Minutes of the Special Session
of the Salem School Committee
Tuesday, July 7, 2026
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.

Members Present:	Mayor Dominick Pangallo, Vice Chair Beth Anne Cornell, Yamily Byas, AJ Hoffman, Mary Manning, Veronica Miranda and Megan Stott
Others in Attendance:	Interim Superintendent Carbone
Members Absent:	None

Call of Meeting to Order
Mayor Pangallo called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and explained the meeting format.

Interview of Superintendent Finalist - Jorge Allen
Dr. Allen provided an opening statement.

Mayor Pangallo asked the first question. Equity often requires difficult choices. How do you approach decisions about allocating resources, opportunities, and supports across students, schools, and programs when needs exceed available resources?

Dr. Allen said that equity does not mean equal distribution of assets but rather how distribution of assets provides equal opportunity of access to opportunities. Dr. Allen mentioned the need to find out which students or families would be impacted by a budget decision. Dr. Allen provided an example. Vice Chair Cornell inquired about the metrics that would be used to assess how to allocate resources equitably. Dr. Allen's response included using data to help close the gaps between student subgroups.

Vice Chair Cornell asked the next question. Salem has worked hard to build a culture of high expectations for all students while also offering strong college and career pathways. How would you ensure students experience a coherent educational journey from elementary through high school and graduate prepared for success in college, careers, and life?

Dr. Allen responded about coherence in terms of the portrait of a graduate and having vertical alignment. Vice Chair Cornell asked how Dr. Allen would work with teachers to assess coherency in line with expectations, follow through, equity and ensure high standards. Dr. Allen mentioned the need for data informed instructional decisions, MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) and provided an example.

Member Byas asked the following question in Spanish. Salem views education as a community mission. How would you build strong partnerships with families, staff, city leaders, and

community organizations, and how would you ensure that families from all backgrounds have meaningful opportunities to shape district decisions?

Dr. Allen responded in Spanish, thanking Member Byas for the opportunity to communicate in a language that many families understand and to communicate in his native language. Dr. Allen said that he respects and recognizes that families are not interest groups to be managed but rather partners who help the district with their experience and knowledge as they are experts when it comes to their students' education and personalities. Dr. Allen said that it is often necessary to introduce ourselves and meet with families in the settings that are most comfortable for them and in the language they prefer. The work involves building trust through community liaisons or intermediaries who help disseminate information and establish the routine or frequency of communication with families. Dr. Allen responded that the goal is for Salem to be a district where everyone feels that they belong.

Member Hoffman asked the fourth question. Tell us about your experience supporting students who face significant barriers to success, including students from marginalized communities and those at risk of disengagement. How would you ensure Salem's systems identify needs early and provide effective support?

Dr. Allen spoke about the importance of early identification and he provided an example. Dr. Allen added that we should try to provide support from the early stages. Vice Chair Cornell inquired about how Dr. Allen would work and engage with teachers to ensure that everyone is prioritizing the same things and students are not left behind. Dr. Allen mentioned structures in schools such as student support and data meetings. Dr. Allen also provided an example.

Mayor Pangallo asked the next question. School districts across Massachusetts face significant fiscal challenges. Tell us about your approach to budgeting and resource allocation, and share an example of how you have navigated a period of financial constraint.

Dr. Allen responded that the budget is a value statement document and provided an example. Member Stott referred to the example Dr. Allen gave and inquired if the Chinese language program continued to be offered. Dr. Allen responded in the affirmative and explained how it was done. Member Stott asked about Dr. Allen's philosophy about communication with regard to the budget to the different groups of staff, families and students. Dr. Allen mentioned guiding principles, budget drivers and provided an example. Vice Chair Cornell asked how Dr. Allen views the role of the Superintendent as the bridge between the unions including the Salem Teachers Union and the School Committee both in the buildup to the budget process, preparing them for potential deficits and in the negotiation process. Dr. Allen stressed communication and to be open to different perspectives.

Member Miranda asked the next question. How do you balance supporting principals and school leaders with holding them accountable when student outcomes, school climate, or equity goals are not being consistently met?

Dr. Allen said that support and accountability are not mutually exclusive propositions. Dr. Allen provided an example. Vice Chair Cornell inquired about Dr. Allen's approach to professional development to support teachers. Dr. Allen responded that professional development at its best is when it is more about coaching than checking a box. Dr. Allen added that it is more like a sustained relationship throughout the new learning that educators are being asked to acquire rather than just one presentation.

Member Stott asked the following question. Salem has a strong foundation and an ambitious future, including a transformative high school project that will impact the community for generations. What should Salem's schools look like ten years from now? How can the superintendent ensure that long-term investments remain educationally sound, fiscally responsible, and responsive to community needs?

Dr. Allen responded that the buildings and infrastructure are the easy part. Dr. Allen added that it is important that capital or infrastructure investments are a reflection of the educational vision and goals, not the other way around. Key school community members who are the educators and students should be involved in the planning phase and also in the implementation phase. Dr. Allen said that the Superintendent's job is to ensure that the future high school maintains the educational programming that Salem values and provides many opportunities for students. Member Stott inquired how Dr. Allen envisions involving educators and students in the planning and implementation process. Dr. Allen said that in anticipation of unanticipated challenges with regard to building of the new high school, it is important to work with the educators and students in creating lists of non-negotiables and what can be cut if needed. Dr. Allen provided an example. Vice Chair Cornell asked about Dr. Allen's approach to PreK as well as portfolio of buildings and how they are utilized. Dr. Allen responded that it is important to identify the warning signs that the infrastructure might not be yielding a safe or educationally conducive environment and partner with the City to assess and prioritize. Dr. Allen provided an example. Dr. Allen stressed on the need to visit the sites and involve the principals to get a better understanding of the situation. Mayor Pangallo asked Dr. Allen's view on what Salem would look like from an achievement perspective or a cultural perspective 10 years down the road. Dr. Allen responded that Salem would have moved needle regarding achievement according to state benchmarks with Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)
proficiency and so forth. Dr. Allen envisioned Salem students graduating with a solid regular high school curriculum, vocational and technical pathways exposure as well as students having access to early college opportunities. Dr. Allen would like to see Salem embracing their assets being multicultural and multilingual in the sense of equipping the students to be ready globally where every Salem graduate is proficient in at least two languages. Salem has a robust Spanish program and a dual language program which Dr. Allen would like to see expand vertically. Salem Public Schools students would have received educational preparation that provides them with the tools to be effective in our economy. Member Miranda asked

Member Miranda asked the next question. Describe a time when feedback from families, staff, or community members caused you to rethink your initial approach to an issue. How did you communicate your decision, and what did the experience teach you about leadership?

Dr. Allen provided an example. Dr. Allen mentioned the need to be humble, communicate, understand different perspectives, build trust in challenging situations and try to remediate as much as possible. Dr. Allen also mentioned the need to change course if necessary. Vice Chair Cornell asked Dr. Allen how he would establish regular lines of communication with different groups such as families, educators, community partners and students. Dr. All responded that communication is similar to equity, a commitment to structures that will allow for genuine engagement and not just when there is a crisis. Dr. Allen praised the fact that even elementary school students in Salem have the opportunity to have their perspectives heard. Dr. Allen also noted the need to have regular communication using different methods and locations. Member Miranda inquired if Dr. Allen could share the ways in which he is ready for this role, having not held a superintendent or assistant superintendent position before. Dr. Allen responded stating that one that is faithful in the small things is also faithful in the larger things. Dr. Allen continued that he has a track record showing his values, being able to listen, and thoughtfully finding solutions. Dr. Allen said his approach to leadership is based on relationships. For the last several years, he has been part of the senior team level and worked closely with the superintendent in challenging decisions which has provided him a deeper understanding of how a district works. Dr. Allen said that his current district is similar to Salem in many aspects and it has given him a sense of how to navigate the different levels in a district from the superintendent's lens. Dr. Allen also mentioned his life experiences as a professional, commitments and values that he has used in the different levels of my career.

Member Hoffman asked how Dr. Allen would help the LGBTQ community and respond to the concerns of the families, as well as making them comfortable to speak with him. Dr. Allen responded about ensuring students see themselves in the curriculum and instruction. Dr. Allen added that in terms of families feeling comfortable to approach him, he would show care for their experiences and be committed even during challenging times. Dr. Allen provided examples. Dr. Allen said he believes in values and that students should feel safe. Vice Chair Cornell asked how Dr. Allen would build relationships with School Committee members individually as well as a body. Dr. Allen responded that the superintendent interacts more with the Chair and Co-Chair of the School Committee. Dr. Allen said that relationships are built by doing things together. Dr. Allen continued that it is important to participate in School Committee Subcommittees. Dr. Allen provided an example.

Dr. Allen provided a closing statement.

Adjournment

Member Miranda made a motion to adjourn at 7:22 pm. Member Hoffman seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,
Shirley Dorai
Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent