



## Marblehead School Committee Budget Sub-committee

<b>Jennifer Schaeffner</b> Chairperson	<b>Melissa Clucas</b> Member
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## Marblehead Budget Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

**Chair: Jenn Schaeffner**

**Meeting Date, Time & Location: 10/30/25 3:00PM 9 Widger Road  
Conference Room Marblehead MA 01945 and Zoom**

**Members Present: Jenn Schaeffner, Melissa Clucas**

**Meeting Recording: [Link](#)**

**Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Jenn Schaeffner**

### **Call to Order and Public Comment (00:00:00–00:02:00)**

- a. The meeting was called to order with recording confirmed at 3:01pm.
- b. Public comment was opened. No members of the public raised their hands or provided comment. One attendee (Aaron) was present online but did not speak.

### **Budget Planning and Reporting Framework (00:02:00–00:10:00)**

- a. Committee reviewed spreadsheet tracking out-of-district tuition and transportation costs, showing 12.5% average annual increase over seven years.
  - Funding sources include circuit breaker reimbursement, IDEA grants, special education revolving funds, prepaid amounts, and general fund appropriations.
  - Exercise aims to clarify funding sources and demonstrate increasing pressure on general fund as circuit breaker and IDEA grant growth does not keep pace with cost increases.
- b. Committee discussed difficulty of projecting out-of-district costs three years in advance due to volatility in student enrollment and needs; agreed documenting assumptions for three-year forecast is necessary for broader budget planning exercise.

c. General fund contribution to out-of-district costs for FY27 projected to approach \$4.5 million.

### **FY27 School Department Budget Planning and Reporting (00:10:00–00:43:00)**

a. Committee reviewed draft spreadsheet organizing FY26 salary/wage data by school and category, sourced from final FinCom-approved FY25 and FY26 budgets.

- Discussed refining categorization using existing budget codes for school location, position type, and department.
- Michael Pfifferling noted certain positions miscoded; accurate live data unavailable until FY27.

b. Discussed challenges categorizing special education staff, EL teachers, school adjustment counselors, and itinerant providers (OT, PT, speech).

- Some positions coded district-wide for staffing flexibility based on changing student needs.

c. Reviewed RADAR enrollment data showing 22% district decline over 10 years, consistent with 20% decline in Marblehead school-age children; statewide enrollment declined 5% year over year.

d. Discussed limitations of state-reported data, including FTE and enrollment discrepancies; RADAR data approximately two years behind.

e. Analysis purpose is to validate current staffing levels based on student needs, class sizes, and caseloads, not assume proportional reductions based solely on enrollment declines; will inform FY27 budget development and multi-year projections through FY28 and FY29.

### **Enrollment Trends and Demographic Analysis (00:43:00–01:21:00)**

a. Committee discussed analyzing staffing levels using FTE data rather than dollar amounts to validate current staffing based on student needs, class sizes, and caseloads.

- Current data systems contain inaccuracies that will not be fully resolved until Munis implementation in FY27.

b. Committee discussed developing three budget scenarios: level service funding, recommended budget reflecting identified efficiencies, and level-funded (zero increase) budget showing impact on class sizes and programs.

- Recommended budget should reflect district needs after identifying efficiencies, not what town can afford.
- Committee emphasized implementing stated cuts if additional funding not provided.

c. Committee discussed class size targets and establishing clear thresholds for when additional teachers are required.

- Current class sizes in some grades average 17 students; analysis should consider different standards for elementary, middle, and high school levels.
- d. Committee reviewed strategies to reduce general fund pressure, including strategic use of revolving funds and special education circuit breaker reserves.
- Discussed moving additional costs into revolving funds where appropriate, such as athletics fees and kindergarten instructional assistant salaries.
- e. Committee discussed out-of-district special education costs and goal of creating in-district programs.
- Creating appropriate in-district programs is a two to two-and-a-half year process.
  - District has no control over out-of-district tuition rates set by state's Operational Services Division, which have increased by as much as 14% in recent years.
- f. Committee discussed full-day kindergarten funding; Marblehead is one of very few Massachusetts districts charging fees for full-day kindergarten.
- Eliminating kindergarten fees would cost approximately \$650,000 annually.

### **Budget Development Process and Data Requirements (01:21:00–01:53:00)**

- a. Budget framework and data organization discussed.
- Spreadsheet serves as summary-level tool requiring underlying staffing analysis by school.
  - Michael Pffiferling to reconcile data using Munis system and provide subcategories within major groupings.
  - Detailed breakdowns will support budget recommendation but not necessarily be presented at town meeting.
- b. Budget development to include two scenarios: level-funded budget and recommended budget reflecting identified efficiencies.
- Recommended budget must reflect actual district needs after staffing analysis, not what town can afford.
  - Proposed reductions must be implemented if additional funding is not provided.. Staffing analysis process established.
  - John Robidoux and Michael Pffiferling to meet with principals to review class sizes, caseloads, and program needs.
  - Special education staffing cannot be reduced short-term; requires two to two-and-a-half year process to develop in-district programs.
- d. Two follow-up meetings scheduled:
- November 17 at 1:00 p.m. for school department members to review staffing analysis progress.

- December 1 at 2:00 p.m. for joint meeting with Finance Committee; presentation to include out-of-district tuition projections for FY27–FY29 by funding source, and school department wages for FY26–FY28 with contract and inflation assumptions.

e. No motions were made and no votes were taken during this section.

f. The meeting adjourned at by Chair Jenn Schaeffner at 4:54pm.