



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** SPCSA Board  
**FROM:** Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing  
**SUBJECT:** Beacon Academy of Nevada - Charter Renewal Recommendation  
**DATE:** November 1, 2019

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**1. Background**

Beacon Academy of Nevada has submitted an application to renew its charter contract as the current charter contract for Beacon Academy of Nevada expires on June 30, 2020. The school currently operates one campus in Las Vegas, located at 7360 W. Flamingo Road.

After a thorough review of the historical data and charter renewal application, staff recommends that the Authority approve the charter renewal of Beacon Academy of Nevada for a six-year term, beginning July 1, 2020.

**2. The Process Related to Renewal Applications and the Standards Under Which an Application for Renewal of a Charter Contract Will Be Granted**

The first step in the renewal process is the submission of a renewal report by SPCSA staff to the charter school.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, on or before June 30 immediately preceding the final school year prior to expiration of a charter school's charter contract, the SPCSA submits to the governing body a report regarding renewal. This document can be found within the supporting documentation for the item.

The renewal report summarizes the performance of the charter school under the terms of the charter contract, identifies any deficiencies related to performance of the charter school that might lead to non-renewal of the charter contract, sets for the requirements forth the renewal application, and identifies the criteria that the

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<sup>1</sup> Charter school regulations provide for an expedited and streamlined renewal process for high-performing charter schools. Generally, charter schools qualifying for expedited renewal review are those charter schools that are consistently rated as four-and five-star schools under the NSPF and have received no notices of concern or notices of breach for academic, organizational or financial performance. [See NAC 388A.415\(2\).](#)

sponsor will apply in making a determination on the application for renewal. The charter school may submit a response to the renewal report. [See NRS 388A.285\(1\) and \(2\)](#).

Next, the governing body of the charter school must submit a written notice of intent to submit an application for renewal to the SPCSA 45 days prior to submitting a renewal application. See [NAC 388A.415\(1\)](#).

In regard to the renewal application, the window to submit the actual renewal application is October 1 through October 15. See [NRS 388A.285\(3\)](#) and [NAC 388A.415\(1\)](#). The application for renewal must include, without limitation:

- (a) The requirements for the application identified by the sponsor in the performance report prepared by the sponsor;
- (b) A description of the academic, financial and organizational vision and plans for the charter school for the next charter term;
- (c) Any information or data that the governing body of the charter school determines supports the renewal of the charter contract in addition to the information contained in the performance report prepared by the sponsor and any response submitted by the governing body; and
- (d) A description of any improvements to the charter school already undertaken or planned.

See [NRS 388A.285\(3\)](#).

Decisions to renew a charter school contract or deny a renewal application are made and based upon the Nevada's charter school statutes and regulations related to charter school renewal (see [NRS 388A.285](#)) and the collective record of a school's academic, financial, organizational, findings from the site evaluation process, and all data and information provided by the Department of Education.

Note that no factor may be given more weight than the academic performance of pupils at the charter school, and the academic performance of the charter school is the touchstone of any renewal decision. [See NAC 388A.415\(10\)\(b\)](#).

In making its recommendation to the Authority regarding a renewal application, SPCSA staff considers the past performance of the charter school, including information contained in the application for renewal, any site evaluations, academic achievement of pupils, and any other information that is determined to be relevant to whether the charter contract should be renewed. [See NAC 388A.415\(9\)](#).

When determining whether to grant an application for renewal of a charter contract, the Authority Board considers the foregoing factors, any other information that the Authority Board determines is relevant to whether the charter contract should be renewed. The Authority Board will consider the "totality of the evidence" presented to it when making a renewal decision. [See NAC 388A.415\(9\)](#). Again, as stated above, no factor is to be given more weight than the academic performance of pupils at the charter school.<sup>2</sup> See [NAC 388A.415\(10\)\(b\)](#).

At its sole discretion, the Authority Board may renew a charter contract for a term of three (3) to ten (10) years, or, alternatively, deny the renewal application. See Senate Bill 451 (2019) and [NAC 388A.415\(11\)](#). Note that a variable term length upon renewal was discretion afforded to the Authority under Senate Bill 451 during the 2019 Legislative Session.

If a charter contract is renewed, that Authority Board may include a provision for a high stakes review during the term of the renewed charter contract which may result in the termination of the renewed charter contract prior to its expiration, or renew the charter contract and include any additional provisions, requirements or restrictions which the State Public Charter School Authority determines are appropriate. [See NAC 388A.415\(b\) and \(c\)](#).

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<sup>2</sup> See [NAC 388A.415\(10\)](#). With regard to a second renewal, the Authority is required to place an even greater weight on academic performance than was assigned to it on the first renewal.

### 3. Analysis

#### *Academics*

Beacon Academy has academic performance levels that, upon a cursory review, might raise serious questions and concerns as it relates to renewal. Throughout the current and previous charter term, the school has earned a number of 1 and 2 star ratings. This culminated in the issuance of a Notice of Intent to Terminate by the SPCSA in 2016 as there were persistent performance issues related to the school's graduation rate.

As noted with the performance report issued to the school on June 28, 2019, Beacon Academy of Nevada and the Authority entered into a mutually agreed-upon settlement in 2016 which expires at the end of the 2019 – 2020 school year. Under the settlement, Beacon agreed to limit its service area to Clark County and establish an enrollment policy to enable participation in the Nevada Department of Education's Alternative Performance Framework (APF). Beacon Academy is the first charter high school in Nevada to transition to operate under the state's APF.

Additionally, the charter contract for Beacon was amended to include an academic performance framework designed to track the performance outcomes expected of a high-quality school serving a population that is exclusively made up of students eligible for alternative education. This framework includes measures such as achievement status, growth, college and career readiness measures, and student engagement. It is important to note that these results are verified by a third-party, Momentum Strategy and Research, which also provides additional insights related to the performance of the school. Results under this framework for the 2016 – 2017 and 2017 – 2018 school year can be found included within the supporting documentation for this agenda item. Generally, the school has demonstrated improvement since 2016, with increases in the following categories for alternative education students: growth, status (proficiency) and college and career readiness. The overall score and designation reflects this improvement.

The total score in 2017 was 47 points, earning an approaches standard designation whereas the 2018 score was 66.5 points, earning an adequate designation. Results for the 2018 – 2019 school year should be available in early 2020 as they require third-party validation. As previously mentioned, Beacon Academy of Nevada also receives results under both the APF and NSPF, and those reports for the 2018 – 2019 school year can be found included within the supporting documentation for this agenda item.

In short, Beacon is currently measured under three frameworks: the Nevada School Performance Framework, an alternative framework in its contract, and the state's Alternative School Performance Framework. With the exception of the alternative framework specific to the school (which will be available in early 2020), results under each of the frameworks can be found within the supporting documentation for this agenda item.

SPCSA staff feels it is more appropriate and representative to give greater weight to the school's performance against those metrics outlined within its charter contract (as opposed to the APF or NSPF) given the school's mission and student body population. Those results are summarized below:

Metric	Beacon Academy of Nevada – Framework Results <sup>3</sup>	
	<u>2016 – 2017</u>	<u>2017 – 2018</u>
<u>Growth</u> - Reading - Math	Unsatisfactory Adequate	Exceeds Approaches
<u>Status</u> - Reading - Math	Critical Critical	Adequate Adequate
<u>College and Career Readiness</u> - Credit Attainment - Transition Success - CCR Assessment Participation	Approaches Exceptional Exceeds	Adequate Exceeds Exceeds
<u>Student Engagement</u> - Attendance Rate - Retention Rate	Exceeds Exceptional	Approaches Exceeds
<b><u>Final Designation (Total Points)</u></b>	<b><u>Approaches (47)</u></b>	<b><u>Adequate (66.5)</u></b>

*Organizational*

Until the Authority approved a more robust organizational framework this past summer, the previous version of the SPCSA Organizational Framework was a rolling evaluation of school organizational performance. Based on verified complaints and spot checks of school organizational performance, the Authority issues Notices of Concern or Notices of Breach for Organizational Performance. Schools which have not received such notices are presumed to be in Good Standing. Beacon Academy of Nevada has not received a Notice of Breach or Notice of Concern under this framework during the current charter term.

**SPCSA Organizational Programmatic Audit Findings**

2018	Good Standing
2017	Good Standing
2016	Good Standing
2015	Good Standing

*Financial*

Beacon Academy of Nevada has a history of clean audit findings. The SPCSA Financial Framework monitors a variety of indicators of financial health. This is supported by the school being classified within the financial rating system as in Good Standing each year since 2013.

**SPCSA Financial Programmatic Audit Findings**

2018	Good Standing
2017	Good Standing
2016	Good Standing
2015	Good Standing

<sup>3</sup> The Beacon-specific performance framework has a six point rating scale that progresses as follows, from lowest to highest rating: critical, unsatisfactory, approaches, adequate, exceeds, exceptional.

**4. Recommendation: Approve Renewal**

Despite the issuance of a Notice of Intent to Terminate, Beacon Academy of Nevada has shown commendable academic improvement since 2016, and appears to be on an upward trajectory. This is particularly true under the school’s specific academic framework as well as the and organizational performance in its initial charter term. The school is also financially viable with strong enrollment, and SPCSA staff is confident the school will continue its current trajectory and performance outcomes.

This upward trajectory supports staff’s recommendation that the Authority renew Beacon Academy of Nevada for a six-year term, beginning July 1, 2020.

*School Demographics since 2015*

Year	Total Enrollment <sup>[1]</sup>	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
15-16	548	2.1%	11.3%	44.3%	33.2%	0.7%	6.0%	2.1%	12.0%	1.6%	46.8%
16-17	402	3.7%	12.4%	43.2%	31.0%	0.7%	5.7%	2.9%	15.4%	3.7%	50.4%
17-18	384	2.0%	17.9%	33.5%	37.5%	1.0%	4.6%	3.1%	18.2%	9.8%	57.2%
18-19	405	3.7%	15.3%	28.1%	43.5%	1.0%	5.7%	2.7%	19.8%	13.1%	65.7%

- A – Asian
- B – Black
- C – Caucasian
- H – Hispanic
- I – American Indian/Alaskan Native
- M – Mixed/Two or more races
- P – Pacific Islander
- IEP – Individualized Education Plan –A student with a disability/special education student
- ELL – English Language Learner
- FRL – A student who qualifies for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

Additionally, Beacon Academy projects strong continued enrollment through a renewed charter term.

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-2026
<b>Planned Total Enrollment for Grades 9 – 12</b>	385	585	650	700	735	735

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<sup>[1]</sup> Enrollment as of Validation Day each year (October 1).