

Blackstone-Millville Regional District School Committee

Minutes of Meeting

Frederick Hartnett Middle School

March 25, 2021

6:00 p.m.

Introduction of Members:

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

Mrs. Larkin was absent from the meeting.

The Pledge Allegiance to the Flag of the United States was recited and a moment of silence and recognition for the life and contributions of Mrs. Margaret Carroll, historian of our community.

Also in attendance were Jason DeFalco, EdD, Superintendent of Schools, Matthew J. Ehrenworth, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Jill Pilla-Gallerani, Christina Shafer, Jenny Chan-Remka and Karen Young.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Vinacco, seconded by Mrs. Williams and unanimously voted to approve Consent Agenda A which includes Warrants and Minutes of the March 11, 2021 meeting.

Kindergarten Request

There is a letter in the packets from Mrs. Lafond requesting entrance into Kindergarten for the FY22 school year for her daughter who will turn 5 on September 6, 2021.

There is a letter in the packets from Ashley Laferte requesting entrance into Kindergarten for the FY22 school year for her son who will turn 5 on September 8, 2021.

These children do not meet the cut off date which is a district policy.

Mrs. Lemieux feels that by making an exception on the start date raises the question where do you then make the cut off? It is a slippery slope and it is a District policy which she does not believe an exception should be made for.

Mrs. Vinacco feels the policy of being 5 years old by the first day of school is a good policy we should uphold.

Mrs. Reggio encourages families to look for other alternatives to Kindergarten at BMR in other places.

Mrs. Vinacco - does not want to miss an opportunity to keep a student in our district. Should we think about revising the policy? That would be a policy conversation but not for today.

Mrs. Gaudette - there are other good school options if you have a child with a September birthdate.

Motion on floor to approve the request. All members said Nay and they will not approve those requests.

State Representative Micheal Soter

Representative Soter has just joined us. He feels we are moving in the right direction. There will be a regional clinic after hard work from the 13 towns who are a part of it. It ran smoothly. People get appointments. Seniors still struggling to get appointments were able to get vaccinated. He wants teachers feeling comfortable being back in the classrooms and also feeling comfortable around each other and socially able to talk and discuss.

Going into budget soon. The stimulus package just passed and will fill some gaps. He wants to address not having MCAS testing. He is an advocate of this for this year due to all the added stresses being placed on students. We could get a temperature on how remote learning works. But that is federally mandated. Unless they get an exemption there is nothing they can do. They are looking into the exemption. Not sure if they can get a true idea of the test this year.

We have an opportunity to try and ask for budget amendments. The science labs stood out to him when he toured the BMR school buildings. He will advocate for this. There may be other needs that Dr. DeFalco thinks are more important. We need to turn these requests in fairly quickly to be part of the budget.

Working hard on collaborative and hoping that will be an exciting move forward going into next year. The Governor is advocating and pushing for the Skills Work Grants. Forming a collaborative with Uxbridge, Bellingham and teaming the money up together is what BMRSD is doing and is a better way to utilize resources.

Rising Up Initiative

This Sunday they are serving over 200 meals to Blackstone residents out of the Complex. Thank you for all the art projects the students did this year. They will share them with Blackstone and with Uxbridge. Put smiles on so many peoples faces. Thank you to all those who volunteer. If he can put a smile on a senior's face who hasn't had interaction and contact in over a year this is what he wants to do. He works for the

people who elected him. There is a light at the end of the tunnel. Encourages all who want to get the vaccine to please sign up. You have an easy site in Uxbridge.

His entire family has had Covid and he lost some great friends from it. It is real and it is there and affects people in so many different ways. On April 19th all ages 16 and over can get the vaccine.

Maybe we need to invest more in better remote learning.

Our new High School Principal is here tonight and her name is Jill Foulis.

BMR School Calendar FY21

Calendar Issues - 2021 calendar - Dr. DeFalco - we are looking to move the snow makeup day to May 28th which was scheduled as a day off for students. This way the school year will end on Friday, June 18th. Unit A has taken a vote and Unit C has not. He did discuss it with the Unit C union president.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mr. Keefe and unanimously voted to approve the revision to the FY21 school calendar by making May 28, 2021 a school day for students and the last day of school June 18th.

Report of the Superintendent

Reintroduction of BMRHS principal Jill Foulis who is coming to us from Monson.

It was a very strong sense that she was the right person to lead our high school to the next level.

She is a graduate from UMASS in 1995 and 2000. She has a husband of 20 years and is a mom of 3 children. She began her career as a history teacher. She went to Monson in 2010 and spent the past 5 years as an administrator. This decision was so important to BMR. Thrilled to lead this proud community. Looking forward to sharing her energy and enthusiasm for learning. She is grateful to be a Charger. Thank you for entrusting your students to her.

Department of Education monitoring report

Jill Pilla Gallerani - In the midst of pandemic the Department of Education continued with their monitoring of school systems. Dr. DeFalco is very pleased with the results.

Mrs. Pilla-Gallerani stated the Educational Stability is finished. Every 3 years the Department of Education comes out and does Tiered Focused Monitoring. Originally due in June and moved and due on October 30th. We are group B. They are looking at licensure, parents, facilities

and classroom, time and learning and equal access. They look at handbooks, bullying and intervention among other things.

Self Assessment Phase - Look at civil rights documentation. Submit all documentation that is required in a certain area.

On-site virtual verification - ask questions, review floor plans, etc.

Results of mid cycle are that we are in compliance and no corrective action is needed, at this time.

The requirement is substantially met in all required areas.

They interviewed a parent in the district as well.

Dr. DeFalco found that the 2 reviewers learned a lot from us. BMR explained to them the full picture.

We are in Tier 2. We are in an even better spot now.

Update on the Removal of Hybrid Model - Dr. DeFalco

We have about 100% of surveys back. Parents were very helpful.

Elementary schools reopening on Monday for grades 4 & 5. 100% of hybrid families are returning to the classroom. Classrooms are set up and teachers are doing drills without the kids there. Desks will be from 5 to 6 feet apart.

Changes to transportation piece. We have less drop off and pickup and more families are opting for using the bus transportation.

Mrs. Shafer and Mrs. Chan-Remka - sent out a survey to K-5 families. They had more wanting bus transportation than expected. With the new guidelines many decided to use bus transportation. At the Complex they will use the Goulet field for excess parent pick up. They will have additional police support for the first few days. There are 3 students to a bus seat for Elementary School and up to 2 students for Middle/High School.

At the Middle School all surveys have been returned. Thirteen of the hybrid families have opted for remote learning. Some classes were shifted but all discussions went well. There is 4 feet between desks and 17-20 students per room.

At the High School all surveys have been returned. Fifteen have moved from hybrid to full remote. Families want to get back to school. Desks are 4 feet apart and there are 18 -22 students per room. After 140 sections taught there are 5 that will need to have live streaming and in person learning.

Full Remote - 330 students out of 1600 students.

Transportation routes have been sent out. Elementary routes are staying the same.

All lunches have been worked out and how to get students safely through lunch.

Mrs. Vinacco - questions on Close Contact - being handled the same. Middle School layout will stay the same as you move around the classrooms. They can't do this at the High School. Assigned seating will remain on the buses as well.

Dr. DeFalco stated that chronically absent students missing 12 days or more are at 20%. Checking to see if there are any errors. This is a very high number. On one hand the principals are on it and Guidance staff are on it trying to get them to engage and come to school. This is a partnership and we need everyone's help. Extend a hand to parents, lean on us, we are here to help.

Forecast of Return and Recovery Plan - Highlight where we are going. The leadership team and staff are thinking about how we get through the summer and utilize the time in a meaningful way.

Starting the week of April 5th a tutor will be at the Boys and Girls Club and they are expanding their tutoring to 4th and 5th grade families from 3:30 - 5:30 p.m. just to help with homework.

We are partnering with the Boys and Girls Club and partnered with Bellingham Superintendent and both putting staff at the Boys and Girls Club to work on and make literacy more fun and engaging. Have fun with reading, writing and math while promoting skills that will be built into their summer program. They are hoping to have 350 students at the Boys and Girls club this summer.

They are looking for high energy staff to do that work over the summer. They will place a counselor there to run social emotional workshops around developing relationships and friendships and working with them in the afternoon block to provide some support around conflict resolution.

They are In the process of reviewing data on students performing at the bottom 25% and working with instructional coaches to implement an August institute. We want to do our summer learning a little bit different. They will do a jump start and start the school year early and do small group tutoring. Looked at research around tutoring and working with coaches with getting the few targeted skills and what do we need students to master to be ready for the next school year.

The Department of Education is paying for a grant to do small group tutoring around literacy and math with enrichment as well. Be thoughtful about where the students will get support to be sure they all get what they need.

A job description for a district social worker will be at the April meeting. Work with families that need the service. Making sure all needs are met for the most at risk students and families during the summer months.

Mrs. Lemieux asked how summer school for the Middle/High school students will look?

Dr. DeFalco stated we will look for a balance for kids who need credit recovery with support for them. Have a tutor there with them to get them through it.

A literacy teacher, math teacher and clinician will be hired for the summer program at the Boys and Girls Club. He feels Bellingham will probably mirror what we are doing.

Karen Young - Updated Covid Handbook Changes

Classroom Procedures and Protocols - 6 feet needs to be changed to 3 feet and ideally 6 feet. They do not know if a HS classroom will need this.

Covid 19 exposure positive test - CDC said that if fully vaccinated 14 days prior to exposure and are symptom free they do not need to quarantine. If they develop symptoms they need to quarantine and test.

Social Distancing - Minimum of 3 feet and ideally 6 feet. Staff should maintain 6 feet of distance between themselves and other students and staff as much as possible. 6 foot distancing for students when masks are not worn during mask breaks.

If you can do 6 feet that is great but 3 feet is the minimum standard.

As each building returns there will be a reset and set handwashing schedule.

Dr. DeFalco spoke on the Governors new travel policy

With vacation coming soon families and staff will look to travel. He was concerned with the Governors travel advisory. Feels they went to a significant level of protection down to almost nothing. The adults may be vaccinated but the kids are not.

He wants to have a discussion this evening on moving forward with their policy on this subject.

Dr. DeFalco handed out a copy of the new travel advisory.

If they are not vaccinated they can return with a test.

You still have an obligation to protect those around you. Mrs. Reggio is concerned that vaccination means you are a little safer but not necessarily the people around you. Concerned

about Easter weekend and school vacation and traveling out of state. She wants to see them follow the advisory but wants us to have an easier option for those who will need to be tested.

Dr. DeFalco - when you go away out of state during this break time please be tested upon return. They will help them get a test. We have a responsibility to those who have not been vaccinated yet and the students. They want to avoid shipping anyone to full remote.

Mrs. Lemieux - if they are tested they may lose 3 school days or quarantine so how do we give them remote learning during this time?

There is an issue if staff have been vaccinated and go on vacation out of state and carry it and can spread it by coming to work the next day. We do not have proof that a vaccinated person cannot transmit Covid.

It makes no sense to have the test in the vacation site, spend a few more days there and then come back to school on the Monday.

There is already a provision in place for families with joint custody. The testing is not a requirement for them.

Test results are coming back much quicker now usually within 24 hours.

Mrs. Reggio - we want to educate the students in a healthy safe environment but we must follow guidelines. Not saying you can't travel but we have this responsibility.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Vinacco, seconded by Mrs. Williams - 6 approve, 1 nay - Mrs. Lemieux to implement a policy for staff and students traveling from April vacation through the end of the school year. They would have to obtain a negative PCR test after returning back to MA from traveling out of state in order to return to work or school.

Dr. DeFalco stated if they are out of school and waiting for a test result and can do school work they will be marked as present.

Dr. DeFalco asks that folks not look at it as a punishment. He asks that folks look at it as another layer of safety. It is not that we are going against what the governor is saying. That is not what we are doing here.

You can be vaccinated and still test positive according to Mrs. Young. With the vaccine it is not 100% and you can still get Covid and with some of the other variants it doesn't mean that you can't get Covid. What they have shown is that if you are vaccinated it is unlikely that you will have severe illness or death. It makes sense for all to take a test.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Williams and unanimously voted to approve the handbook changes as presented by Mrs. Young which include:

Classroom Procedures and Protocols - 6 feet needs to be changed to 3 feet and ideally 6 feet. They do not know if a HS classroom will need this.

Covid 19 exposure positive test - CDC said that if fully vaccinated 14 days prior to exposure and are symptom free they do not need to quarantine. If they develop symptoms they need to quarantine and test.

Social Distancing - Minimum of 3 feet and ideally 6 feet. Staff should maintain 6 feet of distance between themselves and other students and staff as much as possible. 6 foot distancing for students when masks are not worn during mask breaks.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Vinacco, seconded by Mrs. Gaudette and unanimously voted to approve the Rise Initiative use of space on Sunday, March 28th at the Complex A.F.M. side cafeteria from 10:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. as presented by Representative Soter.

Business Report and Report of Assistant Superintendent Matthew Ehrenworth

Meetings have taken place with the two Towns to discuss the certified budget. They met on March 16th with the Blackstone Board of Selectmen and yesterday with Milville. They will meet with the Blackstone Finance Committee on April 7th and then they will put together the budget book and prepare for the annual town meetings.

Facilities

Capital planning sub committee - thank volunteers - Their first in person meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 14th at 5:30 p.m. here at Hartnett Middle School.

This meeting needs to be posted and select a chairperson at the meeting.

Committee Forum

Mrs. Vinacco asked for an update on senior activities

Dr. DeFalco - because of new language they are looking at doing an outdoor senior prom. They are looking to merge awards and banquet to do things together. We can have an actual outdoor graduation with distancing and masks and other provisions. No more than 6 persons per family. The rain date will be Saturday.

Mrs. Reggio - thank you to Mr. Keefe and Mrs. Vernon for their invaluable service to the School Committee.

They would like to continue having Student Reps next year. They were missed this year.

The next School Committee Meeting will be held on April 8th.

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Keefe, seconded by Mrs. Vinacco and unanimously voted to adjourn the school committee meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Monique F. Simard
Recording Secretary

ATTEST:


Tara L. Larkin, District Secretary