



Melrose School Committee

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, December 9, 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	
Jennifer McAndrew	Vice Chair	Present	
Jen Grigoraitis	Mayor	Present	7:13 PM
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

Without objection the Chair opened Public Comment.

Representative Kate Lipper-Garabedian stopped by on behalf of the House of Representatives to acknowledge Chair Dorie Withey and Vice Chair Jen McAndrew as they finish up their time and tenure on the Melrose School Committee. Ms. Lipper-Garabedian thanked them for all they have done for the Community and served them with citations from the statehouse thanking them for their leadership and dedication. (*School Committee Member Seamus Kelley made a motion for a brief recess for a photo opportunity before continuing*)

MEU Representatives **Leslie Means** and **Joellen Beaudet** spoke to the plans for a permanent Superintendent. Ms. Means and Ms. Beaudet both expressed that it was in the best interest of the district to forgo a search and place Interim Superintendent Berman as a permanent Superintendent. They have polled the members of the Melrose Education Union and that is the will of the majority of it's members. They believe a search committee is not the right move for the Melrose Public Schools and supported Interim Superintendent Berman's historical knowledge of the district and her loyalty. With important decisions coming up with contracts and student resources, Ms. Berman has the background needed to make those important decisions.

Jason Merrill, identifying himself as a Secondary Principal, resident, and parent of three, strongly encouraged the School Committee to appoint Interim Superintendent Berman as the

permanent Superintendent. Mr. Merrill praised Ms. Berman's leadership throughout what he described as a challenging year, noting her steady hand in moving the district forward while earning the respect of teachers and administrators. He highlighted her qualifications, which include 25 years of experience across roles such as teacher, special education coordinator, assistant principal, and director. Mr. Merrill emphasized her high expectations for all learners, her strong communication skills, and open-door policy.

With no one else wishing to speak, Chair Withey closed Public Comment.

3. REPORT OF THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

There were no student representatives present.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Chair Withey announced a preliminary vote on the Agenda under the Announcements of the Superintendent. Incoming School Committee members Melissa Holleran and Sheri Leo were invited to the horseshoe to participate in the voting.

1. Vote: 2026 Chair and Vice Chair Preliminary Vote

Interim Superintendent Berman outlined the process for the preliminary vote on the School Committee's Chair and Vice Chair for the 2026 calendar year.

MOTION:	Motion to Nominate Seamus Kelley for the position of School Committee Chair for the 2026 calendar year
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Matt Hartman
SECONDER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
ABSENT:	Jennifer Grigoraitis,
AYES:	Dorie Withey, Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman, Melissa Holleran, Sheri Leo

MOTION:	Motion to nominate Matt Hartman for the position of School Committee Vice Chair for the 2026 calendar year
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Seamus Kelley
SECONDER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
ASBENT:	Jennifer Grigoraitis
AYES:	Dorie Withey, Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman, Melissa Holleran, Sheri Leo

7:13 Mayor Grigoraitis arrived.

Superintendent Berman explained the upcoming election timeline. The official election for Chair and Vice Chair will occur at the January 13th meeting, following the same voting procedure used this evening. The newly elected Chair will then initiate subcommittee chair

selections for the January 27th meeting. Members must inform the incoming Chair of their subcommittee interest by January 20th.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION:	To Approve the Consent Agenda
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Matt Hartman
SECONDER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
AYES:	Dorie Withey , Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman

1. Regular Meeting Minutes Nov 18, 2025 7:00 PM

2. Warrants

FY26 School - [S26038](#) - \$841,229.98

FY26 Refunds/Officials - [S26039](#) - \$3,847.00

FY26 December Debit Card - [S26040](#) - \$1625.00

FY26 November MVMMS Student Activity Wire - [S26041](#) - \$2,300.72

FY26 November High School Student Activity Wire - [S26042](#) - \$26,725.48

FY26 November Meals Tax - [S26043](#) - \$40.69

3. Policies IJND and IJNDB

4. Surplus Memo

6. SUBCOMMITTEES (COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE)

1. Finance and Facilities - Seamus Kelley/Jennifer McAndrew

A Monthly Budget Summary/Revolving Accounts

Interim Deputy Superintendent Kelley presented the packet's two reports and offered to answer any questions. Ms. McAndrew asked if and when the supplemental budget for FY26 is approved, if those amounts would be reflected in the DESE categories. The Deputy Superintendent confirmed that they would once the city starts to receive that revenue, the city will transfer it over to the schools and distribute across the school committee categories.

MOTION:	To Approve the Monthly Budget Summary/Revolving Accounts
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Jennifer McAndrew
SECONDER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
AYES:	Dorie Withey , Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll

B Discussion: FY26 Supplemental Budget Request

Superintendent Berman and Deputy Superintendent Kelley presented a memo and accompanying [slides](#) outlining the proposed allocation of the recently approved funds. Interim Deputy Superintendent Kelley emphasized that while the school budget focuses on instruction and learning, significant additional resources supporting teaching and learning are invested by the city. These external supports were highlighted to demonstrate the city's substantial investment in the schools. Superintendent Berman reviewed the process since the November 4th override passed, noting that the leadership team has worked to identify key staffing needs for the remainder of the school year, focusing on student growth and achievement. The goal is to post these positions after the holiday break. She stressed the importance of bringing back personnel now to plan ahead for FY27, aiming to hire licensed, qualified staff and manage class sizes. Deputy Superintendent Kelley added that resources would also be used to enhance the curriculum and review instructional materials. The potential vote tonight is to incorporate the supplemental amounts into the categories approved in April, establishing a new Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) budget totaling just under \$52 million.

Discussion included: looking to bring down the larger class sizes at the elementary level for next year, the challenge around hiring licensed qualified teachers mid-year, the idea of co-teaching, looking at reading and math specialists for intervention and smaller instruction, and investing in curriculum implementation. Discussion will continue at the next meeting.

2. Policy and Planning - Matt Hartman/Margaret Driscoll

A Vote: 2026-2027 School Year Calendar

Mr. Hartman presented the draft 2026-2027 school calendar, including a list of holidays and observances. The discussion included: establishing expectations for scheduling school events around these observances, the late occurrence of Labor Day will result in a later start to the school year, and agreed to keep early release days on Fridays. A portion of the conversation focused on Juneteenth, which falls on a Saturday; the board needs to determine the official observed day if school is in session due to snow day makeups, and the impact this would have on the last day of school. The plan is to align the school calendar's Juneteenth observance with the city's schedule, and the committee voted to postpone the vote until the meeting on the 16th to allow time for this necessary alignment with the city's calendar.

MOTION:	To Postpone the Voting of the 2026-2027 Calendar until the December 16th Meeting
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Jennifer McAndrew
SECONDER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
AYES:	Dorie Withey, Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Jennifer Grigoraitis, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman

B Review: MHS Competency Determination Policy

The Executive Director of Academics and Accountability, Melanie Acevedo, and Principal Jason Merrill presented an update on the Competency Determination Policy, driven by

ongoing changes from DESE. Their presentation ([slides included](#)) provided context and a timeline for the new policy, highlighted the differences between the new CD requirements and current MHS Graduation Requirements, and offered a general overview of the proposed policy.

Discussed included: the difference between state-mandated Competency Determination requirements and local Melrose graduation requirements, noting that while local standards allow for waivers in extenuating circumstances, the CD standards do not. It was noted that the CD aligns with the standards assessed in the 2023 MCAS, reflecting DESE's expectation for the district to maintain high expectations for all students. While passing the MCAS is not a local graduation requirement, students are still required to sit for the exam as it remains a valuable measuring tool. Following the discussion, the committee moved forward with a first read and first vote on the policy.

MOTION:	To Approve the Competency Determination Policy for 1st Vote
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Jennifer McAndrew
SECONDER:	Dorie Withey
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. Discussion: Superintendent Hiring Process

Chair Withey initiated the discussion on the process for hiring a new Superintendent, referencing a memo in the meeting packet. As required by Interim Superintendent Berman's contract, the Committee must decide on the hiring path by December 31st. The memo outlined two potential paths, and the Chair proposed discussing the pros and cons of these options, and deferring the official vote until the next meeting on December 16th.

Discussion included: drawing on past district experience, senior members detailed the extensive nature of a full search, noting the significant financial cost and the time investment, which includes hiring a consultant, training a screening committee, conducting multiple interviews, and performing site visits. Concerns were raised about the thin landscape for Superintendent candidates in Massachusetts and the district's relatively low salary. The ideal candidate was described as someone who understands Melrose, is passionate, trustworthy, puts students first, embraces the district culture, is willing to face criticism, and has an open-door policy.

Also the advantages of potentially appointing Ms. Berman were emphasized. Members noted that she, is ready to "hit the ground running," and understands the district and its budget well, having been with the district for an extended time. It was pointed out that the Committee has essentially conducted a six-month "interview" through her interim performance, which has received unanimous positive evaluation and recent public endorsement from union and administrative leaders who cited her loyalty. A Committee

member noted that she is an "obvious candidate" and that a search may not yield a better option. However, there was also a desire to maintain a transparent and collaborative process. There have been other critical positions in the city with strong internal candidates all of whom went through some kind of process to get to their final position, and the need to give Ms. Berman an opportunity to present herself publicly. The positive working relationship between Ms. Berman and Mr. Kelley (Finance Director) was highlighted as a significant factor. The Committee agreed to continue the discussion and vote on a process at the next meeting on December 16th to comply with the Interim Superintendent's contract deadline.

2. **Report: Outreach**

Mr. Hartman shared his great visit this past weekend at the robotics competition where kids from all over Massachusetts came to Melrose to compete.

Ms. Razi Thomas reminded the community of the upcoming office hours this Saturday Dec 13th from 8:30 - 9:30 at La QChara.

The Mayor announced that the December 15th City Council Agenda will formally show that the City was successful in its application for a Mass Office of Disability Grant (over \$100,000). This funding will be used to make accessibility improvements at the Horace Mann, Hoover, and Winthrop Schools, addressing needs previously identified in an ADA survey. The Mayor expects the resulting work to be completed by the end of the current school year.

8. **ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Chair Withey cited the need for an Executive Session to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel, Cari Berman. The Committee will not be returning to Public Session.

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

Public Session adjourned at 9:04 PM.

9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

1. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with MEA Units A, B, and C as an open discussion may have a detrimental effect of the negotiating position of the School Committee.
2. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel Cari Berman.

10. **ADJOURN**

School Committee Meeting

December 9th, 2025

Proposed Supplemental Appropriation Request for FY26



Cari Berman, Interim Superintendent
&
Ken Kelley, Interim Deputy Superintendent



Proposed Appropriations to Support Schools

Schools \$8,688,852.00	School Building Maintenance & Improvements \$4,345,052.00	MHS - Bathrooms Renovation MHS - Courtyard Stairs MVMMS - Solar Inverter Repairs MVMMS - Front Stairs and Sidewalk Repairs MVMMS - HVAC Control Upgrades Winthrop School - Doors & Masonry Repairs All Schools - Asbestos Remediation
	Instruction & Learning \$3,818,800.00	Restore 17 Positions \$1,649,000.00 Current Fiscal Year Contractual Obligations \$529,000.00 Curriculum Materials \$1,469,500.00 Instructional Technology \$171,300
	School Technology Needs \$525,000.00	School Security Cameras MHS - Projector Upgrades Districtwide - PA System Upgrades Back Up Power Modernization Elementary Schools - Chromebook Replacements



The Process to Date

- Feedback was provided from principals and leadership team members in order to identify key staffing positions that will support student growth and achievement for the second half of FY26 with the hopes of dovetailing into FY27.
- Although a small sample size, we did gather and analyze data provided to us during Parent University.
- All decisions have been made based upon the needs of students and aligned with the goals outlined in the district's strategic plan.
- Positions that will be restored have been discussed at cabinet meetings and principal meetings.
- Goal: Post positions after the holiday break.



FY26 Instruction and Learning Supplemental Budget

	FY26 SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION	FY26 SC CATEGORY	FY26 PERSONNEL	
Approved FY26 Supplemental Budget MPS Personnel MPS Curriculum MPS School IT \$3,818,800	\$ 97,000.00	FRANKLIN	1.0	1.0 FTE Teacher
	\$ 656,000.00	ELEMENTARY	7.0	6.0 FTE Teacher 1.0 FTE Admin
	\$ 533,000.00	MVMMS	5.4	5.0 FTE Teacher (1.0 FTE potential share with MHS) 0.4 FTE Secondary Admin.
	\$ 363,000.00	MHS	3.6	3.0 FTE Teacher 0.6 FTE Secondary Admin.
	\$ 1,469,500.00	TEACHING AND LEARNING		HQIM - Curriculum renewal math program K-8/AlgII Instructional/student engagement materials school based event support
	\$ 700,300.00	DW/ADMIN.		FY26 Contractual obligations for salary increases for Teachers School based tech - Aspen SIS update and devices HR/Ops platforms
TOTAL	\$ 3,818,800.00		17.0	



Personnel Request

The \$1,649,000 request for 17 FTE positions includes 15.0 FTE teachers and 2.0 FTE administrators that aligns and addresses the following:

- Licensed and Qualified Effective Staff
- Class Sizes
- Student Social/Emotional Needs
- Closing the Learning Gap within Subgroups



MPS Teaching and Learning Request

The total request for the Teaching and Learning category is \$1,469,500 and addresses the following:

- Enhances curriculum and instructional materials that were deferred over the last 2 years.
- Provides High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) for math programs over the next 3-5 years.
- Secures comprehensive instructional materials to enrich the learning experience across all our schools.
- Investments are crucial for sustaining our commitment to academic excellence and robust student engagement.



MPS District Wide/Administration Request

The total request for the District-Wide/Administration (DW/ADMIN) budget totals \$700,300 and addresses the following:

- FY26 contractual obligations for salary increases for teachers.
- Upgrades and additions to Aspen and other HR/Ops platforms for administrative efficiency.



Updated Budget Categories

Motion to consider as respectfully requested in memo dated 12/9/25

FY26 APPROVED SC CATEGORIES		SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION	ADJ FY26 SC CATEGORIES (VOTE REQUESTED)
FRANKLIN	\$ 2,122,157.16	\$ 97,000.00	\$ 2,219,157.16
ELEMENTARY	\$ 16,030,818.54	\$ 656,000.00	\$ 16,686,818.54
MVMMS	\$ 7,774,386.49	\$ 533,000.00	\$ 8,307,386.49
MHS	\$ 8,554,988.37	\$ 363,000.00	\$ 8,917,988.37
ATH/EC	\$ 1,009,766.03	\$ -	\$ 1,009,766.03
TEACHING AND LEARNING	\$ 728,761.05	\$ 1,469,500.00	\$ 2,198,261.05
SPECIAL ED.	\$ 9,052,011.56	\$ -	\$ 9,052,011.56
DW/ADMIN.	\$ 2,674,985.81	\$ 700,300.00	\$ 3,375,285.81
Total	\$ 47,947,875.00	\$ 3,818,800.00	\$ 51,766,675.00

MHS Competency Determination Policy

Class of 2026 and Beyond



Objectives

1. Provide context and timeline for development of policy
2. Differentiate between MHS Graduation requirements and proposed Competency Determination
3. Provide a brief overview of the new policy
4. Answer questions from the committee

Timeline & Context

November 2024- Passage of Question 2

- ❖ Eliminates passing MCAS as graduation & competency requirement
- ❖ Certification that students have mastered the skills, competencies, and knowledge of the state standards moved from MCAS to districts

Winter/Spring 2025- Determining Competency for Class of 2025

- ❖ Limited DESE guidance provided for Class of 2025 Competency Determination (CD)
- ❖ MCAS allowed to be used as CD for class of 2025 ONLY
- ❖ New policy was written and approved by School Committee for Class of 2025

Timeline & Context

May 2025- Board of Elementary and Secondary Education vote to amend regulations on CD (603 CMR 30.00)

- ❖ New: approved by school committee, posted publicly, and submitted to DESE
- ❖ Competency determination must meet standards that were assessed on the 2023 MCAS.

July 2025- NEW guidance is released by DESE and new commissioner

Fall 2025 - Development of new policy Class of 2026 and beyond

- ❖ Must be voted, approved and uploaded to DESE by **December 31st**.
- ❖ SEEM Curriculum Leaders worked together to find the “sweet spot” of flexibility and clarity.

Melrose High School Graduation Requirements

Completion of 24 Total Credits that include:

- 4 credits English
- 4 credits Math
- 4 credits Science (including 3 credits in lab courses)
- 3 credits Social Studies/History
- 2 credits Visual & Performing Arts
- 2 credits World Language
- 2 credits Wellness
- 3 credits Elective
- Community Service (12 hours per year at MHS)
- Sophomore Civics Capstone Project
- Senior Capstone Project (Typically part of English)
- Participate in Grade 10 ELA, Math, and Science MCAS testing (for accountability)

MHS Competency Determination

Completion & Mastery of:

- English 1 & 2
- Algebra I & Geometry
- 1 year Bio, Physics, or Chemistry
- 1 year US History (2027)

CD Policy Highlights (Class of 2026 and Beyond)

Successful Course Completion:

Passing grade using the [district's grading system](#) in identified courses

MHS Grading Policies

Mission and Vision:
At Melrose High School, we strive to create meaningful learning opportunities for all students and to communicate with students and stakeholders about student progress using accurate, transparent, and consistent grading practices that facilitate continuous growth and inspire challenge.

Minimum Grading

- The lowest grade a student may receive on a report card is 50, regardless of student performance on summatives.
- The lowest grade a student may receive on a completed assignment is a 50.
- Assignments may be turned in up to two weeks after the due date with no point deduction from the assignment grade. A zero may be inputted until the assignment is submitted.
- All summatives must be submitted in order to receive a passing grade for the class.

Revision Policy

Students who have turned in their assessment on time and received a grade below 90% may revise/retake summative assessments after the following steps have been taken:

1. Analyze feedback and conference with the teacher.
2. Demonstrate efforts to re-learn content and skills by turning in missing formative assignments and/or revisiting practice work.
3. Reflect on the learning process, which may include explaining changes they have made and why they made them, and examining how they will continue to grow and improve their understanding and skills.
4. Additionally, artifacts related to retake/revision policies, including this reflection, should be added to the student's portfolio.

Students have two weeks from the time that the assignment is returned in order to complete the retake/revision. After the retake/revision, it is up to the teacher's discretion whether or not to cap the score at 90% or to allow for up-to full credit.

Universal Categories Policy

All categories in Aspen MUST be set as the following:

- 75% Summative Assessments
- 15% Formative Assessments
- 10% Habits of Work

Additionally, the "Average Mode" must be set as "Category Total Points."

Demonstrated Content Mastery:

For each course listed students must demonstrate mastery by:

- Earning a passing grade on the midterm and final assessments for the course
- OR**
- Completing a capstone or portfolio project
- OR**
- Equivalent measure identified in the CD as determined by the principal or designee

Additional Considerations

DESE has required that the policy must also clearly state considerations for:

- ❖ Students with Disabilities
- ❖ English Language Learners
- ❖ Late enrolling students- enrolling in MHS after 9th grade
- ❖ Appeal process for current students
- ❖ Appeal process for students enrolled in MPS in the classes of 2003-2024 who did not earn a diploma

Questions and Discussion

