GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA
ROOM A103
SEPTEMBER 17, 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, Donald DiBiasio of Somerset, Jeffrey Begin of Swansea and Paul Jennings of Westport. William Flanagan of Fall River arrived at 5:34 pm.

Absent: Joan Menard of Fall River

Also, in attendance were: Brian Bentley, Superintendent-Director, Leslie Weckesser, Assistant Superintendent-Principal, Warley Williams, Assistant Superintendent-Principal, Melissa Petrasso, Director of Finance, Chace Albernaz, Student Representative, 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. Matos provided notification of intent to record.*

Mr. Jennings led the Pledge of Allegiance.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the August 13, 2026 minutes, as submitted.

Mr. Albernaz provided the Student Representative Report. Fall sports have started and are doing well. He raised a concern regarding the use of AI-generated posters and noted that his shopmates would like opportunities to design posters to develop their skills and portfolios. Mrs. Weckesser clarified that the posters referenced were created during the summer when students were not in the building. It was agreed that students are capable of this work and that staff may submit requests for student-designed posters when students are available.

There was no Citizen Input.

Mr. DiBiasio provided the MSBA Project Update. He reported that demolition of the old building is underway and that asbestos abatement in Area 1 has been completed. Abatement has moved to the next area, with completion anticipated within the next two weeks. Demolition is expected to be completed by early November.

Mr. Bentley reported that staff were onsite on a voluntary basis from August 17 through August 30. All staff returned on August 31 and participated in three days of intensive workshops and classroom/shop setup. Suffolk has been onsite and responsive to building-related issues.

Mrs. Weckesser reported that she is overseeing the Diman punch list and reviewing each item to determine whether it is a Diman or contractor responsibility. Approximately 400 items have been closed out to date. Students have also identified additional items requiring attention. Mrs. Weckesser noted that she continues to keep staff informed of outstanding issues and progress.

Attorney Flanagan asked Mr. Albernaz to identify something he likes and dislikes about the new building. Mr. Albernaz cited the abundance of space as a positive, but noted that the size of the building can make him feel like "an ant" and that he dislikes the number of stairs.

Mr. DiBiasio noted that the construction team will remain onsite for approximately two more years and that building-related issues and concerns are being addressed with Administration.

Mr. Williams reported that he has worked with administrators to implement lockdown procedures and fire evacuation routes while familiarizing himself with the new building. He is also monitoring building systems to ensure proper operation and developing an FAQ for staff to support their comfort and confidence in using the new systems.

Mr. Bentley noted that PCCO No. 021 was presented to the School Building Committee at Monday's meeting and requires reaffirmation.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Atty. Flanagan, and voted unanimously to reaffirm PCCO No. 021 for a total amount of $348,247.22.

Mr. Bentley provided an overview of the Enhance Mats proposal. The mats are to cover and protect the gymnasium floor for when it is used for any events.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Atty. Flanagan, and voted unanimously to reaffirm the Enhance Mats proposal in the total amount of $15,359.61, as submitted.

Mr. Begin asked how many racks and rolls of mats are needed and whether storage would be an issue. Mr. DiBiasio responded that two racks holding nine rolls will be used and that appropriate storage will need to be identified.

Ms. Petrasso provided an overview of the MSBA project expenditures. Invoices from Colliers, KBA, and Suffolk reflect the August monthly billing for the project. Other miscellaneous expenditures were also presented for approval and reaffirmation.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the MSBA Project Expenditures, as presented on the submitted list.

Mr. DiBiasio provided the Housebuilding Sub-Committee Report. He reported that community project work is underway, with Facilities Maintenance Management and Electricity students working at the Fall River Water Department. The 2026–2027 Housebuilding project is also underway. The foundation has been poured and backfilled, and the project is awaiting the required permit. Carpentry has ordered the necessary lumber.

Mr. DiBiasio provided the Policy Sub-Committee Report and reported that Policy ACL – Interacting with Law Enforcement Officers Engaged in Civil Law Enforcement and Policy JLCDC – Self-Administration and Self-Carry of Medications were reviewed and recommended for approval.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to approve Policy ACL – Interacting with Law Enforcement Officers Engaged in Civil Law Enforcement and Policy JLCDC – Self-Administration and Self-Carry of Medications, as submitted.

Mr. Bentley reported on personnel including appointments, advisory board appointments, resignations and retirements.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to appoint Nicole Avila, Business Management & Finance, Kris Dufour, Graphic Design and Visual Communication, Aaron Iamarone, HVAC and Emily Scherny, Programming and Web Development to the identified Advisory Boards for a term of three years.

Mr. Bentley provided an update on DECA, noting that the club has started the school year with a large number of participating students. He stated that the Advisor is requesting an Assistant Advisor in accordance with the DTA contract. Mr. DiBiasio questioned why this position was being brought forward for approval if it had been approved the previous year. Mr. Bentley explained that the Assistant Advisor is not in the DTA contract therefore requires School Committee approval.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the request for a DECA Assistant Advisor, per the DTA contract.

Mr. Bentley reported on facility use requests. He noted that the Diman PTO's request to use the Trade Hall for its craft fair has received clearance from the Fall River Building Inspector. Parking and handicap-accessible entry will be available. Mr. DiBiasio asked how many security guards would be hired and how access to other areas of the building would be restricted. Mr. Bentley stated that he anticipates requesting at least two security guards and that doors will be locked to limit access to other areas of the building.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the request by the Diman PTO to use the Trade Hall on Friday, November 6, 2026 from 2:30 PM on to set up for the craft fair and on Saturday, November 7, 2026 from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM for their annual Craft Fair Scholarship Fundraiser and to waive all use of facilities fees.

Mrs. Weckesser reported on a facility use request submitted by Jeff Cabral on behalf of Studio HPDC for a high-performance design and construction class to be held at Diman. Mrs. Weckesser explained that Studio HPDC provides free professional development opportunities to tradespeople and has offered to provide training to Diman staff at no cost.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the use of facilities request submitted by Jeffrey Cabral, Carpentry and Cabinetmaking Instructor on behalf of Studio HPDC for a high-performance design & construction class to be held in the Carpentry Shop, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays in March and April from 3:30 pm to 7:30 pm. and to waive all use of facilities fees.

Attorney Brilhante noted that the Admissions Policy was not referred to the Admissions Sub-Committee because the proposed revisions were editorial in nature. Mr. Bentley added that Mrs. Griffin reviewed the policy and that the revisions were limited to items such as dates and clarification of language. He stated that there were no changes to the admissions procedures.

It was moved by Attorney Flanagan, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the updated Admissions Policy, as submitted.

Mr. Bentley deferred to Mrs. Weckesser for an overview of the Medical Emergency Response Plan. Mrs. Weckesser reported that the plan was reviewed last year, with updates limited to titles and telephone extensions. She noted that the plan will be reviewed again following completion of construction.

It was moved by Attorney Flanagan, seconded by Mr. DiBiasio, and voted unanimously to approve the Medical Emergency Response Plan, as submitted.

Mr. Bentley reported on the surplus equipment and noted that the four 53-foot box trailers would be retained for potential storage needs. Mr. DiBiasio questioned their suitability due to their age, condition, and elevation, noting that a new storage container could be purchased for approximately $7,000. Mr. Bentley will provide photographs of the trailers for further review.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the list of surplus items as submitted, with the exception of the four 53-foot trailers.

Ms. Petrasso reviewed the monthly financial report and noted no significant changes other than salaries. School Store funds are being used for materials for the new store.

Ms. Petrasso provided an overview of expenditures in excess of $10,000. A list of expenditures was provided, including items previously approved by Mr. Jennings via email.

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 reported on the FY25 Student Activity Agency Accounts Audit Report and noted that there were no findings.

Mr. Williams provided the Principal's Report and noted that he has met with several staff members and is learning the culture of the school. He stated that Diman is a special place, with a strong sense of pride among staff and students. His goal is to meet with as many people as possible, remain visible, listen, and serve as a source of support to the school community.

Mr. Bentley provided the Superintendent-Director's Report, which included updates on student enrollment, the Co-op Program, and the LPN Program. Opening-day enrollment on September 3, 2026, was 1,497 students, with 121 students participating in the Co-op Program and 33 students enrolled in the LPN Program. The Council on Occupational Education (COE) is scheduled to conduct a site visit of the LPN Program on October 6, 2026. He also noted that the Veterans Association recently visited the LPN Program and was very impressed with the program. Applications for the 2027–2028 school year opened on September 15, 2026, and 93 applications have been received to date.

The next meeting will be October 15, 2026 at 5:30 PM.

It was moved by Mr. DiBiasio, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:26 p.m.

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

Materials Included:

August 13, 2026 Minutes
Student Report
Prime Contract Change Order No. 021
Enhance Mats Proposal
MSBA Project Expenditures
Policy ACL – Interacting with Law Enforcement Officers Engaged in Civil Law Enforcement
Policy JLCDC – Self-Administration and Self-Carry of Medications
Policy JF - Admissions
Medical Emergency Response Plan
Monthly Financial Report
Expenditure Report
FY25 Student Activity Agency Accounts Audit Report
Principal's Report
Superintendent's Report