of School Plans as presented here by Dr. DeFalco.

Our tutors from the Boys and Girls Club will move to the school district on Monday.

Mrs. Vinacco - without getting complicated is it teachers schedules or student schedules that will be changed?

Dr. DeFalco - They could possibly have both changed. At the High School some situations cannot be changed. The Middle School is on a block schedule. This will start at the beginning of Quarter 4 and they will eliminate the block schedule and shift back to a regular rotation. The High School is built on a semester schedule and cannot change this.

Mrs. Lemieux asks why? Keeping the livestream some parts are the same. Her goal is to keep things the same as much as we can.

The goal is to minimize the change. We would only change if there is a significant reason to do so. Dr. DeFalco can't say that it won't happen. The High School and Middle School are different. The Middle School doesn't do the live streaming like the High School. They want to keep the teachers the same but shuffle the makeup of the period. If 3 classes are hybrid you might have in the last quarter of the year 2 in person and 1 that is full remote.

It is so important to get the survey back. Parents need to understand they need to make the decision before the plans can be put into place.

Mrs. Reggio stated that everyone in our community will be challenged. Everyone is trying to do the best they can to meet the needs of the students in this district. We will not make everyone happy but we will do the best we can.

Facebook is not the place to say you have a problem. We need people to engage and have conversations.

We want students back in front of teachers in a classroom. Please use respect, kindness and grace. It will be traumatic for some. We will have the social-emotional piece ready to help. Please remember to be kind.

Dr. DeFalco stated the high school staff met and they have a copy of each section in the building right now and the numbers. They color coded all and made decisions this way. They

then took their classrooms and laid out the desks in the 4 to 6 foot distance. If there are schedules that get changed in some capacity it all depends on what the parent surveys say.

Dr. DeFalco will not be applying for a waiver from the students returning fully to school.

If you take a vacation and need to quarantine when you return you will be absent from school. In person has all the guidelines that apply to it.

Mr. Ehrenworth stated that busing will depend on the number of kids coming back. The guidance says that there can be 2 or sometimes 3 students per seat. The air will be circulating with the windows open and the students all wearing masks. The air is constantly moving and the chance of the virus moving through the bus is small.

They will try to use other spaces for lunches. Smaller card type tables will be purchased. Some kids will go to the lunch room and others will stay in the classroom. There are many options they can utilize.

The **motion** on the floor to approve the return to school plan as outlined was unanimously voted.

### **Uniform Replacement**

In the packet there was a 2 year uniform athletic cycle. There is a cost breakdown for each of the uniforms.

Do they want a 4 year or 6 year replacement cycle?

4 year cycle cost is \$8 - 9,000 per year and a 6 year cycle cost is between \$6 -7,000 per year.

Mrs. Reggio leans towards the 4 year cycle.

Mrs. Williams leans towards the 6 year cycle.

Mrs. Vinacco stated with the 6 year cycle we could have kids that never wear a new uniform. It represents our school.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Vinacco, seconded by Mrs. Larkin and unanimously voted to move to a 4 year cycle for uniform replacement.

### **Equity at the High School**

The High School is working hard on Equity. Partnership with Anti-Defamation League. The school committee will sign the pledge.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Vinacco, seconded by Mrs. Larkin and unanimously voted to accept the Equity Pledge.

The pledge was read aloud at the meeting.

### **Vaccine Clinic**

The Town of Blackstone Board of Health are requesting to run 2 more clinics in the School District over the next 2 Saturdays.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Williams and unanimously approved to allow the Town of Blackstone to use our facilities to run 2 additional vaccine clinics over the next two Saturdays.

### **Excess and Deficiency overview.**

\$411,257 is our certified E & D number.

\$167,000 for curriculum resources.

\$300,000 for the loss of revenue.

\$467,000 was taken out of what it could have been certified at.

We will not need the \$300,000 right off the bat and we purchased the curriculum resources ahead and there will be funds coming back to us.

### **Total Revenue Report**

All coming in as expected.

### **Expenditure Review**

The negative numbers mean we will under expend. The grant funding is on the 2nd page of the review. We are still anticipating overspending our Corona virus expenses by \$300,000. All total expenditures show that we are in the black of about \$311,000.

We are still hoping for an additional round of stimulus money.

Personnel Update was distributed.

Surplus Request

Dispose of coolers.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mrs. Williams and unanimously voted to approve the surplus items and disposal of coolers.

**Facilities**

Heating coils have been an issue in our District. They had a leak and needed replacements. Exterior doors at MES - Magnetic locking issue addressed and the building passed inspection. Middle School Driveway - did a temporary patch on some spots. Get an estimate on the cost of resurfacing the driveway.

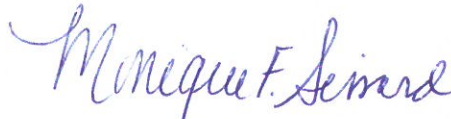
Mrs. Lemieux asked if there is an empty bowl event this year?

They are trying to do a grab n go with the empty bowl event.

Next meeting will be held on March 25th.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Williams, seconded by Mrs. Vinacco to move into Executive Session at 8:40 p.m. and not to return to the regular meeting. This was followed by a roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,



Monique F. Simard  
Recording Secretary

ATTEST:   
Tara L. Larkin, District Secretary