GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
HOUSEBUILDING/FACILITIES SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM
MAY 12, 2026

In attendance: Paul Jennings of Westport, Joan Menard of Fall River and Donald DiBiasio of Somerset.

Also in attendance: Brian Bentley, Superintendent-Director, Jennifer DeMariano, Assistant Principal of Technical Affairs, Gregory Brilhante, Legal Counsel, Jeffrey Cabral, Carpentry Instructor and Outside Projects Coordinator and Helena Neves, Executive Secretary.

The meeting began with a roll call at 5:00 p.m.

It was moved by Mr. Jennings, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to dispense with the reading of the April 9, 2026 minutes and approve them, as recorded.

Mr. DiBiasio deferred to Ms. DeMariano for the community projects update. Ms. DeMariano reported that the police breaching door project has been completed and delivered. Graphics and Facilities completed a variety of promotional materials, including print work and banners for Maes Playground. A banner for St. Demetrius Church was also completed and installed. HVAC completed mini-split installations for FRPD. The Government Center directory sign project is currently awaiting DigSafe plans prior to installation.

In Somerset, finishing touches are underway, with Electrical currently onsite completing final work at the Water Department. Forklift repairs were also completed.

In Westport, Carpentry installed a new display case. The glass is expected to be delivered tomorrow, and the team will return to complete the installation.

At this time, there are no active projects in Swansea.

Mr. DiBiasio noted that he and Mr. Begin recently met to discuss increasing project opportunities in both Somerset and Swansea. They would like to make a stronger effort to bring additional work into Somerset and Swansea so all member communities are equally represented.

Mr. DiBiasio deferred to Mr. Cabral for 25/26 the Housebuilding Program update. Mr. Cabral reported that the project is moving along very nicely at this point. Currently, crews are finishing the remaining front siding work and completing the front porch. Concrete for the front porch was completed last week, and the bathrooms are fully tiled. Exterior siding will be wrapped up shortly, and the outside deck is currently under construction. The kitchen has been installed, bathroom vanities are in place, and flooring is being finished flooring. Plumbing has moved into the finish stage, with toilets installed and bathroom shower finishes completed. Electrical students are continuing with lighting installation, including exterior lighting. Painting crews have also been onsite, with all rooms receiving at least one coat of paint and some already completed with a second coat. He noted that over the next three to four weeks, the focus will be on finishing trim work and completing the final details. Countertops are scheduled to be installed over the next two weekends, and once those are in place, the project will move primarily into punch-list and finishing work.

Mr. Jennings asked if a date has been determined for the Open House. Mr. Cabral suggested June 18th which conflicts with LPN graduation. After discussion, it was agreed that Monday, June 22 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. would work best. The additional few days will allow time for final touch-ups, cleaning, and preparation before opening the house to the public.

Mr. Bentley noted that the event will be advertised through social media and on the website.

Mr. Cabral reported that the homeowners are very pleased with the progress of the project and excited to see the home coming together.

Mr. DiBiasio began the discussion of the 26/27 Housebuilding Program and reported that two applications have been received. The first application is for a house to be located at 21 Seaview Avenue in Fall River. The second proposal is for a property located at 25 Devol Pond Drive in Westport. The plans for both houses were reviewed.

Mr. Cabral reviewed the Westport house proposal and noted that the property is located approximately 8.8 miles from Diman, or about a 20-minute drive. The submitted plans are for a single-level home with approximately 2,100 square feet of conditioned living space, an additional 850 square feet of combined front and back porch space, and a 575 square foot garage.

The plans were purchased from an online source and currently do not meet Massachusetts Building Code requirements. The design calls for the home to be constructed on a slab foundation; however, the foundation would need to be redesigned to include four-foot frost walls around the perimeter in order to comply with state code requirements.

Mr. Cabral also noted that the septic system has already been installed based on a previous site plan that anticipated a different house design with a full basement foundation. He raised concerns regarding the orientation of the proposed home on the site and whether there would be sufficient pitch for proper sewage disposal.

Mr. Cabral made the recommendation that the homeowner consider redesigning the home with a full-height basement, particularly due to concerns regarding the high-water table on the property. Mr. Cabral explained that redesigning the house with a full basement would significantly alter the load points and framing layout, particularly depending on whether the roof remained stick-framed or was redesigned using trusses.

Mr. Cabral further noted that exterior finishes include board-and-batten siding with custom window and door trim details, a stone veneer water table, concrete porches with tongue-and-groove stained ceilings, and a standing seam metal roof. Roof pitches range from 9/12 to 16/12. Interior plans call for 10-foot flat ceilings throughout most of the home, with two cathedral ceiling areas and 8-foot interior doors throughout.

Mr. Cabral noted that several mechanical, electrical, and plumbing specifications had not yet been identified, with some locations still listed as “to be determined.” Mr. Cabral further noted that if the home remained slab-on-grade, all plumbing work would need to be completed prior to the concrete pour.

Mr. Cabral stated that following discussions with the homeowner, that it is recommended that significant revisions would be necessary if the project were to be considered by Diman. The plans would need to be redrawn to comply with building code requirements and adjusted to better fit the capabilities and timeline of a school-year construction project. He further explained that if the homeowners wished to maintain the current architectural design, several major construction components would likely need to be subcontracted, including roofing, sheetrock installation, and concrete and stone work. The architect and homeowner would also need to work closely with Diman to redesign the project into a scope that could realistically be completed within the school year.

Mr. Cabral noted that, as currently designed, the home is larger than this year’s project and includes substantially greater linear wall length, more technical framing details, and additional architectural complexity

that could significantly increase construction time. He emphasized that final plans would need to accurately reflect all intended construction details and finishes prior to project approval.

Mr. Cabral also reviewed the proposal for 21 Seaview Street in Fall River. The property is located approximately five miles from Diman, or about a 15-minute drive. The proposed project is a two-story modern-style home consisting of approximately 2,492 square feet of conditioned living space, along with a 720 square foot garage.

Mr. Cabral explained that the exterior design includes a stick-framed hip roof with a 6/12 pitch. Due to the overall shape and layout of the home, the roof structure is substantial and includes many technical engineered framing components. The design also requires multiple structural beams to support the first-floor framing, second-floor framing, and second-floor ceiling system. He further noted that the project would essentially require framing three separate floor systems, in addition to a rear porch area that is cantilevered back into the house. As a result, there is a significant amount of detailed and time-consuming framing work associated with the project.

Mr. Cabral raised concerns regarding several oversized floor-to-ceiling windows that Diman students would not be able to install, along with multiple large triple-casement windows and glass deck handrails. Exterior finishes include Hardie board siding with custom window casing details. The plans also call for a rear balcony that would require engineered framing support. Interior features include eight-foot ceilings throughout the home, a tray ceiling in the master bedroom, and multiple stairways incorporating landings and directional turns, all of which would add to the complexity of the build.

Mr. Cabral stated that the $200,000 construction budget listed in the application would not be sufficient to complete the project as designed. He further noted that several major components would likely need to be subcontracted, including the roof installation, sheetrock and plaster work, stone work, concrete porch and flatwork, portions of the window installation, and any custom tile work.

Mr. Cabral concluded by stating that completing this house within a single school year would present a significant challenge due to the overall size, complexity, and technical nature of the project.

Mr. DiBiasio noted that currently neither project, as submitted, is viable for Diman's house building program. Mr. Cabral agreed, stating that the Seaview Street project presents significant challenges due to its technical and architectural complexity. He emphasized that the level of detailing and engineered framing required would be difficult to complete within the constraints of a school-year build.

Regarding the second proposed house, Mr. Cabral noted that it would also require substantial redesign. He pointed out that several features, including cathedral ceilings and steep roof pitch, add additional concerns that are beyond what can be done. He further noted that the cathedral ceiling construction in particular adds a significant amount of labor and technical difficulty.

Mr. Jennings suggested that a meeting be scheduled with both applicants to discuss their respective proposals and determine whether they would be willing to redesign their plans. He noted that, if both parties are open to making adjustments and compromises, a viable house project for Diman could potentially be approved.

Mr. Cabral noted that the Westport homeowner is willing to make changes to her design and understands that revisions will be required to meet the program requirements. Mr. Cabral further noted that

the second application and set of plans was only received within the past few days, and had not yet been fully reviewed. As a result, there has not yet been an opportunity to follow up directly with that applicant.

Mr. DiBiasio noted that the proposal will need to be presented at the June 4th School Committee meeting in order to be considered for approval.

There was a discussion regarding the drafting department's internally developed house plans and whether they had been shared with the applicants. These plans are intended to serve as baseline parameters for the house building program, setting acceptable ranges for square footage, height, and overall buildability for student construction.

Mr. DiBiasio requested that the internally developed house plans be shared with both applicants for them to review, provide feedback, and make modifications as needed while maintaining alignment with program expectations.

It was moved by Mr. Jennings, seconded by Ms. Menard, and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:25 PM.

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

Materials Included:
April 9, 2026 minutes
Community Projects List
26/27 Housebuilding Program Applications