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## STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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### ACTION MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** SPCSA Board  
**FROM:** Mike Dang, Manager, Financial and Organizational Performance  
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing  
**SUBJECT:** **Beacon Academy of Nevada RFA**  
1) For Good Cause Exemption  
2) Approval to finance acquisition of school SPCSA approved for occupancy  
**DATE:** April 15, 2022

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#### Summary of Request and SPCSA Staff Recommendation

The Governing Board of Beacon Academy of Nevada submitted a Request For Amendment (RFA) of its Charter Contract to the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) for the school to be approved to:

1. Be granted a Good Cause Exemption to hear this RFA, and
2. Accelerate its facility financing plans for its East Campus which the SPCSA approved on June 26, 2020, and which Beacon opened during the 2021-2022 school year.

SPCSA staff has reviewed the application and recommends approval of both requests, subject to the conditions described below.

#### Background

Beacon Academy of Nevada (Beacon) is, according to its application, an alternative state public charter school serving a large percentage of high school students who have previously dropped out of school, have a history of poor attendance, and are credit deficient. Enrollment is limited to students who qualify for alternative education as defined by NRS 385A.740. The Beacon blended school model requires students to physically attend school a minimum of two days per week or more frequently for more intense academic interventions and wrap-around support.

On June 26, 2020, the SPCSA board approved the school occupying a second site in East Las Vegas to better serve the needs of the Las Vegas community. This newly opened campus is located at 1800 E Sahara Ave, Las

Vegas, Nevada. The new campus enables Beacon to increase its services and outreach opportunities for alternative education students residing in East Central Las Vegas to attend Beacon. This lowers their cost of attending by reducing their commute time and expense.

As mentioned in its prior RFA, this new campus now provides the Beacon option to those formerly underserved due to transportation limitations. Alternative education students from the following high schools will have increased access to Beacon: Valley High School, Chaparral High School, Del Sol High School, Rancho High School, Desert Pines High School, El Dorado High School, Las Vegas High School, and Rancho High School. The zip codes for these schools are 89101, 89104, 89110, 89119, 89120, 89121, 89142, 89156, and 89169. The total enrollment for the area exceeds 36,000, including ES, MS and HS. This area enrollment suggests the school has and will have a large pool of potential students it can assist.

Beacon is planning for the projected enrollment for the existing West campus to remain at 385-400 students, which is under the current enrollment cap of 419. According to the amendment application, the projected enrollment for the proposed new campus is planned to gradually increase to 350- 385 students by the 2024 - 2025 school year. On Enrollment Count Day, Beacon had 355 students enrolled. As of the time of this RFA, Beacon had 170 students at the East Campus and 289 students at the West Campus for a total of 459 students across both campuses for the school system.

Beacon originally planned to implement this step in their financing plan in a few years. However, after considering inflationary risk signs and the uncertainty of borrowing costs in the future and after discussions with their developer, Beacon decided to implement this step now.

## **Applicant Eligibility**

When reviewing an amendment request, SPCSA reviews the academic, financial and organizational performance of the applicant charter school. Note that [NAC 388A.400\(8\)](#) states that when determining whether to grant or deny an amendment request that the Executive Director and the Authority may consider the school's academic, financial and organizational performance.

Regarding its Academic Framework, Beacon is measured under three academic frameworks: (1) a school-specific framework, (2) the state's Alternative School Performance Framework, and (3) the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF). As with other public schools, academic ratings for Beacon and other schools have been on hold for the past few years due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Beacon's school-specific framework is embedded within their current contract. This academic performance framework is 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. The framework includes measures such as achievement status, growth, college and career readiness measures, and student engagement.

Beacon's second academic framework is the Alternative Performance Framework (APF) ([NRS 385A.740](#)) as approved by the Nevada State Board of Education in the summer of 2018. Beacon is the first charter high school in Nevada sponsored by the SPCSA to operate under the state's APF.

Beacon also performs under the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) as all other Nevada public schools do.

Nevada's charter school statutes and regulations contain both mandatory and permissive provisions related to applications for charter school contract amendment requests. Regarding a "permissive" denial of a charter school amendment application, NAC 388A.310(6)(b) states that a charter school sponsor "may" deny a request to amend a school's charter contract if the school "was not rated in the first, second, or third highest tier during the last ratings of the charter school, pursuant to the statewide system of accountability."

This reference is to the Nevada Department of Education’s Nevada School Performance Framework (“NSPF”) contemplated by NRS 385A (Accountability of Public Schools). It means that a charter school sponsor “may” deny an amendment request if a charter school is not rated as a three-star or better school under the NSPF.

Because the school has been approved for the state’s Alternative School Performance Framework, and has demonstrated progress against its own, school-specific framework, SPCSA staff finds the school to be meeting standards regarding academics.

Additionally, SPCSA finds that the school is also meeting performance requirements under both the financial and organizational frameworks. Beacon has shown strong leadership in all three performance areas over the years.

**Summary and Recommendation**

SPCSA staff have reviewed Beacon’s application and recommend the school as eligible to submit these requests. Staff finds Beacon’s application compelling, especially as the school now is able to provide more high-quality school choices to a special segment of Nevada’s students. As such, staff recommends the SPCSA board approve Beacon’s requests as follows:

**Proposed Motion:**

**Grant Beacon Academy of Nevada (Beacon) a Good Cause Exemption to hear this matter and, secondly, grant the school’s request to implement its submitted financing plans for the East campus, which Beacon began occupying the 2021-2022 school year, with the condition that the school provide staff with a copy of the final financing documentation, including information staff will specify to Beacon, including the Total Amount Borrowed, Interest Rate, Term in Years, Total of Payments, etc.**

**Beacon has the following approved enrollment caps for the remainder of its charter term:**

	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6
	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
<b>West Campus</b>						
Grade Levels	9-12	9-12	9-12	9-12	9-12	9-12
Enrollment	419	419	419	419	419	419
<b>East Campus</b>						
Grade Levels	12-Sep	12-Sep	12-Sep	12-Sep	12-Sep	12-Sep
Enrollment	Not Open	200	265	315	350	350
<b>Totals</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>734</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>769</b>

## 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%
19-20	380	3.9%	13.9%	24.5%	47.9%	1.3%	6.6%	1.8%	25.0%	13.4%	66.1%
20-21	324	3.7%	18.8%	26.2%	44.7%	0.9%	4.9%	1.0%	29.3%	12.6%	65.0%
21-22	355	3.1%	25.9%	19.2%	43.9%	0.3%	6.8%	0.8%	24.8%	14.6%	67.0%

Note: all enrollment numbers are from Validation Day each year.

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

## Academic Performance:

Metric	Beacon Academy of Nevada – Framework Results <sup>1</sup>		
	<u>2016 – 2017</u>	<u>2017 – 2018</u>	<u>2018 - 2019</u>
<u>Growth</u>			
- Reading	Unsatisfactory	Exceeds	Adequate
- Math	Adequate	Approaches	Adequate
<u>Status</u>			
- Reading	Critical	Adequate	Adequate
- Math	Critical	Adequate	Unsatisfactory
<u>College and Career Readiness</u>			
- Credit Attainment	Approaches	Adequate	Adequate
- Transition Success	Exceptional	Exceeds	Exceeds
- CCR Assessment Participation	Exceeds	Exceeds	Exceeds
<u>Student Engagement</u>			
- Attendance Rate	Exceeds	Approaches	Exceeds
- Retention Rate	Exceptional	Exceeds	Exceeds
<b>Final Designation (Total Points)</b>	<b>Approaches (47)</b>	<b>Adequate (66.5)</b>	<b>Adequate (64.5)</b>

<sup>1</sup> This table is from the Beacon-specific contract performance framework which has a six-point rating scale that progresses as follows, from lowest to highest rating: critical, unsatisfactory, approaches, adequate, exceeds, exceptional. This is the first of the three academic performance frameworks the school operates under. The school's second framework, the SPCSA framework, relies heavily on NSPF ratings information which was not calculated by NDE the past few years. Nevertheless, the school rated "Meets Standards" or "Exceeds Standards" for the categories the SPCSA measured regarding the school's Enrollment Diversity. Regarding the school's third academic performance framework, the NSPF star ratings, NDE did not calculate them for 2019-2020 as well as for 2020-2021.