

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Board of Trustees of Salem Academy Charter School
Wednesday, December 15, 2021
Via Zoom**

Members present remotely:

Sasha Durand, William Henning, Susan Low, Dan McCaughey, Shelby Morrison,
David Pabich, Alison Palmer, Mekka Smith, Mikki Wilson, Rick Winter, Christine
Wynne

Members absent:

Edward Aroko, Rick Jones, Paula Pitcher

Staff present remotely:

Stephanie Callahan, Alex Dean, Diego Fellows

Guests present remotely:

None

Recorder present remotely:

Shelby Hypes

I. Call to Order

Treasurer Rick Winter called the monthly meeting of the Salem Academy Charter School Board of Trustees to order at 6:22 PM on December 15, 2021, via Zoom.

II. Minutes of the Meeting of November 17, 2021

Mekka Smith moved to accept the minutes as submitted, seconded by Mikki Wilson. With an abstention by Bill Henning, the motion otherwise passed unanimously via roll call vote.

III. Public Comment

With no guests present, there were no public comments.

IV. SFC Report

Bessie Marashi introduced herself as the new moderator of the SFC, replacing Amy Stewart, who resigned due to other pressing commitments. Bessie reported that the calendar raffle has just completed and was very successful. Establishments were very generous, donating \$1450 worth of gift cards and baskets and enabling students to raise \$7700, all of which goes directly into their accounts.

The SFC will not meet again until February, when the next fundraiser takes place. This will be the Boone online product sale; we work with Boone in part because we receive a higher percentage (40%) of the proceeds than with many companies. These are split 50/50 between student accounts and the SFC, which depends on this sale for much of its revenues. Bessie also said that, although the sale itself runs for two weeks, we will continue to receive proceeds from any subsequent sales.

V. Governance Committee Report

Bill Henning presented the proposed slate of officers for 2022: Mekka Smith, Chair; Dan McCaughey, Vice Chair; Christine Wynne, Secretary; and Rick Winter, Treasurer. Sasha Durand moved to accept the proposed slate, seconded by Shelby Morrison. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote, followed by several remarks expressing confidence in our new leaders and excitement for the year ahead.

Bill then proposed Mark Stevens and Toyuwa Newton as new board members, each to serve a three-year term beginning January 1, 2022. Both are parents of Salem Academy students, have strong financial background and bring a variety of skills to the Board. Christine Wynne moved to elect them to the Board, seconded by Rick Winter. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.

Bill concluded his report by telling us that Paula Pitcher has moved and, due to distance, has had to resign from the Board. Last, he encouraged Board members to review their committee appointments and make any changes before the new year begins.

Christine Wynne then recognized the many contributions of outgoing members, Board Chair David Pabich and Vice Chair Rick Jones. Their energy, knowledge, advice, and commitment have been invaluable. Their presence on the Board will be missed, but we are glad both will continue to serve on the Facilities Committee. Appropriate plaques and gifts have been given to each.

VI. Onward Presentation

Mekka Smith briefly reiterated the process of understanding our individual backgrounds, which was the focus of our November meeting; understanding the status of our equity work, which is the goal of tonight's meeting; and, after that, planning together for the future.

CEO Thaly Germain and Project Producer Marielle Narcisa introduced themselves, their roles, and Onward's work with a broad range of organizations—for-profit and non-profit, large and small, staff and boards. Marielle noted that, in conjunction with its consulting services, Onward also has a strong R&D focus to develop new tools for equity work. Familiar with Salem and Salem Academy from past a past association, Thaly spoke to Onward's selectivity in choosing partners committed to real change, and that, rather than preparing typical consultant slide decks, Onward is very hands-on, in-the-trenches involved.

The goal of the current data and discovery (D&D) phase is to understand the community and its needs, good, bad, and ugly. Onward has observed classes as well as having talked with faculty, staff, and students both informally and in a full-day session. They have interviewed Board members, and have distributed a Survey Report, along with other preparatory materials for equity work.

Thaly spoke primarily to how Onward works with its partners, with an emphasis on honesty, directness, and pushing us to be the best we can be, a process that, while sometimes uncomfortable, can be fun as well as productive. We will work to be aware of our surroundings and create inclusive spaces where no one feels marginalized. She spoke also to the pathway we can expect to experience, beginning with denial of an issue through defensiveness, minimization, acceptance, adaptation and, finally, integration. We can expect to be in different places at the same time on this continuum in regard to different issues. And it is important to recognize that there is no shame involved at any point; short of becoming paralyzed and unable to move forward at all, this is what is known as the productive zone of disequilibrium.

Specific short-term and long-term goals are yet to be set, depending on upcoming discussions and work, but we do know we hope for ideas on recruiting a board reflective of all the communities we serve.

VII. Executive Director's Report

Stephanie Callahan addressed the high number of staff transitions that have occurred this semester and the need to provide solid support and coverage for Lower School teachers while Principal Will Carter has been sidelined by health issues. Alyce Davis, who has worked with us before, is providing this important observation and feedback, i.e., instructional feedback. There has also been movement in filling vacancies, but like all schools, this remains very difficult, especially for STEM and special ed positions.

Another concern, particularly at the Upper School level, has been managing behavioral issues. The more restorative approaches we favor take time, time teachers simply don't have with all of the current demands they face. We are exploring how to provide more mental health resources and support, and we are fortunate that our student success coach has been able to step into the assistant dean position. Again, Salem Academy is not alone in experiencing behavior, emotional and mental health issues at this time.

Scholastically, curriculum goals have not been significantly affected by other Covid or other issues at the middle school level. Teachers at the high school level, however, have noted that students do not exhibit the expected level of independent work behavior or, for instance, writing skills. They (and their students) are working to correct this.

In sum, we are keeping it together as we face multiple challenges and are, at the same time, short staffed. We are also looking ahead so that we will be able to give faculty and staff what they need to be happy and successful members of our community,

VIII. Committee Reports

A. Finance and Facilities

This joint report focused on the need to lease additional space, as the gym must currently be used as a cafeteria to allow required distancing. An appropriate space, roughly 10,000 SF, has been identified above the Albright Center that could be used for offices and breakout rooms as well as for a lunchroom. It does require basic improvements, but Prime can have it ready by February 1, 2022. An 18-month lease appears to be the most viable, with the possibility of extending our use of the space after that time at, we would expect, the same base rate as the rest of our space. The rate per square foot and specific terms of the lease are in the process of negotiation.

There are many unknowns to be considered, from what our tuition reimbursement level will be to the extent of required HVAC improvements, to our own long-term plans. In sum, however, we absolutely need the space, and this is ideally located for us. We do have Covid funds available through 2024, and this is an appropriate use of them. Having the gym back and additional new space will be a big morale booster.

After discussion, Rick Winter moved to authorize the Executive Director to finalize details and sign an agreement with Prime. The motion was seconded by Mekka Smith and passed unanimously by roll call vote. A second motion by Sasha Durand, seconded by Dan McCaughey, authorized the Treasurer to co-sign the agreement should the Board Chair be unavailable. It too passed unanimously via roll call vote.

B. Development

In her final report as chair of this committee, Christine Wynne said our fundraising is ahead of this time last year, even without any matching gifts to date. Conversations with the Foundation are ongoing regarding ways of growing funds for an endowment.

She also reported that the Reach for College Gala will take place on May 6th. The venue is still being determined. Sponsorship packets are nearly ready for distribution.

C. Education

Dan McCaughey indicated that, in the absence of a Principals Report at this meeting, Drea Jacobs met with the Education Committee to bring them up to date. A written Principals Report was provided prior to the Board meeting. He expressed our gratitude to Stephanie Callahan for her leadership and ability to, as it were, ride a unicycle on the high wire while spinning plates at the same time. These are difficult times and by her example she is helping everyone to rise to the challenge.

IX. Vote to Adjourn

Sasha Durand moved to adjourn, seconded by Mikki Wilson. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote, and the meeting ended at 8:24 pm.

