

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA  
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM  
September 11, 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, and Donald DiBiasio of Somerset. Jeffrey Begin of Swansea arrived at 5:33 pm.

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 Brilhante, and Helena Neves, Executive Secretary.

Remote attendance: Decio Matos and Rick Medeiros

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.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the August 14, 2025, August 22, 2025 and August 28, 2025 minutes, as submitted.

There was no Citizen Input.

Agenda item 2.1 Unfinished Business, a) FY26-28 School Improvement Plan and b) District Curriculum Accommodation Plan were not discussed as they are not finalized.

Mr. DiBiasio provided the MSBA School Building update. The summer work has been completed. The main drive lane has been brought up to grade to the height of the new building main entrance. The sidewalk going down Locust Street has been completed. New signage has been put up. The steel for the maintenance storage building is up. The installation of exterior glass is almost complete. Window testing is ongoing. Sheet rock installation is ongoing on the first level. Flooring is going in the Culinary Arts shop to allow for equipment to be delivered. It's impressive to see our management company, our architect, and our builder all working together to get the job completed, on time and on budget.

Jeffrey Begin of Swansea arrived at 5:33 pm.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that the MSBA Project monthly dashboard was distributed to all the members. The document provides images of the construction and financial updates. Mr. Bentley stated that Charlie Roberts, Colliers, is doing a great job making sure we're not over expending, and that we're getting our money's worth.

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Mr. Jennings asked who will be responsible for completing the 50% DCAMM report. Mr. DiBiasio stated that Colliers has requested an extension and will be completing the report. Colliers has been in contact with Jennifer Flynn at MSBA.

Mr. DiBiasio provided a summary of Prime Contract Change Order (PCCO) No. 009 which was approved by the School Building Committee.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to reaffirm PCCO No. 009 for a total amount of \$79,302.36

Mrs. Petrasso provided an overview of the MSBA project expenditures. Invoices from Colliers, KBA and Suffolk reflect the billing for the month of August for the project. An invoice from Yankee Engineering was also included.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the following MSBA Project expenditures: Colliers Invoice #0001088183 dated 8/31/2025 for the amount of \$142,115.58, KBA invoice #20006.01-38 dated 8/28/2025 for the amount of \$115,537.00, Suffolk Construction application no. 23 dated 8/31/2025 for the amount of \$10,232,098.75 and Yankee Engineering invoice #34357 dated 8/29/2025 for the amount of \$6,875.00.

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

It was moved by Mr. Manuels, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to appoint Alexandria Jordan-Teixeira – Automotive Technology, Madison Medeiros - Business Technology and Shalynn Woicik – Automotive Collision to identified Advisory Boards for a term of three years.

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

Mr. Bentley reported on the student travel requests

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the afterhours student travel request submitted by Mr. Francouer, Cross Country Coach for students go to Marathon Sports in Mansfield, MA on September 28, 2025 from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm for the Running Shoe Partnership.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the out of state and afterhours student travel request submitted by Ms. Kochman and Ms. Goddard, Senior Class Advisors, for students to attend the Senior Prom on May 28, 2026 from 5:00 pm to 11:00 pm in Providence, Rhode Island.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the international student travel request submitted by Mr. Chace, International Club Advisor, for students to participate in the International Club Field Trip to Japan at the end of the 26-27 school year and returning by June 30, 2027.

Mr. Bentley reported on the use of facilities requests.

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It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the use of facilities request submitted by Mr. Viveiros from the Diman Alumni Association to use Room 251 on Thursday, October 2, 2025 and November 6, 2025 from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM for a meeting and to waive all use of facilities fees.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to approve the use of facilities request submitted by Brian Jacob, Director of Water Maintenance for the City of Fall River to use the parking lot for the Interlachen Walk & Tour on October 25, 2025 from 9:00 am to 1:00 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 \$6,000 donation made by the Diman Bengal Education Foundation in conjunction with BankFive, BayCoast Bank, AA Precision Company and SouthCoast Health to the Carpentry and Cabinetmaking Program for the implementation of the Roofing Curriculum. The funds are to be used to purchase roofing tools, harnesses, roof materials, curriculum support, etc.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to accept the \$1,000 donation made by BayState Financial to fund the cost of the breakfast and lunch for new staff on August 25th, staff welcome back luncheon on August 26th and cookies for the August 28th presentation.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to accept the \$1,500 donation made by Kaestle Boos Associates Inc. to be used to purchase the CityPass for participants of the 24/25 SkillsUSA Competition.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to accept the \$1,500 donation made by Suffolk Construction Company, Inc. for the Athletics Golf Tournament Fundraiser.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to accept the donation of gloves and bouffant caps for the Dental and Medical Programs by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency.

Mr. Bentley provided a summary of the request for a DECA assistant advisor. Mr. Machado, DECA Advisor in his request indicated that there are over 50 participants right out of the gate. The assistant will be paid a stipend of 75% of the DECA Advisor's stipend.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the request for a DECA Assistant Advisor, per the DTA contract.

Mrs. Petrasso provided a summary of the monthly financial report. Mrs. Petrasso stated that there is not much to report as the school year has just begun. The extraordinary maintenance account will be funded once the end of year report is finalized.

Mrs. Petrasso provided members with a breakdown of revenue and expenses for the school store. She is working with Mrs. Weckesser to review the school store account, its expenses and revenue to determine if we are

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overcharging for products sold or if inventory purchases are not being charged correctly. Mr. Begin stated that he does not want to see overcharging for products bought through the school store. Mrs. Petrasso stated that items such as freshman shirts, OVS jackets and student uniforms should be charged to the school store and not to the general fund.

Mrs. Petrasso provided an overview of the expenditures in excess of \$10,000.

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

Mr. DiBiasio expressed concern about the annual storage fee. Mrs. Petrasso stated that equipment for the new building was purchased using grant funds but there is no space in the existing building to store it, therefore the need to store it off site.

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. Bentley deferred to Ms. DeMariano for a summary of the Vocational Program Data Review. Ms. DeMariano stated that the document provided offers specific data for each one of the programs. It has specific data on grade 9 shop choices for last year and the two previous years. The enrollment for grade 9 and the number of students that each program took in and the total enrollment for each program, grades 9 through 12. It also contains data on the different industry-recognized credentials (IRCs), co-op placements and active co-op employers.

Ms. DeMariano stated that the report also contains the incoming class of 2029 freshmen interest for the top three picks. This information was shared with the instructors to give them a little insight as to who's looking at their program and is excited by it, and how to keep their attention at the end of the exploratory rotations. Ms. DeMariano further stated that the goal of the report is to keep going forward with it and slowly start adding some data to it. The programs themselves can then readjust that curriculum if they see numbers moving one way or another, and stay aligned with our frameworks. Instructors are also being asked to give us two things they're doing really, really well, and a two things that they can do better at. This will help the programs to move forward and start building that entire review process with the advisory committee.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Mrs. Weckesser for the Landscape Analysis Report. Mrs. Weckesser stated that the report provides a snapshot from the academics side that tells us how we're doing, what can we do better, and what we need to improve. The intent is to really to take a look at not just where the general education kids are, but also how lower populations are doing, and those kids that are in the middle that might not be getting challenged enough or being pushed up and forward. The consultant reviewed current instructional practices, curriculum, data and assessment and has made recommendations that are aligned with the school improvement plan. There will be opportunities for staff to voluntarily participate and be part of the solution.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that Ms. DeMariano has been meeting with department heads to discuss the community projects. Going forward all community projects requests will be added to the list. Ms. DeMariano stated that the list is a work in progress that will be updated on a bi-weekly basis as she continues to meet with all the teacher leaders that are part of these outside crews. Any requests received will be evaluated to determine viability.

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Mr. DiBiasio stated that Mr. Cabral met with the homeowners of the house being built as part of the 25/26 Housebuilding Program. The homeowners have asked for extra things to be done such as additional sockets and plumbing for a future bathroom. The additional things they are requesting are minor and shouldn't really going to interrupt their timeline. The homeowners will need to submit a change order request to the Superintendent-Director for approval.

Mr. Jennings deferred to Mrs. Griffin for an update on the Admissions Policy. Mrs. Griffin stated that the Admissions Sub-Committee met to discuss the Admissions Policy. The District, as mandated by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, will adopt a weighted lottery system for admissions. The weighted lottery will allow students to obtain up to "4 bingo balls", depending if they meet or put forth the effort to complete all four criteria. The four criteria are: completing the application, attendance, conduct and a personal essay or letter of recommendation. All middle school students that wish to tour Diman, will have the opportunity to so during the school day. Transportation will be provided at Diman's expense as directed by the state.

Mrs. Griffin stated that the essay or letter of recommendation will not be graded. The lottery will be handled by a third party vendor and it will be televised. A separate lottery will be held for each of the four sending communities.

Mr. Jennings stated that the Admissions Sub-Committee voted in favor of the weight lottery system. The Admissions Policy has been updated to reflect the change.

It was moved by Mr. Manuels, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted to accept the recommendation of the Admissions Sub-Committee and approve the Admissions Policy, as submitted. Mr. Begin, Mr. Jennings, Mr. Manuels and Ms. Menard voted in favor. Mr. DiBiasio opposed the motion.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that he opposed the motion as he was not in agreement with the criteria. Mr. Bentley stated that the District didn't create the criteria. The admissions criteria was set by the state.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that it is now more important than ever to explain Diman's policies to perspective students during the recruiting events at the local middle schools. Mrs. Griffin stated that Diman is no longer able to go to middle schools. Mr. Bentley stated that middle schools must develop a career pathway policy regarding vocational education available to students. Mrs. Griffin stated that she has scheduled a breakfast for all middle school counselors to talk about the lottery system and will discuss our policies. Mrs. Weckesser stated that the district is using the new parent communication tool and social media to push out policies such as attendance and dress code. Mr. Manuels suggested adding the policies to the application. Mrs. Weckesser stated that a link to the student handbook's policy section can easily be added to the application.

Mr. Bentley provided the Superintendent-Director's report which included an update on student enrollment, admissions, cooperative education and the LPN Program. Mr. Bentley stated that the LPN Sub-Committee will need to meet to discuss the building lease and the program's finances. Mr. Begin requested a detailed financial report of the LPN Program. Mr. Bentley informed members that the District is looking at possibly applying for a Skills Expansion grant to allow for more students to be admitted to Diman. Mrs. Weckesser stated that grant is an opportunity to expand into some additional career pathways by branching out on our current programs.

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The next meeting will be July 10, 2025 at 5:30 PM.

Mr. Bentley stated that the Fall Advisory Board meeting will be held on October 2nd and Homecoming is on October 24<sup>th</sup> and it is being held at Venus DeMilo.

Mr. Bentley asked members if anyone is interested in attending the MASC/MASS conference to notify Mrs. Neves.

Attorney Brilhante stated the reasons to go into executive session.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels and voted on a roll call at 6:37 pm to enter into Executive Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. Begin, Mr. DiBiasio, Mr. Manuels and Ms. Menard voting yes.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted on a roll call at 6:41 p.m. to rise into Open Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. Begin, Mr. DiBiasio, Mr. Manuels and Ms. Menard and voting yes.

Agenda Item 3.1.c – Individual Employment Agreements – Melissa Petrasso

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the individual employment agreements for Melissa Petrasso, Director of Finance, as negotiated.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:43 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Helena S. Neves*

Helena S. Neves, Executive Secretary

**Materials Included:**

August 14, 2025 Minutes

August 22, 2025 Minutes

August 28, 2025 Minutes

Prime Contract Change Order No. 009

MSBA Project Expenditures

Monthly Financial Report

Student Activity Agency Accounts Report

Expenditure Report

Vocational Program Data Report

Landscape Analysis Report

Community Projects List

Admissions Policy

Superintendent-Director Report