

**Salem Academy Charter School  
Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Board of Trustees  
Wednesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016 at 6:00 pm, Room 124**

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Members Present: Peter Copelas, , Rick Jones, Steve Palmer, Josh Biber, David Pabich, Thomas Monroe, Leslie Tuttle, Ana Nuncio, Karen Cady, and Nina Cohen

Members Absent: Amy Slate, Paige Nalipinski

Guests: Sean O'Neil, Stephanie Callahan, Fawaz Abusharkh, Karen Corbett, 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 March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016 at 6:15 pm, in Room 124 by Chair, Peter Copelas.

### **II. Approval of the Minutes**

**MOTION:** The minutes of the February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016 meeting were presented for review. Steve Palmer made a motion to accept the revised minutes. With the motion seconded by Karen Cady, it was

**RESOLVED:** to accept the February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016 monthly meeting minutes as written. The motion carried unanimously.

### **III. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

### **IV. New Business**

#### **A. 2016-2017 Calendar**

Sean O'Neil presented draft of the new academic year's calendar. It calls for 195 days of school. Peter Copelas asked if it will be visible to families on the website. Sean O'Neil replied that it will.

Ana Nuncio asked about the Board of Trustee meeting dates next year. Peter Copelas replied that we will continue the practice of meeting on the fourth Wednesday of the month, unless a particular conflict arises. Sean O'Neil will present the exact dates at next meeting.

#### **B. DESE Site Visit, Board meeting Tuesday, May 3, 2016 at 8:45 am**

On Tuesday, May 3, the DESE has requested a morning Board of Trustees meeting during their scheduled site visit. These charter school office site visits are part of the accountability program. The team will be looking at key design elements, diverse learning strategies, access and equity, governance, student performance, and finance. Trustees are asked to attend this meeting, if possible.

Peter Copelas followed up asking that Trustees please let Sean O'Neil know if they are able to attend the DESE site visit, or the Read Trust visit, or both. mn

#### C. Read Trust Site Visit, Board Meeting Monday, June 13 at 9:00 am

The team from the Read Trust, including Dr. Albright will meet with the Board of Trustees during this visit to discuss the vision for Salem Academy. This year, in addition to the science department, there is particular interest in the new building plans for the summer and fall.

#### D. Report on ECCF Trustee Institute

Nina Cohen reported that 6 trustees attended this event. The keynote speaker, Hildi Gatli, spoke about "Collective Enoughness." There were a number of points of interest including how trustees could shift their focus in meetings to be more effective. One example given was that trustees need to focus more on what is going well at their schools, and on the mission. If boards make the mission the heart of the board meeting, dialogue is opened up. She further suggested that boards should develop a shared vision and build a trust. Her second recommendation was that boards stop asking for money. And finally, she offered some tools for board meetings, such as sitting in a round configuration, which already occurs at SACS, and that meetings should have more open ended questions.

Karen Cady added that she attended a session on cultural inclusivity for non-profit boards. The session was inspirational and suggested we discuss how we can achieve greater diversity on the board that is reflective of our student population.

#### V. SFC Report

Pam Rochna, Pam Boardway, Lisa King

There was no SFC report this month.

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

Stephanie Callahan

Stephanie Callahan spoke about the Safe and Supportive Schools initiative that we have been undertaking since last year. The initiative asks what we can do as a school to ensure more consistent classrooms. Some of the solutions are centered on ways to increase more parent engagement and how to build student connections. For example, the Lower School is developing an Activity Fair where we are looking at what students are connecting with - and why. Then, the fair would showcase these interests in terms of new or existing clubs or extracurricular activities. We are hoping to also identify what activities may be more beneficial with certain populations. For example, research shows that drama programs are well suited for children on the autism spectrum. The Lower School teachers and coaches are excited about his initiative.

Another area we are examining is how to support new teachers all year, so that we continue to build and develop a more supportive culture. The Upper School is looking at ways to engage parents more around student skills that are missing now, and how we assess those gaps and progress that is made around them.

Leslie Tuttle added that it seems like a lot of new work for our already burdened teachers. We are worried about them.

Stephanie Callahan responded that the goal of the initiative is to make this part of what teachers already do. Moreover, when children have opportunities to do well in different things, it leads to them doing better in all things. We want to ensure that our students have at least one thing that they connect with.

#### Staffing

The STEM teaching position interviews are going well.

Our grade 8 science teacher is leaving for a policy fellowship. The Grade 9 math position for next year is also open.

Thomas Monroe asked how many students in the college process are applying for scholarship and grants. He also asked which scholarships they are applying for. Rick Jones then asked how much debt students leave college with. Peter Copelas suggested that we need to track college attendance, graduation and debt. Stephanie Callahan agreed that this information is the ultimate goal, but the board needs to think about how many resources we will have to get this information, and then to track it consistently. She added that many schools have a second college counselor who specifically works with students and data at the college level. Rick Jones then asked if we are counseling every student to go to college. Stephanie Callahan replied that if it is the right school for the student, we support them. She added that other charter schools are doing more for alternative programs to help students. Thomas Monroe suggested that there are organizations that we may be able to partner with, and there may be a lot of data that we could get with little effort.

### VII. Executive Director Report

Sean O'Neil

#### Enrollment Lottery

We had 350 applicants for 107 spaces. 50% of the 5th graders in Salem applied to our 6th grade. There were 72 spaces in grade 6, but 28 spaces went to siblings. Therefore, we were only able to offer 44 spaces to new to SACS 6<sup>th</sup> grade students.

In an effort to increase the Upper School enrollment, we accepted 30 new 9<sup>th</sup> grade students to create a freshman class of 80 students rather than the norm of 72. All 30 were Salem residents, leaving 30 more candidates on the waiting list, 16 from Salem and 14 from out of town.

Our targeted enrollment is 446 students next year. We have registered with the state for a maximum of 456, which is just in case we don't see attrition that we are anticipating. The following year we could increase our enrollment to 480, which is our maximum enrollment. Peter Copelas asked if there is a penalty if we decide to keep enrollment at 460 students. Sean O'Neil assured him that there is no penalty.

Great Schools of Massachusetts is still addressing the issue of caps on charter schools in the state. Sean O'Neil will provide the Trustees with an update at the next meeting. The Senate is proposing to change our funding formula, which charter school association is against.

### VIII. Committee Reports

#### A. Finance Committee

Thomas Monroe

1. Monthly Financials

Our cash position is consistent with last month. There has been a slight adjustment for enrollment, hardware, furniture, and other small items. The income from the play will offset the drama expense.

2. Search Committee Budget

We are planning to amend this year's budget to engage a consultant or search firm in our search for a new Executive Director. Steve Palmer asked what will it cost, and how much we need to budget. He then agreed to research some prospects and options and report back to the Board next month. At that time, the Board can vote to amend the budget to include the cost of a consultant or search firm.

3. Faculty/Staff Salary Budget for 2016-2017

Sean O'Neil explained that our practice has been to award contracts for the next year the week before staff leave for April vacation and to ask staff to sign and return the contracts by the end of the week following April vacation. For this reason, Sean asked the Board to vote in support of a 5% raise in faculty and staff salaries based on a first draft of a budget for next year. The 5% would be the second consecutive year at this level and is consistent with the strategic planning goal intended to make our salaries more competitive in this district.

Next year's enrollment is projected at 446 students, a 6% enrollment increase. Next year's tuition will be approximately \$6,340,000 with a 2% increase per student. Federal grants will also go up slightly. We are expecting additional \$11,000 in Title I because of increased enrollment.

We received \$415,000 from foundations this year.

With a \$6,698,000 budget, our big expenses will be salaries and facilities. In addition to the 5% salary increases, we have a commitment to longevity increases of \$2,000 in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> year at SACS, and we are increasing the stipend for Form Leaders next year from \$2,000 to \$3,000.

Peter Copelas asked if we are creating an expectation of a 5% annual increase, because that could be a concern. Sean O'Neil replied that this was a commitment we made last year. David Pabich wondered how it was communicated to the staff. Is it now going to be an expectation every year? Was it a metered approach to make salaries more competitive? Stephanie Callahan replied that it is not the expectation for every year, and although we are trying to make salaries more competitive, our teaching salaries are not competitive.

**MOTION:** Peter Copelas made a motion to approve the 5% increase in staff salaries for next year. With the motion seconded by Karen Cady, it was

**RESOLVED:** to support the 5% staff salary increase this year. The motion carried unanimously.

**B. Facilities Committee**

Leslie Tuttle, Chair.

1. Status re Building Two Arts Complex

Sean O'Neil explained that we are waiting on re-designs to finalize the cost estimates. The cost of \$16.98 per square foot has been agreed to. Mr. Lappin has concerns about all of the renovations now because of ramp and lift changes. However, we are

finalizing negotiations and are moving forward. Currently, we are looking at a 15 year lease, if the gymnasium goes ahead as planned. If it does not, we are expecting that a 7 ½ year lease will take over.

## 2. Status re Norman H. Read Gymnasium

Sean O'Neil explained that we are still negotiating a lease for the Gymnasium. We are hoping to sign both leases in the next few weeks.

## C. Development Committee

Nina Cohen, Chair

Nina Cohen explained that there are three grants in process in the amount of \$27,450. There will be no community luncheon this spring. Our time and efforts are directed at meeting the \$40,000 challenge grant from the Peabody Foundation. We are however moving forward with a Science Advisory Council event, possibly a science fair, in May.

## D. Search Committee Report

Steve Palmer, Chair

The Committee recruited 2 faculty members from SACS, Ana Brea (Spanish Teacher, and one of the founding members of Salem Academy) and Drew Betts (Athletic Director). In addition, we are seeking family representatives to serve on the Committee. Our strategy right now is to collaborate on line through the Google drive, and we will meet in person every two weeks. We are investigating possible consultants and considering different approaches to the search depending on what the consultant or search firm offers.

## IX. Adjourn

On motion made and seconded, Peter Copelas adjourned the meeting at 8:15 pm.