Minutes of the Special Session
of the Salem School Committee
Wednesday, July 15, 2026
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.

Members Present: Mayor Dominick Pangallo, Vice Chair Bethann 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 7:00 pm. Mayor Pangallo provided instructions to access interpretation services.

AFSCME Local 294 Collective Bargaining Agreement - Vote to Ratify the Successor Contract for a Term of Three Years (7/1/2026 - 6/30/2029)

Vice Chair Cornell said that it was a collaborative and respectful process in reaching the agreement. Vice Chair Cornell thanked everyone on the negotiating team as well as Tracy Kapantais, AFSCME Local 294 President. Vice Chair Cornell mentioned the value and essential work that the AFSCME Local 294 members do for the district.

Vice Chair Cornell made a motion to ratify the AFSCME Local 294 Collective Bargaining Agreement successor contract for a term of three years (7/1/2026-6/30/20229). Member Miranda seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

The School Committee will deliberate and may take such additional actions to advance and potentially conclude the superintendent search process, including but not limited to selection/appointment of a superintendent, subject to successful negotiation of a contract of employment.

Mayor Pangallo thanked everyone in the community who engaged in the process from the screening committee, finalist visits and surveys. Mayor Pangallo said that it was a thoughtful process that resulted in a pool of strong candidates who reflected that the district is in a strong place as well as the work done to get the schools to this place. Mayor Pangallo credited the educators, central office team and the members of the committee as well as the families and students for making Salem a shining example of a gateway city and district in Massachusetts. Mayor Pangallo added that this has resulted in the opportunity to select from among three exceptional finalists for the position of Superintendent.

Vice Chair Cornell thanked the Superintendent Screening Committee. Vice Chair Cornell added that the three finalists are excellent and that it is a difficult choice. Vice Chair Cornell continued that the finalists brought three unique perspectives and skills. Vice Chair Cornell highlighted Dr. Allen's approach to equity, community building and appreciation of the community in Salem.

Vice Chair Cornell appreciated Mr. Bott's precision and discussions about curriculum and student growth. Vice Chair Cornell also appreciated Dr. Welch's experience in urban districts, particularly with bilingual education as well as his approach to community outreach. Vice Chair Cornell mentioned that she would like to see Dr. Welch in the Salem community.

Member Miranda also said that it was a difficult decision. Member Miranda highlighted Mr. Bott's deep systems knowledge, transparency in the budget process and relationships. Member Miranda appreciated Mr. Bott's thoughtful and curious approach. Member Miranda commented that Dr. Allen's interview encouraged all to think deeply about leadership, dignity and who we imagine in positions of authority as well as to think beyond traditional assumptions. Member Miranda called to attention Dr. Allen's humility, self-awareness and deep commitment to continuous learning. Member Miranda continued that Dr. Allen, as a black man, an immigrant from Panama, a multilingual leader, somebody who spoke so powerfully about students and people, presented possibilities that mattered deeply to many. Member Miranda was compelled by his invitation for all to be more introspective during this process and to examine their own thinking. Member Miranda voiced support for Dr. Welch because of his combination of instructional leadership as well as his experience leading an urban school district as a regional superintendent, supporting multilingual learners, commitment to dual language programming, systems planning and vision for innovation. Member Miranda highlighted his emphasis on students being known, equity beginning with instructional quality, schools being places where every child feels safe and seen, community should be active partners in this work as well as commitment to protecting dual language education while ensuring that it remains fiscally sustainable. Member Miranda said that Dr. Welch has a clear understanding of district-wide planning and a desire to build strong relationships with both the School Committee and the community at large.

Member Stott thanked everyone involved in the process as well as the finalists. Member Stott said that it has been an insightful thorough process. Member Stott highlighted Dr. Allen's responses that made one think and his 10 year vision for locally rooted, globally ready students prepared with two languages. Member Stott commented on Mr. Bott's insightfulness, preparation, focus on student centered opportunities and personable connection with not just the community but with educators as well. Member Stott said that Dr. Welch was also very prepared and insightful. Member Stott thought that Dr. Welch would be ready for the job on day one and liked his vision for students as well as his goal for Salem to be the best district in the state of Massachusetts. Member Stott believed that Mr. Bott was the strongest candidate from the interview and that Dr. Welch had community support. Member Stott said that Mr. Bott's experience closely aligns with what Salem needs. Member Stott continued that Mr. Bott has the history of running a district, a budget, large capital projects as well as understands the staff and educator perspectives. Member Stott continued that Mr. Bott showed a real understanding of the support that the superintendent must provide to students, staff and the community in order to succeed.

Member Hoffman stated that every finalist had great ideas. Member Hoffman voiced support for Mr. Bott. Member Hoffman said that in terms of inclusion, equity and values, Mr. Bott spoke of multilingual learners, students of color, students with special needs as well as LGBTQ+

students. Member Hoffman commented about his work with racial equity as well as accountability and a vision that encompasses all of what represents Salem. Member Hoffman appreciated his forward thinking about students, approach to problem solving where he had clear answers to finding solutions and that he was collaborative.

Member Byas said that Dr. Allen was deeply student centered, equity driven and understood that equity is not just a value but that it needs to be reflected in decisions and the allocation of resources as well as the way that we listen to students, families and educators. Member Byas added that Dr. Allen was very inspiring because he brought both heart and a clear vision to ensure every student, especially those who are underserved, had the support, access and opportunities that they deserve. Member Byas said that Dr. Allen, Dr. Welch and Mr. Bott represented the kind of leader needed for Salem Public Schools. Member Byas continued that Dr. Welch showed genuine commitment to putting students first and ensuring every student feels seen, supported, and prepared for what comes next. Member Byas appreciated the way Dr. Welch spoke about listening to families and educators while still being willing to make thoughtful decisions for the district. Member Byas believed that Dr. Welch would bring a steady, inspiring and collaborative leadership to the role of superintendent.

Member Manning commented that although Dr. Welch's responses were not appealing, she would still support him if he was selected for the position. Member Manning stated that Dr. Allen has the heart and could do a really good job in 5 years time but that he is not ready at the moment. Member Manning liked the way Mr. Bott responded to questions and hoped that he would be selected for the job.

Mayor Pangallo mentioned that the three candidates are phenomenal. Mayor Pangallo commented that Dr. Allen's passion and commitment to equity, more than just his own lived experiences, as well as being centered is an incredible asset to any district fortunate to have him in a leadership position. Mayor Pangallo highlighted that Dr. Allen is leading with true passion, concern and compassion for every student, and that he understands the needs of a district with a high share of multilingual learners. Mayor Pangallo said that Mr. Bott was someone who had a deep grounding in instructional leadership and understood a lot of the challenges that Salem faces. Mayor Pangallo continued that Dr. Welch has the ability to forge important connections throughout the community and build engagement with people who may not feel seen or heard right now. Mayor Pangallo appreciated his passion, enthusiasm and experience as an urban district leader not just in Massachusetts but also in California, bringing a diversity of experience that is valuable. Mayor Pangallo said that Dr. Welch understands that every decision needs to be viewed through the lens of the next strategic plan and how the portrait of a graduate is a reflection of every student. Mayor Pangallo asked if the School Committee members wanted to share feedback or reflections based on other members' comments.

Vice Chair Cornell felt strongly that whoever is selected to be the Superintendent will be supported by all the School Committee members. Member Stott agreed that everyone's values align and that the next superintendent will have the full support of the School Committee, and hopefully the school community and students. Member Miranda added that throughout all of the interviews, the different paths, experiences and strengths of the finalists were evident.

Member Miranda hoped that students saw something about the diverse candidates in the process and how leaders can apply to be a part of a process regardless of the different lived experiences or the languages that they speak. Member Miranda voiced support for whoever is ultimately selected for the position. Member Stott said that Dr. Welch and Mr. Bott are strong candidates who will be able to hit the ground running on day one. Member Stott added that although her top candidate was Mr. Bott, she mentioned about the need for being unified and having an open mind.

Vice Chair Cornell made a motion to select Dr. Welch as the next Superintendent subject to successful negotiation of a contract of employment. Member Miranda seconded. A roll call vote was taken.
Member Byas voted YES
Vice Chair Cornell voted YES
Member Hoffman voted YES
Member Manning voted NO
Member Miranda voted YES
Member Stott voted YES
Mayor Pangallo voted YES
Motion passed with 6 votes in favor and 1 against.

Executive Session
Vice Chair Cornell made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 7:33 pm. Member Miranda seconded. A roll call vote was taken.
Member Byas voted YES
Vice Chair Cornell voted YES
Member Hoffman voted YES
Member Manning YES
Member Miranda voted YES
Member Stott voted YES
Mayor Pangallo voted YES
Motion passed unanimously.

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