

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM
SEPTEMBER 14, 2023

The regular meeting of the Greater Fall River Vocational School District Committee was called to order at 5:31 p.m. by Chairman Paul Jennings, with the following persons in attendance, Donald DiBiasio of Somerset, Jeffrey Begin of Swansea, Fr. Jay Mello of Fall River, Joan Menard of Fall River and Rajiv Nehra of Fall River.

Also in attendance were: Brian Bentley, Superintendent/Director, Andrew Rebello, Assistant Superintendent/Principal, Paul Kitchen, Director of Finance, Gregory Brillhante, Legal Counsel, and Helena Neves, Executive Secretary.

Remote attendance: Decio Matos, Stacy Matos, Lori Brogan, Crystal Santos

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 Mr. Begin, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted to dispense with the reading of the August 10, 2023 minutes and approved them, as recorded. Mr. DiBiasio abstained.

Ms. Hailie Perreira provided the student report which included updates on school events, extracurricular clubs and sports. Ms. Perreira stated that due to the construction of the new building athletes have to use multiple practice fields and are trying their best with field conditions. Ms. Perreira further stated that Administration, Coaches and the Athletic Director have been working to address issues raised. Over 500 students signed up for the fall season and there are currently 300 active athletes.

Mr. Begin asked if there are enough levels of each sport to allow students to participate. Mr. Rebello stated that transporting students to the off campus practice fields is an issue and some cuts needed to be made.

There was no Citizen Input.

Mr. DiBiasio provided an update on the MSBA Project. The 90% construction documents set has been completed, sent to the estimators and are expected back in October. The final 100% document set will be completed in December and distributed for bidding and procurement. The testing agency for construction materials has been selected by School Building Committee based on a review of proposals by Colliers. Suffolk has several packages currently being bid. They include site work, concrete and structural steel. The project team has gone through a round of de-scoping meetings with bidders. Packages for pre-purchase of the generator and electrical switch gear are currently out to bid due to the industry's long lead times. The school readiness construction work for the temporary staff parking lot and new student parking lot entrance has been completed. Administration is working with the project team on planning the groundbreaking ceremony.

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Mr. Bentley stated that the groundbreaking ceremony has been scheduled for November 3, 2023. Students will be dismissed at 11:00 am, light refreshments will be provided at 12:00 pm and the ceremony will take place at 1:00 pm. Students and staff will be invited to participate in the event and photo opportunities will be available. An invitation will be mailed to guests and a program will be designed by our students.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that the Pre-Qualification Committee was approved by the School Building Committee and the members are Mr. Bentley, Superintendent-Director, Mr. Kitchen, Director of Finance and Operations, Mr. Alix , Colliers (or alternate), and Mr. Joynt, KBA (or alternate). Attorney Brilhante stated that the committee is established by statute and meets the requirements of Massachusetts State law.

It was moved by Fr. Jay, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to reaffirm the Pre-Qualification Committee as voted on by the MSBA SBC.

Mr. Kitchen provided an overview of the MSBA project expenditures. Invoices from KBA and Suffolk reflect monthly billing for the project. A Colliers invoice was received after the agenda was published.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Fr. Jay and voted unanimously to approve the following MSBA Project expenditures: KBA invoice #20006.01-13 dated 7/31/2023 for the amount of \$965,250.00, KBA invoice #20006.01-14 dated 8/29/2023 for the amount of \$999,350.00 and Suffolk Construction invoice #007 dated 8/31/2023 for the amount of \$50,000.00.

Mr. Bentley reported on personnel.

Agenda item 3.1.c - LPN Administrative Assistant, Crystal Santos was withdrawn

Mr. Bentley provided a brief description of the webmaster position. This is an individual appointment position that has been in place for the last few years and it's not part of the DTA contract. Mr. Bentley requested permission to post, interview and hire for the position. The position is currently held by a staff member which has been fulfilling the duties without an appointment letter. Mr. Bentley proposed that the position follow an individual agreement and be issued a contract. Mr. Jennings asked who the webmaster reports to. Mr. Bentley stated that they report to the Principal and the posting will reflect this. Mr. Rebello suggested making the position a 12 month position as there is a need to update the website during the summer. Ms. Menard asked if the salary is being increased to reflect the 12 month position. Mr. Bentley stated that he did not recommend a stipend increase.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Fr. Jay and voted unanimously to approve the webmaster position as an individual agreement 12 month position at a salary of \$5,000 and to post, interview and hire for the position.

Mr. Bentley provided an overview of the use of facilities requests.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Fr. Jay and voted unanimously to approve the request by the Diman Football Team to use the Cafeteria for their weekly team dinners on Tuesdays and Wednesdays (9/7, 9/13, 9/20, 9/27, 10/4, 10/11, 10/18 & 10/25) from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm and to waive all use of facilities fees.

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It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to approve the request submitted by the Rotary Club of Fall River to use the cafeteria and Room 251 Restaurant on Sunday, November 5, 2023 from 6:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for their annual pancake breakfast fundraiser and to waive all use of facilities fees.

Mr. Bentley stated that the Diman Bengal Education Foundation is requesting to make a donation of a portable saw to the Carpentry Program, hand tools to Auto Technology Program and t-shirts to the soccer team in memory of Richard Urban.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to accept the donations to be made by the Diman Bengal Education Foundation to the Carpentry and Auto Technology Programs and the Soccer Team in memory of Richard Urban.

Mr. Bentley reported on the out of state student travel request. The request was initially approved by the Chairman.

It was moved by Fr. Jay seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to approve the out of state student travel request as previously approved by the Chairman.

Mr. Bentley provided a summary of the proposal submitted by Mr. Ryan Cain, Guidance Counselor to change the Honor Roll/High Honors parameters. The proposed parameters are as follows: Any student receiving a grade of 80 or higher in all subjects will receive Honors, any student receiving a grade of 90 or higher in all subjects will receive High Honors. GPA will be completely take out of the equation for a student to receive Honors or High Honors. Fr. Jay asked if a student has an 80 in four subjects and a 79 in one what would they receive. Mr. Bentley stated that under the new parameters they would not qualify to receive Honors.

Mr. Begin stated that it's is a great idea as this provides more oppportunities for students. He further stated that a review of the National Honor Society would be appropriate to provide the same oppportunities to students. Mr. Jennings asked that Administration report back on the review of the NHS parameters.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Fr. Jay and voted unanimously approve the new honor roll parameters as presented.

Mr. Bentley reported on the substitute and student worker pay rate. The current rates are as follows: substitute nurse - \$274.37 per day, substitute teacher - \$150 per day, long term substitute teacher - \$215 per day, long term substitute administrative support staff - \$19.47 per hour and student worker - \$16.00 per hour.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to reaffirm the current rates as listed above.

Mr. Bentley reported on the 23/24 School Calendar change. In order to accommodate the groundbreaking ceremony, the District will hold an 11:00 AM dismissal for students on Friday, November 3, 2023.

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It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Dr. Nehra and voted unanimously to approve the proposed 11:00 AM student dismissal and an 11:15 AM staff dismissal on Friday, November 3, 2023.

Mr. Kitchen provided a summary of the monthly financial report. Some changes are anticipated within the next month due to the purchasing of equipment using SkillsCapital and Perkins grant funds.

Fr. Jay asked what is cost of renting the sports fields and transportation and how is it being funded. The field rental fee for Bishop Connolly is about \$14,000 which was budgeted for due to the YMCA agreement and the transportation cost is roughly \$215 per bus per day for two buses. The bus runs to Swansea also incur an additional mileage fee. There's no fee to use the city parks. Mr. DiBiasio asked if the District has entered into negotiations with Bishop Connolly to use the facilities for practices and games. Mr. Kitchen stated that there have been some discussions with the Diocese and it is something that can be negotiated. Mr. Kitchen also stated that the district has an agreement to use the YMCA for the spring season. The city has been very gracious in allowing the use of the parks at no charge.

Fr. Jay stated that he received phone calls from parents concerning football players getting injured on the practice fields. Mr. Bentley stated that the District was made aware of the situation and is working with a company to resolve the issue. Mr. Bentley asked members if they would like to have Mr. Bailey, Athletic Director present at the next meeting. Fr. Jay stated that the next four years will present challenges and the District needs to ensure that sports provide a positive experience for students.

Mr. Begin informed members that he had a discussion with Mr. Bentley and Mr. Bailey regarding the purchasing of guardian helmets for the football team to help with concussions. Mr. Bailey is in the process of getting a price quote. The recommendation by the NFL is to use them for practices. MIIA has not taken a real stance on this but research shows that there's a decrease in concussion rate which makes it worth investing in for the protection of our student athletes. Attorney Brillhante stated that District data shows a decrease in concussions and the helmets will be an additional support. Mr. Jennings asked that Mr. Bailey be present at the October meeting to provide an update.

Mr. Kitchen provided a summary of the expenditures in excess of \$10,000.

Attorney Brillhante left the meeting at 6:13 p.m.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the expenditures as submitted with the exception of the MSBA expenditures as they were previously approved.

Mr. Kitchen provided a summary of the FY23 End of Year transfers. Mr. Kitchen stated that the proposed transfers will zero out all the accounts and it was a recommendation made by the auditors.

Attorney Brillhante returned to the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Fr. Jay and voted unanimously to approve the FY23 End of Year transfers as presented.

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Mr. Kitchen provided a summary of the equipment bid award for Metal Fabrication Department.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Fr. Jay and voted unanimously to reaffirm the bid award previously authorized by the Chairman to Total Welding Supply, 114 Braley Road, E. Freetown, MA as the responsible and responsive bidder for the follow equipment for the Metal Fabrication Department with the Greater Fall River Vocational School District. One (1) Air Cooled Cobot Weld Pak and Eight (8) Miller Multimatic 220 Welders for \$153,654.73 / Siegmund Tables, 25 US167322 tables and 3 US280030 tables for a total of \$86,249.00

Mr. Kitchen provided an overview of the request for the surplus of equipment. The list of items include equipment from the Metal Fabrication program as new replacement items have been purchased. It also includes 16 iMac computers that have been wiped and reimaged. Mr. Kitchen would like to donate the computers to students. Students interested will submit a request and names will be placed in a box and pulled.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to approve the request for the surplus of the equipment as submitted.

Mr. Bentley provided an overview of the National Grid Easement. The easement is needed in order to run the electrical service to the new building. Attorney Brillhante stated that this was a recommendation by Mr. Alix, Colliers – Project Manager as being necessary for the new building.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to authorize the Chairman to execute the National Grid Easement Deed as submitted.

Mr. Kitchen left the meeting at 6:19 p.m.

Mr. Bentley provided the LPN Program update. Currently, there are 40 full time and 16 part-time students. The current enrollment reflects the highest number of enrolled students in the last several years.

Mr. DiBiasio deferred to Mrs. Torres for an update on the community projects. Mrs. Torres stated that the community projects were carried over from the 22-23 school year and work will begin shortly. Work has restarted at the Westport cemetery and is expected to be finished in November. A few new requests have been received and detailed information will be provided at the next meeting.

Mr. DiBiasio provided an overview of the 23/24 Housebuilding Program proposal submitted by a couple residing at 41 Bentley Lane in Westport. They are looking to construct a three stall garage and pool house. Mr. Cabral has reviewed the proposed plans and visited the site. It has been determined that the project is viable and students can safely complete the work. The permitting process has been started and Mrs. Torres and Attorney Brillhante will meet to discuss the contract. Mr. DiBiasio stated that the Housebuilding Sub-Committee approved the project and is recommending full approval.

Mr. Kitchen returned to the meeting at 6:21 p.m.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Fr. Jay and voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the Housebuilding Sub-Committee and approve the propose 23/24 Housebuilding Project.

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Mr. Rebello provided the Assistant Superintendent-Principal report which included an update on the Bengal Challenge, first few days of the school year, student achievement, and parent and community partnerships. Mr. Rebello informed members that U.S. News & World Report has for the 2nd time named Diman as one of the best high schools in the nation.

Mr. Bentley provided the Superintendent-Director's report which included: an admissions report, the LPN enrollment report, information on the Apex Award and the request by the Alumni Association to use Room 251 for their meetings.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Fr. Jay and voted unanimously to approve the request by the Alumni Association to use Room 251 for their meetings.

Mr. DiBiasio asked if there was a loss of 12th grade students as it seems there was a drastic drop from all sending communities. Mr. Bentley stated that he didn't think there was a loss but will compile data and provide an enrollment comparison.

Mr. Bentley stated that a correction to the 23/24 School Committee meeting schedule has been made due a typographical error. The November meeting will be schedule for the 16th and December will be on the 14th. The April meeting will be rescheduled for the 4th due to the OVS ceremony.

Mr. Jennings reminded members that the Fall Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for October 5, 2023.

The next school committee meeting will be on October 12, 2023.

Attorney Brillhante stated that there is a reason to go into executive session. Paragraph b will not be discussed as one item was withdrawn and the other was resolved in open session. Paragraph c will be discussed and there will be no votes taken.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Dr. Nehra, and voted unanimously on a roll call at 6:31 p.m. to enter into Executive Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. DiBiasio, Fr. Jay, Ms. Menard, Mr. Begin, and Dr. Nehra voting yes.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously on a roll call at 7:25 p.m. to rise into Open Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. DiBiasio, Fr. Jay, Ms. Menard, Mr. Begin, and Dr. Nehra voting yes.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Helena S. Neves
Helena S. Neves, Executive Secretary

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Materials Included:

August 10, 2023 Minutes
MSBA Project Expenditures
Honor Roll Parameters Proposal
Monthly Financial Report
Expenditure Report
FY23 End of Year Transfers

Surplus Equipment List
National Grid Easement
LPN Program Report
23/24 Housebuilding Program Project Application
Assistant Superintendent-Principal Report
Superintendent's Report
Revised SY23/24 School Committee Meeting Schedule