

Salem School Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Monday, December 2, 2019

A regular meeting of the Salem School Committee was held on Monday, December 2, 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, Ms. Kristine Wilson, Ms. Ana Nuncio, Mr. Manny Cruz, Ms. Amanda Campbell, and Mayor Kimberley Driscoll

**Members Absent:** Mr. James Fleming

**Others Present:** Kathleen Smith, Interim Superintendent, Kate Carbone, Assistant Superintendent, Jill Conrad, Chief of Systems Strategy, and Stella Rowley, Student Representative (attending in place of Jillian Flynn)

**Call of Meeting to Order**

Ms. Manning called the regular meeting of the Salem School Committee to order at 7:10 p.m.

**Consent Agenda**

Ms. Manning moved to table approval of the Minutes from the 11/18/19 meeting. Mayor Driscoll entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. Mr. Cruz seconded the motion. The motion carried. The consent agenda item – approval of a warrant on 11/14/19 in the amount of \$134,929.54 was approved.

**Approval of the Agenda**

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

Before moving to public comment, the Mayor asked for a moment of silent to honor those lost by our neighboring school district in Peabody: Cara Murtagh, Superintendent, Judith Maniatis, Assistant Principal, and student, Jackson Frechette. In addition, Mayor Driscoll asked for a moment of silence to recognize a longtime Salem Public Schools teacher, Annette Cossover.

**Public Comment #1: Questions and Comments from the Audience**

Dr. Brendan Walsh, 5 West Terrace St., spoke to promote the annual Salem Children's Charity event to be held on December 10, 2019 at the Hawthorne Hotel at 6pm. He also shared a mailing address to which donations can be sent: PO Box 102, Salem, MA 01970 or . The Children's Charity is known for quickly helping families in need without a lot of red tape or at [www.salemchildrenscharity.org](http://www.salemchildrenscharity.org). Dr. Walsh also spoke positively and shared memories about Ms. Cossover (Annette). Finally, looking ahead to budget time knowing that the legislature just made a significant change to education funding, Dr. Walsh implored School Committee members to find a way to support early childhood education.

Erika Rowley of 11 Savoy Road spoke about the Superintendent search process stating that she watched the last School Committee meeting and heard the discussion about the selection of search committee members after she left. She stated that she understands the need to take steps to recruit a more diverse group of people to serve on the committee, but they should have been asked to submit a Letter of Intent as the others had been required to. Her concern was focused on ensuring that the School Committee follows its own systems and procedures in hiring procedures as well as the need to promote trust and transparency.

Alexa Ogno of 180A Federal Street with the Salem Education Foundation spoke about the 30 applications from SPS teachers and were able to fund 24 of the projects, everything from a greenhouse project at Horace Mann, the Collins Math Team, a mural at the Salem High School library, and so on. If you would like to help fund more projects in the future, the Salem Education Foundation is hosting some fundraising events this month including a Charlie Brown Christmas jazz trio on the evening of 12/14 (for adults) and

a kids' show on Sunday 12/15. This will be located at Studio Foley, 90 Lafayette Street. Visit [www.salemeducationfoundation.org](http://www.salemeducationfoundation.org) for more information.

### **Student School Committee Representative Report – Jillian Flynn**

#### **Student School Committee Representative Report**

Ms. Stella Rowley, Vice Chair of the Student Advisory Committee filled in for Jillian Flynn. Ms. Rowley summarized efforts the Student Advisory Council had taken to increase opportunities for student voice as part of the Superintendent search process including requesting another forum for students and extending the deadline for the survey. The group requests that the student forum take place around 6pm so they can get the biggest group possible. Students at SHS will take the survey this Friday during their advisories. Filming school news to spread the word about the SAC. Had a recent meeting with the Superintendent to discuss and better understand the role of the Superintendent. Ms. Rowley shared the group's Instagram page which is:

@salemstudentadvisorycouncil. She stated that the group is working on a presentation for the Buildings & Grounds Subcommittee to address concerns about the Salem High School bathrooms. Students have been actively gathering feedback to identify ways to improve the bathrooms. In addition, she provided an overview of upcoming events including the start of Winter Sports, Councilor Tom Feury's retirement party, and the Salem High School craft fair, climate change assembly on December 18<sup>th</sup>, a Festival of Trees fundraiser will be held on 12/13 and 12/14 in support of the Class of 2023.

Ms. Manning asked about the statement that none of the bathrooms at the high school had been renovated stating that she recalled that some of them were renovated in the mid 2000s as part of an earlier project.

#### **Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Smith shared her memories of Superintendent Cara Murtagh and reiterated the loss to the community. She also described the ways in which her administration has supported Peabody during this difficult time. She asked a team of School Adjustment Counselors and School Psychologists to go to Peabody to support them through this time. Superintendent Smith stated her support for the efforts of the Salem Children's Charity and the Salem Education Foundation. She also shared her efforts to meet with the Student Advisory Council members recently as well and discussed her commitment to spending time at the high school with the students to help them better understand the role of the Superintendent. The student forum that was to be held on December 3<sup>rd</sup> will be canceled due to the snow storm and instead there will be one on Monday December 9<sup>th</sup>.

Superintendent Smith also shared information about a ceremony she attended at the Carlton School to honor Charlie Walsh with a plaque. The Superintendent invited Ann Berman, President of the Salem Teachers Union to speak about a donation the STU received from the American Federation of Teachers, MA for the First Books program.

#### **Recognition of the Salem Teachers Union for their First Book Grant Award**

Ann Berman, President of the Salem Teachers Union shared information about how they were able to receive money to support the First Books program. There was a total of \$50,000 (half from the AFT-MA and half from the AFT National) that would be split across six districts: Boston, Chelsea, Lawrence, Lynn, Lowell, and Salem. The money will be used to directly support 1000 new teachers in those districts to purchase books for their classroom libraries that will help spark students' interest in reading. After this money was spent, the STU was notified that they had \$2,500 leftover that needed to be spent quickly. Ms. Berman decided to use the money to purchase books for every Grade 1 and 2 student in Salem with the remainder of the funds to support libraries in the district's middle and high schools. A total of 890 books were ordered and should be in students' hands before they go home for the holiday break.

## **Update on Student Assignment for the Bentley School and for the new Dual Language Program to be located at the Bentley School**

Superintendent Smith asked Dr. Jill Conrad to provide an update on the Superintendent's recommended student assignment procedures for the Bentley School as well as for the new Dual Language Program to be located at the Bentley School beginning in the Fall of 2020. Dr. Conrad summarized the recommendation that was developed in collaboration with Rebecca Westlake, Director of Bilingual Education, who will be overseeing the Dual Language program. Ms. Westlake was not present at the meeting due to the snow storm. The recommendation included: 1) having assignments to the Bentley school fall under the district's student assignment policy beginning in the Fall 2020; 2) a plan to allow incoming Kindergarteners to opt-in to a series of lotteries aligned to the timing of the kindergarten registration deadlines and segmented by three different language learning groups, based on the results of each applicant's language evaluation results; and 3) to adjust the deadline for the Batch 2 Kindergarten applications to June 15<sup>th</sup> allowing more time for language evaluations and finalizing assignments. Up to six (6) seats will be reserved for incoming Kindergartners who are siblings of currently enrolled Bentley students. Bentley families will still have sibling priority at the Bentley school itself as well. To exercise this sibling priority, Bentley families must apply by February 20<sup>th</sup>, which aligns to the sibling priority deadline for the rest of the district. For the dual language program, the recommendation is to try this approach to assignment for one year as a pilot allowing the administration and School Committee time to assess how this goes before revising the student assignment policy itself.

### **Discussion**

Mayor Driscoll asked a question to clarify the sibling preference opportunity for existing Bentley families. She also asked Dr. Conrad to find out how many incoming Kindergarten siblings we expect for this coming year. Dr. Conrad will follow up on that. Ms. Nuncio asked if School Committee members would be informed about where language evaluations and other outreach efforts in the community would be taking place. Dr. Conrad said she would bring back the location of those evaluations and also a schedule.

### **Salem High School Update and Redesign Plan**

Superintendent Smith asked that this item be tabled for tonight as the members of the high school team were allowed to travel to their homes due to the snow storm. This presentation will be given at the next meeting on December 16<sup>th</sup>

### **Additional Items**

Superintendent Smith summarized her history working on the landmark school finance legislation just passed and shared her hopes in how this new money will make a large difference for children throughout the state. She thanked everyone who worked so diligently on making this legislation a reality.

In addition, Superintendent Smith shared her experience presenting before the Salem City Council on November 21<sup>st</sup>. Her focus was to share the wonderful things happening in the district as well as some of the challenges as we need all representatives in government as partners to improve the schools. Lastly, Superintendent Smith recounted her experience during the traditional "Bridging the Gap" ceremony on the bridge between Salem and Beverly prior to the football game. The Superintendent also attended the Thanksgiving football game and enjoyed the experience.

The Superintendent also recently visited Witchcraft Heights Elementary School to take part in a Project Bread initiative. They came to present an award to Kelly Cronin and to support the Breakfast in the Classroom program.

### **Discussion**

Mayor Driscoll asked the Superintendent to summarize the high school redesign forums that took place recently through Mass Ideas. Superintendent Smith shared and summarized her experience at those forums that engage stakeholders in thinking about problems of practice that everyone can collaborate to solve. Ms. Rowley asked when this event took place as well as how the students who

participated were selected. Mayor Driscoll said it was a broad cross-section of students from different grade levels but wasn't sure how the opportunity was communicated across the school.

**Action Items: Old Business**

**Deliberate and Vote on the Recommendation of the Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee regarding the Fee Waiver Request for the November 16<sup>th</sup> “Be Brave and Strong” Road Race Fundraiser for the Dana Farber Cancer Research Foundation and St. Pierre Family**

Ms. Manning moved to approve the fee waiver. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Action Items: New Business** – None

**Deliberation and Vote on the Superintendent’s Recommendation Regarding Student Assignment to the Bentley School for 2020-21**

Mr. Cruz moved to approve the Superintendent’s recommendation regarding student assignment to the Bentley School for 2020-21. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Deliberation and Vote on the Superintendent’s Recommendation Regarding the Student Assignment Procedures for the first year (2020-21) of the new Dual Language Program (to be located within the Bentley School)**

Ms. Manning moved to approve the Superintendent’s recommendation regarding the student assignment procedures for the first year of the new Dual Language Program. Mr. Cruz seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Deliberation and Vote on Superintendent’s Recommendation to Rely on the Superintendent to serve as the temporary Secretary to the School Committee**

Ms. Manning moved to rely on the Superintendent to serve as the temporary Secretary to the School Committee. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Policy Subcommittee**

**Deliberation and Vote on the Third 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. Manning motioned to approve the Third Reading of the recommendation of the Policy Subcommittee on the revisions to the policies as listed on the agenda. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Subcommittee Reports**

Mr. Cruz moved to refer the discussion on the Salem High School bathrooms to the Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee. Ms. Nuncio seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**School Committee Concerns and Resolutions**

Ms. Manning asked that the Committee schedule a discussion on the ERS report as soon as possible.

Ms. Campbell stated that one of the issues that seems to come up a lot is exactly how students are identified and recruited to take part in different opportunities for student voice in the district. Ms. Campbell suggested that perhaps the Equity and Engagement subcommittee could be a good place to discuss this. Mayor Driscoll suggested beginning with discussing the matter with the SHS principal. Ms. Campbell pointed out that it applies to all schools not just the high school.

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

Erika Rowley of 11 Savoy Road, noticed that the agendas are up for the Bentley innovation planning process but no minutes have been posted. This seems to be another system that is not being followed. In addition, the redesign grant for Mass Ideas. As part of the high school council and they did not hear anything about this. Ms. Rowley wondered why none of the established groups were contacted regarding the Mass Ideas forum.

Alexa Ogno of 180A Federal Street commented on the Dual Language student assignment policy. She stated that she likes the idea that they will be holding back some of the seats for different students as part of the effort and wondered if that is something that should be considered for the general student assignment policy.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the School Committee this evening, Ms. Manning motioned to adjourn the regular School Committee meeting. Ms. Campbell seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:14pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Superintendent, Secretary to the  
Salem School Committee

**Meeting Materials and Reports**

School Committee Consent Agenda December 2, 2019

Superintendent's Recommendation for Student Assignment to the Bentley School and to the Dual Language Program

Fee Waiver Request for the November 16<sup>th</sup> Be Brave and Strong Road Race at Salem High School  
Policies for 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading