

**Minutes of the Regular Session  
of the Salem School Committee  
Monday, May 19, 2025  
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.  
Hybrid Meeting**

**Members Present:** Mayor Dominick Pangallo, Vice Chair Cruz, Amanda Campbell, Beth Anne Cornell and Veronica Miranda

**Others in Attendance:** Superintendent Stephen Zrike, Deputy Superintendent Carbone and Assistant Superintendent Pauley

**Members Absent:** AJ Hoffman and Mary Manning

**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 Campbell 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 ABSENT

Member Miranda ABSENT

Mayor Pangallo voted YES

Motion passed with 4 votes in favor and 3 absent.

**Public Comment**

Ben Chertok, Music Coordinator, Salem Public Schools

Mr. Chertok announced the proclamation from Governor Maura Healey for Massachusetts Day for Music Education. Salem High School's Indoor Percussion Ensemble was one of nine performing groups selected to perform at the state house earlier during the day. The students met Vice Chair Cruz, Senator Lovely's staff and Lieutenant Governor Driscoll. Mr. Chertok acknowledged the significance of the support from the state as well as Salem. Mr. Chertok thanked the School Committee, administrators, teachers, parents and students.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

1. Approval of Minutes of Regular School Committee meeting held on May 5, 2025
2. Approval of Field Trip to Canobie Lake Park, Salem, NH for New Liberty Innovation School

students on June 16, 2025

3. Approval of FY25 Warrants:
  1. 05/08/2025 - \$490,347.54
  2. 05/15/2025 - \$462,355.51

Member Cornell made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Member Campbell 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 ABSENT

Member Miranda ABSENT

Mayor Pangallo voted YES

Motion passed with 4 votes in favor and 3 absent.

### **Student Representative Report**

Student Representative Qualkenbush spoke about the elections for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Student Advisory Council. Graduation is on June 6th. The last Student Advisory Council meeting will be held at the New Liberty Innovation School on June 2nd. The last day for seniors would be May 29th. Superintendent Zrike thanked Student Representative Qualkenbush and Vice Chair Barbara Rowley for their leadership.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Zrike honored Coach Shawna Erps. Deputy Superintendent Carbone said that Shawna Erps, Early Childhood Coordinator and Lead Literacy Coach for Pre-K-5 at Salem Public Schools, received the Salem State University Educator Alumni Award on Thursday, May 15th at the State Universities of Massachusetts Educator Alumni Award Ceremony at the State House. The testimonial that Ms. Erps received was read aloud by Deputy Superintendent Carbone. Vice Chair Cruz echoed the sentiments echoed by Deputy Superintendent Carbone and provided a citation which was read aloud. Members Cornell and Campbell also commended Ms. Erps.

Superintendent Zrike announced the 2025 Student Voice Summit, See Me Festival and Journey of the Young Artist exhibit taking place on May 22nd at the Peabody Essex Museum and at the Old Town Hall. Superintendent Zrike also announced the School Department Budget Hearing in front of City Council on May 27th, Senior Signing Day on May 23rd for future educators. The Senior CTE Awards will be taking place on May 22nd. The Massachusetts Statewide K-12 Graduation Council is conducting listening sessions on May 29th and June 3rd to recommend a new vision for graduation requirements.

#### **1. Salem Education Foundation Update**

Superintendent Zrike introduced President Ellie Rounds Bloom and Vice President Dr. Stephen Beauparlant from the Salem Education Foundation (SEF) who are both Salem Public Schools parents. Dr. Beauparlant shared their mission, summarized the efforts

taken and highlighted one of their best grants. Dr. Beuparlant introduced Ms. Linda Gutierrez and her students. Ms. Gutierrez was the recipient of SEF's Nelson L. Dion Jr. Grant for History. Ms. Gutierrez and her 6th grade students spoke about their project, Young Archaeologist Apprenticeship: 6th Grade Connecting to the Ancient World through Museum Experiences.

Vice Chair Cruz and Member Cornell thanked SEF for providing this opportunity to Salem Public Schools students. Superintendent Zrike commended Ms. Gutierrez and her students' project. Mayor Pangallo expressed his appreciation as well.

## **2. Special Education Update**

Superintendent Zrike said that although Salem Public Schools' track record is better than other gateway cities, there is still a lot of work to do. Executive Director of Special Education, Ms. Jennifer Doucette-Ly presented the update for Special Education.

Member Miranda joined the meeting via Zoom at this point.

In response to Vice Chair Cruz, Ms. Doucette-Ly said that the Parent Forum Group events are scheduled to be held quarterly and the first of these was done together with Exceptional Lives, a non-profit organization that offers professional development and resources in English and Spanish. There will be other partners for future meetings. In response to Member Cornell, Ms. Doucette-Ly said that JumpRope is more flexible than Aspen. Superintendent Zrike said that there has been a lot of improvements under the leadership of Ms. Doucette-Ly and Ms. Osgood. Superintendent Zrike spoke further about engaging Latino families around special education services. Superintendent Zrike also mentioned that students need to be encouraged to do better and set higher expectations. More inclusion opportunities need to be offered.

## **2. Bentley Innovation Plan**

Superintendent Zrike said that he received feedback from the Salem Teachers Union (STU) and members of the administration team. One of the points mentioned is that there is no autonomy to carry over funds from one year to the next as it is not part of the City's policy. The length of the student day will be made in consultation with the school district, union and the School Committee so as not to perpetuate inequities in the district even though it is acknowledged that maybe lengthening the school day in Bentley would be an equitable practice. Superintendent Zrike added that certain language such as the names of private and charter schools as well as evaluative language were removed. The schedule and calendar will be done in consultation with the district so that there is more alignment across the district and does not result in budgetary implications. The school innovation board will work with the principal, district and union around working conditions. Deputy Superintendent Carbone has had discussions with Principal Rogers about curriculum autonomy and the need to discuss and communicate so that the right amounts are budgeted by the Deputy Superintendent's Office.

Vice Chair Cruz questioned whether a vote should be taken at this meeting as some members were not present. Superintendent Zrike said it could be delayed until the next meeting. Member Campbell said that since there were no substantive changes from School Committee members and the feedback was generally supportive, there is no technical reason for it to be delayed as it could cause some unnecessary concerns around the reasons for the delay or whether it has the support. This could affect school planning and be a source of concern for school leadership. Member Cornell agreed.

Mayor Pangallo pointed out that although the retention of unspent funds was being removed from the plan, it still appears on Page 37. Mayor Pangallo inquired if the School Committee members would consider voting on the plan with the condition that the language about the autonomy request for retention of unspent funds be removed. There were no objections.

### **3. Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Update**

Member Cornell said that the Building Committee voted unanimously on new construction for the new high school as opposed to other options such as partial renovation. With the new construction, it is cost effective and the timeline is the shortest at 30 months with minimal disruption to students. There will be a public session for parents of especially younger children on June 3rd. Superintendent Zrike said that there will be a session for Salem High School teachers to look at the plans on June 11th. Member Cornell said the deadline for the design and public input will be in October.

In response to Vice Chair Cruz, Member Cornell said that the capacity of the new high school is 1,000 students. Member Cornell said this has raised some concerns because it is a difficult projection to make seeing that Salem Public Schools is doing very well but then birth rates have been declining. In response to another question, Member Cornell said that the library is called the Learning Commons. Superintendent Zrike said that it is not a traditional library in terms of size because in newer high schools, it functions as a multimedia center. It is more for students to work in small groups and the collection of print books are not as large but Superintendent Zrike added that more discussions are needed around the library.

Superintendent Zrike expressed concern about the student capacity of the new high school because the student enrollment has increased by 200 students since the project planning began about one and a half years ago and this is without a new building which would be much more attractive and increase enrollment. Superintendent Zrike said more conversations are needed such as classroom spaces. Member Cornell said these conversations are on-going. Vice Chair Cruz commented that there has been a boost in the enrollment at the high school for the last 5 years and that Salem Public Schools has been really competitive with other schools where parents can enroll their students. Salem High School has had enrollments of 1,300-1,400 students less than 15 years ago. Vice Chair Cruz also expressed concern about not having enough capacity to accommodate increasing enrollment.

Mayor Pangallo said that the city worked with the MSBA on the enrollment projections based both on the demographics of the community and the MSBA's own experience in districts that had similar projects. Mayor Pangallo added that there are still opportunities for the community to become more engaged in this topic. Mayor Pangallo continued that the MSBA only reimburses around \$600 per square foot and the current project stands close to \$1,000 per square foot. More work is needed to convince the MSBA and state partners to adjust the reimbursement cap to reflect the actual cost of construction in this day and age. Mayor Pangallo said that the cost consideration and affordability of the project has been foremost on the minds of the Building Committee and School Committee members. Mayor Pangallo added that there will most likely be a ballot question for a debt exclusion override vote on this matter in a year from now.

**4. Finance and Operations Report**

**1. Budget Transfer Request**

Assistant Superintendent Pauley referenced the budget transfer request memo dated May 15, 2025 for a transfer of \$8,000 from a non-personnel account to a personnel account.

**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**

Member Cornell said that the changes for Policy 3204: Lease and Rental of School Facilities includes School Committee reviewing long-term leases over 6 months in excess of 3 days a week and that the Superintendent in concert with the Building and Grounds Subcommittee would review any leases for durations of less than 6 months. Leases and rentals not being granted to religious organizations was added to the policy to address concerns that there may be religious organizations with values that do not align to the district's values. Vice Chair Cruz added that counsel advised that it had to be a blanket ban for equity. Superintendent Zrike said that he would be providing information about the leases at the next School Committee meeting. Member Cornell said that changes were made to Policy 6402: Time and Location of School Committee Meetings to ensure the intervals between meetings were more convenient.

## **Motions and Resolutions**

### **1. Bentley Innovation Plan**

Vice Chair Cruz made a motion to approve the Bentley Innovation Plan with the condition that the language about the autonomy request for retention of unspent funds be removed on Page 37. Member Cornell 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 ABSENT

Member Miranda voted YES

Mayor Pangallo voted YES

Motion passed with 5 votes in favor and 2 absent.

### **2. Budget Transfer Request**

Member Campbell made a motion to approve the budget transfer request as per the memo dated May 15, 2025. Member Cornell 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 ABSENT

Member Miranda voted YES

Mayor Pangallo voted YES

Motion passed with 5 votes in favor and 2 absent.

### **3. Policy 3204: Lease and Rental of School Facilities - First Reading**

Member Cornell made a motion to approve Policy 3204: Lease and Rental of School Facilities and Policy 6402: Time and Location of School Committee Meetings for first reading. Member Campbell 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 ABSENT

Member Miranda voted YES

Mayor Pangallo voted YES

Motion passed with 5 votes in favor and 2 absent.

### **4. Policy 6402: Time and Location of School Committee Meetings - First Reading**

This matter was addressed in the previous section.

### **Announcements**

Vice Chair Cruz encouraged the School Committee, high school leaders and Ms. Doucette-Ly to attend the Massachusetts Statewide K-12 Graduation Council's listening sessions or send a portrait of a graduate especially for students with disabilities.

### **Adjournment**

Member Campbell made a motion to adjourn at 8:26 pm. Member Cornell 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 ABSENT

Member Miranda voted YES

Mayor Pangallo voted YES

Motion passed with 5 votes in favor and 2 absent.

Respectfully submitted by,

***Shirley Dorai***

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent