

**Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Wednesday, May 22, 2019 at 6:00 pm, Room 114**

Members Present:

Nina Cohen (Chair), William Henning, Rick Jones, Daniel McCaughey, Shelby Morrison, Steve Palmer, Alfonso Perillo, Mekka Smith, Christine Wynne

Members Absent:

Felicia Pierce, Rick Winter, David Pabich

Staff:

Ana Brea, Stephanie Callahan, Alex Dean, Kathy Egmont, Diego Fellows, Sean Gass

Guests:

Fawaz Abusharkh, Cynthia Marie, Alison Palmer, Pam Rochna

Recorder:

Shelby Hypes

I. Call to Order

The monthly meeting of the Salem Academy Charter School Board of Trustees was called to order by Chair Nina Cohen at 6:00 pm on May 22, 2019, in Room 114.

II. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the April 24, 2019, board meeting were presented for review. Fawaz Abusharkh indicated that it is not the City of Lynn but rather a working group coordinating with the City that is educating children about child abuse. Rick Jones moved, seconded by Dan McCaughey, to accept the minutes as corrected; the motion passed unanimously.

III. Report on the Dominican Republic Service Learning Trip

Ana Brea provided a slide presentation of the April 10-17 trip involving 26 students and four staff members. They were based at the School of the Environment and Natural Resources in Jarabacoa, where work centers on training technicians in conservation, reforestation, and managing natural resources. As part of their service learning, students prepared trails, built a greenhouse and a picnic table, and painted a large wall mural for the center. Students were able to fulfill their required service learning hours, and community circles provided an excellent opportunity to reflect on their experience.

Students were also able to learn about Dominican culture, exploring the colonial city of Santiago with a dedicated tour director and historian Santiago and learning about abuses against indigenous peoples. Recreational activities included a trip to a water fall, white water rafting, a dance and a trip to Paradise Island.

The trip enabled students to push past personal barriers, to learn about themselves and each other, and to see firsthand the value of their work. The total immersion in a different language and culture encouraged many to leave their comfort zone, make real connections, and see themselves in a broader global context.

IV. Public Comment

Fawaz Abusharkh recognized Salem Academy families observing Ramadan and invited everyone to the North Shore Islamic Center's open buffet at 8 pm on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings during Ramadan.

V. SFC Report

Pam Rochna reported on a very successful staff luncheon. The three staff members—Ana Brea, Maggie Acosta and Linda St. Pierre—who have been at Salem Academy since its founding 15 years ago, were honored. Cami Hennekens received the Sean O'Neil Award.

In honor of the school's 15th anniversary, the upcoming family picnic will have a number of special features. The SFC is looking for sponsors and hopes to have high attendance. Other upcoming events include graduation and end-of-year activities.

VI. New Business - Advocacy efforts

Webinars and coaching provided by the Massachusetts Public Charter School Association have provided the impetus to reach out to our local legislators in an effort to make them better informed about who we are, what we do, and our importance to the community. Nina Cohen reported that this is a two-way street; in addition to enlisting their support, we need to be informed about their work and issues. We have already reached out to a number of legislators, and the Advocacy Committee will convene at the end of the school year.

Bill Henning asked if we have an elevator speech. Nina said one is being developed along with general talking points trustees can use.

VII. Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee Report

Alfonso Perillo presented the April financial report. Our expense projections have proven to be very accurate, with salaries being the largest line item. The reduction in revenues reflects the rate determined by City of Salem budget figures that were not available from DESE until March. Final figures will not be available until July. Although key ratios were temporarily adversely affected, we are cautiously hopeful about ending the fiscal year in the black.

The preliminary FY 2020 budget was presented by Kathy Egmont and consultant Cynthia Marie. It is very straight forward. There is little leeway in projecting expenses. Salaries have been maintained and accommodation for new teachers included. Projections have been

trimmed in other areas that do not directly affect the academic program; we will need to look for grants wherever possible. Health insurance costs have been contained. Overall, we anticipate approximately a three percent increase in expenses over current year.

We will need to be particularly careful about all un-necessary spending and continue to use grants or spread improvements over several years to fund capital needs. No commitments have been made, but we hope to make improvements in security, phone and public address systems as well as the installation of vape detectors in bathrooms.

Revenue projections are based on five years of historical data and the assumption that we will have 480 students next year. The challenge will be in the unknown tuition reimbursement which is above the Foundation rate; we are reducing the DESE projection by eight percent to reflect the uncertainty associated with an allocation over which the school has no control. Hoped for increases in funding for public schools at the state level would ameliorate this situation.

The board will vote on the final budget in June. In the meantime, trustees expressed their recognition of the hard work involved in developing the budget and thanked the Finance Committee and Kathy Egmont.

B. Governance Report

Rick Jones reported that work is focused on the executive director's review, a board self-assessment, and talking with alumni/ae interested in serving as a trustee.

C. Development Committee

Christine Wynne said the committee will be meeting in early June and will be sending letters to both individuals and corporate sponsors to raise the additional \$15,000 needed to meet our \$50,000 annual fund goal by the end of June. Pam Rochna suggested the possibility is a fundraising effort at the family picnic. Looking ahead, we will need to increase our goal and, accordingly, our fundraising efforts with friends, philanthropists and others. Christine is meeting with Laurie Kennedy, the Development Director for KIPP Academy in Lynn to get additional ideas.

D. Facilities Committee

Ads to submit proposals for upcoming construction work have been posted, according to Rick Jones. The committee structured the RFP by project so that it will be possible to separate out the cost of each. He also commented on the excellent architectural drawings provided by John Seger.

Anthony Ventura, Executive VP Property Management for Prime Group, the new owner of Shetland Park, toured SACS facilities with Kathy Egmont. She noted his interest in learning about our emergency protocols and what we would need from Prime in an emergency. He also approved our construction plans and indicated Prime is working on a traffic plan to

improve the drop off/pick up procedure. She is encouraged that this a good beginning to building a strong relationship with them.

VIII. Head of School Report

Stephanie Callahan and Sean Gass provided updates on staff hiring, most notably that Andrea Jacobs has accepted the position of Upper School Principal. Both Drea and Matt Chuchul, the new Lower School Principal, will attend our June meeting. We have two Teach for America teachers coming on board in September, and the focus is now on filling remaining teacher openings.

In regard to third quarter achievement, for both Lower and Upper Schools, third quarter statistics are used to determine future needs as the 4th quarter has too many disruptions, e.g., MCAS and end-of year events. The Lower School is on a par with where it has been all year. Plans to improve the screening system for students with special learning needs and possible IEPs include flagging students now for immediate evaluation in the fall so that needed help can be provided more quickly. We are doing more outreach, including plans to do family interviews at Carlton and Bentley next year.

Sean Gass indicated that Upper School results vary by grade. The most consistent gains have been in the 10th grade and one of the biggest concerns is the number of 9th grade students at risk. Both of these results may reflect students' adjustment to SACS culture, grading system, and expectations, as most interventions are not for skill gaps but for organization and executive function, i.e., ability to follow through with work begun in class. Sean has met with every student (and their parent) at danger of retention.

Our smallest class is 10th grade, as a number of 9th graders did not return. Reasons for leaving were not necessarily academic; some had friends elsewhere or had been accepted by Essex Tech, for instance.

Upcoming events include SACS first musical, *The Wizard of Oz* on 5/31 – 6/2, family picnic on 6/6, Service Learning Presentation on 6/7 and, of course, graduation on 6/14. Trustees are encouraged to attend all of these events.

Kathy Egmont made a point of mentioning our Destination Imagination teams stepped up to the plate and took responsibility for raising some of the needed funds to attend the global competition in Kansas City.

Executive Director Report

The status of our grant application to the Read Trust is in limbo as Dr. Albright's ill health has prompted a change in format. We do not know who will be managing this, but Kathy Egmont's conversations with Bill Garr indicate they are positive about our work and remain supportive. We hope to begin a conversation about starting a trustee-controlled restricted fund.

Kathy Egmont also reported on the following:

- Admissions for next year are projected to be 495 students, with some attrition expected.

- Salem Academy has volunteered to be in the first cohort of charter schools submitting accountability plans as part of our new charter. The plan will not be submitted to the Board until it is approved by DESE. However, we will be discussing it with the education committee throughout the process.
- The school's required annual report for this year will be presented at our July meeting for a vote of the Board

Our growth prompted a question about alumni/ae. Diego Fellows reported that we have 296 graduates, but an active email address for only about 20%. We are working at improving this.

IX. Vote to Adjourn

Steve Palmer moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Bill Henning. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting ended at 8:00 pm.