

Record of the Marblehead School Committee Meeting  
Thursday April 15, 2021  
7:00pm

Zoom Recording ID 958 0114 1145 & Password 686984  
<https://zoom.us/j/95801141145?pwd=cjQzZm5lYXRFV0Nzc2RzT1dGajl2UT09>

Members Present: Sarah Gold, Meagan Taylor, Sarah Fox, Emily Barron, David Harris

Also: John J. Buckey, Superintendent  
Amanda Murphy, Principal  
Scott Solberg, Presenter  
Dan Bauer, Principal  
Michelle Cresta, Director of Finance

## **I. Initial Business and Public Involvement**

### **1. Call to Order**

Ms. Gold called the meeting to order at 7:03pm noting that the hearing on school choice would be the first item on the agenda but that it could not begin until 7:05 as noted on the agenda.

### **7:05pm Public Hearing on School Choice**

Ms. Gold asked for a motion to enter into the hearing for school choice for the 2021-2022 school year. The motion was moved by Ms. Taylor and Mr. Harris seconded.

A roll call vote was taken and the motion passes 5-0 to enter into the hearing at 7:06pm.

Ms. Gold-yes  
Ms. Taylor-yes  
Ms. Fox-yes  
Mr. Harris-yes  
Ms. Baron-yes

Superintendent Buckey shared his recommendation not to participate in school choice for the upcoming school year.

Per previous requests from community members, Ms. Fox inquired about the possibility of adopting a policy to participate in school choice in an effort to “become a truly inclusive district.”

After a committee discussion, it was decided that more information was needed to consider participating in future years as it was mentioned that there were too many uncertainties surrounding enrollment numbers during the pandemic.

- Community members Erin and Pat Noonan spoke in favor of participating in school choice.
- Christy Herbert spoke against participating in school choice due to many COVID and transportation related concerns/restrictions.
- Cindy Tower Loewen of Trinity Rd. shared Ms. Herbert’s concerns recommending that the METCO program be better supported prior to integrating students from other districts.

Ms. Gold made a motion that the Marblehead Public Schools not participate in school choice for the 2021-2022 school year due to lack of space. The motion was moved by Ms. Taylor and seconded by Mr. Harris. The motion passes, 4- 0 with a roll call vote.

Ms. Gold-yes  
Ms. Taylor-yes  
Ms. Fox-no  
Mr. Harris-yes  
Ms. Barron-yes

Ms. Gold asked for a motion to adjourn from the public hearing. The motion was moved by Ms. Taylor and seconded by Mr. Harris. The motion passes, 5-0 with a roll call vote, adjourning the public hearing at 7:30pm.

Ms. Gold-yes  
Ms. Taylor-yes  
Ms. Fox-yes  
Mr. Harris-yes  
Ms. Barron-yes

## 2. Commendations

### a. Building Based Commendations-Village Principal, Amanda Murphy

- Ms. Murphy recognized students for greeting visitors with dancing noting the positivity it brought to each day
- She also commended the students for their creativity with organizing socially distanced activities during recess

### b. School Committee Commendations

- Ms. Gold thanked the Board of the Magic Hat for their donations in the amount of \$7k to each school
- Dr. Buckley congratulated the Music Department for their 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of being named as one of the best districts in Massachusetts for music education
- Ms. Fox thanked Ms. Rivers for her work with the pool testing program

## 3. Student Representative-Dan Howells

Not present

## 4. Public Comment

Prior to public comment taking place, Ms. Gold addressed concerns surrounding a recent posting on her social media account regarding a photo of herself and other committee members toasting to as Ms. Gold stated, “the completion of milestones during a difficult year.” She further clarified any misinformation being shared in the community and apologized for the upset the posting may have caused. It was mentioned that the gathering was not an open meeting violation and that some individuals were falsely identified in the photograph posted. Ms. Gold’s prepared statement is included as the final page of the documented minutes.

- Sondra Callahan of Naugus Av shared her disappointment with nurse Rivers not returning to the district
- Catherine Martin of West Shore Dr. discussed open meeting law violations and recommended Ms. Gold self-report on such a violation to which Gold responded that she already had.
- Jen Schaeffner of Casino Rd. thanked Ms. Gold for her apology. She also noted her concerns with level funded budgeting and asked that the committee consider listening more closely to the community members who advocate for student budgeting needs.

- Committee member, Ms. Fox shared her thoughts regarding the violation. It was noted that Ms. Fox felt that it was not the role of the committee to determine whether an open meeting violation took place.
- Ms. Thompson thanked Ms. Gold for her statement and balanced approach to a difficult situation. She also asked that the district move on from the posting concern and address student focused topics of concern.

## II. Consent Agenda and Action Items

### 1. Juneteenth Holiday Discussion-21-22SY Calendar

Ms. Gold shared that Massachusetts declared Juneteenth a state holiday. She explained that students and school year staff would not be affected this school year as the school year would be finished prior to the 2021 holiday. Ms. Gold further explained that the school year calendar would be affected for the 2021-2022 school year and that the committee would be voting on two motions for the Juneteenth holiday.

Ms. Gold made a motion to recognize Juneteenth starting with Juneteenth 2022 noting that when it falls on a Saturday the holiday would be observed on Friday and when it falls on a Sunday, it would be observed the following Monday. The motion was moved by Mr. Harris and seconded by Ms. Barron. A roll call vote was taken with the motion passing 5-0.

Ms. Gold-yes  
 Ms. Taylor-yes  
 Ms. Fox-yes  
 Mr. Harris-yes  
 Ms. Barron-yes

Ms. Gold made a motion to amend the 2021-2022 school calendar to observe the Juneteenth holiday to be observed on June 20<sup>th</sup> 2022. The motion was moved by Ms. Taylor and seconded by Ms. Barron. The motion passes with a roll call vote 5-0. Ms. Taylor questioned the final days for students and teachers to clarify what the dates would be with and without snow days.

Ms. Gold-yes  
 Ms. Taylor-yes  
 Mr. Harris-yes  
 Ms. Fox-yes  
 Ms. Barron-yes

## III. Superintendent Report

### 1. Superintendent Buckey provided his district updates out of order as the first agenda item under the Superintendent's report section.

He shared that both the METCO Director and the Brown School Principal position searches were underway. He commended Assistant Superintendent, Nan Murphy for leading the METCO Director search. Superintendent Buckey shared the two finalists for the principal search noting that existing Principal, Sean Satterfield of the Coffin School was amongst the two. It was mentioned that final determinations would be made on April 26<sup>th</sup> for principal position.

Dr. Buckey reminded the community that all students would be in school and in person for full school days by Monday the 26<sup>th</sup> and he expressed his excitement, sharing what a sense of accomplishment for all the day would bring.

Assistant Superintendent, Nan Murphy provided an update on all of the things happening in district to help support social emotional learning.

- She mentioned the words of encouragement being shared in classroom on daily basis, which was helping to build bonds.
- It was mentioned that strong second steps programing was taking place.
- Assistant Superintendent Murphy noted the professional development happening focusing around responsive classrooms.
- She further shared that parent forums would be set up with district experts to discuss social emotional health and academics by the month of May.

Ms. Fox requested that considerations for medically fragile students returning to school be addressed early on as she felt it would help to lessen the anxiety and social emotional health of students and families alike.

## 2. Social Emotional Learning Assessment Update-Scott Solberg

Mr. Solberg explained how the results from a November social emotional student survey were interpreted and could be used to inform social emotional learning in the future. Mr. Solberg explained that the Village, the Veterans and High School students were represented in the results. It was clarified that the November survey contained questions that were created by adult educators, whereas students created the more recent survey and incorporated questions that were created taking into consideration which questions peers may be more comfortable answering based on the connection they felt to them.

High School students Chloe Pickering and Tessa explained that they have been working on a more recent survey from a student survey they created for their senior project focusing on the social emotional health of their high school peers. It was mentioned that an anonymous survey helped to obtain a higher number of responses. It was also shared that the results would be incorporated in the future planning for more resources for struggling students.

The committee commended the work of the students and requested that Ms. Pickering and Ms. return to present the results of their survey once they have been compiled.

## 3. High School Graduation Update-Principal, Dan Bauer

- Principal Bauer shared that graduation would take place on June 4<sup>th</sup> at 6pm at Piper Field. Rain dates have also been scheduled for both Saturday and Sunday at 2pm.
- Recent guidance from DESE regarding graduation was shared and Principal Bauer informed the committee that capacity would be limited to six family members per student sitting in pods six feet apart from other families.
- It was also shared that the event would be live streamed.
- Dr. Buckey mentioned that other events were currently being planned such as Powder Puff and Prom .

Superintendent's District Updates

This agenda item came out of order prior to Mr. Solberg's update.

## **IV. Finance Organizational Support**

### 1. COVID Funding Update

Director of Finance, Michelle Cresta informed the committee about the new ESSER III grant, which is part of the American Plan Rescue Act. She explained that the Department of Education provided an estimate of the funding to expect in the amount of \$796k. Ms. Cresta noted that 20% of the grant was to be utilized for addressing learning loss. The forms to submit would be available closer to May.

It was also mentioned that the approval for the ESSER II grants should be arriving any day now.

## 2. Schedule of Bills

Ms. Cresta clarified that one of the schedules contained prior year athletic invoices. She explained that the invoices were changed to the athletic revolving fund, which did have enough funds to cover them for the year-end roll over in that account.

Ms. Cresta also informed the committee that a restitution payment from a former METCO Director had come in. She explain that a refund in the amount of \$259 would need to be sent back as the payment received was larger than the court ordered amount.

Superintendent Buckey thanked Ms. Cresta for her transparency with the schedules and overall budget related concerns.

Ms. Gold made a motion to accept the schedule of bills in the amount of \$585,771.15. The motion was moved by Ms. Taylor and seconded by Ms. Barron. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passes 5-0.

Ms. Gold-yes

Ms. Taylor-yes

Ms. Fox-yes

Mr. Harris-yes

Ms. Barron-yes

## V. School Committee Communications and/or Discussion Items

### 1. School Committee Goals Discussion

Ms. Gold revisited the school committee goals with the committee to consider how the goals may align with the Superintendent evaluation and mentioned that they should be revisited at the end of the year again.

### 2. Subcommittee and Liaison Updates

- The next Policy Subcommittee would be scheduled for May
- The Budget Subcommittee met with the Town Finance Committee on Monday
- Mr. Harris mentioned that a warrant hearing would be coming up for facilities and equipment
- The Facilities Subcommittee will be meeting the following day at 10:30am
- Superintendent Buckey noted what a significant piece facilities would be of the final strategic plan
- Ms. Taylor shared that Dr. Solberg presented at the April 6<sup>th</sup> SEPAC conference series event.
- A SEPAC panel discussion will take place on May 12<sup>th</sup> to discuss the vision for the 2021-2022 school year
- The Unsung Heroes event will take place this year virtually and more information will follow

3. Building Project Update
  - A building tour occurred earlier that day with the Board of Selectman and members of the finance committee
  - Ms. Barron shared how wonderful the school looked and commented on the many colors that came together nicely
  - Ms. Taylor also mentioned how great the amount of natural light within the building is

## **VI. Closing Business**

1. New Business  
None
2. Public Comment  
None
3. Correspondence  
None
4. Adjournment  
Ms. Gold adjourned the meeting at 9:32pm.

4/15

Sarah Gold-Community Statement:

Before Public Comment begins, I need to address an issue that might come up. Some members of our community have shared and commented on versions of a photo that I posted on my personal social media account. The photo depicted me, other School Committee members, and the Superintendent sharing a toast to celebrate the completion of a difficult budget process. Some have objected to the photo, saying we should not have been celebrating at all, given that the final budget does require a reduction in several positions. In hindsight, I regret the photo and agree that the “optics” are terrible. I am incredibly embarrassed. I sincerely apologize to anyone who was offended or felt that our behavior was insensitive or cavalier. We got together after-hours to enjoy friendships after getting through a difficult process, during a pandemic, when tensions are unusually high and we all need reasons to pause and acknowledge even small successes. We were a small group of vaccinated adults who got together outdoors. Safety guidance has been incredibly important to me and I also regret that the picture suggests we were being overly relaxed in those standards.

With that said, I also feel the need to correct some of the misinformation that has been conveyed on social media. First, our gathering was not a violation of Open Meeting Law. School Committee members and other elected officials have a right to get together socially without posting an official meeting, as long as we do not discuss or deliberate school business in any way, which we did not. I have alerted the AG’s office to the concern that has been raised and let them know I would be addressing it this evening. Second, some individuals were falsely identified in the photo by those who modified it; individuals who were not present should not have been called out at all. Third, we recognize that there are certainly pain

points in the approved budget, particularly because declining enrollments forced us to restructure and eliminate positions. However, it is inaccurate to state that nine teachers lost their jobs. The School Committee and the Administrative Team worked incredibly hard to maintain as many positions as fiscally possible, and where reductions were necessary, to place employees in other job openings.

Again, I am sorry for any disappointment or anger this photo has triggered. I apologize for the poor judgement.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Lisa Dimier, Secretary  
Marblehead School Committee*

*Approved October 28, 2021*