

**Minutes of the Regular Session
of the Salem School Committee
Monday, December 2, 2024
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.
Hybrid Meeting**

Members Present: Mayor Dominick Pangallo, Vice Chair Cruz, 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: Amanda Campbell

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 Miranda 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 ABSENT

Member Miranda voted YES

Mayor Pangallo voted YES

Motion passed with 5 votes in favor and 2 absent.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes of Regular School Committee meeting held on November 18, 2024
2. Approval of Minutes of Special School Committee meeting held on November 21, 2024
3. Approval of Minutes of the School Committee Retreat held on November 23, 2024
4. Approval of Warrants:
 1. FY25:
 - a. 11/21/2024 - \$425,617.06
 - b. 11/27/2024 - \$564,733.09

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

A roll call vote was taken.

Member Campbell ABSENT

Member Cornell voted YES

Vice Chair Cruz voted YES

Member Hoffman voted YES

Member Manning ABSENT

Member Miranda voted YES

Mayor Pangallo voted YES

Motion passed with 5 votes in favor and 2 absent.

Member Manning joined the meeting at this point.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Zrike said that the School Committee had previously inquired about how the district is supporting students, families and staff from communities who have expressed fear and uncertainty over the last few weeks. Superintendent Zrike continued that he had previously stated that he had heard from a number of students and families about anxieties with the future of the country. Superintendent Zrike read the email that he was planning on sending to the school community the next day that outlined the school district's approach and how any fears expressed by students, families and staff would be addressed at the moment:

SPS Community,

Over the last several weeks many of our students, families and staff from the BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and immigrant communities have expressed fear and uncertainty about the future. It is important to acknowledge these concerns and to express our school district's commitment to supporting each and every individual who is part of our school community.

In the Salem Public Schools, we remain unified and anchored around our core values of belonging, equity and opportunity. More specifically,

We believe all members of our community are valued and that our relationships are built on empathy and respect; and

We believe in promoting social justice to ensure an inclusive school community where all members are empowered and engaged.

These values will continue to guide our decision-making and our approach to supporting the students we serve. We routinely ask ourselves– “And how are the children?” We want to ensure that all of our children are healthy, engaged and excelling in our school community.

We ask that our families, faculty and students report any instances where the well-being of any of our community members may be at risk:

Our school counselors will provide safe spaces for any student to process fears or anxieties they may have;

We will decisively respond to hate speech or actions that denigrate any member of our community;

We will reinforce our core values through our advisory periods, morning circles and restorative discussions across schools;

We will connect families to community resources to assist them with any supports they require for their children;

We will continue to provide guidance to staff on how to facilitate constructive and productive dialogue while addressing negative or harmful commentary.

Our goal is to ensure that our students and their families are safe, protected and cared for within the Salem Public Schools community. We appreciate your partnership as we work tirelessly to realize our vision that our students are locally engaged, globally connected and fully prepared to thrive in a diverse and changing world.

*Sincerely,
Stephen Zrike*

Member Manning and Vice Chair Cruz concurred with the email. Vice Chair Cruz commented that the School Committee could also look into making a statement on this matter.

1. Technology Plan Update

March LeBlanc, Executive Director of Instructional Technology, provided a presentation on technology. In response to Student Representative Qualkenbush, Mr. LeBlanc said that

students can report areas in the schools that do not have internet access through Tech Tickets on ClassLink. Member Cornell was glad that the district is supporting teachers' ability to integrate technology into teaching.

2. Student Support Services Update

Ellen Wingard, Executive Director of Student Support Service, provided a presentation on student support services, discipline and the new metric, risk ratio.

Member Cornell asked how the community is being engaged around the issue of disciplinary action as well as the steps taken to address the overrepresentation of boys with regards to disciplinary action. Ms. Wingard responded that engaging the community

is the next step in the process. Ms. Wingard added that steps need to be taken for prevention before suspensions are given.

In response to Member Miranda, Ms. Wingard said typically the principal or assistant principal and on rare occasions, the mental health staff is involved with suspensions. The suspensions are usually due to handbook violations or some action that puts safety at risk. Superintendent Zrike commented that the exception by law is if the student is in the Kindergarten to 3rd Grade level, the approval of the Superintendent or designee is sought for suspensions. Superintendent Zrike said that the suspensions are usually for safety reasons. Ms. Wingard added that there is always a concurrent process happening at the same time as the suspension around a student's mental health or the family situation for K-3 students.

In response to another question from Member Miranda, Ms. Wingard said that all the schools in the district have a written document that specifies teacher managed and administrator managed behaviors. Ms. Wingard continued it is discretionary but teachers are equipped to build classroom communities where they are able to manage most of the behaviors. Ms. Wingard added that there are lots of times when there is an administrator managed behavior, the teacher may want to manage it on their own because it is difficult to control once it is out of their classroom. Typically when there is an administrator managed behavior, it would be referred to the assistant principal and the assistant principal would meet with the student. Student success advisors and other staff are available to support the student until the assistant principal can meet with the student. There would be a conversation and some manner of restorative consequence provided such as an apology, community service, loss of privilege, and Saturday school. With regard to whether recess is taken away as a disciplinary measure, Ms. Wingard said that sometimes it is taken away if something related to safety happens just before recess in order to allow time for processing and at other times, recess might be restricted to walking.

Member Hoffman asked if there are any warnings given before a suspension. Ms. Wingard said that there are many variables and it is based on the perspectives of the administrators. Superintendent Zrike added that it depends on the situation and the expectations communicated to the students. Superintendent Zrike said that this process is done in a thoughtful manner.

3. Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Update

Superintendent Zrike said that community and staff meetings are going to take place during the week. Superintendent Zrike said information from these meetings will be compiled and provided to the School Committee.

4. Finance and Operations Report

There was no additional report.

Student Representative Report

Student Representative Qualkenbush said that the Student Advisory Group meeting which took place earlier in the afternoon reviewed the results of the poll about inviting new members. There were 12 responses and 9 new members were accepted. The Food and Nutrition Services Program Director, Michaela Short, was present and heard comments as well as suggestions from the students. The students received information about the school lunch and nutritional information. Among the topics that came up were a station for condiments, more vegan options and moving the salad bar so that it allows for more foot traffic. Superintendent Zrike added that Assistant Superintendent Pauley was also present during the Student Advisory Group meeting. Assistant Superintendent Pauley thanked all the students who were present at the meeting for their feedback. Assistant Superintendent Pauley added that some of the issues raised could be solved with quick fixes but others would need more creativity such as low sodium seasoning.

Subcommittee Reports

- 1. Finance Subcommittee**
Member Manning said that she would be meeting with Assistant Superintendent Pauley later in the week so that they can start the budget process earlier.
- 2. Personnel Subcommittee**
No report at this time.
- 3. Building and Grounds Subcommittee**
No report at this time.
- 4. Curriculum Subcommittee**
No report at this time.
- 5. Policy Subcommittee**
Member Cornell said that the subcommittee voted unanimously on the proposal from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) for the organization and online hosting of the School Committee policies. Member Cornell continued that there are available funds for the project and provided the breakdown of the cost which was included in the supporting documents. Member Cornell explained that the current organization of the policies is messy and too many people have access to the original document to make changes. Having MASC host the policies is safer, comprehensive and will ensure that the policies are aligned to Massachusetts General Law (MGL). It also allows other districts to look at Salem Public Schools' policies as a model.

In response to Mayor Pangallo's question, Member Cornell said the current policies' numbering system do not align with the other districts' policies hosted by MASC. Once this is aligned, cross comparison with other districts' policies becomes easier. The entire process will take about three years. Member Cornell added that whenever there are any changes with MGL, MASC will flag it so that the district can review and also if there are policies from other districts that might be helpful for us, MASC will alert us in the initial process. In response to a further question from Mayor Pangallo, Member Cornell said that nothing automatically changes in the policy manual because School Committee approval is needed.

Vice Chair Cruz added that the staff from MASC who will be assisting with the process are former or current School Committee members from other districts. Vice Chair Cruz added that MASC is not prescriptive in any way about model policies they may have because they recognize that each district is nuanced in their policies.

Member Cornell said that the Policy Subcommittee also reviewed the Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (MCJROTC) Memorandum of Agreement. Answers are being sought for some minor questions raised by members of the subcommittee. The subcommittee also voted unanimously to request the Superintendent to engage the City solicitor and the School Committee counsel to review the City of Salem's ordinance prohibiting weapons in public buildings to determine whether or not it applies to the MCJROTC.

Motions and Resolutions

1. Organization and Online Hosting of Policy Manual by Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC)

Member Cornell made a motion to have MASC organize and host online the Salem School Committee Policy Manual. Member Miranda 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.

2. Resolution to Affirm Safe and Welcoming Environments within the Salem Public Schools

Mayor Pangallo read the proclamation which was adopted unanimously by the School Committee on February 6, 2017:

WHEREAS, the Salem Public Schools are committed to every child by creating a safe and welcoming place where all children are valued, appreciated and encouraged;

WHEREAS, Salem Public Schools' teachers and leaders are here to support all students to reach their fullest potential;

WHEREAS, the Salem Public Schools welcome and celebrate the diversity of our students whose native language represents thirty-four countries and dialects;

WHEREAS, the Salem Public Schools are committed to educating every student regardless of citizenship and national origin; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, as MEMBERS of the SALEM SCHOOL COMMITTEE, WE DO HEREBY

PROCLAIM, as follows:

That Salem Public Schools on this day, February 6, 2017, and forever in the future, shall continue to be a school district that welcomes and recognizes the value and contributions of all students, including immigrants, who strengthen our schools and our community.

FURTHER, We hereby express our support for the City of Salem adopting the attached Sanctuary for Peace Ordinance, which re-affirms our City's commitment to ensuring that municipal services shall be accessible to all residents, regardless of immigration status and specifically limits City employees from inquiring about immigration status in the performance of daily tasks, unless required to do so by Federal or State statute, regulation or court decision.

*Adopted by a vote of 7 in favor, 0 opposed
Salem School Committee
School Committee Chambers, Collins Middle School
February 6, 2017*

In response to Vice-Chair Cruz, Superintendent Zrike said that the number of languages, thirty-four, mentioned in the initial proclamation has now changed to eighteen.

Member Miranda questioned whether gender identity could be stated more explicitly

following MGL. Mayor Pangallo said that the ordinance referenced in the proclamation is the City's non-discrimination ordinance and is not limited to just immigration status. Mayor Pangallo continued by reading an excerpt of the ordinance as follows:

It references the following classifications: age, ancestry, color, disability, family status, gender identity/expression, military status, marital status, national origin, race, religion, source of income, housing status, sex or sexual orientation.

Vice Chair Cruz suggested that the School Committee might want to reaffirm the equity and LGBTQ+ inclusion statements. Mayor Pangallo said that these matters highlighted by the members can be discussed at the next meeting.

Member Cornell said that community members state-wide might not be aware that the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) specifically states in the rules governing sports in Massachusetts that students play for the teams of the gender with which they identify. Member Cornell suggested affirming that the district abides by MIAA rules.

Member Miranda questioned if instead of separate statements, it could be all included in one proclamation. Vice Chair Cruz said that the equity and LGBTQ+ statements were part of policies that the School Committee voted on separately. School Committee members continued discussing if the matters as stated on the district website should be considered separately or if they should be included in one document.

Member Manning made the motion to reaffirm the proclamation dated Feb 6, 2017 contingent upon changing the number of languages to "many". 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.

3. Three year contract (July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2027) for Assistant Superintendent, Finance and Operations, Elizabeth Pauley

Vice Chair Cruz said that the Personnel Subcommittee discussed this matter at the last Personnel Subcommittee meeting. The subcommittee reviewed the compensation comparisons for similar positions at other districts. Superintendent Zrike said that this is one of the positions which requires School Committee approval.

Member Manning made a motion to approve the three year contract (July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2027) for Assistant Superintendent, Finance and Operations, Elizabeth Pauley.

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.

Announcements

Vice Chair Cruz announced that the Salem Children's Charity will be hosting their 30th Annual Holiday Party on December 10th from 6:00 - 9:00 pm at the Hawthorne Hotel. Vice Chair Cruz added that the Salem Children's Charity does a lot of great work on behalf of the children and families in Salem. Members of the public can provide donations by visiting the Salem Children's Charity website.

Adjournment

Member Miranda made a motion to adjourn at 8:31 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

