Melrose School Committee
Regular Meeting

Tuesday, May 19, 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	
Mayor Grigoraitis	Mayor	Present	
Matt Hartman	Vice Chair	Present	
Melissa Holleran	Member	Present	
Seamus Kelley	Chair	Present	
Sheri Leo	Member	Present	
Jen Razi-Thomas	Member	Present	
Cari Berman	Superintendent	Present	
Ken Kelley	Deputy Superintendent	Present	

Also in attendance: Legal Counsel, Amy Lindquist and Recording Secretary, Kristen O'Connor. Will a roll call vote with seven (7) present, the meeting convened at 7:00 PM.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Laura Pollica, Friends of Melrose Drama Board Member, expressed concern regarding the Visual and Performing Arts Director remaining a stipend position for the 2026-2027 school year. She acknowledged the district's financial challenges, but felt that a stipend underestimates the role's scope and its significant impact on students, faculty, and the community.

Oskar Senft, parent and Melrose Drama volunteer, emphasized the importance of the arts in building student connections and argued for a dedicated director to handle administrative oversight, allowing teachers to focus primarily on instruction.

Adam Chapman, parent and a former drama student himself, highlighted the lasting benefits of the performing arts and advocated for elevating the director position beyond a stipend to properly manage oversight, partnerships, and grants. He described the program as remarkable and called a fully funded director the best possible return on investment.

Susan Cann, resident and former School Committee member, addressed the *Melrose Weekly News* article on negotiations and cited concerns regarding pest control and climate regulation. She advocated that managing these health and safety issues is the Committee's responsibility and recommended early dismissals (half or quarter days) when building temperatures are extreme.

Charles Faulstich, Melrose resident since 1982 and involved with Melrose Drama, urged the Committee to consider the Director of Visual and Performing Arts as a full-time position. He noted that the program has grown significantly and cited the success of other districts as evidence that a full-time position is important to the program's growth and quality.

Jonathan McCurry, Melrose resident, spoke to the vital role of the arts in student development, emphasizing the leadership skills fostered through theater. He urged the Committee to support these programs, noting that today's students are the future leaders of the Melrose community.

By unanimous consent, Public Comment closed.

MOTION:	To move up Executive Session as the next item on the Agenda
RESULT:	**ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
SECONDER:	Margaret Raymond Driscoll
AYES:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman, Melissa Holleran, Sheri Leo

3. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chair Kelley sited the need for Executive Session to approve Executive Session meeting minutes from February 24, 2026 and March 10, 2026 and also to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with MEU Units A, B and C as an open discussion may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee. The Committee adjourned to Executive Session at 7:15 PM and will return to Public Session.

MOTION:	To adjourn to Executive Session
RESULT:	**ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	None
SECONDER:	None
AYES:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman, Melissa Holleran, Sheri Leo

1. To approve Executive Session meeting minutes from February 24, 2026 and March 10, 2026.

2. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with MEA Units A, B and C as an open discussion may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee.

4. RETURN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Committee returned to Public Session at 7:50 PM. Chair Kelley noted that during Executive

Session, the Committee voted to approve the Executive Session meeting minutes of February 24, 2026 and March 10, 2026.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Superintendent Berman presented updates regarding two new curriculum programs selected following a rigorous evaluation by Ms. Acevedo and a dedicated group of educators. For mathematics, the district will implement *Reveal Math* by McGraw-Hill for grades K–11. To ensure readiness, initial training and material distribution will be completed before the summer break. In literacy, *UFLI* will be adopted as a Tier 1 phonics component for grades K–2, while *MyView* will remain in place for language comprehension strands. Staff training for this program will also take place before the end of the current school year. Superintendent Berman concluded by thanking Ms. Acevedo and all the educators involved in the selection process.

Superintendent Berman also took a moment to express gratitude to the community for the compassion and support shown over the last several challenging weeks. She noted that seeing students, staff, and families unite has made her proud and thankful to be a member of this community.

6. REPORT OF THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

There were no Student Representatives present.

7. CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Driscoll requested that the May 13, 2026, Special Meeting Minutes be removed. They will be moved to the Announcements of the Chair. All other Consent Agenda items were approved as presented.

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

1. Warrants

   FY26 School - S26082 - $469,530.24
   FY26 April High School Student Activity Wire - S26083 - $23,915.80
   FY26 May Debit Card - S26084 - $1625.00
   FY26 April Meals Tax - S26085 - $32.70
   FY26 April MVMMS Student Activity Wire - S26086 - $3,937.50
   FY26 Refunds/Officials - S26087 - $1,008.00

2. Regular Meeting Minutes: April 28, 2026

3. Special Meeting Minutes: May 13, 2026

4. Cafeteria Report

8. SUBCOMMITTEES (COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE)

1. Finance and Facilities - Margaret Driscoll/Melissa Holleran

A Vote: Monthly Budget Summary/Grants/Revolving Accounts

Deputy Superintendent Kelley presented the monthly budget summary, grants, and revolving accounts. As the district winds down FY26, all operating budget purchases have stopped (excepting for building essentials) as of May 15. The accounts payable team is now reconciling the year by ensuring all vendor invoices are received. Regarding grants, Mr. Kelley noted that DESE has transitioned to using GEMS, a new state system for distributing earmark funds. The district is currently navigating these procedural changes. Finally, Mr. Kelley reported that revolving accounts and budget offsets remain on track.

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

B Report: Special Education Expense Update

Deputy Superintendent Kelley shared the Special Education Expense Update prepared by our Co-Interim Special Education Directors, highlighting some of the great work being done.

C Vote: Chartwells Update and FY27 Meal Prices

Deputy Superintendent Kelley presented a memo from Food Service Director Christian Molle regarding updated pricing for the upcoming year. While Massachusetts continues to provide free school meals, Mr. Kelley explained that the new rates apply to a la carte items, second student meals, and staff purchases. He emphasized the importance of annual adjustments to keep pace with inflation and ensure the program remains self-sustaining; this prevents a price shock should state funding for free lunch ever change.

MOTION:	To approve the FY27 Meal Prices
RESULT:	**ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
SECONDER:	Melissa Holleran
AYES:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman, Melissa Holleran, Sheri Leo

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

A Vote: Elementary Handbook

Hoover Principal Mitzi Galante presented the updated Elementary Handbook for the 2026-2027 school year, noting that there were very few adjustments needed this year following the significant changes made for the 2025-2026 school year. The updates for the upcoming year primarily focused on school titles and names across the district, though additional adjustments will be made as staff changes are finalized before the start of the school year. Discussion included praise for the handbook's clear understandable outline, the identification of a few minor editorial changes, and a specific note that the link under the Melrose chain of communication section currently needs to be fixed.

MOTION:	To approve the Elementary Handbook subject to the suggested edits
RESULT:	**ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Seamus Kelley
SECONDER:	Margaret Raymond Driscoll
AYES:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman, Melissa Holleran, Sheri Leo

B Report: Program of Studies

Principal Merrill, Assistant Principal Sewyck, and Deputy Principal Corrigan presented the Middle School Program of Studies for the 2026-2027 school year. Principal Merrill noted that a list of annual updates was included, explaining that these adjustments are driven by feedback from students, staff, the curriculum office, and the administrative team.

Deputy Principal Corrigan reviewed the middle school summary document, highlighting the return of teams and updated language. Key updates included revised course descriptions, notes on the new curriculum, the addition of Tier 2 supports, and general programming adjustments.

Mr. Corrigan then detailed the MHS Program of Studies updates, which focused on course descriptions, prerequisites, and course levels. Additionally, a new Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) statement was updated. It was noted that because the MHS Program of Studies was not in the packet, it will be added to the next meeting's agenda for an official vote.

MOTION:	To approve the Melrose Middle School Program of Studies
RESULT:	**ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Sheri Leo
SECONDER:	Melissa Holleran
AYES:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman, Melissa Holleran, Sheri Leo

3. Policy and Planning - Matt Hartman/Margaret Driscoll

A Report: FY27 Enrollment Updates

Superintendent Berman presented the district's current enrollment data and projections for next year, noting that numbers remain consistent across most grade levels. She highlighted a projected dip between the 8th and 9th grades, explaining that this is a typical annual trend driven by students transitioning to private or vocational schools. The Superintendent confirmed that tracking of current 8th-grade applications aligns with this historical pattern.

Finally, she noted that the upcoming override will help mitigate the impact of larger class sizes, and the district's plan to add an additional classroom to accommodate current registration numbers. Superintendent Berman also referred to a question presented at an earlier meeting inquiring how many students return to the district after leaving to go to private or vocational schools, and noting that 10 students moved back to the district this year.

B Report: Technology Plan

Executive Director of Academics and Accountability, Melanie Acevedo, and classroom teacher, Susan Jones presented the memo in the packet that serves as a yearly review of the 3 year technology plan, and the district is currently at the end of year two. Ms. Acevedo highlighted the ongoing evaluation of AI best practices to inform future technology planning. Ms. Jones then shared some examples of how she integrates AI tools in her 5th-grade classroom to establish clear expectations and support student learning.

Discussion included: praise for the excellent work of Ms. Jones and Ms. Acevedo, the potential negative implications for technology had the override not passed, the balance of daily instructional time and the use of technology in the classroom, student data security and privacy and also recognition was given to the IT department for their extensive time in ensuring all student and staff Chromebooks and laptops were fully updated and prepared.

C Discussion: Strategic Plan

Vice Chair Hartman reported that the current 3-year strategic plan is nearing completion. He, along with Ms. Driscoll, have consulted with MASC regarding support and the potential for a summer strategic planning process. Moving forward, they will collaborate with Superintendent Berman and Deputy Superintendent Kelley to develop a strategy and timeline.

D Discussion: K Policies - **Policy KA**: School/Community Relations Goals, **Policy KBA**: School/Parent Relations Goals, **Policy KBE**: Relations with Parent and Booster Organizations, **Policy KCB**: Community Involvement in Decision Making, **Policy KDB**: Public’s Right to Know, **Policy KHA**: Public Solicitation in the Schools, and **Policy KHB**: Advertising in the Schools.

Mr. Hartman also presented a set of K policies in the packet and outlined the School Committee's policy review process. Discussion included how the district's current policies compare with MASC recommendations, as well as the projected timeline for the review.

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE CHAIR

1. Discussion: Superintendent Review

Special Meeting Minutes from May 13, 2026 were removed from the Consent Agenda. A motion was made to approve by Mr. Hartman, seconded by Ms. Holleran. With five (5) in favor and two (2) abstentions, the motion passed.

MOTION:	To approve the special meeting minutes from May 13, 2026
RESULT:	**ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Matt Hartman
SECONDER:	Melissa Holleran
AYES:	Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Matt Hartman, Melissa Holleran, Sheri Leo
ABSTAIN:	Margaret Driscoll, Jennifer Razi-Thomas

At the request of Chair Kelley, Ms. Driscoll outlined the School Committee's Superintendent evaluation process, DESE requirements, and recommendations moving forward. She emphasized that the evaluation is a public, collaborative process aimed at improving district-wide student outcomes. Ms. Driscoll recommended that members review DESE's evaluation rubric online and explained the process: the Superintendent sets goals and provides evidence, members complete individual evaluation forms, and the Chair compiles these into a final composite rating for DESE submission.

2. Report: Rolling Agenda

Chair Kelley discussed updating the Rolling Agenda for the next meeting.

3. Report: Outreach

Ms. Leo announced that the final virtual office hours of the school year will be held via Zoom on Thursday from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

10. ADJOURN

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:32 PM.