

NEVADA STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

August 06, 2018

Nevada Department of Education
700 East 5th Street
Board Room
Carson City, Nevada

Nevada Department of Education
9890 South Maryland Parkway
2nd Floor Board Room
Las Vegas, Nevada

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

In Las Vegas:

Melissa Mackedon
Jeff Hinton
Randy Kirner
Stavan Corbett
Sheila Moulton

In Carson City:

Jason Guinasso

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Nora Luna

AUTHORITY STAFF PRESENT:

In Las Vegas:

Patrick Gavin, Executive Director
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
Brian Scroggins, Deputy Director
Anthony Marcin, Business Analyst and Technology Coordinator
Sandra Kinne, Education Programs Professional
Mike Dang, Manager of Financial and Organizational Performance

In Carson City:

Jennifer Bauer, Director of Finance and Operations
Danny Peltier, Management Analyst
Selcuk Ozdemir, Education Programs Supervisor

LEGAL STAFF PRESENT:

In Las Vegas:

Ryan Herrick, General Counsel, State Public Charter School Authority

In Carson City:

Aisheh Quiroz, Legal Assistant, State Public Charter School Authority

AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE:

In Las Vegas:

John Hawk
Colin Bringhurst
Trevor Goodsell
Michael Mehle
Nick Sarscha
John Hawk
Yolanda Hamilton
Ben Gerhardt
Ricky Gourrier

Michele Voelking
Richard Holley

In Carson City:

Rebecca Phipps
Chris McBride
Megan Pruitt
Victor Salcido
Susan Nielson

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

Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order, Roll Call, and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Guinasso called the meeting to order at 9:00am with attendance as reflected above.

Agenda Item 2 – Public Comment

Victor Salcido, Director of Operations for Academica Northern Nevada – Spoke on behalf of Doral Academy of Northern Nevada. On August 1, Doral Administration was informed by their general contractor that their new building would not be completed by the original deadline of August 20. They held an emergency board meeting and determined that they would delay the start of school to September 4. They will be amending their calendar for the late start and want to change from the instructional days format to the instructional minutes format. They will add one half hour to their school day to ensure that they meet the requirements for the instructional minutes format.

Chair Guinasso asked that this item be placed on the agenda for the next Board Meeting on August 24.

Agenda Item 3 – Approval of the June 25 and June 28 Action Minutes.

Member Moulton moved to approve the June 25 and June 28 minutes. Member Mackedon seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 4 – SPCSA Staff Report

Director Modrcin updated the Board on the status of new charter applications. The Authority received 14 letters of intent in the spring, but only three applications during the summer cycle. Staff is sending out a survey to the eleven schools who submitted an LOI but did not submit an application and hopes to brief the Board on those responses at the next meeting.

In regard to the three applications which were submitted, they are currently going through a rigorous and multi-step review. Staff will update on these submissions later in the fall.

Director Modrcin also spoke on the timeline for renewal applications. The deadline to submit an LOI for renewal is September 1. The window to apply for renewal is October 1 through October 15.

Finally, Director Modrcin updated the Board on the Nevada School Performance Framework ratings. The final ratings will be out in mid-September. To remind the Board what these ratings measure and how they are calculated, staff plans to give a brief presentation at the August 24 meeting. At the September 28 meeting, staff will provide a look at the ratings for the SPCSA portfolio, followed by recommendations in October.

General Counsel, Ryan Herrick, updated the board on the status of the stipulated agreement reached with Nevada Virtual Academy in June. The terms of the agreement included an obligation for NVA to send out various notices to their students' families informing them that NVA is operating under a Stipulated Agreement with the SPCSA. Those notices have been drafted, approved by Staff, and distributed to families. There is a notice on NVA's website and one included as part of their online enrollment form. The pending litigation with NVA has been dismissed and the Authority has thus created ample judicial precedent for termination and revocation proceedings within the Court system.

Director Gavin gave an update on Beacon Academy. Beacon has received approval from the State to operate under an Alternative Performance Framework, given the population it serves. It is only one of 23 schools operating under that framework, and the only one in the SPCSA portfolio.

Chair Guinasso inquired about what the Board's responsibility of oversight would be in regard to Beacon, given that they will be operating under the APF. Director Gavin stated that the Board and the Authority would still retain their oversight and monitoring responsibilities. He also highlighted the importance of opportunity youth receiving a quality education.

Director Bauer introduced several new members of staff. Keenan Hubel, SPCSA intern, Anthony Marcin, Business Process Analyst, Michael Dang, Manager of Financial and Organizational Performance, and Sandra Kinne, Education Programs Professional.

Director Bauer informed the Board that there is another new employee slated to begin later in the month. After she starts, there will be only one vacancy left in the agency. Staff looks forward to having a fully-staffed agency for the first time in over a year.

Agenda Item 5 – Nevada Connections Academy (High School)

Dr. Chris McBride, Superintendent of Nevada Connections Academy, gave an update on NCA's internal calculation of their projected graduation rate. The graduation rate the school has calculated is roughly 62%. They anticipate it being even higher in the coming year.

Agenda Item 6 – Nevada Connections Academy (Elementary School)

Director Modrcin spoke in regard to Staff's recommendation for issuing a Notice of Breach for academic underperformance in NCA's elementary school. The school was given a 1-star rating in 2017 and has submitted an academic improvement plan, the details of which can be found among the supporting documents of these Minutes. Director Modrcin outlined the various portions of the plan as well as Staff's clarifying questions in regard to the improvement plan. All of this information can be found in the accompanying memo.

Director Modrcin highlighted several key parts of the proposed plan, such as new learning programs and staff professional development, but also cautioned the board that the success of this plan will lie in the faithful execution and implementation thereof.

Dr. Selcuk Ozdemir spoke briefly on the issue of student mobility at NCA. Staff analyzed the relationship between Student Transiency and Free-and-Reduced-Lunch rates. The result of this analysis is outlined in the memo.

Director Modrcin explained that the outcome of the above analyses led staff to recommend enrollment caps for NCA's elementary school as a condition to accepting their academic improvement plan.

Finally, Director Modrcin stated that it is staff's finding that the improvement plan submitted by NCA is a quality, research-backed plan that includes benchmarks and monitoring to keep the school on track for improvement. Staff also believes that the change in leadership will help in the implementation of this plan. However, Director Modrcin cautioned the Board that while this is staff's recommendation, there is no guarantee that the plan will lead to improvement.

Chair Guinasso asked why this plan appears to be setting NCA up for failure when it comes to renewal, as the school will only be rated a 2-star school by the current benchmarks in the plan. Director Modrcin acknowledged this shortcoming and stated that staff will have to evaluate NCA's improvement when it comes time to offer recommendations for renewal.

Chair Guinasso asked staff to explain why it seems to be holding Nevada Virtual Academy to a different standard than Nevada Connections Academy. Director Gavin explained that NVA, at the time they submitted their improvement plan, were under an intent to terminate their charter. NCA is submitting this improvement plan voluntarily in response to a notice of breach.

Staff acknowledged that it would be difficult to recommend a 2-star school for renewal, even though it is recommending accepting a plan that, if implemented correctly, would put the school at a 2-star rating at the time of renewal.

Member Kirner stated that he encountered NCA during his time serving as a legislator and expressed his disappointment that the school is still struggling with their academic performance. He also noted that Pearson's (the school's Educational Management Organization) profit margin appears to be prioritized over the investment in improving the school's academic performance. He also inquired consequences the school would face if it does not hit the benchmarks outlined in the proposed plan.

Director Modrcin responded that staff will be monitoring the school's progress over the course of the next year and that the implementation of the plan as proposed will influence staff's decision regarding renewal recommendation. Not meeting the benchmarks or not reaching the expected index score may lead to staff recommending against renewing the school's charter.

Chair Guinasso indicated that he would like staff, the Board, and NCA administration to be on the same page as far as the improvement plan, the merits thereof, the timeline for improvement, and the expectations the SPCSA is placing on the school.

Member Moulton stated that consistency is important across the portfolio, but that the schools must also be evaluated individually. She is interested in how the professional development will be tracked, and the efficacy and quality of the professional development effort. She also asked for clarification on the significant reduction in FRL – down from 42.8% to 8.4%.

Member Mackedon pointed out the proposed enrollment caps excluding siblings could still mean a significant number of students who are exempt from the enrollment cap.

Jeremy Nork, NCA's legal representation, stated that he sent a letter to Mr. Herrick in the interest of preserving the record in regard to the transitory nature of some of its students. Secondly, the school maintains the objections they made at the February meeting. He stated that the plan being accepted is not a guarantee for renewal, nor is it a guarantee that renewal would be denied. He acknowledged the shortcoming in evaluating the school after only one year of instruction under the proposed plan.

Dr. McBride responded to Member Kirner's comments about Pearson. He stated that when he took the position, he had serious concerns about whether the school's motives were profit-driven or in serving the students' best interests. He is confident that the school is driven by doing what is best for kids. Pearson is a hired EMO by the school's board of directors and Dr. McBride is confident that Pearson is providing the best support for the school and the students. He also pointed out that some of the programs in the proposed plan are not, in fact, Pearson products. He stated that he will always be driven by what is best for kids.

Regarding the FRL reduction cited by Member Moulton, Dr. McBride explained that when the school officials realized they would not qualify for Title 1 funding, there was considerably less effort put into soliciting responses for the FRL paperwork. This year, in the interest of securing Title 1 funding, the school will make a more robust effort to obtain that information.

Dr. McBride explained that in coming up with the proposed improvement plan, the school attempted to reach a balance between the Authority's expectation and what the school could reasonably attain. He allowed that the proposed benchmarks are ambitious, but that the school is

going to do its best to faithfully execute the plan to make significant improvement. Regarding the enrollment cap of 1500, staff and the school have broken down the numbers by grade level. The cap will be 200 each for kindergarten through grade three, and 350 in grades four and five.

Chair Guinasso asked Dr. McBride to explain where the school might hope to see improvement as far as the metrics of the NSPF. He responded that student improvement and growth in the SBAC testing would help increase those numbers. Director Modrcin explained that staff would have liked to have seen more specificity from the school as far as what they feel would be required to increase their index score in regard to resting results.

Chair Guinasso asked how a school earns points in the category of Student Growth. Dr. Ozdemir explained that student growth is measured by median growth percentile and adequate growth percentile from ELA (English/Language Arts) and Math. This is showing year over year growth from SBAC results. Mr. Gavin further explained that the median growth percentile and the adequate growth percentile are based on the school's performance in relation to the statewide results.

Chair Guinasso asked Dr. McBride for his expectation of growth. Dr. McBride responded that he expects the school to improve by 3-5 points over the last year. He offered to give a more detailed explanation of his expectations as far as growth the next time he updates the Board on NCA's high school performance.

Member Kirner asked Dr. McBride whether he is committed to meeting the benchmarks laid out in the plan. Dr. McBride responded that while he is committed, he does not want to make the Board any promises or guarantees. Member Kirner stated that the 20% improvement goal is the bare minimum and he hopes that the school is able to meet that minimum requirement prior to seeking renewal.

Chair Guinasso commended the school for its proactive approach to improving their elementary school, but he cautioned that the plan as presented has benchmarks that would lead the school to not being eligible for renewal even if they are met. He asked for further evaluation and explanation on the part of Dr. McBride relative to the improvement plan as presented.

Following lengthy discussion over the merits of approving a plan that will ultimately not bring the school up to the standard the Board requires for approval, the decision was made to make a motion that will encapsulate the Board's expectations and allow for potential modifications to the proposed plan.

Member Kirner moved to approve Staff's recommendation to accept the school's academic improvement plan as it relates to the school's elementary program with conditions including an enrollment cap of 1500. Nothing contained in this motion should be construed as having any effect whatsoever on renewal, and the approval of this plan does not have any binding effect whatsoever in regard to benchmarks or targets as it relates to renewal. I further direct staff to clarify enrollment caps per grade level. Member Moulton seconded the motion. The motion carried 5-1 with Member Corbett voting against.

Agenda Item 7 – Authority Board Meetings Facilities Update

Director Bauer updated the Board on the upcoming relocation of the SPCSA office in Las Vegas. The new location, the move tentatively set for January 2019, will be equipped with a board room that will be available for the Authority Board to use on a regular basis.

Director Gavin commended Deputy Director Scroggins on his research and information-gathering in regard to potential meeting places for the Board.

Agenda Item 8 – National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Leadership Conference

The Board Members nominated the individuals who will go to the NACSA Leadership Conference in Orlando, October 22-25. The Board determined that the attendees would be Members Kirner, Luna, and Hinton, with Vice Chair Mackedon and Chair Guinasso serving as alternate choices.

Member Moulton moved to accommodate three members to attend the national conference. Member Corbett seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 9 – Long-Range Calendar

In light of the NACSA conference running until October 25, the Board decided to postpone the October meeting to the first week in November. Danny Peltier, Board Secretary, stated that he would look into possible meeting dates and let the rest of staff know what is available.

Chair Guinasso asked that staff populate the Long-Range Calendar for 2019. Mr. Herrick explained that the move and transition for the Las Vegas office would impact the early months of 2019, making the calendar difficult to complete.

Agenda Item 10 – Public Comment #2

None.

Agenda Item 11 – Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00pm.