

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION
OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Monday, March 7, 2022

Herbert L. Jackson Council Chamber Room #106 - 215 Pleasant Street
And Virtual Meeting

Mayor Christenson called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Mayor Christenson read the docket items for the 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. McCarthy	Present
Ms. Spadafora	Present
Ms. Macklin	Present
Mr. Weldai	Present
Mr. Gray	Present
Mr. Bernard	Present
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg	Present
Superintendent Noriega-Murphy	Present
Student Representative Jean	Present
Clerk	Present

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Christenson brought forth the matter of the approval of minutes for the February 7th, 2022 Regular Session of the School Committee. Ms. Spadafora made the motion to approve the minutes. Mr. McCarthy seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Ms. Kathleen Sullivan – 27 Oliver Street, Malden

Ms. Sullivan who is a teacher at Salemwood School spoke about the plan to remove the natural grass and installing plastic grass at the Roosevelt Park. Ms. Sullivan highlighted the dangers of plastic grass to children and that the project is in complete opposition to the protocols of environmental justice. Ms. Sullivan continued that unlike 3 other park renovations, voices of opposition have been discounted and silenced in some instances throughout the process for the renovation at the Roosevelt Park. Ms. Sullivan said that leaders must act on social justice issues and that people have a right to speak up about matters that affect their health. Ms. Sullivan implored the School Committee to protect the Salemwood School students by ensuring the toxins presently in the soil at Roosevelt Park are properly cleaned and a

natural grass surface is used to renovate the Roosevelt Park. Ms. Sullivan said that the natural grass option is a viable and affordable option for Roosevelt Park at the Salemwood School.

Ms. Sherri Jackson, 103 Woodland Road, Malden

Ms. Jackson who is a member of the Beebe School Council requested for a different food service provider because of the issues with the current provider, Whitsons. Ms. Jackson provided details about why some children are not able to get lunch.

The Chair called for a brief recess due to technical difficulties at 6:14 p.m. and resumed at 6:17 p.m.

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

Ms. Gesualdo spoke about the emotional trauma and the pandemic's toll on students. Ms. Gesualdo continued that students need more support for their social, emotional well-being and learning outcomes. Students and educators need a just recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Gesualdo advocated for smaller class sizes, smaller case loads, more hall monitors at the Malden High School (MHS), as well as more social workers and paraprofessionals in all the schools. Ms. Gesualdo also requested the School Committee to work with necessary parties in the city to try and enact a ban on eviction of families who have school aged children. Ms. Gesualdo said that the Malden School Committee and Malden City Council should work together to make it known, as other cities have, that refugees from Ukraine or other countries experiencing similar acts of war and violence are welcome in our schools and community.

Ms. Dawn O'Toole, 130 Adams Street, Malden

Ms. O'Toole who is a Kindergarten paraprofessional at the Beebe School as well as a parent of high school students at MHS asked that the mask mandate be changed to optional. Ms. O'Toole continued that since vaccines are more readily available, all families should be able to choose whether their students wear masks or not.

Ms. Staci Rubin, 33 Blomerth Street, Malden

Ms. Rubin, who is also a member of the Beebe School Council, urged the School Committee to cease working with Whitsons once the contract expires. The entire Beebe School Council unanimously recommends this request. The Beebe School Council met with Whitsons numerous times to address the issue of Whitsons not meeting the needs of students. Ms. Rubin said that only half the improvement measures identified were addressed. Ms. Rubin continued to mention the changes needed for the rest of this school year and looks forward to working with a new vendor for next year.

Ms. Rosalie Norris, 29 Blomerth Street, Malden

Ms. Rubin, who is also a member of the Beebe School Council, requested the School Committee to change the service provider for food service because Whitsons has not met expectations and has not addressed many concerns.

Mr. Anthony Ducasse, 92 Beach Street, Malden

Mr. Ducasse said that the mask mandate should be removed as vaccines are widely available and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) have removed the mask mandate for school children.

Ms. Anabette D'Entremont, 16 Preston Street, Malden

Ms. D'Entremont who is a member of the Early Learning Center (ELC) PTO, said that since ELC students are not eligible for vaccines because of their age, the mask mandate should continue at least at the ELC.

Mr. Kevin Graham, 14 Rockland Avenue, Malden

Mr. Graham said that masks should be optional. Mr. Graham mentioned that the supply shortage is still on-going and the present food service provider might be experiencing it too.

Ms. Colleen Ryan, 72 Ashland Street, Malden

Ms. Ryan, who is a teacher at the Ferryway Schools said that she has a child with special needs at the ELC and asked that masks be made optional so that families have a choice.

Ms. Eva, last name and address was not available

Ms. Eva asked that masks be made optional.

Superintendent's Report

The School Committee resumed the meeting after a brief recess at 7:32 pm.

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that following the mask policy vote of the School Committee, the caregivers, faculty and students will be informed of the new mask guidelines. All safety and cleanliness measures at schools will continue. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy emphasized that regardless whether a student continues to wear masks or not, every student will be treated with respect.

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy highlighted that the month of March is Women' History Month as well as when Stop the Stigma Day is celebrated. There will also be a celebration of life on March 12 at the Linden School for a student who passed away recently. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy continued with the district student learning goals, district enrollment, creating equity between schools as more English Learners have been assigned to neighborhood schools, and improving attendance.

1. 2022-2023 School Calendar

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the 2022-2023 calendar will be revised to accurately show the last day of school with 5 snow days built-in as June 22nd. All early release times were changed to 11:00 a.m. and late-entries at MHS were removed. Other information such as graduation dates will also be included.

In response to Ms. Spadafora, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the 11:00 a.m. early release will not affect time on learning and that after-school services would be available. In response to Ms. Rose-Zeiberg, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the district will work with food services to provide grab and go lunches for students during the 11:00 a.m. dismissals. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy added that the district is also looking to add more after-school services and spaces.

Mr. Weldai made a motion to approve the 2022-2023 school calendar. Mr. McCarthy seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey voted YES

Mr. McCarthy voted YES
Ms. Spadafora voted YES
Ms. Macklin voted YES
Mr. Weldai voted YES
Mr. Gray voted YES
Mr. Bernard voted YES
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES
Mayor Christenson voted YES
Motion passed unanimously.

2. District Updates and Highlights

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy provided more information regarding the instructional core, Saturday and acceleration academies, summer program, reading lists, curriculum and program of studies for PreK-12. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy also emphasized the importance of student participation in MCAS. Other topics covered included student governments, training for students for restorative practice, MTEL preparation courses for staff, working groups for equity, student handbook, code of conduct, and caregiver resource guide. The mask survey results were briefly highlighted along with an update on the COVID-19 cases, testing and vaccination.

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy invited Ferryway School Principal Ciampa for a presentation about the school. Principal Ciampa said that the Ferryway School is the second most diverse school in the state. Principal Ciampa continued providing other information including staff and student attendance, 1st election for student government, accountability data as well as the Extended Learning Time (ELT) grant which will involve the Ferryway and Salemwood schools. In response to Mayor Christenson, Principal Ciampa said that if he could ask for anything more for the school, he would request for more staff and more space.

In response to Ms. Spadafora, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the decrease in attendance in MHS is a pattern seen across the state as high schools usually have the lowest attendance but measures are being put in place to improve attendance. Mayor Christenson and Mr. Weldai commented that the survey data was very helpful.

Subcommittee Reports

1. Technology and Student Services – Mr. Gray

Mr. Gray provided an update about the subcommittee meeting held recently. Mr. Gray said that the subcommittee was initially formed by former School Committee member, Ms. Maria Doucette. Mr. Gray continued that at a future subcommittee meeting, a name change will be proposed and brought to the School Committee for a vote. Mr. Gray also expressed that Ms. Doucette’s foresight in creating this subcommittee should be recognized.

2. Food Service Bid Update – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora said that the Wellness Committee reviewed three proposals from Aramark, Sodexo and Whitsons. Visits have been made. The proposals will be ranked using other criteria before finance is considered. Ms. Spadafora said a meeting will be convened as soon as a recommendation is ready. In response to Mayor Christenson, Ms. Spadafora said that the

vendor who is awarded the bid will provide food service to all the seven schools. Mr. Gray said that the matter of cost is going to be a challenge for any vendor that is selected in being able to meet the needs of the district.

Motions and Resolutions

1. Mask Policy – Mr. Weldai

Mayor Christenson took the Mask Policy out of order after “Public Comment” as there were no objections from the School Committee.

Mayor Christenson read the March 7th statement from the Malden Board of Health (BOH) which included the recommendation from the CDC and the MDPH that masks should be worn in indoor settings by people with weakened immune systems or who are at risk for other severe disease due to age or underlying medical conditions. The statement also indicated that after consulting medical experts and state health officials, DESE would not renew the state mask requirement that expired on February 28th, 2022. The statement also mentioned that Malden has a vaccination rate of 88% and that test kits were widely available. The Malden BOH recommended that Malden Public Schools (MPS) observe the CDC and MDPH masking guidelines for students and staff by lifting the requirement of wearing masks at school.

Student Representative Jean said she sent a survey to all 1,816 all MHS students on February 11th and received 529 responses. The summary of responses showed that the majority of students indicated that they did not feel safe if the mask mandated were lifted and that they would continue wearing the mask even if it were lifted.

Mr. Gray said that he would abide by the recommendation of the Director of the Malden BOH. Ms. Macklin indicated her concern for younger students who are not eligible to be vaccinated as well as immune compromised students and staff. Ms. Macklin said she is also concerned that if the mask mandate were lifted, students who continue wearing the mask might be ostracized or bullied. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg also voiced her concerns for younger children but highlighted all the safety measures and precautions in schools. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg also mentioned the social emotional aspect as well as the new data available that supports the mask optional mandate. Mr. Bernard said that not every family or child has a choice. Mr. Bernard added that although the data is in favor of removing the mask mandate, it still seems too soon to do so.

Mr. Weldai said that the lifting of the mandate raises concerns but that following the new data available as well as the recommendation from the Malden BOH, it is time to lift the mask mandate. Ms. Spadafora said that the number of cases have been declining and that the mask mandate adversely affects some special education or very young students because they cannot read the facial expressions behind the masks and this has caused some regression. Ms. Spadafora said that it is time to give the lifting of the mask mandate a chance.

Student Representative Jean said that many students might not be aware of the resources for COVID-19 tracking and requested that it should be made more available. Mayor Christenson said that after the February break, cases were improving, with good vaccination rates and availability of test kits. Mayor Christenson also added that there is very limited transmission at the ELC and therefore is in favor of rescinding the mask mandate.

Ms. Spadafora made the motion to rescind the mask mandate to be optional effective immediately. Mr. Weldai seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey voted YES

Mr. McCarthy voted YES

Ms. Spadafora voted YES

Ms. Macklin voted NO

Mr. Weldai voted YES

Mr. Gray voted YES

Mr. Bernard voted NO

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES

Mayor Christenson voted YES

Motion passed with 7 votes in favor and 2 against.

The School Committee took a recess at 7:19 p.m. and resumed at 7:32 p.m. with the Superintendent's Report.

Personal Privilege


Mayor Christenson congratulated Athletics Director, Mr. Conefrey for being named as the Massachusetts Athletic Director of the Year.

Adjournment

Mr. Weldai made a motion to adjourn at 8:29 p.m. in honor and solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

Mr. Bernard 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