

Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District

Budget Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2024

Members in Attendance

Joseph Hall of Bellingham
Gerald Finn of Millville
Christopher Pilla, District Treasurer
Jaime Patriarca, Assistant Business Manager

Joseph Broderick of Blackstone
Anthony Steele, Asst. Superintendent-Principal
Nicole Ferguson, Business Manager
Jacqueline Raad, Assistant Business Manager

Members Absent

Edward Cray of Mendon
Tyler Bartlett of Upton
Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick, Superintendent-Director

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 4:35 p.m. by Mr. Finn in the Superintendent's Conference Room.

Approval of minutes from prior meeting

Mr. Finn asked members to review minutes from the November 21, 2024 meeting.

Motion: On a motion moved by Mr. Hall, seconded by Mr. Broderick, it was unanimously voted to approve the Budget Subcommittee meeting minutes of November 21, 2024, as written.

Agenda items

Mrs. Ferguson opened the meeting with a review of the Administration budget (1000 series). This budget series increased \$4,948 or 2.73% from the prior year budget. The most significant fluctuations to the Administration budget were explained as follows:

- \$2.7K *Supt Contract Services* – Addition of new copier lease to replace inefficient old machine
- \$2.2K *Tech Contract Services* – Fee increase for Infinite Visions financial management and HR software, as well as Tracks receivable software

Next for review was the Fixed Charge/Benefits budget (5000 series) which increased \$568,750 or 9.98% over the prior year budget. The major components of this change consisted of:

- \$299.0K *Retiree Medical* – Increase driven by a combination of additional retirees, Medicare eligibility and other state GIC (Group Insurance Commission) plan adjustments
- \$144.1K *Active Employee Medical* – Rate increase based upon experience and trends
- \$103.0K *Retirement Contributions* – Increase in estimated 'pay as you go' cost for Non-MTRS retiree benefit payments
- \$ 22.3K *Employer Medicare and Unemployment Insurance* – Increase directly related to FY26 proposed gross wage base

The active-employee health plan increase was indicative of medical experience and trends provided by the District's health insurance broker. The change reflects a preliminary rate increase of 6.50% for both Harvard Pilgrim HMO and high deductible plans. Mrs. Ferguson indicated that the Harvard Pilgrim rate had been reduced to 4.0% just this afternoon, but there was not time to update the budget documents before this meeting and an update will be available at a subsequent meeting. It was also noted that Group Insurance Commission (GIC) health costs for professional retirees in MTRS are challenging to predict due to GIC plan adjustments. At this juncture, the District assumed the same increase as the prior year at 8.25%, but it was noted that a potential increase between

9-20% should be considered before the FY26 budget is finalized. Options for funding health insurance increases from sources beyond the operating budget were discussed, but no commitment has been made at this time.

The discussion shifted to the final area of review, the Salary and Wage budget, which was higher than the prior year by \$1,191,946 or 6.64%. Mr. Steele opened by noting staffing changes reflective of varying needs and elaborated on the increase. Mrs. Ferguson demonstrated to the Subcommittee that anticipated pay increases made up the majority of the planned change; while, to a lesser extent, level changes and the net impact of other staffing changes (i.e. new, eliminated, replacement positions) made up the balance of the increase. The FTE comparison document included in the meeting materials showed an overall full-time equivalent (FTE) increase was limited to 2.6 positions. In summary, the net change in FTE's consists of an increase of 5.1 positions (0.6 Vocational, 1.0 Instructional Supervision, 1.5 SPED, 1.0 Security and 1.0 Technology), offset by a reduction of 2.5 positions (1.0 Vocational, 1.5 SPED).

In closing, Mrs. Ferguson directed attention to the Budget Summary for items reviewed to date which showed a preliminary increase of 7.79% from FY2025. At this juncture, the percentage increase reflects initial department requests that will be further evaluated after all requests have been presented. Recommendations will be developed to balance the budget with anticipated revenues at a later date. The next scheduled meeting is set for Thursday December 19, 2024 at 5:00 in the Superintendent's Conference Room.

Areas for follow-up:

- Mr. Finn requested a count and percentage of how many teachers in each step and level for FY26
- Mrs. Ferguson will revise health insurance figures with the rate changes discussed
- Mr. Pilla will reach out to UniBank for consideration of changing credit card machine vendors

Adjournment

Motion: to adjourn made by Mr. Hall at 6:00 p.m.; seconded by Mr. Pilla; motion voted and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted by,
Jacqueline Raad, Recording Secretary