

APPROVED



Salem Academy Charter School

Minutes

Governance Committee Meeting

Date and Time

Friday December 12, 2025 at 8:00 AM

The Salem Academy Charter School Governance Committee will via Zoom.

Zoom Link:https://salemacademycs.zoom.us/meeting/register/GDVo5gXZQuSnT_DV4PLB1Q

Committee Members Present

Jeff Whitmore (remote), Stephanie Callahan (remote), Steve Palmer (remote)

Committee Members Absent

Edward Aroko, Toyuwa Newton

Guests Present

Fallon Burke (remote), Rich Cowdell (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Jeff Whitmore called a meeting of the Governance Committee of Salem Academy Charter School to order on Friday Dec 12, 2025 at 8:00 AM.

C. Approve Minutes

Steve Palmer made a motion to approve the minutes from Governance Committee Meeting on 11-14-25.

Jeff Whitmore seconded the motion.

The committee **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. Governance

A. Prospective Trustee Interview

The committee interviewed prospective trustee Beth O'Donnell.

Candidate Background:

Beth O'Donnell is an attorney and experienced HR professional whose background aligns closely with current Board needs. Her professional expertise includes employee relations, benefits and compensation, hiring and oversight of school-based support roles, and risk mitigation. Beth brings strong "back-of-house" experience that would be particularly valuable as the school continues to navigate staffing, compliance, and organizational growth. She has prior board experience, including serving on a small startup nonprofit board early in her legal career and chairing the Peabody Disabilities Commission, giving her a solid understanding of mission-driven governance and policy-level leadership. Beth emphasized that she values offering thoughtful perspective, identifying risks and pitfalls, and contributing meaningfully to decision-making. She expressed clear interest in serving on the HR Committee and is also open to Governance Committee service to deepen her understanding of charter school governance.

Connection to SACS/Mission Interest:

Beth is motivated by a strong personal and professional commitment to education and community service and is seeking opportunities to contribute outside of the City of Peabody. While she does not have direct charter school experience, she brings relevant school-related HR experience and a strong appreciation for the role boards play in supporting effective, mission-aligned organizations. She has taken time to get to know Salem Academy, its leadership, and Trustees, and expressed genuine interest in supporting the school during a period of growth and transition. Beth demonstrated a realistic understanding of board service, acknowledging funding challenges, the dynamics of a relatively new board, and the importance of adaptability and strategic focus when unexpected challenges arise.

The committee discussed the candidate and expressed strong enthusiasm for her HR and legal expertise. Members were impressed with her résumé, professional demeanor, and overall fit with the Board's current needs. The committee noted particular excitement about her potential contributions to the HR and Governance Committees.

B. 2026 Board Slate Development & Planning

The committee discussed the proposed 2026 slate and noted the need to identify a second trustee to serve as a representative on the Foundation Board's Investment Committee.

C. 2026 Goal Setting

The committee agreed to table the 2026 goal-setting discussion and will revisit it at a future meeting, with the intention of developing and bringing forward proposed goals for consideration by the Board of Trustees at the February 2026 meeting.

D. Trustee Recruitment

The committee agreed to continue trustee recruitment efforts and reviewed the 2025 Board Matrix to identify current strengths, gaps, and priority areas for future recruitment.

III. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Fallon Burke

Documents used during the meeting

- Beth Brennan O'Donnell Resume November 2025.pdf
- Board Matrix and Processes 2025 - Google Sheets.pdf