

Record of the Marblehead School Committee Meeting

Thursday May 1, 2025

Marblehead High School Library

Members Present:

Meeting Opening and Commendations (00:01:00–00:03:00)

- a. Commendations given to custodial and maintenance staff for recent exterior building cleanup work completed within the past week
- b. Public comment period opened with instructions to use sign-up sheet and provide name and address when speaking

Public Comment (00:03:00–00:40:00)

- a. Technical setup and procedures: Committee addressed audio issues with remote participants and established three-minute per speaker, 15-minute total time limits for public comment period
- b. Flag policy concerns and community impact:
 - Ms. Clark argued Pride and Black Lives Matter flags are educational, not political, while American flag has been politicized; advocated for maintaining diverse flags as educational opportunities showing all students are welcome
 - Angus McQuilken criticized committee's approach, arguing censorship amplifies voices and no policy was needed; questioned exclusion of Greek American, Jewish American, and Arab American heritage months and lack of Juneteenth recognition
 - Chris Bruell stated he and his wife were offended by previous committee statements about religious traditional family values, explaining their religion includes accepting people for who they are
- c. Policy implementation questions:
 - Renee Keaney questioned definition of "viewpoint neutral position" and whether neutrality is possible
 - Cindy Tower Lowen asked whether committee consulted METCO headquarters, Boston students/families, or other METCO districts about policy impact
 - Mary McCarriston inquired about book policies, recess scheduling, grading systems and expressed concerns about legal challenges

- Jeannie Lamkin analyzed policy language, presented research on 40 additional heritage months beyond six mentioned, noted welcome mat gifted to committee contains symbols that could be considered politically active under proposed criteria, and requested replacement of deteriorated American flag outside building

Student Representative Report (00:40:00–00:42:00)

a. Recent and upcoming school events:

- Chalk-style cooking competition held April 11th with 15 teams
- Fall cheerleading tryouts June 9th, 11th, and 12th from 5:00-7:30 PM
- Senior College Signing Day Thursday, May 29th
- AP exams starting following week
- A cappella spring concert "Okapalooza" Friday, May 9th at Veterans Middle School PAC at 7:00 PM
- Junior prom Friday, May 16th

b. Committee member asked about accessibility of \$25 senior lawn signs for families unable to afford fee; staff confirmed any senior wanting a sign will receive one regardless of ability to pay

Superintendent's Report and Schedule of Bills (00:41:33–00:45:05)

a. Recent activities and visits

- International student trips to Ireland and Greece completed successfully
- Earth Day activities on April 22nd included mulching and planting at Glover and Brown schools
- Superintendent visited Village School sixth-grade Passion Book Project Gallery
- Mock town meeting held with students debating sustainability warrant article, moderated by Jack Harridge

b. Upcoming events: Culture Feast on May 30th at 5:00 PM at high school

Schedule of Bills and Meeting Minutes (00:43:00–00:47:00)

a. Motion made by Sarah Fox and seconded by Brian Ota to approve the schedule of bills for \$595,088.79

- Motion passed 5-0 with votes in favor: Alison Taylor, Brian Ota, Sarah Fox, Al Williams, and Jenn Schaeffner

b. Meeting minutes completion challenges and solutions discussed

- Committee member cited 16+ hours of weekly school committee work preventing timely review

- Plan established for committee member and Caitlyn to batch-complete minutes over coming weeks
- Committee considered posting draft minutes with watermarks for quicker public access
- Secretary offered assistance; executive session minutes handled separately by Caitlin

c. Superintendent reminded to coordinate with Town clerk for seventh-grade students attending town meeting as homework assignment following mock town meeting participation

Senior Project Spotlight (00:48:00–01:05:00)

a. Senior project program overview for 165 participating seniors:

- Fourth quarter program requiring minimum GPA, good discipline/attendance records, and secured mentor/supervisor
- Students complete weekly check-ins and reflections, culminating in May 30th gallery walk presentation

b. Eight seniors presented diverse project experiences:

- Ava Zelum: Essex Pediatric Neuropsychology
- social media content and website templates
- Jacob Hirschfield: Professional golf management at Kerwin Country Club, preparing for Methodist University program
- Student: Boat detailing company across multiple marinas, learning estimates and work orders
- Jeremy Sorkin: First high school intern at Metro Credit Union on teller line
- Lyle Montgomery: Therapy dogs program, bringing trained dogs to Village School with planned expansion
- Ava Hand: RN Law medical malpractice internship, observing depositions and client interactions
- John Bender: Marblehead Current journalism, writing articles and planning State House visits
- Student: Dementia programs including Memory Café and Opening Minds through Art with Chevelle McDonald

c. Committee member praised therapy dog program's positive student impact and supported expanding to all schools; committee members will be invited to May 30th gallery walk presentation

Piper Field Usage Request (01:05:00–01:15:00)

a. John Robidoux requested relief from 2013 planning board decision on Piper Field light and PA system usage:

- Current approval: 12 nights per year for lights, PA system only for football games
- Proposed: 12 nights until 10:00 PM, other nights until 9:00 PM year-round, PA system for all athletic contests
- Would allow sub-varsity teams at Piper Field, freeing other town fields for youth and adult leagues

b. Committee discussed scope and community concerns:

- Application limited to lights and PA system only, not parking or other conditions
- PA system opposition expected due to sound carrying to neighborhoods from elevated field position
- Title IX equity concerns raised regarding football-only PA restriction
- New LED lights create less light pollution than pre-2013 system

c. A motion was made by [Name] and seconded by Alison Taylor to move forward with an application to the planning board for relief regarding Piper Field usage. The motion passed 5-0, with votes in favor: Sarah Fox, Al Williams, Jenn Shaeffner, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota. John Robidoux confirmed he had already begun working with legal counsel and town planners on draft application language.

School Improvement Plans (01:16:00–01:33:00)

a. District Context: All school improvement plans are developed annually with school counselors and aligned with district plan; district is revamping into comprehensive district improvement plan per superintendent's evaluation goals

b. Marblehead High School Goals (Dr. Carlson):

- Prepare for NEASC collaborative visit postponed to following year due to lost fall professional development days
- Update all course curriculum documents including scope and sequence for NEASC evaluation
- Offer professional learning for educator development, social emotional learning strategies, and expanded Wayfinder use
- Increase student voice opportunities through surveys, celebrating contributions, and student-faculty listening sessions

c. Glover Elementary Goals (Frank Kowalski):

- Teaching/learning: increase student achievement, develop accountability, arrange MTSS common planning time, implement Tier 1 instruction best practices, develop school-wide silent reading program
- Professional culture: engage staff in positive unified culture development, celebrate achievements, increase "Fun Fridays" community days
- Diversity/equity/inclusion: ensure inclusive environment, meet bi-weekly with METCO director for alignment

d. Resource Discussion:

- Committee emphasized volunteer teacher meetings must be compensated
- Need documentation of coverage resources for common planning time to support budget planning
- Instructional assistants can provide coverage for short meetings; staff culture supports mutual assistance
- Future plans should include facilities component for medium-level improvements between capital projects and routine maintenance Motion: [Name] moved and [Name] seconded to approve the school improvement plans for Marblehead High School and Glover Elementary School. The motion passed 5-0, with votes in favor: Sarah Fox, Al Williams, Jenn Shaeffner, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota.

Naming Request for Glover School Playground Structure (01:33:00–01:39:00)

a. Request Details:

- Superintendent presented request to name a playground structure at Glover School in memory of Brooke Yannow, a beloved kindergarten teacher who passed away
- Structure type, cost, and funding sources still being determined
- PTO donations will partially fund the project

b. Approval Process:

- Initial approval requested to allow planning work to proceed
- School will return for final approval once structure, cost, plaque design, and funding sources are determined
- More comprehensive presentation about Brookiana's legacy will be provided at final approval stage

c. Motion: Alison Taylor moved and Sarah Fox seconded to name a playground structure at the Glover School playground after Brooke Yannow in her memory. The motion passed 5-0, with votes in favor: Sarah Fox, Al Williams, Jenn Schaeffner, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota.

Financial Update and Budget Discussion (01:39:00–01:52:00)

a. Administrative and financial updates

- American flag replacement in progress per public comment request
- District expended \$31.8M with \$12.5M encumbered, leaving \$2.46M balance (\$253K less than previous month)
- District in good financial position for end-of-year projects and special education tuition prepayments

b. Town financial impact on school capital requests

- Town's free cash reduced by ~\$2.5M, addressed through \$1.5M department cuts and \$1M capital reductions
- Town meeting May 5th at 6:00 PM for school budget vote
- Committee discussed using year-end surplus to offset capital cuts rather than returning funds to town
- Affected items: playground structures, Glover School HVAC, PAC improvements

c. Capital budget management procedures

- Administration to prioritize requests: PAC painting/seats, special education van, Glover playground, HVAC systems
- 6:45 PM committee meeting scheduled for town meeting night for procedural votes if needed
- Superintendent recommended maintaining original vote until final numbers confirmed

Flag and Banner Policy Third Reading (01:52:00–02:37:00)

a. Policy Overview: The committee chair read draft policy IMB establishing school committee sole authority over flags and banners on district property reflecting mission, vision, and values

- Excludes athletic banners, student artwork, office decorations, and personal items
- Allows positive affirmations promoting school values if not affiliated with political/activist organizations
- Requires viewpoint-neutral government speech without promoting political, religious, or ideological viewpoints

b. Opposition and Support Arguments:

- One member opposed the policy, arguing it creates legal uncertainty and enforcement confusion rather than solutions

- Chair defended policy citing \$38,000 spent on flag-related investigation and legal risks of "all means all" First Amendment approach requiring display of offensive symbols like Nazi flags
- Chair referenced Shurtleff Supreme Court case establishing government speech requires formal policy

c. Implementation Details: Committee discussed limiting requests to students and staff rather than community members, with Superintendent confirming priority for building occupants over outside requests

d. Motion: Alison Taylor moved and Sarah Fox seconded to approve draft policy IMB with amendment adding "staff" alongside "students" in personal items section. Motion passed 4-1, with votes in favor: Jenn Schaeffner, Sarah Fox, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota and votes against: Al Williams.

Intramural Hourly Rate Increase (02:37:00–02:40:00)

a. Codifying vote from executive session to increase intramural hourly rate per June 2022 stipend agreement:

- Agreement with Teachers Department Education Association provided automatic COLA increases for stipend positions
- Hourly intramural coaches/staff were mistakenly omitted from original agreement
- Change affects multiple staff, funded through user fees rather than district budget

b. A motion was made by Sarah Fox and seconded by Alison Taylor to increase the intramural hourly rate in accordance with the June 22nd stipend agreement. The motion passed 5-0, with votes in favor: Sarah Fox, Al Williams, Jenn Schaeffner, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota.

Recess Policy First Reading (02:40:00–03:00:00)

a. Background and policy proposal:

- Elementary schools previously had two recesses until removed by former administration, causing community opposition
- Committee unanimously recommended restoring second recess but recommendation was never implemented
- Draft policy requires minimum two scheduled recess periods per school day totaling 35 minutes for grades K-6
- Morning and afternoon blocks of at least 15 minutes each, aligned with CDC and American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations
- Recess cannot be withheld as punishment and must be supervised by school staff

b. State compliance concerns and calculations:

- Committee member raised concerns about state time-on-learning requirements (900 hours)
- Current 20-minute recess schedule allows 925 hours, meeting requirements
- Two 15-minute recesses with 20-minute lunch would result in 892.6 hours, falling below requirement
- Adding five minutes to start time from teachers' contract would bring compliance back to 900 hours
- Superintendent clarified that supervised transition time does not count as learning time per state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

c. Implementation planning:

- Teachers' contract contains existing elementary morning recess language
- Committee agreed to work offline with legal counsel and union representatives before second reading
- Superintendent will collaborate with policy subcommittee to determine viable options meeting both recess goals and state requirements
- Potential calendar amendments discussed to accommodate learning hour requirements

Operating Protocols and Code of Ethics Discussion (03:00:00–03:01:00)

a. Committee member requested postponing operating protocols and code of ethics item to next meeting

- Documents drafted by committee member and Alison Taylor need additional input and refinement
- Separate code of ethics document from MAS identified during research requires integration

b. Committee agreed to move discussion to May 15th meeting

- Allows time to incorporate feedback received from Alicia
- Committee member and Alison Taylor will combine documents into single streamlined version
- Additional time permits better preparation before committee review

Superintendent Evaluation Planning (03:01:00–03:03:00)

a. Committee confirmed May 6th at 10:00 AM at 9 Widger Road for superintendent evaluation compilation

- Fillable evaluation form distributed to committee members
 - Superintendent to provide backup documentation and survey results for evaluation process
- b. Superintendent will provide supporting materials by weekend/Monday
- Will create narrative for one category and attach evidence for other areas
 - Materials due before Tuesday compilation meeting for member review
- c. Two-step process established
- May 6th: compile evaluation based on member input and documentation
 - May 15th: present completed evaluation in open session business meeting

Subcommittee Updates and Office Hours Review (03:03:00–03:20:00)

- a. Coffee hours initiative review and future planning
- Duration debated: current two hours may be reduced to 1.5 hours based on participation
 - Future sessions will feature different committee member pairings and varying times to accommodate parent schedules
 - Next sessions will use different committee members; considering creative locations like playgrounds during good weather
- b. First coffee hours session report and community concerns addressed
- Session described as cordial with productive communication
 - Topics covered: school communication improvements, Google Classroom parent access, flag policy rationale, book removal clarification (not committee's purview), resource review policy process
 - Committee addressed transparency concerns; no specific examples provided when requested
 - Dr. Buckey separation clarified: agreement with non-disparagement/non-disclosure provisions, not termination
 - WIN block program implementation needs better coordination and standardization across grades
- c. Session management and information accuracy concerns
- Alison Taylor expressed disappointment about being accused of dishonesty despite positive feedback from other attendees
 - Discussed establishing ground rules for future sessions to prevent misunderstandings

- Acknowledged risks of free-form meetings but emphasized value of unscripted community engagement

Facilities Update and New Business (03:20:00–03:26:00)

a. Facilities committee reported on comprehensive school walkthroughs by administrators with principals to identify needs

- Staff reported issues from sticking doors to cabinets needing repainting
- Mike created detailed lists of requests, many already addressed including flag pole painting completed that day
- Staff educated on proper procedures for requesting facility improvements

b. Policy subcommittee confirmed discussion of two policies presented and noted protocols/ethics documents for next meeting

c. Superintendent requested selection of committee representative to replace Matt Fox on interview committee for four May meetings

- Multiple members expressed interest with various scheduling concerns and experience levels
- Selection narrowed to two members who will work out assignment between themselves

d. Member raised concerns about meeting protocol violations and requested return to formal procedures

- Cited back-and-forth exchanges with audience as violating established protocols
- Requested implementation of Robert's Rules requiring chair recognition before speaking
- Another member indicated they would continue responding when feeling lies were stated about them, acknowledging protocol violation

e. Confirmed upcoming meetings: May 6th superintendent evaluation, May 5th town meeting, possible May 6th evening meeting, May 15th regular meeting

Meeting adjourned at 9:28 PM