

MINUTES OF THE  
MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD  
Regular Monthly Meeting  
Monday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017

The regular monthly meeting of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board was held at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017, at the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board Office located at 239 N. Lamar Street Suite 207, Jackson, MS 39201. In attendance were:

Krystal Cormack, Chair  
Tommie Cardin  
Chris Wilson  
Dr. Carey Wright

Participating via teleconference were:

Dr. Karen Elam  
Dr. Jean Young

Executive Director Marian Schutte also participated in the meeting. Mr. Leland Speed was unable to participate.

The meeting was called to order at 10:08 am.

ITEM I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

A. Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was previously circulated to all Board members for review.

**Chair Cormack requested a motion to approve the agenda as presented.**

**MOTION: Mr. Cardin**

**SECOND: Mr. Wilson**

**There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.**

ITEM II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A. Approval of Minutes of the July 10<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting

The minutes of the July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017 board meeting were previously distributed to the Board members for review.

**Chair Cormack requested a motion to approve the minutes of the July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017 board meeting as presented.**

**MOTION: Mr. Wilson**

**SECOND: Dr. Elam**

**There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.**

ITEM III. CHAIR REPORT

Chair Cormack welcomed the members of the public to today's board meeting. She thanked board members for continuing board business in July while she had the opportunity to travel to New York this summer with her family.

Chair Cormack then shared that the Authorizer Board has hosted several public hearings as part of the 2017 Request for Proposals process. She facilitated a public hearing in both Canton and Drew. Mr. Wilson also facilitated a hearing in Clarksdale as well. She noted that for board members who were unable to attend the hearings that the hearings from this cycle were the most well attended so far. She also shared that the board had received a substantial amount of written comment that was shared with board members in advance of today's meeting.

ITEM IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Schutte welcomed board members and members of the public to today's Authorizer Board meeting. She noted that new technology was in place for the board meeting and she hopes it will help with board members when they call in as well as assist the public in hearing all board members during the meeting.

First, she welcomed the Authorizer Board's new Deputy Director, Stewart McMillan. She is from Tupelo, Mississippi, and previously taught 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade English/Language Arts at a charter school in Nashville, Tennessee. Most recently, she worked at the Achievement School District as a member of Tennessee's education reform movement. Ms. Schutte noted that Stewart will be working on the Performance and Accountability side of the office. She will work with schools directly after they're approved and also work with MDE as well. She's very excited to begin her role here at the Authorizer Board and looks forward to meeting you all in person today.

Second, Ms. Schutte shared that the Authorizer Board still had not heard any news on the Charter Schools Program grant application that MCSAB submitted in May. She doesn't anticipate that MCSAB will know until the last day of the month.

Third, Ms. Schutte shared that work had kicked off regarding the communications strategy proposal. She thanked all board members for completing the survey distributed by Mississippi First. She noted that she is working on scheduling to potentially avoid having two meetings somewhat back to back and she will notify board members via email to schedule the upcoming meeting.

Finally, Ms. Schutte shared information about the National Association of Charter School Authorizers conference located in Phoenix from October 16<sup>th</sup> to October 19<sup>th</sup>. She asked that if any board member is interested in attending to let her know so that she can make travel arrangements. Ms. Schutte shared that

she has been asked to present on two panels regarding operator recruitment and streamlined charter school application processes at the conference.

## ITEM V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### A. Applications Committee

Dr. Elam presented the results of the 2017 Request for Proposals process through the Stage 3: Independent Evaluation Team Review. MCSAB partnered with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers to conduct an independent evaluation of the charter school proposals received during the 2017 Request for Proposals process. The Authorizer Board received recommendations from NACSA and will base its decision on NACSA's recommendations, the proposals, the capacity interviews, and the applicant's written response to the independent evaluation.

In 2017, MCSAB received a significant amount of interest in the charter school proposal process. Mississippi First offered and provided technical support to all applicants who created FluidReview accounts. At MCSAB's June meeting, four proposals were deemed complete and eligible to move on to Stage 2 of the 2017 RFP process. They were: Clarksdale Collegiate (K-8 in Clarksdale Municipal School District); KC Schools Inc. (PK-12 in South Pike School District); Shades of Elegance (K-8 in Sunflower County Consolidated School District); and SR1 (K-12 in Canton Public School District). At MCSAB's July meeting, three proposals were deemed minimally adequate and were moved to Stage 3 of the 2017 RFP process. These three applicants were: Clarksdale Collegiate, Shades of Elegance, and SR1.

During Stage 3 of the process, the independent evaluation team assesses full proposals against the evaluation criteria. The independent evaluation team reads the full proposal and then conducts an in-person capacity interview. They then form a recommendation after assessing and rating proposals against the criteria. Each proposal receives a rating in Educational Program Design and Capacity, Financial Plan and Capacity, and Operations Plan and Capacity as well as an overall recommendation for approval or denial. In order to receive a recommendation for approval, a proposal must receive a rating of "Meets the Standard" in all three of the evaluated areas. During the 2017 RFP cycle, one proposal received a recommendation for approval: Clarksdale Collegiate. Clarksdale Collegiate received a "Meets the Standard" in Educational Program Design and Capacity, Operations Plan and Capacity, and Financial Plan and Capacity. Clarksdale Collegiate was recommended for approval by the Applications Committee.

Two proposals received recommendations for denial: Shades of Elegance and SR1. Shades of Elegance received a "Partially Meets the Standard" in Educational Program Design and Capacity and a "Does Not Meet the Standard" in Operations Plan and Capacity and Financial Plan and Capacity. SR1 received a "Partially Meets the Standard" in Educational Program Design and Capacity, Operations Plan and Capacity, and Financial Plan and Capacity. Shades of Elegance and SR1 were recommended for denial by the Applications Committee.

### B. Performance and Accountability Committee

Mr. Wilson noted that the Performance and Accountability has met and will present the initial draft of the 2017 Annual Report during New Business.

ITEM VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2017 Annual Report: Initial Version

Ms. Schutte shared that the initial version of the 2017 Annual Report was previously distributed to Board members for review. She noted that this report is similar to the style of the 2016 Annual Report and is pending all data from the 2016-2017 school year. She noted that the report gives some demographic information about charter schools in Mississippi as well as an overview of the charter school landscape. The initial version of the 2017 Annual Report is before the board today due to the Board's legislative mandate that it submit the annual report to the Legislature by October 1. The board will update the report and approve it at its December or January meeting after all data are received and any analysis has been completed.

**Chair Cormack requested a motion to approve the 2017 Annual Report as presented.**

**MOTION: Mr. Cardin**

**SECOND: Dr. Wright**

**There being no additional discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by participating members, the motion carried.**

B. Approval of Invoices

Ms. Schutte presented invoices for approval: 1) Board Member travel to today's meeting; 2) Deputy Director travel for August and September; 3) Staff and Board Member travel to the NACSA conference; 4) July and August Cornerstone Consulting invoices; 5) NACSA membership for FY18; and 6) Interior Elements office furniture for the credenza and filing cabinets.

**Mr. Cardin motioned to approve all invoices as presented except for the July and August Cornerstone Consulting invoices.**

**MOTION: Mr. Cardin**

**SECOND: Mr. Wilson**

**There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.**

Mr. Cardin recused himself from the meeting and left the room.

**Chair Cormack requested a motion to approve the July and August invoices from Cornerstone Consulting as presented.**

**MOTION: Dr. Wright**  
**SECOND: Dr. Young**

**There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.**

C. 2017 Request for Proposals: Stage 3 Results

Mr. Cardin returned to the room.

Chair Cormack stated that in the absence of a vice-chair and the need to recuse herself from the meeting that the Board need appoint a Chair Pro Tem.

**Dr. Elam made a motion to appoint Tommie Cardin as chair pro tem in the absence of Board Chair Cormack. The role of Chair will return to Chair Cormack upon her return to the meeting.**

**MOTION: Dr. Elam**  
**SECOND: Dr. Wright**

**There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.**

Chair Pro Tem Tommie Cardin presided over the meeting.

**i. Application of Clarksdale Collegiate for One School (Clarksdale Collegiate)**

**Dr. Elam made a motion that the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board adopt a resolution to approve Clarksdale Collegiate's proposal for one charter school for the 2018-2019 school year, providing execution of the charter contract and final approval of the school to open shall be conditioned on timely preopening requirements. The preopening requirements will be designed to ensure that the school is prepared to meet its obligations as a public charter school, including but not limited to all building, health, safety, insurance, and other legal requirements that must be fulfilled prior to opening.**

**MOTION: Dr. Elam**  
**SECOND: Dr. Young**

**There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.**

**ii. Application of Shades of Elegance for One School (Truth Academy STEAM Charter School)**

**Dr. Elam made a motion that the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board adopt a resolution to deny Shades of Elegance's proposal for one charter school for the 2018-2019 school year as it fails to meet the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board's criteria for approval as detailed in the Recommendation Report.**

**MOTION: Dr. Elam**  
**SECOND: Dr. Wright**

**There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.**

**iii. Application of SR1 for One School (SR1 College Preparatory and STEM Academy)**

**Dr. Elam made a motion that the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board adopt a resolution to deny SR1's proposal for one charter school for the 2018-2019 school year as it fails to meet the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board's criteria for approval as detailed in the Recommendation Report.**

**MOTION: Dr. Elam**

**SECOND: Dr. Wilson**

**There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.**

**D. Election of Officers**

Chair Cormack returned to the meeting and resumed her role as Chair.

Chair Cormack presented the positions open for election. The first position open is board chair.

**Mr. Cardin made a motion to nominate Krystal Cormack as board chair.**

**MOTION: Mr. Cardin**

**SECOND: Mr. Wilson**

**There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.**

Chair Cormack presented vice-chair as open for nominations.

**Mr. Wilson made a motion to nominate Dr. Karen Elam as vice-chair.**

**MOTION: Mr. Wilson**

**SECOND: Mr. Cardin**

**There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.**

**ITEM VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Cormack shared that seven individuals signed up for public comment for today's meeting. Public comment is limited to five minutes.

Ms. Amanda Johnson thanked the Authorizer Board for their time today and for approving Clarksdale Collegiate's charter school proposal. She shared that she is excited to get started on the process and path to opening Clarksdale Collegiate and offer an option to the families of Clarksdale and Coahoma County.

She stated concerns and misunderstandings may come up today and she wanted to clear up some of those misunderstandings. Charter schools in Mississippi are public schools. They are public entities with a public governing board and body and hold public meetings. Charter schools in Mississippi operate under open enrollment rules. They will offer special education services. They will take the same tests as traditional public schools and receive an accountability score. The main difference is that they operate outside the local school district and are held to higher accountability. Public funding follows students to charter schools. She stated that they do not expect to get any public dollars for students they don't educate. She also stated that public funding for schools in Mississippi is not adequate and they will fight alongside other public schools for adequate funding. She also stated that based on her experiences of opening and running a charter school in Helena, Arkansas she knows that charter schools can be successful.

Superintendent Dennis Dupree thanked the board for the opportunity to speak. He shared his concerns over the charter school process and stated that he felt that the process was conducted without any public comment. He asked board members if they had been to Clarksdale Public Schools to see the work that they were doing. He said that sometimes people get tied up in test scores that people don't realize where students come from. He believes that another school in an existing low-poverty, low-income tax base setting will create a storm and situation to deal with. He stated that he has never had a conversation with Ms. Johnson about improving the existing school system. He stated that he already has trouble finding certified teachers and another school will make that harder. He stated that it was too easy for board members to vote yes on something that they don't really understand. He said the school will only take away from the public system. He stated that they have to take students in Clarksdale as they come and he's not sure how that will work with charter schools. He closed by saying that board members need to come and see what Clarksdale is doing before they authorize schools.

Senator Robert Jackson thanked the board for the opportunity to speak. He stated that he is a public school graduate and they were great for him then and they are doing well for kids who are going to public school now. Senator Jackson stated that he opposed the original charter school legislation and wanted to go on the record as opposed to the Clarksdale Collegiate proposal. He traveled to New Orleans to see charter schools and people were excited about them then but aren't excited about them now. He stated that funds are an issue as well as the Superintendent's budget has been cut. He stated he's going to be looking for ways to get rid of the charter school legislation. He stated that schools just need the funding to do the job they are intended to do. He also wanted to go on record to say that he will work until the school is no longer there. He stated that he will be paying attention to the process before they open and hopes that the board will look at it and decide that this isn't the time to open the charter school.

Representative Orlando Paden thanked the board for the opportunity to speak. He stated that he sent a letter opposing Clarksdale Collegiate's proposal. He stated that Coahoma County can't afford another school district to open in their community. He believes if the State would fully fund education and the Department of Education then education will be better for the general public. He wanted to go on record opposing Clarksdale Collegiate and charter schools in the state of Mississippi. He wants to fully fund public education and make it grow into something greater.

Donell Harrell shared that he was a former Superintendent of the Clarksdale school system. He has two daughters that have graduated from Clarksdale public schools and have gone on to college and are successful. He stated that there are problems in Mississippi. The adequate education program has only been fully funded twice. He shared that they can't afford another school district there and instead need to fully fund public schools. He stated that white flight has been taking place since the 1970s and a charter school is not going to solve that. He wanted to know where the teachers and funds are going to come from in order to operate the charter school. He wanted to go on record opposing Clarksdale Collegiate.

Johnny Newsome stated that as a member of the Coahoma County Board of Supervisors he was there representing his constituents but not the board of supervisors. He stated that he didn't believe that enough community input had gone into the process. He stated that he and his wife had different viewpoints on the issue but he wants the Authorizer Board to take more time on the issue. He shared that he wanted to present his comments before the board members voted today. He asked how this would affect Coahoma County and their millage rates in order to fund the charter school. He agreed that the public schools need some attention and work. He wanted to know why there wasn't a meeting to try and solve the issues in the traditional public schools. He stated that 1,400 people signed a petition against the school and wanted to know if the Authorizer Board members had received the petition. He closed by stating he wanted the best for all students and not just a select few.

Superintendent Cassandra Williams of Canton Public Schools stated that they submitted written comments and wanted to speak before the board today because of the reputation of SR1 in the community and because of their lack of experience with elementary education. She stated that her biggest concern was their lack of track record and experience with literacy. She believes that the proposed school will do damage to children. She believes that the Authorizer Board should review the educational plan components earlier in the process. She stated that Canton Public Schools is educating kids based on their Kindergarten and third grade data. She was glad that the Authorizer Board didn't approve the SR1 application and that she couldn't not come today and speak against the application.

Chair Cormack addressed comments that public comment wasn't taken. She stated that the Authorizer Board has a specific phase in the Request for Proposals process to collect public comment on the proposals. She shared that public forums were held in Clarksdale, Canton, and Drew. She shared that all written comments and the petitions collected were shared and read by all board members. She acknowledged that the specific forums were held solely for the purpose of collecting public comments and approximately 400 people came to public forums this year.

#### ITEM IX. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Authorizer Board will be to discuss the communications strategy proposal tentatively on September 25<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Schutte will communicate with board members via email to confirm the schedule and the Authorizer Board will post the meeting notice. The idea is to move up the October board meeting to this time in order to reduce travel for board members.

If not, the October board meeting date will be October 9<sup>th</sup> in Jackson.



ITEM X. ADJOURNMENT

**Chair Cormack requested a motion to adjourn.**

**MOTION: Dr. Wright**

**SECOND: Mr. Cardin**

**There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.**

**The meeting adjourned at 11:13 am.**

ADOPTED, this the 30<sup>th</sup> day of October 2017.

  
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Krystal Cormack, Chair