

**Minutes of the Regular Session
of the Salem School Committee
Monday, January 26, 2026
Virtual 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 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 ABSENT

Member Stott voted YES

Mayor Pangallo voted YES

Motion passed with 5 votes in favor and 2 absent.

Member Miranda Joined at 7:03 pm.

Public Comment

Adam Rinne, PTO President at Saltonstall School

Mr. Rinne suggested Forten Point Elementary School for the name of the merged school because it reflects the neighborhood and connection to the legacy of Charlotte Forten.

Approval of Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes of Special School Committee Meeting held on January 5, 2026
2. Approval of Minutes of Regular School Committee Meeting held on January 5, 2026
3. Approval of FY26 Warrants:
 1. 12/31/2025 - \$661,458.55
 2. 1/15/2026 - \$977,307.12

Vice Chair Cornell made a motion to approve the consent agenda. 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.

Student Representative Report

Student Representative Sula noted that Salem High School (SHS) had their mid-terms last week. Student Representative Sula said that the Student Advisory Group met with newcomer students to get their perspective on supports needed and there will be an update once the group has had a chance to meet.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Zrike mentioned that there would be another snow day on Tuesday, January 27th. Superintendent Zrike commended the custodial crew for their hard work in clearing the snow. The snow day challenge had a good response and there would be another challenge for Tuesday, January 27th. Superintendent Zrike recognized and congratulated Ms. Evie Oquendo, Collins Middle School Physical Education teacher, the first female to have her number retired in Salem Public Schools (SPS) history. A ceremony for her jersey retirement was held on January 23rd.

1. 2026-2027 Salem Public Schools Calendars (Strategy 4.2)

Superintendent Zrike provided the presentation on the 2026-2027 Salem Public Schools (SPS) calendar. In line with the latest Salem Teacher Union (STU) contract, the earliest that schools can begin for students is the Thursday before Labor Day. The New Liberty Innovation School and the merged Saltonstall/Carlton School calendars will be provided at the next meeting.

In response to Vice Chair Cornell, Superintendent Zrike said that the staff at the merged Saltonstall/Carlton school would be working together on the calendar as they have the autonomy as an innovation school. In response to a question from Member Stott, Superintendent Zrike said that the concern about switching the Professional Development (PD) half day from Wednesday, October 21 to Friday, October 30, 2026 is that student attendance may be affected.

In response to Member Miranda, Superintendent Zrike said that the cost of having separate calendars is transportation and the reason for having separate calendars is that the innovation school plans are based on trimesters. Superintendent Zrike mentioned that from the district perspective, it would be easier if all the schools followed the same

calendar, not only in terms of cost but in terms of communication and organization.

Student Representative Sula suggested switching the PD half day from Wednesday, October 21 to Friday, October 30, 2026 because of traffic concerns for students and getting home late or being able to get to after-school activities or work on time.

In response to Vice Chair Cornell, Deputy Superintendent Carbone said that as part of the innovation plan process, one of the autonomies is the school calendar for educators and students. Deputy Superintendent Carbone added that it is not an autonomy that every innovation school must follow. In response to a follow-up question from Vice Chair Cornell, Superintendent Zrike said that educators in the Teachers Advisory Group had mixed feelings about the PD half day on Wednesday, October 21st for the reasons mentioned earlier. Vice Chair Cornell and Member Stott voiced support for changing it to October 30th.

2. 2026-2027 Enrollment Targets for Student Assignment (Strategy 4.1)

Superintendent Zrike explained the enrollment targets.

In response to Member Miranda, Deputy Superintendent Carbone said that the PreK program at the Early Childhood Center (ECC) does not attract as many lower income families because transportation and summer programming are not offered. Superintendent Zrike said that partner programs offer longer days and transportation. Member Miranda requested data on children who are with the partner programs to identify children who might be falling through the gaps. Deputy Superintendent Carbone said that the information can be gathered.

In response to Member Cornell, Deputy Superintendent Carbone said that the district is working on supporting the different needs of families through shared resources, similar curriculum, coaching and PD opportunities. Deputy Superintendent Carbone added that good communication across programs is also important because if the needs of the families cannot be met at SPS, they can be referred to another provider. Superintendent Zrike commented that the purpose of the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) grant is that there is an equal high standard across all the programs. Deputy Superintendent Carbone said that areas where additional support is needed such as coaching can be identified now because of good data systems.

Member Hoffman said parents are worried they will lose childcare in the summer because the programs have a very long waitlist. Member Hoffman added that it might be worth looking into how to fill that gap in the summer.

3. Educator Self-Selected Professional Development (Strategy 2.2)

Deputy Superintendent Carbone presented the slides on the educator self-selected PD. Superintendent Zrike commented that members of the Teachers Advisory Group often highlight the importance of teachers having choice and autonomy with regard to professional learning. Superintendent Zrike said that this opportunity has been well

received by the faculty at Salem Public Schools.

4. Superintendent Evaluation

Superintendent Zrike said that he aims to email his self-appraisal to the School Committee and provide it to the public by the end of the week.

5. Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Update

Superintendent Zrike provided an update of the school building project.

6. Finance and Operations Report

1. Capital Expenditure 2026-2027

Member Byas said that the presentation will highlight the priorities for the capital expenditure next year. Assistant Superintendent Pauley presented the slides for the capital expenditure 2026-2027 request. Assistant Superintendent Pauley said that the next step involves the district meeting with the city finance team to review the proposals and see what is possible.

In response to Member Stott, Assistant Superintendent Pauley said that the district normally receives \$25,000 and the funds are generally used for work such as installing ramps, Braille signage and sinks that can be accessed by students in wheelchairs. Assistant Superintendent Pauley continued to explain the budget process which begins with input from principals, work orders received and multi year plans. The information is presented to the School Committee and then sent to the City's Finance Office prior to a meeting with them to determine priorities and the amount that will be received. The final package is presented to City Council with the district budget in May after the School Committee approves the general fund budget.

With regards to the ECC playground, Assistant Superintendent Pauley said that \$25,000 of the \$535,000 requested for play spaces is for the ECC playground planning process. Once the planning process is done, a request for the ECC playground will be brought to the School Committee with the next set of capital requests. Superintendent Zrike added that this does not mean that the ECC would necessarily remain at the current site as the School Committee needs to have discussions about the ECC potentially moving to another location. In response to another question from Member Stott, Assistant Superintendent Pauley said that the district is working closely with the City on the Energy Service Company (ESCO) projects and part of this year's investment in the Bentley building is to switch over to LED lighting. All the other school buildings already have LED lighting. Assistant Superintendent Pauley continued there needs to be a longer term larger investment in Bentley's Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system. Since their current window units will not last another year, more energy efficient window units will be purchased. Other work

being done in an effort for greener buildings includes replacing the roof at the Horace Mann Laboratory School which will help with their HVAC system.

In response to Member Hoffman, Assistant Superintendent Pauley said that through Representative Cruz's effort, about \$20,000 - \$25,000 was received about a year ago for equipment at the ECC playground and the principal together with the educators used the funds to purchase bikes and toys that can be put away. Assistant Superintendent Pauley added that the vision is to have climbing structures and other playground equipment that is developmentally appropriate and accessible for young children. The ECC playground is a City owned park and the City is working on bringing more shade. Superintendent Zrike said the issue is that there is not an age appropriate playground structure for the ECC. Mayor Pangallo said that a grant of \$60,000 was received for the shade structure but since it is not enough, the City is going to identify a funding source to close the gap in order to get it installed whether or not the ECC continues to be in that location because it is still a City park and will continue to be used by children.

Subcommittee Reports

- 1. Finance Subcommittee**
No report at this time.
- 2. Personnel Subcommittee**
No report at this time.
- 3. Building and Grounds Subcommittee**
This item was addressed in the earlier portion of the meeting.
- 4. Curriculum Subcommittee**
No report at this time.
- 5. Policy Subcommittee**
No report at this time.

Motions and Resolutions

- 1. 2026-2027 Salem Public Schools Calendars**
Member Cornell made a motion to approve the 2026-2027 Salem Public School calendars contingent upon changing the half PD Day from October 21, 2026 to October 30, 2026. 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.

2. 2026-2027 Enrollment Targets for Student Assignment

Member Cornell made a motion to approve the 2026-2027 enrollment targets for student assignment. Member Byas 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.

3. Naming Saltonstall/Carlton Building

Superintendent Zrike commented that the list of suggested names from the community is provided in the packet and it should have included Forten Point Elementary School.

Mayor Pangallo thanked the community for their thoughtful suggestions. Member Stott said that the suggestions and reasons provided were a great learning and communication experience. Member Stott added that the practice of naming buildings after people should change but that this is an opportunity to honor a woman of color from Salem's history, Sarah Parker Remond. Member Miranda agreed with Member Stott and highlighted that there is a historical connection between Leverett Saltonstall and Sarah Parker Remond, where his opinion in the 1830s about separate but equal schools directly impacted Sarah Parker Remond. Member Miranda continued that there was not much information on Clarissa Lawrence. Vice Chair Cornell commented that she was also leaning towards Sarah Parker Remond but also liked the idea of Forten Point as it connects students, diversity and place. Student Representative Sula mentioned that Salem students have mostly been taught about the witch trials but there is so much more culture, diversity and community in Salem. Student Representative Sula also said that it will be a turning point for the City to move past the racial injustices to something more progressive.

Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Engagement, Laura Assade said that the name Remond is pronounced as Reh-mond. Member Hoffman liked the suggestion of Sarah Parker Remond. Member Hoffman continued that diversity is often talked about but that the focus should be more on inclusion. Vice Chair Cornell mentioned that the name Remond Point flows much better with the correct pronunciation.

Member Miranda voiced concerns that adding a location to the name of a person of

color diminishes the significance of the person and that adding a location to the name solidifies that the community stays in the building when there have been discussions about moving the dual language program to that building. Member Hoffman commented that the history of whatever name is chosen for the school should be taught. Member Stott expressed support for the full name because just a single name does not convey who the school was named after. Member Stott stressed the importance of pronouncing the name correctly. Member Stott added that thought should be given to the possible variations of the name. Mayor Pangallo agreed that the Sarah Parker Remond name is the most appropriate fit because of the history. Mayor Pangallo added that her full name should be used because she had a brother who was also a noted abolitionist. Remond Park was intentionally named for both the siblings.

Member Miranda made a motion to name the Carlton/Saltonstall building as the Sarah Parker Remond Elementary School for first reading. Member Cornell 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.

4. Capital Expenditure 2026-2027

Vice Chair Cornell made a motion to approve the capital expenditure request for 2026-2027. 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.

Announcements

Member Hoffman raised the topic of whether meetings should be held to discuss processes, procedures and plans in place to protect families, trans and non-binary students if United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials come to Massachusetts. A suggestion was made about having a community dinner. Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Engagement, Laura Assade commented that inquiries regarding this matter have been received over the past couple of weeks and that the Welcome Center has been supporting families and educators with the help of partner organizations. Know Your Rights information and Bystander training are

being provided. Ms. Assade continued that having conversations online would provide a safe and supportive environment for families. Ms. Assade said that a list of resources can be shared with the School Committee members. Member Miranda expressed interest in further discussions with the Police Department on this topic. Mayor Pangallo mentioned that this topic is not on the current agenda and that any discussions on this topic should be on the agenda for a future meeting.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Cornell made a motion to adjourn at 9:00 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