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BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
SUBJECT: Nevada State High School – Meadowwood – Charter Renewal Recommendation
DATE: December 3, 2021

1. Background and Summary

Nevada State High School – Meadowwood (NSHS) has submitted an application to renew its charter contract as the current charter contract expires on June 30, 2022. NSHS is a brick-and-mortar public charter school that currently serves 50 students in grades 11 – 12 at one campus in Reno.

After a thorough review of the historical data and charter renewal application, staff recommends that the Authority approve the charter renewal of NSHS for a seven-year term, beginning July 1, 2022.

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.¹ 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. The NSHS renewal report was sent to the board chair on June 29, 2021 and can be found within the supporting documentation for the item.

¹ 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\(2\)](#).

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 forth the requirements for the renewal application, and identifies the criteria that the 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\(1\)](#). NSHS submitted its notice of Intent to Renew its charter contract on August 3, 2021 and NSHS' notice of intent to renew can be found along with the supporting documents.

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\(3\)](#). On October 15, 2021 NSHS submitted its renewal application, which can be found included with the supporting documents.

Several key design elements are outlined in the renewal application that are unique to NSHS and have created a unique niche for students. The application states that while there are other high schools in Nevada that offer students dual enrollment classes and ways to earn college credits, there is no other school that offers three unique features only present at NSHS: a real college experience, developing students personally, academically, and socially in college, and a proven, personalized process for college success.

NSHS' renewal application notes that the network takes a restorative discipline approach to addressing student behaviors. When a situation arises, the application states that NSHS works with students to develop a plan to reflect on their actions, the impact their choices have, and how to better prepare for similar situations in the future. NSHS practices vertical equity, recognizing that a fair system is one that treats people who display responsible behavior with more freedom and flexibility than those who consistently display a lack of responsibility.

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, including financial and organizational performance. 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.² 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 [NRS 388A.285\(6\)](#) 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 and is now codified in [NRS 388A.285\(6\)](#).

The Authority Board may accept or reject, in whole or part, the recommendation of the Executive Director. See [NAC 388A.415\(10\)\(a\)](#). 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\(11\)\(b\) and \(c\)](#).

Alternatively, the Authority Board may deny the renewal application for the purpose of reconstituting the governing body of the charter school pursuant to [NRS 388A.330](#) and assigning the charter contract to a charter management organization or a new governing body which may include, without limitation, the governing body of another charter school or a governing body assembled by the Executive Director; deny the renewal application for the purpose of restarting the charter school and issuing a new charter contract pursuant to [NRS 388A.300](#) to a charter management organization or a new governing body, including, without limitation, the governing body of another charter school, which will inherit any assets of the charter school which remain following dissolution; or deny the renewal of a charter contract for the purpose of closing the charter school. See [NAC 388A.415\(11\)\(d\),\(e\) and \(f\)](#).

3. Analysis

Academics

The NSHS-Meadowwood campus opened for the 2018 – 2019 school year and has yet to be rated under the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF). The school has exhibited strong four-year graduation rates over the past two years:

<u>Academic Year</u>	<u>Graduation Rate</u>
2019 – 2020	100%
2020 – 2021	100%

The NSPF results for this current charter term are summarized and provided in the table below:

<u>School Year</u>	<u>NSPF Rating</u>
2020 – 2021 ³	Not Rated

² 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 Due to COVID-19, the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) applied for and was granted a 2020-21 school year waiver from the U.S. Department of Education for certain requirements established by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Nevada statewide assessments were administered in the 2020-21 school year, but the NDE did not calculate new Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) school ratings for the 2020-21 school year.

2019 – 2020 ⁴	Not Rated
2018 – 2019	Not Rated

Organizational

The current iteration of the SPCAS’s Organizational Performance Framework was adopted by the Authority in the summer of 2019. NSHS-Meadowwood earned 100 points under the 2020 Organizational Performance Framework as approved by the Authority on November 6, 2020, and SPCSA staff have not noted any substantial organizational performance concerns during the 2020 – 21 school year. Additionally, NSHS-Meadowwood has not received a Notice of Breach or Notice of Concern under this framework during the current charter term.

SPCSA Organizational Framework Findings

2020 – 2021	<i>Will be reported in January of 2022</i>
2019 – 2020	Meets the Standard (100/100 points)
2018 – 2019	No organizational performance concerns identified

Financial

In 2018, the Authority requested that the SPCSA Financial Framework be modified so as to be better assess the financial health of sponsored schools. The revised SPCSA Financial Framework was approved on January 18, 2019, with results for FY20 approved by the Authority in January 2021. NSHS-Meadowwood earned a ‘Meets Standard’ rating under six indicators, and one ‘Does Not Meet Standard’ under the ‘Cash Flow’ indicator for the FY20 Financial Performance Framework. Despite underperformance within one indicator, SPCSA staff finds NSHS-Meadowwood to be meeting the standard against performance expectations within the financial framework.

SPCSA Financial Framework Findings

2020 – 2021	<i>Will be reported in January of 2022</i>
2019 – 2020	Meets the Standard
2018 – 2019	No financial performance concerns identified

4. Recommendation: Renew NSHS – Meadowood for a 7-year term

As previously stated, NSHS-Meadowwood has not earned an NSPF rating during the current charter term. The school has exhibited exceptional four-year graduation rates over the past two years. Multiple site evaluations have also occurred since the school opened in the 2018 – 2019 school year. Both evaluations supported strong operational and academic performance at the school.

It is also noteworthy that the school has not been issued any financial or organizational notices.

SPCSA staff is confident the school will maintain strong academic performance in the upcoming charter term. As such, staff’s recommendation is that the Authority renew the NSHS-Meadowwood contract for a

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seven-year term, beginning July 1, 2022. The new term would be subject to the enrollment caps outlined below.

	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Enrollment Cap	135	135	135	135	135	135	135
Grades Served	11-12	11-12	11-12	11-12	11-12	11-12	11-12

5. Proposed Motion

Approve the NSHS – Meadowwood Renewal Application with a seven-year term beginning July 1, 2022 and the enrollment caps as outlined above in the recommendation memo.

Appendix: School Demographics since 2016⁵

Year	Total Enrollment	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
16-17	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
17-18	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
18-19	26	3.8%	0.0%	69.2%	15.3%	0.0%	7.6%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%	46.1%
19-20	55	3.6%	0.0%	65.4%	21.8%	0.0%	7.2%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	21.8%
20-21	68	10.2%	0.0%	60.2%	11.7%	1.4%	13.2%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	*
21-22	50	6.0%	2.0%	54.0%	18%	2.0%	12.0%	6%	*	0.0%	*

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

To protect student privacy, rates associated with IEP, ELL, and FRL populations less than 10 students are displayed with an asterisk (*), and extreme values less than 5 or greater than 95 percent are shown as <5 and >95, respectively. N/A indicates the population did not exist.

⁵ Enrollment as of Validation Day each year (October 1).