

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION
OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Monday, April 6, 2020
Online Meeting

Mayor Christenson called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Mayor Christenson read a paragraph regarding the meeting as follows:

“In accordance Governor Baker’s March 12th, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c. 30A, § 18, and the Governor’s March 23rd, 2020 revised guidance on order by the governor prohibiting assemblage of more than 10 people, this meeting will be conducted via remote participation. In-person attendance by members of the public is prohibited, but public attendance of this meeting via remote access is happening thanks to Malden Access Cable Television, Malden YouTube channel and the Zoom webinar. Public access will also be provided by posting draft minutes and a transcript recording or record of the meeting on the City of Malden website at cityofmalden.org or maldenps.org as practicable as possible after this meeting.”

On behalf of the School Committee, Mayor Christenson thanked members of the public in attendance online for their patience, understanding and support for the schools and each other during these challenging times.

Mayor Christenson said that the meeting will be done in honor of everyone who has helped during this healthcare crisis. 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. Froio	Present
Mr. Gray	Present
Mr. Iovino	Present
Ms. Luong	Present
Mr. McCarthy	Present
Ms. Spadafora	Present
Mr. Weldai	Present
Superintendent Oteri	Present
Student Representative Chouiki	Present
Clerk	Present

Mayor Christenson brought forth the matter of suspending public comments for the meeting. Mr. Weldai made the motion to suspend public comments for the meeting. Mr. Iovino seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Christenson said that the second matter is about addressing certain matters at this meeting or a subsequent meeting instead of the normal practice of sending them to subcommittees first. Mr. Froio

made the motion to suspend the rule for referring matters to subcommittees. Mr. McCarthy seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Christenson brought forth the matter of the approval of minutes for the March 2nd, 2020 Regular Session of the School Committee. Mr. Iovino made the motion to approve the minutes. Mr. McCarthy seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Froio made the motion to approve the minutes of the March 2nd, 2020 Executive Session of the School Committee. Ms. Luong seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Weldai made the motion to approve the minutes of the March 10th, 2020 Special Session of the School Committee. Mr. McCarthy seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent's Report

1. District Updates and Highlights

Superintendent Oteri said that on March 12th, the Malden Public Schools (MPS) closed schools indefinitely, but for at least a minimum of two weeks. This decision was made in consultation with the Mayor's office and the Public Health Director, Mr. Chris Webb. Superintendent Oteri continued that the decision to close indefinitely was made because there was no proof that an arbitrary date would make everyone safe. Superintendent Oteri said that on the Municipal Mayor's call that day, the two leading experts noted that closing schools for a day, two, three or even a week was not going to halt the spread, and, in a short time, our area will be hard hit and we will need to think about a longer term shutdown of 4-8 weeks, if not longer. March 13th was scheduled for a Professional Development Day and students were off. After consulting with Director Webb, MPS cancelled Professional Development, and had a verbal agreement with the Malden Educators Association President Ms. Deb Gesualdo, that the PD Day will be made up after the last day of school.

MPS's priority on March 13th focused on getting free breakfast and lunch to our students. Through the herculean efforts of Business Manager, Ms. Toni Mertz and Food Service Director, Mr. Omar Hernandez this was accomplished for breakfast and lunches on Monday, March 16th. By March 18th, through a relaxing of USDA requirements, MPS was able to combine breakfast and lunch as well as compress the time frames to 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. At first, food was distributed in the buildings but from March 18th onward, Ms. Mertz and Mr. Hernandez were able to organize a drive through pick-up that minimized contact as well as made it safer and easier for families to get food. Many administrators volunteered to help with the food distribution. Their solidarity in this time of need was appreciated. Food was served out of two locations, Salemwood and Malden High School (MHS). Both sites daily serve between 200-250 meals. This feat alone is something that the District needs to publicly acknowledge.

Superintendent Oteri encouraged the School Committee to honor the dedicated, courageous and compassionate men and women of the food service, Ms. Debra Arbin, Ms. Beth Coburn, Ms. Sheryl Defranzo, Ms. Nhan Duong, Ms. Caitlin Filteau, Ms. Cheryl Fitzgerald, Ms. Elizabeth Flores, Ms. Joanne Freddura, Ms. Barbara Grungo, Ms. Nicole Jones, Ms. Christine Knox, Mr. John Lightbody, Ms. Aracely Rivera, Mr. Paul Romeo, Ms. Michelle Royal, Ms. Cheilla Santos, Ms. Jenesta Smallman, Ms. Tracey Walker and Ms. Trista Wooden. Superintendent Oteri said that they are truly some of the unsung heroes during this crisis. They have served food in the cold, rain, wind and whatever the weather, to get it to Malden families. Superintendent Oteri continued that in times like these, food insecurity is a real threat and for some of MPS students, the schools are their source of breakfast and lunch.

On Sunday, March 15th, Governor Baker closed schools until at least April 6th. During that weekend and early that week, Commissioner Riley directed school districts to begin an “enrichment and engagement” program for our students. Superintendent Oteri said that this was meant to provide resources to students and families to help students continue learning while schools are closed. Assistant Superintendents Chase and Wood, along with the directors, began to examine and select resources to support our students and families. In addition to those resources provided by local districts and schools, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) pulled together a list of available resources that can support students and families while schools are closed. DESE also partnered with WGBH to provide some programming for families on television. On March 18th, the Malden Online Enrichment program, a very robust and comprehensive website with dozens of activities by grade levels PreK-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12 was launched. Resources for EL students and Special Education were also provided. The site is translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian-Creole, Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic and Amharic. Superintendent Oteri said that staff were encouraged to reach out and connect with students, be available through email, Google Classrooms and other connection platforms used by MPS. Superintendent Oteri thanked Instructional Technology Director, Ms. Natalia Brennan for her assistance in making all this happen.

On March 25th, Governor Baker extended that closure until at least May 4th. At this point, the Commissioner noted that we will be shifting to a “Remote Learning Model”. On March 26th and 27th, after several conference calls, DESE further explained what this meant. MPS began to build our remote learning plan. As a result, MPS entered bargaining with the Malden Education Association (MEA).

Superintendent Oteri said that negotiations began on March 31st and concluded on April 2nd. The Remote Learning Plan adhered strongly to the guidelines of Remote Learning that DESE Commissioner Riley set out and also took into account information gathered from consulting with several other districts. Superintendent Oteri said that the Remote Learning Plan, which is not meant to replace traditional learning in a brick and mortar school, is one that is flexible, supportive, offers outlets of creativity and innovation, going beyond the classroom and using, as

DESE Commissioner Riley says, the Natural World around oneself. Superintendent Oteri said that all will concede that nothing will replicate the in-person and personalized learning which takes place. This plan is socially and emotionally supportive of meeting students' needs. The MPS Remote Learning Plan (RLP) was crafted in collaboration with the administrative team of Central Office, Principals, Directors and the MEA. They met multiple times as an administrative team and with the MEA to brainstorm ideas about what remote learning could look like in our district. In turn, members of the administrative team have been in regular contact with educators from their respective buildings, holding conversations about what teaching, learning, and connecting with students looks like while we are physically far apart.

Superintendent Oteri said that in each and every conversation, one theme is ever-present: that we value, miss, and love our students and families. Superintendent Oteri added that MPS wants to provide students with the support they need to remain both engaged in meaningful learning that is connected to the school community, while caring about the social-emotional well-being of the entire educational community in Malden. What followed was the entry into the world of remote learning. MPS approached this work with a growth mindset, a lens on equity and access, a commitment to addressing students' social-emotional and academic needs, and a desire to learn alongside our staff, students, and families as we embarked on this new learning journey.

The next order of business, in parallel with the Remote Learning Plan was to get technology in the hands of our families who lacked a device at home. Superintendent Oteri said that Ms. Brennan did an incredible job in coordinating this effort. First, an inventory of devices was done, then a needs survey was created, and the community was notified with the assistance of principals and staff reaching out to every student.

Next, Ms. Brennan and her team began to assemble the chromebooks, get them technologically ready and then as the requests came in, labeling the device for the designated pick up time. The distribution began on April 2nd. In total, as of today, 756 chromebooks were distributed. The distribution process was incredibly smooth, fast and as contact free as possible. Superintendent Oteri thanked all staff, volunteers, as well as Mr. Weldai who helped during this process. Everyone was equipped with PPE of masks and gloves. Superintendent Oteri said that this is a tribute to the dedication of MPS staff and volunteers to make sure that the students and families of Malden get the technology that they need.

During this time, payroll was up and running. All full-time staff and hourly staff have been paid. Superintendent Oteri said that this was the strong recommendation of the Commissioner of Education. Superintendent Oteri added that we know that this is morally and ethically the right option as in these unprecedented times, many families are feeling the very sudden and drastic economic impact of COVID19.

Superintendent Oteri informed the School Committee that all field trips including Tornado Travelers Club's London & Paris trip during April vacation have been cancelled. STEM Director,

Dr. Doug Dias who received the Fulbright Leaders for Global Schools Grant Program to Singapore was informed that the trip has been cancelled. Spring sports, as of now, are slated to begin on May 4th. If the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) makes any changes, everyone will be notified. Superintendent Oteri added that other milestone events are on pause such as the moving up ceremonies, dances, senior prom and graduation. If school is cancelled, Superintendent Oteri recommended to hold some form of graduation and something that seniors would enjoy as a prom, once it is deemed safe. Superintendent Oteri said that we can expect updates as decisions will be made regarding the rest of the proposed school year.

The District Visioning Team had their last meeting on March 12th with the Administrative team. Consultant, Dr. Lori Likis is synthesizing the material and input. Superintendent Oteri said that essentially it is done, but that the team is working on some outcomes and hope to have this completed for the next school year.

Superintendent Oteri said that Linden and Ferryway each have two all-gender bathrooms. The next phase of work will begin with the Forestdale School. More updates will be provided once the work is completed there.

Superintendent Oteri said that soon after schools closed on March 13th, news was received that several of the MHS students won the Scholastic Art Award. There were 3 MHS Gold Key winners who are automatically entered into the National competition. One of them, Kai De Andrade, was awarded a National Silver Key award, which is an incredible achievement. Although it is unfortunate that the awards ceremony they were going to attend on March 14th at Tufts University was cancelled, Superintendent Oteri said that hopefully when the situation improves, their achievements can be acknowledged. Superintendent Oteri added that MHS student, Yohanni Costa, two-time back-to-back years, state wrestling champion was named to both the Boston Globe and Boston Herald All-Scholastic Wrestling Teams.

Superintendent Oteri thanked all the administrators, educators and staff of MPS for although not physically present in the offices and schools, they have been working diligently in coordinating efforts behind the scenes as well as reaching out to students and families. Superintendent Oteri said that in times of need, it is wonderful to see everyone coming together to support students, families, and each other.

In response to Mr. McCarthy, Superintendent Oteri said that the federal government has absolved states from standardized testing such as MCAS and at the state level, a waiver has been submitted and a cancellation has been directionally approved. Superintendent Oteri said that educators would rather not proceed with MCAS and that even if school is back in session in May, it would be impossible to get them ready for the test. Mayor Christenson said that he has spoken to Senator Jason Lewis about the MCAS and urged the School Committee members to email the Senator to weigh in on the matter. Superintendent Oteri further explained that there

is a two-part process to MCAS. There is legislation in Massachusetts that requires MCAS and therefore some legislative action is required.

In response to Ms. Spadafora, Superintendent Oteri said that with overseas and out-of-state trips, there is some work being done at the state level to provide refunds or vouchers. Superintendent Oteri said that he will provide updates as soon as they are available. In response to Mr. Weldai, Superintendent Oteri said that for school registrations, it is on-hold at the moment until there is a plan on how to proceed. In response to Mayor Christenson, Superintendent Oteri said that since March 13th, all assignments will be graded as credit or no credit and any assignments given prior to that will not be graded. Superintendent Oteri added that the remote learning plan will be assessed and reviewed in mid-April. In response to Mayor Christenson's question about reaching out to the private and charter schools in Malden, Superintendent Oteri said that they have been informed of the breakfast and lunch distribution. Mayor Christenson thanked Student Representative Batoul Chouiki for attending the meeting.

Subcommittee Reports/Discussions

1. Space and Enrollment Ad-Hoc Subcommittee – Mr. Iovino

Mr. Iovino said student enrollment as of Friday was 6,692 and that since the last meeting, 11 students have left the district.

2. Equity and Opportunity Subcommittee – Mr. Weldai

Mr. Weldai said that the subcommittee met on March 9th and discussed among other things the equity audit, Educational Equity Policy as well as the Equal Educational Opportunities Policy. Mr. Weldai added that both the policies were adopted unanimously by the subcommittee. Mr. Weldai said that the equity audit is almost done and that they were waiting upon some special education information. Mr. Weldai also spoke about organizing an equity forum in the future.

3. Policy and Procedures Subcommittee – Mr. Weldai

Mr. Weldai said that the subcommittee met on March 9th with Superintendent Oteri, District Attendance Officer, Mr. John Parcellin and Parent Information Center (PIC) Manager, Ms. Joan Federico to discuss the registration policy. Mr. Weldai thanked Ms. Federico for doing research on the registration policy. Mr. Weldai said that the subcommittee unanimously adopted the revised registration policy.

Motions and Resolutions

1. Hourly Employees (Advice from DESE) – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora said a directive from DESE about paying hourly employees was sent to all superintendents and school business officials. Ms. Spadafora said that the directive mentioned that during the period of school closure, it is important to have continuity of operations and an available ready workforce for when school resumes. Ms. Spadafora said that the school system has been paying hourly employees so far. Ms. Spadafora made the motion to continue paying

hourly employees until May 4th when further guidance will be received. Mr. Weldai seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Vendor Payments (Advice from DESE) – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora said that payments to many vendors stopped since mid-March but as for transportation, the district is awaiting directives from DESE as this affects all districts. Superintendent Oteri said DESE is working with school business officials and transportation companies to negotiate a plan. Superintendent Oteri continued that there are also some Massachusetts Municipal laws that need to be addressed during this period. Superintendent Oteri said that the governor and commissioner are strongly recommending that payments continue so that there is continuity when school is back in session. Ms. Spadafora made the motion to follow DESE's directives on vendor payments. Ms. Luong seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Remote Learning Plan – Mr. Iovino

Mr. Iovino said that the remote learning plan is a very robust plan and it is a result of a lot of thought as well as work from many people. Mr. Iovino made the motion to approve the remote learning plan. Mr. McCarthy seconded. In response to Mr. Weldai's question, Attorney Greenspan said that the plan can be discussed at this point but that at a later section of the meeting when the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is discussed and if adopted, the remote learning plan will also be adopted by reference. Mr. Iovino withdrew the motion.

4. 185th Day of School – Mr. Iovino

Mr. Iovino said that DESE recommended that schools need not be in session beyond the 185th day which would be June 19th for MPS. Superintendent Oteri was in favor of the DESE recommendation. Superintendent Oteri commented that if the school district decided to extend the school year beyond the 185th day, negotiations might ensue. In response to Ms. Luong, Superintendent Oteri said that seniors who are in fear of not being able to graduate because of their grades, can make up the work right now on an online learning platform called Plato. Superintendent Oteri said that since the beginning of the year, school counselors have been reaching out to seniors who were in danger of not graduating, to assist them. Superintendent Oteri agreed with Ms. Luong's suggestion of sending emails not only to MHS students but also their parents is good as it will notify them of what is required from the students and how their children are doing. Superintendent Oteri said that MHS Principal Mastrangelo has been reaching out to families as well as students. In response to Ms. Spadafora's question, Superintendent Oteri said that because of contractual obligations, the special education office and attorneys will need to be consulted if school was extended beyond the 185th day. Mr. Iovino made the motion to adopt the 185th day of school which is June 19th as the last day of school. Mr. McCarthy seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

5. April Vacation – Mr. Iovino

Mr. Iovino recommended that MPS observe the April vacation week. However, Mr. Iovino added however, that if teachers wanted to give students independent projects, they should be allowed to do so. In response to Mr. Weldai's question, Superintendent Oteri said that teachers are not required to reach out to students during this time but they can do so if they feel inclined. Mr. Iovino made motion for MPS to maintain April vacation. Mr. Drummey seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

6. MHS Program of Studies 2020-2021 – Mr. Weldai

Mr. Weldai said the MHS Program of Studies 2020-2021 is brought to School Committee for approval instead of going through the subcommittee following the Chair's recommendation.

In response to Ms. Luong's question about 9th graders not being able to take Biology if they took Math 1, Superintendent Oteri said that this is a matter of scope and sequence that requires the Math 1 pre-requisite course. Mr. Weldai suggested that this matter can be taken up by the Equity and Opportunity Subcommittee going forward. Superintendent Oteri said that this is also part of the work that is being done by the Barr Foundation. Mr. Weldai made the motion to approve the MHS Program of Studies 2020-2021. Mr. McCarthy seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Residency Policy – Mr. Weldai

Mr. Weldai said that the registration policy has been updated and this is the most recent version. In response to Mayor Christenson, Mr. Weldai said that difference compared to the current policy is the proof of residency documents and the registration process itself. Mr. Weldai added that the information is more streamlined and clearer so that it will make it easier for people coming to register their children. Mr. Weldai said that the policy will go into immediate effect or when registration resumes. Mr. Weldai made the motion adopt the revised residency policy. Mr. Drummey seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

8. Educational Equity Policy – Mr. Weldai

Mr. Weldai said that both the educational equity policy and the equal educational opportunities policy are policies received from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) and the state. Mr. Weldai said that these policies are updates to the general statewide School Committee Policy Manual that hopefully will be adopted into the Malden School Committee Policy Manual. Mr. Weldai said that it has been reviewed by counsel as well as the Equity and Opportunity Subcommittee. Mr. Weldai made motion to adopt the educational equity policy. Ms. Spadafora seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

9. Equal Educational Opportunities Policy – Mr. Weldai

Mr. Weldai made motion to adopt the equal educational opportunities policy. Mr. Froio seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Personal Privilege

Executive Session

Mr. McCarthy made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 7:34 p.m. Mr. Drummey seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey voted YES

Mr. Froio voted YES

Mr. Gray voted YES

Mr. Iovino voted YES

Ms. Luong voted YES

Mr. McCarthy voted YES

Ms. Spadafora voted YES

Mr. Weldai voted YES

Mayor Christenson voted YES
Motion passed unanimously.

The committee reconvened to the Regular Session at 8:02 p.m.

Mr. Iovino made the motion to approve the MOA with the MEA which includes the Remote Learning Plan dated April 2, 2020. Mr. Drummey seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Mr. Iovino made a motion to adjourn at 8:03 p.m. Ms. Spadafora seconded and it was so VOTED.

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.



Shirley Dorai, Clerk