

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION
OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Monday, May 3, 2021
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 with Governor Baker’s March 12th, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c. 30A, § 18, as well as the Governor’s August 23rd and December 8th, 2020 revised guidance 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 MATV/Urban Media Arts 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 announced that live interpretation services will be available for the rest of the School Committee meetings this year. Mayor Christenson introduced Mr. Danyal Najmi of Rossetta Languages to explain the interpretation services available and how to access them on the Zoom channels. There were 7 languages available and each translator gave a brief introduction in their language. The languages available were Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, Mandarin and Cantonese.

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 Davidson	Present
Clerk	Present

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Christenson brought forth the matter of the approval of minutes for the April 5th, 2021 Regular Session of the School Committee. Mr. Iovino made the motion to approve the minutes. Mr.

Drummey seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Luong made the motion to approve the minutes of the April 5th, 2021 Executive Session of the School Committee. Mr. Drummey seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Ms. Deborah Gesualdo, President of the Malden Education Association (MEA)

In light of National Teachers Appreciation Week, Ms. Gesualdo publicly thanked everyone working for the Malden Public Schools (MPS) regardless of their job title.

Superintendent's Report

1. Assessment Update

Superintendent Oteri invited Assistant Superintendent Chase to provide a presentation on Assessment, Student Learning and Acceleration 2020-2022 to show the current status and future planning. Assistant Superintendent Chase highlighted the different assessment programs being used in the district as well as the results showing where gaps exist and how teachers use the data. Assistant Superintendent Chase also mentioned the recent approval of 45 math assistant positions to assist students in helping to close the gap.

In response to Mr. Weldai, Assistant Superintendent Chase said that in terms of comparison of the results, the platforms being used, what is measured, and what is being taught needs to be taken into account. Assistant Superintendent Chase said that the district followed the Department of Elementary and Secondary (DESE) guidance on curriculum for the previous year and the current year. The teachers and students also learned many new technological approaches. Mr. Weldai also questioned whether the funds allocated by the state for COVID-19 learning losses will be used mainly during the summer or the fall of 2021. Assistant Superintendent Chase said that MPS has many summer programs.

In response to Ms. Spadafora, Assistant Superintendent Chase said that PreK students in the city are not just at the Early Learning Center and therefore, the Kindergarten screenings help to assess these students and catch them up to speed. Director of Literacy and Title I, Janice Raymond said that at the Kindergarten level, the most important measure is phonemic awareness which is understanding how to take sounds and put them together. Ms. Raymond continued that typically, by the end of their Kindergarten year at MPS, at least 90% of the students would have mastered phonemic awareness and letter identification.

In response to Student Representative Davidson, Assistant Superintendent Chase said that teachers are not alone in supporting students. They are also supported by building administration, coaches, paraprofessionals as well as given professional development opportunities to help ensure that student achievement gaps are addressed.

In response to Mayor Christenson, Assistant Superintendent Chase said that it has been a struggle to fill the 45 math assistant positions that would be distributed throughout the district by grade level. Assistant Superintendent Chase hoped that grant funding would support these positions next year as well.

Mayor Christenson said that the different pre-schools in the district had expressed interest in touching base every few months or so to ensure that what they teach aligns with the MPS. Assistant Superintendent Chase said that having them aware of the curriculum standards will be helpful. Ms. Raymond said that she had previously done a presentation for Head Start about kindergarten expectations and would be willing to do it for other local pre-schools. Mayor Christenson informed Ms. Raymond that the Mayor's Office has a database of the pre-schools in the district.

2. Special Education Update

Assistant Superintendent MacDonald said that there was a monthly meeting with all the pre-schools in her previous district to discuss joint grants, presentations and they were in the midst of establishing a pre-school hub where parents could go to one spot to get information on all the pre-schools.

Assistant Superintendent MacDonald said the tiered focused monitoring is wrapping up with DESE and that the findings will be used to develop a long-range plan. Assistant Superintendent MacDonald said she is working on 4 goals. The first is to update the procedures on how IEPs are processed, the second is how special education resources are utilized, the third is to improve in-district programming and the fourth is to increase inclusion rates. Assistant Superintendent MacDonald will prepare a presentation for the School Committee once DESE provides a report of their findings. Assistant Superintendent MacDonald is also planning to present the updated procedures manual at a future meeting once it is completed. As for extended year services, Assistant Superintendent MacDonald said that they are working on staffing for the summer programs that will be offered as COVID-19 compensatory services. Surveys have been sent out to most families. Some speech and language, occupational therapy and physical therapy services will be offered to some very high needs students as compensatory services for two afternoons a week at the Ferryway School during the summer. Assistant Superintendent MacDonald said that if this works out well, more of such services might be offered in the fall.

In response to Ms. Luong, Assistant Superintendent MacDonald said that summer services will be offered to anyone in special education who needs it. In response to Ms. Spadafora, Assistant Superintendent MacDonald said that the long-range plan would be at least 2-4 years.

3. District Updates and Highlights

Superintendent Oteri said that K-5 learners returned to full-time, in-person learning on April 5th and grades 6-8 students returned on April 26th. The state has mandated that high school students return to full-time in-person instruction on May 17th. The district will be meeting with the MEA on the smooth transition of students to full time, in-person learning mode. With almost all of the staff fully vaccinated, and following the stringent guidelines on health and safety, the district's transmission rate of COVID has been zero in the schools.

Superintendent Oteri said that there are currently 4 full-time Family Liaisons: Ms. Genesis Lacen - Linden STEAM Academy; Ms. Bruna Oliveira - Salemwood School; Mr. Kevin Isaza - Ferryway School; and Ms. Sara Joint - Beebe School. The Forestdale position was re-posted today in hopes to find a bilingual candidate. The part-time Parent/Guardian Liaison position at the Parent Information Center (PIC) is still open.

The Family Liaison is responsible for building the capacity of schools to authentically engage our families and community. The Liaison's primary role is to develop family engagement systems and activities that create strong partnerships to support teaching, learning, student achievement, school improvement, and a positive school climate. This position will work in conjunction with the principal and school staff to create a welcoming environment that values parents/guardians as full partners in the education and development of their children. The Liaison will serve as a bridge between school and home in ways that build trustful relationships, foster understanding, and relays the needs of one to the other.

Pool testing started a couple months ago, initially with student-athletes and then with the faculty. Pool testing began today for K-8 students. Information and links to sign up was sent to families last week for those who wish to participate. The state has agreed to pick up the costs of pool testing through August 31st.

Pool testing involves mixing several test samples together in a "batch" or "pool" and then testing the pooled sample with a PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test for COVID-19 detection. This approach increases the number of individuals that can be tested at one time and allows for regular testing for COVID-19. Our medical partner, Concentric by Gingko will have two medical professionals go from school to school on a schedule and collect the samples. Generally, students above third grade are able to swab their own noses, but the nurses will be there to assist if needed. Also, this is a rolling registration so families can opt into this at any point.

The schools will be providing the Abbott BinaxNOW Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Tests for follow-up testing, so that students or staff in a positive pool can be tested as soon as possible and receive individual results in 15 minutes.

Superintendent Oteri provided updates for MCAS. DESE has informed that schools can offer a remote administration of the grades 3–8 tests to accommodate families who chose to have their children learn remotely through the end of the school year. DESE had manuals and trainings available for principals, test coordinators, and test administrators on April 29th.

Modified Competency Determination (CD) for grade 11: At the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's April 20th meeting, Commissioner Riley recommended that the Board modify the state graduation requirements for students in grade 11 (the class of 2022) so that they would not need to pass the English Language Arts and Mathematics MCAS to meet the state graduation requirement (as is already the case with the [science and technology/engineering part of the requirement](#)).

Grade 11 students who choose to take the MCAS ELA and Mathematics tests for scholarship purposes may do so in spring or fall 2021. Students who test this spring will have results this fall, in time to learn whether they qualify for scholarships before applying to colleges.

An [updated testing schedule](#) is available. There has been no change to the previously released schedule for grades 3–5, and the testing window for grades 6–8 will be May 17th – June 11th. The MCAS-Alt submission date is May 20th. There is no Opt-out of MCAS.

Current juniors and seniors may still take the test this spring to qualify for the [Adams Scholarship](#) and [Koplik Certificate of Mastery](#). Juniors who do not participate this spring will be able to test for scholarships during the retest period in fall 2021.

The district is in the process of planning for the summer programming for the Ferryway ELT program. Superintendent Oteri said that staff is putting together a combination of enrichment, professional development and academic enrichment.

Superintendent Oteri hopes to have the food truck by mid-June and ready for summer delivery. During the summer, the plan is to have meals delivered to high areas of concentration where students live, likely around the Newland Street area, Linden Housing and Bowdoin/Bryant street areas.

MassInc Polling reached out to the district recently to discuss a potential collaboration with the Shah Family Foundation and The MassINC Polling Group. Superintendent Oteri said that over 355,000 students received Pandemic – Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) in Massachusetts this year and of that group, it is estimated that about half of these students could be eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit but are not receiving it. Recent data shows that in Malden there are 1,980 children ages 6-18 that could be eligible for SNAP but are not on it. Given that 5,780 students got P-EBT, that is a large number that could be getting SNAP.

The Shah Foundation has engaged MassINC Polling Group to survey families in districts where most or all families received P-EBT to understand their perceptions of SNAP and why they are not enrolling. Shah will use this data to help inform outreach and policy efforts. They will launch a survey which will be sent this out via Blackboard Connect with translations, social media, fliers and placed on the website. All results will be provided to the district. The survey takes approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. A raffle of four \$50 VISA gift cards will be given as an incentive for families to complete the entire survey. Superintendent Oteri said that if more students receive SNAP benefits, the district's Chapter 70 funding will increase.

Superintendent Oteri said that starting on May 10th, the breakfast and lunch pickup will only be available at Malden High School (MHS). There has been a reduction in remote meal pick-up with many of the students back in school for in-person full-time learning. The district is currently serving about 50 meals/day for remote students. The staff members who help with remote pickups are needed to help inside the schools as there are more students eating lunch. Not to mention that they are eating in different parts of the school, not just the cafeteria as was the case before the pandemic. Superintendent Oteri announced that the US Department of

Agriculture has agreed to fund the free breakfast and lunch program through the 2021-2022 school year.

The winter season was a successful and student-athletes were able to reconnect with their teams and coaches. Seniors were honored on Senior Nights for all teams, with parents allowed to attend those special events at the season's end. Notable achievements from the Winter Season included another undefeated Greater Boston League (GBL) Championship by our coed Swim Team, led by head coach Jess Bisson. Top swimmers were senior captain David Lombardi, junior Tony Giech, Abby Tang and Makayla Preston as league all-stars. Two of the three captains on the Malden High-Medford High co-op girls hockey team were MHS seniors, Alaina Giuliano and Sarah Whitehouse and that team registered a number of big wins.

The Athletic Department thanked the athletic training staff members across the GBL for working in collaboration with the athletic directors and principals to develop comprehensive COVID-19 return-to-play guidelines which were used universally throughout the league. MHS athletic trainer Jenn Sturtevant played a key leadership role in the entire process.

Superintendent Oteri said that a key part of safety protocols was COVID-19 pool testing for all MHS student-athletes, which is conducted once weekly on Tuesday and monitored closely by MHS athletic staff. This was a great trial run leading to the continuation of the testing program throughout the end of the school athletic calendar.

The Fall 2 season, which includes Football, Co-Ed Field Hockey, Boys and Girls Soccer, Girls Volleyball, Cross Country, Golf and Cheering began on April 12th. The Boys Soccer and Field Hockey teams remain undefeated and sit atop the GBL. Girls volleyball is 3-1 and all three are looking to contend for a league championship. Girls soccer is a respectable 2-2. The Football team plays archrival Medford in the 133rd meeting, one of the longest continuously running in the nation as of this year, on Saturday May 8th.

Malden High School Video Production student team and their mentor Mr. Jim Valente of MHS live streamed events via Youtube all winter, this Fall season and the spring season.

The MHS Senior Events include National Honor Society Induction Ceremony on May 25th, Senior Awards Night on May 26th, Senior Prom Assembly on May 27th, Prom on May 28th, and Graduation on June 6th with a rain date on June 7th.

Superintendent Oteri said that the month of May is Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month to celebrate the contributions that generations of AAPIs have made to American history, society, and culture. May is also Mental Health Awareness Month and it raises awareness of trauma and the impact it can have on the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of children, families, and communities. The pandemic has exacerbated the struggle people face. The schools have provided links to resources on this important topic.

Superintendent Oteri also recognized principals and teachers for their dedication and contribution to the students of Malden.

In response to Mr. Weldai, Superintendent Oteri said that the free breakfast and lunch program will be provided through the summer. In response to Mayor Christenson, Superintendent Oteri said that about 50% of MHS students are currently in hybrid and will most likely return to full-time in-person learning this year. Superintendent Oteri responded to another question stating that the district has not budgeted for the cost for pool testing after August 31st because the costs is not known but Superintendent Oteri added that at that point, with the vaccinations for students, the need for the tests would probably be less.

Subcommittee Reports

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

Mr. Iovino said that student enrollment was 6,232 as of April 30th. This was an increase of 43 students, the largest monthly increase all year. Enrollment is trending upwards. As of April 30th, 254 Kindergarten applications have been received.

2. Policy and Procedures Subcommittee – Mr. Weldai

Mr. Weldai said that the subcommittee met on April 12th and two items were discussed. These items were brought forth as motions for a vote by the School Committee.

3. Budget Subcommittee – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora said the Budget Subcommittee met twice since the last School Committee meeting. On April 27th, the Budget Subcommittee and the Space and Enrollment Ad-Hoc Subcommittee held a joint meeting to discuss the Early Learning Center (ELC) space needs. On May 3rd, the Budget Subcommittee met to discuss the NRT transportation contract amendment.

Motions and Resolutions

1. School Choice Vote – Mr. Iovino

Mr. Iovino explained that this is a matter brought forward by the DESE for a vote every year to determine if MPS would want to open enrollment to students from other school districts. Mr. Iovino said that he would urge the School Committee to not accept school choice students because of upward trend of enrollment for the 2021-2022 school year.

Mr. Iovino made a motion that the Malden School Committee vote NO about accepting school choice students for the 2021-2022 school year. Mr. McCarthy seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey voted NO

Mr. Froio voted NO

Mr. Gray voted NO

Mr. Iovino voted NO

Ms. Luong voted NO
Mr. McCarthy voted NO
Ms. Spadafora voted NO
Mr. Weldai voted NO
Mayor Christenson voted NO
Motion passed unanimously.

2. Employee Leave of Absence Request – Mr. Weldai

Mr. Weldai spoke about the leave of absence request from MHS Spanish teacher, Mr. Robert Grinnell who received a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) grant to serve in Colombia from August 2021 - June 2022. Mr. Grinnell was awarded this grant prior to being hired by MPS. Mr. Weldai said that the request was approved unanimously at the Policy and Procedures Subcommittee meeting.

Mr. Iovino made the motion to approve Mr. Grinnell's leave of absence request. Mr. Drummey seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey 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.

3. DESE's Guidance on Grade Retention and K/Grade 1 Registration – Mr. Weldai

Mr. Weldai said that DESE anticipates a full in-person return across all grade levels in the fall and read the guidance that was received, "We will work with districts and schools to ensure a focus on teaching grade level content, with appropriate scaffolds for all learners. We will also support districts in meeting the needs of the whole child, including mental and physical health, in addition to accelerated instruction and extra help in core academic subjects. More guidance on fall planning will be forthcoming. As we stated last spring heading into the 2020-21 school year, DESE discourages retaining students at the prior grade level. This includes students of first grade age whose parents/guardians may have kept them home from kindergarten this year; these students should be placed in the first grade in the fall, even if they chose to remain unenrolled for kindergarten."

Mr. Iovino made the motion to endorse the guidance from DESE not to retain students at the prior grade level which includes students of first grade age whose parents/guardians may have kept them home from kindergarten this year. Mr. McCarthy seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey 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.

4. Early Learning Center (ELC) Space Needs – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora said that the Budget Subcommittee and the Space and Enrollment Ad-Hoc Subcommittee held a joint meeting to discuss the ELC space needs because the Budget Subcommittee can view this matter from a financial and salary lens whereas the Space and Enrollment Ad-Hoc Subcommittee approached the matter in terms of enrollment and running out of classrooms. Ms. Spadafora continued that the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, ELC Principal Rogers and ELC Program Manager Ms. Boudreau provided information and scenarios for the ELC to ensure continuing Intensive Learning Program (ILP) contractual compliance as well as offering a pre-school option for the community.

Mr. Rogers provided a presentation to the School Committee based on 22 classrooms at the ELC. Three smaller spaces that were used last year was not included because they were more suited for small group work and not a special education program. Ms. Spadafora said that at the joint meeting, both the subcommittees voted unanimously to approve this plan to take effect for the 2021-2022 school year. In response to Mayor Christenson, Principal Rogers said that this plan has been communicated with faculty, staff, school council, PTO as well as parents who are seeking to register their children. Principal Rogers said the response has been largely supportive and added that having all integrated classrooms will also increase opportunities for inclusion.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to adopt the ELC recommendation for the 22 classrooms. Mr. Iovino seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey 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.

5. NRT Contract Amendment – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora explained that legislation was passed in 2020 that allowed school districts to pay a reduced rate of about 78% to NRT even though services were not rendered. When students came back to school at MPS in hybrid mode in the fall, NRT was only paid for four days a week. Legislation was just passed to allow transportation companies to be paid for the fifth day at a reduced rate. All the while, NRT was providing service to transport out-of-district students who were either in hybrid or full-time in-person learning modes. Ms. Spadafora said that the 2020-2021 contract should be amended to maintain service and that this costs was already included in the budget. The Budget Subcommittee voted unanimously to approve this amendment.

Ms. Spadafora made the motion approve the 2020-2021 NRT contract amendment. Ms. Luong seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

6. School Year Calendar Change – Mayor Christenson

Mayor Christenson withdrew this motion. Mayor Christenson explained that since the last day of school is June 17th and June 18th is a holiday in observance of Juneteenth, the last day for teachers falls on Monday, June 21st. Mayor Christenson continued that a suggestion to forgo the June 21st training and having it in August instead was explored. The MEA conducted a poll and nearly 60% of teachers stated that they would like to keep the schedule as is.

Personal Privilege

Executive Session

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 8:03 p.m. Mr. Iovino seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey 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 9:02 p.m.

Mr. Weldai made a motion to approve the 2.5% cost of living increase in salary for the non-union employees who were eligible for July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. Mr. Iovino seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey 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.

Mr. Weldai made the motion to change the title of Business Director to Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations. Mr. Drummey seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey 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.

Mr. Weldai made the motion to adjust the base salary of the three Assistant Superintendents base salary to \$160,000 effective July 1, 2021. Mr. Drummey seconded. A roll call vote was taken.
Mr. Drummey 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.

Mr. Weldai made the motion to adjust the base salary for the Executive Assistant to the Superintendent to \$67,000 effective July 1, 2021. Ms. Spadafora seconded. A roll call vote was taken.
Mr. Drummey 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.

Adjournment

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to adjourn at 9:06 p.m. Mr. Iovino 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