

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION
OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Monday, April 3, 2023

Herbert L. Jackson Council Chamber Room #106 - 215 Pleasant Street
And Virtual Meeting

Mayor Christenson called the meeting to order at 6:11 p.m. Mayor Christenson read the docket items for the meeting.

Mayor Christenson led the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence for those who have served our country and for those who continue to do so.

Roll Call

The following attendance was taken:

Mayor Christenson	Present
Mr. Drummey	Present
Mr. McCarthy	Present
Ms. Spadafora	Present
Ms. Macklin	Present
Mr. Weldai	Present
Mr. Gray	Present
Mr. Bernard	Present
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg	Present
Superintendent Noriega-Murphy	Present
Student Representative Hakkaoui	Absent
Clerk	Present

Mayor Christenson invited Mr. Weldai to provide details about joining the language access channels for the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Christenson brought forth the matter of the approval of minutes for the March 6th, 2023 Regular Session of the School Committee. Ms. Spadafora made the motion to approve the minutes. Mr. McCarthy seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey voted YES
Mr. McCarthy voted YES
Ms. Spadafora voted YES
Ms. Macklin voted YES
Mr. Weldai voted YES
Mr. Gray voted YES
Mr. Bernard voted YES
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES
Mayor Christenson voted YES
Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Ms. Jackie Ecker, 58 Lanark Road, Malden

Ms. Ecker, Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) Vice-President, requested that Malden High School (MHS) students be provided accessible tutoring services and related her son's experience.

Ms. Karen Hill, Educator at Early Learning Center (ELC)

Ms. Hill said that the ELC has 12 Intensive Learning Program (ILP) classrooms for students with disabilities. She added that in recent years, student population has grown but staffing has reduced. Ms. Hill asked that the school be adequately staffed for safety and to be able to teach students.

Ms. Jodi Lavita, Educator at ELC

Ms. Lavita also spoke about the lack of staffing at ELC through no fault of the Principal Lawrence. Ms. Lavita said that the ELC is understaffed and unsafe. Ms. Lavita added that students are not receiving services because staff are involved with assessments. Ms. Lavita said that some students who are transported by buses are coming 15-30 minutes late and are on the bus for more than an hour.

Ms. Liza Blackman, Educator at ELC

Ms. Blackman said that the floating paraprofessional positions have been eliminated and this has caused classrooms to be short staffed. Students are not consistently receiving services which they are entitled to in their IEP. Educators want to be able to educate the students and not babysit. Ms. Blackman continued that the ELC is also running out of space and although this matter was brought to the attention of the School Committee in prior years, nothing has been done.

Ms. Nicole Chelman, Educator at ELC

Ms. Chelman said the ELC is short-staffed and the classrooms are full. Space is becoming an issue as well. Ms. Chelman said that safety is a concern.

Ms. Terri Polignone, Educator at ELC

Ms. Polignone said that there are less and less opportunities to teach students as educators are busy managing behaviors.

Ms. Marina Apostolou, Educator at ELC

Ms. Apostolou said that she has had many injuries and that the ELC is short-staffed as well as untrained staff. There are no substitutes and no bathrooms in the classrooms. Ms. Apostolou said that ELC needs more classrooms. She added that her students did not have speech language pathologist (SLP) services for three months. Ms. Apostolou said that there is a push for integration but there is no place for students.

Ms. Katie Leonard, Educator at ELC

Ms. Leonard sought accountability for short staffing at ELC which she said is due to poor planning of the administration. Ms. Leonard spoke about missed speech therapy sessions and the elimination of floater positions. Ms. Leonard said that no input from the staff at ELC is requested whenever changes are made.

Ms. Heather Cochran, Educator at ELC

Ms. Cochran said that the students in her classroom have many needs which necessitates 1:1 aide support as indicated in their IEPs. However, due to staff turnover and short staffing, educators have missed many lunch and prep periods as they are busy covering the class.

Ms. Jessica Gold Boots, Malden Education Association (MEA) Vice-President

Ms. Gold Boots stood in solidarity with the ELC educators. She said that a fully staffed ELC is necessary for safety. Ms. Gold Boots requested all stakeholders to collaboratively look for solutions.

Ms. Lissette Alverado, ELC Parent, 492 Pleasant Street, Malden

Ms. Alverado said that she has had children at the ELC for many years. Ms. Alverado said that she wants her youngest child who will be starting at the ELC to receive all the services that he is entitled. Ms. Alverado voiced concern that there are students who are not receiving services. Ms. Alverado implored the School Committee to staff the ELC adequately.

Ms. Deb Gesualdo, MEA President

Ms. Gesualdo said that concerns regarding staffing, space and safety have been highlighted since three Superintendents ago. Ms. Gesualdo said that minimum staffing is not what the district should be striving towards. Ms. Gesualdo read excerpts from the collective bargaining agreement and asked that the district and School Committee to hold up their end of the agreement so that students receive what they need and deserve.

Ms. Salima Slimane, Malden Public Schools (MPS) Parent, 50 Park Street, Malden

Ms. Slimane spoke about the equity gaps for students with disabilities. Ms. Slimane wants to know how Malden educators are trying to close the achievement gaps and address learning loss. Ms. Slimane said that although money is always a concern, the district must do what the students need.

Ms. Anabette D'Entremont, ELC Parent, 16 Preston Street, Malden

Ms. D'Entremont asked about how the vacant positions at the ELC is being filled. Ms. D'Entremont also voiced concern that the ELC does not receive the same priority as the K-8 schools.

Ms. Megan Marincic, ELC Parent, 241 Mountain Ave, Malden

Ms. Marincic supported the educators at the ELC. Ms. Marincic asked for appropriate staffing so that students receive all the required services.

Ms. Cassie Fonesca, ELC Parent, 30 Silver Street, Malden

Ms. Fonesca echoed the concerns of the ELC teachers. Ms. Fonesca said that the ELC has a good reputation and that the city needs to maintain the reputation as all the students and educators deserve the best.

Ms. Mollie Maxwell, ELC Parent, 30 Wheeler Street, Malden

Ms. Maxwell said that her son at the ELC missed a lot of speech therapy services and it is unfair. Ms. Maxwell echoed all the concerns voiced by the educators.

Ms. Michelle Cox, ELC Parent, 57 Seaview Ave, Malden

Ms. Cox supported the ELC educators and voiced concern for her son's and his classmates' safety as well as the ELC educators' mental health.

Mayor Christenson commented that the matter raised about the ELC will be reviewed and an update will be provided at the next meeting.

Superintendent's Report

1. Malden Reads Presentation

Ms. Jodie Zalk, Co-Facilitator of Malden Reads shared information regarding the book selections and programs for the year. Ms. Jodie Zalk was joined by Ms. Linda Zalk, Education Chairperson for Malden Reads and Isaac Wilde, Facilitator of the Mini Writers' Den. School Committee members were presented with the book, "They Called Us Enemy" by George Takei. Ms. Linda Zalk said that this is the 13th year of the program. Mr. Gray said the Malden Reads activities reminded him of his own experience in school.

2. District Updates and Highlights

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy provided updates on school activities, enrollment, efforts to fill vacancies, licensure status for educators, ELC staffing, MCAS participation, instructional focus on literacy and numeracy, chronic absenteeism, attendance, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), summer programs, construction and remodeling will be done at ELC in the summer, ELC students' summer programs will be held at Beebe, PreK-12 Handbook, PreK-12 Program of Studies and the Code of Conduct.

In response to Mr. Bernard regarding the absenteeism numbers, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that absenteeism among students in elementary grades might also be caused by other factors because they depend on caregivers or transportation to get to school. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the district will look into the matter brought up Mr. Bernard regarding special needs students who are on the bus for a very long time and who arrive late to school. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy added that the chronic absenteeism is among students who walk to school or depend on caregivers. Mr. Bernard asked if other services such as mental health and therapy can be built into the multi-tiered support system and Superintendent Noriega-Murphy responded that these services as well as partnerships with the providers are part of the plan.

Mr. Weldai suggested that perhaps the Human Resource Director could speak at a future meeting about recruitment efforts undertaken by the district. Mr. Weldai noted the amount of work that is being done with regards to educator licenses. Mr. Weldai suggested that the Human Resource Department could focus on the educators who have expiring licenses so that this matter can be resolved quickly.

Ms. Spadafora said that the district enrollment data shows a significant increase at the ELC. Ms. Spadafora insisted that the district review the staffing levels at the ELC. Ms. Spadafora also asked about a slide that was not among the printed materials.

In response to Mr. Gray regarding support structures such as peer support to help students experiencing chronic absenteeism, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said she recently met with student members of the STEP Team at MHS who help one another. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy continued that the administrators at MHS also help in this area but acknowledged that peer support among students does have an impact. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy added that there are many similar factors affecting adults too which has an impact on attendance.

Subcommittee Reports

Mr. Weldai said that this year's allocation for the budget from the city is an additional \$12.17 million. Mr. Weldai added that this addition is from the city coupled with the Student Opportunity Act implementation. The first Budget Subcommittee meeting will be held on Monday, April 10 at 6:00 pm via Zoom. The following meetings have been planned for April 27, May 15, and if needed, May 22. Mr. Weldai continued that the Public Hearing would be on Monday, June 5. All these meetings will be posted accordingly.

Motions and Resolutions

1. Donations – Mr. Weldai

Mr. Weldai said that Kevin Larson has graciously donated the remaining money of \$450 from a scholarship that was annually awarded in his brother, Eddie Larson's name. Although the scholarship has run its course Mr. Lawson wanted to continue giving to the MHS community by donating the remaining \$450 to the MHS Class of 2023.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to approve Mr. Larson's donation. Mr. Bernard seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey voted YES

Mr. McCarthy voted YES

Ms. Spadafora voted YES

Ms. Macklin voted YES

Mr. Weldai voted YES

Mr. Gray voted YES

Mr. Bernard voted YES

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES

Mayor Christenson voted YES

Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Weldai said that when the Stoneham Bank learned that many MHS students require financial assistance to purchase a copy of their year book, the Maldonian, they quickly offered \$500 to help defray the cost for students that had financial difficulty. They did not want students going without a yearbook due to money issues.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to approve the Stoneham Bank donation. Ms. Macklin seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey voted YES

Mr. McCarthy voted YES

Ms. Spadafora voted YES

Ms. Macklin voted YES

Mr. Weldai voted YES

Mr. Gray voted YES

Mr. Bernard voted YES

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES

Mayor Christenson voted YES

Motion passed unanimously.

2. Student Enrollment of School Department Personnel – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora explained that there is a policy that if a school district employee requests the School Committee’s approval to enroll their children who live out-of-district, it will be considered along the guidelines that the number doesn’t exceed 5 students. Ms. Spadafora said that there is also a hardship clause that in case the number is exceeded, the request would still be considered.

Ms. Spadafora said a request was received from Ms. Shirley Dorai for her two children to continue their enrollment in the Malden Public Schools starting from the 2023-2024 school year. Ms. Spadafora added that the cap has not been met and there is still space but that Ms. Dorai’s situation also meets the hardship clause as the children’s father passed away recently.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to approve the request from Ms. Shirley Dorai for her two children to continue their enrollment in the Malden Public Schools starting from the 2023-2024 school year. Ms. Macklin seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

- Mr. Drummey voted YES
- Mr. McCarthy voted YES
- Ms. Spadafora voted YES
- Ms. Macklin voted YES
- Mr. Weldai voted YES
- Mr. Gray voted YES
- Mr. Bernard voted YES
- Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES
- Mayor Christenson voted YES
- Motion passed unanimously.

Personal Privilege

Moments of silence were held for Mr. John Edward Wright, Jr., former Principal of MHS and Ms. Karen Anderson, former City Clerk. Acknowledgement of Ms. Paula Higgins, Educational Support Professional (ESP) at Forestdale School who was recently awarded the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) ESP of the Year. Mr. Weldai announced that he will not be running for re-election for the next term.

Executive Session

Mr. Drummey made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 8:12 p.m. Mr. McCarthy seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

- Mr. Drummey voted YES
- Mr. McCarthy voted YES
- Ms. Spadafora voted YES
- Ms. Macklin voted YES
- Mr. Weldai voted YES
- Mr. Gray voted YES
- Mr. Bernard voted YES
- Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES
- Mayor Christenson voted YES

Motion passed unanimously.

The committee reconvened to the Regular Session at 9:09 p.m.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to approve the change of title for the Position of Assistant Superintendent of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to Assistant Superintendent of English Learner Education. Mr. Drummey seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey voted YES

Mr. McCarthy voted YES

Ms. Spadafora voted YES

Ms. Macklin voted YES

Mr. Weldai voted YES

Mr. Gray voted YES

Mr. Bernard voted YES

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES

Mayor Christenson voted YES

Motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Mr. Weldai made a motion to adjourn at 9:10 p.m. Mr. McCarthy seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

I certify that a notice of this meeting was filed with the Clerk of the City of Malden in the manner provided under Chapter 39, Section 23A of the General Laws.



Shirley Dorai, Clerk