

NEVADA STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

July 18, 2014

Grant Sawyer Building
Room 4412
555 East Washington Ave.
Las Vegas, Nevada

And

Legislative Building
401 South Carson Street
Room 2135
Carson City, Nevada

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

In Las Vegas:

Kathleen Conaboy
Michael Van
Melissa Mackedon
Elissa Wahl
Nora Luna

In Carson City:

None

On Telephone:

Elissa Wahl
Robert McCord

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Robert McCord – until Interview was conducted
Marc Abelman

AUTHORITY STAFF PRESENT:

In Las Vegas:

Traci House, Business Process Analyst, State Public Charter School Authority

In Carson City:

Tom McCormack, Interim Director, State Public Charter School Authority
Angela Blair, Education Program Professional, State Public Charter School Authority
Kathy Robson, Education Program Professional, State Public Charter School Authority

Katie Higday, Management Analyst, State Public Charter School Authority
Adrienne Lawrence, Administrative Services Officer, State Public Charter School Authority
Allyson Kellogg, Management Analyst, State Public Charter School Authority
Danny Peltier, Administrative Assistant, State Public Charter School Authority

LEGAL STAFF PRESENT:

In Las Vegas:

Shane Chesney, Senior Deputy Attorney General

AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE:

In Las Vegas:

Steve Werlein
Seth Rau
Teresa Gregory
Ben Gerhardt
Kelli Miller
Deb Roberson
David Blodgett
Jennifer Gaynar
Laruen Tevis
Dan Tafoya
Caroline McIntosh

In Carson City:

Andrew Diss

CALL TO ORDER; ROLL CALL; PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE; APPROVAL OF AGENDA

President Conaboy called the meeting to order at 9:05am with attendance as reflected above.

Agenda Item 1 - Public Comment.

None

Agenda Item 2 - Approval of April 25, 2014 SPCSA Meeting Minutes

Chair Conaboy said there were some edits that needed to be made. No members had any additional edits.

Member Mackedon moved for approval of the April, 25 minutes. Member Luna seconded. The motion was unanimous.

Agenda Item 3 – Authority Update

Chair Conaboy said she would not be providing an update because the rest of the Authority's agenda has topics she would have been discussing anyway.

Agenda Item 4 – Interim Director's Report

Interim Director McCormack said that he and Allyson Kellogg had recently presented to the Legislative Committee on Education regarding facility needs for charter schools across the state. He then said the Authority staff had notified NDE to release DSA funding for one of the new charter schools. He said there were a total of five possible charter schools with the potential to open, but only one had been given the approval to receive funding.

Interim Director McCormack also said that two charter schools had applied and received approval for loans from the Charter School Loan Account. He said Founders Academy and Oasis Academy both would be receiving money through the loan application process.

Interim Director said several SPCSA-sponsored schools would be increasing their enrollment for the 2014-2015 schools year. Those schools include; Somerset Academy, Doral Academy, Oasis Academy, Quest Academy and Discovery charter school. Chair Conaboy asked with the increase in enrollment, how many new students would the SPCSA be serving for the upcoming school year. Interim Director said it was approximately 5,200 additional students.

Interim Director McCormack said work is continuing between the SPCSA, NDE and the State Board of Education regarding the regulation updates. He said the regulations are now with NDE and the SPCSA is waiting the scheduling of a public hearing for the regulations.

Interim Director McCormack ended his update by detailing a conference call he had recently with officials from Nellis Air force Base regarding their interest in opening a charter school on the base. He said details were still being worked out and more information would be available in the near future.

Agenda Item 5 – Discussion and possible action on the development of a government affairs subcommittee of the Authority empowered to speak on behalf of members at the legislature

Chair Conaboy explained to the Authority that several things had been going on during the Interim regarding legislation affecting charter schools. She said Senator Woodhouse had offered one of her Bill Draft Requests to the SPCSA to submit for the 2015 Legislative session. She said facilities were also something that had been talked about in the Legislative Committee on Education's meetings. She said she had also accompanied Interim Director McCormack during an update that was given to LCE regarding the state of charter schools in Nevada. Chair Conaboy stressed the importance of the SPCSA being actively engaged with the Legislature and the various educational interest groups.

She said some of the topics that would be of interest to the SPCSA in the future would be; school safety, the Nevada Performance Framework, P-20 initiatives, data collection, using data to improve student outcomes, digital education, alternative schools, turning around under-performing schools, STEM, college and career readiness and the Educator Performance Framework. She also emphasized the funding discussions that had taken place. The K-12 Funding Task Force had met throughout the interim to try and find ways to improve Nevada's K-12 student funding.

She recommended the SPCSA wait until LCE sets its Legislative priorities because the LCE had yet to make their final legislative priorities known. She said it would be wise to see what would be coming out of LCE, the K-12 Funding Task Force and NDE before the SPCSA finalized its priorities.

Agenda Item 7 – Review of FY2015 – 2016 draft budget

Interim Director McCormack began by explaining the draft budget would be due on August 21 and the final budget would be due for the SPCSA on August 29. Chair Conaboy asked how the amount for the “balance forward” was established. She said she recalled that the SPCSA gave refunds to its schools when the balance forward was high. Interim Director said he was unclear how that amount had been determined, and he would need to check with Adrienne Lawrence for the answer. Chair Conaboy asked Melissa Mackedon if her school had heard anything regarding a refund. Member Mackedon said she had not heard any news regarding a fee refund.

Chair Conaboy asked Angela Blair and Kathy Robson to discuss Special Education and Federal Funding for the SPCSA. Ms. Robson explained how the funds were sent from the Federal government to the SPCSA and then on to the charter schools. She said the SPCSA acts as a “pass-through” with regard to any federal funding. She said once the SPCSA was labeled as an LEA in allowed the SPCSA to secure Title I, II, and III funding for its charter schools. The funds go to things like ELL, Homeless children and professional development.

Ms. Blair then explained how the SPCSA would be awarded its “discretionary units” from NDE for special education funding. She said in the past, NDE had not allocated all of the units to charter schools that they deserved. She said she had taken the each charter school's discretionary units request and compiled them into one document and submitted it to NDE She said she is hopeful the charter schools would be given at least some of their requests, although the exact amount remained unknown.

Member Wahl asked if there were professional development allocations for Authority board members and SPCSA staff. Interim Director said there were funds set aside to ensure professional development would be a focus in FY 15 and 16.

Agenda Item 8 – 2014 Call For Quality Charter Schools Application Review

Interim Director McCormack explained the application process and the application itself to the Authority. He said SPCSA staff had conducted training for potential applicants in Las Vegas and Carson City during the spring. He said the SPCSA had received two letters of intent so far, which indicate two potential applications that could be submitted. He said he had been in contact with the previous year's application reviewers and he suspected that the team that worked on applications last year would mostly be back for the 2014 application process.

Chair Conaboy asked who would be making up the review teams. Interim Director McCormack said SPCSA staff, charter school operators, school district representatives, local city officials, and national reviewers will make up the 2014 team.

Agenda Item 9 – Update on training and implementation of new data system

Traci House updated the Authority on the training that was being conducted with regard to the transition to the Infinite Campus student information service. She said she had already conducted training in May and it had

been going very well. She said that while schools may have been overwhelmed by the transition in the beginning, they were slowly becoming more comfortable with Infinite Campus. She said data conversions continue and getting the charter school's old data systems to work with the new system has taken some time and a bit of creativity. She said certain school's complied data that Infinite Campus does not ask for, and there were questions as to how the schools would be able to continue to collect it. She said some issues have been solved, but there were still more bugs to be worked out. She also said that the schools have been overwhelmingly positive and have been helping one another out to make the transition as seamless as possible.

Chair Conaboy asked about parent access to data, and if Infinite Campus had a "parent portal." MS. House said there was a parent portal and she was impressed with the options it allowed for parents. Member Mackedon said schools have been informing parents about the transition and to be aware things may be different than other Student Information System's in the past. Member Mackedon said she was excited about some of the new features Infinite Campus offered including text messaging to parents.

Agenda Item 10 – Special Education update

Ms. Blair began by explain that charter schools are required to abide by the same federal rules and guidelines when servicing a special education student. She said that federal Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services would be releasing new federal guidelines specifically for charter schools. She said that if SPCSA-sponsored schools would have had to provide the full continuum of services, some charter schools may not be able to stay open. She said the SPCSA staff met with Brustein & Manasevit in order to get a legal opinion on how these new guidelines would affect SPCSA-sponsored schools. Ms. Blair also added that in the past charter schools have concentrated on compliance, but with these new guidelines, schools will be more results-driven with Special Education students. Chair Conaboy added that her understanding is new laws will not be created by the federal government, but it will be doing more to make sure charter schools are following their statutory responsibilities with the guidelines that have been sent out.

Member Luna asked what is being done with the LEP portion of the guidelines. She asked if charter schools are providing interpreters for parents who may not understand English. Ms. Blair said that overall, the need for interpreters has not been brought up, but she thinks that when they are needed the charter schools are reaching out to make sure those needs are met. Member Mackedon added that it may be a good idea to have some meetings with school administrators to discuss issues they may have had that the SPCSA may not be aware of.

Agenda Item 11 – Interview the four top candidates for the position of executive director of the State Public Charter School Authority

The Authority interviewed three candidates in-person and one candidate did not return communication accepting the interview. The other three candidates that were interviewed were David Blodgett, Patrick Gavin and Phil Dotson. The Authority asked each candidate a series of questions to gauge their competency for the position. Superintendent Erquiaga was also nominated to be Governor Sandoval's representative during the search. The top candidates were chosen from an applicant pool of about 25 applications by the Executive Director Task Force which included Chair Conaboy, Member McCord, Member Mackedon, Member Luna and Superintendent Erquiaga.

Agenda Item 12 – Selection of top candidate for the position of executive director of the State Public Charter School Authority

Upon the completion of the applicant interview, the Authority discussed each of the candidates in order to determine who they felt was the most qualified for the position. While each candidate was qualified, the Authority felt Patrick Gavin was the most qualified for the job. After reviewing his resume, contacting his references and interviewing him in front of the whole Authority, all of the members were in agreement with regard to his qualifications.

Member Mackedon moved to select Patrick Gavin as the top candidate for the position of executive director of the SPCSA. Member Wahl seconded. Member Luna asked if Phil Dotson would be considered as the second choice. The decision was unanimous.

After the motion was passed, Member Wahl disclosed that she had met David Blodgett and Patrick Gavin at the National Alliance of Public Charter Schools' conference in Las Vegas the prior week. She said that it had no impact on the decision she made at the public meeting.

Agenda Item 13 – Member Comment

No Authority members had comment.

Agenda Item 14 – Public Comment

None

Member Van moved for adjournment. Member Luna seconded. The decision was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 12:52 pm