

Blackstone-Millville Regional District School Committee
Minutes of Meeting
Frederick W. Hartnett Middle School
February 10, 2022
6:00 p.m.

Introduction of Members:

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

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

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

Report of Student Representative- Kyleigh Sacco

There is a new business teacher at the High School and they will be having an advisory team building meeting tomorrow. The senior girls basketball game was held on Tuesday. The senior boys hockey game will be held on Saturday. Mental health meetings are being held.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Guilmain and unanimously voted to approve Consent Agenda A which includes Warrants and Minutes of January 13, 2022.

There were no items for **Public Forum**.

Class of 2022 Field Trip - Andrea Martino Harms presented - Ursula Hunt - Co advisor not present at the meeting -

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Howell, seconded by Mrs. Gaudette and unanimously voted to approve the Class of 2022 field trip to Newport, RI on June 1, 2022 leaving BMR at 8:00 a.m. and returning at 3:00 p.m.

Each student will be provided lunch and given \$75 dollars to spend during the trip. Mrs. Lemieux - so thankful for the grant received. Mrs. Hunt was instrumental in getting this grant.

Report of the Superintendent

Covid 19 Situation -

Please visit the Covid 19 dashboard on the main page.

Presented by Karen Young, lead nurse.

January had 309 covid cases.

February 31 cases as of today. Dropped from average of 10 per day to 3 per day.

60% of staff participating in at home testing

33% of students participating in at home testing

Vaccine numbers have not changed much.

Blackstone:

5-11 16%

12-15 51%

16-19 58%

Town total 59%

Millville

5-11 17%

12-15 43%

16-19 61%

Town total 49%

School Vaccinations:

HS 57%

MS 46%

Complex 25%

MES 15%

We are about double the state in positive cases.

The Governor and Commissioner had a meeting to not extend the masking mandate past February 28th.

Dr. DeFalco attended the Blackstone Valley Superintendent meeting. Nine districts out of 13 attended the meeting. All are moving forward to go PK-12 Mask Optional with additional masking requirements as follows:

- on the school bus (federal order)
- In the Health Office/Medical Waiting Room (required of all medical facilities)
- Days 6-10 for positive individuals (if out of isolation per DESE protocols and DPH)
- Days 6-10 for unvaccinated non-school close contacts (out of quarantine per DESE protocols and DPH)
- Days 1-10 for vaccinated non-school close contacts (exempt from quarantine per DESE protocols and DPH)
- Symptomatic individuals until symptoms fully resolve (per DESE webinar)

Masking Recommendations:

- Unvaccinated individuals (per DPH and DESE)
- Individuals with medical issues or those who live with someone with a medical issue.

Dr. DeFalco is asking the school committee for their support.

We will have students and staff that either want to or have to wear a mask and Dr. DeFalco is asking families to be respectful in the way they talk about it at home. We want all to feel comfortable and those still wearing masks to not be targeted in any way. He doesn't want students coming to school and pushing back on their peers.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Larkin to approve rescinding our masking requirements effective February 28, 2022 and adopt the guidelines stated above set forth by Dr. DeFalco this evening.

The responsibility relies on family members. If you have a sick child you should test them and keep them home. They are giving families personal responsibility.

If a student is not feeling well the nurse will evaluate symptoms, there will be a phone call home and the child will be asked to mask.

Mrs. Lemieux asks if kids have chronic allergies, etc and how they will handle masking in these situations?

Mrs. Young said that if a doctor writes a note about a chronic cough then the student should not need to wear a mask. As long as the symptoms don't change they can keep the mask off. It will be the parents responsibility and nursing judgment.

Mrs. Reggio feels that it should not be the full responsibility of the nurses. Parents need to keep kids home if they are not feeling well. Teachers cannot be responsible for deciding who should and should not wear a mask.

Mrs. Reggio said our highest numbers tend to come after a vacation break. She encourages optional masking for a bit longer. This is up to the parents.

Mrs. Young said it is recommended to test before returning to school after vacation. If families or staff want to opt in they can at any point. They can opt out at any point also.

The **motion** on the floor was voted 7 in favor, 1 nay.

Pre-School Tuition for School Year 22-23

Recent discussion at a budget workshop.

Cost analysis completed by Mr. Ehrenworth.

Currently, BMR families pay \$60/month for each day of the week that their child attends our program. They do not charge by the day because the total number each weekday varies from month to month.

Our tuition is the lowest in the region. This year, our tuition will bring in approximately \$116,000 and our grants will bring in another \$30,000. Our pre-school costs this year will be approximately \$503,000.

He is recommending raising the rate by \$10/month for each day of the week a child attends our program. By doing this the district will generate an additional \$20,000 to offset the cost to the general fund.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Vinacco, seconded by Mrs. Reggio to raise the BMR Pre-School tuition rate to \$70/month for each weekday that a student attends Pre-School beginning for the 22-23 school year.

Mr. Howell has a few concerns. The poverty level in our communities, coming out of Covid and the lack of employment for our families are the reasons he is hesitant to raise the pre-school rates.

Mr. Howell and Mrs. Gaudette see the gap but do not want to charge more.

Mrs. Guilmain thinks we should re-think the Pre-k program. She feels it costs too much.

Mrs. Reggio stated we are mandated to offer a portion of the program.

We don't have the authority to regionalize with other districts.

For those students who are required to have services it would not be beneficial to have these students sent out of district for the Pre-k program.

We have ELL costs, spec. ed costs, and legal obligations of providing the Pre-k.

Mrs. Pilla-Gallerani stated there are only about 5 students from ELL in the Pre-k at this time. Majority of the student are the role models. You need a certain percentage that need to be role models. They have one separate classroom for the intense special needs students.

Mrs. Reggio stated your tuition will skyrocket if you send them someplace else. When you lose them you have a harder time to get them back.

Mrs. Reggio argues our costs are significantly lower than the alternatives.

Mr. Howell asks where can we cut something else from the budget to afford this? He doesn't feel that our communities can bear more than this current cost.

Motion on the floor to increase the Pre- K rate is 7 in favor, 1 nay.

Mr. Howell would like to see the Pre-k applications go paperless.

FY23 Budget Update

Preliminary revenue and assessment sheet.

What's out sheet. They worked closely with Principals and Cost center managers and they have a reduction of about 1.9 million from the budget.

March 10th is budget certification and public hearing.

Yellow items are those the school committee asked to be removed. They are the costs we thought we could fund from other sources.

School choice and charter sending tuition are given to us based on the number the Dept. of Education gives us.

Total budget is \$28,562,194

Circuit breaker is a fund you are allowed to accumulate to cover unexpected Special Ed. costs.

They are applying funds from here to the budget. \$630,000 applied and it is an additional \$175,000 amount.

- ESSER II funds can be spent for 2 years.
- ESSER III funds can be spent for 3 years

E & D - anticipating to get ours certificated. Put \$150,000 of E & D directly back toward the budget.

Estimated state revenues we should receive:

- Chapter 70
- Regional Transportation
- School choice
- Charter
- Entitlement Grant
- District raises on their own - Pre K, athletic fees, rental of classrooms

Leaves the remainder of \$13,437,834

% of student split

- Blackstone - 1,147
- Millville - 369

Blackstone

- 75.66%

Millville

- 24.34%

The capital costs are set and we have no control over them.

The State has continuously tried to shift responsibility to the local Towns to fund the budget.

The minimum foundation budget cannot educate our students across the Commonwealth.

Blackstone saw an increase of about \$180,000 in local minimum contributions assessed to them.

Last year's increase was significantly lower in FY22 for MLC.

This year there was a significantly higher increase in FY23 for MLC.

Mrs. Reggio wants to remind everyone that these are operational costs with the exception of the ongoing Capital Projects. There are no additional Capital Projects or OPEB charges in here.

We have meetings coming up with the Towns to get us on the same page in these two areas.

Request for removal from budget:

- shared Academic Affairs leader
- Groundskeeper
- full time Athletic Director

Dr. DeFalco is asking to remove these 3 from the budget and put back the teaching positions.

Mr. Howell feels when we eliminate teachers we eliminate the opportunity to educate our children.

The 3 eliminations are not current positions except for the groundskeeper and this was repurposing of custodial funds.

Mrs. Reggio can't justify having a full time athletic director and losing 4 teachers.

Mr. Ehrenworth stated an analysis was done in the past for the groundskeeper and it was a benefit to pay the custodians overtime for groundskeeping work. The benefits also need to be factored in.

Health Insurance Rates

Originally we were looking at a 6% increase in insurance rates but we were able to reduce it by 3% right off the bat. You will land at about a 3% increase. He confirmed with the provider yesterday we are at 2.9% for health and -.25 with dental and reduced it more to a -1.00%.

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Howell, seconded by Mrs. Lemieux and unanimously voted to remove the groundskeeper, full time athletic director and shared academic affairs leader in order to reinstate the four teaching positions that had been cut from the FY23 budget.

Mrs. Lemieux requested a flow chart of who is in the district at this point. As we realize the impact overall it is easier with an organizational chart.

Dr. DeFalco has a chart and will send it to the Committee members.

Report of the Business Office

Matthew Ehrenworth

Revenue review as of 2/4. Collected our revenues as expected.

Can see that we have received non anticipated revenue. The SOA was not implemented as it was supposed to be but received a greater reimbursement from charter school.

General Fund expenditure review - black outweighs the red.

Summary of totals - red in benefits. Slightly overspent due to the number of new staff we brought in that elected benefits.

Guidance - additional funds for social worker added after the budget.

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Howell, seconded by Mrs. Williams and unanimously voted to redistribute the remaining salary expenses of the 2 stem teachers to the general fund enabling ESSER III funds to be reallocated and distributed in a later fiscal year.

Facilities Report

- Baseball and softball dugout roofs to be installed this coming spring
- Baseball and softball fields to be tilled and groomed in the spring
- Work by Premier Sealcoating and striping on tennis courts
- Cracks filled in on tennis courts but need dry conditions and 50 degree temps to finish repairs and refinish the surface
- New Discus and Shotput cages will be completed prior to spring season, cement footings and sleeves have been installed for the removable poles and netting.
- Boiler shutdown at HS was due to the wrong size springs installed in the Pressure Regulator. Liberty Gas has ordered the right springs and will install them as soon as they receive them. They stated due to the large temperature swing it caused the pressure to rise above the normal pressure causing the boilers to lock out to prevent any damage.
- The hot water circulator pump at HMS was rebuilt but has since failed, we are awaiting Riverdale Plumbing to come back and rebuild it under warranty. Riverdale is waiting on the rebuild kit to arrive.

Capital needs update:

MES Capital Outlay meeting will be held on March 1st

Waiting for Blackstone date.

They want to sit down with Towns and lay out what is possible with the capital budget.

School Committee Forum

Mrs. Reggio stated the next meeting will be a joint meeting on March 2nd - Mrs. Williams will not be with us.

Thank you to Mrs. Williams for all your time and energy in serving the District. It will not be forgotten.

Mrs. Williams feels the level of respect has been wonderful with this committee over the years. She will miss that. She doesn't know how Mrs. Reggio chairs the committee.


Motion: It was moved by Mr. Howell, seconded by Mrs. Lemieux and unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Monique F. Simard
Recording Secretary

ATTEST:


Tara L. Larkin, District Secretary