

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM
May 8, 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 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, Attorney Gregory Brilhante, 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. Jennings led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Bentley stated that the special recognition was for Madyson Holmes who was chosen as the 2025 Youth Year and the first Diman student to receive such award. Madyson was not able to be present but was honored with a plaque.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the March 13, 2025 minutes, as submitted.

Ms. Wittkamper provided the student report which included an update on current events, sports, and ongoing issues. Ms. Wittkamper stated that her goal of establishing a culture at Diman where student participation is seen as something positive is getting to where she wants it to be, slowly but surely. She is optimistic and will continue to focus on building a gratifying culture at Diman.

Mr. Bentley informed members that Ms. Wittkamper has been called up to participate in the SkillsUSA National Competition. Ace will not only be representing Diman, they will also represent Massachusetts.

Mr. Jennings called for nominations to elect the Chairperson of the School Committee.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio to nominate Mr. Paul Jennings as the Chairman of the School Committee, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to elect Mr. Jennings as the Chairman of the School Committee.

It was moved by Mr. Begin to nominate Mr. Donald DiBiasio as the Vice Chair of the School Committee, seconded by Mr. Manuels and voted unanimously to elect Mr. DiBiasio as the Vice Chairman of the School Committee.

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It was moved by Mr. Begin, seconded by Mr. Manuels and voted unanimously to appoint Ms. Jill Brillhante as the Treasurer of the School Committee.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels to appoint Mr. Jeffrey Begin as the Assistant Treasurer of the School Committee.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to appoint Ms. Helena Neves as the Secretary of the School Committee.

Mr. Jennings informed members that the subcommittee appointments will remain as is.

There was no Citizen Input.

Mr. Kitchen stated that upon completion and review of the District's End of Year report, DESE is requiring the District to implement a FY'25 Budget Adjustment to be in compliance with the required Net School Spending requirement. The recommendation is to increase the budget by \$1,387,096 to place the District in compliance.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels and voted unanimously to increase the FY25 budget by \$1,387,096.00. This action will put the District in compliance with DESE's Net School Spending requirements.

Mr. DiBiasio provided the MSBA School Building update. The project is on schedule and making progress. April was an important month for construction, with work ongoing to make the building water tight. The exterior envelope, which includes exterior walls, windows, and roofing, all have made progress. Over school vacation week, the project team took advantage of the unoccupied campus to make important drain installations that required the use of the existing roadways. Most of the rooftop equipment is now on the roof as well as the mechanical systems below. A monthly newsletter prepared by Colliers is sent to neighbors providing them with project updates. Summer work will close the main drive lane in preparation for the new drive lane to Locust Street. Mr. Bentley stated that a public community outreach meeting is scheduled for May 19th at 6:00 pm.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that there have been some changes made to the MSBA School Building Committee to reflect the resignation by Ms. Collins and the removal of Ms. Priestner, Mr. Arruda and Mr. Librera. Mr. Richard Medeiros was added as a replacement for Mr. Arruda.

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

Mr. Kitchen provided an overview of the Kaestle Boos contract amendment #10 and #11. Amendment #10 is the proposal for the sports lighting on the lower fields at a cost of \$117,000. Amendment #11 is for the roof mounted solar system design services at a cost of \$175,000.

Mr. DiBiasio provided a summary of Prime Contract Change Order (PCCO) No. 004 which was approved by the School Building Committee.

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It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels and voted unanimously to reaffirm the Kaestle Boos Contract Amendment #10, as submitted.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels and voted unanimously to reaffirm the Kaestle Boos Contract Amendment #11, as submitted.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels and voted unanimously to reaffirm PCCO No. 004 for a total amount of \$1,265,172.24.

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

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to reaffirm the following MSBA Project expenditures: Colliers Invoice #0001039651 dated 3/31/2025 for the amount of \$132,146.62, KBA invoice #20006.01-33 dated 3/28/2025 for the amount of \$115,537.00, Suffolk Construction application no. 18 dated 3/31/2025 for the amount of \$10,886,007.35. Yankee Engineering invoice #33421 dated 1/29/2025 for the amount of \$35,270.00 and invoice #33318 dated 12/23/2024 for the amount of \$25,925.00.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to approve the following MSBA Project expenditures: Colliers Invoice #0001049101 dated 4/30/2025 for the amount of \$146,602.60, KBA invoice #20006.01-34 dated 4/28/2025 for the amount of \$115,537.00, Suffolk Construction application no. 19 dated 4/30/2025 for the amount of \$16,993,143.43. Yankee Engineering invoice #33660 dated 3/31/2025 for the amount of \$15,740.00.

Mr. Bentley reported on personnel appointments, reappointments, resignations and retirements, anticipated vacancies and Advisory Board appointments.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to appoint Aidan Bernier and Joel Correia to the Electricity Advisory Board for a term of three years.

Agenda Item 3.1.c – Individual Employment Agreement was taken up after executive session.

Mr. Bentley reported on the student travel requests previously approved due to the cancellation of the April meeting.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to:

- reaffirm the out of state and overnight student travel request submitted by the Cheer Coaches for students to travel to Pennsylvania on April 25, 2025 to participate in the Cheer Competition.
- reaffirm the overnight travel request submitted by the SkillsUSA Club Advisors for students to attend the SkillsUSA State Conference being held in Marlborough, MA from May 1, 2025 through May 3, 2025.

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- reaffirm the afterhours and out of state travel request submitted by the Photography Club Advisor for students to visit the Newport and Roger Williams Zoo on May 9, 2025 from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm.
- reaffirm the out of state travel request submitted by the BPA Club students to compete in the Business Professionals of America (BPA) National Conference in Florida from May 6, 2025 to May 11, 2025.
- reaffirm the out of state and afterhours travel request submitted by the Culinary Arts Instructors the senior students in the program to experience a fine dining establishment at the Castle Hill in Newport, RI on May 13, 2025 from 3:30 pm to 8:00 pm.

Mr. Bentley reported on the student travel requests.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the out of stated travel request submitted by the Auto Collision Instructors for students to visit the Newport Car Museum in Portsmouth, RI on May 16, 2025 from 9:30 am to 2:15 pm.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to approve the out of state travel request submitted by Mr. Salsinha, Metal Fabrication Instructor for a student to compete in the Project MFG National Maritime Finals at the Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan from June 2nd through June 5th.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to approve the out of state travel request submitted by Mr. Salsinha, Advanced Manufacturing Instructor for a student to compete in the Project MFG National Welding League Finals at the Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan from June 5nd through June 7th.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to approve the out of state and afterhours travel request submitted by the Sophomore Class Advisors for students to attend the class field trip to Canobie Lake Pare in Salem, New Hampshire on June 9, 2025 from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to approve the afterhours travel request submitted by the Junior Class Advisors for students to attend the class field trip to Six Flags in Agawam, MA on June 11, 2025 from 7:45 am to 6:00 pm.

Mr. Bentley reported on the request to establish a new club. Mr. Adam Pimentel has submitted a request to establish the Dungeons and Dragons Club. The club will help students to make new friends, experiment with leadership and support roles and practice social and practical problem solving skills. Mr. Pimentel has agreed to be the club advisor. The advisor will not be compensated as the club in not in the DTA contract. Mr. Pimentel stated that the student present, Carter from the Graphic Communications Program, was instrumental in getting the idea to form the club. Carter stated that Dungeon and Dragons is a game he enjoys very much and is hoping to share his interest with other students.

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It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the request to establish the Dungeons and Dragons Club. The advisor will not be compensated as the club is not in the DTA contract.

Mr. Bentley stated that the May 2nd was changed to an 11:00 am student dismissal. Staff participated in professional development for the remainder of the day. This change was needed to align the number of work days in the DTA contract.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to reaffirm the May 2, 2025 School Calendar change, as previously approved.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Mrs. Weckesser for the upcoming calendar changes. Mrs. Weckesser stated that the last day of the school year is now on June 18th due to a snow day. The last three days of school will be early dismissal for students.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the 24/25 School Calendar changes, as submitted. *June 16, 2025 – will be an 11:58 am student dismissal / full day for staff, June 17, 2025 - will be an 11:58 am student dismissal / full day for staff and June 18, 2025 – will be the last day of school – 11:00 am student dismissal.*

Mr. Bentley reported on the use of facilities requests.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to reaffirm the use of facilities request submitted by Brian Jacob, Director of Water Maintenance of the Fall River Water Department to use the parking lot on Saturday, April 29, 2025 from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm and to waive all fees.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the use of facilities request submitted by Myles Brilhante to use the gymnasium on Wednesdays from 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm for the months of June through August for the Men's Basketball League and to waive all use of facilities fees.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the request by the Rotary Club of Fall River to use the Cafeteria and Room 251 for their Annual Pancake Breakfast to be held on Sunday, November 2, 2025 from 6:30 AM to 12:30 PM and to waive all use of facilities fees.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the request by the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators to use a classroom for an OCED Vocational Teacher Course to be held on Wednesdays from May 21, 2025 through July 2, 2025 from 4:00 pm to 6:30 pm and to waive all use of facilities fees.

Mr. Bentley reported on the acceptance of gifts. The Scholastic Sports Zone Foundation has donated an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) in memory of Michael Thomas Ellsessar and Timothy John Ellsessar.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to accept the donation by the Scholastic Sports Zone Foundation of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) in memory of Michael Thomas Ellsessar and Timothy John Ellsessar.

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Mr. Bentley asked members if they had any questions regarding the Spring Advisory Board Reports. Mr. DiBiasio stated that the reports were well done.

Mr. Bentley stated that the Special Recognitions Committee has nominated Albertina Bell for the Distinguished Graduate award and Leo Roy for the Honorary Diploma award.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the 2025 Distinguished Graduate/Honorary Diploma recipients as: Distinguished Graduate, Albertina Bell and Honorary Diploma, Leo Roy.

Mrs. Weckesser provided an update on the Vision of the Graduate. Voting is currently taking place and it will close on Monday. The final version will be presented at the June 12th meeting.

Mrs. Weckesser provided a summary of the FY25 Diman Faculty Groups. There are over 40 staff members that are participating in focus groups that meet beyond the school day and without compensation. The intent of the groups is to look at different areas, gather input from students and staff and make recommendations for possible changes/improvements.

Mr. Kitchen left the meeting at 6:11 pm.

Mr. Bentley reported on the Substitute and Student Pay Rate. The recommendation is to not change the substitute and student pay rates.

Mr. Kitchen left the meeting at 6:12 pm.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to not change the current rates for substitute teachers, nurses and students. Substitute Teacher - \$150, Long Term Substitute Teacher - \$215 Student - \$16.00, Student Rate for Night School - \$17.00, Substitute Nurse - \$274.37.

Mr. Bentley began the discussion on After School Sports/Events Pay Rate. Currently anyone that works a sports game or an event is getting paid \$75.00. The cost of a sports game is more that the revenue even though an entrance fee is charged for some games. The recommendation is to lower the per game/event fee to \$50.00. Mr. Kitchen stated that the District is paying more for people working a game than the officials that are running up and down the court. Mr. Bailey has suggested that the District hire students to work the events and not collect an admission fee. The discussion continued on the after school sports/events pay rate.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin, to change the rate of pay for sports/events to the recommended \$50 per game/event across the board. The motion did not pass. Mr. DiBiasio withdrew the motion and requested that Mr. Bailey contact local school district's to inquire what they are paying. Mr. Manuels requested a report on expenses vs revenues for sports games/events.

Mr. Jennings deferred to Mr. Kitchen for the discussion of health insurance plans. Mr. Kitchen requested that a Health Insurance Advisory Committee be established. The committee would consist of a representative from each of the bargaining units and administration. Currently there are approximately 145 subscribers to our insurance of which 12 are all large claims.

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It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to establish an Insurance Advisory Sub-Committee.

Mr. Kitchen provided an overview of the Trak Bed Mills bid award.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to approve Southwestern Industries, Inc. DBA TRAK Machine Tools, 2615 Homestead Place, Rancho Dominguez, CA as the responsible and responsive bidder for 3 TRAK DPMRX2 Bed Mills for a total of \$143,097.00 for the Advanced Manufacturing Department within the Greater Fall River Vocational School District.

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

Mr. Kitchen provided an overview of the expenditures in excess of \$10,000 that were previously approved due to the cancellation of the April meeting.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels and voted unanimously to reaffirm the expenditures in excess of \$10,000, as submitted.

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 the expenditures in excess of \$10,000, as submitted.

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

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

Mr. Kitchen provided a summary of the request to surplus textbooks and equipment. Textbooks will be donated. Equipment will be auctioned. The District has collected \$457,000 from equipment that has been auctioned.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the surplus of books and equipment, as submitted.

Mr. Kitchen provided a summary of the FY24 Financial Reports. There were no findings.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to receive the FY24 Financial Report and place on file.

Mr. DiBiasio provided the Community Projects update. Work on the projects is moving along but some will carry over to next year. The construction on the 24/25 Housebuilding Program house is on track to finished before the end of the school year. The 25/26 Housebuilding Program applicants are working on finalizing details for the contract.

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Mr. DiBiasio provided the Policy Sub-Committee Report. The 25/26 Student Handbook was revised to update job titles and grammar. Language was added about unexcused dismissals to mirror the current policy for unexcused tardies, Language regarding the usage of AI was also added.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted to approve the 25/26 Student Handbook, as submitted.

Mr. Bentley stated that there were no major changes made to the 25/26 LPN Student Guidelines or the 25/26 LPN Financial Aid Handbook. Job titles and grammar were corrected.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the 25/26 LPN Student Guidelines, as submitted.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the 25/26 LPN Financial Aid Handbook, as submitted.

Mrs. Weckesser stated that the Family Engagement Policy, which hadn't been reviewed since 2019, was revised to make sure that it current with the requirements of the Title I grant, and is consistent with the recommended language.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the KBA-1 - Family Engagement Policy, as submitted.

Mr. Bentley provided the Superintendent-Director's report which included an update on student enrollment, exploratory program review, admissions, cooperative education and the LPN Program. An Exploratory Program Review Committee has been formed and will start the process of doing a deeper dive into the curriculum use. The lease of the LPN building is up in 2025-2026. The LPN Sub-Committee will need to meet to discuss plans for the 26-27 school year. Mrs. Boscombe, Programming and Web Development Instructor has been awarded a scholarship to participate in the National Cybersecurity Teaching Academy. Mr. Bentley provided the SkillsUSA State competition results. Diman students won 24 gold medals, 6 silver medals and 6 bronze medals. Jonathan Root, Culinary Arts Instructor and SkillsUSA Advisor has been selected as the SkillsUSA Massachusetts Advisor of the Year.

Mr. Bentley provided a summary of upcoming events. Next year's SkillsUSA National competition has been moved for the first week in June. This change will affect the 25/26 school calendar. Changes will be brought before the committee for approval.

The next meeting will be June 12, 2025. Mr. Bentley stated that a July meeting will be needed due to borrowing of funds and expenditures for the MSBA project.

Attorney Brilhante stated the reasons to go into executive session.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted on a roll call at 6:52 pm to enter into Executive Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. DiBiasio, Mr. Begin, Mr. Manuels and Ms. Menard voting yes.

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It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted on a roll call at 8:24 p.m. to rise into Open Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. DiBiasio, Mr. Begin, Mr. Manuels and Ms. Menard and voting yes.

Agenda Item 3.1.c – Individual Employment Agreement- Lisa Young, LPN Director

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to approve the individual employment agreement for Lisa Young, LPN Director, as negotiated.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 pm with Mr. Jennings, Mr. DiBiasio, Mr. Begin, Mr. Manuels and Ms. Menard and voting yes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Helena S. Neves

Helena S. Neves, Executive Secretary

Materials Included:

March 13, 2025 Minutes
Student Report
KBA Contract Amendments #10 & #11
Prime Contract Change Order No. 004
MSBA Project Expenditures
Spring Advisory Reports
Transportation Bid Award
Monthly Financial Report
Student Activity Agency Accounts Report
Expenditure Report
Surplus of Books and Equipment
Community Projects List
25/26 Student Handbook
25/26 LPN Student Guidelines
25/26 LPN Financial Aid Handbook
KBA-1 Family Engagement Policy
Superintendent-Director Report