

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Monday, April 7, 2025

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

Mayor Christenson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Christenson read docket items for the meeting.

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.

Mayor Christenson turns the meeting over to Mr. Drummey for a special moment of silence for Judy Froio, the wife of former committee member John Froio.

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 - Absent

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Christenson brought forth the matter of the adoption of minutes for the March 3, 2025 Regular Meeting of the School Committee. Mr. Drummey made the motion to adopt the minutes. Mr. Bernard seconded and roll call was taken as follows:

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.

Public Comment

Dawn O'Toole, 130 Adams St., Malden - Integrated Kindergarten ESP

Ms. O'Toole brought forth a concern about school lunches and the portions of food that are given to students across grade levels. Older students complain they don't get enough food and in Kindergarten educators are often throwing away a lot of food. Ms. O'Toole adds that the food options are also a point of concern because some things that the 8th graders may enjoy, the Kindergarteners will not eat, like buffalo chicken for example. The hope is that we can revisit the meal choices for our younger students.

Peter Piazza, 1 Manley Terrace, Malden - Malden Public Schools Parent

Mr. Piazza wanted to bring up the importance and value of school libraries for all students. He shares that there is research showing improved literacy outcomes for students in schools that have fully staffed libraries. Even creative choices such as, offering library as an exploratory, may open up libraries as a place of access and enjoyment of reading for students in Malden.

Amanda Linehan, 83 Blomerth St., Malden, Ward 3 City Councillor - Malden Public Schools Parent

Ms. Linehan wanted to take this time to say thank you to the School Committee for addressing some programmatic gaps at the Beebe School due to vacant staff positions. Ms. Linehan shares that she and the Beebe site council and community were thrilled to learn that there would be a Band program for middle schoolers soon after the concerns were brought to the committee. As well as a new drama program, and a new Spanish Language exploratory program. Ms. Linehan said that the community felt very seen and supported with this push forward.

Report of the Superintendent

1. Out of State Field Trip/Canobie Lake Park

Superintendent Sippel greets the Mayor, School Committee and members of the public in attendance and those watching online. The Superintendent begins by bringing forth the matter of an out of state field trip to Canobie Lake Park in New Hampshire for all 5 of our K-8 Schools for approval from the School Committee.

Ms. Hortie asks the Superintendent if there is any particular reason why Ferryway and Beebe have different bus return times than the other schools. The Superintendent asks Assistant Superintendent Bhasin to approach the committee to comment further. Assistant

Superintendent Bhasin tells Ms. Hortie and the committee that she is happy to look further into it, however every school is going on a different day. This may have an impact on the times in which they are coming and going in terms of admission into the park itself and for transportation arrangements.

Ms. Spadafora builds on Ms. Hortie's question asking how we are working with NRT transportation for Special Needs students who will be arriving later than their normal scheduled pick up time? The Superintendent responds saying that they will look into that to make sure everything is in order, and he will get it in writing.

Mr. Drummey made the motion to approve the Out of State Field Trip/Canobie Lake Park trip for all K-8 schools. Mr. Bernard seconded and roll call was taken as follows:

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.

2. Revisiting Entry Findings

Superintendent Sippel shares he and his team's areas for collective action. Informed by feedback received from parents and caregivers, and staff.

The first being *affirming high expectations for all students*, meaning every single one of our students are capable of great things. We want to make sure they have the skills to thrive no matter what they choose to do after high school. As well as *adapting instruction to meet diverse needs*, whether that be students with disabilities, multilingual learners, or advanced learners. We want to *ensure fair access to opportunities*, referring to making sure we have equitable opportunities across the K-8 schools and making sure at all schools students have what they need to access everything we have to offer. Also, *partnering with families effectively* and engaging with an online platform to support communication with families, ParentSquare. There will be ParentSquare training for early adopters, training for all staff, and an introduction to families. And finally *nurturing a strong workforce*; the need for prioritizing recruitment and hiring of staff for high needs

roles to ensure these positions are fully staffed, and the need for increased staffing in various roles. The last being *strength and stability* in terms of resources and building stability.

Mr. Bernard asked for clarification on the timeline of ParentSquare. Superintendent Sippel confirmed that ParentSquare will be ready to use by the start of next school year.

3. Update on Closing Opportunity Gaps

Superintendent Sippel invites Assistant Superintendent Bhasin to share a summary of a report that was presented to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education the previous week as an annual progress report on closing opportunity gaps as well as additional highlights.

Assistant Superintendent Bhasin shares mid-year data to preview what you will see in School Improvement Plans from Principals later in the spring in terms of addressing trends to plan for next year. The Malden Leadership Team is also accessing this data in real time to address needs, however the data we are looking at today is to plan for next year.

Assistant Superintendent Bhasin shares progress measures for core instruction in K-8 English Language Arts. The graph shared shows data from iReady. The trend on the graph shows that data is pretty stable, a measure of progress. However, year to year just under 40% of our students are proficient in reading. With that being said, next steps for improvement are ensuring we are exposing students to complex grade level text. Each of our K-8 schools is working collaboratively with their staff to build school improvement plans that prioritizes professional learning and coaching to support our educators to adapt to these high quality materials to support all of our students. As well as looking at operational work to support core instruction, filling necessary roles, and building schedules so students can receive services without missing core instruction.

Looking at our DIBELS assessment results, we found that we are slightly ahead of last year's mid-year results. The data was desegregated to see which students are improving and which students need more support. The data shows that when our students come into the district with grade level phonics skills they make significant progress in our program. However, for our students who do not come into our program with grade level phonics skills, as a school system, we are not providing the intervention support to help these students catch up. 92% of the students who are well below benchmark are students with disabilities, English Learners or dually identified students.

To address this, as we head into next year all of our School Improvement Plans will have a section specifically where schools are making plans to improve foundational reading

skills instruction (K-8). On top of core instruction, there will be a dedicated literacy intervention block (K-8), professional learning, and strategic scheduling plans.

Ms. Hortie asks Assistant Superintendent Bhasin how are parents going to understand what an intervention block looks like, and how is that different from a literacy coach pushing into a classroom with students, and how does this fall in line with the new curriculum? Assistant Superintendent Bhasin responds by saying that these plans do not involve a change in curriculum, but investing more training and support for educators to implement that curriculum. In our blocks we have 90 minutes for grade level work, and 30 minutes for lagging skills in phonics. The plan for next year is to take the extra 30 minutes and group students with students at their same level... so teachers can work with students in groups who need the same instruction. This is one example of our teachers working creative ways to implement an intervention block.

Ms. Spadafora asks what we are doing in terms of intervention for our high school students... Assistant Superintendent Bhasin says she is happy to bring forth information on plans for the high school. Ms. Spadafora asks how the presentation relates to the Student Opportunity Act plan that was approved last year for three years. Assistant Superintendent Bhasin shares that as part of the Student Opportunity Act plan we had to report on the implementation of two of the evidence based programs that we incorporated into that plan. So, the reporting was on the K-8 high quality instructional material in literacy and allocation of funds to summer programming.

Ms. Spadafora asks for data on Mathematics and what we are doing in relation to the Student Opportunity Act plan for Mathematics. The Superintendent assures that he is happy to share more information and data concerning mathematics as well as the work being done in relation to the high school.

Ms. Spadafora asks the Superintendent how educators reacted to ParentSquare. Superintendent Sippel shares that it has been well received and that there are resources from the platform as well as providing virtual instruction as well.

Subcommittee Reports and Discussions

1. Negotiations Subcommittee Update - Ms. Spadafora

There have been four negotiation sessions with the Malden Education Association so far. The last meeting was the final opportunity to present any new proposals from both sides, so all proposals are now out. The next meeting will be April 10, 2025 at 3:30 p.m. The school committee district negotiations webpage is available for anyone interested. It has our proposals, responses and contracts.

<https://maldenps.org/school-committee/negotiations-updates/>

2. Budget Subcommittee - Ms. Spadafora

There was a budget subcommittee meeting on April 2, 2025. To talk about key drivers to the increase this year. A few of which being Out of District tuition rising, special education transportation costs, special education contracted services, short and long term substitutes.

3. Shore Educational Collaborative Update - Ms. Hortie

Ms. Hortie shares the Shore Educational Collaborative quarterly newsletter. They have city connect coordinators that work like family resource coordinators who are working with parents and caregivers to make sure students have appropriate activities over the winter breaks. Another program they are doing is called Bloomboard. Staff and administrators are mentoring paraprofessionals and ESP's as they begin their bachelors degree in Special Education. Additionally, is a project with Citizen Schools that focuses on project based learning. There is also an adult arm that has welcomed some of the adult services to work with the students as well.

4. Policy and Procedure - Ms. Rose-Zeiberg

The most recent meeting was March 24, 2025 where the topic of the Attendance policy, Assignment to Schools Policy, School Admissions policies and potential changes to the Residency Policy have been reviewed and discussed. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg turns to Mr. Bernard who brought it forward to elaborate. Mr. Bernard shares that he had been approached by individuals who were having trouble enrolling their children due to proof of residency. So, it was asked that a cell phone bill be added to the portion of the policy as an acceptable proof of residency, if the bill reflects the appropriate address. The topic was being brought forward for discussion and consideration, not to be voted on.

Ms. Spadafora shares that she is hesitant about including a cell phone bill as a proof of residency because you can tell any cell phone carrier an address for billing but it is not necessarily tied to an address.

Motions and Resolutions

1. School Choice Vote - Ms. Spadafora

Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 76, Section 12B requires all districts to accept incoming school choice students, unless the school committee votes not to participate. It is voted on every year. A "yes" vote would be in favor of accepting, a "no" vote is a vote not to participate.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion recommending that the body votes "no" for the upcoming fiscal 25/26 year. Mr. McCarthy seconded and roll call was taken as follows:

Roll Call Vote

Mayor Christenson - No
Mr. Drummey - No
Mr. McCarthy - No
Ms. Spadafora - No
Ms. Macklin - No
Ms. Hortie - No
Mr. Gray - No
Mr. Bernard - No
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - No
Motion passed unanimously.

2. Assistant Superintendent/Director of Student Services Contract - Ms. Spadafora

A motion was made on Monday March 3, 2025 in Executive Session to approve the contract for Assistant Superintendent/Director of Student Services, Pamela Macdonald's from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2028. This vote passed unanimously in Executive session. Pamela Macdonald was informed of the decision and it is now being brought forward in open session.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to approve the contract for Pamela Macdonald, Assistant Superintendent/Director of Student Services, from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2028. Mr. Drummey seconded the motion and roll call was taken as follows:

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 7:37 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 9:55.

Adjournment

Ms. Hortie made a motion to adjourn at 9:56 p.m. Mr. Bernard 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