

**Minutes of the Regular Session
of the Salem School Committee
Monday, January 5, 2026
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.
Hybrid Meeting**

Members Present: Mayor Pangallo, Vice Chair Cornell, Yamily Byas, AJ Hoffman, Veronica Miranda and Meg Stott

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

Members Absent: 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

Vice Chair Cornell made a motion to approve the agenda. Member Miranda seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Vice Chair Cornell voted YES

Member Byas voted YES

Member Hoffman voted YES

Member Manning ABSENT

Member Miranda voted YES

Member Stott voted YES

Mayor Pangallo voted YES

Motion passed with 6 votes in favor and 1 absent.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Approval of Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes of Special School Committee Meeting held on December 22, 2025
2. Approval of FY26 Warrants:
 1. 12/11/2025 - \$578,676.03
 2. 12/18/2025 - \$352,449.32
 3. 12/24/2025 - \$823,425.96

Vice Chair Cornell made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Member Stott seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Vice Chair Cornell voted YES
Member Byas voted YES
Member Hoffman voted YES
Member Manning ABSENT
Member Miranda voted YES
Member Stott voted YES
Mayor Pangallo voted YES
Motion passed with 6 votes in favor and 1 absent.

Student Representative Report

Student Representative Sula was not present.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Zrike wished everyone a happy new year. Superintendent Zrike congratulated all who were involved with the Salem High School musical, "The Prom: School Edition" in December. A letter will be sent to all high schoolers at the three high schools and their families about the Competency Determination that the School Committee voted at the last meeting.

1. Welcome New School Committee Members

Superintendent Zrike welcomed and congratulated Members Byas and Stott as well as Vice Chair Cornell. Superintendent Zrike highlighted the performance of Witch Pitch? and Salem Youth Poet Laureate Liana Galvan at the inauguration earlier in the day.

2. Carlton/Saltonstall Merger Update

Superintendent Zrike presented the slides on the Carlton/Saltonstall merger planning and details.

In response to Member Hoffman, Superintendent Zrike said that the Director of Nursing and Health Services, Jane Morissey, is going to review the needs of the students from both the schools. Executive Director of Student Support Services, Ellen Wingard, added that there is a planning process in place for nursing staff in collaboration with Human Resources and the Salem Teachers Union.

Member Stott requested information on student and staff transfers as well as class composition. Member Stott said that the existing reconfiguration webpages can be used to communicate the plan to the community. Vice Chair Cornell mentioned the need for student voice and engagement in the process. Superintendent Zrike agreed that student voice needs to be heard. Vice Chair Cornell requested that Spanish speaking parents be prioritized to be on the committees as it is an important part of the equity process.

Mayor Pangallo asked for the success metrics to be tracked beyond the fall, through the end of the school year. Mayor Pangallo also asked about the benchmarks that would be used as well as the socio-economic targets for the new school. Superintendent Zrike said a new set of targets will be created based on the new demographics of the merged

school, and using the October 1st enrollment data. Mayor Pangallo commented that the Grade 4 students from Carlton would require more support as they would be going through two changes in the course of two years as they move to a new school and then to Collins Middle School.

Member Cornell voiced concern that the transfer placements might create socio-economic imbalance at other schools. Superintendent Zrike said that the socio-economic targets have never been applied to transfers in the summer and that this will be the first time. Superintendent Zrike added that the students affected by the merger will be given priority. Member Cornell and Superintendent Zrike said that this might be reviewed from the policy aspect.

Member Miranda requested that surveys include specific language around belonging especially in connection with LGBTQ+ students. Superintendent Zrike said that this was one of the strengths at Carlton and Saltonstall. Member Miranda continued that there was no data statewide and at the district level regarding this matter.

Superintendent Zrike would be providing the names recommendation from the community for the new merged school after January 16th to the School Committee for their consideration.

3. Human Resources Update

Superintendent Zrike called upon Executive Director of Human Resources, Jill Conrad, to provide the presentation on the Human Resources update.

In response to Member Byas, Ms. Conrad said that the district is being more intentional in efforts to expand outreach and promote job opportunities. Superintendent Zrike commented that during the pandemic, more people were hired on waivers and that brought more diversity in hires but it has been challenging to support them to obtain their credentials and retain them because of the requirements. Superintendent Zrike said that there is a need to invest in paraprofessionals, students and after-school program employees who want to become licensed educators.

In response to Member Miranda about what needs to improve in order to retain staff of color, Ms. Conrad said the supports for staff to obtain licensure needs to improve as well as supports for new teachers in general. Ms. Conrad added that the outreach needs to be more proactive.

Member Cornell inquired if the staff on hiring committees have had anti-bias training. Ms. Conrad said that principals receive training every year and they have a toolkit which has resources but the access to which it is used varies. Deputy Superintendent Carbone added that The New Teacher Project (TNTP) did training with all the hiring managers. Deputy Superintendent Carbone said that the degree to which the toolkit is utilized may need to be reviewed and monitored. Ms. Conrad commented that getting the word out about the diversity in Salem is important because educators from urban districts may

not know this about Salem. Ms. Conrad said that for retention, it is also important to develop the sense of belonging. Superintendent Zrike spoke about the culture at each school which has an impact on the retention of staff of color. Superintendent Zrike continued that schools need to be supported to have a culture that will encourage the retention of staff of color.

Member Hoffman commented that the inclusion aspect needs to be stressed especially with families of color and the LGBTQ+ community. Member Cornell requested more detailed information about staffing such as by school and role. Ms. Conrad said that the information can be provided soon.

In response to Member Miranda, Ms. Conrad said that work is being done to generate interest among high school students to pursue education as a career and provide support for them along the way through the early College High School Program, Career Technical Education (CTE) and new pathways. In response to another question about actions taken when staff of color experience incidents like microaggressions, Ms. Conrad said that in collaboration with the Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Engagement, Laura Assade, a restorative way for approaching these incidents are taken but sometimes other ways are also utilized. In response to Mayor Pangallo, Ms. Conrad said that the 2024-2025 retention rate for all staff was 82.2 % and for staff of color was 79%.

4. Superintendent Evaluation

Superintendent Zrike said that this matter will be addressed at the end of January.

5. Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Update

Mayor Pangallo said that Member Stott will be representing the School Committee on the high School Building Committee. The City will file the bond order and the special election order with the City Council for the project's debt exclusion vote on January 6, 2026.

6. Finance and Operations Report

Assistant Superintendent Pauley said the capital budget request was discussed with the Building and Grounds Subcommittee at a recent meeting and it will be brought to the School Committee at the next meeting. The items that were reviewed were the multi-year plans for the buildings and grounds, impact of the merger and priorities for next year. Assistant Superintendent Pauley continued that the installation of the two new generators at the Bates Elementary School and Collins Middle School have been completed.

Subcommittee Reports

1. 2026-2027 Subcommittee Assignments

Mayor Pangallo provided the following 2026-2027 Subcommittee Assignments:

Building and Grounds Subcommittee

Yamily Byas, Chair
Veronica Miranda
Mary Manning

Curriculum Subcommittee

Veronica Miranda, Chair
AJ Hoffman
Yamily Byas

Finance Subcommittee

AJ Hoffman, Chair
Megan Stott
Beth Anne Cornell

Personnel Subcommittee

Beth Anne Cornell, Chair
Veronica Miranda
AJ Hoffman

Policy Subcommittee

Megan Stott, Chair
Beth Anne Cornell
Mary Manning

2. Finance Subcommittee

No report at this time.

3. Personnel Subcommittee

No report at this time.

4. Building and Grounds Subcommittee

Member Miranda said that the subcommittee discussed terms and conditions about facilities request applications such as *“the visiting organization or entity shall be prohibited from using the name, trademark, trade name, logo or likeness of the Salem Public Schools.”* Member Miranda continued that the subcommittee wanted a clearer understanding of building needs especially at Bentley. Bentley had a full facilities assessment conducted in 2018. Member Miranda added that another assessment at Bentley might be needed to ensure that decisions do not further inequities.

In response to Mayor Pangallo, Superintendent Zrike said that the Salem Public Schools logo is not trademarked. Member Cornell asked whether there was any discussion on including the new language about the facilities usage as a formal policy. Assistant Superintendent Pauley was not certain if it is a policy consideration because the language was included in the guidelines for short-term rentals. Member Cornell suggested including this matter for a discussion regarding policy in order to reinforce the language in the contract. Member Miranda agreed.

5. Curriculum Subcommittee

No report at this time.

6. Policy Subcommittee

No report at this time.

Motions and Resolutions

Announcements

Mayor Pangallo invited the School Committee members to the Polar Plunge event on January 9, 2026.

Adjournment

Member Cornell made a motion to adjourn at 8:32 pm. Member Hoffman seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Vice Chair Cornell voted YES

Member Byas voted YES

Member Hoffman voted YES

Member Manning ABSENT

Member Miranda voted YES

Member Stott voted YES

Mayor Pangallo voted YES

Motion passed with 6 votes in favor and 1 absent.

Respectfully submitted by,

Shirley Dorai

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent



SALEM
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Where belonging leads to opportunity.

Carlton and Saltonstall Merger Planning and Details

January 5, 2026



Priorities for Implementation

The goal is to create a unified school community centered on our four key strategic priorities:

- **Priority I: Student Achievement.** Elevate student learning through shared resources.
- **Priority II: Staff Empowerment.** Position educators for success in a new environment.
- **Priority III: Culture.** Build a shared identity with a culture of belonging and strong family partnerships.
- **Priority IV: Operational Excellence.** Ensure a safe, welcoming, and well-organized school.



Initial Actions- December 2025



Action	Date (s)
School Committee vote	<i>Monday, Dec. 15</i>
Discussion with students- restorative circles	<i>Tuesday, Dec. 16</i>
Leadership announcement	<i>Wednesday, Dec. 17</i>
Transition and Innovation committee invite	<i>Wednesday, Dec. 17</i>
Meeting with school PTO leadership	<i>Weeks of Dec. 15 and Dec. 22</i>



Transition and Innovation Committees

- **Deadline to apply:** January 9
- **Invites:** no later than January 16
- **First meeting of each committee:** before end of January
- **Committee composition:** Each committee will include the lead, two caregivers, two staff members, a school committee member and a representative from the SPS central office.
- **Selection process:** The two school leaders who know their schools best, will make decisions about applicants who are most representative of their communities
- **Decisions:** Recommendations will be made to District leadership and school committee for approval
- **Communication:** Committees will regularly communicate with and solicit input from the respective school communities



Transition and Innovation Committee Design

Transition Committee <i>18 currently interested</i>	Innovation Committee <i>10 currently interested</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Led by Principal Weaver• Recommend events, traditions and experiences that should continue• Design opportunities for the community to come together– tours, meet-and-greet events, community activities, etc• Focus on social-emotional learning supports, counseling, and activities to help transitioning students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Led by Principal Jellison• Adapt the "Continuous Progress" model for the new context• Coordinate with DESE on approval processes• Present final recommendations before April vacation



School Naming

- The naming or renaming of schools is in the purview of the School Committee per policy
- The Committee is open to renaming and has invited community suggestions that align with the district's core values
- Members of the public can submit naming ideas to reconfiguration@salemk12.org no later than 4pm on Friday, January 16, 2026 (note the extension, 7 submissions thus far)
- The Committee will discuss naming at the January 26th meeting



Transfer Requests

- A transfer period will be offered to Carlton and Saltonstall families between – *January 12–February 6*.
 - Families will be notified by February 27 about the result of their request for the 2026-27 school year.
- Each elementary school will have an established number of available seats by grade level. If the number of students requesting a particular grade exceeds the number of available seats, a lottery will be conducted to determine seat placement.
- A few details regarding the lottery:
 - Siblings will receive preference
 - Socio-economic targets for the 2026-27 school year (established by the School Committee in February) will apply



Staffing

- Staff meetings at each school scheduled for this week
- We are interested in learning staff preferences for assignment
- Partnering with our 3 bargaining units to follow specific staffing language in contracts
- Plan to finalize staffing by February vacation week: *Friday, February 13th*– communication on what is known to families in March.



Additional Logistics and Details

- **Bell Schedule:** The school day will begin at either **8:30** or **8:35 AM** and end at **3:05** or **3:10 PM**, depending on the bus schedule
- **Assignment:** School assignment is now closed at Saltonstall and Carlton
- **Enrollment:** New school will limit Kindergarten to 3 classrooms for the 2025-26 school year
- **Class composition:** Class lists for the 2026-27 school year will include a balance of students from both schools
- **Traffic and Parking:** A traffic and parking review will be launched in consultation with the city, with guidance out this spring
- **Before and After School Programming:** Details on expanded before and after school programs will be shared this spring
- **Class Size:** Will remain consistent with current caps
- **504/IEP services:** Will be followed according to documented plans



Next Steps and Accountability

- The District Executive Team will meet twice monthly to monitor the transition project plan
- Monthly updates to the school committee
- A merger savings update and capital investment budget will be provided to the community
- Success metrics (through the fall) will include– *academic achievement, attendance, conduct, student (grades 3-5), staff and family perception data*
- Regular FAQs and progress updates will continue throughout the spring
- Questions should be directed to school leaders- Principal Jellison and Principal Weaver





“Often when you think you’re at the
end of something, you’re at the
beginning of something else.”

--Mister Rogers

