

Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting
November 21, 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
Mitchell A. Intinarelli of Hopedale
Edward D. Cray, III of Mendon
Paul J. Braza of Milford
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
Christopher C. Pilla, Treasurer
Nicole M. Ferguson, Business Manager
Michele Denise, Vocational Director
Dr. Matthew Connors, Vocational Director
Eddie Evans, Academic Curriculum Coordinator
Sosie DerKosrofian, Student Council Representative
Zabel DerKosrofian, Student Council Representative
Mary Sahady, Hague, Sahady & Co., P.C. Representative
Elise Bogdan, Recording Secretary

Members Absent:
Vacant Seat – Millbury

Introduced Observer:
Jan Hanratty of Millbury

Item 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by the Chair, Mr. Hall.

Item 2. Secretary's Report – A. Yitts

2.1. On a motion by Mr. Yitts seconded by Mr. Intinarelli, it was unanimously voted to waive reading of the minutes of the regular School Committee meeting of October 17, 2024 and to accept the minutes as written.

2.2. A review of non-released executive session minutes by central office personnel suggests that legal matters and collective bargaining referenced within the executive session minutes of September 19, 2013; December 19, 2013; January 23, 2014; March 6, 2014; April 17, 2014; May 22, 2014; and June 19, 2014, have reached closure and will not impact the District by their public release. On a motion by Mr. Yitts, seconded by Mr. Koopman, and at the recommendation of Dr. Fitzpatrick, it was agreed to *hold the non-released executive session minutes of January 23, 2014* and to release the executive session minutes of September 19, 2013; December 19, 2013; March 6, 2014; April 17, 2014; May 22, 2014; and June 19, 2014. The motion carried by a majority vote.

Item 3. Treasurer's Report – C. Pilla

3.1. The Treasurer's Report was presented dated September 30, 2024. The report reflected an ending balance of \$3,028,109.46 for Total Funds, including \$1,139,557.87 in Project Funds, and \$1,888,551.59 in Local Funds. On a motion by Mr. Braza, seconded by Mr. Broderick, it was unanimously voted to approve the September 30, 2024 Treasurer's Report as presented.

Item 4. Student Council Representatives - Sosie DerKosroffian & Zabel DerKosroffian

Sosie and Zabel provided an update on Student Council activities. Zabel shared that BVT's Student Council hosted the Central District of the Massachusetts Association of Student Councils (CDMASC) Fall Conference on November 6th. They welcomed approximately 430 students from 29 schools from across the state. Students participated in multiple leadership-themed workshops. The energy was incredibly positive, and hosting our peers from other schools was an honor. Sosie shared that the council members volunteered at the annual admissions open house and vocational curriculum night. Sixteen delegates from BVT are planning to attend the annual MASC state conference. Lastly, Zabel shared that the Student Council is preparing for a busy December! Kicking off with the annual Holiday Drive and shopping on December 12th, twenty-five student council members will attend our annual Holiday Drive shopping and wrapping event during the school day. Thirty-one families of BVT students in need have signed up so far. Dr. Fitzpatrick thanked the students and the council for their efforts.

Item 5. Business Manager – N. Ferguson

5.1. Mary Sahady of Hague, Sahady & Co., P.C. presented the FY24 Audit Reports. The Committee members received two reports: The Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District Basic Financial Statements for the Year Ended June 30, 2024, and a Single Audit Report (Federal Expenditures/Uniform Guidance Report) for the Year Ended June 30, 2024.

Mr. Yitts asked if any of the expenditures from the audit reports looked out of balance or high for an expense line. Mary Sahady stated that nothing really jumped out. Inflation hits in every single category. Everything is in line with historical data.

a. Mary Sahady of Hague, Sahady & Co., P.C. shared the Uniform Guidance Report, which was available at the meeting. The audit came back with no findings, which was great news. The independent auditing firm was very complimentary of how the District handled its finances and records, reiterating that there were no findings in the FY24 financial audit. In conclusion, the District qualified as a low-risk auditee.

Dr. Fitzpatrick thanked Mary Sahady for her professionalism and that of the firm and the manner in which you present the data.

5.2. Donation approvals:

a. On a motion by Mr. Intinarelli, seconded by Mr. Cray, it was unanimously voted to approve the donation (5 Work boots and 12 T-shirts) from High Country Workwear, which will be used in the Automotive Technology Department.

b. On a motion by Mr. Intinarelli, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was unanimously voted to approve the vehicle donation (a 2000 Ford Ranger) from Steven Mills, which will be used for instructional and training purposes in the automotive programs.

Item 6. Budget Subcommittee Report – Chair Mr. Finn

6.1. Mr. Finn informed the School Committee that the Budget Subcommittee held its first meeting at 5:00 p.m. on November 21, 2024, in the Superintendent's Conference Room. The agenda, included electing the Chair and Vice Chair of the FY2026 Budget Subcommittee,

verifying meeting dates, and the first review of the Debt function (8000). Mr. Finn was elected Chair and Mr. Hall elected Vice Chair. The next scheduled meeting of the Budget Subcommittee is planned for December 12, 2024, at 4:30 p.m.

Item 7. Policy Subcommittee Report – E. Cray

7.1. Mr. Cray informed the Committee that the Policy Subcommittee met recently and approved a revised District Policy (ACA) Sex-Based Harassment Title IX Policy and Procedures. The Subcommittee deleted its Policy (ACAB) Harassment/Title IX Policy and Procedures since the revised Policy ACA is a complete replacement. A table outlining the major changes was shared with the Committee. On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was unanimously voted to approve the policy as presented.

Item 8. Assistant Superintendent-Director's Report – A. Steele

8.1. The annual General Advisory Dinner was held at the school on October 30, 2024. The Culinary Arts program prepared the best food-themed dinner to date. Dr. Fitzpatrick was in attendance and honored as it was his last advisory dinner as the superintendent-director. It was a great evening and a well-attended event.

8.2. The National Honor Society Induction Ceremony was held at the school on November 7, 2024.

8.3. The annual Admissions Open House was held on November 13, 2024. The visitors who toured the school filled the BVT parking lot with overflow at Nipmuc. The evening event saw many alums return to tour the school with their children or speak in vocational shops. Approximately over 1600 were in attendance. The application portal is open, and many students are interested in attending BVT. Vocational Director Michele Denise shared that the Admissions Office has received approximately 543 applicants and is on track to have close to 800 applicants.

8.4. A Promising Practices breakfast reception was held at the school on November 15, 2024.

8.5. Seventy-Eight BVT students were recognized as 2025 John & Abigail Adams Scholar recipients during a brief ceremony during school on November 19, 2024.

8.6. The Fall Sports Awards Ceremony was held on the evening of November 19, 2024, in the Competition Center. The ceremony recognized the following fall sports teams: Boys & Girls Soccer, Boys & Girls Cross Country, Field Hockey, Girls Volleyball, Golf, and Cheer. The Football awards ceremony is held in the winter after the season has concluded.

8.7. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released the 2024 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) results. Mr. Evans presented the Committee with an MCAS report. He explained the recent MCAS data reflects the scores of the current juniors (the Class of 2026) who took the MCAS exam as sophomores. The data showed improved achievement and growth. For example, 74 percent of students in English Language

Arts were in the Exceeding or Meeting Expectations category. In Mathematics, 60 percent of students were in the Exceeding or Meeting Expectations category. In Science (Biology and Physics combined), 66 percent of students were in the Exceeding or Meeting Expectations category. All were well above the reported state averages. The Committee, impressed with the consistent MCAS results, voiced their concerns regarding student competency determination. Mr. Evans, in his presentation, shared correspondence from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) dated November 6, 2024, which states in response to the Secretary of the Commonwealth's reported results of Massachusetts Ballot Question 2, DESE is providing a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document relating to competency determination awards to offer guidance to districts and families at this time. The FAQ answered some of the Committee's questions: When does the new law take effect? According to the guidance provided by the Secretary of the Commonwealth, the earliest the law would take effect is December 5, 2024. Mr. Evans shared that he anticipates the District will administer MCAS and is eager to receive further critical guidance from DESE as we head into the testing season.

Mr. Cray asked if the seniors need to pass MCAS and if the juniors are TBD. What is the impact of the law—will any student who has yet to pass MCAS have an alternate pathway without passing MCAS? Mr. Evans expressed that he is waiting on critical guidance and that he had shared what we all have available to interpret at this time.

Mr. Yitts shared that he had more of a comment than a question. Some students need coaching to get to higher academic levels. MCAS was a way to assess those students so we could get to our expectations at BVT. We will need a standardized way to evaluate our students and ensure we get them to a certain level. Mr. Evans speculated that the possibilities are endless at this point, but even with our successful student body, having a CD requirement keeps the focus on high-level academic curriculum and that the District has standardized data available to assess the curriculum along the way.

Mr. Finn commented that the certified MCAS data available to each District used to be a comparative equator. It makes little sense if each District locally determines its own competency determination to graduate based on its interpretation of: "satisfactory completing coursework that has been certified by the student's district" in order to graduate.

Mr. Steele voiced that lowering the expectations is never a good thing. While the MCAS may be used as a performance tool in the future, the student has been dropped from the requirement. Historically, when the test counts, you get a better read as a diagnostic tool when the students are accountable. He is concerned that it could become an invalid assessment tool and deteriorate over time without students needing an MCAS Competency Determination (CD) to graduate. Since 2023, the CD has been based on achieving quality scores on relevant MCAS tests. When the new law takes effect, the CD will be based on "satisfactory completing coursework that has been certified by the student's district," as written by the ballot question. Mr. Steele said that while we don't know what Plan B is, we will do well whatever it is.

Dr. Fitzpatrick thanked Mr. Evans and advised the School Committee that they would likely be called on in the future to determine the CD at BVT. There should be conversations about diagnostic and assessment tools for the leadership team to research and make recommendations to the Committee. He advised the Committee that they might have to revisit future activities including any system-wide performance embedded within collective bargaining that had previously relied on the results of MCAS. A conversation about future considerations around MCAS and CD ensued about what could happen with setting a new standard.

8.8. Principal Steele asked the School Committee Members to consider four remote day options for use during the 2024-2025 school year versus a school cancellation inclement weather. Principal Steele did not ask for a vote. The Committee agreed with Principal Steele that remote day options were helpful in the past, and if the matter required a vote, they would revisit it at a subsequent meeting.

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

a. On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Intinarelli, it was voted to approve the proposed SkillsUSA overnight field trip request as presented to allow students to attend the SkillsUSA Fall State Leadership Conference in Marlborough, MA, from November 24, 2024, to November 25, 2024.

b. On a motion by Mr. Intinarelli, seconded by Mr. Koopman, it was voted to approve the proposed Model UN overnight field trip request as presented to allow students to attend the annual Model United Nations Conference in Boston, MA, from February 7, 2025, to February 9, 2025.

c. On a motion by Mr. Intinarelli, seconded by Mr. Broderick, it was voted to approve the proposed robotics team out-of-state overnight field trip request as presented to allow students to attend the robotics competition in Falmouth, Maine from February 27, 2025, to March 1, 2025.

d. On a motion by Mr. Intinarelli, seconded by Mr. Broderick, it was voted to approve the proposed robotics team overnight field trip request as presented to allow students to attend the robotics competition in Springfield, MA from March 13, 2025, to March 15, 2025.

e. On a motion by Mr. Intinarelli, seconded by Mr. Koopman, it was voted to approve the proposed out-of-state day trip as presented to allow Painting & Design students to attend the Central Papers Annual Holiday Trade Show in Pawtucket, Rhode Island on December 6, 2024.

Item 9. Superintendent-Director's Report - Michael F. Fitzpatrick

9.1. Dr. Fitzpatrick informed the Committee that at the MSBA Board Meeting, which took place on October 30, 2024 at 10:00 AM. BVT's roof repair project, on the agenda for the Board of Directors to vote, received the required invitation to the MBA Accelerated Repair Program.

a. On a motion by Mr. Intinarelli, seconded by Mr. Broderick, the School Committee of Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, voted to authorize the amount of Two Hundred Fifty Thousand (\$250,000) for the purpose of paying costs of roof replacement and repairs for the Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School, located at 65 Pleasant Street, Upton, MA 01568, such costs include feasibility study, schematic design, architectural and engineering, environmental and site costs, including all costs incidental and related thereto (the "Study") said amount to be expended under the direction of Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District School Building Committee. To meet this appropriation, the District has access to previously reserved capital project funds intended solely for the replacement and repair of roofs (see provided certification statement). The District acknowledges that the Massachusetts School Building Authority's ("MSBA's") grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, and any costs the District incurs in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the District. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the vote was adopted by the 12 members of the Committee voting in the affirmative and 0 members voting in the negative.

9.2. Updates/Events:

a. Dr. Fitzpatrick informed the Committee that he participated in the MAVA General Membership meeting on October 24, 2024 with members of the leadership team also representing our system.

b. Dr. Fitzpatrick informed the Committee that he attended the MAVA Leadership Academy I Presentation on November 7, 2024, at Fort Devens and was a presenter at this event.

c. Dr. Fitzpatrick informed the Committee that his Administrative Assistant participated in the MASC/COSCAP Conference on November 8, 2024. The conference was informative and beneficial to her administrative support duties.

9.3. Dr. Fitzpatrick told the Committee that he was impressed that the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District is the recipient of at \$550,000 anonymous donation. A letter of correspondence states these funds are designated to support the school's procurement of equipment for advanced manufacturing, building trades, electronics, engineering, and robotics. The school is thankful for this philanthropic investment.

9.4. An external funding report of 2024-2025 donations as of November 14, 2024 was shared with the Committee. The report included the following donations:

a. A donation of \$250 from Country Bank will help support a student transportation van during the 2024-2025 school year.

b. A \$1,000 donation from Milford Federal Bank will help support a student transportation van during the 2024-2025 school year.

c. A \$3,000 donation from Millbury Federal Credit Union will help support a student transportation van during the 2024-2025 school year.

d. A donation of \$3,500 from UniBank will help support a student transportation van during the 2024-2025 school year.

e. A donation of \$7,200 from the Blissful Meadows Golf Club 2024 Company Open

will be used for the professional development of leadership staff, new skill enhancements, and related purposes during the 2024-2025 school year.

9.5. DESE Communications:

a. Dr. Fitzpatrick shared correspondence from Associate Commissioner Bennett responding to the District's request for a CTE Admission Policy deadline extension in which it was strongly recommended that admissions policies that do not rely on selected criteria be considered. Dr. Fitzpatrick also shared his response to Associate Commissioner Bennett's outreach, expressing an opposing viewpoint regarding the coercion attempt for yet to be validated lottery-based admission processes.

b. A communication dated November 8, 2024 from MA DESE, Office of Special Education Planning and Policy, Acting State Director of Special Education Jamie L. Camacho was shared with the Committee. It notified the District of its LEA status across initiatives and indicators 4A, 4B, 9, 10, and any existence of Significant Disproportionality for the 2024-2025 school year. The District did not have any areas flagged or identified.

9.6. Notification of Resignation(s) & Retirement(s):

a. A Notification of Resignation letter dated October 22, 2024, from Robert L. Hassett III, Spanish teacher, with an effective immediate date of October 22, 2024, was accepted.

b. A Notification of Resignation letter dated November 1, 2024, from Logan Keefe, Teacher Assistant, with and effective date of November 15, 2024, was accepted.

c. A Notification of Retirement letter dated November 7, 2024, from Anne-Marie Colonero, Administrative Secretary Student Life Office, with and effective date of January 31, 2024, was accepted.

Item 10. New Business

Principal Steele informed the Committee that the Hanover Theatre can no longer accommodate BVT's graduation. Having a May graduation at BVT is expensive, weather-dependent, and risks a rain delay. DCU Center's main exhibition hall is the primary local venue that can handle a graduation of our capacity. At a ceremony at BVT on the football field, six tickets per student; DCU offers us eight tickets per student at a third of the cost to have at BVT, and the venue is weather-proof. DCU offers several customizations and is a viable option. The DCU could be the beginning of a new tradition. We need time to think it over and decide soon; they do have our Thursday date available. It is our date if we want to take it.

Copies of the Parent Newsletter, the Link (Winter 2024) were made available at the meeting.

Item 11. 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 12. Next Regularly Scheduled School Committee Meeting - J. Hall

The next regularly scheduled School Committee meeting will be held on December 19, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

Item 13. Meeting Closure:

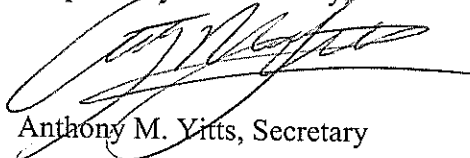
13.1. The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 7:58 p.m.

13.2. On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Koopman, it was voted to adjourn at 7:59 p.m.

Listing of materials used in the meeting:

- Item 2.1. Minutes of Meeting of October 17, 2024
- Item 2.2. Review of CONFIDENTIAL Non-Released Executive Session Minutes
- Item 3.1. Treasurer's Report dated September 30, 2024 (available at meeting)
- Item 5.1. Hague, Sahady & Co., P.C. Financial Reports (available at meeting)
- Item 5.2. Donation approvals (available at meeting)
- Item 7.1. Title IX Policy & Procedures Revision/Replacement Document
- Item 8.7. MCAS Handout (available at meeting)
- Item 8.9.a. Field Trip: SkillsUSA Fall State Leadership Conference
- Item 8.9.b. Field Trip: Annual Model United Nations Conference
- Item 8.9.c. Field Trip: Robotics Competition in Falmouth, Maine
- Item 8.9.d. Field Trip: Robotics Competition in Springfield, Massachusetts
- Item 8.9.e. Field Trip: P&D Trade Show in Pawtucket, Rhode Island (available at meeting)
- Item 9.1.a. Suggested Motion: Authorization for Schematic Design Appropriations
- Item 9.3. Anonymous Donation Correspondence
- Item 9.4. External Funding Donations as of November 14, 2024
- Item 9.4.b. Milford Federal Bank Correspondence
- Item 9.4.c. Millbury Federal Credit Union Correspondence
- Item 9.4.e. Blissful Meadows Golf Club 2024 Company Open Donation
- Item 9.5.a. CTE Admission Policy Correspondence
- Item 9.5.b. DESE School Year 2024-2025 Equity Initiative Status Correspondence
- Item 9.6.a. Notification of Resignation Letter from Robert Hassett III, Spanish Teacher
- Item 9.6.b. Notification of Resignation Letter from Logan Keefe, Teacher Assistant
- Item 9.6.c. Notification of Retirement Letter from Anne-Marie Colonero, Admin. Secretary
- Item 10. The Parent Newsletter, the Link (Winter 2024), print copies available at meeting
- Item 11. Items for the Good of the Committee

Respectfully submitted by,



Anthony M. Yitts, Secretary