Marblehead School Committee
Chair: Al Williams
Meeting Date, Time & Location: Thursday, March 5th, 2026, 6pm, MHS Library, 2 Humphrey Street Marblehead MA 01945
SC Members Present: A. Williams, J. Schaeffner, K. Schmeckpeper, H. Gwazda, M. Clucas
SC Members Absent:
Agenda/Materials: Link
Meeting Recording: Link
Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Henry Gwazda

Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence (00:00:00–00:01:00)

a. The committee recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

b. Superintendent Robidoux announced the sudden passing of Facilities Director Todd Bloodgood.

- A moment of silence was observed in his memory.

Public Comment and Commendations (00:01:00–00:05:00)

a. Chair Williams opened the public comment period with standard time limits (3-minute individual, 15-minute total); no commendations on the agenda.

b. Sarah Fox (46 Beach Street) offered a commendation in memory of Facilities Director Todd Bloodgood.

- Spoke to his dedication, community service, and exceptional rapport with staff, town officials, and the broader community.

Student Representative Report (00:05:00–00:07:00)

a. Student Representative Will Cruikshank provided updates on Marblehead High School activities.

- Drama Club performed *The Mender* at the Northeastern Massachusetts Drama Fest; auditions for spring musical *Mamma Mia* ongoing.
- Aspen grade book software sending first-ever mid-quarter report card that weekend.
- Spring sports starting March 16th; captain's practices underway.

b. Cruikshank reported on junior and senior collegiate activities.

- Juniors touring colleges, taking standardized tests, and meeting with guidance counselors.

- Seniors receiving college decisions; scholarship applications open with most deadlines in early April.

c. Junior class auction underway with over 100 items; proceeds supporting junior class events.

Superintendent Update and Shoutouts (00:07:00–00:11:00)

a. Superintendent Robidoux provided weather and calendar updates.

- Possible delay due to expected wintry mix; decision to be made that evening or early next morning.
- Summer break now begins June 23rd due to three snow days used.

b. Superintendent Robidoux shared shoutouts from district administrators recognizing staff contributions.

- Acknowledgments included Ashley Skeffington (play at Drama Fest), Student Services administrative assistants, Village School instructional assistants, Veterans Middle School advisory contest winners, and Glover art teacher Maggie Dobin.

c. Principal Michele Carlson thanked Dan Richards and Kate Kelly for organizing a school trip to Morocco and Spain.

- Trip was extended due to a blizzard, with Paris added; chaperones Aaron Burke, Jay Gutindaro, Monica Pasquini, Bob Taylor, and Diane ensured student safety throughout.

Financial Update and Bill Approval (00:11:00–00:19:00)

a. Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations Michael Pfifferling presented the financial update.

- Unexpended balance at end of February was $2.7 million, $422,000 less than end-of-December, largely due to reallocation of out-of-district tuition purchase orders from circuit breaker revolving account back to local budget.
- March end-of-month report expected to show approximately $2 million, consistent with typical year-end spending patterns.
- Some budget lines still needed cleanup due to payroll system conversion from SoftRite to Munis; transfers might be needed to align funds.

b. Chair Williams noted February 26th meeting minutes would not be voted on due to incomplete timestamps.

c. Chair Williams called for a motion to approve the schedule of bills totaling $11,584.10.

- A motion was made by Kate Schmeckpeper and seconded by Henry Gwazda to approve the identified schedule of bills totaling $11,584.10.
- The motion passed 4–0–1, with votes in favor: Al Williams, Kate Schmeckpeper, Melissa Clucas, Henry Gwazda; and abstention: Jennifer Schaeffner.

Glover School Spotlight (00:19:00–00:25:00)

a. Superintendent Robidoux introduced the Glover School spotlight; Principal Frank Kowalski introduced art teacher Maggie Dobin.

b. Dobin and Glover students presented on the "community art" program.

- Allied Arts schedule includes regular art blocks plus an alternating bonus session every other week for community art
- Community art projects involve all Glover students (pre-K through 3) working on the same project, fostering school-wide connection
- Fall project: mood masks from clay on tile inspired by abstract artists using color to represent emotions

c. Recent community art project featured artist-in-residence Matt Cronin (North Shore Glass School) demonstrating glass artistry.

- Every student contributed to a fused glass lobster (over 1,000 pieces) to become a permanent installation in the art studio

Veterans Middle School Engineering Club Spotlight (00:25:00–00:33:00)

a. Principal Matthew LeVangie introduced the MVMS Engineering Club, created to utilize underutilized 3D printers; credited parent volunteer Mr. FM for leading the club.

- Students presented prepared statements on their Engineering Club projects via slideshow.

b. Student projects included 3D-printed fishing lures, drone repair, CAD design using Blender and Tinkercad, and computer disassembly/reassembly.

- 3D-printed MVMS logo keychains were distributed to committee members.

FY27 Budget Discussion (00:33:00–01:35:00)

a. Chair Williams noted two scenarios presented at a prior town meeting: one eliminating dozens of positions and closing departments, the other maintaining services with a trash fee and ~$1.5M in additional school budget reductions.

b. The level-funded budget included ~$2.6M in reductions (14.75 FTEs cut).

- Superintendent Robidoux confirmed the administration had developed the level-funded budget since early November and was prepared to present it for a vote.

c. Committee members expressed significant concern about the additional $1.5M reduction request, citing unreliable data.

- Town-side deficit figures had fluctuated repeatedly ($500K, $750K, $1.5M, $4M–$8M), undermining confidence.
- The $1.5M assumed a 15% health insurance increase, but GIC had voted 7.5% that day, potentially reducing the school obligation to ~$900K.
- Members questioned whether the town side had completed a true level-funded budget and raised concerns about the 50/50 revenue split methodology.

d. Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations Pfifferling reported he had requested from the town a roster of school-based employees, health plan types, and whether retirees were included in benefit calculations.

- Additional data needed: confirmation the $1.5M was exclusively benefit-based; actual projected cost using new GIC premiums; details of the 50/50 split against $101.155M projected FY27 revenue; and accounting for school-generated revenues (Medicaid, Chapter 70).

e. Superintendent Robidoux stated he would not model additional cuts until the committee provided a formal directive based on a verified number.

- Full $1.5M additional cuts atop the $2.6M would total $4.1M, requiring unemployment cost budgeting and pushing effective cuts closer to $2M.

f. The committee did not vote on the level-funded budget, scheduling a special meeting for the following Thursday to review requested data.

- Chair Williams committed to inviting Finance Committee and Select Board representation to the Thursday meeting.
- Key deadlines: Finance Committee budget day March 28th; staff notification of potential job losses required by approximately April 15th.
- A member stated that if requested evidence was not received by Thursday, they would be prepared to vote the level-funded budget as presented.
- Override discussions (joint, school-only, or multi-year) remained a separate pending decision.

District Improvement Plan Update (01:35:00–01:38:00)

a. Superintendent Robidoux provided a status update on the district improvement plan.

- Staff feedback integrated; one goal still requiring minor revision.
- Plan to be distributed to parents, caregivers, and community for input by end of week, with narrative explanation for accessibility.
- After community feedback, plan returns to committee for review and formal vote, targeting implementation by September.

b. School principals to begin presenting individual school improvement plans; full integration with district improvement plan expected the following year.

Subcommittee and Liaison Updates (01:38:00–01:40:00)

a. Tree planting projects discussed: high school parking lot (grant-funded) and Village School access road (tree warden's budget).

- Both require maintenance commitments from district facilities staff.
- Facilities subcommittee to conduct site walk with tree warden and maintenance crew before spring planting.

b. If high school grant received, district must ensure compliance with donation acceptance policy, including monitoring requirements.

c. Facilities subcommittee meeting that week was canceled; to be rescheduled.

Executive Session Motion and Adjournment (01:40:00–01:46:00)

a. Chair Williams read the executive session motion into the record, covering three purposes:

- Purpose 7 (Ch. 30A, §21A(3)): To comply with Open Meeting Law (Ch. 30A, §22F and G) relative to review of executive session minutes for the following dates: September 18, 2025; September 30, 2025; October 15, 2025; October 30, 2025; November 6, 2025; November 20, 2025; August 7, 2025; August 21, 2025; and September 4, 2025.
- Purpose 3 (Ch. 30A, §21A(3)): To discuss strategy with respect to potential litigation (Jay Bucke); open meeting may have a detrimental effect on litigating position; chair so declared.
- Purpose 3 (Ch. 30A, §21A(3)): To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining regarding the lead teacher stipend; open meeting may have a detrimental effect on bargaining position; chair so declared.

b. All three purposes declared without intent to return to open session.

c. A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Kate Schmeckpeper to enter executive session for the stated purposes.

- The motion passed 5–0 by roll call vote, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas, Kate Schmeckpeper, Al Williams.

d. The meeting adjourned to executive session at 7:44pm.