

Salem School District
Policy Subcommittee of the Salem Board of Education
February 23, 2022
Media Center
5:45 p.m.

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 23, 2022 REGULAR MEETING

Present: Jen Rucci (Chair), Dan Marsh, LaVan Norwood

Administration: Brian Hendrickson, Superintendent

1. Call to Order – Meeting was called to order at 5:46 pm by Jennifer Rucci.
2. The subcommittee unanimously approved the November 29, 2021 meeting minutes. (LN/DM)
3. Series Review of Section 2000/4000: Review of policies within section 2000/4000 was brought about to discuss function of each section and determine if any policy changes are necessary following operational work conducted by the Personnel Subcommittee and the Administration of updating job descriptions. Ultimately no conflict of policy was noted within either section for the work of updating job descriptions and no policy changes regarding job descriptions need to be updated.

Jennifer Rucci raised bringing policy #2131.1 to action item at next BOE meeting with suggested revisions as proposed at the November 29, 2021 meeting. This policy language was revised to make clear who the designee of the school is in the absence of the superintendent and suggested removing the language of when the superintendent is out of district recognizing that due to changes in technology in and out of district no longer precipitates if the superintendent is available to make decisions for the district.

Mr. Hendrickson reviewed that there is some legislation being discussed about minority recruitment plan (policy within section 4000) in Hartford and there has been report of financial incentives being added to that program. No current changes need to be made to the minority recruitment plan at this time.

Mr. Hendrickson also brought up that policy number #4115.3, Evaluation of Athletic Coaches, has also been discussed within the administration. The role of Athletic Director has been delegated as part of the job description of the Assistant Principal and due to the requirement of evaluations needing to be done on athletic coaches this role should continue to function within the administration. As a result, no additional role will be created to fulfill the role of Athletic Director at this time.

4. Mask Policy Update: Mr. Hendrickson reviewed policy #4118.237 concerning the requirement of face coverings in school. The current policy as stated does not need to be changed due to language in the last paragraph which states, “The Board reserves the right to interpret the provisions of this policy and to modify any or all matters contained in this policy at any time, subject to applicable law”. Mr. Hendrickson then shared an advanced copy of a letter being sent to parents at 7pm on 2/23/2022 with the Policy Subcommittee. The recommendation following discussion with consideration of DPH/SDE guidelines as well as conversations with the Uncas

Health District and school medical advisor was to make masks optional for the Salem School Community come Monday February 28, 2022. Mr. Hendrickson discussed some of the steps the school is taking to operationalize this transition which was all outlined in the letter home. Members of the Policy Subcommittee agreed it continues to make the most sense to leave the current policy as it stands. This allows for the administration along with consideration from DPH and the Uncas Public Health District to assess risk and surges within our state, area and town and have the ability to adjust the masking recommendation as appropriate to mitigate spread of COVID-19. Jennifer Rucci reported while she agrees with the recommendation of the policy to remain as it currently stands and to avoid a board action to maintain or remove masks, ultimately disagrees with the current guidance to make masking optional. Jennifer Rucci cited vaccination rate among children within the town is at 32.9% (as of state information from 2/17/2022) and the inability for children under the age of 5 to have access to the vaccine at this time. Jennifer Rucci also cited long term risks of COVID-19 aside from hospitalization and death including prolonged respiratory disease, cognitive impacts and cardiac issues may have long stand impact for students and staff within the Salem School community if they are to become infected with COVID-19. LaVan Norwood cited ability to have choice and personal freedoms as part of his support for the mask optional guidance. Dan Marsh questioned what the threshold is for putting masks back into place. Mr. Hendrickson stated that the threshold will be a determination of the public health district and the stated department of public health when a surge in cases is indicated in the data. Following the healthy discourse regarding surrounding the necessity of masks, the consensus was that the current policy will allow for the most flexibility and leaves the decision surrounding masks with school administration and public health departments to make the appropriate decisions for the district.

5. Review of Board Policy regarding class size was conducted following a conversation from a full board meeting. The suggestion was made to establish a policy to set guidelines for class sizes to help determine triggers for when a grade needs an expansion or reduction of a classroom. Current guidelines have been used following language within teacher contracts. The discussion reviewed the current best practice in educational literature regarding class size as well as common practice in the area to help develop an appropriate guideline for Salem school to assure a positive educational experience to maximize outcomes. Mr. Hendrickson presented the committee with several policies from multiple school districts. Dan Marsh asked if there were guidelines from East Lyme suggesting aligning our policies would help to assure students are receiving similar educational experiences. Mr. Hendrickson did not have that data available at this meeting but stated he would follow up. Jennifer Rucci stated that of the policies presented the sample from Rocky Hill School district provided the best language setting the policy as a parameter but recommended adjustments down in the numbers suggested. Rocky Hill's policy recommended low end of classroom size to be 16 where discussions within the administration suggested that 14 or 15 might be more consistent with current practices of Salem School and is supported in current educational research. It is recommended that this becomes an action item at next Policy Committee meeting to vote on language for a policy and move the policy out of committee to full board for further discussion following follow up regarding East Lyme's current policy and practice as reported back by Mr. Hendrickson.
6. Review of the Board Role and Bylaws was revisited in preparation of annual retreat which will be held in March with support of CABE consultants. Jennifer Rucci reviewed that the board retreat will help the board to align a vision for the educational system and set forth goals and recommendations to help move the district forward.
7. Discussion of CABE sample policy for Narcan was presented by Mr. Hendrickson. Sample policies from CABE including alternative suggestions were provided to the subcommittee

members. Mr. Hendrickson presented this information as important and time sensitive following an incident that involved an overdose at a school in Connecticut. The policy was recommended at the recommendation of the medical community to protect students and visitors to the Salem School. During the discussion Dan Marsh and LaVan Norwood engaged in conversation concerning how the policy would impact the procedure of giving narcan and the safety of students and staff given an incidence of this nature. Mr. Hendrickson said he would investigate inviting Trooper Crosby to address the committee regarding narcan use within the school and the procedures that would result from this policy. Jennifer Rucci suggested that the CAFE policy as written be presented for an action item at the next policy meeting. Dan Marsh stated that he preferred the language of the alternate version from CAFE and cited his professional experience to support the alternative language. Jennifer Rucci agreed with the recommendation to use the alternative language. All three subcommittee members agreed with further discussion of the policy at the next Policy Subcommittee meeting. The Administration will prepare the alternative language recommended from CAFE for the action item and will include the cost associated with this policy per the guidance of the Board of Education Chair Sean Reith.

8. Next Regular Meeting Date: March 28, 2022 at 4:00 pm in the Media Center.
9. Motion to adjourn at 6:58 pm. (LN/DM)