

**Minutes of the Regular Session
of the Salem School Committee
Monday, April 14, 2025
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.
Hybrid Meeting**

Members Present: Mayor Dominick Pangallo, Vice Chair Cruz, Amanda Campbell, Amanda Campbell, Beth Anne Cornell, 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.

Move to Open the Public Hearing on the FY26 Budget

Member Campbell made a motion to open the Public Hearing on the FY26 budget. Member Cornell 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 voted YES

Motion passed with 6 votes in favor and 1 absent.

Public Comments

Ann Berman, Salem Teachers Union (STU) President

Ms. Berman provided comparisons between last year's budget and the FY26 proposed budget about the roles which were cut and added. Ms. Berman asked if there was a plan for covering the work of the roles that are being cut as adding more to an educator's plate is not the answer. Ms. Berman implored the School Committee to balance the budget without cutting educators who are face-to-face with students everyday.

Barbara McLernon, Salem Public Schools (SPS) Paraprofessional

Ms. McLernon spoke about the paraprofessional positions which are being cut. Ms. McLernon also stressed that although the displaced paraprofessionals could apply for other vacancies in

the district, it is not the same as the positions differ. Ms. McLernon wanted to know who would be covering all the tasks performed by the paraprofessionals whose jobs are being cut. Ms. McLernon supported keeping the Yondr pouches in schools as the cost is minimal.

Kristin Mielcarz and Mary Ciulla, Bates Reading Specialist

Ms. Mielcarz and Ms. Ciulla expressed concern about the proposed elimination of a reading specialist position at the Bates School. They also explained the role and work of reading specialists. The elimination of one of the two reading specialists at the Bates School would affect the services provided to students. Ms. Mielcarz and Ms. Ciulla requested the School Committee to reconsider eliminating this position.

Karen Tucker, Salem Teachers Union (STU) Vice President

Ms. Tucker highlighted the proposed cuts to library paraprofessionals. Ms. Tucker explained what the paraprofessionals do and the direct barrier to learning that would be caused if these positions were eliminated. Ms. Tucker requested that the decision to cut these positions be reconsidered.

Clifford Exilhomme, SPS Coach

Mr. Exilhomme provided information about the progress made by the football and wrestling teams at SPS. Mr. Exilhomme also explained his job position, background and goal of becoming a school counselor. Mr. Exilhomme said that he is also the On Track Facilitator and expressed concern that this position may be cut. Mr. Exilhomme described this role and requested the School Committee not to eliminate positions that support students.

Erica Clifford, Horace Mann Parent Teacher Committee (PTC) President

Ms. Clifford voiced concern over the proposed elimination of the position of the art teacher, Ms. Warren at Horace Mann. Ms. Clifford went on to explain the impact that this will cause. Ms. Clifford requested the School Committee to reconsider this decision.

Heather McClain, Horace Mann Parent

Ms. McClain also spoke in support of not eliminating Ms. Warren's position. Ms. McClain read the petition which has 162 signatories to reinstate Ms. Warren next year. Ms. McClain also explained how this will affect the students.

Erika Rajkovic, Horace Mann Parent

Ms. Rajkovic said that the elimination of the full-time art teacher position would negatively affect the students. Ms. Rajkovic continued to explain why this cut should not be made. Ms. Rajkovic requested that the School Committee reconsider this decision.

Kate Burns, Horace Mann Parent

Ms. Burns mentioned that reducing the full-time art teacher position to a part-time position is not equitable. Ms. Burns requested that the decision to cut the position be reconsidered.

Lee Ann O'Neil, SPS Paraprofessional

Ms. O'Neil described her work. Ms. O'Neil said that she found out that her position will be cut. Ms. O'Neil expressed concern about what would happen to the students without the support provided by paraprofessionals as they might fall through the cracks. Ms. O'Neil hoped that the decision to eliminate this position is reconsidered because students should come first.

Anny Cruz, SPS Parent and Family Engagement Facilitator (FEF)

Ms. Cruz provided information about the work that FEFs do. Ms. Cruz questioned how the different functions that FEFs currently perform will be carried out amidst all the cuts.

Superintendent Zrike read the comments submitted by Ms. Christina Norris and Ms. Laura Olson, Horace Mann parents who requested that the art teacher position be reinstated.

Geoff Millar, Collins Middle School Parent

Mr. Millar questioned the significant increase in the special education budget when there is not much difference in the number of out of district placements for next year. Mr. Millar voiced his support for the Yondr pouches. Mr. Millar also questioned whether the request for proposal for the preschool playground should be put on hold until decisions about school reconfiguration are made.

Vice Chair Cruz made a motion to keep the public hearing on the FY26 budget open until the School Committee meeting on April 28, 2025. Member Manning seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Pangallo thanked everyone for their comments and reminded the public that written comments can continue to be sent to spsbudget@salemk12.org.

Vice Chair Cruz requested a moment of silence for an SPS alumni, Josh Dimino, from the Class of 2010, a former classmate.

Adjournment

Member Manning made a motion to adjourn at 8:11 pm. Member Campbell seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,

Shirley Dorai

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent