

Salem School Committee
Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 18, 2019

A regular meeting of the Salem School Committee was held on Monday, November 18, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. in the School Committee Chambers at Collins Middle School, 29 Highland Avenue, 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: Kathleen Smith, Interim Superintendent, Kate Carbone, Assistant Superintendent, Jill Conrad, Chief of Systems Strategy, and Jillian Flynn, Student Representative

Call of Meeting to Order

Ms. Manning called the regular meeting of the Salem School Committee to order at 7:00 p.m.

Consent Agenda

Minutes of the Regular School Committee meeting held November 4, 2019

Approval of Warrant: 11/14/19 in the amount of \$134,929.54

Mr. Fleming motioned to approve the Consent agenda. Mr. Cruz seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Fleming motioned to approve the agenda. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Public Comment #1: Questions and Comments from the Audience

Erika Rowley, 11 Savoy Road, shared her concerns regarding the application process and communications to those who were not selected for the Salem Superintendent Search Committee. A copy of her written statement submitted for the minutes is attached.

Student School Committee Representative Report – Jillian Flynn

Student School Committee Representative Report

Ms. Jillian Flynn, Student Representative and Senior at Salem High School, provided updates on the Student Advisory Council. Ms. Flynn announced that their meetings are open to anyone and encouraged 9-12 grade students in the district to take part at their meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 20, 2019, from 5-7pm, at Salem Prep located on the 2nd floor of the Mall. Ms. Flynn announced the elected officers that was done at their previous meeting and shared what they would be working on. Ms. Flynn thanked the School Committee for approving refreshments at their meetings. Their meeting with food services is scheduled for this Wednesday. Ms. Flynn thanked the Mayor for her support last year on the tennis courts. They are starting to see the plan evolve. Ms. Flynn provided updates on the Salem High and other High Schools in the district. A student council meeting will be held on November 19, 2019 discuss bathrooms at Salem High School. The Fall Convening Future Student's night will be held this Thursday from 6-8pm at Salem High School and is open to anyone who attends the Salem High School and may be interested.

Superintendent's Report

Everyone joined Superintendent Smith in a moment of silence in honor of Lieutenant Jason Menard, Worcester, Massachusetts firefighter, his family and all professional firefighters. Superintendent Smith reported on what is happening in the district. Salem High School standard based report cards were distributed today. Superintendent Smith reported the importance of holding parent-teacher conferences at Salem High School on Mondays and urged all families to attend. Dr. Smith informed every one of the next School Committee retreat they plan to schedule for mid-December, provided

an update on the process of the Innovation Planning Committee, and other updates of what is happening in the district. Superintendent Smith reminded the School Committee of her presentation before the City Council this Thursday evening and invited the members to join her.

Recognition of Laura Abutaleb, Paraprofessional at Carlton Innovation School

Superintendent Smith welcomed Principal Bethann Jellison, Carlton Innovation School, to share what they experienced last Tuesday at the school. Ms. Jellison explained the quick actions of Laura Abutaleb, Paraprofessional at Carlton Innovation School, to save a student's life from choking. Ms. Abutaleb's immediate actions helped the boy survive. Superintendent Smith, Principal Bethann Jellison, Mr. Fleming, and the School Committee recognized and thanked Ms. Abutaleb.

Update on the Superintendent Search Process

Mayor Driscoll provided an update on the Superintendent search process as well as the progress of the Superintendent Search Subcommittee. First, she identified the members of the subcommittee and named them according to the category they each represent. While these members were approved in October, the names had not been read out loud for the committee. Members include: **Parents:** Kathleen Coates, Heidi Guarino, and Jason Yarrington; **Youth Program Community Member:** Linda Saris; **SPS Administrator:** Emily Ullman; **SPS Faculty:** Jamie Navins, Ann Berman; **ELL Representative:** Perla Peguero; **Special Education Representative:** Gail Titus; **Student Representative:** Mustafa Abdulrahman; **Community Member at Large:** Grace Duran; **Salem State Representative:** Dr. Nicole Harris; **School Committee Representatives:** Manny Cruz, Mary Manning, and Mayor Kim Driscoll. The information is also on the www.salemk12.org website, under 'News' and 'What's New.'

Mayor Driscoll explained that the School Committee had agreed on the importance of having a search committee that reflected the diversity of the Salem community. This was the goal. The Mayor also explained that there were more applications to serve on the search committee from some of the categories and in other categories there were no applicants. This meant that outreach efforts were necessary to identify potential search committee members to serve within the different representative groups as well as efforts to ensure that the overall committee reflected the diversity of Salem. Mr. Fleming inquired as to how the student representative was selected. Mr. Cruz provided an explanation that he had reached out to one of the Student Advisors to identify some interested students and also that at the time, the formal Student Advisory Council had not yet been fully formed. Mayor Driscoll added that previous to this no students had applied to serve on the committee.

Mayor Driscoll shared that while not everyone who expressed interest was able to be selected for the search committee, there were multiple ways that everyone can contribute and participate in this process, including several focus groups that are planned, an online survey, as well as upcoming forums. At the end of the day, the search committee that was selected is a well-rounded group that does reflect the diversity of the City and she is pleased with this as this was their goal from the beginning.

Mayor Driscoll further stated that the screening committee held its first meeting on October 24, 2019. The search consultants will bring feedback from the focus groups and online survey to them as they finalize the candidate profile during their next meeting on December 12th. The final candidate profile will be shared with the School Committee during its meeting on December 16th.

Update on the Progress of Former Students of the Nathaniel Bowditch School

Superintendent Smith provided a brief summary on the background and history of the closing of the former Nathaniel Bowditch school and invited Dr. Jill Conrad to report on the academic progress of the former Nathaniel Bowditch students. Dr. Conrad summarized the current enrollment of those students who previously attended the Nathaniel Bowditch school and shared MCAS and other data comparing their learning outcomes in 2019 to what they had been in 2018 when they were still enrolled there. The results showed positive gains in ELA, Math, and Science for the group of students as a whole. These gains were consistent across all grade levels except for grades 6 and 7.

School climate results were also positive except for these grades. School Attendance data also show trends that mirror the rest of the district.

Discussion

Mr. Fleming requested a more detailed analysis of information that show how the gains reported for this year compare to the rate of increase they had in 2018, while the students were at the former Nathaniel Bowditch school. Ms. Campbell echoed Mr. Fleming's request.

Action Items: Old Business

Deliberation and Vote on the request from Northeast Burn Basketball Skills and Drills to use the Bates Elementary School gym on Thursday nights and fee waiver

Discussion

Mr. Fleming reported that the Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee met. The original request submitted on November 4 was not waived, because it was not submitted on time and further details for insight are needed. Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee members' recommendation is to waive the fees going forward, subject to meeting with Loren Green of the Bates Elementary School for further information; clarify questions for the Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee. The motion would be pending further details and clarification.

Mr. Fleming motioned to waive the fees conditionally going forward, subject to meeting with Loren Green and Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee may be willing to reconsider initial charges. Ms. Manning seconded the motion. The motion carried. Members unanimously agreed.

Action Items: New Business – None

Policy Subcommittee

Deliberation and Vote on the Second Reading of the recommendation of the Policy Subcommittee on the revisions to the following policies:

- 5201 Organization of Instruction
- 5201.01 Instructional Materials
- 5203 Academic Program
- 5212.01 Equal Educational Access and Opportunity
- 5214 Waiver of Graduation Course Requirements
- 5215 Student Records

Ms. Nuncio motioned to approve the Second Reading of the recommendation of the Policy Subcommittee on the revisions to the policies as listed on the agenda. Ms. Campbell seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Subcommittee Reports

Mr. Fleming reported that the Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee instructed Mr. Monk to draw up an explanation of the process and be distributed to the leadership team and others who have any responsibility relative to asking for use of the facilities. The Subcommittee will soon be reviewing the fees of the new contract that includes higher wages for school personnel.

Mr. Fleming reported that the School Committee were not made aware of a run event at the High School for the St. Pierre family. Mr. Fleming requested to refer the matter to the next Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee to discuss waiving the fees retroactively. Mr. Cruz seconded the motion. The motion carried.

School Committee Concerns and Resolutions

Mr. Fleming reminded everyone about the Salem Children's Charity fundraiser event at the Hawthorne Hotel (18 Washington Square W, Salem) on Tuesday, December 10, 2019 at 5pm.

Ms. Campbell reminded School Committee members on their agreement to receive quarterly updates on enrollment demographics for each of the Salem schools to ensure they are well within their targets and hopes to receive the next update report due in December.

Recognition and Thank You for Angelica Alayon, School Committee Secretary

School Committee members recognized and thanked Angelica Alayon, School Committee Secretary, for her work, consistent cheerfulness, smile, and personal touch.

Public Comment #2: Questions and Comments from the Audience - None

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the School Committee this evening, Ms. Campbell motioned to adjourn the regular School Committee meeting. Mr. Fleming seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:47pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kathleen Smith, Secretary to the
Salem School Committee

Meeting Materials and Reports

School Committee Consent Agenda November 18, 2019
Minutes of the November 4, 2019 Regular School Committee Meeting
Former NBS Academic Progress Student Report Presentation
Use and Fee Waiver Request of the Bates Elementary School Gym
Policies
Written statement submitted by Erika Rowley

A quote from Mayor Kim Driscoll, April 2019:

“It is imperative we have a superintendent, School Committee and leadership team in our schools that families can trust and who are committed to working effectively together in the best interests of Salem students.”

Unfortunately, for me these are hollow and we hear them over, and over and over again.

This year I and many other community members submitted applications to be part of the Salem Superintendent Search committee. I never received a letter acknowledging that the superintendent received my application. I asked other community members if they received letters acknowledging their application. None had. I just figured it was typical Salem public School communication snafu, but I thought in time I would get a response and I never did. So in the middle of October I began asking around again and many people I know had received rejection letters. I received nothing. I wrote to the School Committee Members and asked why I hadn't heard anything and asked for all the applications. That night the mayor called me to profusely apologize that my application got “lost in tech,” and they had already selected the members of the search committee from the many applicants. Well, after asking around I found out that I wasn't the only applicant whose letters “got lost.” There were several others, not a couple but several. Me and many others.

Here's how the process for choosing candidates was explained to me by SC members: People that were interested were asked to submit letters of interest to the School Committee. Mayor Driscoll, Manny Cruz, and Mary Manning got together looked over the applications and chose people to be on the search committee that they felt fit their requirements.

Here is where the process was flawed:

- First the team was unable to choose whether candidates were appropriate if they didn't have access to all the applications.
- Some people were handpicked to serve on the committee that did not submit applications even though there were applicants that fit the SC's requirements. For example, Perla Peguero was chosen to be an ELL rep even though she did not submit an application and there was another applicant with ESL background that submitted a letter that was not chosen. The community member at Large (Grace Duran) did not submit an application but Charity Lazima from the YMCA and Pam Kentely did submit applications but were not chosen. The special education Rep(Gail Titus), did not submit a letter of application to be Special Education Rep but there were several people with special education experience that did submit letters but were not chosen.
- Lastly, the student rep. He did not submit a letter of application. And no one knows how he was chosen. I asked the Principal of the high school. She had no idea. I asked the vice principal, she had no idea. I asked the Student Council. They were never asked, so they didn't know. Finally I asked the Salem's Student Advisory Council. You remember them, they were established by Manny Cruz and Amanda Campbell to play a key role in advising the School Committee on policy. There's one sitting right up there. They were established to have a student voice in our School Committee decisions. You would think that the School Committee would have talked to this group when selecting a student rep. Well, they didn't. The students on the Salem Student Advisory Board knew nothing.

People are probably wondering, rolling their eyes, “What is wrong with that Erika Rowley? Why does she keep getting up at school committee meetings?”

I begin to wonder why I bother.

The reason I bother, is because I am an educator, my children go to Salem Public Schools. I'm invested in the city. I believe in the democratic process. I feel it's my responsibility to point out when I see that something is not right. I think if I keep saying things out loud someone might listen.

For now it seems this superintendent search committee is all for show. This application process was a show, the superintendent forums are a show, even the Salem Student Advisory Board is a show. It doesn't have to be that way. Is it really imperative to have a School Committee and an administration that families can trust? Well if it is, then you have to walk the walk and not just say the words.

Was it just a mistake that applications got “lost in tech”, was it a mistake that people were chosen that didn’t submit applications, was it a mistake that the student Advisory Board was not included? Many community members entered the process in good faith. But that trust has once again been broken. It seems we haven't learned anything from last year. Bad process, yield bad results. Who is responsible for the lack of transparency? Is it the interim superintendent? Is it Manny Cruz? Is it Mary Manning?

Read at Salem School Committee Meeting on Monday November 18, 2019 by
Erika Rowley,
11 Savoy Road