

MINUTES OF THE  
MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD  
Regular Monthly Meeting  
Monday, March 17, 2014

The regular monthly meeting of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board was held at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, March 17, 2014, at the office of the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, located at 3825 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, Mississippi. In attendance were:

Tommie Cardin, Chairman  
Chris Wilson, Vice Chairman  
Dr. Carey Wright  
Dr. Bonita Coleman-Potter  
Johnny Franklin  
Dr. Karen Elam

Board member Krystal Cormack participated by teleconference.

Board Chairman Tommie Cardin called the meeting to order at 10:15.

ITEM I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

A. Adoption of Agenda

A draft agenda was previously circulated to the Board members.

**Chairman Cardin requested a motion to adopt the agenda.**

**MOTION: Mr. Franklin**

**SECOND: Dr. Wright**

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

ITEM II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of the February 17, 2014 meeting were distributed to the Board members for review.

**Following a review of the Minutes and one correction, Chairman Cardin requested a motion for approval of the Minutes of the February 17, 2014 meeting.**

**MOTION: Dr. Elam**

**SECOND: Dr. Wright**

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

### ITEM III. CHAIR REPORT

#### A. Attorney General Opinions

Two AG opinions, each concerning conversion schools, have been circulated to the Board members. The first opinion addresses public school property and the question of what happens with non-charter public school property if that school converts to a public charter school. The opinion states that that property remains in the hands of that school district and it controls that property under the existing laws as written. The second opinion addresses the signature requirements of the parents of a non-charter public school that wishes to convert to a charter public school and the need for that conversion request to be accompanied by the signatures of 51% of the parents of the existing non-charter public school. The question posed was whose signatures were required – 51% of the parents of the existing non-charter public school as it exists or 51% of the parents of the children who would be eligible to enroll in the charter school. The opinion states that the conversion requires the signatures of 51% of the parents in the existing non-charter public school.

Currently no conversion schools have made application.

Dr. Potter questioned whether a charter school's right of first refusal to any existing vacant public school property owned by the school district means that the charter school can occupy that property immediately or would that require approval by the school district. Chairman Cardin stated that that is unclear, and an AG opinion would have to be requested should that situation arise.

#### B. Administrative Matters

1. The Executive Director/General Counsel job description has been circulated in final form to all Board members. There remains pending legislation in the House that addresses the possibility of removing the law degree requirement from this job description. If the House votes to concur with this bill, that requirement will be removed. If they do not concur, there will be no change to the description. Chairman Cardin stated that unless directed otherwise by the Board, he will post the job description as it is and revise it after the House votes if they concur with the Bill and remove that requirement.

Mr. Wilson stated that he felt the Board should hold off on advertising the job description until after the House votes on the pending legislation so that what is advertised is the final version of the description.

**Chairman Cardin stated that he would entertain a motion to that effect and Mr. Wilson moved that the publication of the job description of Executive Director/General Counsel be made after the final conference of the legislature to determine the outcome of that legislation.**

**MOTION: Mr. Wilson**

**SECOND: Mr. Franklin**

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

2. Chairman Cardin announced the appointment of Dr. Elam as the Board liaison with NACSA.
3. Chairman Cardin stated that he has been asked if the 12 applications received by the Board in this cycle will be posted to the website. He stated that they will be posted once proprietary information contained in them is redacted.
4. Chairman Cardin called on Kathryn Stewart to discuss her efforts in developing a website for the Board. Kathryn stated that ITS has a vendor under contract, Mississippi Interactive, who will create a template for free from which the Board could expand and develop its website. It will be necessary to use this vendor in order to have an MS.gov domain name. A contract for this service has been drafted and is ready for execution by the Board if approved.

**Having reviewed the proposed contract, Chairman Cardin requested a motion authorizing him to execute the contract with Mississippi Interactive for development of the Board's website.**

**MOTION: Dr. Elam**

**SECOND: Mr. Wilson**

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

5. Chairman Cardin stated that the Board has submitted a deficit appropriation bill to the legislature. Kathryn stated that H.B. 1440 in the amount of \$250,000 has gone to conference.

#### ITEM IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

##### A. RFP and Application Committee

1. Krystal Cormack listed the organizations that have submitted timely applications for their respective school districts as follows:
  - a. New Destiny Preparatory Academy (K-5): Meridian Public Schools
  - b. Jackson Developmental Academy for Pregnant & Parenting Teens (6-12): Jackson Public Schools
  - c. Reimagine Prep (5-8): Jackson Public Schools
  - d. Greater Refuge Preparatory Academy (K-8): Canton Public Schools
  - e. Greater Refuge Preparatory Academy (K-8): Jackson Public Schools
  - f. Emerge Community STEAM Charter School (K-8): Tunica County Public Schools

- g. Excellence Academy (K-5): North Panola Schools
  - h. Sojourner Truth Academy of Science, Arts and Technology School (K-8): Leake County Schools
  - i. Phoenix Early College Charter School (9-12): Natchez-Adams County Schools
  - j. Inspire Charter School STEM & ARTS Scholars Academy (K-6, 9): Columbus Municipal Public Schools
  - k. Dubois STEM & ARTS Art Prep Academy of Tunica (K-6): Tunica Public Schools
  - l. PALS Charter School Amite County (K-12): Amite County Schools
2. Dr. Elam discussed the timeline for the next application cycle which has been distributed to the Board members. The RFP will post July 15, 2014 and December 17, 2014 will be the approval/denial date. The deadlines in between those dates are spaced similarly to the current application cycle. The approval of these dates will be discussed below during New Business.
  3. Ms. Cormack inquired whether the information being provided by the MDE regarding the free lunch and special needs numbers can be made public. It was agreed that because the only information being provided are percentages for each school district, there is no reason to redact that information.
  4. Dr. Elam and Beth Seling discussed the Stage 2, Quality Threshold Evaluation form developed by NACSA for use by the evaluators in preparing their recommendations to the Board. Because the form contains only information extrapolated from the application and scoring rubric that have already been approved, this form does not require further Board approval.
- B. Executive Director/Consultant Search Committee  
No report
- C. Fundraising Committee  
No report

#### ITEM V. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Charter Applications
- Chairman Cardin first recommended that the Board vote to acknowledge receipt of the twelve applications. He stated that the applications have been initially reviewed to determine their eligibility for submission, specifically determining (1) if they were submitted in a timely manner, (2) if the non-profit status requirement has been satisfied, (3) whether the applicant proposes to use an education service provider and does that provider meet the non-profit status requirement, and (4) did they provide proof of US citizenship for all board members and school leadership team members. NACSA has now been given access to each of these applications. It was determine that 11 of the 12

applications immediately met the criteria to proceed in the process subject to providing certain additional minor information.

The application of one applicant, New Destiny Preparatory Academy, was timely submitted but was significantly incomplete due to power outage and computer issues on the part of the applicant. Chairman Cardin stated that after much discussion with the applicant's representatives, they have been told to submit what information they had by the deadline and supplement it by 5:00 p.m. (today) March 17<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Potter voiced her opposition to allowing this additional time for the submission of a significantly incomplete application and stated she simply wants to ensure consistency in the following of protocol.

Dr. Elam expressed her concern with allowing applicants with deficiencies in their applications "a few days" to provide that information as the timetable being followed by the Board and NACSA does not allow for any additional time and deadlines could be missed because of this additional time provision.

Chairman Cardin and Beth Seling assured the Board that applicants are not being allowed to alter information on their applications but are simply being allowed to satisfy deficiencies and asked to clarify items such as non-profit status, etc. He stated that because this is a new process for the Board and procedures are being developed as it moves along, there will be some areas where flexibility is necessary. Beth stated that she felt that the eligibility determination, which is a legal determination by the Board, and the completeness check conducted by NACSA could be taken as a whole in the current timeframe and time could be allowed for the applicants to satisfy minor deficiencies in their applications.

A list of all applications reviewed by the Board along with a list of any deficiencies noted in that review will be provided to NACSA by the end of business day today, March 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Chairman Cardin requested a motion to acknowledge receipt of the 12 applications.**

**MOTION: Mr. Franklin**

**SECOND: Dr. Elam**

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

B. 2014 Timetable

The RFP and Application Committee is seeking the Board's consideration of the initial release date of July 15, 2014 and approval/denial deadline of December 17, 2014 for the 2014 Application Cycle.

**Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the release date of July 15, 2014 and the approval/denial deadline of December 17, 2014 for completion of the 2014 timetable.**

**MOTION: Dr. Wright**

**SECOND: Mr. Franklin**

**Krystal Cormack asked if the December approval/denial date would allow the Board sufficient time to get the information about proposed schools to the state for funding for the 2015-2016 school year? Dr. Wright and Mr. Franklin both stated that it would.**

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

C. Mississippi-based Charter School Evaluators

Dr. Elam stated that NACSA has asked that the Board begin the process of identifying Mississippi-based charter school evaluators who will serve on the evaluation teams along with nationally-recognized charter school evaluators.

Beth Seling further explained the areas of expertise being sought and expressed her hope that they would have available four to six evaluators from Mississippi to work in conjunction with the national evaluators. NACSA is providing a form that sets out all of the areas of expertise that would be useful and is asking the Board to provide referrals of anyone they know who meets any of the criteria listed. The evaluation teams must be in place by the April 9<sup>th</sup>.

William Haft spoke to the rate of compensation set for the evaluators. Each team will be responsible for reviewing and providing an evaluation of four applications. William stated that, based on a national average, the evaluators' compensation has been set at \$750 per application plus \$1000 for the interview component for a total of \$4000 for four applications.

Dr. Potter asked how any conflicts of interest would be checked and Beth stated that a list of all applicants, their school name, organization name, board members, etc., will be provided to the evaluators and they will be expected to self-disclose conflicts or affiliation with any of the organizations. A conflict with one applicant does not disqualify an evaluator from reviewing other applications.

Beth requested that the Board members provide her with referrals for evaluators no later than March 28, 2014 so that teams could be put together the first week in April. Chairman Cardin directed Board members to send any referrals directly to Beth and also stated that the request for referrals would be posted on the MDE and IHL websites.

#### ITEM VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Sayer with Southern Echo stated that it is the primary logic and justification behind the charter school process in Mississippi to focus on the issue of students at risk. He stated that it is the primary obligation of the applicants to demonstrate that they have a plan to address those issues more effectively than the traditional public schools and districts have in the past. He asked if the Board would, in its evaluation process, make it an objective to determine whether each applicant has a serious plan for addressing the needs of students with academic or

behavioral issues so that the students are kept in school and are provided the services to which they are entitled to enable them to succeed rather than use the premise of their misbehavior or substantial difficulties with academic performance as a reason to push them out of that charter school and back into the traditional public schools. He pointed out that the Board is in the unique position of starting from the beginning and creating a model and framework for the system rather than coming into a program already in place and a framework that is already set, and he urged the Board to take full advantage of that and set a strong precedent from the beginning for what will be expected of charter school applicants in the future.

Mr. Leroy Johnson, Executive Director of Southern Echo, addressed the Board with two comments. First he asked that the Board, in choosing evaluators, keep in mind that there is a difference between non-profit accounting and for-profit accounting and there needs to be an understanding of that difference by whoever is chosen to evaluate the applications. Secondly, he stated his hope that compensation plans for teachers hired into the charter school systems are sufficient and ensure that they are placed under the Mississippi retirement system and insurance plans so that quality educators can be hired.

#### ITEM VII. NEXT MEETING

Next meeting date will move to Wednesday April 9, 2014 at 10:00 a.m., which is the deadline for the final determinations of eligibility and completeness of the applications.

Dr. Elam requested that NACSA's Stage 2 written recommendations be provided to the Board members prior to this meeting date to allow everyone sufficient time to review those. Beth Seling stated that those would be provided.

#### ITEM VIII. ADJOURN

**Chairman Cardin requested a motion to adjourn.**

**MOTION: Mr. Franklin**

**SECOND: Dr. Elam**

**There being no discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present, the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:38**

ADOPTED, this the 9<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2014.

  
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TOMMIE S. CARDIN, Chairman