Marblehead School Committee
Chair: Al Williams
Meeting Date, Time & Location: Thursday, April 30th, 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

Opening, Pledge of Allegiance, Commendations, and Public Comment (00:00:00–00:04:00)

a. Meeting called to order at 6:03 PM on Thursday, April 30th, 2026; Pledge of Allegiance recited.

b. Public Comment

- Mary spoke appreciating teachers and noted her granddaughter's participation in a school mock town meeting discussing the override, thanking the superintendent and staff involved.

Superintendent Update (00:04:00–00:14:00)

a. Moment of Silence and Announcements

- Superintendent John Robidoux asked for a moment of silence for Scott LaVoie, long-time custodian who passed away recently.
- Reminded community that the following week was Teacher Appreciation Week.
- Walk, Bike and Ride Day scheduled for Wednesday, May 6th.

b. NELMS Visit and Mock Town Meeting at Veterans Middle School

- NELMS visited Veterans Middle School to evaluate it for the Spotlight School Award; visit reported as very positive with results expected the following week.
- Students participated in a mock town meeting moderated by Jack Attridge; students voted to approve the override, approved Tier 1 and Tier 2, but narrowly rejected Tier 3 after a hand count.

c. Tree Planting and Town Meeting Preparation

- Tree Warden Jonathan Forbert and volunteers planted trees at Village School, funded by private donations, to reduce heat from asphalt areas; next project planned for high school parking lot.

• Superintendent Robidoux thanked the Select Board, Finance Board, Town Administrator, and School Committee for collaboration ahead of town meeting.

d. Student Representative Update

• Student Representative Will Cruikshank reported on fourth quarter, senior projects with over 150 seniors participating, AP tests May 4th–15th, and school musical Mamma Mia opening that weekend.

• Provided spring athletic records and noted upcoming spring concerts beginning May 18th.

District Improvement Plan Update and Feedback Process (00:14:00–00:39:00)

a. Plan Overview

• Superintendent John Robidoux presented the District Improvement Plan (DIP) covering 2026–27 through 2028–29, containing 6 goals, 22 objectives, and over 100 strategies, developed through iterative feedback from administrators, staff, and parents/guardians.

b. Parent Feedback Highlights

• Goal 1: Added language on AI as a learning tool, digital literacy, and screen time vs. hands-on learning balance.

• Goal 2: Added language on celebrating educators and enhancing the mentoring program for newer teachers.

• Goal 3: Added professional development for new teachers transitioning to Marblehead and mentorship for new administrators.

• Goal 4: Added language on online safety, cyberbullying, social media, and clarified restorative practices with natural consequences and consistent behavior procedures district-wide.

• Goal 5: Added language on streamlining district-wide systems through enhanced tools and technology; still needed further wordsmithing.

c. Feedback Process and Timeline

• Committee members to submit individual feedback to Superintendent Robidoux via email by May 8th.

• Revised plan to be discussed May 21st, with vote targeted for that meeting or no later than June 4th.

• A member emphasized completing the process before the election so the current committee could finalize the plan.

d. Committee Discussion

• Chair Al Williams noted the plan lacked specific deliverables, data metrics, and timelines; suggested the superintendent and staff propose these for committee review.



• A member raised concern that the "Assessment and Evidence" column frequently listed meetings rather than actual outcome evidence.

• A member questioned whether the plan's scope was realistic; Superintendent Robidoux acknowledged not every item would be fully achieved within 3 years and described periodic updates, reprioritization, and alignment with the superintendent evaluation process.

Consent Agenda: Bills and Meeting Minutes (00:39:00–00:40:00)

a. Approval of bills totaling $735,165.42 and meeting minutes from April 9, 2026.

• A motion was made by Kate Schmeckpeper and seconded by Henry Gwazda to approve the schedules of bills totaling $735,165.42 and the meeting minutes from April 9, 2026.

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

Public Communication Forums and Override Outreach (00:40:00–00:50:00)

a. Communications Subcommittee reported on public Q&A forums held with the Select Board ahead of the June 9th override vote.

• Two Dunkin Donut open office hours sessions were held, attended by Henry Gwazda, Superintendent John Robidoux, and Select Board members; modest turnout, positive feedback on tiered funding structure, ballot mechanics, and town-side budgets.

b. Continued outreach plans discussed.

• Henry Gwazda to serve as coordinating point person with the Select Board on a calendar of upcoming events at varied times.

• Open Meeting Law considerations noted: events with two or more committee members must be posted with minutes; subcommittee members must avoid deliberating on matters they may vote on; members must provide information but not advocate on the override.

c. Members requested that attendees at outreach events report back public questions and feedback to the full committee.

d. Members reminded of a training session scheduled the following day at noon on public engagement guidelines.

Town Meeting Warrant Articles and Capital Needs (00:50:00–01:11:00)

a. The committee reviewed school-related warrant articles (Articles 25–28) to determine whether to recommend funding or indefinite postponement.

• Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations Michael Pfifferling confirmed the administration did not recommend bringing forward any new capital requests for FY27 given the town's financial situation.

b. Article 25 — School Department Capital Equipment

• A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to recommend indefinite postponement of Article 25.

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

c. Article 26 — School Building Technology Needs

• A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to recommend indefinite postponement of Article 26.

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

d. Article 27 — School Department Capital Needs

• A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to recommend indefinite postponement of Article 27.

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

e. Article 28 — School Department Supplemental Appropriation

• Henry Gwazda initially moved to recommend indefinite postponement but withdrew after Kate Schmeckpeper raised concern about preserving options if the school budget (Article 23) was amended downward at town meeting.

• Members expressed concern that leaving the article open could undermine the committee's commitment to the joint town-wide override approach.

• The original motion to recommend indefinite postponement of Article 28, made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas, was brought to a vote.

• The motion passed 4–1, with votes in favor: Al Williams, Jennifer Schaeffner, Henry Gwazda, and Melissa Clucas; and votes against: Kate Schmeckpeper.

Recreation and Parks Memorandum of Understanding (01:11:00–01:23:00)

a. The committee reviewed the annual MOU between the School District and Recreation and Parks Department for April 30, 2026, through August 31, 2026.

• Superintendent John Robidoux noted the only change from the prior year was updated dates on page 2; a corrected version was placed in the shared drive.

b. Concerns were raised about grounds maintenance quality; Superintendent Robidoux cited staffing constraints, seasonal delays, and ongoing communication improvements.

- Superintendent Robidoux recommended tightening MOU language around irrigation repairs, mulch costs, and third-party service calls.

c. Jennifer Schaeffner proposed amending Exhibit A, item 6 to expand irrigation management language to cover all school district properties.

- A motion was made by Jennifer Schaeffner and seconded by Henry Gwazda to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with the Recreation and Parks Department with the addition of expanded irrigation management language covering school district properties.
- The motion passed 5–0, with votes in favor: Al Williams, Kate Schmeckpeper, Jennifer Schaeffner, Henry Gwazda, and Melissa Clucas.

d. A committee member requested the MOU be revisited approximately nine months ahead of the next renewal cycle to assess performance and determine whether revisions are needed.

Fair Share Supplemental Budget Grant (01:23:00–01:28:00)

a. Superintendent John Robidoux and Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning Julia Ferreira presented Fair Share Supplemental Budget funding secured through Senator Creighton and Representative Armini.

- Grant totaled $66,420: $40,700 for bus cameras, $15,720 for culinary arts at Marblehead High School, $10,000 for music program.

b. Additional supplemental funding may be forthcoming; if received, district would pursue Glover School playground enhancements.

c. Chair Al Williams agreed to draft a thank-you letter from the School Committee to Senator Creighton and Representative Armini.

Subcommittee and Liaison Updates: Facilities Walkthroughs (01:28:00–01:37:00)

a. Communications Subcommittee and Roof Update

- April newsletter sent out; four roof sections replaced over April break; roof subcommittee scheduled to meet the following week.

b. Facilities Walkthroughs

- Facilities Subcommittee completed walkthroughs of all five buildings with maintenance staff James and Gilberto, Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations Michael Pfifferling, and building principals (Principal Michele Carlson did not attend the high school walkthrough).



• All buildings in very good shape; the high school needed the most attention but no issues expected to rise to capital need level; many items already addressed or in progress.

• Superintendent John Robidoux and Michael Pfifferling discussed establishing a preventative maintenance schedule for HVAC systems, univents, belts, and fans.

c. Data Policy Subcommittee

• Subcommittee met that morning and reviewed new policy revisions to be brought to the full committee over the next several weeks.

Closing Business and Motion to Enter Executive Session (01:37:00–01:39:00)

a. No correspondence was reported.

b. The committee moved to enter executive session for two purposes:

• Purpose 3: 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; the chair so declared without intent to return to open session.

• Purpose 3 (Chapter 38, Section 21A3): To discuss strategy with respect to potential litigation, Jay Buffy, as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the School Committee; the chair so declared without intent to return to open session.

c. Vote to enter executive session:

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

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

d. The meeting adjourned at 7:42pm.