

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM
JANUARY 11, 2024

The regular meeting of the Greater Fall River Vocational School District Committee was called to order at 5:37 p.m. by Chairman Paul Jennings, with the following persons in attendance, Fr. Jay Mello of Fall River, Joan Menard of Fall River, Rajiv Nehra of Fall River, Donald DiBiasio of Somerset, and Jeffrey Begin of Swansea,

Also in attendance were: Brian Bentley, Superintendent/Director, Andrew Rebello, Assistant Superintendent/Principal, Eric Silva, Interim Director of Guidance, Paul Kitchen, Director of Finance, Gregory Brillhante, Legal Counsel, Helena Neves, Executive Secretary, Amy Bosse, Joe Bosse, Jeanne Hill, and Kevin Lazaro.

Remote attendance: Heather Hughes, Decio Matos, Wilson Valente, Erin C., Jonathan Root, Emanuel Botelho, John Narcizo, Rachel Canastra, Neil Arruda, Debbie Pacheco, Lois Miller, Anne-Marie Zenni and Jennifer Carter.

Mr. Jennings called for the roll call.

Mr. Jennings made the following announcement: In accordance with Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 30A, Section 20(f), any member of the public may make an audio or video recording of this public meeting. A member of the public who wishes to record a meeting must first notify the chair and must comply with reasonable requirements regarding audio or video equipment established by the chair so as not to interfere with the meeting. *Mr. Matos provided notification of intent to record.*

Mr. Jennings led the Pledge of Allegiance.

It was moved by Dr. Nehra, seconded by Mr. DiBiasio and voted unanimously to dispense with the reading of the December 14, 2023 minutes and approved them, as recorded.

Mr. Rebello provided the student report which included updates on school events, clubs, and sports. Mr. Rebello congratulated the Girls Track Team on securing the Mayflower Championship.

There was no Citizen Input.

Mr. DiBiasio provided the MSBA Project update. The groundwork has begun and the jersey barriers have been put up. Bid documents are out for bidding and trade bids are due at the end of the month. Coordination of equipment is ongoing and it will continue into construction. The next round of recommendations to award are expected to be presented to the School Building Committee at the February meeting. Earthwork and soil processing has begun. This is a two month process that will prepare the site for the foundation. Drainage work has been completed. Coordination with the utility companies is ongoing. Construction traffic is directed and using the construction access road to keep them off of Locust Street. Mr. Bentley stated that he has met with Suffolk to review the emergency response plan. The CORI/SORI process is going well. A Community Outreach meeting was held on January 3rd. It was well attended by abutting neighbors. Mr. DiBiasio stated that the Construction Team did a really nice job presenting a slideshow that included updated renderings. They answered questions and concerns regarding traffic and construction noise. They also informed attendees that the trucks delivering steel may be coming in at 5:00 am. They have been instructed to park on the construction access road.

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Mr. Bentley provided an overview of the MSBA Project Proprietary Items. All items are required items by the City of Fall River relating to life safety equipment for first responders. The fire alarm active network radio signaling, emergency key box and document cabinet are needed to meet the requirements by the Fall River Fire Department and/or the Fall River Police Department as standard pieces of equipment.

It was moved by Mr. Dibasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the MSBA Project Proprietary Items as submitted to meet the requirements by the Fall River Fire Department and/or the Fall River Police Department as standard pieces of equipment.

Mr. Kitchen provided an overview of the MSBA project expenditures. Invoices from Colliers, KBA, and Suffolk reflect monthly billing for the project. Two invoices from Hub International are for the Builders Risk. Locke Lord submitted an invoice for the sale of the bond for which they prepared paperwork, filed and reviewed the closing documents.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the following MSBA Project expenditures: Colliers invoice #0000912152 dated 12/31/2023 for the amount of \$69,098.52, HUB International invoice #3418158 dated 11/27/2023 for the amount of \$263,451, HUB International invoice #3441320 dated 12/13/2023 for the amount of \$173,320, KBA invoice #20006.01-18 dated 12/29/2023 for the amount of \$982,784.02, Locke Lord invoice #1831275 for the amount of \$22,500, and Suffolk Construction application no. 3 dated 12/31/2023 for the amount of \$974,893.16.

Mr. Bentley reported on personnel appointments and resignations.

Mr. Bentley reported on student travel requests.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to approve the overnight student travel request by the BPA Club to attend the BPA Conference in Norwood, MA from March 2, 2024 to March 3, 2024.

Attorney Brillhante requested that agenda item 3.1.d – Discussion and Possible Revision of Job Description be discussed after Executive Session.

Mr. Bentley reported on the use of facilities request. Mr. Jennings asked when graduation is. Mr. Bentley stated that graduation is on June 6th with a rain date of June 8th and its being held at Durfee High School.

Attorney Brillhante left the meeting at 5:50 PM.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the request by Backstage Dance Academy to use the Auditorium and Gymnasium for dance rehearsals and recitals as follows: June 6, 2024 – Rehearsal (4:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.), June 7, 2024 – Rehearsal (4:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.) June 8, 2024 – Recital (9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) and June 9, 2024 – Recital (9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.)

(Use of facilities fee – Auditorium \$2,000/Gymnasium \$1,000)

(Custodial fee - \$791.26)

(Security fee - \$1,159.72)

Total Cost - \$4,950.98

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Mr. Kitchen provided a summary of the list of surplus equipment. Most of the items are from the Metal Fabrication, Advanced Manufacturing, Dental and Graphic Communications. Mr. DiBiasio asked if an appraiser has been consulted to see if the value of the equipment corresponds to what the auction brings in. Mr. Kitchen stated that he relies on the teachers for the cost of the item. Smaller equipment typically draws more bids but the larger equipment is harder to sell. An offer can be declined or a counter offer can be made.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the surplus of equipment as presented.

Mr. Kitchen provided a summary of the monthly financial report. The transfer approved at the last meeting have cleared the negative account balances. The negative balance in the extraordinary maintenance line will be supported by carryover funds.

Attorney Brilhante returned to the meeting at 5:53 PM.

Mr. Kitchen provided a summary of the expenditures. Grant funds are being used to purchase most of the equipment which can be brought over to the new building. Auto Collision and Culinary Arts equipment is a little more of a challenge because it has to go out to bid, ordered and delivered when the new building is completed.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Dr. Nehra and voted unanimously to approve the expenditures as submitted.

Mr. Bentley provided a summary of the Cooperative Education Program report. Mr. Begin stated that it's hard to believe that only one student in Culinary Arts is participating in Co-op. Fr. Jay asked what the Co-op enrollment in January of 2023 was. Mr. Bentley stated that he did not have that information but will email it tomorrow.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Eric Silva, Interim Director of Guidance and Admissions for the Guidance report. Mr. Silva stated that as of today a total of 727 applications have been received. Of the applications received 534 were from Fall River, 60 from Somerset, 61 from Swansea and 68 from Westport. Mr. Rebello stated that this year there has been a substantial increase in freshman applications. In January of 2021 about 580 applications had been received and 620 in January 2022. Mr. Silva stated that applications will be received up until Friday, February 16 and it is anticipated that the number of applications will increase.

Mr. Silva provided a summary of the shop placement. A breakdown of the freshman shops exploratory and their choices was provided which included how many students were placed and the number of open seats. Advanced Manufacturing, Dental Assisting, Drafting and Programming & Web Development have spots available. All the other shops are at capacity.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that he was surprised by the number one choices this year and that the typical high demand shops were not chosen. Mr. Silva stated that it was a very competitive year. The trend amongst a lot of the students was that they were selecting a lot of the same shops. Shops such as Culinary Arts, Auto Collision and Auto Technology usually have spots available but filled up quickly this year and are at capacity.

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Mr. DiBiasio expressed concern that students placed in shops that were not in their top six choices will leave. Mr. Silva stated that there were twenty six students this year that were not placed in their top six choices. The method used to place those students was by looking at the shops with open seats, looking at the individual student and the exploratory numbers to determine the best fit. In a couple of weeks, students will have an opportunity to submit a shop change request.

Fr. Jay asked if any trends of shops going up or down were noticed. Mr. Bentley stated that there were several but one in particular, Business Technology, will need to be monitored. Mrs. Torres will be meeting with the shop Department Heads and with the freshman instructors from the shops that didn't perform as well to review the data and determine the reason for the low shop selection. The hope is to get some very good feedback that will be useful and if an approach needs to change, those changes will be made. Data from the last three years will be reviewed for Business Technology, Medical Assisting and Programming and Web Development to determine if there's a downward trend or if it was just this year.

Fr. Jay expressed concern regarding students not choosing Advanced Manufacturing and Drafting. Eight students were placed in Advanced Manufacturing that didn't choose that shop and there are still four open spots. If those eight students weren't placed in there, that shop would only have fourteen students. Mr. DiBiasio stated that it's up to freshman teachers to be enthusiastic to get students to choose their shop. Mr. Rebello stated that students performed really well in exploratory. Only 40 students scored below 500 and the top score was 600, making shop placement very competitive. Mr. Bentley stated that the teachers do a really good job with the students. If a student does not do well in exploratory and is not placed in a shop of their choice, they will be placed based on what is the best fit. The hope is that they will be engaged and end up liking the shop. Mr. Begin stated that he would really like see a shop like Advanced Manufacturing, which is not a cheap shop to maintain, flourish so that students can take the skills learned beyond Diman.

Attorney Brilhante left the meeting at 6:17 PM.

Mr. Silva provided an overview of the student enrollment.

Mr. Bentley provided the LPN Program report which included an update on enrollment, recruitment and accreditation. Open house is scheduled for January 24, 2024.

Mr. Silva left the meeting at 6:18 PM. Attorney Brilhante returned to the meeting at 6:19 PM.

Mr. Jennings asked if LPN students qualify for financial aid and if there's any way to help students that need financial help stay in the program. Mr. Bentley stated that financial aid is available for qualifying students.

Mr. DiBiasio as the Chairman of the Policy Sub-Committee requested that agenda item 3.1.1 be tabled to February to allow for the review of individual contracts.

Mr. Rebello provided the Assistant Superintendent-Principal report which included an update on student achievement, current happenings and events.

Mr. DiBiasio stated the he and Mr. Kitchen were judges at the DECA Conference. He was really impressed with the students from Diman as they were well prepared.

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Mr. Bentley did not have a superintendent's report.

Fr. Jay asked if the February meeting can be changed. The next school committee meeting will be on February 1, 2024.

Attorney Brilhante stated the reasons to go into executive session.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Dr. Nehra and voted unanimously on a roll call at 6:29 p.m. to enter into Executive Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. DiBiasio, Mr. Begin, Fr. Jay, Ms. Menard, and Dr. Nehra voting yes.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Dr. Nehra and voted unanimously on a roll call at 7:52 p.m. to rise into Open Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. DiBiasio, Mr. Begin, Fr. Jay, Ms. Menard, and Dr. Nehra voting yes.

Attorney Brilhante made the recommendation for a motion to approve the new job description for the Cooperative Education Coordinator, as presented by Mr. Bentley, and to authorize the posting as early as tomorrow.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Dr. Nehra and voted unanimously to approve the new job description for the Cooperative Education Coordinator, as presented by Mr. Bentley, and to authorize the posting as early as tomorrow.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Fr. Jay and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Helena S. Neves

Helena S. Neves, Executive Secretary

Materials Included:

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| December 14, 2023 Minutes | Co-Op Report |
| MSBA Project Proprietary Items | Guidance Report |
| MSBA Project Expenditures | LPN Program Update |
| Coop. Education Coord. Job Description | Community Projects |
| Surplus of Equipment | Assistant Superintendent-Principal Report |
| Monthly Financial Report | |
| Expenditure Report | |