

**In The Matter Of:**

*DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION  
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL*

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*August 18, 2020*

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*Sharon K. Hill, CCR  
(501) 680-0888*

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ARKANSAS DIVISION OF  
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

AUGUST 18, 2020  
9:00 a.m.

(via Zoom/Livestream due to Covid-19)

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

MS. DEBORAH COFFMAN	Chairperson/DESE Asst. Commissioner - Public School Accountability
DR. NACCAMAN WILLIAMS	Former State Board of Ed. Member
MR. PHIL BALDWIN	CEO, Citizens Bank
MS. SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY	Division of Career & Technical Education - Associate Director for Career Readiness

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. MARY CLAIRE HYATT	DESE Attorney
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ALSO APPEARING:

MS. TRACY WEBB	DESE Coordinator of Monitoring and Systems Support
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LOCATION:

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION  
- Auditorium  
#4 Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, Arkansas

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Good morning. Thank you for  
3 your patience. We've had a few technical  
4 difficulties that we're working through.

5 The August 18, 2020 meeting of the Charter  
6 Authorizing Panel is called to order. Welcome,  
7 everyone, to the Department of Education auditorium  
8 and ask that you please silence all of your devices.

9 The Charter Panel oversees the authorization,  
10 renewal, revision, and revocation of charters. And  
11 I'm Deborah Coffman, Assistant Commissioner for  
12 Public School Accountability, and I'll be chairing  
13 the Panel. To my right is Phillip Baldwin -- good  
14 morning; Dr. Sonja Wright-McMurray. Ms. Wright-  
15 McMurray works for our Department of Career and  
16 Technical Education, which is a new department under  
17 DESE. And so we're so pleased to have them. And  
18 then joining us virtually is Dr. Naccaman Williams --  
19 good morning. Two other members that are not able to  
20 be with us today -- Ms. Toyce Newton and Dr. Ann  
21 Clemmer are not with us today, but will be joining us  
22 hopefully in the future. And so we have a quorum  
23 today, and I will be voting as Chair. My goal today  
24 is to facilitate a fair and responsible hearing.

25 I will ask that each person that is speaking to

1 please state your name and title for the record, to  
2 speak clearly into the microphone for the benefit of  
3 the Panel, our viewing audience, and the audience  
4 that we have in the room and on our Zoom. This  
5 entire meeting is being live-streamed and recorded  
6 and a transcript of the meeting will be available on  
7 the DESE website.

8 CONSENT AGENDA

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. And with that we  
10 will get started with our Consent Agenda.

11 We have minutes from our July CAP meeting. Are  
12 there any corrections?

13 If not, I'll accept a motion to approve the  
14 minutes.

15 DR. WILLIAMS: (mouth is seen moving, but no  
16 sound)

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Williams, I believe a  
18 motion but I didn't hear it.

19 DR. WILLIAMS: (mouth is seen moving, but no  
20 sound)

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Still no sound.

22 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. We have a visual  
24 motion to approve the minutes from Mr. Williams.

25 MR. BALDWIN: I'll second.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: A second from Mr. Baldwin.  
2 All those in favor?

3 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Minutes are approved.

5 HEARING PROCEDURES

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Mary Claire  
7 Hyatt, if you will come and outline the process that  
8 we'll be using today to review these applications.

9 MS. HYATT: Good morning. Mary Claire Hyatt,  
10 Department of Education.

11 The hearing procedure for both is going to be  
12 the same. First, please swear anyone, who's not an  
13 attorney, in. Then the applicant will have 20  
14 minutes to give their presentation. There's 20  
15 minutes allotted for opposition. No one signed up in  
16 opposition of Premier, so you can kind of bypass that  
17 piece. And then, 5 minutes for any rebuttal.  
18 Following, you can ask questions, engage in  
19 discussion, and then either make a final decision or  
20 take the matter under advisement until your next  
21 meeting.

22 If you have any questions procedurally  
23 throughout the day, I'll be here to answer them. And  
24 if you don't have any questions, I'll let Tracy --

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Hyatt, if you'll kind of

1 walk them through that, we're going to go through any  
2 legal issues.

3 MS. HYATT: Oh, sure. Thanks.

4 So following the presentation, I think what  
5 we're going to do is resolve any kind of waiver and  
6 legal issues and also allow the applicants an  
7 opportunity to explain to the Panel how they're  
8 providing the things that they're asking for waivers.  
9 Then also if there are any financial concerns or any  
10 concerns from any of the other units of the Division,  
11 we'll address those too; after that, general  
12 questions. Hopefully, some of the questions will be  
13 answered during the remaining concerns section. But  
14 any remaining questions that you have you're welcome  
15 to ask. And then if something comes up during those  
16 questions, which sometimes it does, that results in  
17 another legal issue or financial issue, we'll bring  
18 that up at the end before any voting happens. Of  
19 course, all throughout those pieces you're welcome to  
20 discuss amongst yourself and ask questions for  
21 clarity.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

23 So these are new applications, and these  
24 applicants are looking to start school next school  
25 year. So we want to have a very thorough process in

1 going through these applications.

2 A-1: CONSIDERATION OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL

3 APPLICATION - PREMIER HIGH SCHOOL OF SPRINGDALE

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So, Ms. Webb.

5 MS. WEBB: Good morning. Tracy Webb, Charter  
6 Unit.

7 Our first applicant is Premier High School of  
8 Little Rock -- of Springdale. They are a proposed  
9 open-enrollment charter school that plans to serve  
10 300 students in grades 9-12. Today we have Mr.  
11 Steven Gast, Dr. Dennis Felton, and Ms. Katie  
12 Stephens here for the presentation.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. I'll ask that all  
14 persons planning to speak for the application please  
15 stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear or  
16 affirm that the testimony you're about to give shall  
17 be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the  
18 truth?

19 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. And I acknowledge  
21 that our supporters on Zoom have done the same.

22 All right. Good morning.

23 SUPT. GAST: Good morning. It is nice to have  
24 the opportunity to actually see face-to-face, as  
25 strange as it has been. So thank you so much for



1 giving us the opportunity to present an application  
2 to you for a charter school in Springdale. I would  
3 like to introduce very quickly our team that we have  
4 brought with us so that you're aware of what  
5 individuals could potentially help answer any  
6 questions that you might have.

7 We have, of course, myself, Steve Gast, the  
8 Superintendent. I have Mr. Dennis Felton next to me,  
9 who is the State Director of Premier High Schools,  
10 the State Director of Innovation and Expansion, and  
11 the State Director of pretty much anything else that  
12 I dream up or that he dreams up at this particular  
13 time; Ms. Katie Stephens, who is our Director of  
14 Finance. Ms. Rhonda Bradford is on the Zoom meeting;  
15 she is our Director of Federal Programs, our Staff  
16 and Leadership, as well as Staff Development  
17 Coordinator. We have Ms. Marla Pearson, who is our  
18 Director of Special Programs. And we have Mr. Curtis  
19 Shack, who is our Executive Director of Operations.

20 So, once again, I would like to take this  
21 opportunity to thank you for allowing us to present  
22 our application. We have -- we run three districts  
23 here in Arkansas. We have Premier High School of  
24 Little Rock, Premier High School of North Little  
25 Rock, and we have Northwest Classical Academy up in

1 Bentonville. As part of the Northwest Classical  
2 Academy, we also have a campus in West Little Rock  
3 that is under the West Little Rock -- excuse me --  
4 that is under the leadership of the Northwest  
5 Arkansas Classical Academy. Together, that makes up  
6 four campuses here in Arkansas. And, again, we're  
7 very excited to present the opportunity to expand and  
8 provide another Premier High School for another city  
9 in Arkansas.

10 So at this time I'm going to turn the  
11 presentation over to Dennis Felton who will lead you  
12 through. Dennis is a previous Director of -- Campus  
13 Director for our Premier High School in Little Rock,  
14 was instrumental in the opening of our North Little  
15 Rock campus, and now directs our innovation and our  
16 expansion of Premier High Schools in the state of  
17 Arkansas.

18 So, Mr. Felton.

19 MR. FELTON: Thank you, and good morning. I  
20 figure I'll spend some time this morning -- we've had  
21 Premier High Schools in Arkansas for the past seven  
22 years. And so in part of this presentation we want  
23 to spend some time just revisiting the things that  
24 have been going on on that campus and a new campus we  
25 opened last year, and then kind of get into the needs

1 we've identified in the Springdale community.

2 So hopefully this clicker works to my advantage  
3 today. We're in. All right.

4 So an overview of the presentation: we'll kind  
5 of talk about the impact Premier High School has had  
6 in Arkansas. And then we've spent time with some  
7 parents and students and wanted to bring them in  
8 today; we know Covid-19 has kind of changed that, and  
9 so they've shared some videos with us and they want  
10 to share with you all to talk about their experience.  
11 And then we'll get into the Premier High School of  
12 Springdale overview.

13 So looking at the numbers, we opened Premier  
14 High School of Little Rock in 2013, and we opened  
15 Premier High School of North Little Rock in 2019.  
16 Currently, we are serving over 220 students in  
17 Central Arkansas. Over the past seven years we've  
18 had 144 students earn an Arkansas high school  
19 diploma; of those 144 students, 51 with dropout  
20 recovery, which means these students were not even  
21 enrolled in a high school before entering Premier  
22 High School; 13 were early graduates; 12 were teen  
23 parents; 43 college hours earned from students over  
24 the course of seven years; and 73 of those students  
25 are currently enrolled in college, military, or post-

1 secondary institutions. And we continue to add to  
2 that number.

3 So one of the things we've been trying to do is  
4 make sure that not only are we offering a rigorous  
5 academic program, but we're also tapping into some  
6 talents outside the classroom. And so we've got  
7 student organizations that are available for students  
8 to participate in, as well as extracurricular  
9 activities.

10 Another huge component as well is preparing  
11 students with post-secondary readiness. We know a  
12 lot of students that enter Premier High School have  
13 never set foot on a college campus, they never ate in  
14 a college cafeteria; and so we're trying to get them  
15 in the presence of college representatives, get those  
16 students on college campuses, and then start having  
17 those conversations about what do you really want to  
18 do after Premier High School. Because we know a lot  
19 of these students have become disengaged throughout  
20 the high school process, losing hope of what they  
21 want to do after high school. And that's where the  
22 student advisory piece comes as well, where each  
23 student has their own graduation projection plan,  
24 each student has a personalized learning plan,  
25 personalized learning coach in which they're able to

1 have additional support to be successful.

2 So another key component we've identified in  
3 working with this population we've worked with is  
4 working with parents. We have to teach parents. We  
5 have to give parents a voice. We have to make sure  
6 the parents are involved in the school decision-  
7 making process, as well as getting feedback from the  
8 community. We are a public institution that receives  
9 public funding and we consider our-self to be an  
10 asset to the community. If we're going to be an  
11 asset to the community, then we have to get feedback  
12 from the community and then have community members  
13 serving on our local committees to give feedback and  
14 opinion on school decision-making as well.

15 And so one of the things we've tried to do as  
16 well is connect with other schools, schools like  
17 Graduate Arkansas and The Excel Center; we serve  
18 similar populations. And our mission statements may  
19 differ but at the end of the day we have similar  
20 philosophies and populations that we serve. And so  
21 we've worked with those individuals doing  
22 professional development, having leadership talks.  
23 We've been excited, we're working with The Excel  
24 Center to offer some of those industry-based  
25 certifications for our -- some of our students. And

1           then we've even tapped into the traditional schools.  
2           We have schools like West Memphis School District  
3           who's taken their alternate learning environment  
4           program and come to visit our Premier campus, spent  
5           two days, their entire staff -- their entire  
6           leadership to witness this personalized learning plan  
7           and this personalized learning model and seeing how  
8           does this work. And they went back to their  
9           traditional school district and replicated this, and  
10          they're still running this model to this day.

11                 And then, how do we connect with Higher Ed.?  
12          We've partnered with Arkansas Baptist College. As  
13          you know, one of our campuses is located on Arkansas  
14          Baptist College and Arkansas Tech University to offer  
15          students concurrent credit. That way they're not  
16          only working on a high school diploma, but those  
17          students that meet the criteria are also able to work  
18          towards college credit as well.

19                 And so some highlights that we've kind of been  
20          recognized for over the past few years -- in 2016,  
21          Premier/Little Rock was recognized as a Best  
22          Practices amongst personalized learning in Arkansas  
23          charter schools. In 2017, the same campus was  
24          selected to participate in the PLC pilot project,  
25          which the staff has really grown and really enjoyed

1 collaborating with other schools with similar ideals  
2 and receiving the support from the State. In 2017,  
3 Premier High School had a teacher that was nominated  
4 as Educator of the Year from the Little Rock Family  
5 magazine.

6 Talking about some of the extracurricular  
7 accomplishments, we've even had students not only  
8 engage in extracurricular activities but also be  
9 successful as well, and so we've seen basketball and  
10 track success in our programs. And recently, in  
11 2018, the school was also selected to participate in  
12 the state's BX3 training project. In 2018, Little  
13 Rock was recognized by Johnny Key and also Governor  
14 Asa Hutchinson for their participation and work in  
15 the PLC process, and we've watched that grow over the  
16 past few years as more and more schools are engaging  
17 in this work. And then, most recently, our campus in  
18 North Little Rock that opened in 2019 has 115  
19 students we serve and we feel like the community was  
20 very responsive to the educational opportunity, and  
21 we were able to graduate 15 students, which 46% of  
22 those students were originally dropouts.

23 So this video I have here is Ms. Eskew, who is a  
24 parent who actually went to three high schools last  
25 year and was told her student would not graduate. It

1 was the student's fourth year of high school. He had  
2 some -- a few concerns with attendance and things  
3 going on in school. And so she kind of bounced  
4 around, and she found Premier. And she wants to  
5 share some words with you this morning.

6 [VIDEO PLAYS, AS FOLLOWS:]

7 MS. ESKEW: So the worst thing for me was that I  
8 was told that my son was not going to graduate. He  
9 only had two credits left to graduate and we were at  
10 the end of the semester, so just before Christmas  
11 break. And to hear that was like all of my energy,  
12 all of my time, all of my investment had just gone  
13 down the drain. And I felt like my son as an African  
14 American male would be another statistic, and I knew  
15 that if he hadn't graduated that he probably would  
16 not have a good outcome. But on the flipside of  
17 that, when I did make it to Premier -- actually, when  
18 I got there the administrator was not there; she had  
19 just left. And we called her -- the secretary at  
20 that time called her for me, and she turned around,  
21 came back to the school to meet with me. And when  
22 she met with me and I told her my story and she read  
23 the documents that I had, she said, "We can make this  
24 work." She said that, and that my son would graduate  
25 this year and that he would graduate before -- or at



1 least by spring break. So that was like from one end  
2 of the spectrum to the other; I was on a low and then  
3 I just immediately just felt overwhelmed with  
4 excitement and hope.

5 [END OF VIDEO]

6 MR. FELTON: The next video we have is Sean  
7 Williams, who's a student of Premier High School.  
8 Sean had opportunity to engage in student  
9 organizations; he was a student organization leader.  
10 He also was able to participate in our forklift  
11 certification program with our partnership with The  
12 Excel Center. Sean was considered as a G.E.D. He  
13 was working two jobs; he felt like he didn't have the  
14 time to go back to school. And then I think he ran  
15 into a Premier staff member, educating him about the  
16 program, and he got involved. So, here's Sean:

17 [VIDEO PLAYS, AS FOLLOWS:]

18 MR. SEAN WILLIAMS: I ended up coming across  
19 Premier because I had met Mr. Graham and he had told  
20 me about the school and whatever. I'm like, no, that  
21 sounds too good to be true, I don't want to sign-up.  
22 Like in 2018, I was like, okay, I'm going to sign up.  
23 And I finally got there and I was looking at  
24 everything, and I was like, you know, they work on  
25 computers, you know, work individually, and can teach

1 me personally -- and I loved it from then and there.  
2 And I was -- you know, I got in and the work was  
3 easier and, you know, communication was better with  
4 the teachers. It was like a one-on-one type of thing  
5 we can do.

6 [VIDEO ENDS]

7 MR. FELTON: Then our last video we have is  
8 Daylan Washington. Daylan's family moved from Pine  
9 Bluff to the Little Rock area. He was kind of  
10 overwhelmed by the bigger high schools in the Little  
11 Rock area and was looking for something smaller. He  
12 also was working to try to work towards his mortician  
13 license, working with his family in a funeral home,  
14 and wanted something to have a more flexible schedule  
15 so he can work and get more hours to start his  
16 program.

17 [VIDEO PLAYS, AS FOLLOWS:]

18 INTERVIEWER: Giving advice for somebody -- you  
19 know, like let's say you have a student, like a young  
20 man and young lady, 9th grade, entering in Premier.  
21 What would you tell them?

22 MR. WASHINGTON: To stay focused and keep your  
23 head on. [Inaudible] opportunity to finish  
24 everything -- to finish 9th grade and like  
25 [inaudible].

1 INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So technically you could  
2 graduate --

3 MR. WASHINGTON: At your own pace [inaudible].

4 [VIDEO ENDS]

5 MR. FELTON: I've got to skip to the slide.

6 Okay. It's not doing anything.

7 There we go. All right.

8 So, why Premier High School/Springdale? One of  
9 the things we want to do is provide an academic  
10 program to the Springdale community that's uniquely  
11 designed to attract students who are falling through  
12 the cracks or have dropped out of high school.  
13 Ultimately, we want to decrease the dropout rate in  
14 the Springdale community and increase the graduation  
15 rate. Most important, we're trying to be responsive  
16 to community needs and community interests and  
17 support. And we want to replicate this personalized  
18 learning model that we've been operating in Arkansas  
19 seven years to the Northwest Arkansas area to  
20 ultimately increase our program capacity and the  
21 accessibility. You know, I can get on my soapbox  
22 here about, you know, I love what we do with Graduate  
23 Arkansas, The Excel Center, and Premier High School/  
24 Little Rock and North Little Rock -- but,  
25 unfortunately, all those schools are located in

1 Pulaski County. And so we're seeing how do we tap  
2 outside of Pulaski County to get this opportunity for  
3 students that are located in other geographical  
4 regions of Arkansas.

5 So one of the things we've noticed in looking at  
6 -- in doing kind of our homework in the community of  
7 Springdale is there is a gap of students that are not  
8 graduating from high school. So you can see the data  
9 we have here from Springdale High School, Har-Ber  
10 High School, and Don Tyson School of Innovation. And  
11 the concern here is not that Springdale Public  
12 Schools is doing a horrible job of trying to graduate  
13 students. But I think when you look at the magnitude  
14 of a district of over 22,000 students, and looking at  
15 out of those 22,000 students, if we're talking about  
16 15%, 20%, that is a concern because those 15%, 20% of  
17 students are still leaving high school without a high  
18 school diploma and entering the workforce or other  
19 things that may hinder them from ultimately being  
20 successful as well.

21 One of the things we also noticed as a trend in  
22 looking at the difference between Har-Ber High School  
23 and Springdale High School, you'll notice that  
24 looking at the African American group there seems  
25 like there's a higher graduation rate amongst

1 Springdale High School compared to Har-Ber High  
2 School and vice-versa -- in looking at the Caucasian  
3 group as well. So we're interested in having more  
4 conversations with the personnel to find out why  
5 these trends may exist in these different high  
6 schools amongst these different racial groups as  
7 well.

8 So looking at the bigger picture -- in the 2018-  
9 2019 school year, you're talking about 1354 students  
10 who are part of this cohort that graduated out of  
11 1637. And so you're looking at over a span of four  
12 years 283 students are not graduating with their  
13 cohort, and then approximately 46 students were  
14 retained during that senior year now ultimately are  
15 earning a high school diploma. So, one of the things  
16 that Premier High School/Springdale seeks to do is  
17 close that gap and work to make sure that we put more  
18 high school diplomas in the hands of Arkansans.

19 And so our mission will be to provide hope to  
20 students through an innovative, encouraging learning  
21 environment. We still have a mastery learning  
22 approach, and ultimately we know that in dealing with  
23 our youth today we have to instill more than  
24 academics in them. And so that's where you see your  
25 moral and academic excellence, because we do embed

1           our character education as well.

2           So who do we serve? Premier seeks to look for  
3           students that look for a smaller personalized  
4           learning environment, students who are at risk of  
5           dropping out. We want to be proactive in this. We  
6           don't always want to be, okay, we're being reactive  
7           and outreach is for students who have dropped out of  
8           high school. A lot of times we work with  
9           organizations and schools and identify those students  
10          early on and we can be innovative and at the same  
11          time intervene before it gets to the point where the  
12          student is giving up on the process. And we also  
13          have a lot of students who've chosen to go back to  
14          the workforce, which is very similar in Pulaski  
15          County, and we've noticed that in Springdale as well.  
16          A lot of kids are leaving high school at the age of  
17          16 and 17 for employment opportunities and they start  
18          getting involved working full-time, making really  
19          good money, and they feel like to prioritize as far  
20          as education goes, "Well, I'll put that on the back  
21          burner" or "I'll just get a G.E.D."

22          The academic model -- so in Premier we want a  
23          personalized learning plan with a personalized  
24          learning model, which every student has their own  
25          graduation projection plan. It's a mastery based

1 model so students are not just skating through  
2 content; they're actually mastering each unit in  
3 order to earn credit; and so after you've mastered  
4 five units that's your half-semester credit, and then  
5 after you master 10 units that's your whole year's  
6 credit. And so when students don't master a unit  
7 they're able to get the resources as far as tutoring  
8 and additional support in order to cover those  
9 concepts that they haven't mastered to move on. We  
10 kind of heard Daylan talk about it; he was like you  
11 could be in the 9th grade. We have students that  
12 come in behind and they're trying to catch back up.  
13 And so one of the things we do is not -- if you fail  
14 Algebra I, we don't just throw Algebra I back at you.  
15 How about we assess you and find out what in Algebra  
16 I you really didn't get, because you spent 178 days  
17 in Algebra I. And then if we focus on the things you  
18 don't understand, we spend less time in Algebra I and  
19 get you on to the next subject, and then we -- we  
20 don't spend six years in high school; we shorten it  
21 down to give you -- get you hopefully back on track  
22 or closer to graduating.

23 And then there's also the goal-setting. Each  
24 student comes in every day, they're setting goals for  
25 their individual day, they're setting goals for their

1 week, they're setting goals for their semester. And  
2 then we put the ownership on the students, and so we  
3 make them -- we teach them to track their own  
4 progress and then hold themselves accountable on the  
5 goals that they've met and the goals they haven't met  
6 and then reflect on why didn't I reach that goal,  
7 what behavior led to me accomplishing this goal or  
8 not accomplishing it. Each student is also paired  
9 with a student advisor. These student advisors kind  
10 of act as if -- you think about your college advisor;  
11 they sit down with these students, looking at their  
12 academic transcripts, looking at these are the things  
13 that you've accomplished and you've completed towards  
14 graduation, these are things you have remaining to  
15 meet graduation requirements. And then they have a  
16 personalized learning coach who's kind of that  
17 advocate for a student on campus as far as making  
18 sure they're getting the tutorial sessions they need  
19 or "Hey, Johnny's been missing two or three days; can  
20 somebody find out what's going on? Give a phone  
21 call. Do we need to do a home visit? Because we're  
22 concerned with this student and if they're not in  
23 school we're concerned they're somewhere not safe and  
24 doing something unproductive.

25 Instructional strategies we'll employ -- we'll



1 involve direct instruction. We do understand some  
2 students need a sitting gig [ps]; they need to be  
3 able to be there with a teacher going over those  
4 concepts they're struggling with. But at the same  
5 time we do understand some students are able to work  
6 independently; they've mastered this concept and  
7 their learning style allows them to be able to engage  
8 in computer-assisted instruction, and then they seek  
9 help as needed from teachers and personalized  
10 learning coaches. And that coach will be the  
11 accelerated instruction piece that we're talking  
12 about with students who are able to kind of master  
13 those concepts, then move to the next unit and move  
14 to the next year in order to earn their credit. But  
15 ultimately we've got to get students from the  
16 computers; we've got to get students from the sitting  
17 gig. We've got to get them engaged in project-based  
18 learning. We've got to get them to do the hands-on  
19 experience, really to increase the transferability.  
20 Right? We want them to take these skills and not  
21 only be successful in high school but how these apply  
22 outside of high school as well.

23 So how do we support staff? How do we support  
24 leadership from a school like this? We want to make  
25 sure we're getting them involved and engaged in high-

1 quality professional development which comes with  
2 job-embedded coaching and instructional coaching and  
3 feedback. We want to work with our novice teachers  
4 through their professional growth plans and get them  
5 engaged in institutions like the Charter Leadership  
6 Institute. That way, our administrators and teachers  
7 are growing together. We're going to also make sure  
8 we're using TESS and LEADS to make sure we're not  
9 only holding people accountable, but ultimately we're  
10 using a uniform evaluation system to give feedback  
11 and have those rich conversations about our practice  
12 and how we can improve our practice. And then  
13 ultimately we want to replicate this professional  
14 learning community. The research is strong and  
15 supports what professional learning communities are  
16 able to do in schools, and so we want to continue to  
17 replicate that practice in Springdale of what we're  
18 doing in Little Rock and North Little Rock.

19 So a day in the shoes of a Premier student -- we  
20 typically kick it off with some kind of morning  
21 assembly, character ed. We may have a guest speaker  
22 that comes in town, we may -- we have this thing,  
23 Pizza with a Professional; we bring local  
24 professionals into the school to share their  
25 experiences with students and share the things that

1           -- what are the potential pitfalls that you need to  
2           avoid --

3                               [TIMER BELL RINGS]

4           MR. FELTON: I'm running out of time. Uh-oh.  
5           Okay.

6           And so our Student Success Center where students  
7           are able to come in, get the academic support they  
8           need, as well as start having those conversations  
9           about post-secondary planning as well. So some of  
10          the support services that we will have in the Success  
11          Center are tutorial sessions, college and career  
12          coach, personalized learning coach, attendance  
13          recovery program -- a lot of our students have been  
14          kicked out of school or have been retained because  
15          they just missed too many days. Dropout outreach --  
16          so students that are leaving Springdale High School,  
17          leaving Har-Ber High School, leaving Archer Learning  
18          Center, we've got to go out in the community and find  
19          these people. We've got to work with organizations  
20          to make sure we can identify these students. So  
21          we've got to have a 504 Coordinator, ESL Coordinator,  
22          Director of Special Ed. programs to make sure that we  
23          are providing all the necessary support for the  
24          diverse needs of the community, as well as having a  
25          Dean of Students and Graduation Advisory Committee to

1           oversee this, and having an innovation hub specialist  
2           to oversee that project-based learning, and having a  
3           student health officer and nurse.

4           And so we can't forget about parents. We want  
5           to make sure we've got translators and bilingual  
6           staff, because we know the unique needs in the  
7           community, especially having a large Hispanic and  
8           Marshallese population. We've learned in spending  
9           time with the community that's going to be a huge  
10          support system, as well as educating parents. A lot  
11          of times we spend a lot of time talking about the  
12          students and we fail the parents, we don't provide  
13          them with support and resources. And so we want them  
14          to have representation, as well as we want campus  
15          leadership to be accessible. And so we do this deal  
16          where we have Donuts with the Director each month;  
17          they're able to come in and meet with the Director.

18          And so some of the special school features you  
19          hear me talking about -- the innovation hub where  
20          students are able to earn these industry-based  
21          certifications, we're looking at the virtual CT  
22          certifications, since the Covid-19 has come into  
23          effect, as well as doing mobile science labs. And  
24          I'm so excited -- we had conversations with Northwest  
25          Technical Institute and they're ready to offer

1 industry-based certification programs to our students  
2 free of charge.

3 And so character education is another thing we  
4 think is important. We talked about giving students  
5 leadership roles while they're on campus. You see a  
6 picture of Cristeon Coleman, who is a U.S. Airman at  
7 this day and time. And when you think about him  
8 entering Premier and the things that he's been able  
9 to engage in and the leadership roles he's been able  
10 to serve in has ultimately prepared him for something  
11 like this.

12 Also, looking into potentially working with the  
13 Archer Learning Center, Springdale High School,  
14 Springdale Har-Ber High School, we've had  
15 conversations with the superintendent in Springdale  
16 and Archer Learning leadership about how do we work  
17 together, how do we get together on professional  
18 development, because we're working with similar  
19 populations; hey, how do we work together to decrease  
20 the number of students that are just getting dropped  
21 due to the lack of attendance.

22 Also, there are other organizations we have to  
23 work with in the community. Because we know a lot of  
24 these students are not in school, but other entities  
25 are working with these individuals and can help us

1 identify them; so also working with agencies, like  
2 the Department of Ed., and continue to have the  
3 working relationship with individuals like APSRC to  
4 ultimately continue to support. And one of the  
5 things we also noticed as we spent time in the  
6 community, Chamber of Commerce, the Mayor's office,  
7 state legislators, the Marshall Islands  
8 representative, Northwest Technical Institute,  
9 Springdale School District, parents, community  
10 members, judges, everybody feels this program is a  
11 need in the community and they support it. And we've  
12 shared those with you as well.

13 So I close you with we spent the first year  
14 graduating 10 students. Last year we awarded more  
15 than 30 high school diplomas, and over the past seven  
16 years 140 Arkansans have high school diplomas who  
17 probably otherwise wouldn't have had one without  
18 Premier High School. And so we continue to keep the  
19 student the center of everything that we do, and  
20 we're aiming to be responsive to the needs of the  
21 Springdale community.

22 Sorry I went over.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: No problem. Thank you so  
24 much.

25 All right. Ms. Hyatt, if you will do our legal

1 review please.

2 And at any time, Panel Members, if you have a  
3 question for Ms. Hyatt or for Dr. Felton, either one,  
4 just stop right there and we want to take as much  
5 time as needed to have a thorough understanding.

6 LEGAL ISSUES AND WAIVERS

7 MS. HYATT: So one of the things that we haven't  
8 typically done in the past that we're going to try  
9 this time is try and give the panel members a little  
10 bit more understanding about how the schools are  
11 using waivers that they're asking for. So on some of  
12 these I'm going to -- even though there are no  
13 remaining issues, I'm going to give them an  
14 opportunity to kind of explain to you how they use  
15 that in their model.

16 ALTERNATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

17 MS. HYATT: So the first is waiver of the  
18 Alternative Learning Environment requirements. There  
19 are no issues here, but I did want to give them an  
20 opportunity to explain to you how they meet the needs  
21 of students who have a lot going on -- you've already  
22 heard a lot about it -- or those that can't really  
23 function in a traditional classroom environment.

24 So, if you want to give a little bit of info.

25 MR. FELTON: So one of the things that we like

1 to think is we actually go above and beyond. We work  
2 with a lot of alternative schools; I've communicated  
3 that to you all. But we think everything is  
4 individualized too. We believe we should assess  
5 students academically, as well as things like  
6 emotionally as well, when they're coming to the  
7 school and that way we are identifying the necessary  
8 supports that they need. And so it being a small  
9 environment and a lot of similarities to alternative  
10 learning program, we like to think that we're not  
11 shortchanging students but we're actually going above  
12 and beyond by providing these college and career  
13 coaches, personalized learning coaches and things of  
14 that nature.

15 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: A question that I have is  
16 just trying to get a better understanding of the  
17 difference between what your environment is going to  
18 be like and what the traditional ALE environment  
19 would look like.

20 MR. FELTON: Okay. I think --

21 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: What are you doing  
22 [inaudible]?

23 MR. FELTON: I think one thing we should  
24 understand is the traditional ALE is a referral  
25 process, which means the student has to be identified



1 by the high school. There are certain  
2 characteristics that have to be involved as well. We  
3 are open-enrollment, which allows -- which means we  
4 are a choice. And so when you're talking about the  
5 academic program, I think because we offer a  
6 personalized learning program, personalized learning  
7 plan in which it's all about the individual student.  
8 And so each student that comes in the door they have  
9 their own schedule and they're working on things they  
10 need to ultimately graduate from high school. We run  
11 mastery-based models as well, so there's not just a  
12 sitting gig available. Also we offer -- you hear me  
13 talk about those extracurricular activities. And so  
14 it's not a punitive environment. I know we're trying  
15 to get better in the state as far as what alternative  
16 education environments are -- I mean alternative  
17 learning environments are. And we're -- we feel like  
18 we're challenging that as far as we shouldn't be  
19 [inaudible]; we should just be providing students  
20 with the necessary support and resources they need to  
21 be successful.

22 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

23 MS. HYATT: The next set of waivers has to do  
24 with their Board of Directors. And just for a little  
25 bit of information, these are really common because

1 charter schools don't have elected school boards.  
2 They did provide quite a bit of information about  
3 their governing structure in the application; it was  
4 very thorough. So I'll let them give you a little  
5 bit of information about how their governing  
6 structure is set up. And there's one small thing to  
7 work out before we move on.

8 SUPT. GAST: Thank you.

9 So we're real proud of our organizational  
10 structure that we have. As you know, we have a  
11 larger CMO that supports us that is out of Texas, and  
12 they have their own board and we have our own board.  
13 Our board is made up of representatives from each  
14 area that we have schools, since we do have schools  
15 around the state. So we have our board president who  
16 is located in Bentonville, in northwest Arkansas;  
17 then we have a board member that represents West  
18 Little Rock; we have a board member that represents  
19 -- and two board members that represent the Little  
20 Rock/North Little Rock area. And so we meet on a  
21 quarterly basis, and all the types of things that a  
22 local school board would do, whether they're budgets,  
23 auditing reports -- anything that a public school  
24 system would do, our board also does, along with and  
25 working in coordination with the larger charter

1 authorizing -- or the management company to make sure  
2 that all bases are covered and everything is taken  
3 care of. So there are specific duties that each  
4 board is responsible for, but we make sure that we  
5 overlap those duties and that when something needs to  
6 be approved it's not only approved by the management  
7 organization, it's also approved on the local level  
8 by our Arkansas board here.

9 So I don't know if you have any questions on our  
10 board.

11 MR. BALDWIN: Yes, let me ask on the board if  
12 you could explain the professional experience of your  
13 board members. Are they educators, are they business  
14 people? What is their background? And then, will  
15 you have new board members because of the Springdale  
16 school?

17 SUPT. GAST: Well, the second question first.  
18 Yes, we will definitely have a representative from  
19 the Springdale area that will come from -- a lot of  
20 times it comes from a parent. We don't have staff  
21 members on our board. The president of the board  
22 works for -- or works in Bentonville and is a  
23 professional who also has children in our school. In  
24 the Little Rock area, Dr. Charity Smith, who is the  
25 president or the provost -- I'm not sure what they're

1 calling her -- at Philander College is on our board.  
2 We have an individual who works with youth and who  
3 used to work on staff at Arkansas Baptist, who is now  
4 working somewhere else, but is also on our board.  
5 And then we have a parent in West Little Rock who  
6 serves on our board. And so there's a wide range of  
7 academic as well as professional experience, you  
8 know, on our board.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And all of your board minutes  
10 are posted online?

11 SUPT. GAST: Yes, ma'am. We adhere to  
12 everything that a local school district -- before I  
13 came to work for ResponsiveEd I was a public school  
14 superintendent. And so I have a great deal of  
15 experience in working with boards and the legal type  
16 -- that side of things as far as what should and what  
17 needs to be posted. So, yes, we provide the  
18 notifications; our minutes are posted. We provide on  
19 each one of our sites when we have a meeting. Public  
20 comments are available. We have a room set up in  
21 each school and we publicize if any parent wants to  
22 come and address the board they don't have to drive  
23 to Little Rock to be able to do that; they can go  
24 right to their campus and they can address our board  
25 through -- you know, now through Zoom if they wanted,

1 but it was generally through a phone conversation.  
2 And we've had some parents that have done that over  
3 the course of the time that we've been working with  
4 the board.

5 So we're very, very careful to make sure that  
6 just because -- we firmly believe that just because  
7 we're a charter school doesn't mean that there  
8 shouldn't be certain things that are taken care of  
9 and handled appropriately. And I learned a long time  
10 ago that one of the things you don't do is mess  
11 around with the way things are supposed to be when it  
12 comes to boards and when it comes to posting things,  
13 when it comes to having your minutes available, and  
14 when it comes to being transparent with the running  
15 of your organization.

16 I also am very proud to say that the Department  
17 has sent someone several times. They've come and  
18 they've attended our board meeting, and each time the  
19 Department has said that they're very impressed that  
20 they couldn't tell the difference between a public  
21 school board meeting and our board meeting as far as  
22 how we run things and the things that we do.

23 So we feel very confident and very comfortable  
24 with our organizational structure.

25 MR. BALDWIN: Do you all have a standard board

1 agenda where you have specific topics that you go  
2 over each time? Kind of describe your meeting.

3 SUPT. GAST: Sure.

4 MR. BALDWIN: And maybe also explain maybe some  
5 of the harder issues that the board tackles.

6 SUPT. GAST: Okay. Again, it very much mirrors  
7 what you would see in a public school. We start out  
8 with the president making the comments that, you  
9 know, we have followed all the local and state  
10 regulations as far as posting, that a quorum is  
11 present. We then enter into public comment where we  
12 provide people the opportunity to go ahead and  
13 comment and the board to ask questions. From there  
14 we have a consent agenda, and on that consent agenda  
15 it's, you know, typical -- the minutes from the  
16 previous meeting; you know, those types of things  
17 would be on the consent agenda. Then we're going to  
18 have action items, any particular individual action  
19 items whether they're being -- working with property,  
20 working with budget, working with finance. Anything  
21 that we need an individual vote on would take place  
22 there. From that point we go into reports, and there  
23 will always be a superintendent's report and I will  
24 update the board on anything that's happened between  
25 the two -- you know, the last meeting. Then

1 generally we will either have an academic section  
2 where some of our academic people can get up and do  
3 some presentations; we'll have a finance report,  
4 we'll also have reports from our special programs.  
5 So all our department chairs will generally give a  
6 report on any updates that are needed in a particular  
7 part of the organization. And then, of course,  
8 there's open board discussion, which is one of the  
9 last things, and then if they have any other  
10 questions or anything that they want to bring  
11 forward. And then, of course, there's adjournment.

12 Some of the tougher questions, some of the  
13 tougher things that we as a board have dealt with --  
14 we've been very fortunate in that, you know, one of  
15 the tougher things that a board always deals with are  
16 either personnel issues or grievances that are held  
17 by parents or those types of issues. We have been  
18 very fortunate; in the two-and-a-half, almost three  
19 years that I've been superintendent not a single  
20 parent grievance or student grievance or staff  
21 grievance has come to the board level. Everything  
22 we've been able to do, we've been able to handle, you  
23 know, and there hasn't been many to begin with. But  
24 I think some of the bigger issues are more of -- I  
25 don't know; we haven't had any real, real tough, like

1 I said, kinds of issues. It's more of making sure  
2 that we have a solid 5- and 10-year plan, that we're  
3 reviewing what we want to accomplish, where we want  
4 to expand to, why we want to go there, what types of  
5 schools would be best serving the particular  
6 communities.

7 So a lot of our discussion time is spent on we  
8 feel like we have -- especially like the Premier High  
9 School, we feel like we have a tremendous school to  
10 offer communities because it targets such a  
11 population that is a lot of times lost; that our  
12 biggest challenge is reining in where we want to be  
13 and where we want to go, and doing it in a respectful  
14 -- not respectful -- in a reasonable fashion that is  
15 responsible financially as well as responsive to  
16 those particular communities. So I think that's  
17 probably our biggest challenge is being smart about  
18 what we do and where we go forward.

19 And we're also very cognizant of -- we're proud  
20 of the fact that we are a charter school that every  
21 audit we have had there have been zero findings in  
22 those audits, and that we take our finances and  
23 making sure that our schools, when we open them, are  
24 fiscally sound and that we don't run into -- because  
25 you know as well as I do that the majority of



1           charters that end up closing close for two reasons:  
2           it's either financial or it's management. And, you  
3           know, those are the two big reasons, and we feel like  
4           it's important for us to have an extremely strong  
5           handle on that. And I think you can see from the  
6           financials that are presented -- Ms. Stephens, who's  
7           our Director of Finance, she actually gets contacted  
8           by several charters, as well as by the Department,  
9           from time to time asking for certain information or  
10          how to do certain things or going through it, because  
11          we are very much set on making sure we do it the  
12          right way. The last thing I want is questions from  
13          you as to why is this or why is that or if it doesn't  
14          look like it's supposed to look. And we have the  
15          people in place to make sure that that happens.

16                 DR. WILLIAMS: Good morning. Can you hear me  
17                 now? Can you hear me? I have a question. First of  
18                 all, I want to make sure can you hear me?

19                 SUPT. GAST: Yes, sir.

20                 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.

21                 I noticed in Section 3 of the application  
22                 there's some compensation being provided for some  
23                 board members and other members of the organization.  
24                 Could you address that, please?

25                 SUPT. GAST: I'm not sure I -- I'd have to look

1 at that, what the compensation -- well, we provide  
2 the board members with a laptop for, you know, for  
3 school business. But as far as actual compensation,  
4 we'll look it up here right now --

5 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

6 SUPT. GAST: -- because I'm not aware of what --

7 DR. WILLIAMS: I'll give you a page number too.  
8 It's on page 9. It lists just the following  
9 individuals, specifically identified by name, in  
10 Section A above receive compensation or benefits from  
11 ResponsiveEd or -- now it lists some of those who are  
12 just, you know, like, you know, Chief Executive  
13 Officer, Chief Operating; that makes sense. But also  
14 there's one, two, three, four board members listed  
15 also. And this is on page 9 of the application.

16 MR. FELTON: Dr. Williams, if I'm understanding  
17 what you're looking at, I think it's A, B or C -- am  
18 I not correct -- instead of all of the above?

19 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes, in Section A. Yes.

20 MR. FELTON: Yes. So it's one of A, B or C;  
21 right? Not all of the above. And I think what  
22 you're reading is receives compensation or --  
23 directly or indirectly from the entity or the  
24 individual, but there are two other criteria that  
25 meet that. So I guess are you asking if any of these

1 individuals meet criteria -- I mean meet the things  
2 for criteria A?

3 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. That would be the right way  
4 to phrase the question.

5 SUPT. GAST: Yeah. And in that particular list  
6 the only ones that are in part of that "A" would be  
7 myself, the CEO, Robert Davis, and James Taylor.  
8 Some of those that are listed in the corporate office  
9 are in there that we listed as -- to be transparent.  
10 But as far as number -- or letter A, the individual  
11 board members that we have were listed for that  
12 particular reason under that section.

13 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.

14 Also, just a follow-up question: I actually live  
15 here in Springdale. In looking at -- how do you  
16 propose to actually reach out to the Latino  
17 population? I notice in your bar graph you have  
18 African Americans, you have Hispanic; you did mention  
19 Marshallese in your discussion. But anything  
20 specific that you all are going to -- strategies  
21 you're going to use for the outreach there?

22 MR. FELTON: Yes. So one of the things that  
23 we'll make sure is -- we're already working -- we've  
24 printed material in English, Spanish, and  
25 Marshallese, because we are aware that is the three

1 dominant languages in the community. We also are  
2 working with a Hispanic liaison, as well as the  
3 office -- the Consulate of Marshall Island to make  
4 sure that -- they're basically helping us get  
5 translators and helping us with the outreach as far  
6 as what individuals and areas are currently serving  
7 the groups, and then also able to pair us with  
8 nonprofit organizations as well. So it's  
9 communication channels, making sure the  
10 communications are accessible to all people, and then  
11 at the same time working with those individuals that  
12 already work with these populations.

13 DR. WILLIAMS: Good. Thank you.

14 BOARD MEMBER VACANCIES

15 MS. HYATT: So just one small thing to talk  
16 about here on this section of waivers -- they've  
17 requested a waiver of Arkansas Code 6-13-612 which  
18 basically says that if a board member is convicted of  
19 a felony, a vacancy will occur on the board. It's my  
20 opinion that they only need a waiver of Section C of  
21 that law which requires them to fill the vacancy how  
22 it says in law, which clearly they don't because they  
23 don't have an elected board. But the A and B parts  
24 of that law are the parts that say if someone is  
25 convicted of a felony a vacancy will exist on your

1 board, and then Section B is the prosecutor will  
2 notify the board if someone is convicted of a felony.  
3 So if they wish to move forward with that waiver  
4 request I would like a little bit more information,  
5 because there wasn't a lot of information about that  
6 piece and their rationale for the waiver.

7 MR. WALTER: Madam Chair, this is Tripp Walter,  
8 Staff Attorney with APSRC. May I be recognized?

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes, you're recognized.

10 MR. WALTER: Thank you. I can address Ms.  
11 Hyatt's concern. Based upon the comments received,  
12 the applicant wishes to amend its request for a  
13 waiver of Arkansas Code Annotated Section 6-13-612 to  
14 a waiver of only 6-13-612(c).

15 MS. HYATT: That was easy.

16 MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS/GENERAL BUSINESS MANAGER

17 MS. HYATT: So I'm going to move on to the third  
18 set of waivers which has to do with their Business  
19 Manager. So they've asked for a waiver of the  
20 Minimum Qualifications for General Business Managers.  
21 The rationale behind the waiver request was that  
22 their business manager also operates as a business  
23 manager for some of their other schools. But when I  
24 was reviewing the law and the rules that they've  
25 requested, there's nothing in there that requires the

1 General Business Manager to be a fulltime employee  
2 that I saw. So if they want to move forward with the  
3 waiver, I would like to know things like does this  
4 person have the certification from the Arkansas  
5 School Business Officials or the Arkansas Association  
6 of School Business Officials as required by law and  
7 rule; if not, what type of certification and training  
8 do they have. Because, as Mr. Gast pointed out, a  
9 lot of the charter schools that we do see get revoked  
10 or fail is because of some sort of financial issue;  
11 so we want to make sure that that piece is strong.

12 MR. WALTER: Tripp Walter, APSRC again.

13 Again, as Ms. Hyatt said, the reason we  
14 initially asked for the waiver is to make sure that  
15 we wouldn't run afoul of any laws or regulations with  
16 having Ms. Stephens serve as the business manager for  
17 all the various RES campuses in Arkansas. Upon  
18 determination that that was not going to be a legal  
19 issue, then we will rescind this waiver request and  
20 state affirmatively that Ms. Stephens, who holds that  
21 position, does meet the minimum requirements and  
22 qualifications [audio distortion] business manager.

23 CLASS SIZE AND TEACHING LOAD

24 MS. HYATT: The next set of waivers, there are  
25 no legal issues with them but just to give them an

1 opportunity to kind of explain how they use them, are  
2 the waivers for Class Size and Teaching Load. So if  
3 you guys want to give a little info?

4 MR. FELTON: So Class Size and Teaching Load  
5 gives us the ability to be able to be innovative in  
6 our scheduling to -- you can imagine us having the  
7 demand of credit recovery, students that are trying  
8 to take traditional courses as well. So it allows us  
9 to be innovative and flexible in our scheduling. And  
10 we're still using the traditional master schedule.  
11 It just gives us the flexibility to be able to serve  
12 the students and be able to put the students in the  
13 necessary courses that we need to, and the teachers  
14 as well.

15 MS. HYATT: If there aren't any questions on  
16 that, I'll move on.

17 CURRICULUM, GRADING AND CREDIT HOURS

18 MS. HYATT: So the fifth set of waivers has to  
19 do with Curriculum, Grading and Credit Hours.  
20 They've already explained a lot of this in their  
21 presentation. But a couple of things -- the first,  
22 very easy, they've asked for a waiver of the Uniform  
23 Grading Scale so that they can award credit  
24 differently than the 90 to 100 is an A. In order to  
25 effectuate that waiver they need a waiver of Section

1           2-2.01 of the rules governing Grading and Course  
2           Credit, which is identical to what's in the law that  
3           they've requested. So if I could just get  
4           confirmation that they'd like to add that to their  
5           waiver list?

6           MR. WALTER: Tripp Walter, APSRC.

7           Yes, we will make that confirmation that we wish  
8           to add that section 2-2.01 of the DESE rules  
9           governing Grading and Course Credit to effectuate the  
10          waiver. We will also withdraw our request for a  
11          waiver of Standards for Accreditation rule section 1-  
12          A.3 and, as requested, the legal comments confirm  
13          that RES Premier/Springdale will provide and teach  
14          all 22 hours of credits required for graduation.

15          MS. HYATT: That was so efficient, Tripp.

16          So just because they are asking for a waiver of  
17          the 38 required to be offered, even though they are  
18          confirming that they're going to meet the 22  
19          graduation requirements I think it would be helpful  
20          for them to just explain why they're doing that  
21          because it's not a very common waiver. They do hold  
22          it at their other schools, and it's not an issue at  
23          all, but just so that you guys have the information.

24          MR. FELTON: So one of the things that we've  
25          noticed is a lot of our students, because they are



1           older in coming to the high school and they only need  
2           a couple of credits left, that they typically only  
3           need two or three credits to graduate. And so what  
4           we want to do is focus on the things that the  
5           students need to graduate, but we do offer -- you'll  
6           see an application, a myriad of courses, and so if a  
7           student is interested in taking a course, we don't  
8           prevent a student from having that ability. But we  
9           do want to focus on the things students do need to  
10          graduate and we are guaranteeing we offer those  
11          graduation requirements.

12                               FLAG DISPLAY

13               MS. HYATT: So I'm going to skip Section 6 which  
14               just has to do with Flag Display. That's really  
15               common when charter schools are leasing facilities  
16               they may not be able to display the Arkansas and  
17               United States flags as required by law. So unless  
18               there are any questions, I'm going to skip that.

19               SIX-HOUR INSTRUCTIONAL DAY, SCHOOL START DATE,  
20               GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAMS, NON-INSTRUCTIONAL

21               DUTY TIME FOR TEACHERS, PLANNING PERIODS, AND DUTY-FREE LUNCH

22               MS. HYATT: We'll move on to number 7 and 8, and  
23               they may want to just talk about these together since  
24               there are no legal issues. But they've asked for  
25               waivers of the Six-Hour Instructional Day and School

1 Start Date, as well as the Gifted and Talented  
2 Programs, Non-Instructional Duty Time for Teachers,  
3 Planning Periods, and Duty-Free Lunch; So those are  
4 three sets of waivers. I'll let them just kind of  
5 address them together because I'm sure it's a related  
6 rationale.

7 MR. FELTON: So once again we want -- we're  
8 seeking the ability to be innovative in our  
9 scheduling for our teachers and our staff. One of  
10 the things in talking about the Gifted and Talented  
11 Program, we've rolled out our Premier Prep Program  
12 which allows students to take advanced placement  
13 courses; it also allows students to take concurrent  
14 courses as well. Everything we do, remember, is on  
15 an individualized basis. So we've had -- you saw  
16 kind of the first slide talking about the college  
17 hours earned, the industry-based certifications  
18 earned; that's kind of where you see that kicks in.  
19 As we identify students that meet the necessary  
20 criteria, we are encouraging those students to start  
21 working on high school -- I mean start working on  
22 college credit and getting those involved advanced  
23 placement courses through Virtual Arkansas, Arkansas  
24 School of Math, Science and Arts.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have questions about a

1 typical student's day.

2 MR. FELTON: Oh, I'm sorry; I didn't address  
3 that.

4 So when you think about it, we do have students  
5 that are fulltime employees and students that have --  
6 that are parents. And so one of the things that  
7 we've rolled out in particular for our upper classmen  
8 that have -- let's say I'm a student, I need two  
9 credits to graduate. You know, we do feel like we're  
10 doing a disservice if I go out and recruit a student  
11 who's working fulltime, that's 18 years old, that  
12 needs two credits to graduate, and try to make them  
13 sit in school for eight hours. So that gives us the  
14 ability to be innovative with that schedule to make  
15 students feel like I don't have to give up this  
16 opportunity I have with work in order to pursue my  
17 high school diploma.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So are students able to come  
19 in -- are they working like -- coming in maybe later  
20 in the afternoon, earlier in the morning?

21 MR. FELTON: So they do have that flexibility.  
22 We have some students that have kids that are coming  
23 in later in the day. The campus opens at 7:30 and  
24 closes at 4:00. And so we'll have some students that  
25 come in early because that's maybe when they have

1 childcare or maybe they're working in the afternoon,  
2 and vice-versa; we have some students that are maybe  
3 working in the morning or they have to take care of a  
4 child in the morning, so they come later in the day.  
5 But we time-stamp everything as far as the time the  
6 students are spending and every student's schedule is  
7 different. And this is not a, you know, "just  
8 because I want to do it" type deal; there's a kind of  
9 vetting process where they sit down with  
10 administration, kind of go through this  
11 justification, showing all this documentation to  
12 support you trying to have this type of schedule.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And can the students work  
14 independently or -- and remotely?

15 MR. FELTON: They can. So we have some -- we do  
16 use the Learning Management System, Bright Thinker  
17 courses, which allow students to assist their  
18 coursework when they're not on campus as well. And  
19 so that helps because we'll have some students that,  
20 you know, maybe I cannot come to school today because  
21 I have childcare and I have a sick child. And we  
22 don't want to ultimately hinder that student from  
23 being able to make progress to go forward, and that's  
24 when they tap into our Learning Management System.  
25 So it kind of has helped us amongst all this time of

1 everything going virtual to already be equipped to  
2 have those resources for students.

3 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: You mentioned earlier in  
4 your presentation that you are planning to partner  
5 with Northwest Technical Institute for your CTE  
6 courses. Can you kind of give a little bit more  
7 detail on what that plan looks like? Is it something  
8 that you've done before in other schools? And then,  
9 can you give us a little bit of idea of what those  
10 outcomes look like for those students that went to  
11 that type of plan?

12 MR. FELTON: So what we're trying to do with  
13 Northwest Technical Institute is similar to what you  
14 see when you start partnering with people like The  
15 Excel Center, ABC, Pulaski Tech, and get students  
16 involved in industry-based certifications. One of  
17 the things we've kind of noticed, you'll find a  
18 student, you know, who's 17, 18 years old and they  
19 haven't graduated from high school; they need two or  
20 three credits, but they've already completed all of  
21 their CTE coursework. And so for that student they  
22 shouldn't stop, right, because they haven't earned a  
23 high school diploma. Even though they've fulfilled  
24 all their CTE credits, they still need some kind of  
25 support as far as postsecondary guidance. And so

1           what we've looked at is, okay, how do we try to not  
2           only open up a CTE program and operate a CTE program  
3           that's relevant to the community, but how do we put  
4           something in students' hands that literally -- hey,  
5           I'm only two credits away from graduating, this is my  
6           last year; you know, I don't have time to do a full-  
7           fledged CTE program; however, if I can do a year  
8           program, six-month program, six-week program to get  
9           me a certification that I can take tomorrow and put  
10          in an employer's hands, then it's more attractive to  
11          students and we feel like it's giving them more tools  
12          on their tool belt in the situation they're in. But  
13          we've noticed a lot of students, they've already  
14          knocked out their CTE courses; they're missing  
15          chemistry, English 11, English 12, English. And so  
16          we don't want to say, "Okay, you only need English 12  
17          and chemistry and you're going to be great." No,  
18          we've got to do better than that. You know, we  
19          should be aiming well beyond the high school. And so  
20          I'm excited that Northwest Technical Institute has  
21          the resources to be able to provide this source for  
22          free, and so that's what's exciting.

23                 And I think what we're looking at is we're not  
24                 only bridging a gap where students are able to be  
25                 involved in this type of program while they're in

1 high school, but then ultimately we're kind of  
2 teasing them a little bit; right? We're creating an  
3 appetite for postsecondary learning which could  
4 ultimately get them to start earning college credit.

5 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So when you've done this  
6 in other places what have been some of the outcomes  
7 for those students, like the success rate of them  
8 being able to go for this type of abbreviated plan  
9 or, you know, kind of a modified system and then have  
10 the ability to earn those certifications, and then  
11 their placement?

12 MR. FELTON: So we're growing in this area, but  
13 I will say -- you know, I mentioned 74 students that  
14 are involved -- that are currently enrolled in  
15 college, military, these types of programs. The most  
16 recent thing I'll talk about that we just kind of  
17 implemented is the forklift certification program.  
18 And it's pretty cool. It's one of those things you  
19 kind of overlook, you know, forklift operator  
20 certification. But you've got industries like Wal-  
21 Mart and your Targets and your big manufacturers that  
22 are looking for individuals that are ready to employ  
23 that have that certification. So it is exciting to  
24 see these individuals go and earn this certification  
25 and then -- now these individuals are working for

1           these manufacturers right here in Pulaski County,  
2           making \$21.00, \$23.00 an hour. Without that  
3           certification they would've come in making \$17.00,  
4           \$18.00 an hour. And so we're just trying to get  
5           better.

6           As we've been in the Springdale community, we're  
7           spending time about transportation, poultry,  
8           agriculture, some things that -- what's going to fit  
9           the community. Because it's not about what we're  
10          doing in all our schools; as well we want to make  
11          sure that we're preparing students to serve in their  
12          community.

13          MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And so when you guys had  
14          your -- like your -- I guess your focus groups in  
15          Springdale, were those people a part of the  
16          discussion, outside of Northwest Technical Institute,  
17          to be able to share with you what are going to be  
18          some of those things that students should be working  
19          towards?

20          MR. FELTON: Yeah, and it was pretty fun. We've  
21          had time spending with the workforce, Chamber of  
22          Commerce who played a lot of role with the Economic  
23          Development, as well as playing a role and working  
24          with the workforce as well. And then when you think  
25          about individuals outside Northwest Technical



1           Institute that are working in the workforce in  
2           Springdale -- and so they've noticed that, okay,  
3           yeah, our students are graduating from high school,  
4           but students are missing soft-skills as well. And so  
5           we've taken a lot of that -- not just, okay, students  
6           should be working on those certifications, but what  
7           are really things that students are missing coming  
8           into the workplace. And we've seen a trend. There's  
9           a trend of soft-skills -- you know, how do we get  
10          them to respect authority, how do we get them to show  
11          up to work on time, how do we get them to take  
12          ownership of their work, how do we get them to work  
13          well with others to accomplish goals.

14                               PERSONNEL POLICIES

15               MS. HYATT: Okay. Moving on to the next set of  
16               waivers, this has to do with Personnel Policies.  
17               There are some things you need to work out here, but  
18               I thought it might be better if they explained first  
19               and then we did the working out of the issues after  
20               -- how they -- because this is a pretty expansive  
21               waiver request. So how they do their at-will  
22               employment as opposed to contracts, what their  
23               grievance procedure is like, and how they do their  
24               personnel policies so that you guys have that  
25               information. And then afterwards we'll work through

1           some of the remaining issues on this piece.

2           MR. FELTON: I'm going to pick on Tripp on this  
3           one.

4           MR. WALTER: Essentially -- Tripp Walter, APSRC.  
5           Essentially, the concept as I understand it  
6           behind RES's personnel policy system is, first and  
7           foremost, they want to develop with their waivers a  
8           Teacher Fair Dismissal Act and Public Employee Fair  
9           Hearing Act. They want to create an at-will  
10          environment so that if they see that there are  
11          problems in performance, especially those that are  
12          affecting student achievement, they have the  
13          opportunity to make corrections in their personnel  
14          and remove and replace personnel very quickly so they  
15          can head-off whatever issues are flowing from that.

16          I think Mr. Felton will have to address more on  
17          the grievance procedure part in particular.

18          But the reason for the waivers in this area is  
19          while we certainly want to have the opportunity for  
20          -- pardon me -- for individuals to present their  
21          grievances, we want the flexibility under the  
22          statutes to be able to craft that in such a way that  
23          it doesn't erode the value of their at-will  
24          employment waiver, so they can maintain that system.

25          SUPT. GAST: I'd also like to add to that that

1 the grievance procedure that we have in place, of  
2 course, is set forth in our employee manual. But we  
3 do have a process of grievance and there are stages  
4 and steps. Included in our organizational plan you  
5 will see that one of the responsibilities of our  
6 board is if the grievance isn't satisfied at the  
7 lower levels it can come up and be heard by the  
8 school board. So in no way is the waiver asking us  
9 to circumvent a system that is fair for parents, as  
10 well as for employees when it comes to a grievance  
11 type procedure. So we still do follow all those  
12 different things. There's a form that is filled out,  
13 there are the steps and there are the levels of the  
14 hearings, and the due-diligence as far as researching  
15 it and trying to resolve those conflicts at the  
16 lowest levels. But there is a process and procedure  
17 in place. If that needs to go all the way up to the  
18 school board, it can do that.

19 MR. BALDWIN: Are the policies and procedures  
20 that you guys want to use consistent throughout all  
21 your schools?

22 SUPT. GAST: Yes.

23 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. So it's been tested --

24 SUPT. GAST: Yes, sir.

25 MR. BALDWIN: -- in various different settings?

1           SUPT. GAST: Yes, sir. Now there are different  
2           -- you know, with different models there are going to  
3           be some different things or some different waivers  
4           that might apply to one that may not apply to the  
5           other. But as far as procedurally, those, they're  
6           the same for every campus.

7           MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

8           SUPT. GAST: For every district.

9           MS. HYATT: Just a couple of kind of clean-up  
10          here -- and I'm sure, Tripp, you can jump in. But my  
11          recommendation would be to add 6-17-204, 205, 208,  
12          209, and 201(c). And what these provisions are is  
13          incorporating the policies into teacher contracts,  
14          which they don't have because they're an at-will  
15          employer; personnel policy committees, which they  
16          also don't have; traditional grievance procedures,  
17          which they've just explained; and then 201(c) has to  
18          do with what's in the policies, which also require  
19          some of the things that they've requested waivers of  
20          to be in policy so that would match.

21                 So I just -- if they've got questions about that  
22          or if they want to confirm that they'd like to add  
23          those waivers?

24          MR. WALTER: Tripp Walter, APSRC.

25                 We have no [audio distortion] in which to

1 confirm the waiver request as stated.

2 MS. HYATT: The other kind of two pieces I would  
3 just ask for some additional rationale -- so 6-17-  
4 2301, they've asked for the whole statute which  
5 mirrors 6-17-201 that says you have to have policies  
6 -- 201 says you have to have policies for teachers,  
7 2301 says you have to have policies for your  
8 classified staff. I understand the need to have a  
9 waiver of 2301(c) which, again, has to do with the  
10 things that have to be in the policies, which -- a  
11 lot of which they have waivers from. But just the  
12 rest of the statute requiring them to have those  
13 policies, I don't know that a rationale has been  
14 provided for that.

15 MR. WALTER: Tripp Walter, APSRC.

16 And given the fact that, as Ms. Hyatt said,  
17 201(c) and 2301 basically mirror each other -- and  
18 that is -- that was our objective is to have the  
19 flexibility to prepare, as Mr. Gast -- Superintendent  
20 Gast mentioned, comprehensive and thorough personnel  
21 policies but not necessarily perhaps those which are  
22 more suited to public school districts -- we will  
23 amend our waiver request there to just 6-17-2301(c).

24 POSTED DOCUMENTS

25 MS. HYATT: And the last clean-up here is

1           there's a waiver request for Section 5.01.4 of the  
2           rules governing Documents Posted to School District  
3           and Education Service Cooperative Websites. I gave  
4           those rules that title and I really should have  
5           shortened that title. That piece is the requirement  
6           to post salary schedules on the website. It doesn't  
7           have to be the salary schedule as defined in law,  
8           just whatever salary schedule the school is using.

9           So maybe, Tripp, you could address the need for  
10          that waiver?

11          MR. WALTER: Yes. I think the need for that  
12          waiver no longer exists given the change in the rules  
13          for the posting of salary schedules. And certainly  
14          we intend to post, so we would withdraw that request  
15          for that particular section of the rules.

16          MS. HYATT: And just kind of a heads-up to the  
17          Panel, those rules changed pretty significantly two  
18          months ago. So probably all of the applicants are  
19          going to have to address those rules, because they  
20          used to have a lot of information that they don't  
21          have anymore.

22                           SALARIES AND COMPENSATION

23          MS. HYATT: So if there are no questions on  
24          that, I'll move into the next set of waivers which  
25          have to do with Salaries and Compensation. They

1 mostly have addressed those in their previous  
2 comments. So just to clear up one piece, they've  
3 asked for a waiver of 6-21-303(b) which says that  
4 districts have to provide money to teachers for  
5 things in their classrooms for grades K-6. If they  
6 don't have grades K-6, they wouldn't be required to  
7 do that. Premier is not going to have grades K-6, so  
8 I don't see a need for a waiver. So I'll let Tripp  
9 --

10 MR. WALTER: We'll withdraw that request.

11 PRINCIPAL

12 MS. HYATT: Okay. Moving on to their Principal  
13 waivers, they've asked for a waiver here of 6-17-302;  
14 (a) is the piece that has licensure requirements; (b)  
15 and (c) really deal with how the principal is  
16 governed, so they're governed by the policies of the  
17 board and they report to the superintendent. So I  
18 don't see a need for those waivers. Of course, there  
19 might be, but they might want to provide some  
20 additional information about how their administration  
21 is set up to give rationale to a waiver of those  
22 sections.

23 MR. WALTER: A couple of comments, one just in  
24 general that I perhaps should've spoken to earlier --  
25 I think a lot of the delineation or reduction of

1 parts of this particular section is a change, I  
2 guess, in practice so-to-speak from the last time in  
3 which -- or when RES received its original charters.  
4 These are charter -- I mean these are waivers that  
5 are kind of consistent throughout the program. And I  
6 think in prior years it was more the practice that  
7 the applicant was encouraged to ask for a whole  
8 section rather than piecing it out, so that I think  
9 is what you're seeing with some of this.

10 So in line with that, as to the Principal piece,  
11 given that the licensure piece of that is the prime  
12 concern, we'll amend that request to a request of 6-  
13 17-302(a).

14 STUDENT SERVICES

15 LIBRARY/MEDIA

16 MS. HYATT: The next set of waivers is kind of  
17 expansive, so we can take it in a couple of pieces.  
18 But it has to do with Student Services, which  
19 includes library/media programs, guidance counseling  
20 programs, health services, and facilities. So I'm  
21 going to break this down and start with the Library/  
22 Media.

23 So they want to provide some additional  
24 information about how they are providing the library/  
25 media program, and then we can address any remaining



1 concerns on that piece.

2 MR. FELTON: Well, as you saw in the  
3 presentation, the school is seeking the ability to  
4 operate an innovation hub, which to me goes above and  
5 beyond what you would see in a traditional media  
6 center. And also we're looking to not necessarily  
7 housing as many books on campus, but also having the  
8 ability to provide students with digital books; that  
9 way they can access those books from school, from  
10 home, or anywhere.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Will there be someone to  
12 assist the students in selection and --

13 MR. FELTON: That is correct. So typically what  
14 we do is we will take the -- once again, the ability  
15 with our schedule and being innovative in using staff  
16 members that are rotating in that space to be able to  
17 support students. So someone will be employed.

18 MS. HYATT: So the first piece on this, it falls  
19 in line with what Tripp just mentioned, is really I  
20 think this should be narrowed under the Library/Media  
21 to just 6-25-103 and 104. The other pieces in that  
22 subchapter deal with having a retention policy,  
23 having a policy for when someone challenges some type  
24 of media that you have, having resources that  
25 contribute to lifelong learning and are varied in

1           their interests and different levels of resources, as  
2           well as the legislative intent. 26-25-103 and 104  
3           are related pieces I think that they've provided a  
4           rationale for. Along those same lines, they've asked  
5           for a waiver of 2-D.1 in the Standards, which is the  
6           district has to annually budget and expend sufficient  
7           resources to purchase and maintain an appropriate  
8           balance of print, non-print, and electronic media  
9           that's adequate in quality and quantity to meet the  
10          academic needs of their students. So I don't think  
11          -- based on what they've said and the information  
12          they've provided, it seems like they're meeting that  
13          standard. So I don't necessarily see the need for a  
14          waiver there.

15                 So, Tripp, if you have some comments on those  
16          pieces?

17                 MR. WALTER: [No sound, on mute]

18                 MS. HYATT: You're on mute.

19                 MR. WALTER: Sorry about that.

20                 So did you want me to address Library/Media,  
21          Counseling, Health, and Facilities, or just the first  
22          two at this time?

23                 MS. HYATT: Just Library/Media, please.

24                 MR. WALTER: Okay, just Library/Media. All  
25          right. Again, a continuation of the old waiver

1 requests back in the time when you -- when it was  
2 common to ask for everything so-to-speak, et seq.,  
3 the whole section area. Upon review, then the  
4 applicant can cover what it needs to do through the  
5 flexibility of how it provides the library/media  
6 program and the ability to hire an individual who may  
7 not be a licensed library/media specialist but  
8 provides quality services to the job. So we will  
9 offer to withdraw our request of 6-25-105 and 106 and  
10 Standard for Accreditation Section 2-D.1.

11 MS. HYATT: Also 102 and 101, Tripp, the  
12 legislative intent and the title?

13 MR. WALTER: Yes. We will withdraw those as  
14 well.

15 MS. HYATT: Okay.

16 SCHOOL COUNSELING

17 MS. HYATT: So on the School Counseling, this is  
18 also in kind of the same set of waivers. I think it  
19 would be helpful if they provided some information to  
20 you about how they provide those services to their  
21 students, and then we can do the housekeeping.

22 MR. FELTON: So we have a college and career  
23 coach that works hand-in-hand with our administration  
24 to make sure that we're covering all the things the  
25 students need, the support that they need to be

1           successful. Our rationale, really it's about the  
2           licensure piece. We plan to continue to adhere to  
3           all the things -- I think it's school counseling --  
4           am I saying that correctly? We're going to adhere to  
5           all those things. We're just seeking the licensure  
6           piece; that way, we can hire an individual that we  
7           feel like could best support in that role. And we  
8           like to brag that our college and career coach is not  
9           spending the time doing administrative duties,  
10          administrative tasks; they spend the time outreaching  
11          and getting students involved in these post-secondary  
12          things, like college representatives coming in,  
13          colleges and businesses, and things of that nature.

14               CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Are those coaches trained to  
15              assist kids with their social-emotional health?

16               MR. FELTON: Yes. So we -- from a district  
17              perspective, we've been working hand-in-hand with  
18              other vendors and we also -- our Texas office as well  
19              is providing resources. And here lately we've really  
20              been excited and we're using this program called  
21              Everfi, which is really cool and it allows them to  
22              get students engaged in these real-life lessons as  
23              well. And so we'll continue to -- as we identify --  
24              like here about a few months ago, we had a training,  
25              Trauma-Informed Youth. And so as much as we can get

1           them involved in that type of rich training, high-  
2           quality professional development, we get them  
3           involved in it as well.

4           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: It seems like the clientele  
5           may have a lot of stress. So I would expect that  
6           someone is on staff to assist students in  
7           understanding how to cope with that stress, how to  
8           work through it and still keep their goals in front  
9           of them?

10          MR. FELTON: That is correct.

11          MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I have a -- I saw in the  
12          application that they are a bachelor degreed  
13          individual with some additional technical  
14          certification. Can you give a little bit more detail  
15          on what that additional above the bachelors that the  
16          individual in that position would have to be able to  
17          strongly support a student for their college and  
18          career plans?

19          MR. FELTON: I'll say this -- I think that  
20          varies per individual, because we are talking about  
21          Candace. We're kind of looking at that background,  
22          that experience. Funny that you asked that question,  
23          because last year, this past school year we hired an  
24          individual who was actually a licensed therapist  
25          looking for something different. She kind of felt

1 the program spoke to her heart. And so it's funny, I  
2 never -- even when she came in for the interview I  
3 was like, "All right. Have you kind of looked at,  
4 you know, the position," things of this nature. But  
5 most importantly, it's interesting because you find  
6 these people that -- she's not driven by money, she's  
7 not driven by the ability to serve all students; she  
8 was very interested in this forgotten population of  
9 students and wanted to serve the school. And so  
10 sometimes you do get lucky and you'll have  
11 individuals that are over-qualified for the position.

12 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So are there opportunities  
13 through the school that you guys support for your  
14 college and career coach to get additional  
15 professional development or training that will  
16 enhance their ability to support students that -- we  
17 know that if they're at Premier or they have some  
18 additional challenges then they probably need a  
19 little bit stronger guidance in the process of being  
20 able to identify that appropriate path. So is there  
21 --

22 MR. FELTON: Yes, we do provide high-quality  
23 professional development. And like I said, we really  
24 try to reach out to individuals and organizations  
25 that have more resources to provide them with. One

1           that stands to mind right now is the Clemson  
2           University. I don't know if you're familiar with the  
3           National Dropout Prevention Center --

4                   MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Uh-huh.

5                   MR. FELTON: -- which has a whole -- a lot of  
6           good, rich professional development and resources  
7           that we get them involved with, as well as bring to  
8           the campus level.

9                   MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

10                  MR. FELTON: And again keep in mind we don't  
11           have just one school, and so we're able to  
12           collaborate with other resources that we have at our  
13           other schools. And so we get multiple individuals in  
14           the room, right, that are talking about some of these  
15           same or similar stories, similar issues. And I think  
16           in the 21st century today we have to stay abreast of  
17           that as they change.

18                  SUPT. GAST: And let me add that we are very  
19           encouraging of our people that when they do come to  
20           us and say, "Hey, you know" -- because oftentimes  
21           they'll find a staff development, and as long as it's  
22           not like in Tahiti or Hawaii or something like that  
23           we're very, very interested in doing that. Matter of  
24           fact, and we seek a great deal of outside funding,  
25           different grants and different other types of funding

1           that might be available so that when the opportunity  
2           does arise for these staff members that we're taking  
3           and making every possible opportunity available to  
4           them, you know, to be able to do those things and to  
5           work with those kids. Because you're right, it is  
6           high stress, which is also another reason why Premier  
7           is so neat in that we try and take some of that type  
8           of eight hours worth of public school type of stress,  
9           take that out of the equation to begin with so that  
10          student can concentrate more on the particular  
11          studies that they need to go ahead and get that  
12          diploma. And so we -- you'll find our college  
13          coaches do a lot of different things, including  
14          before all this Covid thing happened, sometimes --  
15          I'm aware of situations where the student would bring  
16          their kids and our staff would help watch that  
17          student for an hour so that that particular -- or  
18          watch the kid so the student could actually get their  
19          work done. And so we are strongly encouraging of  
20          that and hope very much that we secure the types of  
21          necessary funds needed to provide additional training  
22          for them; because, as Dennis was saying, these folks  
23          aren't in it for the money but they are in it to  
24          become really good at what they do and to help those  
25          kids. And so when they come to us and have an idea



1 of something they want to do we, of course, want to  
2 be as absolutely supportive as we can, you know, for  
3 them and provide the funds necessary for them to go  
4 get that additional training.

5 HEALTH AND FACILITIES

6 MS. HYATT: Okay. The last two pieces under  
7 Student Services are related to Health and  
8 Facilities. So they have requested a waiver of 6-A.2  
9 which requires each public school district to adopt  
10 and implement school safety policies in accordance  
11 with the laws in the state of Arkansas. And I don't  
12 -- would like some additional rationale on the waiver  
13 request there and on 2-E.2 which requires each public  
14 school and district to maintain appropriate materials  
15 and expertise to reasonably insure the safety of all  
16 students, employees, and visitors. So if they could  
17 provide some information about the need for those  
18 waivers that would be helpful.

19 MR. WALTER: Tripp Walter.

20 Upon further review, we will withdraw those  
21 waiver requests.

22 EDUCATOR LICENSURE

23 MS. HYATT: The last piece on the waivers --  
24 there are no remaining legal issues here, but just to  
25 give them an opportunity to explain the need for the

1 waiver is the Educator Licensure waiver section.

2 Also a very common charter waiver, but I'm sure that  
3 they have some good information about how they hire  
4 highly qualified teachers that they can share with  
5 you.

6 MR. FELTON: So I just want to confirm that we  
7 do make sure teachers that we are hiring do meet  
8 Arkansas highly qualified teacher requirements, and  
9 we like to think that it gives us the ability to hire  
10 those individuals we feel like can best serve our  
11 students. We're talking about a unique model, we're  
12 talking about a unique population of students, and so  
13 we want that ability as we identify individuals who  
14 are well-suited to serve in the school and to be able  
15 to hire those individuals. And as I kind of  
16 previously stated, sometimes you get individuals that  
17 haven't initially started with the education calling  
18 and haven't gotten invested and spent the necessary  
19 time. And to kind of piggyback off your previous  
20 question with counseling, we're excited because every  
21 teacher that comes that is not licensed, that meets  
22 Arkansas highly qualified teacher, the first thing we  
23 think about is what pathway can we get you set up to  
24 get you licensed; if you're going to work for us,  
25 then we're going to invest in and empower you to make

1           sure that we get you certified.

2           SUPT. GAST: And I would like to add, we're  
3           proud of the fact that the majority of our  
4           administrative staff that we have, both at district  
5           office as well as on our campuses, are Arkansas  
6           certified either as administrators -- I'm a certified  
7           superintendent in Arkansas; we have a certified --  
8           Dennis is certified in administration; our campus  
9           directors for the most part are certified. We have  
10          working -- Ms. Bradford is a retired superintendent  
11          in Arkansas here, as well as a principal. And so a  
12          lot of our staff is rich with Arkansas experience and  
13          people that are certified so that -- they're not  
14          people from out-of-state coming to you who don't know  
15          what's going on, you know, in our state of Arkansas,  
16          and are taking care of things. And so that is  
17          important to us and I think it's important for the  
18          Panel to know that a great deal of our administrative  
19          leadership team are educationally certified in the  
20          state of Arkansas.

21          MR. WALTER: Tripp Walter, APSRC.

22          I think there were a couple of outstanding  
23          comments on --

24          MR. FELTON: Okay.

25          MR. WALTER: -- educator licensure.

1 MS. HYATT: Tripp, those were resolved when we  
2 talked about the personnel policies. There was some  
3 overlap between --

4 MR. WALTER: Right.

5 MS. HYATT: They had requested personnel  
6 policies in the teacher licensure --

7 MR. WALTER: Right.

8 MS. HYATT: -- waiver section. But we got them  
9 all cleared up.

10 MR. WALTER: Okay.

11 MS. HYATT: But thanks for double-checking me.

12 MR. WALTER: Sure.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: [inaudible, mic not on]

14 MS. WEBB: Tracy Webb, Charter Unit.

15 The only remaining concern that we have pertains  
16 to their goal statements. So they have a few goal  
17 statements that are difficult to have a measurement  
18 for, such as demonstrate a high level of community  
19 and parent involvement. We're not sure how to define  
20 "high level." Also, when we get to the end of the  
21 cycle how will we measure that. So those are just a  
22 few -- there are a couple of other goals that just  
23 need to be refined for those statements. We don't  
24 necessarily have to do that today, but those will  
25 need to be refined so that we can have a measurement

1 at the end of the cycle.

2 MR. FELTON: I can speak to that, if you want.

3 So we have been working with the Department on  
4 cleaning our goals up. I think the goal is always to  
5 try to create a smart goal that's measurable,  
6 realistic, accurate, at the same time in a time-bound  
7 manner. And so we'll continue working with the  
8 Department on ironing those goals out. We just know  
9 as an institution that that qualitative data is  
10 important to us. You know, yes, we do want to have  
11 the checks and balances in our quantitative data.  
12 But if we're ultimately serving these families and  
13 we're serving these students, then we care about  
14 their involvement and should be -- hold our-self  
15 accountable of holding -- getting them involved in  
16 the process as well.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Panel Members, what  
18 additional questions do you have?

19 Mr. Baldwin.

20 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. Did I see in here that you  
21 guys don't have a location yet, that you're looking  
22 for one, or have you found a spot?

23 SUPT. GAST: Yes and no. I mean yeah, we  
24 haven't identified a specific location; however, we  
25 are actively involved right now in negotiations with

1 a location. The biggest challenge for a charter when  
2 you're not going to open for over a year is to be  
3 able to secure a location and be able to afford to  
4 pay rent for a year when you don't have any, you  
5 know, any revenue coming in. And so we are currently  
6 in negotiation with a particular site there in  
7 Springdale that would provide us with the necessary  
8 room, as well as the layout of the building to make  
9 that happen. So while we don't have one to bring to  
10 the Panel right now, we're very close to actually  
11 nailing that down and having that, and having it far  
12 enough in advance so that any type of modifications  
13 or anything that needs to be done based on city  
14 ordinances and city codes can be taken care of.

15 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. And then as a follow-up, as  
16 you develop your location, I guess it would be large  
17 enough to handle you for how many years? And then  
18 talk to us about your timeline and maybe the first  
19 couple of years of student population. How do you  
20 see this ramping up?

21 SUPT. GAST: Okay, great question. And I'll use  
22 North Little Rock as kind of an example. You know,  
23 our initial -- when we set the initial budget we were  
24 trying to be conservative and we set the budget based  
25 on 70 students. Because, you know, you do all the

1 marketing and everything, but you're never real sure  
2 exactly, you know, what starts coming in the door.  
3 As you can see, at one time we were up to as many as  
4 120 in that location and we ended the year with 115  
5 kids, and so we far exceeded what our first year's  
6 projections would be.

7 And so with Springdale we would -- you know, we  
8 would start out conservative; we would probably do  
9 the same type of model where we would try and get  
10 between 70 to maybe 85 students, but with the  
11 understanding that once the word gets out we'll  
12 probably grow even more than that. So we'll have  
13 capacity for more than that, but we'll be able to  
14 make sure that we have the number of people that we  
15 need in there to be able to make that goal and to --  
16 you know, to make it work. Ultimately our cap is  
17 300.

18 We do not have any Premiers that we know of --  
19 that I know of that are at the 300 mark. We do want  
20 to make sure that we set it high enough that if it  
21 was extremely successful we would go ahead and be  
22 able to accommodate them and not have to come back to  
23 the Panel and ask for an additional 50 or additional  
24 100 kids. But our plan is normally that the school  
25 is going to serve between 100 and 150 students on a

1           daily basis. But, again, we want some room in the  
2           cap just in case we become wildly successful.

3                   And then, you know, this is -- other than Little  
4           Rock and North Little Rock, you know, this is a  
5           rather large school district, and so it's very  
6           difficult to predict exactly the, you know, the  
7           number that are coming in.

8                   And I will tell you that -- I mentioned that I  
9           had public school superintendent experience; I spent  
10          17 years as a public school high school principal.  
11          And I know that there are kids that walk the hallways  
12          of those high schools in Springdale who tell everyone  
13          they're a junior or a senior but they're walking  
14          around with four credits or five credits. They're  
15          not going to graduate, there's no way. And as you  
16          know, you know that in public schools -- and I did  
17          the same thing when I was a principal years ago -- a  
18          kid fails first semester of Algebra I; well, we keep  
19          them in Algebra I and we let them take the second  
20          semester; he fails the second semester, now he's a  
21          year behind in Algebra I. And what do we do his  
22          sophomore year? We put him in Geometry, and then he  
23          takes Geometry, and we also try and give him -- and,  
24          you know, it's just a vicious cycle and the credits  
25          don't accumulate. And so, you know, at any given



1           time, depending on the size of school, you know, you  
2           could have from 50 to 250 kids walking those hallways  
3           that are -- that don't have the credit. What Premier  
4           allows and provides them is the opportunity to come  
5           in and get that credit.

6           And one of the things that we haven't mentioned  
7           is, especially with North Little Rock, we are  
8           extremely -- it doesn't matter to us where the  
9           child's diploma -- if it says it came from North  
10          Little Rock High School, from Har-Ber High School, or  
11          from Premier High School. The important thing is the  
12          kid gets a diploma. And so if a kid is walking the  
13          hallways and he's behind in credit, he comes over to  
14          us and gets -- or she -- and they get caught up and  
15          want to go back to their high school to graduate,  
16          we're excited about that; you know, we want to do  
17          that. And that's where the partnerships and the  
18          understanding between the different schools come into  
19          play in that it doesn't -- you know, our goal is  
20          ultimately for that child to have a high school  
21          diploma. Whether it's from the local public school  
22          or from a charter school is not the issue; the issue  
23          is them getting it.

24          So we want to be that avenue that that student  
25          can use to move from no hope to providing hope. And,

1           you know, a lot of them decide, "Well, I really like  
2           it here; I'm just going to go ahead and graduate from  
3           Premier High School." But a lot -- some may also  
4           want to go back to their local high school, and we  
5           are truly and highly supportive of them doing that as  
6           well.

7           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Williams, do you have any  
8           additional questions?

9           DR. WILLIAMS: I do not.

10          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So my last question is  
11          looking at the rules for annual school performance,  
12          annual school recognition. This school district I  
13          believe meets the requirement of an open-enrollment  
14          public charter school whose mission and enrollment  
15          are primarily focused on students who have dropped  
16          out of high school or identified as at risk of  
17          dropping out of high school. And is that how you see  
18          yourself?

19          MR. FELTON: Yes. And so, Ms. Coffman, I think  
20          you remember; I enjoyed that time we spent several  
21          years ago trying to identify these individual  
22          programs. And I think the work -- we still have work  
23          on the table to be able to develop an accountability  
24          system that really is fair and that is able to  
25          ultimately measure the performance of these

1 individual schools. And I think that's what we've  
2 been trying to accomplish with the State as well, is  
3 how do we not just lay goals out but how do we  
4 establish goals that really evaluate our mission and  
5 our vision and are we really doing what we say we're  
6 going to do. And so, yes, I was a part of that  
7 taskforce in which we developed those rules, amongst  
8 with other alternative learning environments as well.  
9 And we're proud that the State is trying to make  
10 gains of trying to develop a separate alternate  
11 accountability system.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Any additional  
13 issues?

14 All right. Any additional discussion?

15 Then I'm ready for a motion.

16 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. I make the motion -- and I  
17 guess I've got a question. With the waivers that  
18 we've done do we need to -- does the motion need to  
19 include the detail of that or can we just make a  
20 blanket motion to accept?

21 MS. HYATT: It does not. I've written notes and  
22 I think Tracy has also of the things that we've  
23 rescinded and changed today, so that will make it  
24 into a charter contract. And it's part of the record  
25 because it's on the transcript. So you can just make

1 a motion to approve -- to approve for a shorter  
2 amount of time, longer amount of time, however you  
3 want to do it -- or not to approve.

4 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. I make a motion to approve  
5 the charter school application for Premier High  
6 School of Springdale.

7 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Second.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. We have a motion  
9 by Mr. Baldwin and a second by Ms. Wright-McMurray to  
10 approve this application.

11 Any discussion?

12 All those in favor?

13 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Motion passes.

15 And if you'll give us just a moment we're going  
16 to fill out a voting sheet.

17 [A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE]

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Hyatt, do we need to read  
19 each individual's response, read it into the record,  
20 or just summarize?

21 MS. HYATT: However you'd like to do it. We've  
22 got it in writing, so you don't have to read it  
23 verbatim if you don't want to.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: With the Panel's permission,  
25 I would just say that all four of us have voted for

1           this application. And overwhelmingly the belief is  
2           that this program will help at-risk and  
3           nontraditional students achieve graduation.

4           So thank you so much.

5           MR. BALDWIN: Congratulations.

6           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: A 10-minute break?

7           Okay, 10 minutes. So it's 10:47. We'll come  
8           back at 10:57. Thank you.

9           (BREAK: 10:47 - 10:59 A.M.)

10       A-2: CONSIDERATION OF OPEN-ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL

11       APPLICATION - ARKANSAS AgSTEM ACADEMY

12           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Welcome back.

13           And, Ms. Hyatt, if you'll go over our procedures?

14           MS. HYATT: Just like the previous hearing,  
15           please swear anyone in before they give testimony,  
16           unless they're an attorney. After that, the  
17           applicant will have 20 minutes. We do have a school  
18           district signed up to speak in the hearing in  
19           opposition today, so you'll give that school district  
20           20 minutes. And then the applicant will have an  
21           additional 5 minutes to respond. Following that, and  
22           following what we just did in the previous hearing,  
23           we'll address the waivers and the remaining legal  
24           issues, the remaining issues from the other divisions  
25           like Finance or Accountability, and then allow

1           general questions for the applicant. Of course,  
2           you're welcome to ask questions any time throughout  
3           and engage in discussion at any time throughout. And  
4           I'll be here if you have any procedural questions.

5           MS. WEBB: Tracy Webb, Charter Unit.

6           Our second applicant is Arkansas AgSTEM Academy  
7           and they are a proposed open-enrollment charter  
8           school that would be located in the Harrisburg School  
9           District. The school plans to serve 250 students in  
10          grades 7-12. And today we have Ms. Greta Greeno, Ms.  
11          Shannon Mirus, and Mr. Carroll Thetford onsite to  
12          present to you. We also have the superintendent from  
13          the Harrisburg School District, Mr. Chris Ferrell, on  
14          Zoom to speak in opposition.

15          SUPT. FERRELL: Ms. Tracy, can you hear me?

16          MS. WEBB: Yes.

17          SUPT. FERRELL: Can I ask a quick question?

18          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes.

19          SUPT. FERRELL: Did I hear someone say that they  
20          had different financial numbers that they wanted to  
21          present?

22          MS. WEBB: Yes.

23          SUPT. FERRELL: Will we be made aware of those  
24          prior to starting? And what's the procedure on  
25          things that change after the application process? Or

1 will it be made aware in the narrative?

2 MS. HYATT: So the time has passed for people to  
3 submit things to be handed out or included as part of  
4 their initial application. Applicants are permitted,  
5 however, to bring demonstrative information or  
6 additional information with them to the hearing to be  
7 passed out to panel members. So since we did receive  
8 it now, they can use it during their presentation.  
9 Mr. Ferrell, I'm sure we can get you a copy of it, if  
10 you give us a minute, to make sure that you have it  
11 since you're participating in the hearing.

12 SUPT. FERRELL: Well, I'm fine. I just wanted  
13 to make sure that procedurally that was allowable.

14 MS. HYATT: Yes, sir.

15 SUPT. FERRELL: Okay. Thank you.

16 But I'm assuming it'll be discussed in the  
17 narrative or in their explanation?

18 MS. HYATT: Since it's not included as part of  
19 their application, if they want to have the panel  
20 members review it they will -- they'll have to  
21 address it during their presentation and address the  
22 changes that were made, if they're trying to  
23 introduce that information to answer questions or for  
24 changes in the application.

25 SUPT. FERRELL: Okay. Because my narrative is

1 based on the numbers that I've had for months, and I  
2 just don't want to be using my information if it's  
3 now wrong.

4 MS. HYATT: Sure. And I think we can get you --  
5 we've got to get Dr. Williams a copy of it also. So  
6 I'm sure we can send you a copy, Mr. Ferrell.

7 SUPT. FERRELL: Thank you, Ma'am.

8 MS. GREENO: Greta Greeno, ASSET Foundation.  
9 We also have two other presenters that you did  
10 not mention, but they're Zooming -- Zooming in  
11 (inaudible).

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: If you'll speak into the  
13 microphone please?

14 MS. GREENO: Michael VanWinkle and Mary Norris,  
15 and they're Zooming in. But they will also be  
16 available to answer questions.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Did she go to make  
18 copies of the handout and copy that? Okay.

19 Mr. Ferrell, if you'll watch your email, they're  
20 going to try to send you and Dr. Williams a copy of  
21 the document that was just handed to us.

22 SUPT. FERRELL: Thank you very much, Ms.  
23 Coffman.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. At this time, if  
25 all those speaking in favor and in opposition will



1 stand and raise your right hand, including all of our  
2 Zoom members? Do you swear or affirm that the  
3 testimony you're about to give shall be the truth,  
4 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

5 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you, everyone.

7 I'll get my timer set. And our first presenter,  
8 the applicant, if you'll come up and introduce  
9 yourself for the record.

10 MS. MIRUS: Shannon Mirus on behalf of ASSET  
11 Foundation.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And you have 20 minutes.

13 MS. MIRUS: Okay. Will that start once the  
14 presentation is pulled up?

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes.

16 MS. MIRUS: Okay. There we go. Okay. All  
17 right.

18 Well, good morning and thank you to our  
19 distinguished panel for granting us the opportunity  
20 to present today. We also want to thank Tracy Webb  
21 for her assistance in getting us to this point, and  
22 Senator Dave Wallace and Representative Dwight Tosh  
23 for their support of what we are working toward  
24 today.

25 As I said, my name is Shannon Mirus and I'm a

1 member of the ASSET Foundation, which is the  
2 sponsoring organization for Arkansas AgSTEM Academy.  
3 We're a 501(c)(3) organization and we have several of  
4 our board members here today in the room and some are  
5 available on Zoom as well. And I want to talk to you  
6 a little bit about how I became in the work to  
7 establish this proposed charter school.

8 I'm a proud graduate of Weiner High School where  
9 this proposed charter would be located, and while I  
10 was there I served as Chapter President of the FFA,  
11 which is the Future Farmers of America (in case you  
12 didn't know). In addition to that, I was a  
13 cheerleader and played softball. Weiner was one of  
14 those places that it was the perfect size where you  
15 could participate in every activity. It was great.  
16 In fact, our entire cheerleading squad was the same  
17 group of girls that served with the State FFA as the  
18 officers. And nothing about any of that fits any  
19 stereotype you might have about agriculture or  
20 cheerleaders, but that's the way it is in Weiner.  
21 Later, I served as a State FFA officer and I attended  
22 college -- I was the first in my family to do so --  
23 and majored in agricultural business. From there I  
24 went to law school with one goal in mind: to obtain  
25 my ALM, a Masters in Agricultural Law -- and

1 University of Arkansas just happens to be the only  
2 school in the country that offers that. I was  
3 fortunate to be able to achieve that goal.

4 So why do I share all of that with you today?  
5 As an example of how much more there is to  
6 agriculture than just a farmer checking his field or  
7 someone out checking her cattle, there are endless  
8 opportunities in agriculture far beyond the  
9 stereotypes that we often hear about -- and that's  
10 the missing link for so many of our students.  
11 Through agriculture we can tie the curriculum to  
12 something real, something students can see and feel  
13 and be a part of right there in their own community.  
14 And that's what's driving our group of community  
15 leaders to push for this charter school today; we see  
16 the need. We see the need for school choice, we see  
17 the need for providing options for students in the  
18 Delta, a need for a workforce that is ready, and an  
19 industry that desperately needs young minds who  
20 already get it, who are already familiar with  
21 agriculture and understand its importance.

22 So let's talk about agriculture a little bit.  
23 That's where we want to start today. It's the  
24 largest industry in our state, \$16 billion each year  
25 for our state's economy. We're fortunate to be home

1 to some key industry players like Riceland, Tyson  
2 Foods, and Wal-Mart. And nearly one in four jobs in  
3 our state is tied to agriculture and 95% of our land  
4 is involved in agriculture or forestry; so there's  
5 plenty of opportunities everywhere you look for jobs  
6 for our students. With our agriculture being such a  
7 huge part of Arkansas economy and all that goes on  
8 around us, we aim to utilize that to the fullest  
9 extent possible. You've heard about this in the  
10 Delta that they need a workforce that is ready,  
11 willing, and able to take on key roles in our  
12 operations, and we believe there's no reason students  
13 at this high school can't be that workforce-in-  
14 training. Just one example of the need for an  
15 agriculturally aware workforce is a family who spoke  
16 up during our public hearing. They're looking to  
17 employ workers from South Africa because they have  
18 large equipment knowledge and often college degrees  
19 in agriculture. That's hard to find locally. That's  
20 not the stereotype that you hear on the news about  
21 the (inaudible), but it is reality in the Delta for  
22 looking elsewhere to be able to farm our fields.

23 We've identified industry partners who are  
24 committed to work with our students and bring leading  
25 innovations to the classroom. We want to give

1 students hands-on experience and the opportunity to  
2 visit with professionals about real career  
3 opportunities, connecting the private sector with  
4 public education, as it should be. One such company  
5 is Greenway Equipment. And here's just a little bit  
6 of what they've offered to our students: tech farm  
7 field trips, access to MyJohnDeere Operations Center,  
8 the Op-Center Field Analyzer including the command  
9 center simulator, JD Link Access, Service Advisor  
10 Remote Access, Smart Farm Irrigation Monitoring and  
11 Control Devices, and Auto-Track Demonstration Units.  
12 And if any of that sounded the least bit foreign to  
13 you, then maybe you're starting to understand why a  
14 program like this is so important.

15 And we know right now there's a lack of school  
16 choice for students in the Delta. There are charter  
17 schools across the state with all kinds of different  
18 focus areas, but not one yet just on agriculture.  
19 The arts, for example, have opened up in central and  
20 northwest Arkansas, but we don't have those options  
21 available in the Delta. Here's a situation where a  
22 picture speaks more than a thousand words. Students  
23 have opportunities and choices in the most populated  
24 regions of the state, but not in the Delta. Students  
25 there should not be denied a school choice option,

1 and that's where we come in.

2 Currently, there are very limited options for  
3 students. All of the contiguous districts have a D  
4 rating or similar. 83% of students in the county  
5 where we would be located, in Poinsett County, are  
6 qualified for free and reduced lunch. For the whole  
7 Delta region nearly three in four students qualify  
8 for free and reduced lunch, and with school options  
9 like this in a socio-economic deck stacked against  
10 you it's hard to climb out of that hole. Compare  
11 that with Benton and Washington and Pulaski Counties  
12 where the percentage of children below the poverty  
13 line is significantly less. That's where we see the  
14 need for a school like this to provide the jobs.

15 Just more data about the rural profile where you  
16 see the poverty is significantly higher in the Delta.

17 Our mission statement -- We aim to inspire and  
18 equip students. We want to show them the connection  
19 between the real world around them, something that's  
20 in their own backyard, and demonstrate the  
21 opportunities that are available to make a  
22 difference. We want to equip them with critical  
23 thinking skills to be able to find solutions and  
24 identify the problems that are around us. We want to  
25 offer unique and innovative learning experiences.

1 Our goal is to change the way students think about  
2 the classroom beyond the typical four walls, to  
3 provide ample time in labs and fields or onsite with  
4 industry leaders. We want to teach students to  
5 think, care, learn, and serve. In doing this, we  
6 want to do it through curriculum that's focused on  
7 agriculture and science. We envision something with  
8 total immersion in agriculture and personalized  
9 education programming. We'll create hands-on  
10 learning that applies to the world we live in and  
11 have project-based student-led research. We want  
12 these students to be career and college ready so that  
13 whenever they're done with school, when they have  
14 their high school diploma they are ready to move on  
15 to whatever the next step may be for them.

16 So what does that look like? Let's talk about a  
17 day in the life of a student at Arkansas STEM  
18 Academy. They would arrive on breakfast -- arrive on  
19 campus before breakfast and be greeted at the doors  
20 by the school director. When they enjoy their  
21 breakfast, the cafeteria will also be covered with  
22 materials that reflect the mission of the school to  
23 help foster student creativity to explore  
24 agriculture, science, technology, engineering, and  
25 math. Student posters detailing these -- the

1 scientific method and engineering problem-solving  
2 will be displayed and changed monthly to reflect the  
3 students' exploration as the year progresses. We'll  
4 have a morning assembly, a daily school meeting that  
5 will allow the community to come together to announce  
6 important information, share inspirational messages,  
7 and provide a moment of voluntary meditation or  
8 exercise to help approach the day with eagerness. In  
9 class time, all core classes will include lab time to  
10 be used at the instructor's discretion. The ELA  
11 instructor will provide various types of open  
12 response activities based on lab experiences the  
13 students are having in other classes; the science  
14 instructor will utilize a scientific method as the  
15 guiding instrument to direct students through  
16 experiments and projects; and the math instructor  
17 will build world -- word problems that engage  
18 students to examine and understand the practical use  
19 of formulas and expressions in agricultural STEM  
20 settings; the history teacher will review and compare  
21 and contrast agricultural and STEM practices from the  
22 past with modern advances and work with students in  
23 developing video or electronic reports.

24 After school activities -- we want every student  
25 to be involved in at least one organization, and



1           those will be scheduled in advance on a monthly  
2           calendar and coordinated with transportation  
3           services. All of our instructors will be expected to  
4           participate in some afterschool activities as well.  
5           And this is just the beginning.

6           Let's take a look at a career track for someone  
7           who joins us in 7th grade. This is a sample of what  
8           their time at the AgSTEM Academy might look like. As  
9           a 7th grader, they would join FFA as a gradient. We  
10          would expect all students to compete in an event of  
11          some sort, whether that be a career development event  
12          or leadership development event. Students would also  
13          all begin supervised agricultural experiences and log  
14          their activities through the AET program. They would  
15          work toward completing their degrees in FFA,  
16          proficiency awards, and all instructors will  
17          collaborate in digital citizenship and professional  
18          learning communities for training students in  
19          classes.

20          In 8th grade, their career and technical  
21          education instructors will present resumes and  
22          portfolio templates and students will begin to build  
23          their own. They'll understand the importance of that  
24          and they'll document all of their activities  
25          throughout their school career in this way. We also

1 envision a mentorship through Planting Science;  
2 that's an organization that takes career scientists  
3 and pairs them with students in the classroom so that  
4 they get one-on-one or small group sessions with  
5 those professionals to see what real-world jobs are  
6 out there, what science looks like on a professional  
7 level.

8 By the 9th grade, we anticipate our students  
9 earning their first industry certification. We  
10 expect them to start to hone in on their area of  
11 interest and further develop their SAE and focus on  
12 community service.

13 In 10th grade, they'll start to identify  
14 possible career tracks in agriculture and participate  
15 in career fairs. They'll start using that resume and  
16 portfolio that they begin to build. They'll develop  
17 professional communication strategies to maintain  
18 relationships in the industry with those that they've  
19 met through the career fairs.

20 Our juniors will participate in quarterly  
21 college visits or visits to manufacturers or other  
22 industries in the area that represent possible  
23 employment opportunities.

24 And our seniors will engage in job shadowing  
25 quarterly. Their resumes and portfolios, once

1 completed and documenting all of these activities,  
2 will be reviewed by all school instructors and the  
3 school director, and that will represent a capstone  
4 project to be presented to the CTE instructor for  
5 credit.

6 Now to make all this happen we definitely need  
7 some key partnerships. To do that, we're going to  
8 work with people to achieve some of these  
9 certifications. These are just a sample of the  
10 certifications that would be available for our  
11 students to obtain before they graduate with their  
12 high school diploma.

13 Now we've identified some people who will be  
14 able to help us achieve that. In the private sector,  
15 we've already talked about Greenway Equipment; we've  
16 worked with Eagle Seed. We've got partnerships with  
17 the Division of Agriculture at the University of  
18 Arkansas and Arkansas State University, and I want to  
19 share with you some of the things that they've had to  
20 say about this. Dr. Donald Kennedy at Arkansas State  
21 University proposed -- said, "The proposed school  
22 location is ideal because it will be situated in one  
23 of the most productive agricultural regions in the  
24 world," which is pretty remarkable. In this region,  
25 AgSTEM students will not only be exposed to large

1 scale row crop agriculture, large poultry companies,  
2 and other agricultural industries, but just minutes  
3 away they will have numerous opportunities to partner  
4 and learn alongside agricultural scientists,  
5 educators, and students at Arkansas State University.  
6 Dr. Tim Burcham, who is the director of the Northeast  
7 Rice Research and Extension Center for the University  
8 of Arkansas System, Division of Agriculture, offered  
9 this in support, "Never has there been more need for  
10 a STEM enriched agriculture curriculum than today.  
11 The state's number one industry is agriculture and  
12 it's the most critical component of the Arkansas  
13 economy. A properly trained workforce for this new  
14 digital agriculture paradigm is essential for  
15 Arkansas' continued leadership in food production."

16 We also have community support. In the words of  
17 Senator Wallace, we have a curriculum that focuses on  
18 agriculture as well as guidance from career mentors.  
19 Students graduating from the academy will have an  
20 advantage of obtaining jobs with agricultural  
21 businesses in the area. The school will give  
22 students the option to continue with higher education  
23 or training, or graduate with industry certifications  
24 and go directly into the workforce. This endeavor  
25 would be an asset to northeast Arkansas and the

1           entire state. And Representative Tosh echoes the  
2           sentiment; as he said in his letter of support, "As a  
3           representative for the district, I would like for  
4           parents to have a school choice option. I cannot  
5           even begin to imagine the positive impact the school  
6           will have on agriculture in Arkansas. Above all,  
7           students will benefit from an education that focuses  
8           on their career choice for the rest of their lives."  
9           These are just some of the examples of the level of  
10          support we have throughout the community.

11                 Our preferred location for this is the former  
12          Weiner High School building. We provided the  
13          necessary notice to Harrisburg and we are prepared to  
14          move forward with the process as outlined in the  
15          rules from the Division of Academic Facilities and  
16          Transportation for securing the lease or purchase of  
17          the facilities. Again, I'll rely on Representative  
18          Tosh's words regarding the facilities, specifically  
19          the high school and agriculture building, "Throughout  
20          the years those buildings were repurposed for several  
21          entities that never happened. The buildings have  
22          been vacant for seven years with no clear purpose and  
23          are quickly deteriorating."

24                 In addition, we have a 16-acre plot of land that  
25          is located just adjacent to the school. This

1 provides an incredible opportunity for our students.  
2 The family that owns this land has provided a letter  
3 of support and a commitment to allow the use of this  
4 16 acres of land for educational purposes. And we  
5 have a commitment from a local well company to help  
6 service that and work with students as well.

7 So what could that possibly look like if we were  
8 able to use this field as a laboratory? One thing we  
9 could do with that is use it as a soybean plot, and  
10 doing that would allow students to test varieties and  
11 share genetic differences in growth and maturity,  
12 leaf shape, redevelopment, nitrogen fixation, and the  
13 list goes on. Eagle Feed has committed to helping  
14 our students do just this.

15 So with all of this in mind today, I want to ask  
16 you why not; why not give students in the Delta the  
17 option, the choice; why not take a step toward  
18 creating a school that's focused on our state's  
19 number one industry; why not allow a grassroots group  
20 of individuals, comprised of educators,  
21 administrators, and community leaders and private  
22 sector members to join together and establish this  
23 school.

24 There may be some today who speak out against  
25 the idea, but I urge you to listen carefully to what

1           they have to say because they are defending  
2           themselves; they are not speaking out against this  
3           idea, because this is a good plan and a good idea.  
4           The proposed charter school is great for the students  
5           there, it's good for the Delta, and it's good for the  
6           state of Arkansas.

7           And with that we encourage you to support  
8           approval of the charter and we will gladly answer any  
9           questions that y'all may have. I do want to leave a  
10          few minutes of my time to allow Greta to address any  
11          changes that might've been made to the budget.

12          MR. THETFORD: We didn't make many changes.  
13          Basically, the major change was dealing with  
14          improvements to a building that was being leased and  
15          we were told in the mock hearing that state money  
16          could not be spent for that purpose to do  
17          improvements to a leased building. And so we took  
18          that out of the budget. We made some minor  
19          adjustments in a few other areas, but that was the  
20          only major adjustment that we made.

21          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: State your name for the  
22          record please.

23          MR. THETFORD: My name is Carroll Thetford.

24          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Ferrell, did you receive  
25          the document that was sent to you?

1                   MR. FERRELL: I did, but I don't -- I don't need  
2 to go to it for my 20 minutes of statements. Thank  
3 you. And I appreciate --

4                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And, Ms. Webb, do you want to  
5 hand those out?

6                   Okay. Mr. Ferrell, if you'll introduce  
7 yourself, and you have 20 minutes.

8                   SUPT. FERRELL: Thank you very much. Will you  
9 just stop me at the end of 20, because I may go long;  
10 I'm sorry. And also forgive me, I'll have to take my  
11 glasses off to read some of this.

12                   I enjoyed the presentation that was just made by  
13 the ASSET group and I think a lot of what they've  
14 said holds true, which really helps because I'm  
15 excited to know that there's a need for a charter  
16 school especially tied to ag.

17                   I'm Chris Ferrell, the new superintendent in  
18 Harrisburg. And one of my first things that I'm  
19 going to pursue, and I've started talking to ASPRC  
20 [sic] and other members about how to go forward with  
21 this, is converting Harrisburg to an ag-tech charter  
22 school, much like the one at Centerpoint. Because I  
23 too agree there is a huge need in the Delta for an  
24 ag-tech school, and there's no better place than to  
25 go ahead and utilize the partners they've mentioned.



1 All the partners they've mentioned would be willing  
2 to partner with us for the most part, and they  
3 already support us in other financial ways. So I was  
4 very excited to hear that.

5 I am a product of the Delta and I was born in  
6 Mississippi County, raised there, graduated from  
7 Manila; went to a tiny school called Miscoe [ps] that  
8 got caught up in consolidation in 1986, like all the  
9 other schools under 350. I live in Weiner, so I  
10 discuss this with the community often. It's a  
11 painful thing when you lose your school, and so I get  
12 pursuing all ways of getting that back. I was in 9th  
13 grade when we lost our school at Miscoe, and I'm 49  
14 years old now and it still hurts just as much today  
15 as it did the day we lost our school. So I can be  
16 very sympathetic to that. I'm also from agriculture.  
17 I chopped cotton from 3rd grade to 10th, and  
18 fortunately someone showed up intoxicated for work  
19 when I was in 10th grade so I graduated to cutting  
20 wheat -- and it's still to this day the greatest  
21 promotion I ever got because the combine was air-  
22 conditioned, the cotton field was not.

23 To get started, we already have school choice in  
24 northeast Arkansas and there's some wonderful school  
25 districts in northeast Arkansas to choose from.

1 Harrisburg School District has great competition all  
2 the way around us and we already have school choice,  
3 and there are some -- several good to great school  
4 districts around us.

5 Most of the things you heard in that good  
6 presentation are things that all FFA chapters do;  
7 most of the things listed is what you do as an FFA  
8 member to become what we call a completer. Arkansas  
9 has a wonderful CTE program, and a lot of those  
10 things are just steps to becoming a completer.

11 One of the things I think was left out of the  
12 presentation was the fact that farming will be  
13 completely unmanned probably in the next 20 years. I  
14 heard no mention of robotics, which many public  
15 schools are already doing. I heard no mention of  
16 coding, which Governor Asa Hutchinson has been a huge  
17 proponent of coding -- and thank goodness, because  
18 many of these unmanned pieces of machinery will  
19 require the farmer of the future to be very versed in  
20 coding. I could foresee a day when some young person  
21 runs the drone up and it handles the complete harvest  
22 of the field.

23 Most of what you heard centered around plant  
24 science, and I think that concerns me as animal  
25 science, chemical engineering, et cetera, et cetera

1 are all components of that. So a lot of what we  
2 heard was plant science, and, you know, there's a lot  
3 to the agricultural world outside of plant science.

4 I'm going to go kind of through the things that  
5 -- as a school leader and district leader that threw  
6 up some red flags for me. One of the things I can  
7 say in this business is it's a lot easier to say and  
8 talk education and use the jargon and use the  
9 buzzwords than it is to do it. Executing a plan is a  
10 lot tougher than having a plan -- and I can tell you  
11 as going on my 5th, 6th year of being a  
12 superintendent, I've learned that lesson.

13 Harrisburg School District will be adversely  
14 affected financially and fiscally if this were  
15 approved; you know, that's beyond a shadow of a  
16 doubt.

17 Another red flag I would have is the -- Ms.  
18 Greeno, the president, and Ms. Jones, the treasurer,  
19 being a mother/daughter. I don't think I've heard of  
20 a school board around where the mom would be  
21 president and the daughter would be the treasurer.  
22 That would be a bit of a red flag for me.

23 Blended learning, cross-curricular instruction,  
24 and many of the buzzwords that are mentioned in the  
25 application are all things going on in public schools

1 currently. And they're buzzwords that sound great,  
2 and saying them is a lot easier than doing them.

3 Let's see.

4 Partnerships -- there's nothing mentioned in the  
5 partnerships that public schools aren't already  
6 doing. The two partnerships that are mentioned are  
7 avenues that any school district can do, and that's  
8 on item 7 of the application.

9 Number 8 on the application, the public meeting  
10 they held on May 21, 2020 -- 30 in attendance doesn't  
11 support 90 7th through 9th grade students coming in.  
12 Right now, the math tells me here that we get five  
13 7th graders from the current K-6 campus at Weiner  
14 that is part of the Harrisburg School District.  
15 Roughly, we're guessing we get 35 to 40 from the  
16 Weiner School District 7-12. The students -- a lot  
17 of students in Weiner choose Tuckerman. Part of that  
18 is because Tuckerman has a good boys' basketball  
19 program. And the Weiner boys and girls have always  
20 been known for good basketball, so when Weiner closed  
21 a lot of schools scrambled to get those good  
22 basketball players.

23 We talked about immigrant labor earlier. I grew  
24 up working in the Delta, and migratory labor is just  
25 a way of life. And the jobs that we're talking about

1 a STEM school producing would not be the general  
2 labor jobs. Now I understand doing those jobs,  
3 teaching more about the farm, but it doesn't teach  
4 you anything about the ag-STEM side; it's just being  
5 a general laborer. So I don't know that that holds  
6 as much water with me as it may some.

7 No one has contacted our school district or  
8 board about -- I mean we have been notified they want  
9 to use the high school, but in the application it  
10 mentions \$22,000. That's not been addressed to us at  
11 all as a board or to me as the superintendent. That  
12 may have been addressed to the prior superintendent;  
13 I do not know. But I don't think that money amount  
14 was ever brought up in a board meeting. Also, we are  
15 looking at needing that facility to house the new  
16 Harrisburg Virtual Academy and to offer possible  
17 social distancing during this Covid outbreak. We're  
18 going to need that facility, so I don't know that  
19 that facility will be available. So a plan that has  
20 a probability and a maybe in it of a facility is a  
21 little bit scary to me.

22 They haven't -- they're mentioning having an  
23 eight-member board with spots for five to twenty  
24 members. I mean that seems very excessive to me.

25 The director is being hired for three years, but

1           there's only a plan in there for money -- the  
2           economics to be over a two-year period. So I'm not  
3           sure how you can offer a three-year contract to a  
4           director when there's only two years of budget being  
5           turned in.

6           It mentions growing the 7-12. Why not -- would  
7           their intention not to be to start with a K-3 or K-4  
8           and grow from there? Most successful charters that  
9           I've watched -- again, and I'm not anti-charter; I'm  
10          very pro-charter. I'm just anti-bad idea. So if I  
11          were starting a charter I would want to start at K-3  
12          and grow from there.

13          Let's see.

14          There's really nothing in the application that's  
15          mentioned as new or cutting-edge or high-end learning  
16          with a lot of depth of knowledge to it. Most of the  
17          things mentioned in the application are already going  
18          on in the public schools. Public school students  
19          enroll in CTE classes all the time. We offer  
20          industrial certifications in many areas already. We  
21          also offer the ACT Work Keys, which give students not  
22          planning on going to college an opportunity to be  
23          successful and enter the workforce.

24          On item 13 there's really nothing new or  
25          innovative. I think most charter applications should

1 involve something that's in addition to what the  
2 current public district is doing or is innovative,  
3 and I'm not seeing anything that's really new or  
4 innovative, that's cutting-edge.

5 Item 15, it mentioned athletics but, again, it  
6 really didn't get specific what sports would that be,  
7 how would you pay coaches, does the Triple A know you  
8 want to play. Again, in a lot of these applications  
9 it can do the broad strokes but, as you all as a  
10 panel know, the devil is usually in the details.

11 And so I worry about item 17 where it mentions  
12 guidance counseling being embedded into the school  
13 day.

14 I worry about 17(b) where the medical services  
15 would be provided off campus. I mean what if you  
16 needed an immediate AED or you needed immediate  
17 healthcare on campus immediately? We've all recently  
18 seen stories from last school year where using an AED  
19 saved the life immediately. And so that worries me.

20 It worries me that they're purchasing four  
21 buses. Well, we all know buses are very expensive.  
22 You know, how will they pay for those?

23 No procedures for an ALE concerns me. There's  
24 really no real understanding mentioned of the need  
25 for the treatment of ALE students. I do not see any

1           ELL students or ESL students mentioned. You  
2           definitely -- in a migrant transient population like  
3           the Delta you're going to have to have a plan for how  
4           to deal with non-English speaking students. I do not  
5           see that anywhere mentioned.

6           You know, and it talks about in the application,  
7           at item 18, mentors accepting eligible students.  
8           Well, what would make a student ineligible? I get  
9           nervous when I see the word "eligible" because it  
10          makes me think that there's a way to be ineligible.  
11          So that's a concern that I have.

12          Let's see.

13          I don't see how they can carry 90 students --  
14          and in that only 10% of those 90 can be from members  
15          of the board, so that would limit that to 9 students;  
16          so I'm not sure that was thought through. I don't  
17          think there will be a need for a lottery process  
18          because my best math indicates, from talking to other  
19          district superintendents, that they probably would  
20          not get over 45 students in the first year, if my  
21          math is correct on that. And if my math is correct  
22          overall on the sheer economics it's going to lose  
23          \$800,000 a year.

24          If we go the -- the director is going to make  
25          \$80,000 to \$110,000 for 90 students. That's probably



1 going to be more like 45. Teachers are looking  
2 anywhere from \$35,000 to \$45,000 based on three  
3 years' experience. And then something that kind of  
4 jumped out is the ag. teacher would be making \$10,000  
5 to \$15,000 more than individual teachers. I'm not  
6 sure how individual teachers would feel about that.

7 Fringe benefits are close, but I'm not sure that  
8 enough was allowed there. You know, sometimes 26%  
9 will get you by but it doesn't always thoroughly get  
10 you by.

11 Looking at paying secretaries \$35,000 to \$45,000  
12 -- and, you know, I'm at \$21,500 on secretaries right  
13 now, so that's -- and \$35,000 to \$45,000 for the  
14 secretary would be the same amount that teachers are  
15 making. So to me, a teacher would want to forgo the  
16 headache of dealing with children and be the  
17 secretary, just thinking financially.

18 Talking about the facility -- I'm not sure that  
19 there's a facility. That's a big question-mark for  
20 me.

21 And then other things -- I think for me on the  
22 other sources of income a red flag is that the grant  
23 has Pending by it; it says \$1.25 million pending.  
24 Where there's an application process and it's very  
25 competitive and you could be told no, that "pending"

1 is a little bit scary to me if I was on the Charter  
2 Panel because -- and, again, that's only for two  
3 years. So in year-three how do you plan to continue  
4 to fund a multi-million dollar business that you plan  
5 to grow?

6 Again, ELL -- there's no money mentioned in ELL.

7 Health services, roughly \$5,000 will not be  
8 enough. There's no mention of PT or OT, how you  
9 would deal with that.

10 Pupil transportation -- \$42,000 will not be  
11 enough for four buses. The upkeep of four buses, I  
12 don't think \$31,000 would be enough.

13 And then we're looking at lease purchases. Just  
14 to get the new high school up to snuff for us to use  
15 -- tech, phones, intercom, heat/air -- our last best  
16 number here was \$100,000. So I'm not sure, you know,  
17 where you would go with that because I do not see  
18 enough money there for the upgrades to get that  
19 building ready, if it were available, which it's not.

20 So, and I'm glad to read the letters of support  
21 they have because they do all talk about the need for  
22 an ag-tech charter school in the area. And I'm  
23 definitely looking forward to working with this group  
24 on converting Harrisburg School District to an ag-  
25 tech charter. I think that they're definitely off

1 and running and I think we could definitely partner  
2 with them on bringing this home and utilizing our  
3 facilities. And we definitely welcome everyone on  
4 the ASSET group to have a say in this, because I do  
5 agree; I think it would be great, and would love to  
6 get them involved in that; so that -- because I  
7 agree.

8 Growing up in the Delta, I think we can educate  
9 and do things as well as anyone else in the state.  
10 I'm proud to be a product of the Delta. Farmers  
11 played a huge role in my development. I live in  
12 Weiner, so I do know that not everyone supports  
13 what's going on with the ag-tech charter as it exists  
14 now. But I do know everyone is excited about  
15 continuing the success at Weiner Elementary that it's  
16 developed. Ms. Pam Hogue has built a School of  
17 Innovation over there. She's had an A rating in the  
18 past, and we celebrate Ms. Pam's success. And we  
19 look forward to working with the Weiner community in  
20 the Harrisburg School District as we convert -- work  
21 on our conversion to an ag-tech charter school.

22 And I appreciate the time you all give to being  
23 on the Charter Panel. Again, I'm not anti-charter  
24 for sure. But I worry in the Covid era -- I didn't  
25 see anything in the application about dealing with

1 Covid, the clean-up of that. I know there's not  
2 enough money in the hospital/nursing side in their  
3 budget to cover the expense of that. And to say that  
4 we haven't spent considerable time and money  
5 preparing for that would be a gross understatement.

6 So I think these are tough times financially for  
7 anyone without serious private funding or private  
8 backing that's guaranteed out to four or five years  
9 to be trying to open a charter school from scratch,  
10 which this group will be doing.

11 And I appreciate your time and appreciate your  
12 efforts here and thank you all for listening to the  
13 Harrisburg School District.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Ferrell.

15 All right. You have 5 minutes for rebuttal.

16 MS. MIRUS: Thank you.

17 And thank you, Mr. Ferrell, for your thoughts  
18 and your opinions on our application, walking through  
19 point by point. I'm excited to hear that you think  
20 our culture is an important thing.

21 I do want to encourage you to not stick to the  
22 word "farmer" as you talk about agriculture because,  
23 you know, there is so much more than that. I myself  
24 have never been a farmer, but my background is in  
25 agriculture; I'm very well versed in the fact that it

1 is not only plant science. That was just a sample of  
2 the highlights that we plan to offer.

3 So we did provide notice to the school district.  
4 Now whether they had a functional superintendent or  
5 not at the time, or whether the school board decided  
6 to bring that up, that is beyond our control. We've  
7 met all the requirements as outlined in the rules and  
8 the statute. So we just want to address that.

9 Some questions about the facility -- the last  
10 charter school applicant had not yet identified their  
11 facility either. We have other options that are  
12 available; this is one option. Because it is a  
13 travesty that this school building funded by  
14 taxpayers has been sitting and literally falling  
15 apart for the last seven years.

16 My question to Mr. Ferrell would be where will  
17 Harrisburg get the \$100,000 that he thinks they need  
18 to be able to upgrade those facilities? Because that  
19 will be a problem for them as well. We aren't alone  
20 in facing that challenge.

21 So a couple of things also -- I'm glad that he  
22 enjoyed the presentation. We've not heard from  
23 anybody whatsoever about any improvements or  
24 enhancements to their agriculture program. You know,  
25 their agriculture building at one point was literally

1           falling apart, but there were upgrades made to the  
2           football facilities. You know, we don't have a lot  
3           of NFL players from Harrisburg, but we have a lot of  
4           people who go into agriculture and do that as a  
5           career, whether that be in the financial services  
6           industry, whether that be on a tractor, at a  
7           dealership, whatever the case may be. That's where  
8           the focus should be, and I'm happy to hear that he  
9           plans on addressing that.

10           As far as his criticism that he didn't hear  
11           anything about robotics, I'm not sure if he read the  
12           full application because we definitely talk about  
13           aerial drones, robotics. That's the technology piece  
14           of STEM; that's what the T stands for.

15           So we have been working with everybody in the  
16           community. Thirty is actually really great  
17           attendance for a public meeting. There are many  
18           other charter schools that have much less.

19           He is correct that executing a plan is much  
20           harder than simply talking about it. I'm sure that  
21           he would know. He said he had been a superintendent  
22           for five to six years, but his prior school also had  
23           a D grade. And so I would want to know more about  
24           what he plans to do to improve the options. He said  
25           there are options, but they're all the same. It's

1 not a great educational opportunity for students, not  
2 one that they deserve at least.

3 We agree with his support of the Weiner  
4 Elementary School. It is a fantastic school and that  
5 is the reason that there is not a need for a charter  
6 that addresses K-3 there, because that school is  
7 excellent. It already provides our students with  
8 adequate educational opportunities.

9 And one last thing -- I know he said he lives in  
10 Weiner, but this is not about simply replacing a  
11 school in Weiner. Yes, the school can be the heart  
12 of the community, but this is about the need for  
13 students in the Delta. We will not only serve  
14 students in the Harrisburg School District. Any  
15 other eligible student -- meaning someone who is a  
16 student in the Arkansas -- in the state of Arkansas  
17 who can get there -- would be able to participate in  
18 this. So it's much more of a broad scope than he  
19 implied with that.

20 So with that, we'll address the rest of -- I  
21 assume the rest of his concerns will be brought up  
22 during the question-and-answer session. So, thanks.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

24 Ms. Hyatt.

25 And during this time Ms. Hyatt will be going

1 through any legal issues and waivers, and so someone  
2 will need to be prepared to address those.

3 LEGAL ISSUES AND WAIVERS

4 MS. HYATT: So we'll start first -- we're going  
5 to do this just how we did last time where even if  
6 there's not a remaining legal issue I'll allow the  
7 applicant an opportunity to explain to you how  
8 they're using that waiver.

9 ALTERNATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

10 MS. HYATT: So the first waiver set deals with  
11 Alternative Learning Environments. There are no  
12 remaining legal issues on this, but I would like to  
13 give them an opportunity to explain how they're  
14 meeting the needs of children who would typically be  
15 served in an alternative learning environment.

16 MS. NORRIS: My name is Mary Norris.

17 We're reverberating in here.

18 Can you hear me now?

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Norris, I think you may  
20 have two computers in the same room?

21 MS. NORRIS: No, we don't. We only have one,  
22 but the screen where we've been listening to you --

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Webb is on her way.

24 MS. NORRIS: Thank you.

25 SUPT. FERRELL: Ms. Coffman, we've had that



1           happen in a Zoom meeting up there at the co-op, and  
2           if they log out and log back in it usually fixes it.

3           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN:   Okay, Ms. Norris.

4           MS. WEBB:   (inaudible, not at microphone)

5           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN:   Either that, or she'll need  
6           to come in here.

7           Ms. Norris, can you hear us?

8           MS. NORRIS:   (mouth moving, but no sound)

9           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN:   You're muted.

10          MS. NORRIS:   Are we where you can hear us now?

11          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN:   Yes.   Go ahead.

12          MS. NORRIS:   All right.   What we were looking at  
13          was -- on Alternative Learning we think our program  
14          is going to have students so involved that those  
15          students that normally have trouble in the regular  
16          classroom will be involved and be working more in  
17          line with something that keeps them engaged.   We will  
18          look at joining with any cooperative or regional  
19          learning -- alternative learning environment if we  
20          have a student whose needs we cannot meet.

21          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN:   Do you have someone in mind  
22          that you would reach out to for assistance?

23          MS. NORRIS:   We can't hear.

24          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN:   Ms. Norris, did you have an  
25          idea of someone that you could reach out to for

1 assistance?

2 MS. NORRIS: You -- Debbie, I heard you say that  
3 do we have any idea who we can reach out to. We  
4 would work through the educational cooperative, and  
5 whoever is available in the region we would be glad  
6 to work with them.

7 MS. HAYTT: If there aren't any other questions  
8 on that, I'll move on to the next set of waivers,  
9 which has to do with the school board.

10 SCHOOL BOARD

11 MS. HYATT: I think it would be helpful if they  
12 kind of clarify what their governing structure is. I  
13 believe that the sponsoring entity board and the  
14 local school board are going to be the same school  
15 board, based on my review of the application. But it  
16 would be helpful if they would kind of go over their  
17 governing structure for the school. And then once  
18 they've done that, there's just one little  
19 housekeeping matter we can get to.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And if you'll be sure to  
21 state your name for the record, please.

22 MS. GREENO: Greta Greeno. Yes, our foundation  
23 board will be the governing board. And we have  
24 currently eight members, and, of course, our bylaws  
25 do permit five to twenty members. And we will

1           require, of course, all of those to complete  
2           professional development. The board -- if you're  
3           wanting to understand about the -- how the board is  
4           going to work within the -- you know, with the  
5           director -- is that the question that you're asking?

6           MS. HYATT: So typically you -- with a charter  
7           school you have the sponsoring entity board and then  
8           there's a local school board. And the local school  
9           board often is directed to report to the sponsoring  
10          entity board, but there is a local school board to  
11          whom the executive director and everyone else  
12          reports. In the previous hearing, ResponsiveEd, they  
13          have their CMO board, and then they have a local  
14          school board for their schools here in Arkansas.  
15          It's not prohibited for a local school board and the  
16          sponsoring entity board to be the same. But if  
17          that's the case, we just need to know how are you  
18          going to insure that there's not any conflicts of  
19          interest on your local board, how do you insure that  
20          the business of the sponsoring entity doesn't impact  
21          the business of the school, who has financial  
22          responsibility for which pieces, because we have run  
23          into some issues with that in the past.

24          MS. GREENO: Well, as we initially begin, we  
25          will have -- the ASSET Foundation board will be the

1 governing board. As the school progresses and, you  
2 know, down the road we looked at we might possibly --  
3 you know, we might have a school board that would be  
4 selected at one -- at some point. But for initially  
5 that this board is going to be the governing board,  
6 that the Director of Schools will report to the  
7 board, and that this board -- you know, the things  
8 that this board will be accountable is for -- is to  
9 be responsible to the parents and the teachers and,  
10 you know, the patrons.

11 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Ms. Greeno, can I ask a  
12 quick question?

13 MS. GREENO: Yes.

14 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Do you -- just for my  
15 clarification again, based on the example that Ms.  
16 Hyatt gave -- so the ASSET is the governing board?

17 MS. GREENO: Yes.

18 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And then who is under that  
19 then? Who would be under them?

20 MS. GREENO: It would be the Director of  
21 Schools.

22 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And so will there be --  
23 based on her example, will there be a school board --

24 MS. GREENO: No.

25 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- that will be between

1 the Director and --

2 MS. GREENO: No, not at this time. No.

3 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

4 MS. GREENO: Not initially. This will be --  
5 this board will be -- this board will, you know,  
6 complete all the professional development  
7 requirements, you know, that are necessary.

8 And so is there another question?

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes. Does this board  
10 currently meet? Are you already --

11 MS. GREENO: Yes.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- an organized board?

13 MS. GREENO: Yes, we're already an organized  
14 board. And we -- you know, we have monthly meetings  
15 now and other at-call meetings. We've been meeting  
16 pretty regularly lately. But, yes, we currently have  
17 been meeting. We've been meeting but via Zoom, you  
18 know, recently. But, you know, we have regular  
19 meetings.

20 MR. BALDWIN: Describe for us the ASSET  
21 Foundation, what it is, and what its mission is, how  
22 long has it been in existence, what capacity it has  
23 relative to education?

24 MS. GREENO: Yes. When we formed ASSET  
25 Foundation we got our 501(c)(3) in 2017. And we

1           formed this as an organization to support  
2           agricultural education. ASSET stands for  
3           Agricultural Studies in Science Engineering and  
4           Technology. And so we formed -- it was a local group  
5           of people that felt like there was an opportunity  
6           that is being missed for our students. We feel like  
7           we should be able to offer something that reaches out  
8           that is relative to the area in which our students  
9           live, that would give them opportunities that they  
10          don't currently have in the agricultural realm. And  
11          so -- and this board began with three members, and  
12          then we became five members. And then from there we  
13          have been -- you know, we have -- and we will  
14          continually, you know, look for persons who are  
15          interested, who support the vision and idea of this  
16          school and can bring, you know, pieces of assistance  
17          to us that, you know, that we're looking for. We're  
18          looking -- always looking for, you know, other  
19          members to join us.

20               MR. BALDWIN: Was the foundation formed in  
21               anticipation of the charter school application --

22               MS. GREENO: Yes.

23               MR. BALDWIN: -- or is there a separate  
24               independent work effort that you have outside of this  
25               realm?

1 MS. GREENO: No. It is simply to support this  
2 school.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And would you, while we're at  
4 this spot, address the issue of mother/daughter being  
5 on the board in those roles of --

6 MS. GREENO: Yes.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- president and treasurer?

8 MS. GREENO: Yes. I have been -- I guess I've  
9 been working at this longer than anyone else. And so  
10 whenever we were looking for persons that were  
11 interested to be involved with it -- and my daughter  
12 is a CPA, and so she was giving us, you know,  
13 financial input, you know, on things that she was  
14 helping us with. And so that's why she is, you know,  
15 the treasurer. There is no -- no one on this board  
16 receives any financial money; you know, we don't get  
17 paid. I don't know, Mr. Ferrell assumed that we were  
18 getting salaries or something. But no one in this  
19 organization, you know, receives any financial aid  
20 or, you know -- so I don't -- that does not seem to  
21 be a problem; I don't believe that that constitutes a  
22 problem with the board.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And is that in your future --  
24 in your bylaws or anything that there will be no  
25 payment?

1 MS. GREENO: Yes.

2 MS. MIRUS: I can also speak to that. We have  
3 adopted a (inaudible, not at the microphone).

4 We've adopted a conflict of interest policy as  
5 well to fully vet any kind of conflict of interest.  
6 No one -- I think there was confusion maybe that  
7 somebody would be reporting directly up the chain of  
8 command or something with that who is related. That  
9 is not the case. This is like with any small  
10 community, we have a limited number of volunteers and  
11 they just happen to be related. And Abby's expertise  
12 as a CPA just makes her the perfect candidate for  
13 treasurer. So we have checks and balances on how  
14 funds would be allocated and things of that nature to  
15 avoid any misappropriation of funds.

16 MS. HYATT: Okay. So on the School Board  
17 waivers, I believe they need to add 3-6-13, 6-30, 6-  
18 31, and 6-34. 6-30 and 6-31 deal with elections, and  
19 clearly they're not going to have an elected school  
20 board. And 6-34 deals with the size of the school  
21 board. And since they have the ability to go up to  
22 20 members, that would be outside of what's allowed  
23 for in the law. So I believe they need to add those  
24 three waivers. And if they are okay with that, if  
25 they could -- someone could just confirm for the



1 record.

2 MS. MIRUS: We're agreeable to adding those  
3 sections to our waivers.

4 MS. HYATT: If there are no other questions  
5 about school boards, I will move on to some of the  
6 next waivers.

7 MR. BALDWIN: I just have one more question.  
8 Sorry.

9 MS. HYATT: Sure.

10 MR. BALDWIN: Is anyone on the board right now a  
11 professional educator? And is everyone on the board  
12 living in Weiner, or are there Harrisburg and Truman  
13 and other geographies represented?

14 MR. THETFORD: I am a retired professional  
15 educator; I was an educator for 43 years. Also, Mary  
16 Norris is on -- the lady who spoke earlier, she is a  
17 retired educator also; taught elementary school and  
18 was a reading specialist and a curriculum specialist.  
19 So I live in Jonesboro, Mary lives in Weiner. I've  
20 worked in the Jonesboro area all of my life.

21 ADMINISTRATOR LICENSURE

22 MS. HYATT: The next set of waivers have to do  
23 with Administrator Licensure in fulltime principal,  
24 fulltime superintendent positions. There are not any  
25 remaining legal issues here, but I would like to give

1           them the opportunity to explain how they will be  
2           utilizing those waivers.

3           MR. THETFORD: Because of the size of the  
4           school, it's obvious that we can't employee multiple  
5           people. And so we'll be looking for someone that  
6           will have multiple duties in those areas, someone who  
7           will act as a Superintendent but will also be over  
8           all of the students at this point in time. As the  
9           school grows and the need arises, at that point we  
10          would separate duties and have possibly a Director of  
11          Schools and a Principal at that point. But because  
12          of just beginning and the numbers, it just works  
13          better for us and financially it's better for us to  
14          have that responsibility all put together. But this  
15          person who -- we want to call them a Director instead  
16          of the Superintendent because we want to make sure  
17          that it's someone that is very diverse in their  
18          abilities and can do different things. There will be  
19          a lot of things this person will be asked to do that  
20          a Superintendent would not be asked to do; there will  
21          be a lot of things that they'll be asked to do that a  
22          Principal would not be able to do. So the duties  
23          will cross over, and we just need that option at this  
24          point in time.

25          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Do you have a candidate in

1 mind or someone already in place?

2 MR. THETFORD: We do not have anyone in place  
3 and we do not have a candidate in mind. We are early  
4 in the process. And I think our feelings was until  
5 we can say we have been approved for a school, why  
6 ask someone if you want to come be our Director. You  
7 know, we have discussed the kind of person we feel  
8 like we need to look at, because it will be a unique  
9 school in what we're looking at. It will be -- need  
10 to be someone who can think outside the box, who is  
11 creative, and is willing to step out and probably  
12 take some risks. So we will look for a very unique  
13 individual, and we don't really have anyone in mind  
14 at this point.

15 SCHOOL YEAR/SCHOOL START DATE

16 MS. HYATT: The next set of waivers is related  
17 to the School Year. The applicant asked for a waiver  
18 of the School Start Date and represented that they  
19 were going to be doing a year-round calendar.  
20 Arkansas Code 6-10-108 specifically permits a year-  
21 round calendar and negates the need for a waiver  
22 under the law that they've cited. So if they don't  
23 have an additional rationale for the need for that  
24 waiver, I don't believe it's necessary.

25 MR. THETFORD: We wanted to have some options

1           when we looked at this school, and one of the options  
2           we thought we wanted to be able to consider was a  
3           year-round school. We were not saying that we were  
4           going to do that; just that if we have that option so  
5           that it better fits what we're trying to do with our  
6           students, especially with the farming community and  
7           all the things that go on in the summer. We can do  
8           the same things and teach everything we need to teach  
9           in a regular school year but, as all of us know, if  
10          you've been involved in FFA, they have summer  
11          programs for the ag. teacher, who's employed for 12  
12          months -- and that's state law. Mr. Ferrell  
13          questioned that a little bit. He's paid more because  
14          he works 12 months; teachers don't work 12 months.  
15          But the students would be very active in the summer  
16          also. And if we needed to go to a school year for us  
17          that would have breaks in between, like a typical 12-  
18          month school year -- we were asked the question about  
19          how can you go 12 months. Obviously, a 12-month  
20          school year doesn't mean students are going to school  
21          12 months; they're still going to go 178 days. So  
22          it's just an option that we feel like we would like  
23          to have in our back pocket if that would better fit  
24          what we want to do.

25               MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I do have a question, and

1 I'm not quite sure if this is the best place to put  
2 it. But I would like to, I guess, revisit or get a  
3 little bit more information on some of the comments  
4 that were made by Superintendent Ferrell in regards  
5 to his willingness to do a lot of the things that you  
6 guys have offered in your application. And so could  
7 someone speak to have there been those conversations  
8 between ASSET and Harrisburg School District on  
9 utilizing a lot of your plan and your thoughts in the  
10 existing structure? And how those conversations have  
11 gone and how we've gotten to the point to where you  
12 still feel like you need a separate entity?

13 MR. THETFORD: I'll let Ms. Greeno address that.  
14 I've not been on the board that long.

15 MS. GREENO: Well, we have had these  
16 conversations with Harrisburg School District since  
17 about 2012, whenever they were initially considering  
18 closing the high school portion of the Weiner School  
19 District, former school district. And we went before  
20 them -- I went before the school board two different  
21 occasions, asking them to consider doing what we're  
22 talking about doing right here as a conversion  
23 charter school. I said, "Rather than close this high  
24 school" -- I said, "We have already made the  
25 connections, we've already had a plan since then;

1 we've had a plan in place." And we brought it to  
2 them and said, "This will be a benefit. It'll make a  
3 great impact. It will draw students to the  
4 Harrisburg School District. Let us do this with  
5 you." And we never were even considered. They took  
6 no motion on it, asked no questions; just dismissed  
7 us.

8 I went before the school board a second time. I  
9 went before the school board a third time and asked  
10 them at that point, I said, "Let us do this as a  
11 School of Innovation as part of the Harrisburg School  
12 District." And I said, "We" -- you know, "We will  
13 work with you. We will work this -- just, you know,  
14 give us the go-ahead and we will make this  
15 successful." And again the board took no action and  
16 made no comment and have never really made any  
17 comment to us before.

18 Whenever we have submitted a letter about  
19 requesting the facilities we've just had no comment.  
20 There was no response from the school board, so --

21 MS. MIRUS: [speaking quietly to Ms. Greeno]

22 MS. GREENO: Oh, I'm sorry. And so the -- they  
23 have -- in the past the school board has noted -- I  
24 know that in a document that they presented to the  
25 Charter Authorizing Panel in 2017, when we were here

1           once before proposing this idea, and they came with  
2           the statement that -- they had a list that they  
3           presented and said that they had uses for the  
4           buildings and they were going to have programs. They  
5           said that the former Weiner High School building,  
6           administrators from the Weiner Elementary, and the  
7           Harrisburg High School met with six representatives  
8           from the Career and Technical Education Department of  
9           the Arkansas Department of Career Education to  
10          discuss programs that are planned to be added to the  
11          Harrisburg College and Career Preparatory School,  
12          which was their new charter school that they had  
13          begun; "these proposed programs will be held in the  
14          former Weiner High School building." That was in  
15          2017. Nothing was ever done about it and nothing was  
16          ever mentioned about that again.

17                 They had a greenhouse that -- at that time we  
18                 were asking, you know, also to use the greenhouse  
19                 because it was not being used. And they said Weiner  
20                 Elementary for the Weiner school children's endowment  
21                 received a grant from Post Foods to refurbish the  
22                 campus greenhouse, which is located near our garden  
23                 area. The work has yet to be completed, but the  
24                 incoming agri teacher at Harrisburg High School has  
25                 assured us that his program will help us get the

1 greenhouse up and going as a joint project. That  
2 never happened. That building is dilapidated. I  
3 don't even know that it can be salvaged at this  
4 point. The last I heard the elementary school was  
5 trying to get somebody to come tear it down. They  
6 said, "You can have it if you'll come get it." So  
7 they say that they're going to do things, but it  
8 doesn't always follow through.

9 Last year, the superintendent, which was the  
10 interim superintendent, said in a public meeting that  
11 they were going to utilize the former high school  
12 building on the Weiner campus for a new program that  
13 they were starting that year, last year. They were  
14 going to add a K-6 alternative school for the  
15 district and they already had a teacher allocated,  
16 and that it was going to be on the Weiner campus,  
17 there in the high school building, and that they were  
18 going to see that that happened this year, which was  
19 last school year. Again, that never happened and not  
20 another word was heard about it.

21 This year, they're proposing that they may --  
22 may use the school for social distancing and they're  
23 planning on having the Harrisburg Virtual Academy,  
24 which will target students that are currently home-  
25 schooling in the district. I asked -- at a meeting I



1 asked the superintendent how many home-school  
2 students that they're targeting, and he said 40 to 50  
3 students. The curriculum that they're offering will  
4 not be supported by the Harrisburg staff, but will be  
5 a curriculum selected from DESE for online learning.  
6 Students will not actually attend this school, but  
7 they will, you know, need to attend for course  
8 completion tests or something like that. That's the  
9 only time that a student would be on the campus.

10 And there have been a lot of stated uses for  
11 these buildings over the past seven years, but they  
12 have yet to do anything with it. It is still sitting  
13 there, it is in disrepair. And we were in there with  
14 a contractor in May of 2019, and his reflection was  
15 that the building as of then -- said it can be  
16 repaired and it can be saved, but he said in another  
17 three or four years that this building will not be  
18 worth fixing up. So that is the state that it is in.  
19 It's in a state of terrible neglect.

20 And so have I answered --

21 MR. BALDWIN: Let me ask, who owns the building?

22 MS. GREENO: Harrisburg School District.

23 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. So if you - if we approve  
24 the charter school, how does the building ownership  
25 transfer, or does it transfer?

1 MS. GREENO: We are requesting -- we have  
2 already requested the Division of Public School  
3 Facilities and Transportation to look into this. We  
4 are ready now to submit a petition to ask them to get  
5 involved, because we've had no correspondence from  
6 Harrisburg School District. Mr. Ferrell was, you  
7 know, saying, "Well, I don't know where they come up  
8 with this figure of \$22,000." As far as I know,  
9 they've never negotiated anything with us. We have  
10 tried to; they refused to talk to us or acknowledge  
11 anything that we have sent their way. So we have  
12 asked real estate dealers around the area and asked  
13 them, you know, "What would a building like this, in  
14 the shape that it's in, what would be a proper lease  
15 for a facility like this?" Which there's -- you  
16 know, it's been in disrepair; there's not too many  
17 buildings -- you know, that's an enormous building;  
18 it's almost -- it's about 43,000 square foot. And,  
19 you know, so there's not a lot of comparison. A lot  
20 of schools in the area have -- you know, they've had  
21 consolidations and they have buildings that are  
22 empty. Sometimes they will donate them to the city  
23 and let the city take over the maintenance of them  
24 and use them, you know, for community centers or  
25 whatever other, you know, purpose. So --

1 MS. MIRUS: [speaking quietly to Ms. Greeno]

2 The rules governing Right of Access for unused  
3 or under-utilized public school facilities and the  
4 sale or lease of public school facilities actually  
5 lay out a process for this, for charter schools to  
6 gain access to school facilities that are on the list  
7 that's published every year by this Division. So the  
8 high school facility is on that list. We have asked  
9 them to enter into a negotiation for lease or sale  
10 with us more than 60 days ago. We have still not  
11 heard back. So we have a petition ready to file to  
12 move forward to ask the Division to intervene and  
13 help with the negotiation and issue an order in that  
14 way. So whether that is a lease where they retain  
15 ownership or whether that's a sale where the  
16 ownership would be transferred, you know, we're open  
17 to either of those. But the rules do lay out that  
18 process. Did that --

19 MS. HYATT: I just want to clarify a couple of  
20 things. Number one, I think it's important that  
21 we're having the conversation about the building, but  
22 I want to make sure it's clear that this body is not  
23 the body that will decide whether they get the  
24 building; that's under the Facilities Division. And  
25 so it's appropriate to consider the building in their

1 plan for a building, as you do for other charter  
2 schools, but the Facilities Division will handle  
3 whether this dispute over whether they get to lease  
4 or buy this building or not. If you have a specific  
5 question, Tim Cain, who is over the Facilities  
6 Division, is on the Zoom. But she was reading right  
7 from the rules when she explained that there is a  
8 process in place. They've started that process and  
9 the Facilities Division is working with them.

10 Tim, is there anything else you -- I haven't  
11 said?

12 MR. CAIN: Well, the only thing I'll clarify,  
13 Mary Claire, is that the entity that the petition  
14 would be filed in front of will be the Commission  
15 that we report to. So that would be the three-person  
16 Facilities Commission.

17 MR. BALDWIN: So my question, I guess, why I  
18 asked about the building is it's really key to your  
19 strategy. And I was wondering with the Harrisburg  
20 School system owning the building what the process  
21 would be to transfer it. And I guess what I have  
22 seen is quite a bit of animosity between the two  
23 groups. And so is there a way and are you intending  
24 to force Harrisburg through, you know, whatever  
25 process there is to transfer the building to you

1           somehow?

2           MS. MIRUS:   Sure.   We are open to discussions.  
3           We would love nothing more than to sit down and have  
4           a discussion.   And maybe now that Mr. Ferrell is  
5           there that can happen; you know, he's only been in  
6           this role for a few weeks there.   So previously no  
7           one was willing to engage with us.   So this could be  
8           different.   We're open to that.   We are just  
9           following the procedures that are laid out by the law  
10          to try to achieve that goal.   This is not the only  
11          option for the school.   Obviously, it's already set  
12          up as a school, so it's an ideal place for a charter  
13          school.   But we have other options that we've  
14          explored for housing the school.   So if, you know, if  
15          it doesn't work, if we aren't able to get approval  
16          from the Commission or negotiate a lease -- if we're  
17          able to do that, then we have other options as back-  
18          up, so --

19          MR. BALDWIN:   Okay.

20          MS. MIRUS:   And we'd still be looking in Weiner,  
21          an eye toward the Weiner area.   So access to that 16  
22          acres is still -- would be something that would be  
23          very viable.

24          MR. BALDWIN:   So the timing of this, you guys  
25          have been working on this for sometime it looks like,

1           and Mr. Ferrell came into his role recently. Have  
2           you all sat down with him directly to talk through  
3           this?

4           MS. MIRUS: We -- I have not sat down with him.  
5           I don't know that he's reached out. He's been given  
6           the email notices, as well as mail notices, but we  
7           have not heard any response back.

8           MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

9           DR. WILLIAMS: Question, are we still under the  
10          legal review?

11          MS. HYATT: Yes, sir.

12          DR. WILLIAMS: Okay. I have some questions, but  
13          I'll wait till we finish the legal review.

14          MS. HYATT: So this conversation originally  
15          started as -- at my request for them to provide  
16          additional rationale about their request for a waiver  
17          of the Uniform Start Dates for the Beginning and  
18          Ending of School -- of the School Year. And I think  
19          the information they've provided is helpful. I don't  
20          necessarily think that it spoke to why they need a  
21          waiver from the Uniform Start and End Dates. As the  
22          law exists now, they have the ability to either  
23          operate -- excuse me -- on a year-round calendar or  
24          to follow the Uniform Start Dates; there's that  
25          flexibility in the law. So if they're unable to do

1           either of those -- if they want to have something  
2           that's not the Uniform Start Dates and also not a 12-  
3           month, I would appreciate some additional information  
4           there to justify the waiver, because I'm just not  
5           hearing it based on what was previously said.

6           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Just to add to that, "maybe"  
7           is not a complete answer for me.

8           MS. MIRUS: Sure. We're willing to withdraw  
9           that waiver request so that we can operate within the  
10          parameters of the law as it exists.

11                           PERSONNEL POLICIES

12          MS. HYATT: The next set of waivers deals with  
13          Personnel Policies. These are much more limited than  
14          ones you'll see in other applications, just to the  
15          composition of the personnel policy committees. I'm  
16          sure they would like the opportunity to be able to  
17          explain that to you, because I do think it's  
18          different than what we usually see in the charter  
19          context.

20          MS. NORRIS: [inaudible, on mute]

21                           (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

22          MS. NORRIS: Can you hear me now?

23          Because our staff will be so small we look at  
24          our personnel policy committee would need to be made  
25          up of both certified and classified staff. So we

1 would allow the certified staff to select one member,  
2 the classified staff to select one member, and then  
3 the entire staff to select one member kind of -- I'd  
4 call them an at-large member because it could be  
5 either certified or classified; along with the  
6 Director of Schools; and one member from the ASSET  
7 board. We felt like they could carry out the duties  
8 as defined for a personnel policy in that manner.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Is that a conflict of  
10 interest to have a member of your board on your PPC?  
11 Because normally the PPC puts together the  
12 recommendations to take to the board.

13 MS. HYATT: So it's not explicitly prohibited,  
14 especially if a waiver is granted. Traditionally in  
15 the charter context this is waived entirely and the  
16 board of the charter school makes the policies  
17 themselves, either with no PPC or with some sort of  
18 completely different version of a PPC. I think the  
19 intention here is to try and keep -- and I don't want  
20 to speak for them; so, of course, if I state  
21 something differently, please interrupt me -- is to  
22 try and keep as true as they can to the PPC that's in  
23 the law, while operating in a charter context. If  
24 they are granted these waivers, it would not be  
25 prohibited for them to have an administrator on the



1 PPC committee, along with their certified and  
2 classified staff. It would just be how -- I mean  
3 that's why they're asking for the waiver.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: How many classified and  
5 certified staff do you anticipate hiring?

6 MR. THETFORD: I think the total staff would be  
7 somewhere around 15 initially.

8 STUDENT HEALTH

9 MS. HYATT: If there are no additional questions  
10 on the personnel policy waivers, I'll move on to the  
11 Student Health waivers. It's not a rationale issue  
12 here; I think it's just a typing issue. I just  
13 wanted to clarify -- they've asked for a waiver of 2-  
14 E and 2-E.1. I wasn't sure if they meant 2-E.1 or if  
15 they meant 2-E.1 and 2-E.2. And if they are  
16 requesting 2-E.2 I will have some questions about  
17 that. But if they could just clarify for me what  
18 exactly they're asking for.

19 MS. NORRIS: [seen speaking, but on mute]

20 MS. HYATT: Mary, you're on mute.

21 MS. NORRIS: Can you hear me now?

22 Okay. The 2-E.2, I don't have those standards  
23 in front of me to look at. And so I would leave this  
24 as what you recommend.

25 MS. HYATT: 2-E.1 and 2-E.2 have to do with

1 health services, school nursing services. So 2-E.1  
2 is the school nurse; 2-E.2 is the standard that says  
3 that they have to -- I'm recalling off the top of my  
4 head -- they have to maintain appropriate materials  
5 and staff to insure the safety of students, staff or  
6 visitors. So am I understanding that you do not  
7 intend to request that waiver?

8 MS. NORRIS: Yes, ma'am.

9 MS. HYATT: Okay. Great.

10 Is there any additional information anyone from  
11 the school would like to provide about the school  
12 health services before I move on?

13 MS. NORRIS: I think that we did.

14 MS. HYATT: Okay. I will move on then to --  
15 Okay, sure.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: What is the distance from  
17 Access Medical Clinic to the school and the distance  
18 from -- the fire department is on the other side of  
19 the railroad?

20 MS. GREENO: No. The fire department is on the  
21 same side of the railroad.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

23 MS. GREENO: They are -- you know, we have a  
24 very good first responder unit and they're just  
25 minutes away, like three to five minutes. And the

1           Access Clinic is just across -- it is just across the  
2           railroad tracks, but it is probably four blocks, if  
3           you -- city blocks, you know, away from the school.

4           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Is the fire station staffed  
5           all the time?

6           MS. GREENO: Yes. It's volunteer and they have  
7           -- like I said, in the location of the school, in the  
8           city limits, they have a response within three to  
9           five minutes.

10          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: But there's not someone on  
11          staff all the time?

12          MS. GREENO: Mary, I don't know if you know  
13          about the fire department -- more than I do. But is  
14          there someone staffed?

15          MS. NORRIS: [speaking, but on mute]

16          MS. GREENO: You're muted.

17          MS. NORRIS: Okay. All right. They are -- they  
18          have a 24-hour phone service that they go through and  
19          it is set up with radios and everything, with  
20          emergency back-up. As far as someone sitting in a  
21          building waiting on a call, no; but they are all  
22          connected in. When the call goes in, they're all  
23          immediately dispatched.

24          MS. HYATT: And I did -- you know, when we met  
25          with all of the applicants individually to do a

1 review of the application, they did confirm that  
2 they're aware that they'll have to have someone that  
3 can administer medication, if a student needs it  
4 administered, and it can't be delegated. So they  
5 know that they're responsible for following IDEA and  
6 Section 504 of the Rehab Act and following any  
7 requirements there.

8 LIBRARY/MEDIA

9 MS. HYATT: Moving on to the Library/Media  
10 program, there are no legal issues here. But as it  
11 is an extensive waiver of the Library/Media program,  
12 I think it would be helpful for them to provide  
13 information on how they plan to have access to  
14 different types of media -- appropriate media,  
15 technology for their students.

16 MS. NORRIS: We are looking to hire a technology  
17 specialist who's going to be overseeing the  
18 technology there at the school. And we're looking  
19 at, rather than having a library/media specialist,  
20 this person is going to be responsible for keeping  
21 the connections -- internet, technical -- all of  
22 those areas in service. We're going to have a bank  
23 of what I would call like a card catalog of internet  
24 providers that we will be using for access. We will  
25 -- students will each have a computer and they will

1 be connected in our system. We will assist the  
2 students every day in using the digital and  
3 technological components of our world today. In  
4 addition, we -- though we will not have a room  
5 housing a certain number of books, we will have  
6 access to them through both the technology way and  
7 the regional library. We are a member of the  
8 Crowley's Ridge Regional Library, which when I say  
9 "we" I mean the community of Weiner, and the West  
10 Poinsett Memorial Library. The regional library runs  
11 a courier on a regular basis between nine branches of  
12 the library, and they will bring to us anything that  
13 we request. We will work with the local librarians  
14 to access the materials; they'd be willing to have  
15 the students come to the library, which in our town  
16 is about three blocks away but which down here would  
17 be about one block away. We'll schedule times with  
18 them, if those are needed. We have patrons that have  
19 promised to help build sets of classroom books and  
20 materials such as that, that the students will have  
21 regular access to.

22 GIFTED AND TALENTED

23 MS. HYATT: If there aren't any questions on  
24 that, I'll move on to the Gifted and Talented set of  
25 waivers. This again is no legal issues, but a broad

1 waiver request just to be exempt from the Gifted and  
2 Talented requirements. So I think it would be  
3 helpful to provide some information about how you'll  
4 be meeting the needs of those students.

5 MS. NORRIS: We do believe that our program that  
6 we're going to be having at that school will meet the  
7 needs of those students, as well as the students that  
8 aren't quite as successful. We think we will be  
9 working, you know, outside the box and bringing in  
10 enough hands-on blended learning activities and such  
11 that our students will be pulled and raised to their  
12 potential. We want them to be able to stretch; we  
13 want to stretch every student that comes in that  
14 building to their capacity and not just a limited  
15 number that are classified as Gifted and Talented.

16 Technology, of course, is part of that. Our  
17 curriculum, our selection of staff will be crucial in  
18 this, that we want to meet the needs of all the  
19 students and go beyond.

20 GUIDANCE SERVICES

21 MS. HYATT: The next set of waivers is Guidance  
22 Services, Guidance Counseling. This is a very broad  
23 request for a wholesale waiver of the Arkansas School  
24 Counseling Improvement Act and all of the standards  
25 related to Guidance Counseling. I believe it's the

1 intent of the school to waive this service entirely  
2 for the first two years of operation. This would be  
3 the first time that a waiver that expansive has been  
4 granted to a school. Any waiver under the new School  
5 Counseling Improvement Act that was passed in 2019  
6 has been limited to licensure, with the exception of  
7 one waiver that was granted for the number of classes  
8 a guidance counselor could teach in one instance.  
9 This request is for a wholesale waiver of guidance  
10 counseling services. I think it would be really  
11 imperative if we're going to move forward with this  
12 request to understand completely how they plan to  
13 provide guidance counseling services to their  
14 students and why such an expansive waiver request is  
15 necessary.

16 MS. NORRIS: Our finances are going to be very  
17 limited. And as we looked at staffing, we believe  
18 that the guidance counselor was not a person we had  
19 to have on the campus for the first year and possibly  
20 second year, depending on the number of students that  
21 we have. We want all of our teachers to have enough  
22 professional development and be aware in the areas of  
23 career readiness, meeting the needs of students  
24 academically that we're -- they are definitely on  
25 course for graduation, that their services are

1 provided that are needed. The concern comes that  
2 sometimes you have social, emotional, or mental needs  
3 that may not be the regular -- may not be like the  
4 regular students in our classroom. Our teachers will  
5 receive some training in recognizing the signs or the  
6 things that could be leading to this. We will have  
7 professional development for that. With that, we  
8 will also look at having a contract, a contractual  
9 basis with some group yet to be determined, something  
10 like Families, Inc. or someone along that line to  
11 help us meet those needs. We will look at engaging  
12 with them. But this, again, is something we could  
13 not do until we have a charter approval. We can't go  
14 enter into a contract or work with someone on that.  
15 But we will -- like I say, teachers will receive  
16 professional development to guide. This is going to  
17 be part of -- when we talk about a Director of  
18 Schools, this is part of that extra that they may  
19 have to pick up and be very much aware. And it would  
20 be our hope that we find someone with some dual  
21 certification that would have some counseling in  
22 their certification. But as soon as we can fiscally  
23 do this -- if it's the second year, we'll put that  
24 person on staff; if not, we will add them the third  
25 year. We felt like the second year it was going to



1 be adding more agricultural because that's our  
2 emphasis. But we have to work with the flexibility  
3 of our finances -- or limited flexibility.

4 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I have a question. I  
5 guess I don't quite know how to ask the question.  
6 But I guess I'm looking further down at there being a  
7 waiver for Duty-Free Lunch and Daily Planning and  
8 Non-Instructional Duties, and then to not have an  
9 onsite guidance counselor that can address the  
10 academic, career planning, and social needs, and  
11 having that expectation to fall on for teachers, I'm  
12 just trying to figure out or I guess get a better  
13 idea -- and as I said, I'm trying to make sure -- I'm  
14 trying to think how to ask the question. I'm just  
15 concerned that they just wouldn't have the time to  
16 effectively devote to supporting services in those  
17 areas if they're already being asked to waive so many  
18 other areas; still be prepared to instruct and teach  
19 but then to be able to provide those services. I'm  
20 just a little concerned about them having the time to  
21 do that effectively.

22 And so maybe you could speak a little bit more  
23 to how you see that actually taking place when you  
24 have asked for waivers in some of the other areas  
25 also?

1 MS. NORRIS: We have not asked for waivers on  
2 the Duty-Free, the Planning Time, and such as that.  
3 That was in something that was originally sent in,  
4 and we have come back and rescinded that, taken that  
5 out of there. We are looking small staff, and in  
6 reality small number of students. And what you find  
7 in small schools is that teachers know each student  
8 individually and they know their strengths, their  
9 weaknesses, their high points; they are more in tune  
10 with what's going on in their students' lives day-in,  
11 day-out. Especially when you're in a small rural  
12 community, you start to make those connections. And  
13 so we feel like it's really not putting a lot of  
14 added work on our teachers, that they will be so  
15 aware -- and that's what you usually find, that's the  
16 teachers that tip off the guidance counselor when  
17 something is going on. So that's what we look at is  
18 that we don't believe we're adding that much to them.

19 Does that answer your question?

20 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yeah. I guess I just -- I  
21 thought it was -- maybe that was something different.

22 MS. HAYTT: You might have a copy of before they  
23 resubmitted it. I just checked the copy that she has  
24 of what they resubmitted and those are not included  
25 in the --

1 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Okay.

2 MS. HYATT: -- the one.

3 I -- sorry, I have to get my brain back; just a  
4 second.

5 So included in their request is a request for a  
6 waiver to develop and implement a written plan for  
7 providing comprehensive school counseling services,  
8 to provide developmentally appropriate guidance, and  
9 to aid students in educational, personal, social, and  
10 career development. It sounds, based on what Mary is  
11 saying, that they will be meeting those requirements  
12 just with their teachers. So I don't know that  
13 that's necessarily something that they need.

14 Again, this will be the most expansive waiver  
15 ever granted under this section. It's certainly  
16 permissible for you to grant it. I just think in the  
17 past Dr. Pfeffer and the other members appreciated  
18 knowing when it would be the first time a waiver has  
19 been granted.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: [inaudible, mic not on]

21 MS. HYATT: I'm sorry?

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: [inaudible, mic not on]

23 MS. HAYTT: Oh. Let me grab mine.

24 So I actually have two remaining concerns. One  
25 is on the waiver; I'll address that one first, and

1           then I'll allow them the opportunity to talk on  
2           Teacher Licensure.

3                           ELL

4           MS. HYATT: And it's been brought up at some  
5           point today, but ELL services in the initial  
6           application it was stated that they would not be  
7           provided at all. After we talked with the applicant,  
8           they have now said they will provide it, but how  
9           they're providing it I think is a little bit  
10          problematic. It does mention working with the  
11          Hispanic community services in Jonesboro, but that  
12          only addresses ELL services for one native language  
13          when there could be other native languages. And I  
14          think it would be helpful to understand -- I  
15          recognize that, according to the application, you  
16          have a small population in the area of ELL students.  
17          But I think we need to know how you plan on providing  
18          those services because it's required by federal law  
19          to not be discriminatory.

20          MS. NORRIS: I was kind of holding back thinking  
21          Ms. Greeno would answer this one.

22          MS. MIRUS: Certainly, if there are ELL students  
23          in the district that need services, you know, we want  
24          to provide those. The specific reference to the  
25          Hispanic family center in Jonesboro is because in our

1 experience in working in this district they -- it is  
2 typically Hispanic population that we see in our  
3 schools. If there is another population that need to  
4 be served, you would find the resources to be able to  
5 do that. And we can certainly add that to our  
6 application, if necessary. We're not like  
7 Springdale, where you see a large Marshallese  
8 population, or, you know, different, you know,  
9 backgrounds like that. So the reason that we  
10 specified Hispanic services is because that's what we  
11 typically see and it is a very low number. And  
12 that's the reason it wasn't originally included,  
13 because we didn't, you know, know that we would have  
14 any at all. But if we do, we will obviously provide  
15 the services that are required, so --

16 TEACHER LICENSURE

17 MS. HYATT: Lastly is the Teacher Licensure  
18 waivers. There are no remaining legal issues here.  
19 But just as we've done in the other sections, I think  
20 it would be helpful for them to provide information  
21 on how they'll insure that their teachers meet the  
22 Arkansas highly-qualified teaching standards. Also,  
23 they have confirmed in their application that they're  
24 aware all special education teachers must have a  
25 special education teaching license.

1 MS. NORRIS: We do anticipate in our start-up  
2 that we will have a limited number of certified  
3 teachers, and we are hoping to find some with some  
4 dual certifications. Our chief concern was that we  
5 may have to have one or two that would teach a course  
6 that is outside of their certification, and so that's  
7 why we asked for this. Our other -- we will be  
8 looking for the best, the most highly qualified  
9 teachers that Arkansas has to help implement our  
10 program. Their vision is going to have to follow  
11 along with ours, and that's why the Director of  
12 Schools will be crucial in looking at the students  
13 and the teachers and looking at our needs. We are  
14 believing that the Director of Schools will be able  
15 to look at his staff that he's hired and know who  
16 best can teach outside their area, in specific areas.  
17 We don't want -- we don't know what our pool of  
18 applicants would look like, even though we have had  
19 some teachers to qualify and say -- or not qualify,  
20 but to contact us and say, "Let us know when you  
21 start taking applications." If a licensed teacher is  
22 not available, then we're going to look for the most  
23 highly qualified person we can find to teach that  
24 course. And sometimes this happens especially in the  
25 career and technical areas. And if we find someone

1           that we have to hire that is not certified, then we  
2           would begin the process to get them under the  
3           Arkansas Quality Teachers and making sure that we  
4           have -- they're on a path to getting certification to  
5           teach that.

6           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Williams, that concludes  
7           the waivers. I believe you had some questions?

8           DR. WILLIAMS: Yes, I do. And thank you, Madam  
9           Chair.

10          I guess a couple of my questions -- I feel this  
11          is somewhat déjà vu; I think I was on the State Board  
12          when this first came up, and so we're here again.

13          A couple of things: one -- this is more to ADE  
14          than to the AgSTEM representatives here -- have we  
15          done a thorough review of the budget, is one of my  
16          concerns. As I was looking through the budget, it  
17          seemed, you know, rather tight; let's just put it  
18          like that. And so that would be a question there.

19          Also, in taking a look at the curriculum, as I  
20          was looking at the application, there's some broad  
21          statements but there's not really any breakdown of  
22          how the Ag-Science piece would be integrated within  
23          the curriculum itself. There's no real model for  
24          that, so that was a concern. I just wish the  
25          curriculum was a little tighter. And so I'm sure

1           that the ADE -- I guess a question would be has that  
2           been reviewed fairly thoroughly?

3                   And here's just kind of a general statement: it  
4           seems the focus is more about the school than about  
5           the students. My way of thinking, I always thought  
6           when I review schools -- and I've been doing this for  
7           awhile -- I start with what's the benefit to the  
8           student, you know, where is the focus on the student.  
9           And as I listened to both districts I felt it was  
10          more about the school than it was about the students;  
11          so that was just kind of a general concern.

12                   I guess I would close with just a statement that  
13          I would hope that the -- I guess it's Harrisburg  
14          School District and AgSTEM could -- representatives  
15          could get together and kind of talk these things  
16          through. I guess I want to leave it there. But my  
17          biggest concern is that the curriculum doesn't seem  
18          to be very tight, I have some concern with the  
19          budget, and for me those are fundamentals for a  
20          school. Before I can get past anywhere else I want  
21          to know how -- what impact you're going to have on  
22          students and that's going to be through the  
23          curriculum and through the budget. Then, I'll leave  
24          it at that.

25                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Webb.



1 MS. WEBB: Tracy Webb, Charter Unit.

2 So the largest concern from the internal review  
3 committee is financial. So, in that original budget  
4 that was submitted it includes a grant in the amount  
5 of \$700,000 the first year and \$550,000 the second  
6 year. That grant has not been awarded, and will not  
7 be awarded until September 15th of this year, which  
8 is the day after, I believe, that these would be  
9 approved -- these would be heard by the State Board  
10 to approve or to review the Charter Panel decision.  
11 So it's a little unrealistic to include that in the  
12 budget, and when you take that out there's a deficit  
13 of \$501,646 with their revised budget. And so they  
14 had taken out about \$68,000 worth of expenditures for  
15 this year, and so they still have a deficit of  
16 \$501,000. Also, on page 28 of the grant they  
17 indicate that 45 students are needed to be  
18 financially viable; however, their budget was  
19 completed on 60 students. And so if you only do that  
20 on 45 students that's an even larger deficit of about  
21 \$622,000 and some change.

22 Some other concerns that go along with the  
23 financial are the salary for the director which is a  
24 little high, in the range of \$80,000 to \$110,000, for  
25 90 students. So that could increase -- that's a huge

1 part; I think it's 15% of their foundation funding.

2 Another issue was the lease part that affects  
3 finances. They budgeted \$22,000 for each year. We  
4 think that's probably extremely low, and so that  
5 could also increase the deficit for the first and  
6 second years.

7 A couple of other concerns that are not  
8 financial include just the counseling, not having  
9 someone onsite to provide those social-emotional  
10 wellness services for students. In addition to the  
11 mission statement -- when you read their mission  
12 statement it doesn't really have a focus on STEM or  
13 agriculture; it talks about to develop college and  
14 career ready learners in the agricultural community.  
15 But the whole focus of the mission statement is not  
16 on ag and STEM.

17 But our largest concern is -- are finances.

18 MR. WALTER: Madam Chair, may I be recognized?

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Go ahead, Mr. Walter.

20 MR. WALTER: Thank you. Tripp Walter, Staff  
21 Attorney, Arkansas Public School Resource Center.

22 I just wanted to kind of follow-up on what Ms.  
23 Webb was saying as the grant in question is awarded  
24 through and administered through APSRC. What she  
25 says is correct. I'll just add it is a competitive

1 grant. We don't know who will get it until the  
2 selections are made; it's not an automatic thing.  
3 And it doesn't appear to us that any school should be  
4 able to count on that money unless and until a grant  
5 may be awarded to them.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

7 MR. BALDWIN: A couple of questions on the  
8 grant. Does the -- do you all need approval from us  
9 to be able to receive the grant, or can you get the  
10 grant before we give approval?

11 MS. MIRUS: It's my understanding that we have  
12 to be a charter -- issued a charter by this board, by  
13 this panel before we are eligible for the funds.

14 Is that correct?

15 And that has been the case with many of the  
16 funding sources that we've looked at. It's kind of a  
17 vicious cycle; you need to have the money to get a  
18 charter, and you need to have a charter to get the  
19 money. And it seems to me that the intent of the  
20 set-up of a whole -- of the charter school, of why we  
21 have that option is to allow some control and some  
22 say and some option for those at the local level for  
23 the schools. And that's what this is; it's  
24 grassroots. It's not driven by some organization  
25 outside the state of Arkansas; it's an organization

1 of people who are in the Delta, who are there and see  
2 the needs on a daily basis and want to provide that.  
3 So we understand that funding has been their concern  
4 and we believe the funding is there and available.  
5 We can't often get the funding until we have a  
6 charter in hand. There are many grants we can't even  
7 apply for until we have the charter. So we believe  
8 strongly that the funding is there.

9 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Have you -- have you all  
10 worked with APSRC --

11 MS. MIRUS: We have.

12 MR. BALDWIN: -- through this process?

13 MS. MIRUS: Yes. They've been very helpful.

14 DR. WILLIAMS: A quick follow-up question there.  
15 Does the awarding of a charter make you eligible or  
16 does it get you the grant?

17 MS. MIRUS: Make sure before I speak to that,  
18 but I believe it makes us eligible for that. It is  
19 not necessarily a guarantee. As he just stated, it  
20 is competitive.

21 MR. BALDWIN: And who is the grant coming from  
22 -- potential grant?

23 MS. MIRUS: That potential grant that was  
24 specified in the budget is from APSRC.

25 MR. BALDWIN: Who is that?

1 MS. MIRUS: APSRC.

2 MR. BALDWIN: Oh, oh, oh.

3 MS. MIRUS: Yeah.

4 MR. BALDWIN: Oh, oh, oh, okay. Okay.

5 MR. WALTER: Madam Chair, if I can just clarify  
6 a little bit?

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes, go ahead, Mr. Walter.

8 MR. WALTER: The grant in question is the  
9 Charter School Programs Grant that's awarded by the  
10 U.S. Department of Education. The particular part of  
11 that, or sub-grant, we're talking about is for new  
12 open-enrollment public charter schools. And as was  
13 stated, yes, the awarding of a charter is one of the  
14 conditions of eligibility. But I also reiterate that  
15 it is a competitive grant and just the awarding of a  
16 charter by this body does not automatically mean that  
17 the grant applicant will get a grant.

18 MR. BALDWIN: When you say "competitive grant,"  
19 how -- help us understand what that means. Is it  
20 50/50 that you get it or don't get it, or is it 80/20  
21 that you don't get it? How competitive --

22 MR. WALTER: Well, that's dependent upon the  
23 number of and quality of the application. We have a  
24 limited amount of sub-grants each cycle.

25 MS. MIRUS: I'm sorry. That grant is a place-

1 holder, obviously. It's not the only funding  
2 opportunity but it's the one that is most relevant in  
3 this setting, so that's the reason we included that  
4 particular grant in the application. We've explored  
5 lots of other options. And so if for some reason  
6 that grant didn't come through, we still believe  
7 firmly that the funding is available and will be  
8 there.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Panel Members, are there any  
10 additional questions?

11 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes, I just have one more  
12 question for them.

13 You know, on the curriculum piece I'm still kind  
14 of struggling with that. So what would an average  
15 day look like for a student? Pick any grade that you  
16 would like to, but, you know, I want to make sure  
17 that there's some pieces here.

18 MS. GREENO: I would like for Michael VanWinkle  
19 to address that. He has been a consultant with us,  
20 especially where Career Ed. is involved.

21 And, Michael, are you there?

22 I see him on the screen.

23 MR. VANWINKLE: Yes, ma'am, I'm here.

24 MS. GREENO: There he is.

25 Can you address that question?

1                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. VanWinkle, were you sworn  
2 in?

3                   MR. VANWINKLE: I was not.

4                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: If you'll raise your right --  
5 can you put your camera on, please?

6                   MR. VANWINKLE: Yes, ma'am, just a moment.

7                   CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. Do you swear or  
8 affirm that the testimony you're about to give shall  
9 be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the  
10 truth?

11                  MR. VANWINKLE: Yes, I do.

12                  CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. Proceed.

13                  MR. VANWINKLE: Okay. So I made some brief  
14 notes specifically on some of the things that  
15 students could expect to experience on a daily basis  
16 in the school.

17                  And so some of the things that we looked at were  
18 the site atmosphere, making sure that the school was  
19 designed in such a way that we were fostering the  
20 students' creativity in the areas of agriculture,  
21 science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.  
22 And then also throughout the school year having  
23 students go through a series of projects and actually  
24 putting those things up on the wall to display their  
25 learning; so this could be through school-wide --

1 basically like a science fair. And then having  
2 students display that information for the community  
3 but also using it to design the walls of the school  
4 so that they're constantly seeing what they're doing  
5 to learn the standards in the agricultural classes,  
6 but also being able to tie those into their  
7 curriculum in the core classes as well.

8 Specifically, on a daily basis something that  
9 was mentioned was a morning assembly where students  
10 would receive pertinent information, share  
11 inspirational messages, and then have a common time  
12 to be able to start the day, which could involve  
13 things such as exercise and meditation to help  
14 involve some kinesthetic learning.

15 In the class time, we talked about the core  
16 classes -- and in the core classes, looking at ELA  
17 and science classes both involving some laboratory  
18 experiences in addition to the traditional learning  
19 where the teachers are teaching those standards. And  
20 so the science teacher could be utilizing the  
21 scientific method in those experiments and projects,  
22 and in the mathematics courses using that laboratory  
23 time to help students understand the use of formulas  
24 and expressions in an agricultural and/or STEM  
25 setting so they're seeing how what they're learning



1 actually ties back to those key components of the  
2 existence of the school. In history courses, one  
3 thing that we're looking at is having a structure  
4 comparing and contrasting agricultural and STEM  
5 practices from the past with modern advances in  
6 technology so that students are seeing a reason for  
7 learning history and how that history affects life in  
8 the context of agricultural -- agriculture and STEM.

9 And so for afterschool activities, obviously  
10 there are a couple of career and technical student  
11 organizations, the TSA, FFA, arts too, for sure, that  
12 would be heavily involved with the school. And so  
13 those activities would be on a monthly calendar,  
14 scheduled in advance and then coordinated with the  
15 school transportation service so that it doesn't put  
16 an unnecessary burden on the parents.

17 So those are just some of the items that we  
18 looked -- talked about for daily life in the life of  
19 a student at the AgSTEM school. And, additionally,  
20 as the school is adding grades throughout successive  
21 years, starting them out in the 7th grade with the  
22 CTSO and building a student portfolio -- beginning in  
23 the 7th grade so that by the time they're done in the  
24 12th grade they have this full portfolio of career-  
25 related information that they're able to take to work

1 and/or postsecondary school that contains five years  
2 of documented community service, projects that  
3 they've done throughout those five years, and so that  
4 they have a guiding force as they're entering the  
5 next phase of their life.

6 DR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. VanWinkle, is that  
8 curriculum that you described, is that already  
9 designed or would it have to be designed by the  
10 teachers?

11 MR. VANWINKLE: I mean it would have to be  
12 designed by the teachers. And so one thing that I've  
13 put in there was that teachers would all work on the  
14 same PLC in the sense that they would come together  
15 and make sure that they're all able to see things  
16 through the lens of agricultural -- agriculture and  
17 STEM. So, for example, your English teacher,  
18 obviously their focus is not those two things -- it's  
19 to teach the standards of English. But if they're  
20 able to help the students look at pieces of  
21 literature, periodicals, and things that deal with  
22 agriculture and STEM, and able to incorporate those  
23 things back into the classes -- and so the idea was  
24 in that PLC that the teachers are able to get  
25 together beforehand, before designing their lessons

1 to see how each of them can involve those two aspects  
2 into -- and build them into teaching their standards.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Panel, any other questions?

4 MR. BALDWIN: Let me just talk for a second and  
5 then ask a question here. So what I'm thinking --  
6 when you guys are talking, I'm thinking this is a  
7 great idea. So I come from a small town that's  
8 agricultural based. I spend a lot of time in the  
9 Delta, and I get what you're saying and I love the  
10 fact that it's a grassroots effort. I mean I just  
11 commend you guys for having the foresight to do this.  
12 You also have a lot of letters of support from State  
13 Senators and Representatives and leaders in the  
14 agriculture industry. So I think this is a good  
15 idea. I'm a banker, I'm not an ag person, so the  
16 letters were very meaningful to me. So I think  
17 you're onto something. And my approach has always  
18 been to try to make things work for people when they  
19 have worked this hard to try to make it happen.

20 The things that I also am thinking about is with  
21 Mr. Ferrell being new in his role I really wish that  
22 you all had gotten together with him and maybe had  
23 some time to talk about it before you come in here  
24 where you guys are like two ships passing in the  
25 night. And that puts us in a position trying to

1 choose winners and losers, and it's my preference to  
2 choose winners and winners, if there was a  
3 possibility of having that conversation with him.

4 I know you're here right now for us to make a  
5 decision. I'm not sure what the other -- if there is  
6 another option, whether you guys could come back  
7 after you've talked with Mr. Ferrell to see if there  
8 is a possibility. I know there's a lot of history  
9 and I know -- I understand the distance, and so maybe  
10 there's not that possibility; I don't know. I wish  
11 you all had come with a more detailed budget and a  
12 more -- and a thorough budget. I think as it relates  
13 to this building if it's \$100,000 to fix it, maybe  
14 you can raise that; if it's \$1,000,000, you probably  
15 need to have a Plan B -- which I know you have other  
16 options, but defining Plan B would be helpful. In an  
17 old building you just don't know until you get an  
18 engineer and an architect in there to look at it.

19 And then I guess the question for ADE is what if  
20 we pre-approve this and the grant doesn't come  
21 through? Obviously, there's not enough money for  
22 this to go forward. What happens? I mean is that --  
23 does it just stop or does it go forward in some  
24 smaller capacity?

25 MS. HYATT: It doesn't. Once a charter is

1 granted, the school has a five-year charter, the only  
2 way that the charter can stop is if this panel and  
3 the State Board revoke the charter or modify the  
4 charter. If the grant fell through, it would  
5 certainly be something we could ask them to notify us  
6 about and then you could ask them to come before the  
7 Panel to see the viability of the school moving  
8 forward. But I'm not -- I know that Tripp and the  
9 applicants have said it, but time-wise we're talking  
10 about a school that would open next school year, so  
11 21-22. They might find out -- I'm not sure --

12 Tripp, you might need to explain when they would  
13 find out if they got the grant.

14 I don't know if we would be so far -- I don't  
15 know if it would be efficient to do it that way, or  
16 if it would cost money to the applicant or to the  
17 State that then we can't recoup if the school doesn't  
18 open. But however the Panel chooses to proceed, I'm  
19 sure we can work with the applicant.

20 MS. MIRUS: If I can address that point as well,  
21 one idea that we weren't sure if it was an option is  
22 a conditional approval, approval of the charter  
23 conditioned on obtaining the funds. As she said, we  
24 are still a year out from the school accepting the  
25 first student. And so in that time that gives us the

1 opportunity to -- with a charter, or the promise of a  
2 charter at least, that gives us the chance to raise  
3 the funds that are necessary. So it sounds like you  
4 believe this is a good idea and that could be one  
5 option, again, the logistics of that. And we are  
6 happy to commit to reporting back or updating the  
7 Panel on whatever that progress is, on whatever basis  
8 or whatever time period that you would require.

9 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

10 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I have a question.

11 SUPT. FERRELL: Ms. Coffman, is the local  
12 district allowed to comment after we go our first 20  
13 minutes?

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Hyatt is coming to the  
15 podium now.

16 MS. HYATT: As I shared, you're welcome to allow  
17 them to comment. I also wanted to point out Saliha  
18 from Charter Finance is on the Zoom, so Saliha might  
19 be able to provide some additional information to  
20 your point about moving forward if that large amount  
21 of funding was to fall through, what the options for  
22 the school would be. So she's muted, but I'm sure  
23 she is listening.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. McMurray.

25 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So that kind of brought

1 back what I've been sitting here thinking about and  
2 the question that I had about the types of approval  
3 and types of denial that we have options for.  
4 Because that was -- maybe I didn't ask it at the  
5 right time, but the question on my mind was -- is  
6 having the opportunity for the new -- the brand-new  
7 superintendent to have an opportunity to have that  
8 conversation; is it possible for us to say contingent  
9 on that conversation or something that allows the  
10 person who's been onboard for maybe a couple of weeks  
11 to have a chance? Because I know that you've had  
12 past experience but this is a new person that may  
13 have a different way to approach it.

14 MS. HYATT: One way to do that would be you can  
15 table it and bring it back. We've done that in the  
16 past, tabled it one month and allowed them an extra  
17 month to have additional conversations or to look at  
18 other funding sources. The only kind of caution I  
19 would say there is that then it begins to cut into  
20 planning time, so you wouldn't want to table it for  
21 too long. But we have -- I think it was last cycle  
22 we tabled one for a month and then they came back and  
23 presented some additional financial information and  
24 more information about their model. So certainly,  
25 you could table it and request that they have

1           conversations with Harrisburg and look at additional  
2           funding sources, to Mr. Baldwin's point, or you can  
3           vote to deny or approve today. I don't know that we  
4           have done a contingency approval before and my  
5           suggestion would be, rather than do that, to table  
6           and bring it back once a contingency is met.

7           CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I think it's up to the Panel,  
8           of course. I think there are additional concerns  
9           that have been addressed today as well regarding the  
10          curriculum and then many of the services that are not  
11          in the plans that directly impact students. So --

12          SUPT. FERRELL: Ms. Coffman, can I add  
13          something?

14          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Sure, Mr. Ferrell.

15          SUPT. FERRELL: You know, again, as it's been  
16          stated, I'm pretty new, and I've looked at the  
17          financials of the district. And with mandatory  
18          teacher raises and then the expense for Covid that's  
19          coming, losing 30 students as a school district would  
20          be detrimental to the District. The District worked  
21          very hard to keep the K-6 campus in Weiner open.  
22          Approving the charter would be problematic to that  
23          from a financials point because our -- fiscally, I've  
24          inherited a budget that is so tight that 30 students  
25          would adversely affect our 3A school district, and I



1 just want the Panel to consider that. I know you  
2 want to take a leap of faith on a grassroots, because  
3 I've enjoyed listening to the other side. But,  
4 honestly, I've heard the other side say more today  
5 than since I've been here. And I've had an open  
6 door, wanting the community to come. I had three  
7 town-hall meetings where everyone got to come ask me  
8 any question they wanted. Members of this group was  
9 there.

10 I just want the Charter Panel to please consider  
11 it's not as simple as helping them get started, but  
12 it's detrimental to our school district financially.  
13 Thank you.

14 MS. MIRUS: Can I address that?

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes. Let's make it brief.

16 MS. MIRUS: They've already lost 70-plus  
17 students over the last two years, so the declining  
18 enrollment is not due to a charter school coming in.  
19 It's parents are fleeing because they are seeking a  
20 better educational opportunity. So I understand that  
21 that could cause financial issues, but I just wanted  
22 to be sure and point that out.

23 The other thing is there has been this veiled  
24 threat of closing the elementary school. The truth  
25 is it's the highest performing school that's a part

1 of their district. It would be a shame to close an  
2 A-plus school that's like the only bright spot there.  
3 So that's -- you know, they keep using that as a  
4 threat, but that's my information to share.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

6 I think the Panel is looking at the application  
7 itself and we'll make a judgment based on this  
8 application.

9 MR. BALDWIN: My thought is just to say -- what  
10 my thought is is to table this and give you all 30  
11 days to talk to Mr. Ferrell. If you all can come up  
12 with a plan that -- where Harrisburg and you all are  
13 satisfied that would be good. It would also give you  
14 time to look at a more detailed financial budget.  
15 And that's -- I guess the question I would have would  
16 be does that mess up your grant if we push it 30  
17 days?

18 MS. MIRUS: It's my understanding that it would  
19 because to be eligible for the grants that are  
20 announced about one month from now -- slightly less,  
21 I think, the 15th -- we wouldn't be eligible for that  
22 without a charter.

23 SUPT. FERRELL: Also, the Charter Panel needs to  
24 consider that under the facilities manual 6-21-815 --  
25 and Mr. Cain can clarify -- Section 4(b), page 670,

1 no public charter can be within 500 feet of a public  
2 school, and that would violate that facilities manual  
3 ordinance.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Hyatt.

5 MS. HYATT: I think Mr. Cain might be better  
6 equipped to handle this. But it is my understanding,  
7 based on a conversation that I had with Tim, that --  
8 let me pull it up; give me just a second -- that  
9 there is a provision that says if a building is  
10 within 500 feet of an elementary school that that can  
11 be used as the Commission -- the Commission can use  
12 that fact to deny a petition for the building. I  
13 don't think that it's 100% outright denial, but I do  
14 think it's one of the factors that the Commission can  
15 consider in denying the petition. And Mr. Cain might  
16 correct me if I have misspoke.

17 MR. CAIN: No, you did it exactly -- perfectly.  
18 That's our understanding as well. It's up to the  
19 Commission. If and when a petition is filed, the  
20 Commission could choose to reject it if they believe  
21 that that -- I don't have the statute in front of me,  
22 but if it's a detriment or some type language to the  
23 other school if it's within 500 feet. But that would  
24 be for the Commission to decide.

25 Thanks, Mary Claire.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Cain.

2 Dr. Williams, anything else?

3 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. I think we've kind of  
4 covered just about all aspects of it, but I'm going  
5 to go back to the fundamentals. The fundamentals  
6 where I'm struggling at is, one, budget -- I mean  
7 that's just a given; two, the curriculum -- that's a  
8 given. I mean all the other stuff is noise to me.  
9 If we don't have those pieces right -- if they don't  
10 have the finances to do it and they don't have the  
11 curriculum right -- nothing else matters to me.

12 So for me, I'll just say it out-loud: it's  
13 either deny or table it because we cannot work around  
14 those things. We do not want to approve a charter  
15 school when the curriculum is not tight enough yet.  
16 It's going to be a lot of work with ADE and with the  
17 District with the charter school to get that right.  
18 And as from a financial standpoint, with the budget  
19 being the way it is, I can't in good faith approve  
20 it, even though it would make them eligible for a  
21 grant. And then if they don't get the grant, then  
22 where are you? So for me, there are just some  
23 fundamentals here.

24 So for me there's two options: either deny it or  
25 to table it. And with the table there's no guarantee

1           there -- but then again, they would have the  
2           opportunity to build out the curriculum. You know, I  
3           want to see what each class is going to offer and how  
4           they're going to integrate the science piece. Just  
5           saying the statement is one thing, but showing me a  
6           schedule is another thing -- so, from a curricular  
7           standpoint.

8           To address the counseling issue, that needs to  
9           be addressed.

10          So there are just some fundamental things that  
11          go on in a school that I'm not seeing being presented  
12          in a tight enough fashion, and then the budget  
13          basically speaks for itself -- but I think those are  
14          things that can be addressed now. So I'm not saying  
15          they can't accomplish it, but I don't -- you know,  
16          it's kind of like being on the lot with a used car  
17          salesman; I always dare them to give me the whole  
18          lot, and "you've got to buy it today," I tell them no  
19          every time. So don't let the fundamentals -- never  
20          lose the fundamentals in what should happen. Thank  
21          you.

22          CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Are we ready for a motion or  
23          do you have more questions or --

24          MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I'll move that we table  
25          the application for 30 days. I don't know what else

1 to add to that. Yes, please help me.

2 MS. HYATT: Let's do table till the next meeting

3 --

4 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

5 MS. HYATT: -- because I don't know if it's  
6 exactly 30 days from now.

7 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. I move that we  
8 table the application until the next available  
9 meeting. Maybe not?

10 MS. HYATT: I'm sorry. So I don't think we have  
11 a meeting in September scheduled. So we could use  
12 the dates that we had on temporary hold, if that is  
13 okay with the board -- but as of right now we don't  
14 have a September meeting scheduled, so we would need  
15 to schedule one in order to hear it. And we can  
16 schedule it anywhere from 14 days out. We just have  
17 to have 14 days notice to all the parties.

18 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So should I say the next  
19 scheduled meeting?

20 MS. HYATT: We can work on the exact scheduling  
21 afterwards. So the next scheduled meeting is fine.

22 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So I move that we  
23 table the application until the next scheduled  
24 meeting.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Do I have a second?

1 MR. BALDWIN: I'll second.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Motion by Ms. Wright-McMurray  
3 and a second by Mr. Baldwin to table this application  
4 until the next meeting.

5 All those in -- any discussion?

6 All those in favor?

7 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So, Mary Claire, on our  
9 voting sheet do we just leave it till -- just leave  
10 it as tabled and no comments at this time?

11 MS. HYATT: Yeah, let's do that. Because the  
12 purpose of the voting sheet is for the State Board  
13 when they are reviewing, and since you haven't made a  
14 decision I think it's fine to leave it as tabled.  
15 And before we adjourn, let's get the meeting  
16 scheduled.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. And so at the next  
18 meeting when you come back we'll be listening for  
19 those key things: the budget, the curriculum, and the  
20 student supports. I'll add that piece in there.  
21 Waiving the guidance program is not -- I'm not  
22 comfortable with that, so I'll just say that up-  
23 front. Student supports are very important, I feel.  
24 And so knowing that all of them were just being put  
25 onto classroom teachers and building a curriculum is

1 excessive with teachers that may not be experienced.  
2 It would be excessive for me as an experienced  
3 teacher. So to think that it might be someone who is  
4 not an experienced teacher -- a little bit added on  
5 is no problem; teachers are very resourceful. But  
6 there's a lot to be added to them.

7 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And I just wanted to echo  
8 Ms. Coffman's comments about that. I just feel too  
9 often our guidance counseling and social supports are  
10 kind of pushed to the side and overlooked. And I'm  
11 just afraid that we're getting down that path again,  
12 and we need to be getting back in the other  
13 direction. So that's something that I strongly need  
14 to see the next time that you guys come forward to  
15 address that.

16 SUPT. FERRELL: And, Panel, while we have  
17 everyone, we would love -- I would love as a new  
18 superintendent to meet with everyone that has spoke  
19 today here at the office and start planning how we  
20 can go forward as the Harrisburg Ag-Tech Charter  
21 School and how we can utilize the 16 acres and  
22 utilize all the business supports. I can't wait to  
23 meet with them; very excited about meeting with them  
24 and putting something together that we're all  
25 involved in.



1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Ferrell.

2 NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Webb, do you have a date  
4 for us?

5 MS. WEBB: So the next Tuesday after the State  
6 Board meeting in September would be September 15th.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: September 15th. Work for  
8 you? All right. If you'll get that scheduled for  
9 us, Ms. Webb.

10 Any -- he's good, okay.

11 ADJOURNMENT

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any closing remarks from the  
13 Panel? If not, I'll accept a motion to adjourn.

14 MR. BALDWIN: Motion.

15 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Second.

16 DR. WILLIAMS: Just a quick statement -- I just  
17 want to say welcome to all the new panel members.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

19 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. All those in  
21 favor?

22 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Meeting is adjourned. Thank  
24 you.

25 (The meeting was concluded at 1:19 p.m.)

## C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS     )  
                                  ) ss.  
COUNTY OF SALINE     )

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter and Notary Public before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Charter Authorizing Panel, in Little Rock, Arkansas, on August 18, 2020; that the said proceedings was reduced to typewritten form by me or under my direction and supervision; and that the foregoing pages constitute a true and correct transcription of all proceedings had in said matter.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I have no contract with any parties within this action that affects or has a substantial tendency to affect impartiality, that requires me to relinquish control of an original transcript or copies of the transcript before it is certified and delivered to the custodial agency, or that requires me to provide any service not made available to all parties to the action.

WITNESS, MY HAND AND SEAL, THIS DATE: August 27, 2020.

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SHARON K. HILL, CCR  
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