

Salem Academy Charter School
Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Monday, September 21, 2015 at 6:00 pm, Room 124

Members Present: Peter Copelas, Ana Nuncio, Thomas Monroe, Nina Cohen, Connie Burke, Paige Nalipinski, Steve Palmer

Members Absent: Karen Cady, Josh Biber, Leslie Tuttle, Amy Slate

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

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 September, 21 2015 at 6:20 pm, in Room 124 by Peter Copelas.

I. Approval of the Minutes

MOTION: The minutes of the July 15th, 2015 meeting were presented for review. Ana Nuncio made a motion to accept the minutes. With the motion seconded by Thomas Monroe, it was:

RESOLVED: to accept the July 15th, 2015 monthly meeting minutes as written. The motion carried unanimously

II. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

III. New Business

A. Student Expulsion Policy Approval

Sean O'Neil reported that there is a slight variation this year in the student expulsion policy. The DESE has implemented new guidelines to ensure compliance for all schools. We modified a few areas, and we are now 100% compliant. The DESE has approved it and we are now seeking Trustee approval.

When asked about the nature of the new guidelines, Sean O'Neil reviewed the document and pointed out the numbered and highlighted sentences that corresponded to the DESE checklist of important points. Mr. O'Neil said the changes were essentially to ensure due process and the inclusion of parents in the process.

MOTION: Paige Nalipinski made a motion to for the Board of Trustees to accept the new Expulsion policy, which is in line with DESE guidelines. With the motion seconded by Steve Palmer, it was:

RESOLVED: to accept the new student expulsion policy as presented. The motion carried unanimously

B. MPCSA State House hearing October 13th, 2016

Sean O'Neil reported that there is pending legislation to change the funding formula for charter schools and to put a 3-year moratorium on the institution of new charters. Furthermore, there is legislation that would require charter schools to comply with the certification requirements for teachers as traditional public schools. The Charter School Association has asked all charter schools to send teams of representatives to the statehouse in October to advocate for charter schools. Sean O'Neil requested as much Trustee support as possible.

Nina Cohen asked how our state representatives feel about charter schools. She suggested that Sean O'Neil follow up with the representatives. Stephanie Callahan reported that she has met with Paul Tucker. They are working on arranging a meeting with Joan Lovely, who is one of the supporters of the legislation that would negatively impact charter schools.

C. MPCSA Birthday Celebration October 24

Sean O'Neil explained that SACS has purchased a table for 10 guests and is inviting the Trustees to a dinner party at Boston's Park Plaza Saturday, October 24.

D. Trustee Compliance

The Charter School Office needs all Trustees to respond regarding trustee compliance. SACS is almost all complete.

E. Trustee Committee Appointments Peter Copelas

Peter Copelas reported that we are asking potential trustees to attend the upcoming October or November meetings. Trustees are to contact Peter Copelas for names of individuals to invite.

Thomas Monroe asked how many new trustees we are seeking. Peter Copelas explained that we are looking for 3-4 candidates. Nina Cohen added that we could also invite them to November 5th Community Luncheon. Trustees are asked to email any names and contact information to Nina so that she can send a formal invitation.

IV. SFC Report Fawaz Abusharkh

Fawaz Abusharkh reported that there were close to 20 parents who attended the SFC's first meeting of the year.

He and Cathy Emerling have served as co-moderators for the past three years, and so the SFC is seeking nominations for new co or tri moderators.

V. Head of School / Principal Report Stephanie Callahan

Grading System

Stephanie Callahan reported that there has been a change to our grading system. Specifically, the way grades are calculated is changing. We are now able to recognize higher proficiency and effort in our grading. We will explain the changes to families in more detail during back to school night, but we have given parents some initial

information before that event. This change also affects the way our grades will look on transcripts, but we know that colleges will accept this new system. They will understand the grading system in the context of our system, not compared to other schools.

Connie Burke asked if this new grading system will work in School Brains. Stephanie Callahan replied that it would, and it would be more efficient than Veracross was.

Nina Cohen mentioned that the parent letter was very confusing. She wondered about how SACS plans to assess how families are adapting to the new grading system. Stephanie Callahan agreed that assessment is an integral component and there are assessment plans, including working within the structure of the Dissemination Grant.

Peter Copelas asked if the new grading model is a huge change or a small shift. Stephanie Callahan reported that we are making our grades more meaningful. We are asking teachers to re-think how they are coming up with their grades. It is not a radical shift since our educational model reflects this process already. Additionally, teachers are supportive of the new model.

Thomas Monroe asked if this new system makes the school more or less competitive. Stephanie Callahan replied that the system is more rigorous, and more accurate, therefore making us more competitive.

Technology

We have deployed Chrome Books to all upper school and it seems to be going well. Teachers are using Google classroom. Lower school students are still using the computer carts but we are looking into additional technology enhancements for the Lower School in the future. Currently, we do not have enough Chrome Books for the Lower School, but are building up to that level.

Thomas Monroe asked what happens if students don't have internet access at home. Stephanie Callahan replied that our school is open until 5:30 and students are welcome to work here until then. In addition, we are aware that this could be an issue for some students and are listening for any difficulties.

School Brains

We are preparing to launch the Community Portal, which will give parents and students access. There are a few grading glitches that we are working on. Our next step is to archive all of our Veracross historical data.

MCAS

The MCAS results are still embargoed. We will share those results at the October Board of Trustees meeting. The state will be voting soon regarding PARRC versus MCAS.

Peter Copelas asked if any families opted out of the PARRC testing last year. Stephanie Callahan reported that one student did opt out. Students needed to tell teachers directly if they are not testing because there is no actual opt out option.

Staffing

One of our Upper School history teachers left for Salem High School in September. We have hired a new history teacher with good experience. We are helping students work through this transition.

There is still an opening for an Education Technology Specialist. We are working to find a suitable candidate.

Reach Day

We had a successful Reach Day in September that included field trips for hiking in Upper and Lower schools. Reach the Beach was also a success.

Dissemination Grant

Peter Copelas asked where is SACS in the process of the Dissemination Grant and if we are wrapping things up. Stephanie Callahan reported that Sarah Morrill will be here 2 days a week, and then one day to tie up any loose ends. The project is scheduled to end on February 1, 2016. Salem Public Schools now has to implement what they have learned and have asked for some support from our staff in small groups.

Ana Nuncio asked if we are moving to more professional development days to support this project. Stephanie Callahan reported that we will not add any days, but we will use substitute teachers to cover SACS teachers when they go to Salem Public.

VI. Executive Director Report Sean O'Neil

Current Enrollment

Enrollment always fluctuates at the beginning of school. We anticipated a maximum of 434 students, but we budgeted for 426. We had 438 enrolled in late August. We lost more 9th graders than expected, as many of them enrolled in Essex Technical High School, and then we lost some additional 9th and 10th graders in the last days before school opened and over the course of the first week. This put our enrollment at 422, down 4 students and \$55,000.

We are working to increase appeal in the high school to make it more robust and socially appealing to students. We need to set as a goal to reduce our attrition rate to 5%. The new gym and arts facilities will definitely help attract and retain Upper School students.

Peter Copelas asked how we fix this problem, especially if any other students leave. Sean O'Neil replied that we have already advertised a new enrollment period for this year. Unfortunately, no new enrollments came out of from those efforts. We have met with the 9th grade class and encouraged them to refer friends or acquaintances. One other possibility is to allow high school students to return here after they have left. Since we no longer have a waiting list for the 9th grade, that has not been an option. We do, however, have a large Lower School wait list. 90% of that list includes Salem residents. Currently, our ethnic breakdown now reflects less than 50% of white students enrolled at SACS. Our Special Education population is now 18%, which is an increase from 14% in past years. Our reduced lunch population is at 42% this year. We need to maintain 40% of students receiving reduced lunch over 3 years to maintain our Title I funding.

We are still waiting for a decision on our Amelia Peabody Grant application for a tutoring program, but we anticipate a response in the next week.

VII. Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee

Connie Burke

Thomas Monroe gave the Finance Committee report. Our cash position has improved, which is primarily due to the Read Foundation grant.

Thomas Monroe pointed out that the foundation grants from the Read Trust, the Mifflin Foundation, and the Amelia Peabody Foundation in the first few months of the fiscal year, prior to school beginning in August, made a significant difference in the budget. On that basis, he made a **Motion** that we revise the budget to include these foundation grants as income. With the motion seconded by Ana Nuncio, it was:

RESOLVED: to revise the updated budget as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Year to Date: Thomas Monroe reported that the top line tuition has been reduced by the loss of 4 students, which has the amount \$55,000 less than expected.

Contingency Fund. We are not anticipating using the Contingency Fund this during the year. Overall, SACS is in a solid financial position.

B. Facilities Committee

Leslie Tuttle

Sean O'Neil distributed the most current floor plan for the Gymnasium. The original plan was for three classrooms behind the stage. We are now looking at additional space instead across from the main SACS entrance. We are looking at 5,000 square feet of additional space in this new space for approximately the same price as the three classrooms would have been. We are working on a design plan which we will give to Shetland Park. Soon after that, we will receive a quote from them.

Shetland Park has agreed to add safety features that will include speed bumps and flashing lights. We will also need to soundproof the classrooms.

We are hoping to break ground beginning of December to begin building the new Gymnasium.

C. Development Committee

Steve Palmer

The Development Committee is currently focused on leadership gift possibilities and outreach to existing contacts.

In addition, we are planning our next Community Luncheon. The Committee asks that Trustees send Nina Cohen any contact information of guests you wish to invite. Nina Cohen agreed to follow up with Trustees by sending a list of previous guests so there is no overlap with any new invitees.

VIII. Motion to adjourn Regular Session and move to Executive Session

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:03 by Connie Burke. This was seconded by Steve Palmer and passed unanimously.

IX. Executive Session

- A. Executive Director's Evaluation
- B. Executive Director's Contract

X. Motion to adjourn Executive Session
Peter Copelas