



Marblehead School Committee

Chair: Kate Schmeckpeper

Meeting Date, Time & Location: Thursday, September 3rd, 2026, 6pm, Marblehead High School Library, 2 Humphrey St, Marblehead MA 01945

SC Members Present: K. Schmeckpeper, H. Gwazda, M. Clucas, A-M. Jordan

SC Members Absent: A. Williams

Agenda/Materials: [Link](#)

Meeting Recording: [Link](#)

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Henry Gwazda

Opening, Pledge, and Commendations ([00:00:00–00:02:00](#))

a. The September 3rd school committee meeting, the first of the school year, was called to order at 6:03 PM, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

- Commendations were given to custodial and maintenance staff for their work over the summer preparing the buildings.
- A general commendation was extended to everyone involved in reopening the buildings and situating students.

Public Comment and Student Rep Report ([00:02:00–00:03:00](#))

a. The committee opened the floor for public comment, inviting those in the audience and on Zoom to be heard.

- Audience members were asked to sign in, and online participants were asked to raise their hand in Zoom.
- No one came forward in person or online, and no public comment was made.

b. The student representative report was listed on the agenda, but no report was given this evening.

- The student representative was not present; the committee expected to receive the first report at its next meeting.

Superintendent Update ([00:03:00–00:17:00](#))

a. Superintendent John Robidoux recapped the opening of school, including Aspen training for team chairs, the leadership retreat, the new staff welcome, and convocation at Veterans.



- The high school roof project was reported about 99% complete, with collaboration among Mike, Stephen Kwiatek, the fire department, and the building commissioner.
- New administrators Mary LeBlanc, principal at Glover and Allison Alves, assistant principal, were recognized for strong starts.

b. MCAS Family Portal information will be sent to families next week by regular mail, including student-specific access codes.

- The DESE mandate was implemented late in the summer, creating time pressure; 1,619 students took the MCAS.
- It was reported that state data and final results are not available until the end of September, so shared results remain unofficial.

c. Other operational updates and follow-up items were reported.

- Transportation adjustments continue under Lisa Manning, with families asked for patience and grace.

d. The superintendent will work with the town and the committee to explore alternative options for election polling location safety.

e. The superintendent will take his district updates from these meetings, clean them up, and post them in the digital backpack Dropbox.

Financial Updates (00:17:00–00:24:00)

a. The committee received an update on the FY26 closeout, which remains pending the town's final numbers.

- FY26 is trending toward returning about \$800,000 to the town, above the earlier June projection of \$200,000.
- The variance was attributed to the new software system's encumbrance of terminated employee salaries and closed-out POs.

b. The committee discussed the scale and context of the return.

- The \$800,000 represents about 1.6% of the \$47 million budget, described as a small margin.
- Spending was intentionally restricted early last year due to uncertainty over the override vote outcome.

c. The end-of-year report to DESE and the FY27 update were reviewed.

- Assistant Business Manager Kristin Morello will do the vast majority of the report, due September 30th; Chair Kate Schmeckpeper will sign it once completed. If the town has not closed out, the district may request an extension or file with amendments.



- FY27 payroll rollover work is underway; a staff member will provide more information at the first October meeting.

Facilities Updates ([00:24:00–00:45:00](#))

- a. The committee received an update on the high school roof and HVAC project.
 - The project was reported approximately 99% complete, with membrane, flashing, edging installed and rooftop HVAC units replaced; balancing continues.
 - The project stood \$2.7 million under town meeting approved funding, \$700,000 beyond the \$2 million in previously known savings.
- b. The contract allows the contractors until the end of October to complete the work, leaving the project well ahead of schedule.
- c. Summer maintenance work completed across the schools was reported.
 - Glover Elementary completed a cafeteria HVAC mini-split installation after roughly 12 to 13 years without air conditioning there.
 - The Veterans Middle School D-wing roof and HVAC project was completed about a week earlier, with no leaking observed.
- d. The studio area at Veterans that flooded last year still awaits the insurance-contracted renovation company before MHTV can return to its studio.
- e. Outstanding facilities work items were identified.
 - Install netting at Brown School; remove small rocks from the Glover playground; patch small holes in Glover cafeteria and kitchen tile.
 - Remove the surplus debris pile behind the high school; replace field house floor coping; put up signage requested by Michele Carlson; replace a door removed without a key.
- f. Additional items were assigned or planned.
 - Poison ivy near the Council on Aging sidewalk will continue to be treated with vinegar and dish soap.
 - The future facilities director will pick up Village courtyard renovation planning and work with the Sheriff's Department on painting high school athletics walls next summer.
- g. Override-allocated funds will support capital work that must be expended before June 30.
 - Redo the Veterans School gym floor; carpet and paint the PAC; new Veterans clock system; new snow removal equipment; Hopkins Field structure upgrades.
 - Add shade to the Brown School playground and complete lighting refreshes in the Veterans and Village gymnasiums by June 30.



- h. State earmark funding was reported for a culinary arts classroom refresh (stoves and ovens) and music, plus \$40,000 for upgrading camera systems on buses.
- i. The facilities director search was reported, with the first search having failed and the position reposted.
 - The search committee is screening candidates and hopes to bring new candidates forward to the committee.

Consent Agenda: Bills and Minutes (00:45:00–00:48:00)

- a. The committee noted that donations would be included on the consent agenda going forward to ensure all donations to the district are formally accepted, though no donation items were presented this evening.
- b. Corrections to the draft minutes were discussed before approval.
 - The August 14 minutes carried the header from the prior meeting, showing the wrong location and the July 8 date.
 - A liaison assignment voted at the retreat was missing and would be reflected in the minutes.
- c. An additional correction was identified on the June 11 minutes.
 - At the top of page 7, the reference to the "Information Committee" should read the Superintendent's Anti-Discrimination Committee.
- d. A motion was made by Ann-Marie Jordan and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve the identified schedule of bills totaling \$2,218,333.08 and the meeting minutes from June 11, 2026, June 22, 2026, July 8, 2026, and August 14, 2026, with the corrections discussed by the committee this evening.
 - The motion passed 4-0.

Director of Finance Appointment (00:48:00–00:56:00)

- a. Superintendent John Robidoux presented a memo recommending Kristin Morello for appointment as Director of Finance following Michael Pfifferling's departure in November.
 - Morello has served as Assistant Business Manager for two years, working directly alongside Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations Michael Pfifferling.
 - Contributions cited included integrating Munis financial software, managing state and federal grants, mastering payroll, overseeing districtwide user fees, and holding MCPPO designation.
- b. The committee discussed the appointment and voted.
 - Members noted an internal candidate familiar with district systems would ease transition; the Director of Finance role is narrower than the prior position.



- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to appoint Kristin Morello as Director of Finance pending successful contract negotiations. The motion passed 4-0.
- The Superintendent will sit down with Morello and Pfifferling after the contract is finalized to plan the transition period.

Academic Calendar Update (00:56:00–00:59:00)

a. Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning Julia Ferreira presented a proposed change to the '26-'27 academic calendar, noting that a traditional half day for a day of service on October 21st had been omitted during calendar planning and that Dr. Carlson had notified the district of the missed date.

- The half day lets students complete PSATs while others do volunteer work and seniors take college visits.
- Time on learning requirements were checked and confirmed still met; the change applies to the high school only.

b. The committee voted on the calendar change.

- A motion was made by Melissa Clucas and seconded by Ann-Marie Jordan to approve changing the '26-'27 academic calendar to make October 21st a half day for the high school. The motion passed 4-0.
- Julia Ferreira will update and share the revised academic calendar.

May 2027 Bourndale Field Trip Approval (00:59:00–01:06:00)

a. A request to approve the May 2027 Bourndale field trip was presented to the committee.

- The trip is a 3-night, 4-day trip to Camp Bourndale in Plymouth with six core classes.
- The program is designed to help students transition from elementary to middle school.

b. An alternate "Villages" program was described for students who do not attend Bourndale.

- Activities include Project Aventura, Taste Buds Kitchen, and Crane's Beach, plus a potential marine science center partnership reconnected through a former student.
- On-site activities include Boston Bounce.

c. Action items and motion.

- Bus reservations will be coordinated for the Bourndale trip and village program; a judge will be arranged for the Idol event; the trip's return will be announced at upcoming open houses.

d. A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve the May 2027 Bourndale field trip. The motion passed 4-0.



New Policy ACL: Interacting with Law Enforcement ([01:06:00–01:10:00](#))

a. The committee held the first reading of new Policy ACL, Interacting with Law Enforcement Officers Engaged in Civil Law Enforcement.

- The policy stems from the PROTECT Act signed by the governor in August.
- The DESE model policy and DESE guidance issued August 21st were included in the packet.

b. The first reading was accepted, with the policy to proceed through the district's three required readings despite DESE's ambitious approval timeline.

- The policy subcommittee will meet next week to discuss the policy.
- The committee will revisit comments at the September 18th meeting.

c. Discussion addressed implementation and existing practice.

- A concern was raised about training frontline staff, office staff, and principals to apply the policy confidently.

d. It was noted that the district already has informal procedures in place, and a committee member suggested notifying the police chief that the district has this policy in place.

FY27 School Committee Goals Discussion ([01:10:00–01:37:00](#))

a. The committee discussed the FY27 School Committee goals, building on ideas generated at its retreat, with the goal of bringing a final slate back for a vote.

b. A draft data-informed decisions goal document was presented, including a proposed dashboard for tracking district data trends.

- The draft dashboard was described as a slide, document, or spreadsheet rather than a live data tool.
- Metrics were organized into student outcomes, people, finance and operations, and strategic execution categories.

c. The committee reached consensus to continue refining the goal with the document to be built out further.

- The change reflected that not every decision has a metric or established trend.

d. The committee discussed comparing Marblehead to similar districts and tying quarterly data reporting to DIP progress reporting.

- Members said the school committee should define the comparison cohort and the rationale for it.
- Concern was raised that cross-district comparisons are limited by differing demographics, budgets, and programming.



e. The committee reached consensus to send the data goal and the DIP reporting goal to the goal subcommittee as two separate goals, and not to add a third goal on portrait of a graduate this cycle.

- Members preferred making the two existing goals more robust, with final goals to be decided by December rather than rushed.

f. Action items were identified.

- The draft data dashboard document will be shared with the full committee, and John will identify the relevant metrics.
- Ann-Marie Jordan and Al Williams will meet as the Goals Subcommittee to work on the goals.

Superintendent Evaluation Process ([01:37:00–01:48:00](#))

a. The committee discussed the timing and format of the superintendent evaluation, noting the last evaluation occurred in October 2025.

- May timing was seen as better aligned with committee turnover after town elections, allowing new members more experience.
- An October formative review would allow goals to be reviewed, adjusted, or replaced before the summative evaluation.

b. The committee reached consensus to move to a 2-year evaluation cycle, with an informal formative evaluation in October focused on progress toward goals and a formal summative evaluation in May before the town election.

c. The committee discussed the evaluation form and template.

- The superintendent preferred a narrative, evidence-based format similar to the internal vectors system used for admin and principal evaluations.
- It was noted DESE does not review the underlying form, only certain summary data.

d. The committee agreed to explore creating its own workaround evaluation form that could later be synthesized into the official DESE/MASC form.

- A committee member will attend MASC's watch-and-learn session on superintendent evaluations the following day.
- The superintendent or a committee member will talk to MASC about whether an alternative goals template may be used.

Subcommittee/Liaison Updates and Adjournment ([01:48:00–01:49:00](#))

a. The committee took up subcommittee and liaison updates.



- It was reported that the Policies committee would begin meeting the following week.

b. Motion to adjourn.

- A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Ann-Marie Jordan to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

c. The meeting adjourned at 7:51pm.