

**Minutes of the Regular Session
of the Salem School Committee
Monday, June 8, 2026
Hybrid Meeting**

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

Others in Attendance: Interim Superintendent Carbone and Interim Deputy Superintendent Pauley

Members Absent: None

Call of Meeting to Order

Vice Chair Cornell 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 Hoffman seconded and it was so VOTED. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Lori Marena, History Educator at Salem High School (SHS)

Ms. Marena, an educator at SHS for 20 years as well as a Salem resident spoke on behalf of her colleagues who were present at the meeting and 62 other educators who signed a letter sent to the School Committee on May 30, 2026 in support of SHS Principal Burns outlining data showing that SHS has improved immensely under Principal Burns' leadership which included Advanced Placement (AP) scores, Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) data, college acceptance rates and rising student enrollment. Ms. Marena said that it is ironic being told that no one cares about the data except for Mr. Burns because the same data was mentioned numerous times at graduation including by the former Superintendent and current Massachusetts Secretary of Education. Ms. Marena continued that this dismisses his hard work and it devalues the dedication of every educator who works with students daily to prepare them for the future. Ms. Marena added that prior to Mr. Burns' arrival, teacher morale was at the lowest point in her two decades at SHS and that upon arrival, Mr. Burns worked hard in uniting the faculty and ensuring that educators were treated as professionals and had the support, supplies as well as funding needed to help students to succeed. Mr. Burns provided professional development, overhauled failing programs, increased classroom rigor and implemented grade level text.

Ms. Marena continued that Mr. Burns built deep roots with students and their families, meeting with every single student to build a positive relationship. Every student knows Mr. Burns as he attends nearly every SHS event. Ms. Marena had personally witnessed Mr. Burns' generosity

with students when they could not afford a prom ticket or a class t-shirt, things that he did not for recognition but because he wants every student to feel included. Ms. Marena went on to state that Mr. Burns is fully invested in Salem, having bought a house in Salem, raising his children who attend Salem Public Schools (SPS) and that his wife also works for SPS. Ms. Marena said that the decision to exclude Mr. Burns from the second round of interviews for the superintendent position is shocking. In her tenure at SHS, Ms. Marena had seen superintendents who lacked investment in the community and others who arranged back room deals to hire administrators. Ms. Marena said that moving forward, the faculty and staff at SHS would like full transparency. Ms. Marena questioned what happened to the consultant firm as they are no longer involved and stated that it felt like decisions were made before this process even began and that the trust in this process is now severely damaged. Ms. Marena said in conclusion that as SHS educators, they will always continue to support students, families and their leader, Mr. Burns.

Member Miranda made a motion to take the Sarah Parker Remond School and New Liberty innovation plans out of order. Member Byas seconded and it was so VOTED. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes of the Regular School Committee Meeting held on May 26, 2026
2. Approval of Minutes of the Public Hearing held on June 1, 2026
3. Approval of Field Trip to Orlando, Florida for Salem High School Golf Team on August 27 - September 1, 2026
4. Approval of FY26 Warrants:
 1. 5/21/2026 - \$1,105,387.65
 2. 5/28/2026 - \$550,580.17

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

Student Representative Report

Interim Deputy Superintendent Pauley introduced Student Representative Finn Billings, a rising senior at Salem High School who was elected as the new Student Representative at the School Committee and the Chair of the Student Advisory Group for SHS, New Liberty Innovation School and Salem Prep High School. Student Representative Billings said that he was recently elected by his peers to replace former Student Representative Sula for the 2026-2027 school year and that including next year, he would have been on the Student Advisory Group for all four years at SHS. Student Representative Billings provided further information about his accomplishments and activities thus far which includes being reelected as the Vice President of the Class of 2027, participation in the Harvard Model United Nations, Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership Ambassador,

robotics club, National Honor Society, acting in independent films, working at Salem Willows, athletics, ski club, unified partner in basketball, percussionist, pianist, taking part in the Harvard leadership program and taking Advanced Placement classes. Student Representative Billings said that the Student Advisory Group is working hard to put the word out to ensure that the Salem High community is aware of the historically large number of spots that will be open for new members next year, around 10 spots as opposed to the usual four or so positions in recent years. They want the group to represent the diversity and dynamic programs at school. The group is also looking forward to working with the new Superintendent. Student Representative Billings thanked Interim Superintendent Carbone and Interim Deputy Superintendent Pauley for their guidance, candor, commitment and continued support.

Member Miranda made a motion to take a five minute recess at 7:15 pm so that audio issues can be addressed. Member Hoffman seconded and it was so VOTED. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting resumed at 7:22 pm.

Superintendent's Report

Interim Superintendent Carbone said that the Student Advisory Group elected Finn Billings as the Chair, Liana Galvan as the Vice Chair, Faustina Isiguzo as the Secretary and Anne Bednar as the Communications Representative. Interim Superintendent Carbone added that it would be great to have Finn represent the student body at the School Committee meetings. Interim Superintendent Carbone proceeded to name a few of the many events and activities taking place at the schools including senior recognition night and solstice at Salem High School, recognition of the marching and jazz bands, rolling rally, unified track and field banquet, new teacher university graduation, the three high schools graduations, graduation of two and three-year-olds who are participants in the ParentChild+ home programs and Collins Middle School (CMS) Junior National Honor Society.

Interim Deputy Superintendent Pauley provided updates about the physical moves of the three schools, Carlton, New Liberty and Salem Prep to their new locations which began before the April break. During April break, after the School Committee declared some old and broken materials surplus, three dumpsters worth of paper, broken furniture and outdated materials were removed in line with trying to clear up space. In May, a memo was sent to the staff at New Liberty, Salem Prep, Carlton, and Saltonstall where it was outlined that there would be 10 boxes provided per classroom and five per office. More boxes were needed, and since late May, more than 800 boxes have been delivered. An online Questions & Answers session was hosted and the recording is available for specific questions regarding the move. Three hours of paid packing time is available. Principals have also freed up at least three hours of packing time. The goal is that by June 18th, everyone who has a classroom or an office would have shared with the Buildings and Grounds Department, a drawing of what they want their furniture to look like, and where the boxes should go. They should be packed by the last day of school. Anything that is not labeled or packed would be assumed as no longer needed.

The move for New Liberty and Salem Prep would happen first as they need to be out of the mall by June 30th. A walkthrough on June 30th is planned so as to be able to confirm with the landlord that everything has been left in good condition. Technology equipment such as computers and touch screens are being moved by professional movers. On June 24th and 25th, another set of professional movers would be moving the furniture and boxes and it will be stored in a staging area which will be the Carlton gym because the Carlton move won't be happening until later in the summer. Everything from Carlton will be moved to the new Sarah Parker Raymond School during the first week in August. The reason for the delay is because significant work is being done this summer in the Sarah Parker Remond building including interior upgrades most notably to the auditorium, painting the whole building, moving the basketball court, relining the parking lots, new signage as well as extensive work outside. In the first week in August, teachers will receive time from their principals for unpacking. Interim Deputy Superintendent Pauley continued that the teachers are making great progress with their packing. The buildings and grounds crew are doing regular walkthroughs with the principals to ensure that everything is on track and that there is a space for what's being moved.

Mayor Pangallo joined the meeting at 8:04 pm.

1. Building and Sustaining Pathways to Teaching in Salem

Interim Superintendent Carbone introduced Dr. Jill Conrad, Executive Director of Human Resources who provided the presentation on building and sustaining pathways to teaching.

Member Hoffman was supportive of the inclusion work and suggested that the strategic plan should foster and grow the LGBTQ+ staff with inclusion as well as feeling accepted in the workforce as well. In response to Member Miranda about whether the SWOT analysis was able to assess the culture amongst staff anonymously, Dr. Conrad said the sense of belonging is assessed through annual surveys but that it was not assessed through the SWOT analysis. Dr. Conrad added that this would be a part of the conversation at the Salem Pathways to Teaching Summit. In response to another question from Member Miranda about why some of the schools have a lower percentage of teachers of color, Dr. Conrad said that in the last three years, there was a lot of recruitment of teachers under emergency licensure and some of them have become licensed but not all of them have. Dr. Conrad added that there are also schools that do not have many vacancies because it has veteran staff or a cohesive staff. Dr. Conrad continued that this is a long-term goal. Interim Superintendent Carbone said that the district needs better data to look at where there have been opportunities to hire and how many staff of color have been hired into those positions. Dr. Conrad commented that a lot was done in the last two years to shore up teacher retention in general including the new teacher contract and paraprofessional contracts with new salaries and incentives. Dr. Conrad said that it is a multi-year planning effort because of the work that it takes to have people in the pipeline.

2. Finance and Operations Report

Interim Deputy Superintendent Pauley said that Member Hoffman, Interim Superintendent Carbone and Interim Deputy Superintendent Pauley herself will be

presenting the school department budget to the Salem City Council on June 10th, which is the next step in the FY27 budget process.

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.

Superintendent Search Update

- 1. Presentation of Superintendent Candidate Finalists**
Member Hoffman thanked the Superintendent Screening Committee made up of 15 diverse community members who spent long hours in thoughtful conversations. Member Hoffman continued that the process was confidential and that the three finalists selected were Dr. Jorge S. Allen, Mr. Andrew Bott and Dr. Thomas Welch. Member Hoffman provided a brief background of the three finalists.
- 2. Timeline**
Heidi Guarino, who was supporting the School Committee in the work, provided a presentation for the next steps of the process.

In response to Member Miranda, Vice Chair Cornell said that the different constituents need to feel comfortable in terms of asking questions honestly and having an open conversation and therefore, School Committee members would probably not be present but that it was open to further conversation if members had different thoughts. Since the community forums are public and open to anyone, all would be welcome. In response to a follow-up question from Member Miranda, Vice Chair Cornell said that each stakeholder group would have a feedback form and Ms. Guarino will put together the responses to be provided to the School Committee members. In response to Member Stott, Vice Chair Cornell said that the community forums will be recorded and available through Salem Access Television (SATV) and YouTube. Ms. Guarino said that the public would generally submit questions in advance of the community forums. Interpretation would be provided in-person and online.

In response to Member Byas, Interim Superintendent Carbone said that the temperature at the venue was one of the reasons why the community forums are not being held at the Salem High School as the library is just too hot and uncomfortable in the afternoons. Interim Superintendent Carbone added that other forums were previously held at the Saltonstall School and it is within walking distance for many. In response to member Miranda's question about childcare for the community forums, Interim Superintendent Carbone said that it can be arranged. Member Stott voiced support for having the community forums at the Saltonstall School. Vice Chair Cornell also said that the community forums should be held at the Saltonstall School.

3. Discussion of Superintendent Interview Questions

Ms. Guarino said that there were a total of 17 questions and that they have been consolidated under some specific themes. Ms. Guarino mentioned that Member Byas had the wonderful suggestion of asking her question in Spanish.

Vice Chair Cornell said that a general agreement to these questions is necessary but that it's still in this basic framework if the questions are changed a little as long as the substance of the question doesn't change. Member Stott received confirmation from Ms. Guarino that members could see the questions for the community forums in order to avoid any unnecessary duplication. Vice Chair Cornell mentioned that members can ask follow-up questions. Mayor Pangallo asked if another member can ask a follow-up question to a question initially posed by a different member. The School Committee's attorney's feedback was sought for this question.

In response to a query from Mayor Pangallo, Vice Chair Cornell said that a decision to remove a question from the list can be made at the interview, if needed. In response to Member Miranda, Mayor Pangallo said that when a question is asked in Spanish, it is the hope that the finalist would provide an answer in Spanish and that interpretation would be provided. In response to Member Hoffman, Mayor Pangallo said that if a question is cut, it is up to the School Committee if they want to replace the question.

Motions and Resolutions

1. Sarah Parker Remond School Innovation Plan

Member Hoffman made a motion to approve the Sarah Parker Remond School innovation plan and the renewal of the innovation plan for the New Liberty Innovation School. Member Miranda seconded and it was so VOTED. The motion passed unanimously.

2. New Liberty Innovation Plan Renewal

This matter was addressed in the previous section of the meeting.

Newsletter Items

Vice Chair Cornell mentioned the updates on the questions for candidates, schedule of finalists'

visits and the approval votes for the innovation plans.

Announcements

Member Hoffman extended an invitation to march in the Pride parade on June 27th and wear t-shirts from the schools if possible. Member Hoffman said that plans for the painting of the crosswalks are still being finalized and that everyone will be informed once it is confirmed. Member Hoffman asked everyone who wanted to be a part of the project to email ahoffman@saalemk12.org. Mayor Pangallo said that the information on the Superintendent search process will be on the district website at saalemk12.org/search and city website. Member Miranda added that the Juneteenth celebration events are available on the city's website and Facebook page which includes the flag raising and a party in the park.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Cornell made a motion to adjourn at 8:55 pm. Member Hoffman seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,

Shirley Dorai

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent