

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Board of Trustees of Salem Academy Charter School
Wednesday, March 25, 2020, via Zoom**

Members Present– remotely due to Covid guidelines:

Eddie Aroko, Bill Henning, Rick Jones, Dan McCaughey, Shelby Morrison, David Pabich, Alison Palmer, Felicia Pierce, Mekka Smith, Rick Winter, Christine Wynne

Members Absent: None

Staff, Present remotely:

Stephanie Callahan, Matt Chuchul, Alex Dean, Kathy Egmont, Diego Fellows

Guests, present remotely:

Fawaz Abusharkh, Susan Lowe, Pam Rochna (SFC)

Recorder, present remotely:

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 6:05 PM on March 25, 2020. Because the meeting was held remotely via Zoom software, the roll was called to ascertain attendance; all board members were present.

II. Public Comment

Fawaz Abusharkh praised and thanked SACS faculty and staff for their fast and professional handling of the COVID-19 situation, shutting down in-person operations and establishing remote/online capabilities. David Pabich echoed Mr. Abusharkh's comments on the school's ability to hit the ground running in this quickly unfolding crisis.

III. SFC Report Pam Rochna reported that the Yankee Candle fundraiser generated just under \$7,000, slightly less than last year and netting us a lower percentage of revenues. The SFC will discuss the need and feasibility of another fundraiser this school year.

IV. Governance Committee

David Pabich extended a warm welcome to Susan Lowe, with whom he and Kathy Egmont have met. She has served on the Bentley Academy Charter School board and is a prospective SACS board member. She made a few remarks about her interest in the school and answered a few questions.

V. Minutes of the Meeting of February 26, 2020

Mekka Smith presented the minutes of the February 26, 2020, meeting. Bill Henning moved to accept them without modification, seconded by Rick Winter. The minutes were accepted unanimously via a roll call vote.

VI. Update on Response to COVID-19 Situation

A. Head of School Report

Stephanie Callahan reviewed how quickly the need to suspend classes developed and complimented the faculty and staff for springing into action immediately. She also commended the Board for having made the decision to provide 1:1 chromebooks for students and in place for more than five years.

In short, we have the technology for online learning in place and our students are proficient in how to use it. Week 1 focused on launching remote operations, ensuring students had Chromebooks assigned to them, and communicating clearly, with translation as needed. Everything is now on the website; both the Lower and Upper Schools have sites that launch daily at 8:30 AM.

We are trying to strike a balance between structure/consistency and flexibility, as some students are also working full or part time. As the shut-down continues, we will have to reassess and reevaluate student work and our own programming. We continue to reinforce our cultural connections, e.g., upcoming virtual talent show and spirit week. Student Service Team is focusing on identifying any medical, social/emotional needs.

The Board had several questions. David Pabich asked if we would need additional help for students facing problems outside of school. This will be addressed as required. Rick Jones asked if there were any issues concerning food scarcity or internet connectivity. We are working with Salem High School on food distribution, and we are addressing technology issues as they arise. In response to Mekka Smith's query about the faculty's ability to keep up with this new reality, Stephanie and Matt indicated that this does pose difficulties, especially with new family responsibilities of children at home, but constant communication and team meetings help. We appreciate that everyone is giving it their best efforts.

Felicia Pierce reported that the North Shore CDC is actively reaching out to families in need and can provide guidance re applying for unemployment. Kathy Egmont said we are talking to every family about food, rent and other issues. Both SACS and the NSCDS provide translation services.

Regarding counseling and emotional support, the student body has been divided into 10-student groups; we are doing "lunch bunches" viz Zoom, and counselors are in touch with students as needed.

Stephanie also reported on academic affairs. AP tests are proceeding with shorter, online tests. We have hired an AP Environmental Sciences teacher and have listed vacancies for next year. We are working on how the COVID-19 crisis will affect grading and how to proceed both this semester and next fall.

We are awaiting state guidelines, which we think will include a baseline of best practices. Independently, we are prioritizing benchmarks to be taught by the end of the school year, identifying material that can be taught in other ways, postponed or eliminated. We are working with teachers on the net impact on courses, grades, and GPA's. We see this as an opportunity to review and explore both course content and how it is presented, e.g., new interdisciplinary options.

B. Development Committee Report

Although the March 20th gala had to be cancelled, Christine Wynne reported that we have incurred minimal expenses and no sponsors or ticket holders have requested refunds to date. We have received approximately \$15,000 and are hoping sponsors' will shift their financial support to our annual fund. We will also consider a smaller iteration of this event in the future to honor our service learning partners.

The conversation shifted to ways to support the community, e.g., housing for health care providers and people needing to self-quarantine. Felicia Pierce indicated that the CDC is addressing this. Kathy Egmont proposed the establishment of an Emergency Response Fund using donations to the Foundation and distributing it directly to families in need. We hope that we could raise enough to help with food and gas cards. Felicia Pierce moved to use \$1,500 for such a fund, seconded by Christine Wynne. The motion passed unanimously via a roll call vote. We will also explore FaceBook advertising to parents, supporters, and others to raise additional funds.

C. Executive Director Report

Kathy Egmont expressed her appreciation for the support she and the school have received as we learn how to operate remotely. She applauded the faculty and staff for an exemplary job. Not only did we do it, we did it right, through teamwork, a holistic approach and recognition that how everyone is feeling about this transition matters.

During the past month, we held our annual enrollment lottery. This year, we are communicating by email and one-on-one phone calls to answer all questions. This, along with the fact that all enrollment information forms must now be completed online, will slow the enrollment process.

The building is now closed, having been repeatedly cleaned and sanitized in recent weeks. Custodial staff will be paid through July.

Lastly, all filings and reports are up to date.

VII. Finance Committee Report

Shelby Morrison presented the monthly financial report, which held no surprises. Despite the dip in tuition two months ago and a just announced \$30,000 lower payment from the City, we are tracking on plan in general and anticipate ending the fiscal year a little better than expected.

At this time, Bill Henning moved to go into executive session for the purpose of preparing for sending offer letters and determining compensation offers for next year. The Board will not return to public session but will adjourn from Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Shelby Morrison and passed unanimously via roll call vote. The following people then left the meeting: Fawaz Abusharkh, Stephanie Callahan, Alex Dean, Shelby Hypes, Susan Lowe, Pam Rochna, Diego Fellows and Matt Chuchul.

Executive Session notes have been reviewed by Mekka Smith and are kept in the Board records digitally on file at the school.

Respectfully,

Mekka Smith