

**Salem Public Schools  
Salem School Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
December 21, 2020**

On December 21, 2020 the Salem School Committee held its regular School Committee meeting at 7:00 PM using the Zoom platform.

**Members Present:** Mayor Kimberley Driscoll, Ms. Mary Manning, Ms. Amanda Campbell, Dr. Kristin Pangallo, Mr. Manny Cruz, Ms. Ana Nuncio, and Mr. James Fleming

**Members Absent:** None

**Others in Attendance:** Superintendent Stephen Zrike, Assistant Superintendent Kate Carbone, Dr. Jill Conrad, Ms. Chelsea Banks, Ms. Liz Polay-Wettengel, Ms. Deb Connerty, and Mr. Duncan Mayer

**Call of Meeting to Order**

Mayor Driscoll called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Mayor Driscoll read the new Public Participation Policy 6409 and also explained the request for Spanish interpretation for participation.

**Approval of Agenda**

Mayor Driscoll requested a motion to approve the Regular Agenda. Mr. Fleming motioned and Ms. Manning seconded. The Mayor called a roll call vote.

Ms. Manning	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Ms. Nuncio	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Ms. Campbell	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Yes

Motion carries 7-0

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

Mayor Driscoll requested a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Fleming motioned and Mr. Cruz seconded. The Mayor called a roll call vote.

Ms. Manning	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Ms. Nuncio	Yes

Mr. Cruz	Yes
Ms. Campbell	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Yes

Motion carries 7-0

### **Public Comment**

The School Committee Secretary announced that there were three public comments that have been submitted in writing and have requested to be read aloud.

AJ Hoffman, 3 Victory Road would like to comment regarding the amazing work that Liz Polay-Wettengel, Chief of Public Relations, has been doing since she arrived at Salem Public Schools a little over a year ago. They added that they are very impressed on how the communication and transparency, which has lacked in the past, has been completely turned around.

Geoff Millar, 29 Boardman Street, also wanted to comment regarding the improvements in the level of communications for the district. In addition, Mr. Millar stated that he was very pleased with the ParentSquare program that the district has adopted for their communication platform.

Sara Moore, 34 Leach Street, a parent from the Horace Mann Laboratory School also wanted to recognize the improvement of communications over the past year because of the leadership of Liz Polay-Wettengel.

### **Recognition**

Dr. Zrike announced that Dr. Jill Conrad will be leaving her full time position for the district, but has agreed to stay on at a reduced schedule to help with specific projects for a few more months. Mayor Driscoll thanked Dr. Conrad for all her contributions to the district. Several members of the School Committee also thanked Dr. Conrad for her dedication, knowledge and hard work.

### **Report from the Student Representative**

Duncan Mayer updated the Committee regarding the bathrooms at the high school. He explained that he was able to view the changes and stated that they looked good and noticed some positive improvements. He added that the Student Advisory Council sent out a survey to as many students as they could, but no results are available yet, although he did say that they received many results from all grade levels. Some of the questions asked were:

- In your opinion, what is being done well right now?
- Are there any issues with online learning for you?
- What specifically do you struggle with?
- What support would you need to help you feel/do better?

Mr. Mayer will share the results of the survey when they become available in January/February.

Ms. Campbell and Mr. Cruz commended the Student Advisory Council on their great work with the survey and also to Mr. Mayer and the Council for their leadership.

### **Report of the Superintendent**

a. Communication Presentation - Liz Polay-Wettengel, Chief of Public Relations  
Dr. Zrike introduced Ms. Polay-Wettengel. Ms. Polay-Wettengel began her presentation by explaining that when she first came to Salem Public Schools a little over a year ago, she began by listening to the district and auditing what needed to be done. Her initial plan of action was to begin with the website. By learning the website, she was able to identify what areas needed to be updated, including internal and external communications and technology. She explained that once the pandemic hit, all efforts shifted to quickly and efficiently providing constant communication and also providing information regarding the shift to remote learning. She explained that due to the need for all this communication, they have decided to move forward with adopting ParentSquare for the district. ParentSquare can do a multitude of tasks and we have heard very positive feedback from both teachers and parents. She also explained that there has been a significant growth of followers with Facebook and Twitter. Ms. Polay-Wettengel explained that going forward some of the goals for 2021 are increase usability of the website, build up internal communication pipeline from schools to central office, and promote equity and highlight what SPS has to offer.

Committee members asked questions regarding recruitment and retention of students which Ms. Polay-Wettengel responded that she is in the process of working with Dr. Zrike and Dr. Meier regarding this. She is also working on improving the website. In addition, she explained the new communication liaison positions and how important this position is for providing information. There was also a question regarding how would families without emails receive the notifications from ParentSquare. Ms. Polay-Wettengel explained that this program has the ability to also text in case email is not available and there is an option for translation if required.

b. Update on Flu Vaccine - Charlene Moske-Weber, Director of Nursing and Health Services  
Dr. Zrike introduced Charlene Moske-Weber to speak regarding the upcoming deadline for the flu vaccines. Ms. Moske-Weber explained that the state has mandated that all students are required to receive the flu vaccine by the end of this month. This includes students from kindergarten to college (under 30 years old). She added that any students that have not been vaccinated by the deadline, will not be allowed to return to in-person learning. She added that the only 2 exceptions are religious and health related. She also explained that insurance, including MassHealth, will cover the price of the vaccine and if a family does not have insurance, the cost is \$35 at CVS and Walgreens.

c. January Plan for Students Return to School  
Dr. Zrike began his presentation by stating that part of his return to school plan, there would be a remote week, therefore, students would return to in-person learning on January 11th. That also includes bringing back more students in the hybrid model.

Assistant Superintendent Kate Carbone gave an update on the hybrid planning for grades 3-8 and explained the hybrid model survey that was sent out. Out of 1,600 returning students, approximately 1,100 surveys were returned with their preferences. Ms. Carbone explained that this was crucial for the hybrid planning with regards to transportation and planning of cohorts. In addition, she explained the context for the hybrid model including constraints and guidelines and gave a timeline for the return date. Ms. Carbone also announced that on January 8th, there would be a virtual field trip for grades 3-8 called Salem Soars to Space. It begins with all grades starting with their teacher and their morning meeting, then they would navigate through the virtual field trips that relate to space and exploration. Assistant Superintendent Carbone also gave an explanation on what is being provided for support for K-2 students who may need to quarantine, but the rest of the class does not.

Chelsea Banks was next to present and she gave an update on the January return plan data. This was a review of grades 3-8, which are approximately 1,600 students (not including 6th grade Collins which includes another 200) with who is coming back, who is with us and who is remaining remote. Ms. Banks also outlined the COVID testing that will be conducted the week of January 4th. She explained that any student can test at any site and that testing will be done by drive-up outside or walk-up at the Saltonstall. Staff can test inside their building and do not need to wait in line. She added that this is a saliva based test and results are scheduled to be in by January 8th. Ms. Banks added that there will be a webinar posted that will detail instructions and will help to answer questions people may have.

Dr. Zrike explained that they are still waiting to make a decision regarding winter sports but do have a meeting scheduled with the Health agents to discuss it. He said they are still finalizing the second semester for the high school and the hybrid model for grades 10, 11, and 12. Dr. Zrike also went over the timeline for the options families will need to decide on for return to school.

Ms. Campbell asked questions about testing and students who are required to quarantine lesson options. Dr. Pangallo reminded everyone the importance of testing and staying safe.

### **Old Business**

None to report.

### **New Business**

None to report.

### **Finance Report**

None to report.

### **Subcommittee Reports**

- a. Policy Subcommittee
  - i. Policies for First Reading  
5102.02 Children of Full-time Staff Members

5224 Animals in School  
5405 Drug Abuse

Mr. Cruz made a motion for first reading of the above mentioned policies and Ms. Nuncio seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Ms. Manning	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Ms. Nuncio	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Ms. Campbell	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Yes

Motion carries 7-0

Ms. Manning announced that they are still in discussion regarding the Dress Code Policy. The LBGTQ Committee has requested more specific changes. Dr. Pangallo added that she would like to add her comments to this policy. It was requested to table the three following policies, 5222 Parental Notification of Courses Involving Human Sexuality, 5401 Hazing, and 5411 Dress Code Policy.

Mr. Fleming made a motion to table 5222 Parental Notification of Courses Involving Human Sexuality, 5401 Hazing, and 5411 Dress Code Policy. Dr. Pangallo seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Ms. Manning	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Ms. Nuncio	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Ms. Campbell	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Yes

Motion carries 7-0

- ii. Policies for Second Reading
  - 3601 Student Transportation Services
  - 5217 Student Publications
  - 5222 Parental Notification of Courses Involving Human Sexuality - TABLED*
  - 5300 Class Size
  - 5400 Student Conduct
  - 5401 Hazing - TABLED*
  - 5401.01 Prohibition of Bullying and Cyber-bullying
  - 5403 Alcohol Use by Students

### *5411 Dress Code Policy - TABLED*

Ms. Manning made a motion for second reading of the above mentioned policies other than the tabled items. Ms. Nuncio seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Ms. Manning	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Ms. Nuncio	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Ms. Campbell	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Yes

Motion carries 7-0

Ms. Campbell gave an update on the Equity & Inclusion Subcommittee meeting of December 9th. She explained that they reviewed examples of equity decision making protocols and voted on one to refer back to the Committee for review. She added that she will include it in an upcoming Committee meeting and said that Dr. Zrike plans on discussing this also at the upcoming retreat. She said they also plan on presenting data on discipline and drop out rates at the next meeting.

### **School Committee Concerns and Resolutions**

None to report.

### **Adjournment**

Mayor Driscoll requested a motion to adjourn. Ms. Manning motioned and Mr. Fleming seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Ms. Manning	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Ms. Nuncio	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Ms. Campbell	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Yes

Motion carries 7-0. Meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

*Nancy A. Weiss*

Executive Assistant to the School Committee  
& Superintendent