

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM
OCTOBER 10, 2024

The regular meeting of the Greater Fall River Vocational School District Committee was called to order at 5:32 p.m. by Chairman Paul Jennings, with the following persons in attendance, Joan Menard of Fall River, Rajiv Nehra of Fall River, Donald DiBiasio of Somerset and Jeffrey Begin of Swansea.

Absent: Ryan Pacheco of Fall River.

Also in attendance were: Brian Bentley, Superintendent/Director, Paul Kitchen, Director of Finance and Operations, Katie Warren, Assistant Principal of Academic Affairs, Gregory Brillhante, Legal Counsel, Joseph Minson, Student, Helena Neves, Executive Secretary, Mary Elizabeth Perry, Parent Liaison, Tim Alix, Colliers and Gregory Joynt, Kaestle Boos.

Remote attendance: Maria Torres, Debbie Pacheco, Derick Estacio, Stephen Alves, Liz Hyde, David Degan, Decio Matos, Stacey Matos, Joshua Gower, Lori Brogan, Eric Silva, Kimberly Harrison, Jeffrey Ramadan, Crystal Santos, Cassie Medeiros, Caitlin Bird, Kelly Carneiro, Priscilla Wicks, and Brenna Zekus.

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 Dr. Nehra and voted unanimously to dispense with the reading of the September 5, 2024 minutes and approved them, as recorded.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to dispense with the reading of the September 12, 2024 minutes and approved them, as recorded.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Dr. Nehra and voted unanimously to dispense with the reading of the September 26, 2024 minutes and approved them, as recorded.

Mr. Jennings deferred to Mr. Bentley for the student recognition. Mr. Bentley introduced Benjamin Courville, his mother and grandfather. Ben was recognized for his quick thinking actions that saved the life of a young lady that was choking while eating at a local restaurant. Mrs. Courville stated that Ben is also being recognized at the First Responders Day event in New York where he will be receiving the Junior Firefighter Hero Award. Mr. Bentley presented Ben with an award.

There was no Citizen Input.

It was moved by Mr. Begin, seconded by Mr. DiBiasio, and voted on a roll call to offer the position of Assistant Superintendent-Principal to Mrs. Leslie Weckesser, subject to successful contract negotiations.

5 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention. Motion Carries

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Mr. DiBiasio deferred to Mr. Alix, Colliers and Mr. Joynt, KBA for a brief project update. Mr. Alix stated that construction is moving along well. Steel is going up. The crane has moved to a second location. As work progresses the number of workers onsite will also increase.

Mr. Bentley left the meeting at 5:38 pm.

Mr. DiBiasio left the meeting at 5:40 pm.

Mr. Joynt stated that the steel erection is an exciting and rapid moving phase. As steel erection moves toward the south of the site, the building slabs will be poured and the building envelope will start to go in with sub wall on the exterior. The hope is to get the building wrapped by the time winter comes around to allow for work to continue. The project is at a really exciting point in the progress of the work and people get to see things now, other than a foundation wall of dirt. It is also an exciting time for students to see the new building being built right in front of them. The firms, Colliers, KBA and Suffolk will offer opportunities to have students and their teachers visit the construction site to allow them to see the work that is being done. These trips gives them the opportunity to get excited, particularly for those students who are never going to actually get to be in the building.

Mr. DiBiasio and Mr. Bentley returned to the meeting at 5:45 pm.

Mr. DiBiasio distributed a copy of the presentation that was shared at a recent meeting with representatives of the sending communities. The presentation contains information on the Project Funding Agreement (PFA) increase. Mr. DiBiasio stated that MSBA in collaboration with the local Legislative Delegation, have granted additional funds. The per square foot reimbursement rate has been increased from \$360 to \$425, giving the new Diman project an additional \$22 million dollars. The PFA increase requires a vote by the School Committee and an approval by the sending communities.

Mr. Alix stated that the additional funds will increase the project's budget from \$293,479,760 to \$305,213,446. Mr. DiBiasio stated that items that were taken out of the project due to the \$50 million dollar budget deficit are now being reviewed and put back in the project. Mr. Joynt stated that the Project Team has presented a proposal to add items back in that are achievable. Mr. Alix stated that although items are being added back into the project, the sending communities will be paying less. The district's cost that the four sending communities are paying has reduced from 49% to 43%.

Attorney Brillhante asked Mr. Joynt to explain how the Capital Skills grant funds can now be used for the project. Mr. Joynt stated that MSBA has just recently approved the use of outside grants without penalizing the district's reimbursement. Mr. Joynt stated that Mr. Kitchen has diligently been using Capital Skills grant funds to purchase equipment that can be brought into the new building.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that a meeting was held with representatives of the four sending communities to inform them of the additional funds. All four communities will see some savings in their share of the project's cost.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Dr. Nehra and voted on a roll call to approve the Project Funding Agreement Increase (PFA) as follows:

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“Pursuant to the agreement establishing the Greater Fall River Vocational School District, and the provisions of Section 6(d) of 703 of the Acts of 1962, as amended, I hereby notify you that the following is a true copy of the vote passed by the Regional District School Committee at a meeting held on October 10, 2024:

VOTED: That the Greater Fall River Vocational School District Committee hereby appropriates the amount of \$11,733,686 for the purpose of paying costs of designing, engineering, constructing and equipping the New Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School and related athletic facilities located at 251 Stonehaven Road, Fall River, MA 02723 including the payment of all costs incidental or related thereto (the "Project"), which school facility shall have an anticipated useful life as an educational facility for the instruction of school children of at least 50 years and for which the District may be eligible for a school construction grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority ("MSBA"), said amount to be expended at the direction of the Greater Fall River Vocational School Committee. This appropriation is in addition to and supplements an original appropriation in the amount of \$293,479,760 as voted by the School Committee on February 10, 2022, thereby resulting in a total appropriation for the Project in the amount of \$305,213,446. To meet this appropriation the District is authorized to borrow said amount, under and pursuant to Chapter 703 of the Acts of 1962, as amended, the District Agreement, as amended, or pursuant to any other enabling authority. The District acknowledges that the MSBA's grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need as determined by the MSBA, and any Project costs the District incurs in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the District; provided further that any grant that the District may receive from the MSBA shall not exceed the lesser of (1) seventy-nine and seventy-seven one hundredths percent (79.77%) of eligible, approved Project costs, as determined by the MSBA, or (2) the total maximum grant amount determined by the MSBA, and that the amount of borrowing authorized pursuant to this vote shall be reduced by any grant amount set forth in the Project Funding Agreement that may be executed between the District and the MSBA. No amounts shall be borrowed pursuant to this vote in the event that a member city or town of the District shall express disapproval of the debt authorized by this vote within sixty (60) days of the date of October 10, 2024.

FURTHER VOTED: That within seven (7) days from the date on which this vote is adopted the Secretary be and hereby is instructed to notify the city council of the city and the board of selectmen of each town comprising the District as to the amount and general purposes of the debt herein authorized, as required by the District Agreement and by Chapter 703, Section 6(d), of the Acts of 1962, as amended.”

5 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention. Motion Carries

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Mr. Kitchen provided an overview of the MSBA project expenditures. Invoices from Colliers, KBA, and Suffolk reflect monthly billing for the project. An invoice for Yankee Engineering in the amount of \$19,612.50 was also included. *It was discovered at the time of writing the minutes of the October 10th meeting that Colliers invoice #0000976904 dated 8/31/2024 for the amount of \$142,228.10 was approved at the September 12, 2024 meeting and payment has been issued.*

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the following MSBA Project expenditures: KBA invoice #20006.01-27 dated 9/27/2024 for the amount of \$130,389.20, Suffolk Construction application no. 12 dated 9/30/2024 for the amount of \$64,549,871.67 and Yankee Engineering for the amount of \$19,612.50.

Mr. DiBiasio informed Members that the Project Team will be discussing the total project cost at next month's MSBA School Building Committee meeting. Mr. Alix stated that the project's buyout process is at a point that the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) can be finalized with Suffolk and brought to the School Building Committee for review and approval. The final GMP will also require approval of the School Committee.

Mr. Bentley reported on personnel appointments, resignations and Advisory Board appointments.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to appoint the following individuals to the Advisory Board of the identified programs for a term of three years: Joseph Denis, Metal Fabrication and Welding, Justin Fortier, Automotive Technology, John Futoma, Automotive Collision, Michael Mosher, Advance Manufacturing and David Silvia, Carpentry and Cabinet Making.

Mr. Bentley stated that interviews were held for the administrative assistant to the assistant superintendent-principal. Ms. Stacy Lane was the recommended candidate and she has accepted the terms of the proposed contract. The terms of the contract will be discussed in executive session.

Mr. Bentley reported on the student travel requests.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to approve the afterhours student travel request submitted by the DECA Club for students to attend the DECA Celtics Night in Boston, MA on November 19, 2024.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to approve the proposal submitted by the International Club for an international student field trip to take place during the April 2026 school vacation. Students will visit WWII sites in England, France, Belgium, Germany and Austria.

Mr. Bentley reported on the acceptance of gifts.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to accept donation of guitar parts to the Guitar Club by David Levasseur.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to the donation of a 75 gallon direct vented natural gas heater (estimated value of \$2,800) and a water softening system for a residential application (estimated value of \$3,500) to the Plumbing Program by John Humphrey.

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It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to the donation of lighting supplies (estimated value of \$4,000) to the Electricity Program by Concord Electric Supply of Fall River, MA.

Mr. Bentley stated that a request was received from Cathy Noversa, Theatre Arts Club advisor to add a co-advisor due to the number of students participating. The club has expanded and currently has over 30 members.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve a co-advisor for the Theatre Arts Club per DTA contract.

Mr. Bentley provided a summary of the Project Takeoff proposal. The program is geared towards 9th and 10th grade students that may be interested in the possibility of a career in aeronautics in particular, working on airplanes. It is an 11 week summer program. The program will handle all aspects including instruction and transportation to New Bedford Airport.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. DiBiasio, and voted unanimously to pursue potential 9th and 10th grade enrollment for the Project Takeoff Program.

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

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

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

Mr. DiBiasio deferred to Mrs. Torres for an update on the Housebuilding Program and Community Projects. Mrs. Torres stated that the house walls are built and hopefully the first one will be erected tomorrow. Equipment such as the generator and heat pumps are being purchased ahead, in anticipation of a supply shortage, and will be stored at the supplier. The work on the community projects is ongoing and there were no issues to report. The list of community projects was included in the packet.

Mr. Begin provided the LPN Sub-Committee report. The sub-committee met to discuss the future of the LPN Program. It is the recommendation LPN Sub-Committee to move forward with a full time day program for the 25-26 school year. The program will remain at the Davol Street location until the lease is up and the district will advertise for a smaller place. The current staff has stated that they are interested in staying in the program and will be able meet the needs of 30 full time students.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the LPN Sub-Committee to move forward with a full time day program for the 25-26 school year.

Mr. DiBiasio provided the Policy Sub-Committee report. The sub-committee met to discuss and review a number of policies. Policies ADF – Wellness and IHCDA – Dual Enrollment will be brought back next month for approval as it needs to be updated. The Sub-Committee reviewed the following MASC revised policies: AC - R – Non-Discrimination Policy Including Harassment and Retaliation / ACA – R – Non-Discrimination of the Basis of Sex Under Title IX Sex-Based Harassment / ACAB – Sexual & Sex Based Harassment and Retaliation

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/ ACGA – Civil Rights Grievance Procedure / ACGB – Title IX Sexual Discrimination Grievance Procedure and is recommending them for approval.

Mr. DiBiasio deferred to Mr. Bentley for an overview of the graduation requirements. Mr. Bentley stated that the graduation requirements are incorrect on some of the documents disseminated to students and staff. The student handbook, policy IKF and any other documents that reference the graduation requirements will be updated.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the Policy Sub-Committee and approve the revised graduation requirements and the MASC revised policies.

Mr. Bentley provided the Superintendent-Director's report which included an update on student enrollment, admissions, Advisory Board, Vision of the Graduate and Cooperative Education. As of October 2, 2024 over 400 applications have been received for next year's freshman class even though recruitment has not started. The Fall Advisory Board meeting was well attended. Department heads will be preparing their reports which will be provided to the School Committee at the November meeting. Mr. Bentley also informed members that the Math Team was invited to compete in the WPI Annual Invitational Competition.

The next regular meeting of the School Committee will need to be rescheduled. Homecoming is Friday, October 25, 2024.

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 6:34 p.m. to enter into Executive Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. Begin, Mr. DiBiasio, Ms. Menard and Dr. Nehra voting yes.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. DiBiasio and voted unanimously on a roll call at 7:11 p.m. to rise into Open Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. Begin, Mr. DiBiasio, Ms. Menard and Dr. Nehra voting yes.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Dr. Nehra and voted unanimously to enter into a contract with Ms. Stacey Lane, Administrative Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent-Principal as negotiated.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:11 p.m.

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

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Materials Included:

September 5, 2024 Minutes
September 12, 2024 Minutes
September 26, 2024 Minutes
Project Funding Agreement Vote Language
MSBA Project Expenditures
International Club Trip Proposal
Project Takeoff Proposal
Monthly Financial Report
Expenditure Report
Community Projects
Graduation Requirements
ADF – Wellness Policy
IHCDA – Dual Enrollment Policy
AC - R – Non-Discrimination Policy Including Harassment and Retaliation
ACA – R – Non-Discrimination of the Basis of Sex Under Title IX Sex-Based Harassment
ACAB – Sexual & Sex Based Harassment and Retaliation
ACGA – Civil Rights Grievance Procedure
ACGB – Title IX Sexual Discrimination Grievance Procedure
Superintendent-Director Report