



MARBLEHEAD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Marblehead School Committee Statement from Press Conference November 12, 2024, 11 a.m.

(Statement can be attributed to Jennifer Schaeffner, Chair)

Thank you for coming this morning.

In spite of our best efforts to arrive at an affordable and sustainable contract agreement with the marblehead education association, our children's teachers decided to turn their backs on their classrooms this morning.

It is an unfortunate and unnecessary action. And given how the MEA is conspiring with other MTA unions in neighboring communities, this illegal strike seems more about increasing the collective power of the statewide teachers union than improving the education of our children.

We want our school doors open, but so far the MEA is refusing to consider realistic options that are in the best interest of students.

In fact, to avoid a strike, on Saturday and again on Monday, we offered to release the 15 MEA negotiators from work with pay to continue mediation if they cancel their illegal strike so we can reopen our schools for students. They rejected that offer. /this proposal would have kept students in school and would not have disrupted their education, athletics, singing engagements and other after-school activities while mediation continued.

I want to make it clear that the marblehead school committee is working diligently through mediation to get our children and teachers back into the classroom. We want a fair, affordable and sustainable contract for our teachers and our town, and we are working to get this done.

Unfortunately, the 34% increase the MEA is proposing is not affordable nor is it warranted by the market. it would create a \$7.5 million shortfall in our existing budget that would require a property tax override, which voters have overwhelmingly and repeatedly rejected over the past two decades. A failed override would result in layoffs of approximately 75 staff and elimination of crucial programs. We want to minimize layoffs, so our schools can provide the education and services students and families need and deserve.

Our four year offer would increase the average teacher salary to approximately \$100,000 and the top scale salary to \$108,954 for 184 working days. Our proposals for the other bargaining units also are designed to make us competitive in the market.

The school committee has responded to the teachers' request for increased paid leave, adding a new benefit of 12 days of paid parental leave followed by the use of 20 paid sick leave days for a total of 32 paid leave days. The school committee provides teachers with 15 sick days a year and can carry over unused sick leave from year to year, capped at 180 days. We provide a

sick leave bank for teachers and have offered to create one for employees in the other units so all employees have access to additional paid sick days when needed.

Our efforts to arrive at a contract agreement began in December 2023 when we first requested to start bargaining with the MEA – long before their contract expired. Unfortunately, the MEA waited until March 2024 to meet with us, then requested a slow-paced twice a month meeting schedule ensuring that the contracts would expire prior to the start of the school year.

We hope the union will quit the grandstanding and the petty stunts and will get serious about getting our children back in the classroom.