

Salem School Committee  
Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes  
Saturday, August 11, 2018

A Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting retreat of the Salem School Committee was held on Saturday, August 11, 2018 at 8:00 a.m. at Salem State University, Marsh Hall, Room 210, Salem, MA.

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

**Members Absent:** None

**Others Present:** Margarita Ruiz, Superintendent; Michael Gilbert, Field Director of Massachusetts Association of School Committees

**Welcome, Introduction, and Ice Breaker**

Mr. Gilbert began the meeting with a welcome to everyone, an introduction, and an icebreaker. Mr. Gilbert handed out, and walked everyone through, a NASA exercise where members paired off to discuss their responses to questions on the NASA exercise. Members discussed their answers with each other, and Mr. Gilbert walked them through the answers.

Mayor Driscoll explained they are hoping this meeting is much more of a conversation. It is great to have a facilitator so that everyone can participate. The goal of this meeting is to figure out how they, as a School Committee, can be most effective. They have a mix of newer members and others who have been present for some time. Ms. Driscoll continued that it felt like a good opportunity for everyone, both collectively and individually, to try and make sure they are working to meet expectations in terms of professionalism, as there are always difficult issues to confront. Mayor Driscoll said that she wants to make sure, as the Chair, that she reflects what members, across the board, really need: more time, better understanding with respect to how Subcommittees are working, and how to be sure they are working effectively as a group, for example. Mayor Driscoll shared further examples and details.

Ms. Driscoll explained that she hopes they can have some ground rules and protocols and to build a strong working relationship with the Superintendent as well. Ms. Driscoll continued she views the School Committee's role as a team as everyone seeks the same outcome with respect to Salem schools and its districts. They have a group partnership. The Superintendent has her role but they (Superintendent and School Committee) are all collectively responsible for the schools. Mayor Driscoll said she wants to make sure they are operating as a team. It is helpful to get to know one another better as there are new members.

**Governing Well Together - Meeting Structures for Work Support**

Mr. Gilbert talked about working well together, operating protocols. Parts of the law are clear and others are not. Mr. Gilbert went over those items and talked about how research has shown how effective School Committees are. Mr. Gilbert explained that roles and responsibilities for educational leadership focuses on accountability, fosters strong relationships amongst themselves (the School Committee) and the administrative team, uses data to monitor progress, and leads as a united team. It is really all about collaboration, trust, and respect. Some of the practices that effective school boards actually use to influence student achievement are to set goals and monitor progress, setting goals and ensuring they are achieved. Mr. Gilbert talked about a consent agenda where things are listed on an agenda and one vote is made, at the beginning of the meeting, to serve for all the items on the agenda.

Mr. Gilbert clarified roles and responsibilities of the School Committee and the Superintendent, detailed goals that frame and structure their work, talked briefly about policy meetings, and recapped by asking the following questions:

1. Who budgets for materials, new positions, and programs? School Committee would need to approve it but the process requires the Superintendent to recognize the need, because she is in the lead.
2. The Superintendent makes decisions about hiring, supervisions, transfers, and promotions.
3. Both the School Committee and the Superintendent makes decisions with collective bargaining implications such as teacher assignments and stipends. The School Committee sets how those things are going to be done in the collective bargaining process, and the Superintendent would implement them.
4. The School Committee adds or amends a policy.
5. Administration evaluates faculty and staff.
6. Administration makes pedagogical decisions related to teaching. The School Committee may make some curriculum decisions but the pedagogy (the method of practice and teaching) belongs to the administration.

Mr. Gilbert talked about Personnel and highlighted Chapter 71, Section 59. School Committee members set district personnel policy, job descriptions (the number of positions funded through the budget), and establish compensation (not just salary but anything of a dollar \$ value; benefits for example that would go on a contract) for principals and everyone. School Committee is the employer of record for collective bargaining. Mr. Gilbert continued that the Superintendent is the CEO hired by the School Committee. The Superintendent has the day-to-day management responsibility, authority for personnel, and supervises the principals (principals cannot hire without the approval of the Superintendent). The Superintendent implements district policy, initiates the budget proposal, and manages the budget once it has been approved. Members sought clarification, asked questions, and engaged in further discussion.

Mr. Gilbert talked about the School Committee's budget responsibilities. The unique job of School Committee members is that they represent two different constituencies: those who voted for them and those who do not vote which are the students. It is the only office where the decisions they make are made in front of the people who will be affected by them: parents and staff. There are no expectations of privacy from constituents.

### **Meeting Structure**

Mr. Gilbert talked about meeting agendas and finance and policy subcommittee meetings that may need to be more formal than others. This may be because results may have to be discussed, and voted on, by the full committee at a regular School Committee meeting. They are not just exploring but may be doing something that would affect both staff and community members. Mr. Gilbert shared further details. There are two things to consider in the case of the Finance Subcommittee: 1) The beginning of the budget process where the Superintendent is making recommendations and figuring out how much income they have can be done with two or three Subcommittee members. Once they are at the point where they think they are going to make some decisions, they would have to take that to the Committee of the Whole (COW) and the public, so that the community knows the direction they are heading towards and there are no surprises.

Mr. Gilbert said he thinks that somewhat decoupling the camera meeting from a more collegial environment can be helpful. Many committees have two meetings a month. One meeting is on camera and votes are taken and business is done. The other meeting is more of a working session in this kind of environment where they can actually hash out some serious issues. There are committees, in some cities, where the Subcommittees are Committee of the Whole (COW). The only difference is that the Subcommittee Chair runs that meeting, depending on what that subcommittee meeting is, instead of the Chair running the Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting. Mr. Gilbert shared further insight on the history of Subcommittee meeting requirements. Members shared feedback and engaged in further discussion as well as discussion regarding Subcommittee and Committee of the Whole (COW) meetings, which included who attends, why, and the many PowerPoint presentations.

### **Break**

Mr. Gilbert continued the presentation walking members through some reflective questions. Members took a 15-minute break.

### **Governing Well Together - Meeting Structures for Work Support (continued)**

Members returned from the 15-minute break. Mr. Gilbert continued the presentation and explained that teams underachieve due to absence of trust and gave some supporting examples. Trust is the foundation of teamwork and building trust takes time and requires shared experiences, follow through, and credibility. To help build trust and teams is to try and be able to understand each other and where they come from. Mr. Gilbert continued by showing a personal history exercise for everyone by asking where they grew up, how many siblings they had and where they fit, and the most difficult or important challenge of their childhood. Everyone shared their responses to the questions. Fellow School Committee members are able to go out for a cup of coffee from time to time and talk about other things is a good opportunity to be able to build commodity and get to know each other which leads to better forms of communications and interactions when deliberating at meetings.

Mr. Gilbert talked about mastering conflicts by building trust through engagements, overcoming fear of conflict by acknowledging that conflict is productive and issues (not personalities) are what are debated. Mr. Gilbert talked about commitment, accountability, and focus of results. Members asked questions, shared feedback, and engaged in discussion on open communication and engagement as a group. Mr. Gilbert clarified that on a conversation of a particular issue, on a Personnel Subcommittee meeting, the only one they are legally bound to vote for, coming out of a Subcommittee, is a contract collective bargaining agreement - if one is on the collective bargaining team and the team recommends a contract. Members agreed that their job, as a Subcommittee, is to make a recommendation. Members continued to engage in further discussion on the importance of open and shared communication.

### **Discussion on Last Minute Additions and Missing Supporting Documents in School Committee Packets**

Ms. Campbell shared that some of the dilemma that some people share is that last minute additions are added to the School Committee packet of materials seems to become the norm rather than the abnormality. It is understood that things can come up but last minute additions does not allow reasonable time for review nor time to reflect on the information. Ms. Campbell continued that she works fulltime, all day, and is trying to take time off to catch up on some things. It can be a bit of a challenge. Members agreed with Ms. Campbell that having some consistency with receiving, or having, the information within reasonable time would prevent the need for delayed decisions.

Mr. Fleming suggested a rule with the City Council that issues should not be discussed if the information is not in by Tuesday noontime. If an issue comes up and is very important (as determined by the majority), then it could be considered as a late file and could take consent of

the board. Any counselor could object, waive the rule (if one member objects, it does not happen). School Committee members agreed with Mayor Driscoll about an open meeting law where an item is on the agenda, such as an appointment for Pupil Personnel Services Director, but all the necessary supporting information comes late; they cannot vote on anything unless it is on the agenda by Thursday for a regular School Committee meeting the following Monday. Members all agreed that they should have all the School Committee materials in the School Committee packet by Thursday for consideration of a vote. Members shared feedback and engaged in further discussion.

### **Governing Well Together - Meeting Structures for Work Support (continued)**

Mr. Gilbert continued the presentation and talked about accountability through operating protocols and mentioned the final dysfunction as being inattention to results. Mr. Gilbert talked about the way we listen. There are three ways in the way we listen to others: verbal (words we use to communicate with others), local (tone, reflection, volume, tempo), and body language – which are taken into account by people. The team functions better when communication is better. Mr. Gilbert continued to walk members through other topics of the presentation and talked about attitudes and behaviors. Members performed a self-learning exercise on attitude and behavior and went through their responses. Mr. Gilbert concluded his presentation. Members engaged in discussion.

### **Discussion on Being Notified of Subcommittee Meetings**

Members also engaged in further discussion regarding Subcommittee meetings and agreed that all School Committee members would be included when informed of Subcommittee meetings.

### **Discussion on Consent Agenda**

Members mentioned the Consent agenda. Mr. Gilbert explained that things that would go on a Consent agenda would be routine things such as approval of Minutes and warrants, for example. The Consent agenda is the first thing on the agenda. It would still be printed, but indented, on the agenda with the warrant amounts on it. Anything that was routine and did not need discussion such as some of the field trips and topics that School Committee members are well aware of, have discussed, and just need to take a vote on would go on the Consent agenda. When the Consent agenda comes up as the first item on the agenda, the Chair would read the Consent agenda and state "These are the items that are on the Consent agenda. Does anyone have any objections to any one of these items?" Any School Committee member is welcome to pull something off the Consent agenda and discuss that issue if they wish. They would vote that Consent agenda and then take up that item.

Members agreed with Mr. Fleming on the clarification that if the School Committee adopts the Consent agenda, the understanding is that one member could take one or more items from the Consent agenda out for discussion. Members agree with Ms. Manning when she clarified, for the School Committee Secretary, that the Consent agenda would not just have the 'Warrant' wording on it but it would also list the dollar amount information. Field trip wording would be followed with the schools' name. Mr. Gilbert said that the Open Meeting Law requires as much information available. Members agreed that the agenda document would need to be reorganized so that the first part of the agenda is the Consent agenda and the items would be moved up on it. School Committee members would read the list of items and be able to approve them all as opposed to reading them individually. Any School Committee member would be able to pull any item out for further discussion, as they wish, at the very end of the Consent agenda vote.

Mr. Fleming asked if budget transfers are included on the Consent agenda. Mr. Gilbert responded that it would be the decision of School Committee members to add it onto the Consent agenda if the Chair and the Superintendent agrees that there is no need for discussion but just a vote. It depends how much information is there and how much is needed. Requests to include something, such as warrants, on the Consent agenda would need to be made ahead of

time, in advance not as last minute notice. Members asked Mr. Gilbert questions and engaged in further feedback and discussion. Mr. Gilbert explained that the School Committee would need to have an understanding of how using the Consent agenda works and just make a motion to use the Consent agenda as part of the School Committee meeting agenda. Mr. Gilbert and School Committee members agreed with Ms. Manning that it is just a procedural more than a policy and so does not need to go through Policy.

### **Strategic Priorities for 2018-19 – Review and Discussion**

Superintendent Ruiz handed out a one-page, two-sided document that lists the priorities they have set for the year. Ms. Ruiz informed members that they now have the newly created department of Equity and Engagement. They are working this year on aligning the work, at the school level, of City Connects and engaging community families as well as safe and supportive schools and the Welcome Center. They have the college and career readiness work. Much work is being done to support all new Salem teachers. All teachers in the district will have four (4) days of professional development before the start of the school year. All of it is aligned around the instructional strategies. Ms. Ruiz continued they are leveraging technology. They are continuing with the 1-1 initiative. Collins Middle School students will be taking devices home this year as well as the Salem High School 9<sup>th</sup> graders.

### **Wrap Up and Next Steps**

Members agreed with Mayor Driscoll's suggestion, in terms of operating protocols, that she would take the lead to circulate some drafts for a Consent agenda, get some input, and see if it is something they can adopt, as a group, and figure out a way to hopefully get a consensus on a protocol. Members thanked Mr. Gilbert. Mr. Gilbert left hardcopies of the presentation slides for everyone. Members discussed other non-PowerPoint dialogue alternatives to PowerPoint presentations. Members agreed with Ms. Manning on the preference of receiving copies of the 4 Pillars, for example, that show where they are before a Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting. Members agreed they would rather receive a couple of highlights in advance that they may review and discuss in place of a long presentation. Members shared feedback and engaged in further discussion. Superintendent Ruiz flagged that the next School Committee meeting is August 20, 2018. The next School Committee meeting has not been re-scheduled, as the September 4<sup>th</sup> meeting was cancelled due to elections. There is only one School Committee meeting scheduled meeting for September 17<sup>th</sup>. Members agreed to reschedule a regular School Committee meeting for September 6<sup>th</sup> to replace the September 4<sup>th</sup> cancelled meeting. Members also agreed to meet for a Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting on September 24, 2018 at 6pm.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Committee of the Whole (COW) School Committee retreat, Ms. Manning motioned to adjourn. All members seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Angelica Alayon, Secretary  
Salem School Committee

### Meeting Materials

Committee of the Whole (COW) School Committee Meeting Agenda

Facilitator's Agenda

Orientation Program for School Leaders presentation

Strategic Priorities for 2018-19 handouts