



Marblehead School Committee

Chair: K. Schmeckpeper

Meeting Date, Time & Location: Thursday, January 15th, 2026, 6pm, MHS Library, 2 Humphrey Street
Marblehead MA 01945

SC Members Present: K. Schmeckpeper, M. Clucas, J. Schaeffner, H. Gwazda

SC Members Absent: A. Williams

Agenda and Materials: [Link](#)

Meeting Recording: [Link](#)

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Henry Gwazda

Opening Remarks and Commendations ([00:01:00–00:05:00](#))

a. Commendation honoring Mr. Robert Sanford, Holocaust survivor by J. Schaeffner

- Shared testimony with students at Marblehead Veterans Middle School and Marblehead High School during period of anti-Semitic incidents
- Moment of silence observed in his memory

Public Comment ([00:05:00–00:10:00](#))

a. Sarah Fox, Beach Street, spoke regarding Brigitte Karns grievance.

- Criticized committee's vote against supporting the grievance, calling it retaliatory against someone who stood up against antisemitism
- Argued union contract clearly states number of staff for lead teacher positions with no language for split stipends or shared positions
- Urged a majority member to motion to revoke the decision under Robert's Rules of Order

b. Linda Valenville, former district employee, addressed the committee regarding a time capsule.

- Noted a time capsule buried at Clifton School in 1976 is due to be opened for the 250th anniversary
- Requested committee ensure excavation before any demolition occurs

Student Representative and Superintendent Updates ([00:10:00–00:28:00](#))

a. Student Representative Will submitted written update read by Chair.

- Second quarter ends late January; junior seminars began for college/career planning
- DECA competed at Doubletree in Danvers; performing arts departing for NYC trip January 16th



- Winter sports records: boys basketball 5-3, girls basketball 5-3, boys indoor track 3-0, girls indoor track 2-1, boys hockey 0-8-1, girls hockey 3-6-1, gymnastics 1-1, swimming 2-0, wrestling 2-6

b. Superintendent John Robidoux provided financial and calendar updates.

- Staff reductions and operational efficiencies being developed to meet town's level-funded budget directive; higher classroom numbers and reduced resources will impact students
- 2026-27 school calendar discussions ongoing regarding starting before Labor Day; calendar to be proposed for approval at next meeting

c. Community events and District Improvement Plan updates announced.

- Community action meeting on antisemitism January 13th; MLK Community Breakfast January 19th; Holocaust Remembrance Day event January 20th; webinar on responding to swastikas in schools January 22nd
- District Improvement Plan update underway with administrative feedback received; staff and parent input to follow; principals aligning school improvement plans with proposed goals

d. Recognitions shared.

- Marblehead High School named to 2025 AP School Honor Roll Platinum Level; DECA students qualified for state conference; Yefi Chen placed first in Dramatic Interpretation

Financial Update and Essex Tech Enrollment (00:28:00–00:38:00)

a. Superintendent John Robidoux provided update on Essex Tech enrollment and lottery system.

- Essex Tech serves 17 communities; now uses lottery system due to regulations prohibiting consideration of grades, recommendations, or disciplinary records
- Essex Tech proposed minimum 10-seat allocation for Marblehead based on three-year average; larger districts proposed percentage-based allocation increasing Marblehead's minimum from 10 to 33 students

b. Financial implications discussed.

- Current Marblehead applicants: 33 (class of 2028), 29 (class of 2029), 28 (class of 2030)
- Chapter 70 funding follows students to Essex Tech; potential cost could reach half a million dollars depending on allocation method
- Superintendent preferred three-year average method; planned continued discussions with Essex Tech leadership

Consent Agenda and Town Meeting Warrant Articles (00:38:00–01:03:00)

a. December 18, 2025 draft minutes approved with correction.



- Correction: "negative 3.8% change from 2019 to present" changed to "3.8% average annual" change in enrollment update section.

- Motion by Henry Gwazda, seconded by Melissa Clucas. Passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Jennifer Schaeffner, Melissa Clucas.

b. Revolving fund reauthorization articles approved (all passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Jennifer Schaeffner, Melissa Clucas).

- Special Education (\$200,000): Motion by Henry Gwazda, seconded by Melissa Clucas. Passed 4–0.

- Transportation (\$15,000): Motion by Henry Gwazda, seconded by Melissa Clucas. Passed 4–0.

- Athletic User Fees (\$550,000): Motion by Henry Gwazda, seconded by Jennifer Schaeffner. Passed 4–0.

- MHS Activity Fees (\$200,000): Motion by Henry Gwazda, seconded by Jennifer Schaeffner. Passed 4–0.

- Veterans MS Activity Fees (\$50,000): Motion by Henry Gwazda, seconded by Jennifer Schaeffner. Passed 4–0.

- Village Elementary Activity Fees (\$50,000): Motion by Henry Gwazda, seconded by Jennifer Schaeffner. Passed 4–0.

- General Education Tuition (\$200,000): Motion by Henry Gwazda, seconded by Jennifer Schaeffner. Passed 4–0.

- Kindergarten/Pre-K (\$1,100,000): Motion by Henry Gwazda, seconded by Melissa Clucas. Passed 4–0.

- Athletics (\$30,000): Motion by Henry Gwazda, seconded by Jennifer Schaeffner. Passed 4–0.

- Special Education Circuit Breaker (\$2,100,000): Motion by Henry Gwazda, seconded by Melissa Clucas. Passed 4–0.

- Facility Rental (\$125,000): Motion by Henry Gwazda, seconded by Jennifer Schaeffner. Passed 4–0.

c. Capital/technology placeholder articles and supplemental appropriation.

- School Building Capital Needs: Motion by Jennifer Schaeffner, seconded by Henry Gwazda. Passed 4–0.

- School Buildings Technology Needs: Motion by Jennifer Schaeffner, seconded by Henry Gwazda. Passed 4–0.

- School Department Capital Needs tabled pending clarification from Michael Pfifferling; motion to table by Henry Gwazda, seconded by Melissa Clucas. Passed 4–0.

- School Department Supplemental Appropriation: Motion by Henry Gwazda, seconded by Melissa Clucas. Passed 4–0.

User Fees and Tuition Proposal ([01:03:00–01:16:00](#))

a. Superintendent John Robidoux presented 2026-27 user fees and tuition with 3% increase.



- HS athletic fees: 1st season \$555, 2nd \$505, 3rd \$445; MS: 1st \$270, 2nd \$215, 3rd \$165
- Non-athletics: HS clubs \$300, elementary activities \$300; annual max increased to \$2,125
- Pre-K half day \$5,150, full day \$7,210; full-day kindergarten \$4,420; transportation (K-6 <2 mi) \$260

b. Fee waivers available for families meeting USDA income eligibility or directly certified through virtual gateway; no students turned away for inability to pay.

c. Committee member Melissa Clucas raised concern that fees are high compared to surrounding towns and charging for kindergarten is a moral issue.

d. A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve the 2026-27 user fees and tuition as outlined.

- The motion passed 3–1, with votes in favor: Henry Gwazda, Kate Schmeckpeper, Jennifer Schaeffner; and vote against: Melissa Clucas.

e. A motion was made by Melissa Clucas and seconded by Henry Gwazda to place the School Department Capital Needs article on the warrant.

- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Jennifer Schaeffner, Melissa Clucas.

Budget Subcommittee Update and Meeting Planning (01:16:00–01:32:00)

a. Meeting rescheduled; grievance decision reported.

- January 29, 2026 meeting moved to 7:00 PM start due to Brown School STEAM Fair conflict.
- Henry Gwazda reported school committee voted to deny step three grievance on December 18th; Kate Schmeckpeper recused from deliberations and vote.

b. Superintendent John Robidoux reported natural gas contract renewal.

- New three-year Eversource contract at \$7.10/decatherm (down from \$8.54), approximately \$49,000 annual savings.

c. Budget Subcommittee update on FY27 budget process.

- Level-funded budget of \$49 million required; projected expenses exceed by approximately \$1.7 million.
- Efficiencies of approximately \$900,000 identified (unfilled vacancies, 1.75 ELL positions eliminated), leaving approximately \$879,000 gap.
- Subcommittee meets January 20th; budget presentation February 5th with public hearing to follow.

d. Eveleth School shared use discussion.

- Recreation and Parks exploring feasibility of joint project; feasibility study may require funding.

e. A motion was made by Melissa Clucas and seconded by Jennifer Schaeffner to adjourn.



- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Jennifer Schaeffner, Melissa Clucas.

f. Meeting adjourned at 7:31 PM.