

**Salem Academy Charter School  
Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Board of Trustees  
Wednesday, September 28, 2016 at 6:00 pm, Room 124**

Members Present: Peter Copelas, Nina Cohen, Rick Jones, Karen Cady, David Pabich, Steve Palmer

Members Absent: Ana Nuncio, Leslie Tuttle, Paige Nalipinski, Joshua Biber, Thomas Monroe

Guests: Christian Foster(minute taker), Stephanie Callahan, Sean Gass, Pam Rochna, Pam Boardway,  
Nina Bridgeman, Allison Wyatt, Fawaz Abusharkh

I. Call to Order

The monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of Salem Academy Charter School, 45 Congress St., Salem, MA was called to order on October 26, 2016 at 6:20 PM in room 124 by Chair, Peter Copelas.

II. Approval of the minutes

**Motion:** The minutes of the September, 2016 meeting shall be approved as written. Motion made by David Pabich and seconded by Steve Palmer.

**Resolved:** The motion carried unanimously.

III. Public comment

No comments

IV. SFC Report

The SFC is going to have 4 meetings this year to encourage more participation. The first of two big fundraising events is the Food for Thought raffle to benefit the Salem Education Foundation. The SFC has set a goal and is confident that they can sell 600 tickets. A booth for ticket sales will be set up in downtown Salem. The SFC did not want the Food for Thought raffle to be a student pushed event out of concern of over saturating the same donors. Second of two big fundraisers is a student driven calendar raffle. SFC has 31 prizes. 100% of proceeds go to student fund. The next meeting of the SFC is December 7, 2016.

V. ED Search Committee Report / Discussion

Allison Wyatt was introduced by Steve Palmer. Allison works for the executive search firm Edgility, which was retained by the Salem Academy Charter School for the Executive Director search. Allison introduced other members of the ED search committee and outlined their strategy. She set the agenda and summarized what the committee has been doing for the last month and what the Board can expect in the upcoming months.

Her summary was broken down into eight specific components:

A. Needs Assessment Process

The search committee spent a month doing research on Salem Academy to gain full understanding for the school and the role of executive director. They created a list outlining the strengths and the challenges Salem Academy faces and hypothesized the vision moving forward. These elements they broke down into concrete skills a candidate must possess for this role and strategized how to sell the role to job seekers.

Additionally, the search committee spoke and surveyed staff, students and stake holders (~40 people) to gain further insights into the school and community. The most resounding theme they heard – Salem Academy has a foundation of diversity, school culture, education success and excellence. Salem Academy can be a thought leader in the educational landscape on both a statewide and national level.

#### B. Needs Assessment Findings

One of the challenges Salem Academy faces as it nears its cap include budgetary restraints and expanding the lens of where students go to college.

On top of challenges, the search committee also found many opportunities due to the unique aspects of Salem Academy. Stephanie Callahan introduced standards based grading to Allison. The mission of Salem Academy was reinforced by student behavior and feedback. New facilities are also a huge opportunity. She mentioned change in terms of leadership shift and balancing with Sean Gass' arrival and Sean O'Neil's departure. Finally, Allison mentioned that fact Salem Academy is an "all hands on deck environment" which can lead to muddiness when defining position/responsibility/roles.

The Search Committee is committed to finding a candidate that appreciates the school as it is and doesn't want to come in to make a vast array of changes immediately. They are striving to find someone who has a good understanding for how to take a vision and lead a staff to that. They are selling this position to candidates that are interested in leading a vision, managing senior staff, partnering with the board of directors, ensuring long term viability of a culture of success, and inspiring all stake holders to be their best and continue to pursue excellence.

#### C. Candidate Profiles

The ideal candidate in the eyes of the search committee is experienced in education reform, preferably in a charter school.

Steve Palmer asked about Allison's personal experience with positions like this. She explained that the search committee is looking for a candidate with about 10-15 years of professional experience who has 5-7 years of demonstrated success as a school based administrator. Some schools have the ED role as "business" leaders. Those candidates need less experience. Salem Academy's ED role is a bit more encompassing which would lead to more experienced candidates.

Rick Jones inquired whether staff and students would gravitate towards a younger ED. Stephanie Callahan replied that maturity plays an important part in whether staff/students would react strongly to a candidate. Allison responded with the fact that candidates in charter schools tend to be younger and given more responsibilities earlier in their careers.

#### D. Prioritization Activity

Three key pieces that the search committee found Salem Academy are seeking are:

##### Background Experience

- Charter school
- Teaching experience
- Leadership level management in education reform
- Fundraising

##### Target Skills

- People management
- Spanish speaking skills
- Strategic mindset/strategic thinking
- Communication skills
- Vision setting skills
- Technology acumen
- Organizational skills
- Financial acumen

#### Personality

- Roll up your sleeves, jump in right away
- Motivating/Energizing
- Collaborative
- Approachable
- Transparent/Over communicator
- Kind/Good natured
- Invests in facetime in the building. Present.
- Emotionally intelligent
- Unflappable
- Quiet confidence

Nina Cohen inquired about the ability of the search committee to weigh the difference between skill excellence and professional background/experience. Allison spoke about the resume and recommendations of candidates and mentioned that background experience doesn't necessarily mean skill mastery. She added that candidates will participate in a wide variety of tasks such as interviews, written content, interactions with stake holders, presentations, etc. to vet the readiness for the ED position.

Allison queried the Board about any surprises they may have seen on the three lists the search committee created. Fuzzy mentioned that one of the aspects that may have been missed is "Community engagement skills". ED should get student/parent buy in as well. Allison added that quality to the list. Allison also mentioned and then added "cultural competency" to the list. Stephanie Callahan inquired about whether the new ED should have experience with financial planning. An example that was brought up was "plan for how to budget teacher salaries 5 years in the future". Salem Academy has previously used external consultants to do this type of work. Should the ED have these skills? Allison added "financial modeling" to the list.

Rick Jones asked the question of whether we would preclude a candidate based on how much of each "bucket" we are asking for? The board then had a brief discussion of how Salem Academy avoids a "one size fits nobody" job description. Targeting and signaling specific candidates were recommended. Discussion continued on what skills were amplified in the job description.

Peter asked to what extent the skills and needs in a candidate were unique to Salem Academy. Allison replied that lots of schools highlighted technological and mission driving skills in their job descriptions. Others emphasized fundraising and financial skills. Roles look quite different among schools. She noted that Salem Academy seemed to have deemphasized academic responsibilities in a candidate.

#### E. Trustee Activity

Allison described a workshop the group would be participating in. Three lists were hung up around the classroom outlining the bullets in background experience, target skills and personality (listed previously in the minutes). Trustees were instructed to take colorful dots and walk around the room placing green dots on their top two priorities, yellow dots on their next two priorities and blue dots on "icing on the cake" qualities for each of the three lists.

Key qualities that were highlighted included:

- Strategic thinking
- People management
- Financial modeling
- Inspirational/energizing
- Ed reform
- Fundraising
- Collaborative consensus builder
- Present

Discussion ensued about how Sean O’Neil’s expertise and responsibility in the current role and how Salem Academy can independently shift from confining the ED position roles/responsibilities to what Sean has done so well. The idea of “being present” was also discussed in terms of what Sean has done, where candidates will be in their lives, how the search committee defines this value in a job description, etc.

Stephanie Callahan was surprised that “people management” and “leadership cultivation” were highlighted by Trustees however “communication skills” were not. This was discussed and resulted in a realization that many of the bullets will be collapsed together into larger skill clusters. Trustees also realized that cultural de-sensitivity may play a part in what values were highlighted. This should be realized as the process moves forward.

Discussion took place about whether or not an ED should have teaching experience. Topics that were mentioned and discussed included “knowing the students”, gaining experience in a school setting, and previous interviews with stake holders that did not result in this skill being highlighted. Allison presented a few target profiles that included candidates that did not possess teaching experience. These included current COO, CDO and CBOs in charter schools and CMOs. Other profiles included executive directors of educational reform non-profit institutions. Nina Cohen concluded the discussion by realizing that the Trustees must have confidence that the new ED will be able to cast a wide “net” in many areas and the Salem Academy community must be able to accommodate and support any “soft spots” a new ED may have.

#### F. Recommended Selection Process

The search committee will revise the job description. After that the process may include:

- 1) Edgility Team leads introductory calls and two rounds of formal phone interviews. Robust conversations. Regular discussions and vetting of candidates among search committee.
- 2) Search committee identifies semi-finalists to participate in a full day on-site meeting. These semi-finalists will meet with (*optional: there may be a small sub-search committee that meets semi-finalists before bringing them in for a full day interview*):
  - a) Parents
  - b) Students
  - c) Teachers
  - d) Leadership Team
  - e) Direct reports
  - f) Business Advisory Group (Sarah Morrill)
  - g) Representative of the Read Trust (Bill Garr)
  - h) Lunch meeting with the Board of Trustees (with strategic performance task)
- 3) Debrief session with selection committee to develop recommendations to the Board of Trustees for final approval.
- 4) Board of Trustees holds a group interview with one or two finalists.

Discussion among the Board of Trustees ensued about the small sub-search committee. Would this sway a candidate away from applying? Is it important for everyone to see the same candidates? Does the process change for local candidates vs. candidates flying in? Stephanie Callahan reflected on her interviewing

process both as a candidate and as a search committee. She concluded by realizing that job seekers will also be looking at the school and Salem Academy should have the ample opportunity to sell the position to candidates as well. This was reinforced by Rick Jones and he included the pressure of Sean O’Neil leaving as a hard-cut deadline.

#### G. Search Timeline

Board meeting to review assessment, finalize candidate profiles	October 26, 2016
Job description finalized	October 28, 2016
High impact launch including postings and outreach to internal networks, etc.	Week of October 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2016
Conduct active candidate cultivation and introductory conversations	November 2016-January 2017
Edgility reviews resumes, conducts initial rounds of phone interviews	November 2016-January 2017
Search committee conducts initial interviews with candidates	Likely January 2017
Finalist candidates participate in onsite interviews	Mid-February 2017
Offer extended to finalist candidate	Goal = February 24 <sup>th</sup> , 2017
Finalist offer accepted and paperwork signed	Goal = March 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2017

#### H. Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Directors  
 Salem Academy Charter School Leadership  
 Salem Academy School Leadership  
 Parents and Community Partners  
 Search Committee

#### VI. Head of School and Principals’ Report

We have offered our second adult course of Impact of Trauma on Learning. 23 people are taking this course, 12 are from Salem Public School.

Sean Gass mentioned that 5 out of 7 (1 is still awaiting a response) students are going for the Posse scholarship. Largest number of Posse scholarship finalists. Salem also has one student who is pursuing the Questbridge scholarship. 21 out of 40 students received the Adams scholarship. Leadership is finding “hidden leaders” in the school body with more scholarship opportunities.

FAFSA Day is happening on Sunday, November 6<sup>th</sup>. Nina Cohen volunteered to help out!

#### VII. Executive Director Report

Written report included in meeting notice packet.

#### VIII. Board Governance

There have been 4-5 correspondences with potential candidates for the Board of Trustees. Candidates will meet with the rest of the Board in November. The bylaws of the Board of Trustees state that a candidate normally starts at the beginning of a year and then serves for a three-year term. A candidate may serve the

remainder of a vacant, unexpired term before embarking on a first three-year term. Marketing and medical skills are being sought after especially. Education experience continues to be the most important.

#### IX. Finance Committee

##### A. Audit Report

Peter led this discussion. He stated that the meeting with auditors had occurred in the last month. The audit must be voted on by the end of October 2016. Audit is clear. Salem Academy is at moderate-risk for only one out of the seven sections of DESE recommended financial management. Zero “high risk” areas. Salem Academy is paying a loan off gradually. At some point, the Board of Trustees may vote to pay the entirety of this loan with cash. This will be re-explored later down the line.

**Motion:** On motion duly made and seconded, the Board

**Resolved:** to accept the FY’16 Audit by unanimous vote on October 26, 2016.

##### B. Student Enrollment

9<sup>th</sup> grade is two students short of the enrollment numbers that Salem Academy has budgeted for. The waitlist has been exhausted.

The Board of Trustees discussed why 9<sup>th</sup> graders don’t enroll even when parents fill out the paperwork. Coming into 9<sup>th</sup> grade is harder than transitioning into 6<sup>th</sup> grade. There are however two K-8 schools the Salem Academy draws from. Strategies discussed included the new facilities that will be built. This will work to a two-fold advantage moving forward, enticing students to apply and also lowering attrition from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Salem Academy leadership revealed the trend of creating a larger 9<sup>th</sup> grade class due to loss of 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders. Lower school attracts more students for waitlists. Does Salem Academy need to have a larger 8<sup>th</sup> grade knowing that students will have options for 9<sup>th</sup> grade? Salem Academy used to add 6<sup>th</sup> graders instead of 9<sup>th</sup> graders when an upper school student dropped out. The luxury to do this has been maxed out.

Finance committee has not updated the finances yet on the student enrollment.

#### X. Facilities Committee

David summarized his walk through of the arts building. The work is not coming along as quickly as he would have liked. There are no finishing touches being put on the building as of October 26, 2016. Because of this Salem Academy is saving money on rent for now. The time consuming part, David concludes, will be the finishing and furnishing of the theatre. Nina Cohen is concerned about the transition of the space in terms of alarm systems, wiring, technology, etc. When does Salem Academy start paying for the space? David affirmed that Salem Academy will not begin payments until the building is safe and the ability to occupy has been passed on to the Trustees.

As of this date, Shetland does not have a building permit. Shetland Properties’ Civil Engineer, Scott Patrowicz will consult on the water runoff with the City Engineering office. Shetland owns the costs of the site work and permitting and must determine a solution to the runoff question to obtain a building permit.

#### XI.

On motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 9:28 PM.