



NEVADA STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

July 24, 2020

In compliance with the Governor's Emergency Directives related to COVID-19, the July 24, 2020 Meeting of the State Public Charter School Authority was conducted virtually and livestreamed.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT (via video):

Member Lee Farris
Member Tamika Shauntee Rosales
Member Don Soifer
Member Holmes-Sutton
Member Mallory Cyr
Member Sami Randolph
Member Sheila Moulton
Vice Chair Randy Kirner
Chair Melissa Mackedon

AUTHORITY STAFF PRESENT (via video):

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director
Ryan Herrick, General Counsel
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
Michael Dang, Management Analyst IV
Danny Peltier, Management Analyst I

AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE:

Jami Curtis (via video)
Jennifer McCloskey (via video)
Krista Yarberry (via video)
Gretchen Larsen (via video)
Ron Coe (via video)
Rachelle Hulet (via video)
Ernie Elliot (via video)
Morgan Jackson (via phone)
Chris McBride (via video)
Dr. Scott Harrington (via video)
Christine Dzarnoski (via video)
Kathryn Vaughan (via video)
Samantha Morris (via video)
Jeff Garafalo (via video)
Victor Salcido (via video)

Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order, Roll Call, and Pledge of Allegiance [00:00:31]

Chair Mackedon called the meeting to order at 9:02am, with attendance reflected above.

Agenda Item 2 – Public Comment #1 [00:01:21]

Public comment provided via email by:

1. Michael Kydonieus
2. Jamilah Elder
3. Stephanie Alvizo
4. Mary Jane

See July 24, 2020 meeting materials for content.

Agenda Item 3 – Approval of the June 26, 2020 State Public Charter School Authority Board Action Minutes [00:02:44]

***MOTION:** Member Holmes-Sutton moved to approve the June 26, 2020 Nevada State Public Charter School Authority Board Action Minutes. Member Moulton seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

Agenda Item 4 – SPCSA Executive Director’s Report [00:03:35]

a. Response to COVID-19 pandemic and the reopening of schools

Executive Director, Rebecca Feiden, provided an update regarding the SPCSA and SPCSA-sponsored schools’ response to the COVID-19 pandemic and where they are today. Following the approved process for re-opening plans at the June board meeting and in compliance with the Governor’s Directive 022, SPCSA-sponsored schools began submitting their re-opening plans to the SPCSA for SPCSA staff to review and determine compliance with current guidance and directives. Once the plans are determined to be compliant, they are submitted to the Nevada Department of Education. So far 27 schools have submitted their plans out of 37 charters. SPCSA re-opening plans can be found on the SPCSA website.

b. Summer cycle for new charter school applications [00:11:04]

Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing, provided updates regarding the summer cycle charter school applications. The SPCSA has received 5 applications that are currently under review. He noted, following the approval of the good cause exemption request at the June board meeting, the TEACH application is expected to be received before the beginning of October.

c. Approved expansions for the Fall of 2020 [00:13:00]

Director Modrcin said the SPCSA has 4 approved expansion campuses opening Fall of 2020: (1) new campus at American Preparatory Academy, (2) new campus at Mater Academy, (3) 2 new campuses at Nevada State High School.

d. Site Evaluation Process and Improvements for the 2020-21 school year [00:14:26]

Director Modrcin provided the update on the site evaluation process and SPCSA staff’s proposed improvements. SPCSA staff plan to bring recommendations to the Authority at the August board meeting. He shared a summary of the proposed changes.

There was further discussion between the Authority and Director Modrcin regarding the details of the completed site evaluations.

e. 31st (2020) Special Session of the Nevada Legislature [00:22:42]

Executive Director Feiden summarized the important impacts concluding the 31st (2020) Special Session of the Nevada Legislature regarding school budgets. There is potential for a special second session that may address additional policy issues.

No action taken on this agenda item.

Agenda Item 5 – Updates on approved new charter schools for Fall 2020 and Request for Amendment. [00:26:42]

a. Pinecrest Academy of Northern Nevada

Director Modrcin provided the opening remarks regarding the progress of Pinecrest Academy of Northern Nevada's reopening process. See supporting materials for the written update from the school.

Jami Curtis, Principal at Pinecrest Academy of Northern Nevada, spoke to the school's efforts related to opening in the midst of uncertainty of what school is going to look like for their families. The school has been working hard to find out what resources their families need in order to come into a potential hybrid/virtual learning at different capacities scenario. She also provided further updates on the school's enrollment, virtual open house meetings, marketing strategies, and the MOU with Boys and Girl Club of Truckee Meadows.

Member Soifer asked about the success rate of the targeted postcard campaign and how much that effort contributed to the enrollment.

Ms. Curtis indicated she would bring those details to the next meeting.

Megan Salcido, Chair of the Board of Directors at Pinecrest Academy of Northern Nevada, said she appreciated her school's staff as well as the SPCSA's staff and their hard work and cooperation.

No action taken on this agenda item.

b. Girls Athletic Leadership School (GALS) [00:33:00]

Director Modrcin provided the update regarding GALS' reopening progress. See supporting materials for the written update from the school. The school has fulfilled the conditions attached by the Authority on their approval, which were to hire a school leader, who is present today, and submit a revised budget, which they have submitted.

Jennifer McCloskey, Executive Director at GALS, said their head of school has been working diligently to create a hybrid plan. She provided an update on their enrollment and marketing efforts. They have found community outreach on an individual basis has been working best for them and have also asked for assistance from their parent volunteers on establishing their brand and getting the word out for their existence.

Member Soifer asked about the school's demographics.

Ms. McCloskey said there is a lot of diversity within their zip code as well as the families coming from other areas. She said GALS has a differentiated learning platform and they will be able to customize and personalize to make sure they are keeping both ends of those spectrums challenging and growing.

Member Randolph asked about what their opening model looked like and where the school is at as it relates to the technology concerns.

Jennifer said they are opening with a hybrid and online models. The online only model has been a great measure for them because if something were to occur and they needed to react, the proper processes and programs would be in place to make that transition smooth. In regards to the technology, they have been able to acquire these devices for each of their students.

No action taken on this agenda item.

c. Explore Academy [00:45:29]

Director Modrcin said the final update is from Explore Academy. The written update as well SPCSA staff's recommendation can be found in the supporting materials. As a general update, there is still work to do on the reopening process but the school leadership has been proactive in addressing any questions or concerns. He turned it over to Mike Dang, Management Analyst IV, to speak to the request for amendment.

Mike Dang, previously identified, spoke to the request for amendment and SPCSA staff's recommendation. Explore Academy is requesting (1) the Authority approve their good cause exemption request for them to hear this matter and (2) the Board's approval to reduce their approved enrollment down to 150 students from their prior approved enrollment for 330 students for the upcoming school year. SPCSA staff recommends approval of both requests.

Member Moulton asked for input regarding the CMO management fee and things that the CMO is going to cover, and if that may be a risk.

Gretchen Larsen, Executive Director at Explore Academy, said they have revised the budget many times.

Member Soifer asked about the concessions with the landlord that they may have considering they are a charter school.

Ms. Larsen said they have been extremely cooperative in making this work.

MOTION: *Member Kirner made a motion to approve Explore Academy of Las Vegas's requests, first for a good cause exemption to hear this matter and second for it to reduce its approved enrollment cap to 150 students for the 2020 – 21 school year subject to the condition described below. Member Soifer seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

CONDITION: *This request would be with the condition that Explore continue to submit weekly enrollment updates to SPCSA staff showing its progress in enrolling students for grades 6, 7, 8 and 9 for this fall. Staff will work directly with the school on the format of these reports.*

Agenda Item 6 – American Preparatory Academy – Las Vegas [00:56:44]

Director Modrcin provided a summary of the details related to American Preparatory – Las Vegas' (APA-LV) requests which are for (1) the Authority approve their good cause exemption request for them to hear this matter and (2) approve APA-LV's request for amendments seeking the following:

- 1) An official name change from American Preparatory Academy to Amplus Academy; and
- 2) Changing the grade configurations for both the current and new campus that is scheduled to open this fall for the 2020-21 school year only. The current campus, hereafter referred to as the Durango campus, would serve students in 4th – 12th grades. The campus to open in the upcoming school year, hereafter referred to as the Rainbow campus, would serve students in grades Kindergarten through 3rd grade. A chart below outlines the nature of this request.

SPCSA staff have reviewed the school's request for a good cause exemption as well as both amendment proposals, and recommends that the Authority grant the school's good cause exemption request and approve both proposals as presented.

Rachelle Hulet, Interim Executive Director at APA-LV, provided an update to the Authority regarding APA-LV's recent nonrenewal of APA-LV's agreement with its Educational Management Organization and progress on the schools second campus scheduled to open in the fall of 2020. In addition, she also indicated the school has been working hard on their reopening plan.

Ernie Elliot, Member of APA-LV's Board of Directors, said their Board has been impressed and in support of the leadership and the direction of the way things have been going with the school.

Ms. Hulet provided further updates regarding their stake holder communication, adjustments to their organizational chart, budget revisions, and significant investments in professional development and curriculum supplements. Regarding the update on their new construction, building is going smoothly and is still on track for TCO on September 19. She moved to the amendment requests, with regard to the name change, they have been operating a transition committee consistent of various stakeholders that selected the name change to Amplus Academy. With regard to the new campus grade configurations requests, in reviewing and analyzing data, it makes sense that they keep all students and teachers in grades K-3 located at the same campus.

MOTION: *Member Moulton made a motion to grant the good cause exemption request of APA-LV and approve the requests to:*

- 1) *Rename the school Amplus Academy; and*
- 2) *Locate Kindergarten – 3rd grade students at the Rainbow campus and 4th – 12th grade students at the Durango campus for the 2020 - 2021 school year. Member Kirner seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Agenda Item 7 – Schools Under Receivership or Previously Under Receivership. [01:11:35]

Director Modrcin spoke briefly to the background of the schools before turning it over to Joshua Kern, the receiver for both Argent Preparatory Academy and Quest Academy.

- a. Argent Preparatory Academy Update. SPCSA staff and school representatives will provide the Authority Board with an update regarding the receivership at Argent Preparatory Academy

Mr. Kern, previously identified, said he expects to hear any day whether the contract purchaser intends to close on the last outstanding item (remaining property) in order to close all aspects of this school.

- b. Quest Academy Update. SPCSA staff and school representatives will provide the Authority Board with an update regarding Quest Academy and their transition from receivership to a fully constituted board.

Mr. Kern said they continue to make progress toward reconstituting their board confirming 5 new board members and tentatively scheduled to have their first meeting at the end of next month. He is also pleased to announce they are on track to meet their enrollment target.

No action taken on this agenda item.

Agenda Item 8 – Nevada Connections Academy [01:18:12]

Executive Director Feiden provided the update for this agenda item. As the Authority is aware, Nevada Connections Academy (NCA) was approved for a 3-year contract for their high school. The elementary and middle school closed at the end of the 2019-2020 school year and SPCSA staff worked with the school on that

process. Since the approval in May, SPCSA staff has continued meeting regularly with the school. She turned it over to the school to share NCA's plan for the next upcoming school year.

Chris McBride, Superintendent and Principals Christine Dzarnoski and Kathryn Vaughan at NCA, provided the school's plan via PowerPoint which can be found in the supporting materials.

There was further discussion between the Authority and NCA regarding NCA's summer programs, their recent efforts related to preparing for the school year, and the update related to the terms of the contract for their high school.

No action taken on this agenda item.

A 5-minute convenience break was taken before the next agenda item.

Agenda Item 9 – Growth Management Plan and Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment Update [02:34:03]

Executive Director Feiden provided the information related to the process for future updates to the Growth Management Plan and Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment. The summary for this update can be found in the supporting materials along with the most recent versions of the two documents. She said her aim today is to gather any input from the Board about how SPCSA staff should approach these or other changes.

There was discussion between the Authority and Executive Director Feiden regarding engagement with the stakeholders and considerations in future revisions to the Needs Assessment and the Growth Management Plan.

No action taken on this agenda item.

Agenda Item 10 – Discussion on Serving All Students Equitably. [03:01:24]

Executive Director Feiden started the discussion in regard to the actions that the SPCSA can take to support schools in their efforts to serve all students equitably and uphold the SPCSA's values of equity and diversity to address the request at the last meeting made by Member Cyr. She referred to the information provided in the board materials which includes the discipline data published by the United State Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights from the 2015-16 school year (the most recent available) and the Academic performance data by student group pulled from the January 2020 data overview presentation to the Authority. She looks forward to the fact that the legislation from the 2019 session included a requirement that the annual discipline data going forward be disaggregated by student group. SPCSA staff has spent some time with ideas about how to elevate a focus on equity in their work and with the intent that if they integrate this focus into their work, it will become the work and not be something separate that lives apart from their day to day. She turned it over to Member Cyr to provide comment.

Member Cyr provided input regarding her ideas for supporting schools to serve all students equitably. She suggested the SPCSA contemplate how they will respond as a school group and make some evolution to their work and in conjunction with AB 462. She also suggested addressing this head on by having a quarterly visit from a school to highlight some of the work that is happening with social justice and anti-racism to give ideas to other schools.

There was further discussion between the Authority regarding the actions that the SPCSA can take to support schools and the SPCSA's values of equity and diversity.

No action taken on this agenda item.

Agenda Item 11 – Overview of Charter School Renewal Process [03:43:54]

Mark Modrcin provided the overview regarding the Charter School Renewal Process. See supporting materials for the PowerPoint presentation. This process has already started, and recommendations will come to the Authority before the end of the year.

No action taken on this agenda item.

Agenda Item 12 – Nevada Virtual Academy [03:50:15]

Executive Director Feiden said SPCSA staff is recommending that the Authority resolve the pending litigation initiated by Nevada Virtual Academy (“NVVA”) against the SPCSA in regard to NVVA’s 2019 renewed charter school contract on the terms and conditions outlined in the SPCSA recommendation memorandum in the supporting materials. This resolution would include dismissal of the pending litigation, with prejudice, in *Nevada Virtual Academy v. Nevada State Public Charter School Authority*, Case No. A-19-797195-W; Eighth Judicial District Court, Clark County, and the SPCSA and NVVA entering into an amended charter contract. NVVA board approved the agreement yesterday. She concluded by providing the context of the resolution and background on the school.

Samantha Morris, Board President at NVVA, present with legal counsel Jeff Garafalo, Esq., provided the update from the school. She said they are pleased to reach an agreement on the settlement.

Ryan Herrick, General Counsel, said the school’s legal counsel flagged an issue so he would ask that the Board amend the proposed motion to accept SPCSA staff’s recommendation to approve the draft settlement agreement and amended charter contract and delegate to him to make any non-substantial technical revisions to the document that needs to be done.

MOTION: *Member Kirner moved to accept SPCSA staff’s recommendation to approve the draft settlement agreement and amended charter contract and to allow their attorney to make technical revisions, as necessary. Member Shauntee Rosales seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Agenda Item 13 – Long-Range Calendar [04:02:34]

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director provided the updates on the long-range calendar which can be found in the supporting materials.

Member Randolph asked about adding a future item about servicing students at risk of dropping out and credit retrieval supports.

Executive Director Feiden said SPCSA staff will try to cover this in August.

Agenda Item 14 – Public Comment [04:05:20]

Public comment provided over the phone:

1. Victor Salcido

Executive Director Feiden indicated an additional public comment was received to the email address, which will be posted to the meeting materials later today.

Agenda Item 15 – Adjournment [04:07:30]

The meeting was adjourned at 1:10pm.