

Blackstone-Millville Regional District School Committee
Virtual Minutes of Meeting
January 13, 2022
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
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 Representatives

Madison Marchand and Kyleigh Sacco were not in attendance.

Public Forum will be live streamed with delay. Please type into the chat and they may revisit public forum later in the meeting to see if there are public forum items to consider.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mrs. Guilmain and unanimously voted to approve Consent Agenda A which includes Warrants and Minutes of Meeting of December 9, 2021

Revisit Mask Mandate. The Commissioner has continued the mandatory mask mandate and it will be re-visited on 2/28/22. The school district will continue with this mandate..

Resignation

Mrs. Reggio received a letter from school committee member, Sara Williams. She is no longer able to fulfill her commitment to the School Committee. Her letter of resignation is effective 2/11/22. She has a new job and can no longer commit.

Mrs. Reggio stated Sara has been a huge asset and she will be missed.

Mrs. Reggio sent a letter to the Board of Selectmen in Blackstone and will come up with a plan.

Mrs. Larkin will chair the Capital Committee for now.

Report of the Superintendent - Dr. DeFalco

CV-19 Update from Karen Young, Lead Nurse:

- 120 covid cases in December
- 197 covid cases in January
- 418 cases in the school year
- 72 cases since Sunday
- 87 at High School
- 101 at Middle School
- 141 at Complex
- 81 at MES
- 8 in district office

- In school close contacts over 2100
- 639 test and stay
- 148 vaccinated
- 307 quarantines
- 5 positive today for test and stay

Blackstone Vaccinations

58% town as a whole

MES Vaccinations

48% town as a whole

Vaccinations in school

- HS 55%
- MS 42%
- Complex 13%
- MES 6%

Positive cases:

- Blackstone positive 27.59%
- Millville 24.61%

Mrs. Vinacco asked if we are accepting rapid at home tests across the board right now?

Mrs. Young stated DESE said PCR test for symptomatic, unvaccinated close contact persons. The rapid tests are now accepted for positive close contact cases.

Dr. DeFalco said thank you to all staff. Some districts have gone to remote. Everyone is pitching in from lunch duty, bus duty, covering classrooms. It takes a real team effort to keep things moving and safe. He said thank you to all of our families as well. We have had over 15% of our students out each day. We are trying to do our best and keep things open and safe and continuing the work. Thank you to the School Committee as well.

Dual Enrollment Overview:

New pathway that bridges the academic relationships between the Middle School and High School students.

Great for 8th graders and moves to when they are 9th graders.

Grade 8 Academy 2022 - 2023 Accelerated Learning Pathway Ms. Curt Hoard and Ms. Foulis, Principals

Middle School and High School working together:

- Athletics
- Drama
- Band
- Spanish I and Algebra I taken at MS but not for HS credit
- Time to partner with learning at the Center
- Ski Club opened up to MS and HS

Spanish I taught by MS staff so they can move to the HS and take Spanish II there. Algebra I as well.

Rationale:

- Accelerated Learning Opportunities
- HS Math and Science
- Dual enrollment pathway:
- Early HS = Early College
- High School credit earned - HS credit can be earned at the MS level
- Driven by Portrait of a Graduate

Criteria:

Application

Consideration given to:

- Academic Responsibility
- Social Emotional Readiness
- Commitment
- Teacher and parent recommendations

Intended Outcomes:

- Challenge HS course work with HS faculty
- Increased ability to take AP and college courses
- College credit opportunity
- Challenging course work for transcript
- Increase opportunities for electives and pathway completion.
- Find out what their passion might be early on.

Dr. DeFalco - summary piece - goal is to start accelerated learning opportunities in grade 8 so as they near their junior and senior year they are able to take the college credits while still in high school.

We have 38 families that responded and 37 are interested in learning more about this academy.

They need to provide their own transportation if it is not a virtual class.

Some want to earn HS and college credits at the same time with a true dual enrollment experience.

Mr. Howell asked how do we get it moving?

Mrs. Foulis stated it is ready to go and is through Quinsigamond Community College. If they are engaged in classes on campus, parents would need to transport their students.

Mrs. Lemieux asked what the expected cost for this will be?

Spring courses are \$250/per course. It may go up next year and we budgeted \$350/per course for next year.

Mr. Ehrenworth stated that \$14,000 is budgeted right now.

If students do a true dual enrollment they are responsible for their own enrollment costs.

If they take the classes at BMR these costs apply.

Walk through FY23 preliminary budget

At this point we have all numbers together and have materials and resources all in one place.

Mr. Ehrenworth stated the priorities:

- Principals identified their needs. Not losing focus on growth they need to made.
- Principals discussed their budgets with cost center leaders and put together their budgets to support the district blueprint 2.0.

- Mr. Ehrenworth met with Dr. DeFalco on this as well as cost center managers to review requests in detail.
- They went through 5 past years line by line and compared to the 5 year trend in expenses.
- They were able to shave over \$150,000 out of the priorities submitted.

Student Population figures:

- 1538 students
- 1.8% ELL
- 6.8% 1st language not english
- 18.4% students with special needs
- 46.7% high needs up almost 10% from last year*
- Approximately 50% free/reduced lunch

*Dr. DeFalco is not implying that they are not accelerated learners with high needs but it is important to have services available for them.

Demographics:

- 84.9% white
- 7.9% hispanic
- 1.8 black/african american
- 1% asian
- 4.4% multi race

State Data

- State did not assign accountability status to any schools
- No school within the district require any state assistance or intervention
- 96.8% four year graduation rate
- .7% drop out rate

Our proficiency levels are not where we want them to be.

Grant update:

Competitive grants over 2.185 million in programs, supplies and staff

Substantial grants are in the Career Pathway area.

- Year 3 of Biomedical Pathway at BMRHS - \$75K
- Year 1 of new Engineering/Manufacturing Pathway at BMRHS \$25/K
- Year 3 of HMS career development course work \$100/K

- Year 1 of HMS green technologies and engineering course work \$25/K
- Offering approx. ten courses through BVExcel Program \$450/K
- Year 1 of 21st century learning center program to extend the school day/year for grades 2-5 \$173/K
- Year 1 of school nursing and health support \$100/K
- Early Childhood resource, supplies and programs for academics, emotional, sensory, technology and social needs ages 3-5 students with special needs \$90/K
- Extended learning time for students with special needs \$8/K
- Applied for school safety grant \$50/K
- Elem. and Sec. school emergency relief \$755/K
- MIIA Risk Management Grants \$4/K
- Emergency Connectivity Fund Grant for Chromebooks and Technology \$380/K

Went to funding teachers and interventionists in the district:

- ESSER II Grant - \$200,000
- ESSER III Grant - \$180,000
- Title I and Tuition - \$226,401

Dr. DeFalco gave information on what is driving our budget for FY23?

- Closing gaps and moving forward
- Looking at a new district or revised strategy
- Current blueprint is foundation work and curriculum alignment work
- We need to ensure and anticipate that our budget is in alignment with that
- Focus on curriculum and also non academic barriers
- There have been many social emotional challenges as students came back to school
- We want them to focus on learning
- Focus on career development
- We are a small system but a mighty system

Things impacting our budget and barriers:

- Still have impacts of Covid 19 with a multi year process
- Increasing material costs (supply chain issues)
- Contractual Obligations
- Escalating Insurance Costs - 6% average
- Additional Medical Premiums
- OPEB- Other Post Employment Benefits - work with the Towns to get to a place where they feel comfortable with this
- Growing Transportation costs - costs of fuel and serious bus driver shortages
- Materials and Resources
- Math curriculum and materials
- Identification of Social Studies curriculum
- Enhancement of our career readiness

- Social Emotional learning support
- Diversity and social equity programs

Strategic Staffing

- 1 Family Resource Center Administration Assistant
- .5 Leader for Academic Affairs (split with Bellingham)
- 1 HS Business Teacher (necessary for career pathway)
- 1 MS Business Teacher (expansion of career pathways)
- .6 History Teacher at MS (equitable class size/servies)
- 2 Stem teachers (equity in programming - Regional Agreement)
- 1 full time Athletic Director (support for athletic program)
- 4 Additional permanent building substitutes (impact of Covid and other needs)
Each building has one currently and this would bring them to two.

There is a packet online and you can see the First Draft FY 23 Budget.

Anticipated Adjustments:

- Pre-Purchase Math Curriculum \$150,000
- Application CDC Nursing grant \$100,000
- Assumption of 3% on health and dental \$86,000
- Rollover funds ESSER III \$85,000
- Rollover funds from FY22 ESSER II \$45,000
- Reduction of PD Services \$30,000
- Total of \$496,000 adjustments

Additional funds for Circuit Breaker used to offset Special Education Costs
E & D will be used for OPEB Expense and other one time costs.

Consideration:

The District is presenting an expense budget. The state's budget was just completed. They do not have their FY23 budget yet. Minimum local contributions have not been set yet. Only receive minimal aid increase due to Hold Harmless. Our Chapter 70 funds will not be reduced from year to year. We will only see minimal aid. Last year extra \$35/per student. We hope to see inflation increase as well. Charter Reimbursement may be significantly lower due to the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) Hope to see early cherry sheet numbers in early February which give the town and district allocations.

Workshops:

- Elementary and Middle School - 1/20
- High School and Districtwide - 1/24
- Joint Meeting - TBD
- Continued Revision through 3/9
- Public Hearing and School Committee adoption - 3/10

Mrs. Lemieux asked if there is a bid system for busing?

Mr. Ehrenworth said yes. He will be putting out for transportation bids. He has had initial conversations with transportation companies and anticipates covering the costs in this budget.

If you have specific questions please email Mr. Ehrenworth or Dr. DeFalco.

Mrs. Lemieux said we hope for a collaboration along the way and not wait until town floor to bring forward any concerns. Now is the time to let loose. Don't hold back now. We can address and consider things now.

Mr. Ehrenworth said the workshops are recorded and presented to the public and are important. If the public has comments on the workshops they can express them.

Mrs. Lemieux feels It is not just numbers but lots of information behind the numbers on the pages.

Report of Business Office**Mr. Ehrenworth - Assistant Superintendent**

Things are going well in FY22.

Total Revenue Report - being collected as anticipated. Happy to see we have started collecting the ESSER III funds.

Mr. Ehrenworth believes we will be doing very well and surpassing our expected revenue in the area of Medicaid giving full credit to the Special Education Department for this increase.

General fund expenditure review - worked with business departments and specialists and reclassified some areas. Mr. Ehrenworth explained the reason for these fluctuating numbers. Emphasize they try to be conservative when putting the budgets together. You can reach out to Mr. Ehrenworth or Mrs. Pilla-Gallerani with questions.

In the grant fund review he still listed expenses to be charged to circuit breaker funds but to the right he removed the offset for circuit breaker. This is why you are not seeing the negative number on general fund.

He has included personnel changes as of Jan. 1, 2022.

Facilities update - no major changes happening or updates regarding ongoing work.

Everyone is becoming aware of the Capital Planning process they are undergoing.

Making themselves available to the towns.

Meeting on Jan. 19th with Blackstone Outlay Committee

Meeting on Feb.1st with Millville Capital Outlay Committee

Use of Facilities Requests -

The Knights of Columbus are requesting to use the AFM gym next Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. for the free throw competition. Mrs. Reggio stated they will work to ensure that not everyone is present at the same time. They can give each grade a different time to enter the gym.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mr. Howell and unanimously voted to approve the use of facilities request by the Knights of Columbus for the free throw competition on January 18th @ 6:00 p.m. at the AFM gym, making sure that not all participants are present at one time.

The Green Roy Academy of Irish Dance is requesting the High School auditorium and cafeteria on June 10, 11 and 12, 2022.

Mr. Howell is concerned since 300 to 400 people could be in attendance.

Dr. DeFalco will do a tentative approval and check back in closer to the date to see if they can still hold it. They do not need to use the facility on Sunday unless they can't have Friday and Saturday.

Mrs. Lemieux feels it is important to be fair to the Green Roy Academy. They are counting on this. Make sure we are clear with them and have check in dates with a cut off.

Our own custodial staff is paid to clean up and sanitize after they leave.

Mr. Ehre worth stated there is no liability on the District's part if anyone in attendance gets Covid.

Dr. DeFalco will ask his administrative assistant, Katherine, to reach out to the parties involved tomorrow.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mrs. Lemieux and unanimously voted to approve the use of facilities request by Green Roy Academy of Irish Dance to use the High School auditorium and cafeteria on June 10, 11 and possibly June 12, 2022 provided the above recommended check-ins are put into place .

School Committee Forum

Upcoming meetings -

- 1/20 Virtual Workshop Budget 6:00 p.m.
- 1/24 Virtual Workshop Budget 6:00 p.m.
- 2/3 In person Workshop Budget 6:00 p.m. (tentative)
- 2/10 School Committee Meeting 6:00 p.m.(Mrs. Vinacco needs a zoom link)
- 2/17 Workshop with Kerry Purcell (Mrs. Vinacco needs a zoom link)

Mrs. Lemieux wants to be sure that the meetings are being updated on the Website. This is also an issue for the community.

Dr. DeFalco will be sure that the master calendar is being updated when changes are made..

Mrs. Reggio stated we do post all meetings 72 hours in advance but it can be difficult for someone trying to make a long term schedule.

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Howell, seconded by Mrs. Larkin 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

