Salem School Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 1, 2016

A regular meeting of the Salem School Committee was held on Monday, February 1, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. in the School Committee Chambers at Collins Middle School, 29 Highland Avenue, Salem, MA.

**Members Present**: Mayor Kimberley Driscoll, Mr. James Fleming, Ms. Rachel Hunt, Ms. Mary Manning, Mr. Patrick Schultz, Dr. Brendan Walsh and Ms. Kristine Wilson

**Members Absent:** None

**Others Present**: Ms. Margarita Ruiz, Superintendent, Kate Carbone, Assistant Superintendent, Margaret Marotta, Assistant Superintendent, Philip Littlehale, School Business Manager, Dr. Jill Conrad, Chief of Operations Strategy and Eileen Sacco, Secretary.

**Call to Order**

Dr. Walsh called the Regular Meeting of the Salem School Committee to order at 7:30 p.m. and announced that this meeting is being recorded by SATV and asks at this time if anyone in the audience

**Approval of the Agenda**

Mr. Fleming moved to approve the agenda as presented. Ms. Hunt seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the Special School Committee meeting held on January 19, 2016 were presented for approval.

Mf. Fleming moved approval as amended. Dr. Walsh seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The minutes of the Committee of the Whole/DPAC Meeting held on January 19, 2016 were presented for approval.

Mr. Fleming moved to approve the minutes meeting. Mr. Schultz seconds the motion. The motion carried.

**Questions and Comments from the Audience**

Cindy Theriault addressed the School Committee and reported that the Salem High School Swim Team will be holding a Swimathon at Salem State University on Friday, February 5, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. Students and teachers from Salem High School will be participating to raise funds and a portion of the proceeds will be donated to the Salem Children’s Charity.

Village Tavern fundraiser on Saturday, February 6, 2016 from 11:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Customers who visit that day should mention the Salem High School Swim Team and the Village Tavern will donate 20% from their bill to the team.

## **Action Items**

## **Deliberation and vote on the approval of the first reading of the policy participation at School Committee Meetings by Remote Participation.**

Motion to take the matter from the table Ms. Hunt, Dr. Walsh.

Dr. Walsh and Ms. Hunt motion carried.

Ms. Hunt moved approval. Dr. Walsh seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Ms. Hunt explains that the policy subcommittee reviewed the City policy and the state law regarding this. She explains that they are recommending a policy that is almost the same as the City of Salem policy.

Ms. Hunt explains the differences between the City of Salem Policy and the proposed policy for the School Committee.

Mayor Driscoll called for a vote on the motion. A vote was taken on the motion made by Ms. Hunt to approve the first reading of the Policy on Remote Participation and seconded by Dr. Walsh. The motion carried.

## **Deliberation on the approval of the Third Reading of the recommended revisions to the following policies by the Policy Subcommittee**

## 5714 - Transportation to School

Ms. Hunt moved approval. Dr. Walsh seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Superintendent Report** – **Ms. Margarita Ruiz**

Ms. Ruiz stated that she would like to publicly thank the Salem Partnership and their Executive Director Beth Debski for the banner on display in downtown Salem congratulating Salem High School and the Carlton School on achieving Level I status. She notes that it is great to have the support of our community partners and we look forward to working with them more in the future.

Ms. Ruiz thanked all of the families that joined us for the Kindergarten Expo held last week at Collins Middle School. She notes that the event was well attended and the feedback was positive noting that many felt that the event was very well organized. She noted that many people commented on all of the great choices parents have for options in choosing a school for their children. She thanked Kate Carbone for planning the event.

Ms. Ruiz reported that tonight we will hear from students and parents and the Innovation Planning Committee at the NLCS. She notes that they worked very hard on the plan that is academically rigorous and financially feasible. She states that the plan that the Committee will review this evening has her full support and she believes that we will have sustainable model that will support the students seeking a high school education at New Liberty. She explains that the School Committee will be hearing from staff and parents this evening explaining the plan and the School Committee will vote on the plan at a Special Meeting scheduled for February 23, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

Ms. Ruiz updated the School Committee on the current principal searches in the district for principals for the Carlton School, New Liberty Charter School and the Saltonstall School, which has an interim principal this year. She also notes that we are in discussions with Salem State University on the principal position at the Horace Mann School.

Ms. Ruiz reviewed the principal hiring process adopted by the school district last spring. She notes that there is a generic posting on School Spring for all three positions and explains that the Central Office Management Team will review the resumes and make recommendations on those who would move on to phase two when they will be given tasks to complete and will be rated for further consideration in phase three of the process. She explains that at that time a screening committee will be formed further review of the candidates. She reviews the timeline for the process and notes that the focus groups at each school will have the opportunity to interview the candidates to see if they are a good match for the school. She notes that phase four of the process is a one on one interview with the Superintendent.

Ms. Ruiz asked that if School Committee members are interested in serving on one of the Principal hiring teams they should let her know. She explains that the process starts in early February and she hopes to have the candidates appointed by early April.

Dr. Walsh questions if the advertising materials describes any of the unique qualities of the schools that we are hiring principals for. Ms. Ruiz explains that the posting is a generic posting for elementary school principals and notes the names of the schools are mentioned in the posting. She explains that the candidates will have the opportunity to research the schools and visit websites with that information and notes that the generic posting allows for more flexibility noting that they may find a candidate that is qualified for more than one position and allows for a lot more flexibility. She further explains that they try to ensure that they are sending candidates to the schools that have a level of skills that will match the schools and notes that the process tries to marry the two things that are very important in terms of a school leader.

**Presentations and Reports**

**New Liberty Innovation School Proposal Presentation**

Mayor Driscoll asked Mr. Schultz if he had any remarks noting that he was the School Committee member on the Committee.

Mr. Schultz states that the process was a short one and was very intense. He stated that he was pleased with the process.

Jess Yurwitz, Principal of the New Liberty Charter School addresses the SC and thanks the staff and parents, School Committee member Patrick Schultz, Assistant Superintendent Margaret Marotta, Linda Saris for serving on the New Liberty Innovation School Planning Committee.

Ms. Yurwitz thanked Superintendent Ruiz who was patient and willing to read multiple drafts of the plan, which was very helpful.

Ms. Yurwitz introduced NLCS student Oliva Mento MSCL to address the School Committee. Ms. Mento distributed letters from her classmates that they wrote explaining their experiences at NLCS. Ms. Mento read excerpts of the letter to the School Committee.

Suzanna Pialle a parent, addressed the School Committee and reported on her experience with NLCS from a family perspective. She explained that he daughter has been diagnosed on the autism spectrum and ADD. She explains that she struggled in school despite the efforts of her teachers and she struggled as well with making decisions regarding programming for her daughter. She explains that she was approached by NLCS and decided to look into it and toured the school.

Ms. Pialle explained that her daughter was excited about the school and within weeks of attending became more self sufficient and was getting herself ready for school was enjoying school. She also notes that she is making progress academically and expressed her joy in the progress she is making. She noted that she enjoys school and is participating and learning everyday. Ms. Pialle praised the school, the staff and the curriculum, noting that she is hoping to see her graduate and maybe go on further in school.

Jess Yurwitz, Principal of NLCS addressed the School Committee and explained the specific changes between the charter and the New Liberty Innovation School.

* The NLIS will accept younger students directly out of middle school as young as 14 and will cap the age at 22
* NLCS Currently take students who reside in Salem and will be able to take students from outside of Salem through inter district agreements and arrangements with other districts, noting that it will not be through school choice.
* NLIS Will be able to provide year round program. They are currently discussing the summer program details
* NLCS has a Board of Trustees that has a fiduciary responsibility and they have opted to have an advisory board that would be part of the school but would have not fiduciary responsibility.
* Ms. Yurwitz explains that currently the Board of Trustees or their designee supervise the principal, and the NLIS plan calls for the Superintendent to supervise the principal as other principals in the district are.
* Ms. Yurwitz explained that NLCS is primarily classroom based and they are looking to expand academic opportunities and a variety of other opportunities such as online learning, and a community schools model that will expand offerings for students.
* Ms. Yurwitz explained that they are changing the number of hours in the school day which are currently 9-4:30 every day and the new plan will be 9-3:45 with the possibility of using the space for night classes through community opportunities.

Ms. Yurwitz introduced Matt Conroy to explain Competency Based education.

Matt Conroy addresses the School Committee and explains that New Liberty provides a rigorous, Common Core aligned curriculum that is innovative both in structure and in day-to-day practice. We strive to produce graduates that are competent and to provide an educational environment that not only produces and ensures high levels of achievement from all students, but also fosters cooperation and collaboration in the learning process. This is the concept of competency-based education - a modular system of competencies and benchmarks that offers each student a personalized, self-paced route to high school graduation.

Mr. Conroy explains that in a competency-based educational system, educators must decide what the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors are, decide how to deliver the curriculum to ensure competency in that particular content, and then design assessment tools that are able to determine whether the desired competency level was achieved. New Liberty staff used the Common Core and Massachusetts State Frameworks to develop our Individual Learning Plan (ILP), a set of 33 competencies. Our ILP divides student competencies into three domains: academics, employment, and essential habits (the core habits of stable adults). These competencies and their underlying benchmarks can be combined and recombined into traditional courses and a wide variety of innovative competency development opportunities (CDOs) to create individualized graduation progressions. These opportunities can range from Blended Learning opportunities, to innovative synchronous classes

Mr. Conroy explained that Choice, forces students to look back and consider the impact of each choice noting that their Students come from a variety of lives and this pushes them to find their best choices and strategies.

Linda Saris addressed the School Committee and noted that she has been a member of the Board of Trustees since the school was founded 5 years ago. She explained that the creation of a Community Learning Center is not a new concept noting that there is one at the Ford School in Lynn and the Paul Revere School in Revere. She explains that NLIS will be looking for community partners to provide late afternoon and evening classes for the community they would be available to NLIS students as well. She notes that since school will be ending at 3:45 there will be a lot of opportunity.

Ms. Saris explains that the administration of the community school will be funded by grants and the establishment of a 501C3 noting that they could provide more time on learning and provide community organizations with space they may need. She notes that any revenue raised will offset the cost of the rent for the space.

Ms. Saris reviewed the proposed budget for the New Liberty Innovation School. She explained that the estimated budget for 2016-17 will be $909,000, which is $890,000 +2%, increase. She also notes that they are assuming that the rent will stay at $225,000

Ms. Saris explained what they cut from the present budget to meet the budget. She explained that they cut 1.5 FTE faculty 1.0 Para and reduce funding by $90,000, and cuts to school hours, contracted services and professional development were also made. Teachers working in the summer will get a stipend for working rather than the 16% differential.

Ms. Saris explained that this funding will not allow the student base to grow beyond 50 students. She also notes that additional funding could come from out of district students estimated at $19,000 per student.

Ms. Saris noted that while they don’t believe that it is an ideal model, they feel that they can make this work and the staff is committed to making this work, noting that improvements will be incremental and will take time to accomplish.

Mayor Driscoll asked if there are any questions or comments from School Committee members at this time.

Mary Manning stated that it is great to see familiar faces out there doing well and notes that she is thrilled to see that they will be accepting 14 year olds. She noted that her concern would be about the 8th grader who will not be 14 until November, noting that in the past that has been an issue. She questions if they are looking at 8th graders who have moved on or 14 year olds to admit, noting that it makes a difference.

Ms. Marotta stated that she thinks that they could accept students who have moved on from 8th grade but she will look further into it.

Ms. Manning also questioned how long they would wait to fill an open seat with out of district students noting that she would be concerned about a Salem High School student who has a tough first quarter and may be interested in the program. She notes that she is concerned that the seat may be filled with someone from out of the district.

Ms. Yurwitz explained that they work with Salem High School to identify students for NLCS and she has found that they have the most interest in the school at this time of year and notes that the number of students fluctuates and she does not see that it would be a problem explaining that they are planning for 50 students +/- 10%.

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Margaret Marotta states that they are hoping to have the problem of having too many kids and realize that we have to start small. Mr. Schultz agreed and notes that if there is a need we can certainly grow enrollment.

Ms. Hunt questioned what would the period be on reconsidering the number of students for the enrollment. Ms. Yurwitz explained that currently enrollment is fluid and she expects that would continue and notes that the budget is considered annually and that is when they could consider if there is need for more students. She further explained that the budget is built for 50 students with a leeway of 10% so there may be room for students out of district as well noting that they could take up to 55 students.

Mr. Fleming asked for clarification on the positions that NLIS is we losing… Ms. Yurwitz explained that they are losing a history teachers and a half of a wellness teachers.

Mayor Driscoll asked for clarification on the terms New Liberty Learning Center, Academic Support Center. Ms. Saris explains that Community School and New Liberty Center are interchangeable.

Mayor Driscoll stated that the Community Schools model is intriguing noting that she would like to see more about this. Ms. Saris explained that there not a lot of space available in Salem and NLCS has been approached by Training Resources of America was looking to do a GED programs and another agency was looking to use space for a culinary arts program. She notes that the Community Schools model is a great way to partner with local agencies and businesses and would be a benefit to the school as well.

Dr. Walsh notes that a culinary program was mentioned and recalls that we have equipment for a culinary program. Ms. Yurwitz confirmed that and reported that it is being stored in Chelsea. She notes that the equipment was one of the reasons they were approached about the culinary program and explains that they were willing to set up the culinary space and were willing to take students from NLCS into their program.

Dr. Walsh notes that the cuts that had to be made are deep cuts and questions replacing history with online courses. Ms. Yurwitz stated that it is not ideal but it is the financial reality they are faced with.

Ms. Yurwitz explained that the staff took a substantial cut across the board last year and reviews the cuts made last year for a total of 2 FTE’s and the staff took a 6% pay cut.

Mr. Fleming asked who established the budget ceiling. Ms. Yurwitz explained the budget process and explains that they were able to carry over funds in the amount of $200,000 and notes that they no longer have funds to carry over for next year. She states that they hope through fund raising to provide more but noted that they hope that being smaller they can focus on the improvements that the district feels are necessary.

Ms. Ruiz reported that the vision is that we are starting small within a budget that we feel is fiscally viable and taking into consideration that this is a school for 50 students and we would have the potential to build the school. She notes that one of the things they looked at was the alignment of the enrollment and the resources of the school and she feels that this is a plan and a budget that will allow the school to have fiscal viability.

Mayor Driscoll states part of the problem is the rent and notes that it will probably go up with the addition of Salem Prep in the space as well. She explains that NLCS never really got fundraising going for the school and hopes that there will be an opportunity to do some fundraising for the school moving forward.

Mr. Schultz agreed noting that $909,000 is a foundation budget with the hop that the formation of 502C3 will result in additional funding. He further notes that the heart and soul of the school is the competency-based learning, which has been increased with rigor to support the students while at the same time having a financial model that will not find us in a situation where we overestimate resources. He also notes that starting smaller will give us the opportunity to grow in a path that will lead to great success.

Mr. Fleming stated that he challenges how you provide a high school education without a history teacher, noting that of all the cuts that were made that bothers him immensely.

Ms. Manning questioned what other counseling services are left with the cut of the Wellness Teacher. Ms. Yurwitz explained that they are left with a 1.0 FTE LISW and two interns who are master’s candidates. She explained that every staff member advises 10-15 students. She notes that they could do a better job of bringing in outside clinicians.

Ms. Manning asked if there has been any thought to cross pollination of services with NLIS and Salem Prep. Margaret Marotta explained that there may be opportunities that staff could work across the programs and sharing equipment and that is something they will take a look at.

Ms. Yurwitz explained that as an example both schools noting that NCIS may have 3 students that need services and Salem Prep may have 8 students and in that situation they could share a teacher could share an ELL instructor.

Mayor Driscoll opens the meeting up for public comment at this time. There is no one present who wishes to comment on the matter.

Mayor Driscoll states that the proposal requires a vote of the School Committee. Margarita Ruiz explains that the innovation planning guidelines calls for a presentation on the plan and vote on the plan at a separate meeting. She notes that a special meeting is scheduled to vote on this on February 23, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

Dr. Walsh thanked Ms. Mento and Mrs. Pialle for their presentations this evening and putting a human face on this plan.

Mr. Fleming thanked Ms. Yurwitz for the wonderful service that she has given the district over the last five years. He notes that when you hear the success stories, they are due to her hard work and efforts on behalf of the students.

Mayor Driscoll thanked the members of the New Liberty Innovation Planning team for attending the meeting and for their informative presentation.

## **Finance Report – Mr. Philip Littlehale, Business Manager**

**Approval of Warrants**

January 7, 2016 in the amount of $227,121.40

January 14, 2016 in the amount of $140,910.29

January 21, 2016 in the amount of $446,620.65

January 28, 2016 in the amount of $271,962.84

Dr. Walsh moved approval in the amounts indicated. Mr. Fleming seconded the motion. The notion carried.

**Budget Transfer Requests**

**Subcommittee Reports**

**Policy Subcommittee**

Ms. Hunt reported that the Policy Subcommittee held a meeting to revisit the background check policy regarding finger printing. She reviewed the history of the policy and the implementation of it. She explained that the School Committee talked about the alignment of the policy to the state law and notes that the Superintendent requested that the language be tightened up with regards to volunteers. She explains that the state law requires anyone who has direct and unmonitored contact with children are required to be finger printed.

Ms. Hunt notes that there was a lot of confusion about the policy and notes that it was a challenge since the policy was not finalized until the fall. She notes that there is now a facility in Salem where staff and volunteers can go to get finger printed. She also notes that there is a cost and that was a concern as well. She also notes that the finger printing information comes from the Federal level where the CORI information is just fo the state of Massachusetts.

Ms. Hunt stated that there are no proposed changes to the Background Check policy at this time.

Mayor Driscoll stated that she wants to be clear that the School Committee is doing this for the safety of our students.

Dr. Walsh noted that some had concerns about privacy issues and reported that the only information that the Salem Public Schools will receive is “suitable” or “non suitable”, and stresses that no other information is given to the district.

Mayor Driscoll stated that the City will consider paying for volunteers to get finger printed and notes that the details of that need to be worked out, where it be a sliding scale or something, but noted that if people are willing to give their time to volunteer the least we can do is pay for it.

**Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee**

Ms. Manning reported that the Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee met with Joanne Scott, Executive Director of the Salem Boys and Girls Club. She reported that they have requested that they be allowed to install signage outside of Collins Middle School noting that they are proposing one large sign in the front of the building and two smaller signs directing people where to go.

Ms. Manning explained that they will be submitting more information and she hopes to have this finalized by the March 7, 2016 meeting.

**Finance Subcommittee**

Mr. Schultz reported that the Finance Subcommittee will be meeting to discuss the budget process for this year. Ms. Ruiz reported that she has been holding budget meetings with school leaders and departments and are looking at things more holistically and are strategizing more on the school budget.

**School Committee Concerns and Resolutions**

Dr. Walsh reported that the Salem Children’s Charity Annual Christmas Party raised $27,898.00. He also reported that other donations totaling $2,600 were received as well.

**Next Meeting**

Special School Committee Meeting Tuesday, February 23, 2016

Next Regular School Committee Meeting – Monday, March 7, 2016

**Questions and Comments from the Audience regarding February 1, 2016 agenda**

There were no questions or comments from the audience at this time.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the School Committee this evening, Ms. Manning moved that the School Committee adjourn the meeting. Ms. Hunt seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Eileen M. Sacco, Secretary

Salem School Committee

**Meeting Materials and Reports**

Minutes of Regular School Committee Meeting January 19, 2016

Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting held on January 19, 2016

School Committee Agenda February 1, 2016

Presentation on New Liberty Innovation School Plan

Policy on Remote Participation at School Committee Meetings