

Record of the Marblehead School Committee Meeting

Thursday June 5, 2025

Marblehead High School Library

Members Present: Jennifer Schaeffner, Sarah Fox, Brian Ota, Al Williams, Alison Taylor

Meeting Opening and Commendations (00:00:00–00:02:00)

- a. Meeting called to order at 6:02 PM with live streaming
- b. Commendations given to:
 - Jared Kaplowich for professionalism and leadership during senior days and activities
 - Committee for anti-Semitism proclamation recognized by Anti-Defamation League
- c. Chair Schaeffner noted ADL letter discussion scheduled for later in meeting

Public Comment and Student Mental Health Advocacy (00:02:00–00:27:00)

- a. Chair Schaeffner acknowledged the passing of longtime Marblehead teacher Dave Fleming
- b. Multiple community members provided public comments regarding the anti-Semitism proclamation vote:
 - Kristen Binder, Karen Malcolm (with 60+ signatures), Sarah Pouladian, and Carl Goodman, resident thanked the three committee members (Jennifer Schaeffner, Alison Taylor, Sarah Fox) who voted in favor
 - Several expressed disappointment the 3-2 vote was not unanimous
- c. Jonathan Heller advocated for improved student mental health support, referencing a recent 14-year-old suicide in a neighboring community involving bullying:
 - Requested adding school social workers beyond current guidance counselors and psychologists
 - Asked for a formal mental health proclamation and collaboration with other school committees
- d. Committee introduced Will Cruikshank as new student representative, replacing outgoing representative Ella

District Updates and Superintendent Report (00:27:00–00:37:00)

- a. Superintendent Robidoux acknowledged Pride Month, thanked the committee for his contract, and reported on recent activities:

- Visited sixth graders at Bournedale, praised staff and students for engagement despite challenging weather
- Student athletes signing day held May 29th with 25 students recognized for college commitments across various sports
- Senior projects shared May 30th were impressive
- Brown Fun Run and Culture Feast held with community attendance including Representative Armini

b. Robidoux congratulated graduating seniors pursuing diverse paths including prestigious institutions (Yale, Stanford, Northwestern, UCLA, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, Vanderbilt), career education, trade schools, and military service with U.S. Marine Corps

c. Chair Schaeffner moved to approve a schedule of bills totaling \$796,263.30, and a motion was made by Sarah Fox and seconded by Brian Ota to approve the bills. The motion passed 5-0, with votes in favor: Sarah Fox, Al Williams, Jenn Schaeffner, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota.

Financial Update and Budget Discussion (00:37:00–00:50:00)

a. Assistant Superintendent Pfifferling reported monthly financials for 11th month:

- District expended \$36.8 million with \$8 million encumbered (96% of budget committed)
- Unexpended balance of \$1.87 million as of May 31st, down \$580,000 from April
- June payroll will be high due to deferred teacher salaries

b. Budget adjustments and capital items:

- Pfifferling and Superintendent Robidoux will recommend items not in budget but needed for district
- Three capital items removed due to town's \$2 million projection error: \$30,000 PAC seat reupholstering, PAC painting, and Glover playground project
- District bid painting contract requiring work start before June 30th to use surplus funds
- Glover playground cannot be completed by June 30th, needs additional town funding next year
- Target minimum \$900,000 in prepayments (limited by state law to one year collaborative education, three months private education)

c. Scoreboard project collaboration between school district, Parks and Recreation, and Light Department reduced costs through shared resources and inter-departmental cooperation

Student Health and Risk Survey Presentations (00:50:00–01:19:00)

a. Survey data showed Marblehead students' positive mental health trends over three years: anxiety decreased 21%, depression 13%, psychotic experiences 8%

- Committee questioned 8% psychotic experiences rate and definition
- Presenter clarified these involve seeing/hearing things that aren't there; early detection important for treatment
- Suicidal thoughts and behavior data revealed concerning statistics, though suicide attempts decreased from 3% to 1%
- District has safety assessment protocols and suicide prevention programming in place

b. Additional results: 37% negative body image, discrimination based on race/ethnicity and personal identities

- 67% of sexually diverse students and 50% of gender diverse students above risk thresholds for anxiety/depression
- Seniors had highest anxiety/depression rates though slightly lower than previous year
- Substance use: alcohol rates four times higher than comparison schools; 96% of adults with substance disorders began use before age 20
- 7% of students reported first alcohol use in elementary school

c. District initiatives include multi-tiered support systems, Pre-K to 12 social emotional learning curriculum adoption, Project Reboot presentations for families/students grades 7-12

- Committee requested grade-level data breakdowns
- Suggested adding questions about physical/sexual abuse and consent to future surveys
- Recommended anonymous reporting mechanisms and safety messaging in school restrooms

Science Curriculum Review Presentation (01:19:00–01:53:00)

a. Assistant Superintendent Julia Ferreira presented science curriculum recommendations following six-year review cycle:

- Grades K-4: Mystery Science curriculum (\$51,000) with first-year FOSS lesson integration
- Grades 5-8: McGraw Hill Inspire Science (\$67,000) with grade-specific focus areas
- Grades 7-8 engineering: Project Lead the Way (PLTW)
- High school: Updated materials for biology, chemistry, physics, and AP courses (\$82,000, mostly digital)

b. Committee concerns addressed:

- Cost verification for consumables and kits to avoid classroom sharing

- Teacher preparation time for new curriculum implementation
- Adequate lab instruction at High school level compared to previous formal lab blocks
- Ferreira agreed to collect lab instruction effectiveness data after implementation

c. A motion was made by Sarah Fox and seconded by Brian Ota to approve the science curriculum as presented for grades K-12. The motion passed 5-0, with votes in favor: Sarah Fox, Al Williams, Jenn Schaeffner, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota.

Operating Protocols Approval (02:02:00–02:05:00)

a. Chair Schaeffner presented draft operating protocols for approval and noted Al Williams participated remotely from Michigan

b. A motion was made by Brian Ota and seconded by Sarah Fox to approve the school operating protocols. The motion passed 5-0, with votes in favor: Sarah Fox, Al Williams, Jenn Schaeffner, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota

Policy Adoptions and Updates (02:05:00–02:32:00)

a. Multiple MASC policy adoptions approved following subcommittee review by Chair Schaeffner, Alison Taylor, and Superintendent Robidoux

- Policy IMG (Animals in School): focuses on educational programs and student health concerns like allergies
- Policy IMGa (Service Animals in School): addresses service animals for students with disabilities per federal/state compliance
- Policy IHBG (Homeschooling): updated to remove diploma language not permitted under state statute
- Policies CHA/CHC (Development and Dissemination of Procedures), IH (Compensatory Education), IHBF (Homebound Instruction), IJ (Instructional Materials), IK (Student Progress Reports to Parents), and IMB (Teaching About Controversial Issues)
- Each policy adoption motion passed 5-0 with votes from Sarah Fox, Al Williams, Jenn Schaeffner, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota.

b. Actions deferred and completed

- Policies IL (Instructional Progress) and technology-related policies postponed for minor changes and further review
- A motion was made by Sarah Fox and seconded by Brian Ota to delete policy IHBG-R (additional homeschooling regulations)
- The motion passed 5-0, with votes in favor: Sarah Fox, Al Williams, Jenn Schaeffner, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota.

Donation Approvals and Election Polling Location (02:32:00–02:33:00)

a. Donation approvals:

- \$6,000 cash donation from Massachusetts Marine Trades Association
- Motion by Sarah Fox, seconded by Brian Ota to accept \$6,000 donation
- passed 5-0 (Sarah Fox, Al Williams, Jenn Schaeffner, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota)
- \$1,087 donation from Friends of the Marblehead Public Schools
- Motion by Alison Taylor seconded by Brian Ota to accept \$1,087 donation
- passed 5-0 (Sarah Fox, Al Williams, Jenn Schaeffner, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota)

b. Motion by Brian Ota, seconded by Sarah Fox to approve Marblehead High School as polling location for special election Tuesday, July 8th, 2025

- passed 5-0 (Sarah Fox, Al Williams, Jenn Schaeffner, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota)

Garden Renaming Request (02:33:00–02:40:00)

a. Sarah Fox requested renaming the Catherine R. Martin Organic Garden at the Brown School to honor both Katie Martin (died September 19th) and her late husband Jeff St. George (died January, less than eight months later)

- Both were longtime volunteers contributing hundreds of hours using expertise in landscape architecture and facilities management
- Jeff served longest on facilities subcommittee and authored the MSBA letter of interest that became the Eveleth School project
- Jeff built original garden beds by hand, drove bobcat, transported earth, and moved garden to Eveleth School to ensure student access

b. Committee received support letter from Kristen Salvi Pratt (involved in 2013 fundraising, former PTO board member) describing Jeff as "steady, quiet presence" who leveraged facilities expertise to secure equipment at no cost and emphasizing Katie and Jeff were "partners in life and in service"

c. Plans include new sign creation with local artist Kirsten Vishon involving Katie and Jeff's daughters; oldest daughter Emma expressed excitement about participating

d. A motion was made by Sarah Fox and seconded by Alison Taylor to rename the garden to the Catherine R. Martin Jeffrey St. George Organic Garden. The motion passed 5-0, with votes in favor: Brian Ota, Sarah Fox, Alison Taylor, Jennifer Schaeffner, Al Williams.

Subcommittee Updates and Recess Policy Discussion (02:40:00–02:46:00)

a. Subcommittee met May 30th with Superintendent Robidoux and Assistant Superintendent Ferreira regarding recess policy

- Current recommendation: grades K-3 have two recesses, grades 4-6 have one recess with extended time
- Fourth grade implementation to be determined pending further review
- Joint Labor Management Committee review needed with feedback expected before end of school year

b. Recess extension discussion for grades 4-6 involves increasing current 20-minute period to 30 minutes including transition time

- Assistant Superintendent Ferreira agreed to share survey data from recess policy review including public slideshow results and detailed raw data breakdown

c. Compliance concerns raised regarding ratified contract requiring second morning recess at elementary level (grades K-6)

- Sarah Fox expressed caution about creating policy contradicting existing contract language
- Superintendent Robidoux indicated ongoing conversations with attorneys to address contract language concerns and ensure legal compliance

Correspondence and Closing (02:46:00–02:50:00)

a. Chair Schaeffner read two letters regarding the School Committee's anti-Semitism resolution:

- Anti-Defamation League (May 20th) praised the resolution as "a powerful affirmation" for discrimination-free education, referencing recent incidents including a receshooting
- Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (June 4th) thanked the committee for standing against anti-Semitic content in classrooms, citing recent attacks in Washington D.C.

b. Chair Schaeffner clarified all five committee members supported the anti-Semitism resolution

Meeting adjourned at 8:52PM