



Marblehead School Committee Minutes for 9/4/25

Date: 9/4/25

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Marblehead High School Library, 2 Humphry St. Marblehead

Members Present: Al Williams, Jenn Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper

Members Joining Remotely: Henry Gwazda

Members Absent: None

Minutes Created By: Henry Gwazda

Agenda Link:

<https://marbleheadma.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Marblehead-School-Committee-AMEND-ED-Agenda-9-4-2025.pdf>

Video Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nq8OcNG-8-E>

Meeting Summary:

1. **Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, Accommodations, and Public Comment**

Introduction (00:00:00–00:02:00)

- a. Meeting called to order at 6:01 PM on September 4, 2025, followed by Pledge of Allegiance
- b. Committee member commended administrators and staff for opening school the previous week
- c. Chair outlined public comment policy

2. **Public Comment (00:03:00–00:06:00)**

- a. Sarah Fox (46th Street) raised concerns about survey provisions in student handbooks
 - i. Objected to opt-out structure, citing Supreme Court case requiring opt-in for parents
 - ii. Stated three schools require signed handbooks as graded assignments, calling this a forced mandate violating Supreme Court law
 - iii. Fox criticized removal of finance update from agenda two hours before meeting and questioned finance subcommittee effectiveness
 1. Noted district faces \$3 million deficit (approximately 60 teacher positions) requiring override
 2. Called for greater financial transparency given need for public support
 3. Stated two-member subcommittee cannot meet independently, accused committee of "gaslighting" public

3. **Student Representative Report (00:06:00–00:07:00)**

- a. School year start update:



- i. New students adjusting well after five days
 - ii. Classes ramping up in workload
 - iii. Many new teachers (band, English, Spanish) with positive initial feedback
 - b. New bell schedule causing confusion for students and staff with classes no longer starting on the hour, affecting after-school activity timing
 - c. Fall sports seasons began with cross country, volleyball, field hockey, and soccer first games yesterday; golf started one week earlier; first home football game scheduled tomorrow
- 4. **Superintendent's Report (00:07:00–00:17:00)**
 - a. Staffing updates for new school year
 - i. Twenty-two teachers hired; six were existing staff moved to full-time positions
 - ii. Three special education teacher vacancies remain
 - iii. French teacher hired to replace last-minute departure
 - b. Support systems and committee activities
 - i. All schools have credentialed counselors; Marblehead Counseling Center providing additional support
 - ii. Mental health task force being revitalized with Lisa Marie as school representative
 - iii. MGH Substance Use survey to be administered to high school students in October with results reported in spring
 - iv. Anti-discrimination committee meeting next week to plan speakers and events
 - v. Wellness committee being rejuvenated with quarterly meetings planned; first task is three-year wellness policy review
 - c. Safety updates
 - i. ALICE drills mandated at beginning and end of year with lockdown drill mid-year
 - ii. Fire alarm at high school and gas leak evacuation at Village School went smoothly
 - iii. Glover Playground upgrade completed; additional safety improvements being explored
- 5. **Consent Action and Agenda Items (00:17:00–00:18:00)**
 - a. Motion by Kate Schmeckpeper, seconded by Henry Gwazda to approve draft meeting minutes from August 21, 2025 school committee meeting and schedules of bills totaling \$990,473.31
 - b. Motion passed 4-0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Henry Gwazda, Kate Schmeckpeper, Al Williams
- 6. **School Committee Communication and Discussion Items**
 - a. High School Roof Project Committee Formation (00:18:00–00:30:00)
 - i. Committee formation and member selection



1. Eight community members volunteered: Sam Altreuder, Pete Kessel, Mark Liebman, Karima Maloney, Devin McGlynn, Brian Serafin, Michael Smith, and Ralph Wallace
 2. Superintendent recommended including Mike Pfifferling, Todd Bloodgood, Eileen Long from Leftfield, and Gene Raymond from RDA
 3. Consultants agreed to serve in advisory roles only, not as voting members
- ii. Final committee composition established with seven voting members: five community members (Sam Altruder, Mark Liebman, Brian Serafin, Ralph Wallace, and Karima Maloney), Mike Pfifferling, and Henry Gwazda, with consultants in advisory roles
 - iii. A motion was made by Jennifer Schaeffner and seconded by Kate Schmeckpeper to approve the five community members (Sam Altruder, Mark Liebman, Brian Serafin, Ralph Wallace, and Karima Maloney) for the MHS Advisory Roof Committee. The motion passed 4-0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Henry Gwazda, Kate Schmeckpeper, Al Williams
- b. **Instant Recap Email Communication Initiative (00:30:00–00:37:00)**
- i. Henry Gwazda proposed instant recap emails after school committee meetings
 1. Draft template placed in committee Dropbox for review
 2. Recaps sent Friday or Monday after each full meeting
 3. Provides high-level summary with links for detailed information
 - ii. Committee discussed format and concerns
 1. Questions raised about school committees sending direct emails to public
 2. Superintendent recommended posting recaps to website instead of blast emails
 3. Process: recap generated after meetings, reviewed by chair, sent to Lisa Manning for posting
 4. Replaces previous labor-intensive newsletter format
 - iii. A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Kate Schmeckpeper to approve the instant recap communication initiative as discussed. The motion passed 4-0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Henry Gwazda, Kate Schmeckpeper, Al Williams
- c. **Survey Policy Discussion and Vote (00:38:00–00:44:00)**
- i. Committee member raised concerns about survey policy contradiction
 1. Policy ILD requires prior written consent for student surveys but also allows parent opt-out opportunities
 2. Member viewed this as inherent contradiction between consent and opt-out provisions
 - ii. Chair clarified policy implementation and federal requirements



1. Parents signing handbook agree to surveys generally, with exceptions for eight federally protected areas requiring separate notification and opt-out
 2. District lawyer confirmed no issue with current approach
 3. Policy tracks federal statute requirements for both written consent and opt-out opportunities
 4. Recent court cases about opt-in versus opt-out were specifically about curriculum, not surveys
- iii. Motion was made by Kate Schmeckpeper and seconded by Henry Gwazda to approve the survey policy. The motion passed 3-1, with votes in favor: Henry Gwazda, Kate Schmeckpeper, Al Williams, and votes against: Jen Schaeffner
- d. **Academic Integrity and AI Policy Update (00:44:00–01:05:00)**
- i. Julia Ferreira presented AI policy development by steering committee (Anthony Costello, Michael Fu, Jan Gutadaro, Kathy Koch, Liz Pruitt, David Rainey, Susan Shatford)
 1. Committee developed vision for responsible AI integration and conducted staff professional development on August 25, 2025
 2. Vision emphasizes students producing original work with AI as study tool, not replacement for their work
 3. Core principle established: "the work presented is my own, unless otherwise indicated"
 - ii. Academic integrity expectations updated in all student handbooks, including elementary for first time
 1. AI usage incorporated under existing academic integrity guidelines rather than separate policies
 2. Teachers must set clear AI parameters for each assignment: no AI allowed, AI with citation, or AI encouraged for specific purposes
 3. Students taught to cite AI usage through existing tools like NoodleTools
 - iii. Future plans include continuing steering committee, developing school-level support groups, ongoing professional development, and family communication about expectations
- e. **Textbook Disposition (01:05:00–01:09:00)**
- i. Julia Ferreira requested disposal of outdated curriculum materials following adoption of new evidence-based materials
 1. Materials included old English learner curriculum, science curriculum, reading kits, and units of study materials
 2. Old science textbooks too outdated; K-3 science materials replaced by Mystery Science online program
 3. Student workbooks to be recycled appropriately



- ii. Disposal process involves researching proper methods, contacting superintendents for textile recycling company recommendations, and avoiding dumpster disposal
 - iii. A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Kate Schmeckpeper to approve the disposal of the identified textbooks and curriculum materials
 - iv. The motion passed 4-0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Henry Gwazda, Kate Schmeckpeper, Al Williams
- f. **Boys Varsity Ice Hockey Lake Placid Trip Approval (01:09:00–01:16:00)**
- i. Ken Wheeler presented proposal for boys varsity ice hockey team to play two-game series against Winthrop in Lake Placid, NY on December 12-13
 - 1. Games at historic Herb Brooks 1980 Olympic arena, count as Northeast Conference League games, MIAA approved
 - 2. Educational component includes meeting with 1980 U.S. hockey team captain Mike Eruzione
 - ii. Trip details: overnight business trip for 18 players, 4 coaches, 2 additional spots
 - 1. Friday departure by bus, stay at High Peaks Resort, evening game
 - 2. Saturday workout, Eruzione facility tour, 1:30 game, return trip
 - 3. Estimated cost \$8,000-\$10,000 (\$2,000 already paid); team fundraising for remaining costs
 - iii. Equity concerns raised regarding girls hockey team
 - 1. Wheeler noted similar approach used in basketball with alternating special trip opportunities
 - 2. Girls program is co-op with different structure including 7th/8th grade players
 - iv. Motion made by Kate Schmeckpeper and seconded by Henry Gwazda to approve the Lake Placid trip for the boys varsity ice hockey team
 - v. Motion passed 4-0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Henry Gwazda, Kate Schmeckpeper, Al Williams
- g. **Piper Field Lighting Project Update (01:16:00–01:30:00)**
- i. Updated proposal modifications following August 12th planning board meeting:
 - 1. Usage increased from 56 nights to approximately 84 hours with lighting, requesting roughly 180 nights potential usage
 - 2. All lighting usage aligned to end at 9:00 PM instead of extending some nights to 10:00 PM
 - 3. Mid-August through November usage (approximately 105 nights) and mid-March through May usage (approximately 75 nights)
 - 4. No winter or summer lighting needed; lights only used when needed and turned off after athletic contests



- ii. Visual presentation being developed for planning board with slideshow showing nights, seasons, lumens, and light array information
- iii. Additional commitments made:
 - 1. PA system usage remains limited to MIAA sanctioned events (4-5 football games for play-by-play, national anthem only)
 - 2. Address field concerns including trash and behavioral issues through "carry in, carry out" policy and coordination with athletic director, coaches, parents, and police
 - 3. At least one school committee member to attend Tuesday planning board hearing
 - 4. Superintendent may need zoning board appearance due to original school construction conditions
- h. **Subcommittee Reports and New Business (01:31:00–01:39:00)**
 - i. Policy subcommittee established meeting schedule for ambitious workload and plans to bring policies to full committee at next meeting
 - ii. Budget subcommittee challenges reported:
 - 1. Committee down to one member, creating meeting difficulties
 - 2. District down 170 students with increased contractual obligations
 - 3. Plans to discuss budget matters with superintendent, assistant superintendent of finance, and Finance Committee chair
 - 4. Discussion about waiting for new member with financial background
 - iii. Materials distribution concerns:
 - 1. Current 48-hour policy insufficient for extensive materials review
 - 2. Member indicated potential motion to require materials by Friday before meetings
 - 3. Chair acknowledged need for early provision, especially for data presentations
 - 4. Financial update removed from agenda due to 48-hour policy compliance
 - iv. Youth substance abuse collaboration outreach:
 - 1. Email sent to Board of Health requesting meeting following recent tragedy
 - 2. No response received; member offered to forward directly to individual Board of Health members
 - v. School committee goals status uncertain; NASC conference in November discussed with deadline for reduced registration costs
 - vi. Correspondence received regarding temporary lights at Village Field
- i. **Executive Session Motion and Adjournment (01:39:00–01:42:00)**



- i. Motion to enter executive session under Chapter 30A Section 21A3, Purpose 3 for:
 1. Strategy discussion for collective bargaining with Unit A Marblehead Teachers Association
 2. Litigation discussion: Marblehead School Committee and Marblehead Teachers Association MEP 2511555
 3. Litigation discussion: Vetti Kelly et al. vs. Marblehead Public Schools et al., Docket number 2577cv00904
 4. No intent to return to open session declared
- ii. A motion was made by Kate Schmeckpeper and seconded by Henry Gwazda to enter executive session for the stated purposes. The motion passed 4-0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Henry Gwazda, Kate Schmeckpeper, Al Williams
- iii. Meeting Adjourned at 8:23pm