

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Wednesday, January 28, 2026
Herbert L. Jackson Council Chamber Room #106 - 215 Pleasant Street Malden, MA and
Virtual Meeting

Mayor Christenson called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Mayor Christenson read docket items for the meeting.

Mayor Christenson led the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence for those who have served our country and for those who continue to do so.

Roll Call

The following attendance was taken:

Mayor Christenson - Present
Councillor Linehan - Present
Mr. Drummey - Present
Mr. McCarthy - Absent
Ms. Spadafora - Present
Ms. Macklin - Present
Ms. Hortie - Present
Mr. Piazza - Present
Mr. Bernard - Absent
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - Present

Northeast Metro Tech School Committee Vacancy Interviews

Ms. Spadafora began the meeting by explaining that due to the unfortunate passing of Mr. James Holland, School Committee Representative to the Northeast Metro Tech Regional Vocational High School, there is now a vacancy in the seat. The contract Malden has with Northeast Metro Tech reads that together the School Committee and a City Councillor shall appoint a member to serve until the next City election. The last election took place in 2024, with this being a four year term, the next election will be 2028.

Member McCarthy was not in attendance, as he is employed by Northeast Metro Tech Regional Vocational High School.

The Chair allows each candidate three minutes for an opening statement and then he will allow for questions.

1. Leonard Iovino

Mr. Iovino approaches the School Committee and City Council President, Amanda Linehan and invites them to ask any questions they may have. Councillor Linehan thanks Mr. Iovino for coming and asks him how his professional experience will contribute to this role in serving the regional board and our community. Mr. Iovino responds by saying that in order to be a member of a School Committee you really have to have a passion for what you're doing and a passion for the young ones in your concern, you have to be able to see the big picture. Mr. Iovino shared that he was a member of the Malden School Committee for 16 years and that he is aware of what the duties and responsibilities of someone on the School Committee are, and that he believes he can carry that forward for the remainder of the term. And shares that he considers it an honor to fill the vacancy but does not intend to run after the term. Councillor Linehan also asked if he had ideas how he could foster more 2-way communication between the residents of the City, Malden School Committee, City Council or other bodies? Mr. Iovino shares that it would be incumbent on the person in this role to have all pertinent information about what's going on at the Vocational School.

Ms. Hortie asked Mr. Iovino, if he can tell us how he's going to be the voice for Malden students to make sure they are guaranteed fair admission. Mr. Iovino shares his understanding of the lottery system at the Vocational School and his intentions to look at the policy carefully and adhere to it.

Ms. Macklin shared her belief that it is important for the members of the Vocational School Committee to gather data on local employment trends to be sure their programs align with workforce demands. Mr. Iovino responds saying that industry partners are very important and that students who come out of the Vocational school have a unique experience with the exposure to different employment opportunities, adding that it is important to keep open lines of communication with the Community, with the Schools and this is where the liaison would come in. Ms. Macklin also asks how we can be sure that these programs are inclusive and responsive to students with diverse student needs and diverse cultural backgrounds. Mr. Iovino shared that the expansion of the school will allow for more support and the administrative staff would be there to monitor various situations.

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg asked Mr. Iovino for his thoughts on AI and cellphones in schools. Mr. Iovino shared his opposition to cellphones in the classroom stating they are an unnecessary distraction.

Mr. Piazza asked, given technological innovation, why is a vocational education important and what is it about your background that will help to guide a vocational

school during such change. Mr. Iovino said that you have to have a passion and you have to have a concern. He adds that it is the responsibilities of the administrative staff to be sure the curriculum is up to standard.

Mayor Christensen asks Mr. Iovino how you ensure the programming supports both career bound and college bound. Mr. Iovino amplifies his last statement that the administrative staff and communication with the administrative staff is imperative.

2. Sean Salazar

Mr. Salazar greets the School Committee and Councillor Linehan and shares his gratitude for the chance to be considered for the interim appointment. Mr. Salazar shared some of his background and experience. Mr. Salazar has over 6 years of classroom experience teaching hospitality management, employability, and career readiness skills, along with more than 20 years of professional experience in culinary arts, catering, fine dining, business operations, and marketing. He is Massachusetts DESE-certified Hospitality Management and Culinary Arts instructor and currently teaches multiple levels of Food & Beverage and Hospitality Management at Everett High School, where he works within Career & Technical Education frameworks to prepare students for both employment and postsecondary education. His background includes leadership roles in both education and industry, including serving as Director of Banquets at the John B. Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center, where he managed a \$13 million operation, supervised management teams and union staff, and oversaw large-scale events exceeding 10,000 attendees. Mr. Salazar shares that if appointed his approach would be to listen first, respect decisions already made. With a focus on stability, an informed oversight and ensuring Malden students are well served.

Councillor Linehan asked Mr. Salazar how he planned to improve communication across elected bodies and with the Community. Mr. Salazar shared that he would intend to do a "listening tour" to start, in order to engage everyone in an informed way. Mr. Salazar shared that before the Chapter 74 frameworks are developed from each program, there is input from industry and other sources. He believes that that input can't stop once those frameworks are in place. There are required advisory councils that have union representatives, former students and industry leaders in those Committees. It is important to keep up communication with these councils and new industry leaders need to be involved. It is vital to know the demands for the jobs out there. This includes getting in contact with Universities and Community Colleges.

Ms. Macklin asks Mr. Salazar asks how we can be sure that these programs are inclusive and responsive to students with diverse student needs and diverse cultural backgrounds. Mr. Salazar references his experience as a teacher, and the importance of getting to know

the background of your students and the communities. Sharing that he has an affinity to supporting students who are underrepresented in larger bodies and that it is certainly a priority and that he is interested in hearing more about how we can be sure we are doing that.

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg asked Mr. Salazar for his thoughts on AI and cellphones in schools. Mr. Salazar shares his belief that cellphones do not hold a place in our classrooms, students lose learning time being distracted on their cellphones. AI being a different story, AI is a different story and it is dependent on the inputs. He shares, if you put thought and clarity and your own ideas into the tool that can help to turn it into a coherent plan, it can be helpful. But, AI needs to be taught as a resource. And that's the good thing about trade, you can't AI that away.

Mr. Piazza asked, given technological innovation, why is a vocational education important and what is it about your background that will help to guide a vocational school during such change. Mr. Salazar shares that you cannot replace a human being with AI, and that his background is working from the bottom up and then getting to know the classroom later on. Having a knowledge of the importance of transferring what you're learning in the classroom is a skill that they will use and can be directly applied to the workforce. Mr. Salazar shares that vocation has become his passion and sees it as a strategy for success.

Ms. Hortie asks Mr. Salazar how he will represent Malden and support students through the lottery process. Mr. Salazar says that administration plays a big role in that. However, there needs to be more digging into the application process to make sure we know what we're looking at when kids are applying.

Mayor Christensen asks how you ensure the programming supports both career bound and college bound. Mr. Salazar says that the support should be the same. Students who are college bound need no less or no more support than those going into the workforce. It's about supporting the student and making clear that it's not about picking and choosing which gets what - rather it is student driven and their ideas of success and getting them there.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to recommend Mr. Iovino to the appointment of the Northeast Metro Tech Regional Vocational High School liaison. While both candidates are extremely qualified, Ms. Spadafora sees that Mr. Iovino has the experience to hit the ground running. Mr. Drummey seconded the motion and the Chair opened up for questions or comments before the vote.

Mr. Bernard comments saying with no disrespect to Mr.Iovino and his experience, Mr. Salazar had some intelligent thoughts and answers and assumes that Mr.Salazar will run again. That being said, we will have someone who will be thoughtful and think about things going into the future. Mr. Piazza would like to second Mr. Bernard's considerations and got the sense that Mr. Salazar has a deep sense of necessary standards and that he lives with them in his work; he is in a room with students everyday and Mr. Piazza finds that to be so important to developing policy to be present with students. Councillor Linehan comments on Mr.Iovino's experience and knowledge, as well as Mr. Salazar has on hand educational experience in a vocational setting right now and asks his intent to run in 2028. Mr.Salazar expresses his intent to run in 2028.

Mayor Christenson comments that he has experience serving alongside Mr.Iovino after his experience in Malden Public Schools for decades, so for him it would make sense to have someone of his caliber in this spot.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to recommend Mr. Iovino to the appointment of the Northeast Metro Tech Regional Vocational High School School Committee liaison. Mr. Drummey seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken as follows:

Roll Call

Mayor Christenson - Yes

Councillor Linehan - No

Mr. Drummey - Yes

Mr. McCarthy - Absent

Ms. Spadafora - Yes

Ms. Macklin - No

Ms. Hortie - No

Mr. Piazza - No

Mr. Bernard - No

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - No

The vote does NOT pass with a 6/3 vote.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to recommend Sean Salazar to the appointment of the Northeast Metro Tech Regional Vocational High School School Committee liaison. And so it was VOTED. *The motion passed unanimously.*

Adjournment

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg made a motion to adjourn at 6:57 p.m. Ms. Hortie seconded and a roll call vote was taken as follows:

Roll Call

Mayor Christenson - Yes

Councillor Linehan - Yes

Mr. Drummey - Yes

Mr. McCarthy - Yes

Ms. Spadafora - Yes

Ms. Macklin - Yes

Ms. Hortie - Yes

Mr. Piazza - Yes

Mr. Bernard - Yes

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

I certify that a notice of this meeting was filed with the Clerk of the City of Malden in the manner provided under Chapter 39, Section 23A of the General Laws.

Ariana Langston

Ariana Langston, Clerk