

Record of the Marblehead School Committee Meeting
Tuesday, January 29, 2019
School Administrative Offices conference room

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

Also: Maryann Perry, Superintendent
Dr. Bradford Smith, Assistant Superintendent
Ken Lord, Exec. Dir. Of Technology and Operations
Amanda Maniaci, Director of Business and Finance
Rachel Bowen, Director of Human Resources
Robert Bellucci, Dir of Student Services and Accountability

Members Absent:

I. Initial Business

A. Call to Order

Ms. Tedford called the meeting to order at 8:15AM.

II. Consent Agenda & Action Items

1. School Calendar 2019-2020

Ms. Tedford asked for a motion to approve the school calendar for the 2019-2020 school year. Ms. Schaeffner made motion to approve the 2019-2020 School Year calendar as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Gold. Discussion followed.

Mr. Harris noted that if the Distance Learning Days goes well, it could alleviate using days at end of year for snow make up days. Ms. Tedford also noted that DLD could also be used at the beginning of the school year if the weather is too hot. She heard from many parents and those of High School students seem to like starting before Labor Day because their students are already involved in school sports however younger students' parents prefer an after Labor Day start because of vacation schedules. Superintendent Perry suggested that the Committee form a calendar sub-committee next year and work with religious groups, the union and parent input to determine the 2020-2021 calendar depending on how well DLD worked for this past year.

Ms. Gold asked "If we don't use DLD days this year, can it be used for the following year as a pilot year?" Ms. Tedford noted it could. Ms. Tedford stated that she will address DLD days at the end of the school year if there hasn't been any need to use any of these days.

Ms. Tedford asked for a vote. The Committee **VOTED** unanimously, 5-0, in favor. Motion passed.

III. Teaching/Learning-Superintendent of Schools

A. District Reports and Updates

1. Superintendent's Narrative for Town Report

Ms. Tedford explained that this is the narrative that is sent to the Town for the annual Town Report.

Ms. Schaeffner made motion to approve the Superintendent's narrative for the Town Report. The motion was seconded by Ms. Taylor and the Committee **VOTED** unanimously, 5-0, in favor.

VI. Closing Business

New Business

Superintendent Perry read a prepared statement and announced her retirement.

Ms. Tedford read a prepared statement noting she will not run for re-election this year.

Both statements are attached to the end of the minutes.

C. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and the meeting adjourned at 8:35AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Gold
Marblehead School Committee

Meeting Documents:
School Calendar 2019-2020
Superintendent's Narrative for Town Report

Approved by SC on 2/7/2019



Marblehead Public Schools
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Dr. Maryann Perry
 Superintendent
 of Schools

Dr. Bradford Smith
 Asst. Superintendent of
 Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

Robert Bellucci, Esq.
 Director of Student Services
 & Program Accountability

Amanda Maniaci
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 Business & Finance

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January 29, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

When I started my career in education over 35 years ago in a special education preschool setting, I knew I had found my passion. Positive impacts on students, from classroom teacher to district level leadership roles, ignited my dedication to this career path.

Coming to Marblehead seven years ago as the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment was exciting, and personally and professionally fulfilling. Though I had been warned by statewide educational leadership circles that Marblehead is an unpredictable and extremely challenging community for administrators, I was immediately energized by the work, the staff and of course, the students. The task of updating a decades-old K-8 math program, among other lagging needs in our curriculum and assessment practices was demanding, but the rally and support of my peers, administrators, and teachers were uplifting. The committees I formed for curriculum alignment, transition, and materials adoption filled immediately with volunteers. The teachers were ready to work. It was an exciting time.

The Marblehead School district had much work to do when I accepted the role as superintendent due to the unexpected departure of the former superintendent at the end of the school year. From a struggling High School with a NEASC accreditation warning rating, mandated Educator Evaluation protocol and state frameworks to implement, the work towards compliance and success, at times, seemed insurmountable. However, with a solid team in place and the support of dedicated teaching staff, we rose to the occasion, sharing and implementing district mission and vision statements, a district strategic plan, a long term curriculum and assessment blueprint, and a building and facilities master plan. Through it all, Marblehead Public Schools has remained in the top 30 of statewide districts and High Schools in overall media rankings for quality of education.

With urgent educational and state compliance issues stabilized, my team went to work on the second tier of community feedback and requests. Additional reporting mechanisms were put in place. Website content and communications were strengthened, Superintendent forums were announced, Twitter was launched, Administration submissions to School Committee were published online, and data dashboard transparency tools were implemented, allowing the community instant access to real-time metrics on student demographics, financial snapshots and history, assessment scores and more. A technology plan was laid out and implemented by priority, and building maintenance, including long overdue projects, were planned and executed as funding allowed. The list of accomplishments spans seven years of hard work and hard decisions. The creation of a central registration, the opening day performance by our music teachers, professional learning opportunities for teachers, enhanced safety protocols, a curriculum revision cycle, are just a few of the accomplishments during my tenure as superintendent. Often, there were hard decisions that had to be made for the best interest of students. At times these decisions brought the "angry mob" mentality to life but in the words of Steve Jobs "If you want to make everyone happy, don't be a leader. Sell ice cream." The principals, assistant principals, and central administration met weekly to strengthen and improve all facets of the school district. The monthly emails from staff members sending positive vibes brought a smile to my face. Community, staff and parent response was positive, and my team and I were buoyed by the feedback and the work.



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I will forever be proud of accomplishments of the Marblehead Public Schools during the tenure of myself and my team. I hope they will have a lasting positive impact on the teachers, staff, and students. From large-scale curriculum overhauls and facilities master planning to smaller but equally as important student programming such as service learning curriculum and social and emotional wellness initiatives, I hope the strong foundation in place will be carried on and expanded upon. I will look at my time in Marblehead with mixed emotions. My professional peer groups were correct, Marblehead can be tough. The last month has pulled at my core values putting into question the motives of mean-spirited individuals. At no time during this stressful period did I behave unprofessionally. I am not a bully, criminal, or liar. I was truthful with the series of events and continue to stand by my word. I acknowledged the decision we made and accepted responsibility for it. As a friend said to me in an email "Public perception is rarely the reality of the situation."

It has been an honor and privilege to serve as your superintendent. I am announcing my retirement effective June 30, 2019.

Sincerely,
Dr. Maryann Perry
Superintendent

Chair's Statement - SC Meeting 1/29/19
re: Superintendent Maryann Perry retirement announcement

I knew Maryann Perry's retirement announcement was imminent, and I hope this puts into context not only her absence from last week's meeting, but also my challenge in explaining that absence. I also hope you can appreciate, as I followed the growing, vitriolic comment stream on social media, why I felt it would have been cruel to subject her to what I anticipated, and what proved to be, a hostile working environment on the heels of what amounted to a trial at Tuesday night's Fin Comm meeting. She has protections as an employee of this district, and an angry mob is not a good recruiting tool for her replacement.

While I was hopeful that only the School Committee's presence might ultimately help diffuse the situation, and refocus the committee on district business, that was clearly not the case. Still, the decision to excuse the Superintendent from the meeting shortly beforehand was made independently and consistent with the planning and thought I do as Chair for any meeting. Ultimately, I take responsibility for excusing her, and in turn the Admin Team who followed suit. I still believe it was the right thing to do.

As far as the other attendees of our meetings, the Administrative Team is not required to attend, but do so at our request to support our discussion and agenda items. Working together has been a priority for this administration, especially in times of crisis. As for the Principals, their attendance is also not mandatory. We are lucky to be in a district where they care enough about the work, and are supportive of one another and the team, that they also choose to attend.

I want to thank Maryann for her almost seven years in this district. I have put in the time to truly get to know her and many of the countless, never thanked people who work tirelessly each and every day for our students despite dwindling resources and higher expectations. I have seen firsthand the long hours, late nights, and weekends of service to this district and our children. I understand why Maryann often calls them her own, because she cares, infinitely more than the job requires, and often at the expense of her own family. I am genuinely grateful for the work that both of us have accomplished together under her leadership and guidance and as part of a team.

A team that has: made great strides in re-aligning our curriculum and putting into place a renewal plan that takes us through 2020; embedded social and emotional learning into our classrooms with the addition of PBIS; supported student learning that enabled incredible growth in state testing and accountability standards; identified and fought for

the funding of previously unaddressed capital projects; spearheaded a Feasibility Study for a new school; bolstered our technology infrastructure; took Village School from Level 2 status to Level 1 in less than two years during the ascension of a new principal who was properly mentored and supported. And the high school, which had been the source of so much concern and strife, with genuine school culture issues to excessive principal turnover, to a warning of losing its accreditation, is a ship that has been righted, thanks in no small part to you identifying the right person to take the helm and ensuring he was hired. These accomplishments did not happen in a vacuum and despite of you.

Every leader faces criticism, but unfortunately, the message outside the Marblehead bubble, shared by those who work with us and other districts is that the Town has a reputation for being unforgiving, difficult, demanding, and reactionary. One need only look at the multitude of homegrown social media pages for minute-by-minute analysis of the “idiots in charge,” both paid and unpaid, and the “stupid decisions” that we make. We are brutalized day in and day out.

Thankfully, the converse is a multitude of supportive, reasonable community members who understand the complexities of the changing nature of our student populations and public education, who ask great questions and want to talk through those challenges rationally.

To the community, we will likely begin a Superintendent search immediately, but until a replacement is found we need this Superintendent in place to continue the work of the district. We need a functioning, productive school committee to spearhead that search and to address important and timely issues, particularly this budget season. So you will have to be patient. I know we can agree that more chaos for teachers and staff is not in the best interest of our students.

My school committee seat will be up in and May, and I will retire from this position as well. I ran two times unopposed. That’s the case for most of us, at least those who weren’t appointed to fill vacancies left open by others who couldn’t make it through their three year term. The fact is that most elected or appointed positions in town rarely have turnover or contested races. So if you believe you can do better, and contribute to this community, then I encourage you to step up with an open mind and a positive attitude. You will find you have a lot to learn. I sincerely hope that moving forward this community can come together over a shared vision of what our schools can be.

As for Maryann, I hope that we will have more opportunity for reflection, discussion and ultimately celebration of your retirement. I wish you the best.