

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Board of Trustees of Salem Academy Charter School
November 20, 2024**

Members present in person:

Rich Cowdell, Domina DiBiase, Kara McLaughlin, Toyuwa Newton, Robert Rogers, Mark Stevens, Amy Stewart, Jeff Whitmore, Rick Winter

Members present remotely:

Eddie Aroko, Sal Martinez

Members absent:

Julie Rose

Staff present in person:

Fallon Burke, Stephanie Callahan, Megan Franco, Drea Jacobs

Staff present remotely:

Sabrina Williams

Guests present in person:

Nohara Lopez, Bessie Marashi

Guests present remotely:

Laurie Kennedy

Recorder present in person:

Shelby Hypes

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Chair Toyuwa Newton officially called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM and welcomed prospective trustees Laurie Kennedy and Nohara Lopez, both of whom spoke briefly about their connection to Salem Academy and interest in becoming Board members.

II. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

III. Vote to Approve Minutes of October 23, 2024

Mark Stevens moved to accept the minutes of October 23, 2024, as presented. The motion was seconded by Domina DiBiase and passed unanimously via roll call vote.

IV. School Family Community (SFC) Report

Bessie Marashi reported on the following:

- The November SFC meeting was geared to Lower School parents. LS Principal Sabrina Williams and US Principal Megan Franco explained the high school program at Salem Academy and answered questions.
- The December calendar raffle is in process; all tickets must be submitted by 12/1/24.
- The next fundraiser will be Tuesday, March 4, 2025, from 5 to 8 pm at Amazing Pizza. They will close the restaurant for us, allow a 50/50 raffle and

swag sale, and offer a limited menu in addition to pizza. We will receive 20% of all food sales, both in house and take-out.

- The SFC will begin identifying 2025-26 moderator candidates at its next meeting at the end of January.

V. Executive Director's Report

2024-2029 Accountability Plan

As Stephanie Callahan noted, we must have an accountability plan approved by DESE every five years. For each goal, we must have an objective and two ways of measuring achievement. She then reviewed the plan we are submitting to DESE. It is similar to our last five-year plan, with the only noticeable differences being 1) where we exceeded our goal, we set a new, higher goal and 2) SATs were removed as standardized test requirements for college admissions have changed since the pandemic, with many schools becoming test optional. Though no longer part of the Accountability Plan for DESE, SACS will continue to track internal goals around this assessment.

Robert Rogers asked if the goal regarding all students being accepted at a four-year college should be reworded to include other post-secondary options. Both principals and the ED explained that this goal holds us to our mission but does not obligate students to attend a four-year school. It gives them more options and, in fact, individualization is an important aspect of Salem Academy. The four-year college acceptance goal also helps to recruit teachers. That said, the Strategic Planning Committee may want to review the wording in the plan that is now being developed.

School Resource Officer MOU Presentation

Reengaging with TLPI (Trauma Learning Policy Initiative) is a major commitment this year as we continue to recover from the pandemic. We were a demonstration school with them 10 years ago and look forward to being one again as we work to find new ways to reinforce our "safe and supportive culture" mandate.

One aspect of this is our work with Salem's student resource officer (SRO), a member of the Salem Police Department who works specifically with SPS as well as Salem Academy. The SRO can be involved if there is a problem, but we are also proactive in having the SRO in the building often enough to have established a positive relationship with students. SROs help clarify what is/is not appropriate behavior, in person and online, and encourages SACS to reach out with concerns.

There are three SROs; one is a part of the Community Impact Unit, and two additional SROs are in the schools daily. There is no cost to Salem Academy for this program but we do sign a MOU with the Chief of Police each year. The full MOU was presented in writing.

Salem Academy must also report specific data regarding programming, budget, and resources allocated to mental, social, or emotional health support to the Board of

Trustees each year. Districts are required to submit their SRO MOU to DESE annually.

The written Executive Director's Report also provided enrollment data, of recruitment/hiring status, and a reminder that public comments regarding our charter amendment request are due by December 13, 2024.

VI. Academic Report

Testing

Drea Jacobs reviewed the written Academic Report, which provides data on recent tests and Q1 performance.

The MAP tests given to 6th- 9th graders measure where students currently are in English and math skills compared to a continuum of students nationwide. This helps teachers know exactly which skills to focus on. This is new at Salem Academy and is proving very useful, especially in supporting special ed students. We will retest in the spring to measure growth. MAP tests also let us see how our grading compares to other schools and, because it is not a test created by our teachers, and provides input on how students are likely to do on tests they will have to take in the spring.

We are particularly focused on how to improve math skills; without in-classroom learning during Covid, students now in middle school simply did not acquire the basic skills they need to move forward in math. While children were exposed to reading and writing in their daily lives during Covid, they did not need to use their math skills, hence the difference in ELA vs math performance now.

ANets are interim diagnostic tests that measure students' readiness for the curriculum. These were given at all grade levels and in four core areas: ELA, math, science, and history. Performance was similar to last year, and math continues to be a problem in general. High points were 7th and 8th grade science, 8th grade civics, and 10th grade ELA.

PSATs showed that this year's juniors did not perform as well as last year's on both the English and math tests. Senior English scores were higher than last year's cohort, but lower in math. Our new US math teacher looks forward to getting our math performance on an upward trajectory.

Although we are moving away from SATs, they do remain a good predictor of success in college. We will continue to pay for students to take these in the spring of their junior year and fall of their senior year.

The written Academic Report submitted provides more details by grade, subject, and test and identifies remedial actions being taken.

Absenteeism

This is an area we are watching closely. The current rate of 15.5% is about the same as last year, but may have been affected by several factors. Some seniors took “extended summer vacations,” missing the first day. Our early start and late end of the school year play a role, as do things like family vacations, especially if they have children on different school schedules. It was noted that although we have lowered the number of teaching days in our calendar from 195 to 187, this still exceeds the 180-day school year in other Salem schools. Staff is meeting with all families with students on track for being chronically absent for the year.

VII. Committee Updates

A. Education

As Rich Cowdell reported, the Education Committee focused on the academic performance noted above. While overall performance in math is disappointing, he is optimistic that the new tests provide much better data on where kids are and what they need. The focus now is on intervention.

Rich also addressed the Accountability Plan. Our improvement goals here are achievable but will take work. Q2 results will give us a better picture of what is needed so that we can hit the ground running next fall.

Committee draft goals for 2024-2025 include the following:

- Support school leaders in increasing the number of accountability measures met by 15% by June 30, 2025.
- Identify three prospective trustee candidates with educational expertise by March 31, 2025, and recruit one by December 31, 2025.

B. Governance

The Governance Committee is active on multiple fronts, as Kara McLaughlin reported.

- It is time for the ED’s annual evaluation. All trustees are being sent an evaluation form and are asked to complete it.
- We are in a free, one-month trial period with Board on Track and are in the process of implementing different aspects of this.
- Our by-law review has been hindered by unexpected events this fall, so the Committee may not be ready to present this by December.
- The Committee has been very active on the recruitment front. Two prospective trustees are observing this meeting, and there are other candidates in the wings, both short and long-term.
- The Committee will be considering its 2024-2025 goals at its next meeting.

C. Finance

Rick Winter presented the October financials, which show that the school continues to be in a healthy financial position. Higher professional services

expenditures were balanced by the salary savings of unfilled positions. One new feature is that the status of Foundation funds now appears under the key ratios.

Committee draft goals for 2024-2025 will focus initially on timely budget development for FY2-25. The Committee also wants to develop a capital expense plan. While identifying possible trustee candidates, it is good to know that Bill Henning will be on the Finance Committee, and Mark Stevens will stay on as a volunteer committee member even after his term as trustee ends.

D. Facilities

Robert Rogers reported that the Facilities Committee has identified the following draft goals for 2024-2025:

1. Have a long-term plan in place, either a non-binding agreement with Prime or a clear Plan B.
2. Develop a two- to four-year plan for immediate space issues.
3. Work with the Finance Committee to prioritize smaller projects, such as doors and bathroom improvements.
4. Identify a prospective Board member by March 2025.
5. Identify three sustainable actions we can undertake.

E. Development

Fallon Burke presented the Development Report, which has changed little in the past month. We have received a \$2000 donation from the Cummings Foundation, which was matched by an alumni parent.

The focus now is on Giving Tuesday and the End-of-Year campaigns. We are introducing specific and more tangible giving suggestions. A \$30 contribution pays the transportation for a student to go on a college field trip. A \$99 donation pays for one student's AP test. Anyone who wants to offer a match should contact Fallon.

Goals for 2024-2024 include reaching our \$110,000 Annual Fund goal, having a fundraising calendar in place by March 1, 2025, and recruiting a Board member with development expertise by December 31, 1015.

VIII. Vote to Adjourn

Robert Rogers moved to adjourn, seconded by Mark Stevens. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote, and the meeting ended at 7:35 PM.

Documents referenced during this meeting:

Academic Report as of 11/13/24
Development Report, as of October 23, 2024
Education Committee Goals 2024-2025
Education Subcommittee Report as of November 19, 2024

Financial Report as of 10/31/24
2024 School Resource Officer Memo of Understanding as of 8/24/25
2024 Accountability Plan, Provisionally Approved 10/31/24