

**Blackstone-Millville Regional District School Committee**  
**Frederick Hartnett Middle School**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**December 15, 2022**  
**6:00 p.m.**

**Introduction of Members:**

Erin P. Vinacco, Chairperson  
Tammy A. Lemieux, Vice Chairperson  
Keri L. Gaudette, District Treasurer  
Tara L. Larkin, District Secretary  
Daniel Keefe, Member  
Ted Novio, Member  
Charles Dunton, Member

Erin Zimmerman and the Student Representatives were absent from the meeting.

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

Jason DeFalco EdD., Superintendent of Schools was present.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mr. Keefe, seconded by Mrs. Gaudette and unanimously voted to approve Consent Agenda A which includes Warrants and Minutes of November 17, 2022.

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

**Recognition - Tori Gervais**

Mr. Shafer recognized Tori Gervais, a trumpet player from the BMRHS.

- Auditioned as a select musician in Worcester County.
- Selected to move onto all states and won at all states.
- Second trumpet player in the Northeastern all states.
- In his 22 years she is the first student to make it this far.
- This is something special.
- Tori played in the Macy's Day parade.

A certificate of recognition was presented to Tori.

On April 13 -16 she will be going to Rochester and playing in the festival there with students from all over.

Tori passed her pre-screening into North Western College.

## **School Committee Policy - Mrs. Lemieux**

At MASC's directive Policy Manual C has been revised.

Changes in language to be gender neutral. Using the word District vs. system.

CHCA-E has been removed from the MASC reference manual.

It has been removed because this language is inserted into our school handbook and doesn't need to be here.

CL combined 2 into 1 version of administrative reports.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mrs. Gaudette and unanimously voted to approve the changes to Policy Manual C as presented by Mrs. Lemieux.

## **Report of the Superintendent**

Introduction - Dr. Chris Taylor - Consultant in our school system.

Dr. DeFalco is her mentor.

Work together for 2 years. Ms. Taylor was happy to be at this meeting and meet all of the members tonight.

Ms. Taylor was a teacher, school principal and worked at DESE, working in turn around with schools in receivership and is now at William James College.

Doctoral program in 2018 and wants to stay in the circle of learning and loves the cohort model.

Mrs. Vinacco appreciates her taking the time to do it in this manner.

Seeing the realm of applicants that came through here in the last years.

This will look great on a resume.

## **Update from Jill Pilla-Gallerani - Director of Learner Support Services**

Sara Peters, President of the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (CEPAC) was present with Mrs. Pilla-Gallerani.

At the beginning of December they held the first event at Whitinsville Sparetime Recreation center as an inclusive family bowling night. CEPAC donated a portion of the cost. Students were charged \$5 each. All students were included. 30 students and families came. They set up a sensory friendly area for them. 12 lanes were set up. Some parents wanted to bowl but it was just for kids. They are welcome back anytime. Saw non -prompted interactions and friendships built.

A unified champion school is aimed at promoting social inclusion.

CEPAC is really busy this year. Collaborated with local CEPACs to form a local district CEPAC.

Special Olympics sports is something they want to work together on for the kids to have an inclusive team.

Touch a Truck event. Nice to see both towns come together. Police, fire and DPW were all there. Michael Soter attended and members of the local Boards of Selectmen. They had balloon animals, face painting, etc. and raised \$710 through this event.

They wrapped up the shoe drive and received 1200 pairs from both communities and raised \$228.40.

The Committee needs to accept the funds on behalf of the CEPAC.

Upcoming events: Transition planning event, basic rights workshop for children with special needs.

Jan/Feb workshop federation for children with special needs on bullying. All School Committee members will be invited.

Mrs. Vinacco stated that anything the Committee members say is on their own personal accounts and not public.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mr. Keefe, seconded by Mr. Dunton and unanimously voted to approve applying \$710 raised from the Touch a Truck event and \$228.40 raised from the shoe drive to the CEPAC account.

Mr. Keefe feels that if they are accusing any members of the school committee of bullying it needs to be proven.

Mrs. Vinacco is not entertaining any accusations on this floor tonight. She wants to receive this in an email.

## **FY24 Budget priorities**

Putting together an initial draft.

Direction the district is moving in.

District Improvement Strategy. All are anchored back to this. We want our budget to support this strategy.

## **FY23 Budget**

State increased minimum local contribution of Towns (MLC) largest increase by the State in 5 years.

Blackstone - +6.33%

Millville - +6.27%

District Decreased the Additional Contribution to Absorb the State Assigned MLC.

- Blackstone FY22 - \$1,565,294 to FY23 - \$1,277,522 = Decrease of \$287,772
- Millville FY22 - \$538,038 to FY23 - \$410,990 = Decrease of \$127,048

Chapter 70 Aide increased minimally by .44% (\$30/student)

District worked to offset Town Assessments:

- All ESSER Grants - \$752,259
- CDC Grant - \$130,000
- Entitlement grants - \$240,000
- IDEA Special Ed Grants - \$481,000
- Additional Circuit Breaker Funds - \$175,000
- E & D - \$150,000

We will not be able to duplicate this again this year.

We have no say over what the local contributions are. This is what the Commonwealth requires the Towns to pay.

The school district was able to lower the Town's minimum contributions due to the above but this will not be able to happen again in FY24.

The District uses the grants as offsets. They should be off to the side and not included in the budget process.

There is not a penny the District brings in that the Community does not see.

The additional contributions went down in both communities. We did that by using all of the grants we have been aggressively acquiring. We don't have the ability to do that again next year. Many grants are coming offline next year.

ESSER II grant is done and the CDC grant as well will be done in June.

We have one year left on the ESSER III grant.

We need to make sure that everyone remembers those conversations we had last May with the Boards at town meetings.

### **What is driving the FY24 budget?**

- Serving approx. 1500 students pk-12
- Year two of our blueprint for District Improvement (Blueprint 2.0)
- 50% of students classified as High Needs (eco-dis/EL/Special Needs)
- Studying district consolidation design
- Waiting to hear from MA School Bldg. Authority - feasibility study?
- Minimizing non academic barriers to learning remains a focus while improving learning for ALL students with a focus on key subgroups
- Implementing and supporting our PK-12 social studies curriculum while determining our next steps with our core curriculum (all major subjects have completed a cycle)
- Sustaining our focus on our career development programs/pathways while maintaining our dual enrollment/early college pipeline.

Once we finish our social studies review this year parents should be proud of what is going on in the classrooms.

Exploring what pathways might look like for early college.

### **Other driving Factors for FY24**

- Health Insurance Increase
- Transportation costs - year. 2 of new contract
- State required 14% increase in Private Special Education Tuition
- Bi-County Collaborative required tuition increase of 10%
- Facilities Needs (MSBA)
- Asbestos abatement BMRHS
- Faculty and Staff Contractual Obligations
- Minimum Local Contribution
- School Safety Detail
- Utility Costs

The State is requiring school districts to pay 14% more for private school tuitions. The pandemic did such a number on private schools and we are required to all work together now to help them.

- Bi-County Collaborative is increasing all of their tuition by 10%.
- Dr. DeFalco voted against this increase and lost this.

- We did 10% last year and they are approving another 10% for FY24.
- They increased their enrollment and are projecting 193 students as of January 3rd.
- After this increase for FY24 they should be financially sound.

Bi-County Collaborative have been going into their E & D fund and have depleted this.

The per pupil expense in our district is about \$14,000 and for private schools it is \$25,000.

If you have a student with special needs that are considerable you can spend so much more to educate this student.

The Charter schools take our students, and if after October 1st they decide they can't support that student anymore the student is counted in the charter schools budget moving forward but not in our budget. We take the student back and the money stays with the charter school for this year and the following year.

Many things we have no control over.

### **Budget Process to Date**

Started conversations with Town Administrators and Board of Selectmen.

District leadership and School Committee agree on timeline.

We are without a business manager so we have been working differently. Dr. DeFalco is acting as the licensed business manager.

We have created a different structure and worked hard with the principals and the business office team to try and capture everything we need to. The personnel side of the work is done with the principals and team. Who needs who next year.

If you look at our budget spreadsheets we are trying to provide you with specific information.

Getting everything in budgetsense for FY24 and have a full draft done by the middle of next week.

### **Strategic Priorities:**

- Identification of next curriculum to be reviewed TBD
- Support for math program implementation and social studies new curriculum
- Continue focus on pathways and social emotional learning
- Strengthening our continued work in creating a school district where everyone is welcome and belongs

- Facility/grounds work as determined by Small Capital planning group and feedback from MA School Bldg. Authority.

Sending home about 25 backpacks to our families with food for the weekend.

Took High School leadership group to the Blackstone food pantry to help organize and restock the shelves. They will go to Worcester and volunteer for 3 hours there.

### **Staffing**

Looking to move 2 stem teachers permanently in our local budget

1 elementary math interventionist

No new FTE's to the school system but moving them to the regular budget.

### **Next steps:**

- FY24 draft budget presentation at School Committee meeting on January 12th
- Cost center manager presentation Jan/Feb
- Joint meeting with the Boards of Selectmen, Finance Committees from each town, and School Committee to be scheduled.
- School Committee public hearing and FY24 budget vote - March 9th
- Production/distribution of certified budget book beginning on March 13th.

They may not have the initial cherry sheets by the end of January due to the new governor taking office and this could put a wrench in the joint meetings.

- They will meet on January 17th for a Workshop at 6:00 p.m. with Mr. Dunton arriving at 6:45 p.m.
- The second meeting will be held on January 26th as a Workshop.
- The third meeting will be held on January 31st as a Workshop..
- They are looking at February 13th as a joint meeting at 7:00 p.m.
- School Committee meeting on March 9th.

### **School District Consolidation**

- Postponing the public hearing. Hit pause for a variety of reasons outlined in the email he sent.
- Dr. DeFalco acknowledges all feedback.
- It is not going away, just not being done for the next school year.
- If we did not have January 1st in our Regional Agreement as a deadline we could possibly have moved forward but it is too rushed for now.
- Don't give up on us. We need this time and want to do it right.

Current 7th grade families want their students at the High School. If this applies to you, apply to the 8th grade academy. If the will is there and the student wants to take on the work, it could work out for them.

That is something they could work with and something they already do so they would not need a Regional Agreement vote for this.

Ms.Lemieux feels this 7th grade request is being driven by athletics.

### **Director of Finance and Operations Search**

#### **Jill Pilla Gallerani**

- 3 initial applicants
- screenings of the candidates
- a small interview committee interviewed 2 of the candidates
- They moved 1 forward to Dr. DeFalco and he is meeting with her tomorrow

### **Field trip request**

STUCO advisor annual statewide spring conference trip to Hyannis where the officers get to attend.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Larkin and unanimously voted to approve the STUCO advisor annual spring statewide trip to the MASC conference in Hyannis.

### **Update on the field trip requirements by the board of health**

There are no requirements or restrictions on field trips.

### **Business Office Report**

#### **Expenditure Revenues report**

Dr. DeFalco flagged 3 lines. Professional Development budget for \$99,810 and we are \$43,000 over. We will be able to move ESSER transportation dollars to the Professional Development line.

Guidance 2710 salaries put there that were not initially scheduled to this line.

Telecommunication \$24,000 over because they are waiting for grant funds to come in.

We still have a very healthy bottom line. No concerns with the budget itself.

More bargaining power when we join with French River.



The agreed upon gas rate was \$3.71 per gallon. Now paying \$5.00 per gallon for diesel. We are getting additional invoices since it is going above our contractual rate.

They should have something to move to cover it.

Asked the Athletic Director and Music Dept. to go back and forecast the winter and spring for bus drivers to see what we need to fund this.

**Personnel report.** Placed on file.

Need Foreign language staff member at the High School. The current person left for family reasons.

## **Facilities update**

### **Scott Hebert - Facilities Director**

#### **High School**

- Industrial Burner installed the new pressure relief valves on 11/25, However, two of the valves are defective causing steam to leak out into the boiler room. We have that boiler shut down at this time while waiting for the new valves to come in. The boiler can be used in the event that the other boiler does not start up.  
The coil on the upper media center was replaced on 28th as well.
- The softball infield is completed, however it will require leveling out in the spring after the soil is compacted from the snow and the base will need to be installed.

#### **HMS**

- The new VFD drive has been installed and the Automated System is back to normal operation. The cost of repair came in lower than quoted.
- The circulator pump that was recently rebuilt by Riverdale Plumbing has started to leak again. Reached out to the owner and waiting for him to come look at it.

#### **MES**

- The circulator pump on boiler #2 has failed, the circuit board inside the pump has short circuited. Reached out to NB Kelly who installed the boilers to see if they are still under warranty. The pump manufacturer (Taco pump) has told Mr. Hebert there is only a one year warranty on their pumps.
- The Building Automation system will be replaced by Siemens. We are waiting on Siemens to give us a start date. MIIA has agreed to cover the cost of the project up to \$59,000. We are still waiting on Siemens to give us a start date.

## **Use of Facilities Request**

**Motion:** It was moved by Mr. Keefe, seconded by Mrs. Lemieux and unanimously voted to approve the Knights of Columbus use of facilities request for the basketball free throw as requested by teacher, Karen Thompson to be held on January 9th at A.F.M.

Next School Committee meeting to be held on January 12th along with previously mentioned workshops.

## School Committee Forum

- Mrs. Lemieux acknowledged the hour of code day amazon volunteers. Thank you for all who did this. Make connections with companies like that and get our kids involved.
- Requests an athletic update for the next meeting on what teams are running etc.

A.D. Sam Yoder will be asked to attend the next meeting.

Do we have a school person at all games to help alleviate any issues?

Yes, there is a person in attendance. Could be an unruly fan, etc.

There is always an SRO or detail officer at all of our indoor games.

Dr. DeFalco stated there is a site administrator at all games.

- Mr. Keefe would like to wish everyone happy and healthy holidays and new years season.
- Mrs. Vinacco stated we are waiting for a Capital group meeting in January and we will know what to announce.
- Dr. DeFalco stated the meeting is Dec. 21st and he will know if they are invited to attend the meeting tomorrow .

**Motion:** Mrs. Vinacco stated the regular meeting would be adjourned at 7:55 p.m. and the Committee members would move into Executive Session and not return to the regular meeting. A roll call vote was taken.

Respectfully submitted,

Monique F. Simard  
Recording Secretary

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Tara L. Larkin, District Secretary

