

Blackstone-Millville Regional District School Committee

Minutes of Meeting December 12, 2013

The Blackstone Millville Regional District School Committee met in the library of the Frederick W. Hartnett Middle School at 7:00 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
Diane C. Robin, Member
Brian T. Faulkner, Member

Michael J. Buckley was absent from meeting.

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

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

Report of Student Representatives

Thomas Gallagher gave a report on Student Council, the annual pep rally and spirit week.

Morgan McCarthy gave a report on the hat and mittens drive, blanket drive, gingerbread building contest and sports winter season which includes basketball, hockey, cheerleading and winter track. Morgan gave information on the powder puff football game as well.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Robin, seconded by Mrs. Greenstein and unanimously voted to approve Consent Agenda A which includes Warrants, Use of School Facilities, Field Trip Requests and Minutes of the November 14th meeting.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Robin, seconded by Mrs. Vinacco and unanimously voted to approve the home schooling request by Patricia Stanley, provided the program of study is reviewed and approved by Superintendent Davis.

Parent, Michelle Odoardi sent a letter to Dr. Davis requesting that her child be allowed to enter kindergarten in September of 2014 even though she does not meet the Sept. 1st cut-off date.

The School Committee has never waived the set date and does not want to begin doing this now.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Greenstein, seconded by Mrs. Robin (6 in favor, 1 opposed – Mrs. Vinacco) to deny the request by Mrs. Odoardi for the waiver of the September 1 kindergarten entry date.

Mrs. Vinacco feels that if a parent feels that a child is ready it may be the best thing to let the child go. We do not have a test available to administer to determine if a child is ready.

Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Desai gave an update on literacy. The District has funded 2 programs –Teacher to Teachers Workshop and Foundations.

Mrs. Desai gave an update on the teacher to teacher group. There are 12 study groups that meet in conversation groups. They discuss such topics as “What a good reader looks like” and hands on learning experiences. The teachers are very excited about this. The program is not replacing but supplementing the Houghton-Mifflin program.

Mrs. Brown stated that she has received such positive feedback that teachers are so enthused for themselves and for their students. They are finding a way to probe deeper and get to know the students as readers and the students are getting to know themselves as readers.

Conversations are very targeted and focused. Students can explain what they are doing in great depth. All students are engaged. Regardless of where they are at there is an opportunity for all to participate. It focuses on critical skills that all students need to be successful readers.

Foundations is very dramatic and effective. Teachers are thrilled. Mrs. Desai stated there are 4 professional development days throughout the year.

Next year the cost will be slightly less. In order for this program to be a success they need to commit to it for a minimum of 3 years. The District needs to have trainers that can train the people when they come in. It requires a continued commitment.

Dr. Davis visited the schools and finds the methodology and instruction fascinating. He found that when the assistant superintendent did not arrive the principals and teachers took the helm on the project.

Mrs. Vinacco said thank you to the principals for putting in extra work on this project.

Karen Maguire is new to the District. She works in the Business Office on Tuesday and Wednesday reviewing curriculum instruction assessments as well as professional development at the different levels. She is paid on a per diem contract.

Brad Monroe is doing other work with grants and Dr. Davis feels most everything is being covered.

Roof Project update – The Complex is 75% complete. Depending on the weather we will not make the December 17th deadline. Greenwood Industries will request an extension. They are trying to expedite the placing of the roof and will return to do the trim work since it is not so weather dependent.

There have been concerns about odors at the Hartnett Middle School. Tighe and Bond sent an industrial hygienist to assess the situation. We have been cleared and we do not have any toxic materials in the buildings. They gave helpful suggestions on how to deal with the odor.

The designer is working on the construction documents for the High School Roof project with a completion date of February 2014. This will set in motion the review by the MSBA Commission Agent to review the plans. After this the project can be ready for public bidding. The target for beginning the roof replacement is the summer of 2014.

The MSBA originally expected the roof to be done by the close of this calendar year. The District wrote a letter to MSBA and received verbal acknowledgement to move into 2014. There has not been significant water penetration at the High School.

The OPM and design team completed their work and the project was sent to MSBA for review and vote in January 2014 on the Millville Elementary School roof. The total project budget is \$1,530,517.

The project funding will need to be presented to the Town of Millville for a vote at town meeting and a capital override vote to fund the project. If all goes according to schedule the roof project will begin in September 2014.

MSBA will not pay to replace the air conditioning units at MES that ceased to function long ago. When they go out to bid on the roof they will have the same company replace the air conditioning units.

The District will need a response from Millville on borrowing for the project. There will be a town meeting and then the election. Dr. Davis will have a conversation with the Town Clerk and review the procedure so they do not have a repeat of the last project.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has had an anti-bullying law change. The major change to the law was to expand the definition of “perpetrator” to include a member of the school staff, including but not limited to an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional.

The School Committee should discuss the draft changes to the Bullying Policy and place it on the District website for comments from students, parents and community members. Dr. Davis will bring the revised policy back to the School Committee for a vote to approve in January.

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Faulkner, seconded by Mrs. Robin and unanimously voted to waive the first reading of the bullying policy.

Dr. Davis received word on an energy project by Northern Energy Services to upgrade at the Middle School in the amount of \$73,072 which National Grid will pay \$36,536 of. Dr. Davis has signed off and so the next step will be in late January. Much of the work will happen on the roof and National Grid will allow the District an interest free loan for our portion of the cost. Savings are in the kilowatt hours and the number of gallons of oil needed. This project is unique in the state of Massachusetts. We do not have to go out to bid and we can accept the set prices.

NESDEC has worked with the District to produce an enrollment report that looks at historical enrollment, projected enrollment, birth to kindergarten relationship and related data. The last enrollment report done for the District by NESDEC was in 1997. We currently have a flat number of births in the community and as a result the projections are down. These projections may be impacted with a large change to available housing. The building permits in the last five years are very low. There are older building permits that are now being activated with units under construction.

In the short term the student enrollment numbers will impact Millville Elementary with only a need for one class at the Kindergarten grade level. In Blackstone the numbers will have less of an impact on the needs for class sections. The Middle School and High School will not see the student enrollment decline for a few years. There will be some adjustments for students participating in School Choice both in and out of the District.

The recommendation is to conduct the enrollment study with NESDEC each year to evaluate projections to assist in the planning for the decline in student enrollment and establish a study group to address enrollment trends and plan for changes to lessen the impact on student learning.

Chapter 70 aide is based on students. When you lose enrollment the District's Chapter 70 aide is reduced.

Dr. Davis gave preliminary information on the budget. He met with the school principals and Dr. Haughey to review some of the changes. There are revenue assumptions such as Chapter 70 aide that they will not know about until the end of January. The Ways and Means have agreed to a compromise to move the federal budget. There will be no additional cuts which is good news.

The District is in need of foreign language teachers and a librarian to meet the NEASC standards.

The Athletic Director position is becoming a very demanding position. The supervision of the coaches, evaluations, anti-hazing, anti-bullying and the coordination of multiple teams can make it overwhelming. The current Athletic Director currently teaches four classes in addition to his duties as A.D. It is too much for one person.

Special Education is an ever evolving challenge. We are constantly adding or modifying our service delivery in special education. This budget is separate and some lines are funded by grants.

Administrators need to budget based on the needs of the students. Do not make a wish list but talk about the needs. It is not a good budgeting strategy to make a wish list.

There is a continued need for funding of mentors in the District. There were 38 new staff members this year alone.

There are certain costs associated with the NEASC process.

The health and dental data should be available by the beginning of February.

There were a number of accounts that were zeroed out in FY14 and they will need to appropriate funds to these lines in FY15.

They will let the principals and Dr. Haughey go through their budget. There will be no more than two people in a given night presenting their budgets. They need to be able to talk, interact and discuss. They will also bring in Brad Monroe and Phil Toupin into a meeting to talk about technology and to have Brad speak on the loss of the Race to the Top funds and the impact this will have.

They will tentatively schedule budget meetings for January 9th, January 23rd, January 30th, February 13th and February 27th.

Until they know the Chapter 70 aide revenue side they cannot tell the communities what this will actually cost us. They are hoping for some generated numbers by the end of January from the Dept. of Education.

There were no items for **Public Forum**

Sub-Committee Superintendent Search

They currently have Karen Breault, Cathy Jones, Jerry Finn and Kathy Stearman on the committee. They are looking for a town of Blackstone elected official, PAC members and Parent Organization members as well as student representatives and a business person.

They will sit down and discuss the roles of the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent. Dr. Davis will ask Dr. Bettencourt to review how they can do this.

Strategic Planning – they are trying to get a meeting together after the holidays.

Regional Agreement – organize a study group to look at enrollment trends. They will discuss this as a committee to decide which way to go.

Public Relations – In January they are scheduling building tours and will invite the public to come in and view the buildings. The tours will be held on Saturday to enable as many community members as possible to attend.

Budget – met with Blackstone, Millville and Mark Juba to review Chapter 70 funding and continue that focus.

Facilities – need to frame out the facilities and review this.

Committee Forum

Mr. Tringali – spoke on the success of the winter sports meeting.

Mr. Faulkner – spoke on the thanksgiving football game- congratulated all fall sports and music participants on their accomplishments. The Colonial Feast was a great success at MES and a great community activity.

Mrs. Vinacco – fundraiser for the Williamsburg Christmas was very successful. It raised over \$2,000 for the scholarship fund.

All members wished Happy Holidays to all.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Robin, seconded by Mrs. Greentstein and unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session at 8:55 p.m. for Collective Bargaining and to come out of Executive Session only for the purpose of adjournment.

Respectfully submitted,

Monique F. Simard
Recording Secretary

ATTEST: _____
Erin P. Vinacco, District Secretary