

APPROVED



Salem Academy Charter School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time

Wednesday July 16, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Location

Salem Academy Charter School
45 Congress St.
Salem, MA 01970

The Salem Academy Charter School Board of Trustees will meet at 6:00 PM. This meeting will take place in-person at Salem Academy Charter School located at 45 Congress St., Salem, MA 01970.

Trustees Present

Chris Graham, Domina DiBiase, Edward Aroko, Jeff Whitmore, Kara McLaughlin, Laurie Kennedy, Nohara Lopez-Okoli (remote), Robert Rogers, Sal Martinez (remote), Toyuwa Newton

Trustees Absent

Amy Stewart, Rich Cowdell

Guests Present

Drea Jacobs, Fallon Burke, Ilene Vogel (remote), Melissa Lassen, Sabrina Williams, Shelby Hypes, Stephanie Callahan

I. Opening Items

A.

Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Kara McLaughlin called a meeting of the board of trustees of Salem Academy Charter School to order on Wednesday Jul 16, 2025 at 6:05 PM.

C. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

D. Approve Minutes

Jeff Whitmore moved to accept the minutes of the June 16, 2025, meeting, seconded by Eddie Aroko. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.

II. Chair Report

A. Updates from the Board Chair.

Kara McLaughlin reported that Stephanie Callahan's contract has been signed. Part of the review process included staff and family surveys. It was suggested that future family surveys be conducted at the end of Q1 when more families will have the time to respond.

Board members may still contribute to the Faculty and Staff Appreciation lunch held in May. The suggested contribution is \$30.

III. Finance

A. Capital Plan

The proposed three-year capital plan lists needed improvements and has been jointly endorsed by both the Finance and Facilities Committees. DESE does not allow routine repairs, such as kitchen counters, so the version to be submitted as part of our Annual Report will not include those.

Once approved, we will be able to prioritize improvements and identify those for which a grant may be available, such as whiteboards, and those to be funded out of operating funds. The Facilities Committee has quotes for the PA system and is trying to lower that anticipated expense; we will try and obtain a grant to fund that. While all improvements are important, the firewall must be completed by the end of the next school year.

Nohara Lopez-Okoli moved to approve the proposed plan, with the omission of the kitchen sink and counters, for which we do not yet have a quote. Chris Graham seconded the motion, which passed unanimously via roll call vote.

B. June Financials

June financials are solid, but subject to minor changes as our accountants are still doing the fine tuning associated with the end of the fiscal year. Stephanie Callahan noted that our net operating income for the year is \$89,674, compared to the FY2025 budget number of \$100,273. This is still very positive, as we experienced a decrease in DESE funding and have been notified that we must return \$33,000 in tuition. We are talking to the state charter school association as we received no prior notice about having to return funds. We did not have to use any of the \$150,000 in Foundation monies allocated.

C. Committee Updates

The Committee has met the first two of its three goals (viable draft budget and capital plan).

IV. ED Report

A. 2024-2025 Annual Report

2024-2025 Annual Report

Stephanie Callahan reviewed the Annual Report page by page, focusing on topics that represent a significant change from past reports and/or that are especially noteworthy. For each objective not met we are required to detail what actions were taken and what new actions are planned for the coming year. Only the objectives she discussed are presented here.

Faithfulness to Charter

Criterion 1 Mission and & Key Design Elements

This section provides a description of the school, our what is unique about us.

Criterion 2 Access and Equity

We were not asked to explain discipline data, which actually is from 2023, just to link info from DESE's site to our report.

Criterion 4 Dissemination

The chart in the printed report provides a snapshot of the ways in which we share best practices, from alumni engagement to service Learning. Charters are obligated to collaborate with their local school district, and Stephanie noted that we participate in monthly safety meetings, and community groups. We would like to go beyond regular meetings to share information on college readiness and service learning.

Academic Program Success

Criterion 5 Student Performance

Because we are above the 33rd percentile statewide, we are not required to provide additional information here. We wanted to highlight our academic growth areas, however, and thus provided ANET and MAP Data in Appendix D. (MCAS data is not yet available.)

In particular, the Lower School has experienced tremendous growth in math performance (7th grade 86th percentile and 8th grade 88th percentile nationwide).

Criterion 6 Program Delivery

This section describes curriculum changes enacted this past year, including the adoption of a new high school curriculum for Els, vetting a middle school science curriculum that will be implemented next year, and the positive ongoing implementation of other curricula. The report also discusses our assessment programs, such as Anet and MAP, as well as college and career readiness and support programs for all learners.

Organizational Viability

Criterion 10 Finance

Stephanie indicated there are no demonstrable changes in this section. The numbers may change slightly as end-of-year numbers are finalized. Accordingly, these numbers are unaudited. This section also covers our enrollment and our Capital Plan, discussed more fully above.

Appendix A: Accountability Plan Evidence

Our current Accountability Plan was approved in November 2024, outlining our objectives for the next five years. We are required to report our progress in meeting those objectives annually.

Objective I: Students prepared to succeed in college

Measure A: College acceptance

Ninety-seven percent of the Class of 2025 (63 of 65 students) was accepted at two or more four-year schools. Of the two not included above, one applied to only one college and was accepted by early decision; the other senior opted to attend a trade school.

Objective II: Student progress

Measure A: Students achieving grade level proficiency

Ninety three percent of students have met the goal of reaching internal grade-level proficiency in all classes. This is significant as we have not met this goal for the past five, post-pandemic years. The only subgroup not to meet this goal (students with disabilities) is likely to meet goal by the end of what has been a very successful summer school.

Objective IV: Fostering a safe/supportive school culture

Measure A: 90% agree SACS has a safe/supportive culture

We had an excellent response to the survey on safe/supportive school culture with 99% of students responding, but only 86% agreed that Salem Academy is a safe and supportive community. We saw a significant increase in Lower School students agreeing, including English learners. Response rates for other subgroups ranged from 80% to 89%.

We did have many wins, however with our advisory program and efforts to build relationships. We pilot initiatives and, if they work, scale them.

Measure B: 90% demonstrate growth on strengths/difficulties survey

We made serious efforts to address behavioral issues by having more feet on the ground, an increased dean presence, and consistent enforcement, whether for minor issues like gum on the floor or more serious class disruptions. Behaviors are changing, albeit slowly; referrals to the Dean were down.

Appendix B Recruitment and Retention Plan

This requires explanation in the Annual Report, especially in the context of our amendment request. Detailing why our enrollment does not reflect that of SPS is necessary. In short, we do not offer year-round enrollment, only once a year via lottery. Nor do we enroll students after 9th grade; having them here for at least four years is essential to our college admission goals.

This appendix reviews our recruitment activities by subgroup in great detail. We are seeing success in recruiting more ELS students and more students with disabilities and did meet recruitment goals for subgroups.

Stephanie pointed out that once again the data is retrospective, i.e., a year old, so it does not reflect efforts made since then. We experienced a serious loss of 9th graders this year, 30 vs. 17 last year.

In addition to Salem High and Essex Tech, which perennially draw students, several left for St. Mary's. This means 50% of incoming 9th graders will be new to Salem Academy; they face a significant transition in terms of work load, culture etc. Sabrina Williams and Melissa Lassen are talking with families to clarify what they are looking for and what we offer.

Appendix D Conditions and Complaints

This simply refers to the Board of Trustees open meeting violation last fall.

The Annual Report must be submitted to DESE in August. Domina DiBiase moved to approve the Annual Report subject to minor alterations noted above. Eddie Aroko seconded the motion, which passed unanimously via roll call vote.

V. Education

A. Establishment of School Council

Drea Jacobs reported on this new council's structure and function. She has done research and has talked with charters, principals, and others about how a school council, which is required by DESE, might look and function. Just as we have a single SFC for both lower and upper schools, we will have a single school council as well. Per DESE, it must be comprised of peer-elected student, parent, and faculty representatives, along

with at least one representative from the community. Also per DESE, the Board must approve how these representatives are elected.

Our council will have an advisory/support, not a decision-making role and will focus on suggestions to improve the school. The council will include two high school students, two parents and two faculty members (one from the LS and one from the US in both cases), and no more than two members from the community.

- The parent representatives will be elected at the first meeting of the SFC in September
- The faculty and student representatives will be elected in September, as outlined in the proposal.
- Whoever has a relative majority wins in all of the above cases.
- We are in the process of identifying prospective community representatives and will simply invite them to join.

Other details are yet to be determined, e.g. start date and frequency of meetings, but this is seen as a good opportunity to bring families, students, and teachers together.

Robert Rogers moved to approve the electoral process as outlined above. The motion was seconded by Jeff Whitmore and passed unanimously via roll call vote.

B. Committee Updates

There was no Committee report.

VI. Governance

A. Trustee Nomination

Trustee Nomination

Jeff Whitmore presented prospective trustee Giselle Ortega's background to the Board. We learned of her through Latinos for Education and have found her to be articulate and thoughtful in interviews. She also has charter school and development experience.

Nohara Lopez-Okoli moved to appoint Giselle to the Board of Trustees to complete John Allen's term ending December 31, 2026. The motion was seconded by Chris Graham and passed unanimously via roll call vote.

B. Committee Updates and Progress Toward Meeting Committee Goals

The Governance Committee is moving forward in meeting its goals. In addition to successfully bringing Ilene Vogel and Giselle Ortega on board, another candidate is in the interview process.

We are still working on establishing an HR Committee and identifying trustee candidates with an HR background. We would also welcome candidates with legal or accounting experience.

The Committee is in the process of finalizing the agenda for our September strategic retreat. The Board assessment completed earlier will be discussed and another possible presenter in addition to moderator Mike is being considered.

We have yet to hear from DESE re approval of our bylaw amendments.

VII. Development

A. June Development Report

Fallon Burke reported that, after raising another \$600 in our EOY campaign, the Annual Fund ended FY 2025 with a total of \$113,702, easily topping its \$110,000 goal.

Regarding private grants, deposits have come in from the Read, Mifflin, and Cummings Foundation. Although Read underfunded our request by \$100,000, they increased funding in other areas, specifically funding a math interventionist and increasing support for teacher retention by \$44,000. Overall, we will receive \$756,800, \$30,000 more than last year.

B. Committee Updates and Progress Toward Meeting Committee Goals

Laurie Kennedy reported that we had 100% Annual Fund participation by both Board and Foundation members. With the end of the fiscal year, focus is shifting from its first goal, the Annual Fund, to other Committee goals. The second goal, to develop a Development calendar has also been met. Work continues on the third goal, to speak with all trustees about their Board participation. The fourth goal, to acquire members with development experience, has also been met with both Laurie and Giselle having joined this committee over the past year.

VIII. Facilities

A. Committee Updates

Robert Rogers reported that last week's Facilities Committee meeting focused primarily on Prime's development plans. They have presented both to the Salem City Council and to the Point Neighborhood Association. Both presentations were fairly high level, not detailed. He noted that plans do call for a number of non-profits to be located here. In short, Prime is engaging City leadership and neighbors, but the project is still years away.

B. Progress Toward Committee Goals

As reported above, a capital plan has been developed in conjunction with the Finance Committee. A new member with facilities experience (Ilene Vogel) is now on board

IX. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

Domina Dibiase moved to adjourn, seconded by Robert Rogers. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote and the meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Shelby Hypes

Documents used during the meeting

- Capital Plan - DESE Format.pdf
- Salem FY25 Financials June V2.xlsx
- SACS Annual Report 2024-25 V4.pdf
- BOT Mtg_ School Council July 2025.pdf
- Interview Summary_Giselle Ortega.docx
- Resume - G. Ortega.pdf
- Development Reports FY25 - 6.30.25 V2.pdf