

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION  
OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Monday, April 1, 2024  
Herbert L. Jackson Council Chamber Room #106 - 215 Pleasant Street  
And Virtual Meeting

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

Mayor Christenson read the docket items 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	Absent
Mr. McCarthy	Present
Ms. Spadafora	Present
Ms. Macklin	Present
Ms. Hortie	Present
Mr. Gray	Present
Mr. Bernard	Present
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg	Present
Superintendent Noriega-Murphy	Present
Student Representative Abel	Absent
Clerk	Present

Mayor Christenson invited Ms. Spadafora to provide details about joining the language access channels for the meeting.

**Approval of Minutes**

**1. Regular Session Minutes of March 4, 2024**

Mayor Christenson brought forth the matter of the adoption of minutes for the March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Regular Session of the School Committee. Mr. Bernard made the motion to adopt the minutes. Mr. McCarthy seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

**2. Amendment of Special Session Minutes of January 18, 2024**

Mayor Christenson informed the School Committee about the amendment of Special Session minutes of January 18, 2024 to include documents used. Mr. Bernard made the motion to adopt the amended minutes. Ms. Spadafora seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

## **Public Comment**

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

Ms. Garhart-Smith spoke about safety and crossing guards. Ms. Garhart-Smith said that there should be safety meetings for parents to speak about commuting to school.

Mayor Christenson said he would speak to Police Chief Cronin about this matter.

## **Superintendent's Report**

### **1. District Updates and Highlights**

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy presented a citation to Maximus Angel, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade student from Linden S.T.E.A.M. Academy for quick action during an emergency. When a staff member at Linden had a medical emergency in the classroom, Maximus immediately took the nurse's pass and went to the nurse to ask for help. Mayor Christenson also provided a citation from the City of Malden.

Mayor Christenson called for a recess at 6:10 p.m. The meeting resumed at 6:25 p.m.

Ms. Shauna Campbell from the Tornado's Traveler's Club informed the School Committee that they had just returned from a trip to Costa Rica and related some of the student experiences in Costa Rica. The Costa Rica tour was the 9<sup>th</sup> tour by the Tornado Traveler's Club. Next year's tour to London and Paris has already received approval from the School Committee. Ms. Shauna Campbell requested School Committee approval for the tour to the Dominican Republic as well as the Alps and the Mediterranean Coast.

In response to Ms. Spadafora, Ms. Campbell said that the February 2026 tour will be for 7 days to the Dominican Republic and the April 2027 tour will be 10 days to the Alps as well as the Mediterranean Coast. In response to how absences will be handled, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that it will be an excused absence. Ms. Campbell added that the students do research and a project of their trip which is presented to everyone who is going on the tour. Ms. Campbell said that in preparation for the trip, snorkeling and kayaking lessons are provided prior to the trip. Ms. Spadafora inquired about fundraisers to help students who might not be able to afford the cost. Ms. Campbell responded that the reason why School Committee approval is sought early is so that fundraising activities can begin earlier. In response to Ms. Hortie, Ms. Campbell said that the tour is open to all Malden High School (MHS) students who are in good academic standing.

Ms. Hortie made the motion to approve the February 2026 tour Dominican Republic tour and April 2027 Alps as well as the Mediterranean Coast tour pending receiving the details. Mr. McCarthy seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy spoke about working on providing off-track students at the Malden High School (MHS) more opportunities to graduate. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy invited MHS student Benjamin Perez to relate their experience and the need for a guidance counselor for the Pathways, RISE and PACE programs at MHS.

Ms. Spadafora thanked Benjamin for making the School Committee aware of the matter and supported the initiative. Ms. Spadafora continued that there was a person in this position a few years ago but they were not replaced when they took another position. Ms. Spadafora hoped that the district will prioritize on filling this position. In response to Mayor Christenson, Ms. Spadafora said that the position was advertised as a part-time position and that there was difficulty in filling it. Ms. Spadafora added that the position was always in the budget. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the position was always there and that there was also a full-time Therapeutic Program Manager supporting the program. Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Ms. Pam MacDonald said that Guidance Director, Ms. Erin Craven as well as MHS Counselor Ms. Marie Motley were also trying to support the load while they were looking for someone to fill the vacancy. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the position will be a full-time position for a Social Worker/Guidance Counselor.

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg asked about the number of students in the programs combined. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that there will be a presentation on specific programs as well as changes planned on how students enter the program, the selection criteria and the piloting of a hybrid program. Assistant Superintendent MacDonald said that the Pathways program usually have about 25-30 students, Graduation Academy which is a special credit recovery program for seniors has about 15-20 students, the RISE program which is a therapeutic program has about 20 students, and the PACE program is for students who will be enrolled until they are 22 years old where the students do some off-site work and receive career coaching.

Ms. Hortie asked about the district's efforts in hiring needed personnel. Ms. Hortie mentioned that Salem State College usually reach out trying to find placements for their graduates. Assistant Superintendent MacDonald said that there are a few interns at the moment and they are looking for more. She added that the district works with Lesley College and she is aware of programs at Merrimack and Endicott colleges as well. Ms. Hortie said that she has contacts at Salem State College and would be happy to make introductions. In response to mayor Christenson, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the position which is advertised as part-time will be changed to full-time as hiring has proven to be challenging.

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy continued providing updates on Autism Awareness and Diversity Month; early release on April 2<sup>nd</sup>; Special Education Open Forum; information session for 8<sup>th</sup> graders preparing for 9<sup>th</sup> grade course selection; 2024 climate survey; family engagement events; English Language Classes for multilingual caregivers; summer programs; enrollment data; registration update; human resource licensure support; athletics update; organizational structures and systems; Program of Studies; Honors Pathways program; and curriculum.

Ms. Hortie expressed concern about the data collection efforts for the programs which are being piloted. Ms. Hortie said that counseling can carry a stigma and is confidential. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the data collected does not have specifics about conversations but rather how resources are being utilized for maximization. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that she can provide more specifics to Ms. Hortie after meeting. Assistant Superintendent MacDonald said that the information is protected and only specific personnel can view it.

Mr. McCarthy asked about which schools are going to be closed during the summer. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy responded that it would be the Early Learning Center (ELC), Beebe, Linden and Salemwood as there will be work done at those schools. In response to

another question from Mr. McCarthy, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the staff and administration at the ELC would probably not be able to work in the building but that they will be relocated to another school if that is the case. Mr. McCarthy asked about students who are on the waitlist for placement at a particular school, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy responded that they will be assigned to the next closest school.

Mr. Bernard expressed interest in also looking at more specifics requested by Ms. Hortie earlier. In response to Mr. Bernard's question, Grades 6-12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Director, Dr. Dias said that the additional 2 days or so is built into the curriculum in order to accommodate anything that might happen throughout the year that would interrupt the schedule. Grades K-5 STEM Director, Cara Hovhanessian added that she had added some optional lessons as well in an effort to plan the pacing calendars to take into account unforeseen circumstances.

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg asked whether the summer programs are recommended by educators for specific students or if parents/caregivers select them for their children. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that some programs such as credit recovery programs are for students identified by principals or administration. In response to another question from Ms. Rose-Zeiberg, Multilingual Director, Ms. Carmen Livesay said that the Starbase program has been taking place for the past few years at Malden Public Schools. It is a week long all day field trip for about fifteen 5<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Development ELD1 and ELT2 newcomer students which takes place at the Hanscom Air Force Base and involves interactive STEM activities.

In response to Ms. Spadafora, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the Program of Studies will probably be ready by May 1<sup>st</sup> for review. Ms. Spadafora expressed concern over the number of educators with licensing issues as the numbers have only changed very slightly between February and March. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that regular emails and phone calls are done to encourage educators to apply or renew their licenses. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy added that the Malden Education Association (MEA) also reminds educators regarding licenses. Ms. Spadafora note there are no movement on MTEs. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the MTEs, especially the writing component is difficult to pass and some educators were sent to Cambridge College to take a class.

Ms. Spadafora asked what Hanover Research is providing for the research they are conducting at Malden Public Schools (MPS) based on their cost and why is it only for student from Grades 4-12. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Ms. Emilys Peña said that satisfaction surveys in terms of gathering climate and culture data have been typical in schools and post pandemic, schools have been over-surveyed. Therefore, this survey was put on-hold. Assistant Superintendent Peña continued that it has always been a goal to get data from staff, students, caregivers and families about how students are doing in school. This information is used during the School Improvement Plan process. Superintendent Peña said that Hanover Research is offering the survey to the staff, students and caregivers for two years, a pre-survey this year and a full survey next year. Assistant Superintendent Peña continued that due to the types and length of questions, Hanover Research wanted to only include Grade 5 and higher but the district included Grade 4 in order to have as many students as possible to participate.

Ms. Spadafora said that the country is survey-fatigued and wondered if the results from this survey will be accurate based on the cost. Assistant Superintendent Peña said when applying for some grants for Social Emotional Learning (SEL), the rates received for doing this type of survey such as from Panorama was upwards of \$60,000. Assistant Superintendent Peña added that although the funds for the survey would be from a grant, the district repurposed the funds to purchase curriculum. Assistant Superintendent Peña added that the cost of \$25,000 from Hanover Research is for two surveys. As for survey-fatigue, Assistant Superintendent Peña said that the last survey sent from her office was three years ago for ESSER III funds and that the other survey administered was at MHS from the Principal and Director of Athletics, Physical Education/Health. Assistant Superintendent Peña said that keeping in mind that there have not been much surveys administered since the pandemic, this seemed like an opportune time to start this practice again because it gives valuable information to schools. Assistant Superintendent Peña hoped that the survey-fatigue was not as elevated in Malden and that there will be a good response rate.

### **Subcommittee Reports and Discussions**

#### **1. Budget Subcommittee Update – Ms. Spadafora**

Ms. Spadafora said that the Budget Subcommittee met on March 11, 2024 where the Chief Strategy Innovation Officer, Mr. Ron Hogan, presented the status of Chapter 70 and how it affects the city overall in a negative manner. Mr. Hogan also presented next steps going forward. Ms. Spadafora continued that another meeting is going to be held on April 8, 2024 with figures received from the City. Ms. Spadafora said that a scheduled Budget Subcommittee meeting was cancelled because district staff were working with principals. Ms. Spadafora added that the substitute teacher daily rate was also discussed and this topic was initially brought to the Budget Subcommittee in October 2023 in order to be more competitive. Ms. Spadafora said that some questions had come up regarding the verbiage and there was some disagreements within the subcommittee that more could be done but there was general consensus to wait until the budget season was over before making financial changes.

#### **2. Superintendent Search Committee Update – Ms. Spadafora**

Ms. Spadafora said the Superintendent Search Committee has met a number of times and a community forum was held with the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) families to gauge what they were looking for in the next leader of the district. Another community forum was going to take place on April 2<sup>nd</sup> with an in-person format at MHS and a virtual format. Ms. Spadafora added that the application deadline was April 5<sup>th</sup> and the Superintendent Search Committee members are currently tasked with working on the interview questions. There was also a community survey which was put out by Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) which has been extended until April 5<sup>th</sup> to get input from the community to ensure that everybody has a voice in the process. Ms. Spadafora said that the MEA President, Ms. Deb Gesualdo, has provided some internal survey results which was reviewed by the rank and file members. At the moment, Ms. Spadafora said that the timeline aligns with a mid-May approval by the School Committee and this might entail a special meeting. In the meantime, there will be review of candidates and internal interviews to make a recommendation to School Committee.

#### **3. Policy and Procedures Subcommittee – Ms. Rose-Zeiberg**

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg said that there was a meeting on March 26<sup>th</sup> attended by Ms. Rose-Zeiberg, Ms. Macklin, Mr. Bernard, Mr. McCarthy and Superintendent Noriega-Murphy. The attendance policy was discussed at the subcommittee meeting because the nurses brought it to the attention of the Superintendent that they were seeking clarification of how calls and notes for student absences works. The desire was for a policy revision so that it was explicit that a phone call did not mean an automatic excused absence. The vandalism policy was also discussed. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg said that there was an initial draft of it at a School Committee meeting which was sent back to the Policy and Procedures Subcommittee. The Superintendent spoke with Principals, Assistant Principals and an attorney for revisions. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg added that the prior policy was a little more punitive but that this version showed efforts in place to help students understand the importance of not destroying property. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg continued that the discussion also was around how the policy needed to be put into place equitably. The discussion mainly focused on technology as the district can no longer turn in damaged Chromebooks for replacements as the funding is no longer available. The estimated cost for each unit is \$300 and if maintained properly can last for 7-10 years. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg stressed that vandalism is different from accidental damage. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg said that the vandalism policy passed unanimously at subcommittee level to be brought forward to the School Committee for a vote. Policy BEDH - Public Participation at School Committee Meetings was also discussed by the subcommittee. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg said she had brought it up because unsolicited guidelines from Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan was received and our policy needed to be revised because it cannot supersede state laws and guidelines. The subcommittee decided that they needed more information and tabled the matter. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg said that the meeting was in-person as she needed to be trained on how to do virtual meetings.

In response to Ms. Spadafora, Ms. Rose-Zeiberg said that cases of damage to property will be taken on a case by case basis to look into various circumstances including not wanting to put undue financial burden on families. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg continued that property damage is not limited to just technology.

## **Motions and Resolutions**

### **1. Substitute Teacher Daily Rate - Ms. Spadafora**

Ms. Spadafora said that the motion about the substitute teacher daily rate passed with 4 votes in favor and 1 against at the Budget Subcommittee to change the language. Director of Finance and Operations, Ms. Mertz, said that previously, the substitute teacher daily rate was \$100/day, certified teachers was \$125/day and retiree certified teachers was \$135/day. The motion was to change the verbiage to \$100/day for unlicensed, \$125/day with an educator's license and \$135/day for retired educators.

In response to Mayor Christenson, Ms. Hortie explained that she did not vote for the motion because a substitute teacher might be highly qualified retired from another field or a career changer who wanted to test the waters with teaching or someone who has a Bachelor's degree, not necessarily a teaching license. Ms. Hortie said that she wanted to acknowledge their education but that it might not be possible with the current budget situation.

Ms. Spadafora made the motion to change the verbiage for substitute teacher daily rate to \$100/day for unlicensed, \$125/day with an educator's license and \$135/day for retired educators. Mr. Bernard seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey ABSENT

Mr. McCarthy voted YES

Ms. Spadafora voted YES

Ms. Macklin voted YES

Ms. Hortie voted NO

Mr. Gray voted YES

Mr. Bernard voted YES

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES

Mayor Christenson voted YES

Motion passed with 7 votes in favor, 1 against and 1 absent.

**2. Donation – Ms. Spadafora**

Ms. Spadafora read the following letter which was sent to MHS stating that the Vanella family was writing to ask that Malden High School accept these donations from the Vanella family to Choir and Play Production in memory of Julia Vanella who passed away in 2014, while attending MHS. She was just a junior at the time and this passing devastated the whole community. In just a short time after, Jenna, her younger sister, attended Malden High, the same school where her big sister went. This was a challenging time for Jenna. She struggled with the tragic loss of her sister. Choir and Play Pro were the two places where she could go to feel safe, and be herself, and express herself. These two programs saved her mental health. The Vanella family wanted to give these donations to these two programs to give back to MHS what was so freely given to their daughters. They wished to donate \$500 to Play Pro and \$500 to Choir for maybe an instrument which is needed, or staging, or anything at all. The Vanella family asked that the donations be accepted on behalf of Julia and Jenna Vanella.

Ms. Spadafora made the motion to accept the donation of \$500 to MHS Play Pro and \$500 to MHS Choir. Mr. Bernard seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Spadafora said that the Malden community came together amazingly for this family and she was so happy that they see that, acknowledge it and are able to give back.

Mayor Christenson called a brief recess at 7:43 pm. The meeting resumed at 7:44 pm.

**3. School Choice Vote – Ms. Spadafora**

Ms. Spadafora said this is an annual vote to be taken as per Massachusetts General Law. The inter-district school choice law (G.L. c.76, s.12B) requires all districts to accept incoming school choice students unless the school committee votes not to participate or votes to limit the number of incoming students in particular grades.

Ms. Spadafora continued to explain that this vote would allow students from other districts to attend Malden Public Schools and believed that the sending district bears the cost. Ms. Spadafora added that the School Committee has never passed this vote as it has always been a "no" vote because of space and budgetary constraints.

Ms. Spadafora made the motion to vote “NO” to participate as an inter-district school choice.  
Mr. McCarthy seconded. A roll call vote was taken.  
Mr. Drummey ABSENT  
Mr. McCarthy voted NO  
Ms. Spadafora voted NO  
Ms. Macklin voted NO  
Ms. Hortie voted NO  
Mr. Gray voted NO  
Mr. Bernard voted NO  
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted NO  
Mayor Christenson voted NO  
Motion passed unanimously with 1 absent.

**4. Vandalism Policy – Ms. Rose-Zeiberg**

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg made the motion to adopt the vandalism policy. Mr. Bernard seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

**5. Attendance Policy – Ms. Rose-Zeiberg**

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg explained that the policy is being revised to clarify that a phone call to the school does not mean an automatic excused absence. Caregivers must send the students with a note to the principal. For PreK-12, all notes can be given to the administrative assistants and for Grades 9-12, the notes can also be emailed to [attendancemhs@maldenps.org](mailto:attendancemhs@maldenps.org).

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg made the motion to accept the revision to the attendance policy. Mr. Bernard seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

**Personal Privilege**

Mayor Christenson announced that applications are now being accepted for the Mayor’s Youth Summer Employment Program. The forms can be found at [cityofmalden.org/mysep](http://cityofmalden.org/mysep). Mayor Christenson said that one of their providers informed them that out of all the cities and towns they serve, Malden is one of the most active. Mayor Christenson gave credit to Ms. Kashawna Harling and her staff as well as Ms. Maria Luise.

**Executive Session**

Mr. Bernard made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 7:52 p.m. Mr. McCarthy seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey ABSENT  
Mr. McCarthy voted YES  
Ms. Spadafora voted YES  
Ms. Macklin voted YES  
Ms. Hortie voted YES  
Mr. Gray voted YES  
Mr. Bernard voted YES  
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES  
Mayor Christenson voted YES  
Motion passed with 8 votes in favor and 1 absent.

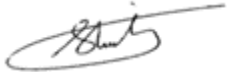


The committee reconvened to the Regular Session at 8:52 p.m.

**Adjournment**

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to adjourn at 8:52 p.m. Ms. Hortie 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.



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Shirley Dorai, Clerk