Marblehead School Committee
Chair: Al Williams
Meeting Date, Time & Location: Thursday, May 21st, 2026, 6pm, Marblehead High School Library, 2 Humphrey St, Marblehead MA 01945
SC Members Present:, A. Williams, K. Schmeckpeper, H. Gwazda, M. Clucas
SC Members Absent: J. Schaeffner
Agenda/Materials: Link
Meeting Recording: Link
Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Henry Gwazda

Pledge of Allegiance and Public Hearing on School Choice (00:01:00–00:06:00)

a. Public Hearing on School Choice

- A motion was made by Kate Schmeckpeper and seconded by Henry Gwazda to open the public hearing on school choice.
- The motion passed 3–0, with votes in favor: Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, and Al Williams.
- No public comment.

b. Vote to Accept Recommendation

- Superintendent John Robidoux recommended Marblehead not participate in school choice, citing inadequate per-pupil funding and budget constraints.
- A motion was made by Kate Schmeckpeper and seconded by Melissa Clucas to accept the superintendent's recommendation that Marblehead not participate in school choice.
- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Kate Schmeckpeper, Melissa Clucas, Henry Gwazda, and Al Williams.

c. Close of Public Hearing

- A motion was made by Kate Schmeckpeper and seconded by Henry Gwazda to close the public hearing on school choice.
- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Melissa Clucas, and Al Williams.

Commendations and Public Comment (00:06:00–00:15:00)

a. Brown School Fun Run

- Brown School fun run raised $30,000.

b. Al Williams commended Jennifer Schaeffner for her service on the Marblehead School Committee.

c. Superintendent John Robidoux commended Will Cruikshank for his service as student representative on the School Committee, and Jennifer Schaeffner for her service on the School Committee.

d. Public Comment — Jonathan Heller (Village School teacher, remote from Camp Bournedale)

- Reported Village School 6th graders participating in outdoor experience at Camp Bournedale

e. No other members of the public spoke during public comment.

Student Representative Update (00:15:00–00:18:00)

a. Student Representative Will Cruikshank provided updates from Marblehead High School:

- Math MCAS testing underway for sophomores; Quarter 4 progress checks released.
- National Honor Society induction held; seniors with 40+ service hours received graduation cords.
- MHS Culture Feast scheduled Friday, May 29, 5:00–8:00 PM.

b. Spring sports updates included NEC conference championships for both track teams.

Superintendent's Update (00:18:00–00:26:00)

a. District Activities

- Village School hosted the first whole-school assembly since COVID, featuring speaker Thomas Smith on resilience.
- Glover School students fundraising for John Glover Farmhouse; culminating walk scheduled June 15–16.

b. DESE & Curriculum Updates

- Village School received unannounced DESE visit to observe MCAS administration; feedback was very positive. Superintendent Robidoux thanked Principal Scott Williams, Jenny Conrad, and Village School teachers.
- Assistant Superintendent Julia Ferreira and teacher Brigitte Karns awarded $1,000 Mark Schonwetter Holocaust Educational Foundation grant for Holocaust survivor speaker and classroom copies of Anne Frank.
- Julia Ferreira collaborated with Marblehead Museum Director Lauren McCormick on the Jeremiah Lee Brick Kitchen and Slave Quarters project; with Mass Humanities grant funding, nine district social studies educators developing curricula for statewide publication.

c. Policy & Other Items

- MASS and MASC drafted position papers pushing back on DESE-proposed graduation requirement mandates, primarily around ensuring adequate state funding; Superintendent Robidoux to update the committee as developments occur.

Consent Agenda Approval (00:26:00–00:29:00)

a. Chair Al Williams presented the consent agenda: schedule of bills totaling $1,174,747 and May 7, 2026 meeting minutes.

b. A committee member noted a spelling error in the May 7 minutes (name correction for Jack Attridge, page 3, first bullet under B).

c. A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve the schedule of bills totaling $1,174,747 and the meeting minutes from May 7, 2026 with the spelling correction.

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

School Improvement Plans: Brown School and Glover School (00:29:00–00:57:00)

a. Brown School Improvement Plan — Presented by Principal Mary Maxfield

- Goals: student growth in math, reading, and writing; writing proficiency identified as priority; preschool curriculum inventory to address inconsistencies, aligned with District Improvement Plan.

b. Glover School Improvement Plan — Presented by Principal Frank Kowalski

- Goals: enrichment opportunities using MCAS diagnostic data; PBIS reintroduced; instructional coaches for grade-level proficiency; parent volunteer plan for WIN blocks; student voice initiatives.

c. Vote — Brown School Improvement Plan:

- A motion was made by Kate Schmeckpeper and seconded by Henry Gwazda to approve the Brown School Improvement Plan as presented.

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

d. Vote — Glover School Improvement Plan:

- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve the Glover School Improvement Plan as presented.

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

Youth Risk Behavior and Substance Abuse Survey Presentation (00:57:00–01:30:00)

a. Survey Overview

- Youth Risk Behavior Data combines MGH school-wide survey with Marblehead-specific questions; 5th year of collection; ~75% response rate; anonymous/confidential with opt-out option.

b. Key Findings

- ~19% above clinical anxiety threshold, 10% depression, 6% psychotic features — all trending down; suicide attempt rate ~1%.
- Vulnerable populations elevated: 64% of sexually diverse students above anxiety threshold; 44% reported suicidal thoughts vs. 8.8% heterosexual.
- Lifetime use: 32% alcohol, 28% nicotine, 16% cannabis — consistent with national downward trends; substance use on school property declined from 27% to 10% over three years.
- 71.7% overestimated peer alcohol use; 5.5% at risk for problem gambling; 60% of licensed drivers reported texting while driving.

c. District Response and Recommendations

- Existing programs: Tier 1 health curriculum, Wayfinder SEL, SBIRT screening (7th/9th), diversion programs, trauma-informed PD, community partnerships.
- Assistant Superintendent Julia Ferreira noted survey data previously supported funding a Village School health educator; emphasized K–12 multi-tiered support framework.
- Recommendations: continue evidence-based prevention, LGBTQIA+ and racial justice programming, address body image/eating disorders, partner with parents and community. Superintendent Robidoux noted Town Board of Health interest in forming a collaborative subcommittee.

School Calendar Revision (01:30:00–01:32:00)

a. Superintendent John Robidoux recommended moving the approved PD day from March 29th to Friday, March 19th based on educator feedback.

b. A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve the revised school calendar.

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

Override Proclamation (01:32:00–01:37:00)

a. Henry Gwazda introduced a proclamation supporting the FY27–FY29 override at Tier 3 ($8.5 million school side).

b. Proclamation summary:

- District closed $3.7M FY27 gap through 18.25 FTE eliminations and one-time $1.5M special education tuition repayment, neither repeatable in FY28.
- Tier 1 ($6.2M) maintains staff/programs; Tier 2 ($7.2M) adds full-day kindergarten and technology lifecycle funding; Tier 3 ($8.5M) adds recurring capital fund and in-district 18-to-22 special education program.
- Resolved that the committee officially supports Tier 3 to ensure fiscal and operational stability through 2030.

c. A motion was made by Kate Schmeckpeper and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve the proclamation.

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

District Improvement Plan (01:37:00–02:00:00)

a. Superintendent John Robidoux presented the DIP as a three-year framework, with detailed work in School Improvement Plans; plan is fluid and will evolve.

b. Feedback-driven changes included adding a cover letter, numbered strategies, timeline column, and language on special education, ELL, MCAS, and teaching/learning responsibilities.

- A discrepancy between six core values (page 2) and seven (page 10) was noted; Superintendent Robidoux agreed to correct for consistency.

c. Committee agreed to quarterly DIP check-ins beginning around November.

d. A motion was made by Al Williams and seconded by Kate Schmeckpeper to approve the District Improvement Plan as presented.

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

Anti-Discrimination Committee and Heritage Month Updates (02:00:00–02:08:00)

a. Anti-Discrimination Committee Update

- Superintendent John Robidoux reported the committee last met March 16th, next meeting June 4th; attendance from some members had been inconsistent.
- Committee found harassment policy adequate but district lacked a specific reporting form for discriminatory actions/harassment distinct from general bullying; a combined draft form was created.



• Draft to be finalized for review at June 4th meeting, which would also address committee's future structure and meeting frequency.

b. Jewish American Heritage Month Activities

• Students Maya Berman, Gabby Berman, Jack Conley, and Delia Hite worked with co-director Keisha and Principal Michele Carlson on activities including Culture Feast integration, heritage-themed announcements, posters, and documentaries.

• Students raised adding a Jewish Heritage Month banner; Superintendent Robidoux indicated this would need referral to the Policy Subcommittee.

c. District-Wide Activities

• Holocaust survivor speaker scheduled to visit Veterans Middle School.

• Conversations ongoing between Principal Michele Carlson and Principal Scott Williams at Village School about high school students visiting to share heritage month content.

Subcommittee and Liaison Updates and Correspondence (02:08:00–02:13:00)

a. Facilities Subcommittee

• Reviewed building walk items; discussed Village School facility improvements involving a parent group.

b. Policy Subcommittee

• Had not met; planned full policy manual review. Revised CTE middle school acceleration policy had been approved.

c. Correspondence

• Chair Al Williams reported Veterans Middle School recognized as newest NELM Spotlight School.

• Chair Al Williams read letter from Commissioner Pedro Martinez recognizing Marblehead as one of 55 districts (out of 351) that decreased chronic absenteeism by at least 5 percentage points through March 1, 2026.

• Superintendent Robidoux indicated he would share absenteeism data with families at the start of the next school year.

Executive Session Motion and Adjournment (02:13:00–02:16:00)

a. Chair Al Williams requested a motion to enter executive session for three purposes without intent to return to open session:

• Purpose 3 (Collective Bargaining): To discuss strategy with respect to and in preparation for collective bargaining with the Marblehead Education Association — occupational therapists, physical therapists,

board-certified behavior analysts, occupational therapist assistants, physical therapist assistants, and certified nurse assistants — because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the school committee.

• Purpose 7 (Open Meeting Law Compliance): To comply with Chapter 30A, Sections 22F–G, relative to review and release of executive session minutes from the following dates: December 19, 2023; October 17, 2024; November 20, 2024; November 25, 2024; January 6, 2025; January 15, 2025; July 31, 2025; December 4, 2025; and December 18, 2025.

• Purpose 3 (Litigation): To discuss litigation — Marblehead School Committee and Marblehead Education Association, MUP-26-12060 — because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the school committee.

b. A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Kate Schmeckpeper to enter executive session for the three stated purposes without intent to return to open session.

• The motion passed 4–0 by roll call vote, with votes in favor: Melissa Clucas, Henry Gwazda, Kate Schmeckpeper, and Al Williams.

c. The meeting adjourned at 8:17pm.