

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
MELROSE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
November 10, 2009**

A meeting of the Melrose School Committee was held this date in the Aldermanic Chamber of Melrose City Hall with the following members present: Ms. Casatelli, Mr. Lehman, Ms. Thorp Ms. Driscoll, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine and Mayor Dolan.

Also in attendance were Superintendent Joe Casey and Business Manager Greg Zammuto.

Ms. Casatelli called the meeting to order at 7pm.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Thorp moved, Mr. Lehman seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve School Committee Minutes of October 27, 2009, with changes

Public Participation

Ms. Thorp moved, Ms. Driscoll seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: To open Public Participation

With no members of the public coming forward, Mayor Dolan moved, Ms. Thorp seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: To close Public Participation

Report of the Student Representatives

Student Representatives Leanne Hogan and Joe LiCausi reported as follows: SADD hosted the Mix-It-Up Lunch today; no school tomorrow in honor of Veterans Day; MHS Open House for 8th grade parents on Dec. 7 from 6:30-8:30pm in Resource Center – see MHS and MVMMS websites for agenda; 8 MHS students from Ms. Babin's photo class were chosen for Boston Globe Scholastic Art Awards; Spirit Week planning is underway; tickets on sale now for Nov. 23 Powderpuff; delayed opening on Nov. 17 for MHS students only – report to school by 9:30am, and report cards given out also; Parent/Teacher conference Nov. 19; Homecoming Nov. 24; Pep Rally Nov. 25.

Announcements – Superintendent of Schools

Field Trip Request – Mr. Casey presented field trip application for MHS Girls Varsity Basketball to compete in an invitational Wildcat holiday tournament in York, ME from December 28 – December 30.

Mayor Dolan moved, Ms. Thorp seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve field trip application, pending confirmation of mode of transportation

December Meeting Schedule – Ms. Casatelli commented on conflicts regarding our December meeting schedule, and suggested December 1 and/or December 15 for a meeting dates next month. Final date(s) will be announced at our next meeting of November 24.

Cyber Safety Presentation Update – The Superintendent reported that approximately 40 parents attended the presentation and question-and-answer period at the Middle School presented by the District Attorney's office regarding social networking, cyber bullying, etc. Further information on internet safety and this presentation can be found on the melroseschools website.

Kindergarten Open House Update – The Superintendent reported that totals of 20 to 40 parents attended open houses at individual elementary schools to meet with principals and ask questions regarding their children starting school next fall. The Open Houses were well received and many parents who could not attend did later contact the Superintendents office for information. Kindergarten parents are urged to contact Central Administration for more information regarding upcoming parent information nights to be scheduled for next year.

In regard to field trip application previously approved tonight, Mr. Zammuto and Mr. Casey clarified that parents will be driving MHS basketball players to the Maine tournament.

Board of Aldermen Meeting/ Monday, Nov. 16 – The Superintendent reported that the Board of Aldermen meeting has been rescheduled to December 14 at 7:45pm. Mass. Dept of Education CFO Jeff Holson will address the Aldermen and School Committee regarding budget issues.

Rotary Club – Mr. Casey reported that the Rotary Club came forward with funds in the amount of \$920 to help with the purchase of an audiometer which is used to perform hearing tests. The Superintendent thanked the Rotary and the Bridge to Education for their concern and work in achieving this goal.

Mr. Casey also commented on the Veterans Assembly at the Middle School where veterans in attendance expressed their appreciation for the program's sincerity and execution, and thanked Mr. Brow and students for their work. Mayor Dolan also noted that Memorial Day and Veterans Day programs in Melrose are consistently poignant and well done.

Ms. Driscoll moved to change order of the day to hear the SPED update.
In the absence at this time of task force members, Ms. Driscoll withdrew the motion.

Finance and Facilities – Don Constantine

Second Vote/ Ripley Busing –

Mayor Dolan noted that funds have been identified and will be available in December for the Ripley bus.

Mayor Dolan moved, Mr. Constantine seconded and with five (5) votes in the affirmative (Mr. Lehman, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine, Mayor Dolan and Ms. Casatelli), and two (2) in the negative (Ms. Thorp and Ms. Driscoll), it was

VOTED: To extend Ripley busing until April 1 contingent upon said funding

Monthly Maintenance Report - Facilities Director Bob Ciampi presented overview of completed projects from September – October 2009, and took questions from the Committee.

Ms. Thorp moved, Mr. Lehman seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: To accept October Maintenance Report

Monthly Budget Summary - Business Manager Greg Zammuto presented October 2009 budget overview.

Ms. Thorp moved, Mr. Lehman seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: To accept October Budget Summary

Policy and Planning – Kristin Thorp

Second Vote/ Revised Policy #6506.1 - Mr. Lehman presented policy for Committee review, as follows:

"REQUESTS FOR AN ITEM TO BE INCLUDED ON THE AGENDA

6506.01

The Chairperson of the Committee or a Subcommittee may include any item on his/her meeting agenda that the presiding Chairperson deems appropriate.

Any other member of the School Committee, Melrose resident or other person having business before the Committee or Subcommittee, may request that an item be included on the agenda. If a request is accompanied by the explicit endorsement of two (2) or more School Committee members, or it is endorsed by the Superintendent and one (1) School Committee member, then that agenda item will be honored by the presiding Chairperson and included on the agenda, although any such item may be deferred for one (1) regularly scheduled meeting, if necessary, for scheduling concerns. Deferrals for longer than one (1) regularly scheduled meeting will require an approved motion of the Committee or Subcommittee.

The presiding Chairperson will decide whether to include a requested item on the agenda, to decline to do so, or to defer the requested item to a later meeting. The presiding Chairperson should give due consideration to all requests. Explanation will be made as to why a request is denied or deferred. Copies of requests and explanations about their disposition shall be maintained as part of the public records of the Committee. Members of the Committee shall be notified when requests are denied or deferred.

Requests must be specific, and in writing, and delivered in person or through other reliable means (email or fax, for example) to the presiding Chairperson or the Superintendent's office at least four (4) full business days before the meeting to be considered for inclusion at that meeting. For example, if the Committee is meeting on Tuesday evening, a request must be received by the presiding Chairperson or the Superintendent's office before the opening of business at the Superintendent's office on the preceding Thursday, assuming a normal workweek. Requestors should not assume receipt without confirmation. The Superintendent shall forward all such requests to the presiding Chairperson. The presiding Chairperson may waive the four (4) day requirement if s/he considers a matter to be urgent.

Acceptance of an agenda item does not necessarily provide the requesting party with an opportunity to speak at a School Committee meeting.

A quorum of Committee or Subcommittee members will not discuss or debate the consideration of agenda items, except as allowed by the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law."

Ms. Thorp moved, Ms. Driscoll seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: For the second time, to approve revised Policy #6506.01 Requests to be Included on the Agenda

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Second Vote/ Revised MSC Bylaws - Mr. Lehman presented policy for Committee review, as follows:

"1.3 Agenda

1.3.1 Construction: The Agenda for each meeting shall be prepared by the Executive Secretary under the direction of the Chairperson (of the School Committee or the appropriate subcommittee Chairperson) in accordance with applicable School Committee policy.

The subcommittee chairpersons shall be responsible for assisting the Committee Chairperson and Executive Secretary in preparing their portions of the Agenda for meetings.

1.4 Public Participation. Public participation shall be consistent with School Committee."

Ms. Thorp moved, Ms. Driscoll seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: For the second time, to approve MSC Bylaws 1.3 Agenda, 1.4 Public Participation

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Policy 5300.01/ Elementary School Class Size – Ms. Thorp presented revised draft policy for Committee review, as follows:

“ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASS SIZE POLICY 5300.01

The goal of this class size policy is to equalize class size throughout the Melrose Public School District in order to provide the smallest class sizes in keeping with our belief that smaller class sizes provide improved learning outcomes.

In order to achieve this goal average class size will be defined as:

- The total number of students enrolling in a grade (1/2 day kindergarten will be treated as a separate grade in this calculation)

Divided by

- The total number of classrooms at that grade level throughout the district based on equitable use of facilities. (Single strand classes are unacceptable.)

This formula will provide district administrators with a number indicating an average class size. To allow for flexibility in assignment, a range of +/- 1 student is acceptable. To allow for site based management issues, the average class size will be determined at each school, with the understanding that there may be slight differences between the actual class sizes at a single school.

This average class size (+/- 1) will be the goal for all Elementary grades, Kindergarten through Fifth, and it will be mandatory at the Kindergarten and First grade levels except as noted in the School Assignment Policy.

The Superintendent will bring forward the elementary school facility usage plan in April of each school year. “

Mr. Lehman moved, Ms. Driscoll seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: To accept revised Policy 5300.01 Elementary School Class Size

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Policy 5301 School Assignment – Ms. Thorp presented revised draft policy for Committee review, as follows:

“**STUDENT AND INSTRUCTION 5000**

ELEMENTARY_SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT POLICY 5301

INTRODUCTION:

The Melrose Public Schools, in order to best meet the academic needs of its elementary school children, implements the following school assignment policy. The goal of this policy is to provide equitable class size throughout the district as well as the smallest class size possible for children in our elementary schools.

Additionally, it respects parent preference regarding the school their children will attend and it supports families attending schools near their homes. The policy also recognizes that the Melrose Elementary Schools are not evenly spaced throughout the district, and it is the intention of the School Committee to allow all families equal choice. It is the responsibility of the Superintendent to oversee the assignment of students to schools, and this policy is intended to provide guidance while maintaining flexibility in that process.

POLICY:

The Melrose Public Schools' school assignment policy recognizes no district lines or neutral zones.

Assignment for new students entering grades 2 and above will be based on parental preference and current class sizes, with the specific intention of maintaining equitable class sizes throughout the district.

Assignment for all students entering kindergarten and first grade will be based on the criteria set out below in this policy, augmented by written administrative procedures which will be created by the Superintendent and approved by the School Committee.

Notification of initial school assignment will be made no later than May 15th of the current school year.

KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE PLACEMENT CRITERIA:

The district will request each family with a student entering Kindergarten or 1st grade to register and make known their preference as to which school their child will attend. The timing and method for requesting this information will be contained in the administrative procedures created by the Superintendent. The school assignment for the students registered by the registration deadline is as follows.

In the event that, of the on time registrants, the number of families choosing a particular school as their first preference exceeds the acceptable number of students in a classroom as delineated in the class size policy, the following criteria will be utilized to determine student placement.

- First - Need for special programs or facilities (including ½ day or full day kindergarten as appropriate).
- Second - Presence of siblings in the school as of September of the child's kindergarten or first grade year.
- Third - Proximity to schools: including, but not limited to, proximity of the child's residence to the preferred schools and proximity of the child's residence to each of the Melrose Public Schools.

WAIT LIST PROCESS:

In the event a child is not placed in their first choice school during the initial school assignment, the child's name will be placed on a wait list for that school. Late registrants will be placed on the wait list in the order that they register, but after the children with on time registrations who did not receive placement at their first choice school.

If seats open at a particular school, parents of wait-listed children will be notified in order and can make a decision regarding school placement accordingly. Parents may request removal of their child's name from the waitlist at any time by notifying the Superintendent.

Because of the movement of students during the summer, the placement of students from the waitlist will continue throughout the summer, but will not continue beyond the end of the first quarter of the school year.

APPEALS PROCESS:

For those families for whom the assigned school presents a hardship, an appeals process is available. The appeals process will be exempt from the Class Size Policy, and thus will not begin until after most of the placements are assigned, as determined by the Superintendent.

The appealing parent will notify the Superintendent's office in writing explaining the hardship caused by the school assignment. An Appeals Board, consisting of at least one Central Office Administrator, and two Principals who are not at the schools in question, will review all appeals. During the appeal, the students will remain on the waitlist for their first choice school and placement may be made through that avenue as well.

All students will be notified of the appeals board's decision as soon as possible, and notification will always occur at least two weeks before the start of the school year.

The Superintendent will set out the specific administrative procedures for the appeals process, which will be approved by the School Committee."

Ms. Driscoll moved, Mr. Constantine seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: To accept revised Policy 5301 School Assignment

Ms. Thorp moved, Mr. Constantine seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: To change the order of the day to hear SPED Update

SPED Update – Patty White-Lambright noted that the SPED program has gotten off to a great start this year, is fully staffed, and thanked her team for the dedication they provide on a daily basis. Her overview included status and progress on the post graduate program, a TLC “The Learning Center” class at the Roosevelt, a language based elementary class at the Horace Mann; Sharing & Caring group event for families with special needs; and the SPED PAC which aids families from ECC through high school by offering a family database, program schedule, workshops, surveys, and parent communications.

Mr. Spinale noted that the Task Force met last week and is scheduled to meet in January or early February.

Ms. Thorp moved, Mr. Lehman seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: To return to Policy & Planning

Return to Policy & Planning – Kristin Thorp

Ms. Thorp commented that Mr. Lehman will be our delegate to the MASC Assembly next week and will vote on the following items: School Funding, METCO, Medicaid, Readiness Schools, Charter Schools, District Restructuring, School Improvement Plans, Reauthorization of Elementary & Secondary Education Act, Charter School Reimbursement, Resolution in Support of Educator Excellence, Inclusion of School Committee Members on State Task Forces, Special Committees and Commissions.

Return to Educational Programs and Personnel – Margaret Driscoll

Personnel Report – Mr. Casey presented update noting two reassigned positions, 2 new positions at the Middle School, and 5 open positions due to retirements or resignations.

Student Growth Model – The Superintendent reported on this new data statistic released by the Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education which is another tool for districts to see and track student performance on statewide assessments going forward.

Ms. Casatelli expressed the need for an Executive Session in order To conduct collective bargaining sessions including grievance hearings under collective bargaining agreements.

Mr. Constantine moved, Ms. Thorp seconded and on a roll call vote it was unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:50pm.