

MINUTES OF MEETING
COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION
BLACKSTONE-MILLVILLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
October 19, 2006
FREDERICK W. HARTNETT MIDDLE SCHOOL
MEDIA CENTER
35 FEDERAL STREET
BLACKSTONE, MA 01504

At 7:05 p.m. the Community Resources for Education Meeting was called to order. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America was recited.

Members of the School Committee were present as follows:

Toni M. Harvey, Chairperson
Ann M. Lesperance, Vice Chairperson
Mark J. Almquist, District Treasurer
Thomas J. Conlon, Asst. District Treasurer
Joann Forbes, District Secretary
Lynn Landry, Member
Catherine A. Robinson, Member

Also present at the meeting were Everett B. Campbell, Superintendent of Schools Kathleen A. Montagano, Asst. Superintendent of Schools, Charles Sawyer, Chairman of the Blackstone Board of Selectman and members of the Board of Selectman, Constance Perreault and Margaret Bik. There were also approximately thirty parents and citizens present.

Mrs. Harvey addressed the parents and interested citizens who were in attendance. She stated that the meeting would be held in a round table fashion.

Mrs. Harvey stated that the School Committee's goal is to attain high student achievement and to have a school system that students are proud to attend.

At 7:10 p.m. Mr. Campbell spoke. He stated that there are many great people in the Towns of Blackstone and Millville and he believes that both communities support the schools. He would like to see both communities working together for the common goal of developing and providing programs for the benefit of students.

The first item that Mr. Campbell discussed was the Funding Sources and referred to a handout given at the meeting. The handout showed how they arrived at the Final FY07 Operational Budget of \$19,233,792 as follows:

Chapter 70	\$10,495,315
Regional Transportation	612,817

Blackstone's Minimum Contribution	5,573,107
Millville's Minimum Contribution	1,463,184
Blackstone's Additional Contribution	405,869
Millville's Additional Contribution	156,900
School District Contribution	526,600

Mr. Campbell also stated that the E & D Fund or Excess and Deficiency Funds are determined by the Department of Revenue. The School District is allowed to have up to 5% of their operating budget in this account. This money can be used for any emergency purpose. Mr. Campbell stated that the District has been tapping into the E & D account each year to fund the budget for the following year.

A questions was raised to Mr. Campbell that since the state funding is decreasing, how do we make up this deficit. Mr. Campbell's response was that the only other funding source comes from the towns of Blackstone and Millville.

Mr. Almquist would like to see discussion on the dollar amount that the school needs to run. How much do we need to spend to educate children in the District and to come to an agreement on the level that needs to be spent. He also stated that Chapter 70 funding is very volatile and we need to have a funding source that is predictable.

Mr. Sawyer feels that the Finance Committee did not become very interested in the School Budget until the money was not available. When this happens the Finance Committee needs to step in.

Mrs. Harvey feels that even though the state is not giving us the money we cannot turn our backs on the children and give them less of an education. She feels that we are in our fourth year of very difficult funding.

Mr. Sawyer mentioned that the members of the town of Blackstone did not realize that by reducing income tax it would reduce our Chapter 70 funding.

Mr. Campbell stated that he sits with Superintendent's of other Districts to discuss issues and they are all concerned. He also stated that it is a fact that higher enrollment figures add to more Chapter 70 money. Since Blackstone-Millville has seen a decrease in enrollment figures it is negatively impacting our Chapter 70 funding. He stated that enrollment is only one factor in the Chapter 70 formula.

Mr. Campbell feels that what is needed is a grass roots effort in the state to lobby for more funding.

A concerned member of the community asked the question, why is enrollment decreasing? Is housing too expensive? This person believes that no one will want to move here if the school system is not intact.

Mr. Campbell stated that the reason the District received \$174,000 in pothole money is mainly due to decreased enrollment and increasing transportation costs.

Mrs. Bik stated that the Department of Revenue promised to give her a written letter on what is happening with Chapter 70 and if the power plant has any impact. She stated that she has been frustrated trying to get this information. Mrs. Bik knows that the Dept. of Revenue has a formula and she wants to know what it is. She stated that we need to know what the problem is in order to try to remedy it.

Parent, Mrs. Carolyn Coleman asked how many people does the District employ that do not directly come into contact with the students on a daily basis, and if the District could save money by decreasing jobs in these areas.

Mr. Almquist replied that the School Committee has worked many hours on this issue and they believe that that these types of questions should not be answered at the end of a town meeting. They need to be addressed ahead of time so that everyone is on board and informed prior to the town meetings.

Citizen, Jackie Miner believes that you need to publicize the good that goes on in the District to show the citizens of the two towns the positive things that the school is doing. She believes that the District should bank up good will and show off a bit and show off the schools and school spirit.

Mrs. Harvey believes that the District needs to do Public Relations and have press releases and articles showing the good that goes on in the schools. She feels it may take time to get noticed, but the schools are beginning to do more in this area.

Mr. Conlon stated that good press can also come from the people attending these meetings. He feels that it would be in the best interest of everyone to invite the Finance Committee to attend one of these meetings so that animosity will not build up. The Finance Committee needs to hear from the parents.

Mr. Sawyer stated that if the Finance Committee will not come to these meetings, the concerned citizens should attend the Finance Committee Meetings. He stated that there is nothing more effective than a large citizens group. He feels that concerned citizens should be placed on the agenda and “get in the face” of the Finance Committee. He stated that it works. He also stated that citizens should get our state representatives to listen to them by e-mailing them and by making their voice heard.

Mrs. Harvey discussed the Goals of the District as follows:

1. Adequate consistent funding
2. Community in support of the school budget
3. Building community awareness of educational needs
4. Define new methods for communicating prior to annual town meetings

5. Increase educational advocacy

Mrs. Harvey stated that the District is forced to give something to every area of education and they are not able to give enough to each area.

Mrs. Harvey stated that the School District does try to acquire grant funding. Areas like Blackstone and Millville will not get as many grants as inner city locations. She stated that the School District is always trying and applying for grant funding.

Toward the end of the meeting Mr. Almquist stated that the Committee welcomes comments and will take them under consideration. He believes that we all need to be on the same page.

Mrs. Lesperance was looking for ways to get registered voters to the town meetings to be held as follows:

May 14th – Millville
May 29th – Blackstone

She stated that in an effort to allow parents to attend, Parks and Recreation has cancelled all games on these nights.

At 9:00 p.m. Mrs. Harvey asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Mrs. Lesperance, seconded by Mrs. Landry to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of October 19th. **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.**

It was decided that the next meeting would be held on November 30th from 7-9 p.m. at the Middle School Media Center.

Respectfully submitted,

Monique F. Simard
Recording Secretary

ATTEST: _____
Joanne Forbes, District Secretary

