

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Board of Trustees of Salem Academy Charter School
Wednesday, June 16, 2021, in person**

Members present:

Sasha Durand, Susan Low, Shelby Morrison, David Pabich, Mikki Wilson, Rick Winter, Christine Wynne

Members absent:

Edward Aroko, Bill Henning, Rick Jones, Dan McCaughey, Alison Palmer, Paula Pitcher, Mekka Smith

Staff present:

Stephanie Callahan, Matt Chuchul, Diego Fellows

Guests present:

Fawaz Abusharkh, Alex Dean

Recorder present:

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 6:11 PM on June 16, 2021.

II. Minutes of the Meeting of May 26, 2021

Christine Wynne noted that the Annual Fund goal is \$70,000, not \$75,000. Stephanie Callahan noted correct spelling of Eddie Aroko's name throughout. Rick Winter moved to accept the minutes of the May 26, 2021, meeting as amended. Mikki Wilson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

III. New Business

Stephanie Callahan presented a revised calendar for the 2021-2022 school year that recognizes Monday, June 20th as the Juneteenth holiday and August 27th as the first day of school. A revised plan for new student orientation is being developed. Shelby Morrison moved to accept this calendar, seconded by Susan Low; the motion passed unanimously.

The above changes necessitate a revision to the Board of Trustees meeting calendar. Per a motion by Shelby Morrison, seconded by Mikki Wilson and passed unanimously, the Board will now meet on Wednesday, June 22, 2022, rather than Monday, June 20th.

IV. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

V. SFC Report

In Amy Stewart's absence, Stephanie Callahan complimented the SFC on all its graduation activities, including presenting the Rachel Hunt Scholarship to Juliebeth Santos. The SFC is now focused on 8th grade graduation, which will take place on June 24th, and on the 3.8 brunch, which will be a Bagel World breakfast in the gym and be limited to students only due to Covid-19 restrictions.

VI. Principals' Report

Matt Chuchul reported that fully 100% of students took the MCAS exams; because timing changed, we do not know when we will receive results, perhaps August. Sixty-one of 72 eighth graders have opted to stay at Salem Academy for high school, a higher than usual number and a reflection we believe of expanded academic and extracurricular offerings.

Open enrollment for summer school is going on now, with more than half the spots filled. We hope to close registration June 18th in order to be fully prepared for July. As we come to the end of the school year, Matt called attention to how effective the new "Wit and Wisdom" ELA curriculum has been. The financial commitment it required was matched by the huge gains we have seen. We hope to expand its usage in other academic areas next year,

End-of-year events will dominate the rest of the term, from a Juneteenth celebration on June 18th, through moving up and graduation ceremonies on June 21st and 22nd respectively, and capped off by Field Day on June 24th.

Matt concluded his remarks by commenting on Will Carter's visit as an important part of the transition process and his own appreciation for his time at Salem Academy and the Board's support. Dave Pabich in turn spoke to Matt's thoroughness, enthusiasm, and impressive performance. Always prepared, always on top and ahead of issues, he has made our lives easier. He has contributed significantly Salem Academy's culture as well as its operational efficiency. We will miss him and wish him the best of luck as he returns to the New York area.

Stephanie Callahan reported on the Upper School in the absence of Drea Jacobs, complimenting her and the entire team on how they basically reinvented a school over the past year. The results are clear in the reports. Incredible planning, a focus on curriculum, instructional leadership, professional development and distributed leadership have all contributed to an excellent year, despite the pandemic.

Sixty of 61 seniors walked at graduation, with a few still completing some requirements. It was wonderful to be together, in person and to celebrate this class. They have worked hard and overcome many challenges, supported by two special education teachers since freshman year. Kudos to them on their success in general and on their fortitude during the past year of upheaval; 100 percent were accepted at four-year colleges, and 55 percent are first-generation college students. Powerful statistics indeed.

Overall, we are in educational recovery mode now, continuing with interventions as needed and with very individualized support. Teachers are in place for the summer and, although students can work at their own pace through July, many are eager to complete work sooner.

Stephanie ended by calling attention to the amazing accomplishments of Navigator sports teams, with baseball, softball, girls and boys track and field all winning MCSAO state championships. The school year concludes with a 9th grade Pride March, Juneteenth observance, moving up ceremonies and field day.

VII. Executive Director's Report

Stephanie Callahan reported first on our work with Onward. A recent virtual meeting provided an opportunity for staff to meet the Onward team and get an overview of Onward's data and discovery report. They are in the process of surveying and interviewing Board members. We have been meeting with Onward remotely biweekly and will soon be diving more deeply into our culture and suggested improvements as we prepare to implement the program in the fall.

On the hiring front, several vacancies have been filled or are pending; there are strong candidates for the remaining positions to be filled over the summer. Typically, it is more difficult to attract math and science teachers who have more private sector job opportunities. We continue to review our hiring practices and ways to build capacity, develop talent, and ensure a workplace that is safe and supportive of all.

The virtual Read Trust visit went well, and we are now waiting for their response to our proposal. This relationship is now 15 years old. We are grateful for and of their significant commitment to us. We want to make sure their new trustees have the opportunities to visit the school and get to know our programs first hand. We are looking at a potential visit in the fall.

Last, the Foundation Board met and will be adding a third meeting to the calendar to do more pre-planning with Development. They are also reviewing policies regarding non-monetary gifts.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee Report

"No news is good news," as Shelby' Morrison pointed out. Tuition has held at a higher rate than budgeted, ratios and cash on hand are both good. In response to a question from Rick Winter, the committee is looking at the positive cash-on-hand trend and discussing whether these funds could be put to more effective use in some way. Christine Wynne brought up the question of how some gifts are accounted for. We want to report them accurately and be accountable to our donors without incurring unwieldy restrictions on how funds are used. Shelby indicated the Committee will be looking into this.

Shelby also presented the proposed budget for FY2022. As usual, we have taken a very conservative approach in terms of anticipated revenues. There are some small changes in budgeted expenses. Salaries for both step plan and non-step plan personnel were voted upon in March. Summer school expenses are included. The most significant change is for an additional upper school teacher in response to the high demand for math and science courses, e.g. AP chemistry.

Sasha Durand asked about the proposed increase in guidance counselors. With more demand for college counseling, a part-time college counselor has been changed to full time and our part-time special education college transition coach/part-time college counselor is position is accounted for in the guidance section, rather than in the special education line.

Rick Winter inquired whether the Covid stimulus grant is automatic or if we must apply for it. It is ours, but we do have to tell DESE how we will use the funds. Currently, we have indicated that we are reserving about a quarter of the grant for use in FY 2023. We can draw down some of those funds if need be, however.

Overall, the budget discussion was clear and to the point, a reflection of the hard work and many iterations considered by the Finance Committee prior to presentation. Shelby Morrison moved to accept the budget as proposed; the motion was seconded by Rick Winter and passed unanimously.

B. Education Committee Report

There was no Education Committee report.

C. Development Committee Report

Christine Wynne reported that we are within \$1,500 of reaching our Annual Fund goal and anticipate we will meet or exceed this by the end of the month. The Committee is already planning for next year, determining dates and planning to lock in important asks ahead of time. They are also focused on transparent tracking for donors.

Dave Pabich asked if there pledges outstanding. One is assured and the Committee is following up on two others.

D. Facilities Committee Report

As we had hoped, Prime Group has agreed to assume 50 percent of anticipated costs of HVAC improvements. Some of these are Covid-related; others developed over the years and are hard to track specifically.

We met with Prime Group to learn more about their vision for the property overall, which proposes a pedestrian- friendly, live/work/play environment with a residential component. Prime is navigating the shoals of developing a property

where the state has control of the waterfront, and the City of Salem needs to be an integral part of the planning process.

From our perspective, it is important that Prime wants Salem Academy as a tenant. It strengthens their proposal and it can work to our advantage, especially as they are currently proposing an entirely new building connected to the current health center for us. These are, however, very early days and very rudimentary plans.

Rick Jones and Dave Pabich also met with Avison Young, the real estate advisors working with Prime Group.

The timing for us is good, as we need to be doing our own long-term planning on what we will need 10 years from now. With a guesstimate that about 30 percent of our students live within easy walking distance, this could be a good solution for us, but we also need to consider other factors, such as changing Salem demographics.

Sasha Durand asked about holding a stakeholder conversation in Meche Theatre. We would need to be clear this is Prime's plan; we are just one tenant.

Sasha brought up another, unrelated topic: cyber security and disaster recovering planning. Stephanie Callahan indicated that all of our technology platforms, upgrades and issues are managed by Z-Tech, a technology consultant that works with small and medium size organizations. We know student-side platforms are backed up, and she will find out more about how our financial systems are backed up. As Fawaz Abusharkh pointed out, small schools are not particularly vulnerable to ransomware attacks.

E. Governance Committee Report

There was no report from this committee.

IX. Move to Adjourn

Christine Wynne moved to adjourn, seconded by Susan Low. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting ended at 7:53 pm.