

Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting
September 18, 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	Anthony E. Steele II, Superintendent-Director
Mark J. Potter of Douglas	Dr. Matthew J. Connors, Assistant Superintendent
Anthony M. Yitts of Grafton	Michele S. Denise, Principal
Mitchell A. Intinarelli of Hopedale	Nicole M. Ferguson, Business Manager
Edward D. Cray, III of Mendon	Christopher C. Pilla, Treasurer
Paul J. Braza of Milford – left at 7:00 p.m.	Miranda Dolegiewicz, Administrative Assistant
Jan P. Hanratty of Millbury	Maddison Dos Santos, Student Council Representative
Jeff T. Koopman of Northbridge	Isla Koopman, Student Council Representative
James H. Ebbeling of Uxbridge	Elise Bogdan, Recording Secretary

Members Absent:

Gerald M. Finn of Millville, Vice Chair
Joseph A. Broderick of Blackstone
James M. Mitchell of Sutton
Tyler D. Bartlett of Upton

Item 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by the Chair, Mr. Hall. Superintendent Steele was notified in advance that the Vice Chair, Mr. Finn, Mr. Broderick, Mr. Mitchell, and Mr. Bartlett would be unable to attend the meeting, and that Mr. Braza would not be able to stay for the entire meeting. Mr. Braza left the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

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 August 21, 2025, and to accept the minutes as written.

Item 3. Treasurer's Report – C. Pilla

3.1. The Treasurer's Report was presented dated May 31, 2025. The report reflected an ending balance of \$2,824,985.19 for Total Funds, including \$1,482,859.12 in Project Funds, and \$1,342,126.07 in Local Funds. On a motion by Mr. Koopman, seconded by Mr. Intinarelli, it was unanimously voted to approve the May 31, 2025 Treasurer's Report as presented.

3.2. The Treasurer's Report was presented dated June 30, 2025. The report reflected an ending balance of \$521,440.00 for Total Funds, including \$1,426,800.05 in Project Funds, and (\$905,360.05) in Local Funds. On a motion by Mr. Intinarelli, seconded by Mr. Ebbeling, it was unanimously voted to approve the June 30, 2025 Treasurer's Report as presented.

3.3. Mr. Pilla noticed that the beginning balances listed in the Treasurer's Report dated July 31, 2025, were incorrect. Therefore, Mr. Pilla requested that the presentation of the Treasurer's Report dated July 31, 2025 be postponed until the next regular meeting. On a motion

by Mr. Pilla, seconded by Mr. Koopman, it was unanimously voted to pass over the July 31, 2025 Treasurer's Report to be presented at the next regular School Committee meeting.

Item 4. Student Council Representatives - Maddison Dos Santos & Isla Koopman

Student Council Representative, Isla Koopman, provided an update on Council activities. First, the Council had a good number of volunteers helping at recent curriculum nights to guide parents throughout the school building. The Council has been planning the 2025 Homecoming, a week-long celebration that begins on September 22nd and includes the following spirit days: Monday is Secret Service Day, Tuesday is 2000's Day, Wednesday is Family Match Day, Thursday is Dress Your Age Day, and Friday is Class Colors Day. The celebration includes a bonfire, pep rally, and dance, culminating on September 27th with a day of athletic competitions. Superintendent Steele thanked Isla, Maddison, and the Student Council for their effort in preparing for these school-wide celebratory events. The Student Council support has become a hallmark of our open house events and similar gatherings. Thank you for that and all you do to raise the BVT school spirit.

Item 5. Business Manager – N. Ferguson

5.1. The Business Manager, Nicole Ferguson, shared an update on the FY25 district financial audit. The audit, which began on July 1, 2025, involved providing reports and data to the Hague, Sahady & Co. audit firm (BVT's auditors since FY16). While we are still in the midst of a thorough audit, we are working toward its completion and anticipate filing our E&D with the DOR within the next week or so.

Item 6. Assistant Superintendent-Director's Report – Dr. M. Connors

6.1. The Academic Curriculum Parent Nights for parents of students in Grades 10 and 12 were held on September 10, 2025, and for Grades 9 and 11 on September 17, 2025. The well-attended evening events allowed parents to follow their teen's academic schedule, visit the classrooms, meet the teachers, and learn more about the expectations and coursework.

6.2. Dr. Connors provided a CTI update. The Healey-Driscoll Administration recently awarded BVT with a \$1,040,000 Career Technical Initiative (CTI) implementation grant. CTI funding allows BVT to deliver high-quality career technical education to adults interested in upskilling and retraining, provides skilled labor to the local workforce, and generates non-local taxpayer revenue to help fund the school. BVT is pleased to launch this new initiative through high-quality evening programs for adult learners with the introduction of the newly established Blackstone Valley Technical Institute (BVTi). The institute will begin with credential-based programs in Advanced Manufacturing, Electrical, HVAC, Plumbing, and Welding. Dr. Connors showed the School Committee members on a large screen how to navigate the school website to access the BVTi webpage at www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/bvti. The webpage is active as part of a soft launch; it's available, and people can register right now. In terms of a hard launch, the flyer that you see in front of you will be distributed to all homes in the district (around October 9th), as well as a one-town buffer surrounding the district. So clockwise, it would be Webster, Oxford, Auburn, Worcester, Shrewsbury, Northborough, Westboro, Hopkinton, Ashland, Holliston, Medway, Millis, and Franklin — so the district in and up in its entirety, plus a one-town buffer. There's also a radio campaign that will kick off on October 6th through Beasley Media and will run through the beginning of January.

Superintendent Steele took a moment to acknowledge Dr. Connor, Mary May, the administrative team, and other central office support staff who have moved quickly to support the launch of this new initiative to offer multiple courses with the quality that we expect. We've developed a sophisticated, professional product that we're proud to be putting our name on, and we've done it at lightning speed. So, thank you.

6.3. DESE AI Frameworks

Dr. Connors informed the Committee that the day after the previous School Committee meeting in August, we received the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) AI Frameworks, put forth in a 74-page document to provide guidance to help school districts and educators integrate artificial intelligence into K–12 schools in a safe, ethical, and instructionally meaningful way. Developed by a statewide task force, the frameworks support districts in creating their own AI policies and practices. I've combed through the document. There is quite a bit of information in it, and I'm happy to share the link if anyone's interested in reading it. Additionally, we have AI as part of our professional development, which we started the year with the folks from MIT coming in to kick things off. They will return on the morning of October 1st to conduct additional AI presentations and follow up. And I've also personally reviewed the majority of the teachers' goals for the year and Teach Point, ensuring that they are using AI in some way, shape, or form in their classroom or student learning goals. So AI is here, and we are full throttle ahead with that as well. Between AI, CTI, and admissions, we've had a busy month.

Item 7. Principal's Report – M. Denise

7.1. Principal Denise shared an update with the Committee and referred to a Title I Federal Grant and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Regulatory Alert letter, included in their packet of meeting materials. The letter explains that the limited Title I funding may be used to provide salaries for professional staff, paraprofessional staff, professional development for Title I staff, materials to support students in reading, math, and science, Title I foster care provisions, and activities under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. Ms. Denise informed the Committee that during the 2025-26 school year, the district will allocate a total of \$77,258, which is the amount received for direct Title I services as outlined in the letter.

7.2. Ms. Denise provided a brief overview of the senior class of 2026 and their planned activities. In an effort to keep you informed about what our students are doing—especially in light of our conversation last year regarding the senior class trip—I wanted to share some updates. As you may recall, participation in the senior trip the previous year had declined, so we've been intentional this year about increasing engagement and communication. Let's start with the senior class. I've been meeting weekly with each class, along with their class officers and advisors, to set expectations, plan initiatives, and work on class calendars. The seniors kicked off the year with their Senior Sunrise on Wednesday, September 9th, and we had a fantastic turnout. With a class of just over 300 students, we had approximately 250 students in attendance. Students arrived as early as 5:45 a.m., and we provided coffee, hot chocolate, donuts, fruit, and muffins. As part of the event, each student wrote a letter to themselves, sealed it, and placed it in a box. They'll receive these letters back during their Senior Sunset event later in the year, which adds a personal and reflective touch to their senior journey. We also invited parents

to participate by writing letters to their students, which will be given to the students during the class trip—another special moment to look forward to. Speaking of the class trip, this is particularly exciting: we currently have 105 students registered for the senior trip to New York City, with 15 more on the waitlist. We only need five more sign-ups to secure a third bus—an incredible jump from last year, when we only filled one. We've been doing a lot of outreach and promotion, and it's clearly paying off.

7.4. Field Trip Requests

a. On a motion by Mr. Braza, seconded by Mr. Intinarelli, the DECA field trip request, as presented by Ms. Denise, was unanimously approved. The proposed itinerary includes out-of-state travel and overnight accommodation in Arlington, VA (from November 20, 2025, through November 23, 2025) for the educational purpose of attending the Ultimate DECA Power Trip conference. The motion carried, and the Committee approved the proposed trip.

b. On a motion by Mr. Intinarelli, seconded by Mr. Braza, it was voted and unanimously approved to grant initial approval to the Culinary Arts program to plan its annual field trip to Cape Cod as proposed and presented by Ms. Denise. The proposed itinerary includes in-state travel and overnight accommodations to and from Cape Cod, MA, from May 13, 2026, to May 15, 2026, for the educational purpose of Culinary Arts students visiting various establishments and experiencing the hospitality industry.

7.5. Principal Denise provided the Committee with an update on the lockdown that occurred on Thursday, September 4, 2025. It was not a drill, and I want you to have the details. At approximately 9:17 a.m., the Upton Police Department received a report of a suspicious male walking on Pleasant Street near Glen Avenue, in the direction of Nipmuc High School and Blackstone Valley Tech High School. Officers responded to the area immediately, and as a precautionary measure, schools in the area were placed on a lockdown while an investigation was conducted. After receiving the lockdown directive from the Upton Police Department, BVT immediately declared a lockdown and remained in constant contact with the Upton Police, including the increased presence of both State and local police on our campus. The investigation concluded without any findings, and the schools were subsequently released from lockdown. The Upton Police confirmed that there was no threat. The "suspicious individual" was identified and confirmed to be a hunter in the area, posing no harm to the school and community. Afternoon activities, such as cleanup, trash removal, dismissal, and sports, continued as normal. Chief Nicholas Palmieri of the Upton Police Department informed the public of the incident that precipitated the lockdown in a press release titled "Upton Police Respond to Report of Suspicious Individual on Pleasant Street." BVT shared this information with parents, students, and staff. We understand that this type of event can evoke emotions and concerns amongst both our students and staff. We informed our school community that our counselors were available to assist anyone who may need help with processing. We were incredibly proud of our staff and students for their prompt response, and we appreciated everyone's support and patience as we navigated the situation in real time.

During the lockdown, we communicated with parents to inform them that our students were in lockdown due to an external threat. We used the intercom system to maintain communication with students and staff, providing updates and reassurance that everyone was safe. Once the lockdown was lifted, we again contacted parents to inform them. We are incredibly proud of how

our students, staff, and families handled the situation. Everyone remained calm and followed procedures with care and responsibility. After the lockdown, we resumed our regular school day with a few necessary restrictions, including the closure of the school restaurant. In the two weeks since the incident, we've taken time to reflect, assess, and gather feedback from staff, students, and parents. We've held safety meetings and planning sessions and have been thoroughly reviewing our response to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. This was a significant experience—one we had trained for but never encountered in a real situation until now. It was eye-opening to see the difference between a drill and a real event. One encouraging takeaway was how thoughtful and reflective our staff and students were afterward. Many came forward with insightful feedback, both positive and critical, aimed at making our response even better in the future. Unfortunately, given the current climate, such situations may become increasingly common. While we hope we never have to face them again, we are committed to staying prepared and continuously improving our safety protocols. Thank you again for your support, trust, and engagement throughout this experience.

Item 8. Policy Subcommittee – E. Cray

8.1. On behalf of the Policy Subcommittee, and at Mr. Cray's request, Mr. Steele informed the School Committee members that the Policy Subcommittee had met on September 9, 2025, and September 16, 2025, to look at BVT's Admissions Policies (JF Student Admissions and JF-R School Admissions) during the public Policy Subcommittee meetings. As everyone is well aware, the Department of Education requires BVT to produce a new admissions policy that complies with the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education regulations, which require a mandatory admissions lottery with a locally determined option for extra lottery weights. A new admissions policy would require a School Committee vote and is due to DESE by November 1st. The Policy Subcommittee had lengthy discussions about the nuances of implementing a lottery admissions policy within the guidelines provided by DESE. With that input, we (the Policy Subcommittee) were able to establish key points. After our second meeting, we had a very solid draft that we felt very confident in, not only meeting the guidelines but also representing the best intentions, which align with the wishes of the BVT School Committee in moving forward. However, we (the Policy Subcommittee) decided that it would be premature to seek a vote at this School Committee meeting. The Policy Subcommittee put forth a draft (POLICY: JF-ADMISSIONS) of a new Admissions Policy, dated September 16, 2025, that was made available at the meeting. The policy is currently being reviewed by legal counsel.

8.1.a.b. On behalf of the Policy Subcommittee, Mr. Steele informed the School Committee members that the action sought tonight is to void and suspend BVT's Admissions Policies (JF Student Admissions and JF-R School Admissions) at this time to be replaced (around October 1, 2025), with a new draft admissions policy (POLICY: JF-ADMISSIONS).

On a motion by Mr. Intinarelli, seconded by Mr. Cray, it was unanimously voted to approve voiding and suspending BVT's Admissions Policies (JF Student Admissions and JF-R School Admissions) indefinitely with the understanding that a special meeting date would be forthcoming (on or around October 1, 2025) to seek a vote on a new proposed Admissions Policy

(POLICY: JF-ADMISSIONS).

Mr. Cray praised the tremendous amount of work, well-thought-out scenarios, impressive preparation of Mr. Steele, Dr. Connors, and Mrs. Denise to poke holes in a wide-variety of admissions scenarios.

8.2. ACAB Harassment/Title IX Policy and Procedures

The document file ACAB (Harassment/Title IX Policy and Procedures) with the proposed changes were made available at the meeting. On a motion by Mr. Braza, seconded by Mr. Intinarelli, it was unanimously voted to approve the Harassment/Title IX Policy and Procedures as presented.

Item 9. Superintendent-Director's Report – A. Steele

9.1. An FY26 Delineation of Subcommittees was shared with the School Committee members. This item is a carryover from last month, as Mr. Steele wanted to remind everyone of the subcommittee vacancies for the 2025-26 school year. While the School Committee Chair has the power to appoint Policy Subcommittee members, Mr. Hall shared that Tyler Bartlett had previously informed him that he would volunteer to fill the Policy Subcommittee vacancy. The following School Committee members verbally expressed their interest and volunteered to fill remaining vacancies: Teachers Sick Leave Bank Advisory Subcommittee – Mr. Koopman. Administration/Support Staff Sick Leave Bank Advisory Subcommittee – Mr. Braza. Fiscal Warrant Signers: Mr. Cray for 2025-26 and for 2026-27, Mr. Potter. Mr. Potter also volunteered for the Policy Subcommittee.

Mr. Steele also mentioned that he and Dr. Connors would be attending the 2025 MASC & M.A.S.S. Conference from November 12-14, 2025, at The Emerald Resort/Cape Cod Irish Village, Hyannis, MA. Registration is now open. If any members are interested in attending, the workshops are good for either new or returning School Committee members.

9.2. Per his contract, the School Committee was provided with Superintendent Steele's three draft goals for FY26.

9.3. The vocational office listing of the FY26 team leader appointments, along with a delineation of the vocational office and the duties of the vocational directors, was shared with the School Committee.

9.4. An FY26 Grants to Date listing (as of September 9, 2025) was shared with the Committee with a to-date FY26 total of \$1,497,035. Mr. Steele pointed out that BVT is pursuing CTE-related grants, as noted in the Applications Released/In Progress listing (specifically, the FY26-28 CTE Expansion Grant), which would expand capacity and equipment in those areas. BVT is exploring the RFP, putting together applications for expansion grant(s), with consideration to the feasible use of space and staff. It would be a gradual approach, but a viable solution for adding more seats each year, with a grant-funded structure, equipment, and outbuilding. We have a well-thought-out proposal that outlines these scenarios. The submission deadline is October 30, 2025.

Paul J. Braza of Milford – 7:00 p.m.:

At this point in the meeting, it was 7:00 p.m., and Mr. Braza left the meeting as previously indicated. The recording secretary noted his departure time, and as he left the meeting, he informed the recording secretary that he would not be able to attend the next regular School Committee meeting in October.

9.5. The proposed 2026 School Committee Monthly Meeting Calendar was presented for the Committee's approval, with a proposed date change for the June meeting from the 18th to the 11th to avoid meeting after the end of the school year. On a motion by Mr. Intinarelli, seconded by Mr. Cray, it was unanimously voted to approve the calendar as presented.

9.6. Superintendent Steele informed the Committee that the Facilities Manager, Mr. Dolegiewicz, had prepared a summer project cost analysis at the request of Mr. Finn. Mr. Steele distributed the handout titled BVT Construction Cost Analysis to the Committee members in attendance. Mr. Hanratty proposed showing the dollar amount saved during future budget presentations.

9.7. Superintendent Steele provided an overview of upcoming events:

a. Mr. Steele indicated that he plans to hit the links, playing as a foursome, at the Blissful Meadows Company Outing Fundraiser in Uxbridge on September 19, 2025. The annual event, which supports education, is an opportunity to network and has resulted in donations to the school.

b. BVT will welcome members of the National Defense University International Fellows program when they visit and tour the school on September 24, 2025. It is an honor to have our school recognized as a model career and technical education school by this esteemed and prestigious organization during this annual visit.

9.8. Notification of Retirement:

a. The Committee is in receipt of a notification of retirement letter dated August 15, 2025, from Steve Caligaris, Culinary Arts Instructor, which gave formal notice of intention to retire at the end of the 2025-2026 school year.

Item 10. New Business

Mr. Yitts asked Mr. Steele for any update(s) on equipment pertaining to winter approaching. Mr. Steele indicated that conversations and meetings with the Facilities Manager, Mr. Dolegiewicz, suggest that the school's fleet of vehicles is in good working order. We have a new water heater, and the boilers are behaving; we are prepared for winter.

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 October 16, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Item 13. Meeting Closure:

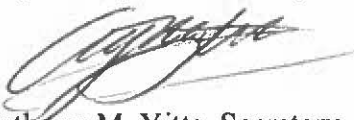
13.1. The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 7:11 p.m.

13.2. On a motion by Mr. Intinarelli, seconded by Mr. Koopman, it was voted to adjourn at 7:11 p.m.

Listing of materials used in the meeting:

- Item 2.1. Minutes of Meeting of August 21, 2025
- Item 3.1. Treasurer's Report dated May 31, 2025
- Item 3.2. Treasurer's Report dated June 30, 2025
- Item 3.3. Treasurer's Report dated July 31, 2025
- Item 6.2. CTI Update / BVTi handout at meeting
- Item 7.1. Title I Annual Update
- Item 7.2. Homecoming Week Calendar and Status
- Item 7.4.a. Field Trip Request: DECA/Arlington, VA
- Item 7.4.b. Field Trip Request: Culinary Arts/Cape Cod, MA
- Item 8.1. Draft Policy: JF – Admissions, made available at meeting
- Item 8.2. ACAB Harassment/Title IX Policy and Procedures
- Item 9.1. Delineation of FY26 Subcommittees
- Item 9.2. Superintendent Draft Goals
- Item 9.3. FY26 Vocational Team Leader Appointments
- Item 9.4. FY26 Grants to Date
- Item 9.5. Proposed School Committee Meetings for Calendar Year 2026
- Item 9.6. BVT Construction Cost Analysis
- Item 9.8.a. Notification of Retirement: Steve Caligaris, Culinary Arts Instructor
- Item 11. Items for the Good of the Committee

Respectfully submitted by,



Anthony M. Yitts, Secretary