

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Monday, November 4, 2024

Herbert L. Jackson Council Chamber Room #106 - 215 Pleasant Street Malden, MA and  
Virtual Meeting

Mayor Christenson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Christenson read docket items for the meeting.

Mayor Christenson led the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence for those who have served our country and for those who continue to do so.

Mayor Christenson asked that the School Committee and those in attendance remain standing in memory of Lieutenant Scott Carroll of the Malden Police Department. Lieutenant Carroll joined the Malden Police Department in the year 2000 after serving our country in the United States Marine Corps. Mayor Christenson asked that everyone take this opportunity to pray for the family.

Mayor Christenson turned attention over to Mr. Bernard, who shared that in the City of Malden voting hours would be from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Mr. Bernard directed those who do not know where to vote to visit the City of Malden website to find voting locations, and to reach out if they need further information or assistance.

Mayor Christenson, on behalf of the entire committee, introduced and welcomed the new School Committee Student Representative, Cathen Fontanilla, a sophomore at Malden High School. Cathen introduced herself and expressed that she was honored to be present.

**Roll Call**

The following attendance was taken:

Mayor Christenson - Present

Mr. Drummey - Present

Mr. McCarthy - Present

Ms. Spadafora - Absent

Ms. Macklin - Present

Ms. Hortie - Present

Mr. Gray - Present

Mr. Bernard - Present

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - Absent

Superintendent Sippel - Present

Student Representative Cathen Fontanilla - Present

## **Approval of Minutes**

Mayor Christenson brought forth the matter of the adoption of minutes for the October 10, 2024 Regular Session of the School Committee. Mr. Bernard made the motion to adopt the minutes. Mr. McCarthy seconded and so it was VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

## **Public Comment**

## **Report of the Superintendent**

### **1. Proposed Out-of-State/Overnight Field Trips**

Superintendent Sippel opened by thanking Mayor Christenson and the School Committee. The Superintendent introduced and welcomed the newest member of his Executive team, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Dr. Sarah McLaughlin.

Superintendent Sippel invited the teams from the Salemwood School, Forestdale School, and Ferryway School to present proposals, to the School Committee, for overnight and/or out-of-state trips for approval.

Principal of the Salemwood School, Van Huynh, begins by introducing the 6th grade ELA and Math teachers, Ms. Ma and Ms. Strayer. As well as Carolina Machado, a seventh grader at Salemwood who attended the trip last year, to speak about her experiences. Carolina introduces herself and says that she is there to talk about why every 6th grader should be able to experience Nature's Classroom. Carolina says that she was able to enjoy new experiences, spend time with friends and spend time off of her phone. Carolina described Nature's Classroom as "some of the most productive days of [her] life". She went on to say that there were opportunities for her to have fun in nature, make new friendships and learn about other people's ways of thinking. She added that something unexpected was the strong connection she made with her Science teacher. Nature's Classroom gave her the opportunity to see a different side to her teacher that she would not have had otherwise. Carolina thanks the School Committee for their time and for listening to her experiences. Ms. Strayer, Salemwood's 6th grade Math teacher. Ms. Strayer shares that the tentative date for the trip will be the last week of March and the Charlton site has provided them with a price of \$350 per student. However, they are confident they can get that number down to lower than \$250 for the 3-night 4-day trip. Ms. Ma, Salemwood School's Language Arts teacher, approached the committee to express that the students really enjoyed it last year and that it was touching to watch the kids just be innocent and enjoy themselves in nature.

Mayor Christenson thanks the teachers for all that they do and opens the conversation up for questions.

Ms. Hortie thanks Mayor Christenson and asks what the procedure is for cell phones. Carolina Machado answers Ms. Hortie, saying that children were instructed to leave their phones at home. Ms. Ma adds that the teachers engaged with families through Class Dojo providing updates and photos.

Ms. Macklin thanks Mayor Christenson and asks about the fundraising efforts. Ms. Strayer responds by explaining that there will be fundraising and scholarships available for families who would have issues with affordability.

Ms. Spadafora thanks Mayor Christenson and asks if there is a possibility for cancellation due to the weather. Ms. Strayer says they go in all weather conditions, and stay on top of the weather forecast in order to inform families of what kind of outerwear is necessary for the trip. Ms. Spadafora asks if there are exceptions made if a child needs their cell phone for medical purposes. Ms. Strayer says that they follow medical advice, may those cases arise and that they are able to pay a surcharge for a 24 hour nurse if necessary. Ms. Ma adds that they coordinate with the school nurses to make sure the children attending had up-to-date medical files. Ms. Spadafora asks about dietary restrictions. Ms. Strayer adds that Nature's Classroom is a nut free facility and that they also support students with any dietary restrictions.

A motion was made by Ms. Spadafora to approve the Salemwood School's Nature's Classroom trip. Ms. Hortie seconded and it was VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent Sippel invites Principal Matt Stahl of the Ferryway School to approach the committee; one of Ferryway's school counselor's, Joel Stevenson, joins him. Principal Stahl explains that while Salemwood covered some of the bigger topics, some things will be slightly different with the Ferryway School Nature's Classroom trip. Principal Stahl invites Mr. Stevenson to provide more information on the trip. Mr. Stevenson says that there are scholarships for every 10th student attending and that this year they will be going to Camp Cody in Freedom New Hampshire.

Ms. Hortie asks what their plan was for fundraising, Mr. Stevenson says that they plan to do a movie night, a football tournament, a walkathon, and a hacky sack tournament depending on how the initial fundraising goes.

A motion was made by Mr. Drummey to approve the Ferryway School's Nature's Classroom trip. Ms. Spadafora seconded and it was VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent Sippel invites the Principal of Forestdale School, Adam Weldai to approach the committee to propose two trips. The first, a Nature's Classroom trip and the second being a trip to Washington D.C. Principal Weldai thanks Superintendent Sippel and introduces his team; 6th grade ELA teacher Ms. Foley, and 7th grade teachers Ms. Bratsis and Ms. Bowe. Principal Weldai shares that there is much to gain for the students but there is also so much for the staff to get out of the experience. Ms. Foley approached the Committee to speak on her experiences with Nature's Classroom and expressed her enjoyment of the trip last year and her eagerness to return to have the opportunity to go back.

Mayor Christenson opens the discussion up for questions. Ms. Spadafora asks Principal Weldai what students who do not go are doing during the Nature's Classroom trip. Principal Weldai says that there are trips organized for the small groups that stay back. For example, The Museum of Science, a trip to Boda Borg and a visit from "Curious Creatures".

Ms. Hortie asks the Forestdale team if they know why there were students who did not attend or did not want to attend. Ms. Foley says that some of the students were either not ready to leave home or leave without their phones.

A motion was made by Ms. Spadafora to approve the Forestdale Nature's Classroom trip. Mr. Drummey seconded and it was VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent Sippel asks the Forestdale team to continue with their proposal of a trip to Washington D.C. Ms. Bowe approaches the Committee; the trip is scheduled for May 19-31st. Through the Organization WorldStrides. The students will fly direct to D.C. where they will be met by a coach bus, followed by a minute to minute itinerary. Ms. Bratsis approaches the Committee to explain financial planning for the trip. They were quoted \$1,300 for each student, with the cost covering meals, transportation, insurance, hotels and chaperones. They have fundraisers planned where they anticipate raising \$10,000. Ms. Bratsis has also applied for over \$30,000 in grants. The grants will be used to cover students who have financial constraints.

Mayor Christenson moves to questions. Ms. Hortie asks if WorldStride will be providing the chaperone and asks for the team to provide further detail. Ms. Bratsis goes on to say that yes they will be chaperoning and that the chaperones will be awake and at either end of the hallway from 10pm-6am. Ms. Hortie asks what the procedure is for cell phones. Ms. Bowe says that she would love for students to have their cell phones in order for them to utilize them in an educational way during the trip.

Ms. Spadafora asks why they decided to fly rather than a coach bus there. Ms. Bratsis says she did look into coach buses, however aside from liability issues they also found that in order to utilize their time the best way, flying provided more time there and less time travelling. Ms. Spadafora mentioned that it says on the information sheet that 6 out of 7 meals will be provided and wondered what the plan was for the one meal that is not provided. So, the student would be expected to pay for one grab and go meal. However, the students who are unable to provide that, it will be on their radar and extra money will be allocated. Ms. Spadafora asks Principal Weldai of the effects of a lot of teachers and students being out at the same time with two trips going on at once. Principal Weldai says that they do not believe coverage will be an issue.

A motion was made by Mr. Bernard to approve the Forestdale 8th Grade Washington D.C. field trip. Ms. Hortie seconded and it was VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

## **2. District Update**

Mayor Christenson turns the meeting back over to the Superintendent, who invites Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Komal Bhasin and Assistant Superintendent of Student Services to present the MCAS Accountability Results. Assistant Superintendent Bhasin explains that they plan to discuss two of the five Accountability Indicators, Chronic Absenteeism and High School Data. Assistant Superintendent Bhasin shares that Chronic Absenteeism is defined as the number of students who miss 10% of the school year. This number is measured because we can see a relationship between absenteeism and academic performance. Massachusetts data shows that there is a 20% difference in passing rate for students who are chronically absent opposed to those who are not at the elementary level, and an even larger difference at 27% for highschool.

For Malden, Chronic Absenteeism has decreased at Malden's K-8 and high school levels, although it still exceeds statewide averages. Specific groups that Malden can do more to support with attendance include students with disabilities and Hispanic/Latino students at both the high school and elementary levels.

The graduation rate has declined from 2022-2023; the drop out rate stayed flat from 2022-2023; the extended engagement rate has exceeded targets. More support is needed to reduce dropout rates and boost graduation for specific populations, including English Learners.

Assistant Superintendent Bhasin turns attention to Assistant Superintendent Macdonald to go over plans for next steps on these topics. The team has developed attendance monitoring protocols. They will be doing root cause analysis of attendance data, with

significant emphasis on students with disabilities, English Learners and other high needs populations. While continuing to provide training for staff and leadership. Monthly school-specific meetings will be held to monitor trends and develop interventions. As well as taking a tiered approach to intervention, with purposeful collaboration with the Attendance officers.

Relative to the High School Accountability data, Assistant Superintendent Macdonald shares that we are a newly designated Early College Program. This will allow Malden to provide more students with opportunities to take Advanced Courses. A tutoring program for students retaking the MCAS will be implemented. We will be utilizing targeted instruction and post-secondary planning for at risk students in need of support.

Mayor Christenson asks Assistant Superintendent Bhasin and Assistant Superintendent Macdonald where they think we will be on Accountability Results for next year. Assistant Superintendent Macdonald responds by saying she believes it will likely be similar for next year but there are interventions they are implementing that will improve the numbers. Mayor Christenson then asks if it is surprising that excused absences are included when looking at chronic absenteeism. Assistant Superintendent Bhasin says her understanding of the rationale behind the way it is calculated is that because it is such an impact of missing that much school, DESE is just looking at who was in their seat and who was not.

Ms. Hortie asks if there are functions that alert whomever is in charge of attendance to make them aware that there have been a lot of absences. Assistant Superintendent Macdonald says that yes, they do exist but they are all different by school in how they look at absences. She believes that we need a more system wide approach, we are looking at implementing well thought out and strategic protocols that all the schools use. Ms. Hortie asks if a report were to be run right now, how many students would be chronically absent today. Assistant Superintendent Macdonald says that they will be running those numbers tomorrow and they are working with a tool that shows if a student is on track to being chronically absent. Ms. Hortie asks who will be the contact person with the family if a student is on track to becoming chronically absent. Assistant Superintendent Macdonald says that they really are at the beginning of this. Right now, it is on the backs of Principals and Assistant Principals but we need to get the entire school involved in working towards getting chronic absenteeism down.

Mr. Gray asks if students in subgroups are being double and triple counted. Superintendent Sippel says that they do overlap however it is looked at specifically in smaller groups as well and that they can be broken down into smaller groups but there is not a requirement to.

Ms. Spadafora asks if students with disabilities who are receiving tutoring for medical reasons are still counted as chronically absent. Assistant Superintendent Macdonald says that if they are in a home hospital program it does not count. Ms. Spadafora asks if we are counting daily absences or class absences at the high school level. Assistant Superintendent Macdonald says that at the high school level it is daily. Ms. Spadafora asks when it comes to graduation rates, does it take into account MCAS Alts? Assistant Superintendent Macdonald says it does not and that there are not enough to skew us a ton.

Mr. Bernard asks in relation to the overlaps in subgroups when we go and speak to the family with concerns are we doing so in a culturally competent manner? We want to make sure we are having conversations with the family and that the investment is coming from home and at school. Assistant Superintendent Macdonald says that is something they are really working hard on, scheduling events for parents and caregivers. Working on building relationships with families.

Mayor Christenson asks Superintendent Sippel if he thinks improvements could be seen as soon as next year or is this going to take more time. Superintendent Sippel says he hopes to see improvements this year, but hesitates to guarantee improvements for next year. However, with all that we are doing we are hoping for wins in the next year. Mayor Christenson asks if there is one area of improvement he thinks if there is one that is more likely that we could see gains in. Superintendent Sippel says Chronic Absenteeism is probably the one which is the highest leverage for us.

Superintendent Sippel shares that active enrollment as of November 1st went from 6,472 to now being 6,494. We expect when we have final numbers the numbers will be lower.

Superintendent Sippel presents his goals for 2024-2025. We are in the “analysis, goal setting and plan development” phase. The Superintendent reviews his core values; Include and Collaborate, Embrace Growth, and Do Right by All Kids and moves into his goals. Goal one being “ Effective Entry and Direction Setting”, by late spring 2025, the district will have broad agreement from key stakeholder groups about the district's most critical needs for improvement, the strategies and goals that will address them most effectively and the measure that will be used to assess progress. Goal two being “Maintaining Focus on Continuous Improvement During the Transition (Student Learning Goal): Through the collaborative development of a common vision of effective instruction, keep the district moving forward during this year’s transition by working with the districtwide leadership team to ensure meaningful improvement is underway at the classroom, school, and district levels. Goal three being “New Superintendent

Induction Program (Professional Practice): Develop skills in strategy development, data analysis, and instructional leadership by completing the first year of the New Superintendent Induction Program and earning at least Proficient ratings on each major assignment.

Ms. Spadafora asks if our out-of-district student numbers dropping are due to students moving out or back to in-district schools. Assistant Superintendent Macdonald says there is generally a lot of turnover in Malden. But we did welcome some students to our therapeutic programs and continue to work on bringing students back to the district.

Ms. Spadafora asks if the goals they have received are in alignment with the Massachusetts Association rubric that the School Committee will be evaluating him on. Superintendent Sippel responds by saying that he has gone over the goals with his coach from the New Superintendent Induction Program and that they do align.

A motion was made to approve Superintendent Sippel's goals by Ms. Macklin. Mr. McCarthy seconded and so it was VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Motions and Resolutions**

#### **1. Residency Policy - Mr. Drummey**

Mr. Drummey makes a motion to refer to the Policy Subcommittee possible amendments to the residency policy for student enrollment (Policy JFAA), specifically for students who have moved outside of Malden and are in their final year at a K-8 school or at the high school. The motion is seconded by Mr. Bernard.

Motion goes to roll call vote

#### **Roll Call Vote**

Mayor Christenson - Yes

Mr. Drummey - Yes

Mr. McCarthy - Yes

Ms. Spadafora - Yes

Ms. Macklin - Yes

Ms. Hortie - Yes

Mr. Gray - Yes

Mr. Bernard - Yes

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - Absent

Motion passed unanimously.

#### **2. Residency Policy - Mr. Drummey**

A motion to authorize the superintendent to defer enforcement of current residency



policy for students whose status may be affected by the policy amendments under consideration was made by Mr. Drummey and seconded by Mr. Bernard.

Mayor Christenson explains for context, that Malden had a student that is in their final year at one of the K-8's but has moved mid-year and there has been a request by teachers and staff to let them finish out their 8th grade year since they have been there since K. This motion gives the Superintendent authority to defer enforcement, because if we did nothing that student should be in another district. Ms. Spadafora says that because we are a school choice district, she would like to include a date on this and would like to make an amendment to the motion to read..."authorizes the Superintendent to defer enforcement of the current residency policy until December 20th for students whose status may be affected by the policy amendments under consideration".

*Motion Amendment: Motion to authorize the Superintendent to defer enforcement of the current residency policy until December 20th for students whose status may be affected by the policy amendments under consideration.*

Motion goes to roll call vote

Roll Call Vote

Mayor Christenson - Yes

Mr. Drummey - Yes

Mr. McCarthy - Yes

Ms. Spadafora - Yes

Ms. Macklin - Yes

Ms. Hortie - Yes

Mr. Gray - Yes

Mr. Bernard - Yes

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - Absent

Motion passed unanimously.

**Personal Privilege**

**Executive Session**

Ms. Hortie made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 8:18 p.m. Mr. McCarthy seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Roll Call Vote

Mayor Christenson - Yes

Mr. Drummey - Yes

Mr. McCarthy - Yes

Ms. Spadafora - Yes  
Ms. Macklin - Yes  
Ms. Hortie - Yes  
Mr. Gray - Yes  
Mr. Bernard - Yes  
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - Absent  
Motion passed unanimously.

The committee reconvened to Regular Session at 8:46 p.m.

Ms. Spadafora made the motion to approve up to 4 consecutive work weeks of paid parental leave with an additional 6 paid work weeks may be taken, to be deducted from their accumulated sick leave for pregnancy, childbirth, or adoption of a child effective immediately. Ms. Hortie seconded and a roll call vote was taken.

#### Roll Call Vote

Mayor Christenson - Yes  
Mr. Drummey - Yes  
Mr. McCarthy - Yes  
Ms. Spadafora - Yes  
Ms. Macklin - Yes  
Ms. Hortie - Yes  
Mr. Gray - Yes  
Mr. Bernard - Yes  
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - Absent  
Motion passed unanimously.

#### Adjournment

Mr. Drummey made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Bernard seconded and so it was VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

I certify that a notice of this meeting was filed with the Clerk of the City of Malden in the manner provided under Chapter 39, Section 23A of the General Laws.

*Ariana Langston*

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**Ariana Langston, Clerk**