MINUTES
Marblehead School Committee
Chair: Al Williams
Meeting Date, Time & Location: Thursday, February 5th, 2026, 6pm, Brown School Library, 40 Baldwin Rd. 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

Public Comment and Opening Remarks (00:02:00–00:08:00)

a. Public comment on transparency concerns

- Speaker expressed concern that meeting documents were not available online, noting documents had been posted prior to meetings for the past six years
- Speaker stated public engagement is essential during budget discussions and criticized perceived lack of transparency

Superintendent Update (00:08:00–00:15:00)

a. Superintendent John Robidoux recognized February as Black History Month.

- 2026 theme marks 100th anniversary of Black History Month's founding by Dr. Carter G. Woodson
- Junior Naima Giante recognized by METCO for digital Black History Month book

b. District recognition announced.

- Education Magazine invited Marblehead Public Schools to be featured in "The 10 Most Influential School Districts in 2026"
- Magazine cited strong academic rankings, 99% graduation rate, MCAS performance above state averages, and expanded AP opportunities

Consent Agenda (00:15:00–00:17:00)

a. Motion and Vote

- Motion by Kate Schmeckpeper, seconded by Henry Gwazda, to approve the consent agenda including: schedules of bills totaling $321,620.66, 2026–2027 school committee meeting dates, and January 29, 2026 meeting minutes

• The motion passed 5–0, with votes in favor: Jennifer Schaeffner, Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Al Williams, Melissa Clucas

b. Discussion

• Michael Pfifferling explained National Grid incorrectly credited town utility payments to school department accounts; credits belong to the town and National Grid must correct the error

FY2027 Budget Presentation and Discussion (00:17:00–01:35:00)

a. Superintendent John Robidoux presented proposed FY2027 level funded budget of $49,122,285.

• Level funding requires reductions in services, staff, supplies, and programming; level service would require approximately $2.56 million more

b. Michael Pfifferling reviewed budget allocation and funding offsets.

• Salaries comprise approximately 80% of budget; offsets include increased circuit breaker reimbursement and nearly doubled Pre-K/Kindergarten revolving account withdrawals

• District needed to identify $1.7 million in additional revenue or cuts to achieve level funding

c. Administration outlined staffing reductions totaling 14.75 FTEs plus one stipend.

• Round one: summer technology position, HR assistant (vacant), teacher-in-charge stipend at Glover, 1.75 FTE EL teachers at Village, 0.5 FTE math intervention at Veterans, 0.2 FTE art teacher

• Round two: 1 elementary teacher, 1 Veterans teacher, 3 high school teachers, 0.4 FTE EL teacher at Glover, 1 general education elementary instructional assistant, 0.4 FTE speech-language pathologist, 1 ABA coordinator (vacant), 1 special education teacher at Village (vacant), 1 maintenance worker

d. Committee discussed enrollment trends and staffing alignment.

• Enrollment declined from 3,144 (2016-17) to 2,435 (February 2025); licensed teacher FTEs declined from 263.9 to proposed 212.35

• Melissa Clucas noted high-needs students increased from 27% to 32% of enrollment since 2016

e. Committee raised concerns about budget assumptions and sustainability.

• Jennifer Schaeffner questioned confidence in out-of-district tuition and transportation projections

• Michael Pfifferling acknowledged revolving fund reliance is not sustainable; key risks include utilities, special education costs, and federal grant funding

f. Next steps discussed.

• Public hearing scheduled February 26, 2026; school committee vote planned for March

• Committee agreed to keep FY27 budget as standing agenda item; budget subcommittee to continue working with administration if further changes needed

Subcommittee and Liaison Updates (01:35:00–01:42:00)

a. Communications Subcommittee update on newsletter distribution

- Newsletter will be sent Monday instead of Friday to avoid conflicting with school newsletters
- Content will be budget-focused with roadmap update and links to budget documents and presentation with timestamp
- Materials being prepared for PTO and social media distribution ahead of budget hearing

b. Roof Committee update on high school roof project

- All HVAC units with long delivery times ordered and assured on site by June; pre-inspection of rooftop equipment during February vacation
- Weather permitting, one to two small roof sections may be completed during April vacation; decision expected one to two weeks in advance
- Summer impacts: special education program relocated to Veterans Middle School; weight training access continues with flexible entry points; Piper Field available with possible limited exceptions during crane operations
- First-floor office staff unaffected; some second-floor assistant principals may temporarily relocate; contractors require advance notice of all staff and students on site during summer work

Closing Business and Adjournment (01:42:00–01:43:00)

a. No correspondence noted.

b. Motion to adjourn made by Melissa Clucas, seconded by Henry Gwazda.

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

c. Meeting adjourned at 7:42pm.