

Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting
April 10, 2025

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	Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick, Superintendent-Director
Joseph A. Broderick of Blackstone	Anthony E. Steele, Asst. Superintendent/Principal
Mark J. Potter of Douglas	Matthew Urquhart, Asst. Principal
Anthony M. Yitts of Grafton	Michele Denise, Vocational Director
Edward D. Cray, III of Mendon	Dr. Matthew Connors, Vocational Director
Paul J. Braza of Milford	Christopher C. Pilla, Treasurer
Jan P. Hanratty of Millbury	Nicole M. Ferguson, Business Manager
Gerald M. Finn of Millville, Vice Chair	Maddison Dos Santos, Student Council Representative
Jeff T. Koopman of Northbridge	Elise Bogdan, Recording Secretary
James M. Mitchell of Sutton	
James H. Ebbeling of Uxbridge	

Members Absent:

Mitchell A. Intinarelli of Hopedale
Tyler D. Bartlett of Upton

Item 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by the Chair, Mr. Hall. Dr. Fitzpatrick said he was notified in advance that Mr. Intinarelli would be unable to attend, and that Mr. Barlett would be late. Mr. Bartlett was delayed longer than anticipated and did not 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 the reading of the minutes of the regular School Committee meeting of March 13, 2025, and to accept the minutes as written.

Item 3. Treasurer's Report – C. Pilla

3.1. The Treasurer's Report was presented dated February 28, 2025. The report reflected an ending balance of \$4,634,949.34 for Total Funds, including \$946,681.91 in Project Funds, and \$3,688,267.43 in Local Funds. On a motion by Mr. Braza, seconded by Mr. Broderick, it was unanimously voted to approve the February 28, 2025, Treasurer's Report as presented.

Mr. Pilla shared that he has been investigating the best money market rates to secure a better rate for the district. The district has determined that Eastern Bank has the better rate at shy of four percent. Mr. Pilla shared that he has been working with business manager Nicole Ferguson, meeting with the Eastern Bank representative, and scheduling future meetings to discuss some of the bank's other tools and services, such as processing credit card payments and avoiding fees.

Item 4. Student Council Representatives - Sosie DerKosroffian & Maddison Dos Santos

Maddison informed the committee that Sosie was unable to attend the meeting. Maddison provided an update on Council activities, which included the following activities. Our student council has learned that it would be recognized as a 2025 National Gold Council of Excellence by the National Student Council for its exemplary record of leadership and service and activities that assist the school and community. It is the seventh consecutive year that the council has earned this award. Junior Ryan Benoit is running for Vice President of the Central District of the Massachusetts Association of Student Councils (CDMASC). We will assist the campaign at the CDMASC spring conference on April 16, 2025. In honor of teacher appreciation, the council is making snack goodie bags for every staff member. Principal Steele congratulated the council on earning the 2025 National Gold Council of Excellence.

Item 5. Budget Report – G. Finn

5.1. For the New Finance Committee Meetings/Presentations portion, Mr. Finn asked each member to report on the meetings in their respective Towns.

a. Milford (3/19/25) – Mr. Braza reported that he joined Dr. Fitzpatrick at the Milford Finance Committee meeting on March 19, 2025. Mr. Braza indicated there would be another Finance Committee meeting next week to discuss the budget further. Chris Pilla informed the Committee that the budget was voted on last night and passed in Milford.

b. Northbridge (3/19/25) – Mr. Koopman reported that he joined Mr. Steele at the Northbridge Finance Committee on March 19, 2025. It was a good presentation. Mr. Finn asked if there were questions about the stabilization account. Mr. Steele responded that there were a few questions, but it was a respectful exchange. Mr. Koopman agreed that it was a good exchange.

c. Millbury (3/24/25) – Dr. Fitzpatrick and Mr. Steele attended the Millbury Finance Committee meeting on February 24, 2025, for the District's FY26 budget presentation. Mr. Hanratty could not attend due to a travel conflict but had voiced his support before traveling. The Finance Committee asked for a second meeting on March 24, 2025, which was attended by Dr. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Steele, and Mr. Hanratty. Mr. Hanratty reported that he received the warrant today and the Finance Committee approved the budget but is not endorsing the stabilization account.

d. Sutton (3/25/25) – Mr. Mitchell reported that he joined Dr. Fitzpatrick and Mr. Steele in attending the Sutton Finance Committee meeting on March 25, 2025. It was a long meeting, but the Finance Committee's questions about the budget and the stabilization account were asked and answered through a professional exchange.

e. Upton (4/2/25) – Dr. Fitzpatrick reported that he, Mr. Steele, Mr. Bartlett, and Mrs. Ferguson attended the Upton Finance Committee meeting on April 2, 2025. They were supportive of the budget and the stabilization account. The presentation was well-received.

f. Douglas (4/8/25) – Dr. Fitzpatrick and Mr. Steele presented the district’s budget to the Douglas Finance Committee on March 11, 2025. It was a professional exchange. The Douglas Finance Committee asked for a second meeting on April 8, 2025, which was attended by Mr. Steele, and Mr. Potter. The Douglas Finance Committee seeking additional information before supporting BVT's stabilization account request did not endorse BVT’s warrant article: creation of stabilization account rationale/request.

g. Millville (4/8/25) – Mr. Finn reported joining Dr. Fitzpatrick and Mrs. Ferguson at the Millville Finance Committee meeting on April 8, 2025. There were no questions about the budget, but a few questions about the stabilization account.

h. Blackstone (4/9/25) – Mr. Broderick reported that he and Mr. Steele attended the Blackstone Finance Committee meeting on April 9, 2025. Mr. Steele gave a good presentation and did a great job responding to all of their questions.

i. Uxbridge (4/9/25) – Dr. Fitzpatrick reported that he attended the Uxbridge Finance Committee meeting on April 9, 2025. Mr. Ebbeling was unable to attend. Uxbridge had many questions, but Dr. Fitzpatrick believed they would support the budget and stabilization account.

After the reports on the Finance Committee meetings and as part of the discussion on the creation of the stabilization account, the School Committee members considered a request as the originator of the warrant article seeking the endorsement of a stabilization designated for future capital repairs, to formally ask for the proposed warrant article to be 'passed over' at the Annual Town Meeting in Douglas scheduled for May 5, 2025. The Committee decided to pass over the pass over and not take action.

5.2. Stabilization Account – On a motion by Mr. Koopman, seconded by Mr. Potter, hereby move that pending a simple majority vote (via Town Meeting) by no fewer than seven (7) member communities, the Blackstone Valley Regional School District will establish a stabilization account to address future capital needs and priorities. Furthermore, such stabilization account shall not exceed a maximum of five percent (5%) of the school district’s operational budget for any given fiscal year. The motion carried, and the vote was universally approved following a brief conversation.

Item 6. Assistant Superintendent-Director’s Report – A. Steele

6.1. A handout of the SkillsUSA Massachusetts District V Leadership Medal Results by Town was shared with the Committee. It showed a total medal count of 82 medals earned by BVT students: 31 gold, 28 silver, and 23 bronze medals, in addition to 8 sweeps.

6.2. On April 8, 2025, BVT shared an Admission Position Statement with its staff, families, alumni, cooperative education employers, and friends of BVT. The letter requested help to uphold BVT's current admissions policies and ensure these schools remain accessible to those who are truly passionate and dedicated to pursuing a skilled trade or agricultural career. The Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) had designated a period

for public comment until Friday, April 18, 2025. The shared statement included a link to share thoughts on the proposed admission lottery with BESE. To be helpful, it included a list of potential talking points for public opinion on the utilization of lotteries for vocational-technical admissions in Massachusetts. The School Committee members also received the position paper, which they found helpful in shaping their public comment response. The Board is expected to vote on the proposed amendments at its regular monthly meeting scheduled for May 20, 2025.

6.3. MAVA Outstanding Vocational Technical Student Awards Banquet: April 10, 2025 – Mr. Steele informed the Committee that the 39th annual MAVA Outstanding Vocational Technical Students Award Ceremony was being held at Mechanics Hall on April 10, 2025. The Outstanding Vocational Award recognizes those students whose scholastic and vocational technical achievements have significantly contributed to their local school district and, thus, to the total vocational technical education delivery system in the Commonwealth. Vocational Director Keri Baltramaitis represented BVT at the award banquet with BVT's MAVA Outstanding Vocational Award recipient, Kallie Allen of Hopedale, a senior in the Biotechnology program. Principal Steele shared that Kallie is the National High School President of SkillsUSA.

6.4. Principal Steele presented that Committee with a Table of Organization handout outlining BVT's proposed policy and administrative functions. This revision is a reorganization of the administrative team for succession planning. There is one less position, which is a better way to organize for the new era. Search Committees are being formed to determine the best candidate for the Principal, Assistant Superintendent-Curriculum Director, and Director of Workforce and Economic Development positions.

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

a. On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was unanimously voted to approve the Biotechnology out-of-state field trip request to travel to Roger Williams Park Zoo, in Providence, RI on May 7, 2025.

b. On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Finn, it was unanimously voted to approve the Class of 2026 out-of-state senior field trip request to visit New York City on a three-day "Big Apple" tour. Travel buses would depart from BVT on May 18, 2026, and return to the school on May 20, 2026. Mr. Yitts asked about the cost of the trip being a factor in reduced participation. Mr. Urquhart shared that the New York trip is about a hundred dollars less than the Class of 2025's senior class trip. Principal Steele shared that if this pattern continues, we could look at taking a different class trip to a day out in Massachusetts to increase class participation. Mr. Urquhart shared that when the school moved away from the in-state trip, the students were surveyed regarding participation in visiting out-of-state locations. This year, parents were included in the survey. Mr. Finn asked if the survey included pricing, and yes, Mr. Urquhart's shared that the cost of the trip was provided to parents and students.

Item 7. Policy Subcommittee Report – E. Cray

7.1. A BVT 2025-2026 Policy Changes handout was made available at the meeting.

a. On a motion by Mr. Cray, seconded by Mr. Broderick, it was unanimously voted to approve the Student Handbook as presented.

b. On a motion by Mr. Cray, seconded by Mr. Broderick, it was unanimously voted to approve the JIH- Searches and Interrogation as presented.

c. On a motion by Mr. Cray, seconded by Mr. Broderick, it was unanimously voted to approve the JH-R Attendance Policy as presented.

d. On a motion by Mr. Cray, seconded by Mr. Broderick, it was unanimously voted to approve the IJND / IJNDB – Access to Digital Resources / Empowered Digital Use Policy as presented.

Item 8. Superintendent-Director's Report – Dr. M. Fitzpatrick

8.1. On a motion by Mr. Yitts, seconded by Mr. Hanratty, it was unanimously voted to waive reading of the minutes of the FY26 Budget Subcommittee Public Hearing Meeting Minutes of March 13, 2025, and to accept the minutes as written.

8.2. Dr. Fitzpatrick provided a report on the incredibly successful 31st annual Superintendent's Gourmet Dinner, which was held at the school on March 20, 2025. The evening event is a significant fundraiser for the school, which invites the Blackstone Valley to celebrate quality career and technical education each spring with a lavish reception and an elaborate dinner. This five-star dining experience is planned, prepared, and served by students, faculty, and graduates of the Culinary Arts program and, by design, gives current students a taste of the skills necessary for success in the food, beverage, and hospitality industry. The Culinary Arts Department, with contributions from the Facilities Department, Construction Technology, and Painting & Design Technology, did a wonderful job decorating the competition center to represent the theme the students had chosen: New Orleans Jazz Club. The students take pride in their culinary training and maximize their portfolio with the work done at the dinner.

8.3. A grant summary document was shared with the Committee with an FY25 to date total of \$2,865,810 as of April 2, 2025 with an additional in progress total of \$1,099,552.

8.4. A document titled Grant Pursuits was shared with the Committee. It listed the following three grants, currently being pursued. First, an FY26 Leadership Retreat for professional development at \$7,500 through NESDEC. Second, an Indoor Track Initiative for \$5,000 through the Upton Men's Club nonprofit. Third, a Special Education/Wheelchair Van advanced as an earmark request to our Senatorial delegation for \$126,000.

8.5. Visitors:

a. Dr. Fitzpatrick shared that he worked with Dr. Connors and welcomed Larry Pomerleau of Connecticut Technical Education & Career System to campus on March 25, 2025. The visitor was impressed with what he observed.

b. Dr. Fitzpatrick informed the Committee that members of Gilbane Construction came to the school for a conversation on April 2, 2025.

8.6. Dr. Fitzpatrick reminded the School Committee members of the annual Scholarship Contribution request.

Item 9. New Business

Dr. Fitzpatrick brought forth the following topics under new business:

A five-year graduate survey was completed, and a report will be compiled and shared with the Committee in the future.

Presently, eight or nine of the sending communities are in favor of supporting the stabilization account. Dr. Fitzpatrick shared that the motion you took tonight will help advance the campaign.

Dr. Fitzpatrick shared that he was joined by Christopher Pilla, Treasurer, and Nicole Ferguson, Business Manager, and Principal Steele in meeting with an Eastern Bank representative on April 4, 2025.

At the request of MAVA, Dr. Fitzpatrick shared that he has requested a time to speak during public comment to testify during the Tuesday, April 29, 2025, Board of Education meeting regarding proposed Admission to talk about the implications and challenges of the proposed legislation to amend statewide policy for Massachusetts vocational school admissions presents if a blind lottery is forced upon vocational schools and the multitude of scenarios that could be anticipated. Mr. Finn asked the Committee to consider voicing their support by phone or e-mail for NOT using a lottery system. Mr. Cray shared that the talking points within BVT's Admission Position Statement were good and helpful.

The four percent increase in the District Healthcare costs has been well received, and no one has been able to match that.

Mr. Hall shared that he attended BVT's Drama Club's presentation of the Murder Mystery at the Murder Mystery. He suggested a stage be built that could be broken down. It was a fun event.

Item 10. 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 11. Next Regularly Scheduled School Committee Meeting - J. Hall

The next regularly scheduled School Committee meeting will be held on May 15, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Item 12. Meeting Closure:

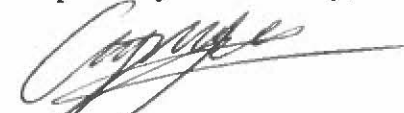
12.1. The meeting was declared closed by the chair at 7:06 p.m.

12.2. On a motion by Mr. Koopman, seconded by Mr. Broderick, it was voted to adjourn at 7:06 p.m.

Listing of materials used in the meeting:

- Item 2.1. Minutes of Meeting of March 13, 2025
- Item 3.1. Treasurer's Report dated February 28, 2025
- Item 5.2. Suggested Motion: Stabilization Account
- Item 6.1. SkillsUSA District V Leadership Medals Report
- Item 6.4. Table of Organization: BVT Policy and Administrative Functions
- Item 6.5.a. Out-of-State Field Trip Request Biotechnology May 7, 2025
- Item 6.5.b. Out-of-State Field Trip Request Class of 2026
- Item 7.1. BVT 2025-2026 Policy Changes
 - Item 7.1.a. Student Handbook
 - Item 7.1.b. JIH-Searches and Interrogation
 - Item 7.1.c. JH-R Attendance Policy
 - Item 7.1.d. IJND / IJNDB – Access to Digital Resources
- Item 8.1. FY26 Budget Subcommittee March 13, 2025 Public Hearing/Meeting Minutes
- Item 8.3. FY25 Grants to Date Listing as of April 2, 2025
- Item 8.4. Grant Pursuits
- Item 10. Items for the Good of the Committee

Respectfully submitted by,



Anthony M. Yitts, Secretary