



Melrose School Committee
Regular Meeting

Tuesday, March 10, 2026, 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
Margaret Raymond Driscoll	Member	Present	
Jen Grigoraitis	Mayor	Absent	
Matt Hartman	Vice Chair	Absent	
Melissa Holleran	Member	Present	
Seamus Kelley	Chair	Present	
Sheri Leo	Member	Present	
Jen Razi-Thomas	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 five (5) present and two (2) absent, the meeting convened at 7:00 PM.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chair Kelley sited the need for Executive Session to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel Cari Berman. The Committee adjourned to Executive Session at 7:01 PM and will return to Public Session.

MOTION:	To adjourn to Executive Session
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
SECONDER:	Melissa Holleran
AYES:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Melissa Holleran, Sheri Leo
ABSENT:	Jen Grigoraitis, Matt Hartman

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

3. RETURN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Committee returned to Public Session at 7:17 PM. The Committee discussed a three-year contract with Cari Berman to begin on July 1, 2026 and conclude on June 30, 2029.

MOTION:	To approve the contract for Cari Berman
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Margaret Raymond Driscoll
SECONDER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
AYES:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Melissa Holleran, Sheri Leo
ABSENT:	Jen Grigoraitis, Matt Hartman

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Without objection the Chair opened Public Comment.

Jake Whitmore, a teacher in Melrose for 18 years, teaching seventh grade math, spoke about his experience, and his offer to work in another district but declined because he felt he had more work to do here. He voiced his concerns that the team model would not be restored in the 7th grade, and urged the School Committee to act as stronger advocates for student-facing resources and to restore previously cut positions. He challenged the Committee to be ready to provide serious pay, a parental leave package and to do better to ensure Melrose keeps its best teachers, paraprofessionals, and secretaries.

Nicole Goodhue, a Melrose teacher of 16 years, addressed the Committee regarding the disparity between Melrose property values and the city's education funding. She noted that despite rising local real estate costs, the city maintains some of the lowest per-pupil expenditures and education budget percentages in the area. Ms. Goodhue urged the Committee to secure a larger investment in public schools, stating that families purchasing homes deserve a community that invests in education.

MOTION:	To close Public Comment
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
SECONDER:	Sheri Leo
AYES:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Melissa Holleran, Sheri Leo
ABSENT:	Jen Grigoraitis, Matt Hartman

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

1. Updates: Registration

The Superintendent reported that 2026-2027 Pre-K registration numbers reached 215 as

of March 9th, consisting of 20 students in the two-day, 39 in the three-day, and 156 in the five-day programs. Kindergarten pre-registration opened March 2nd in Aspen with so far 136 students, maintaining a pace consistent with last year.

Additionally, the Superintendent addressed a follow-up inquiry regarding students returning to the district after going to a different school setting, noting that 14 high school students returned to the district from private, charter, or vocational schools since August 2025. Discussion included any potential glitches using an online system and time-saving costs to online registration.

2. Report: Personnel

The Superintendent presented the personnel report from the packet and offered to answer any questions.

3. Report: DESE Integrated Monitoring Review Report

Superintendent Berman presented the DESE Integrated Monitoring Report, highlighting a successful three-year review of special education and civil rights compliance. While the district achieved full implementation across nearly all criteria, the "SE 51" element regarding special education teacher licensure was noted as only partially implemented. The Superintendent discussed the widespread challenge of recruiting highly qualified, licensed staff and how the district is collaborating with DESE to expedite processing unlicensed teachers to ensure full compliance. Discussion included: the process for obtaining special education licensure, noting the challenging test and other districts seeing similar.

6. REPORT OF THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

There were no student representatives present.

7. CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION:	To approve the Consent Agenda
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Melissa Holleran
SECONDER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
AYES:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Melissa Holleran, Sheri Leo
ABSENT:	Jen Grigoraitis, Matt Hartman

1. Warrants

- FY26 School - [S26062](#) - \$527,879.32
- FY26 Officials - [S26063](#) - \$740.00
- FY26 February High School Student Activity Wire - [S26064](#) - \$16,718.94
- FY26 March Debit Card - [S26065](#) - \$1625.00
- FY26 February Meals Tax - [S26066](#) - \$30.72

FY26 February MVMMS Student Activity Wire - [S26067](#) - \$175.00
FY26 Postage Wire - [S26068](#)- \$5,000.00

2. Regular Meeting Minutes: February 24, 2026
3. MHS Field Trip: Germany 2027
4. Surplus Request

8. SUBCOMMITTEES (COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE)

1. Finance and Facilities - Margaret Driscoll/Melissa Holleran
- A Vote: Monthly Budget Summary/Revolving Accounts

Interim Deputy Superintendent Kelley presented the monthly budget summary and revolving accounts, noting that the district is on track to finish the year with a balanced budget.

MOTION:	To approve the monthly budget summary and revolving accounts report
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Seamus Kelley
SECONDER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
AYES:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Melissa Holleran, Sheri Leo
ABSENT:	Jen Grigoraitis, Matt Hartman

B Discussion: FY27 Fees

Education Stations Director, Jen Proulx, presented slides from the packet showing the proposed tuition and program options for FY 27, highlighting a transition to a single pickup time to optimize staffing and enhance peer activities. While tuition rates will be standardized to this single time, caregivers still have the flexibility to pick up children at any time. Additionally, Ms. Proulx recommended a 2% tuition increase to address rising supply costs and maintain competitive staff wages and offerings. Discussion included: early bird rates, and the number of staff and students in the program.

Principal Andrea LaCau presented the FY27 Franklin ECC proposal, noting consistent enrollment trends and praising the school's high quality staff and programming. She emphasized the important role of the special education programs, requesting the budget and staffing necessary to maintain all current classrooms to meet both contractual obligations and student needs. Ms. LaCau concluded by noting that the proposed tuition remains competitive with comparable area programs.

Interim Deputy Superintendent Kelley reviewed the secondary fees outlined in the packet. He noted that the ten percent increase implemented for FY 2026 was a significant

adjustment driven by the unknown of FY 2027. The Administration discussed maintaining the same fees for the upcoming year with one exception. To ensure student participation remains accessible, the hockey fee—currently set at \$715—would be reduced back to its pre-increase rate. This recommendation follows concerns from Mr. Fogarty and Principal Merrill that the higher cost might discourage students from joining the team.

C Informational: City and MPS Budget Overview

2. Educational Programs and Personnel - Jen Razi-Thomas/Sheri Leo

A Informational Review: SOA Report

Melanie Acevedo, Executive Director of Academics and Accountability, presented the mandated three-year Student Opportunity Act (SOA) Plan, which focuses on identifying and closing achievement gaps between specific student subgroups. This year's plan specifically looks at middle school students with disabilities and multilingual learners. Ms. Acevedo detailed the implementation of evidence-based practices, including comprehensive tiered support systems, high-leverage instructional strategies for students with disabilities, and the development of effective programming for multilingual learners.

Discussed included: the significant effort required for the presentation while noting that the SOA is not a substantial funding source, how this foundational work is critical for improving mid-year data and directly impacting student outcomes. The conversation also touched on the necessity of ensuring all instructional materials and resources remain current, highlighting an ongoing review of the district's math programs to align with these strategic goals.

B Discussion: Mid-year Data

Melanie Acevedo, Executive Director of Academics and Accountability, presented the FY26 mid-year assessment data, noting that the results represent a single data point. Her overview included a comparative analysis of student performance from the beginning to the middle of the year and a review of next steps. Discussion included: students buying into the iXL program at the high school level and how this impacts the data, looking at this as a standards base assessment and thinking about our curriculum and instruction, end of year MCAS data, and when we might see a shift in data after starting a new math program, and how to keep up with the most up to date programs.

3. Policy and Planning - Matt Hartman/Margaret Driscoll

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE CHAIR

1. Report: Rolling Agenda

Chair Kelley discussed updating the rolling agenda to reflect recent meetings.

2. Report: Outreach

Ms. Leo shared details from her meeting with the citywide PTO and the positive feedback around frequency and clarity of communications from the Superintendent, particularly around the communication regarding potential snow days, as well as the new flyer

distribution process. She also mentioned the next monthly School Committee office hours coming up on Saturday March 28th with Ms. Holleran and Ms. Razi-Thomas at La QChara at 8:30 am.

10. ADJOURN

MOTION:	To adjourn
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
SECONDER:	Melissa Holleran
AYES:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Melissa Holleran, Sheri Leo
ABSENT:	Jen Grigoraitis, Matt Hartman,

The meeting adjourned at 9:24 PM.