Marblehead School Committee
Chair: Al Williams (Acting Chair K. Schmeckpeper)
Meeting Date, Time & Location: Thursday, May 7th, 2026, 6pm, Brown School Library, 40 Baldwin Road, Marblehead MA 01945
SC Members Present: J. Schaeffner, K. Schmeckpeper, H. Gwazda, M. Clucas
SC Members Absent: A. Williams
Agenda/Materials: Link
Meeting Recording: Link
Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Henry Gwazda

Superintendent's Report and Shoutouts (00:00:00–00:07:00)

Opening, Commendations, and Public Comment (00:01:00–00:06:00)

a. Acting Chair K. Schmeckpeper called the May 7th meeting of the Marblehead School Committee to order at 6:06 PM and noted the meeting was being recorded.

b. Public Comment

- A member of the public urged the committee to adopt a resolution supporting the "Fair Fix for RetirementPlus" legislation before the Massachusetts legislature, addressing enrollment inconsistencies affecting educators excluded from RetirementPlus. The speaker noted other committees (including Medford) have adopted resolutions and the Superintendent has joined a statewide letter of support; provided a draft resolution and requested the committee amend its agenda to discuss it that evening.
- No other public comments were offered. Public comment was closed.

Student Representative Report (00:06:00–00:07:00)

a. Student Representative Will Cruikshank provided updates on MHS events.

- AP tests underway; junior prom scheduled May 15th; final spring instrumental concert May 18th.

b. Spring sports records reported.

- Baseball 8–6, Softball 9–5, Boys Lacrosse 8–3, Girls Lacrosse 5–7, Boys Tennis 8–2, Girls Tennis 6–3, Boys Track 5–1, Girls Track 3–3, Sailing 9–7.

Superintendent Update and Shoutouts (00:07:00–00:15:00)

a. Superintendent John Robidoux acknowledged May observances and appreciation days.

- Mental Health Awareness Month, Jewish American Heritage Month, Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Principal Appreciation Day, School Nurse Appreciation Day, Teacher Appreciation Week

b. Superintendent Robidoux reported attendance at the annual ADL Law and Education event and that the NEASC visiting team provided very positive overall feedback during their May 5–6 visit to Marblehead High School.

- Formal NEASC report to be shared once issued

c. Acting Chair K. Schmeckpeper agreed to take the agenda out of order to allow the Village School student presentation to proceed next.

Village School Spotlight Presentation (00:15:00–00:25:00)

a. Superintendent Robidoux introduced the Village School spotlight presentation.

- Village School counselors and 6th-grade peer leaders presented a slideshow of school programs and activities.

b. Programs highlighted included:

- Peer Leaders Club: Weekly meetings; activities include peer mentoring, holiday cards for seniors, behavioral skits, school tours, positive messaging, announcements, campus cleanup, and planning a school dance.
- Confident Me Club, School Newspaper (led by Liz Pruitt), and Morning Announcements (delivered daily by students, with Principal Scott Williams providing additional updates).

c. School-wide initiatives presented:

- Composting Program with student volunteer "compost rangers"; monthly Community Meetings for grades 4–6; morning meetings added this year for grades 4–5.
- George the Chair tradition (Principal Scott Williams); Organic Garden ("Wanwan") supported by SPUR for hands-on sustainability learning.

d. Community service and school spirit efforts:

- Project 351 Partnership: Clothing collection for Cradles to Crowns nonprofit.
- PBIS Duck Dollars: Behavior incentive system with weekly totals and prize events.
- Spirit Days and Community Celebrations including reading competitions and Teacher Appreciation Week.

e. The committee thanked the students and staff; a group photo was taken.

Financial Update and Budget Discussion (00:25:00–00:31:00)

a. Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations Michael Pfifferling reported an unencumbered, unexpended balance of approximately $1.988 million.

- ~$1.5 million reserved for prepaid tuition, leaving ~$480,000 in unexpended, unencumbered funds.
- Cautioned the balance reflects first year with Munis payroll and a balloon payout to ~60% of teachers at end of June.

b. Facilities walkthroughs conducted by Pfifferling, Jennifer Schaeffner, Henry Gwazda, principals, and facilities staff identified items needing repair/replacement (pumps, water heaters, end-of-life equipment).

- Pfifferling expressed urgency to complete work before June 30th given constrained FY27 budget; committee will likely be asked in June to approve specific expenditures from remaining FY26 funds.

c. J. Schaeffner confirmed FY27 maintenance budget is level-funded; originally proposed 2% increase on supply and contract services lines was removed.

d. J. Schaeffner sought clarification on town website document showing three override tiers for FY27.

- Pfifferling clarified the district will prepay next year's tuitions using current-year funds (reducing budget by $1.5 million), but in FY28 no prepaid money will be available, creating a $1.5 million shortfall — the Tier 1, year 2 item.
- Under all three override tiers, no additional funding flows to schools in year 1 (FY27).

Consent Agenda Approval (00:31:00–00:34:00)

a. Consent agenda included schedule of bills totaling $287,845.41, draft meeting minutes from April 30, 2026, and revisions to policies HA, HB, HF, KBA, KBE, KCD, and KDD.

b. Two corrections to April 30th draft minutes

- "Jack Asher" changed to "Jack Attridge" under superintendent update.
- Page 4, subsection F referencing Parks and Recreation MOU deleted as duplicative.

c. A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve the identified schedule of bills totaling $287,845.41, the draft meeting minutes from April 30, 2026, as revised in discussion, and the revisions to policies HA, HB, HF, KBA, KBE, KCD, and KDD.

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

School Improvement Plans: Village, Veterans Middle, and High School (00:34:00–01:28:00)

a. Superintendent Robidoux introduced SIP presentations, noting the district is transitioning to a new District Improvement Plan (DIP); full SIP-DIP alignment expected next year.

b. Village School — Principal Scott Williams presented the one-year SIP developed with the School Advisory Council.

- Goal 1 (Curriculum/Instruction): Literacy and math growth via holistic data approach; new science curricula and dedicated science block added; pilot learning walk program for peer classroom observation; special education integrated through PLC data meetings and IEP/504 compliance.
- Goal 4 (Student Support): Sense of belonging through student voice initiatives, clubs, peer leaders; Responsive Classroom morning meetings rolled out; social-emotional learning instruction; safety drills and QBS de-escalation training conducted.
- Goal 5 (Leadership/Communication): PBIS "Duck Dollars" program; bimonthly newsletter; planned expansion of grade-level open house events.

c. Committee member Jennifer Schaeffner raised concern that SIP goals lacked specific measurable targets. Superintendent Robidoux agreed measurability should improve. Committee member Henry Gwazda suggested mid-year written progress follow-ups; Superintendent Robidoux and Principal Williams supported this.

d. Veterans Middle School — Principal Matthew LeVangie presented. NELMS selected MVMS as a spotlight school (51.5/54 on 18 indicators).

- Goal (Curriculum/Instruction): Structured monthly data team process analyzing common assessment data; math transitioning from three levels to two with co-taught inclusion class maintained.
- Goal (Professional Development): At least four peer-led internal PD sessions per year.
- Goal (Student Support): Partner with student leaders (Cornerstones) for at least four after-school engagement events per year. Jenn Schaeffner encouraged return of events lost during COVID.

e. Marblehead High School — Principal Michele Carlson presented the SIP reflecting NEASC self-study priorities and emerging DIP.

- Goal (Belonging/Engagement): Systemize structures for student connectedness; strengthen Magic Block advisory model; expand Wayfinder SEL; develop early warning indicator systems.
- Goal (Transitions): Strengthen 8th-to-9th-grade transition supports including expanded counselor collaboration, orientation visits, RTI classes, and peer mentoring.
- Goal (Student Voice): Expand opportunities beyond the same core group, building on Southern Magic Coalition.
- Goal (Curriculum/Instruction): Review and update written curriculum documents per NEASC priorities; embed Vision of the Graduate with assessment rubrics.

- Jennifer Schaeffner urged that maximizing academic achievement and positioning MHS as a top secondary school be explicitly reflected. Superintendent Robidoux acknowledged this feedback.

f. The committee voted to approve all three school improvement plans.

- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve the Village School Improvement Plan, Veterans Middle School School Improvement Plan, and Marblehead High School Improvement Plan.
- The motion passed unanimously, with votes in favor: Kate Schmeckpeper, Jennifer Schaeffner, Henry Gwazda, and Melissa Clucas.

Use of High School Field House for Town Elections (01:28:00–01:34:00)

a. Superintendent Robidoux reported the town formally requested continued use of the Marblehead High School field house for town elections; committee approval was needed before the Select Board could act.

- Known election dates: June 9th (town election), September 1st (primary), November 3rd (general election).

b. Committee agreed to approve usage for the remainder of 2026 rather than on a blanket basis, retaining year-by-year flexibility.

- A motion was made by Jennifer Schaeffner and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve the use of the Marblehead High School field house for any and all needed town elections for the remainder of 2026, including but not limited to June 9th, September 1st, and November 3rd.
- The motion passed 4–0, with votes in favor: Kate Schmeckpeper, Henry Gwazda, Jennifer Schaeffner, and Melissa Clucas.

c. Jennifer Schaeffner noted the committee will need to revisit this approval for elections in 2027.

Subcommittee Updates, Override Office Hours, and Adjournment (01:34:00–01:37:00)

a. Henry Gwazda announced community open office hours on the override ahead of the June 9th town election.

- Sessions scheduled May 11th, May 19th, May 27th, and June 2nd; 9:00–10:00 AM and 5:30–6:30 PM at Abbott Hall.

b. Kate Schmeckpeper reported the Policy Subcommittee scheduled a meeting with Superintendent Robidoux on May 28th at 11:00 AM to finalize remaining policies for the June meeting.

c. A motion was made by Melissa Clucas and seconded by Henry Gwazda to adjourn.

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



d. The meeting adjourned at 7:42 PM.