

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA  
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM  
August 14, 2025

The regular meeting of the Greater Fall River Vocational School District Committee was called to order at 5:31 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, Jennifer DeMariano, Assistant Principal of Technical Affairs, Linda Griffin, Director of Guidance and Admissions, Melissa Petrasso, Accountant, Attorney Gregory Brillhante, and Helena Neves, Executive Secretary.

Remote Attendance: Decio Matos

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 Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the May 23, 2025, June 12, 2025, July 10, 2025 and July 31, 2025 minutes, as submitted.

There was no Citizen Input.

Mr. DiBiasio provided the MSBA School Building update. The project is on budget and on time and is about 60% completed. The outside of the building is really taking shape. Windows are installed. The new drive lane is expected to be paved this week. The new entrance will come out to Fenmore and Dunbar Streets. Some parking was lost. Mr. Bentley is working with maintenance to ensure parking is available. There will be a crane onsite next week to lift rooftop units.

Mr. DiBiasio provided a summary of Prime Contract Change Order (PCCO) No. 007 and PCCO No. 008 which were approved by the School Building Committee.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to reaffirm PCCO No. 007 for a total amount of \$357,772.03.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Manuels,, and voted unanimously to reaffirm PCCO No. 008 for a total amount of \$1,225,836.43.

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Mr. Bentley introduced Ms. Petrasso, Accountant and deferred to her for an overview of the MSBA project expenditures. Invoices from Colliers, KBA, and Suffolk reflect the billing for the month of July for the project. Invoices from Moody's and Yankee Engineering were also included for approval.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the following MSBA Project expenditures: Colliers Invoice #0001078805 dated 7/31/2025 for the amount of \$153,422.54, KBA invoice #20006.01-37 dated 7/29/2025 for the amount of \$115,537.00, Moody's Invoice #P0505871 dated 7/30/2025 for the amount of \$78,500.00, Suffolk Construction application no. 22 dated 7/31/2025 for the amount of \$9,754,190.33 and Yankee Engineering invoice #33809 dated 4/30/25 for the amount of \$7,180.00 and invoice #33896 dated 5/30/25 for the amount of \$6,060.00.

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

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to appoint is to appoint Madilyn Simcock - Advanced Manufacturing, Elijah Mendez, Aaron Myers and Seth Myers – Metal Fabrication and Joining Technologies to the identified Advisory Boards for a term of three years.

Mr. Bentley reported on the student travel request.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the out of state & after hours student travel request submitted by Mr. Botelho, for students to play in a game being held at Bryant University in Smithfield, Rhode Island, on August 26, 2025 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Mr. Bentley stated that a request for an assistant dance coach was received from Erika DiBiasio, Dance Coach. Ms. DiBiasio in her request stated that over 28 female students have joined the dance team. Attorney Brillhante asked if a stipend has been determined. Mr. Bentley stated that it has not. Mr. Bentley further stated that an Assistant DECA Advisor was previously approved and the stipend was calculated at 75% of the Advisor's stipend.

It was moved by Mr. Begin, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted to approve the to approve the request for a Dance Team Assistant Coach per the DTA contract. *Mr. DiBiasio abstained.*

Attorney Brillhante left the meeting at 5:47 PM.

Mr. Bentley reported on the use of facilities requests and introduced Jennifer DeMariano.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the use of facilities request submitted by Jenn DeMariano, Assistant Principal of Technical Affairs to use several shops for the NOCTI Career and Technical Education (CTE) Teacher Testing program on October 18, 2025 from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 pm and to waive all use of facilities fees.

Mr. Bentley reported on the acceptance of gifts.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to accept the donation made by Teresa Silva has donated a 2000 Plymouth Neon (estimated value of \$800) to the Auto Collision Program.

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It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to accept the donation made by The Bristol Aging & Wellness of Fall River, MA has donated 200 laboratory goggle and 500 face shields to science department and the three medical programs.

Mr. Bentley reported on the request submitted by Mr. Zajac to convert unused vacation days to sick days. The request is due to the reduction of his work year to 210 days as per the DAA contract.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the request by Mr. Zajac to convert 4.156 unused vacation days to sick days.

Mrs. Weckesser provided a summary of the End of the Year Report. Next year's report will include three years of data. It will also include program strengths and areas that need improvement.

Attorney Brilhante returned to the meeting at 5:53 p.m.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Mrs. Weckesser for a summary of the FY24-27 Medical Emergency Response Plan. Mrs. Weckesser stated that the updated plan was reviewed by a small group that included a school adjustment counselor, school nurse and the athletic director. Mrs. Weckesser further stated that she has been working with the lead security person to look at the maps of the new building and identify some specific areas of concern so that a plan is in place when it comes time to meet with the police and fire department. A format is also being created to establish a process on how to handle the "before and after" an incident. A Safety Team comprised of volunteer vocational instructors, academic teachers, and guidance staff was started last year to assist with planning for the new building.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels and voted unanimously to approve the FY24-27 Medical Emergency Response Plan, as submitted.

Mrs. Weckesser provided an overview of the FY25-28 Professional Development Plan. An internal professional development committee made up of volunteer vocational instructors, academic teachers, guidance counselors, school nurses and clerical staff was created to identify what the vision , the philosophy and the commitment to improvement were going to be and what attributes they were looking for in professional development. One of the proposals would be to use PD content-specific days so that they can visit other vocational schools to see the content that is being used and what additional software and best practices are out there. A report will be provided upon their return on what they saw and how they could see it implemented at Diman. The first content specific professional development days are scheduled for September and October.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the FY25-28 Professional Development Plan, as submitted.

Mrs. Weckesser stated that the FY26-28 School Improvement Plan is not yet finalized. Four common pillars were created by taking the narrative from the audit reports and plugged into the pillar categories. Each staff member will be assigned a task. A survey will be conducted and we will comeback as a community to solve concerns. Mrs. Weckesser further stated that she is hoping to have the plan ready in December.

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Mrs. Weckesser stated that the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) has not been updated since 2018 and is being reviewed. A consultant is scheduled to come in on November 3<sup>rd</sup> for a training on how to offer tiers 1-3 supports at all the programs. The plan will be updated and submitted for approval in December.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Ms. Petrasso for a summary of the monthly financial report. Ms. Petrasso stated that there isn't much to report as the year just started.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Ms. Petrasso for an overview of the Student Activities Agency Accounts. There's hardly any activity to report as it's mostly an end balances report. A new account needs to be established for the Class of 2029. Mr. Begin asked why there's such a high balance in the school store account. Ms. Petrasso stated that the purpose of the school store account, was originally created to help offset the expenses for DECA and that has not happened. It's been mostly money coming in and money going out for the sales of items sold by the store and to offset student costs. Over the past few years funds have been budgeted inside the general fund to cover the DECA expenses which have not been charged to the school store account, as it was originally intended. Two separate bank accounts are in place for the student activities accounts and the school store's PayPal payments. This was needed in case a bank account was compromised. Mr. DiBiasio asked if the cost of the products sold by the school store is being charged back to the school store. Ms. Petrasso stated that the stock purchased for the school store is being charged to the school store fund in the general ledger. Mr. DiBiasio stated that the cost of purchasing stock for the school store should be taken out of the school store's revenue and not taken out of the school store's general budget account. Mr. Begin requested a detail report of the school store account.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to establish a Student Activities Agency Account for the Class of 2029.

Ms. Petrasso provided an overview of the expenditures in excess of \$10,000 previously approved by Mr. Jennings.

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

Ms. Petrasso 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.

Ms. Petrasso provided an overview of the FY25 Year End Transfer of Funds request. The transfers have no impact on the budget as they are needed to close out individual lines in anticipation of the audit.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the FY25 Year End Transfer of Funds, as submitted.

Mr. Bentley provided an update on the Housebuilding Program and the Community Projects. The permit for the house has been obtained and the foundation has been poured. A check for the first payment has been received. A meeting will be scheduled with the homeowners and Mr. Cabral to finalize plans. Mrs. Weckesser and Ms. DeMariano are working on the Community Projects and will be consulting with the instructors. A more detailed update will be provided in September. Ms. DiMariano stated that she will be holding bi-weekly meetings on the Housebuilding

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Program and Community Projects. Mr. DiBiasio requested that all community projects be listed. Mr. Bentley stated that a conversation will need to take place regarding the transition to the new building and the impact the move will have on the 26/27 Housebuilding Program.

Mr. Jennings deferred to Ms. Griffin for a summary of the Go2CTE Admissions Software Program. Ms. Griffin stated that the current platform being used will not meet the needs of the district as the lottery system will be implemented . One of the biggest pros of Go2CTE is the ability to translate the application into any language. It is also able to extract and breakdown data as needed.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the use of the Go2CTE Admissions Software Program for admission purposes.

Mr. Bentley stated that the Policy Sub-Committee met to review Policy IHAQA-R – Rules and Regulations to be followed by the owner during the construction of a home to be built by the school and the FY26 Employee Handbook. Policy IHAQA-R was revised to change the general liability amount from \$2 million to \$1 million. This change was needed due to homeowners not being able to get the coverage.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to approve Policy IHAQA-R – Rules and Regulations to be followed by the owner during the construction of a home to be built by the school, as submitted.

Mrs. Weckesser stated that the employee handbook was updated to outline expectations that were found to not be understood by staff. The main goal of the Vision of the Graduate statement was also added. Discipline was updated.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the FY26 Employee Handbook, as submitted.

Mr. Bentley provided the Superintendent-Director's report which included an update on student enrollment, admissions, cooperative education and the LPN Program. Ms. Griffin distributed an updated enrollment and shop placement report. The data will be shared with shop instructors so that they can work on retaining the students in their programs. A survey will be sent to students within the first cycle of shop to find out why they chose these shops, why they chose Diman, and why they didn't choose some of the shops. Another survey will be sent after shop placement to collect feedback from the students on what are we doing well during exploratory and areas where we can improve.

Attorney Brilhante stated that Melissa Petrasso is an additional internal candidate who has applied for the Director of Finance position. She has taken the necessary steps relative to applying for the job, filing the licensing paperwork with DESE and receiving clearance by MSBA and the Inspector General's Office. She would like the opportunity to interview. Attorney Brilhante further stated that it is the Committee's choice if they would like to interview Ms. Petrasso. Mr. DiBiasio stated that if Ms. Petrasso is interviewed, a new set of interview questions needs to be developed as she was present during the other candidates interviews. A meeting will be schedule for Friday, August 22, 2025 at 4:00 PM for the purposes of interviewing Ms. Petrasso.

Mr. Bentley stated that opening day for faculty is on Tuesday, August 26, 2025 and invited members to attend and offer welcome remarks. Mr. Manuels will represent the School Committee at opening day.

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The next meeting will be September 11, 2025 at 5:30 PM.

Attorney Brillhante made the recommendation to go into executive session for the purpose of approving the minutes of the May 23, 2025 and June 12, 2025 meetings. There will not be a discussion on the Director of Finance position.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. DiBiasio and voted on a roll call at 6:47 pm to enter into Executive Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. DiBiasio, Mr. Begin, Mr. Manuels and Ms. Menard voting yes.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels and voted on a roll call at 6:53 p.m. to rise into Open Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. DiBiasio, Mr. Begin, Mr. Manuels and Ms. Menard and voting yes.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:53 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Helena S. Neves*

Helena S. Neves, Executive Secretary

**Materials Included:**

May 23, 2025 Minutes	District Curriculum Accommodation Plan
June 12, 2025 Minutes	Monthly Financial Report
July 10, 2025 Minutes	Student Activity Agency Accounts Report
July 31, 2025 Minutes	Expenditure Report
Prime Contract Change Order No. 007	FY25 Year End Transfer of Funds
Prime Contract Change Order No. 008	Policy IHAQA-R – Rules and Regulations to be followed by the owner during the construction of a home to be built by the school
MSBA Project Expenditures	FY26 Employee Handbook
FY25 End of Year Report	Superintendent-Director Report
FY24-27 Medical Emergency Response Plan	The Animal Rescue League of Fall River Letter
FY25-28 Professional Development Plan	
FY26-28 School Improvement Plan	