

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA  
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM  
February 13, 2025

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, Richard Manuels Jr. of Fall River, Joan Menard of Fall River, Donald DiBiasio of Somerset (remote) and Jeffrey Begin of Swansea.

Absent: William Flanagan of Fall River

Also in attendance were: Brian Bentley, Superintendent/Director, Leslie Weckesser, Assistant Superintendent-Principal, Paul Kitchen, Director of Finance and Operations, Ace Wittkamper, Student Representative and Helena Neves, Executive Secretary

Members of the Diman Teachers Association were in attendance in person and remotely.

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 in the chat of intent to record.*

Mr. Jennings led the Pledge of Allegiance.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted on a roll call to dispense with the reading of the January 9, 2025 minutes and approved them, as recorded.

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

Ms. Wittkamper provided the student report which included an update on current events, ongoing issues, and new issues. School lunches continue to improve with an increased variety in daily offerings. There is a consistent availability of wraps throughout lunch periods, charcuterie trays continue to be available and there has been an introduction of new items such as Philly cheesesteak, rodeo burger and meatball sub. The new “Bengal Build Excellence” hallways is already improving student morale. Ms. Wittkamper suggested bringing back the Trade Fair which allows students to navigate a project on their own that produces tangible evidence that they did something to be proud of. The Trade Fair would also offer an opportunity to showcase the abilities of Diman students to the community.

There was no Citizen Input.

Mr. Bentley provided a summary of Prime Contract Change Order (PCCO) No. 002 which was approved by the School Building Committee.

It was moved by Mr. Begin, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted on a roll call to reaffirm PCCO No. 002 for a total amount of \$76,014.58.

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

Mr. Jennings called for a motion to authorize Mr. Bentley or Mr. Kitchen to Sign PCCOs approved by the School Building Committee.

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It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted on a roll call to authorize Mr. Bentley or Mr. Kitchen to Sign PCCOs approved by the School Building Committee .

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

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 Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted on a roll call to approve the following MSBA Project expenditures: Colliers Invoice #0001021881 dated 1/31/2025 for the amount of \$165,579.34, Colliers Invoice #0001011473 dated 12/31/2024 for the amount of \$127,501.11, KBA invoice #20006.01-31 dated 1/29/2025 for the amount of \$115,537.00, and Suffolk Construction application no. 16 dated 1/31/2025 for the amount of \$7,396,690.23.

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

Mr. Bentley reported on personnel appointments and advisory board appointments.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted on a roll call to appoint Madison Pereira, Rachel Resendes and Trent Resendes as advisory board members of the Carpentry and Cabinet Making Program for a term of three years.

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

Mr. Bentley reported on the student travel requests.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted on a roll call to approve the afterhours student travel request submitted by the Theater Arts Club Advisors for students to attend tech rehearsal and festival competition being held at Attleboro High School. Tech rehearsal is on February 24, 2025 from 3:00 pm to 6:30 pm and the festival competition is on March 1, 2025 from 6:30 pm to 10:00 pm.

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

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted on a roll to approve the overnight student travel request submitted by the BPA Club Advisor for students to attend the Business Professionals of America (BPA) State Competition being held in Norwood, MA on March 8, 2025 and March 9, 2025.

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

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted on a roll to approve the out of state student travel request submitted by the Dental Assisting Program Instructors for students to go to Pearson Testing Center in Warwick, RI on March 14, 2025 from 6:30 am to 5:00 pm for the RHS Board exam.

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

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted on a roll to approve the out of state student travel request submitted by the Building and Property Maintenance Instructors for students to attend the Annual Builder's / Building Materials and Building Process Trade Show. It is hosted at the RI Convention Center Providence, RI on March 28, 2025 from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm. *5 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention. Motion Carries*

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted on a roll to approve the out of state student travel request submitted by the HVAC Program Instructors for students to attend the Annual Builder's /

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Building Materials and Building Process Trade Show. It is hosted at the RI Convention Center Providence, RI on March 28, 2025 from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm. *5 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention. Motion Carries*

Mr. Bentley reported on the use of facilities requests.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted on a roll to approve the use of facilities request submitted by the Diman Football Coach to use the gymnasium for the annual dodge ball tournament to be held on Friday, March 14, 2025 from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm and to waive all use of facilities fees.

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

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted on a roll to approve the use of facilities request submitted by the Diman Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPEC) to use a classroom for a meeting with the School Principal and the Director of Special Education to be held on Thursday, March 27, 2025 from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm and to waive all use of facilities fees. *5 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention. Motion Carries*

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted on a roll to approve the request submitted the North Fall River Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses to use the auditorium on Saturday, April 12, 2025 from 5:45 pm to 8:45 pm for their annual religious celebration. The total use of facilities fee is \$374.82.

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

Mr. Bentley reported on the acceptance of gifts.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted on a roll to accept the donation of \$3,000 worth of material made by City Electric Supply Company of Fall River to the Electricity Program.

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

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted on a roll to accept the donation of \$1,000 made by ICM Mechanical & Controls to the Diman BPA Chapter to be used at the discretion of the BPA Advisor for the state and national competitions.

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

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted on a roll to accept the donation of 35 safety glasses (estimated value of \$100) made by Tony Resendes for the students in the Advanced Manufacturing Program.

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

Mr. Bentley stated that due to a change in the law MCAS is no longer a graduation requirement. The Department of Education has established that there still needs to be some determination of competency for students who do graduate from high school. The Administrative Team collaborated to review the course work and curriculum to develop the competency determination. Information shared by the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators, Superintendents groups, Principals groups and Academic Directors groups was also used. Mr. Bentley stated that students will continue to take the MCAS test, as it can be used to determine competency.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted on a roll call to approve the revised competency determination, as submitted.

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

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Mrs. Weckesser provided an update on the Vision of the Graduate. The group is made up of about 32 members from different backgrounds. The first meeting was held on February 6<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Boscombe presented a PowerPoint and provided handouts of plan samples from other schools. Mrs. Boscombe introduced the idea about building adjectives around the letters B.E.N.G.A.L. that are relatable not only to business, industry, college, and surrounding communities, but to the faculty and staff as well.

Mr. Bentley stated that a request was received to add a co-advisor for the DECA Club due to the large number of members.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted on a roll call to approve a co-advisor for the DECA Club per the DTA contract. *5 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention. Motion Carries*

Mr. Bentley stated that the exploratory program has concluded and 385 freshman have been placed in a shop. Mrs. Griffin stated that the exploratory process and shop placement process did not change from last year. A handout was provided that showed the shop placement data by program and shop choices. The data sheet also included shop choices by gender. Mrs. Griffin stated that 27 out of 385 students were not placed in a shop of their choice. Students and their families were contacted and were offered placement in available shops. Sixteen out of the 27 students who weren't placed in a shop of their choice have submitted a shop change form. Mr. DiBiasio asked if any of the 27 students have withdrawn. Mrs. Griffin stated that one student has withdrawn but it was due to the overall experience of having two weeks on/ two weeks off. Another student who was placed in their top choice shop who had requested and was granted a shop change is also withdrawing due to the same reason.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that he would like to see the exploratory rubric revised. Students that may have had a bad experience or missed days due to an illness should not be penalized. Mrs. Griffin stated that after the February break, she will be looking to assemble a team, hopefully exploratory teachers will join, to review the exploratory process as a whole.

Mr. Kitchen provided a summary of the monthly financial report. The daily substitutes account has roughly \$40,000 left out of the \$250,000 that was encumbered. Funds will need to be transferred to cover the expense for the remainder of the school year.

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

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted on a roll call to approve all expenditures, as submitted. *5 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention. Motion Carries*

Mr. Kitchen provided an overview of the transfer of funds request. A total of \$150,000 will be transferred into the daily substitute salaries account to cover the expense for the remainder of the school year. The funds will be transferred out of the teacher salaries and benefits lines. The other funds being transferred will cover the cost of books for Dental Assisting, equipment for Auto Technology and Programming and Web and technology supplies.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Manuels and voted on a roll call to approve the transfer of funds, as submitted. *5 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention. Motion Carries*

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Mr. Kitchen provided a summary of the request to surplus miscellaneous books and equipment.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Manuels and voted on a roll call to approve the transfer of funds, as submitted. ***5 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention. Motion Carries***

Mr. Kitchen provided an overview of the request to surplus textbooks and equipment. Textbooks will be donated. Items such as a lift, planer, oscilloscopes, tables and chairs will be auctioned.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Manuels and voted on a roll call to approve the surplus of books and equipment, as submitted. ***5 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention. Motion Carries***

Mr. DiBiasio requested that a link for the auction website be posted on the Diman website.

Mr. Kitchen provided an overview of the bid award request for the Lincoln 300C Welders & Equipment.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Manuels and voted on a roll call to approve Welding Mart, W5021 Amy Avenue, Suite 7, Kaukauna, WI 54130, as the lowest responsible bidder for the Lincoln 300C Welders & Equipment for the Metal Fabrication Department within the Greater Fall River Vocational School District at One Hundred Forty Three Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty Three Dollars 08/100 (\$143,863.08). ***5 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention. Motion Carries***

Mr. Bentley provided the Superintendent-Director's report which included an update on student enrollment, exploratory placement, admissions, cooperative education and the LPN Program. Student enrollment remains strong at 1465 students as of February 5<sup>th</sup>. There have been 810 applications received for the class of 2029. Accepted Student Night is scheduled for April 8, 2025 at 6:00 pm. Cooperative Education placements continue to increase. Currently, there are 198 seniors and 25 juniors placed with local employers. The Board of Nursing has accepted Mrs. Pitera's appointment as the Interim LPN Director. The District will continue to advertise and interview for a permanent director. The Food Science Club will hold their presentations on March 13<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm.

Mr. Bentley stated that the Dental Assisting instructors submitted a student travel request for students to take the ICE Exam. The date and time of the exam was assigned after the agenda was posted.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Manuels and voted on a roll call to approve the afterhours student travel request submitted by the Dental Assisting Instructors for students to take the Infection Control Exam (ICE) in Wellesley, MA on March 13, 2025 from 2:45 pm to 8:45 pm. ***5 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention. Motion Carries***

The next regular meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for March 13, 2025.

Mr. Jennings provided notification that if the Diman Teachers Association negotiations are finalized, he will call for a special meeting of the School Committee, if needed.

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It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted on a roll call with Mr. Jennings, Mr. DiBiasio, Mr. Begin, Mr. Manuels and Ms. Menard voting yes to adjourn the meeting at 6:19 p.m.

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

**Materials Included:**

January 9, 2025 Minutes  
Student Report  
Prime Contract Change Order  
MSBA Project Expenditures  
Revised Competency Determination  
Shop Placement Report  
Monthly Financial Report  
Student Activity Agency Accounts Report  
Expenditure Report  
Transfer of Funds  
Surplus of Books and Equipment  
Superintendent-Director Report