

**Minutes of the Special Session
of the Salem School Committee Meeting
Tuesday, March 11, 2025
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.**

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

Others in Attendance: Superintendent Stephen Zrike and Deputy Superintendent Carbone

Members Absent: Mayor Dominick Pangallo and AJ Hoffman

1. Call the Meeting to Order

Vice Chair Cruz called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

2. FY26 Budget Update

Superintendent Zrike said that the deficit for next year, 2025-2026 is between \$4-4.5 million. However, the district is awaiting more information from the city regarding appropriation before information about workforce reduction can be finalized. The budget for next year necessitates difficult decisions in many different areas.

Vice Chair Cruz said that the School Committee does not have the option of carrying the deficit over to the following year. In response to a question from a member, Superintendent Zrike responded that school site councils have time to make final decisions because the deadline is April 28th. Superintendent Zrike commented that even after getting the final inputs from stakeholders, there would need to be a lot of cost-cutting measures in order to balance the budget.

Vice Chair Cruz and Member Cornell commented that the budget deficit is an on-going conversation and stakeholders knew about this as well as the cuts that would be necessary for some time now.

Assistant Superintendent Pauley provided the presentation on the FY26 budget. The topic

of charging fees for athletics and clubs were discussed. Superintendent Zrike said that it is not uncommon to charge fees. Some districts such as Marblehead and Beverly do charge athletic fees. The athletics and music groups in Salem subsidize their events through fundraising. More students are engaged in athletics compared to other clubs. Superintendent Zrike commented that the goal was to fill full teams so that they can participate in games. Students have commented that if there were any barriers to participating, they would not participate. There was a discussion about trying to get donations but there were comments that students should not be asking for donations.

Superintendent Zrike said that parents have informed him that they do not want to fundraise. School Committee members and Superintendent Zrike were not in favor of charging fees for athletics and clubs. The members informed Assistant Superintendent Pauley that no further analysis in this area was needed.

The topic of charging PreK fees was discussed. Vice Chair Cruz said that he was not in favor because there are funds available for universal PreK offerings for gateway cities. In response to a question about the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) grant, Deputy Superintendent Carbone said that even though families pay based on a sliding scale, families are still struggling to pay. Superintendent Zrike said that it helps PreK student enrollment increases when there are no fees. In response to a question about the numbers and percentages of CPPI students, Deputy Superintendent Carbone said that she would obtain the figures.

Technology fees and YONDR pouches were discussed. As to the question if it was possible for students to bring their own laptops to school, the response was that it might be better to have the same devices so that the access would be the same. Vice Chair Cruz and Member Cambell said that this discussion should be part of the acceptable use policy.

Member Campbell made the motion to refer the Acceptable Use Policy to the Policy Subcommittee. Member Miranda seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Member Campbell voted YES

Member Cornell voted YES

Vice Chair Cruz voted YES

Member Hoffman ABSENT

Member Manning voted YES

Member Miranda voted YES

Mayor Pangallo ABSENT

Motion passed with 5 votes in favor and 2 absent.

Transportation fees were discussed. Members expressed that this is tied with controlled school choice and necessitates further conversation. The topic of neighborhood schools and school closing was also mentioned.

As for using reserved funds to help close the budget gap, members said that they were not in favor of doing so since the following years also will have large budget gaps.

Members agreed that more conversations are needed instead of kicking the can down the road about how to right size the district. There were suggestions to begin these conversations in May and June.

3. Adjournment

Member Cornell made a motion to adjourn at 7:38 pm. Member Miranda seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,

Shirley Dorai

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent

SPECIAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING 3.11.25



AGENDA

FY26 Budget: Process update & discussion:

- Possible fees
- Transportation practices
- Financial Reserves



+11%
appropriation
-
+4%
actual

The Numbers:

	FY23 ACTUAL	FY24 ACTUAL	FY25 APPROPRIATED	FY26 PROJECTED
<i>PERSONNEL</i>	\$51,355,599	\$55,646,373	\$58,583,738	\$63,449,227
<i>NON- PERSONNEL</i>	\$12,323,698	\$15,791,644	\$16,008,878	\$19,402,068
<i>TOTAL</i>	\$63,679,297	\$71,438,017	\$74,592,616*	\$83,111,546

* +\$3,637,000 annual revenue
+\$2,450,000 in reserves & one-time funding

= \$80,158,896.50 (Total FY25 spending)



In our Budget Forums we have asked about Fees

- Athletics/Extracurricular (~\$23,600)
- PreK (~\$150,000)***
- Technology (\$22,000)
- Transportation & Bus passes (\$15,500)

There is no clear consensus

We have estimated that SPS could raise up to \$211,100 if we applied all of these fees & assumed full collection.

****Would likely change our CH70*



Athletics/Extracurricular activities

Current State: no fees for any extracurricular activities

Is it common for districts to charge fees? Yes; many offer scholarships/waivers for students who cannot pay

Feedback: Consistent (*do not charge fees*)

Preliminary Thinking: *Do not charge fees*

Potential revenue: ~\$23,600



Athletics/Extracurricular Fees:

Athletics

- Gloucester High School: ranges from \$70-\$200
- Gloucester Middle School: ranges from \$25-\$200

- Beverly High School: ranges from \$210-\$315
- Beverly Middle School: \$105

- Peabody: \$175.00 per sport; \$350 family maximum

- Danvers High School: \$155-\$245
- Danvers Middle School: \$100

Salem MS & HS Athletes: 1277

After school rosters: 830



PreK

Current State:

- Foundation Budget Rates, Per Pupil= \$5,066.15
- 211 students in full day Preschool/PreK
 - 62 with an IEP; 149 without an IEP
- Fees charged for PreK after school program (sliding scale)
 - Range 5 days (September-May): \$40-\$400 monthly

Is it common for districts to charge fees? Yes; many offer waivers

Feedback: Consistent (*do not charge fees*)

Preliminary Thinking: *Do not charge fees*

Potential Revenue: \$15,000 per month; \$150,000



Technology

Current State: No fees for chromebooks, repairs, replacements

Is it common for districts to charge fees? Yes

Feedback: *Mixed, but generally supportive of repair/replacement fees*

Potential revenue: ~\$22,000 (including YONDR pouches)



Technology

Preliminary Thinking:

If SPS implements a fee for technology:

- No insurance fees or standard technology fees
- \$30 invoice for accidental damage after the first instance per year
- \$30 invoice for intentional damage
- \$100 for a lost Chromebook
- Free replacement if stolen with a police report provided

Potential revenue: ~\$20,000



YONDR Pouches

Current State: Provide phone pouches to students at SHS, CMS, New Liberty, Saltonstall; purchase replacement pouches (@ \$25.50 per pouch)

Is it common for districts to charge fees? Unknown

Preliminary Thinking: Charge for the 2nd replacement YONDR pouch

Potential Revenue: ~\$2000 (@ \$10 per pouch)



Transportation

Feedback: *Mixed; consistent on charging for replacement bus passes*

Preliminary Thinking:

- Reduce the number of nonmandatory riders & **go from 13 to 12 buses (drop to 1435)**

Consider charging fees:

- Charge non-mandatory, non-low income families
- \$180 per year for round trip for one child (\$90 for one way); \$225 family max
- \$5 for replacement bus passes (1 free replacement)

Potential Revenue: ~\$15,500



Transportation: Mandatory Riders

2. Mileage Limits for Entitlement to District-Provided Transportation

A. The Salem School Committee has determined that student bus transportation shall be provided at no cost for students in grades K-6 in accordance with MGL CH. 71, section 68. In addition to what is required by MGL, the Salem Public Schools provides transportation to students as per the following:

- Pre-K: Not eligible
- Grades K-2: Students who live 1 mile or more from school
- Grades 3-5: Students who live 1.5 miles or more from school
- Grade 6: Students who live 2 miles or more from school (students in grade 6 are required to be transported 2 miles or above per MGL)
- Grade 7-12: Students who live 2 miles or more from school

These students are considered **mandatory riders

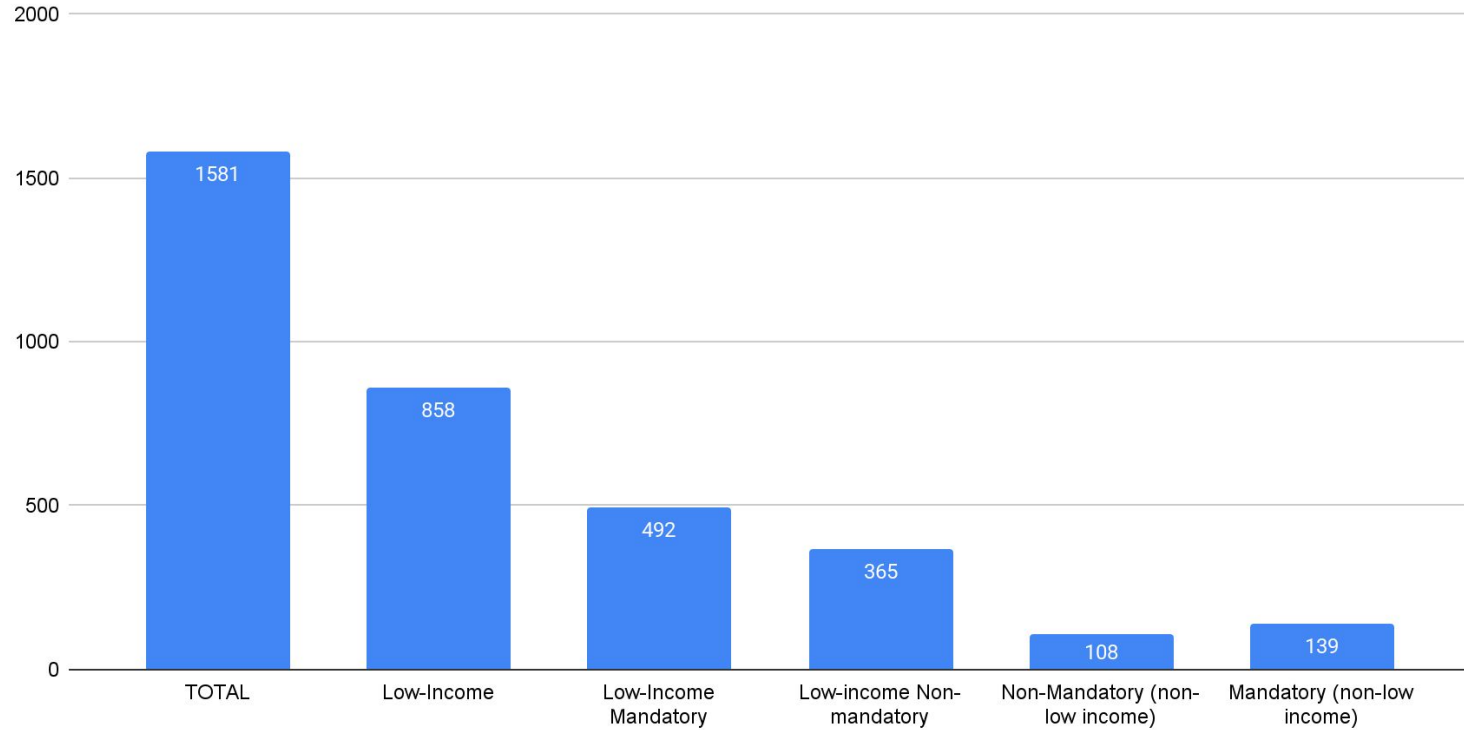


2024-2025 Buses per School

	AM	PM
BATES	3	4
BENTLEY	3	3
CARLTON	2	2
COLLINS	4	4
HMLS	2	3
NLIS	1	1
SALTS	2	2
SHS	5	5
WHES	3	3
SAC	2	2



2024-25 BIG BUS RIDERS



Projected Year End Reserves

Current State:

- School Choice: ~\$750,000
- Circuit Breaker: \$2.7M
- Stabilization Fund: \$550,000

Preliminary Thinking: Save reserves in case of shifts at the Federal level

Potential Revenue: \$4,000,000



What's Next?

- ❑ **Mid-March:**
 - ❑ Additional analysis
 - ❑ Update on the funding “floor” from City
 - ❑ Conversations with Principals & Department Heads (week of 3/24)
- ❑ **End of March:** Meetings with School Site Councils (week of 3/31)
- ❑ **Early April:** Budget presentation on 4.7
- ❑ **Mid April:** Budget Hearing (week of 4/14)
- ❑ **Late April:** SC vote (4/28)





Salem Public Schools