

**Salem Academy Charter School  
Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Board of Trustees  
Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at 6:00 pm, Room 124**

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Members Present: Peter Copelas, Paige Nalipinski, Thomas Monroe, Nina Cohen, Karen Cady, Ana Nuncio, Rick Jones

Members Absent: Leslie Tuttle, Steve Palmer, Josh Biber, Amy Fridhi

Guests: Sean O'Neil, Stephanie Callahan, Sean Gass, Fawaz Abusharkh, Karen Corbett, Pam Boardway, Erik Sayce

**I. Call to Order**

The monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Salem Academy Charter School, 45 Congress Street, Salem, Massachusetts was called to order on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at 6:10 pm, in Room 124 by Chair, Peter Copelas.

**II. Approval of the Minutes**

**MOTION:** The minutes of the December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 meeting were presented for review. Paige Nalipinski made a motion to accept the minutes. With the motion seconded by Ana Nuncio, it was

**RESOLVED:** to accept the December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 monthly meeting minutes as written. The motion carried unanimously.

**III. Public Comment**

Fawaz Abusharkh was invited to Great Schools Massachusetts where he helped create a template for supporters of charter schools to send letters to their State Representatives and Senators. The template can be found on the Great Schools MA Facebook page and Fawaz Abusharkh asked that the Trustees please look for it there.

**IV. SFC Report**  
Pam Rochna

Pam Rochna reported that the SFC met on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016. There was a small turnout. The group discussed the purpose of the SFC. The discussions revolved around how parents are more emotionally engaged when their students are active in the school. The SFC would like to find ways to involve parents more at events, for example for Service Learning projects, or the end of Quarter academic recognitions, sports events, social events, and international social events.

SFC would begin to reach out to parents about the logistics of school events, such as the PTS (Parent /Teacher/Student) conferences and pasta dinner, admissions open houses, lottery, fundraising for NOLA, and academic achievements celebrations. The goal is to get parents to support the school in a new and different way by capitalizing student success to encourage family engagement. The committee discussed shifting the conversation from recruiting new SFC members for fund raising programs to instead increasing parent involvement overall. The key question for parents should be, "how do I become more involved in school activities, not how do I join the SFC."

Another idea discussed was holding Open Forums with speakers or other engaging forums, and only quarterly SFC meetings.

The committee is still discussing fundraising and what it will fund. The members did agree that the SFC should continue to provide support for teacher appreciation and for the Family Picnic.

The next SFC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016.

Peter Copelas commented that there seems to be a slight shift and that it all sounds promising for increasing parent participation.

## **V. New Business**

### **A. ECCF Institute for Trustees, March 19**

The ECCF Institute for Trustees is intended to assist nonprofits to function more effectively. It is held every spring and SACS consistently sends a number of Trustees to the event. Any interested Trustees should contact Sean O'Neil by Friday, February 5.

## **VI. Head of School / Principal Report**

Stephanie Callahan / Sean Gass

Stephanie Callahan reported on ANet news. Two Learning Walks will take place at SACS this spring, where people outside of ANet will come to SACS to look at literacy practices in the Lower School and on coaching strategies, especially around text dependent questioning. Our teachers are shifting lessons to be more text-based, with a focus on supporting facts and evidence on tests, instead of “feeling” questions.

Next week, the Lower School will be taking their interim ANet assessment. This will be the first time that the whole school will be using the new Chromebooks at the same time. This session will help get ready for PARCC, as it is a bit of a dress rehearsal for the May exams.

In the Lower School, our math scores are strong this year. ELA scores are solid as well. Our students continue to perform in the top 5% of the network consistently. The ANet network has doubled in size this year and we are ranked 7 out of 137 schools nationwide.

### **Upper School**

Sean Gass reported on the PSAT data. The College Board was late reporting data this year. The PSAT was realigned this year to focus on evidence based reading and writing, which makes it now more in line with the new SAT. Our students scored below the state and nation overall in grades 10 and 11. In grade 10, our mean score was 891, compared to 956 in MA and 932 nationally. In grade 11, our mean score was 929, compared to 1011 in MA and 1010 nationally. Clearly there is room for improvement. In addition, last year's results were better. At this time, the Upper School needs to figure out why we aren't showing improvement.

Stephanie Callahan added that for this 11<sup>th</sup> grade class, math has always been a struggle. She reported that targeted intervention actually began for this grade back in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, with support from the Amelia Peabody Grant.

Sean Gass added that the Upper School is also looking at other measurement tools going forward.

Thomas Monroe asked when the Upper School teachers begin working with students on college essay writing. Sean Gass explained that they begin the process with our College Counselor, Melissa Lassen, in Grade 11. Reflective writing begins in Grade 9. In addition, Stephanie Callahan added that writing in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum is identity based.

Peter Copelas asked if Sean Gass is worried about test fatigue for students.

Sean Gass replied that we have only MCAS in Upper School now, so the testing process is not like years in the past. However, it is a concern and we need to explore options further.

#### College Report

Sean Gass reported that 43 students of 46 will graduate. Two students were not on track from the beginning of the year. 100% of students have applied to colleges, with an average of 7 applications per student. 27 out of 44 students have already been accepted to college.

#### Staffing

We have hired two new temporary Special Education teachers to work with two of our current at-risk students. We also welcomed three student teachers to the Upper School -- two from Salem State University and 1 from Gordon College.

Stephanie Callahan reported that the technology teacher position remains unfilled. We are re-thinking the position for next year to possibly include increasing STEM, robotics and computer science in the Lower School. Peter Copelas asked if the administration has decided to focus on more of a teaching person than a technology expert. Stephanie Callahan responded that we believe we are in very good shape with the technology and we are functioning well with the new Chromebooks. There seems to be less of a need for an integration specialist – instead a solid IT teacher is needed in addition.

#### Professional Development

This year, our first full back to school was January 4<sup>th</sup>. We will hold one more professional development day this week. Part of the process includes looking at trends, at-risk interventions, and grading and in US. The Lower School is looking at ANet results and trends as well.

#### Staff Survey

Our staff completed their mid-year surveys. Stephanie Callahan reported an overall upward trend in results, which affirms a general feeling of a positive staff culture this year. The Administrative Team continues to reflect on how staff can best be supported.

#### Calendar

Stephanie Callahan reported on a number of activities. Our basketball season is well underway. All home games are taking place at the JCC in Marblehead and have been well attended. The Dance Team performs at the games as well.

Our upcoming play this year is Alice in Wonderland, which will take place in March.

Our Lower School winter trips are coming up next month. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade will go to Boston to skate. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade will go tubing, and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade will go skiing and snowboarding. These opportunities always offer team building and a chance for many students to explore out of their comfort zone.

Ana Nuncio asked if SACS is participating in Salem Schools programs on cultural orientation. Stephanie Callahan said she will look into it.

## **VII. Executive Director Report**

Sean O'Neil

#### Trustees

We are interested in including more interaction between Trustees and school events and activities overall. Please let Sean O'Neil know any time you would like to visit, or would like to speak at or participate in meetings. More participation by Trustees is welcome.

#### Security

Security is still a focus for us and we are taking continued steps to prepare. Our entire staff recently participated in ALICE training (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate), which is a national organization protocol for safety in schools. It is a system of communication and alert, with clarification on what to do to survive in the event of an attack. All members of the staff took an on-line course and test. Following that process, the Salem Police gave a presentation to the full staff. The next step includes a walk through by police and then discussion of how to bring this model to students.

Thomas Monroe asked if all staff attended. Sean O'Neil replied that all staff and teachers did participate.

#### Enrollment

Our enrollment is back up to 422, which includes two new 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Approximately 30 people attended the January 20<sup>th</sup> Admissions Open House. We currently have 120 new candidates for next year, which is a slight increase from last year, and we are continuing to see a steady increase in applications each year.

#### The State House

The Massachusetts Charter Schools Association goal for the last few years has been to lift the cap on charter schools. Currently, enrollment in a charter school cannot take over 9% of a district's budget – unless it is a failing district. Only then, and if the charter school is a proven provider, it can take up to 18% of the district's student population. Our increase in enrollment was based on this formula. Only 4% of students in Massachusetts attend charter schools. There are 81 charter schools in MA. The state allows for 120. The Association wants to lift caps. Mayor Walsh and Governor Baker support lifting caps. There is concern and pushback from teachers unions, however.

Great Schools MA is currently backing efforts to support the cap increase. Unions and opponents of charter schools claim that money is taken away from districts and that charter school select top students only. The opposition also wants to change the funding formula for charter schools, which would put funding in a volatile and unpredictable situation. The Mass Charter School Association is not willing to sacrifice chapter 70 funding.

Mr. O'Neil then displayed the ESE Charter Schools Office website citing the multitude of data the Department uses to hold charter schools accountable, and he illustrated the CHART dashboard prepared by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education comparing each individual school's demographics with comparable schools in the Commonwealth.

### **VIII. Committee Reports**

#### A. Finance Committee

Thomas Monroe

The End of Year report will reflect less than expected in terms of student income, but other changes to the budget will allow it to still be balanced. Staff changes have altered numbers as well, but without any reduction in totals budgeted funds.

Professional fees are being adjusted for Veracross and the School Brains transition.

There are costs associated with equipment maintenance, including a smart board purchase versus fixing it, which would have been more costly. Additional Chromebooks were purchased and that was added to capital purchases.

#### B. Education Committee

Amy Slate

There was no report.

C. Facilities Committee  
Leslie Tuttle

The Department of Labor did rule that Shetland Park has no responsibility for bidding or procurement laws because Shetland is private company.

Sean O'Neil and Mark Meche looked at the space again for the Arts Center. It seems to be a straight forward option. Mark Meche will submit his design to Shetland and they will price it out. The next step will then be to negotiate a lease. The Arts Center should be ready by September 2016.

The Project Manager at Shetland Park is going on maternity leave this week. Their IT person is point of contact going forward. We are looking at the Lynch Street site for the Gymnasium again.

The next step is to meet with Mr. Lapin. Lease options and negotiations need to be revisited as well. Sean O'Neil will follow up with Shetland and will have more information at the next Board of Trustees meeting.

D. Development Committee  
Nina Cohen

The Development Committee met last week. The Trustees held a successful Phone-a-thon on MLK day.

A letter was sent to potential donors, alerting them to the call. Our Matching grant is half way there, and Nina Cohen is hopeful that we will meet the September 1<sup>st</sup> deadline.

Thomas Monroe asked if the Committee asked specifically for funding, or if options were given for donors who didn't necessarily want to support sports or arts. Nina Cohen reported that the Committee focused on tutoring and educational excellence, and that we tailor grant applications when necessary. However, the Amelia Peabody Grant is matching only towards the Second Decade Fund.

In April/May, the Development Committee will be hosting another community luncheon.

**IX. Transition Planning / Search Committee**  
Steve Palmer

Peter Copelas asked for 1 or 2 more Trustees to sit on the Committee. Their first meeting date will be February 6<sup>th</sup>. Kara McLaughlin has agreed to serve on the committee. In addition, Sean O'Neil will update his job description

The Committee will need to determine a budget and research search firms.

**X. Adjourn**

Nina Cohen made a motion to adjourn the meeting. With the motion duly seconded by Thomas Monroe and unanimously approved, the meeting adjourned at 8:44 pm.