

MINUTES OF THE
MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD
Regular Monthly Meeting
Monday, September 12, 2016

The regular monthly meeting of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board was held at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, September 12, 2016, at the office of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board located at 239 N. Lamar Street Suite 207, Jackson, Mississippi. In attendance were:

Tommie Cardin, Chairman
Krystal Cormack, Vice-Chair
Dr. Karen Elam
Johnny Franklin
Chris Wilson

Dr. Carey Wright participated by teleconference. Executive Director Marian Schutte also participated in the meeting.

Board Chairman Tommie Cardin called the meeting to order at 10:12 a.m.

ITEM I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

A. Adoption of Agenda

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

Chairman Cardin requested a motion adopt the agenda, as presented.

MOTION: Mrs. Cormack

SECOND: Mr. Wilson

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

ITEM II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A. Approval of Minutes of the July 11, 2016 Meeting

The Minutes of the July 11, 2016 meeting were previously distributed to the Board members for review.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the Minutes of the July 11, 2016 meeting, as written.

MOTION: Dr. Elam

SECOND: Mrs. Cormack

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

B. Approval of Minutes of the August 1, 2016 Special Meeting

The Minutes of the August 1, 2016 special meeting were previously distributed to the Board members for review. Chairman Cardin noted a correction to the minutes regarding item II. B to strike the phrase “because of conflict” as there was no conflict.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the Minutes of the August 1, 2016 special meeting, as amended.

MOTION: Mr. Wilson

SECOND: Dr. Wright

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

ITEM III. CHAIR REPORT

Chairman Cardin noted that this is the board’s three year anniversary. The board members terms are staggered and the Lt. Governor’s appointees terms are for an initial three years. The Lt. Governor’s appointees were Chairman Cardin, Dr. Elam, and Dr. Coleman. The Lt. Governor has reappointed Dr. Elam and Chairman Cardin. Dr. Coleman will not continue on the board and we will recognize her at the appropriate time, as she could not be here today. The Authorizer Board does not have additional information on the new appointee and will keep in contact with the Lt. Governor’s office. Chairman Cardin then thanked board members for their service and for working with him as chair as his term as chair ends.

ITEM IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Ms. Schutte welcomed board members and the public to the Authorizer Board’s new office space where the Authorizer Board hopes to hold all future meetings. She offered to give board members a tour of the space after the meeting.

Next, Ms. Schutte noted that Mississippi’s third charter school, Smilow Prep, has opened its doors and is off to a great start for the 2016-2017 school year. The school has received its informal site visit within the first month of opening as outlined in the Authorizer Board’s new ongoing monitoring protocol.

Next, Ms. Schutte offered a hiring update for the Deputy Director position. She stated that she is continuing to conduct interviews with prospective candidates and will continue to update the Authorizer Board with information as it becomes available.

Finally, she added that the NACSA annual conference is coming up on October 24-27 in Atlanta. That conference will be center around authorizing practices and she strongly encouraged any Board members who wished to attend to please do so.

ITEM V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Applications Committee

Mrs. Cormack reported on the 2016 RFP process. She reported at the last board meeting the Authorizer Board moved Collegiate Academies and Mississippi Preparatory School to Stage 3 of the RFP process. The Stage 3 evaluation process is the full review of the written application and an in-person capacity interview. Also in this cycle, groups had one week to respond to the recommendation of the independent evaluator with additional information or to correct any information or factual inaccuracies. In order to receive approval, the applicant must receive a Meets the Standard rating in all three areas, which are the Educational Program Design and Capacity, the Operations Plan and Capacity, and the Financial Plan and Capacity. Mississippi Preparatory School, Inc. received a Meets the Standard in both Educational Plan and Financial Plan and received a Partially Meets the Standard in Operations Plan. Collegiate Academies has withdrawn from this 2016 RFP process and Marian will be working with them to cultivate their interest in opening a school in the future. She stated that the Applications Committee was not able to come to a recommendation regarding the Mississippi Preparatory School application. They have a strong application but they are an existing operator that operates 8 schools: 7 schools in Ohio and 1 school in Indiana. They have mixed results at some of their schools. She stated that the statute requires the Authorizer Board to “grant charters only to applicants that have provided evidence of competence in each element of the authorizer’s published criteria, and in the case of an applicant that currently operates one or more schools in any state or nation, clear evidence that the charter school or schools currently operated by the applicant has produced statistically significant gains in student achievement or consistently produced proficiency levels as measured on state achievement tests.”

Mrs. Cormack stated that there are a variety of proposals for this application from members of the Applications Committee. She stated that her recommendation is to give Mississippi Preparatory School more time before the Board authorizes them to open schools in Mississippi. The last four schools that Mississippi Preparatory School opened have either no data or data that shows that they are struggling. She recommended that the Board continue to cultivate relationships with this operator and also wait to see what their additional data will be. She mentioned that each of the other members of the Applications Committee would then share their thoughts. Chairman Cardin recommended that this be done in the context of new business. Mrs. Cormack agreed and also shared that the independent evaluation team recommended denial for Mississippi Preparatory School Inc.’s application.

B. Performance and Accountability Committee

Ms. Schutte stated that any performance and accountability updates would be given during new business with regards to the annual report.

ITEM VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2016 Annual Report

Ms. Schutte presented the 2016 Annual Report required by the Mississippi Charter Schools Act before October 1. The report before the Board today is a stopgap since the board does not have all information at this time. The Board will amend the report with this data and present it for approval at its December 2016 meeting. Chairman Cardin stated that by doing this we are meeting the Board's statutory requirement to issue the report. Mr. Wilson asked if this would be an issue each year. Currently, at this time, we will have this issue until the statute is changed.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the 2016 Annual Report.

MOTION: Mr. Franklin

SECOND: Mrs. Cormack

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

B. Epicenter Proposal

Ms. Schutte presented a proposal from Epicenter for their charter school data monitoring tool. She stated that this proposal is the result of the project from one the Board's summer interns. Chair Cardin and Mr. Wilson were able to see a demonstration at the National Charter Schools Conference. With the charter management system, the Board will also have access to its board management tools and application portal as well. The cost is \$1,900 per school and would bring the cost to \$5,700 total for this school year. Chair Cardin recommended that a motion to approve the Epicenter contract would be contingent on review by counsel due the indemnification provisions in the contract.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the Epicenter contract pending review by counsel.

MOTION: Dr. Elam

SECOND: Mrs. Cormack

There being no discussion and a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

C. FY 17 Budget Revision

Ms. Schutte stated that two budget revisions are needed. The first is to move \$5,700 from other fees to the Epicenter contract line item. The second is to move \$3,000 from other fees to IT services in order to set up internet and technology needs in the new office.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the FY17 budget revisions.

MOTION: Mrs. Cormack

SECOND: Mr. Wilson

There being no further discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

D. Approval of Invoices

Chairman Cardin recused himself from the vote and he left the room. Ms. Schutte presented invoices for travel and Cornerstone Consulting.

Vice-Chair Cormack requested a motion to approve the invoices for travel and Cornerstone Consulting.

MOTION: Mr. Wilson

SECOND: Mr. Franklin

There being no further discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

E. 2016 Request for Proposals: Stage 3 Results

Chair Cardin request a motion on Mississippi Preparatory School, Inc.'s application. Dr. Elam made a motion to approve Mississippi Preparatory School, Inc's application with conditions for approval. The conditions are 1) approve application for only one school during the 2017-2018 school year; and 2) to set specific conditions for performance before additional schools are approved.

MOTION: Dr. Elam

SECOND: Mr. Franklin

Mrs. Cormack directed board members to the recommendation report from the independent evaluation team and the response to the recommendation from the applicant. She further presented the data contained in these documents. She stated that previously the board has set a high bar for approval and she believes that this applicant does not meet this standard for approval. She recommended that the applicant be given time to increase their performance and then apply again. Mr. Franklin stated that the Applications Committee has had two meetings with significant discussion. He stated that the independent evaluation team rated Mississippi Preparatory School as partially meeting the standard and their older schools have performed well. He stated that he was willing to give them an opportunity with one school. Dr. Elam agreed with Mr. Franklin's comments and stated that the applicant has shown that they can perform comparably to their local school district. She also stated that Indiana recruited this group to come to Indiana. The applicant has a principal in training and is ready to come open a school here in Mississippi.

Chairman Cardin stated that his concern was around the standard of review. The statute says that in the case of an applicant that currently operates one or more schools in any state or nation, clear evidence that the charter school or schools currently operated by the applicant has produced statistically significant gains in student achievement or consistently produced proficiency levels

as measured on state achievement tests. He stated that this language requires a burden of proof. The language requiring clear evidence isn't supported by all of the documentation of the RFP process and that the data doesn't meet the standard identified by the statute. Dr. Elam shared concerns that the longer we delay opening schools the fewer students are served. Dr. Wright shared concerns that she didn't want to lower the bar for the Board's application process. She also shared that opening another school that doesn't perform doesn't actually give children true options. Mr. Wilson stated that as he reviewed the application that he was thankful of the diligence of the Applications Committee. He stated that the independent evaluation team has recognized deficiencies in their application. As he read their response to the denial recommendation, he found no reason as to override the evaluator's opinion. Chairman Cardin stated that mixed results and uncertainty does not equal clear evidence. Dr. Elam shared her concern of the message that this sends to other existing charter school operators. Mrs. Cormack stated that this is the first time that the Applications Committee wasn't able to come to a consensus and thanked everyone for their time and evaluation of Mississippi Preparatory School, Inc.'s application and that the Board may not come to a consensus today and that it may be time to vote.

There being no further discussion and following a vote by all members present and participating, the motion failed by a vote of 2-4 denying Mississippi Preparatory School, Inc.'s application.

F. Election of Officers

Chairman Cardin presented the positions open for election. The first position open is board chair.

Mr. Wilson made a motion to nominate Mrs. Krystal Cormack as board chair.

MOTION: Mr. Wilson

SECOND: Mr. Franklin, Dr. Wright

There being no further discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

Chairman Cardin presented vice-chair as open for nominations.

Mr. Wilson made a motion to nominate Mr. Johnny Franklin as vice chair.

MOTION: Mr. Wilson

SECOND: Dr. Elam

There being no further discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

ITEM VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Cindy White with the Parents Campaign stated that the Parents Campaign appreciates the diligence with which the Board has approached its work in the past few years and its

commitment to quality and now is not the time to back off that commitment and appreciates the decision the board made today. What the test results from Reimagine and Midtown show, is that Mississippi has challenges that other states do not have. Excellent people and plans for success are necessary to improve. The original intent of the law was to provide options to children who are trapped in low-performing schools and we appreciate your fidelity to the law and we urge you to continue on this path.

Ms. Marilyn Young with Southern Echo asked what is the code section that the board referred to today. Chairman Cardin stated that it was code section 37-28-19 2(a). She also asked how the independent evaluators rated the application. Ms. Cormack stated that the applicant received a Partially Meets the Standard in Operations Plan where they noted their track record of success.

ITEM IX. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board will be held on October 3, 2016.

ITEM X. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to adjourn.

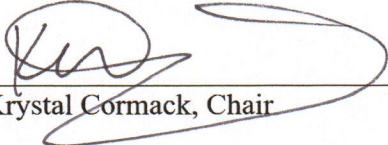
MOTION: Mrs. Cormack

SECOND: Mr. Franklin

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:30am.

ADOPTED, this the 3rd day of October, 2016.



Krystal Cormack, Chair