

Blackstone-Millville Regional District School Committee Meeting
Frederick Hartnett Middle School
November 14, 2024
6:00 p.m.

Introduction of Members:

Daniel Keefe, Chairperson
Tara L. Larkin, Assistant Chairperson
Ted Novio, District Secretary
Keri Gaudette, District Treasurer
Tara Schouboe, Member
Matthew Catalano, Member
Charles Dunton, Member
Erin Vinacco, Member

Also Present:

Jason DeFalco EdD., Superintendent of Schools
Jill Pilla-Gallerani, Assistant Superintendent/Director of Student Services
Joseph Spagna, Director of Finance and Operations

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

Report of Student Representative

- Pumpkin carving information
- fall sports wrap up information
- Marching Band went to Nationals
- STUCO went to fall conference at BVT
- Annual Powder Puff game
- NHS food drive
- Intergenerational prom held

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mr. Dunton and unanimously voted to take the agenda out of order.

School Committee Report

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Dunton, seconded by Mrs. Schouboe and unanimously voted to approve the waiving of fees for the December 14th Parks and Recreation Holiday Event.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Gaudette, seconded by Mrs. Larkin and unanimously voted to approve the Warrants.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mrs. Gaudette and unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of October 10, 2024.

There were no items for Public Forum.

Student Recognition of MCAS

Dr. DeFalco stated it is an important measure of our students' growth and proficiency. Kids who have scored really high at Meeting/Exceeding Expectations are here to be recognized tonight. A great big thank you goes out to the students, parents and educators. Dr. Remka will read off the names of the Middle School recipients this year. Mrs. Foulis, HS principal will speak and distribute to the high school students.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mrs. Schouboe and unanimously voted to accept the donation of 3 hooyer lifts for the District to be used for special education students needing assistance with movement.

Millville Elementary School Water Update

Mary Jude Pigsley - Regional Director of MassDEP's Central Regional Office in Worcester, MA.

\$1 million dollars has become available to Millville to fix the water issue at the Millville Elementary School. It is an award granted to small water systems that have contaminants. MassDEP was given the money and the work plan for Millville was approved for \$1 million. MassDEP worked with the Town of Millville to continue moving forward with the plan to define the scope of work for the water project. Mr. Caruso, Town Administrator will review the plan to be sure all areas are covered.

Mr. Caruso stated they are using pilot testing, pulling out the total organic carbon and ensuring PFAS are addressed going forward.

New technology eliminates the matter, consideration in engineering in digging a new well if needed and addressing the structure of the existing well. Lengthen the encasement of the piping of the current well. The levels in October went above the allowable levels which continues to be monitored. Haven't found the right management of the chlorine in the water. Tried to match the typical demand for water that would come from MES on a normal day.

The Board of Selectmen did vote to supply bottled water for cooking and drinking for the next school year 25-26.

Response letter from Mary Jude was read by Mr. Caruso. Now the strategy has been switched so a new form must be completed and sent to the EPA Boston office for approval. They don't control how it goes with the Boston office. It could be as fast as a 2 month turn around. The money given to MassDEP from EPA is to be used for PFAS and manganese. The green sand treats the manganese. Getting rid of the total organic carbon levels might reduce the PFAS but they are not sure this will occur.

Mrs. Vinacco feels that they should just build a new well.

MassDEP has more confidence in the new engineers for the Town. MassDEP wants to move forward with the treatment first. They don't know if a new well will improve anything. The water is the water and that won't change. They strongly support the idea of treatment first and then the new well plan will be ready if it is necessary.

Mr. Keefe - New technology is being introduced not currently used in the state of MA. A pilot program that Millville will be the first to pilot. Likely it will be successful and a quicker fix. In a month or two after the paperwork is accepted by Boston the process could be underway by mid winter. They have 3 years to spend all of the money. It may be new to MA but it is used in other states successfully. We will be on the cutting edge of water treatment in MA.

Mrs. Gaudette asked what assurance do they give families about the newest change in procedure. Parents want their kids in a school without bottled water. The timing depends on when the Town gets the forms back to MassDEP so they can send it to the EPA Boston. The EPA needs to accept the new plan which could take a few months. The vendor needs to get the technology approved. All of this should be going on while waiting for the EPA to accept the new plan.

Dr. DeFalco asked them to address the issue with coliform . Coliform bacteria are a class of rod-shaped bacteria that can be found in soil, water, and animal feces. While they are usually harmless and unlikely to cause illness, their presence in drinking water can indicate the presence of disease-causing organisms. Tests showed it a few months ago in the MES water. This is why currently there is no drinking or cooking with the water at MES. Mr. Caruso said the pump keeping the PH in a certain range wasn't working properly and is being addressed.

We now have the money, a plan and hopefully a vendor. Working closely with MassDEP and our engineer operator. We are in a much better place than we were last year at this time.

Dr. DeFalco stated we do not need a vote to move students back to Millville.

Mr. Novio and Mrs. Larkin commented that the process is the town of Millville's project, the School Committee will make a decision on test results.

Mr. Caruso stated you may want to ask the Towns for a provisional extension on the Regional Agreement for this move. You may want to get the insurance to make everyone happy. He is referring to the vote by the townspeople (Annual Town Meeting) since this was an emergency move, not a planned realignment.

Update MASC/MASS Conference

Dr. DeFalco attended 3 days of the conference. He stated it was packed with hundreds of Superintendents and School Committee members, lots of vendors and information. Highlights were unique challenges of regional schools and school building projects, current legal issues facing school districts, and negotiation sessions. He met with an innovative architectural firm. He presented on a panel on Friday p.m. regarding work with School Committees.

MSBA update - Committee members - Dr. DeFalco, Mrs. Gaudette and Mrs. Reggio

Dr. DeFalco stated we received 3 submissions for a designer. They will submit their rationale to MSBA before Thanksgiving.

- Meeting with MSBA on Dec. 3 at 9:30 to talk through the 3 proposals.
- Dec. 17 interview the 3 firms. They will advocate strongly for the designer they feel will do the best work for BMR.
- Between Christmas and New Year's they will negotiate the contract with the designer.
- On Dec. 30th they will have a school building committee meeting and then look for permission to sign the contract with the designer. That will conclude the OPM and designer process.
- Hope to have both by the end of 2024.

Superintendent's Evaluation

Thank you to all for their feedback.

- All focus standards came in as Proficient
- Student learning goal noted as Some Progress
- Professional Practice goal is Met
- District Goal Strengthening our system is Met
- All are welcome and belong goal is MET
- Facilities - Maximize learning creating facilities MET.

They will meet at a later date to discuss Dr. DeFalco's contract.

24-25 Student Improvement Plans and Professional Data Plans

H and I were presented at the last meeting. There is no need to read them tonight.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Gaudette, seconded by Mr. Dunton and unanimously voted to approve the 24-25 improvements and professional data plans as presented.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Gaudette, seconded by Mr. Dunton and unanimously voted to approve the Superintendent and District goals as presented.

8th Grade annual Washington, DC Field Trip in the Spring of 2025

Washington DC field trip - Mrs. Foulis left the meeting but if specific questions need to be answered please contact her. Dr. DeFalco stated they looked at flights to maximize more time in D.C. but it doubled the cost so they feel it is too much higher. Bus trip is set at \$800.

Mrs. Vinacco feels that is a lot of money for a bus trip. There is no cost for visiting the museums and monuments in Washington, DC. It seems high.

Dr. DeFalco will find out how many students are in a room and who will be chaperoning the trip.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Schouboe, seconded by Mrs. Larkin and unanimously voted to approve the 8th grade Washington, DC field trip.

Report of the Superintendent

Athletics Update - Darlene Gaudette, Athletic Director and Director of Student Life was here to present. Ms. Gaudette gave a summary of the fall season. She sent an end of season survey to the participants.

She stated that currently 31 students have not paid their athletic user fees. Noone that has an outstanding balance can try out for a winter sport.

Winter sport vacancies have been filled.

They have open gym time for basketball.

Mr. Dunton asked if students are allowed to use the weight room on open time with supervision? Ms. Gaudette will look into this.

Vacancy Update

- MES - Special Education teacher, Instructional Assistant and RBT
- MS - Reading Specialist, Esther Cote has been filling in here and Spec. Educ. Teacher
- HS - Instructional Assistant to assist with Behaviors
- Special Education Office - Administrative Assistant

FY26 budget update

- Held budget kick off a few weeks ago.
- Cost center managers were given timelines by Mr. Spagna.
- Drafts submitted by Tuesday before Thanksgiving.
- Have one on one meetings with all cost center managers on Dec. 2nd.

MCAS - the State vote was passed to remove the requirement for passing MCAS. No longer a graduation requirement at BMR. Waiting to hear what implications there will be on this. The whole idea of having it was to have a consistent measure. They no longer have this.

The State now has a required Grade 8 Civics test.

Report of the Business Office Mr. Spagna

Personnel Changes in packets.

Expenditure Report - no concerns but points out a change in report.
P. 2 benefits see active and retiree line broken out.

Staying steady with forecasted projections for the school year.
Budget transfers for approval. Need to align to the DESE function codes.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mr. Dunton and unanimously voted to approve the budget transfers to align to the DESE function codes as presented by Mr. Spagna.

EV Charging Station Green energy projects

Electric vehicle charging stations.

Grant gives up to \$50,000 for full installation. There is a slight cost to each location. Millville is not eligible because of the grading involved. MS level 2 charging stations (not rapid) take 3 or 4 hours. There is an app that can designate during the day hours at no charge or whatever the District decides to charge. They did not look into whether there is a need for it in the district. Mr. Spagna will look into it. We are not eligible to use our credits for it. There is a cost of \$29,000 to the District to install these units.

Mr. Novio - for \$28,000 you could try to help our buildings rather than put it into charging stations when we are in dire straits.

It is only brought to them since there is a grant for it.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mr. Dunton to reject the grant and not move forward with the EV Charging Stations.

Mrs. Vinacco asked to table it until we find one without cost.

If a better deal comes back later they can bring it up again.

The current **motion** on the table was approved 7 yes, 1 no (Mrs. Vinacco).

Phase 1 of the lighting project is complete. Over the next couple of months Phase 2 exterior lighting at MES will begin.

Facilities Report - Scott Hebert

- HS circulator pump quotes to have it rebuilt
- HS B107 leak above the ceiling tiles. Has been repaired.
- HS Broken window on 2nd floor and 1st floor both repaired.
- HS Air makeup system in the kitchen needed fresh air system. Relay is going to be replaced.
- MS pressure gauges waiting for vendor to get parts
- MS domestic hot water mixing valves to be changed
- MS phase 2 of lighting complete
- MS came back to change lights on the Hartnett sign as you enter driveway
- MS storm drains fixed
- MS repair big potholes
- MS boiler #2 developed leak
- looking into some doors not closing during fire drill
- exit signs need to be lit up
- games painted on asphalt and lines painted
- MES fire pump passed inspection
- Phase 2 of LED lighting project completed tomorrow
- heating system continues to be a problem

Mr. Catalano asked if we can get age appropriate playground equipment here at the Middle School.

Mrs. Vinacco - Plan for MES building sidewalk snow and ice cleanup before opening. Since we lost 3 custodians last year, how does this get done?

Mr. Hebert stated we now have 1 custodian in the am and 2.5 at night. If it's a weekday the van driver will go over and do the walkways.

Mrs. Schouboe asked if MES was online to be used for after school for activities. Dr. DeFalco told her yes it has always been online and will continue to be.

Mr. Spagna stated they are looking at doing a quarterly maintenance on all of the district vehicles.

Use of Facilities

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Novio, seconded by Mrs. Larkin and unanimously voted to approve the Use of Facilities requests as presented tonight.

There were no items for School Committee Forum.

The next School Committee Meeting will be held on December 12th.

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Catalano, seconded by Mrs. Larkin and unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Monique F. Simard
Recording Secretary

ATTEST:



Ted Novio, District Secretary