



NEVADA STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

May 21, 2021

In compliance with the Governor's Emergency Directives related to COVID-19, the May 21, 2021 Meeting of the Nevada State Public Charter School Authority was conducted virtually and livestreamed as well as in-person.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT (via video):

Member Lee Farris (via video)
Member Tamika Shauntee Rosales (via video)
Member Don Soifer (in-person)
Member Tonia Holmes-Sutton (via video)
Member Mallory Cyr (in-person)
Member Sheila Moulton (in-person)
Vice Chair Randy Kirner (in-person)
Chair Melissa Mackedon (via video)
Member Sami Randolph (via video)

AUTHORITY STAFF PRESENT (via video):

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director (in-person)
Ryan Herrick, General Counsel (via video)
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing (in-person)
Danny Peltier, Management Analyst I (via video)

AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE:

Ryan Reeves
Amanda Safford
Jami Curtis
Angela Orr
Maria Pimienta
Jennifer Braster
Sandra Kinne
Jessica LaNeave
Eve Breier
Raul Carranza
Trish Allison
Matt Brown
Biante Gainous
Jill Shreidl
McCall Judd

Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order and Roll Call, and Pledge of Allegiance [00:00:35]

State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA), Board Chair, Melissa Mackedon called the meeting to order at 9:00am, with attendance reflected above and Vice Chair Kirner facilitated the pledge of allegiance.

Agenda Item 2 – Public Comment #1 [00:02:04]

There was no written public comment submitted or on the line.

Agenda Item 3 – Approval of April 23, 2021 Board Meeting Action Minutes. [00:02:11]

MOTION: Vice Chair Kirner made a motion to approve the April 23, 2021 board meeting action minutes. Member Moulton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 4 – SPCSA Executive Director’s Report. [00:03:20]

a. Initiatives related to Serving All Students Equitably

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director, provided a recap of the efforts made to date related to their focus on serving all students equitably. She referred to the memo in the supporting materials that is provided about once every quarter to the Authority and highlighted a few recent updates. With regard to site evaluations, the Site Evaluation Handbook was updated, and staff has worked to ensure representative focus groups and schools have included elements in their presentations related to culturally responsive practices. SPCSA staff is beginning to look at revisions going into next year and expect to bring recommendations to the Authority this summer.

With regard to renewal applications, SPCSA staff made a few changes to the template from last year to include questions on restorative justice, disproportionate discipline practices, and addressing opportunity gaps. They have begun the process of revising this year’s renewal application which will include questions on parent and family engagement, professional development with regard to diversity, equity and inclusion and school demographics with comparison to the local community. These changes will be incorporated in the application template that schools complete this year and will come in front of the board in the late fall.

SPCSA staff has looked at a number of improvements related to increasing access to data and information for their stakeholders and most importantly parents and families that are looking for a school for their child. Most recently, they engaged with a translation company that has translated the ‘For Parents’ section on their website into Spanish and plan to add a section in Spanish for parents.

Today there is a Focus on Schools item on the agenda, and the Authority will hear from two schools about their efforts to serve a representative population through the use of a weighted lottery.

With regard to equitable access, they have made some headway in working with their foster care agencies in all counties that are served by SPCSA schools and recently finalized a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with one of them and working with all the others and going through the legal processes and reviews. This has led to increased collaboration with these partners, and she appreciates the work of Lisa Dzierbicki, Education Programs Professional who has been patiently working with their partners to get those MOUs in place.

SPCSA staff has been intentional about embedding these initial steps into existing work and there’s certainly more work to do and so as they begin to plan for next year, they are looking forward to hearing additional feedback and ideas from the Authority on what steps to take next and staff is already beginning to consider those.

Member Randolph arrived at the meeting during this agenda item.

Member Moulton asked how many students are in the foster care system? Executive Director Feiden said she thinks it’s about 50-100 and they collect that data on an annual basis and is glad to have staff pull that information. Member Moulton said it would be good to let those social services know about charter schools because often times it may be a great fit for those students.

b. Results from 2020-2021 SPCSA Sponsor Survey [00:09:03]

Executive Director Feiden said this year they conducted a survey of all of their schools to gather feedback on their experiences working with the SPCSA as an authorizer. The intent of this was to be broad in nature and to seek wholesale feedback on their work and they expect this to become part of their annual practice. Staff saw responses from 19 of their 37 charter holders and the survey was broken into four categories: communications, authorizing, school support, and grants. The results of the first survey are summarized in the [memo](#) to the board.

Agenda Item 5 – COVID-19 Update. [00:14:32]

Executive Director Feiden provided a brief recap as to where we are at this point. Schools have been steadily moving into in-person learning since the beginning of the school year with almost every SPCSA-sponsored charter schools providing some form of in-person instruction. As the state has moved towards reopening, decision-making has been pushed down to local level, which within education means district and charter school sponsors. As part of this transition last month, the Authority established that schools would continue with social distancing practices of 3 feet for students and 6 for staff through the remainder of the school year. For capacity limits and sanitation protocols however, the Authority authorized schools to make those decisions within the state parameters. At that time, the SPCSA made clear they would revisit this guidance for summer school programming and before the beginning of next school year.

With regard to the requirements for face coverings, under Directive 045, face coverings continue to be governed at the state level through emergency directives. Guidance issued by the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) on May 11th, provided as an exhibit to this agenda item, allowed schools to relax requirements for face coverings for students 9 years old and younger but schools may maintain stricter standards. Additionally, NDE pointed to recent guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommending that schools continue to use the COVID-19 prevention strategies outlined in the current version of the CDC's Operational Strategy for K-12 schools for at least the remainder of the 2020-21 academic school year. This guidance from the CDC recommends face coverings for all students and staff. Additionally, the CDC plans to release updated guidance in the coming weeks that can be used to plan for the 2021-22 school year.

With regards to the SPCSA guidance, and the recommendation with regard to just the social distancing piece, they surveyed schools regarding plans for summer programming and of their 67 charter school campuses, 46 indicated that they plan to provide some form of summer school programming. Of the schools planning to provide in-person or hybrid learning, all schools projected weekly participation rates below 60% of their current year enrollment.

With all this information SPCSA staff is recommending that for summer school programming, they continue the mitigation measures that are currently in place, namely the requirement for schools to maintain a minimum of 3 feet social distancing for students and 6 feet social distancing for adults, and allow schools that are located in counties with less restrictive social distancing requirements to seek an exemption from the Executive Director. Staff expect to bring recommendations for mitigation measures for the beginning of the 2021-22 school year to the June 25, 2021 SPCSA board meeting. These will be informed by updated guidance that is expected from the CDC and NDE in the coming weeks.

Member Moulton asked about Clark County using school sites to give inoculations, and in recognizing that parents and families have a choice on this, she wondered if the SPCSA was doing anything to encourage vaccinations especially as the younger children will maybe have the opportunity to do so? Executive Director Feiden said they have not been directly involved though she knows several schools have made arrangements to provide or have already provided, in partnership with whether it's the Southern Nevada Health District or UNLV, vaccination sites on their campuses.

MOTION: *Member Moulton made the motion to:*

- *Require a minimum of 3 feet social distancing for students and 6 feet social distancing for adults at SPCSA-sponsored schools, including within school buildings, on school grounds, and within school transportation vehicles for summer 2021 programming; and*
- *Allow schools located in counties with less restrictive social distancing guidance to seek an exemption from the Executive Director.*

Member Shauntee Rosales seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 6 – Focus on Schools. [00:22:17]

Ryan Reeves, Chief Operating Officer, Academica Nevada, said that the schools were prepared to present together for this item.

- a. Doral Academy of Northern Nevada**
- b. Pincrest Academy of Northern Nevada**

Amanda Safford, Director of Operations, Academica Nevada, said she is joined today by Angela Orr, Principal of Doral Academy of Northern Nevada (DANN) and Jami Curtis, Principal of Pincrest Academy of Northern Nevada (PANN). Before she joined Academica, her background was in data science and experiential economics so the schools have asked her to help analyze the data in presenting on their weighted lottery implementations. She handed it off to the schools to provide some background.

Ms. Orr, previously identified, provided the background and story of DANN and how they moved to a weighted lottery and some of the effects they have been seeing. As part of the 2019 amendment, DANN requested to be the first Nevada school to implement a weighted lottery, giving 2x weighting to all verified FRL applicants. She turned it over to Ms. Curtis for the next portion.

Ms. Curtis, previously identified, provided the background and story of PANN and how they moved to a weighted lottery and some of the effects they have been seeing. They requested to open with a partnership with the Boys and Girls Club to transport students from more diverse communities and to be the first Nevada school to implement a weighted lottery from its inception and from the very beginning, giving 2x weighting to all verified FRL applicants.

Ms. Safford, previously identified, took over for the next part of the presentation and discussed the FRL eligibility percentages within the other districts closest to DANN and PANN. She gave an overview of the weighted lottery process and then provided the data from the 2020 lottery results for DANN and PANN.

One challenge they have seen at both schools is the low number of parents who indicated they were FRL eligible, but a low number (about 40%) of them turned in the paperwork. This is a challenge they are working to address and collaborate with other schools to work to resolve as more schools bring on more weighted lotteries. Other issues affecting the 2021 lottery included in-person marketing restrictions, in-person instruction limitations and seamless summer program (which resulted in adjusting their lottery weight for PANN, from 2:1 to 5:1).

Both weighted lotteries have shown success and the schools are looking to build on this and learn. They are excited to see other schools implement lotteries and share best practices moving forward. For additional details and data results, see the [schools' presentation](#) in the supporting materials.

There was further conversation between the Authority and school representatives regarding the weighted lotteries.

Agenda Item 7 – Updates on new charter schools approved for fall 2021. [01:24:10]

- a. CIVICA Career and Collegiate Academy**

Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing, provided the background of the CIVICA and turned it over to the school for their presentation.

Eve Breier, Principal, CIVICA Career and Collegiate Academy, began the [school's presentation](#). She said as of this week their enrollment is at 436 students firmly enrolled for the upcoming school year, unofficially, they have 503 students, as they are still waiting on some of the required paperwork to be submitted and 100 applications still need to be processed. Their approved enrollment for the upcoming year is 603. They have been focusing on being visible and available to the community. She provided their staffing updates and talked about the schools initiatives related to community outreach/marketing. As it relates to the construction updates, they are on track to be ready by mid-July and are also in the process of submitting all their pre-opening documents.

There was further discussion between the Authority and school representatives.

b. Sage Collegiate [01:43:37]

Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing, provided the background of the Sage Collegiate and turned it over to the school for their presentation.

Sandra Kinne, Founder and Executive Director, Sage Collegiate, said she is joined by her board chair Jennifer Braster. She referenced the [memo provided to the Authority](#) and confirmed that they have found facility and had a special board meeting yesterday. They are partnering with the Lied Memorial Boys & Girls Club for year 1 and will get the official paperwork to the SPCSA through EpiCenter within the next two days. They are working to finalize their permanent space and have another meeting with Building Hope, their external developer, to discuss their final facility. She talked about other partnerships and efforts they have made to date.

There was further discussion between the Authority and school representatives.

c. TEACH Las Vegas [02:04:00]

Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing, provided the background of the TEACH Las Vegas and turned it over to the school for their presentation.

Maria Pimienta, Assistant Superintendent, TEACH Las Vegas began with the progress and updates to date starting with student recruitment. The school is utilizing both online and in-person recruiting efforts. At the current time they have 47 verified and enrolled, 33 in process, 79 interested. In regards to their staffing updates, they are in the process of hiring an Executive Director and expect them to begin June 1st. She gave updates on the following remaining pieces: facilities, grants and loans, and operations/staffing. For additional details and data results, see the [school's written update](#) in the supporting materials.

d. Las Vegas Collegiate [02:13:36]

Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing, said Las Vegas Collegiate was conditionally approved in December of 2019 and was deferred to open in 2020 based upon action by the Authority next May. SPCSA staff has been in close communication with the school during their pre-opening process to monitor the facilities progress, he mentioned the school has been working on the facility issue for some time and despite the facilities that have been identified, none have come to fruition to date and so given the timing, SPCSA staff does feel it is increasingly unlikely that the school can successfully identify a viable facility, finish student recruitment, hire staff and complete the remaining items in the pre-opening process prior to the start of the school in August. As a result, there's a brief [memo from SPCSA staff](#) noting that they are recommending the Authority take action today to clarify that the school will not open in August of 2021-22 school year and that by June 10, 2021, Las Vegas Collegiate will submit to staff a detailed deferral plan for a 2022-23 school year opening. He turned it to school representatives.

Biante Gainous, Executive Director, Las Vegas Collegiate, said her team was able to put together a [letter](#) to inform the Authority that Las Vegas Collegiate was unable to secure a facility for the upcoming school year

There was further discussion between the Authority and school representatives.

MOTION: *Member Moulton made the motion that Las Vegas Collegiate will not open for the 2021-22 school year. By June 10, 2021, Las Vegas Collegiate will submit to staff a detailed deferral plan for a 2022-23 school year opening. Member Shauntee Rosales seconded the motion.*

Vote taken via role call:

Member Farris: Yes

Member Shauntee Rosales: Yes

Member Soifer: No

Member Holmes-Sutton: Yes

Member Cyr: No

Member Randolph: Yes

Member Moulton: Yes

Member Kirner: Yes

Member Mackedon: Yes

The motion carried 7-2.

A 5-minute break was taken.

Agenda Item 8 – Growth Management Plan Revisions. [03:02:43]

Executive Director Feiden said the initial Growth Management Plan was approved by the Authority in December of 2019, and in April of 2020 the Authority approved revisions after they received some feedback from the Legislative Committee on Education. They are required by statute to revise the Growth Management Plan every two years, but there is some time sensitive information in this plan and they want to make sure it's kept up to date for their stakeholders. The proposed revisions today are highlighted in gray, see [Growth Management Plan Proposed Updates](#) from the supporting materials and are technical in nature rather than substantive. She provided a quick summary of what those updates entail.

MOTION: *Vice Chair Kirner made the motion to accept the revisions as proposed by their Executive Director to the Growth Management Plan. Member Moulton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Agenda Item 9 – 2021 Legislative Update. [03:06:58]

Ryan Herrick, General Counsel, gave the quick update and referenced the updated [written update](#) in the supporting materials. He noted that the plan is to put together some guidance for their schools once the session is over, not only on the bills referenced but there are also some general education bills.

Agenda Item 10 – Long-Range Calendar. [03:15:50]

Executive Rebecca Feiden said SPCSA staff has some minor revisions to their frameworks as well as some changes to their site evaluation protocol they expect to come at a future meeting.

Mr. Herrick spoke with regard to the logistics of the upcoming board meetings, if AB 253 is enacted into law, this would make permanent the ability to hold fully virtual board meetings. The directive that allows fully virtual board meetings expires at the end of May and starting at the June board meeting they will have a physical location.

Executive Director Feiden noted that they are planning on doing elections for the Vice Chair and Chair at the June meeting, as required by statute.

Vice Chair Kirner said he will not be at the meeting in June.

Chair Mackedon said this is potentially Vice Chair Kirner's last meeting and she thanked him and said she loved serving with him and appreciates him and his mentorship.

Agenda Item 11 – Public Comment #2 [03:21:50]

There was no written public comment submitted or on the line.

Agenda Item 12 – Adjournment [03:22:33]

The meeting was adjourned at 12:22pm.