GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
ADMISSIONS POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA
NOVEMBER 7, 2024

In attendance: Paul Jennings of Westport, Richard Manuels Jr. of Fall River and Jeffrey Begin of Swansea

Also in attendance were: Brian Bentley, Superintendent-Director, Leslie Weckesser, Assistant Superintendent-Principal, Maria Torres, Assistant Principal of Technical Affairs, Debbie Pacheco, Director of Special Education, Linda Griffin, Director of Guidance and Admissions, Gregory Brilhante, Legal Counsel, and Helena Neves, Executive Secretary.

Remote attendance: Decio Matos

The meeting began with a roll call at 4:31 p.m.

It was moved by Mr. Begin, seconded by Mr. Jennings, and voted to dispense with the reading of the August 27, 2024 minutes and approved them, as recorded. Mr. Manuels abstained.

Mr. Bentley began the discussion on the admissions policy. The discussion at the last sub-committee meeting was concerning if changes should be made to the policy. Mrs. Griffin started the discussion by answering questions raised at the last meeting.

1. **When does the application open and close?** The application opened on September 16th and it was made public on the website. The application will close for priority admissions on December 15, 2024.

Mrs. Griffin stated that the first round of the 365 students to be accepted are from applications received on or before December 15th. Applications will be accepted until the class is full and a waiting list created with excess applicants.

2. **What platform is currently being used for the applications?** Currently, the District contracts out a private individualized application that is not able to be translated. A lot of other schools are using a platform called GO CTVE.

Mrs. Griffin stated that this platform offers a dropdown menu of languages that allows the application to easily be translated into over 150 languages. Anyone will be able to seamlessly use the application without needing assistance of a translation service. Mrs. Griffin has been working with Ms. Glover, District Data Specialist on moving to the GO CTVE platform. This is expected to be completed by April of 2025 and implemented for the class of 2030. Currently, the District uses the ESL and TOFEL services for translations for anybody who is needing translation. GO CTVE would definitely be a more efficient platform.

3. **Data review of all of the applications from the class of 2028 in the counselor recommendation category.** Data shows that multiple schools are giving all students a score of 60 points, which is the maximum amount of points that can be given. There is a school that the highest score given was 45 points.

Mrs. Griffin stated that based on the review of the data it is apparent that some of the sending schools may not be scoring students appropriately. A counselor breakfast has been scheduled for December 2, 2024. Education surrounding how to use the recommendation piece of the application effectively will be provided. There was a school that the average acceptance rate was a 27.5 which raises the concern that the counselor recommendation piece is not being utilized accurately.

Mrs. Griffin provided data on the five surrounding towns' admissions policies. The intent is to determine if the lottery system is being used. Greater New Bedford Vocational Technical High School is the only school in the area that is using a qualifying lottery on the basis of 50% attendance and 50% conduct. Diman's current admissions policy is based on 50% academics and the other half is pretty much an even split between attendance, recommendation, and conduct. In looking at some of the other schools, it seems as though they are placing more value on an interview and a counselor recommendation.

Mrs. Griffin stated that Diman's admissions policy is equitable for students that are applying and recommended not making any changes.

Mr. Begin stated that he's surprised to see other schools put so much weight on interviews because of the pressure that is being put on districts for inclusivity. Mrs. Griffin stated that the speculation would be that it's to have additional subjective information in order to avoid the blind lottery. It looks as though there's limited data to support the efficacy of a full lottery.

Mr. Jennings asked how many students are interviewed at the schools that use an interview as a score. Mrs. Griffin stated that they interview every student that submits an application. Mrs. Griffin stated that the interview process can be subjective based on the person conducting the interviews, especially if it's not the same person interviewing all applicants. Mrs. Weckesser stated that in her previous district there were 8 to 9 staff members conducting interviews.

There was further discussion on the lottery system, its advantages and disadvantages.

Mr. Bentley stated that the current admissions policy is meeting DESE requirements and is not recommending any changes.

Mrs. Griffin stated that she has been brainstorming on some ideas that would put the ownness on the students, such as an essay portion of the application.

Mr. Begin stated that in looking at the data, it is evident that the school with low scores may not understand the process or they don't want to lose their students to Diman. Mr. Bentley stated that students have the right to attend to Diman and it shouldn't be up to the sending school to deny them that opportunity.

Mrs. Griffin stated that 550 applications have been received without any recruiting activities. Visits to sending schools are starting tomorrow which is expected to substantially raise the number of applications.

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Mr. Jennings asked how come there are applications that are not from the four sending communities. Mrs. Griffin stated that some of those students may be school choice students at the current district but reside in one of the sending communities. Mr. Bentley stated that out of district students are not accepted. The verification process is used for any applicant whose residency status in question.

Mr. Jennings called for a motion to keep the admissions policy as is.

It was moved by Mr. Begin, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to keep the admissions policy as is.

Mr. Bentley stated that there is a minor edit to under section II. Eligibility. The old language reads "Any rising or current 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th or 12th grade student". The word rising can be interpreted that a rising 8th grader is a current 7th grader. The wording "Any rising or current" will be removed and replaced with "Current". The other edit is a change of personnel by adding Mrs. Wecksesser as the Assistant Superintendent-Principal.

Mrs. Griffin stated that as part of the recruiting process and in an effort to increase applications, tours of the building are held on Thursdays and anyone can register for a tour. Tours are provided in English, Portuguese and Spanish due to the Student Ambassadors speaking those languages. A virtual admissions night was held last week with participation of over 125 parents. The admissions night was held via Google Meet which allows families to log in, in their native language and the conversation is instantly translated. The Diman Admissions Team will be going to the sending schools starting November 12th. The Diman Open House is scheduled for December 8th. The admissions team is working on compiling a mailing and sending out a personalized postcard to prospective students. The postcard has a QR code in the back that when scanned it brings the user to the admissions webpage.

Mrs. Weckesser stated that once the GO CVTE platform is in place, simulations can be run on freshman acceptances to see where applicants lost points. The platform offers a feature that can assist the district if the lottery admission goes in effect.

Mr. Begin stated that the current admissions policy is a solid one that offers students the opportunity to attend Diman. Mr. Bentley stated that Diman is at capacity. Allowing student transfers has helped to maintain a constant enrollment but it is also putting a stress on the capacity of the building such as the cafeteria. Ms. Griffin stated that the admissions team works hard to ensure that enrollment remains where it needs to be.

It was moved by Mr. Begin, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to adjourn the Admissions Sub-Committee meeting at 4:58 p.m.

Materials Included:
August 27, 2024 Minutes
Admissions Policy
Admissions Data

Respectfully Submitted,
Helena Neves
Helena Neves, Executive Secretary