Melrose School Committee
Regular Meeting

Tuesday, December 16, 2025, 7:00 PM
562 Main Street, Melrose, MA 02176
Council Chamber, First Floor, Melrose City Hall

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Dorie Withey	Chair	Present	7:19 PM
Jennifer McAndrew	Vice Chair	Present	
Jen Grigoraitis	Mayor	Present	
Jennifer Razi-Thomas	Member	Present	
Seamus Kelley	Member	Present	
Matt Hartman	Member	Present	
Margaret Raymond Driscoll	Member	Present	
Cari Berman	Interim Superintendent	Present	

Also in attendance: Interim Deputy Superintendent, Ken Kelley and Recording Secretary, Kristen O'Connor. With a roll call vote with six (6) present, the meeting convened at 7:00 PM

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment was opened by Vice Chair McAndrew then closed as no one wished to speak.

3. REPORT OF THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

There were no Student Representatives present this evening.

4. ANNOUNCMENTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

1. Report: Personnel
   Interim Superintendent Berman presented the personnel report from the packet and offered to answer any questions from the Committee.

2. Report: Enrollment Update
   Superintendent Berman also shared the enrollment report from the packet and offered to answer any questions.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION:	To Approve the Consent Agenda
RESULT:	**ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Seamus Kelley
SECONDER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas

ABSENT:	Dorie Withey
AYES:	Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman

1. Meeting Minutes: December 9, 2025 Regular Meeting
2. Cafeteria Report
3. MHS Ski Club Field Trip
4. Warrants

   FY26 School - S26044 - $274,289.97
   FY26 Refunds/Officials - S26045 - $399.00

6. SUBCOMMITTEES (COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE)

1. Finance and Facilities - Seamus Kelley/Jennifer McAndrew

A Monthly Budget/Grants
Interim Deputy Superintendent Kelley presented the monthly budget summary and grants from the packet. Mr. Hartman asked about some FY25 balances, and the Deputy Superintendent clarified that many of the grants are multi-year grants, all grants are in compliance, are monitored closely and are in good standing.

MOTION:	To Approve Monthly Grants
RESULT:	**ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Matt Hartman
SECONDER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
ABSENT:	Dorie Withey
AYES:	Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman

B Report: Special Education Expense Update

The Special Education Report from the packet was reviewed. Ms. Razi-Thomas inquired about the integrated monitoring cycle. Interim Superintendent Berman explained the DESE process, which involves a three-year cycle focused on special education and civil rights (Section B). The district submitted a self-assessment and will receive a final report after January. Today's on-site visit included two DESE representatives visiting six schools to observe programs and classrooms, Thursday's activities will include interviews with educators, administrators, and SEPAC. Ms. Razi-Thomas then suggested inviting the current co-directors to a future School Committee meeting

C Vote: FY26 Supplemental Budget Request

Finance and Facilities Subcommittee Chair Kelley initiated the discussion on the Supplemental Budget Requests, presented for review prior to a Committee vote. The discussion included: the process for approving the supplemental funding from the override, emphasizing that this vote is for distribution across this year's budget categories and does not include approval for the FY27 budget, which has not yet begun. It was clarified that no changes would occur in the middle school principal position at this time, as Mr. Merrill and Mr. Corrigan are under contract until the end of the current school year. The leadership team will work to determine the best way to utilize these funds for the second half of the school year. Also, it was clarified that the Committee would be voting on Column 2 on the chart in the packet.

MOTION:	To Approve the District Wide Admin Supplemental Appropriation in the amount of $700,300.00
RESULT:	**ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Jennifer McAndrew
SECONDER:	Matt Hartman
ABSENT:	Dorie Withey
AYES:	Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman

MOTION:	To Approve remaining supplemental appropriation lines: $97,000 for Franklin, $656,000 for elementary, $533,000 for the middle school, $363,000 for the high school, and $1,469,500 for teaching and learning, for a total of $3,118,500.
RESULT:	**ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Jennifer McAndrew
SECONDER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
ABSENT:	Dorie Withey
AYES:	Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman

The Deputy Interim Superintendent noted that the final FY 24 report was received yesterday. He confirmed that the information contained in the final report matched the data presented in the prior packet. The final report was a procedural formality and will be included in the next meeting's packet for reference only.

2. Policy and Planning - Matt Hartman/Margaret Driscoll

A Vote: 2026-2027 School Year Calendar

Policy and Planning Subcommittee Chair Hartman presented a revised 2026-2027 school calendar setting June 18th as the official observance day for Juneteenth. This adjustment also established the new last possible day of school if snow days extend the year. A motion was made by Ms. McAndrew to approve the 2026-2027 school year calendar, seconded by Ms. Razi-Thomas. With all in favor, and one abstention, the motion passed. *Ms. Withey arrived 7:19 PM*

MOTION:	To Approve the 2026-2027 school year calendar
RESULT:	**ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Jennifer McAndrew
SECONDER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
ABSTENTION:	Dorie Withey
AYES:	Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman

B Vote: MHS Competency Determination Policy

The Competency Determination Policy was presented for a second vote.

MOTION:	To Approve the Competency Determination Policy
RESULT:	**ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Seamus Kelley
SECONDER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
AYES:	Dorie Withey, Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman

C Vote: CTE Policy Amendment

Mr. Hartman reviewed the CTE Policy. Following feedback from DESE, the policy was amended with a sentence added clarifying that the hosting school will pay all costs associated with the school tours. A memo in this week's packet highlights the changes made. Therefore, a vote must be made on the amended policy.

MOTION:	To Approve the CTE Policy Amendment
RESULT:	**ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Seamus Kelley
SECONDER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
AYES:	Dorie Withey, Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman

3. Educational Programs and Personnel - Jennifer Razi-Thomas/ Margaret Driscoll

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE CHAIR

1. Vote: Superintendent Hiring Process

Ms. McAndrew provided a summary on the status of the Superintendent Hiring Process. Her summary included a discussion of the Interim Superintendent's mid-year performance review, the various potential paths forward discussed during the previous meeting, and the legal and procedural guidance provided in the memos from Ms. Withey and Attorney Lindquist. Ms. McAndrew also acknowledged the lengthy discussion that had occurred and thanked members of the public for their input. She referenced the addition of Interim Superintendent Berman's resume and letter of interest in this week's packet. Ms. McAndrew opened the floor for the Committee to continue their discussions and questions.
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Interim Superintendent Berman responded to a variety of Committee questions on her vision and experience within the District. She highlighted the value of her time as Interim Superintendent, noting the opportunity to gain a broader perspective beyond her previous role in special education and to deepen her understanding of the entire District. Ms. Berman discussed her collaborative work with the district leadership team and the current seasoned interim PPS directors to develop a strategic plan. She also discussed her work with Interim Deputy Superintendent Kelley to stabilize funding for the special education program, appropriate budgeting, pre-paying tuitions, and early identification of needs in areas like mental health, early ELA and math and emphasized the importance of high-quality Tier One instruction. While acknowledging her primary expertise lies in special education, secondary education, and budgeting, she shared how she is actively learning more about the elementary level. Ms. Berman referenced the importance of the "ABC's" of accountability, sense of belonging, and consistency and also outlined plans to enhance dialogue with families and educators.

Committee members shared their reflections on the Superintendent hiring process, focusing specifically on Ms. Berman's qualifications. Their reflections centered on her strong leadership, her history as a long-time employee with deep knowledge of Melrose, the stability she offers, and the importance of having a Superintendent with an educator's voice, perspective, and core values that align with the District's. Mr. Kelley made a motion to officially appoint Ms. Cari Berman as the Superintendent of Schools, contingent upon successful contract negotiations. The motion was seconded by Ms. Driscoll, and with all members voting in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

MOTION:	To Appoint Ms. Cari Berman as Superintendent of Schools pending successful negotiations
RESULT:	**ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Seamus Kelley
SECONDER:	Margaret Raymond Driscoll
AYES:	Dorie Withey, Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman

2. Report: Outreach
Mayor Grigoraitis took a moment to thank members of the Committee and incoming Committee members who attended the first ever lighting of the Menorah at city hall.

Superintendent Berman took a moment to thank the Committee for their recognition and support.

Ms. Withey recognized Ms. McAndrew's final meeting after eight years of service, expressing gratitude for their collaboration. Ms. McAndrew reciprocated, thanking Ms. Withey on her final meeting as both a School Committee member and Chair, acknowledging the significant workload associated with the Chair position. The remaining School Committee members each offered thanks and shared individual stories celebrating Ms. Withey's and Ms. McAndrew's dedication and contributions. Mr. Kelley, on behalf of the School Committee, presented both Ms. McAndrew and Ms. Withey with flowers

8. ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Vice Chair McAndrew stated the need for Executive Session to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel Cari Berman.

MOTION:	To Adjourn to Executive Session
RESULT:	**ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Dorie Withey
SECONDER:	Seamus Kelley
AYES:	Dorie Withey , Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman

The meeting adjourned to Executive Session at 8:20 PM and did not return to Public Session.

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel Cari Berman.

10. ADJOURN