

**Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Wednesday, June 19, 2019, 6 PM, Room 114**

Members Present:

Nina Cohen (Chair), William Henning, Rick Jones, Daniel McCaughey, Shelby Morrison, David Pabich, Steve Palmer, Alfonso Perillo, Rick Winter, Christine Wynne, Rick Winter

Members Absent:

Felicia Pierce, Mekka Smith

Staff:

Drew Betts, Stephanie Callahan, Kathy Egmont, Diego Fellows, Sean Gass, Melissa Lassen

Guests:

Fawaz Abusharkh, Matt Chuchul, Drea Jacobs, Alison Palmer, Bessie Marashi

Recorder:

Shelby Hypes

I. Call to Order

The monthly meeting of the Salem Academy Charter School Board of Trustees was called to order by Chair Nina Cohen at 6:00 PM on June 19, 2019, in Room 114.

II. Approval of Minutes

Bill Henning moved to accept the minutes of the May 22, 2019 meeting as submitted. The motion was seconded by Steve Palmer and passed unanimously.

III. Update on College Acceptance Process and Results for the Class of 2019

College Counselor Melissa Lassen reported that all but one student (98 percent) applied to and were accepted by four-year colleges. Approximately half applied for early decision. Highlights of the statistics, which are based on self-reporting Naviance data, are that of these students, more than 56 percent will attend a public school, while another 31% will attend private colleges. Two students will attend two-year programs, while two have opted for military service, and two more will enter the workforce.

Ms. Lassen provided an overview of the college application process, which begins in September and ends in late November. Students apply to a mix of “reach,” “safety,” and “good fit” schools; special consideration can be given to students for whom application fees pose a hardship. All students are encouraged to know their schools’ admissions representatives by name, to reach out and maintain contact with the schools. They are also encouraged to visit schools in which they are interested or to which they have been accepted. Rising seniors already have a target list of at least 15 schools.

At the staff level, the process includes a transition team for students on an IEP and weekly meetings of the College counselor with both the Adjustment Counselor and the Director of Special Education to ensure everyone is on the same page and that all students know they are supported and capable of pursuing higher education.

Melissa also discussed the importance of financial aid, noting that one school accepted 12 Salem Academy students, but only one opted to attend as the school provides no financial aid. Fifty-five percent of those attending college are Pell Grant eligible, 36 percent for full funding and 19% for partial funding. The relevance of financial aid is highlighted by the fact that nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of our graduates will be paying less than \$10,000 next year, including 35 percent who will be paying less than \$5000. Altogether, Salem Academy graduates received \$219,000 In scholarships. This is in line with our goal of minimizing the debt our students incur. Melissa met one on one with 30 families to review financial aid packages and assist In the decision-making process.

Looking ahead, instead of a FAFSA day, Melissa will meet individually with families regarding loan counseling. We will be implanting the Naviance CCLR (College Career Life Readiness) curriculum. Melissa has already arranged for 9th graders to meet at SSU on March MCAS day. She will be meeting with the Athletic Director regarding students pursuing collegiate sports programs. She will also be serving as the president of the North Shore Guidance Directors Association next year.

IV. Introductions and Recognitions

Stephanie Callahan introduced Matt Chuchul and Andrea Jacobs, who are assuming the positions of Principal of the Lower School and Upper School, respectively. Matt is currently teaching 8th grade history and coaches cross country; he looks forward to the opportunity to both learn and lead. He will be participating in the Lynch program at Boston College. Drea is new to Salem Academy, but not to the area, having taught math in Lynn, worked with new schools and having done turnaround work with principals in Lawrence. In their comments, Matt and Drea mentioned the importance of doing the best for each student and achieving equity for all students.

Nina Cohen took the opportunity to recognize the invaluable contributions of Sean Gass with a plaque and pen. Sean, the outgoing Upper School Principal, has accepted a new position as Assistant Principal of Wayland High School.

V. Public Comment

Fuzzy Abusharkh expressed his pleasure that Salem Academy was able to recognize graduates with the Seal of Bi-literacy at the graduation. It is a new honor from DESE and a great credential for our graduates.

VI. Finance Committee Report

The work of the Finance Committee was at the heart of the agenda with the presentation of both the monthly financial report and the proposed 2020 budget.

May financials were presented by Alfonso Perillo and show that, with the move of Foundation funding to the school prior to the end of June, we will be close to break-even

at the end of the fiscal year, regardless of likely final public funding. Key ratios remain stable and, as Bill Henning noted, cash on hand is fine, remembering that the summary sheet line does not include cash from the Foundation. That cash is available to us however. Starting with the July financials, we will show both lines of cash in the 60 day ratio.

Kathy Egmont reviewed the proposed 2020 budget. In keeping with a highly conservative philosophy, it reflects a belt-tightening position next year in order to accommodate both growing expenses and an uncertain funding rate. Salaries remain the largest category expense and will increase approximately seven percent with the addition of a new senior administrative position and raises. Discretionary expenses, such as field trips, have been budgeted at a minimal level; some, such as professional development, have been tagged as being dependent on our fundraising initiatives; and some expenses have not been funded, but could be added back if monies are available. It was also noted that some expenses have been moved to different categories to bring the Salem Academy budget in line with state budgeting categories.

Capital expenditures are not included for reasons discussed in Section IX.D. of these minutes. Overall, the FY2020 budget represents an increase of approximately four percent over FY2019. The budget reflects the rigorous and time-consuming commitment of both Kathy Egmont and the Finance Committee. Their work is greatly appreciated.

Steve Palmer moved to accept the proposed budget, seconded by Christine Wynne. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. New Business

A. Board Meeting Dates for FY2020

Nina Cohen moved to accept the proposed meeting schedule, with meetings falling predominantly on the last Wednesday of the month. The motion was seconded by Bill Henning and passed unanimously.

B. Advocacy Committee

This remains an ad hoc committee. Anyone is welcome to become involved, as its mission is to build awareness of and support for Salem Academy in the broader North Shore community by highlighting what a charter school does, how Salem Academy can raise achievement levels in Salem children and the value in human potential provided by a strong education. The current focus is on outreach to local officials.

C. Resolution Regarding Institutional Membership in MIAA

Drew Betts, Athletic Director at Salem Academy (and chair of the Massachusetts Charter School Athletic Organization or MCSAO) presented an overview of our athletic association options and the advantages/disadvantages of joining the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA). While membership in the MIAA would entail higher dues (est. \$3500 + \$190 per sport), less flexibility in competition locations, and slightly higher tournament ticket prices, it would also

give Salem Academy greater visibility and press coverage, more opportunities for our athletes to be recognized and to participate in leadership conferences, more opportunities for local competition, and the chance for individual-sport athletes (golf, swimming, indoor track) to compete.

Perhaps the biggest advantages are the early September season start, which could prevent conflict with other school events, and the ability to retain students who might otherwise transfer to schools with more substantial athletic programs. MIAA membership is supported by both the Executive Director and the Head of School. David Pabich moved to join the MIAA, seconded by Steve Palmer. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. SFC Report

Betsy Marashi reported that the annual picnic was a big success—lots of food, activities, fun, 15th anniversary trivia, and, of course, the Lombardi Trophy. Similarly, graduation was a wonderful event, with 50 graduates and a very popular graduation speaker, Dr. Richard Haynes of the University of New Hampshire, who had been requested by the senior class. Still ahead is the high honors brunch on June 27th. The SFC will take the summer off and resume with a meeting on September 9th.

IX. Other Committee Reports

A. Governance

The Governance Committee has sent a 15-question self-evaluation to all board members focused on what members believe we do well and what could be improved. The committee is also working on the Executive Director's evaluation and thinking about prospective board members, including those with development and financial expertise and possibly an alumni member.

B. Development

Christine Wynne reported that we are now only \$5,000 short of our \$50,000 annual campaign goal; she is confident we will surpass the goal by the end of the month. Board members are asked to save the date of September 13th, for a reception for the new principals at Nina Cohen's home. We anticipate inviting former Trustees, new friends of the school and possible new Board members. The Committee anticipates more events involving business and community leaders, philanthropists, employers, past board members and friends during next year..

C. HR Committee

Rick Winter reported that Massachusetts paid parental leave legislation has been postponed until October; a major reason for the delay is that there are few plans available and the issue of how to prevent double dipping has not been resolved. Accordingly, the Committee will continue to follow how this issue unfolds and develop a plan for Salem Academy as details become available.

The Committee is also working on developing a more formal and consistent process for exit interviews that will enable us to collect comparable data and identify possible trends.

D. Facilities Committee

Eighteen firms requested our RFP, but only one responded, JJ Walsh Construction. This is due, we believe to the fixed and short construction time frame, the small size of our project, and the fact that firms are already busy. Walsh is a respected contractor and submitted a bid of \$236,000. The highlights of the project are the addition of two breakout rooms, a new office, modifications and redefined access to the learning commons, and an additional bathroom with access from the nurse's office.

We remain hopeful that grant monies will be available from the Read Trust to fund a substantial portion of this project. As a contingency, however, we can finance construction with a loan that would involve annual payments of \$30,000 over a 10-year term.

Adoption of the following resolution was moved by David Pabich, seconded by Rick Jones, and passed unanimously.

Resolved that the Board of Trustees of Salem Academy approves moving forward with the summer construction project for break out rooms and offices.

- The Board authorizes Kathy Egmont, Executive Director, with approval from the Finance Committee, to apply for a loan of up to \$250,000 for a term of no more than 10 years, from Beverly Bank.
- The Board authorizes Kathy Egmont to sign the contract with Walsh Construction for \$236,000 for the project.
- The Board approves the use of the credit line for interim financing if needed before the bank financing is secured.

E. Education Committee

The work of this committee has been focused creating an accountability plan, which was submitted to DESE on June 17th. As Dan McCaughey stated, this is a self-directed plan designed to help us establish and meet five-year goals. As such, we want to set goals that are ambitious but achievable and flexible enough to allow for changes. Because we are the first school to submit a plan, it is being reviewed by DESE and, when accepted, will be brought to the board for a vote by the Education Committee.

X. Head of School Report

Steve Palmer recognized Sean Gass for a successful and well-orchestrated graduation. Sean noted that this was the first time one of our graduates was a parent, noting the efforts of Salem Academy to ensure she had adequate living and daycare in place. It was also important to champion her for successfully handling the difficult job of being both parent and student. Salem Academy's team effort has meant that she was not only

able to stay in school, but also to walk at graduation and to continue her education through the Gateway to College program.

The Q4 Capstone event was highly successful, as was the Lower School's Learning Service presentation, which Stephanie Callahan noted was very well prepared, very interactive and well executed, whether the topic was LGBTQ advocacy or ocean cleanliness. More time will be allocated for this presentation next year in order to recognize all of the fine work students accomplished.

Field day for the Lower School will be held on June 28th, on Salem Common and at Palmer Cove for the Upper School.

XI. Executive Director Report

Kathy Egmont's role in the activities described above, predominantly budget development, precluded the need for a separate Executive Director's report.

XII. Vote to Adjourn

Bill Henning moved to adjourn, seconded by Steve Palmer. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.