

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Board of Trustees of Salem Academy Charter School
Wednesday, November 18, 2020, via Zoom**

Members present remotely due to Covid-19 guidelines:

Bill Henning, Dan McCaughey, Rick Jones Shelby Morrison, David Pabich,
Alison Palmer, Mekka Smith, Rick Winter, Christine Wynne

Members absent:

Edward Aroko, Susan Low

Staff present remotely:

Stephanie Callahan, Matt Chuchul, Alex Dean, Diego Fellows, Andrea Jacobs

Guests present remotely:

Amy Stewart (SFC)

Recorder present remotely:

Shelby Hypes

I. Call to Order, Welcome

The monthly meeting of the Salem Academy Charter School Board of Trustees was called to order by Chair David Pabich at 6:09 PM on November 18, 2020, via Zoom.

II. Minutes of the Meeting of September 23, 2020

Mekka Smith presented the minutes of the October 28, 2020, meeting. Bill Henning noted that he should have abstained from the CPA vote to avoid any perceived conflict of interest. As his abstention would not have affected the outcome of that vote Mekka Smith moved to accept the minutes as submitted. Shelby Morrison seconded the motion, which was passed by a roll call vote.

III. Public Comment

Several members of the public were present, but the only comment was a wish for a Happy Thanksgiving from Fawaz Abusharkh.

IV. SFC Report

Amy Stewart reported that he SFC met via Zoom on November 4th with an excellent turn out of 50 people. Spanish translation was provided, including posing questions in Spanish in the chat. With Stephanie Callahan, Drea Jacobs and Matt Chuchul in attendance, primary topic was how hybrid learning is working and the transition from remote to in-school learning.

Amy reported that the Rachel Hunt Scholarship has been heavily promoted among seniors and the timing changed from spring to fall; as a result, we have 60 applications as opposed to two last year.

The Boon Supply fundraising project is in full swing, to date we have raised \$2600.

V. Principals' Reports

Matt Chuchul indicated that the end of Q1 means the Lower School is operating fully in hybrid mode (with the exception of families that have opted for remote learning.) Grades are being finalized and appear to be lower, as one would expect given pandemic-related instructional recovery and the current teaching environment. Staff now has the opportunity to do more detailed analysis of performance and needs and set the course for interventions and the work ahead. In short, we are now settling in as opposed to fighting fires.

We are leveraging our ANet relationship as fully as possible. Although the transition did impact work completion and indicate the need for more tutoring in Q2, we are #1 in several areas in our ANet cohort of comparable schools. Without MCAS, we have relied on ANet and diagnostics aligned to our curriculum to understand students' academic status, particularly 6th graders. Overall averages are lower than we would like, especially in math, but we know what needs to happen between now and December. We have been working with our ANet coach on reading ability and fluency, both of which correlate strongly with overall performance.

Matt also indicated that everyone continues to work on how to support kids who remain fully remote, including finding more ways to provide small group instruction and touch points with teachers. Celebrating students—balloons, awards, events—and supporting staff are also important concerns.

At the Upper School level, Drea Jacobs reported that the time-consuming transition from remote to hybrid learning is just now taking place. This is particularly challenging as it increases teaching time and results in less asynchronous time for planning. Both students and teachers have really stepped up to adapt to the more complicated requirements involved.

This is an important time for seniors as they apply to colleges. Although both PSATs and SATS were given on campus, for many colleges the pandemic has de-emphasized tests and raised the importance of grades. Our seniors recognize this and are taking their academics and the application process seriously. Similarly, our college counseling team has done Zoom meetings with families to review the overall and financial processes. They are meeting one-on-one with all students and are scheduled to have one-on-one calls with all families as well. We have also provided more guidance for teachers in writing strong college recommendations.

Bill Henning asked if there is lack of technology and home support has created any noticeable achievement gaps. Although we have paid attention to this and all students have needed tools, Alex Dean indicated that speed and reliability of internet access are factors in student participation and engagement. We are monitoring this.

VI. Interim Executive Director's Report

Stephanie Callahan reported on several different topics. The November 13th charter school delegate assembly focused on ensuring charters are included in various funding programs, our advocacy group and Representative Paul Tucker has been

very supportive. We are in the beginning stage of enrollment for next year's lottery; letters will soon be sent to all Salem 5th and 8th grade families. Our work as a pilot school for trauma sensitive practices has been recognized in a video on best practices; our experiences and lessons learned—from mindfulness to room to the importance of counselors (funded by the Read Trust)—can now provide guidance to others.

In regard to Covid-19 and remote vs. in-school learning, DESE's guidance has changed, allowing for more nuanced decisions and encourage in-school learning. We continue to operate very conservatively, just now bringing back our juniors and seniors, and planning to operate remotely the week following Thanksgiving. This slow approach allows us to address issues as they arise and, along with proposed weekly saliva pool testing (funded by the City of Salem), will help to ensure that learning is not continuously interrupted.

The Board expressed concern for how teachers are coping. While understandably anxious, everyone has remained professional and committed. They appreciate the attentiveness of administrators and trust them to make good decisions so that they can focus on teaching.

Despite our conservative operating stance, we must still meet learning requirements. Rick Winter raised the question of liability, and Bill Henning recommended we check with our insurance broker to ensure we are covered should something go awry.

VII. Committee Reports

A. Education Committee Report

Dan McCaughey reported that the Committee will be reconvening on our diversity/equity/inclusion (DEI) initiative and will make a recommendation for a partner in this work in December. The proposals we have received differ in terms of scope, focus, cost and time span, highlighting the need for us to clarify our priorities in terms of our Executive Director search and for the school in general. An ad hoc DEI Board Committee is under consideration.

B. Governance Committee Report

According to Rick Jones, this committee will be meeting November 23rd to review the rubric for the first round of interviews of Executive Director candidates. Edgillity reports that there are already eight to ten applicants.

C. Facilities Committee Report

Dave Pabich said we are working with a consultant to map out how our HVAC system has evolved. We will be asking for estimates to get the system in balance and are figuring out the best way to proceed and pay for needed improvements. These may not take place until next summer. Who is responsible for filtration and airflow—the school or the landlord—is also under discussion, complicated by the fact that a system may meet code, but not pandemic requirements.

D. Finance Committee Report

Shelby Morrison reported that we are still waiting for DESE's December announcement regarding tuition. Currently, DESE's projections are higher than we have budgeted. Along with some lower expenses due to the pandemic, higher revenues may enable raises for teachers in January, which would be a great morale booster for faculty who have gone above and beyond for their students.

E. Development Committee Report

Christine Wynn's report was, as she said, all good news. We have our first matching grant for \$5,000 in hand and will use it to spearhead our Giving Tuesday fundraiser. The Annual Fund is currently at \$19,000 and, based on the matching grant and our recent history of exceeding our fundraising goals, the Committee has set a goal of \$70,000 for this school year. Bill Henning moved to accept this goal, seconded by Shelby Morrison. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.

Additional committee news included an upcoming alumni event being spearheaded by Alison Palmer and the fact that we have about half of our Emergency Fund remaining. We are not receiving many inquiries right now, but this could well change over the winter.

VIII. Vote to Adjourn.

Bill Henning moved to adjourn, seconded by Rick Winter. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote, and the meeting adjourned at 7:57 pm.