

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA  
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM  
DECEMBER 12, 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, William Flanagan (5:31 pm), of Fall River, Richard Manuels Jr. of Fall River, Joan Menard of Fall River, and Donald DiBiasio of Somerset .

Absent: Jeffrey Begin of Swansea.

Also in attendance were: Brian Bentley, Superintendent/Director, Leslie Weckesser, Assistant Superintendent-Principal, Paul Kitchen, Director of Finance and Operations, Katie Warren, Assistant Principal of Academic Affairs, Maria Torres, Assistant Principal of Technical Affairs, Gregory Brillhante, Legal Counsel, Tim Alix, Colliers, Mateo Batista, Suffolk, Paul Freeman, Suffolk and Helena Neves, Executive Secretary

Remote attendance: Christopher McGovern, Decio Matos, Elizabeth McPherson, Liz Hyde, Neil Arruda, Debbie Pacheco, Maureen Cooney, Christine DeMelo and Luis Rebelo.

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. Manuels and voted to dispense with the reading of the November 7, 2024 minutes and approved them, as recorded. *Attorney Flanagan abstained.*

Mrs. Weckesser stated that Ms. Wittkamper was not able to attend due to a family event and provided a brief summary of the student report. The written report was in the packet and it included an update on current events, sports and after school activities. The overcrowding in the morning has been solved by allowing students into the gym for intramurals before homeroom. Students participated in a survey where they were asked about the lunch program and the meals served. Mrs. Weckesser stated that the survey obtained high participation. The next steps are to analyze that data together, meet with our culinary instructor as well as the cafeteria manager to look at some potential solutions based on what the kids have selected. Ms. Wittkamper will report back at a later meeting.

There was no Citizen Input.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that representatives from Colliers and Suffolk are in attendance and will present the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) and provide a brief project update.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that the MSBA School Building Committee was revised to include Mrs. Weckesser's name as the Assistant Superintendent-Principal.

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It was moved by Mr. Manuels, seconded by Mr. DiBiasio and voted unanimously to approve the revised School Building Committee as submitted.

Mr. Batista provided a summary of the final GMP which encompasses all the iGMP's that have been approved in the past. The final GMP is being presented at the original budget of \$240,727,443. It includes the storage building, athletic field house and the athletic field surface alternates. Roughly 90% of the project has been procured prior to the final GMP. The final GMP wraps up some of the larger remaining scopes such as demolition, abatement and landscaping. Mr. DiBiasio stated that the final GMP is required by MSBA when a project is at about 30% built. Mr. Batista stated that some of the scopes that have not been bought out yet are in the final GMP as holds. Mr. Batista further stated that the final GMP budget was achieved by reducing the construction contingency by \$800,000. Mr. Alix stated that the final GMP is a big milestone for the project.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. DiBiasio and voted unanimously to approve the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP), as submitted.

Mr. Freeman provided a brief Suffolk Construction project update. Winterization has allowed for floor slab pours. Carpentry trade workers are starting to build the actual walls of the building. The mechanical, plumbing and electrical trades are running pipes, putting out ducts for the HVAC system and are starting to get the fire protection sprinklers up. The project is on schedule and on budget. Mr. Batista stated that the building is broken up into five sequences. Sequences one through three are the larger classroom wings. Sequence four and five are one story spaces located in the back for the heavy vocational programs. Steel work is expected to be completed at the end of January.

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 Mr. Manuels and voted unanimously to approve the following MSBA Project expenditures: Colliers invoice #0000995386 dated 10/31/2024 for the amount of \$144,588.83, Colliers invoice #0001004467 dated 11/30/2024 for the amount of \$131,978.66, KBA invoice #20006.01-29 dated 11/29/2024 for the amount of \$115,864.25 and Suffolk Construction application no. 14 dated 11/30/2024 for the amount of \$5,430,767.89.

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

It was moved by Attorney Flanagan, 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: Cameron Bell, Culinary Arts, James Marzilli, Advanced Manufacturing and Manuel Silva, Building and Property Maintenance.

Mr. Bentley reported on the student travel requests.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Attorney Flanagan and voted unanimously to reaffirm the approval of the student travel request submitted by the volleyball coach for athletes to participate in the All Star Game held on November 13, 2024 at Bristol Plymouth Technical High School.

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It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Attorney Flanagan and voted unanimously to approve the out of state student travel request submitted by the Advanced Manufacturing Program Instructors for students to visit and tour Magesal, in Warren, RI on January 16, 2025.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Attorney Flanagan and voted unanimously to approve the out of state student travel request submitted by the Senior Class Advisors for students to attend the Senior Prom on May 30, 2025 in Newport, RI from 5:00 pm to 11:00 pm.

Mr. Bentley reported on the request to establish two scholarships.

It was moved by Attorney Flanagan, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to establish a \$500 scholarship in memory of Dylan Quinn per the criteria set by the family.

It was moved by Mr. Manuels, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to establish a scholarship in memory of George “Sneaker” MacDonald. A \$500 scholarship will be awarded to three baseball players to purchase tools or to pay college fees.

Mr. Bentley reported on the acceptance of gifts.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Attorney Flanagan and voted unanimously to accept the \$1,500 donation to fund the George “Sneaker” MacDonald Scholarship.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard voted unanimously to accept the \$1,750 dollar donation made Dr. Kyle Medeiros and Dr. Phillip Robitaille to cover the cost of renting a coach bus for the students in the Dental Assisting Program to attend the Dental Conference in Boston.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Mr. Kitchen for a summary of the request to establish a student activities account club. Mr. Kitchen stated that he was approached by Mr. Medeiros and Mr. Sousa to start an afterschool car club. The proper application and the required student signatures have been received. The club is open to all students. Mr. Bentley stated that the advisors will not be receiving a stipend as the club is not in the DTA contract. Mr. Sousa stated that the intent is to bring awareness of car building. The club is open to all students in any of the vocational programs. The Car Club will also collaborate with other vocational programs such as Advanced Manufacturing, Metal Fabrication, Electronics and Carpentry.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Attorney Flanagan and voted unanimously to establish the Diman Auto Customs Club. Advisors will not receive a stipend as the club is not in the DTA contract.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Mrs. Weckesser for the professional development proposal. Mrs. Weckesser stated that the professional development proposal submitted for approval will streamline the philosophy on how to support students, especially the high needs students. This is a six-part leadership professional development series that will provide administrators with the knowledge and tools to foster a unified culture of high expectations.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. DiBiasio and voted unanimously to approve the Professional Development Proposal as submitted.

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Mr. Kitchen provided a summary of the monthly financial report. The extraordinary maintenance line's negative balance will be funded once free cash is certified and received.

Ms. Menard left the meeting at 6:00 pm.

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

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

Mr. Kitchen provided an overview of the transfer of funds request.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Attorney Flanagan and voted unanimously to approve the transfer of funds, as submitted.

Mr. Jennings deferred to Mr. Bentley for the LPN Sub-Committee report. Mr. Bentley stated that the sub-committee met to discuss the LPN program. No votes were taken during the meeting. Currently there are 17 students that have been accepted and have paid the seat fee for the 25/26 school year. Recruitment is ongoing and it shouldn't be an issue to meet the 35 student enrollment for the full time program. The ACEN report is not due until October 2025. Barbara Pitera has been appointed the interim program director.

Ms. Menard returned to the meeting at 6:05 pm.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that the Policy Sub-Committee met to review Policies ADF – Wellness and IHCD – Dual Enrollment and deferred to Dr. Warren for a summary of the changes. Dr. Warren stated that the Wellness policy was revised to clarify the language regarding the athletic study hall. The athletic study hall offers eligible students the opportunity to take a non-credit bearing study hall or a credit bearing course in lieu of physical education when actively participating in an MIAA sport or intramural activity. Attorney Flanagan asked if this is something that has been modeled or implemented in other school districts. Dr. Warren stated that she is unsure of this but clarification has been received from DESE.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Attorney Flanagan and voted unanimously to approve policy ADF – Wellness, as submitted.

Dr. Warren stated that policy IHCD – Dual Enrollment was revised to clear up language, update procedures, added a grade scale and removed the class list. The class list limited students to a broader number of classes that they can take. Ms. Menard asked if dual enrollment courses are free now that community college is free. Dr. Warren stated that dual enrollment courses are not free but the district does have some foundations that cover the cost. Ms. Menard stated that dual enrollment courses should be free to high school students and suggested a conversation with the local delegation. Mrs. Weckesser stated that the State offers a program called Designated Pathways that offers grant funds for dual enrollment courses. However, vocational schools don't receive any additional funds to help offset the cost of dual enrollment courses. Mr. Jennings asked who does Diman partner with for dual enrollment. Dr. Warren stated that currently Diman only partners with Bristol Community College. Ms. Menard stated that if a high school student is willing to take additional classes they shouldn't have to worry about the cost.

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It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve policy IHCDA – Dual Enrollment, as submitted.

Mr. DiBiasio deferred to Mrs. Torres for the Housebuilding Sub-Committee update. Mrs. Torres stated that the community projects work is going well. Some projects are on hold awaiting responses and some will be completed in the spring when Building and Property will no longer be at the Swansea house. Work on the playhouse for the Rosemary's Wish Kids has begun. Mr. DiBiasio stated that the work at the house in Swansea is moving along well. Mrs. Torres stated that the windows will be installed before the Christmas break. The homeowners will also have work done during the break.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that an application for the 25/26 Housebuilding Program has been received. The program is being advertised to hopefully bring in more applications. The intent is to have applications presented at the February meeting for approval. Mrs. Torres stated that the application received is for a house in the same development in Swansea as the one that is currently being built.

Mr. Bentley provided the Superintendent-Director's report which included an update on student enrollment, admissions and co-operative education placements. The Topping Off Ceremony took place today at 1:00 PM. Open house was held on Sunday, December 8, 2024.

. The next regular meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for January 9, 2025.

Attorney Brilhante stated the reasons to go into executive session.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously on a roll call at 6:20 p.m. to enter into Executive Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. DiBiasio, Attorney Flanagan, Ms. Menard and Mr. Manuels voting yes.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously on a roll call at 6:33 p.m. to rise into Open Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. DiBiasio, Attorney Flanagan, Ms. Menard and Mr. Manuels voting yes.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Attorney Flanagan and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:33 p.m.

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

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**Materials Included:**

November 7, 2024 Minutes  
December 12, 2024 Student Report  
Student Lunch Survey  
MSBA Building Committee  
MSBA Project Final GMP  
MSBA Project Expenditures  
Professional Development Proposal  
Monthly Financial Report  
Student Activity Agency Accounts Report  
Expenditure Report  
Transfer of Funds  
LPN Program Update  
ADF – Wellness Policy  
IHCDA – Dual Enrollment Policy  
Community Projects  
25/26 Housebuilding Program Application  
Superintendent-Director Report