

Record of the Marblehead School Committee Meeting  
Thursday June 20, 2024  
7:00PM

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

Also Present: Dr. Theresa McGuinness-Interim Superintendent, Mary Delai- Interim Assistant Superintendent of Finance, Patricia Bell-Interim Student Services Director, Julia Ferreira-Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning

I. Initial Business

a. Call to Order

Ms. Fox called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM

b. Committee Re-Organization

*Sarah Fox asks for a motion to postpone the School Committee Reorganization until the next meeting when they are a committee of five*

The motion is not seconded, the motion dies

*Alison Taylor asks for a motion that Jen Schaeffner be Marblehead School Committee chair*

The motion is seconded by Mr. Williams

Mr. Williams, Ms. Taylor, and Ms. Schaeffner-All Yes

Ms. Fox Abstained from the vote

A vote was taken, and the motion passes 3-0 with one abstention

*Jennifer Schaeffner makes a motion to nominate Alison Taylor as Vice Chair of the Marblehead School Committee*

The motion is seconded by Mr. Williams

Ms. Taylor, Ms. Schaeffner Mr. Williams -All Yes

Ms. Fox Abstained from the vote

A vote was taken, and the motion passes 3-0 with one abstention

*Alison Taylor asks for a motion for Al Williams to be Secretary*

The motion is seconded by Ms. Schaeffner

Ms. Taylor, Ms. Schaeffner Ms. Fox -All Yes

Mr. Williams Abstained from the vote

A vote was taken, and the motion passes 3-0 with one abstention

c. Commendations

- Sarah Fox would like to commend the current Student Representative Cat Piper
- Ms. Schaeffner would like to commend the Interim Superintendent Dr. Theresa McGuinness

d. Public Comment

- Elmer Magana-World Language Teacher-MHS
  - Elmer reads his statement surrounding the accusations of racism and antisemitism against the World Languages Department at MHS
  - Elmer voices his support for Candice
- Mindy Greenberg-World Language Teacher-MHS
  - Mindy Greenberg reads her statement surrounding her support for the proposed independent investigation by a vetted agency
  - She also requests that an evaluation is done surrounding the current policies and procedures to ensure they are carried out in accordance with the law

*Jennifer Schaeffner asks for a motion for recess to move attendees to the “overflow room” due to exceeding capacity in the Library*

The motion is seconded by Ms. Taylor

Ms. Taylor, Mr. Williams, Ms. Fox, Ms. Schaeffner -All Yes

A vote was taken, and the motion passes 4-0

- Brigitte Karns-World Language Teacher-MHS
  - Brigitte Karns reads her statement surrounding the accusations against the World Languages Department at MHS
- Candice Sliney-World Language Teacher-MHS
  - Candice Sliney reads her statement surrounding the accusations against her and the World Languages Department at MHS
- Mary Francois-World Language Teacher-MHS
  - Mary’s statement is available below
- Laura Alvarez-World Language Teacher-MHS
  - Laura’s statement is available below
- Andrea West-World Language Teacher-MHS
  - Andrea reads her statement surrounding the accusations against the World Languages Department at MHS
  - Daleny Nguyen’s statement is read by Marietta (last name) regarding the World Languages Department at MHS
- Rabbi Yossi Lipsker (Spelling)-Marblehead Redisent
  - Rabbi Yossi reads his statement regarding the accusations against the World Languages

- Department at MHS
- Yael McGinn- Marblehead Resident
  - o Yael reads her statement surrounding the accusations made against the World Languages Department at MHS
- Elan Tiaguy (Spelling)- Marblehead Resident
  - o Elan reads his statement surrounding the accusations made against the World Languages Department at MHS
- Judith Trackman- Marblehead Resident
  - o Judith makes her statement surrounding the accusations made against the World Languages Department at MHS
- Deborah Noah- Marblehead Resident
  - o Deborah reads her statement surrounding the accusations made against the World Languages Department at MHS
- David McGuinn-Sophomore at Marblehead High School
  - o David McGuinn reads his statement surrounding the accusations made against the World Languages Department at MHS
- Judy Louise-Clinical Social Worker-MHS
  - o Judy reads her statement surrounding the accusations made against the World Languages Department at MHS
- Janice Knight-Marblehead Resident
  - o Janice makes her statement surrounding the accusations made against the World Languages Department at MHS
- Sarah Palladian-Marblehead Resident
  - o Sarah reads her statement surrounding the accusations made against the World Languages Department at MHS
- Karen Talmakoff (Spelling)-Marblehead Resident
  - o Sarah reads her statement surrounding the accusations made against the World Languages Department at MHS
- Deacon Jon Whipple-Marblehead Resident
  - o Deacon Whipple makes his statement surrounding the accusations made against the World Languages Department at MHS
- Greg Coles-Marblehead Resident
  - o Greg makes his statement surrounding the accusations made against the World Languages Department at MHS
- Rabbi Michael Ragoson-Swampscott Resident
  - o Rabbi Michael makes his statement surrounding the accusations made against the World Languages Department at MHS
- Yosef McGuinn (Spelling)-Marblehead Resident
  - o Yosef makes his statement surrounding the accusations made against the World Languages Department at MHS
- Nare Freelander-(Spelling)-Marblehead Resident
  - o Nare reads her statement surrounding the accusations made against the World Languages Department at MHS
- Meridith Rearddon-Marblehead Resident
  - o Meridith reads her statement surrounding the accusations made against the World Languages Department at MHS

Certain public comments were submitted for the record:

“Dear SC and Marblehead Community,

I am one of the teachers who was falsely accused of antisemitism. I have been working in MHS for 8 years and I have taught hundreds of Marblehead students.

Anti Semitism exists, antisemitism is dangerous and antisemitism has to be fought. We are all gathered here today to fight anti semitism because we want an independent investigation to shed light on these horrific accusations made about us. We live and/or work here and want to make this town and this school district a place to be proud of. A place where we can all co-exist.

Our district has failed us all; they were not capable of conducting a proper investigation when we were unjustly accused. These allegations are very serious and should never be taken lightly but they are also very dangerous when used so frivolously. This webinar is an example of the utilization of social media to spread misinformation.

My colleagues and I have been working together for many years and never in all these years have I witnessed any of them saying anything remotely close to those hateful statements that were shared on the webinar. Not in rumors, not from students, nor from staff. Our job is to teach about inclusivity and diversity. Our curriculum talks about appreciating how enriching it is to meet someone with a different perspective in life. We teach your children about empathy, respect and tolerance.

All of my colleagues who sit next to me today met with Dr. McGuiness in February this year and categorically denied that any of those comments were ever made by us or in our presence. Despite having shown that this is completely false, they allowed this to continue, poisoning our relationships with colleagues, administration, you all (the town) and ultimately (the one that hurts the most), the students. I don't like anonymity. My colleagues are here today because we want you to put a face to all of the dreadful lies you heard about us. It's easier to hate the unknown; that's why we are here. We are people, like all of you. We all have families who love us and who we love and they are all suffering along with us during this nightmarish of a year.

To conclude, I would like to applaud the work of Ms. Candice Sliney to combat all forms of hate in Marblehead Public Schools and specifically for working with the ADL to fight against anti semitism in our community.”

6/20/24

Statement from Laura Alvarez

“I am here as an educator in World Languages who believes and teaches that our differences are what makes us stronger. Learning a language is learning how to communicate and see the varying lenses through which we see the world. Teaching students about diversity, respect and

tolerance is at the core of our discipline. I encourage students in my classroom to celebrate and value their identities including their religion and give them a place to describe how those beliefs and traditions are important to them. I teach explicitly about discrimination, religious tolerance and how to fight against intolerance. I believe in the importance of multilingualism, but what I truly think is important is learning to listen and to consider the weight of our words, our perspectives and our identity as a community.

And speaking of words, I know this is all just words. Many people listening don't know me and have no reason to believe what myself or my colleagues are saying. The investigation will corroborate what we are sharing here tonight. I truly believe that we are all for the same cause. It is so hard to see misinformation spread, especially in an age of social media and it's the hardest when that misinformation is attacking the things you believe in the most. I have seen no one be more of an advocate for Jewish students at MPS than Candice. Many who know her, know me or know our department can speak to what we believe and teach and I hope that an investigation can look at the current complaints and see the truth. I hope that Marblehead can face the difficult conversations that need to happen and that MPS can take concrete actions to handle discrimination and hate.”

from Mary Francois  
6/20/24

“To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in sincere concern about allegations against a former co-worker at Marble Public Schools, Ms. Candice Sliney. There may be more to the situation than I know or understand, but I can say without a doubt, that Candice Sliney is not an antisemite.

I held the Lead Counselor position at Marblehead High School from September of 2008 through June of 2018. During the last three years of my tenure at MHS, I was the co-chair of Team Harmony with Candice. Melissa Kaplowich, a Parent Council Leader, requested that Candice and I consider incorporating the ADL A World of Difference Institute curriculum into our Team Harmony program.. Candice and I reviewed the prograrrf and agreed that it would be beneficial to our Team Harmony group as well as t.he MHS student body.

In July of 2016, Candice and I along with 2 other MHS teachers attended an inspirational, in-depth 4-day training in Montpelier, VT. That fall, we brought Phil Fogelman from ADL into MHS on 2 Sundays to train our Team Harmony students and Phil also presented the program to our teachers during a professional development day. The goal was for students to teach students to challenge prejudice and discrimination within their school. Our Team Harrmony leaders presented engaging, interactive programs for theiir peers during health classes that contributed to respectful behavior such as understanding the negative effects of microaggressions and to recognize and acknowledge prejudice and discriminatory behavior in themselves and others. Candice and I were proud of the work our Team Harmony leaders had accomplished. We also took our Team

Harmony students to the annual ADL Youth Congress in Boston and the ADL Law and Education Day at the Kernwood Country Club each Spring. Since my transfer to MVMS in the fall of 2018 and my retirement in June of 2021, I believe these beneficial programs continue to exist.

In closing, Candice Sliney is a person who firmly upholds her convictions. Together we were proud to be facilitators of the ADLA World of Difference Institute program and promote anti-bias and respect within Marblehead Public Schools.

Sincerely,



Meredith A. Reardon

11/7/23”

e. Student Representative-Cat Piper

- 2023-2024 School Year ended Monday 06/17 at Noon
- Finals concluded last week with grades posted Monday morning
- Summer Reading lists have been posted on the Library Website
- Fall Sport Registration will start in July
- Cat thanked all of her teachers and the school committee

II. District Updates-Dr. Theresa McGuinness

Dr. McGuinness highlights the retirees of the 2023/2024 school year for their combined 160 years of service to Marblehead Public Schools

- The principals for each school, as well as Dr. McGuinness read statements about each of their retirees
- Dr. McGuinness provides updates on the vacant principal position at the Village School being filled by Scott Williams as well as the Glover School Interim Principal Frank Kowalski
- Dr. McGuinness thanks Patti Bell and Mary Delai for their interim roles at MPS this year
- A new Superintendent of Finance and Operations has been appointed, Michael Pfifferling, and a new nurse has been hired for the High School, Maddison Gaeiski
- Our new Interim Superintendent will be John Robidoux
- Dr. McGuinness thanks the district and wishes us luck going forward

a. School Nutrition Program Update (vote)

- Mary Delai shares an update on the School Nutrition Program
  - John Costantino, Food Director for Marblehead Public Schools, highlights the number of meals served this year, both breakfast and lunch
  - He thanks his staff who helped to serve all of these meals to our students
  - “By increasing menu rotation it allows us to have more choices for the students and thus kept them engaged in eating lunch in the Cafeterias at MPS”
  - John has focused on bringing local foods into the Schools over the last two years
  - He has also partnered with a non-profit, “Jeff’s Granola”, who donates a portion of the sales from our school system to a nonprofit of our choice.
    - This year we have chosen the Marblehead Food Pantry
  - We will also be continuing the half day lunch service
  - There have been improvements made to the kitchens at each school with new equipment
  - John proposes a new position to be added to the Food Service Staff to allow him to function more as a Director for MPS
    - This position would be a Nutrition Operations Specialist
    - The role involves training sessions on nutrition and culinary skills, as well as Customer Service and team building activities to ensure a cohesive cafeteria staff in Marblehead.

*Jennifer Schaeffner asks for a motion to approve the creation of the position of school nutrition operations specialist as outlined by the job description provided by the Director of Food Service*

Moved by Ms. Fox, Seconded by Alison Taylor

Ms. Taylor, Mr. Williams, Ms. Fox, Ms. Schaeffner -All Yes

A vote was taken, and the motion passes 4-0

b. School Improvement Plans-Village, Brown and Glover Schools (vote)

- Julia Ferreira presents the School Improvement Plans for Brown and Glover
  - The goals being shared tonight are very similar to the goals presented last year for both Brown and Glover
  - The School Advisory Council wanted to spend more time working on the goals set for last year though there has been “tremendous progress” this year
  - They will be continuing the use of iReady as well as Wit and Widsom
  - Both schools would like to continue to engage in opportunities to develop a positive and unified professional culture
  - Staff members will work to ensure accessibility and accommodations as needed in the classrooms
- Amanda Murphy presents the School Improvement Plans for Village
  - Village is working on “fully aligning their MTSS system” and will also be taking on Wit and Widsom curriculum next year
  - They will also be refining their math curriculum over the next few years

- They will continue to practice “vertical and horizontal alignment” across the district which helps our professional culture
  - This allows teachers to have conversations across grade level across the district
- Amanda highlights the PDP process which helps teachers across the district with their recertification
- Sarah Fox give commendations to Amanda Murphy for the way that the Village School utilizes their “Win Block”

*Jennifer Schaeffner asks for a motion to approve all three School Improvement Plans for the Village School, Brown School and Glover School*

Moved by Ms. Fox, Seconded by Ms. Taylor

Ms. Taylor, Mr. Williams, Ms. Fox, Ms. Schaeffner -All Yes

A vote was taken, and the motion passes 4-0

c. Annual Contract Salary Adjustments (vote)

*Jennifer Schaeffner asks for a motion to approve the annual individual contract salary adjustments in the amount of \$127,804*

Moved by Ms. Fox, Seconded by Ms. Taylor

Ms. Taylor, Mr. Williams, Ms. Fox, Ms. Schaeffner -All Yes

A vote was taken, and the motion passes 4-0

d. Special Education Review Focused Program Review Update-Patti Bell

- Patti Bell presents the Special Education Review slide show
- The Special Education department is provided with a list of Special Ed Students for the audit
- The files are pulled and examined for accuracy
- They also connect with the members of our community to get a better picture of how the Special Education Department is functioning here
- They report back on 34 different standards

e. Financial Update-Mary Delai

- Mary Delai provides an update on the end of FY24
- There will be a “turn back of funds” that will likely be less than 1% of the total budget

III. Consent Action and Agenda Items

a. Schedule of Bills (vote)

*Motion to approve the identified schedule of bills totaling \$605,563.66*

Moved by Ms. Fox, Seconded by Mr. Williams



Ms. Taylor, Mr. Williams, Ms. Fox, Ms. Schaeffner -All Yes

A vote was taken, and the motion passes 4-0

b. Approval of Minutes (vote)

*Motion to approve the minutes as presented for 02/15/24, 04/01/24, 04/25/24, 05/01/24, and 05/10/24*

Moved by Mr. Williams, Seconded by Ms. Fox

Ms. Taylor, Mr. Williams, Ms. Fox, Ms. Schaeffner -All Yes

A vote was taken, and the motion passes 4-0

c. Recommendation for School Nurse Hire-Maddison Gaieski (vote)

*Jennifer Schaeffner asks for a motion to approve the recommendation for hire of Maddison Gaieski, School Nurse, at Marblehead High School*

Moved by Ms. Fox, Seconded by Ms. Taylor

Ms. Taylor, Mr. Williams, Ms. Fox, Ms. Schaeffner -All Yes

A vote was taken, and the motion passes 4-0

IV. School Committee Communication and Discussion Items

a. Interim Superintendent Contract (vote)

*Jennifer Schaeffner asks for a motion to approve the Interim Superintendent Contract*

Moved by Ms. Fox, Seconded by Ms. Taylor

Opened up for Discussion-

- Al Williams asks how the number was developed for the “Termination without cause Clause” in the contract
  - Sarah Fox clarifies that the number is based on approximately 3 months of Salary

Ms. Taylor, Mr. Williams, Ms. Fox, Ms. Schaeffner -All Yes

A vote was taken, and the motion passes 4-0

b. Independent Investigation

- Tom Costello, the School Committee Council, sent a letter to the School Committee advising that three different firms are considered for this investigation

- Alison Taylor states that she believes that they should take the lawyers recommendation and pursue an independent investigation
  - Alison would like the three investigative firms to come and present to the School Committee prior to making the decision on the firm chosen in an effort to complete the investigation correctly
- Sarah would like Tom to weigh in to ensure that the “validity of the investigation” remains in tact
- Tom provides some background on the firms selected and vouches for their qualifications to complete this investigation
- Al Williams would also like to request that the firms selected present to the School Committee prior to completing the investigation
- Jennifer Schaeffner does not believe that they should be making a decision surrounding the selection of the firm prior to having them come in and speak to the School Committee
- This agenda item will be moved to next week to discuss next steps

*Sarah Fox makes a motion to approve an independent investigation pending further review of applicants*

Seconded by Ms. Taylor

Ms. Taylor, Mr. Williams, Ms. Fox and Ms. Schaeffner, All Yes

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passes 4-0

c. Subcommittee and Liaison Updates and discussions

V. Closing Business

a. New Business-School Committee Announcements and Requests

- Al Williams would like to get a date for the School Committee Retreat
- Alison Taylor requests that this agenda item be placed on the agenda for next week

b. Correspondence

- None

c. Adjournment

*Jennifer Schaeffner makes a motion to postpone the Executive Session to our next scheduled meeting*

Moved by Ms. Taylor, Seconded by Mr. Williams

Ms. Taylor, Mr. Williams, Ms. Fox and Ms. Schaeffner, All Yes

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passes 4-0

Meeting is adjourned at 10:34 by Ms. Schaeffner

Respectfully Submitted,  
Allison McMahon, Secretary  
Marblehead School Committee