Marblehead School Committee
Chair: Kate Schmeckpeper
Meeting Date, Time & Location: Thursday, October 1st, 2026, 6pm, MHS Library, 2 Humphrey Street Marblehead MA 01945
SC Members Present: A. Williams, K. Schmeckpeper, H. Gwazda, M. Clucas
SC Members Absent: AM. Jordan
Agenda/Materials: Link
Meeting Recording: Link
Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Henry Gwazda

Public Comment and Student Representative (00:00:00–00:01:00)

a. The meeting was called to order at 6pm and opened with public comment, and no members of the public came forward in person or on Zoom.

- The student representative was not present, so no student report was given, and the committee moved on to district updates.

District Updates (00:01:00–00:10:00)

a. The committee received an update on the rollout of a new discrimination reporting form and updated law enforcement protocols.

- The form, on each school's website, routes to building administration and populates a Google Sheet for trend review with the Anti-Discrimination Committee.
- Principals will add the form link to school newsletters, to be discussed at Tuesday's admin meeting, and QR codes are being created with Stephen Kwiatek.

b. Protocols under the PROTECT Act and the after-school user fee were reviewed.

- The memo outlines steps if ICE or civil law enforcement appear, requiring judicial warrants, and defines safe spaces including schools, childcare, healthcare facilities, and courthouses.
- The $300 flat user fee for after-school clubs and activities is unchanged, though past enforcement among some clubs had been inconsistent.

Financial Update (00:10:00–00:21:00)

a. The committee received the first financial update report for fiscal year '27.

- The unexpended and unencumbered balance stood at $4.2 million as of late September.

- Special education tuitions and transportation known to date were encumbered, along with utilities based on last year's spending.

b. Several budget lines were reported as miscoded or misaligned.

- The veterans special ed teachers line was not encumbered at all, totaling $700,000.
- Out-of-district transportation showed $368,000 unencumbered and the electricity line $774,000 unencumbered.

c. Additional adjustments and context on the remaining balance were reviewed.

- The new facilities director, starting October 13, was not yet in the system, leaving roughly $121,000 unencumbered.
- Corrections identified totaled about $2.25 million, leaving an estimated $2 million balance, consistent with last year, when $1.5 million was prepaid at year end.

d. Action items were identified for correcting the reports.

- Mike will work tomorrow to fix the veterans special ed teachers encumbrance, and Mike will review the electricity line against last year's level.
- Mike will address the largest lines immediately, including the $715,000 middle school teachers line, fine-tune smaller discrepancies in later months, and leave Kristin guidance on preparing the reports.

METCO Program Update (00:21:00–00:39:00)

a. Superintendent John Robidoux introduced METCO Director Caja Johnson, who presented a METCO program update using a slide deck and a short introductory video on METCO history.

- The video did not play during the meeting; it was agreed the link would be sent out and included in the minutes. Video linked here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptIEI5rXHI4

b. Johnson described METCO as a voluntary desegregation program operating in 33 Massachusetts districts.

- Funding comes from the state, with the program administered in collaboration with DESE and METCO Inc.
- The program was founded by Ruth Babson and originated from Project Exodus, transporting students from Boston to suburban districts.

c. Johnson reported current enrollment of 46 METCO students districtwide.

- One third grader, three fourth graders, one fifth grader, 14 middle schoolers in grades 7 and 8, and 27 high schoolers.

d. Johnson outlined the program's enrollment model, staffing, and goals.

- The district uses cohort enrollment for grades 7 and 9, citing bus rides over an hour to 1.5 hours and no late bus for K-6.
- Three staff support the program districtwide: Johnson, DQ/Dupont, and Ms. Salters-Lacoya.
- Goals center on student need, social-emotional support, academic achievement, and community connections.

Consent and Action Agenda Items (00:39:00–00:40:00)

a. The committee took up the consent and action agenda items as a single motion.

- The items comprised the identified schedule of bills, the September 17, 2026 meeting minutes, and a donation.
- The schedule of bills totaled $2,502,080.90.

b. A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Al Williams to approve the identified schedule of bills totaling $2,502,080.90, the meeting minutes from September 17, 2026, and a donation from the Massachusetts Marine Trades Association in the amount of $5,946.02 for the Marine Service Program at the high school.

- The motion carried 4-0.

c. During discussion, a correction to the September 17, 2026 minutes was requested.

- The top of page 5 referenced "Julia and Samarine"; it was noted that "Samarine" is not a person.
- Secretary will correct the minutes to remove the reference on page 5.

Montreal/Quebec Field Trip Approval (00:40:00–00:46:00)

a. World language teacher Anna Bertsman presented a proposed four-day field trip to Quebec City and Montreal, with information included in the committee packet.

- Trip scheduled during February break so students would not miss school.
- Itinerary included the Quebec Winter Carnival, Château Frontenac, St. Lawrence River, Mont-Royal, Vieux-Montréal, the underground city, and a sugar shack.
- Most participating students are currently taking French and will practice the language, including at a market.
- Students will stay two per room with one bed each in two hotels; chaperones will include one administrator and high school teachers at a ratio of one adult per six students.

b. Staff will determine the number of chaperones based on how many students sign up.

c. A motion was made by Henry Gwazda and seconded by Melissa Clucas to approve the Montreal/Quebec field trip.

- The motion passed 4-0.

Superintendent Goals Progress Update (00:46:00–01:08:00)

a. Superintendent John Robidoux presented a progress update on his four evaluation goals as the first step toward the formative evaluation.

- Goal 1: administrator learning walks will expand district-wide to all educators in 2026-27, modeled on a Village School pilot.
- The initiative is not evaluative and focuses on shared student engagement practices; each educator will visit at least one classroom.

b. The committee questioned whether the written Goal 1, focused on principals, should be revised now that the initiative has broadened to all educators.

- Superintendent Robidoux will continue discussions with the admin team on Tuesday regarding whether to add a survey component to the goals.

c. Goal 2 addressed hiring, training, and retention of educators.

- A new tracking sheet for resignations, retirements, and non-renewals was created this year, and exit interviews revealed varied reasons for departures.
- Superintendent Robidoux stated that this HR goal need not remain a separate standalone evaluation goal, as the practices are becoming part of regular practice.

d. Goals 3 and 4 covered the District Improvement Plan and student achievement measures.

- The three-year DIP was developed with input from administrators, parents, staff, and committee members, aligned to DESE's six categories; a DIP tracking sheet is in progress.
- Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning Julia Ferreira will present a teaching and learning update including district MCAS scores and related data.

e. The chair described the formative evaluation process, noting committee members should use the guide form placed in the Drive by Superintendent Robidoux.

- Rather than a written report subject to a vote, members will go around the table at the next meeting and share verbal feedback on progress toward goals.

School Committee Goals Discussion (01:08:00–01:11:00)

a. The committee reviewed the status of the school committee goals.

- The goals subcommittee did not meet between the last meeting and this one.
- Al Williams prepared a revised data goal draft, placed in the Google Drive, incorporating feedback and material from Henry Gwazda.

b. The draft governance dashboard framework will serve as the starting point for further discussion.

- Three core goals: defining the dashboard, reviewing it on a set schedule, and communicating findings to the community.
- An addendum contains contextual and informational material not intended to be part of the strategy itself.

c. Rather than continuing solely through the subcommittee, the committee decided to schedule a workshop/retreat to work through the goals together.

- K. Schmeckpeper will send out a schedule and survey to find a two-hour block in the next couple of weeks.

Subcommittee and Liaison Updates (01:11:00–01:14:00)

a. The Facilities Subcommittee reported that its principal item for the full committee was a recommendation to begin the process of turning over the school to the town.

- The recommendation followed Superintendent John Robidoux's recommendation; the subcommittee agreed.
- The superintendent noted the process could take a long time, involving many town officials and town meeting warrants.

b. The subcommittee did not pursue a detailed discussion at this meeting because the matter was not on the evening's agenda, and members wanted the public to be able to listen.

- The recommendation will be added to a future full committee agenda for discussion by the full committee.

c. Another subcommittee reported discussing additional resources and programming for staff and students, including a possible series of staff trainings on recognizing discrimination and antisemitism in the classroom.

- The committee tasked itself with researching training resources and bringing them back to the group to review for suitability.
- Members noted the professional development calendar was already set and budgeted, raising questions of when, how, and funding.



Adjournment (01:14:00–01:15:00)

a. With no further business before the committee, the chair called for a motion to adjourn.

- A motion was made by H. Gwazda and seconded by A. Williams to adjourn the meeting.
- The chair called for discussion, and none was offered. The motion passed 4-0.

b. The meeting adjourned at 7:16 PM.