

MINUTES OF THE  
MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD  
Regular Monthly Meeting  
Monday, September 9, 2019

The regular monthly meeting of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board was held at 10:00 am on Monday, September 9, 2019 at the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board Office located at 239 N. Lamar Street Suite 207, Jackson, MS 39201. In attendance were:

Quentin Ransburg, Chair  
\*Dr. Karen Elam, Vice Chair  
Dr. Jean Young  
Chris Wilson  
\*Leland Speed

The meeting was called to order by Chair Ransburg at 10:00 a.m. Dr. Karen Elam attended the meeting by phone from Oxford, Mississippi. Mr. Leland Speed attended the meeting by phone from North Carolina.

ITEM II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

A. Adoption of the Agenda

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

Chair Ransburg requested a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

**Motion: Wilson**

**Second: Young**

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

ITEM III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A. Approval of the Minutes of the July 8, 2019 Board Meeting

The minutes of the July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Board meeting were previously circulated to the Board members for review.

Chair Ransburg requested a motion for approval of the July 8, 2019 board meeting minutes.

**Motion: Speed**

Second: Elam

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

#### ITEM IV. CHAIR REPORT

Chair Ransburg extended a special thank you to the applications committee and Dr. Karmacharya for all of their work with the application process. He realizes that this is a big task and appreciates everyone's hard work.

Very happy to have a new school open, Ambition Prep. While unable to attend the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, Chair Ransburg has seen pictures on Facebook and the internet. He has heard wonderful things about Ambition Prep. Congratulations to Mr. DeArchie Scott. His hard work is appreciated.

#### ITEM V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Dr. Karmacharya welcomed members of the Board and visitors and thanked them for coming. Since our last meeting we have had a very smooth back to school season with 6 schools now up and running. We conducted a pre-opening site visit to Ambition Prep that went very well and celebrated that with the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on August 9<sup>th</sup>. Proud to announce that Ambition is serving K-1 near capacity which is 150 students enrolled. We have enrollment at all of our schools at or near capacity with over 2100 children being served this year. This is definitely something to celebrate.

On August 14<sup>th</sup>, we had a Back to School Meeting with key staff and department leads from MDE to support our school level leadership with a full day of learning and leadership opportunities. We had guests from the following departments: SPED, Federal Programs, Communications, Finance, Technical Support, and Student Assessment. Each department had a 45 minutes session to visit with our school leadership and that was followed by time for Q & A. It was full day together including a working lunch with MCSAB staff and school leadership. School leaders received an updated Epicenter reporting calendar with key dates & submission requirements along with sample submission forms. Epicenter submissions have been significantly reduced to support schools and eliminate duplicative reporting to MDE & MCSAB. We so much appreciate our partnership with MDE. They are so very supportive of our work, of the agency, and of the schools. Thank you to Vanda for helping put the meeting together.

Happy to report the recent findings of the Supreme Court that ruled in our favor and are upholding the decision of the chancery court here in Hinds County.

The 2018 Annual Report is complete along with the addendum to reflect additional data collection through 2016-17. Mr. Wilson will share more details about this during his report.

Policy work is ongoing. Avery and I are continuing our weekly meetings with a healthy agenda each week. Very much appreciate Avery and her support through this process.

Update on the Charter School Program Grant. With Dr. White no longer with us, Vanda has been the lead person on the project. She has done an amazing job picking up the work of the grant. That being said, it is going to be necessary for us to begin working on a significant amendment to the grant that will put the agency in a better position to meet goals and objectives.

With respect to the grant, we have had ongoing meetings with MSFirst and MEdAccelerator to discuss their current contracts that expire at the end of this month.

In our work with and through the external consultant, we have been able to provide our CSP subgrant recipients with inventory procedures and an Allowable Cost Guide. Prior to that they did not have anything that defined allowable expenditures under federal guidance. With the help of Dr. Kibodeaux, Vanda, and myself, we were able to put this together.

Preliminary Data and Ratings for the Schools will not be released to the public until after the State Board of Education approves those accountability ratings; but we are encouraged by what we see. Our kindergarten readiness scores at Clarksdale Collegiate and Smilow Collegiate are above the state average of 711. Clarksdale scored at 728 and Smilow Collegiate scored at 723. Very excited to report these scores. This is something to celebrate.

Thank you to Avery, Jordan, and Vanda who have all gone above and beyond in helping the team work here. We have a lot to do, but we are well on the way.

#### ITEM VI. GRANT COORDINATOR UPDATE

None.

#### ITEM VII. FINANCIAL REPORT

Dr. Karmacharya presented the Financial Report on behalf of Denise De Rossette, Cornerstone Consulting, who was unable to attend the meeting.

##### FY19 Year End Report

- The agency expended a total of \$339,557 from its operational budget for FY19.
- The expenditures used the entire appropriated amount of \$237,000 and \$102,557 from school revenue.
- The federal grant expenditures were \$674,409.23. This included approximately \$410,000 to sub-grants to Clarksdale Collegiate and Ambition Prep. The administrative expense of \$24,083 was for salary. The remainder of federal expenditures was for contractual services.
- The revenue from the schools for the FY19 school year was \$361,177.93. This money was actually recorded in FY20 as it was received in July and August.
- We ended the year with a cash carry-over balance of just under \$100,000.

## FY20 Year

- Spending authority for FY20 includes \$237,000 in a general fund appropriation and \$500,000 from local revenue. This includes local revenue and MAEP.
- Although the spending authority totals \$737,000, the adopted internal budget is \$576,840. This budget is based on full employment for three positions, current contractual obligations and anticipated needs for agency operations.
- The internal budget will allow a cash carry over into FY21 approximately \$121,000.
- During the first 2 months of the fiscal year, the operational expenditures have been \$75,137.87 which reflects 13% of the internal budget. (The normal average would be 16.7% if we spent 1/12 of the budget each month.)
- Federal grant expenditures for FY21 total \$73,763.57.

**Mr. Wilson made a motion to accept the financial report.**

**Motion: Wilson**

**Second: Ransburg**

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

## ITEM VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### A. Applications Committee

Beth Seling shared the results and a summary of the application process. The Board was provided with applicant reports prior to the meeting. In the beginning of the application process, the Board determined that 11 of 12 were eligible to apply. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, the Board received applications and conducted a completeness review to make sure all required documentation for the proposal was included in the submission. Five applications were approved to move on in June. Following the July meeting, the Stage 3 process began. The Independent Evaluation Committee members were as follows: Dr. Bonita Coleman, Dr. Kimberly Dorsey, Rachel Ksenyak, and Dr. Kelli Peterson. The team was trained on the process and completed the review based on the established criteria.

Ms. Seling presented the Stage 3 findings and recommendations to the board.

The Independent Evaluation Team recommends **approval** of the application for the *MS Delta Academies, Leflore Legacy Academy*. All critical aspects of the application are compelling, comprehensive, and research – and evidence – based, and the team demonstrates deep educational, operational, and financial experience and capacity to open and operate the school. The applicant met the standard in Educational Program Design & Capacity, in Operations Plan & Capacity, and in Financial Plan & Capacity. The proposed head of school brings extensive experience and capacity to the role, having served as a teacher and school leader in both traditional public and charter schools. She has deep ties to the community, having been born and raised in Greenwood. School governance is particularly strong. Six proposed board members

are identified, bringing deep ties to the target community, and expertise in K-12 and higher education. The application includes sound financial management plans including financial planning and transparency. No written response to the report from the applicant was received.

The team recommends **denial** of the application for *Randy J Naylor, Memorial Prep Academy*. The applicant falls far below the standard in Education Program Design & Capacity, in Operations Plan & Capacity, and in Financial Plan & Capacity. The applicant did not provide sufficient evidence of its capacity to open and operate a public charter school. The curriculum overview is significantly incomplete, and the development and execution of the model is reliant on a principal who has not yet been identified. The relationship between the proposed school and the Memorial Foundation is unclear and potentially problematic and plans for school staffing, professional development, performance management, and governance are substantially underdeveloped. The applicant did not provide a transparent structure for financial management and oversight, nor evidence of its capacity to execute a sound financial plan.

The team recommends **denial** of the application for *MS Community Ed. Center, Greenwood Charter*. The applicant does not meet the standard in Education Program Design & Capacity, in Operations Plan & Capacity, and in Financial Plan & Capacity. The applicant did not present a clear and cohesive academic model or plan for school culture and plans for serving special populations are insufficient. The ambiguity and lack of detail regarding plans to serve special populations at the proposed school is particularly concerning given the fact that the applicant currently serves significant special education populations at its existing private schools. There is a level of concern around capacity of school's instructional leadership team and a potential conflict of interest in oversight and Board structure. As proposed the substantial overlap between the charter holder, paid management company, and school board is unclear and potentially problematic. The plan for financial management lacks transparency. Neither the start-up or five-year operating budgets are viable and assumptions are not evidence-based nor reflective of adequate due diligence. No written response to the report from the applicant was received.

Finally, the team recommends **denial** of the application for *SR1, SR1 College Prep & STEM Academy*. SR1 demonstrates strong potential with evidence of improvement over last year's application. Overall, the application has many strengths, but key concerns in essential areas prevent the evaluation team from recommending approval. While the applicant met the standard in Financial Plan & Capacity, they partially met the standard in Education Program Design & Capacity and in Operations Plan & Capacity. The applicant was unable to provide sufficient evidence of its readiness and capacity to implement its proposed STEM-infused, project-based learning model. Although proposed organizational and operational plans met the criteria in many respects, plans for staffing, professional development, performance management, governance, and facilities require additional information and do not fully address the criteria. The applicant's response to the report demonstrates a level of understanding with respect to reviewers' comments and opportunities for continued strengthening of the application.

Chair Ransburg asked Ms. Seling if the reports were made available to the applicants prior to the interview so they could prepare. Ms. Seling provided a response. The applicants were provided the reports after the interview so they were given the opportunity to prepare responses. Ms. Seling reminded the Board to consider the applicant responses alongside the evaluators' reports.

**B. Performance and Accountability Committee**

Mr. Wilson presented the 2018 Annual Report and Addendum. These documents were circulated to the Board prior to the meeting. Mr. Wilson called the Board's attention to the 2018 Annual Report to the legislature. Bellwether Associates and Dr. Karmacharya have done a great job preparing this document. It is simple, concise, and truthful. It includes an addendum that contains more analysis of data based on previous years that were omitted from previous reports to the legislature.

Dr. Karmacharya thanked Noelle from FiveLine Designs for working with us to create the aesthetic of the document.

**ITEM IX. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Election of Vice Chair**

Mr. Wilson nominated Dr. Young as Vice Chair of the Board.

Dr. Young accepted the nomination. Dr. Young's acceptance and position are contingent upon the 2020 Legislative appointments to the Board as her term expired at the end of August 2019.

Chair Ransburg requested a motion to elect Dr. Jean Young Vice Chair of the Board.

**Motion: Wilson**

**Second: Elam**

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

- B. Approval to adopt Board Policy, Part 403, Chapter 4 establishing a Background Check Policy. Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act Process with no public comment.
- C. Approval to adopt Board Policy, Part 403, Chapter 5 establishing a policy for Equal Employment Opportunity. Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act Process with no public comment.
- D. Approval to adopt Board Policy, Part 403, Chapter 8 establishing a policy for Charter School Renewal. Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act Process with no public comment.

- E. Approval to adopt Board Policy, Part 403, Chapter 9 establishing a policy for Closure of Charter Schools. Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act Process with no public comment.

Chair Ransburg requested a motion to approve items B – E.

On a motion by Dr. Young, seconded by Mr. Wilson, the Board unanimously approved to adopt Board Policy, Part 403, Chapter 4 on Background Check Policy, Chapter 5 on Equal Employment Opportunity, Chapter 8 on Charter School Renewal, and Chapter 9 on Closure of Charter Schools.

**Motion: Young**

**Second: Wilson**

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

- F. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act Process: To establish MCSAB Policy Part 403, Chapter 6, Rule 6.1-6.6 for Employee Code of Ethics.

Dr. Karmacharya gave the Board some context on this policy. When the Board took action in the past, the resolution was unclear. In conversation with Mississippi First and legal counsel it was decided that the Board should take this action today.

- G. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act Process: To establish MCSAB Policy Part 403, Chapter 8, Rule 8.8 for Charter School Renewal Application and Guidance.

Dr. Karmacharya referenced the renewal application that was previously circulated to the Board. The schools in renewal this year will receive this application before September 30<sup>th</sup>. This needs to be approved before we can move forward with renewing schools this year.

Chair Ransburg requested a motion to approve items F & G.

On a motion by Mr. Wilson, seconded by Dr. Young, the Board unanimously approved to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process to establish Board Policy, Part 403, Chapter 6, Rule 6.1-6.6 establishing a policy for Employee Code of Ethics, and Chapter 8, Rule 8.8 for Charter School Renewal Application and Guidance.

**Motion: Wilson**

**Second: Young**

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

- H. Data Privacy Policy – Administrative Procedures Act not required. (Internal Policy)

Dr. Karmacharya informed the Board that the USDE requested this policy for the Charter School Program Grant.

Chair Ransburg requested a motion to approve the Data Privacy Policy.

**Motion: Speed**

**Second: Elam**

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

**I. Approval of Calendars**

Dr. Karmacharya requested that the Board move the December Board Meeting date to December 9<sup>th</sup> to allow a full 90 days for schools in renewal to respond to their application.

Chair Ransburg requested a motion to approve the change in December Board Meeting date.

**Motion: Wilson**

**Second: Speed**

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

Dr. Karmacharya presented the 2019 – 2020 Board Meeting Calendar.

Chair Ransburg requested a motion to adopt the calendar.

**Motion: Young**

**Second: Elam**

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

**ITEM X. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Ransburg followed the order of the public comment sign-in sheet that was provided at the meeting. Commenters were given 5 minutes to present their information to the Board.

Gary Hannah, Superintendent of Canton Public Schools left the meeting and did not offer a public comment.

Mr. Tamu Green, CEO of SR1, thanked everyone for the opportunity. They did read the feedback that was given on their application. They wanted to create a global school. STEM surrounding the state of Mississippi. Project-based learning. With respect to the concerns with the school leader, they chose someone who possesses strengths in mathematics. Mathematics is the basis for their proposed STEM program. They don't have facilities, but it's a multi-tier approach. They are looking long term – at the future. Thanks everyone for their time and their feedback.

Ms. Dorlisa Hutton, SR1, thanked everyone for the opportunity to speak. The main focus of the educational plan was the educational leader. The educational leader has endorsements in math. Math is core to STEM. She currently is serving as a consultant and additionally she has provided oversight to STEM-infused curriculum. SR1 is still working with Mississippi College to align with the STEM program that has been approved by MDE. With respect to organizational capacity, we started identifying possible facilities. The plan was to pay for the facility upon approval.

Ms. Tamala Boyd Shaw, MS Delta Academies, thanked the applications committee and the Board for the rigorous and informative process for writing this Charter School RFP. She appreciates this second opportunity to come before the applications committee and the Board. It is her hope, desire, and personal prayer that the Board accepts the recommendation of the application committee, knowing that they will work extremely hard on behalf of all the students of Greenwood, Leflore County.

Ray Thomas, Vicksburg MS, asked about the possibility of addressing the deficiencies of the application and resubmitting the application. Dr. Karmacharya informed Mr. Thomas that this is not protocol and that the application cycle has been closed. She reminds him to reference the feedback that was provided after the interview for if and when the Memorial Foundation chooses to reapply during the next application cycle.

#### ITEM XI. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED

##### J. 2019 Request for Proposals: Application Review Stage 2 Findings

On behalf of the Applications Committee, Dr. Elam made a motion to **approve** *Leflore Legacy Academy, proposed by MS Delta Academy* for the 2020-2021 school year provided that final approval to open the school shall be conditioned on timely satisfaction of the Authorizer's pre-opening requirements and execution of the charter contract.

**Motion:** Elam

**Second:** Young

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

Dr. Elam made a motion to **deny** *Memorial Preparatory Academy, proposed by Randy J. Naylor Memorial Foundation* because the charter application does not meet the approval criteria for the reasons articulated in the recommendation report presented to the Board.

Motion: Elam  
Second: Wilson

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

Dr. Elam made a motion to **deny** *Greenwood Charter School, proposed by Mississippi Community Education Center* because the charter application does not meet the approval criteria for the reasons articulated in the recommendation report presented to the Board.

Motion: Elam  
Second: Young

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

Dr. Elam made a motion to **deny** *SR1 College Preparatory & STEM Academy, proposed by SR1* because the charter application does not meet the approval criteria for the reasons articulated in the recommendation report presented to the Board.

Motion: Elam  
Second: Young

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

#### ITEM XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Wilson made a motion to have a closed Board consideration for determination of the need to go into Executive Session.

Motion: Wilson  
Second: Elam

Chair Ransburg requested that everyone clear the room.

Mr. Wilson made a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss an investigation of possible violations of law and to discuss potential litigation by former employee.

Motion: Wilson  
Second: Young

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

Mr. Wilson made a motion to come out of Executive Session.

Motion: Wilson

Second: Elam

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

#### ITEM XIII. NEXT MEETING

Chair Ransburg shared that there was no action taken during Executive Session.

Chair Ransburg noted that the next meeting will be Monday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 10:00 am at the Authorizer Board's office

#### ITEM XIV. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Ransburg requested a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Elam

Second: Young

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:28 am.  
ADOPTED, this September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

  
Quentin Ransburg, Chair

Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board  
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