

Record of the Marblehead School Committee Meeting

Thursday February 27, 2025

Marblehead High School Library

Members Present: Jennifer Schaeffner, Sarah Fox, Brian Ota, Alison Taylor, Al Williams

Facility Naming Request Discussion (00:00:00–00:06:00)

a. Joan Rosenthal of 40 Bartlett Street supported naming recognition for Mr. Kulovich, crediting his state and local government class 25 years ago with inspiring her civic involvement and school committee candidacy through principles of community, responsibility, and privilege

b. Committee chair outlined Policy FF governing facility naming:

- Any resident or Superintendent may submit written naming requests to school committee chairperson
- Requests must specify intent and reasons why name fits facility
- Policy requires public comment period before committee deliberation and voting
- Vote proposed for next meeting with community input invited via email/phone
- Lettering and plaque design samples to be available for review and press distribution

Budget Hearing and Public Comment (00:06:00–00:46:00)

a. Motion by Sarah Fox, seconded by Alison Taylor to open public hearing for budget passed 5–0, with votes in favor: Sarah Fox, Al Williams, Jenn Shaeffner, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota. Motion by Sarah Fox, seconded by Alison Taylor to close public hearing passed 5–0, with votes in favor: Sarah Fox, Al Williams, Jenn Shaeffner, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota

b. Superintendent Robidoux presented FY26 proposed budget of \$49,120,285 (5.05% increase)

- Budget includes salary increases per collective bargaining agreements, 2% COLA for non-represented employees, 2% increase in supplies/contracted services, 4% utilities increase, \$200,000 curriculum investment
- Town committed to provide requested funding increase of \$2,361,174
- FY27-28 challenges: 3% and 3.5% contractual salary increases may require staff reductions or Proposition 2½ override

c. Public comments addressed facility naming support, Glover School playground replacement, enhanced dyslexia programming, and Eveleth School feasibility study funding. Student Services Director reported six staff beginning Orton Gillingham training, parent open houses planned, and efforts to return out-of-district special education students to in-district programs

General Business and Administrative Updates (00:46:00–01:04:00)

a. Administrative updates:

- Pre-K enrollment currently lower than previous years
- MSBA visits scheduled to evaluate all district buildings and conduct post-occupancy evaluation at Brown School
- Special education and anti-Semitism investigation reports may be delayed beyond next meeting

b. Public comment urged approval of naming athletic complex after Alex Kulovich, citing his 30-year teaching career and positive character influence

Consent Agenda Items Approval (01:04:00–01:10:00)

a. Consent agenda items included scheduled bills and meeting minutes from January 9, 2025 and January 23, 2025

b. Motion by Sarah Fox, seconded by Al Williams to approve the consent action and agenda items. Motion passed 5–0, with votes in favor: Al Williams, Brian Ota, Sarah Fox, Alison Taylor, Jenn Shaeffner

Academic Program and Calendar Planning (01:10:00–01:22:00)

a. Dr. Kelsey presented the Marblehead High School program of studies for school year 2025-2026

- New graduation requirement for financial literacy added for incoming freshman class (class of 2029) as one-semester course
- Three existing courses will meet requirement: Banking and Personal Finance, Entrepreneurship, and Real World Skills
- Essex Tech After Dark program removed due to budget cuts
- Grammar and nature writing courses removed from English electives due to lack of enrollment
- CP2 level courses for Algebra 1 and Physics General Education eliminated
- Committee emphasized importance of teaching practical financial skills including credit, debt, student loans, budgeting, and financial scams

- A motion was made by [Name] and seconded by Alison Taylor to approve the Marblehead High School program of studies for school year 2025-2026. The motion passed 5–0, with votes in favor: Sarah Fox, Al Williams, Jenn Shaeffner, Alison Taylor, Brian Ota

c. Superintendent Robidoux presented 2025-2026 school year calendar proposing start date before Labor Day

- Administrative benefits include better professional development scheduling and "soft start" for transitioning students
- Committee expressed mixed views on starting before Labor Day
- A motion was made by [Name] and seconded by [Name] to approve the 2025-2026 school year calendar. The motion passed 3–2, with votes in favor: Al Williams, Brian Ota, Jennifer Schaeffner and votes against: Sarah Fox, Alison Taylor

FY26 Budget Timeline Planning (01:22:00–01:27:00)

a. Budget voting timeline established:

- School committee must vote before Finance Committee's March 31st vote
- Committee agreed to target March 20th vote to allow time for additional input from FINCOM liaisons meeting and public response
- Contingency meeting planned for March 26th or 27th if March 20th cancelled due to weather

b. Superintendent evaluation planning discussed:

- Committee to conduct formative assessment in spring for permanent status consideration
- Workshop with Massachusetts Association of School Committees representative being planned to facilitate assessment

Superintendent Evaluation Planning Workshop Scheduling (01:27:00–01:38:00)

a. Workshop planning and evaluation scope

- Committee proposed 2-hour workshop for superintendent's formative assessment, separate from regular meetings
- Process will follow previous method: individual assessments completed first, then collective line-by-line review
- Evaluation will serve as performance review to help determine permanent position offer
- Plans include soliciting feedback from educators, students, and community members

b. Scheduling discussion focused on March availability

- Potential dates narrowed to March 11th or March 14th after discussing member conflicts
- Committee preferred all members attend in person rather than via Zoom
- Final decision deferred pending facilitator availability confirmation
- Committee chair to follow up with Massachusetts Association of School Committees representative within 1-2 days

Committee Updates and New Business (01:38:00–01:53:00)

- a. Document management and communications updates
 - Dropbox formatting issues discussed; committee chair and AI Williams worked on recent versions
 - January newsletter reached ~1,100 viewers; February newsletter distributed previous day
 - Website corrections needed for outdated subcommittee references and member titles
 - Operating Protocols document formatting issues to be addressed by converting from PDF
- b. Mission statement and upcoming events
 - Committee questioned need for separate school committee mission vs. district mission; superintendent noted previous committee voted to unify missions
 - Issue to be revisited after budget completion
 - Metco Advocacy Day 2025 scheduled March 20th at State House, 9:00 AM-1:30 PM
 - Student councils from all five schools to present in March
 - Policy forum held previous evening; follow-up meeting planned to review protocols and draft flag policy
- c. I-Ready assessment presentation requested for future agenda
 - Comprehensive review of results at each school level needed
 - ~50% of students reportedly one grade level or more below expectations
 - Presentation to include special education and general education collaboration strategies
 - Discussion of assessment data use for curriculum planning and student improvement

Meeting adjourned at 8:13 PM