GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM
APRIL 9, 2026

The regular meeting of the Greater Fall River Vocational School District Committee was called to order at 5:34 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, Jeffrey Begin of Swansea and Paul Jennings of Westport. *William Flanagan of Fall River arrived at 5:46pm.*

Also, in attendance were: Brian Bentley, Superintendent-Director, Leslie Weckesser, Assistant Superintendent-Principal, Melissa Petrasso, Director of Finance, Michael Zajac, Assistant Principal of Student Affairs, Linda Griffin, Director of Guidance and Admissions, Attorney Gregory Brilhante, and Helena Neves, Executive Secretary.

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 Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously on a roll call to approve the December 17, 2025 and March 12, 2026 minutes, as submitted. *Mr. DiBiasio abstained.*

A written student report was provided as the student representative was not present.

There was no Citizen Input.

Mr. DiBiasio provided the MSBA Project update. It is anticipated that the temporary certificate of occupancy will be received around June 18th which will allow to move equipment, desks, chairs, and other items into the building. Summer work will start soon after June 24th and it will start with the student parking lot. New lights and cameras will be installed, and the lot will be fully repaved. Work will also begin at the softball fields to convert that area into a temporary teacher parking lot for next year. All items will need to be removed from the existing building for demolition preparation to begin with asbestos abatement being the first step. In order to obtain the full certificate of occupancy, we need to backfill approximately five feet and install sidewalks, as the school currently sits higher than the roadway in front of it. Once that work is complete and the city provides final approval, anticipated sometime in August, the full certificate of occupancy will be received, allowing staff and students to fully occupy the building. The project is approximately 79% complete overall, including demolition of the existing building and work on the football field. This indicates that the new building itself is over 90% complete. Overall, the project is in good shape, and on schedule for the opening in September.

Mr. Bentley provided an update on the signage for the new building. Images of the signage planned for the building were provided. Mr. Bentley noted that the concept behind signage is to create a cohesive theme for the new Diman. Mrs. Weckesser proposed a compass-type theme, emphasizing that the road to success travels through Diman as students come from Somerset, Swansea, Westport, or Fall River. Several concepts are being incorporated into the building design. A Diman history timeline will be located in the Room 251 area. Stairwells will be named after the surrounding communities and will feature imagery representing its respective city or town.

The overall concept will continue throughout the building, creating a visual representation of the communities we serve and reinforcing the idea that, no matter where we come from, we are all part of the same larger community.

Mr. Bentley provided a summary of Prime Contract Change Order (PCCO) No. 016, which has been approved by the School Building Committee and needs to be reaffirmed.

It was moved by Ms. Menard, seconded by Mr. DiBiasio, and voted unanimously on a roll call to reaffirm PCCO No. 016 for a total amount of $833,877.80.

Mr. Bentley provided a summary of the procurement request for the vocational shop equipment assembly, disassembly and commissioning in the amount of $125,000; and $76,792 for the purchase and assembly of vocational shop material pipe, bar and sheet racks. A budget transfer out of the Owner's Contingency is required to cover all associated costs totaling $878,661.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to reaffirm the Vocational Shop Equipment Disassembly, Assembly, Commissioning – $125,000, Purchase & Assembly of Vocational Shop Material Pipe, Bar and Sheet Racks Thru Suffolk – $76,792 and Owner Contingency Budget Line Transfers – $878,661, as submitted.

Mr. Bentley provided a summary of the technology procurement requests. The Ockers proposals were removed from discussion as more information is needed. The PorAV quotes are for the videowall and videowall signage add.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to reaffirm the IT Procurement; Pro AV Quote: Videowall Add - $54,390.95 and Pro AV Quote: Spinetix - Videowall Signage Add - $13,081.98, Ockers, as submitted.

Ms. Petrasso provided an overview of the MSBA project expenditures. Invoices from Colliers, KBA, and Suffolk reflect the billing for the month of March for the project. Invoices from AET Labs and Walecka and Sons invoices 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 #0001161175 dated 3/31/2026 for the amount of $167,696.51, KBA invoice #20006.01-45 dated 3/31/2026 for the amount of $170,537, and Suffolk Construction application no. 30 dated 3/31/2026 for the amount of $5,086,577.03, AET Labs invoice #AET-205342 for the amount of $44,000, and Walecka & Son $1,484.70 & $4,060.00.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Ms. Griffin for the Lottery Update. Ms. Griffin distributed a handout and provided an overview of the data shown on the handout. Ms. Griffin noted that round 1 consisted of the initial offers made during the live lottery conducted by Go2CTE in the auditorium. The number of initial offers aligns with each town's appropriation. Any student who missed the deadline received three email notifications. The first email was sent on the day of the lottery, informing students of their acceptance and instructing them to log into the portal to accept their seat. A second reminder email was sent to students who had not yet accepted or declined, noting that a response was still required and providing a 7-business-day deadline from the lottery date. A final reminder was sent 24 hours before the deadline, along with a phone call delivered in each student's native language. After the

deadline passed, students who either missed the acceptance deadline or declined were moved into round 2. Currently the lottery is in round 3, which remains open until the April 15.

Ms. Griffin noted that the lottery process has required quite a bit of additional work, especially with the phone calls. It is somewhat frustrating and a little disappointing that admission is offered to students who applied and then they are simply not responsive. There is also frustration from students who were not accepted, as many have expressed disappointment that they did not receive an offer.

Attorney Flanagan asked if data has been reviewed whether there has been any change in student academic indicators between the Class of 2029 and the Class of 2030. Ms. Griffin responded that she won't be able to fully answer the question until later this summer. Under the new admissions policy and Department of Education guidelines, the district is not permitted to collect or review student grades at the time of application. Final 8th-grade report cards will be received at the end of the school year, which at that time data will be able to be analyzed.

Mr. DiBiaso provided the Housebuilding subcommittee report. A significant amount of work has been completed and is still ongoing across our various shops throughout the community, including Westport, Somerset. Currently, Swansea has no active projects; however, Mr. Begin will be meeting with town officials to discuss potential future projects in that community. The house building project remains on schedule. The homeowner will complete their portion of the work, including installation of the cesspool, and pouring the porch pad during school vacation.

Mr. DiBiasio noted that no applications have been received for the 2026–2027 Housebuilding Program. and stated that applications for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) will be accepted.

Mr. Jennings noted that *Agenda Item 3.1.d. Job Description Review Subcommittee Report*, will be tabled and discussed at next month's meeting.

Mr. Bentley reported on personnel.

Mr. Bentley reported on Advisory Board Appointments. Reappointments will be presented at the May meeting.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Attorney Flanagan, and voted unanimously to appoint Tabitha Baker, Medical Assisting, Kayla Cabral, Graphic Design & Visual Communication and Robert Parks, HVAC/R to the identified programs for a term of three years.

Mr. DiBiasio questioned the hiring of staff for the LPN Program and expressed concern that, although there will be savings in rent by moving to BCC, the program should not offset those savings by hiring additional staff. Mr. Bentley responded that an adjunct, part-time LPN instructor was added in response to a directive from the Board of Registration in Nursing to meet program approval requirements, specifically related to obstetrics. The second position is an LPN mentor, who is required to support a new staff member's certification and ensure that teaching qualifications for the program are met.

Mr. Bentley reported on the student travel requests.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Attorney Flanagan, and voted unanimously to approve the after-hours travel request submitted by Ms. Collins for students to participate in the Massachusetts AP Day, which will be held on April 15, 2026, from 7:15 AM to 3:30 PM at the State House.

It was moved by Attorney Flanagan, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to approve the out of state travel request submitted Mr. Pimentel for students to participate in the BPA National Conference, which will be held from May 5, 2026 to May 10, 2026 in Nashville, TN.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Attorney Flanagan, and voted unanimously to approve the overnight travel request submitted by the SkillsUSA Advisors for students to participate in the SkillsUSA State Competition, which is will be held from April 30, 2026 to May 2, 2026 in Marlborough, MA.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to approve the after-hours travel request submitted by Ms. Duffany for students to visit the American Heritage Museum in Hudson, MA, on May 8, 2026, and May 15, 2026, from 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to approve the out of state and after-hours travel request submitted by Chef McGovern for students to experience a Fine Dining Establishment at the Boat House Waterfront Dining in Tiverton, RI on May 12, 2026 from 3:30 PM to 8:00 PM.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to reaffirm the out of state/after-hours travel request submitted by Ms. Wicks for a student to take the RHS Board Exam at the Pearson Testing Center in Warwick, RI on March 17, 2026 from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Mr. Zajac for an overview of the Bullying Prevention/Intervention Plan. Mr. Zajac stated that, in collaboration with Mr. Bailey, the plan was updated to incorporate civil rights violations and ensure that all individuals are protected. The revisions included embedding civil rights violations, updating all titles, and ensuring compliance with Massachusetts law, as well as with Diman's existing policies. The document outlines and defines the various types of violations, as well as general responsibilities. Appendices A, B, and C detail the full process—from the initial report through the investigation—and are presented in a flowchart format. These sections clearly outline the procedures followed in response to allegations of bullying or civil rights violations, ensuring a consistent and compliant approach.

Attorney Flanagan left the meeting at 6:07 pm and returned at 6:08 pm.

Mr. Jennings questioned if the plan should have been reviewed by the Policy Subcommittee. Mr. Zajac noted the document is a plan and not a policy. He reviewed the district's bullying policy which is in alignment with Massachusetts law and is in compliance.

It was moved by Attorney Flanagan, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the Bullying Prevention/Intervention Plan, as submitted.

Mr. Bentley report on the use of facilities request.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to approve the use of facilities request by the Diman PTO to use the student parking lot on Sunday, May 31, 2026 from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm for their annual Car Show fundraiser and to waive all use of facilities fees.

Mr. Bentley reported on the acceptance of gifts.

It was moved by Attorney Flanagan, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to accept the donation by Chic-Fil-A of Fall River of bagged lunches for staff during the Teacher Appreciation Week during the week of May 4 through May 8th.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Attorney Flanagan, and voted unanimously to accept the grant in the amount of $35,000 awarded to the Precision Machining & Engineering Program by the Gene Haas Foundation, to be used as directed by the grant guidelines.

It was moved by Attorney Flanagan, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to accept the donation of $1,000 by the University of Michigan to be used by the Guidance Department to purchase student materials.

Mr. Bentley reported on the Distinguished Graduate/Honorary Diploma.

It was moved by Attorney Flanagan, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the 2025/2026 Distinguished Graduate/Honorary Diploma recipients as: Distinguished Graduate: David Fazzina & Jeffrey Marques; Honorary Diploma, Senator Michael Rodrigues.

Mr. Bentley reported the surplus requests of academic and vocational materials.

It was moved by Mr. Begin, seconded by Attorney Flanagan, and voted unanimously to approve the surplus of academic and vocational materials, as submitted.

Mr. Bentley reported on the final walkthrough of the existing building. The final walkthrough will be held on July 12th from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Small bags labeled “Diman Final Walkthrough” will be sold as a fundraiser, allowing attendees to place small items inside if they choose. Attendees will also have the opportunity to leave something meaningful behind, such as writing their name, graduation year, or a message on a designated wall.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Attorney Flanagan, and voted unanimously to approve the Final Walkthrough to be held on July 12, 2026 from 2:00 pm to 4:00 PM.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to allow attendees of the walkthrough to take whatever items are left over in the building, that are not permanently affixed or were not able to be surplused or donated.

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

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

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM
APRIL 9, 2026

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Attorney Flanagan, 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.

It was moved by Attorney Flanagan, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the Transfer of Funds, as submitted.

Mr. Bentley provided the Superintendent-Director's report which included an update on student enrollment, applications, admissions, cooperative education and the Food Services report. Mr. Bentley noted that he would like to improve the quality of food served in our cafeteria and elevating the overall program. He has visited Durfee to observe their operations and has also contacted the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's School Nutrition Program for guidance on menu planning and food options. They have already visited our site to review our financials, and we are in good shape in that regard. The next step is to bring in a nutrition specialist to help us identify and implement improved meal options.

Mr. Jennings informed members that the Preliminary Screening Subcommittee met and reviewed all applications. At the time, we had received 29 applications, and additional submissions may have come in afterward. From that pool, the committee narrowed the candidates down to four. Many applicants were not selected due to not meeting the required licensure or lacking the appropriate credentials and experience. The four candidates selected to move forward to the interview phase are Amy Bronhard, Elizabeth Haskell, Jarrod Lussier, and Warley Williams. Public interviews will be held on April 14th starting at 5:00 p.m.

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

Attorney Brilhante stated the second reason to go into executive session has been removed and will not be addressed, therefore the only reason for executive session will be to approve the December 17, 2025 and March 12, 2026 minutes and no votes will be taken upon rising into open session.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted on a roll call at 6:33 pm to enter into Executive Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. DiBiasio, Mr. Manuels, Attorney Flanagan, Ms. Menard and Mr. Begin voting yes.

It was moved by Mr. Manuels, seconded by Ms. Menard and voted on a roll call at 6:34 p.m. to rise into Open Session with Mr. Jennings, Mr. DiBiasio, Mr. Manuels, Mr. Begin, Attorney Flanagan and Ms. Menard voting yes.

It was moved by Attorney Flanagan, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:34 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Helena S. Neves
Helena S. Neves, Executive Secretary

Materials Included:
December 17, 2025 and February 12, 2026 Minutes
Student Report
Signage Images

Prime Contract Change Order No. 016
Vocational Shop Equipment Disassembly, Assembly, Commissioning
Purchase & Assembly of Vocational Shop Material Pipe, Bar and Sheet Racks Thru Suffolk
Owner Contingency Budget Line Transfers
Pro AV Quote: Videowall Add, Pro AV Quote: Spinetix - Videowall Signage Add
Ockers Proposal: WAP Uninstall, Ockers Proposal: MDF/IDF Uninstall, Ockers Proposal: Security Camera Uninstall, Ockers Proposal: Auditorium Uninstall
MSBA Project Expenditures
Community Projects List
Bullying Prevention/Intervention Plan
Surplus Lists
Monthly Financial Report
Student Activity Agency Accounts Report
Expenditure Report
Transfer of Funds
Superintendent's Report