

Minutes of the Regular Session
of the Salem School Committee
Tuesday, September 8, 2026
Rm 227, 29 Highland Avenue

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

Other in Attendance: Superintendent Welch, Deputy Superintendent Carbone, Assistant Superintendent Pauley and Student Representative Finn Billings

Members Absent: None

Call the Meeting to Order

Mayor Pangallo called the meeting to order at 7:00p.m.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was formally moved by Member Cornell, seconded by Member Miranda, and approved by unanimous consent without discussion or modifications.

Public Comment

Public comments were invited both in person at 29 Highland Avenue and remotely via Zoom, but no community members came forward or requested to speak during this session.

Approval of Consent Agenda

The consent agenda was unanimously approved as presented following a motion by Member Cornell and a second by Member Miranda. Approved items included the minutes from the September 3rd School Committee retreat, FY26 warrants dated August 26th and September 2nd, and FY27 warrants dated August 20th, August 27th, and September 3rd.

Student Representative Report

Student Representative Mr. Billings presented an update on the Superintendent Advisory Council, detailing plans to recruit 10 to 12 new students to bring total membership to 20–28 students. He emphasized keeping the group compact to foster open discussion while utilizing subgroup break-outs. Recruitment strategies include school assemblies, homeroom presentations by student ambassadors, Google Form applications, and staff recommendations (e.g., Ms. Wilkins). Member Hoffman inquired about selection criteria and how discussions are communicated back to the student body; Mr. Billings explained that council members represent diverse extracurriculars, sports, and programs across Salem High, utilizing open-floor agendas

to bring forward student concerns and host guest speakers. Member Manning raised concerns about maintaining balanced grade-level representation rather than over-indexing on freshmen. Mr. Billings and Ms. Polly clarified that while upperclassmen remain actively involved, ninth-grade recruitment is specifically prioritized because freshmen historically have lower representation and lack established word-of-mouth networks. Mr. Billings highlighted plans to leverage senior student ambassadors to deliver slideshow presentations to freshmen homerooms. Member Miranda noted the informal liaison role previously held by former members Manny Cruz and Amanda, expressing interest in connecting directly with student representatives to support their priorities.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Dr. Welch presented a comprehensive report starting with personal reflections on local community events and key district announcements: Salem Fire Department's 9/11 25th anniversary remembrance ceremony featuring the Salem High JROTC color guard, the hiring of Michael Daly as the new Salem High School Athletic Director, and highlights from the first days of school, including the Sarah Parker Remond portrait unveiling event. Dr. Welch then presented his 100-Day Entry Plan ("Ground Learning, Not Ground Running"), built on five core phases: Phase 1 (Internal Orientation & Governance Alignment), Phase 2 (Listening & Strategic Coherence via school-based forums and document reviews), Phase 3 (Instructional Deep Dives & Operational Audits), Phase 4 (Synthesis & Public Reporting via a SWOT analysis leading to the December 21st report), and Phase 5 (Strategic Transition into the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan, FY28 budget, and Salem Public Schools 2035 10-Year Vision). Key targets include holding 100 community/stakeholder meetings and conducting walkthroughs in 100% of district classrooms (targeting 50% by December).

Deputy Superintendent Carboni and staff provided context on the Protect Act Policy (1408), outlining required point-of-contact protocols, staff interaction scripts, incident tracking, family notification standards, and public posting mandates.

Subcommittee Reports

1. Finance Subcommittee

Operations updates detailed summer facility work, traffic safety measures at Sarah Parker Remond, Horace Mann, Witchcraft Heights, and Bentley, a goal of sourcing 50% local foods in September alongside expanded vegetarian menus on the new Link platform, and the upcoming rollout of student bus tapping passes on September 21st.

Committee discussions addressed bike rack positioning at Sarah Parker Remond and safety concerns regarding electric bikes at Bertram Field, leading to suggestions for a formal policy subcommittee review.

2. Personnel Subcommittee

Nothing to report

3. Building and Grounds Subcommittee

Nothing to report

4. Curriculum Subcommittee

Nothing to report

5. Policy Subcommittee

The policy subcommittee reported on its review of the state model Protect Act Policy (1408) developed following legislation signed on August 5th. Subcommittee members reviewed drafts from DESE, MASC, and legal counsel Attorney Brunt (Stoneman Chandler & Miller). The subcommittee recommended specific edits: removing the performative introductory paragraph on general non-discrimination (noting it duplicates existing district policy), striking unnecessary references to the sitting governor and state timeline mandates, and removing extraneous statutory recitals while retaining the core procedural guidelines required by law. The committee discussed balancing state compliance with local governance, noting that while district practices already align with protect act standards (referencing Dr. Zrike's February 2025 guidance memo), keeping the standard three-reading process ensures adequate time for staff review, procedure development, and public clarity.

Motions and Resolutions

The committee voted on several policy actions. Member Miranda initially moved to suspend policy rules to pass Policy 1408 immediately, but rescinded the motion after discussion emphasized the value of completing full reads. Member Cornell then moved to approve the first reading of Policy 1408 (Protect Act) as amended by the policy subcommittee, which passed unanimously. Next, the committee unanimously passed the second reading of revised Policy 5711 ADF (Wellness Policy) on a motion by Member Scott, seconded by Member Hoffman. Member Miranda moved to pass the second reading of revised Policy 5709 (Medication Administration Policy), which passed unanimously after a second by Member Scott. Finally, Member Miranda moved approval of Section C of the policy manual (General School Administration) for first reading while holding implementation until the complete policy manual review is finished; seconded by Member Hoffman, the motion passed unanimously with notes that specific items regarding staff relations chain of command will return for further review during second reading.

Newsletter Items

Member Cornell outlined key content items for the October 1st community newsletter. Featured topics will include a direct link to the Superintendent's 100-Day Entry Plan presentation slides, highlights of the School Committee retreat, summaries of approved policy votes, and coverage of the Protect Act Policy's first passage. Member Cornell emphasized acknowledging former

School Committee member and current State Representative Manny Cruz for his role as co-sponsor of the Protect Act legislation.

Announcements

During final announcements, Member Scott highlighted the open community survey gathering feedback on the architectural design vision and identity for the new Salem High School project, noting a response deadline of September 23rd. Member Scott also requested that a motion to suspend policy readings under Policy 6205 be retained on the next meeting agenda as a procedural safeguard for the second reading of Policy 1408.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Member Cornell, seconded by Member Hoffman, and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted by,

Hadee Benoit

Interim Executive Assistant to the School Committee