

**Minutes of the Special Session
of the Salem School Committee
Monday, April 7, 2025
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.
Hybrid Meeting**

Members Present: Mayor Dominick Pangallo, Vice Chair 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 5:30 pm and informed the public how to access Spanish interpretation.

Approval of Field Trip for Two Salem High School Students to Innovative Schools Learning Excursion, Tucson, Arizona from April 28 - May 1, 2025

Member Cornell made a motion to approve the field trip for two Salem High School students to Innovative Schools Learning Excursion, Tucson, Arizona from April 28 - May 1, 2025. 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.

Proposed FY26 Budget Discussion

Superintendent Zrike thanked everyone for their feedback on the FY26 proposed budget. Superintendent Zrike continued that based on this feedback and the feedback to be received from the School Committee at this meeting, the administrative team will make some adjustments.

Superintendent Zrike shared a presentation on reflections and clarifications based on the comments received thus far. Deputy Superintendent Carbone and Assistant Superintendent Pauley also spoke on the slide presentation.

The School Committee and district recognized Ms. Sayanora Reyes, Parent Information Center Manager, who was leaving the district after 27 years of service. Mayor Pangallo and Vice Chair Cruz read the citations for Ms. Reyes.

Vice Chair Cruz commented that last week, at the state level, a supplemental budget which is the result of the millionaires tax allocated some funding to the circuit breaker. Vice Chair Cruz said that although there are no guarantees, there might be more funding available for next year than what was anticipated.

In response to Ms. Manning, Assistant Superintendent Pauley and Executive Director of Special Education, Ms. Jennifer Doucette-Ly explained how the estimate for the number of students and the tuition for out-of-district is calculated. Ms. Manning said that there is a difference in the impact of an employee who is travelling between schools as opposed to an employee who is based in only one school. Member Manning suggested that a travelling employee could be scheduled to be in a particular school for a few days instead of constantly travelling every day between schools. Member Manning also questioned the library schedules and Deputy Superintendent Carbone responded with the current practice. Member Manning commented libraries should be open after school for students' use.

Member Campbell joined the meeting at 6:15 pm.

Vice Chair Cruz mentioned the importance of the specialists programs including physical education staff for early childhood, special education and art. Vice Chair Cruz said that maybe trade-offs with vendor contracts and other areas can be reviewed so that these positions can be preserved. Superintendent Zrike commented that the specialists' time across schools was not really scrutinized over the years. Superintendent Zrike said that this is a good exercise to do to ensure that there is equity across schools.

Member Cornell was concerned about equity among the schools especially when looking at the resources at Carlton. Enrollment in Bates and ECC are on the rise. Member Cornell added that the Horace Mann community had made academic strides and did not want to undercut their community. Member Cornell said some evaluation is needed.

Member Campbell commented that innovation schools and innovation plans do have budgeting implications as it comes with a cost. Superintendent Zrike said that there are two schools with innovation plans and that this matter would need to be looked into because there are associated costs. Member Campbell requested data on students needing supports. Member Cornell asked if PreK students have reading specialists support and Superintendent Zrike said that they typically do not.

Vice Chair Cruz asked if the district team can move certain items into grants and grants in the pipeline. Assistant Superintendent Pauley said that there are about 50 staff members on entitlement grants as well as revolving accounts and that they can look into this further. Superintendent Zrike mentioned the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI)

grant which involves a lot of work but does not subsidize staff as it is used to defray tuition for families who are in need.

Superintendent Zrike said that there is revenue coming in from school choice but that there are concerns about middle school as the Saltonstall students will be coming to Collins next year and there is a need to watch class sizes.

In response to Member Manning, Deputy Superintendent Carbone said that the work done by reading specialists is a combination of the role of classroom teachers and reading specialists.

In response to Member Miranda, Superintendent explained the process by which the proposed cuts were suggested. Each department and school was asked to make suggested reductions. They did this in consultation with their leadership teams. Member Miranda said that going forward, there should be less paternalistic ways of gathering information and making these decisions. Staff, students and the public should be involved in the process instead of just providing feedback. Member Miranda also said that it could be beneficial on several fronts to have less sub separate classrooms and more inclusion. Member Miranda added that the proposed budget states that the reductions are based on enrollment and student needs but some of the aspects do not reflect this. Member Miranda asked the district to see if special education positions can be restored through restructuring administrative costs and other ways.

Superintendent Zrike said that there were several forums with different stakeholders that were held during the budget process. Ms. Doucette-Ly said that there are many inclusion classes except the 9th grade. Superintendent Zrike added that we do not have a full inclusion model like some schools but it is a complex and costly process requiring training and supports but it is a right direction to be moving towards. Member Miranda requested data for special education services or accommodations being used for students across the district. In response to Member Manning, Superintendent Zrike said that 24% of the students receive special education services. Ms. Doucette-Ly said that there are quite a few staff members who have dual certification.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Cruz made a motion to adjourn at 7:17 pm. Member Miranda seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,

Shirley Dorai

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent



*FY 26 Budget Updates
School Committee
Discussion/Reflections
April 15, 2025*

Support for Elementary Schools

- Reading & math supports- equity across schools
- Plan for Family Engagement Facilitators (FEFs)
 - 3 FEFs split between 6 elementary schools (time allocation should be based on enrollment/need)
 - SHS & Collins each have 1 FEF
 - Support in Parent Information Center (PIC)
 - Review job description
- Substitute coverage at schools
 - More robust substitute pool
 - Guidance for schools
 - Lunch support
 - Staff attendance



Unknowns

- Still working with Principal Burns on final high school staffing decisions
- Early education funding at the state level
- Increase in circuit breaker reimbursement



Elementary Specialists—Art, music, PE

Add tremendous value to our schools

- Deliver important content
- Build special relationships with students and contribute to school cultures
- Spark students creativity & critical thinking

Why are we taking a closer look at this area?

- Next year we will have 4 elementary schools with fewer than 300 students
- Opportunity to recalibrate

Overview to Cuts

- 1 PE, .5 Music, .5 Art, 1 Civics (exists only at WHES)
- Added 2 Library Digital Media Specialists
- **Total overall cut = 1 FTE**



Libraries

SHS

- Librarian does not teach classes so has time to support students with checking out books and reshelving throughout the day.

CMS & Elementary Schools

- Library/Digital Media classes include time for browsing and checking out books.
- Principals will intentionally build in weekly time into the library schedule for grade level access and for reshelving.



Special Education: OOD Tuition

- Tuitions for out-of-district placements are increasing significantly, even though the number of students is remaining steady
- The Massachusetts Operational Services Division (OSD) sets the tuition rates (& increases) for approved Special Education programs
- In FY26, average summer/school year tuition will be:
 - Private: \$171,835.74 (+\$9,203.10)
 - Collaborative: \$94,067.02 (+\$20,611.45)
- Timing of placement impacts overall budget



Other Updates:

- **Playgrounds:**
 - There was an RFP posted for renovating the Bates early childhood playground
 - Total budget est.: \$500,000
- **Edited Budget Book: Corrections**
 - An error in the Bates budget on (pg 67).
 - Clarified the districtwide/school based cut (Science coach)

