

Record of the Marblehead School Committee Meeting
Thursday, January 24, 2019
Marblehead High School

Members Present: Meredith Tedford, Jennifer Schaeffner, David Harris
Sarah Gold, Meagan Taylor

Members Absent:

I. Initial Business

1. Call to Order

Ms. Tedford called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. She noted that this was an unusual meeting because none of the administrators are present. Due to this fact, they will modify the agenda. Some agenda items need to be voted on this evening by the Committee. She noted that they received a lot of feedback from the community on both sides of the issue but it is the role as board members to remain calm and respectful as they have a process that they must follow.

Ms. Tedford reminded anyone who wants to speak in public comment to add their name to the sheet and to say their name and address when called.

Mr. Harris made a motion to take items out of order on the agenda. First he would like to give an update on the Bell Coffin Gerry school; secondly, he feels the Committee needs to have a discussion and vote on warrant articles because town warrant closes tomorrow; the white water rafting trip needs to be voted on; new business and finally the last item would be public comment. Ms. Taylor seconded the motion.

Ms. Tedford stated that she was not comfortable to take items out of order. Ms. Schaeffner noted that the Committee needs to vote on the letter to the selectman and the school calendar but Mr. Harris disagreed with what needs to be voted this evening. He stated that since there was no representation from the administration and due to the lack of confidence he has in the superintendent, certain items should not be discussed or voted on. He added that we are going to potentially have two meetings next week which includes one with the building committee and if something on this agenda needs to be voted on, we could do it after the meeting with the building committee. He agreed to vote on the letter to selectman and would amend his motion to include this but stated that he feels that with his lack of confidence in the superintendent, the Committee shouldn't conduct any business that isn't necessarily necessary.

Ms. Schaeffner reminded the Committee that by the Unit A contract, the school calendar has to be voted on by January 31st.

Ms. Tedford asked the Committee to have the Public Comment at the beginning of the meeting then follow agenda items noted by Mr. Harris.

Ms. Schaeffner noted she would prefer to hold the public comment at the beginning to respect everyone's time and to hear what the public has to say.

Ms. Schaeffner noted that the FY19 budget discussion that is on the agenda includes a vote on the cuts that were mentioned and discussed at the last meeting and the FY20 budget discussion was going to be an update from the budget sub-committee meeting held earlier today.

Ms. Taylor noted she has questions on the budget and is not comfortable about voting without discussion and questions to the administrators.

Ms. Tedford restated the motion made by Mr. Harris which now includes voting on the Letter to the Selectmen on the Revolving Funds; BCG Building Update; Warrant Articles; White Water Rafting approval; and Public Comment. She asked for a vote for the motion on the floor. The Committee **VOTED** as follows: Mr. Harris-in favor; Ms. Schaeffner-in favor; Ms. Taylor-in favor; Ms. Gold-against; Ms. Tedford-against. The motion was 3-2 and the motion carries.

Ms. Schaeffner made motion to hold the Public Comment at the beginning of the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Gold. The Committee **VOTED** unanimously, 5-0, in favor.

2. Commendations

none

3. Public Comment

Amy Ruocco, 227 Pleasant Street. Suggested that the district starts addressing the special education program problems and improve that Department.

Rebecca Larson, 12 Amherst Road noted that she is reading a statement for Brenda Kim, 86 Clifton Ave. Brenda felt many students leave the district because our district doesn't offer what some of our students need and want such as technical education or other opportunities that some private schools now offer.

Sarah Fox, 46 Beach Street. Stated her frustration that no one from Central Admin was present at the meeting.

Catherine Martin, 29 West Shore Drive. Thanked school committee for appearing and told the Committee that it is their responsibility to make a motion tonight to change the culture of backroom deals.

Khazzie Kindle, 163 Jersey Street. Stated she had many questions for the Superintendent and that contractually she should have been present at this meeting.

Paul Baker, 42 Elm Street. Thanked the School Committee for being here and noted his disgust by the lack of administrators. He stated that the Committee has lost the confidence of the town, the finance committee and the community.

Cindy Loewen, 12 Trinity Road. Stated she is a parent, volunteer, stake holder, SEPAC member, involved in METCO and other communities, search committees and site based for 18 years and as stakeholders has every right to ask questions. Administration needs to change in culture.

Dr. Melissa Kaplowitch, 10 Camille Terrace. Has three children in system and thanked teachers who have taken care of her children and noted she appreciates them each day. Stated that the events that have taken place over the last several weeks were shameful and that it's the Committee's responsibility to be the leaders that they were elected to be. She urged the Committee to take action tonight.

Rachel Selby, 58 Orchard Street. Read the vision and mission statement. Urged the Committee to take action against illegal actions of the administration and to not breach their responsibility.

A community member asked if the superintendent is suspended, then what happens? Ms. Tedford explained that there is a process that has to be followed and the School Committee's actions must adhere to this process.

Ms. Schaeffner thanked everyone who attended and commented. She reminded the community that as a School Committee, they must adhere to all State and Federal laws regarding personnel confidentiality. We are required under law to discuss personnel discipline or performance in executive session with legal counsel and the person who is being discussed is allowed to attend and bring their legal counsel.

Mr. Harris also thanked the community members in attendance. He stated that the Committee needs to hear from them at the School Committee meetings and also at the Building Committee meetings and the budget hearings but that they should please understand that the Committee needs to conduct the business before them and there will be public comment at other meetings as well. He noted that anyone can go online to the Attorney General's web page and view the guide to the Open Meeting Law.

Ms. Tedford noted that in terms of the administration not attending, it's important to have respect and that there is another side to this and when criticism falls on the Superintendent, it also falls on her team as they are a unit.

Regardless of their lack of attendance here tonight, we as a committee have a responsibility to conduct business. This has been a difficult time for the community, the staff and the teachers and the School Committee recognizes this.

Taken out of order

V. School Committee Communication and/or Discussion item

1. Building Committee Update

Mr. Harris noted that we are at the stage where we have submitted the Schematic Design to the MSBA. We will be meeting with the MSBA on February 13, 2019 for their scope and budget. This Tuesday we had a scope and budget project review with the sub-committee of the MSBA and today we received comments from the MSBA that included three items. One recommendation was to remove the lift from the stage and replace it with a ramp; as well as two other small items. Our reimbursement rate, has gone up to 38.56% and that is to be formalized by the board on the 13th but this is the preliminary reimbursement rate we've been given. They reviewed all square footage that's been submitted under the MSBA guidelines and we have less than 2000 sq. feet in the entire school that is not eligible for reimbursement which speaks volumes to the efficiency of the design. We will meet next Thursday for an update from the Office of Campaign Finance to see what we can and can't do during the next phase to promote the project. Subject to change, but based on the information we received Tuesday, the estimated district share has decreased from forty-one million, ninety-three thousand to forty million, forty-five thousand.

2. Budget Liaison Update

Not discussed

II. Consent Agenda & Action Items

1. School Calendar 2019-2020

This item was postponed for approval at another meeting.

2. Senior White Water Rafting Trip (out of state & overnight)

Ms. Schaeffner gave a brief description of this request as follows:

Each year during Senior Week, some high school seniors take an overnight, out-of-state trip to New England Outdoor Adventure in Millinocket, Maine. They leave early on a Tuesday morning, stay overnight, go white water raft the next day and arrive back in Marblehead that evening. It is a good team building experience. The details are listed below:

The trip is the annual senior trip to Millinocket, ME to go white water rafting. They will be leaving on June 4 at 7:30 a.m. and driving to New England Outdoor Center in Millinocket. The students will have the afternoon to play lawn sports, kayak, canoe, swim, or just hang out. Students spend the night in cabins (heating, full bathrooms, etc.) on either the boys' or girls' side of the campsite, under the watchful eyes of the faculty chaperones. On Wednesday, the students will raft in the morning, eat lunch at the rafting site, and then load back in the buses for the drive home. We are back at MHS around 8:30 p.m. Last year's trip included 80 students and 10 faculty chaperones. The full cost of the trip to each student is \$215, which covers all costs (food, lodging, rafting and equipment, etc.) excluding food or drinks at the rest stop. The rafting trip has been specifically designed for MHS, to be fun, but not overly challenging, as many students have not rafted before.

Mr. Harris made motion to approve the Senior White Water Rafting Trip. The motion was seconded by Ms. Schaeffner and the Committee VOTED unanimously in 5-0, in favor.

III. Teaching/Learning-Superintendent of Schools

A. District Reports and Updates

1. MHS Attendance Update

Not discussed.

2. Class Size Report Veterans and High School

Not discussed.

IV. Finance Organizational Support

1. Schedule of Bills

a. new bill schedule protocol

Not voted on.

2. Kindergarten Tuition

Not voted on.

4. FY 20 Budget discussion

Not discussed.

5. Letter to Selectman on Revolving Funds

Ms. Tedford noted that this is a standard item that needs to appear on the warrant each year. The letter reads as follows:

Dear Ms. Belf-Becker and members of the Board of Selectmen;

Please accept this letter as a request from the School Committee and School Department Administration to reauthorize the following revolving fund for fiscal year 2020.

Special Education Revolving Fund

In the amount of \$950,000 in anticipated expenditures, in fiscal year 2020, for the use of School Committee authorized expenses within the scope and conditions pertaining to this fund.

Revenue sources into this fund are from the following:

- Tuition collected for special education students tuitioned-in to the Marblehead Public Schools Special Education Programming
- Funds collected, from outside districts or student/family agreement, to pay for additional special education contracted services for out of district special education students provided through the North Shore Special Education Consortium
- Proceeds or costs from approved special education public and private placements

Said funds are to be expended on costs directly related to the Marblehead Public Schools special education programs directly servicing Marblehead students.

Ms. Gold made motion to approve the letter to the Selectmen on Revolving Funds. The motion was seconded by Mr. Harris and the Committee VOTED unanimously, 5-0, in favor.

6. Discussion of Warrant Articles for Town Meeting

Warrant articles

Ms. Tedford noted that the language was written by Town Counsel but the School Committee must vote on adding these articles to the warrant. Board of Selectmen will determine the number of the article which is why there is a blank in the title of each article. Mr. Harris also noted that the dollar amount is included in the motion by Massachusetts law. Once we get that amount on February 13th from the MSBA, it will then be included in the motion that the Town Moderator makes.

Article _____ on new school building

Mr. Harris noted that this first article is for the new school to see if the Town will vote to appropriate, borrow or transfer from available funds, an amount sufficient to be expended under the direction of the Elbridge Gerry School Building Committee for the design and construction of a new Pre-K through Third Grade Elementary School with an approximate square footage of 81,935 square feet located at 40 Baldwin Road in Marblehead, Massachusetts inclusive of abatement and demolition of the existing school structures on said property; new parking lots, a multi-purpose field, and all other costs incidental and related thereto, which school facility shall have an anticipated useful life as an educational facility for the instruction of school children of at least 50 years, and for which the Town may be eligible for a school construction grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority

(“MSBA”). The Town acknowledges that the MSBA’s grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, and any project costs the Town incurs in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the Town. Any grant that the Town may receive from the MSBA for the Project shall not exceed the lesser of (1) 37.08 percent (%) of eligible, approved project costs, as determined by the MSBA, or (2) the total maximum grant amount determined by the MSBA. Or take any other action relative thereto.

A motion was made by Ms. Schaeffner to approve the Article for the new building. The motion was seconded by Ms. Gold and the Committee VOTED unanimously, 5-0, in favor.

Article Discontinue and Change of Use - Portion of Baldwin Road

To see if the Town will vote to discontinue and abandon that portion of Baldwin Road, so called, as shown on a plan dated January 29, 1958 entitled “Baldwin Road Alteration”, including 5,176 square feet +/- and which said plan is on file in the office of the Town Clerk and further, that once the use thereof is changed from municipal use to school use under the care, custody and control of the School Committee for school purposes; or take any other action relative thereto. Sponsored by the Board of Selectmen and School Committee.

Mr. Harris noted that there is a knuckle at the lower Bell that the new school will be on. This article will address this issue. It will have no impact to the neighbors and was sponsored by the Board of Selectmen and School Committee.

A motion was made by Ms. Schaeffner to approve the Article to discontinue and change use of a portion of Baldwin Road. The motion was seconded by Mr. Harris and the Committee VOTED unanimously, 5-0, in favor.

Article Sharing of Administrative Functions

To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Section 37M and authorize consolidation of [administrative functions, including but not limited to financial, personnel, and maintenance functions] of the school committee with those of the town, provided that such consolidation only occur upon a majority vote of the School Committee and a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen, or take any action relative thereto.

Ms. Schaeffner noted that this was received yesterday from the Town Administrator and in light of some recent actions, it was requested that the School Committee consider this article. She further explained that we would need to adopt this article, to follow Massachusetts General Law Part I, Title XII, Chapter 71, Section 37M, in order to begin discussion on consolidating administrative functions of Town and School departments such as financial, personnel, maintenance, or technology, between the Town and the School District. Any consolidation of functions would require a majority vote of the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen. This article would allow us to begin discussion.

A motion was made by Mr. Harris to approve the Article of sharing administrative functions. The motion was seconded by Ms. Schaeffner for discussion.

Mr. Harris stated that the idea would be for efficiencies and to save money for the Town where there might be duplication of effort between departments that could be combined. There may be areas of expertise in the School District that we could help the Town with and other areas that the Town could provide better services. There would be a sub-committee of both the School Committee and the Selectmen to discuss this. He noted that he believes we do have the opportunity for consolidation and people with more expertise. Ms. Taylor asked if there was time to consider this before voting on it. Ms. Schaeffner explained that if the Committee adopts this, it can go on the Town Warrant and it allows us to have these discussions. Then it would go for a vote of the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Gold asked if it’s passed tonight but in two months we don’t want to do this, what then? Ms. Tedford noted that just because this gets on the warrant it does not require us to consolidate. It allows us to begin discussion with the Town. She noted that the Town doesn’t have an HR Director and that could be one position that could work for both.

Ms. Tedford asked for a vote for the motion on the table. **The Committee VOTED unanimously, 5-0, in favor.**

ARTICLE

To see if the Town will raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds a sum to supplement the School Department’s operating budget for Fiscal Year 2020, contingent upon the passage of a Proposition 2 ½ ballot question, or take any other action thereto.

Ms. Tedford noted that she and Ms. Schaeffner received this language today which was generated by school counsel and they discussed it at the morning Budget Sub-Committee meeting. It would be sent to Town Counsel tomorrow if passed. In light of what has been in many public requests for increases in our budget, people are concerned that we don’t have enough money in our budget for items we have deferred over the years. This article would be to see if there is an appetite in the community for an override. This would serve as a placeholder. Over the next couple of weeks, as we discuss the FY20 budget, there may be a choice between two budgets-one that reflects an override and one that is level funded. This year the School Committee will hold the Budget Hearing on a separate night as a stand alone item.

A motion was made by Ms. Gold to approve the Article considering Prop 2 ½ for supplemental monies for the schools. The motion was seconded by Ms. Schaeffner for discussion.

Mr. Harris noted that in his experience on the Finance Committee, because of what we are talking about and that we haven’t done our budget yet, it would be usual and customary that this would be a place holder. He also made note that he is not in favor of a proposition 2 ½ for this reason but he wants to see the budget first and would be in favor of putting it on as a place holder. He believes it would be indefinitely postponed.

The Committee **VOTED** unanimously, 5-0, in favor.

7. Town Report Submission

a. Superintendent/SC Chairman Narrative

Not discussed.

V. School Committee Communication and/or Discussion items

1. BCG Building Update

Taken out of order and given earlier in the meeting

2. Budget Liaison Update

Not discussed

VI. Closing Business

A. New Business

Mr. Harris noted that in light of the recent audit and the illegal payment of FY18 Special Ed tuition with FY19 funds, it has come before us and discussed in public meetings of the School Committee on January 16th, the Selectmen on January 17th, and with FinCom on January 22nd, which was also posted as a joint meeting with our budget liaison, whereas it has been discussed that this was an intentional violation of the compliance of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44 Section 31, and school management lead and directed by Maryann Perry the Superintendent of Schools, intentionally withheld submitting tuition invoices during fiscal 2018 with the intent to charge the expenses to fiscal 2019, even though they knew they were 2018 expenses, he made a motion to schedule an executive session based on the requirements of Massachusetts Open Meeting Laws. We should vote this evening and be counted and this should be done as expeditiously as possible, he stated. Ms. Schaeffner seconded the motion and further noted that she has been working with the chair in trying to schedule a time with the school committee attorney, the superintendent and her attorney to this purpose.

Ms. Schaeffner stated that there is a minimum of 48 business hours to post a meeting and that the meeting will have to accommodate the schedule of multiple people. The earliest that the Committee could convene would be Tuesday afternoon if everyone's schedule coincides.

Ms. Tedford asked for a vote for the motion on the floor which was that the Committee meet in executive session as expeditiously as possible. The Committee **VOTED** unanimously, 5-0, in favor.

B. Correspondence

None

C. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and the meeting adjourned at 8:37pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Gold
Marblehead School Committee

Meeting Documents:

School Calendar 2019-2020

Senior White Water Rafting Trip

MHS Attendance Update

Class Size Report Veterans and High School

Schedule of Bills

new bill schedule protocol

Kindergarten Tuition

FY19 Budget discussion

Letter to Selectman on Revolving Funds

Discussion of Warrant Articles for Town Meeting

Town Report Submission

Superintendent/SC Chairman Narrative

School Committee Warrant Articles

Approved 3/7/2019