

Salem School Committee
Meeting Minutes
Monday, April 3, 2017

A regular meeting of the Salem School Committee was held on Monday, April 3, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in the School Committee Chambers at Collins Middle School, 29 Highland Avenue, Salem, MA.

Members Present: Mayor Kimberley Driscoll, Dr. Brendan R. Walsh, Ms. Mary Manning, Mr. James Fleming, Mr. Patrick Schultz, Ms. Kristine Wilson, and Ms. Deborah Amaral

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Margarita Ruiz, Superintendent, Kate Carbone, Assistant Superintendent, Margaret Marotta, Assistant Superintendent, Kristin Shaver, Business Manager, Kelley Rice, Chief of Communications and Jill Conrad, Chief of Systems Strategy.

Call to Order

Mayor Driscoll called the Regular Meeting of the Salem School Committee to order at 7:01 p.m.

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Fleming moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Schultz seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Discussion

Mr. Fleming motioned to remove the March 6, 2017 School Committee Minutes from the table. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mr. Schultz moved to approve the minutes of the March 20, 2017 School Committee Minutes. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. Mr. Fleming abstained from approval. The motion carried.

Questions and Comments from the Audience

A member of the audience, Heidi Guarino, spoke on behalf of the growth she has observed in the Carlton Elementary School over the last eight years. She urged School Committee members to retain the best of the Carlton Innovation Plan, think about scaling what has worked so well at the Carlton District-Wide to benefit more of Salem families and students, and take steps this year to ensure that the budget allows for the best of the Carlton Innovation Plan to continue and for all of Salem to benefit from the lesson of Carlton's unqualified success. She asked they please think of ways to bring more teachers in for learning walks, to leverage the knowledge that the Carlton teachers have gained to inform planning in other schools, and continuance of their commitment to their innovative teaching model.

Another member of the audience, Beth Ann Cornell, who is also parent of students at the Carlton school, spoke on behalf of the growth she has observed in the Carlton Elementary School over the last nine years and shared concern of the staffing shortage. She spoke on behalf of other parents that they can see that the Innovation Plan is not able to fully follow through on its promises because of recent cuts in staffing and the recent cut adjustments. They have seen shortages in staffing, including the Flex teacher, Reading specialist, Reading tutor, and the Success block. She shared that a few years ago her daughter entered Kindergarten in the 3rd trimester (March) and worries that she may be forced to transition up to each next level before she is academically and emotionally ready (which is what the Innovation Plan promises) in order to make room for students who are coming up behind her because of the staffing shortages. She worries that her daughter may be forced to start middle school before she is ready because of the loss of the Flex teacher that helps transition students up. Kindergarten parents are concerned about this because Carlton's Trimester Start Dates had not been fully considered when the District accepts students into Carlton each fall. She reiterated that parents could see that the Innovation Plan is not able to fully follow through on its promises because of recent cuts in staffing and the resulting program adjustments. They hope that the School Committee reinvest in resources so that the Innovation Plan can continue to be a success.

Superintendent Report – Margarita Ruiz

During the Superintendent's report, Ms. Ruiz thanked School Committee members and the public for attending the 2nd Citywide Conversation at Salem High on March 22nd. She noted in particular the participation of Saltonstall Elementary student Hawa Hamidou Tabayi. Ms. Ruiz thanked School Committee members, teachers, parents, business professionals, and many civic leaders who joined them on March 22nd at the High School for the 2nd City Wide conversation. Community meetings, focus groups, and online survey feedbacks will help shape the recommendations that will be presented to the School Committee as part of the Strategic Plan in May. Ms. Ruiz also thanked school leaders and staff that helped in the facilitation process that evening. She further noted that the district received a \$10,000 grant from the Nellie Mae Foundation to train Salem High students to be community conversation facilitators. Ms. Ruiz also invited School Committee and the public to attend Art Can Make A Difference at the PEM on Tuesday, April 4th and the annual Read Family Science Night at the Nathaniel Bowditch on April 6th. The price of admission is one unexpired canned good. Ms. Ruiz thanked all of the Art teachers in the district for putting this great event together. Ms. Ruiz ended her presentation. Mr. Fleming asked about the hours for the Read Family Science Fair. Ms. Amaral said it would be from 5:30 to 7:30. Ms. Ruiz agreed and thanked her.

Presentations and Reports

FY 18 Budget Presentation

Superintendent Margarita Ruiz gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Proposed FY18 Budget for the Salem Public Schools. Copies of the presentation were also made available to members of the audience. Ms. Ruiz outlined that one of their top priorities this year was to support the newly negotiated Salem Teachers' Union (STU), Paraprofessional, and AFSCME contracts. Eighty percent (80%) of the district budget supports personnel costs across the district. Seventy-one percent (71%) of the personnel

costs are for teachers. The budget also includes close to \$400,000 earmarked for professional development, workshop attendance, and tuition reimbursement to build the capacity and the practice of the teachers in the district. Ms. Ruiz talked about the restructuring of the priorities and guidelines for the budget to guide their decisions focusing on the alignment of resources to enrollment. They continued to build upon that this year. Ms. Ruiz continued with her report on the Budget presentation, which included the challenges they face and what they propose to do to meet those challenges. Ms. Ruiz concluded the presentation stating they continue to align resources with enrollment and student need. They are taking steps towards the implementation of the Strategic Plan. They are looking forward to fully develop the action steps for the plan to present them to the Committee in May.

Discussion

Mr. Fleming expressed a concern about the proposed budget for the Carlton School. He said they have to look and follow the Innovation Plan that was put in place several years ago that created that school. He urged the Superintendent to continue to look at the staffing needs of the Carlton School, the needs of the implementation of the plans they promised administrators and teachers at the Carlton School when they asked them to continue the good work and they would give them the resources. Ms. Ruiz agreed and said they have worked very closely and collaboratively with the Principal of the Carlton School to ensure that the school has the level of resources they feel they need and continue to support them. Dr. Walsh commented in support of Mr. Fleming's comments. He is not quite sure how they are realigning resources to strengthen the Innovation Model when they are telling them to do it with fewer people. In addition, Mr. Fleming referred to a plan that was approved by the Innovation Plan Committee that calls for very specific staffing. The size of the Carlton School at the time that the Innovation Plan was adopted was not what it is now; the school has grown. They have more students and a plan that is working. There are specific positions within that plan that have been eliminated before now despite student increase. Mayor Driscoll said that they are at the beginning of the dialogue and better understanding how the current Innovation Plan is working in terms of on the ground. Hearing from the Superintendent and staff is something they have time to do and understand; point is well taken. Ms. Ruiz said they received a draft renewal of the Carlton Innovation Plan and is looking forward to continuing those conversations and to bringing the new plan forward for the Committee to vote. Ms. Ruiz reiterated their commitment and support for all the schools, especially the Carlton School, which has had great success in the district. School Committee members discussed their views and thoughts on Salem schools. Dr. Walsh spoke in favor of the range of programs Salem High School offers. Mr. Fleming stated that two years ago, during a political forum, he advocated budgetary considerations based on need and not necessarily on population. He commented that Ms. Ruiz should be proud to have directed resources to where the need is; budget is primarily aimed at actual needs. Mayor Driscoll asked about expectations at individual schools, for school leaders, in case anyone requests information. They have a public hearing on April 24th and would like to make sure others are informed about what is going on. Ms. Ruiz said they are going to ask school leaders to have discussions with their school councils regarding other recommendations of the budget. They are also

going to publicize a line-by-line itemization of the budget book soon so that the public can review in preparation of the public hearing on the 24th.

Dr. Walsh motioned for a one-minute recess. Ms. Manning seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Discussion of the School Climate Survey for MCAS

Ms. Ruiz informed School Committee members on the School Climate Survey for MCAS that the Department of Education would be piloting this year as part of the MCAS Administration in May. She asked School Committee members to look in their packet for DESE Commissioner Mitchell D. Chester's letter. Ms. Ruiz asked Assistant Superintendent Kate Carbone to inform everyone what is happening this year. Ms. Carbone stated that the department is considering a School Climate indicator as part of the information that either gets configured into the accountability system or is shared with the public through the school profiles and report cards published on the website. They are piloting questions. This is standard. At the end of MCAS, the department typically has a questionnaire. The questions have tended to be more about the student's experience in the classroom or academics. This year, they are using this as an opportunity to pilot some school climate questions in grades 5, 8, and 10 only. This will occur after the Science MCAS for grades 5 and 8, which will happen in May – and the 10th grade Math assessment, which also happens in May. As part of the process and negotiations with teachers, they had a joint committee. They agreed on two surveys that are very similar to the questionnaires currently shown in the packets presented to School Committee members. Ms. Carbone said that the question is 'do we opt out?' It would be nice for them to support the pilot for the state but they already have similar data based on their own student surveys they administered at the beginning of February for all students for grades 3 through 12. They have comprehensive data set and the same surveys as last year. They have two years of consistent data. Ms. Manning asked if they have the District's survey for the state. Ms. Ruiz said that what they have in their packet is the letter from Commissioner Mitchell D. Chester and the questions on the questionnaire. The Commissioner had asked they do not present the state survey at the time. They are available to parents. Ms. Carbone said that the questions are similar to their School Climate surveys they shared with the School Committee during the middle of the year. Ms. Amaral and Dr. Walsh commented that this might be difficult for students after testing for the MCAS, which takes a long period of time. He understands the students' position but has no problem with presenting it. Ms. Manning said it can be given the day after the MCAS testing, does not have to be immediately taken after having taken the test. Dr. Walsh asked if they needed to act on this. School Committee members agreed that it does not and Mr. Fleming commented it is a non-funded mandate.

Discussion of the School Climate Questionnaire, included with the MCAS

Ms. Carbone said they have their own questionnaire. It would just be a matter of whether they would like to take on another survey. Mayor Driscoll suggested they ask the leadership team to give them back a recommendation and get some input from all of them after they have had some time to carefully review, what the process is. Guidance can be provided to the leadership team if it is something they do not want to do. All School Committee members agreed.

Action Item

Deliberation and Vote on the approval of the ROTC field trip of the Salem High JR. R.O.T.C 3-day field trip to Camp Curtis from April 28 to April 30, 2017.

Mr. Fleming motioned to approve the ROTC field trip of the Salem High JR. R.O.T.C 3-day field trip to Camp Curtis from April 28 to April 30, 2017. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. Mr. Michael Schultz and Ms. Mary Manning opposed the field trip. The Motion carried.

Finance Report

There was no finance report this evening.

Subcommittee Reports

Policy Subcommittee

- a. Deliberation and Vote on the Third Reading of Policy 6406 Voting Method – Tabled from March 20, 2017.

Ms. Amaral requested that this policy remain tabled.

- b. Deliberation and Vote on a Third Reading of Policy 6408 entitled Minutes to SC Meetings.
- c. Deliberation and Vote on the Third Reading of the Recommendations of the Policy Subcommittee on the revisions to the following policies:

1101	School – Community Relations Goals and deletion of
3202	Acceptance of Gifts Grants and Bequests
6114	Use of Electronic Messaging by School Committee Members

Discussion

Ms. Amaral clarified that Items b. and c. - Policies 6408, 1101, 1301, 3202, and 6114 have already gone through three readings and should no longer be in the Agenda.

School Committee Concerns and Resolutions

Dr. Walsh said that one concern he had was that a majority of the audience left after the Budget presentation. He hoped they did not leave thinking that the document that was presented tonight is in its final form; that it is subject to change. Mayor Driscoll said she hopes so as they made it clear that it is the beginning of the process. There will be a public hearing and an opportunity the school communities to carefully review the

information. The Superintendent can work with principals and principals can work with school counsels, to ensure communication consistency.

Ms. Amaral apologized for arriving late to the meeting this evening and wanted to comment on the Minutes for March 6, 2017. She said there were errors in the Minutes that need correction, including a missing statement regarding the legal contract. Mayor Driscoll asked if they were clerical. Ms. Amaral said that Mr. Fleming had promised that the legal service would not be a single source, and that comment was not reflected in the Minutes. All agreed to direct the School Committee Secretary to acknowledge that on the Minutes.

Questions and Comments from the Audience

A member from the audience, Ms. Luz Barreto-Longus, spoke on behalf of the need to hire more Latino staff members in the district. She will be retiring at the end of the school year, explained her services at the Salem High School as a Latino Guidance Counselor, and shared her professional background, including serving at the Salem High School for 31 years. Ms. Barreto-Longus informed of the need to expand Bilingual Guidance Counselors services to include English-speaking students. She said it is necessary that the Salem School Committee, the Superintendent, and Principals actively recruit Latino professionals that can serve all students in Salem. She shared her ideas on the need to advertise for new positions in minority recruitment websites such as the www.newenglandminoritynetwork.com, www.latinamericanprofessionals.com, advertise for openings where there is a need for Latino professionals in the Spanish media. She would be happy to help. She also suggested other resources such as El Mundo Boston, La Semana, Lawrence Vale, El Planeta, Hola Noticias, Latino Times, Las Americas newspaper, La Voz Hispana, Al Punto Univision, The Rainbow Times, and by working with the Latino Coalition in Salem. She also hopes that City Connects work with Latino Adjustment Counselors K through 8 to serve the ELL students that are not able to express their emotions in English.

A member from the audience, Geoff Millar, spoke against cuts regarding the Budget process. He reminded the School Committee members that they are politicians as they go out, pull nomination papers, place their names on ballots, seek votes, and win a seat on this body. He stated that decisions are made without inquiring information from school leaders on what the actual needs are. He was concerned that the questions asked is not what is needed but what can be given up. He suggested they pass the budget as they do to the City Counsel. If parents, families, and faculties have complaints about that, the response from the City Council is an immediate referral to the School Committee. He shared that cuts are made where salaries may be increased and suggested a direct approach to school administration directly in order to have a clear guideline on schools' actual needs. Then submit a budget with those details.

Alexandra Piñeros Shields, a 14-year resident of Salem advocated that the Carlton Innovation Plan be fully funded and fully staffed. She talked of how administrative leadership in school is very important. She spoke of short-term teachers and the negative effect it had on her family while her daughter attended the Nathaniel Bowditch Elementary. Her daughter had a new teacher and a new principal every year she attended the school.

Consistency and who the principal is are very important. Her daughter has thrived at Carlton Elementary. Carlton has opened up her mind and she is such a self-directed learner. She said that the Innovation Plan model is working very well. She is here to advocate that fixing something that works very well is unnecessary. The lesson at Carlton is that the Innovation Model works. She heard that the Carlton might lose the Assistant Principal. This information caused her to think back on their experience at the Nathaniel Bowditch Elementary School. She urged School Committee members to implement the original Innovation Plan, which is at the Carlton School to also be implemented at the Nathaniel Bowditch Elementary.

There were no further speakers.

Additional Announcements

Margarita Ruiz announced an important event to be held tomorrow, April 4th, the LEAP for Education Fundraiser 6PM at the Danversport Yacht Club. They do so much for the students and Ms. Ruiz wanted to share that with the public and support them as well. Dr. Walsh spoke in light of one of the speakers tonight. He said he has been involved for about 20 years with the Giving Tree Award at Salem High School, which will be given to a student on May 25th. It is also given to an adult member who has done service to the community above and beyond the call of duty. Normally, the first announcement is made in the newspaper. Given the situation on who is here tonight, Dr. Walsh pointed out that this year's winner of the Adult Giving Tree Award for Salem is Mr. Omar Longus.

Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted by:

Angelica Alayon, Secretary
Salem School Committee

Meeting Materials and Reports

School Committee Agenda April 3, 2017
School Committee Minutes March 6, 2017
School Committee Minutes March 20, 2017
FY18 Budget Presentation
Discussion of School Climate Survey for MCAS
Discussion of School Climate Questionnaire, included with the MCAS
Paraprofessionals MOU Contract
Stoneham, Chandler, and Miller Legal Services Agreement
ROTC Field Trip
Policies