

MINUTES OF THE
MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD
Regular Monthly Meeting
Monday, April 6, 2015

The monthly meeting of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board was held at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, April 6, 2015, 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
Krystal Cormack, Vice-Chair
Dr. Bonita Coleman-Potter
Dr. Karen Elam
Johnny Franklin
Chris Wilson
Dr. Carey Wright

Board Chairman Tommie Cardin called the meeting to order at 10:10 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 to adopt the agenda as presented.

MOTION: Dr. Elam

SECOND: Dr. Wright

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 March 2, 2015 meeting were previously distributed to the Board members for review. Chairman Cardin asked that Mrs. Cormack's title be corrected from Co-Chair to Vice-Chair.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion for approval of the Minutes of the March 2, 2015 meeting, as amended.

MOTION: Mrs. Cormack

SECOND: Dr. Elam

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

ITEM III. CHAIR REPORT

A. Legal Counsel

Chairman Cardin reported that he has been in touch with the office of the Attorney General regarding an assignment of legal counsel to the Board and was offered the counsel of Special Assistant Attorney General Avery Lee and Special Assistant Raina Lee, in-house counsel for MDE. The Board will reach out to these two as the need arises.

Chairman Cardin further reported that he and Ms. Schutte are continuing to work on the executive director evaluation tool. Models from other states with similar positions as ours are being used and he hopes to bring a draft proposal to the Board for consideration in the near future.

ITEM IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Schutte reported that she has conducted interviews of interested applicants for the Teach for America Exploring Equity Fellows summer intern position and an offer has been extended to Evan Emenegger. He has accepted the offer and will begin work the first of June for approximately six weeks. Evan is an English II teacher at Yazoo City High School with a strong record of raising student achievement, as well as fund raising and class development.

Ms. Schutte further reported that her office furniture and documents have been delivered to her permanent office space at IHL, and as soon as the printer is delivered, hopefully later that day, she would begin operating out of that office. She invited the Board members to see the space following the meeting.

As a legislative update, Ms. Schutte reported as follows:

HB 859 Passed – The House concurred on this version that contains the Senate amendment that removed the provision that allowed funds remaining at the end of the school year to be shared with schools operated by the same management organization. That bill clarifies the delivery of local funding to charter schools and has been approved by the Governor. The Senate version of this bill, SB 2300, died after several amendments were added in conference and the conference report was not taken up by either body.

HB 1047 Passed – This bill includes the authorizer board and its employees in the MS Tort Claims Act.

SB 2844 Passed – This is the IHL funding bill and includes funding for the charter school authorizer board.

Mrs. Cormack stated that it seems likely that there will be a special session called and asked if any of the bills that had died could be brought back for consideration at that time. Chairman Cardin and Ms. Schutte both stated that to their knowledge no special session on these issues had been discussed.

Dr. Elam asked if the HB 859 includes the forward funding based upon estimated enrollment provisions. Ms. Schutte stated that it does include the provision that the funding is based on the enrollment table in the contract.

Ms. Schutte further reported that with the passage of HB 859 and the MAEP funding, she has been working with MDE to determine the total amount of the authorizer fee the Board can expect to receive. The Board receives 3% of the state and local funds that the charter schools receive and they are working on determining an estimate and the delivery method for those funds. Early estimates indicate approximately \$50,000 will be received by the Board and available for the upcoming school year.

US Department of Education has a charter schools program. Part of that is a state agency application that awards funds to state education agencies to give sub-grants to approved charter applicants to fund start up activities. The first step in applying for these funds is to work with the Safal Partners organization that confirms that applicants meet the program requirements. She is working with that organization determine the Board's eligibility. This could potentially give the Board monies to provide start-up funds to approved applicants and could serve to attract other charter operators to the state.

Dr. Coleman-Potter raised a question concerning the FY16 MAEP allocations received by the school districts last week. She stated that HB 1536 lists the two charter schools, Midtown and Reimagine, as separate districts. Her understanding had been that their funding would be pulled from the home district, JPS in this case, and would follow each child to the charter school. The scenario presented in HB 1536 would indicate that the creation of two new districts would reduce the MAEP funding for all districts statewide to fund these two new districts/charters rather than just JPS. After some discussion, Dr. Wright and Ms. Schutte indicated they would look into it further and clarify this for the Board.

ITEM V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Applications Committee

Mrs. Cormack stated that the committee has discussed the following:

1. Contracting with NACSA to continue third party support for the RFP process. She stated that one of the national best practices they have observed and would like to continue for the Mississippi process is continuing to use third party evaluators in stages two and three so that the Board's decisions can remain objective.
2. Continuing the use of the online fluid review portal for the RFP process. Mrs. Cormack stated that this process used in the previous application cycle worked much more smoothly than the paper method of document submission utilized in the first cycle, and it allowed applicants to work together as teams in updating documents, as well as allowing the committee and board members to be able to access the process as it was ongoing.
3. Making edits and technical changes to the RFP that is currently out for public comment. She stated that one comment has been received from Southern Echo and the committee accepted the suggestions in the comment and have made those revisions to the RFP. Major revisions made to

the RFP since its submission for public comment include creating separate proposals for new operators and existing operators and continued to keep the conversion operator proposal separate. New existing operator RFP streamlines the process for organizations that are already operating successful charter schools. She reviewed the major dates included in the timeline. The RFP will be considered for approval under New Business.

Ms. Schutte pointed out one other revision made at the end of stage three and also stated that Mississippi First has released an RFP for a consultant to provide additional technical support through the application process, a service that NACSA had provided through the last two cycles. She added that Mississippi First has secured the funding for this service.

Next, Mrs. Cormack stated for further clarification that the matter of providing applicants with the third party evaluators' report prior to the final vote by the Board would not create an exchange between the applicant and the Board. The Board will not respond to the applicant prior to the vote, and a strategy will be in place for responding to local media should information contained in the reports be leaked prior to the Board's final vote. Any response by the applicants to the evaluators' report is limited to writing.

B. Performance and Accountability Committee

Dr. Coleman-Potter reported that the committee has met via conference call and will be presenting today for consideration the charter contract which is dated to begin July 1, 2015. She stated that the committee has thoroughly reviewed the contract with regard to establishment of the schools, ensuring consistency with the legislation governing the operation of charter schools, as well as financial and personnel matters. The Committee asks for legal review of the contract as a whole and specifically in terms of renewal and revocation.

She reported further that the performance framework is in development and is projected to be released in draft to the Committee by April 13th.

Ms. Schutte stated that Avery Lee has the charter school contract for review and has advised that she plans to return her comments today.

ITEM VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Approval of Invoices

Ms. Schutte reviewed invoices that had been previously provided to the board members for consideration.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve invoices for payment.

MOTION: Dr. Coleman-Potter

SECOND: Dr. Wright

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

B. 2015 Request for Proposals Release
The RFP was discussed earlier in the meeting.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to release the 2015 Request for Proposals.

MOTION: Dr. Elam

SECOND: Mr. Franklin

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

C. NACSA Third Party Evaluation Proposal
Ms. Schutte discussed the budget presented by NACSA for this proposal.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the NACSA Third Party Evaluation Proposal.

MOTION: Mrs. Cormack

SECOND: Dr. Elam

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

Dr. Wright asked under what budget line item this would fall. Ms. Schutte explained that the NACSA invoices had previously been paid out of the "Other Fees" line item under Contractual but will be paid under the "Authorizer Fee" in the future. Chairman Cardin suggested that a new line item for "Professional Services" be added to future budgets specifically for this type of service.

Dr. Elam pointed out the possibility of exceeding the budgeted amount for this item since it is limited to only four applicants making it through to the capacity interview stage. Ms. Schutte explained that this budget was based on the history of the last two RFPs with 4 to 10 applications going to stage two of the process and four surviving to stage three.

D. Mississippi Charter School Contract
The contract was previously presented to the Board members and discussed earlier in the meeting.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the Mississippi Charter School Contract subject to final legal review and to authorize the Chairman to execute the contract subject to that review.

MOTION: Ms. Cormack

SECOND: Mr. Wilson

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

E. Strategic Plan: Discussion and Possible Action

Ms. Schutte presented a draft of the strategic plan and outlined two primary revisions that were made based on feedback since the prior board meeting. The first is the removal of a specific number of applications the Board would approve by a set date or the number of districts to identify for conversions. The second revision is the addition of a bullet point addressing outreach, engagement and education with community groups and stakeholders.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the Strategic Plan as presented.

MOTION: Dr. Wright

SECOND: Dr. Elam

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

F. Endorsement of National Alliance for Charter Public Schools

Following the regular New Business items, Mr. Franklin addressed the Board regarding a telephone conversation he had with Marie Sanderson, who currently serves as the Republican Governors education policy person. She stated that the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools is seeking an increase in the federal grant funding being provided to support charter schools and has requested that the Board consider sending a letter to Senator Cochran in support of their position. He has provided to Ms. Schutte the information and an example of the letter sent by Mississippi First.

Following some discussion, Chairman Cardin requested a motion to authorize the Chair to provide a letter to Senator Cochran to advocate an increase in the funding for the grant program.

MOTION: Mr. Wilson

SECOND: Mr. Franklin

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

ITEM VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Sayer with Southern Echo asked if the proposed charter school contract will be posted on the website and available for public comment. Chairman Cardin stated that they would, as they had been up to this point. He further asked if the goal is to have a standardized contract used by each charter school and confirmed that none of the schools approved to date have yet signed a contract. Ms. Schutte stated that that is the case.

ITEM IX. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held Monday, June 1, 2015, at Delta State University in Cleveland, MS. The specific location and time are yet to be announced.

After some discussion regarding the July meeting falling on the Monday after July 4th, Chairman Cardin requested a motion to move the July meeting from July 6 to Tuesday, July 7th to prevent Board members from traveling on the holiday weekend.

MOTION: Dr. Elam

SECOND: Dr. Wright

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

Further, Chairman Cardin requested a motion to revise the RFP timeline to reflect this date change.

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.

ITEM X. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: Dr. Wright

SECOND: Dr. Elam

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

ADOPTED, this the 1st day of June, 2015.



TOMMIE S. CARDIN, Chairman