

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION
OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Monday, September 14, 2020
Online Meeting

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

Mayor Christenson read the protocols in accordance with the format used for 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 August 7th, 2020 revised guidance on order by the governor prohibiting assemblage of more than 25 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 via remote access by internet, telephone and public broadcast by Malden Access Cable Television on public access television channels. 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

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Christenson brought forth the matter of the approval of minutes for the August 24th, 2020 Regular Session of the School Committee. Mr. McCarthy made the motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Iovino seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Iovino made motion to accept the minutes of the August 24th, 2020 Executive Session of the School Committee. Mr. McCarthy seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Prior to beginning this segment of the meeting, Superintendent Oteri provided an update about the chromebooks. Chromebooks were collected from families towards the end of summer and were quarantined for the appropriate amount of time. After whatever work needed was completed, the chromebooks were re-quarantined before they were distributed to students again. Superintendent

Oteri said that the district received word earlier in the day that some of the devices were in a condition that was less than the expected standard. Superintendent Oteri said that families with this issue can reach out directly to the Director of Instructional Technology, Ms. Natalia Brennan, at nbrennan@maldenps.org.

Dr. Philippe Jain, 150 Hawthorne Street, Malden

Dr. Jain, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, Director of Healthy Aging Studies at The Depression Clinical and Research Program of the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), and a Beebe parent said that his opinion are his own and of Dr. Liliana Ramirez Gomez, Neurologist at MGH. Dr. Jain said that closing schools disproportionately worsens the education for minority students. Dr. Jain continues that virtual instruction for 5-8 year old children is difficult due to their short attention span and group conversations due to inadequately developed theory of mind. Dr. Jain requested the School Committee to re-open schools for the elementary level during the next 4 weeks while the contagion rates remain low, implementing appropriate safety protocols to protect students, teachers and staff.

Superintendent's Report

1. Revised 170 Day 2020-2021 MPS School Calendar

Superintendent Oteri said that with the elimination of 10 school days by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the required school days was brought down to 170 days. Superintendent Oteri continued that the calendar that was approved recently had 172 days and it was noted that 2 additional professional days will need to be added to the calendar. Superintendent Oteri said that the additional professional development days will be February 12 and June 17. This will reduce the school days to 170. Superintendent Oteri continued that there will be no school on Friday, June 18th because it is now a holiday celebrated in Massachusetts for Juneteenth which falls on June 19th but because the holiday falls on a Saturday, Friday will be a holiday for students and staff. Superintendent Oteri said that the district is waiting for guidance from DESE about snow days during the hybrid or remote learning phase.

Mr. Iovino made motion to adopt the revised 2020-2021 school calendar. Mr. Drummey seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

2. District Updates and Highlights

Superintendent Oteri said that the 163rd year of public education in Malden began on Monday, August 31st, as the faculty was welcomed back via Zoom. Superintendent Oteri continued that there were several mandatory training sessions. One of the sessions was presented by Mr. Jeff Perrotti from DESE, founder of Safe Schools for DESE who has been guiding Malden Public Schools (MPS) on the creation of all-gender bathrooms. Mr. Perrotti and his guests provided awareness and training on LGBTQ+ matters.

The second mandatory training was a safety training conducted by Ms. Patti Tramondozzi, Director of Nursing, and Ms. Maria Tamagna, the Malden Board of Health Nurse. These two

sessions were mandatory for ALL staff. Superintendent Oteri said that these training sessions were recorded so that when new staff are brought on, they can view it. Superintendent Oteri added that on September 8th, Dr. Darnisa Amante-Jackson was the keynote speaker to kick off that week's training sessions as the district renewed its commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion to create a community of belonging in Malden.

Superintendent Oteri said that the 10 days of Professional Development has been centered on **Safety Training; Required Training** such as Conflict of Interest; **Timely Topics** such as social emotional learning and technology; **Curriculum and Instruction; Coming Together While Apart** which is building-based time scheduled by principals to address individual buildings' needs; and **Planning and Outreach** which allows time for educators to plan in teams as well as connect with students and families. The district also purchased a copy of the Distance Learning Playbook for each teacher, a practical guide and resource that covers everything from self-care to ways to make life easier in terms of planning for distance learning, with sections on working with young learners for whom lots of screen time is a particular challenge.

Negotiations: Superintendent Oteri announced that there is a tentative agreement with the Malden Education Association (MEA) in place and the membership will hold a ratification vote. Safe return to school for students and staff has been the overriding theme during the process. Superintendent Oteri continued that many negotiations sessions that lasted many hours were held before an agreement was reached to have staff back in the buildings on September 28th and the highest needs students beginning on October 13th.

The school week will be 4 days with the buildings being cleaned on Wednesdays. Superintendent Oteri said that there will be a committee which includes medical and public health staff to interpret the data and metrics to help drive decisions to the next phase of reopening. Superintendent Oteri said that there are no set dates to transition from one model to the next but the committee will be convened to monitor the current data on cases, infection rates and other trends locally and at the state level.

Superintendent Oteri quoted the preamble of the MOA, "The health and safety of our students, educators, families, and the community are the **foremost** priority of the Malden School Committee and the Malden Education Association. In order to protect public health and safety, the Malden Public Schools shall make sound decisions regarding the COVID-19 guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the Massachusetts Department of Industrial Accidents, the Massachusetts Department of Labor Standards, and/or the City of Malden Board of Health. The Malden Education Association and the Malden School Committee agree to meet as soon as possible to negotiate the impact and effects of any revisions or updates to those guidelines."

Breakfast and Lunch: Starting on September 16th, breakfast and lunch will be available for pick-up from 10:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at Forestdale, Beebe, Ferryway, Salemwood, Malden High School and Linden STEAM Academy. Students and families in Malden can pick up their food at any of these locations which is most convenient for them. There will be crossing guards present to help during this time. Superintendent Oteri hopes that this will ease the burden of providing meals for families while students are in the remote learning mode.

Technology: Superintendent Oteri announced that the district currently has Chromebooks for all of the Grade 5 through 12 students. At this point, there are no Chromebooks for Pre K to Grade 4 students because of a massive backorder of devices with the computer manufacturers. Superintendent provided a timeframe and summary of what was communicated to the lead staff on this, Ms. Natalia Brennan, Director of Instructional Technology and Ms. Toni Mertz, Business Manager.

The Chromebooks order was placed with the vendor, CDW, on July 30th once the CARES Act funding was secured. CDW is the largest business supplier of both HP and Google Chromebooks. The district was informed that the order would arrive in the August - September timeframe, in time for the start of the school year on September 16th. On August 28th, a representative of CDW emailed that they were expecting a batch of 29,000 Chromebooks from HP and the MPS order of 4,000 would be coming from this batch. On September 2nd, the representative said the district “missed” the order because it was smaller than anticipated and therefore cut off from this shipment. On September 3rd, the representative confirmed the order would be delivered between September 18th – 23rd. On September 8th, the representative re-confirmed that the order would be delivered between September 18th – 23rd. The district even received Google licenses for the order, thus giving the impression that the license was tied to a device serial number. Finally, unfortunately, on September 10th, the representative notified that the order would not be delivered until sometime in October. Since that time, Ms. Natalia Brennan, Ms. Toni Mertz, Assistant Superintendent Chase and Superintendent Oteri have been working non-stop on every political, private, familial and friend lead to try to secure Chromebooks quicker. The district even contacted DESE on this matter and they are trying to see if MPS can join in on their order which is not due to come in until sometime in October. DESE was aware that many districts were told that their orders for Chromebooks would not be available until December. DESE offered to districts the option of ordering through them. Superintendent Oteri said that during his call with DESE Commissioner Riley earlier in the day, he was informed that if the district placed an order through DESE, the Chromebooks would only arrive in November.

The district has been informed by CDW that there is currently a backorder of nearly 400,000 Chromebooks with HP and CDW. The district has come up with an alternative assignment for students. As soon as the district was aware of the tech issue, curriculum directors began working with coaches and their teams to pull together curriculum packets for Grades K-5. Since then, the district has been able to secure Chromebooks for Grade 5.

Superintendent Oteri said packets for students in K-4 will be available at each K-8 school on September 16th and families will be informed to come pick it up. The PreK packets are being worked on now and will be shared with ELC separately.

Family HelpDesk: Superintendent Oteri announced that MPS has set up an external Multilingual Help Desk support team to help families with technical questions. This was done through the efforts of Ms. Toni Mertz, Business Manager and Mr. Anthony Rodrigues, City of Malden IT Director. This service is only for families. By tomorrow, on all MPS school websites, there will be a phone number and a live chat box that families can use to connect with technical support. The chat box will only show up on the website if there is a live agent available to connect with them. The agent will be “live” on beginning on September 16th, 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. from

Monday – Friday. Translation services are available as a part of the program. This is specifically for families to help with their remote learning. Helpdesk will help parents navigate resources and navigate issues with wifi or chromebooks. If the helpdesk cannot assist, the parents will then be connected with our school based tech team.

Special Education Update: After an extensive recruitment and interview process, Superintendent Oteri said that Ms. Pamela MacDonald is the successful candidate for the position of Assistant Superintendent of Student Services. Ms. McDonald is from Haverhill Public Schools where she has been the Director of Special Education for the past four years. Superintendent Oteri continued that Malden has been fortunate to have been able to bring back the team of consultants who have stepped into the role in the past and are very familiar with MPS. Ms. Maura Johnson and Ms. Debbie Connell along with Human Resource Manager, Ms. Ashley Pierre, helped shepherd the interview processes for several of the administration openings this summer, and most particularly for the Assistant Superintendent for Student Services. In addition, they have assumed the role of Student Services since the departure of Mr. Michael Wood in August. Superintendent Oteri thanked them for their help during this time.

The student services department has been working on a transition plan that includes an analysis of where the special education department needs to focus specific effort during the fall and throughout the school year, recognizing that there were areas that were not working for parents and students was the place to begin. For staff, this will mean training in writing more robust and specific Remote Learning Plans; the implementation of complete service delivery, including related services: creating a critical list of evaluations that are outstanding and developing an action plan to prioritize those evaluations for completion; purchasing technology, including new software, that will ensure that students can be evaluated safely and in a timely fashion; determining how related services will be provided and ensuring that both staff and students remain safe. Superintendent Oteri continued that a goal for this school year will be to, along with parent partners, determine current and future student service needs, evaluate specific special education program(s) as required, and to develop a strategic plan for Student Services.

Through an online parent survey, that was followed up with phone calls and outreach by both Program Managers and building Principals, the district identified those students whose level and types of disability likely indicated the immediate need for in-person education and whose parents wished to have their child receive those services either in person or through a remote learning platform. Superintendent Oteri thanked the parents for making their voices and opinions known.

Hiring/Recruitment: Superintendent Oteri said that there are 27 new teachers to the district. Please note that this does not include teacher postings where teachers were reappointed to their role. Of the 27 educators, there are 22% educators of color that were hired into the district. MPS has 2 that identify as Black/African-American, 1 Multi-racial, 1 Latino, and 2 Asian educators. MPS also has over 37% of new educators that are fluent in another language besides English. The languages include Arabic, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Spanish, Vietnamese, Italian and including American Sign Language.

PIC Update: Superintendent Oteri said that the Parent Information Center (PIC) is currently open for “appointment only” per the Malden Board of Health. There has been an uptick of withdrawals and families moving out of Malden and the PIC is processing a number of these cases as well as the recent arrivals of students from other districts. Superintendent Oteri continued that additional resources will be allocated to PIC this week to help speed-up operations.

Home Schooling Update: To date, MPS has received 13 new homeschool students. Three of these families moved into Malden over the summer and a few were from private schools outside of Malden. Several students have moved out of Malden. So, the total number of home schooled students remains within the 35-40 range. Superintendent Oteri said that there is a fair amount of confusion out there where many families are saying they want their students home to “teach at home”. However, when contacted, what they are actually saying is to keep their children in remote learning.

ELC Update: Superintendent Oteri announced that Mr. Richard “Rick” Rogers will be the interim Principal of the Early Learning Center (ELC). Mr. Rogers is a proven school leader with over 28 years of experience as a Principal in urban and suburban settings. Mr. Rogers has been a Principal in Winchester, Lexington, Lowell and Brookline. He has been the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals’ Association. Mr. Rogers is a consultant to many school districts on leadership and building professional learning cultures. He has experience in all facets of school leadership from hiring, supervising, evaluating staff and providing professional development. His references note a very strong background in all aspects of school leadership, promoting an inclusive school community and a very strong professional learning culture. Superintendent Oteri said that Mr. Rogers will be a welcome addition to the MPS leadership team while the search continues for a permanent leader at the ELC.

School Schedules for September 16th and Onwards: Superintendent Oteri said that many students and parents might still have questions about what the school schedule will look like for remote learning. The staff and principals at each school will be contacting every student to let them know this information. Superintendent Oteri asked parents and guardians to reach out to them if you have not heard from them or missed an email or call from them. Superintendent Oteri also asked parents and guardians to contact the school secretaries to update their phone numbers or email addresses so that they do not miss out on any communication from the schools.

Athletics: Superintendent Oteri said that the Greater Boston League has voted to push all fall sports to the “Fall 2” season which begins in late February. Athletic Director, Mr. Charlie Conefrey and MHS Principal Chris Mastrangelo fully supported this and made the case it was critical to remain united as a league especially as both Everett and Revere are “Red” cities and cannot even hold practices.

In closing, Superintendent Oteri reminded that in spite of all the challenges, difficulties and obstacles in our path, the district will be working together tirelessly with parents, guardians and staff to make sure students receive the education they deserve.

In response to a question on whether there will be online instruction to go with the Grades K-4 packets, Superintendent Oteri said that he will have to check if there will be online instruction as well. Ms. Spadafora asked for clarification on whether principals at the schools are asking students in grades 6-8 to return the Chromebooks if they already have a device at home for remote schooling. Superintendent Oteri said that principals would be sending surveys to families to ask them if they would be returning their devices so that it can be given to other students who might need them. In response to Ms. Spadafora's question on the packets, Superintendent Oteri said that that other family members or friends can pick up the packets from the schools if the parents or student is unable to do so. Superintendent Oteri also added that the packets would be available online. In response to another question, Superintendent Oteri said that from the time schools starts until October 13th when identified special needs students begin in-person instruction, the district will be providing services to the best of their abilities remotely.

In response to Ms. Luong, Superintendent Oteri said that some of the families of special needs K-4 students have devices in order to receive instruction remotely. When questioned about the status of the special education audit that was requested by the School Committee, Superintendent Oteri said together with special education consultant, Ms. Maura Johnson, the database is being reviewed and work is being done on remote learning plans. Superintendent Oteri continued that when Ms. Pamela MacDonald starts work as the new Assistant Superintendent of Student Services, a vendor will be secured to help with the audit. Superintendent Oteri said the audit will be a preview for the review that is coming up in the spring. Ms. Luong said that she remembers the plan going forward as discussed was for Ms. Johnson to look at different vendors who could do the audit and not wait for six months or the DESE audit. Superintendent Oteri said that they have already had conversations with WestEd and will proceed when Ms. MacDonald comes aboard. Ms. Luong asked how the work will be prioritized such as the process by which the students are evaluated or is it the process how they are being educated or receiving services. Ms. Luong requested that Superintendent Oteri provide the information on how the work will be prioritized at the next meeting. Mr. Weldai recognized the effort of the district administration in preparing for remote learning as well as providing support to students and families. In response to Mayor Christenson, Superintendent Oteri said about 55% of the families of the students identified for in-person instruction expressed interest in sending their children to the schools. Mayor Christenson asked Superintendent Oteri to inform him if there is anything in the contract with the Chromebook vendors that will provide some mitigation for the city on what appears to be the vendor's error.

Subcommittee Reports

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

Mr. Iovino said the current enrollment number is 6,113 students. About 140 registrations applications are incomplete. Mr. Iovino said that the PIC is working with the parents to help complete the registration process. There are also about 25 - 30 students who are on the waitlist

for ELC. Mr. Iovino said that with these numbers, the enrollment figure will be about 6,300 once everything is processed. In response to Mayor Christenson, Mr. Iovino said that the district has 280 students less than last year at the same time. Mr. Iovino continued that Ms. Joan Federico, PIC Manager, informed him that many students have moved out of Malden or left the country.

2. Policy and Procedures Subcommittee – Mr. Weldai

Mr. Weldai deferred to Ms. Spadafora. Ms. Spadafora said that the subcommittee met earlier in the evening and discussed the face coverings policy. Ms. Spadafora said that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) had sent a draft of the Face Coverings Policy to review and make any changes. Ms. Spadafora said that there are a few changes. One of them is on paragraph 2 where the last sentence states that those exempted from this policy are students from Grade 1 and below. This was stricken and replaced with “The district shall require this for all students in Grades K-12 and it will be recommended and strongly encouraged for PreK students.” This follows the verbiage in the MOA.

Ms. Spadafora said that a few other minor changes speak to needing a physician’s letter to be exempt from the policy as well as approval from the building principal. Ms. Spadafora said that these two requirements would be combined into one sentence which will read “To be exempt, you have to have a note from the student’s physician and approval from the building principal.”

Ms. Spadafora continued that the statement, “Student’s mask or face covering shall adhere to current dress code policies and masks shall not be gang affiliated, have wording related to sex, alcohol, drugs, tobacco or improper language and shall not contain profane, offensive or disruptive subject matter.” Ms. Spadafora said that the changes were voted and accepted unanimously and that it was also voted unanimously at the subcommittee level that the policy be brought to the School Committee for review.

Ms. Luong said that there was one more edit. Ms. Spadafora said that the policy also stated that additionally face masks or face coverings will be required when appropriate social distancing is enforced during mass breaks. Ms. Spadafora said that “during mass breaks” was replaced with “during indoor and/or outdoor mass breaks.”

Motions and Resolutions

1. Face Coverings Policy – Mr. Weldai

Mr. Iovino made the motion to accept the changes and adopt the 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 7:30p.m. Mr. Weldai 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 7:45 p.m.

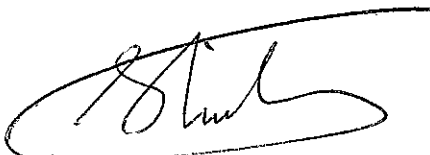
Mr. Iovino made the motion to appoint Ms. Pamela MacDonald for the position of Assistant Superintendent, Student Services. Mr. McCarthy seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey voted YES
Mr. Froio ABSENT
Mr. Gray voted YES
Mr. Iovino voted YES
Ms. Luong voted NO
Mr. McCarthy voted YES
Ms. Spadafora voted YES
Mr. Weldai voted YES
Mayor Christenson voted YES
Motion passed with 7 votes in favor, 1 against and 1 absent.

Adjournment

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to adjourn at 7:47 p.m. Mr. McCarthy seconded and it was so 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.



Shirley Dorai, Clerk