



Marblehead School Committee Statement

November 11, 2024

(Statement can be attributed to Jennifer Schaeffner, Chair)

The Marblehead School Committee is working through mediation to get our children and teachers back into the classroom. We want a fair, affordable and sustainable contract for our teachers and our Town, and we are working to get this done.

Unfortunately, the 34% increase the Marblehead Education Association (MEA) is proposing is not affordable. In fact, it would create a \$7.5 million shortfall in our existing budget that would require a property tax override, which voters have overwhelmingly rejected for nearly two decades. However, a failed override would result in layoff of approximately 75 staff. We want to avoid layoffs, so our schools can provide the education and services students and families need and deserve.

Our proposal keeps all of our teachers employed and our class sizes intact with a 10.5% increase for all teachers and an additional 2% raise for teachers who are currently at the top of the pay scale, which is two-thirds of Marblehead teachers. Our offer would increase the average teacher salary to more than \$100,000 and the top scale salary to \$108,954 for 184 working days. Our proposals for the other bargaining units are similarly based on fair, affordable increases. With our current budget constraints and the restrictions on how much the Town can raise under Proposition 2 ½ levy limits, this is a reasonable and affordable solution.

The School Committee has responded to the teachers' request for increased paid leave, adding a new benefit of 12 days of paid parental leave followed by the use of 20 paid sick leave days for a total of 32 paid leave days. Public employees are not covered by the state's parental leave program, but teachers are allowed 15 sick days a year and can carry over unused sick leave from year to year, capped at 180 days. We have also offered to maintain a Sick Leave Bank for teachers and create one for tutors, paraprofessionals, permanent substitutes and custodians to create a pool for them to borrow from if they need to supplement their earned sick time.

The union's all-or-nothing strategy - and their conspiring with other MTA unions in neighboring communities on this illegal strike - is only hurting the students. We want our school doors open, but so far the MEA is refusing to consider realistic options that are in the best interest of students.