

Salem School Committee
Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 8, 2018

A regular meeting of the Salem School Committee was held on Thursday, March 8, 2018 at 7:39 p.m. in the School Committee Chambers at Collins Middle School, 29 Highland Avenue, Salem, MA.

Members Present: Ms. Mary Manning, Mr. James Fleming, Ms. Kristine Wilson, Ms. Ana Nuncio, Mr. Manny Cruz, Ms. Amanda Campbell, and Mayor Kimberley Driscoll

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Kate Carbone, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Margaret Marotta, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services, Jill Conrad, Chief of Systems Strategy, Kristin Shaver, Business Manager, and Kelley Rice, Chief of Communications

Call to Order

Mayor Driscoll called the regular meeting of the Salem School Committee to order at 7:39 p.m.

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Fleming moved to approve the Agenda as presented. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Deliberation and Vote on the Minutes of the Committee of the Whole (COW) Meeting Held February 12, 2018 – Tabled From 2/26/18

Mr. Fleming motioned to table the Minutes of the Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting held February 12, 2018 for the next regular School Committee meeting. Ms. Wilson seconded the Motion. The Motion carried. The Minutes remains tabled.

Deliberation and Vote on the Minutes of the Regular School Committee Meeting Held February 26, 2018

Mr. Fleming motioned to table the Minutes of the Regular School Committee meeting held February 26, 2018 for the next regular School Committee meeting. Ms. Wilson seconded the Motion. The Motion carried. The Minutes were tabled.

Questions and Comments From the Audience

Diana Vargas, 79 Willson Street, provided School Committee members with an outlined proposal handout and addressed the School Committee to talk about a Plan B. Ms. Vargas talked about the plan listed in the Superintendent's recommendation to address segregation – A disproportionate number of Hispanic students at the Nathaniel Bowditch School as compared to the district's average, the number of English Language Learners (ELLs) at the Bowditch School compared to the district's percentage, the number of low-income economically disadvantaged students, and the low numbers of student performance on the standardized MCAS performance. Ms. Vargas explained that she and the community propose a Plan B to address the issues at the Nathaniel Bowditch School. Ms. Vargas read the proposal aloud. The recommendation was to merge the Nathaniel Bowditch with the Saltonstall School and to relocate the Horace Mann School to the former Saltonstall building. Ms. Vargas asked School Committee members to vote 'No' on the Superintendent's proposal and instead vote to create a subgroup made up of School Council members from each school and School Community members that would dedicate time to

study their proposed Plan B for consideration of future vote and to move forward on a decision that affects students and families.

Ms. Avaris Velez, 197 North Street, spoke on behalf of students, friends, herself, and the Nathaniel Bowditch School and asked School Committee members to consider not closing the Nathaniel Bowditch School as students feel anxious and guilty that the school might close due to their not meeting grade levels. They are also concerned of the issue of bullying at the receiving schools and asked School Committee members to consider the future of the students.

Natalie Hernandez, student, 3 Sophia Road, shared that she has seen many teachers leave the Nathaniel Bowditch School over the past several years and fears more will as a result of the news that the school would be closing. Some teachers have stayed and she believes in them. The concern is that many students feel responsible for the problems and that they are to blame.

Angelise Segura, 5 Heritage Drive, a Nathaniel Bowditch School alumni, shared that Spanish was the only language she spoke fluently when she was registered at the school. The Nathaniel Bowditch School made her feel welcomed and all the faculty and students made her feel included. Ms. Segura continued sharing that she had many accomplishments and awards at the Nathaniel Bowditch School and has been successful, because of their support. She has been able to continue using the skills she learned at the Bowditch School to further her language as a sophomore in High School. Ms. Segura said that she would hate to see the Nathaniel Bowditch School close considering that is where she learned so much and has learned to become the person she is today. Ms. Segura asked School Committee members to please consider all the successful students from the Bowditch School when they make their final decision.

Peggy Fucillo, 4 Cedar Hill Road, Former Teacher at the Nathaniel Bowditch School, shared that the city of Salem has taken responsibility for allowing the Nathaniel Bowditch School to fail. Alternative plans have not been considered and it appears there is no room for compromise. Ms. Fucillo said that she listened to Nathaniel Bowditch School students - at a recent School Committee meeting - recount that they often help other students in their classes. She heard parents offering to tutor groups of students in their homes to help bring up scores at the Bowditch and was impacted by a student who asked School Committee members, "Why are you abandoning us?" Ms. Fucillo continued that she asked School Committee members last week to consider the psychological impact that closing the Nathaniel Bowditch School would have on its students. Ms. Fucillo walked School Committee members through an extensive list of proposed possible alternative options to consider.

Kathleen Coates, 51 Hawthorne Street, expressed her support for Superintendent Ruiz's plan to close the Nathaniel Bowditch School and the reassignment of students throughout the district. Ms. Coates continued sharing further details in favor of the plan.

Lisa Hansen-Damato, 53 Hawthorne Street, expressed her strong support of Superintendent Ruiz's proposal to dissolve the Nathaniel Bowditch School and move the Horace Mann Laboratory School to 79 Willson Street. Ms. Damato said she supports the plan and that it, if executed correctly, would benefit the students of the Nathaniel Bowditch and the Horace Mann Schools, thus the entire district. Ms. Damato continued sharing further details in favor of the proposal.

Amy Winkle Goise, 69 Linden Street, shared that her two children registered at the Nathaniel Bowditch School had a fantastic year and she would really feel sorry to see the school close. The Bowditch School Administration fosters a joy of learning and critical thinking. Ms. Goise asked School Committee members to think about that before they vote.

Yoleny Ynoa, Salem resident and parent of a Kindergarten student at the Nathaniel Bowditch School, stated that students should not pay for the mistakes of adults. Mr. Ynoa shared that the Bowditch School has a new principal to serve a 3-year term and students agree that the school has improved since then. Mr. Ynoa asked School Committee members to allow the new principal to continue his term and prove his ability to turn things around, and wait to see the results at the end of that two-year term. Mr. Ynoa said that parents and the community are hopeful that things would continue to improve and asked that they please do not close the school.

A member of the audience who did not disclose his name addressed School Committee members saying that students will remember their faces. He feels upset that his children were compelled to ask him to attend this School Committee meeting in support of the Nathaniel Bowditch School. He shared that the Salem population has grown and residents may choose to relocate due to the issues surrounding the closing of the school, something that would affect the Salem economy. He asked School Committee members to consider this, shared that the Nathaniel Bowditch School was doing well four years ago under a different Superintendent, and said that closing the school is not the right decision.

Fawaz Abusharkh, 4 Harrison Road, passed out a handout to School Committee members of a proposed possible alternate plan that would also help to preserve cultures, especially among the middle school students. Mr. Abusharkh explained the plan in detail and asked that all cultures be preserved.

Superintendent Report – Margarita Ruiz

Update and Information on Action Item Regarding the Nathaniel Bowditch and Horace Mann Laboratory Schools

Ms. Marotta read a statement addressed to everyone from Superintendent Ruiz of the reason for her absence this evening, because of unforeseen flight cancellation due to the unpredictable weather, and her affirmation on the recommendation proposal.

Ms. Carbone presented the information that School Committee members had asked for at the last meeting on behalf of Superintendent Ruiz.

Discussion

Mr. Fleming asked why a merger between the Nathaniel Bowditch School and Horace Mann Laboratory School would not be appropriate. Ms. Carbone responded that Superintendent Ruiz was concerned they happen to be the two lowest performing schools in the district. Mr. Fleming asked if they have considered merging one of the lowest performing schools with another higher performing school. Ms. Carbone responded that they believe that the Superintendent's current plan both meets the needs of students and dwells on the strengths of schools. Mayor Driscoll asked Ms. Carbone to share her insights on what they have done to try and improve the circumstances at the Nathaniel Bowditch School including additional resources and efforts and her view on where they stand today. Ms. Carbone responded that there have been many interventions as mentioned this evening in the presentation. Expanded learning time was brought into the school that offered additional common planning time for the teachers, which they knew was really essential. The importance of teacher collaboration, time to plan for quality instruction cannot be understated. The expanded learning time also offered time for intervention blocks for students so that they can target instruction to their needs and provided enrichment. Students were able to go to the YMCA and explore topics that were of interest to them. They have purchased personalized materials not just for the Nathaniel Bowditch School, but for all schools. Some of them are core materials that they have used across schools. They brought in new materials such as Foundations and science materials with social studies materials recently this year.

Ms. Carbone continued they also brought in Reach for Reading as a support at the K-3 levels, something that teachers were requesting and felt was a nice alignment to the materials that were being used in language instruction. Ms. Carbone said they had a teacher retreat every summer. It was a week for teachers to get together, collaborate with leadership, and plan for the school year. A lot of that time was focused around building a positive culture and establishing some common expectations across teaching staff to start the year off positively. Mayor Driscoll asked if these supports were only put in place at the Nathaniel Bowditch School as an additional resource. Ms. Carbone responded they were unique to the Bowditch School. Ms. Carbone continued they had a number of support staff, additional coaches, and tutors at the school throughout the years. Ms. Marotta confirmed Ms. Carbone's information.

Mr. Fleming asked why these have not worked. Ms. Carbone responded that she could not pinpoint an exact reason but thinks that it is a combination of factors, many of which have been talked about. One of them has been the issue of teacher and leadership retention and student mobility in and out of the school. Ms. Carbone continued that it is hard to say it is any one thing. The performance data shows that they have an issue on their hands. They have tried different things. They partnered with the union a few years back and worked hand-in-hand. They did a thorough review, much like the Department of Education would do at a school to help highlight and inform their turnaround planning. Ms. Carbone said that she feels that plan resulted in a good set of recommendations. She is at the school a lot and knows people are working hard and are committed to the students, but things are where they are.

Ms. Marotta added that they are distressed about what is occurring at the Nathaniel Bowditch School despite having put in place research-based interventions and additional staff and have tried everything they know how to do and were taught to do throughout their education. They are at a loss and are really concerned for the future of the students that are attending the Bowditch School. They believe that they have to do something drastic in order for the students who are currently there to have the future and educational success that they deserve. Ms. Nuncio explained her concerns and commented that they would have to carefully consider student exits, or how students transition from this situation, if they were to approve the plan, because despite the affirmations that the issues are related to a systemic failure, students still seem to think that they were the ones who failed. She is concerned and struggles with that. Mayor Driscoll stated she does not think this defines the students at the Nathaniel Bowditch School, but it is a data point that they cannot ignore. Ms. Driscoll talked about what happened with the Bentley and the Carlton school and their turnarounds. They focused on what is in the best interest of the students. Ms. Driscoll continued that it is not about the school but the students; it is all about the students. Members continued further discussion.

Action Item

Deliberation and Vote on the Superintendent's Recommendation to Close the Nathaniel Bowditch School and Transfer all Students to Other Schools in the District and to Relocate the Horace Mann Laboratory School to the Building Located at 79 Willson Street in Salem – Tabled From February 26, 2018

Mr. Fleming motioned to take the deliberation and vote on the Superintendent's proposal off the table. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The motion to take the tabled action item off the table carried.

Discussion

Mayor Driscoll commented they have tried to listen and understand both concerns expressed by members of the public, teachers in the building, parents (including one-on-one conversations), families, staff (including one-on-one conversations), members of the School Committee, and the present body to try and understand how they could move forward as members of the district. Ms. Driscoll continued this is very

hard and emotional. She offered to read a summary of the Action Item that could hopefully take into consideration some of the concerns that were raised.

Mayor Driscoll asked Ms. Rice to pass out handouts - of an amendment to the Superintendent's proposal, to - anyone who needs a copy and said that she is looking forward to a fresh start for the students of the Nathaniel Bowditch and Horace Mann Laboratory Schools, as well as their staffs. Mayor Driscoll read the amendment aloud for everyone that would address the concerns of all and include a new name for the building at 79 Willson Street building, the implementation of the Fresh Start plan for Nathaniel Bowditch and Horace Mann schools, and new Subcommittee entitled the Educational Equity Subcommittee. Mr. Fleming asked for clarification on whether this is an amendment. Mayor Driscoll responded she is not sure if it is a combination of both an amendment and part of the action item combined, she would accept it as an amendment, and commented this is a summary of the Action Item. Mayor Driscoll entertained a motion to adopt the Superintendent's amended recommendation as a proposal for the School Committee to move forward on.

Ms. Manning motioned to accept and adopt the Fresh Start of the Nathaniel Bowditch School. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Ms. Nuncio asked for Spanish translation of the document to provide to audience members. Members agreed translation would be done live simultaneously.

Amendments Made to the Superintendent's Proposal

School Committee members made further amendments to the Fresh Start Amendment to the Superintendent's proposal before approving.

Mr. Fleming asked if the wording for Section #4 could be changed from "will make every effort" to "shall maximize and prioritize seats available"

Ms. Campbell asked if similar wording could be used for Section #5 pertaining to Horace Mann families by changing the language from "will make every effort" to "shall."

Mayor Driscoll wanted to affirm that both changes would be made but that the assignments would be made in a way that is consistent with the current student assignment policy.

Mr. Cruz asked if the language of Section #1 could be amended to add "...and available spaces at Saltonstall" as well as language at the end saying "...in a manner that is consistent with the Student Assignment policy." Mr. Cruz also asked if the categories of "sexual orientation, students with disabilities or special needs" could be added to the list pertaining to the goal of receiving an equitable education in Section #9.

Ms. Manning asked for clarification on the end date for the monthly updates mentioned in Section #8. After some discussion, the Committee opted to add language "through the end of the 2018 calendar year." Mr. Cruz also asked if language focused on the placement of current support staff could be included in Section #7.

Mr. Fleming stated that Bowditch staff members should be able to stay at the Willson Street building if they wanted to. Mayor Driscoll countered that doing this would run counter to staffing procedures within their own collective bargaining agreements. No language was added. The members voted to approve them as one package once all of the amendments were discussed.

Mr. Fleming motioned to approve the amendments as offered previously. Ms. Manning seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Deliberation and Vote Discussion

Ms. Wilson read a prepared statement aloud in favor of the need for change at the Nathaniel Bowditch School and listed reasons why. Ms. Nuncio suggested discussion on the idea of a choice for a new school name to give it a fresh start. Mr. Fleming said they are not voting on the Superintendent’s recommendation, but on the new amended document. Ms. Manning said she would vote in support of the fresh start and took a minute to explain her reasons.

Ms. Campbell explained that the necessary changes have been put in place, she has taken into account all that has been said, and emphasized that work is just beginning. They are responsible, with the proper supports in place, to follow through with careful, continuous observance. Mr. Cruz spoke in favor of families and what they have gone through, agreed with Ms. Manning that students are very resilient, and personally addressed the students by sharing his experience in the school system. He wants students to know they are “Ruby Bridges,” (like the inspirational character in a movie that he had seen), and hopes they will apply to be student representatives. They have a voice; he has heard them. Mr. Cruz continued explaining actions they would follow through with to provide proper support.

Vote to Approve the “Fresh Start” Amendment to the Superintendent’s Recommendation to Close the Nathaniel Bowditch School and Transfer all Students to Other Schools in the District and to Relocate the Horace Mann Laboratory School to the Building Located at 79 Willson Street in Salem.

School Committee Secretary Roll Call:

Ms. Mary Manning	Yes
Mr. James Fleming	No
Ms. Kristine Wilson	Yes
Ms. Ana Nuncio	Yes
Mr. Manny Cruz	Yes
Ms. Amanda Campbell	Yes
Mayor Kimberley Driscoll	Yes

Of the 7 members voting, six (6) voted ‘Yes’ and one (1) member voted ‘No.’ The matter was approved.

Finance Report

a. Approval of Warrants

March 8, 2018 in the amount of \$490, 678.81

Mr. Fleming motioned to approve the warrant in the amount listed on the Agenda. Ms. Campbell seconded the motion. The Motion was approved.

b. Budget Transfers - There were no budget transfers.

Subcommittee Reports - There were no Subcommittee reports.

School Committee Concerns and Resolutions

There were no School Committee concerns or resolutions.

Questions and Comments From the Audience

Andrea French, 7 Cleveland Road, notified that CPAC has an upcoming event this month, on March 12, 2018 at Salem High School from 6:30 to 8:30pm. It is for students who are transitioning into graduation or aging out of services. There would be a presentation from the Federation for Children with Special Needs. Translation and childcare services would be provided. Anyone with questions can search for Salem CPAC on Facebook and one of the 3 Eboard members would answer their questions.

Fawaz Abusharkh, 4 Harrison Road, shared that the Superintendent's proposal was tweaked a bit this evening with the amendments; he still does not think they gave the community what they want, and feels they should have studied the proposal further and have more community input before having a vote today. Mr. Abusharkh shared his disappointment with School Committee members.

Stevie Brandenburg, 84 Barstow Street, reflected on Salem's own history. She would hate to see this happen again. This is going to be very traumatic for students. Ms. Brandenburg continued they need to remember and consider that students would face fear every morning as they prepare to enter the new schools.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the School Committee this evening, Mr. Fleming entertained the motion to adjourn. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by:

Angelica Alayon, Secretary
Salem School Committee

Meeting Materials and Reports
School Committee Agenda March 8, 2018
Minutes of the February 12, 2018 Committee of the Whole (COW) Meeting
Minutes of the February 28, 2018 Regular School Committee Meeting
Presentation to School Committee
School Committee Resolution – A Fresh Start for Bowditch and Horace Mann Students and Staff