

Moses Grader
Statement on 2024 Re-election to the Select Board
League of Women Voters

I have a background in finance and strategy in the private sector with a BA in economics and an MBA. My wife and I are 30-year residents with two children who are proud graduates of Marblehead High School. I served for 9 years on the Finance Committee, 6 years as its chair. I am now in my 7th year as a Select Board member.

I am seeking your support for one more term to help the Board see through several key initiatives where my experience, relationships, and perspective can continue to contribute to the Select Board's success.

- I was honored to serve as Chair last year with a unanimous vote of my Board colleagues. I have also acted as Chair Pro Tempore this year while our current Chair has dealt with very difficult family health issues. It is a distinct privilege to be part of a great team which does not always agree, but which has found a way to provide high functioning deliberation and leadership in the service of all Marbleheaders.
- One of the great rewards and motivations for running again is to continue to have strong positive working relationships with our Town Administrator and Finance Director and to help minister to their professional success and fulfillment. I hope to continue to play a leading role in supporting their professional success with the department heads and employees of the Town.
- The organizational changes underway are another reason I am highly optimistic about the direction of Town government. Because of the traditional operating independence of the Town departments, there is room to improve the resource management of our Town government without increasing our Town budget. It essentially means centralizing certain functions – human resources department, DPW, building inspection, community development, and building out the capabilities of the finance department – so that departments can focus on service delivery to residents. These changes, spearheaded by our Town Administrator, bring opportunities for employee advancement and could not happen without the leadership of our department heads and the teamwork of our employees, who have been resilient and receptive to innovative improvements.
- Another key area of significant effort, led by the talent and conscientious hard work of our Finance Director and her department, includes the complete modernization of the Town's financial technology on OpenGov and Munis, consolidating the Town's AAA bond rating and resulting in Town's GFOA Budget Presentation Award a year ahead of schedule. These improvements are essential for the accuracy, analysis, visibility, accountability, and cost savings across Town departments and are making possible the implementation of complete financial and compliance policies to which the Town has long aspired but often fallen short mainly because of outdated technology.
- Having witnessed the persistent challenges of the School Committee and the District Administration over the last 15 years, I believe we are very close to helping the Schools turn the corner onto a new era of rebuilding. This hope for the future rests on my belief that we are now in the happy position to correct the root causes of much unnecessary division and dysfunction –

caused by decades of perverse budgetary incentives which have frustrated many attempts to build productive School/Town relationships between people of good will or stabilize District governance.

The essential structure of this unhealthy dynamic is that the Town is held accountable for setting a School budget number every year over which it has no control and, until recently, little meaningful transparency. The Town is put in the position of having to justify a School budget number when it cannot. The School leadership has also failed to justify their School budget numbers in an unsuccessful School override attempt at Town meeting. The default position is that the School leadership fights the Town administration to get the lion's share of the levy growth each year, while the Town has resisted in its struggle to understand the rationale for rising School costs which have been the key drivers of the Town's budget deficit.

Removing this damaging dynamic is crucial to our healing and renewal. The Select Board has recently sought to align incentives in several ways by: i) bringing complete transparency to both Town and all School finances with the aforementioned financial technology, and (ii) allocating all costs associated with School discretion into the School's chart of accounts and under School budget responsibility. These first two steps create uniform transparency and clear lines of accountability for financial decisions made by the Town and the Schools respectively. The next steps are to encourage the practice of mutual accountability. My proposal is to (iii) split the tax levy between Schools and Town to fixed amounts next year based on the latest budget allocations (which is approximately 60% / 40%, respectively) and (iv) to set a policy that the Town and the Schools can change the split by advocating their separate overrides at Town meeting. In this way, both Town and Schools will advocate directly for the budgets they fully control and understand at Town Meeting – creating more direct accountability to taxpayers, removing the core basis to “fight the Town” or “us vs. them” stance, and encouraging the credibility of both School and Town leaders to properly explain the spending they control independently.

I also believe that these innovations can change the political climate of the School Committee and provide a powerful draw for strong, competent, and resourceful Superintendents who will rightly understand that the proven capital generosity of Marbleheaders can also be unlocked on the operating side with a highly professional presentation of the School's financial condition and spending metrics at Town Meeting.

- I am excited that we are about to undertake a Town Charter for the first time in Marblehead's history. I have assisted in the recruitment of the Charter Committee leadership and am optimistic that this historic event has the potential to provide significant clarity and efficiencies to Town government and its by-laws. However, my position is that the Town Charter should be an opportunity for a celebration and a loyal written immortalization of our traditional democratic form of government. I do not believe that the Charter should be written as a vehicle to advocate for values (religious or secular) or partisan issues, but rather as a robust time-tested framework for individuals with values and political opinions to freely manifest their advocacy. I will use four basic standards by which to balance my evaluation of a new Town Charter developed by the Charter Committee:
 - i) Does it increase or decrease volunteer engagement?
 - ii) Does it increase or decrease voter enfranchisement?
 - iii) Does it improve operational efficiencies?
 - iv) Can the Town flexibly amend the Charter?

I believe that the first Charter will be a first draft in a process of constitutional improvement, so I am in favor of a document that is “light” on the Charter, which requires cumbersome State approval, and “heavy” on the by-laws, which can be amended at Town Meeting.

- Finally, I believe that committee appointments by the Select Board are crucial for the participatory engagement of volunteers. Some committees have distinctive independent statutory mandates from the State (such as the Finance Committee and Conservation Committee) and others have specific mandates from the Select Board as designees (such as the Fair Housing Committee and the Harbor Implementation Committee). Any changes involving the re-appointment of existing volunteers by the Select Board should be handled on a committee-by-committee basis with the cooperation of each committee Chair.

Thank you for your consideration. I humbly ask for your vote this Tuesday, so that I can continue to serve on these pivotal issues which I believe will define Marblehead for many years into the future.

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