

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM
AUGUST 15, 2024

The regular meeting of the Greater Fall River Vocational School District Committee was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chairman Paul Jennings, with the following persons in attendance, Ryan Pacheco of Fall River, Rajiv Nehra of Fall River, and Donald DiBiasio of Somerset and Jeffrey Begin of Swansea.

Absent: Joan Menard of Fall River

Also in attendance were: Brian Bentley, Superintendent/Director, Gregory Brilhante, Legal Counsel, Gregory Joynt, KBA Representative and Stephanie Blanchette, Administrative Assistant.

Remote attendance: Debbie Pacheco, Maria Torres, Katie Warren, Decio Matos, Rose Blanchette, Crystal Bradwin, Craig Brogan, Michael Furtado, Jonathan Root, Stephen Alves, Leslie Weckesser, Liz Hyde, Stacey Matos, Lori Brogan, Erin Smith and Rick Medeiros.

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. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted to dispense with the reading of the July 16, 2024 minutes and approved them, as recorded. Mr. Pacheco abstained.

There was no Citizen Input.

Mr. DiBiasio deferred to Mr. Gregory Joynt to provide the MSBA Project update. Mr. Joynt stated that there's quite a bit of activity out on the job site. All of that soil processing that had to happen to get the building up from ground has been completed. Foundations are nearing completion. Masonry has started and they are working on the stair and elevator towers. Steel work is scheduled to start next week. The main drive lane summer work is nearing completion and will be ready for the start of the school year. Steel will begin on the Locust Street side and move south toward the water department. Once decks and slabs go in place, we'll start to see exterior closure. The project is on schedule and tracking on budget.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that parking has been a big topic of discussion. Mr. Joynt stated that temporary lots have been reestablished and are being extended where possible. A new permanent parking lot also at the main entry has been created which will be the permanent parking lot for the stadium. The goal is to match the number of parking spots available last year and continue to look for safe parking places.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that Project Funding Agreement (PFA) increase proposal will be presented to the School Building Committee at their monthly meeting scheduled for Monday, August 19, 2024. Mr. Joynt stated that the State has provided additional funding to help mitigate the inflation that has been seen in the last few years. MSBA increased the reimbursement rate per square foot which results in about \$22 million dollars. In addition,

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MSBA has changed one of its longstanding goals for third party funding that allows districts to use grant funds without the MSBA taking back a portion of the funds. The District will be able to add the \$2 million dollars Capital Skills grant funds to the project's budget without penalty. Mr. Joynt stated that the project's PFA will need to be increased in order to use the additional funds. The additional funds will help to bring back some of the items that were cut during value management. The Project Team has established a list of items totaling an estimated \$11.7 million dollars that will be presented to the School Building Committee for their approval.

Mr. Joynt stated that approval will be sought to reestablish some money back into the contingencies which would allow for a little bit less risk as the goal is to get as many items, including the alternates, in the project, even if they come in slightly over the original budget. Mr. DiBiasio stated that contingencies will help to offset any unforeseen costs such as ledge blasting and continued construction costs increase. Mr. DiBiasio further stated that unfortunately the ISSN Program and the square footage that was cut will not be able to be added back in. Mr. Joynt stated that the sending communities will benefit financially as the additional funds will reduce their share of the project's cost.

Mr. Kitchen provided an overview of the MSBA project expenditures. Invoices from Colliers, KBA, and Suffolk reflect monthly billing for the project.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Dr. Nehra and voted unanimously to approve the following MSBA Project expenditures: Colliers invoice #0000969334 dated 7/31/2024 for the amount of \$125,350.79, KBA invoice #20006.01-25 dated 7/29/2024 for the amount of \$115,537.00 and Suffolk Construction application no. 10 dated 7/31/2024 for the amount of \$3,506,411.20.

Mr. Bentley reported on personnel appointments, resignations and retirements.

Agenda item 3.1.c-Discussion of Assistant Superintendent/Principal position will be discussed after executive session.

Mr. Bentley reported on the acceptance of gifts.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to accept/approve the following:

- The donation of \$5,000 from the Diman Bengal Education Foundation on behalf of Dr. Martin Fogle to purchase an infant vital sign trainer for the Medical Assisting Program.
- The request by the Mateus Family to establish the "Mateus Family Medical Scholarship" to benefit a student from the class of 2025, 2026 and 2027 from the following programs: Dental Assisting - \$1,000 / Health Assisting - \$1,500 / Medical Assisting - \$2,500
- The request by the Murphy Family to establish "The Murphy Family Scholarship" in the amount of \$5,000 for the class of 2024, 2025 and 2026 to benefit students that are a representation of Diman and who are furthering their education by attending college and/or going into a trade.

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Mr. Bentley reported the use of facilities request by the Diman Special Education Parent Advisory Council.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to approve the request by the Diman Special Education Parent Advisory Council to use a classroom from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm to hold their council meetings on September 12, 2024, October 3, 2024, January 16, 2025, March 3, 2025, April 3, 205 and May 22, 2025 and to waive all use of facilities fees.

Mr. Bentley reported on an out of state student travel request.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Dr. Nehra and voted unanimously to approve the request by the Diman Soccer Team to attend the D1 soccer game, Bryant vs UMass on August 26, 2024 from 4:30pm to 9:00pm in Smithfield, RI.

Mr. Bentley stated that the Admissions Sub-Committee will need to meet to review the admissions policy. Mr. Jennings stated that a meeting date will be determined and communicated with the members of the sub-committee.

Mr. Bentley provided on overview of the 24/25 employee handbook.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Dr. Nehra and voted unanimously to approve the 2024/2025 Employee Handbook as presented.

Mr. Bentley provided on overview of the Medical Emergency Response Plan.

Mr. Begin stated that a lot of the overhead photographs are incorrect and outdated. Mr. Bentley stated that although the photos are outdated the information is still valuable. The plan will be updated.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Dr. Nehra and voted unanimously to approve the Medical Emergency Response Plan as presented.

Mr. Bentley provided an overview of the amended budget. The budget was amended by the State and it has resulted in a small increase of \$6,720.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to amend the Fiscal 2025 Budget based on the final Chapter 70 funding formula to Thirty Two Million Four Hundred Fifty Thousand Five Hundred and Thirty Nine Dollars (\$32,450,539.00)

Mr. Bentley provided a summary of the monthly financial report.

Mr. Bentley provided an overview of the expenditures in excess of \$10,000.

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

There were no transfer of funds.

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Mr. DiBiasio provided the Grievance Sub-Committee report. The Grievance Sub-Committee has heard from both parties and the position of the sub-committee was to deny the grievance of the Director of Guidance and Admissions position.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to deny grievance SY2024-2 DAA – Director of Guidance and Admissions.

Mr. DiBiasio provided the Housebuilding Sub-Committee update. A list of community projects for the current and upcoming school year was provided. Mr. DiBiasio asked Mrs. Torres if the foundation for the house that the students will be building in the fall is in. Mrs. Torres stated that the foundation has been in for a couple of weeks now, and the homeowners have provided a copy of the insurance policy. Mr. DiBiasio asked Mrs. Torres if any new community projects were received over the summer. Mrs. Torres stated that the community projects list included in the packet includes all the projects which will be reviewed to determine which ones will be worked on first. Two new projects were received from Fall River and will be evaluated. One is for the Programming and Web Program to create a website for the Fall River Fire Museum. The other is for the Boys and Girls Club who has some work that needs to be done at Camp Welch. Somerset has requested work to be done on the dugouts, a new shed and also a simple task for plumbing at the library. Westport has approached us in the past about their dugouts for the Westport youth and a snack shack for their athletic field. There's still some work to finish up at the Westport fire station and they have submitted another request for the Briggs Road Fire Station. New projects will be evaluated and Mrs. Torres will report back. Mr. DiBiasio requested that the community projects work be divvied up by the four sending communities. Mrs. Torres stated that the intention of the community projects program has always been to work with the four sending communities.

Mr. Begin provided the LPN Sub-Committee report. He stated that a meeting was held to discuss the current status of the LPN Program. The program is seeing a shortage of instructors due to resignations and/or reallocations to other programs within the district. Due to the inability of getting qualified instructors the program is running into a situation where they are not going to be able to provide instruction at the level that we want to be and to the level that's required. Currently, there is a part time day program that students have completed their first year and are going into their second year. Our goal is to maintain that program, make sure that they get their second year so that they complete the program. The LPN Program also a full time day program which had 52 students enrolled. Due to the shortage in instructors, the LPN Sub-Committee along with our director of the LPN Program have opted to suspend the daytime full time LPN Program for upcoming 24/25 school year with potentially maybe doing it again or reevaluating the program later on.

Mr. DiBiasio asked why was a new instructor just hired if the full time program has been suspended and there are only 17 students in the part time program. Mr. Begin stated that currently there are three instructors that will be teaching in the part time program. Mr. DiBiasio expressed concern about the financial strain of the program on the budget due to the cost of lease of the building and salaries. Mr. DiBiasio asked why there's a need for three teachers. Mr. Bentley stated that the three instructors are needed in order to provide the second year students with the best education possible to complete the requirements and graduate the program. Mr. Bentley further stated that the goal is to offer the LPN program as part of the Division of Continuing Education using the Diman High School facilities.

Mrs. Brogan that members are looking at as if the 5 employees are teaching the students. That's not what's taking place. The program administrator cannot teach or go to clinical according to the Board of Nursing's regulations.

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The administrative assistant is needed to answer phones, collect payments and perform other office duties. The three faculty members are needed to teach. The teacher to student is 1 to 10 ratio out at clinical, but they also have to teach. Term 4 will start up with 2 classes where they'll be teaching maternity and leadership management. These are college level classes and the preparation is a lot more. The program is also scheduled for the ACEN accreditation visit in the fall of 2025 which faculty will need to prepare for. Mr. Begin requested a breakdown of what the cost of the part time program will be.

There was further discussion on the restructuring of the LPN Program, the financial burden of the lease and how to best support students and staff during the transition.

It was moved by Mr. Begin, seconded by Dr. Nehra and voted unanimously to suspend the LPN Full time Program for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

Dr. Nehra asked if support was given to the students that had committed to the full time program. Mrs. Brogan stated that all 52 students were contacted and told them they had an option to be grandfathered into the part time evening program. We also reached out to all the local LPN Directors, and several of them did come through to help us out, and they are taking students for us. One program has taken 6 students and the other programs taken 6 to 8. The Quincy program has also reached out to me as a possibility to take on more students in their Plymouth campus but they don't have any faculty at this time, either. We are also helping them by sending the records to all the schools that they want them to be sent to.

Mr. Bentley provided the superintendent's report which included an update on admissions, student enrollment, Cooperative Education and Opening Day agenda. There were 773 applicants for the Class of 2028. Currently, there are 1457 students enrolled in grades 9-12 and are still accepting transfers for upper classmen. Mr. Marciszyn continues to work hard to provide students with cooperative education opportunities. This past school year there were 117 juniors, now rising seniors, that participated in cooperative education leading the way to a good start for the 24-25 school year. Mr. Bentley invited Members to attend the opening day for staff. Mr. Begin will attend.

Mr. Bentley stated that the School Committee will need to meet prior to September 12th due to the sale of the Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) for the MSBA Project. The meeting will be scheduled for September 5, 2024 at 3:30 pm and it will be a virtual meeting.

The next regular meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for September 12, 2024 at 6:00 PM. A Housebuilding Sub-Committee meeting will be scheduled for September 12th at 5:30 PM.

Attorney Brillhante stated the reasons to go into executive session.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously on a roll call at 6:35 p.m. to enter into Executive Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. Begin, Mr. DiBiasio, Dr. Nehra and Mr. Pacheco voting yes.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Dr. Nehra and voted unanimously on a roll call at 7:34 p.m. to rise into Open Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. Begin, Mr. DiBiasio, Dr. Nehra and Mr. Pacheco voting yes.

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Attorney Brillhante stated that agenda item 3.1.c-Discussion of Assistant Superintendent/Principal position will not be addressed.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Helena S. Neves

Helena S. Neves, Executive Secretary

Materials Included:

July 16, 2024 Minutes
MSBA Project Expenditures
Admissions Policy
2024/2025 Employee Handbook
Medical Emergency Response Plan
FY24/25 Amended Budget Summary
Monthly Financial Report
Expenditure Report
Community Projects
LPN Program Suspension Proposed Plan
Superintendent-Director Report