

**Salem School Committee  
Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes  
Monday, December 6, 2021**

A Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting of the Salem School Committee was held on Monday, December 6, 2021 at 5:00 pm using the Zoom platform.

**Members Present:** Mayor Kimberley Driscoll (enters at 5:30p), Ms. Mary Manning, Ms. Amanda Campbell, Dr. Kristin Pangallo, Mr. Manny Cruz, Mr. Fleming and Ms. Ana Nuncio

**Members Absent:** None

**Others in Attendance:** Dr. Stephen Zrike, Jeff Perrotti

**Call of Meeting to Order**

Ms. Manning calls the meeting to order at 5:15pm. She notes the committee is meeting to listen to the Superintendent's self-assessment as an initial formal step toward the SC evaluation. The second purpose is to meet the consultants presenting at the regular school committee meeting occurring this evening.

**Superintendent's Presentation of Progress Toward Goals**

Dr. Zrike opens his presentation to the school committee noting that the Superintendent is the leader of the district but he can't take full credit for the work being done as he was gifted a strong team upon taking the position in Salem.

He mentions the final components of his self-evaluation includes areas of growth and he wants to promote the culture that growth is important and receiving feedback of all kinds is constructive and helpful to better serve children. Dr. Zrike shares he identified four indicators of success during his time as Superintendent that he will share this evening.

The success areas and areas of strength are showcased in bulleted points along with narrative components. He notes instruction as an indicator and the strength of the Deputy Superintendent and the Teaching and Learning team that have been a support to his work within his role. He notes the timeframe of his role beginning in the midst of a pandemic and how the core work the district does was shifted to support students and families during that time.

Dr. Zrike notes the work of the PreK Program, literacy curriculum, and the dual language program being game-changing for young people and successful progression within his time. He mentions the high school redesign, school times, and BARR grant funds being successful components at the secondary level. Dr. Zrike continues to note the social-emotional learning component being married to the academic piece and notes seeing this strengthen over the next 3-5 years within the school system to increase the strength of SEL.

Dr. Zrike notes the work of teachers and staff for trying to maintain as much of academic integrity and instructional integrity as possible despite what they've experienced with the pandemic and rolling with pandemic shifts along the way.

He transitions to indicator two, and mentions Assistant Superintendent DeLai, and the operating team. This indicator shares how resources are being used and monitored and how they are maximized for curriculum, staffing, and scheduling. He notes the thoughtful experience of devising a fiscal plan last year that resulted in an effective use of funds with community and staff input. Budget planning, the use of the ESSER dollars, and hope to fine tune the process for using resources pertaining to intentions and initiatives. The central office review guided transition in realigning and creating new departments to support students and families under the guidance of Deputy Superintendent Carbone and Assistant Superintendent DeLai.

He notes pride for the team leading the COVID Response, including: Chelsea Banks, Charlene Moske-Weber, Zissis Alepakis, Ryan Monks, and others who shifted the needs of families during the navigation of the pandemic. He notes the example Salem has been through the pandemic and the envy of other districts for the work from the team.

Dr. Zrike notes the work surrounding emergency planning crisis management and mentions a few components of importance for working with the community specifically with Chief Miller and the SPD to enhance protocols in place for increased safety. He mentions new cameras and intercom systems have been installed at entrances of all schools, and a keyless entry system is being introduced across the district. He mentions there's work to be done to continue to strategize with the police and fire departments and the district strategy will continue to guide the work and resources to continue this effort forward.

Family engagement is noted as work near and dear to his heart and shares this is critical work to build relationships with the community. He notes the work of communication from Chief of Public Relations, Liz Polay-Wettengel. He notes the work he's done to be forward facing in the community: Facebook Live, 1:1 Meetings, Backyard Meetings, and mentions he continues to strengthen this work with building the relationships with the students, families, and staff. This was a critical component to his entry plan and he wants to continue to be present in this role of building these partnerships. Dr. Zrike shares his desire to build culture. He wants to build a community where everyone feels important in their role. He shares that the most important next step is being visible in the schools to hear and see what's happening as it's the only way to truly understand the culture.

Dr. Zrike moves along to share his goals. Including:

- Review the partnership with local businesses in the community, higher education and community organizations
- Better highlighting how impressive and powerful the teaching and instruction is in our schools to better market the tremendous work throughout the district.
- Understand district budget to capitalize on resource and operations
- Better connect Social-Emotional Learning and Academic Learning

- Need to build up the Human Resources department, including hiring a recruitment manager
- Professional Learning needs to grow for our non-teaching staff
- Quality of programming for our Special Education department

Mr. Cruz appreciates Dr. Zrike overview and his mention of his team members' work to support his progression in his role, speaking volumes to his leadership. He requests some insight to his plan to diversify the leadership team in regard to his goals surrounding HR and hiring. Dr. Zrike notes the struggle is the district isn't aggressively looking at partnering with organizations - going to job fairs, seeking the best talent in the region, etc. which stands to be a component of the issue. He also mentioned there's a lot of talented people within the organization that quietly do exceptional work and need to be elevated. A problem we see is a gap between where folks are and senior leadership. He notes hiring managers of color within the last year, including: Food Service, Parent Engagement, Attendance, and Transportation. He mentions there is still work to be done noting they're not "sitting at the table," as the executive team. He notes it's unfortunate we don't have many principals or assistant principals of color and we need to tap those folks to get them into leadership programs. He identifies the process will be a combination of growing within as well as bringing in talent from the outside: perhaps people who have connections to Salem, or those that he's making personal connections with regarding interest to come to the district. Overall, a better system and structure is necessary.

Dr. Zrike continues his presentation with goals including:

- Student Learning Goal
- District Goal
- Professional Growth Goal

He shares his student learning goal and how he doesn't have much data but tries to work with the principals to help enhance learning goals. Dr. Zrike notes the work of Deputy Superintendent and himself being in schools, supporting principals, providing regular feedback, and giving consistent coaching. He shares that supporting the principals is the most important work to be done because it is the toughest job.

The transition to professional goal results in gratitude to committee member Amadna Campbell for the introduction to the Equity Imperative for the work and support they've provided to facilitate conversations and live work to better understand the work within the district. He notes having data in his evaluation of feedback from teachers across the district. He also mentions his optimism for the work of TEI and students across the district. He notes that while there's been progress in the equity work for his professional growth, there is still room for more work to be done.

He reviewed the district goal of establishing the district improvement plan to focus on the eight metrics and twelve priorities of work for the district which will be reviewed and discussed further at the leadership retreat in January.

Mayor Driscoll notes one area of growth you mentioned was to regularly highlight and replicate models with powerful teaching and learning across SPS. She asks if he could say a bit more about how he might operationalize that opportunity.

Dr. Zrike responds to Mayor Driscoll's comment noting a big component is how we market. He mentions he doesn't think people even know of some of the things happening in our schools that no other school districts are doing. He notes being in other districts, and his students being in another school district right now and the work Salem is doing, especially instructionally, is very powerful and important work to be celebrated. He also shares the importance of expanding excellence across the district. He notes the importance of highlighting work to families, the committee, and those in the community. He also shares the need to notice staff and the impactful work they're doing and how they can learn from within and share their own systems to continue the good work.

He finishes with gratitude to work with a committee who's been very supportive during a very difficult time. It's a tough time to be a superintendent but the guidance and partnerships are appreciated.

Ms. Nuncio shares gratitude for the addition of the Educators Showcase being a regular fixture in the school committee meetings.

Discussion surrounding the timeline for committee members to return evaluation reports is had. Mention of the next COW on December 20th includes the summation overview and confirming the retreat date of January 22nd is discussed as well.

### **Introduction of Jeff Perrotti, founding Director of MA DESE's Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ+ community**

Ms. Manning discusses broadening the plans to support the LGBTQ+ community. Overtime discussions with Jeff Perrotti and his colleagues have been working to build plans for supports to the district through a team of consultants working with DESE.

Jeff Perrotti and Landon Callahan join the meeting for a quick meet and greet. Ms. Manning introduces Mr. Perrotti and provides him the floor to introduce his colleague. Mr. Perrotti notes working with Salem for years and is excited to this evening and having conversations to build on the wonderful things happening in Salem. He introduces Landon Callahan, noting work done during the Obama era surrounding gender identity and Landon's path of being interviewed and later becoming the poster boy for transgender student rights. Jeff mentions after college, he became one of the most sought after trainers and shares appreciation to work alongside him.

Mr. Callahan provides an overview of his work with the Safe Schools programs beginning in his high school years and continuing through college. He notes his training work is done from kindergarten through high school. He also shares that work is unfolding at the university level as well.

Conversation is had about the presentation scheduled for the regular school committee meeting and the importance of having conversation surrounding LGBTQ+.

### **Adjournment**

Mayor Driscoll entertains a motion to adjourn the School Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting this evening. Ms. Manning motioned and Mr. Fleming seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Ms. Manning	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Ms. Nuncio	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Ms. Campbell	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Yes
Motion carries 7-0	

Meeting adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

*Jensen Frost*

Executive Assistant to the Deputy Superintendent