MINUTES

Marblehead School Committee
Chair: K. Schmeckpeper
Meeting Date, Time & Location: Thursday, January 29th, 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)

Opening, Commendations, and Public Comment (00:00:00–00:06:00)

a. The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. on January 29, 2026, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

b. Commendations

- Maintenance and custodial staff were commended for clearing over 20 inches of snow with limited equipment, including 14-hour shifts.

c. Public Comment

- Reese Dahlberg, co-president of the Veterans Middle School PCO, reported the MVMS Cornerstones leadership group organized a winter-themed school dance raising over $1,800 for Boston Children's Hospital.
- She thanked Principal Matthew LeVangie, Ms. Abel, Ms. Vautor, Ms. Dartley, Rocco, and MVMS staff for coordinating the event.

d. Student Representative Report

- First day of third quarter at Marblehead High School noted.
- Music department field trip to New York City over MLK weekend included a Broadway performance of The Great Gatsby.
- Rho Kappa hosted Don Dahl, town historian, for a local history presentation.
- MHS junior class office began collecting donations for their fundraiser.
- Winter sports records: boys basketball 8-4, girls basketball 7-5, boys indoor track 5-0, girls indoor track 4-1-1, boys hockey 3-8-1, girls hockey 3-8-1, gymnastics 2-2, swimming 5-0, wrestling 3-7.

Superintendent Report (00:06:00–00:14:00)



a. Snow-themed student work from Atlanta Conley's preschool class was shared.

b. Brown School STEAM Fair was well attended with students presenting innovative projects.

c. International Holocaust Remembrance Day was acknowledged on January 27th, marking the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

d. Essex Tech Admissions Process Update

- The committee adopted a percentage-by-enrollment allocation method, increasing Marblehead's freshman seats from 10 to 39.
- Current total enrollment is 35 students; the new allocation will be revisited next year.

e. MHS art students received honors from the regional Scholastic Art Awards, including Noah Jackson, Diane Marietta, and Valandry.

f. A proposed level-funded budget will be presented at the next meeting.

Consent Agenda and School Calendar Approval (00:14:00–00:21:00)

a. Consent Agenda

- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve the schedule of bills totaling $1,479,152.17, the draft meeting minutes from January 15, 2026, revisions to policies GB, GF, GCBC, GCE, GCG, GCIA, GCK, and GDB, and the rescission of policies GCQD, GCQE, GDQC, and GDQ.
- The motion passed 4-0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas.

b. Proposed 2026–2027 School Calendar

- August 26th staff orientation, August 27th–28th staff PD days, August 31st first student day (earlier start approved by union due to late Labor Day).
- Calendar includes set PD dates, February vacation, and Juneteenth observed June 18th.
- Fridays will serve as snow day makeup days if needed.

c. Conference Schedule Change

- Half-day evening conference format tried this year was not well received.
- Proposal returns to traditional full-day conference format with evening conferences the following week.

d. A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve the 2026–2027 school calendar as presented, pending the addition of open house dates and school committee meeting dates.

- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas; absent or not voting: Al Williams.

High School Program of Studies (00:21:00–00:32:00)

a. Dr. Cross presented the 2026–2027 program of studies review.

- Added language for courses meeting financial literacy graduation requirement (AP Business with Personal Finance, Accounting, new Financial Literacy course).



- Added competency determination language per new school committee policy, replacing MCAS graduation requirement language.
- Removed Marblehead Academy language as program has not run in years.

b. Course additions included AP Business with Personal Finance, Financial Literacy (Math), Modern America Since 1980 and History of Philosophy (Social Studies semester electives), and Advanced Manufacturing (replacing Advanced Woodworking as two semesters to align with Pathways program).

c. Course eliminations included African American Literature and Best Selling Fiction (insufficient enrollment), Algebra 3 CP2 (final step in CP2 phase-out), and Latin 1–4 (phase-out from elementary/middle school; AP Latin remains one more year).

d. SNHU dual enrollment partnership for Honors Anatomy and Physiology was highlighted as successful in first year, with qualified teacher certified and five dual enrollment seats available.

e. Committee members asked about Latin enrollment and student surveys; confirmed Latin 1 sign-ups had been available but enrollment remained insufficient.

f. A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve the High School Program of Studies as presented.

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

DECA Conference Field Trip Approval (00:32:00–00:37:00)

a. The business teacher requested approval for Marblehead High School's participation in the DECA State Career Development Conference, March 12–14, 2026, at the Seaport Convention Center in Boston.

b. A committee member raised concerns about room accommodations, noting two Austin Prep students would room with Marblehead High School students in triple and quad arrangements.

- The teacher explained this arrangement has precedent, with students approving the pairing and connecting via social media beforehand.
- The committee member expressed ongoing concern about students sharing rooms with unfamiliar individuals.

c. A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve the DECA State Career Development Conference competition from Thursday, March 12 through Saturday, March 14, 2026.

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

Policy Revisions and Approvals (00:37:00–01:05:00)

a. Policy IHAI – High School Pathway of Immigration Policy

- Revised per state requirements to allow excused absences for vocational-technical school visits.
- Superintendent expressed concern about excusing students for visits to other programs.
- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve revisions to policy IHAI.
- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas.

b. Policy ADF – School District Wellness Program

- Wellness advisory committee reviewed policy as required every three years; revisions streamlined language.



- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve revisions to policy ADF.
- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas.

c. Policy GA – Personnel Policy Goals

- MASC recommended rescinding; goals to be moved to evolving district documents.
- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to rescind policy GA.
- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas.

d. Policy GBA – Equal Employment Opportunity

- Revision updated protected categories list.
- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve revisions to policy GBA.
- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas.

e. Policy GBEA – Staff Ethics Conflict of Interest

- Changed "board work" to "outside employment" regarding staff use of information.
- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve revisions to policy GBEA.
- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas.

f. Policy GBE – Staff Conduct

- Tabled for further review; committee member to present alternate version at future meeting.

g. Policy GBEC – Gifts to and Solicitations by Staff

- Added restrictions on raffles and games of chance; specified gifts to district require school committee acceptance.
- Michael Pfifferling confirmed need to review donation approval process with principals.
- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve revisions to policy GBEC.
- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas.

h. Policy GBGB – Staff Personal Security and Safety

- Eliminated pre-employment physicals for certain staff.
- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve revisions to policy GBGB.
- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas.

i. Policy GBI – Staff Participation in Political Activities

- Added ballot initiatives to political activities list; included state law restrictions on soliciting campaign contributions.
- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve revisions to policy GBI.
- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas.

j. Policy GCA – Professional Staff Positions

- Expanded school committee approval to include position modifications; required superintendent to maintain job descriptions.



- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve revisions to policy GCA.
- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas.

k. Policy GCBA – Professional Staff Salary Schedules

- Combined administrator and principal sections; deleted merit increase and district survey language.
- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve revisions to policy GCBA.
- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas.

l. Policy GCB – Employment of Principals

- Changed certification to licensure; used gender-neutral pronouns.
- Committee agreed to further assess whether principal contracts require school committee approval prior to issuance.
- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve revisions to policy GCB.
- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas.

m. Policy GCF – Professional Staff Hiring

- Deleted preferred candidate language; updated terminology and protected categories list.
- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve revisions to policy GCF.
- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas.

Subcommittee Updates and Budget Discussion (01:05:00–01:18:00)

a. Policy Committee Update

- Met the previous week to review policies; will meet again in February to continue work on the manual.

b. Budget Subcommittee Update

- Met with Superintendent John Robidoux, Assistant Superintendent Michael Pfifferling, and Finance Committee liaisons Molly Tweets and Pat Franklin.
- Level-funded budget was presented to the subcommittee and will be presented to the full school committee the following week.
- District reduced a $2.6–$2.7 million level services budget increase to a level-funded budget.
- Superintendent thanked Michael Pfifferling, Julia Ferreira, Lisa Marie, and the principals for their collaborative work.
- Budget timeline: presentation February 5th, public hearing February 26th, then submission to Advisory and Finance Committee before Town Meeting.

c. State of the Town

- Committee members noted the presentation highlighted challenging town finances and that the town's level services budget differed from the school district's progress on achieving a level-funded budget.

d. Facilities Subcommittee Update

- February meeting schedule will be distributed.

e. Goals Subcommittee Update



- Met in early January; next meeting planned before February break.

f. Safety Committee Update

- Superintendent reported meeting with the administration/union safety committee and the principals/town safety committee.
- Meetings shifted from monthly to quarterly; discussions focused on tracking systems.
- Per the MoU, the staff safety committee may present to the school committee with proper communication.

g. School Committee Calendar and Improvement Plan

- Committee agreed to finalize meeting dates for the upcoming year, following the first and third meeting schedule with holiday adjustments.
- School improvement plan survey closes the following day; feedback will be integrated and sent to parents, caregivers, and the school committee before formal presentation.

Executive Session (01:18:00–01:19:00)

a. No correspondence was reported.

b. Motion by Jennifer Schaeffner, seconded by Henry Gwazda, to enter executive session pursuant to Chapter 30A, Section 21A3, Purpose 3, to discuss strategy with respect to potential litigation (J. Bucky), as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the school committee, and the chair so declared, without intent to return to open session.

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

c. The meeting adjourned at 8:20pm.