

**Innovation School Screening Committee
Meeting Minutes
Friday, September 27, 2019**

A meeting of the Salem Public Schools Innovation School Screening Committee was held on Friday, September 27, 2019 at 1:00 p.m. in the School Committee Chambers at Collins Middle School, 29 Highland Avenue, Salem, MA.

Members Present: Mayor Kimberley Driscoll (School Committee Chair), Kathleen Smith (Interim Superintendent) and Ann Berman (Salem Teachers Union President)

Members Absent: None

Others Present: For the Salem Public Schools: Kate Carbone, Assistant Superintendent and Jill Conrad, Chief of Systems Strategy
For the Salem Teachers Union: AFT Representatives: Nicholas Dipardo, Dan Murphy, Eric Blanchet

Call of Meeting to Order

Superintendent Smith called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. and summarized the purpose of the meeting. The members discussed and clarified the purpose of the meeting. The Superintendent acknowledged that she had received a document entitled “Statement of Principles and Concerns” from the STU and invited STU President Ann Berman to discuss its contents.

President Berman shared her concerns regarding the lack of teacher voice involved in the final stages of development for the innovation school prospectus that had been submitted. She stated that teachers were never given a copy of the final version of the prospectus and once they did, it left out many details regarding how exactly, the school would operate or use the autonomies, which made them uncertain of whether or not to support it. Mayor Driscoll explained that is because those types of details are meant to be developed at the next phase, when the Innovation Plan Committee is formed, with all of the required stakeholders at the table. She stated that the prospectus was only meant to provide a general summary.

Superintendent Smith concurred that the prospectus is meant to be more like a “concept paper” and that the types of details that President Berman seeks will be determined during the next phase of the process. The Superintendent read the purpose for the screening committee which is to approve or deny the prospectus to allow the applicant to advance to the next phase of developing an Innovation Plan Committee which is responsible for developing the final innovation plan.

President Berman continued saying that she did not feel that she trusted the process because the final prospectus submitted by an applicant group that was only made up of members of the Board of Trustees and not anyone working at the school. Mayor Driscoll pointed out that Jenna Cripps, who is the lead applicant does work at the school and reminded President Berman that the previous principal had involved teachers in the earlier stages of developing the prospectus, over the summer. She also explained that it was difficult to reach teachers during the summer and the unexpected leadership turnover at Bentley also played a role.

Both Mayor Driscoll and Superintendent Smith expressed concern about the need to move the process forward. Mayor Driscoll stated that she also has some questions about the specifics which are not

captured in the prospectus but feels that their role is not to slow down the process at the prospectus level, but rather move it to the next level where those details will get worked out. She further stated that she wanted to see teachers be involved at the next level. Superintendent Smith agreed and stated that as a conversion innovation school, ultimately, the teachers at the school must vote to approve the final innovation plan.

Mayor Driscoll asserted that it would be great to have collective support for moving the prospectus forward to the next level to send a message of collaboration and unity. President Berman stated that she did not feel that she could support the prospectus on the basis of not having had a teacher serve on the applicant team. Mayor Driscoll reiterated her desire to move forward to the next level.

President Berman identified the areas where they had questions about the prospectus, areas where more clarity would be needed. These include: teacher compensation, student enrollment, role of the governing board, rationale for continuing extended year, and a clear rationale for waiving out of any provision of the collective bargaining agreement. She continued stating that teachers wanted to have a stronger voice in decision making, wanted to have the home visits be voluntary, more support staff within the school, a transparent budget, and more input on the culture and climate of the school.

Mayor Driscoll and Superintendent Smith heard the concerns and agreed to make sure that the applicant hears them as well. They also agreed to submit the recommendations regarding the Innovation Plan Committee to the applicant.

Mayor Driscoll stated that she was ready to vote. Superintendent Smith moved to approve the Bentley Academy Innovation School Prospectus as submitted with notes from today's discussion along with the STU recommendation for the Innovation Plan Committee to be shared with the applicant. Mayor Driscoll and Superintendent Smith both voted in favor of approving the prospectus. President Berman opposed the measure based on the reasons previously stated.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50pm.

Meeting Materials and Reports

Bentley Academy Innovation School Prospectus

STU proposal shared at the meeting