

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
MELROSE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
November 24, 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. Thorp, Mr. Spinale, Ms. Driscoll, and Ms. Casatelli.

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

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

(Mr. Constantine arrived at 7pm)

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Thorp moved, Ms. Driscoll seconded and with five (5) votes in the affirmative (Ms. Thorp, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine, Ms. Driscoll and Ms. Casatelli), none (0) in the negative, and two (2) absent (Mayor Dolan and Mr. Lehman), it was

VOTED: To approve School Committee Minutes of November 10, 2009

Public Participation

Ms. Thorp moved, Ms. Driscoll seconded and with five (5) votes in the affirmative (Ms. Thorp, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine, Ms. Driscoll and Ms. Casatelli), none (0) in the negative, and two (2) absent (Mayor Dolan and Mr. Lehman), it was

VOTED: To open Public Participation

With no members of the public coming forward, Ms. Thorp moved, Ms. Driscoll seconded and with five (5) votes in the affirmative (Ms. Thorp, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine, Ms. Driscoll and Ms. Casatelli), none (0) in the negative, and two (2) absent (Mayor Dolan and Mr. Lehman), it was

VOTED: To close Public Participation

Report of the Student Representatives

In the absence of the Student Representatives at tonight's meeting, Mr. Casey reported as follows: Seniors who are seeking higher education are welcome to participate in the AFL/CIO Scholarship Program and should see Mrs. O'Connor in the Guidance Office to register – test will be given at MHS on February 3; Thanksgiving Day football game tickets on sale before and after school in main lobby - \$6 for adults and \$4 for children – and \$8 at the gate; tomorrow is half-day of school for everyone, and MHS will be dismissed at noon after the Pep Rally.

Announcements – Superintendent of Schools

Field Trip Request – Suzanne Troy and Jim DiSanto presented field trip application for MHS Environmental Science Grades 11 & 12 visit with chaperones Costa Rica from February 15 – 23, 2010.

Ms. Thorp moved, Mr. Constantine seconded and with five (5) votes in the affirmative (Ms. Thorp, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine, Ms. Driscoll and Ms. Casatelli), none (0) in the negative, and two (2) absent (Mayor Dolan and Mr. Lehman), it was

VOTED: To approve field trip application

Field Trip Request – Greg Moss presented field trip application for MHS Ski and Snowboard Club for winter travel in 2010 with chaperones as follows: January 9 to Sunday River in Newry, ME; January 30 to Mount Snow in West Dover, VT; February 21 to Sunapee in Newbury, NH; and March 13 to Okemo in Ludlow, VT.

Ms. Thorp moved, Mr. Constantine seconded and with five (5) votes in the affirmative (Ms. Thorp, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine, Ms. Driscoll and Ms. Casatelli), none (0) in the negative, and two (2) absent (Mayor Dolan and Mr. Lehman), it was

VOTED: To approve field trip application

December Meeting Schedule - Ms. Casatelli noted that, as discussed in our previous meeting, our regularly scheduled December 8 and December 22 meeting dates are not workable, and it was proposed that meeting dates for next month be Tuesdays, December 1 and December 15.

Ms. Thorp moved, Mr. Constantine seconded and with five (5) votes in the affirmative (Ms. Thorp, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine, Ms. Driscoll and Ms. Casatelli), none (0) in the negative, and two (2) absent (Mayor Dolan and Mr. Lehman), it was

VOTED: To accept December 1st and December 15th meeting dates

MASC & MASS Update – The Superintendent reported that he attended the Superintendents' meeting which was a very worthwhile conference with information and best practices shared among superintendents from other districts. Ms. Thorp and Ms. Driscoll commented that the School Committee meeting segment offered excellent programming, covered many issues and offered the opportunity to share information with others and take away useful ideas.

(Mayor Dolan entered the meeting at 7:16pm)

Mr. Casey reported on the holiday concerts being offered by the Music Department as follows: Wednesday, December 9 at 7pm – Holiday Choral Concert featuring the Middle School Chorus and High School Chorus; and Wednesday, December 16 at 7pm – Holiday Instrumental Concert featuring the Middle and High School Orchestras, Middle School Band, and High School Symphony Orchestra.

Ms. Driscoll moved, Ms. Thorp seconded and with six (6) votes in the affirmative (Ms. Thorp, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine, Ms. Driscoll, Mayor Dolan and Ms. Casatelli), none (0) in the negative, and one (1) absent (Mr. Lehman), it was

VOTED: To change the order of the day to hear Educational Programs and Personnel

Educational Programs and Personnel – Margaret Driscoll

Fall Sports Update – Athletic Director Pat Ruggiero reported that approximately 58% of MHS students participate in a sport; School and City departments continue to work cooperatively to maintain our successful programs; great strides were made in Fall sports this year – girls volleyball, swim, soccer, and cross country and boys soccer, cross country and football; a big thank-you to booster clubs for their respective programs; Arlington and Wilmington will join the Middlesex League in 2011; information for upcoming Winter sports can be accessed on the melroseschools website and in local newspapers; Melrose hosts the annual Thanksgiving Day game – kickoff at 10:15am.

Education Stations Update - Heather Josephson reported on the status of this new, 3-month-old program in our elementary schools which has been well received by parents and students. Program begins right after school and offers learning, recreation, and academic support, with various other interests being planned. Attendance has raised, staff members of teachers, paraprofessionals, students, mentors and volunteers are doing an excellent job, and budget is on target. A parent questionnaire will be distributed in December to gauge feedback.

Ms. Driscoll moved, Ms. Thorp seconded and with six (6) votes in the affirmative (Ms. Thorp, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine, Ms. Driscoll, Mayor Dolan and Ms. Casatelli), none (0) in the negative, and one (1) absent (Mr. Lehman), it was

VOTED: To return to order of the day

Finance and Facilities – Don Constantine

Second Vote/ Monthly Maintenance Report –

Mayor Dolan moved, Ms. Thorp seconded with six (6) votes in the affirmative (Ms. Thorp, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine, Ms. Driscoll, Mayor Dolan and Ms. Casatelli), none (0) in the negative, and one (1) absent (Mr. Lehman), it was

VOTED: For the second time, to accept October Maintenance Report

Second Vote/ Monthly Budget Summary -

Mayor Dolan moved, Ms. Thorp seconded with six (6) votes in the affirmative (Ms. Thorp, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine, Ms. Driscoll, Mayor Dolan and Ms. Casatelli), none (0) in the negative, and one (1) absent (Mr. Lehman), it was

VOTED: For the second time, to accept October Budget Summary

Policy and Planning – Kristin Thorp

First Vote/ Policy 5300.01 - Elementary School Class Size – Ms. Thorp presented revised policy as follows:

“STUDENT AND INSTRUCTION 5000

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.)

- Rounded up to the nearest whole number

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.”

Ms. Driscoll moved, Mr. Constantine seconded and with six (6) votes in the affirmative (Ms. Thorp, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine, Ms. Driscoll, Mayor Dolan and Ms. Casatelli), none (0) in the negative, and one (1) absent (Mr. Lehman), it was

VOTED: To accept Policy 5300.01 Elementary School Class Size

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Second Vote/ Policy 5301 School Assignment – Ms. Thorp presented policy 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 with six (6) votes in the affirmative (Ms. Thorp, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine, Ms. Driscoll, Mayor Dolan and Ms. Casatelli), none (0) in the negative, and one (1) absent (Mr. Lehman), it was

VOTED: For the second time, to accept Policy 5301 School Assignment

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Ms. Thorp reported on the School Committee Self-Evaluation Schedule and made available appropriate forms for members' completion. Items to be evaluated include governance, committee/superintendent relations, operations, member relations, strategic planning and fiscal management, community relations, conduct of meetings and completion of goals. Ms. Thorp requested evaluation forms be returned to her one week from today in order for her to compile the information and report back on December 15. In addition, Ms. Driscoll reported on strategic plan timeline, and Ms. Casatelli and Mr. Casey reported on various sections of the communication plan.

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Presentation of MSC Bylaws – Ms. Thorp presented revised draft of Section 1.1 Place of Meetings, and Section 1.2 Regularly Scheduled Meetings, as follows:

“ARTICLE 1 - MEETINGS

1.1 Place of Meetings. Regularly scheduled meetings of the School Committee will be held in the Aldermanic Chambers of Melrose City Hall. The meeting location can be changed by a majority vote of the committee, as long as sufficient public notice is given, and the location complies with Massachusetts State Law. Additional meetings may also be held in other locations as determined by the Chair of the School Committee.

1.2 Regularly Scheduled Meetings. Regularly scheduled meetings of the Full Committee shall generally be held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, except for the month of July, which will generally have one meeting. Meeting dates and times can be changed by a majority vote of the committee, as long as sufficient public notice is given according to Massachusetts State Law.”

Ms. Driscoll moved, Mayor Dolan seconded and with six (6) votes in the affirmative (Ms. Thorp, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine, Ms. Driscoll, Mayor Dolan and Ms. Casatelli), none (0) in the negative, and one (1) absent (Mr. Lehman), it was

VOTED: To approve Bylaws changes

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

Ms. Thorp moved, Ms. Driscoll seconded and on a roll call vote with six (6) votes in the affirmative (Ms. Thorp, Mr. Spinale, Mr. Constantine, Ms. Driscoll, Mayor Dolan and Ms. Casatelli), none (0) in the negative, and one (1) absent (Mr. Lehman), it was

VOTED: To adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:35pm.