

**Salem Public Schools
POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
August 18, 2021**

On August 18, 2021, the Policy Subcommittee held its meeting using the Zoom online meeting platform.

In Attendance: Ms. Ana Nuncio, Ms. Mary Manning, Mr. Manny Cruz

Members Absent: Mr. James Fleming

Others in Attendance: Mr. Adam Colantuoni, Executive Director of Student Services and Family Supports. Superintendent Stephen Zrike arrived at 4:11 p.m.

Call of Meeting to Order

Members of the subcommittee welcomed Mr. Colantuoni. Mr. Cruz suggested that the meeting could be called to order to review the minutes in advance of Dr. Zrike's arrival.

Ms. Nuncio asked whether members had had a chance to review the three sets of minutes. She explained that there were some items pending resolution from the previous meeting, but that one item was likely resolved by having Mr. Colantuoni present at this meeting.

Ms. Manning stated that she hadn't read the minutes, explaining that she was at this meeting because another member who's actually assigned to the Policy Subcommittee wouldn't attend. She added that she's only filling in as Vice Chair of the School Committee so that there can be three members present during the Policy meetings. She also explained that when Mr. Cruz had recently gone on parental leave, the subcommittee had voted to give her voting privileges for her interim participation while Mr. Cruz was away.

Mr. Cruz made a motion to approve the minutes and Ms. Nuncio seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Cruz Yes
Ms. Nuncio Yes
Motion carries 2-0.

Mr. Cruz made a motion to take a recess pending Dr. Zrike's arrival. He was seconded by Ms. Nuncio, and a roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Cruz Yes
Ms. Nuncio Yes
Motion carries 2-0

When Dr. Zrike joined the meeting, Ms. Nuncio made a motion to take the meeting out of recess. The motion was seconded by Mr. Cruz and a roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Cruz Yes
Ms. Nuncio Yes
Motion carries 2-0

The meeting was called to order at 4:12 p.m.

Ms. Nuncio stated that the main topic for this meeting was the topic of firearms in schools and added that the topic related very much to the health and wellness, well-being and safety of the students and teachers in our schools. She acknowledged that the subject of weapons in schools was covered in our school district's set of school policies, as well as in the General Laws of the Massachusetts state legislature.

Ms. Manning stated that the issue at hand was that regardless of the "no weapons" policy that we have in our district, as well as the policies in the state laws prohibiting weapons in schools, "we were surrounded at Salem High School by examples of JROTC (Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps) having weapons in school, and that they seem very comfortable with this."

She added that her concern was not that JROTC should have a weapons policy, that she personally thinks we're OK on this. She explained, however, that the whole JROTC was a different matter because we (the district) has a contract with them, and that contract states that they *can* have weapons in school, even though she acknowledged that the weapons are air rifles.

She stated that the question really was: "Do we want JROTC doing target practice in a school building?"

Mr. Cruz stated that he agreed with Ms. Manning that in both policy and procedure, the district has existing protocols related to weapons in school, and that we've had those policies and procedures in place for a very long time. He stated that this discussion to him seemed like we're having a conversation about a program within a school, and that this conversation moved outside of the bounds of our role on the School Committee.

He added that there's a contract in place with the JROTC, a contract that was negotiated between JROTC and Salem High leadership or the Superintendent's office. Once the contract was signed, instructors were brought on board, and they got the program up and running. He understood there were reservations about the location of the target practice, and that was something School Committee members could definitely flag, but that it was not appropriate for us to talk about the program pieces.

He further explained that he has never seen the contract with the JROTC, and that he feels it would be helpful to have those grounding documents in order to better understand who, exactly, is in charge of this. He stated that in his view it is the Salem High School administration that needed to sort out the logistics of the program.

He stated that what he saw happening here is a proposal for a policy that works around a contract that we've negotiated historically, and that there were some lines that were being crossed between what our role is on the school committee, and what the role of the administration is in terms of the implementation of curriculum and programs.

Ms. Manning stated that she had seen that document since this issue came up, and that the document was sent to her electronically. She added that somebody came up with the actual document, so it's available somewhere electronically.

Dr. Zrike said he couldn't find it, and Mr. Cruz said he himself hadn't seen the contract, although they had been talking about receiving it since last March.

Ms. Manning stated that the document (contract) was accessible somewhere, and that we could look at it. She stated that the contract had been signed 20 years ago and that now, 20 years later, “we’re in a new day and age, and there’s a lot more gun use.”

She recalled a meeting with two JROTC representatives when one of them mentioned that the kids were coming in to use the firing range during the summer “to work off stress,” adding that shooting was a good way to work off stress. For her, the question was: Do we want to be teaching our children that a way to work off stress is to fire a gun?”

She explained she was not looking to get rid of ROTC, but wanted to be sure that the JROTC personnel had the understanding that they are firing weapons, “and if we can’t be sure that they have this understanding and control, could we at least get them out of the main hallway?”

Mr. Cruz explained that this program had existed for many years at Salem High, that it only became an issue when it was moved to a particular part of the building. He stated that he believed there was a failure of protocols and leadership within the building for leadership not to think about the sensitivities around this kind of activity.

He reiterated that to Ms. Manning’s point, this wasn’t an issue when the program was kept to the old JROTC wing that the students were in, very close to where the weapons were stored. But the second it was moved to that other side of the building, without notice to anybody, that demonstrated a lack of awareness around the elements of the program.

He added that it was incumbent upon Salem High leadership to sort out the logistics around the program: “where it is housed, how staff can ensure that they’re being sensitive to the fact that a trauma response could be triggered in some students when they don’t understand why another student is carrying an air rifle.” He noted that “you can’t drill kids on gun violence and then expect them not to have a trauma response when they may not understand why another student is carrying an air soft rifle.”

Ms. Manning noted that 20 years had passed since the contract was approved, and 20 years ago, “a gun in a school was an anomaly, a big deal.” She stated that back then, “a gun on the street with kids shooting at each other was a big deal. She affirmed that everything was different now, “the whole atmosphere around the usage of guns, and how some people are looking to guns to solve problems.” She added that for that reason, the School Committee *does* have a right to look at that program and say, “Do we still want to believe in that whole thing, or should we be taking another look? It’s not just about carrying a gun through school and other kids seeing it. It’s the whole thing about gun use and violence, that is so much bigger now.”

Mr. Cruz asked who the “we” was that had the decision-making authority to resolve those pieces. He stated that he didn’t believe that the authority belonged to the School Committee. He added that he thought that the decision was within the purview of the directors, high school principals, the people on the ground implementing curriculums and programs to make those types of school-based decisions. He observed that “If Salem High administrators wanted to go back to the table with the JROTC and say to them, “We don’t want this element (marksmanship) of the program here anymore,” that he believed that was their prerogative.

Mr. Cruz said he didn’t believe it was appropriate to take the decision about the JROTC program out of the hands of the administrators and leadership of Salem High, and out of the hands of the superintendent. He added, “We don’t implement curriculums, we don’t implement programs, we support them via policy, via budget, we offer input, there’s no question that we’ve done that in this particular area. But again, there’s a point to be made about which programs get housed, how

they're developed, and who should be leading them." He advised against "blurring the line" between the role of the administration, and what the School Committee's role was -- governance.

Ms. Nuncio stated that she believed that the School Committee has the authority to look at these things and make a statement about them, because times have changed. She added that she knew that "there's great reluctance to couple this topic (of guns in schools) with the JROTC program, but I don't think that we would be violating or overstepping our bounds if we came up with a policy that made sense in the context of the emotional safety and emotional well-being of students and staff with regard to firearms in schools."

Ms. Manning observed that "if the school administration doesn't have the sense to keep this marksmanship practice out of sight, then we need to step in to put it out of sight."

Members then discussed the high rate of turnover of principals at Salem High, four principals in the last four years, which contributed to the poor decision about the location of the marksmanship practice. Mr. Cruz stated that he honestly believed the cause of the problem was a leadership issue.

Ms. Manning stated that she also believed it was a leadership issue. She asked, "But if the leadership level that's supposed to be taking care of all of those kids who don't want to hear gunshots in the building, as well as taking care of the few (who do like marksmanship practice), and the leadership doesn't provide for those other kids, then whose responsibility is it, but us (School Committee members)?"

Mr. Cruz reiterated that "we've hired a superintendent to be the administrator in the district, chief executive operating officer, and that there was a way to resolve this so that it didn't involve school committee policy." He reiterated that it was the prerogative of the high school leadership and the superintendent to make this type of determination about a program.

He added that he thought this matter was better suited to the superintendent and the high school principal to make a programmatic decision about how they wanted to proceed.

Mr. Cruz went on to explain: "There's contract in place with the JROTC, we have legal counsel, we have a superintendent; they can determine the next steps about eliminating this particular part of the program, if that's the choice they want to make, or if they want to go the other way. But I think that that's their prerogative. At the end of the day, I don't think that falls to us."

Mr. Cruz stated that although he hadn't seen the district's contract with the JROTC, he was certain that there were no signatures of School Committee members signing off on the marksmanship component of the program with the JROTC.

Ms. Manning replied that she, too, didn't know whether there were any School Committee member signatures on the contract, but "I just think that we do have a bigger responsibility in this day and age to take care of all the kids."

Ms. Nuncio asked for the perspectives of Dr. Zrike and Mr. Colantuoni.

Dr. Zrike stated that "With respect to whose authority this is, I'm not sure that I agree with Mr. Cruz's assessment, although I think it might be prudent, Ms. Nuncio, for you to reach out to MASC (Massachusetts Association of School Committees) to better understand. I think programmatically it is the purview of the school district how they implement a program. We would be responsible for how a program would be implemented in the school, how we teach something. We do have a responsibility to teach marksmanship per the contract we have."

He continued, "Whatever contract we have is from 25+ years ago. We don't have any renewed contract with JROTC. Like you, like all of us, I'm not interested in getting rid of JROTC, I think it's really important for our kids. But I do think that matters of safety, matters of weapons in schools and policies like that, I believe they *are* in the School Committee's purview. The safety and wellness of staff and students and anything related to that, I do believe are within the purview of the School Committee."

"I don't think any aspects of *how* we implement are (within the School Committee's purview); that is for us to decide. But if there were a policy that said that we could not have weapons of any kind in a school, we would have to implement that requirement of marksmanship to be somewhere else."

Members then discussed why it was necessary for our School Committee to establish a policy against marksmanship practice on school grounds if there are already state laws forbidding weapons in schools.

Dr. Zrike explained that "you're allowed to have weapons if it is for the purpose of JROTC; there isn't anything that says you cannot have them in schools, but establishing a local policy could override that."

Ms. Manning asked why if a state law says no weapons in schools, except for school resource officers carrying them, then how can a school policy trump a state law?

Mr. Cruz replied that there's probably a regulation around JROTC programs around the state that allows for the programmatic ability to offer marksmanship, archery, and other programs. He believes there's a state law or regulation that permits districts to enter into those types of agreements with the JROTC programs. He also added that he was hearing people say that "we're not looking for a weapons policy, we're looking to eliminate this particular (marksmanship) element of the program."

Ms. Manning clarified that she was not even looking for that, she was just looking to move the program, maybe putting it back in the cafeteria at this point. She wondered why Dr. Jill Conrad, who had assisted the Policy Subcommittee last year in researching state laws and policies, had never come up with anything specific to JROTC law.

Mr. Cruz replied that we had asked Dr. Conrad to look up policies related to weapons and firearms; we did not ask her to look up policies, regulations, and laws related to JROTC.

Mr. Cruz added that he felt comfortable giving a directive to the superintendent at this point, "to examine the contract, to bring it forward to us, to do some due diligence around it to help us better understand where our opportunities to tackle this are, but to your point about this thing (marksmanship) being moved to the cafeteria, that's a logistical question for the district and the high school principal to make that change expeditiously. "

Ms. Manning stated that she didn't think it was only a logistical question: "We're talking about emotional health, it's not just about the concern of not getting hit by a stray air bullet."

Mr. Cruz asked Ms. Manning whether she thought we needed a policy to move the program to the other part of the building, or whether she thought that that was a directive that we could assign to the superintendent.

Ms. Manning replied that it had to be a directive that showed an understanding “that this kind of thing that can be scary to the rest of the kids, that the practice has to be in a place where it’s not open to the general population bumping into it.”

Dr. Zrike added, “But the location right now, yes, I wouldn’t want the School Committee to tell us where to have the program. I think it was a poor decision to move it where it was moved. If it were to be in a building, I think how it was done previously was a better spot. What the School Committee does have authority on, is whether activities like that can happen in a school. Right now, there’s nothing that prevents that activity from occurring in a school, and ultimately it falls on the principal, or superintendent, to decide where a program can take place. Marksmanship is part of the program, there’s nothing that says that it can’t happen within the school.”

He continued, “So I think that what you have to discuss, and again I would urge you to contact MASC about the purview of the School Committee on this. I think that there are committees out there that do have stipulations around weapons whether they’re toys, or airsoft rifles for the purpose of marksmanship NOT being allowed in a school building. I think you have that right to make that policy. I don’t think you have the authority to tell us how to implement the program, but if there were a policy that stated that that couldn’t happen in a school building, then we would have to move the marksmanship program somewhere outside of the school.”

Mr. Cruz stated that the Superintendent could also move that program through his directive outside of the school, without a policy. Dr. Zrike acknowledged he could, through his own directive.

Mr. Cruz also asked whether the superintendent could also establish an MOU with the Salem Police Department that allowed him to move the marksmanship component to their range, and Dr. Zrike replied, “I think the reason that this came to everyone’s attention was because there was concern, the report about the marksmanship practice was in the media. I came to the School Committee at the time, and that’s why we’re here today.”

At this point, Ms. Nuncio acknowledged Mr. Colantuoni’s request to speak.

Mr. Colantuoni stated that “I, too appreciate the conversation as well, it’s not about dismantling the program, it’s about thinking what’s in the best interest of the entire student population and thinking about the possible adverse, you know, the impact on trauma and the emotional well-being of students. For me, it’s more about location than anything else, and that would be my stance on it. I think a best practice for it would be for it NOT to be in a school.”

Mr. Cruz reiterated some of his earlier points about the superintendent moving expeditiously with regard to the JROTC contract, and with exploring alternative locations for the marksmanship program in an expeditious manner. He added that he didn’t think the superintendent wanted to wait for the School Committee to hold three readings of a policy in order to make a determination about whether or not this practice should be within a school in a location like the previous one.

He urged the superintendent to move quickly between now and the start of the school year to provide some clarity to the participants in that earlier meeting, and “to start the process of moving the JROTC equipment to where it needs to go, and then establishing clear protocols for the high school about the handling and storage of the equipment.”

Mr. Cruz again noted the gaps in leadership at Salem High over the last four years, saying that it was a disservice to the students that the leadership wasn’t more vigilant over the years about this program in terms of being able to communicate about the appropriate transport of the equipment, and what this should look like.

Ms. Manning commented that it was not the series of principals that were really involved here, it was only the most recent principal who moved the target practice to its present location. She added, "Let's not blame all previous principals. I think some of those people never even knew it was there, and some of the others were not even asked. And then, when the last principal was asked, it was moved."

Ms. Nuncio stated that she would feel comfortable calling MASC, just for purposes of information gathering, to inquire whether activities like marksmanship can happen in a school. She stated that she wanted to do this because she thinks the responsibility cannot all be placed on the superintendent's shoulders to say, "Here's what I'm going to do," knowing what the pushback is from our community. She acknowledged there had been a problem of leadership at Salem High due to the frequent leadership changes, but that she also thought that some people got very comfortable with being very deferential to a program that overstepped its bounds.

Ms. Manning stated that she didn't think the JROTC program overstepped its bounds, that it did a good job for some kids.

Mr. Cruz asked Ms. Nuncio to clarify whether she wanted MASC to provide her with a state law that addressed the question of whether marksmanship is allowed within a school. Ms. Nuncio replied that she wanted to know whether there's any other school district that has come up with a policy dealing with this question.

Mr. Cruz suggested looking at what the state law says about JROTC programs in the Commonwealth, rather than looking for specific policies. He added that perhaps the superintendent could reach out to Tom Scott as well about other contracts related to JROTC programs, because that might be the basis in which these programs exist more broadly, rather than policies.

Dr. Zrike offered additional insights: "There are a number of communities around us that do have marksmanship in their high school: Lynn, Beverly, and Haverhill as well, and that's just in the local area. When I raised this question with other superintendents, they were all as surprised as I was, that this was a practice that was happening after school. I think over time, that what happened was that, as Ms. Manning mentioned, schools like Malden High School used to have a shooting range. They still have the shooting range at their high school that was used for target practice. That was not due to a JROTC program; that was just for recreation, or an elective that you could take.

"So I would say that a lot has shifted, but there are some vestiges of this happening in schools all over the state. I think here, we never – (including myself) we never really looked at the contract with JROTC. I don't think any of us has any intention of us NOT having a relationship with them. I will tell you that I have concerns not about JROTC, not about marksmanship, because I do know that kids are very engaged by marksmanship; it is something that draws them to the program. I don't inherently have a problem with teaching kids how to be responsible with a weapon.

"I do have a concern in and around schools. You know so much about this is about how much we have shifted as a country. My biggest nightmare that any of us could experience is violence around schools, right? I don't have to go through what that is. I also know that many of our kids have experienced trauma with violence in this community. Guns are on the streets in Salem, as they are in other communities. There are kids who have significant trauma associated with this, and there are fears that in some cases are very connected to school, based on social media and with what's happened over the last few years. And right before COVID, obviously Parkland High School was on everybody's mind.

"Look, I don't worry about how these folks are handling the rifles and storing them, I think we have an excellent team of JROTC leaders at SHS. But objectively, I don't feel great about that existing in a school, in a community, and in a time in our world where there is such a heightened anxiety over weapons. I'd very much support the continuation of the practice outside of the school space, with an MOU, as Mr. Cruz said, with the Police Department and/or with another firing range.

"I have talked to Paul Tucker about this; I haven't talked to the new chief about this; everybody's initial reaction is, "Ooh, I don't think this is the best thing to happen in a school. I don't want to send a message to the kids, their families, or their instructors that somehow I don't believe in the value of JROTC.

"To me, the optics are concerning, especially during a time when we're worried tremendously about violence in and around young people and schools, and I want school to be as safe a place as possible can for young people. So that's my stance on it."

Mr. Cruz stated he respected Dr. Zrike's concerns, reiterating the actions that he believed Dr. Zrike could take to address the issue of the location for the marksmanship practice. Then Mr. Cruz introduced the topic that he was very concerned about over the presence of school resource officers in Salem schools, noting, "If we're going to have a larger conversation about weapons in schools, there are things that give me pause -- marksmanship and the JROTC program does not. What concerns me are police officers in schools with firearms that are real, and could discharge someday. If we want to have a policy, that, to me, would be an area of concern for me.

He continued: "Police officers who work directly with teens and children showing up, every time --those police resource officers walk through the doors in uniform with tazers, guns -- this presents a huge problem for people of color. [Children and teens] see them in the community, sometimes mistreating their older siblings, their friends, their neighbors, their peers -- to me, those are the firearms that give me pause. When kids bring weapons to schools, and I'm talking like knives, blades, guns -- it has happened -- the bullets, those things are very alarming, and at a high level. I think we need to have a conversation at a high level about whether we need a policy regarding School Resource Officers, revisit that contract and maybe say, "That's not what we want, we don't want people in school with firearms."

"It's different if you're responding to an emergency, coming in your full uniform. Those are the things that give me pause when you talk about the health, safety, and well-being of our students, who are disproportionately students of color."

Mr. Cruz continued, "But with respect to this program, I do think you have some options in front of you. If you come back to us with a recommendation wanting to take this (marksmanship) off-site, I think my view, and the only point on where I differ with my colleagues is that I don't think we need a policy to achieve that goal of being off-campus, being outside, being at the police station's range, or moving to a different location inside the school building, and putting in some pretty strict protocols around the storage and the use of those air soft rifles."

Ms. Manning responded that she had somewhat changed her opinion about the school resource officers being armed in the building. She stated that she still felt it was important to keep some connection between the school resource officers and the students in the building. "I've seen too many instances of that relationship stopping things. And really, some of those connections made (between SROs and students) have been lifelong for some of those kids."

Ms. Manning added, "When they first put (school resource officers) in, I was one of the first proponents to do it. But I get the point, I see what you're saying about that."

She continued, "My concern, though, if you're comfortable that the guys running the JROTC program are making sure the air rifles are safe, and that they're handled safely, and we give up the prerogative for the Superintendent to figure out where to move the marksmanship program in the high school, I still can't get over the issue of one of those guys commenting during a meeting that he believes marksmanship is a good way for kids to unstress. That to me, shows a mindset that I can't get past, regardless of what they say about how they're going to lock up the weapons. I still can't get that out of my mind."

Mr. Cruz agreed that that was a poor explanation or justification for keeping an element of a program. He added that he didn't remember the officer saying that, but that it was "incredibly problematic," and that there should be a follow-up conversation about this comment.

Ms. Manning said she believed that *was* what was being taught, about shooting being a great way to unstress. She asked Mr. Cruz a clarifying question: "I know that you're saying that it's not within the School Committee's purview to have the superintendent set any parameters on the marksmanship, etc., yet are you saying that the School Committee *should* be discussing whether the SROs should be armed? What's the difference?"

Mr. Cruz responded that there's an MOU within the district regarding the SROs. He added, "Just to be clear, it's not that I don't have concerns about weapons in schools, it's just that also, in my larger concern within school buildings is the SROs having weapons; that's larger than this marksmanship program. I fully acknowledge that, but I feel that if we're going to look at one MOU, let's look at them both at the same time." He added that it was the superintendent's prerogative, not the School Committee's, to look at both MOUs.

Dr. Zrike stated, "Well, what's interesting about the SRO is that the SRO is really funded by the City, so I'm not sure how much authority we really have. The Chief and I have been talking about the MOU, and I'm really not sure who has the ultimate authority to sign the MOU with the City."

Members continued discussing the question of the MOU for school resource officers, with Ms. Manning noting that there had been a huge discussion with a lot of parental dissent about the fact that they would be armed, and that it was definitely a topic on the table for the School Committee to discuss, whether or not they (the SROs) would be armed or not. She remembered that School Committee members ultimately took some kind of vote on the MOU, and included the part that the SROs would be armed, so the School Committee had a role in that discussion.

Mr. Cruz stated that he didn't know anything about either of the two MOUs with respect to their history, and whether or not the body (School Committee) had voted on them, and that the larger question was whether it was within the superintendent's prerogative to say to the SROs, "I'm going to re-negotiate the MOU with you."

He added that it would be helpful for the superintendent to talk with Police Chief Miller about the SROs being in plain clothes when they enter the buildings, and also being unarmed, if that's possible, adding that he didn't know who has the authority with the MOU for the JROTC program.

Ms. Manning clarified that the JROTC is a contract, and the agreement with the SROs is an MOU. She added that she had seen the JROTC contract some time ago, since all this discussion started.

Dr. Zrike asked Ms. Manning to track it down, because he had been unable to find it. Ms. Manning replied that she'd try, but that she didn't even remember who had sent it to her.

Dr. Zrike added that he did have a copy of the sample MOU from the state, and that it did look like it's the Superintendent and the Chief of Police who sign it. It's the sample state-recommended MOU, and it does have a signature line for the superintendent, and one for the Chief of Police.

Ms. Manning stated that they renewed this MOU periodically, and it still involved the School Committee.

Mr. Adam Colantuoni stated that he had heard yesterday that the SROs are not going to be in uniform this next year, and Dr. Zrike confirmed that they had already taken the step -- that the SROs will no longer be in uniform.

Dr. Zrike added that the Chief and he had discussed this one step, but that they know that "there have to be further conversations about SROs, to Mr. Cruz's point."

Ms. Manning asked Ms. Nuncio to invite Dr. Pangallo into the Zoom meeting, but after discussion it was established that Dr. Pangallo could watch the meeting but not speak at this time, so as not to break Open Meeting rules. It was established that in order for Dr. Pangallo to speak at the meeting, the agenda should have been posted as a Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting in advance, because it would have included more than the three members of the Policy Subcommittee.

Ms. Nuncio explained that the purpose of having invited Amanda Campbell and Dr. Kristen Pangallo was for them just to listen to the discussion about the marksmanship program. Then, if the matter about the marksmanship component eventually went to the whole School Committee for consideration, that they would have some background.

Mr. Cruz added that the Policy Subcommittee is supposed to be a sub-forum of the School Committee with only three members present. Once a fourth member is added, then it becomes a full School Committee meeting. He noted that the other part that should have been included in the agenda, for future reference, is a public comment period in which all members of the public would have had equal opportunity to provide comment during the meeting.

He explained further that the meeting could also have been posted as a COW meeting to include Ms. Campbell as well, with five members of the Committee fully participating.

Ms. Nuncio summarized from her notes her understanding about where we stood with the discussion about the marksmanship program and said that it was a good thing that the meeting was being recorded.

She offered this summary: "Originally, we were trying to see if we could have a policy that addressed the issue of firearms in schools in a more specific way about the marksmanship program, and where that program takes place at the high school. Then Mr. Cruz stated that this matter doesn't need the School Committee to bring forth a policy, which would have to go through three readings. He stated that he believed that it was within the superintendent's purview to come up with a recommendation and decide the matter on his own.

Mr. Cruz added the additional topic of school resource officers in the schools, and we talked about how those two agreements are different. We learned that there's a Memorandum of Understanding with regard to the presence of school resource officers in the schools, and that there's a contract with the JROTC program officers.

Ms. Nuncio asked if it was indeed a faster track to ask Dr. Zrike to look into this issue (moving the marksmanship program) to another place, to determine whether he can make a recommendation,

or decide on his own that marksmanship programs do not belong in the schools. Was it going to be faster for the superintendent to make some kind of an agreement with shooting ranges nearby, or make some agreement with the Salem Chief of Police, to have the marksmanship practice take place in a location other than in the schools. She asked whether Dr. Zrike has the authority to move that program and just make that recommendation to the School Committee, and whether that was a faster track for dealing with this issue.

Mr. Cruz responded with an amendment/correction to what Ms. Nuncio had said, saying that “Dr. Zrike can make a programmatic change, that no recommendation to the School Committee is a necessary step, unless it’s regarding a policy. He added, “Dr. Zrike can make a programmatic change tomorrow around these pieces without needing School Committee approval. It’s his prerogative, to seek our input and have a thought partnership with us about these pieces, but the more appropriate term instead of a recommendation is that he can make a programmatic change.”

Ms. Nuncio asked Dr. Zrike whether he could do that, and he replied that he definitely could, that there was nothing preventing him from doing that. He added, “I think that then you will have people coming to the School Committee, who will want the Committee to respond to what my directive is. Which is fine, that’s part of my job. I have to make a decision about what I think is best for the school, and I will certainly do that. I do think that this is a high-profile enough matter, and that’s why I brought it to the School Committee. There are many decisions I make every day that don’t involve the Committee, but because this became a matter of public interest, I brought it to you. I’m happy now, if that’s what you want me to do at this point. I’m not afraid to make a decision about what I think is right for kids.”

Members continued discussing how Dr. Zrike could make a programmatic change and get support from the School Committee. Then Dr. Zrike stated, “If the Policy Subcommittee wanted to make a policy that prevented this type of activity from occurring in a school, that would obviously require us to immediately make a change. If that’s not what the School Committee is going to do, and feels like this is an implementation decision on the part of the school district, then I will make a decision. And I’m happy to bring you that decision for your support or not, but what I think you’re telling me is that you’re giving me the authority, or you’re not preventing the authority that I have to make a decision, about where this activity occurs. And I will tell you that my directive will be that the activity should not happen at Salem High School.

He added, “I will work to find another location to make it happen, to Mr. Cruz’s point, through an MOU with the Police. I had already started to look at that last year, but then I put a pause on it. Now I will work with them because I do believe that at this point we have a requirement through our contract that marksmanship is part of the program, part of the curriculum, and it should continue. It just doesn’t need to continue in a building. So that’s what my directive will be.”

Ms. Manning said she could support that, and Ms. Nuncio said she could support that, too, adding, “but I’ve seen the School Committee take a stance on other topics, when it acknowledges that times have changed. Sometimes, those matters are presented to the School Committee, and the School Committee brings itself to make a resolution. I don’t know what standing a resolution has, but if we did that with regard to the marksmanship program in the schools, I think it becomes a statement of principle on the part of the School Committee --whether you call it a resolution, or whatever. In this way, we show support for what I think is a big step that the Superintendent is taking, given what we know about the resistance and the culture that’s out there.” She asked, “And how is it different to say that we oppose a marksmanship program taking place in the schools – how is that different from the resolutions that we’ve made in the past with regard to other matters, for example, the Sanctuary for Peace ordinance?

Ms. Manning stated that the difference was that we had a contract with respect to the JROTC program. Mr. Cruz reiterated that it was within the Superintendent's prerogative to take his directive and bring it to the School Committee if he's looking for support, and he stated again that he didn't think that it takes three readings to achieve that.

Mr. Cruz offered his advice to the Superintendent to "move with some level of agility with respect to the location of the marksmanship program, just to give some clarity to the students and the instructors who are doing the work. But if you were looking to come to us in the September meeting and say, "In my Superintendent's report, this is my directive around this, and I'm looking for School Committee support, I think that's a much more efficient way to slice this than to wait for three readings and hash the same conversation out three times in a row about whether or not this should be happening with respect to the policy. I don't think that a policy is the appropriate vehicle to make a programmatic change."

Ms. Nuncio noted that Dr. Zrike wanted to say something, as well as Mr. Colantuoni, and invited them to speak.

Dr. Zrike agreed that his programmatic decision didn't need a vote for him to be able to make a change. He stated, "The only thing that I thought might happen is that a policy could be established based on the Policy Subcommittee's process that would cause there to be a different implementation, that's all. But I'm ready to proceed. I agree with you, Mr. Cruz, that it needs to be done quickly and clearly, and I can bring it up as a matter of information in our next meeting, which isn't until Sept. 13th.

Mr. Cruz replied that the Superintendent also had a prerogative, in the absence of a policy, to draft a policy and bring it forward to the School Committee.

Dr. Zrike replied that in that case it would be a *practice*, but that he could certainly issue a directive around a practice, and "that's what we're going to do in this case, and we can discuss later about whether I would want some support from the School Committee around my directive."

He concluded: "I do think, so everybody's ready, that once I explain this to people at Salem High School, they're going to show up at the next meeting to share their concerns about my directive. But that's fine, I'm not worried about that, but I just wanted the School Committee to be prepared for that."

Adjournment

Ms. Nuncio made a motion to adjourn the Policy Subcommittee meeting and Mr. Cruz seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Cruz Yes
Ms. Nuncio Yes
Motion carries 2-0

Meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Ana Nuncio, Policy Subcommittee Chair