

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION
OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Monday, December 8, 2021
Herbert L. Jackson Council Chamber Room #106 - 215 Pleasant Street
And Virtual Meeting

Mayor Christenson called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m and apologized for the late start due to technical difficulties. Mayor Christenson proceeded to read the docket items for the meeting.

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."

Mr. Weldai provided details about joining the language access channels for the 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 Noriega-Murphy	Present
Student Representative Jean	Present
Clerk	Present

Since this would be his last meeting as a School Committee Member, Mayor Christenson invited Vice-Chair Mr. Iovino to lead the meeting. Mr. Iovino proceeded to chair the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Iovino brought forth the matter of the approval of minutes for the November 8th, 2021 Regular Session of the School Committee. Mr. McCarthy made the motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Spadafora seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Mr. Patrick Fitzgerald, President of the Malden Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)

Mr. Fitzgerald said that the dissatisfaction with the North Reading Transportation (NRT) service is the most consistent issue brought forward by parents to SEPAC. Mr. Fitzgerald asked the School Committee to table the NRT contract to the next School Committee meeting in order to be able to gather feedback from relevant stakeholders. Some of the complaints received about NRT's service includes timeliness as well as their ability to monitor the conflicts that arise in the vehicles. Mr. Fitzpatrick requested that if the matter cannot be tabled to a later date, the School Committee should not extend the contract for another year. Mr. Fitzgerald added that the terms and conditions should be re-visited if the NRT contract is going to be extended or if a new company wins the bid. Mr. Fitzgerald also mentioned that NRT has not been collecting and maintaining records required by state law. Mr. Fitzgerald acknowledged the service of Mr. Iovino, Mr. Froio and Ms. Luong.

Ms. Eden Garhart-Smith, 16 Corey Road, Malden

Ms. Garhart-Smith said thanked Mr. Iovino, Mr. Froio and Ms. Luong for their service. Ms. Garhart-Smith requested more information about the number of students being tested per school and vaccination rates in Malden Public Schools (MPS).

Ms. Amy Friedman, 8 Marvin Street, Malden

Ms. Friedman requested that the NRT contract not be renewed. Ms. Friedman spoke about her child's experience using the transportation service as well as issues in obtaining the video recordings from the vehicle. Ms. Friedman said that the lawsuit Malden Public Schools v. Supervisor of Public Records et. al. is directly related to NRT. Ms. Friedman said that the NRT contract should not be renewed because NRT is not complying with the contract.

Ms. Bonnie Littlejohn, 127 Emerald Street, Malden

Ms. Littlejohn thanked Ms. Luong, Mr. Froio and Mr. Iovino for their dedication to the students and staff of the MPS. Ms. Littlejohn requested the School Committee to table the NRT contract so that families can be heard before a decision is made.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy recognized the years of service and dedication of Mr. Iovino, Mr. Froio and Ms. Luong to MPS.

1. Enrollment

Mr. Iovino said that the enrollment number was 6,339 students as of December 4th, and this is an increase of 26 students since the November School Committee meeting. There are 46 potential students still pending because of residency and/or medical information. On March 6th 2020, there were 6,703 students enrolled. In August 2021, there were 6,118 students enrolled. Many students had transferred out of the district. Since August 2021, 569 students have enrolled. Mr. Iovino said enrollment is in a constant state of flux and that it will continue to be monitored.

2. Bullying Task Force Update

Ms. Luong recognized all the effort put into this effort for the safety of students and staff. Assistant Superintendent, Ms. Laryssa Doherty thanked Ms. Luong and continued that Ms. Luong, Ms. Spadafora and Mr. Weldai spearheaded the work.

Assistant Superintendent Doherty continued that the task force is looking into the revising the existing Bullying Prevention Policy and Task Force. Feedback from families, caregivers, students and staff include the social emotional aspect, definitions of bullying, building on-going relationship with the police, Malden Education Association, bullying reporting hotline and many more areas. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that there will be training for staff and students.

Ms. Spadafora said that Ms. Luong stepped into the role of School Committee member in January 2020 and at the first policy meeting in February 2020, Ms. Luong immediately started working on the bullying prevention policy to help students. Mayor Christenson said that student input is important for the policy. In response to a question from Mayor Christenson, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that students who are experiencing bullying now can go to their teachers, guidance counselors, social workers, family liaisons, principals, and nurses.

In response to Student Representative Jean, Assistant Superintendent Doherty said that in order to preserve anonymity and ensure accessibility, the reporting regarding bullying incidents can be made through a third party app, phone call and online portal that facilitates multiple languages. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy added that the reporting platforms will be available even outside of school hours and during holidays. In response to Student Representative Jean's question regarding follow-up, Assistant Superintendent Doherty said that the type of follow-up will be based on a case-to-case basis as some instances may require immediate attention if it entails imminent harm and other instances may require further investigation.

Mr. Weldai said that he worked with former Assistant Superintendent Nancy Kassabian in 2011 to write the original Bullying Prevention Policy. Mr. Weldai applauded the work Ms. Luong has done on this policy.

3. District Updates and Highlights

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy proceeded to provide updates and highlights about student enrollment, attendance, Welcome Center online registration, Edwin Analytics Data, special education structures, supporting homeless students and families, training sessions, K-8 student government, mid-year and end-year exams being put on-hold, code of conduct, handbooks, time on learning, ASPEN gradebook and other matters from the Superintendent's Report slide presentation.

Superintendent called on Beebe Principal, Dr. Kari-ann Murphy who presented Beebe highlights including grade level growths, school improvement plan, SEL curriculum, student cabinet, as well as Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training and support for staff instructional rounds.

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy called upon Assistant Superintendent, Ms. Pam MacDonald; Literacy and Title I Director, Ms. Victoria Mulkern; Humanities Director, Mr. Greg Hurley; and Athletics, Health and Wellness Director, Mr. Charlie Conefrey to provide further updates in other areas.

In response to Mayor Christenson, Ms. Mulkern said that students will be serving on the steering and selection committees. In response to Student Representative Jean, Mr. Conefrey said that there is a policy for inclusion of gender non-conforming students in sports. Mr. Conefrey added that this is also one of the reasons why MPS has so many co-ed offerings. Ms. Jen Sturtevant, MPS Athletic Trainer is also working on this policy and she is a member of the National Athletics Training Association's Gender Equity and Inclusion Task Force for this region. Mr. Weldai thanked Mr. Conefrey and added that Mr. Conefrey has been working closely with Mr. Paul Hammersley, City of Malden's Addiction and Recovery Specialist. Mr. Conefrey said MPS will be collaborating with Mr. Hammersley leading up to Stop the Stigma Day.

Subcommittee Reports

Motions and Resolutions

1. Memorandum of Agreement SEIU Local 888 Clerical Unit – Mr. Iovino

Mr. Iovino made the motion to accept the SEIU Local 888 Clerical Unit Memorandum of Agreement. 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.

2. District Transportation Contract – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora thanked everyone who spoke on the matter of the contract earlier in the evening. Ms. Spadafora said that the initial contract with NRT was a 3-year contract with two 1-year extensions. The School Committee had already approved one of the 1-year extensions which ends on June 30, 2022. Ms. Spadafora continued that if the School Committee were to approve the remaining 1-year extension, the contract would end on June 30, 2023 and it would be up for bid again. The current contract with NRT is \$2.5 million.

Ms. Spadafora said that she met with Assistant Superintendent, Ms. Pam MacDonald and Ms. MacDonald informed her that although there have been complaints, NRT has been responsive to the complaints. Ms. MacDonald has been working with NRT so that their drivers and monitors are trained to transport special education students and knowing what to do when a student is dysregulated during pick up. Ms. Spadafora said that she is also a parent of a student that uses NRT transportation and that from personal experience, they have been responsive to issues or problems that arise.

Ms. Spadafora went on to explain that if this matter was tabled to the next meeting and a decision was made not to extend the NRT contract, an invitation to bid would need to be made. Ms. Spadafora said that in terms of timing, this would be cutting it very close. Currently, 346 students are being transported on 50 routes and this is a lot for a new company to learn in short notice. Ms. Spadafora added that it is important to make a decision tonight because the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, Ms. Toni Mertz is working on the budget and it is important to know what to build into the budget. Ms. Spadafora said that due to the pandemic, transportation companies have been having difficulty in finding bus drivers. Ms. Spadafora emphasized that because of all these factors, it is in the best interest of the committee to extend the NRT contract for next year.

Mr. Weldai expressed appreciation for the work by the SEPAC in directing parents and caregivers to reach out to School Committee members. Mr. Weldai mentioned that the majority of the feedback he has received from parents indicate that they were in favor of extending the contract. Mayor Christenson said that there are many unknowns. In past years, this was one of the most volatile item on the school budget. Mayor Christenson added that not knowing the enrollment numbers and the funding that will be received as well as the expense for the new building for the vocational school, it makes sense to make a decision on this contract now because it is a known expense amount in the budget.

Ms. Spadafora said that if the School Committee voted to extend the NRT for another year, the School Committee will start earlier next year to gather more stakeholders input before going out to bid. Mayor Christenson added that SEPAC will be included in the review panel. Ms. Luong said that the contract is a budgetary issue as well as a communication issue. Ms. Luong said that communication between the district, parents and NRT is vital in order to resolve the issues that parents have raised.

Ms. Spadafora made the motion to extend the NRT transportation contract for the year 2022-2023. Mr. Weldai seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey voted YES

Mr. Froio voted YES

Mr. Gray voted NO

Mr. Iovino voted YES

Ms. Luong voted NO

Mr. McCarthy voted NO

Ms. Spadafora voted YES

Mr. Weldai voted YES

Mayor Christenson voted YES

Motion passed with a vote of 6 in favor and 3 against.

3. Schools Council Members – Mr. Froio

Mr. Froio brought forward the matter to the School Committee for approval. In response to Ms. Spadafora, Mr. Concanon said that there was a training for School Council members recently. Ms. Spadafora said she would vote to approve the School Council members but would like to see a revised list with co-chairs. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that an updated list will be provided.

Mr. Froio made the motion to accept all the school council members for the seven schools. Mr. McCarthy seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Personal Privilege

All the members expressed appreciation to Ms. Luong, Mr. Froio and Mr. Iovino. Ms. Luong, Mr. Froio and Mr. Iovino said parting words. Mayor Christenson provided citations to Mr. Iovino, Mr. Froio and Ms. Luong. Mr. Iovino requested a moment of silence for the lives lost during the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Executive Session

Mr. Iovino made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 8:12 p.m. 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.

The committee reconvened to the Regular Session at 8:36 p.m.

Adjournment

Mayor Christenson made a motion to adjourn at 8:37 p.m. in honor of Mr. Iovino, Mr. Froio and Ms. Luong. Mr. Drummey 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