

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM
OCTOBER 9, 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, Katie Warren, Assistant Principal of Academic Affairs, Melissa Petrasso, Director of Finance, Attorney Gregory Brillhante, Tim Alix, Colliers and Helena Neves, Executive Secretary.

Remote attendance: Decio Matos and Jessica DeMoura

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 Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the September 11, 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. Mr. DiBiasio stated that the project is roughly 62% completed. The construction crew is working on overhead doors, installing the dust collector outside of carpentry and preparing for paving in the back of the building all the way to Locust Street. The storage building's shell is up and the next step is to close it in. The fireproofing has been complete. Equipment in the culinary arts kitchen has been installed. Most of the equipment in the mechanical room has been installed. Installation of soundproof ceilings is ongoing. Suffolk is looking to start the polished floors in January.

Mr. DiBiasio deferred to Mr. Alix for a summary of the MSBA Project Funding Agreement (PFA) Second Amendment. Mr. Alix stated that the previously approve PFA defined the budget and agreement with MSBA which is a typical MSBA process. The first amendment issued was for a special agreement due to escalation during design development and construction documents. MSBA came back increased the per square foot reimbursement for the project. An error was made, as there was a reduction in the building's square footage during value engineering , and the wrong reimbursement amount was included. Amendment #2 corrects the error by updating the correct reimbursement amount and it also incorporates the actual contractor's actual costs.

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Mr. Alix stated that the MSBA had informed the Project Team that an amendment was going to be issued to make the correction. There was some back and forth discussions as the amendment was reviewed it, and we found some additional things that we didn't necessarily agree with. Once the amendment was finalized it had to go through all the different levels of authority there before final sign-off and School Committee approval. Mr. Alix further stated that things are going well and the project is on budget. Contingency funds are available if needed.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that of the \$22 million dollars in additional funds, the District only asked for \$11,400,00, therefore the surplus will be returned to the sending communities. The additional funds are being used to put things back in the project that were removed during value engineering due to the escalation putting the project over budget.

Mr. Alix provided a brief project update. The big push right now is to get the building enclosed for the winter so that there is temporary heat. Finishes such as tile work and paint are ongoing. Some of the shops are in are just in rough installation of plumbing and mechanicals and some are getting really close to finish. They'll be working from the top down. The new drive lane that was completed during the summer seems to be working out great.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that Colliers has completed the 50% DCAMM evaluation. Mr. Alix stated that DCAMM sets up all the procedures that we have to follow, and they require that at 50% through construction an evaluation of all the filed subbidders and the general contractor board is completed. This evaluation gives a contractor a heads up if they were having some issues and gives them time to correct them and get a good for the final evaluation.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the MSBA Project Funding Agreement (PFA) Second Amendment, as submitted.

Ms. Petrasso provided an overview of the MSBA Project Debt Schedule. The final debt schedule has been received and there is an increase of \$1,059,735.44. The original debt schedule had a bond rate of 4.5% and the interest that was originally approved for the budget for this year was \$3,232,158.00. When the final numbers were received, the first interest payment actually went up to \$4,291,894.44. The schedule will not change and it will carry us through the rest of the project, but unfortunately, it will have an impact on the member town's assessments. The District is looking to see if we can use any of our E&D funds to lower the assessments. The amount of interest that we're earning on the borrowing can be applied towards what would go back to the member towns. Mr. Jennings requested that notification is sent to the sending communities as soon as the final numbers are available.

Mr. Jennings asked for a discussion on the revised School Building Committee. Mr. DiBiasio request that a correction be made to the School Building Committee and add Lisa Desrosiers back on as member. Ms. Desrosiers was removed as she has not attended several meetings but did attend the last one.

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

Mr. DiBiasio provided a summary of Kaestle Boos Amendment #8 – Additional Reimbursable Services and Kaestle Boos Gym Equipment, Flooring Finish Revisions. The amendments were presented to the School Building Committee for their review and approval. Amendment #8 is for services are considered reimbursable and the allowance increases the contract value that can be billed against based on the requirements in the field and

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overseen by the Owners Project Manager. This increase reflects the need to oversee the work associated with the increase in unsuitable soils within the buildings area of influence and the uncovering of unknown Transite piping requiring additional monitoring by consultants. Mr. Alix stated that the amendment will replenish funds in the budget that will be used as needed if hazardous materials are found. If the funds are not used, they will be returned to the budget.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the KBA Amendment #8 – Additional Reimbursable Services for the amount of \$108,000, as submitted.

Mr. DiBiasio provided a summary of Amendment #9 which is a no cost amendment. Certain elements that were previously removed from the project during value management can now be added back. KBA has already advanced design services for the following items at no additional cost. Scope Revisions: Gymnasium Equipment Addition – Batting Tunnel, Gymnasium Equipment Addition – Mat Hoist, Floor Finish Revisions – Lobby Tile Upgrades, Floor Finish Revisions – Polished Concrete.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the KBA Amendment #9 – Gym Equipment, Flooring Finish Revisions, as submitted.

Mr. DiBiasio requested to go back to the MSBA Project update to discuss the Walecka stored items. Ms. Petrasso stated that the list provided includes all the items that have been purchase and are being stored at Walecka. Ms. Petrasso further stated that some of the items are for graphic arts, medical assisting equipment, but the majority are desks and chairs.

Ms. Menard left the meeting at 6:00 pm.

Mr. Jennings asked if a storage flat fee is being paid to Walecka. Ms. Petrasso stated that the fee increases as more items are added. Walecka updates the list as they receive additional items. Mr. DiBiasio will inquire with the Project Team on how soon the items can be brought in order to not continue to pay the fee.

Mr. DiBiasio provided a summary of Prime Contract Change Order (PCCO) No. 010.

Ms. Menard returned to the meeting at 6:03 pm.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to reaffirm PCCO No. 009 for a total amount of \$189,197.66.

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

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the following MSBA Project expenditures: Colliers Invoice #0001099438 dated 9/30/2025 for the amount of \$136,831.59, and KBA invoice #20006.01-39 dated 9/29/2025 for the amount of \$115,537.00. Suffolk Construction application no. 23 dated 9/30/2025 for the amount of \$10,569,276.68, pending acquisition of necessary documentation, and Yankee Engineering invoice #34507 dated 9/29/2025 for the amount of \$20,820.00.

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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 *Michael Berube, Facilities Maintenance Management, Eric Miguel, Plumbing, Donald LaBerge, Programming and Web Development, Julia Louro, Metal Fabrication and Welding, Kayla Moniz, Dental Assisting, Sophie Oliveira, Business Technology, and Ariel Phal, Programming and Web Development* to identified Advisory Boards for a term of three years.

Mr. DiBiasio questioned why there have been no reappointments to the Advisory Board. Mr. Bentley stated that most members remain on the board for years. Mr. DiBiasio requested that a list of Advisory Board reappointments be submitted for review and approval by the School Committee.

Mr. Bentley reported on the student travel requests

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the student travel request submitted by Mrs. Mello, Theater Club Advisor for students to attend the Theatre Arts Membership Meeting on Saturday, October 18, 2025 from 8:30 am to 1:00 pm in Wayland, MA.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve student travel request submitted by Mr. Botelho, Soccer Coach for students to attend the High School Night New England Revolution Game on Saturday, October 18, 2025 from 3:00 pm to 10:00 pm. in Foxboro, MA.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the student travel requests submitted by Mr. Machado, DECA Advisor for students to participate in the DECA Day on the Hill on November 7, 2025 from 6:00 am to 4:00 pm, the DECA Celtics Game on November 12, 2025 from 3:00 pm to 11:30 pm and the DECA ICDC National Conference from April 24, 2026 to April 30, 2026.

Mr. Bentley reported on the acceptance of gifts.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to accept the \$1,250 donation made by the Diman Bengal Education Foundation in conjunction with the Fall River Rotary Club 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 donation by Mr. Gauthier of a 2010 Dodge Ram Quad Cab 4WD (\$6,610 estimated value) to the Automotive Technology Program.

Mr. Bentley reported on the use of facilities request.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the request by the Journey Christian Church to use the Auditorium for their Christmas Program to be held on December 5, 2025 and December 6, 2025. The total use of facilities fee is \$504.82.

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Mr. Bentley provided a summary of the request for a Key Club assistant advisor. Ms. Ghilbeault, Key Club Advisor has requested an assistant advisor due to the large number of students participating in the Key Club. The assistant will be paid a stipend of 75% of the Key Club Advisor's stipend.

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

Ms. Petrasso provided a summary of the Bid Award - #2 Fuel Oil.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously approve Sprague Operating Resources, 185 International Drive, Portsmouth, NH 03801 as the most responsible and responsive provider of #2 Fuel Oil for the SY 2025-2026 for the Greater Fall River Regional School District from the Commonwealth OSD Contract ENE52 Agreement.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Ms. Petrasso and Mrs. Weckesser for an overview of the surplus and/or disposal of equipment. Ms. Petrasso stated that the IT items on the list is equipment that is past its useful life or is damaged and it would not be feasible to offer it up to the communities. The equipment will be recycled. Mr. DiBiasio asked if a discussion has taken place regarding items that can be auctioned. Ms. Petrasso stated that Mrs. Weckesser is working on getting the lists together.

Mrs. Weckesser stated that all department heads have been given stickers to identify items in their shops/classrooms that are to be moved, recycled or trashed. The items included in the packet are things that are either broken or damage that can be trashed. Mrs. Weckesser, Myles Brilhante and Alan Benevides will inspect the items before having them trashed. The next step will be to look at items that have some value and can be auctioned.

Mr. DiBiasio left the meeting at 6:28 pm.

Mrs. Weckesser stated that although this is a huge undertaking that is raising a lot of questions, she feels that there is a good plan in place to make sure that things are handled correctly. Mr. Bentley stated that the move is a lot of work but Mrs. Weckesser has a good handle on it and is following the District's policy on disposal of tangible goods.

Mr. DiBiasio returned to the meeting at 6:30 pm.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously approve the surplus and/or disposal of equipment, as submitted.

Ms. Petrasso provided a summary of the monthly financial report. There are no transfers of funds this month. The End of Year report was submitted on September 30th. Any carryover funds received will be put into the extraordinary repairs line item.

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

Mr. DiBiasio provided the Housebuilding Sub-Committee report. The community projects list has been updated to reflect current items, items that have been finished and items that are not viable projects. Ms. DeMariano is

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developing a work order form to be used by anyone requesting work. Online advertising for the 26/27 Housebuilding Program has begun and wraps will be placed on the vans.

Mr. Begin provided the LPN Sub-Committee report. Mr. Begin stated that a discussion was had on the possibility of relocating the LPN Program. The lease coming up which would require to go out to bid. There is an opportunity to go into a space the Bristol Community College. BCC has some open spaces that would allow us to bring our own equipment. Mr. Begin further stated that a review of the financials is needed to determine if it is feasible to continue the program. Other districts have eliminated their programs due to financial and regulatory issues. Currently the program has 34 enrolled students. Daily phone calls are coming in inquiring about the program. The LPN Sub-Committee will meet again in November as a decision needs to be made. The Board of Nursing requires a six month advance notice of any changes to the program.

Mr. DiBiasio provided the Policy Sub-Committee report. Most of the policies were updated by MASC. The Policy JFABG – Admission of Staff Children will be tabled to next month. Mr. Bentley provided an overview of the policies. The biggest change is the prohibition on raffles as they are seen as a form of gambling. MASC has cautioned that if the school does something with fundraising that they stay away from selling raffle tickets. MASC has also expanded the policy to include the different Advisory Councils such as the English Language Learner Parent Advisory Council.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mrs. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the policies ECAB – Access to Building and Grounds, EFBA – School Food and Nutrition – Meal Modifications, GBEC – Gifts to and Solicitations by Staff, JJE – Student Fundraising Activities, KBE – Relations with Parent Organizations, KBG – Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), KI – Visitors to the Schools, as submitted.

Mr. Bentley stated that policy JFABG – Admission of Staff Children, will be brought back in November.

Mr. Bentley provided the Superintendent-Director’s report which included an update on student enrollment, admissions, cooperative education and the LPN Program, NEASC Accreditation Visit and Accountability Score/MCAS. A postponement request was submitted to NEASC due to moving into the new building. NEASC has approved the request and have rescheduled the visit for the Fall of 2027.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Dr. Warren for the Accountability Score/MCAS. Dr. Warren stated that there was a slight drop in accountability, which was expected due to the changes in MCAS. 60% of it is coming from MCAS. We dropped two points on student achievement and 1 point on growth. A point was gained with improvement on the dropout rate, and we lost 1 point with advanced coursework completion. Most of the points lost were with due to MCAS. The instructional planning teams have been meeting to review data and determine the areas of need. Mrs. Weckesser stated that Diman’s accountability score is pretty consistent with other urban school districts. An instructional coach is available and in the building to offer support to teachers. She's coming in to do some intense professional development on teaching all students in different instructional strategies. Mr. Bentley stated that the Administrative Team is working hard to support staff and students.

Ms. Menard left the meeting at 6:54 pm.

Mrs. Weckesser stated that when sophomores take MCAS they are given a climate survey. The survey asks questions such as how our staff interact with kids, how do they push them forward, how do they offer extra assistance, how do they offer choice in assignments, how do teachers respect one another, how do teachers respect kids, how do kids speak with kids. Mrs. Weckesser further stated that she was happy to say that we went up to

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94% in some of those areas. When they averaged all the categories together, we went from 50% to 57%. We're on the cusp of that mostly favorable on all categories. Dr. Warren stated that Diman continues to do well in comparison to other schools.

Ms. Menard returned to the meeting at 6:56 pm.

The next meeting will be November 13, 2025 at 5:30 PM.

Attorney Brilhante stated the reasons to go into executive session.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted on a roll call at 6:59 pm to enter into Executive Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. Begin, Mr. DiBiasio, Mr. Manuels and Ms. Menard voting yes.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin and voted on a roll call at 7:13 p.m. to rise into Open Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. Begin, Mr. DiBiasio, Mr. Manuels and Ms. Menard and voting yes.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:13 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Helena S. Neves

Helena S. Neves, Executive Secretary

Materials Included:

September 11, 2025 Minutes

Walecka Stored Items List

MSBA Project Funding Agreement (PFA) Second Amendment

MSBA Project Debt Schedule

KBA Amendment #8 – Additional Reimbursable Services

KBA Amendment #9 – Gym Equipment, Flooring Finish Revisions

Prime Contract Change Order No. 010

MSBA Project Expenditures

Surplus and/or Disposal of Equipment List

Monthly Financial Report

Student Activity Agency Accounts Report

Expenditure Report

Community Projects List

Policies: ECAB – Access to Building and Grounds, EFBA – School Food and Nutrition – Meal Modifications, GBEB

– Gifts to and Solicitations by Staff, JFABG – Admission of Staff Children, JJE – Student Fundraising Activities, KBE

– Relations with Parent Organizations, KBG – Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), KI – Visitors to the Schools

Superintendent-Director Report