

Blackstone-Millville Regional District School Committee

Minutes of Meeting

Frederick Hartnett Middle School

August 5, 2021

6:00 p.m.

Introduction of Members:

Jane C Reggio, Chairperson
Erin P. Vinacco, Vice Chairperson
Keri L. Gaudette, District Treasurer
Tara L. Larkin, District Secretary
Tammy A. Lemieux, Member
Tim Howell, Member
Amanda D. Guilmain, Member
Sarah E. Williams, Member - virtually

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States was recited.

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

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Gaudette and unanimously voted to approve Consent Agenda A which includes Warrants and Minutes of the July 12, 2021 meeting.

Public Forum - the parent of a kindergarten student was present - he is worried about mass mandate cons and the impact of social development and being unable to see their peers' reactions as well as sanitization and health liabilities concerning this. He hasn't seen convincing evidence of transmission from adult to student to adult.

Set up a **joint meeting** with the Towns. Checking calendars for available dates. Looking at 8/18/21 @ 6:00 p.m.

Based upon the evaluation of Superintendent DeFalco the Committee wants to give Dr. DeFalco a 2% salary increase, \$680 per month for travel and a merit increase of \$1600 based on last year's evaluation.

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Howell, seconded by Mrs. Vinacco and unanimously voted to approve a 2% pay increase for Jason DeFalco along with \$680 per month for travel expenses and a merit increase of \$1600.

Discussion of Covid 19 handbooks and talk about recommendations of our current policy. Mrs. Young, lead nurse will join them.

Looking at full in person learning and distancing will be set at desks at 3 feet and 3 feet of separation between students in the cafeteria.

The most pressing recommendation is around masking. The Governor strongly recommends masks but does not require masks.

When Dr. DeFalco looked at our communities vaccination rates for those who are eligible he became concerned. Eligible students vaccinated are between 30 - 35 %. Only $\frac{1}{3}$ of eligible students are vaccinated.

Overall numbers for resident adults who are eligible and are vaccinated is around 50% in Blackstone and Millville 41%.

They are recommending that they continue with masking for students and all staff and visitors while they are inside only.

The numbers of those vaccinated is just too low to justify not masking.

Mrs. Lemieux feels K -2 grades are going to have trouble with the masking. She feels we can't leave the choice of masking up to the parents. It needs to be mask or no mask. The numbers of those not vaccinated is alarming to her. People chose not to get the vaccine and now we are in the same boat as we were last year. If you chose not to get your student vaccinated and they test positive the whole piece of quarantine becomes an issue.

Mrs. Reggio is working in an organization where the students must be vaccinated to enter the school but not the staff. She is not willing as a vaccinated person to take the risk of spreading the disease to them. If we had herd immunity going and 80% of the people were vaccinated she would feel very differently. If we get those vaccination numbers up to 80% and we will have a different conversation.

Mr. Howell stated that his workplace has gone back to masks and are pushing back the in person working to October. He sympathizes with parents and teachers but there is no way to allow students to come back to school without masks. Parents have made decisions to not do what they need to do to protect children and we as a Committee have to make choices as well. He feels that staff should be forced to be vaccinated to come back to school. It is our responsibility to protect the children.

Mrs. Gaudette feels it is not fair that some are vaccinated and others are not and that we have to wear masks even though we are vaccinated.

Mrs. Reggio feels that because a person is vaccinated does not mean they are not a carrier of the disease. You can still give it to the next person. She feels you have a responsibility to try and mitigate the transmission of the disease as much as possible.

Dr. DeFalco feels that the vaccination numbers are just too low and then you get an outbreak. If you start with the quarantining again you do not have remote teachers any longer so who will be teaching the kids and how do we navigate this. We are not ready to pivot and go back to remote learning again.

Mrs. Reggio stated that letting those who are vaccinated not wear a mask would be almost impossible to monitor and also if their parents made the decision not to have them vaccinated they should not feel badly about that decision.

Mrs. Lemieux feels that the under 12 population need the socialization piece of non mask wearing. She would like to see the data on the number of cases in this age group.

Mr. Howell stated we are not going to make everyone happy. He feels the answer is no to not wearing a mask at school. It will be very difficult for them. We do not have the data at this point.

Mrs. Vinacco would like to offer vaccine clinics again in the fall.

Availability is no longer the issue for getting the vaccine.

Mrs. Reggio feels we need to put it in the hands of the community. If we can get the vaccination numbers to 80% we can then re-address the masking policy.

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Howell, seconded by Mrs. Vinacco and unanimously voted to approve the recommendations to require masks inside the school by all students and staff and no masks required outdoors. This includes full in person learning and distancing will be set at desks at 3 feet and 3 feet of separation between students in the cafeteria.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mr. Howell and unanimously voted to amend the original vote and add policy reviewed monthly.

Mrs. Williams wants to continue to use the outdoor spaces and use the tents since the students do not need to wear masks outside. She wants a push for more outdoor learning.

Mrs. Lemieux feels the teachers were talking about the loss of learning time trying to get kids in and out of the school building. She wants this streamlined for less loss on time on learning.

Mrs. Lemieux wants to be sure the kids get the promised mask breaks. It cannot be optional.

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Howell, seconded by Mrs. Vinacco to require staff and teachers to be vaccinated upon returning to work in the fall. The motion was changed to one shot by the beginning of the school year. The motion did not pass as it was 1 Yay, 4 Nay and 3 abstain from voting.

Mrs. Vinacco feels we already have many required vaccines and eventually it will probably be added to the list of those vaccinations that are needed to enter school. Why not be a leader and not a follower where this is concerned.

Mrs. Guilmain feels that until it is FDA approved we cannot really require it.

Mrs. Lemieux does not agree with the mandated vaccine. It is my body, my choice.

Within the next week or so we should have the contact tracing and quarantining protocols.

Athletic Fees

Recommend going back to their typical fee schedule.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Guilmain and unanimously voted to go back to the typical fee schedule for FY22.

Mrs. Reggio wonders if they can survive at a reduced rate?

Mrs. Guilmain stated that the hockey fee does not go towards the family cap.

Dr. DeFalco stated that if you reduce or eliminate the fees something else will have to go to make up this gap.

Mrs. Williams stated that Uxbridge removed all athletic fees. No one wants to cut a teacher to achieve this. They will need to come up with a plan for this. If they remove athletic fees it will mean an \$89,000 deficit. They do not want to keep kids from signing up for sports due to the fees. ESSER grant does not cover sports and all of the funds have already been allocated.

Mrs. Reggio wants to look at a reduction to get more students to participate. She is looking for a compromising amount.

Last year the rate was cut in half.

Mrs. Reggio feels that maybe they could go from \$200 per sport to \$150 per sport.

Mrs. Guilmain wants to know if they get more students to participate, will we have enough equipment to go around.

Mrs. Reggio asked the Athletic Director six or seven years ago to develop a plan to get sponsorships at the corporate level we could fund some of the fees without raising the cost to participate.

Mrs. Lemieux stated you need to check the MIAA rules around sponsorships.

Dr. DeFalco will look into this.

Mrs. Guilmain would like to put all of the booster clubs together to have a discussion about this and get all on the same page.

Mrs. Lemieux stated that for families who cannot afford the fees they were waived in the past. She doesn't know if lower fees will necessarily help the sign up numbers. She wants a portion of the money going to co-ops to go toward the family cap.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Larkin to reduce the athletic fees by 50% and reduce the family cap to \$400.

Mrs. Vinacco wants to keep it status quo to last year.

Mrs. Vinacco made a **motion** to amend to keep the fees status quo from last year with 50% reduction in fees and a cap of \$300. This was seconded by Mr. Howell. 3 in favor, 5 opposed. Did not pass.

The original motion is on the floor. This motion passed unanimously at 50% reduction in fees with a family cap of \$400.

School Year Opening

Important dates:

Meet teacher nights:

- Complex Sept. 15 @ 6:30
- MES Sept. 16 @ 6:30
- HMS Sept. 14 @ 6:30
- HS Sept. 13 @ 6:30

Class lists released a week from today.

Parent teachers conferences:

- Complex November 4 & 10
- MES November 4 & 10
- HMS November 17 & 18
- HS November 17 & 18

all at different times

They will have the ability to have virtual meetings.

New Staff Orientation will be held on August 19 & 20th at 8:00 a.m. in the auditorium with Teachers, Paras, ABA's, mentors and leadership team. They are also doing the bus tours again.

Acceleration Academy - smaller group of students with classes of 12 or less and will participate at every level. Still have space at the High School and it is free with lunch served. The focus is on Math. Mr. Roe will be teaching the course and Mr. Curran will be offering a current event piece to break it up a bit.

Optional Planning Day - August 30th.

Opening Day for staff - August 31st.

Permanent Substitute Teachers

Requesting an increase in the Permanent Sub Rate to \$85/day. It gives a bit of an incentive to them. We have a permanent sub in each building that come in every day.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mrs. Lemieux and unanimously voted to increase the Permanent Substitute teacher rate to \$85/day.

Mr. Howell asked where the money will come from. Dr. DeFalco will let the Committee know where the funds will come from.

Mrs. Vinacco asked why they aren't giving the extra to the day to day subs. Dr. DeFalco stated that the day to day subs are a much bigger line item.

Report of the Business Office

The total revenue, expenditure report and personnel update are in the packets.

Revenues are coming in as scheduled.

Expenditures have some activity.

Title I funding had a small increase of about \$40,000.

The personnel update includes July and August.

We have been hiring quite a bit. The big area they are still looking to fill is in Special Education. Sometimes a person will take a position and then continue to interview and resign if they find a better offer.

Scott Hebert - Interim Facilities Director - Scott spoke and gave his background to the Committee. He looks forward to continuing to grow with the district. They have been walking the grounds to look at what needs to be done.

Mr. Howell asked Scott about the Athletic Grounds. He was groundskeeper at one time and he took great pride in the fields and he looks forward to getting them back to where they should be.

Facilities Update

Field work - they listed who is doing the work and when it should happen and be completed. They hope things should be in place by early to mid fall.

Camera and security work is done at the high school.

Safety vestibule work is moving along. They will move to second shift it is not complete by the opening of school.

Safety laminate has been installed.

Paving at the Complex - almost complete and makes a big difference. Thank you to the Town of Blackstone for doing this.

Report of Dept. of Labor Services

Dr. DeFalco read a report by the Dept. of Labor services when they visited the high school. Informed district of steps to be sure the building remains open . The company UVC addressed the concerns raised by the Dept of Labor Services.

The proposed scope of work is to remove any asbestos on the ceiling tile and replace the ceiling tiles. Some of the older tiles are sagging and the dust can fall out from the cracks in the tiles. It is believed to be a capital project.

The Dept of Labor Services stated the building is safe now for students and staff but they were clear that this work must be taken care of.

They are giving the District a 3 year timeframe to get the job done.

They have an overview of the scope of work by UVC with a 3 year plan outline around the asbestos abatement.

- \$22,500 with monitoring cost of \$9,000 - Summer of 2021
- \$195,000 plus \$28,000 monitoring fee - Summer of 2022
- \$175,000 plus \$26,500 monitoring fee - Summer of 2023

The question is will it go in our budget or not. We are moving to authorize putting it in our budget.

Mrs. Lemieux says that we can wait to vote on it until we find out if it is in our budget or the Towns budget. We have a budget process that we must follow.

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Howell, seconded by Mrs. Vinacco and unanimously voted to engage the company UVC to complete asbestos abatement work contingent on the District budget as follows:

- \$22,500 for work with monitoring cost of \$9,000 - Summer of 2021 removal of and replacement of ceiling tile.
- \$195,000 for work plus \$28,000 monitoring fee - Summer of 2022
- \$175,000 for work plus \$26,500 monitoring fee - Summer of 2023

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Vinacco, seconded by Mrs. Lemieux and unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Monique F. Simard
Recording Secretary

ATTEST:


Tara L. Larkin, District Secretary