



Marblehead School Committee Budget Sub-committee

Jennifer Schaeffner Chairperson	Melissa Clucas Member
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Marblehead Budget Subcommittee Committee

Minutes

Chair: Jennifer Schaeffner

**Meeting Date, Time & Location: 11/17/25 9 Widger Road
Marblehead, MA and Zoom**

Members Present: Jenn Schaeffner, Melissa Clucas

Meeting Recording: [Link](#)

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Jenn Schaeffner

Opening and Technical Issues ([00:03:00-00:12:00](#))

a. Meeting called to order at 1:03 p.m.; technical difficulties with audio and recording equipment resolved; recording to be posted to website.

Staffing Analysis by Building and Role ([00:12:00-00:31:00](#))

a. Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations presented staffing spreadsheet analyzing salary allocations by building and role category.

- Spreadsheet categorized positions including administration, clerical, teachers, student services, special education, substitutes, instructional assistants, coaches, counseling, nurses, transportation, maintenance, security, and athletics
- Analysis totaled \$38,622,000 in salary lines based on budget figures; per-pupil costs calculated by dividing total dollars by building enrollment
- Differences between buildings reflected varying program intensity, particularly in special education services at Glover Elementary

- b. Committee discussed methodology and limitations of per-pupil calculations.
- Per-pupil totals were not true per-pupil expenditures as calculated by DESE; analysis was salary-only and excluded out-of-district placements or other expenses
 - Variations in per-pupil costs could reflect differences in staff salary steps and columns rather than actual staffing levels
- c. Assistant Superintendent presented enrollment projections and teacher-student ratios for upcoming year.
- Current enrollment of 2,392 students projected to decline to 2,345 students, a decrease of 47 students
 - Projections created by moving current grade cohorts forward rather than using NESDEC data
- d. Committee discussed using staffing analysis to identify potential efficiencies.
- Assistant Superintendent identified areas for potential trimming requiring conversations with principals to understand building-specific needs
 - Example provided: reducing first grade sections from five to four classes at one building would increase average class size from 18.8 to 23.5 students
 - Committee emphasized staffing changes would have rippling effects on prep time, duty coverage, recess, and specials
- e. Committee discussed budget development approach and expectations from town leadership.
- Interim Superintendent clarified town requested district identify reasonable efficiencies rather than simply back into level-funded number
 - Committee discussed presenting balanced budget demonstrating services provided within projected revenue constraints
- f. Committee emphasized need for detailed justification of budget to present at Town Meeting based on student enrollment and needs.

General Education Teacher Ratios and Enrollment Projections ([00:31:00-00:42:00](#))

- a. Historical staffing and enrollment context
- Current staffing levels similar to seven to nine years ago when enrollment was 3,300–3,400 students
- b. Special education staffing methodology
- Student services staff balanced based on caseloads and required ratios
 - Program classes have legal student-to-teacher ratio requirements

- Staffing includes contingencies for students with changing needs or new enrollments
- District received 16 new students requiring services, with three or four additional since last meeting

c. Special education data presentation and privacy

- District can speak in generalities about service levels without identifying individual students
- Example: K-3 therapeutic programs typically require one teacher and one aide for eight students, or one teacher and two aides for ten students

d. Consolidation of therapeutic programs

- District moved away from replicating identical programs in both Brown and Glover elementary schools
- Traveling therapists serve two buildings rather than all four to minimize travel and provide flexibility

e. Timeline for program marketing and IEP tracking

- District not ready to market programs to other districts until following year to ensure program stability
- Committee requested tracking data on new IEPs developed during school year to understand enrollment variability

Special Education Services and Programming (00:42:00-00:56:00)

a. Factors contributing to variability in special education referrals and evaluations:

- Testing requests increase after report card periods
- Carryover evaluation requests from previous year completed in current year
- Initial evaluations more frequent at younger grades due to MTSS early identification
- Middle school requests less common, may occur due to emerging mental health issues

b. Distinction between 504 plans and IEPs:

- Both require identified disability through evaluation
- 504 plans provide accommodations for equal access; IEPs provide specialized instruction and modified curriculum
- Students with IEPs automatically qualify for 504 protections
- 504 plans extend through college and age 22; IEPs terminate at age 22

c. Timeline for budget recommendations:

- Administration to meet with principals and leadership team to assess staffing impact
- Staffing decisions made at district level

- Recommendations to committee by mid-January 2025, identifying positions by level (elementary, middle, high school)

d. Budget presentation approach and timeline:

- Two scenarios: level-funded budget and necessary services budget
- Warrant article for potential override voted in January; dollar amount required closer to Town Meeting
- Public budget hearing potentially moved earlier than traditional March timeframe
- Full budget presentation with detailed recommendations following mid-January initial presentation

FY27 Capital Requests Review (00:56:00-01:24:00)

a. Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations presented FY27 capital request list totaling approximately \$1.7 million, prioritized on scale of one to three (one being highest priority), for submission to town by November 28th deadline.

b. High priority capital requests included:

- Glover Elementary playground refurbishment (\$75,000)
- High school field house improvements including padding, painting, and floor refurbishment (\$59,000 total)
- Middle school flooring repairs for cracked linoleum and expansion joints (\$100,000)
- Performing arts center upgrades including carpeting and lighting (\$75,000)
- Wireless access point licensing renewal (\$180,000)
- Bus camera system upgrades for all seven district vehicles (\$75,000)
- Rolling stock replacement: 2013 14-passenger bus and 2015 28-passenger bus

c. Items designated for immediate action through operating budget rather than capital requests:

- Brown Elementary ADA door mechanism (\$19,000)
- High school cooking classroom countertops (\$16,000)
- High school security alarm system refresh (\$14,000)

d. Committee discussed funding strategies including exploring partnerships with athletic boosters and community organizations to offset costs, potential joint funding with Recreation and Parks Department for Seaside Park drainage project (\$100,000), and possibility of proposing comprehensive debt exclusion for all capital needs.

e. Committee to vote Thursday to endorse priority rankings for submission to town; Assistant Superintendent to meet with town administrator to discuss full capital request list and explore comprehensive borrowing options.

Budget Calendar and Timeline Discussion ([01:24:00-01:42:00](#))

a. The Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations (Mike Pffierling) presented the FY27 budget calendar.

- October 30th joint meeting with Finance Committee to be added to calendar for documentation
- Capital request submission deadline to town confirmed as November 28th
- Principal and director budget meetings scheduled December 1st through mid-December; final feedback discussions in January TBD

b. Budget presentation timeline and approach established.

- Level service budget numbers for FY27 and FY28 available but not presented as full budget
- December 4th subcommittee meeting would not include budget presentation
- Executive team review of budget recommendations December 8th–22nd
- Finance subcommittee to receive initial budget recommendations in January TBD before full school committee presentation

c. Override warrant article vote moved from February 5th to January 8th.

- Change ensures adequate time before warrant closing date of January 23rd
- January 22nd available as backup meeting date if needed
- Potential warrant articles include operational override and capital debt exclusion

d. Key budget milestones: January TBD Finance subcommittee receives budget recommendations; February 5th recommended budget to full school committee; February 6th budget posted online; February 26th public hearing; March 5th school committee budget vote; March presentation to Finance Committee; April town meeting warrant hearing and town meeting; May town election.

e. December 1st joint meeting with Finance Committee liaisons scheduled 2:00–4:00 p.m. to discuss staffing analysis, enrollment projections, and budget calendar; minutes from October 14th, October 30th, and November 17th to be approved.

f. A motion was made by Melissa Clucas and seconded by Jennifer Schaeffner to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 2–0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Melissa Clucas. The meeting adjourned at 2:42 p.m.