



Marblehead School Committee Budget Sub-committee

Jennifer Schaeffner Chairperson	Melissa Clucas Member
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Marblehead School Committee Budget Subcommittee Minutes

Chair: Jenn Schaeffner

**Meeting Date, Time & Location: 12/1/25 9 Widger Road
Marblehead, MA Conference Room AND Zoom**

Members Present: Jenn Schaeffner, Melissa Clucas

Meeting Recording: [Link](#)

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Jenn Schaeffner

Opening and Public Comment ([00:00:00-00:08:00](#))

- a. Meeting called to order at 2:03 p.m. by Jennifer Schaeffner, Chair; public comment moved to beginning.
- b. Sarah Fox, 46 Ft Street, public comment on enrollment decline:
 - Enrollment dropped from 2,727 (June 9th) to 2,511 currently—216 students (8%) in under six months.
 - Expressed concern regarding explanation of decline in relation to staffing lines and budget requests.
 - Noted additional funding requests would face town scrutiny without clear messaging on enrollment-to-staffing translation.
- c. Kate Thompson, remote public comment on missing meeting minutes:

- Formally requested minutes for three 2024 meetings (10/17, 10/30, 11/17) and five 2023 meetings (10/24, 1/7, 2/13, 2/28, 3/18).
- Noted some meetings have YouTube recordings, but all require publicly posted minutes.

FY27 School Department Budget Planning and Reporting ([00:08:00-01:23:00](#))

a. Assistant Supt. Of Finance and Operations Michael Pfifferling presented a detailed spreadsheet organizing the FY26 approved budget by department, staffing category, school building, and role type.

- Spreadsheet grouped positions including administration, clerical, teachers (by grade level and specialty), instructional assistants, special education services (licensed and support staff), guidance, nurses, transportation, maintenance, and technology.
- Reflected only appropriated budget funds, not grant-funded positions.

b. Committee discussed instructional coaches totaling approximately \$732,000 across district-wide positions and building-level teacher leader stipends.

- Four full-time district instructional coaches work on curriculum development, implementation, professional development, and classroom support.
- Committee requested written roles and responsibilities descriptions for instructional coaches and administrative positions to communicate value to the public.

c. Committee reviewed guidance and school adjustment counselor positions, noting confusion in categorization between general education and special education roles.

- Administration acknowledged need to properly categorize staff based on licensure and actual service delivery for accurate state reporting.

d. Special education staffing and budget allocation discussed.

- Approximately 25% of total salary costs allocated to special education, aligning with district's 20-23% special education enrollment.
- Supt. Of Schools John Robidoux noted out-of-district tuition costs higher than desired; building internal programs is a multi-year goal.
- Recent increases in initial evaluation requests and move-ins with significant needs have impacted staffing demands.

e. Administrative costs reviewed and found reasonable.

- School-level administration represents approximately 3% of total salary costs; district-level administration approximately 4%; clerical staff approximately 3.5%.
- Total administrative costs represent approximately 10% of total salary costs.
- John Robidoux stated no areas for administrative reduction.

f. Facilities, maintenance, and technology staffing discussed, representing approximately 6% of total salary costs.

- Deeper analysis of custodial and maintenance staffing planned but not yet completed.
- Committee suggested exploring shared services with town departments and a permanent building committee for large capital projects oversight.

User Fees and Athletic Budget Accounting ([01:22:00-01:39:00](#))

a. User fees and athletics funding discussed.

- When user fees were raised, all coaching salaries moved from local budget to revolving fund.
- Michael Pfifferling restructured user fee accounting into separate revolving funds for high school athletics, high school clubs/activities, middle school programs, and elementary activities to improve transparency and oversight.
- Approximately 50% of athletics transportation costs funded from user fees, 50% from local budget.

b. Sustainability of user fee funding for recurring expenses discussed.

- User fees set at \$500 per student with family cap; salaries increase 2-3.5% annually while fees have not been adjusted.
- Pfifferling cautioned recurring salary expenses require recurring revenue, not fund balances.
- Committee agreed fund balances should be used for one-time expenses only.

Enrollment Trends and Exit Analysis ([01:39:00-01:42:00](#))

a. Enrollment decline reviewed.

- Enrollment dropped from 2,776 in June to 2,511 currently.
- John Robidoux noted decline includes larger exiting senior class than incoming class.
- Committee questioned whether reporting mechanisms may have inflated/deflated previous numbers.

b. Preschool enrollment tracking challenges explained.

- Students enrolled for assessment purposes may not ultimately attend, inflating counts.
- Last year: 168 students; this year: 78 students.

c. Exit interviews/surveys requested to understand why families leave district.

- Committee member noted exit interviews were requested last year but not implemented.

d. Class size data ties to general education teachers, representing approximately 30% of total salary costs.

Meeting Schedule and Calendar Planning ([01:42:00-01:55:00](#))

a. Michael Pfifferling distributed FY27 budget process calendar.

- Key dates: February 5th 2026, recommended budget presentation to school committee, February 26th public hearing, March 5th school committee vote, March 23rd or 30th presentation to Finance Committee, April 6th warrant hearing.
- School committee must vote on budget before Finance Committee recommendation to town meeting.

b. John Robidoux outlined principal meetings and staffing review timeline.

- Administration to meet with principals December 1st-15th to review staffing needs and identify critical positions versus potential reductions.
- Robidoux expressed concern about publicly sharing detailed reduction lists in December for May vote due to staff morale; Committee clarified seeking overall sense of adjustments, not specific position details.

c. Committee scheduled December 22nd meeting at 10:30 a.m. via Zoom to check budget development progress before holiday break; agreed to schedule additional January meeting to review detailed budget information before February 5th presentation.

d. Finance Committee members clarified they function as liaison team per town counsel, not official subcommittee; no formal recommendations or minutes required. School committee members required to produce minutes. November 17th meeting was school committee subcommittee meeting only, not joint meeting.

Closing and Adjournment ([01:55:00-01:56:00](#))

a. Minutes from November 17th meeting and two prior meetings pending approval; earlier meeting minutes not yet completed by Michael Pfifferling.

b. Motion by Melissa Clucas, seconded by Jennifer Schaeffner, to approve November 17th meeting minutes.

- The motion passed 2-0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Melissa Clucas.

c. No public comment.

d. Meeting adjourned at 3:56 p.m.