

**Minutes of the
Salem School Committee Workshop
Tuesday, February 11, 2025
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.**

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

Others in Attendance: Superintendent Stephen Zrike, Deputy Superintendent Kate Carbone and Attorney Brunt

Members Absent: Mayor Dominick Pangallo

1. Call the Meeting to Order

Vice Chair Cruz called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm.

2. Workshop on Latest Legal Developments

Attorney Brunt said that when there are new executive orders, School Committee members should write their questions down to be forwarded to an attorney. Some of these orders are currently being challenged. Attorney Brunt added that for many of the new developments, there are no clear answers and that the district can only focus on regulations that affect schools directly.

Attorney Brunt also reminded School Committee members that laws such as gender identity have not changed. The state, Attorney General's Office and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) refer to these laws and have verified that nothing has changed with respect to the law in Massachusetts. Attorney Brunt emphasized not to obstruct but rather to follow our current protocol.

One of the School Committee members suggested that a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet might be helpful for staff. Attorney Brunt also noted that our general liability insurance covers staff who perform their jobs accordingly.

In response to questions raised about field trips, Attorney Brunt said that it is based on circumstances and parents need to be informed so that they can make the appropriate decision for their student. As for transgender youth in sports, Attorney Brunt said that it is unclear and that for the time being, the schools should maintain the status quo.

Vice Chair Cruz said that if members had questions, they can direct them to Mayor Pangallo or himself with a copy to Superintendent Zrike.

A question was raised about resources for families. Attorney Brunt stated that parents and caregivers should update their emergency contacts.

It was highlighted that the school district has constant communication with the Salem Police Department (SPD) and that the schools are usually notified by SPD if the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) are about and had detained anyone for any infractions.

The discussion continued about available resources for families to help get their immigration or guardianship paperwork done. Attorney Brunt added that the Department of Children and Families (DCF) assists students to continue to attend school should the parents be unavailable.

The question about effects on grants and disbursements was raised and Attorney Brunt said that if something arises, it should be referred to an attorney. As for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the advice is to download and print everything.

A question was raised about what the district would do if an ICE agent came to a school. The response was that the Superintendent would go meet with the officers, contact legal counsel, collect documents and scan them. The Superintendent would also inform school leaders and transportation. There are strict protocols for any adult who visits the schools. Deputy Superintendent Carbone said that the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants recently had a webinar and over 1,000 people had logged in.

One of the members commented that everything being done in Salem aligns with other school districts. Some organizations are handing American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) cards to students. It is a first amendment right. There was a comment that perhaps the student handbook should have some information.

Attorney Brunt cautioned that districts should not be making broad sweeping changes to curriculum as this must adhere to the law.

Vice Chair Cruz left the meeting at 6:30 pm.

The topic of field trips was raised again and Attorney Brunt said that Parents need to be provided with all information in advance such as mode of transportation, itinerary, etc. Superintendent Zrike was asked to work with Attorney Brunt on the field trip policy.

On the question if the titles for certain roles should be changed, Attorney Brunt cautioned against it as the priorities in the state have not changed.

3. Adjournment

Member Cornell made a motion to adjourn at 6:39 pm. Member Miranda seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Member Campbell voted YES

Member Cornell voted YES

Vice Chair Cruz ABSENT

Member Hoffman voted YES

Member Manning voted YES

Member Miranda voted YES

Mayor Pangallo ABSENT

Motion passed with 5 votes in favor and 2 absent.

Respectfully submitted by,

Shirley Dorai

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent