

MARLBOROUGH BOARD OF EDUCATION

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, August 28, 2025

Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School – Library @ 6:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call:

Chip Morris, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm

BOE Members Present: Angela Colantonio, Amy Kuhrt, Chip Morris, Jean Wilson

Administration Present: Dr. Holly Hageman, Superintendent
Paula Graef, Principal
Kristen Trahan, Principal
John Mercier, Director of Operations

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Celebrations:

Dr. Holly Hageman highlighted the successful start of the new school year, noting that just two days in, students and staff have already settled smoothly into the routines. She thanked all staff for all that it takes to have the school ready to welcome children back.

4. Public Comment: None

5. Consent Agenda:

- 5.1 Minutes of 5/29/25 Special Meeting and 6/5/25 Special Meeting;
- 5.2 Personnel Actions – none;
- 5.3 Monthly Enrollment Report

A.Colantonio made a motion that the Board approve Consent Agenda items 5.1 - 5.3, seconded by A. Kuhrt. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

A.Colantonio made a motion to move New Business agenda item 8.3 *MECCA Playground Improvement and Request to Extend Lease* to be discussed immediately following Consent Agenda and prior to Oral Reports, seconded by A. Kuhrt. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

8.3 MECCA Playground Improvement and Request to Extend Lease:

Lisa Wolfe, Vice President of MECCA, along with Heather Little, Board President, and Rochelle Murphy, Program Director, presented a proposal for a \$300,000 investment, using only MECCA funds which they have available, to improve its playground including installing new playground equipment with shade structures, extending/resurfacing pavement for basketball, replacing fencing, and mulching. Diagrams of the proposed project were shared with the Board. Along with the financial investment by MECCA for this project, they would also like to extend their current lease (which runs through the 2028–29 school year) for an additional five years through 2034.

Given the scale of MECCA's proposal and lease extension request, Dr. Hageman noted the importance of Board approval. Dr. Hageman also emphasized that the proposed \$300,000 playground improvement project would be fully funded by MECCA; not by the Marlborough Board of Education or the Town of Marlborough. She noted the importance of making this distinction clear, as the district faces several upcoming capital projects and it is important for it to be in the public record that this playground proposal is by a private entity who leases the space.

Chip Morris asked, given that MECCA's tuition rates are not increasing, how the organization plans to address future rent increases. Lisa Wolfe responded that MECCA has secured grant funding and conducted fundraising events to support its budget. She added that MECCA is also planning to increase enrollment. Wolfe assured the Board that funds for the project are already secured and that MECCA has no concerns about meeting future rent obligations.

John Mercier noted that MES with major construction and renovation projects on the horizon, and the district's and Town's interest in maximizing reimbursement from the state, the district must pay close attention to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) assessment of space standards. He noted that if it were to be determined by the DAS that MECCA's tenancy could in any way decrease the maximum reimbursement amount and jeopardize potentially millions of dollars of reimbursement, the district would need to curtail the lease. Dr. Hageman, John Mercier, and the MECCA leaders hope that this would not become necessary, but Dr. Hageman emphasized that it was important for MECCA to be aware of this possibility.

Mr. Mercier recommended adding a clause to the current or extended lease stating, *"If MECCA's tenancy in any way adversely affects the district's ability to receive full state reimbursement for a major renovation, the lease would become null and void."*

Dr. Hageman supported this recommended caveat, clarifying that reimbursement rates are calculated based on state-defined space standards. Should those standards change in a way that counted MECCA's use of space against the district, the district must have the ability to terminate the lease in order to qualify for the maximum reimbursement.

Both MECCA representatives and Board members expressed appreciation for the strong and positive working relationship between MECCA and Marlborough Elementary School. Lisa Wolfe reiterated that MECCA's request for a lease extension is rooted in seeking peace of mind and long-term stability, and she emphasized that MECCA and the district are aligned in this goal. Board members likewise recognized the benefits of having MECCA in the building. At the same time, all parties acknowledged the potential impact of future DAS rule changes and agreed on the importance of including the lease disclaimer recommended by John Mercier to protect the district's eligibility for state reimbursement.

A.Colantonio made a motion that the Board approve the improvements to the MECCA playground at MECCA's expense and for the Superintendent to enter into extended lease negotiations, seconded by A. Kuhrt. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

6. Oral Reports

6.1 Advisory Groups:

- **PTO** – Paula Graef reported that the principals met with the PTO presidents over the summer. The PTO has planned another full year of events for students, families, and staff, beginning with a back-to-school staff breakfast. Upcoming activities include Soccer Night, the Book Fair and Ice Cream Social, and Trunk-or-Treat. The first PTO meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 2nd.
- **SAC** – Kristen Trahan reported that an upcoming newsletter will make a pitch to invite families to join the School Advisory Committee. While the committee met on an as-needed basis last year, the first planned meeting for this school year is scheduled for October.
- **Operations, Wellness & Safety** – John Mercier informed the Board that he will provide updates later in the agenda.
- **Board of Finance Liaison** – None
- **AHM** – Chip Morris reported that the fall programs and services brochure has been released. Registration is open for programs offered through the Early Resource Center, Health Matters, and the Youth Theater program. More information is available at AHMyouth.org. Tickets are on sale for the Gilbert & Sullivan Showcase on September 21st. Additionally, AHM will host a free QPR and Narcan training on September 8th at 6:00 p.m..

6.2 Subcommittees:

- **Policy Committee** - Chip Morris informed the Board that the Policy Committee will present two policies at the September BOE meeting. Dr. Hageman noted that policies 5131.911, Connecticut School Climate Policy, and 5144.12, Challenging Behavior Prevention: Restorative Practices Response in Student Discipline, are mandated and must be adopted by the Board as soon as possible.
- **Personnel** - None
- **Communications** - None

6.3 Chairperson:

Chip Morris noted the excitement of back-to-school events and commended the custodial staff, office staff, paraeducators, teachers, and administrators for a smooth and successful start to the year. He also informed the Board that Board Member Josh Bruhn submitted his resignation on August 19, thanked him for his service and wished him well. Finally, Chairperson Morris announced the upcoming CABE/CAPSS Convention, scheduled for November 21–22 and encouraged Board members to consider registering by contacting Carmela Monte.

6.4 Superintendent and Administrative Team:

- **School Opening/Summer Work Update**
 - **Extended School Year (ESY)** - Paula Graef reported that the ESY program ran smoothly for four weeks during the summer with 20 Pre-k to grade 5 students.
 - **Summer Professional Development and Curriculum Work** - Kristin Trahan reported that summer curriculum work aligned with the Strategic Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP) which included refining pacing guides in literacy, math, science, and social studies; development of the new STEAM program, completing the ELA text inventory, and developing Physical Education rubrics.
 - **Opening of School Preparations and Events** - Paula Graef reported that the school year began with new teacher orientation, followed by administrators welcoming teachers on Monday and all staff on Tuesday. Both days included professional development in targeted sessions. On Tuesday morning, MES also hosted the annual Meet-and-Greet for families and students. The first day of school was

Wednesday. Open House is scheduled for September 24 with more information to go out to families.

- Summer Building Projects/Facilities Update - John Mercier reviewed the 2025 summer facilities, technology and food service projects which included rekeying interior locks, replacing door hardware, repairing sidewalks, and maintaining floors. Blackout blinds were added in classrooms with significant glare, playgrounds and grounds were refreshed with mulch and landscaping. A new front entrance camera was installed and EV charging stations, paid for through grants, are almost ready for use. Annual inspections and maintenance were completed for HVAC, boilers, hot water heaters, pumps, the generator, fire systems, extinguishers, the oil tank, and elevators. An additional TouchView board was added to an instructional space and 65 new Chromebooks were configured. Network and Wi-Fi equipment was updated with the latest security firmware, and PowerSchool along with other software platforms were rolled over for the new school year. SNAP Healthcare software setup for the Health Office is in progress. Food service updates included collaboration with RHAM to implement LINQ, a new point-of-sale and parent self-service program. Annual kitchen inspections, including hood, grease trap, and fire suppression systems, were also completed.
- **Summary of Education-Related Legislation Enacted in the 2025 Regular Session-** Dr. Holly Hageman reported two key updates from the recent session. First, the Special Education Expansion and Development (SEED) Grant Program, a state non-competitive grant, will support enhancements in special education services and interventions. Second, the CT DRIP Grant (District Repair and Improvement Project Program) will provide reimbursement grants to districts for minor capital repairs and improvements to school buildings, grounds, and infrastructure.

7. Unfinished Business:

- 7.1 Discuss and Review FY 2024-25 Year-End Financial Report and Financial Transfers:
Dr. Holly Hageman informed the Board that the 2024–25 fiscal year is expected to close with a surplus of \$52,471.75. Following the completion of the FY25 audit, after the FY24 audit is completed, this surplus is anticipated to be deposited into the district's 2% Reserve Fund.

Dr. Hageman also reviewed the FY25 transfers for Board approval.

A.Colantonio made a motion that the Board approve the FY 2024-25 financial transfers as presented, seconded by A. Kuhrt. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

- 7.2 MES Facilities Project Update:

Dr. Holly Hageman reported that she, John Mercier, and Chip Morris met informally with Town officials including Deb Bourbeau, Chair of the Board of Selectmen, Mike Nastri, Chair of the Board of Finance, and David Porter, Town Manager to discuss the facilities project(s). The meetings focused on idea sharing, potential timelines, order of operations, and space utilization strategies to maximize state reimbursement. The group has met twice and plans to meet again on October 28th.

Dr. Holly Hageman noted that the group agreed that the school district will engage in an engineering study for the two smaller projects, the egress and the water infiltration issue in the stage area, and these studies may be able to qualify for DRIP funding. Each and both of these projects are unrelated to the bigger roof/HVAC/electrical project and were also highlighted in the Facilities Study conducted last year as needing to be done as soon as possible. Mr. Mercier will prepare RFPs for these two studies so that they can take place this fall in order for the school district to present these as potential capital requests in the FY27 budget.

8. New Business:

8.1 Review August Financial Report:

Dr. Hageman stated as this is the first report of FY 2025-26, and noted that it is still early for projections.

8.2 Announcement of District Medical Advisor:

Dr. Hageman referred to the memo in the packet announcing the appointment of Brittany Molkenhuth, MSN, CPNP-PC, as the new School Medical Advisor for Marlborough Public Schools and Region 8 Schools. MES partnered with all school districts in Region 8, once again, to share the cost.

9. Communications

9.1 Monthly Staff Vacancy Report - Submitted

9.2 2025-26 Staff Listing - Submitted

10. Future Meetings & Topics:

- Tentative Policy Committee Meeting, Thursday, September 25, 2025, 6:00 p.m.
- Next Regular Business Meeting, Thursday, September 25, 2025, 6:30 p.m.
- All Boards Meeting, Tuesday, September 30, 2025, 6:30 p.m., Senior Center

11. Public Comment:

Pam Farrington, 95 Jerry Daniels Road - Thanked everyone for a wonderful start to the new year. She stated that it has been a smooth transition from summer to the first day of school. Staff is looking forward to the new school year.

Louise Concodeo, 70 Millstone Dr. - Loves the idea of MECCA's playscape, but suggested that the Town Manager and Town Planner be involved to ensure all permits are pulled and to be aware of the wells underground in that area.

12. Adjournment:

A.Colantonio made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m., seconded by J. Wilson.

Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED