Minutes of the Special Session
of the Salem School Committee
Thursday, July 9, 2026
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.

Members Present: Mayor Dominick Pangallo, Yamily Byas, AJ Hoffman, Mary Manning, Veronica Miranda and Megan Stott

Others in Attendance: Interim Superintendent Carbone

Members Absent: Vice Chair Bethann Cornell

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 - Andrew Bott
Mr. Bott 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?

Mr. Bott responded about the need for a clear roadmap as well as the strategic plan and portrait of a graduate as guiding documents to clarify the prioritization of funding decisions in a challenging budget. Mr. Bott also mentioned data and programmatic needs of students. Mr. Bott provided examples.

Member Manning 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?

Mr. Bott related his experience meeting the students in Salem when he came for a visit. Mr. Bott spoke about the continuity from Kindergarten through Grade 12 in relation to the vision of a graduate and the need for data. Mr. Bott mentioned working with career partners to do evaluations of career pathways. Mayor Pangallo inquired how Mr. Bott would work with classroom teachers to determine whether or not goals are being met. Mr. Bott mentioned surveys, focus groups and gauging the effectiveness of professional development. Mr. Bott 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?

Mr. Bott responded in English and Spanish that the key is to open the conversation to the full community. Mr. Bott provided examples. Member Stott inquired how Mr. Bott envisions having real conversations with communities that do not know him. Mr. Bott commented that real conversations involve listening, asking questions and confirming what is being heard. Mr. Bott said it is not just about structures such as listening sessions. Mr. Bott said it is also about being upfront about the data. Mr. Bott provided an example.

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?

Mr. Bott mentioned the need to know the student, data and providing access. Mr. Bott also said that each student needs to have an adult or adults to go to. Mr. Bott provided personal experience and examples. Mr. Bott said that the adults working with students also require support.

Mayor Pangallo asked another 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.

Mr. Bott said that the budget requires transparency. Mr. Bott provided an example. Mr. Bott said that budget cuts must be examined so that it does not adversely impact students. Mr. Bott also spoke about the role of grants. Mayor Pangallo asked how Mr. Bott viewed the role of the Superintendent as the bridge between the unions including the Salem Teachers Union and the School Committee both in the budget process, negotiation process and daily operations. Mr. Bott responded that it requires open dialogue as well as honesty and provided an example.

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?

Mr. Bott's response included understanding data points, improvements, supports for school leaders, school cultures, joy in schools, clear expectations and an example. Mayor Pangallo asked about Mr. Bott’s approach to professional development as a tool to support educators. Mr. Bott mentioned the connection to the school improvement plan, district strategic plan, feedback and provided an example. Member Miranda inquired about Mr. Bott's successes and failures of recruitment and retaining educators of color as well as data that was used to prove this in some way. Mr. Bott provided an example which included removing bias in questions, diversity of the interview committee, mentoring program, affinity groups and a proactive outreach.

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?

Mr. Bott responded that flexibility needs to be built into the design. Mr. Bott provided an example. Mr. Bott mentioned the strategic plan, the need for schools to be joyful places, increased opportunities for students and programs to re-enagage students. Member Stott inquired about how Mr. Bott envisions communicating with the community to know what they need. Mr. Bott answered that regular meetings with the school communities are needed as well as getting to know community based organizations. Mr. Bott provided an example. Member Byas inquired about families who might not feel safe or comfortable going to the schools for meetings. Mr. Bott gave an example. Mr. Bott mentioned using technology to connect as well as meeting outside the school such as libraries.

Member Miranda asked the final 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? Mr. Bott provided a few examples in response.

Mr. Bott provided a closing statement.

Adjournment

Member Miranda made a motion to adjourn at 8:03 pm. Member Hoffman seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

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