

**Minutes of the Regular Session
of the Salem School Committee
Monday, September 16, 2024
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.
Hybrid Meeting**

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

Others in Attendance: Superintendent Stephen Zrike, Deputy Superintendent Carbone and Assistant Superintendent Pauley

Members Absent: None

Call of Meeting to Order

Mayor Pangallo called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and informed the public that the docket contains the public participation procedure and how to access Spanish interpretation.

Approval of Agenda

Member Cornell made a motion to approve the agenda. Member Manning seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Member Campbell voted YES

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 unanimously.

Public Comment

Ben Chertok, Music Coordinator, Salem Public Schools

Mr. Chertok said that the calendar of events will be ready soon. Mr. Chertok also provided a reminder that the Annual Musical Instrument Rental Night will be held at Saltonstall on Wednesday, September 25th from 6:00 - 8:00 pm. It provides an opportunity for beginners to learn about the music program from music teachers and pick up a rental instrument from the vendors.

Approval of Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes of Regular School Committee meeting held on September 3, 2024

2. Approval of Warrants:
 1. FY24:
 - a. 9/04/2024 - \$1,950.60
 - b. 9/11/2024 - \$2,742.47
 2. FY25:
 - a. 9/05/2024 - \$614,943.94
 - b. 9/12/2024 - \$711,569.38

Member Manning made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Member Miranda seconded.

A roll call vote was taken.

Member Campbell voted YES

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 unanimously.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Zrike thanked everyone for a great start to the school year. Superintendent Zrike mentioned the Open Houses being held at the schools during the first few weeks of school, as well as the fact that transportation services are getting better every year for the 1,500 students who receive these services. Flag raising and other activities have been planned for in celebration of September being the Hispanic Heritage month. MCAS accountability data would be released publicly on Tuesday, September 24th and a full presentation will be provided at the October 7th School Committee meeting.

1. Middle School Pilot Program

Superintendent Zrike invited the middle school team of administrators to speak about the pilot program for 8th grade students. Collins Middle School (CMS) Principal, Mr. Gavin Softic, Dean of Innovation, Ms. Chelsea Banks, Saltonstall Principal, Ms. Bethann Jellison, CMS Dean of Students & School Culture, Mr. Terrell Greene, Saltonstall Assistant Principal, Ms. Jes Eveleth, and CMS Assistant Principal Mr. Shamus Mruk, provided an update about the program.

In response to Member Miranda, Ms. Banks said that WPS stands for Winthrop Park

School. Vice Chair Cruz said that as the middle school and high school are undergoing redesign at the same time, the innovative practices need to continue from the middle school to the high school, especially the student-led part as well as the educator's professional development. Superintendent Zrike said experiences such as this helps attract and retain educators.

Member Campbell highlighted the dual language program at the elementary level and was interested in knowing more of how dual language can be incorporated into the innovative practices at the secondary level. Member Cornell said that the Salem High School Building Committee has an advisory group which helps facilitate innovative ways of approaching education. Member Cornell said that the committee was able to see that SPS was involved in many endeavors towards this effort because the focus was not to just design an innovative space but how it relates to innovative teaching and learning.

In response to Member Cornell, Ms. Banks said that the teachers have more support this year as there is co-teaching. Member Cornell said that input from the middle school pilot program teachers would be beneficial for the high school teachers and also the High School Building Committee in thinking about the kind of space needed to continue the program. Member Manning said that it might be time to stop referring to the program as a pilot. Principal Softic said that they are referring to it as the "8th grade experience".

Mayor Pangallo asked if the program is offered to 7th graders. Ms. Banks said that they are utilizing the time like early releases to enable other grades to have some of the experiences. Ms. Banks added that some of the professional development time is also being utilized by teachers to integrate the learning. In response to Member Manning, Ms. Banks said that students normally think of field trips as a trip to the amusement parks but that the messaging to students has been changed so that they are aware that learning immersion is about taking the learning on the road.

Superintendent Zrike commended the middle school leadership team for taking on this challenging assignment after the pandemic. Superintendent Zrike added that progress can already be seen and there will be more in the near future.

In response to Mayor Pangallo, Ms. Banks said that the decision to introduce the program to the entire 8th grade instead of 7th grade was data driven. Ms. Banks said that other districts have not been implementing this program as extensively but that Peabody Public Schools is trying to incorporate elements of the program for their 6th graders. Superintendent Zrike said that they have had inquiries about the program because of the improved chronic absenteeism data.

2. Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (MCJROTC) Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

Superintendent Zrike sought feedback from the School Committee regarding the Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (MCJROTC) MOA. Superintendent Zrike added that there has not been an MOA with the MCJROTC since 2013.

Member Manning suggested that the Policy Subcommittee review the MOA and revert with any questions. In response to Member Cornell, Vice Chair Manning clarified that this will not set a precedent for the Policy Subcommittee to review every MOA or set up a policy but rather it is upon recommendation of the Superintendent a review to provide feedback. Vice Chair Cruz added that any of the School Committee members can also send any of their questions for the Policy Subcommittee to review.

In response to Member Miranda, Superintendent Zrike said that based on the document, it looks like the district will be on probation for the program because the number of students volunteering for the program is less than the minimum number of around 90 students. Superintendent Zrike said that this would be a good question to ask the program organizer. Member Miranda requested enrollment data for this program in light of budget constraints. Mayor Pangallo suggested that the MCJROTC representatives be invited to the Policy Subcommittee meeting and to post the meeting as a Committee of the Whole meeting so that members who are not in the Policy Subcommittee could also participate. Member Manning asked for information about how many students from the graduating class had gone on to enlist. Member Miranda requested feedback from graduates of the program for their feedback.

Vice Chair Cruz made a motion to refer the MCJROTC MOA to the Policy Subcommittee and the Committee of the Whole. Member Miranda seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Member Campbell voted YES

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 unanimously.

3. Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Update

Member Cornell said that the designer selection process is underway. The designer is the architect. There was a Designer Selection Subcommittee meeting on September 5th comprised of representatives from the community, many of whom are architects, Director of Building Services, Mr. Zisis Alepakis, City Finance Director, Ms. Anna Freedman, and attendees. They reviewed 8 designer proposals and then on September 24th, there will be an applications review with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) where 3 or 4 firms will be shortlisted for interviews and interview questions will be determined. The designer interviews will be held on October 8th. There will also be a Building Committee meeting on September 19th which will be televised by Salem Access Television. Superintendent Zrike added that the MSBA selects the designer but SPS recommends for the finalists.

4. Finance and Operations Report

Assistant Superintendent Pauley said that progress continues with the Witchcraft Heights Elementary School playground. A ribbon cutting in early October is anticipated. In response to Vice Chair Cruz, Assistant Superintendent Pauley said that Mr. Alepakis would know whether the basketball hoops installation is adjustable.

Student Representative Report

Vice Chair Cruz and Superintendent Zrike met with about 16 prospective members of the Student Advisory Council at Salem High School with representative students from New Liberty Innovation School and Salem Prep High School earlier during the day. They are in their recruitment phase and organizing elections for their officer positions which will be completed on October 7, 2024. Vice Chair Cruz said that the students were excited about being the first Student Advisory Council that meets with the School Committee on a monthly basis.

Subcommittee Reports

1. Finance Subcommittee

No report at this time.

2. Personnel Subcommittee

Vice Chair Cruz said that the contract with the Salem Teachers Union (STU) is being finalized. Vice Chair Cruz added that the next step would be the ratification by the STU. Once the ratification process is complete, the contracts would then be placed on the meeting agenda for the School Committee.

3. Building & Grounds Subcommittee

Member Miranda said the subcommittee met last week and the topics discussed included Halloween parking at the middle school for a fundraiser and it was deemed not feasible because of extracurricular activities during the evenings and weekends at the school. The subcommittee also received an update about all the summer work that took place in the buildings and grounds. At the next meeting on October 7th, Mr. Alepakis will be presenting recommended increases in the

facility rental fees and custodial fees for anyone looking to rent space in the schools or fields.

4. Curriculum Subcommittee

No report at this time.

5. Policy Subcommittee

No report at this time.

Motions and Resolutions

Announcements

Mayor Pangallo mentioned that “Mayors Night Out” will take place on Friday, September 27, 2024. Mayor Pangallo added that there will be a press conference with BusPatrol and AAA New England on September 17th regarding safe travel on roadways.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Cruz made a motion to adjourn at 8:25 pm. Member Miranda seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Member Campbell voted YES

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 unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,

Shirley Dorai

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent