

MINUTES OF THE  
MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD  
Monthly Meeting  
Tuesday, October 14, 2014

The monthly meeting of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board was held at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, October 14, 2014, at the office of the Mississippi Department of Education, Suite 311, located at 359 North West Street, Jackson, Mississippi. In attendance were:

Krystal Cormack, Vice-Chair  
Chris Wilson  
Johnny Franklin  
Dr. Carey Wright

Dr. Bonita Coleman-Potter participated by teleconference. Chairman Tommie Cardin and Dr. Karen Elam were unable to participate.

Vice-Chair Krystal Cormack called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

ITEM I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

A. Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was previously circulated to all Board members.

**Vice-Chair Krystal Cormack requested a motion to adopt the agenda, as presented.**

**MOTION: Dr. Wright**

**SECOND: Mr. Franklin**

**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

The Minutes of the September 25, 2014 meeting were previously distributed to the Board members for review.

**Vice-Chair Krystal Cormack requested a motion for approval of the Minutes of the September 25, 2014 meeting.**

**MOTION: Mr. Franklin**

**SECOND: Dr. Coleman-Potter**

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

### ITEM III. CHAIR REPORT

Vice-Chair Krystal Cormack reported on behalf of Chairman Cardin. She stated that Marian Schutte will officially begin employment as Executive Director of the Charter School Authorizer Board on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and a press release will be made to that effect today.

Mrs. Cormack further stated that the December meeting date previously planned, as well as the proposal interview dates, will need to be changed because of budget deadlines and that would be discussed in detail at the end of today's meeting.

### ITEM IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### A. RFP Committee

Vice-Chair Krystal Cormack reported that the RFP Committee has been meeting via conference calls and moving the proposals from Stage 2 to Stage 3 in the evaluation process. She stated that the Stage 2 evaluations are now complete. Before presenting the findings, she asked Beth Seling to give an overview of the Stage 2 process.

Beth Seling explained that a panel of five evaluators participated in this stage consisting of Krystal Cormack and herself, as well as three national evaluators with expertise in this area and who have previously run similar evaluations in other states. Five areas were evaluated and a determination was made as to whether the applications were "substantially inadequate" in any of those areas. Those five areas include the applicants' (1) preparation to meet charter school obligations or statutory requirements; (2) preparation to serve all student populations; (3) start up plan; (4) personnel plan; and (5) financial plan. The one applicant operator currently operating a charter school in another state was also evaluated on its performance history with that school with regard to both academic and non-academic operations. Applicants proposing a relationship with an education service provider (ESP) that would manage operations of the school were evaluated to determine the nature and terms of that contract relationship.

Krystal Cormack identified the findings of the evaluation panel as follows:

1. Midtown Public Charter School (Jackson Public Schools) was found to have no deficiencies and the panel recommends ratification of this application to proceed to Stage 3.
2. Inspire Charter School (Columbus) was found to have no deficiencies and the panel recommends ratification of this application to proceed to Stage 3.
3. Dubois Prep Academy (Tunica) was found to have substantially inadequate ratings in four areas. Those were its student population plan, startup plan, financial plan, and ESP relationship plan.
4. Emerge Community STEAM Charter School (Tunica Co.) was found to have a substantially inadequate rating with regard to its student population plan, specifically in the area of meeting the needs of anticipated English language learner students.

5. Emerge Community STEM +E Charter School (JPS) was found to have a substantially inadequate rating with regard to its student population plan, specifically in the area of meeting the needs of anticipated English language learner students.
6. Excellence Academy STEM Charter Elementary School (North Panola) was found to have a substantially inadequate rating with regard to its student population plan, specifically in the area of meeting the needs of anticipated English language learner students.

Mrs. Cormack stated that for Stage 3 the Committee would like to bring in two NACSA national evaluation experts, as well as two locally based evaluators, specifically Dr. Tommye Henderson, retired education superintendent of the Clinton School District and Assistant Professor of Teacher Education and Leadership at Mississippi College, and Dr. Kimberly Dorsey, Professor of Business and Finance at the Mississippi University for Women. Dr. Dorsey was recently recognized by IHL for Education Diversity Excellence.

#### ITEM V. NEW BUSINESS

##### A. Stage 2 Application Decisions

**Krystal Cormack requested a motion to ratify the recommendations of the RFP Committee to move Midtown Public Charter School and Inspire Charter School forward to Stage 3.**

**MOTION: Mr. Franklin**

**SECOND: Mr. Wilson**

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

**Krystal Cormack requested a motion to ratify the recommendations of the RFP Committee to deny the proposals of Dubois Prep Academy, Emerge Community STEAM Charter School, Emerge Community STEM +E Charter School and Excellence Academy STEM Charter Elementary School.**

**MOTION: Dr. Wright**

**SECOND: Mr. Franklin**

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

Mr. Franklin stated that he would encourage the RFP Committee and the Board to continue its work with these applicants who were denied and encourage them to stay involved in this process and do all that can be done to hopefully ensure their success at some point in the future.

Mrs. Cormack stated that both she and Beth Seling have been in contact with various people associated with these applications answering questions and providing feedback. She also stated that prospective applicants are being advised, and she reminded them today, that Erika Berry with the Mississippi Coalition for Public Charter Schools is a resource for anyone seeking information on this process and how it works.

B. NACSA Service Contract

Vice-Chair Krystal Cormack reviewed the scope of work contained in this contract. A copy of the NACSA contract is attached hereto as **Exhibit A**.

**Vice-Chair Krystal Cormack requested a motion to approve the contract with NACSA.**

**MOTION: Dr. Coleman-Potter**

**SECOND: Mr. Franklin**

Dr. Coleman-Potter pointed out that the itemized budget referenced in the contract was not attached to the copy of the contract previously disseminated to the Board and requested a copy of same. She asked that it be noted that the contract is being approved based on the budget amount identified in the contract. Krystal Cormack requested that NACSA provide a copy of the itemized budget to all Board members.

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

C. Memorandum of Understanding with IHL

Denise DeRossette reviewed the revisions that have been made to the MOU, a copy of which has been provided to the Board members. A copy of the Memorandum of Understanding is attached hereto as **Exhibit B**.

**Mr. Franklin made a motion that the Board enter into the Memorandum of Understanding with IHL as is and to authorize the Chairman to make necessary changes going forward.**

**MOTION: Mr. Franklin**

**SECOND: Dr. Wright**

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

D. Approval of Invoices

Denise DeRossette presented a list of the outstanding invoices being held for payment pending approval of the Memorandum of Understanding. A copy of that list is attached hereto as **Exhibit C**.

**Vice-Chair Krystal Cormack requested a motion to approve payment of the invoices identified on the list presented by Cornerstone, a copy of which is attached hereto as Exhibit C.**

**MOTION: Mr. Franklin**

**SECOND: Dr. Wright**

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

E. Approval of Payment Monthly Salary

Denise DeRossette asked the Board to consider granting Cornerstone Consulting, as the accounting agency for the Board, the standing authority to make monthly payroll payments on behalf of the Board without having to request authorization each month. Other payments such as contract payments, invoices, travel reimbursements for Board members, etc. will continue to require individual approval.

**Vice-Chair Krystal Cormack requested a motion to authorize the payment of payroll expenses, including benefits and travel reimbursement, on a monthly basis for the Executive Director position, as approved by the Chair or his designee.**

**MOTION: Mr. Franklin**

**SECOND: Dr. Wright**

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

#### ITEM VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Sayer with Southern Echo expressed his hope that the applications that are moving forward to Stage 3 will be posted on the website as soon as they can be redacted and available. He also urged the Board to again hold the public hearings for those applicants. He expressed his belief that that is an important opportunity for the community to participate and give feedback in this process and it contributes to the trust and respect in the process. He thanked the Board for the diligence it has shown during this second cycle, as it did in the first, and in explaining its reasoning and the scrutiny that has been demonstrated.

Marilyn Young, Southern Echo and Tunica Teens in Action, asked which application had been approved for Tunica. It was clarified that neither of the Tunica area applications had been approved.

Mary McCaskell, Kilmichael, MS, Center for Education Awareness, stated that she has three questions. The first of which was to ask for clarification of Beth Seling's explanation of the evaluation process during Stage 1 in which they were "not looking at what was wrong but looking at whether they had provided anything at all." Beth explained that the purpose of Stage 1 is to evaluate the completeness and eligibility of the applications to proceed to the next stage and ensure that the applicants have responded in some way to every single RFP requirement and have attached every document that is required. There is no review of the quality of those responses at that stage but rather to see if any response was given.

Her second question asked for clarification of a statement Dr. Wright made pertaining to monies held in the MDE budget. Dr. Wright explained that she used the "pass through" money held in

the MDE budget as an example when trying to clarify how the Board's money will be held and disbursed from the IHL budget.

Mrs. McCaskell stated that she will ask her third question of someone after the meeting.

Michael Hunter, Jackson Association of Educators, asked how many IEP 504 students can Midtown Middle serve and what happens to the overage. Secondly he asked what contingencies exist for traditional public schools with significant pupil loss. Vice-Chair Krystal Cormack asked Mr. Hunter to leave his email address and she would research the Midtown application to answer his question with regard to specifically how many special needs students they project to enroll. She stated that the Board has only asked that the applicants provide a projection. Midtown based its projection on the percentage of JPS students with special needs and estimated how many of those students would come to them. Their plan for serving those students is based on that projection. She explained that the legislation requires that applicants serve at least 80% of the disadvantaged population in those schools so, for example, if JPS has 12% overall students with special needs, Midtown will be required to be present a plan for serving 80% of that 12%. Mr. Hunter asked what the contingency plan is there for any students in excess of the 80% number. Does the school have the option to deny them enrollment? Mrs. Cormack explained that the 80% is simply the minimum number they must be prepared to serve but does not limit them as to how many they may enroll. Her understanding is that if there is more student interest than there are seats available, the school must provide a plan for a lottery system for choosing which students they enroll.

He next asked if there is a plan in place for the existing public schools that lose a significant number of students to charter schools. Dr. Wright explained that that is up to each individual school district. She explained further that each school district oversees its own budget and once each districts' funds are identified and paid to the district by MAEP, it is up to the district to determine how those funds are spent and how they are account for. Mrs. Cormack stated that the Board notifies each affected district as a complete and eligible application is received. They are made aware of any pending application in their district and the timeline of the evaluation process. As the applications are public record, the districts are encouraged to follow the applications through the evaluation process to determine if they proceed to final approval. Dr. Wright explained further that once a charter school is approved, the existing school district is "held harmless" for one year until the exact enrollment of the charter school is determined. This gives the existing school district the ability to think ahead, determine what the impact might be and make the necessary budget adjustments as they deem necessary based on that charter schools projected enrollment. Once the charter school opens, it becomes its own school district with its own MAEP funding.

#### ITEM VIII. NEXT MEETING

The next regular monthly meeting, previously scheduled for December 12, 2014, will be changed and will now be held on December 5, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. at the Mississippi Board of Trustees of

State Institutions of Higher Learning. A public notice of this meeting will be posted. There will be no regularly scheduled meeting during the month of November.

ITEM IX. ADJOURN

**Vice-Chair Krystal Cormack requested a motion to adjourn.**

**MOTION: Mr. Franklin**

**SECOND: Dr. Wright**

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

ADOPTED, this the 5<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2014.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
TOMMIE S. CARDIN, Chairman