

**Salem Academy Charter School  
Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Board of Trustees  
Wednesday, April 24, 2019, at 6:00 pm, Room 114**

Members Present: Rick Jones, Daniel McCaughey, Shelby Morrison, David Pabich, Steve Palmer, Mekka Smith, Richard Winter, Christine Wynne

Members Absent: Nina Cohen, Alfonso Perillo, Felicia Pierce, William Henning

Staff: Kathy Egmont, Alex Dean, Leni De los Santos, Sean Gass

Guests: Fawaz Abusharkh, Pam Rochna

Recorder: Shelby Hypes

**I. Call to Order**

The monthly meeting of the Salem Academy Charter School Board of Trustees began at 6:00 pm April 24, 2019, at 6:00 pm, in Room 114, with a presentation on social emotional learning. The business portion of the meeting was called to order by Steve Palmer at 6:45 pm.

**II. Presentation on Social Emotional Learning at Salem Academy Charter School**

This report was prepared and presented by Chyna Onembo, Dean of Students and the Student Support Services Team, comprising Elisabeth Reikert, Counselor, Upper School; Sarah Roy, Counselor, Lower School; Katie Harvey, School Nurse; Linda St. Pierre, Director of Special Education; and Taylor Wright, Assistant Dean of Students. Sean Gass and Stephanie Callahan were involved but did not take part in the presentation.

Social emotional learning (SEL), as defined by CASEL, is a process through which children and adults learn to manage emotions, set and achieve goals, and make good decisions. It is a holistic approach to examining the impact, particularly of early trauma, on a child's development, mentally, socially and emotionally.

This team has worked with psychologist Joe Restuccia for several years, ahead of state mandates for incorporating SEL in schools. Because trauma impacts the whole child and leads to vulnerability and behaviors that undermine learning, the team has worked to recognize and then change contributing factors in the SACS environment and culture. One of the benefits of SEL is that is helpful for all children, not just those impacted by trauma.

We are now at the point where we have training for all teachers, have served as a demonstration school for ways to make school safe and supportive, and have improved parent communications and family engagement. SACS is now modeling SEL approaches for other schools and is helping to formulate state legislation on SEL.

The presentation was followed by a brief question and answer period that focused on family communications and teachers' increasingly more informed and solutions-based responses. Sean Gass noted that an SEL message and expectations need to be communicated to parents.

### **III. Approval of the Minutes**

The minutes of the March 27, 2019, board meeting were presented for review. David Pabich moved to approve the minutes; the motion was seconded by Rick Jones and passed by unanimous vote.

### **IV. Public Comment**

Fawaz Abusharkh reported that the City of Lynn is working on teaching children how to recognize and prevent abuse. They are targeting a variety of school-related groups, and he suggests this is something Salem Academy may wish to look at for ways in which those teachings can be applied here.

Mr. Abusharkh also reminded the board that the North Shore Islamic Center will host Open Mosque Day on Sunday, April 29<sup>th</sup> from 1 to 3 pm, providing an opportunity to learn more about Islam.

Kathy Egmont reported that Alexa Ogno and Carrie Cabot of the Salem Education Foundation have expressed concern about a proposed North Shore CDC plan to rework the intersection of Peabody, Ward and Congress Streets. Ms. Egmont requested that they not move forward until all affected parties are informed and more information is available, e.g., potential traffic impacts, funding, requirement for Salem City Council approval, etc.

### **V. SFC Report**

Pam Rochna said planning for the approaching year end activities is underway. The Staff Appreciation event will be held on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, at which time the Sean O'Neill staff award will be presented. The SFC will also recognize the three staff members who have been at SACS since its founding: Ana Brea, Maggie Acosta and Linda St. Pierre. The SFC is scheduled to meet Monday, April 29<sup>th</sup>.

### **VI. Committee Reports**

#### **A. Finance Committee Report**

The financial report, presented by Kathy Egmont, pointed out that cash on hand is lower than we would like, but not undue cause for concern. The primary focus of her report was on the fact that we are receiving \$37,000 less each month from the Commonwealth than anticipated.

Administration will continue to work with DESE and Central Source to clarify the reasons for the drop in per pupil tuition and will report back to the Board. Giving this pattern, we will need to be very careful and efficient in planning and spending in order to meet our needs. It is very possible that funding for next year will be tighter than expected.

On a positive note, both the Governor's and State House of Representatives' education budgets are optimistically substantial. We will know more about state funding by end of May. We vote on our budget in June.

#### **B. Governance Report**

Rick Jones reported that the Governance Committee is modifying how the Executive Director is reviewed to include the chairs of all five committee chairs in the process.

### **C. Development Committee**

The annual fund campaign has raised \$33,000 and has nearly met its matching gift goal, according to chair Christine Wynne. Additional fundraising activities are planned, including a telephone campaign. The committee hopes to increase the number of donors.

### **D. Facilities Committee**

David Pabich led a discussion of a drawing of the proposed changes to the building planned for this summer. These changes will create break-out rooms, bathrooms, offices, and a connecting door from the nurse's office to the adjoining bath. Some of the changes will involve modular construction, making future modifications more feasible. The committee will be discussing proposed changes at its April 25<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **E. Education Committee**

Dan McCaughey said the committee has not met since the last board meeting but has been actively interviewing and narrowing the list of possible candidates for the Upper School Principal, as indicated in the Head of School's report below.

Sean Gass reported that, in addition to an active hiring season, it is also MCAS season, and SACS has just completed a great first 10<sup>th</sup> grade ELA computer-based testing experience.

The Board then discussed the success of the Lower School Destination Imagination (DI) team, which has won regional and state titles and now moves on to the global competition to be held in Kansas City, KA, May 22-25. The Upper School team has also been invited to this competition and, in both cases, it poses a funding question for the school, particularly as the cost to attend is now \$1000 per student. Although DI is not an official school project, SACS wants to support these students and will consider several fundraising activities. Looking ahead, the Board will need to develop a policy and perhaps a special fund for this.

## **VII. Head of School Report**

Kathy Egmont reported on behalf of Stephanie Callahan, beginning with crediting Ms. Callahan for extremely well organized and transparent principal searches. Fourteen candidates for High School Principal have been winnowed down to two finalists who will be interviewed by administrators, teachers and students prior to making a final decision. Two of the most important criteria on which candidates have been measured is their ability to help build Upper School pride and the academic leadership they can provide to move us to the next level. Although certification is not a SACS requirement, any new principal who is not already certified will be so by the end of their first year. Overall, this has been a good, comprehensive process in which everyone has been heard.

Two of six teacher or principal openings have been filled. Recruitment for the remaining openings is in process

Upcoming athletic, academic and extra-curricular events were reviewed. Most notable is the engagement of Richard Hayes, Admissions Counselor at the University of New Hampshire as graduation speaker.

## **VII. Executive Director Report**

Shetland Park has reviewed SACS as part its due diligence prior to sale. It is important to any prospective owner that a major, long-term tenant such as SACS be stable.

Re 2029-20 enrollment, we have had six rejections, all filled quickly from the wait list. The Intention to Return form will be mailed soon so that we can fill any additional spaces sooner rather than later.

HRA costs for Health Insurance have been under control—we have only used half of the allotment set aside—but we are watching to see what happens going forward as we had high usage this past year, primarily for maternity reasons.

Teacher attrition has been for typical reasons: babies, graduate school, moving. We anticipate about 80% retention, which is good for charter schools with young teachers.

We did not receive the Cummings grant for tutoring for which we applied. They will call us and give us information about the rejection.

A “Finance 101” session for our teachers was well received, promoted both understanding of our overall fiscal picture and our commitment to transparency. Teachers are understandably interested in how raises are determined and how we ensure that our teachers are paid comparably to new teachers with similar experience. This highlighted the need for a hiring guideline, including an explanation of how that guideline is used. Accordingly, the Board supports Kathy Egmont’s intention to create a Faculty Compensation Advisory Committee and perhaps hold an open meeting to discuss

## **VIII. Vote to Adjourn**

Rick Winter moved to adjourn, seconded by Rick Jones. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm.