

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION
OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Monday, September 11, 2023
Herbert L. Jackson Council Chamber Room #106 - 215 Pleasant Street
And Virtual Meeting

Mayor Christenson called the meeting to order at 6:00 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. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy requested moments of silence for a Malden High School (MHS) student who passed away recently; Ms. Marie Andrea McIsaac, Educational Support Professional (ESP) for 24 years at the Early Learning Center; Ms. Barbara Clifford-Laporta, who worked for 27 years at Malden Public Schools (MPS); and Mr. Robert Digiammarino who worked for MPS for 40 years.

Roll Call

The following attendance was taken:

Mayor Christenson	Present
Mr. Drummey	Present
Mr. McCarthy	Present
Ms. Spadafora	Present
Ms. Macklin	Present
Mr. Gray	Present
Mr. Bernard	Present
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg	Present
Superintendent Noriega-Murphy	Present
Clerk	Present

Mayor Christenson invited Ms. Spadafora to provide details about joining the language access channels for the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Christenson brought forth the matter of the adoption of minutes for the June 12th, 2023 Regular Session of the School Committee. Mr. McCarthy made the motion to adopt the minutes. Mr. Bernard seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Ms. Penny Kalman and Ms. Sarah Strayer, Salemwood School Educators
Ms. Kalman requested the Malden School Committee for help in providing them with the resources needed to protect staff and students. Ms. Strayer said that not having cords to tie the classroom door caused a colleague lots of stress. was stressed that she didn't have anything to tie the door. Ms. Strayer added that bringing the police twice a year for safety trainings was good.

Ms. Deb Gesualdo, Malden Education Association (MEA) President

Ms. Gesualdo echoed Ms. Kalman and Ms. Strayer about safety at the schools. Ms. Gesualdo also added her support for the Thrive Act and requested all to do the same. Ms. Gesualdo said that the punitive aspects of MCAS is especially detrimental to students with Individualized Education Plans, students learning English as a second language, students of color and students from groups that have been historically marginalized from an equitable and supportive education.

Superintendent's Report

1. District Updates and Highlights

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy introduced new district administration staff. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy continued to provide updates on district enrollment; program of studies for K-8; academic highlights; summer program; facilities improvements; safety training; district focus on literacy, numeracy and reducing absenteeism; multilingual education; cross functional teams; and staffing. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy ended her presentation with a video featuring the Beebe School.

Ms. Spadafora requested for information about the seating capacity and number of seats open in every school because caregivers have been inquiring why their children are unable to be enrolled in the school of their preference.

Subcommittee Reports

1. Budget Subcommittee – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora said that she is the interim chair for the Budget Subcommittee and that the subcommittee met on September 6 to discuss the substitute nurses' daily compensation rates which is currently at \$140/day.

Ms. Spadafora continued that it has been a struggle to hire substitute nurses because many surrounding communities are paying almost double the rate. When the district is unable to hire substitute nurses, the district has to approach staffing agencies and their rates are upwards of \$455/day, which in turn is double the rate paid by surrounding communities.

The subcommittee voted unanimously to increase the substitute nurses' daily compensation rate to \$240/day. Ms. Spadafora said that only one surrounding school district pays higher than this rate by \$10.

Motions and Resolutions

1. Substitute Nurses Compensation – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to increase the substitute nurses' daily compensation rate to \$240/day. 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. Gray voted YES
Mr. Bernard voted YES
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES
Mayor Christenson voted YES
Motion passed unanimously.

2. Substitute Teachers Compensation – Ms. Spadafora and Ms. Rose-Zeiberg

Ms. Spadafora and Ms. Rose-Zeiberg brought attention to the matter of substitute teachers' compensation which has not been reviewed since 2018.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to refer this matter to the Budget Subcommittee. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

3. District Cell Phone Policy – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora said that what is practiced in the district does not align to what is in the handbook.

In response to Mr. McCarthy, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that at the moment, if educators tell students to put their cellphones away, the students need to do so. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy continued that what is being practiced at the K-8 schools which is also recommended by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is for educators to collect the phones from students and store them in a cellphone hotel. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the policy in the handbook needs to be reviewed because it was based on what is practiced at the high school. Mr. McCarthy asked for some data about the effects on learning once this is implemented fully.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to refer this matter to the Policy and Procedures Subcommittee. Mr. Bernard seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Student Absence Policy – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora said that caregivers have raised questions about the absence policy which states that a doctor's note is required for excused absences but caregivers are being asked to keep their students home if they are not feeling well. Ms. Spadafora continued that the policy should be reviewed.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to refer this matter to the Policy and Procedures Subcommittee. Mr. Bernard seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Resolution in Support of the THRIVE Act – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora said students feel stressed over standardized testing and that this also puts pressure on educators. Ms. Spadafora proceeded to read the resolution.

Mr. Bernard voiced his support for the resolution. Mr. Bernard added that many students have anxiety over testing and DESE's testing requirement for graduation is unfair. Mr. Bernard continued that DESE bases a school district's performance on the MCAS scores and uses receivership as a punitive measure but there is no support provided to help districts end receiverships.

Mr. Gray said that he will not be supporting the resolution. Mr. Gray continued that some students and adults thrive with systems that have high stakes testing. Mr. Gray said from personal experience, he had to take high stakes testing to get into Latin School. Mr. Gray also mentioned that to serve in the military or to obtain a driver's license, pilot license or to become a doctor, the applicant has to take and pass written standardized tests. Some students need the structure as well as a mechanism or training so that when they get on a career path in life and need to take a standardized test, they will be prepared. Mr. Gray gave an example of students at law school. Mr. Gray said that his perception of the resolution indicates removal of standardized testing. Mr. Gray continued that there needs to be middle ground somewhere as it seems to be too broad and open. Although tests can be stressful for all students, it does work for some students. Mr. Gray concluded that the experience he had as a child and young adult to take standardized tests, helped him as an adult to take tests for the certifications needed for employment.

Ms. Spadafora said that the legislation which is before the Education Committee is about ending high stakes standardized testing that prevents graduation and that it is not about ending standardized testing. Ms. Spadafora continued that there needs to be a better way that does not put high limitations on students.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to adopt the resolution. 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. Gray voted NO

Mr. Bernard voted YES

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES

Mayor Christenson voted YES

Motion passed with 7 votes in favor and 1 vote against.

Personal Privilege

Executive Session

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 7:10 p.m. 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. 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 7:23 p.m.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to accept the redacted Executive Session minutes for the public from September 2022 to June 2023. 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. Gray voted YES

Mr. Bernard voted YES

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES

Mayor Christenson voted YES

Motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Mr. Drummey made a motion to adjourn at 7:24 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