

# **Blackstone-Millville Regional District School Committee**

## **Minutes of Meeting**

**April 3, 2014**

The Blackstone Millville Regional District School Committee met in the library of the Frederick W. Hartnett Middle School at 6:30 p.m. with the following members present:

William F. Chaplin, Jr., Chairperson

Steven J. Tringali, Vice Chairperson

Wendy L. Greenstein, District Treasurer

Catherine A. Robinson, Assistant District Treasurer.

Erin P. Vinacco, District Secretary

Michael J. Buckley, Member

Diane C. Robin, Member

Brian T. Faulkner, Member

Also in attendance was Perry P. Davis, Ed.D, Interim Superintendent of Schools.

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

Public Forum – there were no items for public forum.

Alex Hemphill a current Junior at BMR is proposing an Eagle Scout Project.

Alex would like to free up the clutter on the auditorium stage. He would like to build locking cabinets on the side of the auditorium to hold instruments and equipment.

Alex showed pictures of his proposal to the Committee. He feels it would enhance the band program and clean up the stage. If approved Alex will submit his proposal to the Boy Scout council and solicit for donations.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Robinson, seconded by Mrs. Greenstein and unanimously voted to accept the proposal by Alex Hemphill to build locking cabinets on the side of the auditorium.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Robin, seconded by Mrs. Vinacco and unanimously voted to accept the amendments made to the Minutes of March 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mr. Buckley, seconded by Mrs. Robin and unanimously voted to accept Consent Agenda A which includes Warrants, Use of School Facilities, Field Trip Requests and Minutes of Meeting of March 12th, March 19<sup>th</sup> (with amendments included) and March 25th.

### **FY15 Budget Discussion with Representatives from Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen**

Chairman Chaplin stated the proposed budget was certified at a past meeting. They gathered tonight to discuss the budget and engage in dialogue to try and find a middle ground. They are trying to set up a better fiscal infrastructure. They want to keep the Towns in tune throughout the whole process. The budget is driven by student needs and student learning. Our charge is how do we continue to chase excellence? The past 5 or six years they have seen the dwindling of state dollars.

The proposed budget reflects an increase of 3.4% which is substantially lower than the state average. Last year the District was able to use Excess and Deficiency funds to shorten the gap. They are unable to use the E & D funds this year because they are dangerously low at 2.5%.

If they continue to cut the budget and class sizes go up more and more students will choose to leave BMR through School Choice, BVT or other schools. If they continue to cut they can lose accreditation and this will impact enrollment.

Norfolk Agricultural school has an April 1<sup>st</sup> cut off for applications. This poses problems for the Towns since they do not know how to budget for it. It was stated that every town gets about a 50% reimbursement directly for any child who attends a non-member school.

The School District cannot deny a student if they wish to go outside of the District. If the course of study is not offered in your town they can go elsewhere. Currently 28 students are school choiced in and 73 are school choiced out which translates to over a \$300,000 deficit for the school district.

It is a fact that the suburbs are suffering and the Town of Millville is no exception.

They were forced to close the town library. They had to do a prop 2.5 override to continue with trash removal and rely on volunteers to keep the senior center going.

Mr. Crivello, Chairman of the Millville finance committee stated that they do not have money to back this deficit. He questioned that many line items are showing a large increase.

Dr. Davis stated that these lines were either at zero for FY14 or inadequately funded.

In Millville they are barely able to keep the Town going. They need to come up with a strategy.

Mr. Buckley understands the needs of the Town of Millville. He did however state that the District is trying to manage class size, increase of user fees and have tightened supplies and materials budget to almost nothing. The Towns need to look down the road over the next several years. It needs to be a desirable community to come into especially when you are trying to sell your home. The school system is one of the first things that buyers look at when deciding on a community to purchase a home in.

Mr. Chaplin moved here because of good schools. Who will move in if the schools are poor.

Regionalization was brought up. The Towns need to vote on this and pass it. They have tried this before and it was voted down. There is a sub-committee working on this now. A study is being worked on but it is a long process. This would give the District the ability to move students around to keep class sizes down. The School District did an enrollment study. Based on the data the trend is decreasing enrollment in the District.

They need to look at variable and direct overhead and ways to be creative about reducing the amount of utility usage. They need to increase efficiency in these areas.

It is important to have a strong central office with a Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent to look at creative ways to maximize dollars and think outside the box.

Dr. Davis wants to hold onto the programs that directly affect children. They will look very seriously in the area of personnel and support staff in the District. Over 80% of the budget is salary and benefits.

They do not have a grant writer in the District or a facilities director.

Dr. Davis has spent 35 years in regional school districts. He has looked at ways to consolidate. They have looked into busing consolidation as well. Transportation reimbursement has hit regional districts hard. As more towns regionalize less money will come back to us in reimbursements.

We rent space to the Bi-County collaborative and will continue to look at opportunities in this area.

When you agree to accept money from MSBA you are agreeing to keep those buildings open and you have to use them as a school. If MSBA funds a portion of the roof at Millville Elementary they will need to keep this building in use as a school.

By identifying more children that get free and reduced lunch you can get more in Chapter 70 aid.

The budget is not a level service budget. They have asked for a new teacher in world languages. Currently 2 teachers are teaching extra classes to fill this void. They are looking for a .2 physical education teacher as the Athletic Director is teaching 4 classes and needs to cut this down to 2 classes to be able to perform his A.D. duties properly. They also need a librarian at the High School. NEASC requires this to keep the school accreditation. They are requesting a .6 special education teacher in the District. Millville needs this teacher to continue to offer services to students on the autism spectrum.

Mrs. Wing does not feel that Millville will allow a prop 2.5 override.

They are currently researching the reasons why students are school choicing out.

They need to sell it and lay out a plan to get the kids to stay here and not school choice to other schools.

They can't keep kids here without offering them the education they need and the extra curricular activities that they want.

So many things have been cut and people look at what they can offer their kids and if they don't like it they look elsewhere. This is just the way it is today unlike 40 years ago. You need to invest money in education. Don't just ask what is your plan, but say how are we going to help you to get a good plan going.

Please look at this as an investment in education. These children depend on us and we want to keep the communities viable. Please come on board and help us to plan the budget.

We are a level 2 school. Parents look to see if they are level 1,2,3. They brought in a curriculum program to improve student achievement. They will look at student achievements. If they don't put the money in education the parents looking at statistics to decide if they want to move here will decide against our district. We have had the back and forth for too long. We need to raise our test scores to get out of level 2 and into level 1. The High School and Millville Elementary School are a level 1. The Complex and Hartnett Middle School are a level 2.

We need a point of action and a plan. We did not intentionally dig this hole. We have been able to pull a rabbit out of our hat for many years but now we cannot and we need all of you to help us figure this out and give us more input. We need to see how much each town can afford and let us know.

We are not even spending the state average on our kids. We are spending \$3,000 less on each one of our students.

The strategic plan is a big part of how to sell it to the communities. Please prepare a power point to give visuals at the Millville town meeting.

In conclusion, Dr. Davis stated that having been an educator for 40 years he believes we do care about our schools and our future. He has been presenting a reality check. We all have a common challenge here. To absorb the kind of reduction that the minimum contribution would pose will have a significant impact on personnel. How do we find common ground and the resources to address it.

Blackstone will report back to the Finance Committee and they plan on working with the School Committee to help out as best they can. Mr. Dubois wished to compliment the board on being transparent.

### **Superintendent Search**

It was stated by Chairman Chaplin that the candidate offered the position of Superintendent of Schools declined the offer.

They now have two choices. They can go back to the pool of candidates in which three persons remained or they can begin the search over again.

The School Committee discussed its options of reviewing candidates that were part of the search process and not selected to be a finalist or to reopen the superintendent search process. The merits of each option were discussed in detail by members of the school committee. Mr. Chaplin asked for a motion to determine the next step in the search process.

**Motion:** Mrs. Vinacco moved to invite two candidates to come before the school committee for a public interview at the April 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, seconded by Mrs. Greenstein.

### **Roll Call Vote:**

Mrs. Robinson        yes

Mrs. Robin            yes

Mrs. Greenstein      yes

Mrs. Vinacco         yes

Mr. Chaplin	no
Mr. Buckley	no
Mr. Faulkner	yes
Mr. Tingali	absent

The motion was approved by a vote of five yes and two no. The committee discussed how to proceed. Mr. Chaplin will contact Dr. Bettencourt at NESDEC to contact Mr. Himmelberger and Dr. Thomson to schedule public interviews on April 10, 2014.

#### **Last meeting for Cathy Robinson**

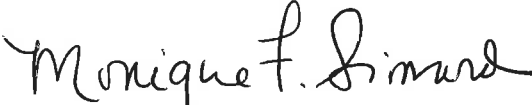
The school committee members ended the meeting by thanking Cathy Robinson for her years of service on the Blackstone-Millville Regional School District Committee. She is not seeking reelection and this was her last school committee meeting.

#### **Final school committee comments**

Several school committee members thanked the officials from Blackstone and Millville for attending the meeting to address the challenges of the FY 15 budget and its impact on the assessments to the two towns. The focus of the school committee is to advocate for the learning needs of the children in the schools and work with Blackstone and Millville officials to the FY 15 budget.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Vinacco, seconded by Mrs. Robin and unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Monique F. Simard, Recording Secretary

ATTEST: Erin P. Vinacco

Erin P. Vinacco, District Secretary