

MINUTES OF THE
MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD
Regular Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, September 2, 2015

The monthly meeting of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board was held at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, September 2, 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 10:05 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: Mr. Franklin

SECOND: Dr. Elam

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 July 7, 2015 meeting were previously distributed to the Board members for review.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion for approval of the Minutes of the July 7, 2015 meeting.

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.

The Minutes of the August 13, 2015 special meeting were previously distributed to the Board members for review. Mrs. Cormack noted one needed correction to the heading.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion for approval of the Minutes of the August 13, 2015 special meeting, as amended.

MOTION: Mr. Franklin

SECOND: Mrs. Cormack

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

ITEM III. CHAIR REPORT

Chairman Cardin stated that he wished to discuss the topic of the Board's role and responsibilities and those of the executive director in determining the need for any future staff positions. He reported that after previous discussions between Board members, he has sought the advice of the Board's counsel at the Attorney General's Office and that his intention today is to invite discussion of that advice and to attempt to reach a consensus as to the protocol for determining the need and ability of the Board to add additional staff members and the means by which any such position would be filled and overseen. Additionally, he stated that he has asked the Executive Director to prepare a list of the duties and responsibilities that she currently engages in and a list of tasks and responsibilities that she anticipates as a result of schools being approved for operation. She has been directed to circulate that list and be prepared to discuss it at the next meeting to assist the Board in better determining the need for additional staff.

Chairman Cardin first outlined the language of the statute that sets out the staffing process, specifically 37-28-7(9), which states that the board "...shall appoint an executive director." Further, it states "Subject to the availability of funding the executive director may employ such administrative staff as may be necessary to assist the director and board in carrying out the duties and directives of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board."

He stated that AG counsel advises that that means that the executive director hired by the Board *may* hire additional staff as needed subject to the availability of funding. The Board has the role of determining the availability of funding.

Dr. Coleman-Potter asked whether the state personnel board has any oversight for this position and whether an SPB PIN would have to be assigned to the position. Though Chairman Cardin does not see in the statute any mention of the SPB's involvement beyond setting the salary of the executive director, he stated that he would investigate that further and would let the Board know what he finds.

Further discussion was had concerning (1) at what point in the budget cycle would the determination of the availability of funds be made, (2) whether the Board or the executive director has the final determination on filling the position once it is determined that the funds are

available and the position is approved and, (3) what role the executive director plays in the oversight of the position.

Chairman Cardin stated that following this discussion he believes there is a consensus on these issues. He suggested that he be allowed to develop a protocol based on the statute and these discussion points and provide that to the Board members for discussion and possible approval at the next board meeting.

ITEM IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Schutte first reported that both charter schools approved last year are operational and fully enrolled. She has visited both schools but stated that the first official site visit will take place in the spring as part of the routine monitoring as is set out in the performance framework. Reimagine Prep held a grand opening two weeks prior which she and some of the Board members attended, and Midtown will be holding a grand opening later in the month.

Ms. Schutte further reported that MDE's application for the federal charter school program grant has been submitted. She worked with MS First, on behalf of MDE, and applied for a grant in the amount of \$10M over five years. Notification of the awards will be made on September 30th.

Ms. Schutte reminded the Board that the NACSA conference will be held October 19-22, 2015, in Denver, CO, and there are funds available for Board members who wish to attend. She stated that this conference is focused on authorizing practices. She will be attending, as well as presenting on Mississippi's application process, and she hopes some board members will be able to attend.

On a final note, Ms. Schutte stated that NACSA has featured the Board on its new website and will be featuring the Board in its upcoming newsletter highlighting the additional second stage of the application process as leading the way in authorizing across the nation.

ITEM V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Applications Committee

Mrs. Cormack stated that she is very excited to hear that NACSA is recognizing the Board on its application process and that Mississippi is leading the way in this area. She reported the committee has been busy over the summer with activities outside of the application process. Every member of the committee, as well as the chairman and executive director, attended the public forum and sat in on the interview process for this application cycle. She outlined the points of the stage three process reporting that one proposal, Republic Charter Schools, Inc., had been moved forward to stage three. The evaluation team presented the Committee and the applicant with its recommendation and the applicant was given one week to respond. A determination of eligibility must receive a rating of "meets the standard" in all three areas evaluated, which are the educational program design, the capacity in operations plan and capacity in financial plan. Republic Charter Schools, Inc. received a "meets the standard" in all

three areas. Board members were provided with both the evaluation report and the applicant's response. Republic has applied to operate two schools, Joel E. Smilow Collegiate (K-8 when grown to capacity) and Joel E. Smilow Prep (5-8 starting with grade 5 and adding one grade per year). The unanimous recommendation of the committee is to approve these schools for operation.

Chairman Cardin asked of the committee felt that the new procedure of allowing a week for the applicant to respond to the evaluation team's recommendation is productive?

Mrs. Cormack stated that she believes that allowing the applicant to respond to the report, specifically anything they believe to be factual inaccuracies, is definitely in line with the goal of the Board to offer better "customer service". It also gives the Board a sense of the level of responsiveness they can expect from an applicant and some insight into how the group will operate.

B. Performance and Accountability Committee
No report

ITEM VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Election of Officers

Chairman Cardin stated that it is time for the annual election of Board officers, specifically the Chair and Vice Chair, and opened the floor to nominations.

Dr. Coleman-Potter nominated Tommie Cardin to continue in the role of Chair.

Mr. Wilson moved that the nominations be closed.

MOTION: Mr. Wilson

SECOND: Mrs. Cormack

Mr. Franklin moved to accept the nomination by acclamation.

MOTION: Mr. Franklin

SECOND: Dr. Elam

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

Mr. Franklin nominated Krystal Cormack to continue in the role of Vice Chair.

Mr. Wilson moved that the nominations be closed.

MOTION: Mr. Wilson

SECOND: Mr. Franklin

Mr. Franklin moved to accept the nomination by acclamation.

MOTION: Mr. Franklin

SECOND: Dr. Wright

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

B. 2015 Request for Proposals: Stage Three Results

1. Application of RePublic Charter Schools, Inc. for Two Schools
 - a. Joel E. Smilow Collegiate (K-8)
 - b. Joel E. Smilow Prep (5-8)

Vice Chair Cormack made a motion that the Authorizer Board adopt a Resolution to approve RePublic Charter Schools, Inc.'s application for two charter schools for the 2016-17 school year providing execution of the charter contracts and final approval of the schools opening shall be conditioned on timely pre-opening requirements. The pre-opening 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: Mrs. Cormack

SECOND: Mr. Franklin

Dr. Coleman-Potter asked for clarification of information contained in the enrollment projection sheet on page 5, specifically what is capacity enrollment in 2023? Is it the 1,130 in K-8 plus the 550 for 5-8 for a total of nearly 1,600 kids on this campus?

Ms. Schutte state that that is correct.

Chairman Cardin asked if there would be two separate charters, and Mrs. Cormack stated that that is correct.

Dr. Coleman-Potter asked if both schools would be on the same campus, and Mrs. Cormack stated that that is also correct. She pointed out that the organization has secured a large amount of philanthropic support from a local foundation that has pledged to completely renovate an existing campus that will hold that number of students. The foundation will eventually lease that property to the schools as they grow in their capacity and ability to make payments for it. That location is the old Wesley Bible College (former Broadmoor Baptist Church) on Northside Drive in Jackson.

Dr. Coleman-Potter asked for clarification on the "planned vs. maximum" student enrollment contained in the proposal. Ms. Schutte stated that the law dictates the information that must be contained in the application (planned and maximum enrollment), and it has been worked into the charter contracts where there is an enrollment projection in the contract and the schools are allowed to enroll up to 120% of that number. If the school receives more applications for students than they have seats to offer, they would then institute a lottery for that selection.

Mr. Wilson asked if the committee, based on the information provided, was confident in the applicant's ability to handle the rapid growth projected in the proposal. Mr. Franklin stated that the applicant had demonstrated that it has in place what he considers to be a well thought out governance structure to deal with the anticipated growth. Mrs. Cormack explained further that RePublic has built an infrastructure of leadership and demonstrated a plan to train and develop fellows who will then grow and develop into later leadership positions each summer. She was confident in their plan to support their projected growth.

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

C. Approval of Invoices

Ms. Schutte presented invoices for board travel to today's meeting and travel to information sessions conducted in Cleveland and Greenville.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve payment of invoices.

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.

D. FY 16 Budget Revision

Ms. Schutte reviewed one revision to the FY16 Budget that was approved in June. Since the Board has not hired a second employee, she proposed moving monies contained in the Salary and Fridges category for July, August and September to the contractual line item for the NACSA contract so that a purchase order can be issued when that invoice is received.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the budget revision.

MOTION: Dr. Wright

SECOND: Dr. Elam

Dr. Coleman-Potter asked if there were not funds in the previously approved budget that were allocated in a contractual line item for the payment of this invoice? Ms. Schutte stated that the Board had discussed at the time of the FY16 Budget approval paying the NACSA contract out of private funds rather than the appropriated state funds. Chairman Cardin stated that the Board had been advised to make this change so that a purchase order can be issued when that invoice is received.

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

ITEM VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Marilyn Young asked for clarification of the location of the charter schools located and how many students they plan to enroll.

Chairman Cardin stated that it will be located in the old Wesley Bible College, formerly the Broadmoor Baptist Church location on Old Canton Road. Mrs. Cormack stated that the enrollment projections for 2016-17 school year for Joel E. Smilow Collegiate, which will serve grades K through 1 plan to have 198 with a maximum of 237. For Smilow Prep which will start with the 5th grade, they plan to have 119 with a maximum of 142. They will have grown incrementally each year to capacity in the 2023-24 school year with as many as 1600 students in the combined schools. Each will add one grade each year until Prep reaches the 8th grade.

Mike Sayer complimented board on its due diligence and follow through in the process and in keeping concerns of quality at the forefront. Secondly, he stated that he foresees enormous pressure that will be brought in next legislative session to encourage board members to loosen standards to open the door to charters drawing students from beyond the boundaries of the districts in which they're located and to rapidly expand the charter system. It is his hope that the board will stick to the framework that is in place and avoid a process that encourages quantity over quality.

ITEM IX. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on October 5, 2015, in Oxford, Mississippi.

Dr Elam stated that the meeting will be held in the School of Education at Ole Miss at the regular meeting time. The Dean of the School of Education has extended an invitation to faculty to join the board at a lunch seminar.

ITEM X. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: Dr. Coleman-Potter

SECOND: Mrs. Cormack

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

ADOPTED, this the 5th day of October, 2015.



TOMMIE S. CARDIN, Chairman