

**Minutes of the Regular Session
of the Salem School Committee
Monday, August 19, 2024
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.
Hybrid Meeting**

Members Present: Mayor Dominick Pangallo, Manny Cruz, Mary Manning,
AJ Hoffman, Veronica Miranda and Beth Anne Cornell

Others in Attendance: Superintendent Stephen Zrike and Assistant Superintendent
Elizabeth Pauley

Members Absent: Amanda Campbell

Call of Meeting to Order

Mayor Pangallo called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and explained the public participation as well as the availability of Spanish interpretation.

Approval of Agenda

Member Manning made a motion to approve the agenda. Member Cornell seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

There were no public comments. Mayor Pangallo closed this portion of the meeting.

Approval of Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes of Regular School Committee meeting held on June 17, 2024
2. Approval of Minutes of Regular School Committee meeting held on July 29, 2024
3. Approval of Warrants:
 1. **FY24:**
 - a. 7/24/2024 - \$207,813.94
 - b. 7/31/2024 - \$107,383.88
 - c. 8/7/24 - \$125,779.43
 - d. 8/14/2024 - \$53,249.80
 2. **FY25:**
 - a. 7/25/24 - \$342,008.58
 - b. 8/1/2024 - \$288,306.45
 - c. 8/8/2024 - \$445,801.83
 - d. 8/15/2024 - \$566,992.21

Member Manning made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Member Cornell seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Pangallo asked for a moment of silence in memory of Salem Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services Department, Sandra Niconchuk who passed away recently. Mayor Pangallo stated that her infectious, positive energy will be missed among staff and students alike.

Superintendent's Report

1. Update on Strategic Plan (All Priorities)

Superintendent Zrike said that some data such as the MCAS data and other information have not been released yet. Superintendent Zrike proceeded to highlight the core values, success and celebrations from last year. Superintendent Zrike also reviewed the measures of success for the four priorities which are a part of the strategic plan. Superintendent Zrike provided his reflections on the past year's successes and challenges.

In response to Member Miranda, Superintendent Zrike further elaborated that the administration is working on improving on the quality and usefulness of evaluation provided to educators. Member Cornell suggested a follow-up survey so that more feedback can be received from educators about how they perceive evaluation results from school leaders and coaches. In response to Member Cornell's question about a standard evaluation, Superintendent Zrike said that there is a standard rubric used across the state for annual evaluations but that the process differs by district and that informal feedback is also provided to educators. Member Miranda expressed interest in seeing what the faculty identify as a need. Superintendent Zrike suggested a focus group.

Member Manning said that a lot of important feedback is non-evaluative and that questions need to be phrased appropriately. In response to another question, Superintendent Zrike explained the timeline for 4-year graduates to meet all the requirements. Ms. Manning mentioned the low response for surveys. Superintendent Zrike said that the survey is administered twice a year but that it would make more sense if comparisons were made from year to year. Member Cornell requested for a detailed breakdown of the disciplinary data at each school.

2. Back-To-School Update

Superintendent Zrike presented the back-to-school update.

Member Cornell noted that the School Committee members do not receive the school improvements plans. Superintendent Zrike said that they are on the website but that going forward, they will be provided to the School Committee members as well.

Executive Director of Academics, Dr. Kimberly Talbot, presented the academics update for the 2024-2025 school year. Member Cornell asked if the focus on writing and academic discourse under support instruction had an interdisciplinary approach or if it was centered around English Language Arts (ELA). Dr. Talbot said that the writing component is interdisciplinary.

Executive Director of Special Education, Ms. Doucette-Ly provided an update about the implementation of the new Individualized Education Program (IEP), capacity building, and other areas. Member Miranda questioned if the organization, Exceptional Lives provides any advocacy or supports for parents related to the IEP process. Ms. Doucette-Ly said they would provide an introduction about the IEP process, inform parents about their rights and direct them to resources as well as where to obtain advocacy support. In response to another question, Ms. Doucette-Ly said that about 3-4 parent fairs will be held this year in collaboration with the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC). Member Miranda stressed that the district needs to ensure that students are not being over-identified or slipping through the cracks.

Executive Director of Student Support Services, Ms. Ellen Wingard spoke about how the Student Support Services Department is expanding best practices and streamlining systems. Executive Director of Instructional Technology, Mr. Marc Leblanc provided an update on technical support, data applications, as well as digital learning and library services. Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Engagement, Ms. Laura Asaad spoke about empowering educators, centering belonging and strengthening the foundation. Member Cornell questioned if the reporting tool for students and educators to report concerns was going to be vetted by legal counsel. Superintendent Zrike responded that it would be reviewed by legal counsel. Member Cornell requested that once the reporting mechanism has been reviewed, it should be brought back to the School Committee to allow for questions to be asked, especially surrounding privacy, retaliation, how staff would be supported and so forth.

Director of Human Resources, Dr. Jill Conrad explained how the human resource department has increased operational efficiency to meet strategic staffing goals. Dr. Conrad also provided an update about vacancies. Superintendent Zrike said that there are back-up plans for recruitment and schools are developing contingency plans for staffing. Superintendent Zrike said that the level of staff turnover is lower than the previous two years. Vice-Chair Cruz questioned if there has been an increase of employees who took exit surveys and provided feedback. Dr. Conrad said she can gather that information.

Assistant Superintendent, Ms. Elizabeth Pauley, provided an update about transportation, food service and the business office. Superintendent Zrike gave credit to the Transportation Manager, Ms. Vanessa Fagundes, and her team for their efforts in facilitating dry runs and notifying families two weeks in advance about their student's bus routes. Previously, families were only able to be notified two days prior to the start of school. Member Cornell added that she had heard from families about how Ms. Fagundes helped resolve transportation issues for them. Assistant Superintendent Pauley added that bringing the bus routing in-house last year has made a lot of difference.

The facilities update which included the work done in the summer was also provided by Assistant Superintendent Pauley. Member Manning asked about Bentley Academy Innovation School's HVAC controls and Assistant Superintendent Pauley said that there is no solution yet. Special Projects and Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Liaison, Ms. Lisa Golden provided an update on the MSBA project. Ms. Golden also gave an update about safety and security.

3. Finance and Operations Report - Unused Buses

Assistant Superintendent Pauley requested the School Committee's approval to designate 8 buses which have been parked in the bus yard since 2021 as surplus. Once approval is received, the buses can be disposed of by way of auction and proceeds could be used to purchase smaller, more energy efficient mini buses. Assistant Pauley added that at the moment, the district owns 17 buses.

In response to member Miranda's question about the age of the buses, Assistant Superintendent Pauley said that they were purchased between the 2012-2016 but that she could find out the exact age. Member Miranda said that she is cautious about auctioning off the buses because it might lock the district into continuing to outsource transportation. Assistant Superintendent Pauley said that Ms. Fagundes would agree that even if the district ran all the routes with its own buses, these 8 buses would still need to be disposed of because of their age and condition.

Student Representative Report

None

Subcommittee Reports

Personnel Subcommittee

Policy Subcommittee

1. Policies for Second Reading:
 - a. Policy 2202
 - b. Policy 2500

Member Cornell made a motion to approve Policy 2202 and 2500 for second reading. Member Miranda seconded. seconded. A roll call vote was taken.
Member Campbell ABSENT
Member Cornell voted YES
Vice Chair Cruz voted YES
Member Hoffman voted YES
Member Manning voted YES
Member Miranda voted YES
Mayor Pangallo voted YES
Motion passed with 6 votes in favor and 1 absent.

Motions and Resolutions

1. Motion to Declare Unused Buses as Surplus
Member Cornell made the motion to declare the unused 8 buses as surplus. Member Miranda requested to amend the motion to include “with data from the transportation department for needing to dispose of the buses because of the condition and age.”

Member Cornell made the motion to amend the prior motion to declare the unused 8 buses as surplus with data from the transportation department for needing to dispose of the buses because of the condition and age. Vice Chair Cruz seconded. A roll call vote was taken.
Member Campbell ABSENT
Member Cornell voted YES
Vice Chair Cruz voted YES
Member Hoffman voted YES
Member Manning voted YES
Member Miranda voted YES
Mayor Pangallo voted YES
Motion passed with 6 votes in favor and 1 absent.

Announcements

Adjournment

Member Miranda made a motion to adjourn at 9:02 pm. Member Cornell seconded. A roll call vote was taken.
Member Campbell ABSENT
Member Cornell voted YES
Vice Chair Cruz voted YES
Member Hoffman voted YES
Member Manning voted YES

Member Miranda voted YES
Mayor Pangallo voted YES
Motion passed with 6 votes in favor and 1 absent.

Respectfully submitted by,

Shirley Dorai

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent