

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM
DECEMBER 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.

Absent: William Flanagan of Fall River and Jeffrey Begin of Swansea.

Also in attendance were: Brian Bentley, Superintendent/Director, Leslie Weckesser, Assistant Superintendent-Principal, Jennifer DeMariano, Assistant Principal of Technical Affairs, Melissa Petrasso, Director of Finance, Attorney Gregory Brilhante, Siobhan Santos, Graphic Communications Instructor, Chace Albernaz, Student Representative and Helena Neves, Executive Secretary.

Remote attendance: Decio Matos, Kate Warren and Eric Silva

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 November 13, 2025 minutes, as submitted.

There was no Citizen Input.

Mr. Bentley introduced Chace Albernaz as the new student representative. Mr. Albernaz provided the student report that included updates on current events and ongoing issues. The pep rally was a lot of fun. The Varsity Football Team won against Whittier and took home Diman's first championship in the school's history. Student Government has been meeting on a weekly basis to develop a constitution to revitalize the group. Last year's student voice meetings with Mrs. Weckesser were very important and should continue as they allow students to express their opinions on school matters.

Agenda item 2.1 Unfinished Business, b) District Curriculum Accommodation Plan was not discussed as it is not finalized.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Mrs. Weckesser for the 26/27 Student Schedule Change proposal. Mrs. Weckesser stated that the current student scheduling structure builds two separate schedules (A and B cycles), which creates inefficiencies. This type of scheduling limits students' opportunities to interact across different communities. There are major class imbalances, such as having 20 students in a class on one cycle and only 2 on the other which in turn classes end up being canceled when enrollment falls below 10. The proposed change will use resources such as teachers and classrooms more efficiently.

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Mr. DiBiasio asked when the change will go in effect. Mrs. Weckesser responded that if approved, the change will go in effect for the 26/27 school year. Mrs. Weckesser noted that the proposed new scheduling approach eliminates A/B cycles during initial scheduling and schedules all students based on academic requirements, electives they choose and student support needs. It will also help to determine the number of course sections needed based on total demand. Once courses are built and balanced, then students are evenly divided into A and B cycles. This new approach ensures equal access to courses regardless of cycle, balances class sizes, better use of teachers and resources and fewer students being moved individually between cycles. Students who move between cycles will do so with peers, helping with social adjustment. The proposed scheduling approach does not change vocational programs as students will still be grouped by shops.

Mr. Manuels asked if students are able to opt out if their weeks are switched. Mrs. Weckesser stated that the proposal should eliminate the need to opt out because students will be placed based on their needs. Mrs. Weckesser further stated that she has reviewed every scenario and spoken with guidance counselors, teachers, students, and Mr. Marciszyn. The proposal also removes some of the scheduling barriers that have kept students from co-op placements and gives employers more flexibility.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the 26/27 Student Schedule Change, as submitted.

Mr. Bentley provided a summary of the partnership with Bristol Community College (BCC) for the HVAC evening adult program. BCC applied for and received a grant that will cover all expenses to run the program. They are handling all aspects of the program with the exception of instruction. The instructors hired are Diman staff that will be paid by BCC. They are using the Diman facilities for which they're being assessed a use of facilities fee. The program kickoff is scheduled for January 20th, and it will continue 4 days a week, ending roughly around the second week of June.

Mr. Bentley stated that a contract has been drafted and is ready for review and approval. Attorney Brilhante noted that there is conflicting language in the memorandum of understanding. Section 1 – Purpose states that the memorandum of understandings establishes a partnership with BCC, and then under Section 7 - General Provisions it states that it does not establish a partnership. Section 1 of the MOU will be changed to read “This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes as use of facilities agreement...”

Attorney Brilhante asked if BCC is committing to a year round program. Mr. Bentley stated that BCC intends to start the program in January of 2026 and end it in June. However, should the program be successful, they would have a second semester starting in September which is contingent upon continuing to get the students to fill the cohort. BCC is also very interested in expanding the program to other trades.

Mr. Jennings inquired about the type of equipment BCC will be bringing. Mr. Bentley responded that BCC will bring small tools and possibly some heat pumps. He added that Mr. Teixeira, Interim HVAC Department Head and Instructor, has been involved in the planning process from the beginning and has provided input regarding space availability. BCC will be responsible for relocating any equipment housed at Diman when the new building is ready.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with Bristol Community College for the use of facilities.

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Mr. DiBiasio provided the MSBA Project update. The project is roughly 70% complete, is on time and on budget. Work on the maintenance storage building is moving right along. The rooftop units are on. The floors are being worked on and the polished floors are moving along nicely and on schedule. Doors are starting to go in. Window testing is ongoing. The equipment for the cafeteria kitchen is all in. The slab for Auto Collision has been poured.

Mr. Bentley provided a summary of Prime Contract Change Order (PCCO) No. 012, which has been approved by the School Building Committee and needs to be reaffirmed.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to reaffirm PCCO No. 012 for a total amount of \$256,204.21.

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

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the following MSBA Project expenditures: Colliers Invoice #0001120854 dated 11/30/2025 for the amount of \$121,484.25, KBA invoice #20006.01-41 dated 11/30/2025 for the amount of \$136,411.59, Suffolk Construction application no. 26 dated 11/30/2025 for the amount of \$6,799,107.41 and Yankee Engineering invoice #34202 dated 7/31/2025 for the amount of \$14,045.00.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Ms. DeMariano for the Housebuilding Program Update. Ms. DiMariano noted that all exterior walls have been built, raised, and braced, including the garage. The subcontractors that are doing the roof anticipate that it will be completed on December 12th. Students from Carpentry were on-site watching the installation of the trusses and the trim work done by the roofers. The windows, doors, and interior wall material are expected to be delivered to the site starting on Monday. The goal is to make the building weather tight before the Christmas break. The concrete flat work, including garage and basement, has been coordinated to be completed as soon as the roof is finished. Plumbers and electricians will be onsite after the break to start the rough wiring and plumbing in the basement. HAC is currently prefabricating all the ductwork in preparation for the installation.

Ms. DeMariano provided a summary of the community projects. Plumbing students are at the Fall River Bio Reserve and the Conservation Building working on a leaky boiler and rerouting some heat and PEX lines. A new project has been received from the City of Fall River for the Facilities Maintenance Management students. They will be building a shed for a hydrant that, in the long term, will allow them to put in some heat so that the local facilities can use that hydrant to fill water trucks throughout the year. Currently, it has to be shut down in the winter months because it is not practical to continue filling it. The Electricity students are in a holding pattern while waiting for the house to be ready, so they have been working on upgrading some of the fixtures at the Masonic Lodge in Westport. Carpentry students are finishing up some small projects before starting to build the cabinets for the house.

Mr. Manuels provided the LPN Sub-Committee report. The subcommittee met to discuss and review the draft revocable license agreement with Bristol Community College (BCC). Two changes were made to the agreement previously submitted. The start time was changed from 7:30 am to 6:30 am and the end time remained as 10:00 pm. The other change was the monthly rental fee. Mr. Bentley was able to negotiate a lower fee of \$5,958 per month. Attorney Brillhante noted that the start time was changed to meet contractual obligations. Mr. Manuels noted that the LPN Program will be housed in Building B. The lab along with the classroom will be on the first floor, and the office will be on the second floor. Attorney Brillhante informed the members that a small build-out will be necessary. BCC

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will complete the work and submit an invoice to Diman for payment. Mr. Bentley noted that the build-out will include adding a sink and recreate a simulation lab.

Mr. DiBiasio asked if the moving expense has been determined. Mr. Bentley stated that a moving cost has not been determined because plans are not finalized. Attorney Brillhante stated that a determination of what is being moved needs to take place. Ms. Petrasso noted that a move management list has been given to Mrs. Young, LPN Director so that an inventory of equipment and supplies can be taken to prepare for the move.

Attorney Brillhante stated that BCC has been very accommodating. They are looking to offer LPN students the same discount as their students for purchases at the cafeteria. The relocation of the program to BCC is an all-around positive outcome. Mr. DiBiasio agreed that it is a great location with plenty of parking. Attorney Brillhante added that campus police and security are also onsite, making the campus very safe for the students and staff.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the contract with BCC for the relocation of the LPN Program, as negotiated.

Mr. DiBiasio provided the Policy Sub-Committee report. The subcommittee has reviewed several policies and is making the recommendation for approval. Mr. Bentley stated that the Student Activity Agency Account Guidelines & Procedures as been updated and modernized in order to reflect current practices, as well as recommended procedures from MASC or under law. Policy DJ – Purchasing was updated to ensure that we follow the rules, the regulations, the law, the procedures, and policies, as they have been established.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Mrs. Weckesser for a summary of Policy IKF - Graduation Requirements and Policy IKFE – Competency Determination. Mrs. Weckesser stated that the graduation requirements remain consistent, except for removing MCAS testing language and replacing it with the competency determination. Both policies have to be submitted to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education by December 31st.

Mr. Bentley stated that Policy JJ – Co-Curricular and Extracurricular, Activities, Policy JJF – Student Activities Funds Management, and Policy JJH – Student Travel are MASC recommended policies that have been updated to reflect current practices and serve as guides alongside the Student Activity Agency Account Guidelines & Procedures.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the Student Activity Agency Account Guidelines & Procedures and Policy DJ – Purchasing, Policy IKF - Graduation Requirements, Policy IKFE – Competency Determination, Policy JJ – Co-Curricular and Extracurricular, Activities, Policy JJF – Student Activities Funds Management, and Policy JJH – Student Travel, as submitted.

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

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to appoint *Jameson Carreiro, Mechanical, Architectural & Additive Mfg. Engineering, Sean Morrissette, Facilities Maintenance Management and Paul Nogueira, Metal Fabrication and Welding* to the identified Advisory Boards for a term of three years.

Mr. Bentley reported on the student travel requests

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It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the out of stated travel request submitted by Ms. Maynard for AP Literature students to participate in the Literature and Art Tour at the RISD Museum in Providence, RI on January 14, 2026 from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the afterhours travel request submitted by Ms. Wicks for students to attend the Yankee Dental Convention being held in Boston, MA on January 29, 2026 from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm.

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 of three 5 drawer roller tool boxes with butcher blocks (estimated value \$13,500) by LISTA International Corporation in Holliston, MA.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to accept a \$500.00 monetary donation by Dave Saber Auto Body as a sponsorship for the Fall River Children's Holiday Parade participant t-shirts.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to accept the donation of miscellaneous components (estimated value \$43,275.00) by CTS Services Inc. of Bellingham, MA.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to accept the donation by Southcoast Health Internal Medicine of Fall River, MA of expired supplies (sterile scissors, sterile forceps, sterile gloves, sutures, suture removal kits, urine cups, swabs, staple remover kit, N-95 masks and an arm sling.

Mr. Bentley reported on the use of facilities requests.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the request by Bristol Community to use the HVAC shop and an adjacent classroom for their HVAC Partnership Program with Diman to begin on January 20, 2026 through April 12, 2026. The program will run Tuesday – Thursday from 3:30 pm to 6:30 pm and on Saturday from 8:00 am to 11:00. The use of facilities fees will be in accordance with the contract, as negotiated.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to approve the request by Ms. DeMariano to use two shops for the NOCTI Career & Technical Teacher Tests to be held on April 11, 2026 from 7:00 am to 4:00 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 Ms. Torres to use Room 251 Restaurant on January 22, 2026 from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm for the American Cancer Society/Greater Fall River Relay for Life Team Captain's meeting and to waive all use of facilities fees.

Mr. Jennings began the discussion of the Naming of Facilities agenda item. Mr. Jennings stated that he requested that this item be on the agenda for discussion so that a decision is made before moving into the new school. Currently, there are areas in the existing building named in honor or memory of various individuals. A decision needs to be made on whether these names will carry over to the new school or if the areas will be renamed. Mr. DiBiasio stated that he has met with Mr. Bentley and with members of the Diman Alumni Association to discuss this and feels that the new school presents an opportunity to rename these areas to honor more recent individuals. The Harrington Field will remain. Mr. DiBiasio noted that a discussion was had about

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having an electronic display in a prominent area of the new building that will display photographs and information memorializing those individuals. Mr. DiBiasio stated that memorial benches can also be placed throughout the new school grounds.

Mr. Jennings stated that he disagrees with renaming these areas and suggested using plaques of the same size that include a description of each person's accomplishments. Mr. Jennings feels that the history of the school should be preserved.

Mr. Jennings made a motion to bring over the signs, add brief descriptions of each individual's accomplishments, and keep the area names as they are. Mr. DiBiasio requested to postpone the decision until there is a full board present that can make a decision. Ms. Menard and Mr. Manuels agreed to postpone the decision. *The motion did not carry.* Mr. Jennings stated that the decision would be postponed until January and requested a list of names and areas named after individuals. Attorney Brillhante asked whether it would be an issue if Attorney Flanagan is not back in January. Mr. DiBiasio stated the he would be fine with Attorney Flanagan not being present.

Mr. Bentley stated that a change to the school calendar was needed to accommodate the building tour for middle school students as part of the admissions process. The 11:00 am student dismissal was previously approved by Mr. Jennings.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted unanimously to reaffirm the 25/26 School Calendar Change, as previously approved.

Ms. Petrasso provided a summary of the Lathes Bid Award. The recommendation is to award the bid to Southwestern Industries. There is plenty of room in the shop for the lathes. Southwestern Industries will remove the three old lathes upon delivery of the new ones.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard 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 three (3) TRAK 1630 Lathes for a total of \$124,273.98 for the Precision Machining and Engineering Department with the Greater Fall River Vocational School District.

Mrs. Weckesser provided a summary of the surplus of equipment. She noted that she is seeking clarification on how the School Committee wishes to proceed with the items identified as surplus. The items identified by the vocational programs are specialty items that hold some value and can be auctioned off now. Items identified by Academics are items such as desks that will not be brought over to the new building but are needed until the move.

Ms. Petrasso noted that the District has a contract with Auctions International, which handles all aspects of auctioning surplus items.

Mr. DiBiasio stated that a discussion has taken place with the Diman Bengal Foundation about the possibility of making small items, such as chairs and desks, available as a fundraiser. Donations will be used to continue the work the foundation does for the students and school. There was also a discussion about offering some of the items to local schools. Mr. DiBiasio stated that local schools will be responsible for moving and picking up whatever items they decide to take. Ms. Petrasso noted that she can reach out to local schools through a listserv to inform them about the small-ticket items available. Mrs. Weckesser expressed concern about getting

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everything out of the building before the move. Mr. Bentley stated that small items such as teacher desks can be offered to local schools.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mrs. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the Surplus of Equipment, as submitted.

Ms. Petrasso provided a summary of the monthly financial report. Ms. Petrasso stated that invoices for the school store have been received for items that are student related that have not been charged back to the general fund. Mrs. Weckesser noted that the school store is limiting the purchase of inventory due to the impending move to the new building.

Ms. Petrasso provided an overview of the expenditures in excess of \$10,000. Mr. DiBiasio asked why the Walecka storage fee changed to a six month fee instead of a monthly charge. Ms. Petrasso responded that the storage fee is paid on a monthly basis. The six month expenditure is an open encumbrance.

Ms. Petrasso noted that Walecka is now charging an insurance fee. She is checking with the District's insurance company to see if the current policy already offers the coverage. Mr. DiBiasio stated that Walecka should have their own insurance to cover the items being stored. Ms. Petrasso stated that it could be because of the value of the equipment. Attorney Brillhante asked if the District established a contract with Walecka. Ms. Petrasso responded that she's unsure because the contract was established by the previous Director of Finance. Mr. Jennings requested an updated on this issue at the January meeting.

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

Ms. Petrasso provided an overview of the transfer of funds. The transfers are intended to align the budget with the appropriate accounts and to comply with DESE end-of-year reporting requirements.

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

Ms. Petrasso provided a summary of the FY26 Budget Amendment. The amendment is needed due to the increase of the initial bond interest payment due on June 30, 2026. The increase in interest on the bond was \$1,059,736, bringing the total increase in the capital assessment from \$5,908,263 to \$6,967,998. Ms. Petrasso noted that she contacted the District's representative at Unibank to inquire about spreading the increase over the life of the bond, but was told that it's not possible. All four member communities have been notified of the increase and have been provided with a copy of the debt schedule. Ms. Petrasso noted that the third and fourth assessment could potentially go down, as interest can be applied.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to amend the FY26 Budget based on the increase of the initial bond interest payment due June 30, 2026. The total increase in the capital assessment will be from \$5,908,263 to \$6, 967,998.

Mr. Bentley provided the Superintendent-Director's report which included an update on student enrollment, admissions, cooperative education and the LPN Program. Over 790 applications have been received for next year's freshman class. The number of applications is expected to increase after yesterday's middle schools

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tour. The Cooperative Education program remains strong with 177 students placed with local employers. The LPN Advisory Board met on December 4th, and the meeting was well attended.

Mr. Jennings asked when students are notified of shop placements. Mr. Bentley responded that students are notified over the Christmas break. Mrs. Weckesser stated that since the release of the shop selection form, 136 students have chosen their shop. Mr. Bentley stated that the Guidance Department is doing something a little different this year. Students are being asked to rank their shop selections from 1 to 18 instead of just the top six.

The next meeting will be January 8, 2026 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 6:58 pm to enter into Executive Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. DiBiasio, Mr. Manuels and Ms. Menard voting yes.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted on a roll call at 7:17 p.m. to rise into Open Session with Mr. Jennings, 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 7:17 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Helena S. Neves

Helena S. Neves, Executive Secretary

Materials Included:

November 13, 2025 Minutes
26/27 School Schedule Change Proposal
Prime Contract Change Order No. 012
MSBA Project Expenditures
Community Projects List
Student Activity Agency Account Guidelines & Procedures
Policy DJ – Purchasing
Policy IKF - Graduation Requirements
Policy IKFE – Competency Determination
Policy JJ – Co-Curricular and Extracurricular Activities
Policy JJF – Student Activities Funds Management
Policy JJH – Student Travel
Lathes Bid Award
Surplus of Equipment
Monthly Financial Report
Student Activity Agency Accounts Report
Expenditure Report
Transfer of Funds
25/26 Budget Amendment
Superintendent’s Report