

**Minutes of the Regular Session
of the Salem School Committee
Monday, July 28, 2025
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.
Hybrid Meeting**

Members Present: Mayor Dominick Pangallo, Vice Chair Cruz, Amanda Campbell, AJ Hoffman and Veronica Miranda

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

Members Absent: Beth Anne Cornell 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 Miranda made a motion to approve the agenda. Member Campbell seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Member Campbell voted YES

Member Cornell ABSENT

Vice Chair Cruz voted YES

Member Hoffman voted YES

Member Manning ABSENT

Member Miranda voted YES

Mayor Pangallo voted YES

Motion passed with 5 votes in favor and 2 absent.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes of Regular School Committee Meeting held on June 17, 2025
2. Approval of Minutes of School Committee Retreat held on June 21, 2025
3. Approval of Field Trip for Carlton 5th Graders to The Farm School in Athol MA from September 22 - 24, 2025 for one group and September 24 - 26, 2025 for the second group.
4. Approval of FY25 Warrants:
 1. 06/19/2025 - \$494,163.25
 2. 06/26/2025 - \$1,481,713.55

Approval of FY26 Warrants:

1. 07/09/2025 - \$843,763.69
2. 07/16/2025 - \$359,154.47
3. 07/17/2025 - \$70,618.07
4. 07/23/2025 - \$78,759.09

Member Miranda made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Member Campbell seconded.
A roll call vote was taken.

Member Campbell voted YES

Member Cornell ABSENT

Vice Chair Cruz voted YES

Member Hoffman voted YES

Member Manning ABSENT

Member Miranda voted YES

Mayor Pangallo voted YES

Motion passed with 5 votes in favor and 2 absent.

Student Representative Report

Superintendent Zrike said that students from Student Advisory Group are working on creating materials and supports for newcomers at Salem High School as part of the Student Voice Project over the summer. Superintendent Zrike said the group has an earlier start this year.

Superintendent Zrike hoped that there would be regular interaction between the School Committee and the Student Advisory Group. Vice Chair Cruz was hopeful that the Student Advisory Group would have an opportunity to engage formally with the School Committee through a public meeting.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Zrike congratulated Ms. Sonia Lowe who will be the new Executive Director of Teaching and Learning. Ms. Lowe has been working for the Salem Public Schools since 2014 in multiple roles including teacher, coach and curriculum director for the secondary schools. Superintendent Zrike updated the School Committee on the Mental Makeover event taking place on August 3rd which is being supported by the Salem Teachers Union as they are involved with the organization. The organization which was started by graduates of the Salem Public Schools supports mental health, wellness and suicide prevention. Another update was the farewell for the students from Ota, Japan which took place earlier in the day. The City of Salem has an on-going relationship with their sister City of Ota, Japan for the past 34 years.

1. Update on Strategic Plan (all priorities)

Superintendent Zrike said some data from MCAS is not in the presentation as the results have not yet been released to the public. Superintendent Zrike proceeded with the presentation on the state of the school.

In response to Mayor Pangallo, Superintendent Zrike said that the data on how students feel in terms of centering belonging is available by grade level and school. Vice Chair

Cruz requested that the questions on culture and belonging to be broken down more so that more data will be available. Deputy Superintendent Carbone said that data will be gathered a few times throughout the year.

In response to Member Miranda, Deputy Superintendent Carbone said the district is partnering with five community based organizations where about 180 PreK students are receiving access to high quality curriculum. Coaches from Salem Public Schools (SPS) will be also working with the educators at the community based organizations to make data informed decisions. These students will be entering Kindergarten with a higher level of readiness. Deputy Superintendent Carbone also said that comparison data between other PreK students coming into SPS and the five partner community based organizations would be available after data sharing agreements with the partners and parents are in place.

Vice Chair Cruz highlighted that some of the alternative assessments to the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) are available now and that the district has opportunities to engage with staff about this in an effort to increase educator diversity. Vice Chair Cruz added that the Educator Diversity Act also calls for an educator diversification plan that is supposed to come from an educator diversity team or an educator diversity council which is an advisory council to both the School Committee and the Superintendent. Vice Chair Cruz mentioned that since many educators of color are more junior staff, there is a risk that the district might lose these staff members due to the budget crisis. Superintendent Zrike commented that the educator diversity council could be an important next step for the district. The district has seen improvement in this area but it is plateauing. The Salem Teachers Union (STU) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT) have been great partners in this work. Superintendent Zrike added that it does make a difference in outcomes for students when there are more diverse staff and that this is part of the district priorities.

2. Teacher Diversification and Pipeline

Superintendent Zrike introduced Veronica Salas, who was an intern at SPS from the Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.LD) Program at Harvard Graduate School of Education. Part of her project at SPS was helping to organize efforts to diversify the workforce which includes pipeline work for educators and paraprofessionals. Ms. Salas shared her presentation as part of her change project on the information she collected.

Vice Chair Cruz commented that the paraprofessionals to educators pipeline shows promise and needs supports. Vice Chair Cruz added that the student to educator pipeline is another important area and elaborated on the steps taken by some other school districts. Member Campbell said comprehensive data need to be collected for the student to educator pipeline because it takes many years before the students become educators. There is a need to stay connected with the students through college. The results will affect the funding and resources dedicated to this effort.

3. Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Update

Superintendent Zrike said that along with the design team, he was able to present to the Facilities Assessment Subcommittee (FAS) of the MSBA on July 16th. The FAS asked about the preliminary design ideas, educational program and other questions. The full Board of the MSBA would vote on and approve the Preferred Schematic report on August 27th. On July 25th, the team met with staff from the MSBA to discuss achieved milestones, progress of the proposed project, the preferred solution, and the project timeline for the coming months. The next step in the process is the continued review of the schematic design submittal which includes the basis of the project cost.

Superintendent Zrike continued that there will be continuous feedback on the final design in the coming weeks to prepare for a December submission and final MSBA Board approval at their regularly scheduled February 2026 meeting. There will be community engagement in the coming weeks so that Salem residents can better familiarize themselves with the details of the project. The MSBA expects the new building to open in Fall 2030. Mayor Pangallo anticipates the City Council would schedule the debt exclusion vote for May 2026 and approve the bond order for the project cost. Mayor Pangallo added that according to the timetable, the construction will begin in 2028.

5. Finance and Operations Report

Assistant Superintendent Pauley said that the Facilities Department is working hard on the buildings and grounds this summer. Assistant Superintendent Pauley invited School Committee members to visit the buildings and grounds.

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.

6. School Committee Retreat Report

Mayor Pangallo said the School Committee retreat took place in June 2025 facilitated by

Mr. Paul Mills from CannonDesign. CannonDesign had led the 2021/2022 Facility Master Plan. Mayor Pangallo continued that the purpose of the retreat was to discuss the continuation of charting a path forward for the students, educators and community to have the best possible school district to serve them. The district is facing increasing costs for transportation, special education, employee health insurance, facilities maintenance and potential cuts in federal funding. The situation is challenging.

At the retreat, the School Committee committed to invest and expand the dual language and early childhood programs as well as Innovative Teaching and Learning Models. The School Committee also committed to identifying an in-district location for the alternative high schools; making the most efficient use of facilities district-wide; exploring the learning, extracurricular, and financial benefits of uniformly-sized elementary schools throughout the district; modifying the intra-district school choice policy to improve community engagement; maintain district-wide socioeconomic balance; and address rapidly increasing transportation costs. Mayor Pangallo added that more work and opportunities for public engagement as well as input are still to come on this discussion.

Motions and Resolutions

1. Change in School Committee Meeting Date in September 2025

Superintendent Zrike said that the proposal is to move the Monday, September 22, 2025 meeting date to Wednesday, September 24, 2025.

Vice Chair Cruz made the motion to move the Monday, September 22, 2025 meeting date to Wednesday, September 24, 2025. Member Miranda seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Resolution for July 4, 2025

Vice Chair Cruz said that the request for this resolution came from Councillor Davis and it was taken from the Boston City Council. Councillor Davis had inquired if this was something that the School Committee members wanted to support. Vice Chair Cruz said that the timing of the request did not make it possible as it would have to be discussed at a School Committee meeting. Vice Chair Cruz expects this matter to come again next June.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted by,

Shirley Dorai

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent