

Record of the Marblehead School Committee  
Friday August 11, 2023  
Marblehead High School  
Library  
12:00pm

<https://marbleheadschoools-org.zoom.us/j/91203637392?pwd=eG50YXhmU0lqazU1WFNmZ1BpYlJWUT09>

Members Present: Sarah Fox, Brian Ota, Jennifer Schaeffner, Alison Taylor and Meagan Taylor

Also: Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, Michelle Cresta  
Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Julia Ferreira  
Glover School Principal, Hope Doran

I. Initial Business

a. Call to Order

Ms. Fox called the meeting to order at 12:02pm

b. Commendations

Ms. Fox read correspondence sent to the leadership team from Acting Superintendent Cresta and commended her efforts on remaining focused on the needs of the students.

Prior to opening the meeting to public comment Ms. Fox read the public comment policy per the advisement of legal counsel. She noted it was last revised a few months prior.

Ms. Meagan Taylor made a motion to waive the fifteen-minute timeline allotted for public comment. It was seconded by Ms. Alison Taylor and the motion carries 5-0. Ms. Fox reminded the community to submit comments in writing that may take longer than three minutes to share.

c. Public Comment

- Mimi Hollister of 7 Glover Square shared her future hopes pertaining to transparency for the new school committee
- Rob Sharp of 22 Franklin St. thanked the committee for holding public meeting and spoke about the costs associated with Dr. Buckley's termination. He requested that the committee share their reasoning for terminating his contract.
- Xazzie Kindle of Jersey St noted Massachusetts becoming one of the states to permanently provide free breakfast and lunch for students. She recommended that the quality of the food provided be further reviewed for nutritional value.
- Sarah Gold of 9 Reed Street requested that the entire committee step down and allow new people to head the committee so, "the district can heal." She spoke against the way public business has occurred since the changing of the committee and questioned the reasoning used for the Executive Session scheduling. She also requested an open forum be held to discuss concerns related to starting the year without a Superintendent.
- Mary McCariston of Pinecliff Drive spoke about her agreement with Ms. Gold's sentiments.
- Charles Gessner of 20 Gregory Street requested that the committee share the reasons for the termination of the Superintendent to avoid speculation.
- Renee Keaney of Beverly Avenue spoke of the loss of focus on the Town and School's budget situation noting how the decision to terminate the Superintendent undermines that focus. She mentioned repairing trust to gain the support of taxpayers.

- Raymond Hansen of 39 Evans Rd read the mission statement. He reminded the committee

that their elected status should not be used for ulterior motives but to represent the voice of the Town. He requested the factors that brought the termination of the Superintendent be shared.

- Becky Suciu of Lafayette Street spoke in favor of a second recess returning. She also spoke in favor of moving beyond the current events to focus on a positive school year ahead.

Ms. Fox spoke regarding the comments pertaining to the termination of the Superintendent and mentioned that the Executive Session minutes pertaining to the termination will be voted on and released soon.

- Alison Goldberg of 45 Humphrey St. spoke about the turnover of Superintendents over the last ten years.
- John DiPiano noted his disappointment at the hostility directed towards the school committee who were elected by the community at large. He spoke in favor of supporting the committee and the counsel leading the committee.
- Melissa Kaplowitch of 10 Camille Terrace thanked Superintendent Buckey for his service. She shared her concerns about the division created in the Town. She also spoke about denouncing discrimination, racism, and ableism in any form.
- Paul Baker spoke against the amount of money that will be taken away from student facing services over the Superintendent termination. He shared his concerns about being able to attract Superintendents. He requested that the committee members resign as he feels the committee may have lost the support of the community.
- Nina Pickering-Cook of 11 Pearl Street, a municipal lawyer for Acton and Bedford spoke about the termination of Superintendent Buckey and the open meeting law violations she feels took place. She spoke against forcing out a Superintendent so close to the start of school during uncertain budget times. She requested that the reasoning for his termination be shared.
- Kathy Leonardson of 17 Cloutmans Lane spoke about the wellness policy ADF and recommended including the number of recesses into the policy. She requested that implementation changes such as including a second recess go through the Superintendent's Office rather than being postponed for multiple readings by the school committee.
- Frank Kastnor of Pickwick Rd. spoke about non-disclosure agreements and employee terminations. He spoke in favor of supporting the school board assuming they are doing the right thing.
- Jonathan Heller of Ralph Rd. noted he was speaking as a parent and teacher and not as the MEA co-president. He spoke about the turnover of Superintendents and the difficulty that comes with adapting to changes in leadership.

## II. District Updates-Michelle Cresta

Assistant Superintendent Michelle Cresta provided an update on the following:

- FY24 State Budget  
Universal free lunch was approved at the state level for Kindergarten through 12th graders  
The State did approve a Chapter 70 school funding increase but does not have an impact on the FY24 budget as it was already approved
- Leadership Retreat  
The Directors, principals and chairs gathered to plan the direction of school year
- Summer Professional Development  
Funding from ARPA and ESSER funds were used for summer professional development planning
- New ELA Curriculum  
The ELA curriculum Wit and Wisdom has arrived and is being unpacked
- Athletics  
Going forward all coaches will be required to be MIAA certified by the fall

- Enrollment  
Enrollment remains consistent at the Brown School.  
The Glover School enrollment is slightly down.  
The Village School enrollment remains steady.  
The Veterans school enrollment has increased by about 50 students.  
The High School enrollment increased by about 18 students.

Total enrollment numbers will be shared once the data roll occurs in the coming weeks.

- Return to School  
Educators return to work on August 29th and students return on September 5th.
- Transportation and Pay to Ride Program  
The Pay to Ride Program will continue and seats will become available on a first-come, first-serve basis beginning on August 15th at 6pm. A call has gone out to notify families of the opportunity.

Superintendent Cresta provided an update on the FY23 year-end close mentioning the amount paid to out of district tuitions, the total operating budget and the total expenditures and encumbrances as of June 30th. It was mentioned that a memo with the amount will be posted on the website.

She mentioned that monthly budget reports will begin for the new fiscal year in late October.

Superintendent Cresta addressed concerns pertaining to how the former Superintendent will be paid out. She further explained that savings due to lower than anticipated unemployment related costs and savings due to new hiring related costs will provide an estimated \$250-\$350k.

### III. Consent Action and Agenda Items

#### a. Schedule of Bill

Ms. Fox inquired about an item in the amount of \$10K on schedule number 23923. It was explained that the item in question pertains to the Keynote speaker attending the convocation. The parent/teacher organization for each building will be donating \$1k each to fund half of the cost while the remainder will be funded through the Educatius revolving fund.

Ms. Fox asked for a motion to approve the identified schedules for FY23 totaling \$1,417,073.57. The motion was moved by Ms. Schaeffner and seconded by Alison Taylor. The motion passes 4-0 with one abstention.

Ms. Fox asked for a motion to approve the identified schedules for FY23 totaling \$648,248.90. The motion was moved by Ms. Schaeffner and seconded by Mr. Ota. The motion passes 4-0 with one abstention.

#### b. Acceptance of Tree Donation at Glover School

Principal Doran explained that the tree was purchased to recognize 30-year teacher Barbara Thomas who recently retired.

Ms. Fox asked for a motion to accept the donation of a tree to be planted at the Glover School. The motion was moved by Mr. Ota and seconded by Ms. Alison Taylor. The motion carries 5-0.

#### c. Approval of Minutes-6/15/2023 and 6/29/2023

Ms. Fox made a motion to accept the minutes from June 15, 2023. The motion was moved by Ms. Schaeffner and seconded by Alison Taylor. The motion carries 2-0 with 3 abstentions.

Ms. Fox asked for a motion to accept the minutes from June 29, 2023. The motion was moved

by Alison Taylor and seconded by Jennifer Schaeffner. The motion passes, 4-0 with one abstention.

IV. School Committee Communication and Discussion Items

a. Ratification of Separation Agreement

Ms. Fox asked for a motion to ratify the separation agreement between the Marblehead Public Schools and Dr. John Buckey dated 8/2/23. It was moved by Ms. Alison Taylor and seconded by Ms. Schaeffner. Committee member Ota stated he would be recusing himself.

Ms. Meagan Taylor spoke about her disappointment and her concerns about the committee not effectively managing Superintendent Buckey. She spoke in favor of action plans to address areas of concern.

Ms. Schaeffner spoke about the difficulty with which the decision regarding the Superintendent was made. She noted how her decisions are always made with taking into consideration the best interests of the students, faculty and community members.

Ms. Fox stated that personnel and student information is privileged to protect individuals as appropriate. She spoke of the difficulty of the situation for all involved. She requested that the community focus on the best interest of the students and learn to be able to “disagree without being disagreeable.”

Ms. Alison Taylor quoted what the committee was accused of during public comment. She mentioned leading better by example for their children.

Ms. Meagan Taylor spoke of how more transparency will provide less divisiveness. The original motion carries 3-1 with one abstention.

b. Open Meeting Complaint(s)

Ms. Fox explained that community member Ms. Cathyann Swindlehurst filed an open meeting law complaint alleging the following:

“The committee improperly convened in Executive Session regarding the early termination clause of the Superintendent’s contract.”

Ms. Fox shared legal counsel’s response confirming that the committee convened for a proper purpose under provision number 2 which was to discuss potential negotiations with the Superintendent about the early termination clause of his contract and it was clear that it was the Superintendent that the committee was discussing.

There was no vote for enacting the early termination but rather a vote to allow the committee’s counsel to begin discussion with the Superintendent’s counsel regarding an earlier end to the contract. The committee and Superintendent were able to reach mutually agreed terms and the agreement was ratified today in open session.

Ms. Fox asked for a motion to enable counsel to draft a response to Ms. Swindlehurst’s open meeting law complaint with the determination that no open meeting law violation occurred as discussed.

The motion was moved by Alison Taylor and seconded by Ms. Schaeffner.

After discussion about the Executive Session reasoning that was originally put out to the public, the motion was read again. The motion passes 3-1 with one abstention.

Ms. Fox mentioned that community member, Ms. Reece Dahlberg also put forward an open meeting law complaint. Per counsel, it was noted that the complaint does not state what the

alleged violation is and Ms. Dahlberg is requesting a public apology for the violation.

Ms. Fox noted resending the open meeting law complaint to counsel to ensure nothing was missed.

Ms. Meagan Taylor questioned the written complaint and Ms. Fox confirmed that there was no action required.

c. Interim Superintendent Discussion

Ms. Fox recommended that Assistant Superintendent Cresta serve as Acting Superintendent through October 31, 2023 and enable the Chair to negotiate compensation with Ms. Cresta at this time.

The motion was moved by Ms. Schaeffner and seconded by Ms. Megan Taylor. It was confirmed that the School Accountant, Ms. Emma Puglisi will be taking on additional responsibilities while Michelle serves as Acting Superintendent.

Ms. Fox mentioned Ms. Schaeffner taking the lead to connect with NESDEC on the Superintendent search process and bring information back to the committee.

After discussion about the timeline for the search took place the motion passes 5-0.

d. Subcommittee and Liaisons Updates

a. Policy

Ms. Fox explained that both policies required revisions recommended by the state. Superintendent Cresta explained that the wellness policy was also required to be able to submit applications to the state for the school lunch program.

i. Wellness Policy ADF

Ms. Fox mentioned that changes to recess are not part of the wellness policy. Assistant Superintendent Cresta mentioned the requirements that are part of the policy such as regularly scheduled meetings and goal setting.

ii. Life Threatening Allergies Policy JLCDD

Assistant Superintendent Cresta shared that policy JLCDD is a new policy acknowledging life threatening allergies. The policy encompassed ensuring training compliance and having an emergency health care plan in place for all students with life threatening allergies.

Ms. Fox asked for a motion to approve policy ADF wellness as presented and waive the three readings. The motion was moved by Ms. Schaeffner and seconded by Mr. Ota. The motion passes 5-0.

Ms. Fox asked for a motion to approve policy JLCDD life threatening allergies as presented and waive the three readings. The motion was moved by Ms. Schaeffner and seconded by Alison Taylor. The motion passes 5-0.

Ms. Ota explained that he is researching a curriculum subcommittee by speaking with other districts. He mentioned that he would like to revisit the topic at the start of the school year once he has more information.

e. School Committee Summer Retreat Discussion-request of topics

Ms. Fox requested that committee members email Ms. Schaeffner their availability for the retreat. Ms. Fox requested that Colby return to discuss open meeting law and Executive Sessions.

f. MASC/MASS Conference

Ms. Fox mentioned the information for the joint conference being in the school committee drive. She asked members to reach out to the Superintendent's Assistant to schedule.

V. Closing Business

a. New Business-School Committee Announcements and Requests

The earlier request for the wellness policy to be added to a future agenda was mentioned. Ms. Alison Taylor spoke about the amount of ARPA funds that were given to the rail trail in comparison to the amount the school has been allotted.

b. Correspondence

None

VI. Executive Session

At 2:34pm Ms. Fox asked for a motion and vote to meet in Executive Session pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws chapter 30A, Section 21 (a) for the following purpose (7) in order to review, approve and consider for release the Executive Session minutes from the following SC meetings (which were held under Purpose 2 to discuss strategy in preparation for and to conduct negotiations with the Superintendent (7/21/23 and 7/31/23) with the intent not to return to open session.

The motion was moved by Ms. Schaeffner and seconded by Ms. Alison Taylor. The motion passes 4-0 with one abstention.

*Respectfully Submitted,*

*Lisa Dimier, Secretary*

*Marblehead School Committee*

*Approved October 5, 2023*

Materials Included:

District Updates

Schedule of Bills

Tree Planting Memo & Memorials Policy FFA

Superintendent John Buckey Settlement Agreement

Superintendent John Buckey Resignation Letter

Financial Update

Open Meeting Law Complaints

Cathyann Swindlehurst

Reece Dahlberg

Policy ADF-Wellness

Policy JLCDD-Life Threatening Allergy Policy

MASC/MASS Joint Conference Booking Information