

Salem Academy Charter School
Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Wednesday, October 28, 2015 at 6:00 pm, Room 124

Members Present: Peter Copelas, Connie Burke, Leslie Tuttle, Amy Slate, Steve Palmer, Karen Cady, Ana Nuncio, Nina Cohen, Paige Nalipinski

Members Absent: Josh Biber, Thomas Monroe

Guests: Sean O'Neil, Stephanie Callahan, Sean Gass, 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 October 28, 2015 at 6:20 pm, in Room 124 by Chair, Peter Copelas.

II. Approval of the Minutes

MOTION: The minutes of the September 21, 2015 meeting were presented for review. Karen Cady made a motion to accept the minutes. With the motion seconded by Ana Nuncio, it was

RESOLVED: to accept the September 21, 2015 monthly meeting minutes as written. The motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: The minutes of the September 21, 2015 Executive Committee meeting were presented for review. Karen Cady made a motion to accept the minutes. With the motion seconded by Ana Nuncio, it was

RESOLVED: to accept the September 21, 2015 Executive Committee meeting minutes as written. The motion carried unanimously.

III. Public Comment

There was no Public Comment.

IV. SFC Report
Fawaz Abusharkh

Fawaz Abusharkh reported that the SFC held its second meeting and began the process for election of new moderators. There are now three candidates on the ballot which is being sent by email to all parents. The new moderators will take their places at the next meeting.

The Calendar Raffle is coming up. Currently, we have 24 gifts and are planning to add some more.

, The SFC raised some money by selling tickets for the Salem Education Foundation Food for Thought raffle. The SFC currently has \$240.00 in the bank.

V. Head of School / Principal Report

Stephanie Callahan / Sean Gass

Grading

Sean Gass reported that Quarter I ends on Friday October 30th. The impact of the grading shift will be analyzed and shared with Board of Trustees at the November meeting.

Technology

The school is now using School Brains exclusively. However, a few administrators still have access to all of our historical data in Veraross. So far, we are seeing that School Brains has some great features, however there are some challenges as well. Our attempts at customization have been difficult. Parent access to student assignments and grades is not a function that School Brains currently provides, but we are working to try to implement this feature. The shift to Google Docs has gone well. There has been no internet down time and overall functionality has been great.

PARRC

The state will release PARRC results next week. We will share those results with the Trustees in November.

Human Resources

We still have one opening for a Technology teacher. We are continuing to interview candidates for this position.

College

Students are well into the process of applying to colleges now. Many scholarships and honors are coming through as well.

Professional Development

We are continuing our work on safe and supportive schools, and dedicated our Professional Development to this initiative last Friday. In addition, we are working with Massachusetts Advocates for Children and with Lesley University to plan and implement these practices in more detail. We have also partnered with Harvard Law School, and plan to review and analyze the outcomes of our work over the next two years.

MCAS Results

Salem Academy continues to outperform the state and district in Grade 8 science and Grade 10 English Language Arts. For the first time, however, we are not meeting those same standards in math. We are in the process of looking into the decline. However, there is still high growth of 63%.

In Math, 77 % of students performed at the Proficient level, but the overall performance is down 13 %. Over the last two years there has been a decline. We believe that tests now are asking students to do more creative problem solving in their responses, and to therefore comprehend more steps. Our students' content knowledge is very strong, but the deep complex problem solving is a struggle. This is exactly what the Common Core is designed to accomplish, to force higher level and more complex problem solving.

The Science MCAS results showed 67 % of students earned Advanced or Proficient across whole school. These scores far outperform the state.

In Grade 9 Biology, there was a slight dip in the Advanced scores. In Grade 8 science, The Advanced and Proficient scores increased.

Overall, we are happy with most of these results and will work with the 10th grade.

Parent-Teacher-Student conferences are beginning next week.

VI. Executive Director Report

Sean O'Neil

Enrollment

We have seen some ups and downs in enrollment recently, especially in the high school. Two families have moved out of state. Currently, our enrollment is at 420 students. This number brings us 6 students lower than our projected enrollment.

Our demographic profile has changed. The students reporting low income status is up to 45% and our students with special education needs has risen to 18%. The numbers of students in our English Language Learners program is stable. The overall number of non-white students is up as well. Our demographics are now even more consistent with our sending districts, Salem.

School Brains

We have hired a project manager, who is a database specialist, to expedite the transition.

Charter School Celebration

Salem Academy attended the Charter School Celebration in Boston earlier this month. In addition, a group of parents attended the legislative hearings on Charter Schools at the Statehouse. There are currently two efforts to lift the cap on charter schools. One initiative is legislation filed by the Governor so that 12 new charter schools are given charters each year. However, many legislators and unions are against this legislation. Another group, made up of Boston businesses, is preparing to a ballot initiative to lift the cap on charter schools. There is a rally scheduled to take place on November 18th.

Peter Copelas asked if there is any threat of rollback? Sean O'Neil replied there is not.

The current legislation against charter schools is asking for a 3 year moratorium on new charter schools. It is also asking to re-evaluate the funding formula over those 3 years, and to tighten certification requirements for teachers in charter schools.

Sean O'Neil reported that there was a positive meeting with the new Salem Public Schools Superintendent. She is interested in building a collaborative relationship, even though currently, half of the school committee is against charter schools.

Grants.

The Amelia Peabody Foundation has awarded SACS \$35,000 towards our tutoring program, \$20,000 towards our new building, and a \$40,000 challenge grant to leverage gifts from other sources for the new Gym. This is an increase over \$40,000 given to us last year and we are grateful for their continued support.

VII. Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee

Connie Burke

1. Report of the Auditor FY 2015

The Trustees will need to vote on the Auditor's Report. There were no compliance and control issues in the report. However, the report shows that we don't have a line item for depreciation, which is \$120,000. If this depreciation were reported, we would not have a positive balance of over \$120,000. It would instead show a negative end of year cash flow of \$6,500. The report, therefore, shows an accounting issue that will be evaluated as a negative by the state. While our financial position is improving, our net debt position is deteriorating because we are not funding depreciation.

Connie Burke asked if the Auditors suggested a new process. Sean O'Neil replied that if we were able to fund our depreciation, we would be in a better position to demonstrate our financial security. We aren't providing for our long term depreciation. This issue will become a higher priority. The auditors reported that most of the other charter schools are in stronger financial positions than Salem Academy.

Steve Palmer wondered how many charter schools own their buildings. There are differences on how other schools spend their money than SACS does. Karen Cady asked if we could analyze other charter schools. Peter Copelas added that we do spend a bigger percentage of our budget on facilities than other schools.

Steve Palmer pointed out that overall, the profile looks like consistent growth.

MOTION: The 2015FY Auditor's Report was presented for review. Connie Burke made a motion to accept the draft financial statement of the Independent Auditor's Report. With the motion seconded by Leslie Tuttle, it was

RESOLVED: to accept the 2015 FY Independent Auditor's Report. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Monthly Financial Statements

Connie Burke reported few changes in the monthly statement, other than tuition is down because of students leaving Salem Academy

C. Facilities Committee Leslie Tuttle

Sean O'Neil, Mark Meche and Peter Copelas met with representatives from Shetland Park to discuss the new building. They are all working on further negotiations. Mark Meche will work with them regarding test boring results so that we will be able to go ahead with the foundation for the building. In addition, an independent civil engineer will look at the Lynch street site to help plan next steps.

D. Development Committee Steve Palmer

Steve Palmer shared that the Capital Campaign has 100% commitment from the Board and is in Phase II, major gifts from individuals to match the Amelia Peabody Grant. Phase III is to approach area foundations and corporations. Phase IV is broad outreach, which will be easier to sell once we have our new facility planned.

Nina Cohen added that the Community Luncheon is planned for next Thursday. Currently, we have 16 acceptances.

VIII. New Business

Transition Planning
Peter Copelas

We need to begin the planning process in our search for a new Executive Director, and discuss the transition plan for 2017.

Peter asked the Trustees to think about a timeline and possible overlap. Search Committee members will include board members and other stakeholders.

At the November Board of Trustees meeting, more substantive decisions will be made regarding the search process and action planning.

IX. Motion to Adjourn

Steve Palmer made a motion to adjourn the meeting. With the motion duly seconded by Connie Burke and unanimously approved, the meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.