

**Minutes of the Regular Session
of the Salem School Committee
Monday, May 5, 2025
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.
Hybrid Meeting**

Members Present: Mayor Dominick Pangallo, 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: Vice Chair Cruz

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 and it was so voted. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Ann Berman, Salem Teachers Union (STU) President

Ms. Berman thanked educators in recognition of Teacher Appreciation Week. Ms. Berman also congratulated Anny Cruz, Family Engagement Facilitator, for receiving a distinguished service award in the category of non-licensed member in the PreK-12 system from AFT Massachusetts. Anny was nominated for her work in getting the Family Engagement Facilitators recognized in the last contract as well as her work on the negotiating team in recent contract negotiations.

Approval of Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes of Regular School Committee meeting held on April 28, 2025
2. Approval of FY25 Warrants:
 1. 05/01/2025 - \$404,932.00

Member Cornell made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Member Miranda seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Student Representative Report

Superintendent Zrike said that Student Representative Qualkenbush was not present because he was being inducted into the National Honors Society. Superintendent Zrike said that he met with the Student Advisory Group and discussed elections for next year's officers. Facilities Director, Zisis Alepakis, was also present and informed the students about how the issues raised by the students about the locker room bathrooms were addressed. Students discussed access to menstrual health products and were informed that their feedback on the new high school building was shared during the design meetings. The recent data on the dropout and graduation rates were also discussed. Students raised concerns about female students graduating at lower rates compared to male students as well as higher multilingual and special needs students dropout rates although there have been improvements in this area. The group provided suggestions for having more support for students. There were a number of New Liberty Innovation School (NLIS) at the meeting and they spoke about issues with their building. The final Student Advisory Group meeting will be held at NLIS.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Zrike thanked all the educators in honor of Educator Appreciation Week. Superintendent Zrike recognized the teachers who were present at the meeting and applauded Dorothea Stefanov for her work which was highlighted by a parent from Bentley Academy Innovation School. Superintendent Zrike also thanked the STU for helping in cleaning up the contracts and successful negotiations. Superintendent Zrike congratulated the 33 inductees to the National Honor Society, 13 inductees to the National Art Honor Society and the Seal of Biliteracy recipients. Superintendent Zrike wished Happy Mother's Day to all in the Salem community.

1. School Choice Discussion

Superintendent Zrike provided recommendations for Salem Public Schools' participation in Massachusetts' inter-district non-resident School Choice Program for 2025-2026. Superintendent Zrike continued that the district has participated in this program for the last few years and had success with it. Superintendent Zrike said he was not recommending accepting school choice students into New Liberty Innovation School because the seats are being reserved for Salem residents since there is a need. Salem Prep High School does not accept school choice students because they need to have the appropriate IEP in order to be enrolled.

Superintendent Zrike also did not recommend a change to Grades K-5. The district does not accept school choice students for PreK except for the children of staff. Superintendent Zrike did not recommend accepting school choice students for middle school grades 6-8 because with the Saltonstall middle school transition, the district wants to ensure that this is done thoughtfully. Additionally, Superintendent Zrike expressed concern about the class sizes at the middle school. Superintendent Zrike said that the rest of the recommendations are the same as last year and have been reviewed by legal counsel. This includes the September 5th cut off date for accepting school choice students. Superintendent Zrike said that there is some accommodation for families who move during the middle of the school year.

In response to Member Miranda, Superintendent Zrike said that the number of school choice students the district receives is almost the same as the number of Salem students who go to other districts. The number of school choice students in Salem is comparable to other districts. Member Manning highlighted that when the new high school is open, there might be an increase in school choice students as they might be applying to certain programs such as Career and Technical Education. Superintendent Zrike said that when he had initially recommended school choice a few years ago, the enrollment at Salem Public Schools had declined, particularly at the high school level. The school choice program has helped enrollment numbers. Superintendent Zrike said that this needs to be monitored especially with the new high school building. In response to Mayor Pangallo, Superintendent Zrike said that even if a school choice applicant already has a sibling attending Collins Middle School, they cannot be enrolled if the decision is made not to allow any new school choice students in the middle school grades. In response to another question, Superintendent Zrike said that once a school choice student is enrolled, they can stay until they graduate high school.

2. Bentley Innovation Plan

Principal Rogers, ML Coach Laura Towey, 4th Grade Teacher Dorothea Stefanov and Adjustment Counselor Kelly Quinn from Bentley Academy Innovation School presented the innovation plan.

Members Campbell and Cornell thanked the Bentley team for their hard work and dedication. Assistant Superintendent Pauley clarified if Bentley was requesting to carry forward unused funds from one fiscal year to the next and Principal Rogers responded that they were not but wanted to have it as an option for the future. Assistant Superintendent Pauley cautioned that if they were requesting it in the future, it would be challenging for the year end budget process. Superintendent Zrike said that it has not been the practice to carry money over. As for the length of the school day, Superintendent Zrike said that the district worked hard to have equity across the school system and wanted to be thoughtful about this matter. Member Campbell was in favor of potentially having a longer day for dual language because they have a different model. In response to Member Cornell, Member Campbell said that she is of the opinion that the innovation model is important for dual language programs unless it is expanded to additional schools. Superintendent Zrike commended the improvements at Bentley. Superintendent Zrike said that feedback on the plan will be gathered and brought back to the School Committee at the next meeting for final vote.

In response to Member Miranda, Assistant Superintendent Pauley said that she was not aware of any intentional strategy for fundraising. Member Miranda commented that she has had an amazing experience at Bentley with her own child. Deputy Superintendent Carbone said that the work at Bentley has been transformational.

3. Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Update

Superintendent Zrike said that there were two meetings held last week about the design alternatives and that there is another meeting later in the week to discuss which design

that the Building Committee would select. Superintendent Zrike said that this will not be the final design but rather whether it will be a new construction, renovation or a combination of both. The community will continue to be engaged around this project.

4. Finance and Operations Report

1. Budget Transfer Request

Assistant Superintendent Pauley referenced the two budget transfer request memos dated April 30, 2025 and May 2, 2025 which were in the packet seeking School Committee approval.

Subcommittee Reports

1. Finance Subcommittee

No report at this time.

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

No report at this time.

Motions and Resolutions

1. School Choice Vote

Member Campbell made a motion to accept Superintendent Zrike's recommendation for the School Choice vote. Member Miranda seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Budget Transfer Request

Member Campbell made a motion to approve the budget transfer requests as per the memos dated April 30, 2025 and May 2, 2025. Member Miranda seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Policy 5103: Controlled Choice Student Assignment - Third Reading

Member Cornell made a motion to approve Policy 5103: Controlled Choice Student Assignment and Policy 5501: Responsible Use Policy and Media for third reading. Member Campbell seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Policy 5501: Responsible Use Policy and Media - Third Reading

This matter was addressed in the previous section.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Adjournment

Member Campbell made a motion to adjourn at 8:14 pm. Member Miranda seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,

Shirley Dorai

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent