

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION
OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Monday, October 5, 2020
Online Meeting**

Mayor Christenson called the meeting to order at 6:01 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	Absent
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 September 14th, 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.

Ms. Spadafora made motion to accept the minutes of the September 14th, 2020 Executive Session of the School Committee. Ms. Luong seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Ms. Deborah Gesualdo, President of the Malden Education Association (MEA)
Ms. Gesualdo said that October 5, 2020 is World Teachers Day and recognized the work of the Malden Public School teachers. Ms. Gesualdo also mentioned the passing of Linden teacher, Ms. Pam Wickwire last week.

Mr. Patrick Fitzgerald, 45 Wesmur Road, Malden

Mr. Fitzgerald, a Linden parent, thanked all the staff at Malden Public Schools (MPS) for rising to the challenge of teaching remotely focusing on the needs of students and families. Mr. Fitzgerald implored the district to prioritize the special education audit as well as identify and publicize the public health data that is relied upon to make transitions through the stages of re-opening. Mr. Fitzgerald says that families need to know this criteria so that they can hold accountable those in positions of making these decisions. Mr. Fitzgerald said that the absence of in-person learning negatively impacts the education, growth and development of all students, especially special education students. Mr. Fitzgerald said that there should not be any unnecessary delay of in-person learning in order to accommodate collective bargaining when the time comes to transition.

Ms. Laura Gould, 480 Main Street, Malden

Ms. Gould, a teacher at Malden High School (MHS), spoke about the positive experience she has had her students through distance learning. Ms. Gould said it would be a disservice to students to assume that in-person instruction is the best opportunity for all students. Ms. Gould continued that safety should be considered as COVID-19 cases are on the increase. Ms. Gould added that it is safer if fewer students are in the building for in-person instruction as some of the high needs students academically are also the most medically compromised. Ms. Gould also said that wifi at MHS is not up to the challenge if all the teachers are teaching remotely from the school since it has crashed under other less taxing circumstances. Ms. Gould said she is not comfortable working in a classroom with another adult. Ms. Gould requested that the majority of the students continue with distance learning until the public health data improves.

Before closing this section of the meeting, Mayor Christenson mentioned that there was an email with a public comment received by all the School Committee members and asked how these are usually handled. Mr. Weldai responded that there is no guideline on how this should be handled since the School Committee had never had a written comment before now. Mayor Christenson requested that going forward, these be read into the public record.

Superintendent's Report

1. District Updates and Highlights

Superintendent Oteri asked that a moment of silence be observed out of respect and honor for the sudden and tragic loss of a long-time educator in MPS, Pamela Wickwire who passed away on October 3, 2020.

Superintendent Oteri informed the School Committee that over 2,500 chromebooks arrived and have been distributed to all Pre K-12 students thanks to a collaborative effort led by Assistant Superintendent Chase, Instructional Technology Director Natalia Brennan and Business Manager Ms. Toni Mertz who obtained the chromebooks directly from DELL Computers. The chromebooks were unboxed, inspected, configured, catalogued, scanned, stacked, and delivered to each school. The schools then delivered to families. All the volunteers wore PPE of masks and gloves and spread out across the MHS cafeteria. Superintendent Oteri thanked the leadership team who stepped up and spent several days getting these devices ready and delivered to schools. Paper packets were provided to PreK – Grade 4 students for the two weeks before the arrival of the chromebooks. Superintendent Oteri thanked Assistant Superintendent Chase for her incredible dedication with her directors to produce these packets.

Assistant Superintendent Chase spent two weekends coordinating and digitally collating these packets broken out by grade level to deliver to Minuteman Press for printing.

Enrollment

Superintendent Oteri said that there was a decrease in enrollment in MPS. There are slightly over 400 students fewer since last October. Many families have moved to neighboring communities or out-of-state. Superintendent Oteri said it is a concerning trend and that superintendents in neighboring districts are also seeing a decrease in enrollment. Some of it may be a result of under-enrollment in Kindergarten which is probably due to the pandemic. This year, 380 students have registered for Kindergarten classes which is about a 100 registrations less than last year. There are some incomplete registrations at the Parent Information Center (PIC) including 52 for Kindergarten and 2 for the Early Learning Center (ELC). PIC has contacted the parents and guardians to help them complete the registrations. Superintendent Oteri said that the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is aware of this as districts are concerned about the financial impact. Malden will be analyzing the data.

As a result of the enrollment numbers, Superintendent Oteri said that the policy on School Assignment and English Learner student distribution would need to be examined. As the decrease in enrollments is not equal across all schools, there are some disparities in enrollment numbers. Superintendent Oteri recommended that this matter be examined by the Equity and Opportunity Ad-Hoc Subcommittee and the Policy and Procedures Subcommittee as well as the Space and Enrollment Ad-Hoc Subcommittee. Superintendent Oteri continued that when the October 1st state report comes back in November, with the School Committee's approval, the subcommittees can use that as a standard to examine this matter further.

Special Education Update

The Special Education department after meeting with Ms. Luong and Mayor Christenson have begun the internal audit. The Special Education Department has begun calling families to review their contact information as well as their experience with remote learning and what services were delivered in the spring. Superintendent Oteri said that the district is also working with families to determine what additional services they need to address regression experienced in the spring. The special education department worked hard last spring to provide services remotely during the Governor's stay at home orders. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education originally told districts to only provide resources to families and then changed that guidance to say that students should continue to receive services. They also made it clear that services may look differently than they did when in person. This may have meant a child received services over google meets, was sent a video to watch or was provided asynchronous lessons to cover their grid services. The duration and frequency may also have changed during remote learning.

Per DESE's guidance, each child was provided a remote learning plan that specified how services would be delivered. Parents were notified but did not have to agree with the remote plan. Remote learning was not ideal for some of the families. Having to create remote learning plans and deliver remote services within weeks was difficult for all districts including Malden. MPS educators worked hard in the spring to adapt services to a remote format on very short notice and without extensive resources. Even through the best efforts of the special educators, some families received more robust services than others. This was due to many factors,

including the level of tech savvy of the teacher or provider, the level of need of the student, access devices and many other unforeseen issues that arose.

In order to ensure all special needs children were serviced equitably during this spring, the district is reaching out to families to ask about their experience in the spring, and checking to see if they received services outlined in their individual remote plans. This was and continues to be a unique and challenging time for all families, but especially students with special needs. Assistant Superintendent MacDonald will have an update for the School Committee at the November 9th meeting.

Superintendent Oteri said that on October 13th, the highest needs students will return to school for in-person learning. This return is optional for the families and thus far, there are 198 students who will be returning to the 7 buildings and 80 students who opted for remote learning. In order to abide by the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) as well as accommodate both in-person and remote learning for these students, Superintendent Oteri said that remote only classrooms are being created and this necessitates some class roster changes. Teachers will be assigned to these classes based on students' needs. It is anticipated that this will affect 20% of the high needs students and mostly the students who have elected for remote learning. Letters are being sent out to parents informing them of safety protocols as well as any reassignment of classes.

HVAC Report

Superintendent Oteri said that district had contracted with WB Engineering, one of the state contractors that do HVAC analysis and certification. They submitted their report to public facilities recently. Each building was analyzed from the schematic design, the engineering load and then tested in person. The report indicated that the air movement and filtration system is exceptional and will more than handle the capacity of a return to school for students and staff. Superintendent Oteri said that schools have the highest filtration system, MERV 13. The Board of Health Director, Chris Webb has reviewed this report and is very pleased with the results.

Breakfast and Lunch Update

Superintendent Oteri reminded all families that FREE Breakfast and Lunch is available at all K-8 schools and MHS daily from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. This is for any school age student in Malden. Families can pick-up food from any of the K-8 schools or the Malden High School (MHS). The district also provides meals for the weekend on Fridays. Superintendent Oteri added that hot meals are currently being served and hoped that Malden families take advantage of this great opportunity. Meals will also be provided to the highest needs students who will be returning to school on October 13th. Superintendent Oteri said he will provide more information later when reheatable dinners become available for families.

In closing, Superintendent Oteri thanked everyone who helped in the distribution of devices to students. Superintendent Oteri hoped that with the devices, all students will be able to progress with remote learning more smoothly. The school administrators and teachers are working hard to ensure that all students are engaged during remote learning. Lots of outreach to students and families is being done on a continuous basis. Superintendent Oteri thanked everyone for their continued support and looked forward to working with students, families, and staff to make a success of this year despite the obstacles.

Ms. Luong asked if something can be placed on the website so that families who have not been called for the special education audit are able to contact someone about this matter. Ms. Luong also asked which schools will the students be going to for in-person learning on October 13th. Superintendent Oteri responded that they will be all be going to the schools that they were previously assigned and that this was also recommended in terms of public health by Mr. Chris Webb, Malden Board of Health Director. In response to Ms. Luong, Superintendent Oteri said that translation services for families will be available during the special education audit.

Superintendent Oteri introduced Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Ms. Pamela MacDonald. In response to Mayor Christenson, Assistant Superintendent MacDonald said that she can be contacted by email and that the district website has her contact information.

Mr. Weldai inquired of the HVAC report can be made public on the website. Superintendent Oteri said that he will find out if this can be done. Superintendent Oteri followed-up on the point that Mr. Weldai made about the city being pro-active and starting an endeavor with Honeywell Inc. on upgrades on compressors, chillers, boilers and other areas well before the pandemic. This enabled many systems to be computerized so that if there is a problem, the system will highlight it even before complaints are received. Mr. Weldai also mentioned that he was impressed that the district has the MERV 13 air filtration system. Superintendent Oteri said that the district was able to have the MERV 13 filters because the buildings are newer and able to support this system.

In response to Ms. Spadafora, Superintendent Oteri said the re-assignment of students in classes is necessary because according to the MOA, the same teacher cannot be teaching in-person and remotely at the same time. Assistant Superintendent MacDonald said that most students will not see any changes as it only affects a few students. At first only 55% of the highest needs students expressed interest in attending in-person learning but Assistant Superintendent MacDonald said that this has changed to 72% and therefore, some re-shuffling of classes was required. Ms. Spadafora asked about data from the helpdesk calls regarding chromebooks. Superintendent Oteri said that initially GDS, the company that manages the online helpdesk provided reports to Business Manager, Ms. Toni Mertz. There were some issues about login which were resolved. Superintendent Oteri said that the helpdesk reports will be monitored. In response to another question from Ms. Spadafora, Superintendent Oteri said that he will look into the possibility of families picking up food for the weekend on Thursdays just in case they are unable to make it on Fridays.

In response to Ms. Luong's question about wifi bandwidths at the schools, Superintendent Oteri said that over the last year or so , through a grant, the district spent about \$600,000 on technology hardware infrastructure. Superintendent Oteri continued that there were very little problems during MCAS testing or at other times when many people were online. Superintendent Oteri said that some of the issues might be a vendor issue such as something to do with Comcast, Verizon, etc. but that all these issues including the issues experienced last week is being monitored. Ms. Luong asked if the plans to handle current and future technology issues that arise can be shared. Superintendent Oteri said that once the issue is identified, it will be addressed internally or by contacting the vendor. Mayor Christenson thanked everyone who was involved in the Honeywell project. In response to Mayor Christenson, Superintendent Oteri said that the families of students who left Malden did so for a variety of reasons including housing, better opportunities and jobs. Mayor Christenson asked whether the 153 incomplete

registrations is normal. Superintendent Oteri said it is a little higher than normal because the Parent Information Center (PIC) has been working remotely mostly and the new residency policy adopted last year as well as the medical requirements are more challenging for families during the pandemic.

In response to Mayor Christenson, Superintendent Oteri said that even if the 52 incomplete Kindergarten registrations were included, the Kindergarten enrollment is still lower than last year. Superintendent Oteri continued that DESE indicated this year will not be considered a snapshot in determining funding for next year but rather the last 2, 3 or more years will also be considered to minimize the impact financially. In response to Mr. Weldai's question, Mayor Christenson said that the legislative branch should be made aware that the many districts could potentially be adversely affected if funding for next year is solely based on the October 1st reporting data. Mr. Iovino commented that it boils down to money as the state has lost about \$8.6 billion in taxes due to loss of revenue from taxes. Mr. Iovino added that the enrollment will most likely pick-up along the year and that towards the end the decrease in the number of students will not be that much less compared to last year's numbers.

In response to Mayor Christenson, Assistant Superintendent MacDonald said that following DESE's guidelines, staff contacted parents to collaboratively create remote learning plan for students on IEPs and this was distributed to the parents. Assistant Superintendent MacDonald said that the remote learning plan is different from an IEP where the parent's signature is necessary but it is her understanding that most families were contacted about the remote learning plan. Mayor Christenson asked Assistant Superintendent MacDonald to provide an update on the remote learning plan at the next meeting. Ms. Luong said that since some parents informed her that no conversations took place, she would like Assistant Superintendent MacDonald to provide some clarification at the next meeting.

Mr. Weldai made the motion to refer the examination of the policy on school assignments and English Learner student distribution to the Equity and Opportunity Ad-Hoc Subcommittee. Ms. Spadafora seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Subcommittee Reports

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

Mr. Iovino said that many students from Malden have moved to neighboring districts including 8 to Chelsea, 42 to Everett, 10 to Lynn, 12 to Revere, 14 to Saugus, 48 to Wakefield and 12 to Winchester. Mayor Christenson said that this matter would need to be examined further.

Motions and Resolutions

1. Donation from KISS 108 and Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents – Mr. Iovino

Mr. Iovino said KISS 108 partnered with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (M.A.S.S.) to help raise funds for "Chromebooks for Kids." As a result of the contributions received from KISS108 listeners, M.A.S.S. and KISS108 forwarded \$7,298 in donations to Malden Public Schools.

Mr. Iovino made the motion to accept the \$7,298.00 donation. Mr. McCarthy seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Honorary MHS Diploma for Edward Graffam – Mr. Iovino

Mr. Iovino said Mr. Edward Graffam was a senior at the Malden High School when he left to serve in the military during war time. Mr. Graffam served in the Air Force in the Korean war and when he returned, he obtained his GED and served as a Malden police officer for many years.

Mr. Iovino made the motion to award a Malden High School diploma to Mr. Edward Graffam. Mr. Weldai seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Honorary MHS Diploma for John Joseph O’Neil – Mr. Iovino

Mr. Iovino said that Mr. John Joseph O’Neil was a World War II veteran who left Malden before finishing high school to serve in the military. He was a tail gunner on a B17 Bomber that did 27 missions over Germany during daylight bombing runs. Mr. Iovino said that the program to grant high school diplomas to young men and women who left school to serve the country during war time was established over 20 years ago by Mr. Bill Mini, former School Committee member and Ms. Ann Madigan, former Superintendent of Forestdale Cemetery.

Mr. Iovino made the motion to award a Malden High School diploma to Mr. John Joseph O’Neil. Mr. McCarthy seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Update on Criteria for School Re-Opening – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora said the public is probably not aware of the criteria which includes the CDC, DESE, public health data and other guidelines that need to be met in order to enter the different phases outside of remote learning. Ms. Spadafora requested Superintendent Oteri to provide the information that needs to be followed to enter the six stages that were outlined in the MOA to go past the remote learning phase. Superintendent Oteri said that he could provide it at the next meeting. Superintendent Oteri continued that part of this information is provided in the MOA where it outlines that local, state and federal guidelines be followed which includes infection rates and trends. Superintendent Oteri added that the Joint Labor Management Committee (JLMC) on Health and Safety meet regularly to monitor and review data.

Mayor Christenson said the criteria is not an exact science but rather to establish some consistency. Ms. Spadafora said that there are no clear goals established to understand next steps for the district. Mr. Weldai emphasized the need for consistent communication with the public and the need for a communication specialist. In response to Mayor Christenson, Superintendent Oteri said that several of the school principals have already had zoom calls with their school community to enhance communication. Mayor Christenson requested that the School Committee members be made aware of the meetings organized by principals ahead of time. Superintendent Oteri said that once the highest needs students are back in the schools, a remote district-wide town hall can be organized. Mayor Christenson requested Superintendent Oteri to provide the information about the criteria for a hybrid model or fully in-person learning at the next meeting.

5. Decision on Employee’s Child Attending Malden Public Schools – Mr. Weldai

Mr. Weldai said that the Policy and Procedures Subcommittee met earlier in the evening to consider the application from Ms. Katie Hannan, an educator at the Beebe School to have her son be enrolled in Kindergarten at the Malden Public Schools. Mr. Weldai added that Ms. Hannan is looking for enrollment for just one year while the family works through some unexpected circumstances. Mr. Weldai said that the subcommittee voted unanimously with Superintendent Oteri's recommendation that to approve this request.

Mr. Weldai made the motion to approve the enrollment of Ms. Hannan's son into Kindergarten at the Malden Public Schools for the 2020-2021 school year. Ms. Spadafora seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Personal Privilege

Executive Session

Mr. Iovino made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 7:28 p.m. Mr. McCarthy seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey ABSENT

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.

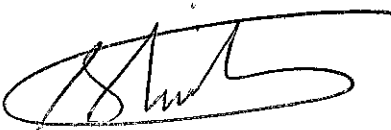
The committee reconvened to the Regular Session at 8:23 p.m.

Adjournment

Mayor Christenson adjourned the meeting in memory of Ms. Pamela Wickwire, 1st grade teacher at the Linden STEAM Academy.

Mr. Weldai made a motion to adjourn at 8:24 p.m. Mr. Froio 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