

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
Board of Trustees of Salem Academy Charter School  
Wednesday, February 24, 2021 via Zoom**

Members present remotely due to Covid-19 guidelines:

Rick Jones, Susan Low, Dan McCaughey, David Pabich, Alison Palmer, Paula Pitcher, Mekka Smith, Rick Winter, Christine Wynne

Members absent:

Edward Aroko, Bill Henning, Shelby Morrison

Staff present remotely:

Stephanie Callahan, Matt Chuchul, Diego Fellows, Andrea Jacobs

Guests present remotely:

Amy Stewart (SFC)

Mikki Wilson, Sasha Durand, Rich Cooper

Recorder present remotely:

Shelby Hypes

**I. Call to Order, Welcome**

Chair David Pabich called the monthly meeting of the Salem Academy Charter School Board of Trustees to order at 6:05 PM on February 24, 2021, via Zoom. He welcomed guests Mikki Wilson, Sasha Durand and Rich Cooper, all prospective board members. He also noted that new Board members, such as Paula Pitcher, must be approved by DESE and are not eligible to vote until then.

**II. Minutes of the Meeting of January 27, 2021**

Rick Jones moved to accept the minutes of the January 27, 2021, meeting. The motion was seconded by Christine Wynne and passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

**III. Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**IV. SFC Report**

Fifteen people, including staff, attended the February SFC meeting. According to Amy Stewart. She was pleased to report that Melissa Lassen had discussed the Rachel Hunt Scholarship with her senior class and, as a result, we have 34 applications. The next SFC meeting is scheduled for March 6<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm, at which time the focus will be on finalizing fundraiser details.

Amy also expressed her thanks as a parent to Salem Academy faculty and staff for their superlative support for both students and parents during this time when learning is under stress and many students are struggling.

## V. Principals' Report

The upcoming move to live streaming on March 1st headlined Matt Chuchul's report. This will allow smaller sections—12 students in the classroom and 12 more zooming in—and give teachers more prep time. We will be able to use existing technology, i.e., computer cameras and audio, as our equipment has already been optimized for remote learning. After fine tuning, live streaming will become the model for the rest of the year. Matt referred the Board to his detailed written report for more details on Lower School progress during the past month.

At the Upper School level, Drea Jacobs indicated a few teachers are piloting live streaming, but individualized schedules make this more difficult than in the Lower School. Currently, teachers are still teaching both remotely and in person.

Drea focused on how we are analyzing performance data strategically at all levels, from individual students to teachers, team leaders, etc., to determine the best ways to move forward. She also called attention to how students have stepped up as leaders, checking in with their peers, organizing and running the Students of Color Student Union, and planning Black History Month. She also indicated that college application process continues and that we are setting the stage for Juniors now. Moving SATs up to the spring is one example.

In looking at performance comparisons from last year to this, Christine Wynne remarked that the increase in students failing two or more classes is quite small. Drea indicated this class has been followed closely and many measures are in place to support them, measures that will also serve lower grades. We look forward to seeing what happens now that all students are in the building, some meeting teachers in person for the first time.

## VI. Interim Executive Director's Report

Stephanie Callahan reported that Onward's long-anticipated work has launched and that 30 more students have enrolled in the March lottery. She called attention to the current spate of statements about plans to get children physically back in school. The fine print beyond the headlines addresses issues that have long been on our radar if not already implemented, such as bringing high priority students back first and testing to monitor the virus. Our commitment to safety, learning and keeping students engaged, while continually refined, remains unchanged.

We do look forward to teacher vaccinations, lowering the burden they face, and positive signs like Salem's lower Covid numbers and the State continuing to pay for testing. Changes are being announced almost daily.

Stephanie mentioned two other things. We are proceeding to fill faculty and staff vacancies and DESE has requested that the Board reaffirm the decision to move from a 195-day to a 187-day calendar to clarify that this is not a pandemic-related request. Rick Winter moved to reaffirm this decision, seconded by Dan McCaughey. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

## **VII. Committee Reports**

### **A. Governance Committee Report**

Rick Jones welcomed prospective Board members Mikki Wilson, Sasha Durand and Rich Cooper. Mikki has been part of our Development Committee for a year and a half and is the first to be nominated for Board membership. Christine Wynne moved that Mikki be elected to a full term; this was seconded by Mekka Smith and passed unanimously by a roll call vote. Welcome, Mikki. The process for filling other Board vacancies will continue next month.

### **B. Education Committee Report**

Dan McCaughey indicated there is no February report from this committee/ Its next order of business will be to check in on how Onward is doing.

### **C. Development Committee Report**

Christine Wynne said the Development Committee has nothing to report this month.

### **D. Advocacy Report**

Mekka Smith reminded the Board that Charter School Advocacy week begins March 2<sup>nd</sup>. She and Nina Cohen will definitely participate in this virtual meeting, which provides an important opportunity for charter schools to have face time with state legislators.

### **E. Facilities Committee Report**

Dave Pabich reported that there are no pressing issues requiring Board consideration at this time.

### **F. Finance Committee Report**

Stephanie Callahan reported that our financial picture looks good. Our comparatively low cash position, despite higher- than-expected revenues and lower expenses thanks to Covid, is because of the retroactive pay raises just implemented. Because so much information regarding funding is still being developed, the draft budget normally presented in February will now be in March.

## **VIII. Executive Session**

Christine Wynne moved to go into executive session and not return to open session. The motion was seconded by Dan McCaughey and passed unanimously by roll call vote. Board members and two members from Edgility (Allison Wyatt and Ila Shah) convened then discussed the results of the Executive Director finalist process. The Edgility team presented the results of the finalist interview day and reviewed comments from students, faculty, staff, select board members, and the Read Foundation. After reviewing the materials and a commensurate salary, the Board

voted to extend an offer (position + salary) to its first-choice candidate, name to be announced when final. The meeting ended at 7:15 pm.