

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
HOUSEBUILDING/FACILITIES SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM
MARCH 13, 2025

In attendance: Paul Jennings of Westport, Joan Menard of Fall River and Donald DiBiasio of Somerset.

Also in attendance: Brian Bentley, Superintendent-Director, Leslie Weckesser, Assistant Superintendent-Principal, Paul Kitchen, Director of Finance and Operations, Maria Torres, Assistant Principal of Technical Affairs Gregory Brillhante, Legal Counsel and Helena Neves, Executive Secretary.

Remote Attendance: Jeffrey Cabral, Allison Medeiros and Brittany Mota.

The meeting began with a roll call at 4:30 p.m.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Jennings and voted unanimously to dispense with the reading of the December 12, 2024 minutes and approve them, as recorded.

Mr. DiBiasio deferred to Mrs. Torres for the community projects update. Mr. Torres stated that the work on the community projects is moving right along. Some of the projects have been completed and some are on hold due to the Building and Property students and instructor having to help at the Swansea house. Mrs. Torres encouraged members to attend the RI Home Show and see the Rosemary's Wish Kids Playhouse that was built by Diman students.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that he has visited the house site. It was really nice to see the students and instructors from the different programs working together.

Mrs. Torres informed members that the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has changed the frameworks for many of the programs with Building and Property taking the biggest hit. DESE has changed the name of the program and have basically made it more like a college project management course. The majority of the new curriculum is didactic and there is no carpentry in the frameworks. Mr. Jennings asked if the changes have to be accepted. Mr. Bentley stated that the frameworks are the baseline that need to be adhered to in order to meet the NEASC accreditation and program requirements. Mrs. Weckesser stated the recent changes have also reduced the exploratory hours to 180 which aligns directly to comprehensive high schools that offer CTE programs. Mrs. Torres stated that she has been very vocal and has expressed the concerns with DESE.

Mr. DiBiasio deferred to Mrs. Torres for the 24/25 Housebuilding Program update. The work on the house is moving right along. Someone is coming on Friday to look at the HVAC system. New energy codes will be taking effect soon that will impact new constructions. Students are doing a really nice job and everyone is working hard.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that two applications have been received for the 25/26 Housebuilding Program. One was submitted by Jordan Motta for a house to be built on Lot #21 Nottingham Circle in Swansea. This is a one level house at 1800 sq. ft. The garage increases the size to 2428 sq. ft. Mr. DiBiasio asked Mr. Cabral to provide his input on the house. Mr. Cabral stated that it's a simple

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one level ranch style house. The concern is with the details with the roof trusses. The trusses are going to be about 43ft long and 11ft wide making it hard to install by hand without the use of a crane. Mr. DiBiasio stated that the homeowners will be responsible for hire the crane for the installation. Students will not be able to do work while the crane is on site. Mr. Cabral stated that instructors can brace the trusses need to ensure student safety.

Mr. DiBiasio asked Mr. Cabral if there were any concerns with the inside design. Mr. Cabral stated that the design inside is simple and straightforward.

Mr. DiBiasio asked Mr. Mota if he had anything to add. Mr. Mota stated that he is a certified crane operator and would not have an issue with getting a crane for the trusses. Mr. DiBiasio stated that the concern is with having subcontractors on site while students are also there. The safety of the students is top priority.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that the second application was submitted by Allison Medeiros and Zachary Carvalho from Westport. The application is to build a 2,426 sq. ft. house with a garage at 42 Crane Avenue in Westport. This house has a walkout basement which makes it two levels in the back which makes it not compliant with the policy.

Mr. DiBiasio asked Mr. Cabral for his input on the Westport house. Mr. Cabral stated that he has looked at the house plans extensively as it has more architectural details. Mr. Cabral has communicated via email with the homeowners and they are willing to make changes if needed. The floor system is harder due to the walkout basement. The framing plan is more technical with a lot more beam work that requires more time. The roof trusses cannot be installed by students and are a concern just as the house in Swansea. The other concern is the chimney in the back. Diman does not have the staging or the equipment to build it.

Mr. DiBiasio asked Mr. Cabral for his input on the new energy code. Mr. Cabral stated that Westport is a "stretch town" which means they follow the 21 energy code and then some. They have a few extra energy codes that need to be strictly followed. The 21 energy codes go in effect on June 30th. Some of the new codes pertain to insulation, energy efficient windows and more efficient heating and cooling equipment.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that students will not be able to do the roof and the siding on the backside. Mr. Cabral stated that students can do the siding but cannot do the roof. Mr. DiBiasio stated that if the Westport application is approved, the roof would be the homeowners responsibility.

Mr. DiBiasio asked Mr. Cabral if the roof is contracted out would there be enough time to complete the house. Mr. Cabral stated that if the roof and the chimney were to be done by an outside contractor the house can be built in the school year.

Mrs. Torres expressed concern that if work is subbed out the students miss out on the hands on experience.

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Mr. DiBiasio asked the Westport applicants if they had anything to add. Ms. Medeiros stated that they are willing to make changes if needed.

Mrs. Torres expressed concern that the project may not be completed due to the 21 energy code and the additional codes of the stretch town code. Mrs. Menard asked if the Swansea house was easier. Mr. Jennings stated that both houses have their issues. Mr. DiBiasio stated that the homeowners will need to do some of the work and the Housebuilding Program should rotate communities.

It was moved by Mr. Jennings, seconded by Mrs. Menard and voted unanimously to recommend the Westport Housebuilding Program application to the School Committee for approval.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Jennings and voted unanimously adjourn the meeting at 5:12 PM.

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

Materials Included:

December 12, 2024 minutes
Community Projects List
25/26 Housebuilding Program Applications