

**Salem Public Schools
Committee of the Whole
February 6, 2020
Meeting Minutes**

Members in Attendance: Ms. Mary Manning, Mayor Kimberley Driscoll, Mr. James Fleming, Ms. Amanda Campbell, Mr. Manny Cruz, Ms. Ana Nuncio, Dr. Kristin Pangallo, Miss Jillian Flynn

Others in Attendance: Dr. Emily Flores, Dr. Samantha Meier, Kate Carbone, Thomas Doyle, Craig Vadala, Timothy Sturk, Thomas Beckett

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order 7:18 p.m. Mayor Kimberley Driscoll identified the two topics up for discussion as the 2020-2021 Program of Studies and preparation of the superintendent final interview process.

Mary Manning opened the meeting with a motion to move the program of studies from the third item to the first item on the agenda. Mr. Fleming seconded and the motion carried. Mayor Driscoll then invited the high school principal Samantha Meier and Academic Dean Emily Flores to discuss the change in the program of studies.

Program of Studies Salem High School 2020-2021 School Year

Dr. Flores described the method in which decisions were made about the courses for the 2020-2021 school year. She explained meeting with the teachers and department heads to identify courses that were either must haves or courses that were nice to have. The health and wellness courses posed an issue with one particular course that is listed as a required course, Project Adventure. She informed the Committee this course is not required by the State. Since the course is not a State requirement the course will be listed without the language of "required". Dr. Meier expressed her concerns with the course reading required and some of her reasons were as follows; some students' physical inability to succeed in this course, students with clear identifying disabilities are unable to take the course, and if the course is not passed then GPA's of students are impacted. There was a brief discussion from Ms. Manning asking why isn't algebra 1 listed as required and this course is listed as required. There are many required courses. Mr. Fleming asked about a waiver for kids who cannot take the course. Dr. Meier explained she does take waivers but only for those students who clearly, due to disability, cannot take the course.

Mr. Fleming expressed concern removing the word required. This may result in students not taking the course. Dr. Pangallo expressed her concern having a course that may set a child up to fail and that will not be acceptable. Mr. Cruz spoke about his experiences with the course as a student. He explained it's more of a team building course, promotes self confidence, and was

the turning point in his education. He will not support a change in language to remove the word required.

Several members of high school staff spoke highly of the program and asked for the wording to remain the same. Staff members included, Thomas Doyle, Craig Vadala, and Timothy Sturk were all there to express their concern and to discuss in detail about the courses importance. In addition to the high school staff, several committee members also disagree with the removal of the word required and spoke highly of the course, those members included, Mr. Cruz, Mr. Fleming, and student representative Jillian Flynn.

Ms. Nuncio suggested we explore changing the word required to something else to help identify the importance of the course. The Mayor asked how and when did this language get into the program of studies and it was mentioned the language was put in back in the 1970's.

This issue was discussed at great length and Mr. Fleming referred the matter back to Committee to discuss on February 13, 2020.

Superintendent Interviews Planning

Mayor Driscoll moved on to the preparation for the Superintendent interviews by thanking John Brackett for his work. Mr. Brackett explained to the Committee the positive feedback he received from the finalists. They are all excited to be here. He then went on to congratulate the Committee and the Subcommittee for their hard work. Mr. Brackett outlined the topics for discussion. First, they will discuss the interview process, second, the upcoming calendar, and finally, a discussion on bias and feedback forms.

Mr. Brackett discussed the plan for the interviews. Monday and Wednesday there are no actions. He explained that although this is a public meeting the committee must remember it's an interview in public but not a public interview. He also explained the number of questions needed and the time it will take for those questions. Mr. Brackett told the Committee each interview will be about 75 minutes long. There will be eleven questions but although these are questions, he wants the Committee to approach it as though it is a conversation. Finally, he allotted 20 minutes for follow-up questions.

Dr. Pangallo asked if the finalists could ask the Committee questions? The Committee advised against this idea. The Committee spent time going over which interview questions should be asked. The Committee came up with 12 possible questions. Some of the questions were targeted for situational experiences, equity, retention, and transitional questions. There was a brief discussion about performative questions but the Committee ultimately decided this can be incorporated with the selection they have chosen. Mayor Driscoll asked the Committee to forward her any changes to questions by Saturday. The Mayor will then assign questions to Committee members.

The Mayor asked the Committee if the interviews should be live on SATV? The Committee decided in favor of this.

Mr. Beckett moved on to feedback forms. He explained that once they receive the feedback forms, the forms become a public document. Mayor Driscoll explained to the Committee we are reviewing for pros and cons and feedback. She recommends we interview first then review the feedback. Mr. Cruz suggested at this point we discuss bias.

Mr. Becket addressed the Committee with ideas to watch for with bias. He defined bias as a preconceived notion. Two types of bias are confrontational and implicit. Conformational is identifying someone with traits based on a familiarity. Mr. Beckett gave an example of my favorite boss wears a black coat and the finalist wears a black coat, so you prefer this candidate. Implicit bias is categorizing the finalist based on race or body image as some examples. The way to overcome bias is to ask the question "so what". This will help with clarity. Bias in this environment is the brains way of filing information. Mr. Beckett reminded the Committee the feedback forms may have bias.

Mayor Driscoll asked the Committee if there were any issues and questions. There were several comments. The Mayor expressed to the Committee to keep comments positive. All the candidates are talented. We are looking for the best fit not who is more talented.

Amanda Campbell motioned to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Cruz seconded. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 9:47pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer A. Gariepy
*Executive Assistant to the School Committee
& The Superintendent*

Attachments Include:
Discussion Item
Interview Schedule
Interview Bank
Topics for Questions
Superintendent Feedback Forms
2020-2021 Program of Studies