Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting
September 17, 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:

Joseph M. Hall of Bellingham, Chair
Joseph A. Broderick of Blackstone
Mark J. Potter of Douglas
Anthony M. Yitts of Grafton
Paul J. Braza of Milford
Jan P. Hanratty of Millbury
Gerald M. Finn of Millville, Vice Chair
Tyler D. Bartlett of Upton
James H. Ebbeling of Uxbridge

Members Absent:
Mitchell A. Intinarelli of Hopedale
Edward D. Cray, III of Mendon
Jeff T. Koopman of Northbridge
James M. Mitchell of Sutton

Anthony E. Steele II, Superintendent-Director
Dr. Matthew J. Connors, Assistant Superintendent
Michele S. Denise, Principal
Nicole M. Ferguson, Business Manager
Eddie Evans, Academic Curriculum Coordinator
Christopher C. Pilla, Treasurer
Miranda Dolegiewicz, Administrative Assistant
Madison Denise, Student Council Representative
Jay Krauss, Mendon Resident
Elise Bogdan, Recording Secretary

Item 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by the Chair, Mr. Hall. Superintendent-Director Mr. Steele reported that Mr. Intinarelli, Mr. Cray, Mr. Koopman and Mr. Mitchell were absent. Mr. Steele noted that a special guest was in attendance and would be introduced at the appropriate time.

Item 2. Secretary's Report – A. Yitts

2.1. Mr. Yitts moved to waive the reading of the minutes of the August 20, 2026, regular School Committee meeting and approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Braza and passed unanimously.

Item 3. Treasurer's Report – C. Pilla

3.1. Mr. Pilla presented the Treasurer's Report dated July 31, 2026. The report reflected an ending balance of $5,217,632.42 in Total Funds, including $1,180,199.49 in Project Funds and $4,234,916.93 in Local Funds. Mr. Broderick moved to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bartlett and passed unanimously.

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

The Student Council Representative Madison Denise provided an update on recent and upcoming activities. Student Council members are assisting with Academic Curriculum Nights and are planning the 2026 Homecoming, a week-long celebration that will begin on Monday, October 19 – Friday, October 23 and includes spirit days, a bonfire, a pep rally, and a dance, culminating on October 24th with a day of athletic competitions.

Madison reported that the first general Student Council meeting was held on September 9, at

which time the new Executive Board was introduced, and members participated in team-building activities. The next Executive Board meeting is scheduled for September 21, and the next general Student Council meeting is scheduled for September 23. A sophomore and senior curriculum/academic information night is scheduled for September 24. Upcoming Student Council discussions will include bonfire and Homecoming plans.

Mr. Steele thanked Madison for her report and participation in the school's September 11, 2026, 25th anniversary remembrance ceremony. He also recognized the other Student Council and SkillsUSA representatives for their professionalism and the quality of their presentations.

Item 5. Business Manager – N. Ferguson

5.1. FY26 Audit Update:

Business Manager Nicole Ferguson provided an update on the District's FY2026 financial audit. She reported that the audit began on July 1, 2026, and that financial reports and supporting data have been provided to Hague, Sahady & Co. The auditors have also reviewed personnel records related to Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) and have begun contacting School Committee members for interviews and reviews. Committee members were encouraged to respond promptly and truthfully to auditor inquiries.

The District's E&D filing with DOR is targeted for completion in September, and the DESE End-of-Year Report is due September 30, 2026. The goal is to finalize the District's FY2026 financial statements by the end of October and present them to the Committee in November.

Ms. Ferguson also reported that Hague, Sahady & Co. recently concluded their audit of the FY2025 End-of-Year Report filed with DESE on September 20, 2025. The engagement took longer than anticipated, due to the delay of the compliance supplement issued by the Office of Management and Budget. Additional time was required to finalize dual-compliance frameworks needed to integrate the revised 2024 Uniform Guidance. No findings were reported in the FY2025 audit of End-of-Year Report.

5.2. Donation Approval(s):

a. On a motion by Mr. Broderick seconded by Mr. Finn, the Committee voted to approve the donation of two air handlers from Daniel Lavoie for instructional and training purposes in the HVAC program. The motion passed unanimously.

5.3. Cash Donation(s):

a. On a motion by Mr. Finn, seconded by Mr. Braza, the Committee voted to approve a total of $2,500.00 in cash donations from local banks to support the maintenance and operation of student transportation vehicles, which are used to transport students to local job sites and work-based learning experiences. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Mr. Steele introduced special guest Jay Kraus, who presented the Committee with a $4,025.00 donation for athletic equipment and a plumbing scholarship. Mr. Kraus reported that the funds came from a recent benefit car show held at BVT in August, with support from

sponsors Iacovelli Construction, Kapi's Pub, Crothers Tire, and Mass Nail-It. He reported that about 150 participants attended and said he plans to make the event an annual fundraiser.

On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Braza, the Committee voted to accept the donation as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

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

6.1. CTI Update:

Dr. Connors informed the Committee that the Blackstone Valley Technical Institute (BVTi) is well underway with its evening programs. Fall classes began on September 8, 2026, with strong participation from the community and continued targeted recruitment efforts. BVTi will participate in the MassHire Central Job Fair at Polar Park on September 18, 2026, and the next BVTi job fair is scheduled for January 13, 2027.

Dr. Connors reported that BVTi received $880,000 in Career Technical Initiative (CTI) grant funding. The Round 11 funding will support training in Carpentry, Automotive Collision, Automotive Technology, Culinary Arts, Electrical, HVAC, Plumbing, and Advanced Manufacturing. BVTi also received $124,320 from the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center through its Pathmaker Initiative to support the launch of a new Biomanufacturing Technician program.

In addition to its Chapter 74-related programs, BVTi is also introducing personal enrichment programs. The Committee expressed appreciation for the update and the significant growth in enrollment.

6.2. Dr. Connors informed the Committee that BVT has been named one of America's Healthiest Schools for 2026 by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, a national nonprofit focused on advancing whole-child health and creating healthier school environments.

6.3. MCAS Bonus:

Dr. Connors introduced Academic Curriculum Coordinator Mr. Evans, who presented the Committee with the determination regarding the Performance Award Program established under the previous collective bargaining agreement. Mr. Evans reviewed the three contractual conditions applicable to the Performance Award: Four-Year Graduation Rate, 2025 MCAS Performance, and Professional Development. He reported that two of the three conditions had been met and that the 2025 MCAS performance condition had not been met.

Mr. Evans noted that the 2025 MCAS administration was unusual because it was the first year since the early MCAS pilot period in which individual student results did not count toward the competency determination. He also noted that BVT students performed comparatively well overall in 2025, despite not meeting the specific contractual MCAS performance targets.

Mr. Steele reminded the Committee that the Performance Award Program has been placed on pause under the new collective bargaining agreement. The Committee discussed the fact that two

of the three contractual conditions had been met and acknowledged the unforeseen circumstances surrounding the 2025 MCAS performance. No final determination regarding the MCAS Bonus was made. The Committee agreed to obtain additional information and place the matter on the agenda for further discussion in an Executive Session at the next meeting.

Item 7. Principal's Report – M. Denise

7.1. Opening of the 2026–2027 School Year:

Principal Denise presented a report on the opening of the 2026–2027 school year. New staff orientation began on Wednesday, August 19. On Thursday, August 20, all staff returned to campus, Day 1 of Freshman Orientation was held, and the Class of 2030 attended the Freshman Cookout. Day 2 of Freshman Orientation was held on Friday, August 21, with a half-day schedule to allow for professional development and teacher in-service activities in the afternoon. Monday, August 24, was the first full day of school for all BVT students.

Mr. Yitts asked about any differences in student attitudes or behavior following the implementation of the lottery admissions process. Principal Denise reported that staff remain attentive to student behavior and that the school's expectations remain unchanged. She stated that the school continues to challenge students to meet those expectations. Discussion included student enrollment characteristics, behavioral expectations, monitoring of student behavior, parental engagement, and efforts to preserve the school's culture.

7.2. Senior Activities – Class of 2027:

Principal Denise reported that planning is underway for senior activities for the Class of 2027. Planned activities include a car decorating and senior parking spot event, Senior Sunrise and Sunset events, a senior banquet, and a senior lock-in event at Pins.

7.3. September 11 Remembrance Ceremony:

Principal Denise reported that members of the school community gathered on September 11, 2026, to honor the lives lost on September 11, 2001, and to recognize the service and sacrifice of first responders and military personnel. The remembrance ceremony, held outside the school's main entrance, included student representatives from the National Honor Society, National Technical Honor Society, SkillsUSA, and Student Council, who joined Principal Denise and Superintendent Steele in sharing reflections on the impact of September 11. The ceremony also recognized current and former service members and first responders from the Upton community, including those who continue to serve and protect others. The Upton Police Chief, Fire Chief, and a Select Board member attended with several members of the Upton Police, Fire, and EMS.

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

8.1. The FY27 Vocational Team Leader Appointments were shared and reviewed with the Committee.

8.2. An FY27 Grant Update, as of September 4, 2026, was shared and reviewed with the Committee. The report reflected total FY27 year-to-date grant funding of $2,027,001 with

$727,371 currently in progress.

8.3. The Superintendent-Director's FY27 Draft Goals were shared with the Committee at its August 20, 2026 meeting. Following its review of the FY27 Draft Goals, the Committee, at its September 17, 2026 meeting, asked Mr. Steele questions regarding alumni engagement, the development of a 10-Year Capital Plan, and timelines for completion of the goals.

On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Hanratty, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the FY27 Draft Goals as presented.

8.4. Events/Updates:

a. Mr. Steele reported that he and Dr. Connors met with the Douglas Board of Selectman Chair Les Stevens and several other town officials on August 18, 2026 to discuss financial forecasts in FY28. In addition, Dr. Connors provided preliminary information regarding apportionment.

b. Mr. Steele reported that he attended an Educational Leaders Meeting Fall Session on August 31, 2026, to exchange with colleagues from other educational organizations on professional development topics.

c. Mr. Steele reported that he met Sutton Town Manager Austin Cyganiewicz at BVT on September 3, 2026. The meeting included a campus tour, financial enrollment forecasts, and status updates on the roof project.

d. Mr. Steele reported that he toured BVT with Millville Board of Selectmen Chair Richard Bremlist during his site visit on September 8, 2026.

e. Mr. Steele reported that he and other staff members conversed with Harvard Pilgrim Representative Susan Boisvert at BVT on September 15, 2026. He said the meeting was the first of several planned meetings about a proposed insurance premium increase and related cost drivers.

f. Mr. Steele reported that he and other staff members welcomed the Class of 2027 International Fellows from the National Defense University in Washington, D.C., on September 16, 2026. BVT students shared their perspectives in a panel discussion with the group, which wanted to learn more about career technical education at BVT.

8.5. The Committee was informed that the school website, hosted by Finalsite, now offers a subscription feature. Users may click the bell icon in the "BVT in the News" section to select the board or boards for which they would like to receive email alerts when a new post is added.

8.6. Notification of Resignation/Retirement(s):

a. A resignation letter dated August 25, 2026, from Olivia Bonati, Teaching Assistant, was accepted, effective September 3, 2026.

8.7. Mr. Steele and Mr. Braza, on behalf of the Policy Subcommittee, presented and reviewed the PROTECT Act Policy with the Committee, "Interacting with Law Enforcement Officers Engaged in Civil Law Enforcement," for consideration. The policy establishes

procedures for interactions with civil law enforcement in accordance with the PROTECT Act and applicable state guidance.
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On a motion by Mr. Ebbeling, seconded by Mr. Finn, the Committee voted to approve the PROTECT Act Policy as presented. Mr. Finn opposed. The motion carried by a majority vote.

Item 9. New Business

Mr. Finn requested estimates at the August 20, 2026 meeting for the cost savings associated with projects completed with internal assistance from BVT staff and students, as referenced in the 2026 Post-Summer Summary of Capital Projects and Preventive Maintenance. Mr. Finn requested an update on the request. Mr. Steele indicated that Mr. Dolegiewicz would provide the requested detailed information via email.

Mr. Finn informed the Committee that the Towns of Blackstone and Millville are considering a December 1 vote regarding funding for a proposed $197 million new high school.

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 October 15, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Item 12. Adjournment

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

12.2. Chair Hall declared the meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Listing of Materials Used in the Meeting:
Item 2.1. Regular Meeting Minutes of August 20, 2026
Item 3.1. Treasurer's Report dated July 31, 2026
Item 5.2.a. Donation: HVAC, D. Lavoie
Item 5.3. Cash Donations
Item 6.2. America's Healthiest Schools 2026 Awardee Letter
Item 8.1. Team Leader Appointments
Item 8.2. FY27 Grant List
Item 8.3. Superintendent-Director's FY27 Goals
Item 8.6.a. Resignation: Olivia Bonati, Teacher Assistant
Item 10. Items for the Good of the Committee

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony M. Yitts
Secretary

**original signed copy on file in the Central Office*