



NEVADA STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

August 28, 2020

In compliance with the Governor's Emergency Directives related to COVID-19, the August 28, 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 Tonia Holmes-Sutton
Member Mallory Cyr
Member Sami Randolph
Member Sheila Moulton
Chair Melissa Mackedon

AUTHORITY STAFF PRESENT (via video):

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director
Ryan Herrick, General Counsel
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
Danny Peltier, Management Analyst I
Selcuk Ozdemir, Education Programs Supervisor

AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr. Andi Morency (via video)
Roger Helwig (via video)
Joshua Kern (via video)
Will Batista (via video)
Dr. M. Lynn Hanrahan (via phone)
Kelle Snow (via video)
Jeremy Christensen (via video)
Rachelle Hulet (via video)
Nik Hulet (via video)
Dr. Eve Breier (via video)
Candy Farthing (via video)
Ernie Elliott (via video)

Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order, Roll Call, and Pledge of Allegiance [00:00:34]

Chair Mackedon called the meeting to order at 9:00am, with attendance reflected above.

Agenda Item 2 – Public Comment #1 [00:01:22]

Public comment submitted via email.

1. James Marticello Sr., wrote in support of continuing to keep the schools closed.
2. Gram Harsh, inquiring about charter school standards on classroom and virtual learning class time.

Ryan Herrick, General Counsel, indicated the parent concern will be addressed by State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) staff.

Agenda Item 3 – Consent Agenda [00:02:46]

- a. Approval of July 24, 2020 and August 14, 2020 Board Meeting Action Minutes**
- b. Discovery Charter School Contract Amendment Application (change to school’s mission statement)**

MOTION: Member Moulton moved to approve the consent agenda items. Member Farris seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 4 – SPCSA Executive Director’s Report [00:03:47]

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

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director provided the update related to the response to COVID-19 pandemic and the reopening of schools. Following the board meeting last week, she sent out a document that summarized the board’s action and went through it on the Wednesday call with schools. At this point, she has granted three exemption for schools, all in Washoe County. All three of these exemptions are contingent upon Washoe County School District continuing to remain in their current model. All other charter schools are operating under the current guidance discussed, which can be found in the supporting materials, along with the COVID-19 Response Task Force meeting materials. She discussed SPCSA staff’s current primary efforts which are related to devices and connectivity. They have also worked closely with the health districts on the development of the outbreak response plans. There are separate outbreak response plans for the Washoe County Health District, Southern Nevada Health District, and Health and Human Services that applies for the rural areas.

Member Shauntee Rosales arrived at 9:06am. [00:10:51]

- b. Updates on approved new charter schools [00:11:00]**

Director Modrcin provided the updates related to the approved new charter schools. Pinecrest Academy of Northern Nevada, Girls Athletic Leadership School, and Explore Academy have completed the preopening process and are opening as planned. The SPCSA will continue to work with these schools throughout the first quarter to monitor their status, as well as perform site evaluations at the end of the year.

Enrollment updates: Explore Academy is at 125 students; Girls Athletic Leadership School is at 96 students; Pinecrest Academy of Northern Nevada is at 709 students.

Director Modrcin also provided the update on CIVICA Nevada Career and Collegiate Academy Charter School (CIVICA), which was previously approved in May. SPCSA staff has received three out of five of the initial

conditions attached on this approval and working with the CIVICA team on the others. Update to come from the CIVICA team and SPCSA staff at the October meeting.

c. Update on the Summer Cycle for New Charter School Applications [00:13:50]

Director Modrcin indicated that five applications have been deemed complete and capacity interviews have been scheduled. SPCSA staff remains on track to bring recommendations at the November meeting. Note that all these applications are posted to the SPCSA website and the public may provide input.

In regard to the previously approved extension for TEACH Las Vegas charter school application, the deadline for their application is no later than October 1st. They continue to work with their board on the final application.

d. Overview of SPCSA Performance Framework and Charter School Accountability [00:16:03]

Director Modrcin provided the presentation on the overview of SPCSA performance frameworks: academic, financial, organizational. See supporting materials for PowerPoint presentation.

e. Overview of Grant Monitoring [00:34:40]

Executive Director Feiden provided the update on the overview of grant monitoring. See supporting materials for the PowerPoint presentation providing the summary.

Agenda Item 5 – Quest Academy Update. [00:49:17]

Member Soifer refused himself from this item as he has a business relationship with one of the proposed board members.

Director Modrcin provided the Authority with an update regarding Quest Academy and their request to transition from receivership to a fully constituted board. The school has shown adequate financial progress since the receivership was installed. Mr. Kern has found five board members to serve on their board. SPCSA staff has reviewed the background of the proposed members and interviewed them. SPCSA staff is recommending the following individuals reconstitute the Quest governing board.

The following proposed board members provided introductions (1) Will Batista (2) Dr. M. Lynn Hanrahan and (3) Kelle Snow.

MOTION: *Member Moulton moved to approve the request to reconstitute the Quest Preparatory Academy School Board, with the condition that the Quest Preparatory Board continue to appear at least quarterly in front of the Authority for the 2020 – 21 school year, and terminate the Receivership effective October 15, 2020. Member Shauntee Rosales seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

Agenda Item 6 – Freedom Classical Academy Charter School Contract Amendment Application [01:04:17]

Mike Dang, Management Analyst IV, provided the summary of the request for amendment application submitted by Freedom Classical Academy. The school is requesting approval of their good cause exemption for the Authority to hear this matter and to approve their request to acquire or construct a new or additional facility that will not affect their approved enrollment. Essentially, they are seeking to issue bonds to buyout their leasing campus. SPCSA staff recommend approval of both requests.

MOTION: *Member Moulton moved to approve Freedom Academy of Las Vegas's requests, first for a good cause exemption to hear this matter and, second, for it to Acquire its Facilities in a way to not affect its approved*

enrollment level, subject to the following condition. The condition is that Freedom submit its bond prospectus or offering memorandum and the final terms received upon issuance, including total debt encumbrance, term of years, interest rate, cost of issuance and issuance cost breakdowns. Staff will work directly with the school on the format of this information. Member Soifer seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Note: Member Holmes-Sutton was not present during the above vote due to technical difficulties.

Agenda Item 7 – Honors Academy of Literature Charter School Contract Amendment Application [01:11:18]

Director Modrcin provided the Authority with SPCSA staff’s recommendation related to Honors Academy’s request for a good cause exemption and the request for amendment to increase their enrollment cap by 14 students. SPCSA staff recommends approval of the requests.

MOTION: *Member Farris moved to approve Honors Academy’s requests, first for a good cause exemption to hear this matter and, second, for it to increase its enrollment cap from 211 students to 225 students, subject to the condition below. Member Moulton seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

Condition: Submission of a revised budget, approved by the Nevada Department of Education, after the budget true ups are finalized in the fall of 2020.

Agenda Item 8 – Amplus Academy (formerly American Preparatory Academy – Las Vegas) [01:15:27]

Director Modrcin provided a brief update regarding Amplus Academy’s request for a good cause exemption and request for amendment to make modifications to its instructional model, the update on the nonrenewal of Amplus Academy’s agreement with its Educational Management Organization and lastly, the progress related to the school’s second campus scheduled to open in the Fall of 2020. SPCSA staff recommends approval of the requests.

Rachelle Hulet, Interim Executive Director, provided Amplus Academy’s update on their transition process and progress. She said their school is stronger and more stable than before.

Nikolos Hulet, Director of Student Support Department at Amplus Academy, talked about the progress the school has made related to their special populations.

Sara Barlow, Secondary Principal at Amplus Academy, provided an update regarding the use of new programs schoolwide that will directly impact student access and increase student achievements for all grade levels. She highlighted some of the programs.

Dr. Eve Breier, Elementary Principal at Amplus Academy, spoke to the initiatives in place to support the growth of their school.

Candy Farthing, Board Member at Amplus Academy, provided the update from the board of directors and their involvement with the leadership team.

MOTION: *Member Moulton moved to grant the good cause exemption request of Amplus Academy to hear this submitted amendment; and approve the proposed changes to the academic, operations and financial plans for the school to take effect beginning in the 2020 – 21 school year. Member Shauntee Rosales seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

A 10-minute break was taken from 10:33 to 10:43am.

Agenda Item 9 – Site Evaluation Process [01:45:08]

Director Modrcin and Selcuk Ozdemir, Manager of Academic Performance, provided the update regarding the site evaluation process and the five proposed changes for the 2020-21 school year cycle of site evaluations:

1. Place a statement in the SE handbook to minimize the potential for bias during the focus group portion of the evaluation.
2. Lower the number of items schools are required to upload into epicenter prior to the evaluation.
3. Implement a presentation time.
4. Revise the classroom observation rubric by simplifying the wording and removing the organizational framework portion from this rubric.
5. Decrease the current number of staff hours used to write, revise, and edit the final report by improving internal processes.

SPCSA staff is seeking the Authority's approval of the changes as specified. See the PowerPoint presentation in the supporting materials for additional details.

***MOTION:** Member Soifer moved to approve the changes in the site evaluation process as specified. Member Shauntee Rosales seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

Agenda Item 10 – Serving All Students Equitably [02:07:43]

Executive Director Feiden began the discussion regarding the actions 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. She has put together a set of initial steps to elevate the SPCSA's focus on equity in the following areas: site evaluations, new school and amendment applications, renewal applications, annual presentation on SPCSA data, focus on schools and Growth Management Plan working group.

Member Cyr asked about offering a network wide training through funding and the previous conversation around this data being accessible to families or the public.

Executive Director Feiden replied in regard to the network wide training, she contemplated putting a survey in as a learning piece to think about a springtime training and will incorporate that item. In terms of data being accessible by families, the SPCSA has two initiatives that are focused on making the information accessible, one is related to the performance reports, and she will circle up with team to build a component in the discipline data referred to. The second piece is looking at how to make their website more accessible to families. She said that she expects to take the comments mentioned today and incorporate some immediately and keep a long running list of the others.

No action taken on this agenda item.

Agenda Item 11 – Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment Category: Students at Risk of Dropping Out [02:24:38]

Executive Director Feiden discussed the category of students at risk of dropping out of school in the Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment, which can be found in the supporting materials.

Member Randolph said she started looking at the at-risk subgroup and her hope going forward is that this becomes part of their discussion as it relates to providing equitable access for all students and look to bring schools that want to meet this need into the portfolio.

Member Soifer said he looked forward to adding to this conversation a deliberate engagement with communities and stakeholders around barriers to entry as well as the portfolio aspects of our schools.

Member Cyr gave a shoutout to Beacon Academy. She said they worked very closely with agencies such as Help of Southern Nevada that has as homeless youth center on their campus and eligible students or potential students could enroll there as well as a partnership where they look to recruit new youth when they arrive on their campus. She suggested having Beacon Academy at the table to talk about best practices and how they recruit, who they reach out to and what they have been doing related to this conversation.

No action taken on this agenda item.

Agenda Item 12 – Long-Range Calendar [02:43:15]

Executive Director brought some things to the Authority’s attention regarding the long-range calendar. First being that they have proposed a second December board meeting for the 11th.

Director Modrcin added to inform the public and schools that the SPCSA released an updated amendment form this week for schools that may be seeking an amendment to their school this fall. They are potentially bringing forth the request for amendment recommendations to the December 4th meeting.

Member Cyr asked about adding the focus on schools presentation.

Potentially discussed schools coming in October or November and will plan to provide summaries in the Executive Director’s Report.

Agenda Item 13 – Public Comment #2 [02:46:25]

No additional public comment.

Agenda Item 14 – Adjournment [02:46:49]

The meeting was adjourned at 11:47am.