

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Monday, February 3, 2025

Herbert L. Jackson Council Chamber Room #106 - 215 Pleasant Street Malden, MA and
Virtual Meeting

Mayor Christenson called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Mayor Christenson read docket items for the meeting.

Mayor Christenson announces that the Malden Reads presentation will be taken out of order in the agenda. Malden Reads will present first, followed by Public Comment and the Superintendent's Report.

Mayor Christenson led the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence for those who have served our country and for those who continue to do so.

Roll Call

The following attendance was taken:

Mayor Christenson - Present

Mr. Drummey - Present

Mr. McCarthy - Present

Ms. Spadafora - Present

Ms. Macklin - Present

Ms. Hortie - Present

Mr. Gray - Present

Mr. Bernard - Present

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - Present

Superintendent Sippel - Present

Student Representative Cathen Fontanilla - Present

Ms. Spadafora gives an update on the status of virtual translation for the School Committee meeting. She shares that they are in the process of ironing out licensure issues with "Teams"; meanwhile we have translation in closed captioning. The hope is to have Teams ready with full translation by the next School Committee meeting in March.

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Christenson brought forth the matter of the adoption of minutes for the January 13, 2024 Special Session Meeting of the School Committee. Mr. Drummey made the motion to adopt the minutes. Mr. Bernard seconded and so it was VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Report of the Superintendent

1. Malden Reads - 2025 Book Selections and Programs

Jodie Zalk, Co-facilitator for Malden Reads approaches the committee and introduces herself as well as Mr. Nadell, School Librarian and Advisor for Malden High Love 4 Kids. To start, Ms. Zalk thanks the Committee again for welcoming them for their 15th year. Malden Reads is a Community Organization that selects a new book every year for the community to read together, as well as planning programs related to its themes and selects companion books to satisfy the needs of all reading levels.

Malden Reads has donated hundreds of titles, and thousands of books to the Malden Public Schools as well as partnering with Malden High School ELA teacher leaders, literacy coaches, and ELA/World languages director, and the school librarians to support educators' efforts. Their mission is to connect the community through reading, and seeing value in the connections made with educators, and also with students, who are the future of our community. Ms. Zalk introduces Sophia Chan, the president of MHS Love 4 Kids, to describe their partnership, as well as the 2025 book selection.

Sophia Chan, founder and president of Love 4 Kids, introduces herself along with Rashmi Kc, their Social Media Coordinator and Eldana Abrhamae their vice president. Love 4 Kids is a club at the Malden High School where high school students read, and have a wide variety of educational activities planned with teachers from the Early Learning Center for children that are ages 1-4. This club was made possible through passionate volunteers who help provide support to young students in the community. In addition to working with other high school volunteers through Henry Fan the Youth Outreach Coordinator at city hall, we were able to meet with Malden Reads and found that they had many of the same goals.

Ms. Chan announces that the Malden Reads book for 2025 is 'The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind'. A book about the importance of a good public education, allowing children to gain more opportunities and learn important life skills. Ms. Zalk returns to the microphone to share that there are 3 different versions of "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind" – an adult book, young readers' edition, and a picture book edition.

Mayor Christenson calls a brief recess.

Public Comment

Marie Motley, School Social Worker at Malden High School, 70 School St., Saugus Ma. Ms. Motley approaches the committee and shares that she is a school Social Worker at Malden High School and works with the Pathways program. The Pathways program is an alternative high school program, designed to meet the unique needs of the most vulnerable students.

Students who face emotional, social and behavioral challenges making traditional classroom environments difficult. Ms. Motley shares that she believes the success of the Pathways program weighs heavily on the presence of a program manager. This year, there is no dedicated program manager, though the program has received support, she believes the absence of a full-time program manager has placed a strain on everyone involved. Ms. Motley concludes by saying that she is there to advocate for the reinstatement of the program manager position for the pathways program. And that this is about giving our most vulnerable students the best success.

Deb Gesualdo, Massachusetts Education Association President, 77 Exchange St.

Ms. Gesualdo approaches the committee with members of the MEA. Ms. Gesualdo shares that she believes something that demands collective attention is the safety and protection of Immigrant students. She asks that the committee partner with the Union in distributing red cards to students to ensure students know their rights. The red cards would be at no cost to the district, as the MEA has already ordered thousands of them to distribute in the community. Ms. Gesualdo urges the committee to commit to ongoing efforts to protect all students from any kind of discrimination or intimidation.

Report of the Superintendent

2. Proposed Graduation Policy

Superintendent Sippel begins his report by going over his Core Values; Include and Collaborate, Embrace Growth, and Do Right by ALL Kids. He then adds that he has been receiving concerns regarding immigrant students and students who are transgender and gender non-conforming. Superintendent Sippel says that he wanted to be sure he shared Massachusetts General Law chapter 76 Section 5 States: “No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.” The Superintendent reiterates that this is a state law that we follow and the announcements and federal executive orders say many things but that that does not change our legal obligation in the state and this is what we will continue to do every single day.

As the Superintendent segways to Malden’s proposed Graduation Policy. Massachusetts students have to meet both their district’s local requirements and the standards of a Competency Determination to graduate. Students in the Class of 2025 must pass a minimum of 21 credits (combination of 1.0 full-year credits, and 0.5 semester course credits). Demonstrating mastery of the skills, competencies and curriculum frameworks in the areas measured by the 2023 MCAS high school tests, as evidenced by a passing score in the class. These courses include: Math II or equivalent course, English 10 or equivalent course and Science: Biology I, Physics 1 or equivalent course. Many of our peer districts use “equivalent course” in their competency determination policy, with

respect to students transferring into the district. Before Question 2, the Competency Determination was based on achieving a minimum score on MCAS tests in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science, Technology and Engineering. Now the Competency Determination must now be defined by School Committee policy. Demonstrating mastery of the skills, competencies and curriculum frameworks in the areas measured by the 2023 MCAS high school tests, as evidenced by a passing score in the class. These courses include: Math: Math II or equivalent course* ELA: English 10 or equivalent course* Science: Biology I, Physics 1 or equivalent course*.

Former Malden High School students who did not pass the MCAS exam and were awarded a Certificate of Attainment, but believe they have met the current competency determination requirements, may submit requests in writing inviting the district's consideration of their transcript. The determination regarding equivalent coursework shall be made by the Principal; any appeals to the decision of the Principal shall be submitted to and reviewed by the Director of Guidance and the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning. This policy takes effect for the Class of 2025; the School Committee reserves the right to revise this policy for the Class of 2026 and beyond, pending further guidance from the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Mr. McCarthy asks the Superintendent to clarify what the plan is for reaching out to students to let them know they may have an opportunity to receive a diploma? Superintendent Sippel responds by saying that we do not have that number here and today, but we do know who they are and we can reach out to them to inform them of the opportunity.

Ms. Hortie asks the Superintendent if we have the manpower to teach the electives that are part of the Graduation requirement. Superintendent Sippel clarifies that this portion of the policy is contained there because in our current policy manual the courses are not listed. Further, Assistant Superintendent Bhasin has been working with the curriculum directors to ensure that there are enough seats for all students to fulfill the requirements. Ms. Hortie then asks if students are given the opportunity to take the biliteracy test as an option. Superintendent Sippel responds that yes, it is an option.

Ms. Macklin asks the Superintendent to speak more on the language for the certificate of attainment, and how that differs from the diploma language. Superintendent Sippel explains that when MCAS was a graduation requirement if a student had met the other requirements but had not passed MCAS, as an acknowledgment of what they had achieved they were given a certificate of attainment and were allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony but were not given a diploma.

Ms. Spadafora asks the Superintendent why Physics is listed as a science requirement. Superintendent Sippel shares that in 2023 there were only two tests administered including Physics and some schools offer Physics freshman year.

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg asks what the definition of a passing score would be. Superintendent Sippel says that the idea is if a student gets a passing grade for the course (D or higher) it would be considered a passing score. The intention being not to create more of a hurdle for students.

Mr. Bernard made a motion with respect to the approval of the proposed graduation policy graduation requirements for the purposes of discussion. Ms. Spadafora seconded the motion.

Mr. Bernard made a motion to suspend, Ms. Spadafora seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Roll Call Vote

Mayor Christenson - Yes

Mr. Drummey - Yes

Mr. McCarthy - Yes

Ms. Spadafora - Yes

Ms. Macklin - Yes

Ms. Hortie - Yes

Mr. Gray - Yes

Mr. Bernard - Yes

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bernard made a motion to approve the proposed graduation policy graduation requirements. Ms. Spadafora seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Roll Call Vote

Mayor Christenson - Yes

Mr. Drummey - Yes

Mr. McCarthy - Yes

Ms. Spadafora - No

Ms. Macklin - Yes

Ms. Hortie - Yes

Mr. Gray - Yes

Mr. Bernard - Yes
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - Yes
Motion passed, 8-1

3. FY26 Budget Introduction

Superintendent Sippel shares that the Administration proposed budget, Chapter 70 Aid and foundation budgets have been announced. Chapter 70 is the Massachusetts law that governs funding for all public elementary and secondary schools, establishing minimum spending requirements for each school district (“net school spending”) and minimum requirements for each municipality’s share of school costs. In the foundation budget every K-12 student is projected to be funded at a per pupil rate of \$18,830 in FY26 if it is approved. The foundation budget for this year if it is approved would be \$130,437,793, local contribution being \$60,667,748 and \$69,770,045 coming from Chapter 70 Aid.

Superintendent Sippel shares that our Chapter 70 Aid is going up but when you look at our neighboring cities, though their populations are not much greater than ours, the amount they receive in Chapter 70 Aid relative to what they require for local contribution is quite significant.

Mayor Christenson shared that the money we need to fund schools and the money we raise versus the money we need to fund over 40 departments leaves us in a situation where, if things do not change, our reserves will be gone within 4-5 years.

4. Entry Plan Next Steps

Superintendent Sippel shares upcoming opportunities for input... Special Education Advocacy Council (Monday, February 10 at 6:30pm at the Salemwood School), District PTO Meeting Thursday (February 13 at 6:00pm Beebe School), Superintendent Feedback Session Tuesday, (February 25 at 6:00pm Location to be announced).

Subcommittee Reports and Discussions

Policy and Procedure Subcommittee Update - Ms. Rose Zeiberg

Policy and Procedure Subcommittee met in January to discuss recommendations for changes to policy if someone moves out of the district and were looking at possibly making a change where if someone is in the 12th grade. As well as looking at making changes to documents being used to register a child in school.

Negotiations Subcommittee Update - Ms. Spadafora

Negotiations Subcommittee met January 23, 2025 for the first bargaining session with the Malden Education Association. The committee is currently in bargaining sessions with all three of their Units, A, B & C. In the first meeting they established ground rules, being that all future

sessions will be completely open to the public. The district has a dedicated page for Negotiations updates, www.maldenps.org/negotiations-updates.

Motions and Resolutions

Inflation Cap Resolution - Mr. Bernard

Mr. Bernard shares that he would like to put forth a resolution to go and talk to our state legislative delegation concerning Chapter 70 funding, particularly the calculation of the inflation rate. Effectively, what we are looking for is for the inflation cap to be lifted and bumped to 7%. Mr. Bernard made a motion to talk to state legislation concerning the inflation rate cap and calculation of Chapter 70 funding, Mr. Drummey seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Roll Call Vote

Mayor Christenson - Yes
Mr. Drummey - Yes
Mr. McCarthy - Yes
Ms. Spadafora - Yes
Ms. Macklin - Yes
Ms. Hortie - Yes
Mr. Gray - Yes
Mr. Bernard - Yes
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - Yes
Motion passed unanimously.

Personal Privilege

Executive Session

Mr. Drummey made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 7:44 p.m. Mr. Bernard seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Roll Call Vote

Mayor Christenson - Yes
Mr. Drummey - Yes
Mr. McCarthy - Yes
Ms. Spadafora - Yes
Ms. Macklin - Yes
Ms. Hortie - Yes
Mr. Gray - Yes
Mr. Bernard - Yes
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Christenson and Mr. Drummey recused themselves in Executive session because of a potential conflict of interest. Vice Chair Spadafora served as the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

The committee reconvened to Regular Session at 8:26

Mr. Bernard made a motion to approve the contract for SEIU effective for September 1, 2024. Mr. McCarthy seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Roll Call Vote

Mayor Christenson - Absent

Mr. Drummey - Absent

Mr. McCarthy - Yes

Ms. Spadafora - Yes

Ms. Macklin - Yes

Ms. Hortie - Yes

Mr. Gray - Absent

Mr. Bernard - Yes

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

Motion passed unanimously in Executive Session.

Adjournment

Ms. Hortie made a motion to adjourn at 8:29 p.m. Mr. McCarthy seconded and so it was VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

I certify that a notice of this meeting was filed with the Clerk of the City of Malden in the manner provided under Chapter 39, Section 23A of the General Laws.

Ariana Langston

Ariana Langston, Clerk