

Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting
May 16, 2024

The regular meeting of the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee was held in the school cafeteria. The following members, staff and others were present:

Joseph M. Hall of Bellingham, Chair
Joseph A. Broderick of Blackstone
Mark J. Potter of Douglas
Anthony M. Yitts of Grafton
Edward D. Cray, III of Mendon
Gerald M. Finn of Millville, Vice Chair
Jeff T. Koopman of Northbridge
James M. Mitchell of Sutton
Tyler D. Bartlett of Upton
James H. Ebbeling of Uxbridge

Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick, Superintendent-Director
Anthony E. Steele, Asst. Superintendent/Principal
Nicole M. Ferguson, Business Manager, Zoom
Michele Denise, Vocational Director
Peter Wojnar, Advisory Board Chair
Matthew Urquhart, Assistant Principal
Skye Bomba, Assistant Principal
Becky Corda, SkillsUSA Advisor
Ellie Poitras, Student Council Representative
Maddison Dos Santos, Student Council Representative
Elise Bogdan, Recording Secretary

Members Absent:

Mitchell A. Intinarelli of Hopedale
Chester P. Hanratty, Jr. of Millbury
Paul J. Braza of Milford

Item 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by the Chair, Mr. Hall. Dr. Fitzpatrick said he was notified in advance that Mr. Intinarelli, Mr. Hanratty, and Mr. Braza would be unable to attend the meeting.

Item 2. Secretary's Report – A. Yitts

2.1. On a motion by Mr. Yitts seconded by Mr. Finn, it was unanimously voted to waive reading of the minutes of the regular School Committee meeting of April 11, 2024 and to accept the minutes as written.

Item 3. Treasurer's Report – C. Pilla

3.1. Dr. Fitzpatrick said that he was notified in advance that the District Treasurer, Mr. Pilla would be unable to attend the meeting. It was agreed that the Treasurer's Report dated March 31, 2024, would be tabled and presented at the next regularly scheduled School Committee meeting.

Item 4. School Committee Fiscal Year 2025 Appointments

4.1. District Treasurer (Term 07/01/24 – 06/30/25) - Dr. Fitzpatrick spoke in favor of the nomination and shared with the Committee that Mr. Pilla indicated to him that he would accept the FY25 appointment if supported by the Committee. On a motion by Mr. Finn, seconded by Mr. Broderick, and with indicated acceptance of the candidate, the District School Committee unanimously voted to appoint Christopher C. Pilla as District Treasurer for the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District for the period of July 1, 2024, through and including June 30, 2025.

4.2. Recording Secretary (Term 07/01/24 - 06/30/25) - On a motion by Mr. Yitts, seconded by Mr. Finn, and with voiced acceptance of the candidate, the District School Committee unanimously voted to appoint Elise Bogdan as the Recording Secretary for the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District for a term office commencing July 1, 2024, and concluding on June 30, 2025.

Item 5. Student Recognition - Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick

5.1. Dr. Fitzpatrick recognized Jacob Decatur, a Scout from Troop 22, Worcester, MA who earned the rank of Eagle Scout. Jacob, a Millbury resident, is a senior and a soon-to-be graduate of the Information Technology program at BVT. Jacob's project involved installing a bike repair station at the Brierly Pond Conservation Trail Head in Millbury, MA. On behalf of Principal Steele and the District as a whole, Dr. Fitzpatrick congratulated Jacob on earning the Boy Scouts of America's highest rank.

Item 6. Comments by Student Council Representatives - Ellie Poitras & Maddison Dos Santos

Before providing an update on Council activities, Ellie (a soon-to-be graduating senior) shared that this would be her last meeting as a student representative. She then introduced the Committee to their new representative for the next school year, Maddison Dos Santos (Student Council, Vice President), who will join Sosie DerKosroffian (Student Council, President), who could not attend tonight. Ellie then shared that BVT's Student Council was recognized as a 2024 National Gold Council of Excellence by the National Student Council for its exemplary record of leadership, service, and activities that assist the school and community. It is the sixth consecutive year that BVT's Council has earned this top award, and it is an honor to earn this national recognition. Maddison informed the Committee that the Council would volunteer at Community Harvest in a couple of weeks to plant crops and harvest food with the organization. Dr. Fitzpatrick, on behalf of the School Committee, thanked the student representatives for their comments and recognized Elle's contributions to the School Committee.

Item 7. SkillsUSA State Competition Results – Rebecca (Becky) Corda

The SkillsUSA Advisor provided an update on the 2023-2024 BVT SkillsUSA activities, which included the following conferences and competitions:

Fall Leadership Weekend Conference: (November 19th – 20th, 2023 in Marlborough, MA), had 12 students attend and every student achieved the SkillsUSA Leadership Award.

Freshman Smart Start Summit: (January 18th, 2024), a one day conference in Natick, MA had 16 freshmen and the Skills Chapter Officer Team in attendance to learn about SkillsUSA.

S.A.I.L. Conference: (February 8th, 2024), had 12 senior students take part in resume building, career pathways and networking workshops earn a diploma for their participation.

District Leadership and Skills Conference: (March 13th, 2024), had 225 student competitors selected through Shop COP testing in December/January. BVT students competed in 55 different events, capturing a record 94 medals with 9 sweeps. 36 Gold, 27 Silver, and 31 Bronze.

State Leadership and Skills Conference: (April 25th – 27th, 2024 in Marlborough, MA), had 110 student competitors, 13 Delegates, 1 State Officer Candidate. Four students were chosen to be National Voting Delegates. Kallie Allen was chosen to be the National Officer Candidate.

BVT students competed in 60 different events, earning 69 medals (27 Gold, 23 Silver, and 19 Bronze).

National SkillsUSA Leadership Conference: (June 24th -29th, 2024 in Atlanta, Georgia), BVT will send 22 Gold Medalists, 1 State Officers Elect, and 4 National Voting Delegates to compete against peers in their field, from schools across the nation.

Item 8. Business Manager - N. Ferguson

8.1. Line-Item Transfers:

a. On a motion made by Mr. Koopman, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was unanimously voted to transfer available funds totaling \$49,900 into the accounts identified in Item 8.1.a. as presented. Mrs. Ferguson explained this fund transfer from available appropriations will be used to provide additional funding for various Facilities and Technology needs to carry through the end of the Fiscal Year 2024. Such needs include the creation of a “Technology Coordinator” position to replace the “Technology Director” position, as well as the procurement of portable AC units, hot water tank repairs, a battery operated carpet extractor, annual software renewal for security cameras, exhaust motors for bathroom fans, additional 2-way radios, additional fuel costs for handicapped van, and additional heat for the MRS building being occupied throughout the Dust Collector Replacement project.

b. On a motion made by Mr. Finn, seconded by Mr. Koopman, it was unanimously voted to amend a prior transfer of available funds in the amount of \$9,000 completed on October 12, 2023 in Item 6.4.a. from the following account: 1000.50.2250.580.8 Tech Dept. (Tech Hardware) into a newly identified Account 1000.76.3530.500.8 SkillsUSA. Mrs. Ferguson, in the suggested motion, explained that identified savings from available appropriations was originally intended to fund a 7D licensed van driver, which was subsequently approved to be covered by the FY24 IDEA SPED grant. Alternatively, the District seeks approval to use these funds towards SkillsUSA competition costs.

8.2. Donation Approvals:

a. On a motion by Mr. Ebbeling seconded by Mr. Finn, it was unanimously voted to approve the donation of general safety supplies with an estimated value of \$1,509.40 from Eric Belleville, which will be used by BVT’s Facilities Department.

b. On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Koopman, it was unanimously voted to approve the donation of miscellaneous equipment with an estimated value of \$4,900 from Martha Ziba, which will be used for instructional training purposes in BVT’s Advanced Manufacturing & Fabrication program and the Facilities Department.

Item 9. Assistant Superintendent-Director’s Report - A. Steele

9.1. Mr. Steele shared that Nurses Appreciation Day occurred on May 6, 2024. He noted that the nurses (school nurses and teacher nurses) who serve and care for the school community were invited to attend the Faculty Appreciation Day.

9.2. Mr. Steele reported that Faculty Appreciation Day, recognized on May 7, 2024, at the faculty staff meeting, had a fun and creative theme of slide into summer. There were food and games; administrators prepared sliders and snacks to thank the teachers and nurses for

making a difference in the school community.

9.3. Mr. Steele invited Assistant Principal Matthew Urquhart to report on the Junior/Senior Prom. Mr. Urquhart reported that the prom was held on May 11, 2024, at the DCU Center in Worcester, MA. There were 680 students and 23 chaperones who attended the fun and safe evening event. There were no incidents, and it went off without a hitch. Mr. Urquhart thanked the Class of 2024 Advisors, Nathalie Christiansen and Sarah Huber, for working with the students to make the prom a successful night.

9.4. Mr. Steele informed the Committee that English Language Arts instructor Scott Diesenhaus was selected as BVT's nominee for the 2024 Promising Practices Recipient recognition by the Blackstone Valley Superintendents' Consortium. This nominee alternates annually between an academic and vocational teacher at BVT, and the recognition event will occur in the fall.

9.5. Out-of-State/Overnight Field Trip Requests:

a. On a motion by Mr. Koopman, seconded by Mr. Broderick, it was unanimously voted to give final approval for the out-of-state field trip request for students to travel from 06/24/24 to 06/28/24 for the SkillsUSA National Conference held in Atlanta, Georgia.

b. On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was unanimously voted to give initial approval for the senior class (Class of 2025) trip to Gettysburg, PA from 05/14/25 to 05/17/25 as proposed.

9.6. Vocational Director Michele Denise recognized and introduced the Advisory Board Chair Peter Wojnar, who provided a General Advisory update. The update began with an overview of the calendar of events, and the next scheduled advisory meeting is on June 4th. The Advisory Committee, which annually reviews budgets, grants, and equipment, has been seeing positive outcomes in these meetings, thanks to the District's success in securing grant funding. The Advisory Committee members, serving as ambassadors, work diligently to raise informed awareness in the district towns about BVT's proposed operating budget and the current bond request. They also work closely with the vocational directors to review staffing, professional development, curriculum, student placement, and the Co-op program. Mr. Wojnar expressed his appreciation for staff members who keep everyone motivated and going. He also shared that the Advisory Committee Membership for 2023-2024 has 439 members representing industry, community, parents, and students.

9.7. The School Committee expressed their approval of the increase in new Advisory Committee members. Dr. Fitzpatrick thanked Mr. Wojnar for the Advisory Committee's support with the current bond request in helping to clarify that the District is asking each sending town to accept its portion of a 20-year, 10-million-dollar bond, which is eligible for reimbursement under the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Accelerated Repair Program. This approach will significantly reduce the debt associated with the repairs, and energy-saving grants will further lower costs for the HVAC portion of the project. Each member community enjoys a partnership with twelve other towns that share and contribute to this cost-effective capital

improvement venture. The first step is local approval, and the borrowing for the project only occurs if the state approves reimbursement for the project.

Dr. Fitzpatrick thanked Mr. Wojnar and Ms. Denise for their presentations and coordination with the Advisory Committee. In conclusion, Mr. Steele asked Ms. Denise to share the recent Auto Tech news. Ms. Denise shared that seniors Josh Maillet and Carter Schadler won the Ford Ace Completion. They each won a gold medal, a huge tool kit, and a 2024 Ford Mustang for the Automotive Technology program at BVT.

Item 10. Policy Subcommittee Report – A. Steele

10.1. Revised Policies:

a. On a motion by Mr. Finn, seconded by Mr. Ebbeling, it was voted to approve the 2024-2025 BVT Student Handbook as presented.

10.2. Revised Fiscal Policies:

a. On a motion by Mr. Koopman, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was voted to approve the DB - Annual Budget Policy as presented.

b. On a motion by Mr. Koopman, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was voted to approve the DBD – Budget Planning Policy as presented.

c. On a motion by Mr. Koopman, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was voted to approve the DBJ – Regional School District Budget Transfer Authority Policy as presented.

d. On a motion by Mr. Koopman, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was voted to approve the DFG-R- High School Student Activity Accounts Policy as presented.

e. On a motion by Mr. Koopman, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was voted to approve the DKF – Scholarship Funds Policy as presented.

f. On a motion by Mr. Koopman, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was voted to approve the DJ – Purchasing Policy as presented.

g. On a motion by Mr. Koopman, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was voted to approve the DJA – Purchasing Authority Policy as presented.

h. On a motion by Mr. Koopman, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was voted to approve the DJE – Procurement Requirements Policy as presented.

i. On a motion by Mr. Koopman, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was voted to approve the DK – Regional School District Payment Procedures Policy as presented.

Item 11. Budget Report – G. Finn

11.1. The FY25 Budget/Bond status report as of May 16, 2024, was available at the meeting. At this juncture, nine of the thirteen sending towns have approved the budget at their annual town meeting. The remaining towns, Hopedale, Milford, Blackstone, and Bellingham, have town meetings scheduled for later in May.

11.2. Capital Improvement/Finance Committee Meetings – Dr. Fitzpatrick shared that since the last school committee meeting, BVT was invited to present the FY25 budget and bond request in Bellingham and Blackstone.

a. Dr. Fitzpatrick shared that he was joined by Mr. Hall at the Bellingham Capital Improvement/Finance Committee Meeting on 04/22/24.

b. Dr. Fitzpatrick shared that he was joined by Mr. Broderick and Mr. Steele at the Blackstone Capital Improvement/Finance Committee Meeting on 05/09/24.

11.3. Annual Town Meeting Status Report:

a. **Upton:** Mr. Bartlett shared that he was unable to attend the town meeting in Upton on 05/02/24, during which BVT's FY25 budget and bond request were approved. The bond request was also subject to a town ballot vote (proposition 2½ exemption), which subsequently passed.

b. **Mendon:** Mr. Cray said he was unable to attend the town meeting in Mendon on 05/03/24, during which BVT's FY25 budget and bond request were approved.

c. **Douglas:** Mr. Potter reported that he was in attendance at the town meeting in Douglas on 05/06/24, during which BVT's FY25 budget and bond request were approved. The bond request is subject to a town ballot vote (proposition 2½ exemption), which has yet to occur.

d. **Millbury:** Mr. Steele shared that he attended the town meeting in Millbury on 05/07/24, during which BVT's FY25 budget was approved with no holds or questions. However, the bond request was not as expected. It started with the Finance Committee changing their recommendation to pass over the vote on the item. Mr. Steele said he believed the Town Counsel made them aware, at some point after the meeting started, that the pass-over would constitute automatic support for the project; when they figured that out, they amended on the fly when it came time for the Finance Committee's recommendation to vote no or not support the project. However, in doing so, it meant two things. First, the sharp citizens of Millbury noticed that was not what was printed in the warrant and said wait a minute. Secondly, it inverted the vote; a no was a yes, and a yes was a no. Also, in Millbury, there were a lot of BVT parents, alumni, and staff present, in addition to supportive citizens in the room who asked many great questions and we ended up discussing the article. Ultimately, the citizens overwhelmingly supported the project and the need for the bond request. The bond request is subject to a town ballot vote (proposition 2½ exemption), which has yet to occur. Committee members voiced concern should Millbury delay conducting its just decided debt exemption ballot vote especially with the MSBA application under state review.

e. **Northbridge:** Mr. Koopman reported that he was in attendance at the town meeting in Northbridge on 05/07/24, during which BVT's FY25 budget and bond request were approved. The bond request is subject to a town ballot vote (proposition 2½ exemption) scheduled for May 21, 2024.

f. **Grafton:** Mr. Yitts shared that he was in attendance at the town meeting in Grafton on 05/13/24 where the town approved BVT's FY25 budget. The bond request is subject to town ballot vote (proposition 2½ exemption), scheduled for May 21, 2024.

g. **Millville:** Mr. Finn reported that he was in attendance at the town meeting in Millville on 05/13/24, during which BVT's FY25 budget and bond request were approved.

h. **Sutton:** Mr. Mitchell shared that he was in attendance and read the warrant at the town meeting in Sutton on 05/13/24, during which BVT's FY25 budget and bond request were approved by supportive citizens.

i. **Uxbridge:** Dr. Fitzpatrick reported that he, Mr. Finn, and Mr. Steele joined Mr. Ebbeling at the town meeting in Uxbridge on 05/14/24, during which BVT's FY25 budget was approved. However, the town meeting in Uxbridge was continued to 5/15/24, during which the bond request was supported but is subject to a town ballot vote (proposition 2½ exemption) scheduled for May 21, 2024.

Item 12. Superintendent-Director's Report – Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick

12.1. The Committee is in receipt of the FY24 Superintendent's Goals. In a shared responsibility for accountability, the goals are shared periodically through a formal process.

12.2. Dr. Fitzpatrick shared that he and other BVT administrators attended a NEASC Showcase as invited presenters on May 2, 2024, and that the presentation focused on BVT mental health resources and supports was well-received.

12.3. The Committee members were given a copy of Senate Docket No. 3161, a petition (accompanied by bill/subject to Joint Rule 12) of Senator Ryan C. Fattman for legislation relative to the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District (filed on April 11, 2024).

Item 13. New Business

Dr. Fitzpatrick informed the Committee that the Boston Globe recently released the Massachusetts high-school graduation rate. BVT is proud of its 100 percent graduation rate. The District just submitted its next Massachusetts Skills Capital Grant Program application for 2 Million for the Culinary Arts program. A Perkins – Federal Grant Funding announcement is anticipated to be coming soon. Foundation support is being sought. Lastly, Dr. Fitzpatrick informed the Committee that on May 15, 2024, the Massachusetts House of Representatives passed *An Act to provide for the future information technology needs of Massachusetts*, also known as the FutureTech Act. He explained that this bill authorizes \$1.23 billion in bonded spending and utilizes an additional \$400 million in anticipated federal funding to bolster critical information technology projects across the Commonwealth. The initiatives included in the bill aim to modernize the Commonwealth's information technology infrastructure, enabling agencies to operate with enhanced efficiency while also upgrading cybersecurity efforts. By investing in these advancements, Massachusetts seeks to broaden access to vital services and information, ultimately enhancing the digital landscape and user experience for all residents. Other vocational administrators joined Dr. Fitzpatrick in requesting that the bill be amended to include regional school districts and regional vocational technical high schools. On a motion by Mr. Broderick seconded by Mr. Finn, it was voted to endorse the recently proposed amendment to the H.4242 Docket, referred to as the FutureTech Act of 2024, to fund critical information technology capital needs.

Item 14. Items for the Good of the Committee:

The monthly compilation of news clippings and correspondence packet was provided at the meeting for members to review individually.

Item 15. Next Regularly Scheduled School Committee Meeting - J. Hall

The next regularly scheduled School Committee meeting will be held on June 20, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

Item 16. Meeting Closure:

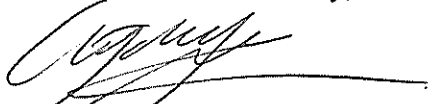
16.1. The meeting was declared closed by the chair at 7:20 p.m.

16.2. On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Koopman, it was voted to adjourn at 7:21 p.m.

Listing of materials used in the meeting:

- Item 2.1. Minutes of April 11, 2024 Regular Meeting
- Item 4.1. Suggested Motion: District Treasurer (Term 07/01/24 - 06/30/25)
- Item 4.2. Suggested Motion: Recording Secretary (Term 07/01/24 - 06/30/25)
- Item 7. BVT SkillsUSA Massachusetts 2023-2024 Annual Report/State Competition Results
- Item 8.1.a. Suggested Motion: Line-Item Transfer for various Facilities and Technology needs
- Item 8.1.b. Suggested Motion: Line-Item Transfer (amend) for SkillsUSA Competition Expenses
- Item 8.2.a. Donation Approval of General Safety Supplies
- Item 8.2.b. Donation Approval of Misc. Equipment
- Item 9.4. 2024 Promising Practices Recipient – Scott Diesenhaus, English Language Arts
- Item 9.5.b. Senior Class Trip Proposal: Gettysburg, PA – 05/14/25 - 05/17/25
- Item 10. Policy Subcommittee Meeting Report - April 9, 2024
- Item 10.1.a. Revised Policies: 2024-2025 BVT Student Handbook
- Item 10.2.a. File: DB – Annual Budget
- Item 10.2.b. File: DBD – Budget Planning
- Item 10.2.c. File: DBJ – Regional School District Budget Transfer Authority
- Item 10.2.d. File: DFG-R – High School Student Activity Accounts
- Item 10.2.e. File: DKF – Scholarship Funds
- Item 10.2.f. File: DJ – Purchasing
- Item 10.2.g. File: DJA – Purchasing Authority
- Item 10.2.h. File: DJE – Procurement Requirements
- Item 10.2.i. File: DK – Regional School District Payment Procedures
- Item 11.1. FY25 Budget/Bond Status Report
- Item 12.1. FY24 Superintendent Goals – Progress Update
- Item 12.3. Senate Docket No 3161 by Senator Fattman
- Item 13. Suggested Motion: Endorse the H.4242 Docket/FutureTech Act of 2024
- Item 14.0. Items for the Good of the Committee

Respectfully submitted by,



Anthony M. Yitts, Secretary