

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Monday, December 2, 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.

Roll Call

The following attendance was taken:

Mayor Christenson - Present

Mr. Drummey - Present

Mr. McCarthy - Present

Ms. Spadafora - Present

Ms. Macklin - Present

Ms. Hortie - Present

Mr. Gray - Present

Mr. Bernard - Present

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg - Present

Superintendent Sippel - Present

Student Representative Cathen Fontanilla - Present

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Christenson brought forth the matter of the adoption of minutes for the November 4, 2024 Regular Session of the School Committee. Mr. Drummey made the motion to adopt the minutes. Mr. McCarthy seconded and so it was VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Chris Giordano, Malden High School Educator, 19 Sprague St.

Mr. Giordano approaches the Committee and introduces himself. He expresses that he is present to voice his support for the Teacher Leaders at Malden High School. He goes on to say that these positions allow teachers to guide curriculum and help coordinate within and across content teams. Helping teachers implement the curriculum and assuring students receive an equitable instruction. Mr. Giordano speaks directly to his experience with the math department's teacher leader, Kayla Gaynor has improved the quality of instruction at MHS. Saying, "she has led our departmental initiative to improve student engagement and learning in our classes". Mr.

Girodano says the work that teacher leaders do is essential to helping all students achieve. He adds that there was an issue with the granting process that pays for their position, so they have been completing their responsibilities without compensation. Mr. Giordano expresses that he believes it is imperative that these positions continue to exist and that the teachers who have been acting as teacher leaders be paid for the work they have done this school year. Mr. Giordano closes by saying he hopes the Committee uses their oversight power to learn more about the situation and to ensure the teacher leaders are paid for the work they have done.

Imene Bouziane Saidi, 30 Parkside Place

Ms. Bouziane Saidi joined the meeting virtually, and spoke through a Zoom call. She began by saying she called in to talk about the lack of modification and accommodation for students with disabilities. She mentions that reports have shown that students with disabilities are largely falling behind, as MCAS numbers have dropped in ELA and Math compared to their peers. Ms. Bouziane Saidi believes that our current approaches are not meeting the needs of these students. Though she suggests, small group instructions, personalized interventions and technologies are available to help these students. While teachers have played a key role, they need the right tools and training. Ms. Bouziane Saidi concludes by saying she hopes that the district can work on professional development and inclusive practices to help both teachers and staff but ultimately our students.

Report of the Superintendent

1. Introduction of Student Advisory Committee

Superintendent Sippel thanks the School Committee and Mayor Christenson as well as the audience for the opportunity to present. Superintendent Sippel then introduces the 2024-2025 Student Advisory Committee. The Committee is composed of five students elected by their peers to represent the student body. One of whom was able to attend, Sophia Chen, to whom Superintendent Sippel introduces and welcomes. Superintendent Sippel shares that the Student Advisory Committee will be meeting with Mayor Christenson, Vice Chair Spadafora and himself to share their ideas and collaborate with them moving forward at least three times this school year.

2. Enrollment & 5-Year Trend

Superintendent Sippel moves onto an Enrollment Update, and begins by looking at the certified enrollment numbers for 2024-2025. Superintendent Sippel presents the current enrollment number alongside the total student enrollment over the last 5 years (Oct. 2020: **6,120** - Oct. 2021: **6,101** - Oct. 2022: **6,308** - Oct. 2023: **6,282** - Oct. 2024: **6,355**). These numbers show a slight increase relative to last year, but fairly stable over the last 5 years. Superintendent Sippel then presents enrollment by (K-8) Schools. Showing that

enrollment across all five (K-8) schools have also been fairly consistent. Malden High School shows similar trends of consistency, as well as the Early Learning Center. Superintendent Sippel presents Enrollment for Students with Disabilities. With a slight decrease in enrollment during the Pandemic, the percentage of students with disabilities has also been consistent. The Superintendent shares Student Enrollment for students whose first language is not English, those who are English Learners, and those who have been in the country less than 3 years. The number of English Learners and those who have been in the country less than 3 years have both grown considerably. With the number of English Learners increasing from just over 1,000 in the year 2020 to 1,900 now. And the number of those who have been in the country less than 3 years increasing from 561 in 2020 to 1,185 now.

Mayor Christenson asks The Superintendent if the total enrollment for the District has been compared and computed the same way. The Superintendent confirms that the totals presented have in fact all been calculated the same way over the 5 year span and adds that these increases in district-wide enrollment have not been a considerable increase.

School Committee member Hortie thanks the Chair, and asks Superintendent Sippel for clarification on if the graph indicating the number of students who have lived in the U.S. for less than three years is not necessarily the number of students who are classified as English Learners, but it is still the number of students who have not lived in the U.S. Superintendent Sippel confirms that this is correct. Ms. Hortie then asks that if this is the case, are we servicing those families and if so, how? Superintendent Sippel thanks Ms. Hortie, and says that he and his team are concerned about this as well and there will surely be more to come on actions towards serving this population.

School Committee member Gray thanks the Chair, and goes on to say that he is not sure these enrollment numbers should be limited to 5 years because October 2020-2021 is right in the middle of Covid. Mr. Gray says he thinks looking at the numbers prior to 2020 would give a better idea of how the numbers have changed. Superintendent Sippel says he would be glad to look back another two years or so and share those numbers with the Committee.

Vice Chair Spadafora thanks the Chair and asks Superintendent Sippel if there is a way to also look at capacity for schools next to their enrollment. Ms. Spadafora also asks if we were actually enrolling students for Pre-K in October of 2020, wondering if this would account for a decrease in enrollment. Superintendent Sippel says he will look into this for additional content.

3. Entry Plan Update

Superintendent Sippel moves on to his Entry Plan Update and reviews his three core values; Include and Collaborate, Embrace Growth, and Do Right By ALL Kids.

Superintendent Sippel speaks on his experience of visiting classrooms and his enjoyment and appreciation for his time with students and staff and shares that he has already visited half of the classrooms in the district. He and his team have also conducted 9 Town Halls and Listening Sessions for Parents and Caregivers with more than 235 participants.

During these events, using a tool called Thought Exchange, parents and caregivers were able to share over 700 thoughts and suggestions. Town Halls and Listening Sessions have also been conducted for staff, with more than 290 participants and nearly 750 ideas and suggestions shared.

Superintendent Sippel introduces “Entry Pan Phase 4” looking forward to his Report of Entry Findings which he intends to present in March. Between now and then input from parents and caregivers as well as teachers and staff will be analyzed and follow up surveys will be conducted. As well as focus groups and additional Town Hall meetings. Plans are also in place to speak with students, including the Student Advisory Committee, together with continued observance of classrooms and schools.

Superintendent Sippel introduces some topics that he has heard in his interactions with educators, parents and caregivers, staff and students etc. First of which being Communications, concerning the district website. We now have a Communications Coordinator who has been actively working on the website to make it more usable and current. Another topic being middle school extracurricular activities. The Superintendent describes working with Principals to provide those opportunities to students coming in the new year. MCAS was also a topic and a team is being identified at the highschool working on putting together resources for MCAS preparation. Attendance; a campaign is being launched to encourage students to come to school for every day they can. Also working with the teams at schools and families to make schools feel safe and welcoming for students.

Some areas where there will be longer term work are recruitment, the high school schedule, and English Learners. Superintendent Sippel says that they will be engaging professional assistance for hard to fill positions, some of which being Special Education classes, English as a second language and World Language. Working on filling those vacancies as soon as possible. In terms of the high school schedule, Superintendent Sippel explains that he has heard from students that they want to make full use of the school day to be prepared for the future. So, though there is no solution to the high school schedule at the moment they will be working diligently to come up with a solution. Superintendent Sippel says that for English Learners they are engaging with teachers,

union partners and students to have conversations about how we can best meet the needs of these students.

Mayor Christenson asks Dr. Sippel if they are considering having more Town Halls and Listening Sessions at different times than the first round to reach more people. The Superintendent says that yes, there are options for different times. Mayor Christenson asks if the 700 responses for the Thought Exchange asked a range of questions. Superintendent Sippel explains that there were results all across the board; some people want more recess, some want more homework etc. Mayor Christenson then asks if he has heard that the Legislature will do anything with Question 2 concerning MCAS. Superintendent Sippel says it is anticipated that retests will be administered for students for scholarship purposes and that the MCAS is still administered in compliance with Federal law and that will not be changing.

School Committee member Bernard asks concerning attendance if there is anything we are doing to encourage students who may be experiencing mental health issues to come to school. Superintendent Sippel explains that Assistant Superintendent Macdonald is working with the schools to identify students who have a concerning attendance record and working with Administrators, Counselors and other resources to work with those students to make sure they feel like they can come to school and are able to navigate life more broadly

School Committee member Rose-Zeiberg thanks the Chair and asks Superintendent Sippel, if when he is going to classrooms he is going to observe or if he is participating when in classrooms? She then asks if the efforts for MCAS will be just for the high school or if they are planning to intercede at even younger grades. Superintendent Sippel responds that his involvement during the classroom visits depends upon what is going on in that classroom at the time of the visit. He mentions that he does try to be a fly on the wall as much as possible but that he may become more of a distraction he will spend less time. Superintendent Sippel addresses Ms. Rose Zeiberg's second question saying that they have i-Ready, IXL and DIBELS, assessments aligned with the curriculum to identify students who may need to catch up in the younger grades. So they can implement interventions early on.

Vice Chair Spadafora thanks the Chair and says that she is surprised Special Education is not on the slide with Urgent issues is Special Education. Superintendent Sippel says there are many things that were not in those buckets of urgent issues that are important and need to be addressed. And that many of the urgent issues intertwine within one another. In the surveys that are coming, Special Education and Advanced Learners will be addressed as well. Ms. Spadafora asks if there will be something like a Town Hall,

Listening Sessions or surveys for students. Superintendent Sippel says that they absolutely intend to loop in students to hear their perspectives, input and opinions. Ms. Spadafora closes by thanking and commending Superintendent Sippel for his visibility in the classroom, having seen over 200 out of roughly 500 classrooms.

Motions and Resolutions

1. Negotiations Subcommittee - Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora goes into a brief update for members of the Community. Malden Education Association has notified the district of their intent to bargain. Units A,B, and C all end in August of 2025. So, the intent to bargain was to start the bargaining process in January. The Negotiations Subcommittee will be meeting in the Executive Session on December 9th at 6:00pm to start the process on their side. Ms. Spadafora wanted the community to be aware and said to feel free to reach out to any subcommittee members with any questions.

2. Policy and Procedures Subcommittee - Ms. Rose-Zeiberg

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg begins by saying the subcommittee met on November 26, 2024 to address the residency policy. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg explains that there is a lot that goes into any policy changes for many different implications. The subcommittee decided not to suggest any changes and that they plan to schedule meetings to take a more full look at it, and will be examining what is done in other districts as well.

School Committee member Hortie asks if it is written in the residency policy that students are able to present their case to the Committee to consider. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg explains that you need to notify the district within 5 days of moving and it ends there. Ms. Hortie explains she was wondering if there was anything that says that cases can be reviewed by the Superintendent or School Committee. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg says that is why they are looking at what other schools are doing because there are so many variations of circumstances.

Personal Privilege

Mayor Christenson closes by saying we do need to regroup on Chapter 70 as we head into the new year. We have been dealing with shortfalls on how that formally is presently conducted. And that with assistance we have been able to weather those shortfalls but that we as a committee are going to have to lead that charge come the new year.

Executive Session

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 7:32 p.m. Mr. Bernard 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 - Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

The committee reconvened to Regular Session at 7:42 p.m.

Adjournment

Mr. Drummey made a motion to adjourn at 7:43. Mr. Gray 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

Ariana Langston, Clerk