

Salem School Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Monday, February 5, 2018

A Regular Meeting of the Salem School Committee was held on Monday, February 5, 2018 at 7:07 p.m. in the School Committee Chambers at Collins Middle School, 29 Highland Avenue, Salem, MA.

**Members Present:** Ms. Mary Manning (participated remotely via conference call), Ms. Kristine Wilson, Ms. Ana Nuncio, Mr. Manny Cruz, Ms. Amanda Campbell, and Mayor Kimberley Driscoll

**Members Absent:** James Fleming

**Others Present:** Margarita Ruiz, Superintendent, Kate Carbone, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Margaret Marotta, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services, Kristin Shaver, Business Manager, Jill Conrad, Chief of Systems Strategy, and Kelley Rice, Chief of Communications

**Call to Order**

Mayor Driscoll called the regular meeting of the Salem School Committee to order at 7:07 p.m.

**Approval of the Agenda**

Ms. Wilson moved to approve the Agenda as presented. Mr. Cruz seconded the motion. The Motion carried.

**Approval of Minutes**

**Deliberation and Vote on the Minutes of the Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting held January 13, 2018**

Ms. Wilson motioned to approve the Minutes of the Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting held January 13, 2018. Ms. Nuncio seconded the Motion. The Motion carried.

**Deliberation and Vote on the Minutes of the Regular School Committee meeting held January 16, 2018**

Ms. Campbell motioned to approve the Minutes of the Regular School Committee meeting held January 16, 2018. Mr. Cruz seconded the Motion. The Motion carried.

**Questions and Comments From the Audience**

Mayor Driscoll announced that Ms. Mary Manning, School Committee Vice Chair, would be joining them remotely this evening via a conference call with an amplified voice system for everyone to hear clearly. Ms. Driscoll continued that there would be no vote at this evening's meeting, particularly regarding the recommendation concerning the Bowditch and the Horace Mann Schools. They are having a special meeting and public hearing on February 12 and a likely vote is scheduled for February 26, 2018. There will be ample opportunity for public comment regarding this matter in the upcoming meetings.

Dr. Brendan Walsh, 5 West Terrace, Salem, noted his awareness of an article in the Salem News, dated January 24, 2018, where the Superintendent was quoted as saying that she is closing the Horace Mann School building, moving it to the Bowditch School site, and dispersing the Bowditch population throughout the district. The news story, this week, was about how the enrollment of the Bowditch and

other district schools is already in progress. Dr. Walsh asked School Committee members to consider the methodology involved very carefully, in making and announcing these profound changes as well as their present and future role as a School Committee. Much public tumult has resulted from the Superintendent's announcements with most not understanding the roles of the Superintendent and the School Committee. The Superintendent does not have sole authority to close a school or move a school from one building to another. Dr. Walsh continued that the Salem School Committee is responsible for the decision-making of any closing of Salem Schools, usually but not necessarily, acting on the recommendation of the Superintendent.

Dr. Walsh stated there was neither proposal nor any open discussion for the closing of the Bowditch School at a School Committee meeting, where he served until January 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. The Salem News was apparently contacted by the Superintendent and presented with the idea. Dr. Walsh considered the possibility this could appear in the Minutes of the open meetings held by the two school councils in which this matter was discussed. It is also problematical if such meetings are to be held in February. Dr. Walsh continued that there was no discussion by the School Committee of the article concerning the spread of the Bowditch students throughout the district and commented that School Committee alone makes policies for the Salem Public Schools. Dr. Walsh continued that the formula for school assignment is quite complex and wondered if the sibling factor in placing Bowditch students throughout the district has been weighed. The policy specifically states that younger siblings of older students enrolled in a school have priority to attend the same school. Dr. Walsh shared his concern to achieving this, the balance and Choice portion of the policy, and possibility of a backlash. Dr. Walsh asked the School Committee if they, as a body, are the ultimate authority in the school system and stated that the future of public education in the Salem community hangs upon their answer.

Thomas H. Furey, Councilor At Large and former member of the School Committee, 36 Dunlap Street, Salem said that the future of the Bowditch School and the Horace Mann is at a critical crossroads in crisis. They have the opportunity, in this decision, to make this crisis better for all by dissolving the Bowditch School and remaking the long overdue Horace Mann. Mr. Furey explained that he did his student teaching at the Horace Mann School in 1970. It was an old and challenging school showing its age on a college campus. It has been a great marriage between the city and the college, but time has taken its toll. The Horace Mann School was outdated in 1970 with no modern media library, gym, cafeteria, or auditorium. A tunnel connected the Sullivan building and the Horace Mann so the students could use a cellar classroom. It was padded with mats for gym. Later, the Salem State College allowed the Horace Mann School to use their gym, located on the Main campus and then the South campus Harrington School. Mr. Furey continued explaining that Horace Mann School classrooms were small and inadequate back then. Parking was limited, as it is now. Things are now worse 48 years later, 2018. In his visionary plan for the future, President John D. Keenan of Salem State University did not mention the future of the Horace Mann on campus. Last year, the plan for the future transfer of the Horace Mann School was put on the back burner like the plans to modernize the Salem High School auditorium and the Performing Arts Center. Mr. Furey continued that their dynamic and dedicated Superintendent thought profoundly and boldly outside the box to turn this crisis into an opportunity for the entire school system. The Federal Street School, the Old St. James School was a bold imaginative plan with two languages being taught at the same time. With a revolving door of principal and staff, the Bowditch School challenges were expensive, tough even for a new building.

Mr. Furey shared that two of his sons played basketball in the new Bowditch gym. It's a clean new cafeteria. Change and sacrifice would have to be made and they would soon witness a thriving educational campus with Salem High and Horace Mann Schools. Mr. Furey urged everyone to visit the Bowditch School in action and compare it to the Horace Mann School now, which will continue to be on the back burner for proper funding. Mr. Furey wondered when would a bold action be taken if not now and continued that this bold new plan by Superintendent Ruiz will be a win-win opportunity for the

University in the city. He served 12 years as a Salem School Committee member, taught 40 years in the elementary school, and sent his 5 sons to the Salem Schools. Mr. Furey suggested taking this bold opportunity, as Salem community, into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. He believes that students would feel inspired and that they have something to be proud of as they enter the new Horace Mann Building. Mr. Furey believes that closing the Bowditch School would be an epiphany for education, for both schools, for equity access for all students; win-win.

Kelley Madowsky, 6 Heritage Drive, Apt. 21, shared that Salem High School received a new pair of ROTC instructors during the fall of 2014, two outstanding men who have gone on to rejuvenate the program and attending students. They have helped students who did not feel respect for themselves and instead chose to disrespect rules and poison their futures, students who did not feel they fit into their grades and instead chose to cower in the safety back seat of the classroom, students who did not have the motivation to get out of bed in the morning, never mind struggle their way over to school. Ms. Madowsky continued that the ROTC program, along with those instructors, ignited a flame within these students, a spark of hope in themselves and an unending drive to do better and to succeed. The ROTC program openly presented an alternative option for their futures and gave those students the tools to succeed in any field, not just on the frontlines of a desert, or in a cockpit of a plane, but in a study hall of a university or in a station of a workplace. ROTC cadets have very fond memories of the Colonel. Some have seen him as a mentor, a father figure, and as a motivator. Ms. Madowsky continued that they, at the ROTC program, are scared; parents, cadets, non-ROTC students, and teachers have come forward and voiced their support of Colonel Hunter but have not seen any change. Responses have not changed despite new developments. There have been suggestions for better action to be taken and requests to have the Colonel's certification returned to him even if his job is stopped. Many have come forward to say that the action taken was too harsh of a punishment. Some in positions of authority still insist that nothing can be done, that they are looking at it, and that they wholeheartedly support the ROTC program in Salem. Ms. Madowsky commented that they feel lack of support and wondered where the members were for the past 3 years during all of their ROTC events and active services in the community and assemblies they were politely invited to and continued that if they truly support the Salem ROTC program, as they insist, to please take the advice of fellow Committee members and reinstate the Colonel. Please join them in petitioning for it to happen if they do not have the authority to do so – to please help them. Ms. Madowsky asked the School Committee to please show their support for them. The Colonel and the ROTC program are true. She asked they please turn their words into action and prove to them that the ROTC program is indeed welcomed in Salem.

Mark Worth, 153 Bellevue or Bay View Ave., shared he is a Bowditch School parent. He has been there for 8 years. There have been many challenges there. The staff and teachers there have been amazing. When he looks back at Bowditch, it has been a great experience but he thinks it is time to close it down. There have been 6 principals, including acting principals. The whole Bowditch experience has been great. He loves that school. He would be sad if it does close but he thinks it should. The same issues from 8 years ago are still there. If change is for the better, then it should be done. At the end of the day, it is about the students.

Ryan Bates, 40 Roslyn Street, Salem shared that he is frustrated, aggravated, and tired. He does not feel that the Superintendent speaks for him or the ROTC program. Mr. Bates continued that he stands for 3 words: honor, courage, and commitment and does not feel those three words have been met by the Superintendent based on the actions taken. Mr. Bates expressed that he feels the Superintendent does not support the ROTC program, him, the work that the ROTC does, nor respect the great service they have given to this community. Mr. Bates continued that he wanted to make my stance heard and hope this can quickly be resolved. He is quickly losing faith and does not think the Superintendent to be the appropriate voice for them.

Allen Aprizio, 337 Jefferson Avenue, shared that he was not born in the United States. He was born in Jalisco, Mexico. The reason they moved to the United States is because his family wanted him and his sister to get a good education. They experienced issues in previous schools and were moved from school to school. Salem High School has been the best school he has attended, thanks to its teachers and staff. He had never attended a school that had teachers who greatly cared for its students. He now understands why teachers and staff at other schools only directed their attention to the studies, leaving out caring for their students, they were not allowed to by administration and were afraid to lose their jobs. Mr. Aprizio continued that there is a lot of concern. It feels that Salem teachers are under attack by administration, that they are afraid of caring for their students, because they think it is going to bring consequences for doing so. A good thing going for the High School is a caring teacher. It is frustrating and very upsetting, for him and many others, not feeling that administration would protect and uphold teachers and staff. Mr. Aprizio asked the Committee to please listen to them.

Allison Krezman, 56 Weatherly Drive, shared that the School Committee has repeatedly addressed their interest in listening to the community and hearing what they have to say but have not done that at all. Ms. Krezman said they have tried to communicate many times and have been shut down. That is not leadership or what a leader does and is unprofessional. Ms. Krezman is tired of this because she has been trying to come up with a way for the Committee to resolve this issue and reinstate the leader who she looks up to the most. Mr. Hunter cared for her future; she sat in his office and he asked her if she wants to go to College and looked into all the military branches. Ms. Krezman continued that she had checked herself out to the military and leaves in 20 days, because that is the one thing that offers everything she wants and has everything she needs - college credits for everything, a GI bill. She is not wasting her education on something she wanted to explore. Ms. Krezman said that Mr. Hunter made sure she had everything she needed. She feels the Committee has not listened to the ROTC cadets; they are stressed out and feel they are not being heard. Ms. Krezman stated that she feels the School Committee talks of Social Justice and to do the right thing but are sending the wrong example of what Social Justice is. She feels this is wrong. They have over 1,000 signatures in hardcopy and online for the reinstatement and reconsideration of Colonel Hunter. Ms. Krezman continued that they are continuing in their efforts for the reinstatement of Colonel Hunter. She asked the School Board and School Committee to please rethink the entire decision. Ms. Krezman explained that the Committee has pretty much said they cannot talk to them. It is frustrating, because the only time the Committee would listen to them is during the 'Questions and Comments' from the audience at the School Committee.

Ruthann Hatt, 8 Nursery Street, explained that in the search for answers in the shocking firing of the beloved leader of Salem High School's ROTC program, the parents' groups investigating this upsetting action have made several interesting findings. They have basically found, in spite of the contrary suggestion that something horrible has happened, is that the only thing that Lieutenant Colonel Hunter seems to be guilty of is raising his voice to an administrator who was not doing his job. Ms. Hatt continued that it became clear that the ROTC program is not part of the current school agenda. The Superintendent's goals of 100% of students being accepted to college or a technical program with no mention of the military as a possible alternative suggests that they are trying to remove the program from Salem High School. A replacement for Colonel Hunter has not been made, the ROTC program is not supported, nor do any administrators attend any of the events. Extra credit is not given for physical education programs that ROTC does, although it is far more demanding than the physical education program at Salem High School. Stipends are not provided for the ROTC personnel who spend countless hours, after school, working with the students. Ms. Hatt continued that the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the ROTC program is not part of the future at Salem High School, despite what is heard. This is a blow to anyone who has worn the uniform. Ms. Hatt asked where they thought everyone would be were it not for our military. Their freedom and all else is being taken for granted. Ms. Hatt asked the Committee how they thought the ROTC program would survive and continued that the ROTC was not allowed to provide a secure and safe place for their students or be a safe place to address students

regarding behavior and to listen to them. Ultimately, the loss of the ROTC program cannot be measured with graphs and pie charts. Unfortunately, that seems to be the only thing that is important here. Ms. Hatt stated that they have to fight for the program and that this is not about Colonel Hunter, but about trying to remove the ROTC program from the Salem High School.

Jessica Angel, 50 Gallows Hill Road, shared that she is tired of seeing heads bowed, not paying attention or listening; they may hear it but are not listening to students, teachers, and parents about what needs to be said. Having Colonel Hunter taken away from them was an injustice and it needs to be corrected.

Yoleny Ynoa, shared he has a 21-year old son who attended Bowditch and currently attends Salem State University and a daughter who is a student at Salem High School. He has a child who started the Kindergarten grade this year. Mr. Ynoa continued that students and parents are not to blame for the Bowditch School's current condition, but an administration's problem. He believes that the problem is one-way communication: no communications to parents and students. They called for a meeting the last two weeks that he and other parents attended. There was no announcement of a proposal but rather presented a decision that the Bowditch School would be closed in June. Mr. Ynoa continued that he does not know why that was not presented to the School Committee beforehand. He also does not know why they did not seek feedback from parents and students. Mr. Ynoa stated that they need to fight together to save the Bowditch School.

Michelle O'Shea, 12 First Street, Apt. N308, expressed that no one seems to listen to their voices. They are told to attend the School Committee meeting where they would be heard, and yet it is not the place. Their telephone calls to the Superintendent and the Salem High School have not been answered. The buck just keeps being passed. Nobody seems to want to take any responsibility for any decisions that are being made, especially regarding Lieutenant Colonel Hunter. Ms. O'Shea continued that she highly suggests Superintendent Ruiz's contract not be renewed if this administration cannot step up and do what they are supposed to do and that other parents join them in support and sign the petition. Ms. O'Shea stated they need somebody to be responsible, willing, and available for discussion, if no one is doing it. That has not happened yet. It is not a role a leader should take.

Fawaz Abusharkh, 4 Harrison Road, shared he was a Bowditch parent for 9 years, and the Bowditch School was the reason he began attending Salem School Committee meetings for over 12 years. Mr. Abusharkh recalled that he asked the Salem School Committee back in December not to put the Bowditch School down, and they did. He hopes that no one in authority is overstepping any boundaries. This is usually why he does not support politicians on School Committees, because politicians make political, not educational deals. It is sad when they have 3 new members and this is what they are immediately faced with. This is why for at least the past 20 years and many School Committee meetings around the state, he never supports a Mayor on a School Committee seat. Mr. Abusharkh wondered why the Horace Mann School is not being dissolved instead of the Bowditch School. He also wondered why the Bowditch community has to pay for Salem School Committee decisions for the past 10 to 12 years. It was not as a result of Bowditch parents or students, but that of the Mayor (as part of the Salem School Committee) and the Salem School Committee where mistakes and bad decisions were repeatedly made. They had parents, for months at a time, coming up with plans just for the Salem School Committee to turn it down. The reasons they gave was that it did not match their turnaround or what they are planning. School Committee members were present with parents when they did the planning. The Mayor came to the meeting. Mr. Abusharkh wondered why were they supposed to meet from January to June only to be turned down? Why did they direct them in doing this? Mr. Abusharkh continued that he still has the plans. That plan did not imply their turnaround or anything else. Mr. Abusharkh asked why they are taking an entire school and putting it into the Bowditch and renaming it something else. He wondered if it is to avoid confronting past failures for at least the last 8 to 12 years minimum. It is sad that something like this happens right after the election season. Mr. Abusharkh said this is not an overnight decision and

that the Nathaniel Bowditch School should be kept if the school is going to be moved. What happens in the school is what matters. Mr. Abusharkh continued that it is his opinion that just by changing the name has to do again with minorities. The issues have always been with the Bowditch School and not any others in the city, because the Bowditch School was never intended to succeed. It was not turned around with good administration. Mr. Abusharkh said he would not shy from stating that this is the last rock the Committee is throwing at the Bowditch and Hispanic community. He thinks that what they are doing is shameful and more shameful in that it happened immediately after an election. He hopes that the 3 new School Committee members do not become part of the politics in this city but part of the education: students, families, and community first. He hopes they can make a difference. These are Salem families and Latinos, and they have to make it succeed. Mr. Abusharkh stated that they loved Superintendent Ruiz, because she is a Latina and they thought she would do something for their community and that this was disappointing at all levels, starting with the Latino community.

Rachel Martin, 4 Harrison Avenue, shared they really miss Colonel Hunter. Some students consider him as a mentor, teacher, and father – as someone they really trust. She thinks of him as a best friend. She really misses him and was devastated when she heard he was fired. Ms. Martin continued that she made her family and friends feel nervous because she was crying so much and truly wants Colonel Hunter to return.

Dr. Nate Bryant, 22 Puritan Road, expressed support, on behalf of Salem State University, for the recommendation that Superintendent Ruiz will be presenting this evening. Salem State University has long endured a strong partnership with Salem Public Schools and has engaged in the majority of the schools in the district. Right now, Salem State partners with the district to prepare their future and current teachers through current teachings in professional development, in all grade levels. Their grants provide opportunity to Salem students throughout the summer and academic year and on curriculum development. Moving the Horace Mann Laboratory School off of their campus will not hinder this participation but will in fact allow for new and enhanced opportunities for collaboration and a better physical learning environment. The more physical space available in the proposed building, Salem State and the Horace Mann programming can expand, giving Salem State students more opportunities to interact with Salem students in providing the district with increased instructional power that comes from more hands-on engagement in the classroom. Mr. Bryant continued that they look forward to supporting the current Bowditch students as a transition next year. They, at Salem State, are excited by the prospect of collaborating on richer problematic opportunities for Salem Public School students, district-wide.

Deborah Phillips, 35 Settlers Way, Minister at Grace Episcopal Church in Salem, shared they had a partnership with the 7<sup>th</sup> graders at the Bowditch School, since they were 4<sup>th</sup> graders. They had a partnership of supporting them in any way possible, including supporting the Bowditch School faculty and staff. She wrote to the Superintendent to tell her that she agreed that there are major inequities at the Bowditch School that need to be addressed, when she heard and read about the issue of segregation at the Bowditch School. Ms. Phillips continued she is not knowledgeable enough to know if the closing of the Bowditch School is the solution to this problem. She does believe that there have been issues of inequities in the schools and many of them have been based on race and economic resources. She hopes that, whatever decisions the School Committee makes, they realize they are not solving the problem of these issues in the Salem Public Schools – that whatever decision they make would simply be a first step in acknowledging how a certain segment of their population has been segregated in these schools. Ms. Phillips stated she also wants to let them know that she thinks it is important that they seriously consider how these students/scholars are going to be perceived and received in their new schools – and with them being branded, so to speak, as subpar. She would hope they would do all that they can. Grace Church would like to be a partner in this, in facilitating the resettlement of the scholars if that is what they determine to do so, that they are warmly received and given all the opportunities that all the other students that the City of Salem have been afforded. She hopes that whatever they decide, they realize this is a first

step, that there are many consequences to whatever they decide and that they continue to pursue the best way so that every student in the Salem Public School has equal access to all of the resources that the city has to provide.

Domingo Dominguez, Salem City Councilor, addressed the Salem School Committee as a parent and former teacher sharing that he heard many comments this evening that made a lot of sense. He thinks the voice of the Latino community need to stand up. They need to understand that they, as a community, need to better communicate with everyone this year in Salem. He is not against any decision that the authority made, because they have to commit and obey decisions of the Salem School Committee Administration. However, he is not in favor of the process that the administration and the School Committee chose to try to resolve this situation. He thinks they need to do better than that. Communication needs to begin making more sense, in that they are a diverse people. They need to make a statement out of this and try to solve this situation. Every decision they made as a city has failed. Mr. Dominguez continued that he believes they need to do better than that and learn from mistakes. Communication is key and they need to ensure that they, as leaders, continue to better communicate to everyone in Salem. Mr. Dominguez stated that he is not in favor of the offer to dissolve the Bowditch School as a solution. He thinks they need to meet and listen to all feedback and seek to save one of the best schools in Salem history that is currently not seen as productive as it should be.

Stephen Dibble, Ward 7 City Councilor, echoed the words of Mr. Dominguez, in support of his comments and those of several others. Mr. Dibble offered to call his friend, Principal Angeramo, and ask him to reconsider his decision regarding Michael Hunter. Mr. Dibble's son attended Salem High School 12 years ago and they had similar problems then, so he understands them and said he would call the Principal of the Salem High School tomorrow. Mr. Dibble stated that he is disappointed that, as a Ward Councilor, he has not heard of any plans to dissolve the Bowditch School. He attended some 40 meetings over the last two years with no mention of the school relocations. Still today, he has not been involved in any communications at all, except for one call from the Mayor. He asked for a follow-up meeting with her and that has not happened yet. He is hopeful that it will. Mr. Dibble said he is interested in hearing the presentation this evening. Hopefully, the Superintendent can address some of his concerns, as she already knows, in the presentation that he would like to share with everyone here this evening. It seems that, every year, the City of Salem hires consultants or tries a new program and tries to correct different schools that are suffering in different ways with poor grades. Those grades are sometimes swept under the rug and they do not reinforce Principals to stay; they do not support any of the schools. They do not support it fully. New programs come and go. The turnover, at several of their schools, has been great with principals coming and going. The Bowditch School was a phenomenal school many years ago. He does not think they supported it along the way to the point that it became significantly watered down. Now, 4 or 5 years ago, they begin segregating and putting the lion's share of low-income students or the lion's share of Hispanics into one school. That is just wrong across the board. They should have a mix of students throughout the city roughly equally balanced. He apologized to the community that this has happened and said that hopefully this is fixed correctly so that it is not a harmful effect to students and families but is done citywide and in a proper way. Hopefully, there will be several meetings to have it happen in a proper way where the voices are heard. He was told that the Horace Mann School was moving and wondered where that discussion took place; City Council and school community did not know about it. Horace Mann School needs a safe location. They need to be off a busy road. They need a proper location that is permanent for them. He thinks that everyone, in the last 45 years, has agreed that needs to happen. Mr. Dibble reported that they had a meeting two years ago, with the former President of Salem State, the Mayor, the Superintendent, and he was there, along with a few others where they talked about solutions for, not only the Horace Mann School relocation, but also for Early Childhood because they had a long waiting list of over 100 Early Childhood students. They need to get children under Kindergarten age, off the waiting list and to an Early Childhood facility where they can prosper and have better grades for their elementary years. He does not know how much work has happened in the last two

years for creating such a facility working with Salem State University bringing Head Start or Pathways. Hopefully, the Superintendent can address that in the presentation this evening. He talked about an idea of moving the Horace Mann School to the Harrington Building at South Campus, which had been talked about for 45 years. As part of that conversation two years ago, they talked about creating an Early Childhood Center at the upper South Campus of Salem State in a building called 'Academic Building.' It was built in the 60s. It is rock solid and could be renovated for early childhood pretty easily. These are connected with the Horace Mann School and professors and teachers can share office and meeting space. Mr. Dibble continued sharing possible options and alternatives and asked Superintendent Ruiz that she touch on this in her presentation if she can, because it has been two years since they met and talked about this subject. It is much needed. Moving the Horace Mann to a safe location is very important and he supports it, but it should not be permanent because Ward 7 deserves a neighborhood school like every other Ward the city presently has.

Mayor Driscoll addressed the audience regarding the ROTC instructor, because she was getting the sense that others may need some clarification on this. The request was made for the Superintendent and the Principal of the Salem High School to meet with Lieutenant Colonel Hunter. That meeting did occur. She just wanted to make sure they knew there was discussion. She does not think that the decision by the Superintendent and the Principal was modified or altered at that meeting. Mayor Driscoll continued that she wanted to make sure they knew that the meeting occurred and that there certainly was an opportunity for the Superintendent to meet with staff. The reason it is difficult for them to meet again is because of privacy and personnel rights. It is something that the Superintendent and the Principal cannot share any more or additional information with respect to a Personnel decision. It is pretty clear to everyone that the budgets and the opportunity to support the ROTC program is something they feel strongly about. Ms. Driscoll continued that she just wanted to make sure others understand the process. There was a meeting. There was no decision to amend or alter the prior decision. They appreciate everyone attending the School Committee meetings. As School Committee members, they do not have the jurisdiction to overturn that decision. Mayor Driscoll was asked if she could ensure that the ROTC program would continue to receive funding. Mayor Driscoll responded that she could not unilaterally assure it but can tell them that a strong majority of the School Committee strongly supports the program. They would be going through the budget for the next fiscal year starting July 1<sup>st</sup> – very shortly over the next several weeks. Ms. Driscoll affirmed that she certainly supports it.

### **Brief Recess**

The School Committee agreed to a brief recess to allow clearance of the School Committee Chambers. Superintendent Ruiz would give her presentation and members of the audience would continue to comment after the Superintendent has finished her presentation.

Members returned from brief recess.

### **Discussion**

Mayor Driscoll explained that questions and comments would be taken immediately after the Superintendent's report, as opposed to waiting to the very end of the meeting in order for audience members to have an opportunity to ask questions or share further comments. Mayor Driscoll continued that they might not have the answers to every question. In this case, there would be another meeting on February 12, 2018, where they may be able to address those questions raised this evening and were not able to respond to at this time. They are aiming for a final meeting and potential vote on February 26, 2018, assuming Committee members feel they have sufficient information and are prepared to do that. Mayor Driscoll affirmed that this is very much a proposal. Ms. Driscoll was at the Bowditch School meeting and thought it was presented that way. Ms. Driscoll said that she could not speak to the newspapers, in terms of how they presented and edited. However, that is certainly the way they (as School Committee members) viewed it. This is a proposal from the Superintendent to the School



Committee that needs to be vetted. It needs to have due diligence taken. It needs to be understood and explained.

Mayor Driscoll continued that this is the first presentation that all of them are seeing as well. They may have some questions and comments and additional information is also going to be necessary. Ms. Driscoll said that she is feeling a lot of emotional issue around this, can certainly understand that, and wants to make sure everyone knows that they, as a group, are taking this very seriously. The School Committee intends to ensure that they are having adequate information to make decisions that are in the best interest of the Bowditch, Horace Mann, and Salem community overall.

### **Superintendent Report – Margarita Ruiz**

#### **Superintendent Recommendations to Increase Equity and Access for all our Students at Bowditch and Horace Mann Schools**

##### **Keeping Our Promise Increasing Equity and Access in the Salem Public Schools**

Superintendent Ruiz thanked everyone, in both English and Spanish, for attending and sharing their thoughts and ideas on her recommendations. Last year, they spent many months as a community thinking about how they wanted to shape the future of their schools as part of their Strategic Planning process.

##### **Our Vision**

They had many conversations across their district, and together they crafted a bold vision for the graduates of Salem Public Schools. The vision really speaks to what they hope students will achieve, which is that all students will be locally engaged, globally connected, and fully prepared to thrive in a diverse and changing world. This is a promise that they made to themselves and their community, but more importantly, they made that promise to their Salem students. The promise is to provide equity and access to all of them. They have an obligation to their children, as adults, to eliminate any and all barriers to educational achievement, and promote policies and practices that are fair and just and make learning opportunities accessible to all. Superintendent Ruiz continued that she has been thinking very deeply about some of the ways in which they may not be keeping this promise to the children of their district. The Bowditch School was a model for dual language instruction for many years. It was a gem in the Salem School district. Sadly, due to a variety of factors, the Bowditch School is not providing the quality of education that Salem students deserve.

##### **2017 Achievement Percentile for K-8 Schools**

The 2017 MCAS results confirm that we are not serving the Bowditch students to the standard of excellence that they strive to provide. Superintendent Ruiz continued that she wants to make very clear this evening, as she has done before, that she is not blaming the students, families, or Bowditch School staff. This is a systematic systemic failure that they as a district need to correct. Ms. Ruiz continued that she, as a Superintendent, is taking the responsibility to right this wrong for their students. Superintendent Ruiz walked School Committee members and the audience through the 2017 Achievement Percentile (and Bowditch School) data. They, as a district, have created conditions by which their students are not able to be successful academically. Ill-conceived problematic decisions related to the movement back in 2014 of all the Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) students into the building. They know that that movement is counter to good ELL instruction back then. Frequent leadership and staff turnover have been mentioned before.

Superintendent Ruiz mentioned that 70% of the teachers at the Bowditch School are currently in their first 3 years of teaching. In compounding the frequent changes of the school model, the Bowditch school is no longer a dual language school, and all of these factors have had a negative impact on the school performance. They know, and practice and research clearly shows, the negative effect leadership and

staff turnover has on a school's ability to develop stable academic agenda that would effectively service all students. It is difficult to create stability and continuity of the work when there are frequent turnovers, especially when they are talking about the academic agenda for a school. Looking at the 2017 achievement percentile data, it is clear there is a disparity between the achievement levels at the Bowditch and every other school. The data clearly shows that students at every other school could have performed better based on what they see at other schools. They also know (and have seen students leave the Bowditch School and transferred to other schools) and have seen those students thriving and gaining on their academic performance. Ms. Ruiz continued that this is not about who the students are in the school or the demographic balance that the school may have, but about how they are serving the students that are there. Superintendent Ruiz emphasized that to continue in the path would mean that they would continue to systematically underserve a particular section of their population that is separate but not equal. The reality is that they have a chronically underperforming school that is also segregated. Therefore, they are not a specific demographic of the school. Ms. Ruiz shared that as a Hispanic Superintendent, former English Language Learner herself, proud mother of a bilingual son, educator who has worked in special education, served as a Principal and coach, as Area Superintendent, and now Superintendent, she knows for a fact that all of their Salem students including students of the Bowditch School can succeed if they are given the opportunity to do so at other higher performing schools. She has seen it happen time and time again.

Superintendent Ruiz reiterated that she does not blame students, families, or Bowditch School staff. By all accounts, what they see as formative data for the school is that while students are making some good gains this year, they are intermittent. They also know, and research clearly indicates, that the path and time that it would take to turn the school around (although not impossible) is time that the students at the Bowditch School do not have right now. Ms. Ruiz stated that as Superintendent, she needs everyone to understand that she is trying to address the inequity and injustice they see on the 2017 achievement percentile data slide on the screen.

### **Vision (continued)**

They need to face this difficult reality and engage in thoughtful and meaningful change. Ms. Ruiz said she knows this is difficult. Students at the Bowditch School do not have 2 or 3 more years to wait for turnaround efforts to work. The district has tried over the years. Ms. Ruiz explained that the Salem Teacher's Union, in conjunction with the district, collaborated and enacted a set of recommendations in support of the school, in the spring of 2015 after she first began working in Salem, in the summer of that year. Things were put in place in school such as extended learning time, a new principal, and other things to support. But, once again, leadership had turnover, and simple efforts have not yielded results, despite everyone's best intentions.

### **Superintendent Recommendations**

Superintendent Ruiz continued that this is why she is recommending to the School Committee that they dissolve the Bowditch K-8 at the end of the school year and welcome and integrate the students into other schools across the district where she believes they would be better served. The 2017 achievement percentile data as presented this evening tells the story. Salem students had higher achievement at all the other schools. Ms. Ruiz believes that the students at the Bowditch School would be better served in schools that are performing higher.

Ms. Ruiz explained that often times, others would say things would not work, when recommendations are made to close a school. Unfortunately, many districts have assigned students to schools that are equally or close to underperforming when they closed schools, which is not the case in the Salem district; they would be assigning Bowditch School students to schools that show they have the conditions in place for them to be academically successful. They are already seeing that with many of the students who have transferred out of the Bowditch School to other school communities. Superintendent Ruiz continued that

she also believes that this recommendation to dissolve the Bowditch School at the end of the year would also make all of their schools more reflective of the rich and vibrant cultural diversity that they have in their city. They have a disparity in the demographics at Bowditch. There is nothing wrong with that inherently. The situation is that they have this large number of economically disadvantaged, Hispanic, and English Language Learner students that they are not effectively serving at the school. Superintendent Ruiz said that the students at the Bowditch School have no more time and deserve no less than the rest of the other students in the district. Ms. Ruiz continued that she is not blaming anyone. What she is simply saying is that they are not serving the population of students that they have at the Bowditch School well and, as Superintendent, she needs to put a stop to that, as difficult and as hard as this recommendation is for her to make to the School Committee.

#### **Proposed K-5 Classroom Structure**

Should the recommendation move forward, the Collins Middle School would be adding classrooms to welcome next year's 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders currently, at the Bowditch. They would also add new classrooms to some of their elementary schools and take advantage of under-enrolled grades at other schools to open the doors to Bowditch students for students in grades K-4. Superintendent Ruiz continued that they estimate they would need to add about 14 classroom teachers, based on the Bowditch current enrollment of 358 students. They would add 4 classrooms at Witchcraft Heights Elementary School in Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades at the elementary level, a 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade at the Bates Elementary School, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom at the Horace Mann.

#### **Proposed Collins Middle School (CMS) Classroom Structure**

They would add 7 classroom teachers to the Collins Middle School staffing. The school currently has 27 homerooms with an average of 20 students. Their proposal would add 7 teachers for approximately 137 new students that would be going to the Collins. The additions of those 7 homerooms would maintain the average class of about 20 students per homeroom. Ms. Ruiz said that she knows that this has been a concern that was raised throughout their conversations. Class sizes will remain at, or below, contractual limits across the district.

Superintendent Ruiz continued that they have reviewed the physical space of all of the schools classroom gains and know that they have the available space. Students who receive any support, related to special education or language learning needs, would continue to receive that support at their new schools. Ms. Ruiz added that all the Professional status staff at the Bowditch School would be assigned to an opening. They would be able to place all of the permanent staff and teachers in jobs in their district. This includes the classrooms that are opening and some retirements they were informed of throughout the district. They would be able to provide the non-professional staff teachers with plenty of opportunities for openings in the district.

#### **Proposed K-5 Classroom Structure**

Superintendent Ruiz walked members through the proposed K-5 classroom structure slide containing a breakdown of the K-5 classroom structure for the entire district (levels and class sizes). They are all within their contractual limit. The data also showed the number of projected classes that gives the capacity (open seats) they have to assign, enrollment grades (projections) they have for each grade level, and excess capacity they have for each grade level throughout the district (ability they have to assign more students).

#### **Discussion**

Mayor Driscoll sought clarification, because the numbers under the Capacity line are not equal to the multiplication. Superintendent Ruiz explained that there are integrated classrooms such as Special Education, requiring smaller class sizes in some of the schools and others that account for disparity in the numbers. Mayor Driscoll clarified that there is some wiggle room, based on the fact that they may have

class sizes that are slightly less than shown taking into account, but it does not take away from what their class size is. Ms. Ruiz responded in agreement. Mayor Driscoll summarized that the chart shows to be deceiving when they are looking at the ratio because it does not take into account the programs that they have, and how they evaluate class size, versus adults in rooms and things like that. Superintendent Ruiz added that it is especially true in an integrated Special Ed classroom for example, where they are smaller class sizes. Mayor Driscoll said that in enrollment, for example, are the actual number of students they would anticipate in K-5 within the district. That would not necessarily change whether they had Bowditch online or offline. Their enrollment projections would be the same; it would just be the number of buildings students are in, or would be, that would potentially change. Ms. Ruiz agreed.

Mayor Driscoll asked what would be the excess capacity. Superintendent Ruiz responded that it would be the availability of seats they have once all of the students have been assigned throughout the district.

### **Transfer Process**

Superintendent Ruiz summarized the plans of the transfer process for Bowditch students and families. They would use the revised student assignment process approved by the Salem School Committee as a framework to do this work. They would use the same tenets of their assignment policy, which is predicated on school choice. They would ask families to make selections of the three top choices in the district. They would be looking at the balance of economically and non-economically disadvantaged students (also built into their policy), sibling preference, and school distance. They would use those as a way of conducting the assignment. One of the things they are planning to do, in terms of the sibling preference, is to assign older grade students first to attend to the sibling preference; have a deliberate effort to keep siblings together (to the best of their ability) throughout the assignment process.

### **Information Sessions**

In terms of family support, Superintendent Ruiz announced that they have trained 7 additional bilingual staff members to support the team at the Parent Information Center and help Bowditch families. Ms. Ruiz explained that they have scheduled information sessions at the schools to help the community and make it easier for Salem families. Sessions and outreach have been scheduled to ensure families are contacted and get family preferences as soon as possible. This would be based on the School Committee's approval of this recommendation. Families in grades K-4 may select other elementary schools and opt into the lottery at the Bentley Academy Charter School on March 9, 2018. There are available seats at some grade levels across the district. Families would learn that due to some space constraints, some schools currently have fewer seats available than other schools where they would be adding classrooms.

The assignment process has not begun and will not begin until the School Committee makes the decision on that regard. Superintendent Ruiz continued by sharing their plan to welcome their students and integrate them across their Salem schools. They have been working on draft plans in the case that the School Committee approves the recommendations. They are working with their school leaders in creating welcome teams at each of the receiving schools. They would develop plans to ensure that the students and their families are knitted into the school communities and traditions. They would be supporting school leaders and actively shape their message of inclusion and enthusiasm to the Salem school communities. Superintendent Ruiz continued by explaining that they are thinking of establishing the buddy system in support of the students and provided details of the process. They are also critically thinking of the having the same process with the families. They are intentional on working to welcome the families and help integrate them into the fabric of the school.

They are also considering looking into having a "get to know you" field trip during the school year where they have their buses take Bowditch students (after assignments have been completed) to their assigned schools where they would be welcomed. There would be a planned set of events by the receiving schools,

to help get them ready and excited. The welcoming team and school leaders have planned these and many other things to help welcome the students and their families to the communities.

### **Horace Mann Laboratory School Partnership**

Superintendent Ruiz said they have been thinking of the Horace Mann Laboratory School and recalled that the district always wanted a better facility for the Horace Mann School. The physical condition of the Horace Mann building is not on par with the state and the rest of their district. Some classrooms can only fit up to 15 students, while others can fit more. There is no gym at the school and students are bussed to another location for gym. The cafeteria requires 6 lunch periods in order to accommodate all the students, because it is a reduced space with the number of students. That impacts on the school's ability to really have a robust schedule to support learning time. The school does not have a large enough space to accommodate and hold meetings or family gatherings. Superintendent Ruiz shared that she has attended some meetings at one of the Kindergarten classrooms and thanked the teachers for offering their classrooms. The school does not have any parking for staff or visitors. The location on Loring Avenue creates some safety concerns, as well during arrival and dismissal times. In contrast, the building on 79 Willson Street is nearly double the size of the Horace Mann building. It has a gym, two playgrounds, a cafeteria with a large stage, a large library and meeting space for teachers, and ample parking.

Superintendent Ruiz reported that, with the support of the Salem State University, she would be proposing that the Horace Mann be relocated to what would be the former Bowditch School building for the next school year. The district would be able to provide students with more enriching programming in one building site by relocating the Horace Mann to the Willson Street building. It would improve working conditions for teachers; increase safety for walkers, bus riders, and parent drop-offs and pick-ups. Ms. Ruiz said she knows that several families at Horace Mann and members of the community have expressed concerns of what they must do about the partnerships with Salem State. Salem State is committed to the Horace Mann in continuing to strengthen their partnership with Horace Mann and throughout the entire district. Ms. Ruiz explained that they strongly believe that the move into a new building would provide a variety of opportunities for them to expand their partnership.

These are two very important recommendations that have not been made lightly. Superintendent Ruiz continued it is her intention that these recommendations honor their commitment to equity and access for all students. They, as a district, must be intolerant of inequities that prevent their Salem students from academic success and reaching their goals. Ms. Ruiz addressed School Committee members saying that she recognizes this is not an easy decision for them to make. It is imperative to focus on keeping students at the center of their work. These two recommendations surely have the students at the center. Superintendent Ruiz concluded her presentation.

### **Discussion**

Mr. Cruz requested more information related to the supports that are going to be in place for the students if they were to transfer to other schools. One of his specific concerns on when a student transfers over to another school – the recommendation mentions field trips and a buddy system, but there is the potential that some students might be bullied. Mr. Cruz would like to hear more of the district's plans to try to incorporate either more councilors or conflict resolutions at the other schools. Superintendent Ruiz agreed and commented that they would be more than happy to return with more information about that at the next School Committee meeting February 12, 2018. Ms. Ruiz continued that one of the things they have been talking about with staff is that while the recommendation is to dissolve the school, the students are not leaving the district. Part of the work is to see where the students are assigned so that they can marshal the supports they have. They have a strategy on bullying. Superintendent Ruiz said they would provide further information at the next meeting next Monday.

Ms. Nuncio asked if School Committee members could, if they have the time, attend upcoming information sessions that will be taking place between bilingual personnel working with families just to see the counseling taking place. Superintendent Ruiz responded they could. Ms. Nuncio commented that she has received many comments from others who have written to them as School Committee members on understanding the need to desegregate. Everyone seems to be on board with that; nobody can quarrel with that. Ms. Nuncio continued that the piece she thinks has been difficult for their Latino community is the name change, which may have to do with the feeling of erasure.

Ms. Nuncio commended many of the people who showed up, many of them being from the Bowditch School. Ms. Nuncio continued that this idea of a name change is concerning. Its cost would have to be allocated into the budget. Ms. Nuncio said that she searched online as to other schools that have gone through the process of name changing their schools and how much it has cost them. It would have to be allocated in the budget. Ms. Nuncio shared examples of what other schools paid to have a school name change. Bowditch is a very honorable name. It is not an intellectual argument to consider further discussion on the matter of name changing. The ideal circumstance is that if the Committee as a Whole were to vote for the proposal there would be some kind of fusion, not erasure of the Bowditch name, if that plan is approved. Ms. Nuncio continued that she would like to see both school communities honored, that it be taken into account. It is not a matter that people want to cling to their old school name but rather something that is respectful for both communities and ultimately does not feel like erasure.

Superintendent Ruiz responded that Horace Mann community might also have a strong attachment to their name. Ms. Ruiz said she is interested in hearing from the Horace Mann community understanding that they may find the same argument on the other side. The proposal is to dissolve the school. Naming another school that is not really the Bowditch School might prove to be confusing to families. Ms. Ruiz said she recognizes the difficulty of the recommendation, understands, and values those feelings. The name would merit further discussion.

Ms. Campbell shared her concern regarding teachers and families who have stuck with the Bowditch School for so long and have the burden fall on them as they face the need to find a new teaching position, etc. The burden of segregation is falling on families who were uprooted and are now expected to transition again. That is something that weighs heavily on her and she is not sure if another option has been explored for this population not to have to carry the burden of desegregation when they have already gone through so much. Superintendent Ruiz responded that she agrees and also looked at it with that respect. It is also about not changing what they have, but not making the transition would imply to continue to underserve the students that have already gone through so much.

Superintendent Ruiz continued that she understands the families would be going through the process but they need to ask themselves what is the alternative. Is the alternative to continue to allow this underserving situation for a section of the population she believes deserves better? Many families have already transferred out of the school, because of concerns of how students are being serviced. Unless something is done, as a district, to stop that, then they would be saying that it is something they are willing to allow. Superintendent Ruiz confirmed that she is placing the recommendation to the Committee because of the respect she has for that community and the desire to better serve their children.

Ms. Manning asked Superintendent Ruiz for clarification, on the movement from the Bowditch (the 4 classrooms) going to the Witchcraft School and (the 2 classrooms) going to the Bates School, if it means they are being transferred over as entire classrooms. She hopes they would not be separated and blocked at the new school. Superintendent Ruiz confirmed they would not be moved over as an entire group, separate from the rest of the school. They are going to work with the school leaders so that all of the students are integrated across all classroom assignments. Classrooms will have students same as all other

classrooms in the school; they would be integrated throughout to prevent from grouping a large number of students from the Bowditch in one particular room, resulting in a true diverse makeup of classrooms.

Mayor Driscoll asked for more information including: Multi-year data trends, in terms of student performance; most recent student makeup data for all Salem schools (to try to get a handle on where they have better and less balances), and actual current class size counts. Ms. Driscoll asked what more could be done to support Biliteracy initiatives within their district. Many parents would like to have more linguistic opportunities within their schools. Mayor Driscoll would like to know how they would approach that going forward and asked that an outline be incorporated in the presentation at the next School Committee meeting. Ms. Driscoll emphasized that Early Ed opportunities this proposal might present are a very important and critical component and would like to get a better understanding of their capacity to put that in place, when, and what that might look like overall. Ms. Driscoll continued that the process for staff outline and students have been very similar and requested a better underpinning of that for the next School Committee meeting. It might be worthwhile to share videos for Bowditch parents such as those used by principals (to talk about what their schools are) for the Kindergarten showcase, which provides a highlight of the school, impression of who the leader is, and what their school focus might be.

Mayor Driscoll continued she is hopeful they have a welcoming and diverse environment in all of their schools. It is one of the things that encouraged her, as a parent, to want to be in Salem Public Schools. Ms. Driscoll called out the difference between diversity and integration and commented that she had shared an article in the New York Times about that. Ms. Driscoll would like to better understand how they would ensure having a diverse and integrated school building environment and what that really means for students and staff. The premise of the study was that students who were truly integrated sharing experiences are the students that are seeing the highest performance when they have socio-economic demographics that are diverse. That has not been achieved at the Bowditch school. There are successes in other buildings and room to grow in others. Mayor Driscoll continued that she values the need for them to go deeper about how they are actually integrating the experiences of students to get the full value. Superintendent Ruiz agreed and confirmed they would provide that information and steps on how to deepen that work.

### **Brief Recess**

The School Committee agreed to a brief recess to allow clearance of the School Committee Chambers. Ms. Campbell motioned for a brief recess for room clearance. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Members returned from a brief recess and continued with Presentation and Reports section of the Agenda.

### **Presentations and Reports**

#### **Pillar 1 – Create a Vibrant K-12 Teaching and Learning Ecosystem**

Superintendent Ruiz reported that the district has launched the Excellence Language Learning for all students. Rebecca Westlake, the Director for English Language Learning for the district, is leading the initiative. The Initiative would examine and make recommendations around three issues:

1. The current K-12 Spanish Instruction in the District
2. The Seal of Biliteracy – a National program the district is looking to implement to graduating Seniors
3. The Bilingual Task Force – includes private citizens that look at models of bi-literacy

Superintendent Ruiz provided detailed information of each of the recommendations. Rebecca Westlake would provide more in-depth information on each of these at the next School Committee meeting.

### **Questions and Comments From the Audience – Shared After the Superintendent’s Report**

Diana Vargas, 79 Willson Street, addressed the members of the School Committee about the Superintendent’s plans to close the Nathaniel Bowditch School and disperse the students across the district. She feels that she owes an explanation, to the Bowditch parents, of the events that have taken place at the Bowditch for the past 5 years. Ms. Vargas continued that parents have stood by the Bowditch School, year after year, regardless of the hardships that the school went through for the past five years. Ms. Vargas said that she stands beside the Nathaniel Bowditch School students who demand better answers than those they have received about the closing of their school. The district told students that the school was closing because of their underperformance on the standardized test MCAS, which was unacceptable. Ms. Vargas stated that support was never provided to the students. The message that Horace Mann students are better was explicitly and implicitly given to the students by closing the Bowditch School. Ms. Vargas explained the changes that the Nathaniel Bowditch went through in the 2013 – 2014 year when Superintendent Russell had promised better instruction, resources, and support.

The Bowditch School lost reading specialists and other support personnel who were key to the success of the Bowditch School students who were performing below grade level in that same year. Since then, the Nathaniel Bowditch School has gone through 5 different principals, whether they were interim or hired for the position, and faced support cuts in teachers and classrooms with most recent reduction of classrooms happening last year, under the recommendation of Superintendent Ruiz. The promise to provide better instruction, resources, and support was highly kept from the very beginning and sounded then very familiar to the promises they hear today. The School Committee is aware of the struggles of the Bowditch School performance. Ms. Vargas continued that what is new and surprising to her and many parents, students, stakeholders, and especially the teachers of the Nathaniel Bowditch School is the use of the term ‘segregation’ which has now changed to the term ‘demographic imbalance.’ This was plastered in every speech, article, newsletter, and communication given to each and everyone about the decision to dissolve the Bowditch School. The Nathaniel Bowditch faculty met with the Superintendent after school on Tuesday, January 23, 2018 to receive news of their school closing. The Superintendent claimed that she was not aware of the segregation happening at the school and that what started the segregation was the decision made by Superintendent Russell to place the SEI program in the Nathaniel Bowditch School and that no one wanted the segregation to intentionally happen but it did, and she needed to take action to end it immediately. Ms. Vargas continued that she has a problem with that statement. As a faculty member of the Nathaniel Bowditch School, she knew that the decision to place the SEI program at the school would lead to segregation, and many others knew this. They had no choice. As teachers, they had to educate the students and tried to plead with school administration for the restructure of the Bowditch school. Ms. Vargas continued that she met Superintendent Margarita Ruiz in March 2015 after Ms. Ruiz was appointed as Superintendent of Salem Public Schools. She asked Superintendent Ruiz if she was planning to restructure the Bowditch school, in terms of the SEI program and the K-8 configuration. Ms. Ruiz responded they would not, because any type of reconfiguration at that time specifically moving grades 6 through 8 to the Collins Middle School would have a negative effect on the Collins Middle School’s performance scores, implicitly conveying the message that other school’s performance was a priority and that segregation at the Bowditch School was not a priority then. Ms. Vargas continued that Superintendent Ruiz promised she would meet and sit down with them to listen to their ideas and plans for school improvement, at their request, which did not happen that year. Ms. Even was appointed Principal of the Nathaniel Bowditch School in June 2015. News of extended learning time was announced to the staff as a way to improve school performance. The school was being restructured with non-professional status teachers and not given support due to lack of mentoring in the district. Segregation continued without being acknowledged by any of the members in administration. Inappropriate behavior, segregation, and aggression by Bowditch students increased after the implementation of the extended day program and hiring of new teachers. Ms. Vargas continued that a meeting with Superintendent Ruiz still has not happened. Faculty met with members of the



administration in April 2016 to address root causes of student behavior issues at the Nathaniel Bowditch School where faculty, unanimously, identified segregation and the root cause of not only behavior but also student underperformance. They were told there was no segregation happening at the Bowditch School. They were told that the SEI students were strategically and purposefully placed at Bowditch to receive the best education possible and that faculty were creating a racial issue where there was none. Staff members were called to the principal's office the following day and reprimanded for speaking up about segregation for talking about the disproportionate number of Hispanic students in their school compared to the rest of the district. Ms. Vargas continued that according to this evening's presentation the data shows 67% of students as being Hispanic compared to the district average at 36.8%. This data information was not presented to faculty back then when they met. Segregation is being presented this evening as an unforeseen problem that currently surfaced that no one could have prevented or stopped it from happening. Ms. Vargas continued that she views the term segregation, being used now, to secure the solution to the Nathaniel Bowditch School. The district is able to deal with the underperforming scores of the Nathaniel Bowditch students, make the lowest scoring school, with the worst reputation in the district, and revolving doors of principals disappear with this decision. The district also has the possibility of moving the Horace Mann Laboratory School with this decision. Ms. Vargas addressed the members of the School Committee saying that she understands they have been given a very difficult task and there needs to be an in-depth study of demographics of every school in the district if this district is serious about ending segregation and solving this issue once and for all. Ms. Manning agreed. Ms. Vargas continued informing members of the disproportionate data as a result of moving the students to the other schools, as mentioned on the letter that was sent out to families on January 2018 compared to the numbers at the Carlton and Saltonstall Schools. Ms. Vargas stated that history in this Salem district would repeat itself if they are not careful regarding segregation: first it was Bentley, now it is Bowditch, and in 5 years it may be the Witchcraft school. Ms. Vargas begged the Committee, for the sake of families and students to take every piece of information given to them this evening and examine every possibility so that they may guarantee their students that segregation would never happen again in this district. Members of the district should be held accountable for their actions or lack of action regarding segregation should it happen again. Ms. Vargas addressed members, families, and students of the Nathaniel Bowditch School and apologized for what is happening, the dissolving of the Bowditch School, and possible lack of actions to avoid it.

Fawaz Abusharkh, 4 Harrison Road, commented that the dissolving of the Nathaniel Bowditch and changes to the Horace Mann schools does not imply improvement to both when one is being improved while the other is being dissolved. The issues of the Nathaniel Bowditch School have been present for many years without being addressed and faculty members, families, students, and the community are most impacted by it. Mr. Abusharkh asked School Committee members not to take the Bowditch School name or dissolving it, but rather keep the school and work to improve it.

Donna Fritz, 57 Summit Street, parent at Witchcraft Heights and PTO President, shared that they would be as welcoming as possible should there be students going to their school. She and the school principal of the Witchcraft Heights have begun discussion on how to welcome a significantly large number of students into their school. They want to do that well. There is no other school in the city that would have more than 3 grades in a school. Ms. Fritz continued that she believes that the Witchcraft Heights School has the number of physical classrooms able to support the number of students that may be transferred there. Ms. Fritz asked if this is something that the Salem School Committee approves that they think how they are going to support those students in feeling welcomed at the new schools and throughout their transition – how they are supporting students and staff members once they get to the other schools. Ms. Fritz suggested the Committee take a careful look at what has not worked before when moving students to other schools to prevent issues from arising and also asked the School Committee to consider their future plans as they move forward to try to balance the physical numbers. Overall, Ms. Fritz advocates: support

physically for next year during a big transition year (please do not forget the schools they are adding numbers to) and how to bring balance back long-term.

Beth Kontos, 237 Center Street, Danvers, President of Salem Teacher's Union, shared they currently have a strong leadership team at the Nathaniel Bowditch School. They can stipulate that the Bowditch School is a segregated school. They have seen this happen over several years. Ms. Kontos stated she believes they need to redistribute their assets, that being the students. Sixty nine percent of the students are economically disadvantaged, which is improper and out of balance with the rest of the district. She is a member of the Massachusetts Education Alliance, and they would be protesting if they saw those numbers. She does not believe this was intentional but misguided nor does she believe it is morally or educationally correct. Separation from one another continues rifts between groups of people. They could and should not wait for High School to mix students together. Ms. Kontos continued that she believes they need to desegregate their schools. It is fundamentally unfair to have a majority/minority school or have a majority of disadvantaged schools in their district. Ms. Kontos stated that she, as President of the Salem Teacher's Union, does solemnly commit her time to see that teachers, paraprofessionals, and staff are treated fairly according to the contract, whatever the plan is going forward. She asks they spend extra support funding towards reading specialties and ESL support in all their schools. She believes that a redistribution of their greatest assets, their students, would be in the best interest of their entire district and certainly for each individual student.

Stephen Dibble, Ward 7 City Councilor stated that he thinks they have to take responsibility for what has been happening at the Nathaniel Bowditch School for many years. They can make sure that it does not happen again and prevent it from happening to yet a 3<sup>rd</sup> school further down the road. Mr. Dibble continued that he is curious of the steps they are going to take to prevent this from repeating itself. He wondered what the State would do if they do nothing and keep the Bowditch School. They should hear what the options are. What is the next plan if they do not dissolve the Bowditch School? Mr. Dibble was curious of the specific support that Salem State University would offer to the Horace Mann School when it is at a different location, as it is easier to give support when the school is at their location. Mr. Dibble wondered about the Principal of the Horace Mann School; would the principal continue to be an employee of Salem State University going forward, so that the linkage would stay strong with that principal/leadership being an employee of the Salem State University? And where would the population be 2 to 3 years from now, and if there might be a need to reopen another school if needed? Mr. Dibble hopes they can address the answers to these questions at the next School Committee meeting on February 12, 2018.

Mayor Driscoll said they would put those questions on a list and responded that Salem State University is committed to that partnership and so the Principal would continue to be part of the Salem State community moving forward, at least being paid for and supported as they have in the past and that the Superintendent would be working with the Dean of Education on the Pilot Agreement and the principal replacement process. Superintendent Ruiz agreed.

Susan Ellis, Federal Street, retired Salem School teacher, asked about the Welcome program. The Nathaniel Bowditch School has many bilingual staff members, which does not exist at other schools. There are many parents whose English is not as good as others. Ms. Ellis wondered how they are going to get Bilingual staff to all of these different schools to provide support for these parents and why are students not being transferred over to the Saltonstall and Carlton schools. Ms. Ellis believes that students throughout the district need additional target support in reading and math instructions – small group instruction with targeted support. She does not see anything in the plan to add targeted support for their students in those two curriculum areas. Ms. Ellis also asked why the Bowditch families are the ones who have to make the sacrifice to move.

## **Action Items**

### **Deliberation and Vote on the Proposed Amendment to Articles of Agreement by Northshore Education Consortium – Tabled from 1/16/18**

Ms. Wilson motioned to remove the deliberation and vote on the proposed amendment to Articles of Agreement by Northshore Education Consortium – tabled from 1/16/18. Ms. Nuncio seconded the motion. The motion carried.

### **Discussion**

Superintendent Ruiz explained that they would see a marked up copy of the terms of agreement. The only change that was made to the Articles of Agreement is the inclusion of the district of Ipswich located on the front page as one of the districts that have become members of the consortium. There has been no other change other than adding Ipswich as a member of the Consortium. School Committee members would vote to accept that revision. Mayor Driscoll clarified that in adding Ipswich, they would have 21 communities instead of 20. Superintendent Ruiz agreed.

Ms. Wilson motioned to accept the revision to the Articles of Agreement by Northshore Education Consortium. Mr. Cruz seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

### **Deliberation and Vote on the Field Trip Request from Salem High School for 24 Students to Participate in the Harvard Model Congress in Boston, MA on February 22-25, 2018**

Mr. Cruz motioned to approve the field trip request from Salem High School for 24 students to participate in the Harvard Model Congress in Boston, MA on February 22-25, 2018. Ms. Nuncio seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

### **Deliberation and Vote on the Salem High School Color Guard and Percussion Ensemble Band Field Trip Request to Participate in Out-of-State Trips, to Attend a Variety of Musical Trips and Competitions, for the following 2018 year:**

- Saturday, March 3
- Saturday, March 10
- Wednesday-Saturday April 18-21, 2018
- Wednesday-Saturday, April 13-16, 2018
- Friday, June 8 or 15, 2018

Ms. Wilson motioned to approve the field trip request from Salem High Color Guard and Percussion Ensemble Band to participate in out-of-state trips to attend a variety of musical trips and competitions as listed on the agenda. Ms. Nuncio seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

### **Deliberation and Vote on the Salem High Jr. R.O.T.C. Field Trip Request to Attend a Two-Day Field Trip to Halsey Academy in Elizabeth, New Jersey on March 23-24, 2018**

Ms. Wilson motioned to approve the field trip request from Salem High Jr. R.O.T.C. to attend a two-day field trip to Halsey Academy in Elizabeth, New Jersey on March 23-23, 2018. Ms. Campbell seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

### **Deliberation and Vote on the Salem High School Science Team Field Trip Request to Participate in a one-day Out-of-State Science Meet Trip to University of Connecticut on March 3, 2018 at 5:30am-7:00pm**

Ms. Wilson motioned to approve the field trip request from Salem High School Science Team to participate in a one-day out-of-state science meet trip to University of Connecticut on March 3, 2018. Ms. Campbell seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

**Deliberation and Vote to Accept a Donation to the Nathaniel Bowditch School in the Amount of \$1000 from Swift Staffing Agency to Support Unforeseen Needs for Families**

Ms. Nuncio motioned to accept a donation, to the Nathaniel Bowditch School, in the amount of \$1000 from Swift Staffing Agency to support unforeseen needs for families. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

**Finance Report**

**a. Approval of Warrants**

January 25, 2018 in the amount of \$301,833.78

February 1, 2018 in the amount of \$452,994.08

Ms. Wilson motioned to approve both warrants in the amounts listed on the Agenda. Mr. Cruz seconded the motion. The Motion was approved.

**Budget Transfers** - There were no budget transfers this evening

**Policy Subcommittee** - There were no Subcommittee reports

**School Committee Concerns and Resolutions**

Mr. Cruz had a questions regarding one of the public comments that was made this evening regarding the assignment policy and Kindergarten classes in March. He asked if more information might be provided about that. Mayor Driscoll responded that more information would be provided on the next School Committee meeting on February 12, 2018. Members agreed that more information on various requests would be provided at the next School Committee meeting.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the School Committee this evening, Ms. Nuncio entertained the motion to adjourn. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Angelica Alayon, Secretary  
Salem School Committee

Meeting Materials and Reports

School Committee Agenda February 5, 2018

Minutes of the Committee of the Whole (COW) January 13, 2018

Minutes of the January 16, 2018 Regular School Committee Meeting

Northshore Education Consortium Articles of Agreement Packet

Field Trip Requests From Salem High School