

**Salem Public Schools
Salem School Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 7, 2022**

On March 7, 2022 the Salem School Committee held its regular School Committee meeting at 7:00 PM using the Zoom platform.

Members Present: Mayor Driscoll, Ms. Mary Manning, Mr. Manny Cruz, Ms. Amanda Campbell, Dr. Kristin Pangallo, Ms. Beth Anne Cornell, and Mr. James Fleming

Others in Attendance: Superintendent Stephen Zrike, Assistant Superintendent Kate Carbone, Chelsea Banks, Liz Polay-Wettengel, Marc LeBlanc, Linda Farinelli, Adam Colantuoni

Call of Meeting to Order

Mayor Driscoll calls the meeting to order at 7:01pm and requests a call of attendance. She explained the Public Participation Policy 6409 and also explained the availability of Spanish interpretation.

Attendance

The school committee secretary called the attendance.

Ms. Campbell	Present
Ms. Cornell	Present
Mr. Cruz	Present
Mr. Fleming	Present
Ms. Manning	Present
Dr. Pangallo	Present
Mayor Driscoll	Present

Approval of Agenda

Ms. Manning requested a motion to approve the Regular Agenda. Mr. Fleming motioned and Dr. Pangallo seconded. A roll call vote was taken as requested by the school committee secretary.

Ms. Campbell	Yes
Ms. Cornell	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Ms. Manning	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Yes

Motion carries 7-0

Approval of Consent Agenda

Ms. Manning requested a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Consent agenda items include:

- Approval of minutes of the Regular School Committee meeting held on 02/28/22
- Approval of Warrants: 3/3/2022 - \$413,811.59

Mr. Fleming motioned and Dr. Pangallo seconded.

Ms. Campbell Yes

Ms. Cornell Yes

Mr. Cruz Yes

Mr. Fleming Yes

Ms. Manning Yes

Dr. Pangallo Yes

Mayor Driscoll Yes

Motion carries 7-0

Public Comments

The School Committee Secretary reads aloud submitted comments and promote one community member to speak.

Donna Fritz

57 Summit Street

The school calendar information: why is the results of the survey not part of the information provided in the packet? Why do the survey if your not going to share the results? I'm not a fan of this idea but I'm particularly concerned you didn't share the communities response.

Masks, cases are as low as July! One a SHS student after playing in the basketball game Friday said " what a difference it was without the mask on! I didn't expect that, I was so used to wearing them." Time to let families make their own choice about masks wearing.

Laura Justice

10 Daniels St.

I believe Salem schools should make masks optional. As of today, there have been no increases in cases since the last meeting, and total cases throughout the state are extremely low. Because our family has decided that vaccinations are important, we are not as risk averse as those who haven't, and should not continue to be required to wear masks due to those who haven't made the same choice. Those students and staff who are immunocompromised should continue to wear a mask, and should be supported. Please vote to make masks optional.

Geoffrey Millar

29 Boardman St

Geoffrey Millar is promoted to talk.

A few notes on the calendar proposals. I found it interesting that, with the addition of an additional break, the last day of school would fall on June 20th which is a Tuesday and June 19th would be the holiday for Juneteenth, I can't imagine that June 20th after a three-day weekend June holiday would be the least attended day in Salem Public Schools history. So I think we need to look at whether or not that really makes sense. And maybe anowdays will clear that out and make that not a problem. The one comment I

submitted when answering the survey was that I hoped that we would parse the information received, because I had to say who my students were when I answered the survey. I hope we're taking a hard look at whether or not our populations are most at high-needs, DESE high-needs requirements. Whether or not those populations are served by an extra break or hurt by an extra break, because none of that has been published. But I hope you've all looked at that. Then one other point that I would like to make is that Carlton Innovation School controls its own calendar more than the rest of the district and for someone who has had two Carlton students over the years, this hasn't mattered to me but next year I will have one Carlton student and a Collins Middle School student and the idea of potentially having the district adopt a November break and Carlton not adopting that - I asked around a little but and I think there is a high possibility of that if the district adopts a November break, it does not lessen stress on those families but probably increases it quite a bit. So I think there needs to be understanding before you make a decision on this as far as what the Carlton decision would be, whether it would follow that or not. Moving onto the mask decision before you, I'm not exactly sure who or what SalemHealth Advisors is, but I encourage you all to make this decision based on the currently available data rather than fear. I have been very pro-mask, pro-vaccination, I think that's definitely the way we should have gone but if you look at the current data for Salem Public Schools - I'm judging by the weekly newsletter that came out on Friday - there's very little COVID in the Salem Public Schools. The outcomes are not negative and I completely grant there are long term impacts that nobody knows about at this point but if we are going by the data, I think the data does support a move to parental choice at this point. I'll also add in, one little run off - I have a child in the Salem Public Schools that failed their vision test this year and recently got eye glasses and they're having a very hard time wearing those glasses in class with a mask on and they fog up, they're taking the glasses off, can't see what's going on in the front of the room still, and I think there are a lot of impacts like this that we are not really talking about. I believe at your last meeting there was a school psychologist who talked about some of the negative impacts of masking on some of the highest need students so I'm hoping that we're going to continue to be science-based and data-based - thank you very much.

Lise Hansen-Damato
53 Hathorne Street

I'm writing to strongly support the addition of a fall (November) break in the 2022-2023 school calendar.

I have been a longtime supporter of the intersession break at Saltonstall and have appeared before the committee annually in its support. To quote former Saltonstall Principal, Dr. Nick Gesualdi, intersession/fall break "allow[s] for a more natural break in the schedule so that students and staff would have a more natural break in the fall semester, and so that students and staff are in a better position to maximize learning throughout fall until Christmas break. By having a brief break after 6-8 weeks of instruction, the thought process is that our instructional time can be used in a more fruitful manner. "

I completely agree with Dr. Gesualdi's assessment and wholeheartedly believe that fall break has benefitted my son's mental and academic well-being.

Adding a fall break would potentially shorten summer break by a week. As a working parent, it is difficult to cobble together childcare for ten consecutive weeks during our lengthy summer break and I welcome any chance to shorten that, even by just a week.

Finally, travel during February and April breaks is exorbitantly expensive and a November break would allow families a cost-effective travel alternative. As an example, a flight to Puerto Rico over April break on Spirit airlines costs over \$700. The same flight costs \$283 (on a real airline) during the first week in November.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dr. Zrike gives a shout out to the performers of the Into the Woods program and boys' basketball team from their performance and winning game over the weekend. He also notes the upcoming performances and a shout out to the banquet for the SpEd athletics.

Recommendation from health advisors regarding masking and other mitigation strategies

Dr. Zrike notes he and Ms. Banks met with the health advisors on Friday (March 4) which aligned the recommendation being presented via screen share on Zoom. Dr. Zrike notes the folks in the health advisory committee including: Dr. Pangallo (Scientist/Chemist and SC Member), Mr. Greenbaum (SHS BOH), Dr. Moske-Weber (Director of Nursing), and Dr. Clovene Campbell (District Pediatrician).

Ms. Banks shares data graphs in multiple slides. The mirrored graphs are showing updates with February 2022 to Today metrics versus the metrics noted with the spike of the Omicron variant.

Dr. Zrike takes over the presentation and explains the recommendation as noted by the health advisory committee which includes making optional masking effective March 14th. A strong recommendation for immunocompromised students to remain masked. Other recommendations include encouraging meals outdoors, keeping hygiene a priority, filtered air, and mitigation protocols such as weekly testing.

He continues the presentation to note considerations which include maintaining a hold on metrics and data and analyzing to pivot if needed. Advisors suggest that optional masking should be for all grade levels, including pre-k, ensuring families stay home when sick, adequate masking for those masking should available in snug fit and appropriate filtration, and finally communicating and providing lesson plan support to staff and families to create a culture of respect for masking decisions moving forward.

Mayor Driscoll would like to hear a bit more about the pre-k decision and how that recommendation was made as a group. Dr. Pangallo shares the consensus of the group given that the adults around the pre-k students could be vaccinated and could be a source of adequate safety along with other mitigation measures.

Ms. Manning thanks the health advisory group. Ms. Manning makes a motion effective March 14th we lift the mandate to wear masks in the Salem Public Schools for all staff, students, and visitors; with the exception of those staff, students, and visitors at the ECC, and pre-k classrooms in Bates and HMLS. And the decision with pre-k classroom masking would be revisited at the school committee meeting following the April Vacation. Mr. Cruz seconded the motion.

Mr. Fleming questions Ms. Manning's motion to require pre-k students continue wearing masks despite the recommendation provided by the health advisors. Ms. Manning shares that the families of students in that population are not comfortable with mask optional yet and she, herself is not comfortable with it. Noting that this population of students is not eligible for vaccination at this time, waiting to assess data upon return of the April break to be reassured it's the safe way to go. Mr. Fleming asks what the data and science behind the decision is, rather than the opinion of community members. Ms. Manning states Mr. Fleming has taken the

opinion of folks and she is doing the same in return. She notes she doesn't see the problem with airing on the side of caution when it comes to this young population.

Ms. Cornell notes as a parent she understands where Ms. Manning is coming from. She notes as being on a board who is being advised from health professionals it's an important time to recognize that work and data presentation to make advised decisions.

Mr. Cruz shares the same concerns for the access of vaccines when it comes to the pre-k population. He notes the recommendation didn't necessarily point to data in that decision making but more of a universal approach. He notes possibly adding an amendment to Ms. Manning's motion in regard to vaccination updates. Mr. Cruz's access freezes and we move along to Dr. Pangallo.

Dr. Pangallo notes the science is limited right now and right now it's a judgment call. Science is ever changing. Some experts say it's time to remove masks and others say it's not the time. Dr. Pangallo notes that school is a special place and a place where they are legally required to attend and she is leaning more cautiously with this specific decision. Dr. Pangallo notes all the levels and steps taken throughout COVID to ensure safety to all and right now is a time that science cannot support when there are many different outlooks. She also notes social-emotional issues that are being suppressed by masking. She notes a variety of considerations: Omicron variant being the most vicious strain of what we've seen of COVID, children are not, vaccination is an important factor to health and wellness, vaccination is an inequitable measure, and boosting is important to protecting yourself. She continues to share information about the concern of COVID-19. This respiratory virus is fundamentally different from other respiratory viruses as noted as:

1. you can transmit when presymptomatic
2. extremely contagious
3. reproduction type of being infected to infecting someone else

She finishes with removing masks that will not remove the virus, will not remove the pandemic, and will not remove the stress and fatigue from the result of the pandemic. We're going from a community approach to an individual approach which doesn't work as well. She believes it's premature to go mask optional at this point. She notes this not being a science decision but a community decision.

Mr. Cruz picks-up his concerns noting that it's hard to be persuaded to universal mask optional and supports Ms. Manning's motion as is; and if there is changing data prior to the date noted, reconsideration could be had.

Ms. Campbell agrees with Dr. Pangallo and notes the presentation provided shows an interpretation of the data as the recommendation has been presented by health officials. She states there are many other health professionals who are offering a different interpretation of the data. She notes the science as presented has different interpretations. She shares hesitancy when it comes to the pre-k population. She notes families with a lack of making "same choices" as other families could be due to eligibility of vaccination because of age or access. She notes hesitancy for K-5 in terms of efficacy of dosing as well as concern of the vaccine rates across the district. Having a universal approach in response to data that isn't universal is concerning.

Ms. Campbell asks for clarification on eating meals outdoors, and how the recommendation could be made when the advisory committee would be okay with students going maskless all day long in the classroom but having distancing and outdoor eating as a mitigation strategy for lunch. She wonders how the advisory could be comfortable with one and not the other.

She also asks about small-sized masks being available, but there was no explanation of how they are being provided to families, what specific kinds of masks they are, or how many are available. She notes “expanding mask sizes” and wants to know what sizes we do not currently have and what we will be getting.

Dr. Zrike responds to the masking question, noting a variety of masks are currently available but more options have been ordered and will be available for all students who need one.

Ms. Banks notes the lessons from COVID not going away so to keep outdoor dining available is important especially for the students who would still be wearing masks as an opportunity to remove masks for socialization and fresh air outdoors.

Ms. Campbell shares hesitation about the presentation of having masks of a variety of properly fitting masking, noting that it sounds like the district is hopeful or thinking that the masks will be available and when going mask optional, these items need to be accessible. She adds onto the pre-k situation as the presentation notes it’s okay for the students of the pre-k population to remove masks as the adults around them CAN be vaccinated, not that they ARE vaccinated and that preschoolers struggle to keep on their masks - which isn’t necessarily to be the case. She mirrors the situation to a child forgetting to wash their hands, and it wouldn’t result in abandoning that practice. She doesn’t believe the case for pre-k is that strong.

Mayor Driscoll asks for clarification as she heard Dr. Zrike states we have enough masks for all. Dr. Zrike states we have plenty of masks for all students in the smaller size to fit the faces of young students but we are hoping to have a variety of sizes to accommodate the best fit. We have plenty of masks currently.

Ms. Cornell notes that she would support Ms. Manning’s motion. She also mentions she’s not comfortable picking and choosing information presented from the health advisory committee. I’m uncomfortable with the process but would like to revisit the role of the health advisory group and the extent of which we will take their guidance and recommendation.

Mayor Driscoll notes that one week ago the school committee did not want to give the health advisors the ability to make the decision, and this week we have the recommendation provided to us at pause with concern on how to undertake the choices and decisions to make moving forward. She notes these are imperfect times and difficult times to be making tough decisions mentioning all the committees who have had to review data and make informed decisions over the past few years.

Ms. Manning thinks she hears Mr. Cruz noted waiting until the week before April break to lift masking for pre-k students; but she clarifies she is wanting to wait until the week following April

break. She also reiterates the role of the advisory committee not being a decision-making committee. She notes she is in agreement with the 13 out of 14 grade levels the health advisor has recommended and is merely just asking to wait a bit longer.

Mr. Cruz notes his timeline he mentioned was specifically if the vaccine for the pre-k population were to become widely available ahead of the timeframe she's put in her motion. He also provides background to Ms. Cornell context regarding the COVID advisory committee as far as the suggestions and recommendations being presented to the school committee for refinement and decision-making. He explains the importance of the school committee role needing to act upon and amend.

Mr. Fleming agrees with Ms. Cornell regarding the component of having information and data recommended and the motion on the floor does not derive from that recommendation. He notes his dissatisfaction with the motion on the floor as he believe with the lack of science driving the masks remain for pre-k students isn't available and doesn't support the motion made.

Old Business

None

New Business

Deliberation and vote to enter into a Power Purchase Agreement with SolectEnergy for solar installations at Saltonstall and Collins Middle School

Mr. Fleming makes a motion to adopt this agreement and installation. Mr. Cruz seconded. Mr. Fleming notes a consensus of the B&G committee that it was a good deal and a great transition for powering the city.

Ms. Campbell	Yes
Ms. Cornell	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Ms. Manning	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Yes

Motion carries 7-0

Deliberation and vote on the 22-23 Bates, BAIS, CMS, ECC, HMLS, Saltonstall, WHES school calendar

Mayor Driscoll notes the three proposals noted. One, being a Halloween break, an early November break, or an extension of next year's winter break. She asks if anyone would like to share their opinions or make a motion. Dr. Zrike responds to public comments requesting data information for the survey to the families. He notes the survey was specific to a November pause and provides the results. He notes the additional suggestions have since been considered and are now being proposed to the school committee for a vote.

Mr. Fleming makes a motion to approve the calendar with the extension to winter break adding January 2nd-January 6th. He notes it makes much more sense in terms of the dates and with the demographics of the population in our district, he notes losing many students in attendance around this time and thinks it's important to consider. Mayor Driscoll notes energy saving as an option with this consideration.

Ms. Manning mentions CMS and Salts being on the same calendar. She notes concern surrounding the three high schools and the number of half days and concern of professional development. Ms. Manning shares she is in favor of a Halloween break. Based on the date and the days following. She mentions hearing some folks saying around that time, kids are tired, teachers are tired, and it can be a good time for a break.

Ms. Cornell asks for clarification on why there may be opposition surrounding the November break. She notes seeing a downside to October as it's pretty soon after the school year begins. She mentions the 50/50 November survey results as presented by staff votes. Dr. Zrike clarifies the concern for the November break reiterating the comments made from STU president, Ann Berman regarding the reasoning why there was concern for a break ahead of the holiday break.

Ms. Campbell mentioned Dr. Zrike mentioned at the last meeting regarding whether the same positions noted who would be impacted in November would be impacted by the extension of the winter break. She asks what the main concern is whether it's ahead of or after the holiday break. Dr. Zrike restates the comments of Ann Berman noting the decision was in favor of a break extension in December/January versus November. Ms. Campbell notes she's okay with moving on this decision with that information but also mentions for folks to not get comfortable with this decision remaining for future meetings as a vote in March 2023 could result in a different vote on the 23-24 calendar.

Dr. Pangallo shares COVID data between November-January and with no reason to suspect next year will be any different, having the longer winter break makes the most sense to support families with travel plans as well as being a bit more protective of the time following New Year's in respect of increased case counts.

Dr. Pangallo seconded the motion.

Ms. Campbell	Yes
Ms. Cornell	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Ms. Manning	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Yes

Motion carries 7-0

Mayor Driscoll leaves the meeting at 8:30pm and turns over the meeting to Mr. Cruz.

Deliberation and vote on the 22-23 Salem High School calendar

Mr. Fleming makes a motion to approve the 22-23 SHS Calendar. Ms. Cornell seconded. Mr. Cruz opens for further discussion. No further discussion, the roll is called.

Ms. Manning	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Ms. Cornell	Yes
Ms. Campbell	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Not Present

Motion carries 6-0.

Deliberation and vote on the 22-23 Salem Prep High School calendar

Mr. Fleming makes a motion to approve the 22-23 Salem Prep High School Calendar. Ms. Cornell seconded. Mr. Cruz opens for further discussion. No further discussion, the roll is called.

Ms. Manning	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Ms. Cornell	Yes
Ms. Campbell	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Not Present

Motion carries 6-0

Deliberation and vote on the 22-23 New Liberty Innovation School calendar

Mr. Fleming makes a motion to approve the 22-23 New Liberty Innovation School Calendar. Ms. Manning seconded. Mr. Cruz opens for further discussion. No further discussion, the roll is called.

Ms. Manning	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Ms. Cornell	Yes
Ms. Campbell	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Not Present

Motion carries 6-0

Deliberation and vote on the 22-23 Carlton Innovation School calendar

Mr. Fleming makes a motion to approve the 22-23 Carlton Innovation School Calendar. Ms. Manning seconded. Mr. Cruz opens for further discussion. No further discussion, the roll is called.

Ms. Manning	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes

Mr. Cruz	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Ms. Cornell	Yes
Ms. Campbell	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Not Present

Motion carries 6-0

Deliberation and vote on the recommendation from health advisors regarding masking and other mitigation strategies.

Ms. Manning thanks the health advisory group. Ms. Manning makes a motion effective March 14th we lift the mandate to wear masks in the Salem Public Schools for all staff, students, and visitors; with the exception of those staff, students, and visitors at the ECC, and pre-k classrooms in Bates and HMLS. And the decision with pre-k classroom masking would be revisited at the school committee meeting following the April Vacation. Mr. Cruz seconded the motion.

Ms. Campbell	No
Ms. Cornell	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Ms. Manning	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	No
Mayor Driscoll	Yes

Motion carries 5-2

Dr. Pangallo notes the responsibility to be greater to ensure vaccination rates rise among the student body as masking has been lifted. Mayor Driscoll notes the different strategies with respect ensuring access to vaccines as easy as possible.

Dr. Zrike notes a vaccination clinic at BAIS tomorrow, March 8th from 1p-5p - it's a second dose clinic but it's also a walk-up clinic for anyone to join.

Mayor Driscoll notes continuing to watch data and metrics and should that change, mask optional will change as well.

Finance Report

None

Subcommittee Reports

Mr. Cruz requests a motion to move the following policies to third reading:

Policies for Third Reading

1103 Distribution of Notices

1105 Media Relations/News Releases

1107 Public's Right to Know

Ms. Manning made the motion and Ms. Cornell seconded the motion. Ms. Manning asks which policies are up for review and Dr. Pangallo notes the policies on the table. Mr. Cruz notes the

policies were reviewed during the time in which Ana Nuncio held a seat on the school committee in A roll call vote is taken:

Ms. Manning	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Ms. Cornell	Yes
Ms. Campbell	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Not Present

Motion carries 6-0.

School Committee Concerns and Resolutions

None

Adjournment

Mr. Cruz requested a motion to adjourn. Mr. Fleming motioned and Dr. Pangallo seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Ms. Manning	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Ms. Cornell	Yes
Ms. Campbell	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Not Present

Motion carries 6-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:41p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Jensen Frost

Executive Administrative Assistant to Assistant Superintendent