

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the
Board of Trustees of Salem Academy
Wednesday, January 22, 2020, 6:00 pm, Room 114**

Members Present:

William Henning, Rick Jones, Dan McCaughey, Shelby Morrison, David Pabich, Alison Palmer, Mekka Smith, Christine Wynne

Members Absent:

Eddie Aroko, Felicia Pierce, Rick Winter

Staff:

Stephanie Callahan, Matt Chuchul, Alex Dean, Kathy Egmont

Guests:

Fawaz Abusharkh
Pam Rochna (SFC)

Recorder:

Shelby Hypes

I. Call to Order, Welcome

The monthly meeting of the Salem Academy Charter School Board of Trustees was called to order by Chair Dave Pabich at 6:10 PM on January 22, 2020, in Room 114.

II. Approval of Minutes

Mekka Smith presented the minutes of the December 18, 2019 meeting. A correction was noted in that Alison Palmer's attendance was mentioned twice. Mekka moved to accept the minutes as corrected, seconded by Rick Jones. The minutes were accepted unanimously.

III. Public Comment

Fawaz Abusharkh announced that the Pulpit Exchange will meet at the Islamic Center of the North Shore in Lynnfield on Friday, January 24th at 8 pm. All are welcome.

IV. SFC Report

Pam Rochna reported that there had been no SFC meetings in December or January, although committees have been meeting regarding upcoming events. The next SFC meeting will be on Monday, February 9th, a week later than usual to avoid conflict with the Super Bowl.

The Yankee Candle fundraiser will begin Monday, February 11, and run through beginning of March. This is a longer campaign as we need to reach \$10,000 in sales in order to receive a 40% rebate. The event is being promoted by telling students they can get up to 20% in their accounts and by taking advantage of online availability to solicit friends and family beyond Salem. We are also encouraging teachers to promote this.

Timing for the Rachel Hunt Scholarship has changed; we will be sending information out to students soon, although the award will still be presented in the spring.

V. Committee Reports

A. Governance

Rick Jones reported that Peter Copelas has encountered conflicts that make him unable to join the Board at this time. He will, however, continue to serve as a volunteer member of the Finance Committee. Since we had voted on Peter's membership, we will vote to accept his resignation. Bill Henning moved to accept the resignation, seconded by Christine Wynne. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Development

This discussion focused on the March 20th REACH for College Gala. Christine Wynne reported that sponsorship packages are going to last year's donors. A few have already signed up, although we are still hoping to obtain one or two \$4000 (Head of School) sponsors. Invitations are going to print, and Christine requested that everyone submit names. The gala will be promoted by e-blast to all parents, faculty and donors, followed by printed invitations. Board members may also have printed invitations to give to prospective attendees.

The fee is \$75, prorated to \$50 for parents and \$25 for alumni/ae and parents. An anonymous donor will pay for faculty. A portion of the ticket fee covers the event cost, the remainder goes to the annual campaign.

Christine said we are hoping to honor some of the organizations that have supported our service learning program over the year. Bringing in more community organization, public officials and the public at large is a goal. Christine requested the help of the Advocacy Committee in inviting public officials.

Our annual campaign is progressing well. We have received \$4,000 against our second \$5,000 matching gift, and there is a third anonymous matching gift of \$5,000 ahead. Beginning our campaign earlier is working in our favor; we are optimistic about reaching our \$60,000 by June 30.

Alison Palmer and Eddie Aroko will be using Facebook and conducting a texting campaign to encourage alumni/ae to send in a \$10 donation.

Last, Mikki Wilson has joined the Development Committee. Her marketing and event experience will be welcomed.

VI. Head of School Report

Matt Chuchul presented the results of the ANet tests, which are given to 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. These tests help to identify learning gaps, especially with new students and specific cohorts, indicate progress year over year, and (by averaging results) provide a general predictor of MCAS performance. Building in time for extra remediation and early intervention this year (Read 180, tutoring, Learning Center, etc.) produced a significant change between early October and late November. We are particularly pleased with 8th grade math results, the strongest in five

years, as this group struggled as 7th graders. Overall, the results are a testament to the work of the entire team, especially 6th and 7th grade teams.

Mr. Chuchul also noted that the Civics class has become actively involved in the upcoming elections, looking up poll numbers, talking about candidates, and doing research.

In terms of staffing, Stephanie Callahan reported that our AP Biology and Environmental Science teacher resigned to take a position in a public high school closer to home. Several very qualified candidates are being interviewed to replace him and, in the meantime, reducing team leaders workload from four to three classes has enabled Cami Hennekens to temporarily take on AP Bio. Similarly, Ana Brea will cover for a staff member on medical leave.

The mid-year staff survey provides a three-year comparison of how we are doing in terms of staff morale and satisfaction. This year's results are similar to those of last year, according to Ms. Callahan. She noted responses to three questions in particular, one regarding whether they have recently received positive feedback, one asking if they feel they are heard and their opinions valued, and one designed to ascertain if their sense of collegiality. Overall, faculty responded favorably to these and other questions. This is important; we work hard to recognize and praise our teachers' efforts, and we want to promote a culture of respect in which staff feel comfortable, valued and among friends. In February we will begin querying staff on whether they are likely to return for the 2020-2021 school year.

Ms. Callahan concluded her report by referencing both recent and upcoming events, such as Salem Academy's capstone nights and the winter concert, which packed the Albright Center. Our first MIAA basketball game was against Salem High School. Although SACS lost, spirits remained high among both the 500 supporters and our players. Our next game will be at Salem High School on January 31st. February will bring more athletic events, two more plays and a musical.

Alison Palmer asked for more information about MIAA; one of the big benefits to joining MIAA is that individual athletes are now able to participate in sports such as swimming and wrestling.

VII. Finance Report

The Finance Report, presented by Shelby Morrison, began with a quick look at our December financials. The most significant update was that we received considerably less in state funding in December than in previous months. Although the state dictates the foundation formula for school districts, the above foundation rate is created by local spending. It appears that Salem's above foundation spending has leveled off to much less than anticipated, significantly impacting our revenue, at a number which is \$350,000 less than projections. Kathy Egmont will seek clarification on this trend from Mayor Driscoll, Senator Lovely and Rep. Tucker.

The main take-away from this discussion is that we face the prospect of reduced funding; accordingly, we need to be super vigilant about spending and super aggressive in meeting our annual campaign goal. We expect to break even for the current fiscal year and are managing the cash flow.

Kathy Egmont then reviewed the tuition formula and process by which charter schools receive state funding. She also reviewed the City of Salem's above-foundation rate history. This is relevant as the tuition formula is a calculation of the foundation rate in the sending district, plus the percentage above the foundation rate spent by the district applied to the foundation rate of the charter school. In short, the higher Salem's above-foundation rate, the higher the revenues

received by charter schools. Although the City of Salem's state aid increased 18% between FY 19 and FY20, its net school spending increased by only 4%.

Kathy Egmont has also asked former Board member Steve Palmer to meet with a small group to explore ways of growing revenues and decreasing our dependence on the City of Salem. This is an exciting prospect that could include private grants, fundraising and new ideas as part of our overall long-term planning.

Pam Rochna asked if we talk to students about the importance of supporting SACS when they become alums. This reinforced the importance of Alison Palmer's and Eddie Aroko's anticipated work with alums.

State funding is a complicated topic to analyze and report on; Ms. Egmont thanked the Finance Committee for their hard work.

VIII. Executive Director Report

Kathy Egmont reported on several topics. In response to faculty feedback and exit interviews, we are looking at ways to reduce the school year from 195 days to 187 or 188 days in order to provide staff with a longer summer vacation. This will *not* affect our extended day, extended school year aspect of our charter. We will still be far over the instructional hours required by the state. Her next step will be to survey and discuss with staff and parents before presenting a proposal to the Board. A change will require a minor amendment to our charter.

Mekka Smith and Nina Cohen are working to bring a group of parents, trustees and alumni to Advocacy Day, February 13th, on Beacon Hill. We have suggested talking notes from the Massachusetts Charter School Association, but personal stories from parents on how their children have benefited from SACS are of particular interest. Our advocacy efforts have also resulted in our inviting Senator Joan Lovely to host a legislative update here on Tuesday March 10. This will be a breakfast meeting to which other legislators will be invited and at which some of our students will speak.

Analysis of our enrollment—currently 491 students—indicates students are not leaving at the rate of attrition we have seen the past few years. Eighth graders are the most likely to leave; they do so in order to attend schools like Essex Tech or Bishop Fenwick; no students left to attend Salem High School last year.

Three other topics were discussed.

- 1) Ms. Egmont explained that E-rate provides funding for LAN and WiFi. We will be going out to bid for that support. Although we are pleased with the work of our current supplier, Z-tech, we need to identify the most cost-effective solution.
- 2) The Student/Family Handbook and Employee Handbook have been updated and are under legal review.
- 3) Last, we are beginning preparations for our mid-year cycle review for our entitlement grants, i.e., federal programs and civil rights, which will take place in the coming year. It is called the TMS Review.

IX. Vote to Adjourn

Bill Henning moved that we adjourn. Rick Jones seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously at 7:50 p.m.