Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District
School Committee Regular Meeting Minutes of
August 20, 2026

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:

Gerald M. Finn of Millville, Vice Chair
Joseph A. Broderick of Blackstone
Anthony M. Yitts of Grafton
Edward D. Cray, III of Mendon*
Jeff T. Koopman of Northbridge*
Paul J. Braza of Milford*
Jan P. Hanratty of Millbury
James M. Mitchell of Sutton
Tyler D. Bartlett of Upton
James H. Ebbeling of Uxbridge

Members Absent:
Joseph M. Hall of Bellingham, Chair
Mark J. Potter of Douglas
Mitchell A. Intinarelli of Hopedale

Anthony E. Steele II, Superintendent-Director
Dr. Matthew J. Connors, Assistant Superintendent
Michele S. Denise, Principal
Nicole M. Ferguson, Business Manager
Robert Dolegiewicz, Facilities Manager
Miranda Dolegiewicz, Administrative Assistant
Cheryl Houle, Human Resources Director
Anthony Faath, Hopedale Resident
Eli Laverdiere, Uxbridge Resident
Isla Koopman, Student Council Representative
Madison Denise, Student Council Representative
Elise Bogdan, Recording Secretary

Item 1. Call to Order

In the absence of the Chair, Vice Chair Mr. Finn presided and called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A quorum was present. Superintendent-Director Mr. Steele reported that Chair Hall, Mr. Potter, Mr. Intinarelli, and the District Treasurer Mr. Pilla were absent.

*Mr. Cray arrived at 6:06 p.m. Mr. Koopman left the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and Mr. Braza left the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Superintendent-Director Mr. Steele noted that guests were in attendance, including School Committee candidates Anthony Faath of Hopedale and Eli Laverdiere of Uxbridge, who are on the ballot for the upcoming election, and newly appointed Human Resources Director Cheryl Houle.

Item 2. Secretary's Report – A. Yitts

2.1. Mr. Yitts moved to waive the reading of the minutes of the June 11, 2026, regular School Committee meeting and approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Koopman seconded the motion.

Mr. Finn asked for an update regarding the potential large-scale donation from Plywood Plus, which was discussed under Item 13 of the June 11, 2026, meeting. At that meeting, the Committee authorized Mr. Steele and Mr. Dolegiewicz to review and evaluate the potential donation and report back to the Committee with a recommendation regarding acceptance.

Mr. Steele reported that the potential donation remains pending. He stated that he had not received an invitation to view the items and, therefore, the School District had not accepted the donation. He further explained that complications involving the family's liquidation of the

business had delayed the matter. Mr. Steele stated that the authorization remains in place should the opportunity to review the items arise.

The motion to approve the June 11, 2026, minutes as presented passed unanimously.

Item 3. Treasurer's Report – C. Pilla

3.1. Business Manager Nicole Ferguson presented the Treasurer's Report dated May 31, 2026, on behalf of Treasurer Christopher Pilla. The report reflected an ending balance of $3,298,000.44 in Total Funds, consisting of $1,160,318.58 in Project Funds and $2,137,681.86 in Local Funds.

Mr. Finn asked whether all member assessments had been collected from the member towns. Ms. Ferguson reported that all 13 towns had paid for all four quarters of their FY2026 assessments.

Mr. Braza moved to approve the Treasurer's Report dated May 31, 2026. Mr. Broderick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3.2. Business Manager Nicole Ferguson presented the Treasurer's Report dated June 30, 2026, on behalf of Treasurer Christopher Pilla. The report reflected an ending balance of $2,141,231.55 in Total Funds, consisting of $1,072,413.64 in Project Funds and $1,068,817.91 in Local Funds.

Mr. Braza moved to approve the Treasurer's Report dated June 30, 2026. Mr. Hanratty seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Cray arrived at 6:06 p.m.

Item 4. Student Council Representatives - Isla Koopman & Madison Denise

Student Council Representatives Isla Koopman and Madison Denise provided an update on recent Student Council activities. The representatives reported that Student Council members volunteered to assist with Freshmen Orientation on August 20 and 21, 2026, serving as mentors and helping new students become familiar with the school, their classmates, and their homerooms. Student Council members also volunteered at the Freshmen Cookout on August 20, greeting families and distributing freshman T-shirts. The representatives described the various decorations and activities prepared throughout the school, including personalized Candyland-themed displays outside the freshmen homerooms to help students locate their assigned areas. The representatives reported the freshmen welcoming activities were part of productive start to the school year.

Mr. Steele and the Committee thanked the Student Council representatives and all participating students for their dedication, school spirit, and commitment to supporting the school community.

Item 5. Business Manager – N. Ferguson

5.1. Business Manager Nicole Ferguson provided an update on the FY2026 District

financial audit. She reported that the audit is progressing as scheduled, with the auditors reviewing financial and personnel records. The auditors have also conducted an on-site review and provided positive feedback regarding the District's internal controls and cooperation. The financial statements are anticipated to be presented to the Committee in September or October.

Ms. Ferguson also provided updates regarding the auditors planned review of personnel records related to Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB), as well as the District's upcoming Excess and Deficiency (E&D) and DESE reporting requirements. The E&D filing is targeted for completion in September, and the DESE End-of-Year Report is due September 30, 2026.

Ms. Ferguson provided an update on the sale of surplus culinary equipment. Gross proceeds to date were approximately $20,000, with the majority recognized as FY2026 revenue. Additional proceeds may be recognized in FY2027 as remaining items are sold or collected.

5.2. Donation Approval(s):

a. On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Braza, the Committee voted to approve the donation of an iPad Mini 5th generation and a multichannel monitor from Mark Conley, to be used in the BVT Technology Department. The motion passed unanimously.

b. On a motion by Mr. Koopman, seconded by Mr. Bartlett, the Committee voted to approve the donation of a toaster oven and kitchen island from Rose Allain. This contribution will be used in the BVT Practical Nursing Program. The motion passed unanimously.

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

6.1. Dr. Connors introduced Mr. Robert Dolegiewicz, BVT Facilities Manager, who presented the Facilities Department's 2026 Post-Summer Summary of Capital Projects and Preventive Maintenance. Mr. Dolegiewicz reviewed completed and ongoing capital improvement projects, facility upgrades, roofing work, site improvements, and summer preventive maintenance and facility-readiness activities.

Mr. Steele provided an update regarding the roof replacement project, including MSBA reimbursement and financing options for Phase II.

Mr. Dolegiewicz also provided an update on the installation of an on-site well to support irrigation of the backfield.

Committee members and administrators thanked Mr. Dolegiewicz and the Facilities staff for their extensive summer work and efforts to maintain and prepare the facilities for the upcoming school year. Mr. Finn requested estimates related to the cost-savings of projects completed with internal assistance.

6.2. Dr. Connors presented an overview of several initiatives for the 2026–2027 school year, including development of a 10-year master plan, establishment of an alumni association,

expansion of BVTi to nine technical programs and personal enrichment classes, and revisions to the exploratory rubric.

Dr. Connors reported that, following implementation of the lottery process and guidance from the Department of Education, student behavior may no longer be used as a factor in determining shop placement in the exploratory rubric. Behavior and employability have therefore been removed from the shop placement calculation and incorporated with work ethic into a separate freshman grade.

Dr. Connors also provided an overview of potential adjustments to the lottery apportionment process to provide greater consistency and stability in determining town enrollment targets.

Mr. Steele indicated that a handout summarizing the 2026-2027 School Year Initiatives would be provided to the Committee by email following the meeting.

6.3. The School Committee received an update on new personnel and reviewed the FY27 Appointments document identifying positions, appointees, and the status of each appointment. Dr. Connors commended the Human Resources Department for its recruitment efforts and introduced the following new personnel:

a. The Director of Special Education – Heidi Godowski, who was present at the Freshmen Cookout.

b. The Human Resources Director – Cheryl Houle, who was introduced to the Committee and provided a brief overview of her professional background in Human Resources.

6.4. Dr. Connors reported that the continued efforts of BVT students and staff have resulted in national recognition from Project Lead The Way (PLTW). BVT was recognized as a 2025–2026 PLTW Distinguished School for the ninth consecutive year. Dr. Connors recognized this achievement as a reflection of the continued commitment and dedication of BVT students and staff.

Item 7. Principal's Report – M. Denise

Item 7 was taken out of order. The Principal's Report was not presented at this time and was deferred to a later point in the meeting.

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

8.1. Mr. Steele presented the School Committee Member Directory and requested that members notify his office of any necessary changes or corrections to their information.

8.2. On a motion by Mr. Cray, seconded by Mr. Broderick, the Committee voted to approve the proposed 2027 Calendar of School Committee Meeting dates as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Laverdiere asked whether the regular School Committee meetings are scheduled for the third

Thursday of each month. Mr. Steele confirmed that this is the established pattern.

8.3. A draft of the FY27 Subcommittee assignments was provided to Committee members for review and consideration of service on subcommittee vacancies. Mr. Finn noted that the only open position was the Chair of the Facilities Subcommittee. Mr. Braza volunteered to serve as Chair.

8.4. Table of Organization (Revision): Superintendent-Director Steele presented a revised BVT Organizational Chart reflecting the District's current administrative and supervisory structure, including the Director of Special Education position. Mr. Steele explained that the revision formally reflects the separation of the Director of Student Services and Director of Special Education positions established during the prior year, both of which are administrative positions.

Mr. Broderick moved to approve the revised Table of Organization as presented. Mr. Ebbeling seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

8.5. Superintendent-Director Steele shared his annual welcome letter with the Committee, which conveyed excitement for the year ahead.

8.6. An FY27 Grant Update, as of August 5, 2026, was shared with the Committee. The report reflected total FY27 year-to-date grant funding of $1,628,534 with $932,554 currently in progress.

a. FY27 Fair Share Education Earmark: The Committee received an update regarding the District's FY27 Fair Share Education Earmark. DESE is expected to administer the funding through the Grants for Education Management System (GEM$), with an application process similar to FY26. As of July 23, 2026, the funding and application materials were not yet available. The District will provide a follow-up update when the application materials and funding become available.

b. Title I Federal Grant / ESSA Update: Superintendent-Director Steele provided an update regarding the Title I Federal Grant and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Regulatory Alert included in the Committee's meeting materials. The allowable uses of Title I funding including staffing, professional development, instructional materials, and support for eligible student populations. Mr. Steele reported that the District will allocate $75,183 for direct Title I services during the 2026–2027 school year.

8.7. Summer Professional Development Update:

a. The MAVA Connecting for Success Conference was held on June 29-30, 2026, at Assabet Valley Technical High School. The multi-day retreat was a great professional development opportunity for vocational educators.

b. Mr. Steele attended the M.A.S.S. Executive Institute event, which took place in Mashpee on July 13–16, 2026. The Institute program featured three days of keynote speakers,

various presentations, regional meetings, and evening social activities. In addition, there was a lot of camaraderie with the vocational cohort and sharing of resources.

c. The Leadership Retreat on July 20–22, 2026, was well attended and a valuable planning experience. The annual retreat, held in Salem, New Hampshire, centered on campus-wide improvements, technology upgrades, team-building activities, recruitment of new personnel, and structural enhancements. It was a fantastic goal and vision setting event, and particularly helpful toward the implementation of many new initiatives.

Mr. Koopman left the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

d. The annual MAVA Leadership Retreat was held August 4–6, 2026, in Hyannis, Massachusetts. This event is particularly valuable as it exclusively focuses on vocational issues and topics.

8.8. A draft of the FY26 BVT Annual Report was shared with the Committee. On a motion by Mr. Braza, seconded by Mr. Broderick, the Committee voted to approve the draft as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

8.9. The Superintendent's FY27 Draft Goals were shared with the Committee for review and consideration. Mr. Steele stated that the Committee had not had an opportunity to review the document in advance and recommended deferring consideration and approval.

Mr. Broderick moved to table consideration and approval of the Superintendent's FY27 Draft Goals until the next meeting. Mr. Hanratty seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

8.10. School Newsletters:

a. The Freshmen Newsletter – The Bridge (Summer 2026) was available at the meeting.

b. The Parent Newsletter – The Link (Fall 2026) was available at the meeting.

Principal Denise arrived at 7:04 p.m.

8.11. Milford CTE Letter: A letter dated June 24, 2026, from BVT Superintendent Anthony E. Steele II was shared with the Committee in response to Milford CTE's request for assistance and support regarding its efforts to add Chapter 74 (Ch. 74) vocational technical education programs as part of its Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) construction project. Mr. Steele indicated the Milford CTE Letter carefully, thoughtfully, and cautiously responded to Milford's request in its MSBA application process and addressed the Consultation Appendix, Section 2, for Regional Vocational Technical Schools. Mr. Steele expressed support with concern that if Milford expands, they may not fill the abundance of CTE seats created in this endeavor, the prospect of a school choice student on tuition basis is not likely to be well received by member towns. A conversation about seat allotment ensued.

8.12. School Nurse Appointment(s):

a. On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Bartlett, the Committee voted to approve the appointment of Stephanie Dunham as Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School Nurse. The motion passed unanimously.

b. On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Bartlett, the Committee voted to approve the appointment Deanna Pavone as Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Nurse. The motion passed unanimously.

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

a. A resignation letter dated June 10, 2026, from Slavka Lee, Teaching Assistant was accepted.

b. A resignation letter dated June 1, 2026, from Jessica Ladieu, Mathematics Teacher, with an effective date of June 15, 2026, was accepted.

c. A resignation letter dated July 7, 2026, from Beth Esposito, PN Financial Aid/Program Support Assistant, with an effective date of July 14, 2026, was accepted.

d. A resignation letter dated July 27, 2026, from Brooke Johnson, School Counselor, with an effective date of July 27, 2026, was accepted.

e. A resignation letter dated August 2, 2026 from Kathryn Moore, Cafeteria Worker, with an effective date of July 24, 2026, was accepted.

f. A resignation letter dated August 3, 2026 from Jenn Litchfield, Vocational Instructor Health Services, with an effective date of August 3, 2026, was accepted.

g. A retirement letter dated August 3, 2026 from Anne Smith, Student Services Secretary, with an effective date of August 31, 2026, was accepted.

8.14. M.A.S.S. Survey Results: The Committee received the July 2026 Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (M.A.S.S.) survey regarding district-level reductions in force and staffing reductions for review. Of the 275 member districts, 161 responded, with results indicating widespread staffing reductions across urban, suburban, rural, regional, and vocational districts, including 7 positions at BVT. The survey also noted that many districts reduced staffing through attrition, retirements, non-renewals, and unfilled vacancies rather than formal layoffs, highlighting continued statewide fiscal pressures. Mr. Steele noted that none of the member towns appear in the report.

Mr. Braza left the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Item 7. Principal's Report – M. Denise

Item 7 was taken out of order. At 7:31 p.m. the Principal's Report was presented at this

point in the meeting.

7.1. The 2026-2027 Student Handbook and Planner was shared with the School Committee members.

7.2. Principal Denise provided an update on the third and final stage of the 2026 SkillsUSA competition series, held in Atlanta, Georgia, in June. BVT students earned five bronze medals at the National Conference.

7.3. Principal Denise provided an update on the admissions process, including the admissions lottery and town apportionment. She reported that enrollment for the incoming Class of 2030 is expected to reach about 315 students before the October 1 enrollment date.

Item 9. New Business

Mr. Finn provided an informational update regarding the proposed Blackstone-Millville Regional High School project. He reported on the upcoming vote related to the proposed new high school and the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) process.

Mr. Finn reported that the proposed project is currently anticipated to be completed in approximately 2030 and that there are no current plans to include Chapter 74 programming in the proposed school.

The project is currently in the MSBA Schematic Design phase, with estimated total project costs of approximately $200 million. Mr. Finn provided the update for the Committee's information.

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' individual review.

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

The next regularly scheduled School Committee meeting will be held on September 17, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Item 12. Adjournment:

12.1. On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Bartlett, the Committee voted to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

12.2. Vice Chair Finn declared the meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Listing of Materials Used in the Meeting:
Item 2.1. Regular Meeting Minutes of June 11, 2026
Item 3.1. Treasurer's Report dated May 31, 2026
Item 3.2. Treasurer's Report dated June 30, 2026

Item 5.2.a. Donation: iPad Mini, Multichannel Monitor, M. Conley
Item 5.2.b. Donation: Toaster Oven, Kitchen Island for PN Program – R. Allain
Item 6.1. Facilities Department 2026 School Building Enhancement Summary
Item 6.3. FY27 Appointments
Item 7.1. 2026-2027 Student Handbook
Item 7.2. SkillsUSA Nationals Update
Item 8.1. School Committee Member Directory
Item 8.2. School Committee 2027 Proposed Monthly Meeting Calendar
Item 8.3. Delineation of FY27 Subcommittees
Item 8.4. Table of Organization, Revision
Item 8.5. Welcome Back Letter
Item 8.6. FY27 Grant Listings
Item 8.8. FY26 Annual Report, Draft
Item 8.9. FY27 Superintendent Goals, Draft
Item 8.10.a. The Bridge (Freshmen Newsletter) Summer 2026
Item 8.10.b. The Link (Parent Newsletter) Fall 2026
Item 8.11. Milford CTE Letter
Item 8.12.a. School Nurse Appointment S. Dunham
Item 8.12.b. School Nurse Appointment D. Pavone
Item 8.13.a. Resignation: S. Lee – Teaching Assistant
Item 8.13.b. Resignation: J. Ladieu – Mathematics Teacher
Item 8.13.c. Resignation: B. Esposito – PN Financial Aid/Program Support Assistant
Item 8.13.d. Resignation: B. Johnson – Guidance Counselor
Item 8.13.e. Resignation: K. Moore – Cafeteria Worker
Item 8.13.f. Resignation: J. Litchfield – Vocational Instructor Health Services
Item 8.13.g. Retirement: A. Smith – Student Services Secretary
Item 8.14. M.A.S.S. Survey Results
Item 10. Items for the Good of the Committee

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony M. Yitts
Secretary