

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Board of Trustees of Salem Academy Charter School
Wednesday, April 28, 2021 via Zoom**

Members present remotely due to Covid-19 guidelines:

Edward Aroko, Bill Henning, Sasha Durand, Rick Jones, Susan Low, Dan McCaughey, Shelby Morrison, David Pabich, Alison Palmer, Paula Pitcher, Mekka Smith, Mikki Wilson, Rick Winter, Christine Wynne

Members absent:

None

Staff present remotely:

Stephanie Callahan, Matt Chuchul, Diego Fellows, Andrea Jacobs

Guests present remotely:

Alex Dean, Fawaz Abusharkh

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 6:07 PM on April 28, 2021, via Zoom.

II. Minutes of the Meeting of March 24, 2021

Mekka Smith moved to accept the minutes of the March 24, 2021, meeting as submitted. The motion was seconded by Susan Low and passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

III. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

IV. Discussion Regarding Violation of the Open Meeting Law

It was brought to the Board's attention that discussion of compensation is not considered a valid reason for entering into executive session, as occurred on March 24, 2021, in considering the appointment of Stephanie Callahan as Executive Director. After consulting with our attorney, it was decided to bring this appointment up for discussion in open meeting. Accordingly, Rick Winter moved to ratify Stephanie's appointment and her \$182,000 annual salary, seconded by Christine Wynne. With the exception of new members Sasha Durand, Paula Pitcher and Mikki Wilson, all of whom voted present as they were not yet eligible to vote in March, the motion passed unanimously. Congratulations (once again), Stephanie.

V. SFC Report

In Amy Stewart's absence, Stephanie Callahan indicated that the SFC is working on teacher appreciation gifts as well as upcoming graduation flowers/boutonnieres for graduating seniors and T-shirts for graduating 8th graders. She also reported that

Massiel Garcia will be taking over as SFC Treasurer next fall. Last, Matt Chuchul and Drea Jacobs will be doing a presentation for 8th grade families about high school at Salem Academy.

VI. Principals' Report

At both Lower School and Upper School levels, the focus this month has been on the reopening of the school and the transition from remote learning it represents for everyone.

Matt Chuchul reported that Monday, April 26th was dedicated to reorientation, Tuesday to testing the regular schedule, but remotely, to ensure proper operation for our live streamers, and today (Wednesday, April 28th) to the first time in 412 days that students have physically been in school. We welcomed 152 Lower School students with tremendous excitement, and Matt was pleased to report that everything went smoothly, including lunch in the gym. Choice blocks and SEL are also taking place on campus.

Matt paid tribute to the student spirit that has produced a trivia contest, the movie/play *The Pauper Princess*, and athletic teams that are in playoffs, winning championships, etc. Most of all, things we once took for granted, i.e., simply coming to school, are now truly cause for celebration.

Drea Jacobs's Upper School report echoed this sense of excitement, energy and celebration. At the same time, no one is forgetting our primary job is to make sure the learning process runs smoothly and effectively for all. We will be checking in with remote learners, who will now be online for longer periods every day, and we are continuing to follow grades closely, providing interventions as needed.

In response to a question from Dave Pabich, Drea indicated that our early attention to tracking performance and the need for credit recovery appears to be paying off. We are working with Edgenuity's online platform intervention block, bucketing performance outliers and communicating with families. We are paying special attention to our 11th graders, only half of whom have opted for in-school learning. We do recognize that some students for whom remote learning has worked well have opted to continue online. Also, with SATs and AP tests, this is a heavy load.

VII. Executive Director's Report

Stephanie Callahan's report also began on the high note of how good it is, after more than a year, to see kids in school and for them to actually see their teachers in person.

She called attention to Salem Academy's extracurricular life, especially school athletics. Our flag football team won the charter school league championship. We are the only charter school to field varsity baseball and football teams in the MIAA league. She thanked Athletic Director Drew Betts for his hard work and the growing number of sports opportunities we now provide. This is particularly important as the lack of athletics used to be a common reason for students to choose a different high school.

Turning to other aspects of school reopening, Stephanie reported that 90 percent of students participated in pre-opening testing. Pool testing will continue, funded by the state and taking place at lunch every Monday. Lunch will continue to be free throughout the 2021-2022 school year. Free breakfast is also available to anyone who wants it.

In regard to hiring, we are relieved and excited to have Will Carter on board this early as our 2021-2022 Lower School principal. He was a popular choice among the student panelists, who did an excellent job of interviewing candidates. Onboarding will heat up in July as we fill vacancies created in many cases by family moves. Hiring letters are out to current faculty members.

In response to Sasha Durand's question about the depth of the candidate pool, Stephanie said it varies by field. Typically, we have more candidates in art, music and the humanities than we do in math and science, where we are competing with industry. We also usually hire two teachers from Teach For America.

Stephanie indicated Onward is now reaching out to trustee with surveys and some one-on-one interviews as part of their data discovery phase.

The last subject of her report was amending this year's June calendar and approving the 2021-2022 school calendar. Due to the pandemic, student learning time requirements for the 2020-2021 school year were modified by the State and are now 170 days (935 hours) for secondary schools. We will meet this requirement and still be able to end school on Thursday, June 24, allowing an extra professional day on Friday to wrap up and plan for the summer and fall. This will shift Eighth Grade graduation to June 23 and the June Board meeting to June 16. Accordingly, Shelby Morrison moved to amend the current calendar to make June 24th the last day of school, seconded by Mikki Wilson. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.

The calendar for the upcoming school year features 187 instructional days, approved by DESE. Two additional half days for professional development will be scheduled once MCAS dates are available. This calendar begins later in August than in the past to give teachers a full three weeks off in August, allow the operations staff more prep time and provide a needed break between the summer session and the new academic year. Bill Henning moved to accept the proposed calendar, seconded by Christine Wynne. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. Governance Committee Report

The Committee did not meet in April but is continuing to work on developing an emergency planning policy. Additionally, we need to be identifying potential Board members, particularly with construction/facilities and development experience, as David Pabich, Rick Jones and Christine Wynne leave the Board at the end of this year. Another concern is that Christine's and Dave's departure mean Rick Winter will be the only parent on the Board.

B. Education Committee Report

Dan McCaughey reported that this Committee did not meet in April but is gratified to hear the excitement surrounding the school reopening.

C. Development Committee Report

By contrast, the Development Committee has been meeting frequently in preparation for the Reach for College Gala, being held virtually Friday, May 7th. Christine Wynne reported that many people have been pivotal in helping to meet the Gala's \$25,00 goal. We have raised about \$15,000 and have \$6,500 in pledges. As these numbers suggest, fundraising is doing well, thanks to both individuals and businesses that have been generous in giving time and leadership as well as dollars.

Alison Palmer has been focused on an alumni giving challenge, hoping to get every class since 2009 to raise at least \$100. Encouraging alumni to give back, even while still in school, is important, regardless of the amount given.

Bill Henning called attention to the matching gifts and the involvement of the Foundation.

D. Facilities Committee Report

Dave Pabich reported on recent meetings with Prime. They are taking our request for assistance with HVAC remediation seriously, and we hope to come to an agreement.

We have also begun to explore our longer-term relationship. Both Prime and Salem Academy are looking ahead. Prime shared some of their preliminary thinking about the park and their plans. They are more forthcoming now that they have settled into their ownership of the park and seem eager to work with us.

We, in turn, need to know whether there will be a place for us here in 10 years. The "live/work/play" scenario they are developing would be a good one for our families, faculty and staff. Sasha Durand asked when they are likely to finalize their plans, and Dave suggested they could be going to the Salem Planning Board before the end of the year. He stressed that is a strategic process for both of us, one that of necessity will proceed hand in hand as both organizations think about their future. Bill Henning reminded us that we don't want to lose sight of our owner occupancy goal (vs. long-term lease).

E. Finance Committee Report

The Finance Committee is continuing to work on the budget for the upcoming fiscal year and will present it to the Board in June. This is a fluid process, as Shelby Morrison said, given updates from the State occur on an ongoing basis. We are encouraged that tuition numbers look good. Our monthly financial dashboard is positive and stable.

IX. Move to Adjourn

Rick Jones moved to adjourn, seconded by Shelby Morrison. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote, and the meeting ended at 7:30 pm.