

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Monday, June 9, 2025

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

Mayor Christenson called the meeting to order at 6:04 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.

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

Mayor Christenson brought forth the matter of the adoption of minutes for the May 5, 2025 Regular Meeting of the School Committee. Ms. Spadafora made the motion to adopt the minutes. Mr. Drummey seconded, and so it was VOTED. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Bonnie Littlejohn, 127 Emerald St.

Ms. Littlejohn approached the School Committee and stated that she would like to respectfully ask to consider having the budget public forum on a day prior to the day of the School Committee meeting with the vote for the budget. Having the forum the same day as the vote does not allow time for the Committee to digest the concerns the public has brought to the committee and leave time for more thought and clarifications before the vote.

Nicole Chellman, 77 Exchange St.

Ms. Chellman highlighted the ongoing negotiations since January 2025 and the impending expiration of contracts on August 31st, 2025. She emphasized the need for the school committee to pass a budget that meets the needs of Malden Public Schools.

Liza Blackman, 77 Exchange St.

Liza Blackman presented the MEA's 400 members demands for a fair contract, including safe and welcoming schools, class sizes that meet educator needs, professional respect, paid family leave policies, and competitive compensation to recruit and retain high-quality educators.

Ross Bowdridge, Malden Educator, 77 Exchange St.

Mr. Bowdridge requested that the School Committee commit to ensuring safe school zones, particularly in relation to the enforcement of policies affecting vulnerable community members, including immigrants and LGBTQ+ individuals. Mr. Bowdridge urged the school committee to commit to maintaining safe school zones, especially for vulnerable community members such as immigrants and LGBTQ+ individuals. He requested that the committee support educators who uphold district policies against ICE agents and protect the rights of transgender staff and students and encouraged the committee to publicly support and legally defend staff members who deny ICE agents access to school buildings.

Heather Cochran, Malden Educator, 77 Exchange St.

Ms. Cochran emphasized the importance of smaller class sizes for students' success and advocated for maintaining smaller classes to meet the diverse needs of students; highlighting the multiple benefits of smaller class sizes, including tailored instruction, better student engagement, and the ability to meet the diverse needs of students, particularly those with complex needs.

Kevin Miles, Malden Educator, 23 McCormick St., Malden

Mr. Miles shared that the MEA is asking the School Committee to withdraw a proposal that would change a long standing practice that the MEA and School Committee share, the Union President's salary.

Sonia Miller, Malden Educator, 77 Exchange St.

Ms. Miller approached the Committee to speak to stronger and longer paid leave policies that align with the private sector and allow Malden Educators to care for themselves and their families as they do the students of Malden Public Schools. Ms. Miller spoke of her friend, another Malden Educator who used her few remaining sick days in her last year as an educator and ran out of sick days when she needed them most. She applied for FMLA and spent the last few months leading up to her retirement on unpaid sick leave. This forced her to sell her house to pay her medical bills and daily needs. Her situation is one that longer paid medical leave would prevent.

Kim Foley, Malden Educator, Wakefield, Ma

Ms. Foley shared that throughout her career she has needed to work additional jobs to make ends meet. This is a widespread experience among colleagues, with the general consensus being that acquiring home-ownership requires sharing living expenses with roommates and assistance programs. The issue at hand is a fundamental issue with basic living expenses; we need a living wage that focuses on our children, not how we will survive financially.

Chris Giordano, Malden Educator, 19 Sprague St., Malden

Mr. Giordano voiced concerns about the persistent issue of understaffing at the school and its impact on student over-enrollment and directed studies, noting that the student-teacher ratio is higher than in comparable schools. He provided data showing the need for additional teachers to match ratios in other districts. Giordano explained that understaffing leads to over-enrollment in directed studies, limiting students' options for elective courses and affecting their overall educational experience. He stressed the need for increased budget and hiring more teachers to address these issues.

Karen Hill & Lisa Keene, 77 Exchange St.

Ms. Hill and Ms. Keane, team chairs at the Early Learning Center, expressed concerns about the proposed elimination of the early childhood program manager position and highlighted the critical responsibilities overseen by the program manager. They outlined the responsibilities of the early childhood program manager, including overseeing student placements, ensuring compliance with evaluation timelines, reviewing and signing IEPs, conducting staff evaluations, and supporting summer hiring. They believe that eliminating the program manager position would disrupt the Early Learning Center's operations, particularly during a time of programmatic changes and increased student needs and advocated for retaining the position to support students, staff, and families effectively.

Superintendent's Report

1. Charting Our Path Forward in SY26 and Beyond

The Superintendent shared findings from the entry plan, highlighting the strengths of Malden Public Schools, such as diverse and talented students, committed educators, and a supportive community. Areas for improvement included high expectations for all students, adapting instruction to meet diverse needs, and ensuring fair access to opportunities.

SY26 Strategy for Improvement

The Superintendent outlined the strategy for school improvement, focusing on engaging students in active learning, providing targeted literacy interventions, and reducing chronic absenteeism. Each school developed specific plans aligned with these district-wide priorities. Dr. Sippel went on to discuss visioning for the future, emphasizing the need to address advanced learners, expand preschool and early learning opportunities, enhance

digital literacy and computer science education, increase access to performing arts, and ensure high school and postsecondary success. The Superintendent also mentioned the ongoing process to adopt a new health curriculum aligned with updated Massachusetts frameworks, with a recommendation to be presented later in the meeting.

School Improvement Plans

Dr. Sippel welcomed Assistant Superintendent Komal Bhasin to introduce our schools' principals as they presented their School Improvement Plans for the upcoming school year, focusing on academic priorities, intervention strategies, and attendance goals.

The Beebe School Improvement Plan focuses on three key priorities. Academically, the plan emphasizes active student engagement to enhance learning outcomes. In terms of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), the school aims to expand the “Walk to Learn” model to include grades 2 through 8, ensuring more targeted instruction based on student needs. For attendance, the plan includes the implementation of a weekly monitoring system and a communication flow chart to strengthen outreach and collaboration with families, ultimately supporting improved student attendance. The district-wide School Improvement Plans reflect a shared commitment to fostering active thinking, meaningful engagement, and academic growth across all schools.

Ferryway School is prioritizing active thinking through a coaching model, with a strong focus on foundational reading, comprehension, and individualized support in ILP classrooms. Addressing chronic absenteeism—currently at 12%—is also a key focus, particularly among students in special education (15%) and multilingual learners (10%). Forestdale School is working to promote joyful, actively engaged learning through appropriate scaffolding for a wide range of learners, while aiming to reduce chronic absenteeism by 5% this year and build a strong sense of belonging.

Linden School emphasizes meaningful thinking and is developing a structured intervention block schedule while rebuilding relationships with families and staff post-COVID (pre-COVID chronic absenteeism was at 14%). Salemwood School is encouraging students to take ownership of their learning through staff professional development on effective strategies, and is implementing targeted MTSS interventions for multilingual learners (MLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs), alongside strengthened collaboration with families on attendance.

The Early Learning Center is aligning curricula and reinstating Positive Behavior Support (PBS) practices to ensure developmentally appropriate identity-building experiences.

Malden High School is focusing on daily classroom observations using common strategies, implementing a co-teaching model for language acquisition, and monitoring attendance through a dedicated portal and faculty updates.

Visioning for the Future

Additionally, the district remains mindful of five key areas of interest, ensuring that no school loses sight of foundational priorities. These efforts are aligned with the Self-Assessment Goals 1–3 under the Superintendent Induction Program to support student success system-wide. We will continue to engage and focus on advanced learners, preschool and early learning, digital literacy and computer science, expanding access in the performing arts, and high school and postsecondary success.

Ms. Hortie voices her concerns about ELA writing, reading, speaking and listening but that she is a little bit disappointed that there was no mention of Math in the School Improvement Plans. Especially after looking at the iXL scores in Math as the ELA and Math priorities seem unbalanced. Superintendent Sippel wanted to clarify that when we talk about academic priority and heavy lifting, that is not intended to be just in literacy, but in every class and every subject. And that we will have math coaches at each of the K-8 buildings and administrators to make sure that heavy lifting is also happening in Math. There will also be interventions that happen for Mathematics also. Dr. Sippel invites Assistant Superintendent Komal Bhasin to elaborate on the interventions and programs that will assist students in succeeding in Math at their current level. As well as students who are performing above grade level.

Ms. Hortie asks if there was any thinking along the lines of everyone having a streamlined version of an attendance group that meets every week? If not, what are we doing and why are we doing different things? In terms of high school attendance, she was looking for more information on the attendance portal and communication with parents. The Superintendent invites Assistant Superintendent Pam Macdonald and Principal Materangelo to speak to these questions. Assistant Superintendent Pam Macdonald shares that they are working on an Attendance Playbook (team of administrators and attendance officers) and this will be expanded throughout the K-8 schools. Mr. Mastrangelo goes into detail about his team's plans to work on attendance by continuing to build teams of administrators, Guidance Councilors, Social Workers etc. to engage with students and their families who are struggling with attendance.

Ms. Spadafora wanted to echo Ms. Hortie's concerns, and her own disappointment with the lack of focus on Math in the Student Improvement Plans and that it needs to be talked about so that our parents know that we are focusing on literacy and numeracy in the classroom. Ms. Spadafora wanted to also highlight that she would have loved to see the

names of those who sit on student/school councils that put in work from Sept.-June. And she hopes that we can think about what we can do across the district together as a unit.

Ms. Rose - Zeiberg wanted to point out that we do have attendance policies that can be referred to and that the Policy and Procedure Subcommittee will likely be meeting to evaluate the policies. Also, she would like to continue the conversation for the Honors Pathway.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to accept the School Improvement Plans for SY26. Mr. McCarthy seconded the motion and so it was VOTED. The motion passed unanimously

2. Health Curriculum Adoption Process and Recommendation

Superintendent Sippel invited Assistant Superintendent Bhasin to walk everyone through the selection and adoption process for a new Health Curriculum. Assistant Superintendent Bhasin recommended the adoption of the Health Smart curriculum for grades K-12, based on a thorough review process and input from families, students, and educators.

Ms. Hortie asked a question pertaining to the “Opt-Out” process in relation to the Health Curriculum. Assistant Superintendent Bhasin shares that parents have the opportunity to opt-out of any particular curriculum unit. There is communication put in place to share with families topics that are covered, so they can make a choice unit by unit. And explains the additional options parents have may they opt-out of a unit.

Ms. Spadafora asks what the feedback looked like for the family engagement surveys and if any of the School Committee members contributed to the curriculum adoption process. Superintendent Sippel shared that while they did not include any School Committee members, it is a welcomed idea and it will be considered moving forward. Assistant Superintendent Bhasin shared that the listening sessions included caregivers, families of students as well as student surveys.

Mr. Bernard made a motion to adopt the Health Curriculum as presented. Mr. McCarthy seconded the motion, and 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

The motion passed unanimously.

Subcommittee Reports and Discussions

1. Budget Subcommittee Update - Ms. Spadafora

The school committee approved the proposed \$98 million budget for FY26, which maintains current staffing levels and addresses increases in out-of-district tuition and transportation costs. Highlighting no reduction to staff due to the budget. Superintendent Sippel responds to a question from Ms. Rose-Zeiberg pertaining to the program manager vacancy at the ELC. Assistant Superintendent Macdonald shares that we have two team chairs now compared to one last year as well as a part time program manager.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to approve the SY26 Budget. Mr. Bernard seconded the motion and 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

The motion passed unanimously.

2. Negotiations Subcommittee Update - Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora provided an update on the ongoing negotiations with SEIU Local 888 and the Malden Education Association (MEA) units A B and C, highlighting the progress made, tentative agreements and upcoming meetings.

Consent Agenda

1. May 2025 Warrants

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to place the May 2025 warrants on file. Mr. McCarthy seconded the motion and so it was VOTED. The motion passed unanimously.

Motions and Resolutions

1. Ferryway Cafeteria Dedication - Mr. Drummey
Mr. Drummey made a motion to refer the dedication of the Ferryway Cafeteria to former Ferryway School Principal Paul Aber. Mr. Bernard seconded the motion and so it was VOTED. The motion passed unanimously.
2. Admission of Non-Resident Students (Policy JFAB) - Ms. Hortie
Ms. Hortie made a motion to send Policy JFAB back to the Policy and Procedure subcommittee for further review. Ms. Spadafora seconded for the purposes of discussion and a roll call vote was taken:

Roll Call Vote

Mayor Christenson - No

Mr. Drummey - No

Mr. McCarthy - No

Ms. Spadafora - No

Ms. Macklin - No

Ms. Hortie - Yes

Mr. Gray - No

Mr. Bernard - No

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - Yes

The motion did not pass with a 7/2 vote.

3. Assignment of Students to Schools (Policy JCA) - Ms. Spadafora
Ms. Spadafora made a motion to suspend docket rules to take the policy up. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg seconded the motion and 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

The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to have the policy worded as such, “additionally, students who have siblings already enrolled in any of the K-8 Malden Public Schools will be given the choice of being placed in the same school of their sibling, or the school in their designated attendance area. If enrolled prior to July 1st of the upcoming year. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg seconded the motion and 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
The motion passed unanimously.

5. MPS Facility Rental Rates - Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to approve the MPS facility rental rates starting July 1, 2025 and Mr. Drummey seconded the motion and 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
The motion passed unanimously.

Personal Privilege

Executive Session

Mr. Drummey made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 8:33 p.m. Ms. Hortie 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

The 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 9:38.

Adjournment

Mr. Gray made a motion to adjourn at 9:39 p.m. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg seconded and so it was VOTED. The 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