

Salem School Committee
Meeting Minutes
Monday, April 8, 2019

A regular meeting of the Salem School Committee was held on Monday, April 8, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. in the School Committee Chambers at Collins Middle School, 29 Highland Avenue, Salem, MA.

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

Members Absent: Ms. Amanda Campbell

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

Call of Meeting to Order

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

Amended Consent Agenda

- Minutes of the School Committee meeting held March 25, 2019
- Approval of Warrants: 4/4/19 in the amount of \$515,770.62, 4/11/19 in the amount of \$197,055.49

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

Approval of the Agenda

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

Prior to opening for public comment, Mayor Driscoll shared initial thoughts, with the audience, on the accomplishments and progress made in Salem Schools, changes currently in process, and assured the audience of the School Committee's commitment to the progress and improvement of academic achievements, communication, and transparency in all Salem Schools.

Public Comment #1: Questions and Comments From the Audience

Dr. Brendan Walsh, 5 West Terrace, shared his concerns about recent events that have affected the reputation of Salem Schools. Dr. Walsh reminded the members of the School Committee that they are the final authority in the school system and the need to act accordingly.

Carrie Francis, 90 Federal Street, Executive Director of the Salem Education Foundation, said they seek to be a consistent voice that pushes and partners with the district and the School Committee to address the deep complex issues that are facing Salem Schools and affecting all of the students and continue to celebrate success while digging deeper to solidify and address the systemic issues ahead of them. Parents were invited to join their conversation series this Thursday, April 11, 2019 at 7:30pm at Espacio Community Center located at 105 Congress Street in Salem, MA. There will be activities and simultaneous interpretation.

Alexa Ogno, 180A Federal Street, President of Salem Education Foundation, said she hopes that the cancelled Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting previously scheduled for this evening to review and discuss results of interviews with former NBS students and families would still take place.

Catherine Miller, 15 Warren Street, asked about Bertram Field being closed again from November 2019 until September 2020 and feels the closing is unnecessary as it is used a great deal. Ms. Miller would like the City to work harder to keep it open. Ms. Miller addressed the need for a crossing guard at the playground that is located at the corner of Broad and Jackson Street.

Stacia Kraft, 140 Federal Street, Parent, spoke on behalf of concerned Salem residents and Parents of Salem Public School students, both active stakeholders, read a list of grievances to the Salem School Committee and asked the School Committee to take a vote of 'No Confidence' for the Superintendent of Salem Schools, Margarita Ruiz, and

for the Chair of the School Committee, Mayor Kimberley Driscoll. Ms. Kraft submitted the paperwork to the Secretary of the Salem School Committee for processing. This document is attached.

Tim Flynn, 42 Sable Road, Ward for City Counselor, shared he has seen a downfall of Salem Public Schools and need for good leadership. Mr. Flynn shared his discontentment of the closing of the Nathaniel Bowditch School, overwhelming overload of students at other schools due to that closing, and the recent Principal hiring process. Mr. Flynn said Salem students are great and shared his concern for students that are being left behind. Mr. Flynn echoed they have the best teachers and principals of the North Shore, commented on the need for transparency, and suggested the inclusion of teachers, School Committee, and parents in the hiring process.

Robert Kennedy, 17 Carlton Street, shared his concern about the Superintendent's ability to work with teachers, something that was brought to the attention of the School Committee without results. Mr. Kennedy shared his discontentment of the Mayor's performance regarding Salem Schools. Mr. Kennedy shared his concern regarding the increased amount of turnover in Salem Public Schools, asked Mayor Driscoll to step down, and asked the School Committee for a commitment to democracy, stating they do not have one at this time.

Clair Cloutier, 12 Pearl Street, Parent, said that the focus has been on what has been happening at the High School and stated she thinks there are major problems throughout the district, not just the High School, with the inclusion of the closing of the Nathaniel Bowditch School. Ms. Cloutier talked about other Elementary Schools having to absorb the increased number of students without clear explanation of why it's happened and its capacity at any of the elementary schools. Ms. Cloutier continued she thinks it illustrates more existing problems in the district, aside from the High School.

Presentation and Reports

Superintendent's Report – Margarita Ruiz

Superintendent Ruiz took a moment to briefly address the concerns expressed.

Other Reports

Update on questions posed during the 4/1 School Committee meeting

Superintendent addressed a list of questions that arose at the April 1, 2019 School Committee meeting. One of the questions was related to the assignment process on how they arrived at the 50/50 ratio for economically disadvantaged versus economically advantaged students. Ms. Conrad provided an explanation of how they arrived at the 50/50 enrollment targets and whether or not they could be unique to each school. Ms. Conrad walked members through the information provided in the packet. Ms. Conrad talked about the level of choice regarding the school choices and referred the School Committee to the table in the packet that provide the information. Superintendent Ruiz responded to a prior concern of the School Committee members regarding the absence of a student counsel. Ms. Ruiz reported that she connected with Mr. Cruz, after the previous School Committee meeting and are in the process of ensuring a counsel is put in place. Ms. Ruiz explained that Ms. Conrad is gathering information in order for them to put a guideline in place.

Mr. Cruz reported that he met with a group of students, a couple of weeks ago, regarding the student advisory counsel. The meeting consisted of listening to student questions and explaining some of the research that he has done on student advisory committees. Mr. Cruz continued that they agreed he would do some research and make some introductions for students to the Boston Student Advisory Counsel so that this group of students could visit them and learn about their practices, how they run their elections, what their by-laws are like and gain better understanding of the relationships of the Boston Student Advisory Committee, School Committee, and District Leadership. Mr. Cruz explained that he also committed to making an introduction to Youth on Board, a non-profit organization that works directly with the Boston Student Advisory Counsel who train how to be board members and have a great relationship. Mr. Cruz shared that he met with Ms. Rachel Gunther. Mr. Cruz continued that Ms. Campbell had also met with the students and that he and she spoke and would both like for the School Committee to authorize them to serve as the School Committee's liaisons to the Student Advisory Counsel on student voice and work with the district to help set up the student advisory counsel. Mr. Cruz stated he plans on making that motion later on in the meeting. Mr. Cruz explained that they were brainstorming on different groups that they could be reaching out to, within the district, as they look at the potential folks who might like to join the student advisory counsel. Mr. Cruz shared they are also looking

forward to making some adjustments to the current policy and that he is keeping the students informed of that as well.

Mayor Driscoll mentioned that April 11, 2019 is Student Government Day for anyone who is interested and has not signed up for it. They have a full boat of activities planned for that day, and the City has a Youth Commission. Mayor Driscoll recalled some of the student engagement work that are already underway with the Youth Commission and stated that it would be great to either build off of that, or continue to figure out an intersection between that work and the work at the student advisory counsel.

Superintendent Ruiz addressed questions regarding the mode of communication. They are looking to receive actual feedback from families on the modes of communication that works best for them and will soon present those to the School Committee. Ms. Ruiz talked about the enrollment level this year and where they are in terms of the reassignment of the students. Superintendent Ruiz explained that the topic of attendance and academic data would also be included at the next School Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting.

Mr. Fleming addressed the audience and stated that anyone may attend School Committee of the Whole (COW) meetings although it is not a regular School Committee meeting. Mayor Driscoll mentioned that the next School Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting would be April 22, 2019.

Superintendent Ruiz shared detailed information regarding the ALICE training program and the drills process that takes place twice a year and the communications to families beforehand and the day of the drill. The information of the materials are on the School's website. Superintendent Ruiz said they will be partnering with the Salem Police Department to host two (2) district-wide parent information sessions: Monday, April 29, 2019 at 6:30pm for parents of students in grades K-5 at the Horace Mann School and Tuesday, April 30, 2019 at 6:30pm for parents of students in grades 6-12 (middle and High School) at the Salem High School. All parents and families are encouraged to attend. Ms. Ruiz talked about the annual cost of the ALICE training.

Ms. Nuncio suggested having upfront meetings with parents and families where they can be directly informed prior to the training, not just through the website as not everyone might be able to access the information online.

Discussion on the comparison of percentages

Mayor Driscoll asked questions on the variable percentages (no significant differences between 2017 and 2018) with respect to former Nathaniel Bowditch students that went to other elementary schools, and said she would like to see the numbers (5 and 10 years out) between cycles. Ms. Driscoll said she would like to see prior five and ten year cycles. Ms. Conrad responded she would work to provide that information and shared that different measures were used prior to 2014. Ms. Conrad agreed with Mayor Driscoll to make an apples to apples comparisons as far back as possible and provide that context.

Discussion on the comparison of percentages

Mayor Driscoll asked questions about the variation in percentages of economically disadvantaged students between 2017 and 2018. She wanted to know if the reassignment of former Nathaniel Bowditch students had significant impacts on those percentages across the schools. The Mayor indicated that she would like to see those percentages, going back several years, 5 to 10 years out to see the effects over time. Ms. Conrad responded she would work to provide that information and reminded the Committee to keep in mind that different measures were used to calculate "low income" students, prior to 2014. Ms. Conrad agreed with Mayor Driscoll to make apples to apples comparisons as far back as possible and provide that context at a future meeting.

Discussion on overcrowdedness in classroom

Members asked questions and engaged in discussion on the topic of student advisory. Mayor Driscoll agreed with Mr. Fleming's comment on the topic of amount of students in classrooms that cause overcrowdedness in classrooms and the need for further review and discussion, in terms of appropriate number capacity of each classroom.

Discussion on School Safety

Mayor Driscoll talked about the helpful resource access of an ALICE training video be offered on the website for families to review. Ms. Driscoll talked with both Facilities and Buildings and Grounds regarding additional school safety opportunities that exist. The governor has a grant that both school and police have collaborated on whether it is cameras for example. Ms. Driscoll flagged these for consideration at a later School Committee meeting, perhaps in May.

Personal Statement by School Committee Member

Mr. Cruz shared a written personal statement with the Superintendent and the public. A copy of his statement is attached. Mr. Fleming echoed the remarks of Mr. Cruz, in terms of trust, and shared his reasons.

Update on Our Salem, Our Kids

Ms. Emily Ullman, Director of School Community Engagement and Partnership in Salem, reported and presented on the work that is being done through the Salem Children's cabinet on Our Salem, Our Kids.

Action Items: Old Business

Deliberation and Vote on the request of facilities fee waiver for the use of the Bertram Field on Saturday, June 15, 2019 from 5-7pm

Mr. Fleming motioned to continue the request of facilities fee waiver, for the use of the Bertram Field on Saturday, June 15, 2019, from 5-7pm, to the Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee for further review and discussion to take place on Thursday. The motion to refer the matter to the Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee meeting for further review and discussion continues to carry.

Action Item: New Business

Deliberation and Vote on the SY 2019-20 School Calendars

1. SY 2019-20 Calendar for ECC, Bates, Horace Mann, Collins, and Witchcraft Heights Elementary Schools
2. SY 2019-20 Calendar for Salem High School
3. SY 2019-20 Calendar for Saltonstall K-8 School
4. SY 2019-20 Calendar for Carlton Innovation School
5. SY 2019-20 Calendar for New Liberty Innovation School

Discussion

Mr. Fleming explained that based on a survey, parents do not want to change the calendar to an extra week of vacation and that it costs the district. Mr. Fleming said he does not agree to the extra October and November vacation week of the Saltonstall K-8 School calendar and opposes its approval.

Mr. Fleming motioned to approve the proposed SY 2019-20 Salem Public School calendars, with the exception of the Saltonstall K-8 School. Mr. Cruz seconded the motion. The motion to approve the Salem Public School calendars, with the exception of the Saltonstall School, carried.

Mr. Fleming motioned to approve the proposed Saltonstall K-8 School calendar. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Deliberation and Vote on the Fund for Our Future Resolution

Discussion

Mayor Driscoll explained that there is a current process underway in the State Legislature looking to improve funding formulas under a reform after several years of review and analysis by state leaders and others. The funding formula has not kept up with district needs, particularly of urban districts that have higher cost factors in several areas. There has been a great push to encourage legislature to enhance the formula that is consistent with the requirement of the constitution that every student, in every community, be given a full and fair education. The Salem Teachers Union submitted the resolution to the School Committee and asked their support on the new level of funding and having that in place by May 1st, 2019 would help cities and towns better understand what they are looking at for additional aid. Mayor Driscoll shared further information on the funding education cost bill in Salem.

Ms. Manning motioned to approve the full Fund for Our Future Resolution. Mr. Fleming seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Finance Report - None

Subcommittee Reports

Ms. Nuncio provided an update on the Policy Subcommittee meetings. They have finished review of the policies in the 4000 series pending a certain number of policies that require legal input. They are moving on to the 5000 category. One of the policies they recently reviewed, with regard to the student advisory counsel, is dependent on what Ms. Campbell and Mr. Cruz are doing.

School Committee Concerns and Resolutions

Mr. Cruz motioned to appoint Ms. Campbell and him to be granted the authority by the School Committee body to serve as the liaisons to the district on student voice. Mr. Fleming seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Public Comment #2: Questions and Comments From the Audience

Stephen Beaupalont, 18 Varney Street, clarified on what it means when students come in from other schools or whether enrollment will change. He does not think parents are advocating for temporary placement of their children or repeated placements. Mr. Beaupalont commented on the Superintendent's comment of resetting communication, the unnecessary need of 18-month commitment of an unlicensed High School principal, and would like to see the hire of a High School Principal.

Elisha Arnold, 81 Moffatt Road, shared her discontentment on the lack of details on the Minutes, the spelling of her name, unclear responses to questions from the Superintendent, and non-reliable and outdated communication. Ms. Arnold asked the School Committee to please ensure they receive clear and concise responses from the Superintendent.

Kelly Cahill, 2 Orne Square, talked about the lack of space in Salem schools.

Alexa Ogno, 180A Federal Street, talked about the overcrowding at Witchcraft Heights, numbers of student enrollments in the schools, and overcrowdedness.

Donna Fritz, 57 Summit Street, shared she hopes to receive clear responses to her questions, asked what the enrollment plans are for Witchcraft Heights and their need to hire more nurses to meet student needs, and asked how they intended to manage the large number of students in all grades, through the next five years.

Erika Conklin, 11 Savoy Road, shared that she attended a meeting at the High School last week and the agenda did not list any time for parents to speak. Ms. Conklin shared further feedback and asked about the annual reports that are no longer visible online nor at the City Clerks office.

Brian Dawson, 30 Dearborn Street, asked when would they be able to have a dialogue about resolution, with the responsible people, to have things done rather than just be listened to and receive a simple 'thank you' for their comments. Mr. Dawson asked the School Committee if there is ever an actual time where they can meet and have a dialogue about their concerns, as the current communication is not conducive to getting things done. Mr. Dawson shared his concerns and said he hopes that the School Committee evaluates the work that is being done when they look at the 360-degree process.

Liz McGovern, 8 Lyme Street, provided an update on SEPAC, the Special Education Parent Advisory Counsel. Ms. McGovern explained they had about 20-25 parent inquiries this year, through their Facebook page. Ms. McGovern shared further details about SEPAC, said they are available, may be found in Facebook, and are very responsive to their Facebook page. Ms. McGovern shared that Salem Education and Scholarship Committee is up and running. They are based on a Salem commission on disabilities where any senior resident of Salem (not necessarily from Salem Public Schools) can apply for a scholarship from the city. The scholarship is funded by donations from excise and property taxes for example. The scholarship application deadline is May 15, 2019. Ms. McGovern continued that they can find the information on the www.salem.com website. Their next meeting will take place on April 22, 2019, at 6:30pm, in the Media Conference Room in the Annex Building, Salem, MA.

Stella Rowley, 11 Savoy Road, shared that previously spoke at prior School Committee meetings about proposed schedule changes that have been put on hold and inconsistencies in communication. Ms. Rowley talked of how important it is for students to be informed and included to what is happening at their schools to build and maintain trust. Ms. Rowley talked about the lack of student inclusion to the changes and what is happening in their schools.

Jillian Flynn, 3 Becket Street, added to Ms. Rowley's remarks on the inconsistencies of information to what is happening in their schools that are causing students to distrust.

Paige Pattison, 76 Moffatt Road, said she was called down to a meeting with the Superintendent the day that the new principal was hired at the High School and felt that the purpose of the meeting was to hush them. Ms. Pattison shared she does not know if she can trust the Superintendent.

Geoff Millar, 29 Boardman Street, commented the situation that is happening at the High School with regards to the Principal is cause for the School Committee to be cautious and be more observant. Mr. Millar also talked about the Kindergarten assignment numbers of the presentation this evening and of how the percentages of economically disadvantaged students on the enrollment targets document do not match what is currently on the DESE website for October 2018-19. Mr. Millar walked School Committee members through the numbers as compared to DESE and talked about the need for budget assistance for school materials for teachers.

Ms. Conrad briefly responded to Mr. Millar's concerns saying that the data that is currently on the DESE website was not available or published on the website on January 7th, when the enrollment targets were set. The data used to set the enrollment targets were from the same, October 1st data set, however, there may have been a difference in actual enrollments between October 1 and January 4, affecting the percentages slightly. The student assignment policy requires that enrollment targets be set in January, prior to the start of the Kindergarten registration process, so even though the data was not yet available on the website at that time, the district received the data via spreadsheet file from DESE, which is what was used to run the enrollment target calculations. In addition, Ms. Conrad clarified that the document shared, dated January 4, 2019, was not intended to be an update on the percentages of economically disadvantaged in the schools, but rather a re-sharing of the document that had been presented, during the January 7th School Committee meeting. Members asked questions and agreed that data would be double-checked with DESE for any current data change updates to ensure that data is as accurate as possible, going forward.

Jamie Lapensee, 61 Butler Street, shared her concern of the Superintendent's need for improved communication and talked of the various common ways for the Superintendent to communicate with families, as needed. Ms. Lapensee advised and requested the School Committee to improve communication now and listed the common ways of communication to consider.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the School Committee this evening. Mr. Fleming entertained the motion to adjourn the Regular School Committee meeting, not to return to open session. Mr. Cruz seconded the motion. The Regular School Committee meeting was adjourned.

Deliberation and Vote on the Superintendent's Recommendation for the Executive Director of Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) position

Executive Session

Mr. Fleming motioned to move to Executive Session to conduct the strategy in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel. Ms. Manning seconded the motion.

School Committee Secretary Roll Call

Ms. Mary Manning	Yes
Mr. James Fleming	Yes
Ms. Kristine Wilson	Yes
Ms. Ana Nuncio	Yes
Mr. Manny Cruz	Yes
Ms. Amanda Campbell	Absent
Mayor Kimberley Driscoll	Yes

Of the 6 members voting, six (6) members voted ‘Yes’ with (1) member absent. The matter carried with a motion of 6 in the ‘*affirmative*’ and 1 ‘*absent*’. Members adjourned to move to Executive Session to conduct the strategy in preparation for negotiations with the non-union personnel.

Executive Session

Mayor Driscoll motioned to open Executive Session for the purpose to conduct the strategy in preparation for negotiations with the non-union personnel. Mr. Fleming seconded the motion.

Members conducted the strategy in preparation for negotiations with the non-union personnel.

Motion to Adjourn and End Session

School Committee Secretary Roll Call

Ms. Mary Manning	Yes
Mr. James Fleming	Yes
Ms. Kristine Wilson	Yes
Ms. Ana Nuncio	Yes
Mr. Manny Cruz	Yes
Ms. Amanda Campbell	Absent
Mayor Kimberley Driscoll	Yes

Of the 6 members voting, six (6) members voting, 6 voted ‘Yes’ with (1) member absent. The matter carried with a motion of 6 in the ‘*affirmative*’. Members adjourned from Executive Session.

Respectfully submitted by:

Angelica Alayon, Secretary to the
Salem School Committee

Meeting Materials and Reports

School Committee Amended Consent agenda April 8, 2019

Minutes of the March 25, 2019 School Committee meeting

Update on Questions Raised During the 3/25/19 School Committee meeting

2019-20 School Enrollment Targets for Student Assignment January 4, 2019

Resolution in Support of Full Funding for Our Public Schools request

Our Salem, Our Kids presentation

Facilities fee waiver request for use of the Bertram Field on Saturday, June 15, 2019 from 5-7pm

SY 2019-20 Calendar for ECC, Bates, Horace Mann, Collins, and Witchcraft Heights Elementary Schools

SY 2019-20 Calendar for Salem High School

SY 2019-20 Calendar for Saltonstall K-8 School

SY 2019-20 Calendar for Carlton Innovation School

SY 2019-20 Calendar for New Liberty Innovation School

Written statements submitted to the School Committee attached

Official Statement:

Superintendent Ruiz, Over the past month I have taken the time to evaluate the high school principal situation and how the administration has handled the ensuing fallout. During this time in the district, I have had the opportunity to meet with parents, students, educators, my colleagues, and former SC members to better understand the varying impacts and perspectives on the situation. As one of the leaders of this school district, I pride myself on four pillars: 1. Empathy 2. Building Positive Relationships with stakeholders 3. Reciprocal Dialogue 4. Transparency. I believe that these pillars are critical to my practice and development as a leader in this community. My professional advice to you would be to take these pillars and fully implement them into your practice because without them you cannot succeed as a leader in this community.

As I listened to hours of testimony from parents and students, reviewed your words and subsequent actions, tonight I find it critically important that I share with you and the public my honest feedback about the processes that I have watched unfold:

With respect to the principal appointment process, I'll first start with some background. Under the Massachusetts Education reform in 1993, the responsibility of hiring of almost all school district personnel was transferred from school committees to superintendents and principals. Specifically, members of the public can reference Title 12, Chapter 71, Section 59B which states that the "superintendent of a school district shall appoint principals for each public school within the district at levels of compensation determined in accordance with policies established by the school committee". The subsequent section assigns principals the authority to hire teachers.

As a school committee, we primarily serve as the policy-making body for the school district and as a body, we have the authority to appoint and remove the superintendent in accordance with state laws and our local policies.

Anyone interested in the topic will come across a DESE Advisory on the superintendent's hiring authority. The Advisory states that it is a best practice for the Superintendent to keep the school committee and public informed of the principal hiring process. It is also good practice for superintendents and principals to involve broad-based screening committees for hiring.

Superintendent Ruiz, I am deeply concerned about the process you used to make the 18-month appointment at the high school. I find it very problematic in your March 20th letter to the editor you stated the timing was the reason why you did not use the established procedure for selecting a new leader, and that this is a process that you deeply valued.

I think you need to clarify the emails that have since become public: In those emails, you appeared to suggest that the destabilizing factor in appointing the principal was the normal process used for hiring principals. You led us to believe that the destabilizing factor was not having an experienced leader at the helm, and the challenges associated with the redesign. I think you need to immediately clarify the following:

In the January 29th email, it was stated that Dr. Pacifico contacted you about an interim principal position at the high school, after a conversation with Ms. Beatriz Zapater. Ms. Zapater is not an elected member of the school committee. Nor is Ms. Zapater an administrator in this district. When did you

inform Ms. Zapater that you were looking for a new principal at the HS? Why did you choose to inform her of this upcoming decision months in advance of the school committee? Confidentiality is not a permissible explanation.

As the Superintendent, at any time, you could have requested an executive session to discuss personnel-related matters. That's how this partnership works. Instead, you left the committee in the dark until March, when the students published the op-ed about the scheduling changes at the HS.

As a school committee member I have come to the conclusion that you:

1. May not value school committee input
2. And that you preferred to make the decision amongst the administrators and with outside consultants.

I want to be clear. Like many of the parents on Thursday night, I am not directing any comments to Dr. Pacifico. I've reviewed her resume and her professional website. I have a responsibility to evaluate and critique the process that was used to appoint her as the leader of the high school. That falls back on the administration. From a communications standpoint, the way you have described the concerns regarding licensure and certification is problematic. The license to be a principal is a little more than just a piece of paper and nonissue. According to my research, an unlicensed principal cannot evaluate staff. If Dr. Pacifico cannot evaluate staff at the high school, then who has taken on the responsibility while she awaits a decision from DESE on a waiver? Transparency means that you must lay all of the facts out on the table so that every stakeholder can properly digest the information.

We were asked at our meeting on March 25th, how are we preventing the next crisis in the district. I think one way to have averted this crisis was to be transparent with us, the authority that you directly report to. It could have given us the time as a body to help you navigate what was going to be a difficult transition.

Superintendent Ruiz, trust is supposed to be reciprocal. As you utilize your administrative authority it is imperative that you trust us to provide you with our feedback, guidance, and support. You cannot continue to work with your administrative team and outside consultants in a vacuum without regard for the input of the School Committee and the Community.

Superintendent Ruiz, the only way you can make any gains on repairing the trust that has been broken with the School Committee and the Community, is for you to change your processes in the district and to relinquish some control by truly incorporating the voices of students, parents, educators, and school committee members in district decision making.

As school committee members we do have options. In my view, we can create new policies, the evaluation process, and the upcoming budget serves as the tools that as a body we can use to transform the dynamics in the districts.

With respect to policies, I specifically feel as though we must consider the following:

1. The formal adoption of the broad-based screening committee process for principals as a school committee policy and procedure. This would be for both the regular hiring process and for appointments that are not interim.

2. Additionally, I think this policy should be expanded to include Screening Committees for all district-level positions. That would include positions of principals, assistant principals, the ELL Director, the CTE Director, the Director of Guidance, The Director HR, the Director of Nursing and similar positions.

At our first retreat, I made it clear that one of my top priorities as a School Committee member was retention and the development of a leadership pipeline so that we can promote from within when appropriate. We do have a policy regarding personnel reports. We updated the policy so that we could receive a quarterly update. We have yet to receive this report.

With all the concerns I heard about vacancies I took it upon myself to review the listing of available positions on the website. I found several noteworthy positions:

1. Director of Digital Learning,
2. Director of Career and Technical Education
3. Director of Nursing
4. Director of Guidance
5. Assistant principal Carlton Innovation School

Madam Chair, I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these anticipated vacancies, and positions in executive session next week or in the immediate future. We need to begin to fully understand why these positions have not been filled or why they are vacant. As a school committee and community, we need to apply strict scrutiny as to why we cannot retain our staff.

In closing, Superintendent Ruiz, this is my honest feedback and my concerns. I hope that you have taken note of them and will work diligently to respond and implement changes to your practice. As one of your evaluators, I will continue to assess your performance with fidelity so that this community can get the level of accountability it deserves from this school committee.

To the members of the public; the parents, the educators and the students who entrusted me with this responsibility to serve on this committee. I want you to know that I am here to listen and to serve. I am taking your concerns into account and incorporating your feedback into my decision-making process.

I know that many of you are frustrated, and I join you in those frustrations. I have heard from some of you, that you are tired. That you may feel like quitting. Please don't. Please know that the love and care that you have demonstrated in advocating for your child permeates throughout this district. I was an at-risk youth who was able to transform his life because of this community.

I am a proud alumnus of the Salem Public Schools; I went to Horace Mann, Collins Middle School, and graduated from Salem High School. I am a sitting member of this committee in large part because of my teachers, mentors, my peers, and all of the parents that advocated to improve the school system while I was a student. I want all of our kids to succeed, and as a school district, we cannot get there without your voices.