

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA  
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM  
FEBRUARY 12, 2026

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, Melissa Petrasso, Director of Finance, Linda Griffin, Director of Guidance and Admissions, Eric Silva, Freshman Coordinator, Attorney Gregory Brillhante, Helena Neves, Executive Secretary, Chace Albernaz, Student Representative, John Narcizo, Electricity Instructor/Dept. Head and Kevin DaCosta, Electricity Instructor.

Remote attendance: Decio Matos, Kevin Mahoney, Debbie Pacheco, 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. Begin, and voted unanimously to approve the January 8, 2026 minutes, as submitted.

Mr. Albernaz provided the student report which included updates on current events and ongoing issues. Course selection was sent out last week, and students are currently filling them out. Fundraising efforts for a freshman student that has been diagnosed with leukemia have been very successful, raising nearly \$60,000 in under 20 days. Ticket prices were announced for the class trip to Lake Compounce in Connecticut. Students are also preparing for SkillsUSA events later this month. Clarification to the student body may be helpful to address rumors and confusion regarding week switching for next year. Some clubs appear on the Diman website calendar while others do not (e.g., Theater Arts is listed, but Student Government, Photo Club, and Key Club are not). Adding all clubs could improve access to information. Some bi-weekly club meetings fall on the same days as others, causing scheduling conflicts for students. More coordination between club advisors could help reduce these overlaps.

There was no Citizen Input.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Mrs. Weckesser for a summary of the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP). Mrs. Weckesser noted that the DCAP had not been updated since 2018, so the goal was to move slowly and carefully to ensure the revision was done correctly. A focus group model was used, bringing together a blended group of teachers to review and work through the updates. Mr. Silva was tasked with leading the group due to his experience in guidance.

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Mr. Silva noted that the DCAP is essentially a list of accommodations that teachers can use in both academic and vocational settings. If a student is struggling, teachers can implement these accommodations or modifications, monitor progress over a set period, and determine whether the strategies are effective. If a student continues to struggle after accommodations, a referral is made to the SST team before considering a 504 plan or IEP. Mr. Silva further noted that he will remain involved with the focus group as the document is fluid and will continue to be revisited and updated throughout the year.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mrs. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP), as submitted.

Mr. Jennings informed members that agenda item 2.1(b), Discussion of Property and Liability Insurance, will be tabled until the March meeting.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Mrs. Griffin for the Shop Placement update. Mrs. Griffin noted that student shop choices were reviewed for picks 1 through 6, with totals showing where students ultimately were placed. There have been four freshman sign-outs: one due to a student passing away, one who withdrew before learning their shop assignment, and two siblings whose parent withdrew them because one did not get their shop of choice. Acceptance letters were sent this week to fill the vacated seats, in order of points, from the waitlist.

Mr. DiBiasio questioned the shop placement chart provided last month and the chart provided at this meeting and asked for clarification. Mrs. Griffin stated that the chart provided today shows the students who actually ended up in the shops, while the chart provided last month shows overall choices. Mrs. Griffin noted that it is possible for a student to pick a shop as a first choice but not end up in that shop because placement is determined by points. She provided an example: if a student picked Auto Collision as their first choice but another student had more points and there were no spots left, the first student would not get in.

Mrs. Griffin noted that last year, there were 27 students with no shop picks; this year, that number decreased to 18. There was an increase in shop change requests this year: 50 students out of 384. Six students in Programming & Web had no picks, and 3 requested a shop change and in Drafting twelve students had no picks, and 6 requested a change.

Mr. DiBiasio asked if shop enrollment will increase once the new building is opened. Mrs. Griffin noted that this is a great discussion topic for Ms. DeMariano, Assistant Principal of Technical Affairs, and Mrs. Weckesser, as the student-teacher ratio, in conjunction with the square footage of the vocational programs, needs to be reviewed. She added that the new building is nearly at capacity, and enrollment is approaching its limits. Mr. Bentley noted that there are some restrictions because the academic classrooms are still only set up for 25 students. Mr. Bentley further noted that the goal for Diman is to maximize the new building for the Fall River, Somerset, Swansea, and Westport communities and the the mission of the school is to have students enrolled as part of the community and working. An enrollment increase can be discussed once the new school opens and capacity is reached.

Mr. Begin raised concerns about students being placed in “no-choice” shops despite available spots aligning with 1st–3rd choices and suggested a broader placement approach. He noted that grading during exploratory courses should be used to identify students’ aptitudes and place them in the right programs for the right reasons. He also suggested considering weighting first, second, or third-choice performance higher in the

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point system to give students a better chance at their preferred programs. Mr. Begin emphasized that caution is needed when expanding programs, as it can change a program's dynamics.

Mrs. Weckesser stated the admissions policy includes how students are graded during exploratory to help identify their aptitudes and place them in appropriate programs. During the last professional development day, freshman instructors had an opportunity to discuss grading practices and share strategies, highlighting inconsistencies and exploring ways to better place students in programs for the right reasons. Mrs. Weckesser agrees with Mr. Bentley's recommendation of reviewing placements once the new building is settled and implementing program updates gradually. She also noted that placement decisions should consider long-term retention, peer influence, and student engagement, not just initial enrollment numbers. Exploratory provides students with exposure to multiple shops, allowing them to make informed choices even if their initial preference changes.

Mr. DiBiasio provided the MSBA Project update. Mr. DiBiasio stated that the new school is roughly 70–75% total project completion. This includes the demolition of the old school, construction of the athletic field complex, and renovation of parking lots and softball/baseball fields. Work in the auditorium is ongoing with the installation of the permanent floor and seating expected soon. In the gymnasium, the wood flooring is being acclimated to the humidity before installation. Classrooms for the most part are done while vocational shops are in progress, including lighting installation, painting, and finishing work. The Auto Body shop is nearly complete, with polished floors to be done by late February or early March. Summer work planning is underway, including parking lot renovations, and will be discussed in the April–May meeting. Mr. DiBiasio noted that over 200 workers remain on-site, the project is on schedule, and it is on budget and temporary occupancy is tentatively scheduled for June 17–18.

Mr. Bentley provided an update on signage for the new building. He and Mrs. Weckesser has met with KBA and other designers to develop interior signage, including graphics for walls, stairways, and other spaces. Initial designs were reviewed but did not really align with the district's vision. The signage is intended to showcase the four communities served by the school, incorporate historical and educational elements, and maintain aesthetic appeal. Ideas discussed include a compass-themed roadmap, pictures of historical athletic events, and points of interest from surrounding towns. Mrs. Weckesser noted that the signage will use vinyl overlays, allowing for future updates and maintenance. Banners for the gymnasium are also being planned, keeping the school colors consistent with orange and black.

Mr. Bentley requested that the PO request for Hub Technical - Patch Cord Cables be withdrawn from consideration as it was not presented to the School Building Committee. The PO request for ProAV Systems – Wall of Fame, which is for the electronic wall of fame needs approval.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to reaffirm the Technology Purchase Order ProAV Systems – Wall of Fame, as submitted.

Mr. DiBiasio provided a summary of Prime Contract Change Order (PCCO) No. 014, which has been approved by the School Building Committee and needs to be reaffirmed.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to reaffirm PCCO No. 014 for a total amount of \$401,694.67.

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Ms. Petrasso provided an overview of the MSBA project expenditures. Invoices from Colliers, KBA, and Suffolk reflect the billing for the month of January for the project. A quote for Brightly Software and invoices from Yankee Engineering were also presented.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the following MSBA Project expenditures: Colliers Invoice #0001141801 dated 1/31/2026 for the amount of \$148,313.44, KBA invoice #20006.01-43 dated 1/31/2026 for the amount of \$162,163, and Suffolk Construction application no. 28 dated 1/31/2026 for the amount of \$6,444,039.29. Yankee invoice #3442 dated 7/31/2025 for the amount of \$7,000, Invoice #34669 dated 10/30/2025 for the amount of \$25,815, invoice #34760 dated 12/17/2025 for the amount of \$13,020 and invoice #35005 dated 1/30/2026 for the amount of \$6,115. Brightly Software quote #Q443149 for the amount of \$18,511.08.

Mr. DiBiasio provided the Housebuilding/Facilities Sub-Committee report. The community projects list was included in the packets and no questions were asked. Ms. DeMariano had cards made to distribute throughout the communities to advertise the services Diman students provide. The 25/26 Housebuilding Program project is moving along well. Electricity is about 75% complete and students are working on siding and insulation. Advertising will continue for the 26/27 Housebuilding Project.

Mr. Bentley reported on personnel.

Mr. Bentley reported on Advisory Board Appointments.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to appoint Noah Gouveia, Carpentry/Cabinetmaking and Roger Tessier Jr., Mechanical, Architectural, and Additive Mfg. Engineering to the identified Advisory Boards for a term of three years.

Mr. Bentley reported 877 applications have been received for the Class of 2030 and that a lottery is scheduled for March 16. He noted that the committee determines the number of students to admit. The baseline enrollment is 365 students, but the committee has typically increase it. The recommendation is to increase enrollment to 385 students for the class of 2030.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to increase the number of students from 365 to 385 for the Class of 2030.

Mr. Bentley will work with Mrs. Griffin to determine the number of seats to be included in the lottery. Mrs. Griffin noted that the district will hold four separate lotteries, one for each of the sending communities. The lotteries will be held in the auditorium and will be livestreamed. A separate lottery will be held in the summer for any applications that were not completed before the deadline. Applicants will have seven days after the lottery to accept their admission. A waitlist will be generated for each of the communities and published on the website.

Mr. Bentley stated that there are two extracurricular activity clubs, Dragons & Dungeons and Badminton, which were approved at the beginning of the school year, that the advisors have volunteered their time and are not currently being compensated. There are some clubs on the DTA extracurricular scale that have no student activity but have a stipend allocated. In contrast, these two clubs are very active, with regular student participation. After speaking with Mrs. Weckesser, it was recommended that each advisor receive a \$500 stipend retroactive to the

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start of the school year, with continuation into the 2026–27 school year contingent upon student interest, enrollment, and available funds.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to pay each advisor a \$500 stipend, retroactive to the beginning of the 2025–2026 school year, and continue the stipend for the 2026–2027 school year, contingent upon sufficient funds, student enrollment, and interest.

Mr. Bentley reported on the student travel requests

It was moved by Mr. Manuels, seconded by Mr. DiBiasio, and voted unanimously to approve the out of stated travel request submitted by Rick Medeiros, Automotive Technology Instructor quest for students to visit the Newport Car Museum in Portsmouth, RI on March 27, 2026 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the before/after school hours travel requests submitted by Mrs. Mello, Theater Club Advisor for students to participate in the Theater Festival Competition being held at Bourne High School, Bourne, MA on February 25, 2026 – Tech Night from 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM and on February 28, 2026 – Festival Competition from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the out of state travel request submitted by Meredith Guilbeault, SkillsUSA Advisor for students to complete community service at the Veteran’s Home in Bristol, RI on February 27, 2026 from 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the overnight travel request submitted by Shawn Pimentel, BPA Club Advisor for students to participate in the Business Professionals of America (BPA) State Conference being held in Southbridge, MA from March 6, 2026 to March 8, 2026.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the out of state travel request submitted by Michelle Gaudencio, Photography Club Advisor for students to visit various cooperative education sites to take photographs of the OVS students on March 11, 2026 and March 18, 2026 from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the after school hours travel request submitted by Ray Machado, DECA Club Advisor for students to participate in the DECA Night at Fenway in Boston, MA on April 6, 2026 from 3:30 PM to 11:30 PM.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the before/after school hours travel request submitted by Michael Furtado, Student Government Advisor for a student government officer to participate in the Student Government Day being held at the State House in Boston, MA on April 10, 2026 from 6:60 AM to 4:30 PM.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the out of state travel request submitted by David Salsinha, Metal Fabrication & Welding Instructor/Department Head for students to participate in the Project MFG Maritime Competition being held in Providence, RI on April 15, 2026 from 7:30 AM to 2:00 PM.

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It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to reaffirm the before/after school hours travel request submitted by Jonathan Root and Mitch Sweet, SkillsUSA Advisors for students to participate in the SkillsUSA SAIL Conference held at Patriots Place, Foxboro, MA on February 5, 2026 from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to reaffirm the before/after school hours travel request submitted by Jonathan Root, Culinary Arts Instructor for students to participate in the MA Lodging Association Career Fair held in Boston, MA on February 11, 2026 from 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Ms. Petrasso for an overview of the request to establish the Lemay Family Scholarship.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to establish the Lemay Family Scholarship per the guidelines set forth by the family.

Mr. Bentley reported on the Acceptance of Gifts.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to accept the \$5,000 donation by the Diman Bengal Education Foundation to the Carpentry and Cabinetmaking Program for the implementation of the Roofing Curriculum.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to accept the donation by the JED Foundation of their three-year JED High School Standard package valued at \$35,000.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to accept the donation of five cases of popcorn by the Double Good Virtual Fundraising Company.

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 submitted by Ms. Torres to use Room 251 Restaurant on 2/23/26, 3/24/26, 4/29/26 and 5/18/26 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.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the request submitted by the Southeastern Massachusetts Umpires Association to use the gymnasium on Thursday, March 12, 2026 from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm for an umpire clinic and to waive all use of facilities fees.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Ms. Petrasso for the discussion of the Audit Firm agenda item. Ms. Petrasso stated that the contract with the current auditors will end at the close of the school year. Three auditing firms commonly used by local school districts were identified and quotes were obtained. She noted that this service is exempt from Chapter 30B, so a formal bid process is not required. Ms. Petrasso provided a price analysis for the firms and recommended selecting a new auditing firm beginning with the 2026 school year audit.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to select Hague, Sahady & Co. located in Fall River, MA for the 2026, 2027, and 2028 audits.

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Mr. Bentley deferred to Ms. Petrasso for the discussion of surplus auctioned to date. Ms. Petrasso reported that, at the committee's request, an update was prepared on the surplus funds from equipment auctions. Approximately \$527,000 has been received from the sale of surplus equipment since 2021. Of that total, \$511,512 was generated through Auctions International, which handled the majority of the auctions during that period.

Mr. Bentley reported on the surplus of athletic equipment.

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

Mr. Bentley reported that a flyer has been prepared regarding the availability of surplus desks and chairs. The flyer will be sent to local communities and posted on the website. Priority will be given to local schools, including Catholic schools and other institutions that may have a need. Anyone interested will be required to complete a request form indicating the quantity. Mrs. Neves will collect and organize the requests and will contact recipients to schedule a pickup date. All items must be picked up by the requesting organization.

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

Ms. Petrasso provided a summary of the monthly financial report.

Ms. Petrasso stated that a request has been received to establish a Golf Club activity account.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to establish a Golf Club Student Activity Account.

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

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

Ms. Petrasso provided an overview of the transfer of funds request. Ms. Petrasso stated that, while reviewing several accounts and receiving the carryover funds, some line items were identified that did not originally have a budget or were overspent. She noted that transfer requests will be used to clean up and adjust those accounts accordingly.

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

Ms. Petrasso reported on the FY26 Budget Adjustment. The budget adjustment is due to a \$19,458 carryover of FY24 encumbrances that were not paid in FY25, as well as a \$1,452,752 Carryforward.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to adjust the FY26 Budget and transfer \$1,472,210 to line item 100.4300.8.000.623 Extraordinary Repairs.

Ms. Petrasso reported on the Excess & Deficiency Funds. The recommendation is to apply the interest earned to date to offset the third and fourth quarter additional capital assessment to the member towns in the amount of \$280,000.

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It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to apply the interest earned to date to offset the third and fourth quarter additional capital assessment to the member towns in the amount of \$280,000.

Mr. Bentley provided the Superintendent-Director's report which included an update on student enrollment, applications, admissions, cooperative education and the LPN Program.

The next meeting will be March 12, 2026 at 5:30 PM.

It was moved by Mr. Begin, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:59 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
[Helena S. Neves](#)  
Helena S. Neves, Executive Secretary

**Materials Included:**

January 8, 2026 Minutes  
District Curriculum Accommodation Plan  
Shop Placement List  
Prime Contract Change Order No. 013  
ProAV Systems Quote – Wall of Fame  
MSBA Project Expenditures  
Community Projects List  
Audit Firm Proposal  
Surplus of Equipment List & Flyer  
Monthly Financial Report  
Student Activity Agency Accounts Report  
Expenditure Report  
Transfer of Funds  
FY26 Budget Adjustment  
Superintendent's Report