

Record of the Marblehead School Committee Meeting
Thursday November 2, 2023
7:00PM

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

Also Present: Michelle Cresta-Acting Superintendent, Julia Ferreira-Assistant Superintendent

I. Initial Business

a. Call to Order

Ms. Fox called the meeting to order at 7:00PM

b. Commendations

- Sarah Fox commended Jamie Yomtov, Nurse Beth Stanojev, and Carla Rose
 - Accidents occurred almost simultaneously in different areas of town
 - All three of them stopped and assisted until EMS could arrive
- Sarah Fox wants to commend the Village School on publishing their first newspaper this week
- Sarah Fox wants to commend all staff for their ability to “do more with less”
- Sarah Fox wants to commend Michelle Cresta for all of the work she has done during the past few months for her role as Acting Superintendent
- Meaghan Taylor wants to commend the Building Committee for the Brown Elementary School for being selected as a model school
- Meaghan Taylor would also like to commend the many High School students that have reached out to the School Committee recently to share their perspectives
- Brian Ota would like to commend to the Brown School, Mary Maxfield, the rest of the staff and students on their first practice evacuation drill

c. Public Comment

- Jonathan Heller 26 Ralph Rd-MEA Co-President and Sally Shevory 80 Garfield St-MEA Co-President
 - Jonathan started with this statement “As a Union we stand together to let you know that the MEA will not tolerate harassment or bullying of any kind including such behavior directed at our members”
 - Johnathan went on to state that for the entire staff, from Para’s to Tutors, to Custodians that “the morale is at an all-time low”
 - Jonathan references the posts made on social media and the articles in the papers that is causing a “toxic environment that impacts our educators and our ability to work”
 - He states that “these actions are not warranted” and is leading to a mistrust and disconnect between the school leadership and our educators as well as the parents and community as a whole

- Jonathan goes on to outline the number of FOIA requests received from July 1, 2022- June 30, 2023 (28 total) and since July 1, 2023 the district has received 45 requests or amended requests which he sites is a 65% increase in 4 months
- He calls on the community to “end the cycle of mistrust and suspicion” that has brought us to the point of receiving “sweeping FOIA requests” for additional information surrounding incidents occurring with our educators
- Sally Shevory begins speaking about her time with Marblehead Public Schools
- Sally states that the community is one that “first and foremost” cares about education
- She states that over the last few years “the world around us has been shaken”
- Sally continues that along the way somehow we “forgot where our priorities lie” stating the “climate in our schools is unsettling to say the least. Over the last few years the community has lost trust in teachers”
- She references the FOIA that was just received that is requesting to search “All staff emails to see if we have hiding anything, specifically complaints”
- Sally states that this FOIA is a “waste of time and resources that could be far better spent in the schools”
- Sally goes on to state that we will be welcoming Theresa McGuinness back to the district and is hopeful that she will be able to help us to “abandon all personal vendettas” and that the community “return to the commitment of providing our students with the best education possible”
- Sarah Fox shares the Public Records Request with the attendees of the School Committee meeting
- Mary McCariston-46 Pine Crest Drive
 - Mary begins by stating that she “called around to 21 different communities to find out if they have a flag policy”
 - She stated that a lot of the communities she reached out to do not have flag policies and one of the schools, Wellesley, displays any and all flags that the students want to see on one wall
 - She questions how all students are going to feel supported if we have a policy in place that does not allow for different flags to be displayed visually in our schools
- Chris Brule 212 West Shore Drive
 - Chris begins by asking about safety as it relates to “unauthorized individuals” entering the schools to remove the flags from the walls
- Four High School Students (did not get names from recording)
 - The students spoke about the letter that they wrote to the School Committee last week expressing that they were disappointed that the Policy Committee that was meeting on Friday was during School hours
 - They stated that they were disappointed “because this issues is directly relevant to us as students”
 - They would like to discuss with the School Committee outside of school hours the impact that a Flag policy might have on current students
 - One of the students went on to state “we believe that removal of existing flags can make many students feel they aren’t valued at Marblehead High School”
- Sarah Fox points out that there has been a lot of public comment regarding the possible flag policy and the misinformation that was released into the community surrounding the intent behind the policy
 - The policy is not intended to “take things down”

- Sarah notes that unless a Policy is in place “you have to say yes to everything”
- Nikia Bell-Green Street
 - What bothers Nikia the most is that her child is coming to Marblehead Public Schools from a different town
 - She states that they already feel like “they’re not welcome in our town”
 - She feels as though it is a “slap in the face” that the parent who took down the flag has not been banned from entering the school
- Cindy Tower Loewen-Did not state address
 - Cindy stated by thanking Nikia for her statement
 - She states that she understands that there is no back and forth but in this particular instance “there should have been a response back”
 - She points out that a parent was able to go into the building and take the flag down which is “not acceptable”
 - Cindy points out that there needs to be student and community involvement in the creation of this policy
 - Cindy commends the administrators and educators who have tried to make a difference in this community
- Tena Cersei-Dorchester MA
 - Tena has concerns about the removal of the flag like everyone else
 - Tena states “the parent needs to pay for that, the children are innocent”
 - She states that there have been statements made to her son regarding his background and ethnicity
 - Tena states that “these are children, we can talk to children about certain things” but “when an adult in the community is making my son feel uncomfortable and after speaking to the principal and teachers there is nothing being done, that is a problem”

d. Student Representative-Kat Piper

- The class of 2028 Open House will be held on 11/8
- The Tri M honor society held a Halloween Breakfast on Tuesday 10/31
- The French Honor Society is selling Croissants and Crepes this month at lunch for National French Week
- The Senior class of 2024 is selling bagels at lunch
- The National Honor Society is resuming its tutoring program at MHS
- The Annual Rock the nights gala is taking place at Hooper Mansion tonight and the funds raised will go towards concert and theater support
- The end of the current quarter will end on 11/9
- All Fall sports teams have moved on to their Championship Seasons at this point
- Unified Basketball team is celebrating Senior Night tonight, 11/02
- Powder Puff is under way and the Seniors are selling merchandise
- The Senior Show hosts were determined last week
- Halloween had a good showing this year with each grade taking on a different themed costume

II. District Updates - Michelle Cresta

b. Financial Update FY23 and FY24

- Michelle Cresta starts by thanking Chief Dennis King for applying for “Safe Routes to School Signs and Lines Grant” that we have been awarded
- FY23 is closed on the Schools end and the town is still working on their end
 - Marblehead did end up with some additional funds that we used towards “onetime costs”
 - Some of these onetime costs include security system upgrades, security badge updates as well as furniture replacement
 - We were also able to pay some out of district tuitions
 - Final financial reports, including all grants and revolving funds, have been provided to the School Committee
- For FY24 so far we have spent 11.2% of our operating budget, this time last year we had spent 10.9%
 - Still have staffing vacancies but they are not as significant as last year at this time
 - We do still struggle filling some staffing positions at this time
 - These positions include Substitute Teachers, Substitute Custodians as well as Substitute Lunch Workers
 - We do continue to watch our out of district transportation costs and we seem to be on track with what we have budgeted for this year at this time
- Sarah brings up the ability to utilize a cleaning service to fill some of the holes to ensure that our schools are being taken care of
 - Michelle points out that they discontinued using a cleaning service to fill the holes in custodial staff due to the cost

III. Consent Action and Agenda Items

a. Schedule of Bills (vote)

Motion to approve the identified schedule of bills totaling \$105,084.84.

Moved by Ms. Shaeffner, Seconded by Ms. Alison Taylor

Mr. Ota, Ms. Meaghan Taylor, Ms. Alison Taylor, Ms. Shaeffner and Ms. Fox-All Yes

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passes 5-0

b. Approval of Minutes (vote)

Motion to approve the minutes from 08/11/23 as presented

Moved by Ms. Shaeffner, Seconded by Ms. Alison Taylor

Mr. Ota, Ms. Meaghan Taylor, Ms. Alison Taylor, Ms. Shaeffner and Ms. Fox-All Yes

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passes 5-0

IV. School Committee Communication and Discussion Items

a. Approval of Basketball overnight fieldtrip (vote)

- Mr. Giardi explains that the trip this year will be to Springfield and they will be visiting the Basketball Hall of Fame as well as participating in a Boy Girl Basketball game

Motion to approve the Basketball overnight field trip for the night of Saturday February 10, 2024 returning on Sunday February 11, 2024

The motion is moved by Ms. Shaeffner and seconded by Ms. Alison Taylor

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passes 5-0

Ms. Fox, Ms. Taylor, Ms Taylor, Mr. Ota and Ms. Shaeffner-All Yes

b. Veteran's Middle School Basketball Hoop Donation (vote)

- Mr. Fox explains that we received a very generous offer from the Friends of Marblehead Basketball to purchase two new Basketball hoops for the MVMS Gym

Motion to approve the Donation from the Friends of Marblehead Basketball for the donation of Basketball hoops to the Veterans School Gymnasium

Moved by Ms. Shaeffner, Seconded by Ms. Alison Taylor

Mr. Ota, Ms. Meaghan Taylor, Ms. Alison Taylor, Ms. Shaeffner and Ms. Fox-All Yes

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passes 5-0

c. Village Scoreboard Donation and Naming Request (vote)

- We received some communication from Marblehead Youth Football requesting to be able to fundraise to replace the Scoreboard over at Hopkins Field

Motion to approve fundraising efforts for a new scoreboard in like kind to include same size to be labeled Dr: Hopkins field in accordance with policy KCD

Moved by Ms. Shaeffner, Seconded by Ms. Alison Taylor

Opened up for Discussion

- Meaghan Taylor requests clarification on the motion as well as requests Sarah Fox to outline what a KCD policy is
- Sarah Fox explains that KCD is the district's policy on "public gifts" and reads the policy
- Matt Martin requests clarification on the portion of the policy in which it states that the donor is not able to "advertise" themselves on the new scoreboard ("no extensive advertising of promotions")
- The School Committee has requested a "mock up" of the sign for approval to ensure it does not go against the "extensive advertising policy"

Motion to table the motion until a "mock up" of the scoreboard has been received and reviewed

Seconded by Jennifer Shaeffner

Mr. Ota, Ms. Meaghan Taylor, Ms. Alison Taylor, Ms. Shaeffner and Ms. Fox-All Yes

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passes 5-0

d. Vaping Preventions and Response

- Jennifer Shaeffner begins by stating that she has heard from many people in town by email, phone, and on social media for years that students are unwilling to go into use the bathrooms because of the “extensive vaping” primarily at the High School
- Jennifer asks what we are doing to make sure that students feel they can use the restroom during the school day without being faced with this
- Michelle Carlson begins to explain what the High School has in place to mitigate vaping in school
 - There are Vape Detectors in the “gang” bathrooms or the ones with more than one stall which when vape smoke is detected it sends a text message and an email of the location of the detector that has gone off so they are able to go investigate
 - The administrators are constantly monitoring the bathrooms
 - When a student is caught vaping there is a diversion program to educate the students on why not to do it
 - Gina goes into the statistics of students who vape and points out that it usually begins outside of school so they are “coming to school already addicted”
 - She begins to talk about the MGI Decide diversion program and how they are focusing on diversion as opposed to punishment
 - Gina points out that we need to “shift the focus to prevention because once kids are addicted we’re kind of too late”
 - Gina reads some of the language used by this program “Any student with a substance use infraction will be referred to receive cycle education in order to reduce recidivism and provide support. It is a Tier 2 intervention intended for adolescence who have begun to show early signs of problematic substance use”
 - Michelle Carlson points out that the parents are notified no matter what and if the student does refuse the Diversion program that they do move on to the next step which is typically a suspension or Saturday detention
 - Sarah Fox asks if there is any data on the students after the program has been completed on how many of these students are still “free from these products”
 - Gina indicates that this MGH program is part of a larger grant that also focuses on the results after the program
 -

Motion to approve

Moved by Ms. Shaeffner, Seconded by Ms. Alison Taylor

Mr. Ota, Ms. Meaghan Taylor, Ms. Alison Taylor, Ms. Shaeffner and Ms. Fox-All Yes

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passes 5-0

d. Approval of School Improvement Plans (Veteran’s Middle School & Marblehead High School) (vote)

- Matt Fox begins with the Improvement Plans for the Veteran's Middle School
 - Matt Fox outlines the MVMS District Strategic Objectives, Initiatives, and School Based Goals
 - Matt goes on the outline the Improvement Strategies which includes Action Steps for these Improvement Strategies
 - The PDF of all Strategic Objectives, Initiatives and School Based Goals as well as the Improvement Strategies is available on Marbleheadschoools.org under the Agenda and Materials
- Michelle Carlson Begins with the Improvement Plans for the Marblehead High School
 - Michelle Carlson outlines the MHS District Strategic Objectives, Initiatives, and School Based Goals
 - Michelle goes on to outlines the Improvement Strategies which includes Action Steps for these Improvement Strategies
 - The PDF of all Strategic Objectives, Initiatives and School Based Goals as well as the Improvement Strategies is available on Marbleheadschoools.org under the Agenda and Materials

Motion to approve the Veterans Middles School and Marblehead High School School Improvement Plans as presented

Moved by Ms. Shaeffner, Seconded by Ms. Alison Taylor

Mr. Ota, Ms. Meaghan Taylor, Ms. Alison Taylor, Ms. Shaeffner and Ms. Fox-All Yes

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passes 5-0

f. Subcommittee and Liaison Updates and Discussion

- Jennifer Shaeffner-Policy Subcommittee
 - Alison Taylor and Jennifer Shaeffner met last week
 - Talked about student electronic usage-specifically email usage
 - They discussed Flags, Banners and Signs to come up with a policy
 - They will bring a draft to the School Committee in the coming weeks
 - Jennifer discussed that student input in this policy is important
- Sarah Fox-Finance Subcommittee
 - In the last finance meeting the Finance Subcommittee was able to dive into the data that Michelle had provided
 - For FY23 one of the biggest overages was Out of District Transportation
 - The committee is looking at the trends and data to inform areas that need to be focused on as we move forward
- Brian Ota-Safety Advisory Subcommittee
 - Met last week
 - Everyone is working hard to get the ALICE protocols in place

V. Closing Business

a. New Business-School Committee Announcements and Requests

- Brian brought up that in the past the School Committee had rotated some of the meetings to the different schools. He would like to suggest doing that again.
- Meaghan Taylor would like to get two items on the next agenda
 - Meaghan would like to make sure that there are some priorities/goals set for Mr. McGuinness now that she is coming on board
 - Meaghan would also like to add to next meeting's agenda a discussion about the Permanent Superintendent search

b. Correspondence

None

Meeting is adjourned at 9:21PM by School Committee Chair Ms. Fox

Respectfully Submitted,
Allison McMahon, Secretary
Marblehead School Committee