

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL SESSION  
OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Thursday, August 6, 2020  
Online Meeting**

Mayor Christenson called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Mayor Christenson read the protocols in accordance with the format used for the meeting as follows: "In accordance Governor Baker's March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c. 30A, § 18, and the Governor's March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 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 all effort will be made to permit public attendance of this meeting in the manner specified which is via remote access by internet, telephone and by YouTube Channel, Malden Access Cable Television. Public access will also be provided by posting draft minutes and/or transcript recording or record of the meeting on the City of Malden website at cityofmalden.org as soon as practicable after this 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. Froio	Present
Mr. Gray	Present
Mr. Iovino	Present
Ms. Luong	Present
Mr. McCarthy	Present
Ms. Spadafora	Present
Mr. Weldai	Present
Superintendent Oteri	Present
Clerk	Present

**School Reopening Plan 2020-2021 – Mayor Christenson**

Mayor Christenson thanked Mr. Iovino, Mr. Weldai, Superintendent Oteri, Business Manager Mertz, and Assistant Superintendent Chase for immediately started working on the fall reopening as soon as school ended in June. Superintendent Pteri said that the Re-Entry Task Force composed of 31 members from the different stakeholder groups started meeting regularly since May to study the re-entry plans. They were briefed every week by Malden Board of Health Director, Mr. Chris Webb about the COVID-19 status. Superintendent Oteri thanked Mr. Iovino and Mr. Weldai as well as the Re-Entry Task Force for their work on the plans.

Superintendent Oteri said that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) directed districts to develop 3 re-entry plans: fully in-person, fully remote and hybrid. Superintendent Oteri continued that the fully in-person plan is not feasible in Malden because even with the 3 feet distancing,

only 20 – 22 desks could fit in a classroom. Furthermore, school officials and Health Director Webb were not comfortable with the 3 feet distancing and were recommending the 6 feet distancing. Superintendent Oteri said that the hybrid model with social distancing and other safety precautions was also considered with two cohorts students coming in on alternate weeks from Monday to Thursday with a half day on Friday so that deep cleaning of the buildings can be done on the latter half of the day. Superintendent Oteri added that the hybrid plan also included the highest needs substantially separate special education students, newest English learners, homeless students and students in foster care coming to school every day. These students are identified using state guidelines. Superintendent Oteri said that the state also requested districts to prioritize students who have regressed significantly. For families who did not feel comfortable sending their children for in-person instruction, a fully remote virtual learning academy would be made available. Superintendent Oteri said that with the fully remote plan, efforts will be able to provide the services for the substantially sub-separate special needs students in order to be compliant with state and federal regulations. This is currently in negotiations with the Malden Education Association (MEA).

These plans were submitted to DESE on July 31st. However, Superintendent Oteri asked for an extension on the recommendation from the district until August 7<sup>th</sup> so that a decision from the School Committee can be obtained.

Mr. Weldai echoed Superintendent Oteri and stressed that safety is a priority. Mr. Weldai said that no matter what decision is made, it will negatively impact the growth and the learning momentum of some of the students, particularly the most vulnerable and high needs students. Mr. Weldai said that after hearing the input from many stakeholders, he believes that the school year should begin remotely, phasing in the re-opening of school buildings in a safe way. Mr. Weldai added that the district should strive to find ways to best serve the needs of the highest needs students. Mr. Iovino said that safety was the overarching goal in every plan that was considered. Mr. Iovino thanked Superintendent Oteri, Mr. Weldai, Instructional Technology Director Ms. Brennan and building administrators for their hard work. Mr. Iovino added that the high needs students should be provided with as much in-school and onsite instruction as possible. Mr. Iovino supported the fully remote plan.

In response to Ms. Spadafora's question on the different start times for different grade levels, Superintendent Oteri said that everything is subject negotiations with the MEA but that the state reduced the number of school days from 180 to 170 days and that they will also be providing guidance on the reduced hours. Superintendent Oteri added that some guidance on the remote learning hours is also expected. In response to another question, Superintendent Oteri said that the remote learning plan will be more robust and synchronized so that there will be time for being in front of the teacher online as well as asynchronous learning independently. Superintendent Oteri added that in the spring, it was more like crisis learning and not all the families had access to devices initially but the district was able to get over 3,000 devices to the students. Superintendent Oteri said that the collection of chromebooks started today so that they can be refurbished and they are expecting the new chromebooks they purchased to arrive the next month. The plan put forward is to ensure that every student will have a device. The PreK and Grade 1 students will have a touchscreen device while all the other students in Grades 2-12 will have a chromebook. The district is also planning on providing hotspots and other means for families to families who do not have internet access. The remote learning plan is expected to mirror the school day as much as possible in terms of length and time. It will be attendance driven and grades will be provided. Families and students will be supported socially and emotionally in virtual reality. Superintendent Oteri recommended the remote learning plan as student safety is paramount. Ms. Spadafora said that she also supports the remote plan.

Ms. Luong thanked everyone who worked on the re-entry efforts and said she supports the remote plan. Ms. Luong was elated that chromebooks and hotspots will be provided. Ms. Luong stressed that special education services must be provided to the students with the most needs from Day 1. In response to Ms. Luong, Superintendent Oteri said that start times are all subject to negotiation. Ms. Luong said that she is also looking forward to see the results of the special education audit once complete.

Mayor Christenson said that Mr. Iovino and Mr. Weldai will continue working on the planning and the implementation of the plan that is chosen for the start of the next school year. In response to Mr. Gray, Superintendent Oteri said that the school district will strive to service the students with the highest needs in-person at some level no matter which learning model is chosen. Superintendent Oteri added that some of the special needs students will need different devices as well as and the district will work to accommodate these needs. In terms of accountability, Superintendent Oteri said that the district will continue to engage with students who are falling behind in their education. Superintendent Oteri added that in the spring, some high school students actually were more engaged as they were provided with devices to help them keep track of their academic work. Mr. Weldai said that in the spring, the work students were given were all optional but for the next school year, the expectations are more specific. Teachers will be doing more close follow-up with students and families. Mr. Weldai stressed the importance of ensuring that the needs of the more high needs students are met. Mr. Weldai added that according to the comments from one school, some of their special needs students did very well and were engaged although it was done remotely. Mr. Weldai said that at the informational meetings with parents, the point that was highlighted is that before the school year starts, the district will reach out to every special needs student and their family about their learning plan.

Ms. Luong asked if at the high school level, other topics such as time management skills can be introduced because it becomes more important when studying remotely. Superintendent Oteri responded that the district will be looking to do some of those topics and also providing families with some technology support. Superintendent Oteri added that the remote plan is the new norm until the health metrics improve.

Mayor Christenson said that the health and safety of students as well as staff is important. Mayor Christenson added that other mayors in other cities have received the same advice from their local health authorities about starting the school year remotely especially with the anticipated flu season. In response to Mayor Christenson, Mr. Weldai said that it is hoped that the remote plan would not be for the whole year. Mr. Weldai said that just providing arbitrary dates for transitioning to the hybrid or in-person plan does not mean anything because it is not based on any scientific findings. Based on negotiations with the MEA, Mr. Weldai hopes that families can be provided with some indication as to how long the remote plan will be in effect. Mr. Iovino said that it is the science that will determine when the remote learning phase can be changed. Superintendent Oteri said that providing transition dates is not possible because it is difficult to predict when the situation will improve. Superintendent Oteri suggested setting review dates so that together with the metrics from the health department, possible transition dates can be set. Superintendent Oteri also suggested a subset of the Re-Entry Task Force could work on the health metrics and bring the information to the Task Force on agreed upon dates for review. Mayor Christenson requested Superintendent Oteri to be in communication with the community about the decision for the start of the school year and future steps so that they can plan accordingly.

Mayor Christenson also mentioned that other officials have indicated that just having one school to provide in-person services for the highest needs students is not ideal and that it would be better if the services were provided at all the schools. Mayor Christenson asked about the plans for athletics and student athletes. Superintendent Oteri answered that the remote learning plan will not prohibit students from taking part in fall sports. The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) and MPS Athletics Director, Mr. Charlie Conefrey who is on their Board of Directors are also looking into this matter. Superintendent Oteri said that over the next few days, Mr. Conefrey will inform the student athletes about the plans going forward.

Mayor Christenson stressed the importance of communication with the community of all plans going forward. Mr. Weldai thanked Communications Director, Mr. Ron Cochran for setting up the School Committee Zoom account. Mr. Weldai said this will enable more community forums to be hosted in future.

Mr. Weldai made the motion to adopt distance learning to begin the 2020-2021 school year. Mr. Iovino 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.

#### **Revised 2020-2021 School Calendar – Mr. Iovino**

Mr. Iovino said that DESE has reduced the number of school days from 180 days to 170 days. The first 10 days will be used as professional development days for teacher. The first day for teacher for the 2020-2021 school calendar is August 31<sup>st</sup> and the first day for students is September 16<sup>th</sup>.

Superintendent Oteri said that DESE announced last week about the change to the number of school days. Superintendent Oteri added that the teaching staff work 184 days with the first two days of the year reserved for professional development. Superintendent Oteri said that because the extra 10 days of professional development have been added to the beginning of the calendar, the two original professional development days at the beginning of the year will be moved to another date which will be identified and negotiated with the MEA.

In response to Mr. Gray, Superintendent Oteri said that five snow days have been built into the calendar. Superintendent Oteri added that the district is waiting on guidance from DESE about snow days when the school district is on the remote learning plan. Superintendent Oteri said that special needs students who might be receiving in-person instruction in the school buildings will be affected by the snow days. Superintendent continued that the district is awaiting guidance on this matter as well.

Mr. Iovino made the motion to approve the revised 2020-2021 MPS school calendar. Ms. Spadafora seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

#### **Executive Session**

Mr. Iovino made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 7:09 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 7:26 p.m.

**Adjournment**

Mr. Drummey made a motion to adjourn at 7:27 p.m. Ms. Luong 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

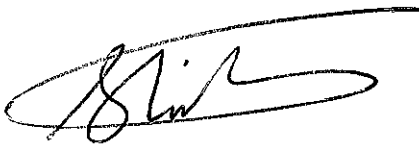
Ms. Spadafora voted YES

Mr. Weldai voted YES

Mayor Christenson voted YES

Motion passed unanimously.

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.



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Shirley Doraj, Clerk