

In The Matter Of:
*BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL*

April 19, 2017

*Sharon Hill Court Reporting
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BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

APRIL 19, 2017
8:30 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

MS. DEBORAH COFFMAN	Chairman/Chief of Staff
DR. MARK GOTCHER	Vice Chairman/Deputy Commissioner
DR. IVY PFEFFER	Asst. Commissioner - HR/Educator Effectiveness & Licensure
DR. ERIC SAUNDERS	Asst. Commissioner - Fiscal & Administrative Services
MR. GREG ROGERS	Asst. Commissioner - Fiscal & Admin. Services
MS. STACY SMITH	Asst. Commissioner - Learning Services
MR. BOBBY LESTER	Director of Federal Programs
MS. LISA HALEY	Special Education Division Manager

ALSO APPEARING:

MS. ALEXANDRA BOYD	Public School Program Coordinator
MS. KELLY McLAUGHLIN	Public School Program Advisor
MS. VIRGINIA PERRY	Public School Program Advisor
MR. FREDDIE SCOTT	Learning Services Operations Mgr.
MS. MARY PERRY	ADE Assistant to Director

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. JENNIFER DAVIS	ADE Staff Attorney
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ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
#4 CAPITOL MALL
LITTLE ROCK, AR 72201

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E X H I B I T S

A-4: COVENANT KEEPERS

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

Concordant Percent Proficient, All Students
Math + LEA

EXHIBIT TWO (2)

4.00 Rules Applicable to All Public Charter Schools

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P R O C E E D I N G S

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. The April 19, 2017 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to the Department of Ed. and ask that you please silence all electronic devices.

The Charter Panel will oversee the authorization, renewal, revision and revocation of charters. We will facilitate a responsible and fair hearing. And I will ask that each person speaking please state your name and title for the record before you begin to speak, and ask that you continue to clearly speak into the microphone for the benefit of the Panel, the audience, and the viewing audience. This meeting is being live-streamed and recorded and a transcript of the meeting will be posted to the ADE website.

Ms. Davis, if you will explain the hearing process today.

MS. DAVIS: Hi, good morning. Jennifer Davis, Staff Attorney for the Department.

The first few items on your agenda today will follow the same procedures for amendments. All persons that are wishing to provide testimony today

1 will need to be sworn in. After that, the applicant
2 will have 20 minutes to make its presentation to you
3 for its amendments. There will be 20 minutes
4 collective for any opposition they may have against
5 the amendment, followed by an additional 5 minutes to
6 close by the applicant. You can then ask questions
7 of the applicant at any point in time or of ADE staff
8 that you may have before making your decision.

9 You do have a Google doc today that you can
10 write the reasons for your decision in there today,
11 so the applicant will know what your decision was
12 based on.

13 CONSENT AGENDA

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Then, Consent
15 Agenda is for minutes.

16 Having reviewed those minutes, are there any
17 corrections?

18 Then I'll accept a motion for approval.

19 DR. PFEFFER: So moved.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: Second.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion has been made by
22 Dr. Pfeffer and seconded by Dr. Saunders to approve
23 the minutes from March 15, 2017.

24 All those in favor?

25 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed?

2 Consent Agenda is approved.

3 A-1: REQUEST FOR DISTRICT CONVERSION CHARTER SCHOOL

4 AMENDMENTS: CROSS COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL, CHERRY VALLEY

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Action Agenda 1, Request
6 for District Conversion Charter School Amendments for
7 Cross County High School. Ms. McLaughlin, you're
8 recognized.

9 MS. McLAUGHLIN: Thank you. For action item 1
10 we have Cross County High School. Dr. Matt McClure
11 and Stephen Prince, the high school principal are
12 here to speak.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All representatives from
14 the charter and anyone speaking in opposition please
15 stand to receive the oath. Do you swear or affirm
16 that the testimony you're about to give shall be the
17 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

18 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

20 Dr. McClure, you're recognized.

21 SUPT. McCLURE: Thank you. Good morning,
22 everyone. So this is something that was discovered;
23 it's something that we missed that was not in our
24 original charter application at either the high
25 school or the elementary, or the renewal. We've been

1 doing performance pay for 12 years as first we were
2 -- initially, we were one of the pilot districts for
3 Governor Beebe's READ program, so we did five years
4 with that. Then we got a federal TIF 3 grant, did
5 five years with that; was renewed back in October, I
6 believe it was, for TIF 5, which will be in another
7 five years. So when we were doing renewal on
8 elementary I think Dr. Saunders was the one that
9 found it, that we had missed that. Obviously, that
10 law came into -- that law was passed six years after
11 we started performance pay and so it was just an
12 oversight on our part.

13 So the waiver that was approved for the
14 elementary school, we're asking for the same waiver
15 for the high school today. I'm happy to answer any
16 questions.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

18 Is there anyone to speak in opposition?

19 Hearing none, any final words before we go to Q-
20 and-A?

21 SUPT. McCLURE: I would appreciate a good vote.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right.

23 Questions from the Panel?

24 Then I'll accept a motion.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Make a motion to approve.

1 DR. PFEFFER: I second.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion has been made by
3 Dr. Saunders, seconded by Dr. Pfeffer to approve the
4 waiver for Cross County High School.

5 All those -- any discussion?

6 All those in favor?

7 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed?

9 Motion passes.

10 If you'll wait just a moment, we need to write a
11 written response.

12 SUPT. McCLURE: Okay.

13 [A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE]

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

15 MS. HALEY: I moved [sic] to approve the waiver
16 and I have no concerns.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

18 MR. LESTER: I voted to approve the waiver and I
19 have no concerns with the waiver.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

21 DR. PFEFFER: No concerns.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

23 MR. ROGERS: No concerns.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Voted for it, no concerns.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And Ms. Smith.

2 MS. SMITH: Voted for, no concerns.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations.

4 SUPT. McCLURE: Thank you.

5 A-2: REQUEST FOR DISTRICT CONVERSION CHARTER SCHOOL

6 AMENDMENTS: FARMINGTON CAREER ACADEMIES

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Action Item Number 2,
8 Request for District Conversion Charter School
9 Amendments for Farmington Career Academies. Ms.
10 McLaughlin, you're recognized.

11 MS. McLAUGHLIN: Thank you. Today we have
12 Clayton Williams, assistant principal; Bryan Law,
13 superintendent; and Jon Purifoy, principal, here to
14 make their presentation for their amendment request.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If all of the
16 representatives from the charter would stand and
17 anyone speaking in opposition. Do you swear or
18 affirm that the testimony you're about to give shall
19 be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
20 truth?

21 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

23 And, Dr. Law, you're going first? Who's going
24 first? Okay.

25 MR. WILLIAMS: My name is Clayton Williams; I'm

1 the assistant principal at the Farmington Career
2 Academies at Farmington High School. Thank you for
3 letting us come and talk to you a little bit today
4 about our relocation amendment request.

5 Just our current status -- currently, we're a 9
6 through 12 campus in Farmington. We have the 9th
7 grade Farmington Freshman academy and then the 10th
8 grade Farmington Career Academies.

9 Just a little bit of a history there --
10 currently, we're about 738 students. We requested to
11 become a conversion charter back in the fall of 2014
12 and were granted that in the spring of 2015. Our
13 career academy is about 538 students. We are on an
14 alternating block schedule, and right now we do share
15 staff. We treat our freshman academy as a school-
16 within-a-school where the students are isolated on
17 our campus; they have their own separate lunch, their
18 own separate classes, except for one. We do have a
19 mixed choir class because it's hard to get multiple
20 choir teachers. We also have a presence of the
21 Northwest Arkansas Community College on our campus
22 providing some concurrent credit opportunities for
23 NWACC.

24 Our proposal is to move about 1.2 miles south of
25 our current campus. When we made our application

1 request back in 2014, we had stated that we were in
2 the process -- we'd already purchased land. We were
3 in the process of building an arena and a fine arts
4 facility there, that has since been completed, and we
5 are in the process and are almost completed with the
6 high school campus. That will be 10 through 12.

7 Our goals are to fully implement a career
8 academy model. We've been in conversation with Tim
9 Johnston at the Department of Career Ed. and we've
10 kind of moved along that line of developing the
11 career -- three career academies within our system.
12 This new facility that we are in the process of
13 building will have three specialty labs: a medical
14 lab, a business lab, a pre-engineering lab. We also
15 have a biomedical classroom as well that we're really
16 excited about. We also have some opportunities for
17 video production as well. One of the things that
18 we're most excited about is just this past year it's
19 been approved that on our existing campus we will
20 have a building space that we'll be able to allow the
21 Northwest Technical Institute and NWACC to expand
22 their role on our campus. And we were excited to
23 find out that NTI will be offering four different
24 programs next year on that campus: CNA, PCA, criminal
25 justice, dental assistant -- and we just found out

1 this week that they will be offering a computer
2 engineering pathway as well. So, and this doesn't
3 just serve Farmington students. We're excited that
4 this will become the Southern Washington County
5 Career Center, so it will be servicing about seven
6 different school districts as well. When I first
7 came before this panel, back in 2014, I was very
8 greedy. It was all about Farmington and all about
9 the district. But as I've kind of been able to
10 experience some of the growth and some of the success
11 and some of the opportunities we've had, you know,
12 we're not bitter rivalries with Prairie Grove and
13 Lincoln and Elkins and others as well. I think
14 that's a testament to all of the schools within
15 southern Washington County to be able to come
16 together and put some of those things aside and
17 really do what's best, not just for the students in
18 their district but also all of the students in
19 southern Washington County.

20 The new facility will also obviously allow our
21 students -- for future facilities expansion and we
22 expect -- for about the past seven or eight school
23 board meetings the construction crews have always
24 come back -- originally, the completion deadline was
25 going to be around Thanksgiving of 2017, between

1 Thanksgiving and Christmas, but about the last seven
2 or eight school board meetings they've come back and
3 said, "We can get it done at the end of June." We
4 were hoping that they weren't going to compromise
5 quality and safety, but the construction has gone
6 very well. We've had some favorable weather and so
7 we're really excited to be able to make that
8 transition over the summer, rather than possibly
9 having to do that.

10 This is our current campus that you might see on
11 the map. The building that's designated as letter
12 "D" will be where our freshman academy will be
13 located. We will eventually plan -- the district
14 will eventually plan to move 8th grade over so that
15 it will become a junior high. But letter "F" is
16 where NWACC currently has a presence and letter "A"
17 is where the building -- the facility where the
18 Southern Washington County Career Center will
19 actually be housed. And, again, this will be open to
20 all school districts in southern Washington County.

21 Just a little bit of a mock-up drawing of what
22 the new high school will look like as it is attached
23 to the arena, where it says Cardinals but then off to
24 the left is their -- so that building, the arena is
25 already existing along with the performing arts

1 center. And then this is just another view of it.
2 It will be a two-story building and there are some
3 options for future expansion as the district grows.
4 And this is just a little bit of a blueprint. We'll
5 have four total hallways. We were originally
6 exploring the idea of each hallway being a particular
7 career academy; we're just not that size yet to be
8 able to do that. We found that it was going to cause
9 some problems with students having to basically run
10 all over campus, and so we've kind of stuck with more
11 traditional grade level wings as of right now. But
12 we're hoping as we expand that we can alter that to
13 really jump forward into the career academy model.

14 Now I didn't mention this before, in working
15 with the Department of Career Ed. we are adopting
16 this career academy model. Our goal is within five
17 years to be recognized as -- all three of our
18 academies be recognized as model career academies for
19 the nation. And our faculty have been very
20 receptive, our community has been very receptive.

21 This is the second floor which will basically
22 house our 11th grade on kind of the part that's
23 jutting towards the bottom of the blueprint. And the
24 part that's jutting to my left will be our science
25 labs, where we'll have that pre-engineering and other

1 science labs as well.

2 So our rationale -- obviously, this is a great
3 opportunity for our students; great opportunity that
4 we've got expansion of curriculum and also some of
5 the new facilities as well. But again, as I said,
6 it's really an opportunity that as we're vacating one
7 location that it increases opportunity for all
8 students in southern Washington County to be able to
9 take advantage.

10 I believe that is our presentation.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

12 Is there anyone here to speak in opposition? We
13 have seats inside, so I'm sure if they were here
14 they'd be inside.

15 You have 5 additional minutes. Anything in
16 addition you'd like to say?

17 MR. WILLIAMS: No.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Then, I'll --

19 MR. WILLIAMS: Any questions that you may have
20 that we can answer.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Thank you.

22 Then I would turn it over to the Panel. Any
23 questions?

24 I'll accept a motion.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Motion to approve.

1 DR. PFEFFER: Second.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I have a motion by Dr.
3 Saunders, second by Dr. Pfeffer to approve the
4 request.

5 Any comments, questions?

6 All those in favor?

7 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed?

9 Motion has passed.

10 If you'll give us a second to record those
11 notes.

12 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I voted
15 in favor of the relocation. I have no concerns with
16 this proposal. I look forward to seeing great things
17 for students with this facilities upgrade.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

19 MS. HALEY: I voted for the request. I have no
20 concerns. I think it provides an opportunity for the
21 students in Farmington, as well as opportunities for
22 surrounding districts.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

24 MR. LESTER: Voted for the move. I have no
25 concerns with the move. It provides increased

1 opportunities for students.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

3 DR. PFEFFER: I voted in favor. And I too am
4 excited that you are providing opportunities for
5 students all around your area.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

7 MR. ROGERS: I voted for. Didn't have any
8 concerns with the move or expansion.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Voted in favor, no concerns.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

12 MS. SMITH: Voted for, no concerns. There was
13 evidence of planning and need to relocate; great
14 opportunity for the students.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations, Mr.
16 Williams, and congratulations to your team.

17 A-3: REQUEST FOR OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

18 AMENDMENT: ARKANSAS ARTS ACADEMY

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Action Item 3, Request for
20 Open-Enrollment Public Charter School Amendment for
21 Arkansas Arts Academy. Ms. Perry, you're recognized.

22 MS. PERRY: Good morning. Virginia Perry with
23 the Charter Unit. Action Agenda Item 3 is an
24 amendment request for Arkansas Arts Academy, and we
25 should have Superintendent Mary Ley on the phone.

1 MR. BRADBERRY: Yes, ma'am.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Ley, I will trust that
3 you will raise your right hand and receive the oath.
4 Do you swear or affirm -- oh, let me see if there's
5 anyone speaking in opposition.

6 Seeing none, Ms. Ley, do you swear or affirm
7 that the testimony you're about to give shall be the
8 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

9 MS. LEY: Yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Ms. Ley,
11 you're recognized. You have 20 minutes. If you will
12 state your name and title?

13 MS. LEY: Mary Ley, Arkansas Arts Academy CEO.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Go ahead with your
15 presentation, Ms. Ley.

16 MS. LEY: I'm sorry; I couldn't hear.

17 MR. BRADBERRY: She said to go ahead with your
18 presentation. You have 20 minutes.

19 MS. LEY: Well, we just want to use a year-round
20 learning calendar because we feel with our unique
21 programming -- and our scores are going up very well
22 -- but we feel like students lose time over the
23 summer. And we have also a grant with the Rogers
24 Activity Center, where the weeks off during the
25 months of the year they will provide special arts

1 programming and field trips and other things and for
2 a very low cost to parents. So there's no problem
3 with daycare during those months off.

4 And so we want to have six weeks off in the
5 summer so we can keep their memories fresh and we can
6 also -- we have performances with all of our Mastery
7 of the Arts that we could spread our performances out
8 throughout the year and not try to load up the months
9 of May and April.

10 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Ley, does that
12 complete your presentation?

13 (A MOMENT OF SILENCE)

14 MR. BRADBERRY: Ms. Ley? Hello?

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Perry, I think we've
16 been disconnected.

17 MS. PERRY: I'll have her call.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

19 MR. BRADBERRY: She's still here. We don't have
20 a ding, so she's still connected; she just can't hear
21 us, I guess, or we can't hear her.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Ley, if you can hear
23 us you may have hit your mute.

24 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Doug, while we're waiting

1 for her to call back in, we're going to have several
2 questions. So it may be that we have to -- I don't
3 know -- get the phone where she can hear us better.

4 MR. BRADBERRY: Ms. Ley?

5 MS. LEY: Mary Ley.

6 MR. BRADBERRY: Thank you, Ms. Ley.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Ley. If
8 you'll continue with your presentation?

9 MR. BRADBERRY: Ms. Ley, do you have any
10 additional information you would like to present?

11 MS. LEY: No. It's just -- we're just trying to
12 work with our students more fluidly throughout the
13 year.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.
15 Is there anyone here to speak in opposition?

16 MS. PERRY: No, ma'am.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

18 Ms. Ley, any final words before --

19 MS. LEY: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- we begin questions?

21 MS. LEY: I'm sorry; I didn't hear the question.

22 MR. BRADBERRY: Do you have any additional
23 comments before they start asking questions?

24 MS. LEY: No, I do not.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: See if you can get it over

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--

Ms. Ley, we're trying to get the phone closer where you can hear us.

MS. LEY: Yes, I'm sorry?

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We're trying to get the phone close so you can hear us.

MS. LEY: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Questions?

Dr. Gotcher, I believe you had a question.

DR. GOTCHER: Yes. Good morning, Ms. Ley. Mark Gotcher. How are you?

MS. LEY: We're doing great. Thank you.

DR. GOTCHER: Good. I'm going to assume you can hear me. Please interrupt me if you cannot.

One of the things I've learned about the year-round or the balanced year approach is it requires quite a bit of local community engagement and buy-in in the process. Because what little bit of research I've done on this has indicated that if that is not done effectively most year-round models revert back to a traditional calendar because of an inability to really fully engage the community in the process. So could you tell the Panel what kind of engagement and what kind of response the community or the parents have provided that support this?

1 MS. LEY: Yeah, sure. It's really quite
2 exciting. We are a museum school. We have
3 partnerships with nine museums. We're very blessed
4 in northwest Arkansas. So we have -- we're about
5 wearing the wheels off of our buses (inaudible)
6 what's going on in those museums and how that works
7 well. You know, we have the Amazeum, and of course
8 Crystal Bridges is our flagship, and then we have the
9 Ozark History and -- anyway, so they've all bought in
10 with this, have special programs in the summer. We
11 still have the Rogers Activity Center; it's an art
12 grant that we have through the United Way, \$100,000
13 grant to provide activities during those weeks off.
14 We have the YMCA that's providing special activities
15 and more fitness type things when we're off. And,
16 you know, northwest Arkansas is very blessed to have
17 community support. And I have a full-time arts
18 integration specialist and fine arts director; he's
19 working out different activities -- extra violin
20 lessons and extra theater activities with the
21 different theater organizations, like Theater Square
22 and Trike's Theatre. So I have two full-time
23 gentlemen that do nothing but plan activities for
24 these kids all year long.

25 DR. GOTCHER: Follow-up, Madam Chair?

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: (Nodding head up and
2 down.)

3 DR. GOTCHER: And I agree the opportunities in
4 northwest Arkansas are very expansive. But what has
5 been -- what questions have you asked, what public
6 forums have occurred, what surveys have occurred that
7 maybe could provide evidence for the committee, for
8 this Panel? Excuse me.

9 MS. LEY: Well, I'll tell you one evidence is
10 last year for our K-8 we only had 88 on our waiting
11 list, and after our lottery we have 420 people on the
12 waiting list with about another -- we probably get
13 two to three more requests a day to come to our
14 school. And that's all happened since we've
15 discussed with the community at our meetings --
16 mostly school board meetings and special meetings and
17 letters going home about this calendar.

18 DR. GOTCHER: All right. So if --

19 MS. LEY: I also have exemplary leadership at
20 that K-8 that we used to didn't have, and he comes
21 from a background of extended learning. He used to
22 be the principal at Baker in Bentonville, and he knew
23 how to work that calendar very well and had a lot of
24 success with it. So he's comfortable with it and he
25 had high, high test scores at that school. So he's

1 very experienced at making a calendar like this work.

2 DR. GOTCHER: One more follow-up, Madam Chair.

3 So if I heard correctly, your waiting list has
4 increased since the announcement of this balanced
5 year or year-round calendar?

6 MS. LEY: Yeah, about 300%. Uh-huh.

7 DR. GOTCHER: All right. Thank you, Madam
8 Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders, you had
10 additional questions?

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Good morning.

12 MS. LEY: Good morning.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: The first question I had, going
14 year-round were you looking at adjusting the 178
15 contact days?

16 MS. LEY: I'm sorry; what did you say?

17 DR. SAUNDERS: Were you looking at adjusting the
18 number of student contact days above 178?

19 MS. LEY: Uh-huh.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

21 DR. GOTCHER: Ms. Ley, Dr. Saunders' question
22 was did you adjust the 178 student contact days in
23 this --

24 MS. LEY: No. It's exactly the same. Exactly
25 the same.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

2 MS. LEY: Same amount of days.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And on that, looking at --
4 a couple of follow-up questions -- one thing in
5 particular, I noticed that your percentage of EL
6 students is very low, especially for the area. I
7 think this year you're reporting at 4%. For example,
8 Rogers, which is right nearby, has 35%.

9 MS. LEY: Yes.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: I have two questions on that.
11 The first question is: what are you doing to try to
12 reach out to those populations to encourage their
13 application?

14 MS. LEY: Well, one thing we're trying to do is
15 we had a lady that was working with a nonprofit
16 organization from Springdale who was going to help
17 us, you know, initiate our programs out in the
18 Springdale/Rogers area. And then they lost money on
19 that, and I feel bad about that. But what we're
20 trying to do is we're going to reach out to different
21 areas and we're going to try to lease a school bus
22 just to pick up kids in that area. That's one thing
23 we're working on right now.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And I assume you're maybe
25 advertising that to those within that area so they

1 would be aware of that to take advantage of that?

2 MS. LEY: Yes, uh-huh. We really want to hit
3 our Hispanic population very, very hard. And so I
4 hired -- I have a grant where I hired a new Master of
5 Fine Arts director and he's going out to the
6 programs, all the art programs in the area and trying
7 to find students that would really enjoy being in the
8 arts and bringing them to our school. And then when
9 we get the interest we are going -- we have a school
10 bus now picking up at three different areas in
11 Bentonville, and we want to pick up at two or three
12 different areas in Springdale and help the art
13 students in the Springdale area to be able to come to
14 our school.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And now specifically
16 addressing that same idea to your application, I know
17 many times the EL students may be new to the country,
18 they may have a substantial number of their family
19 back in another country, and so many times they'll
20 take an extended break or extended leave to spend
21 time where they came from. And I'm curious, with
22 this type of schedule would that cause them to miss
23 more school, whereas in a traditional schedule they
24 may spend say two months --

25 MS. LEY: I think it would work on their behalf.

1 A lot of people that are very interested in this
2 schedule are Wal-Mart employees that travel, and a
3 lot of times they would take their students with them
4 to have exposure to different opportunities, but they
5 can't because of school. But if they could arrange
6 those trips on those weeks that we have off during
7 the school year, then their kids could be exposed to
8 more opportunities. And so because there are breaks
9 throughout the year there's different times for kids
10 to travel that wouldn't get to travel otherwise.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you.

12 MS. LEY: We also work with the local War Eagle
13 camps to make sure that our students could have the
14 week off that -- we have the six weeks off that they
15 would make sure that there's a camp that kids could
16 get into during those six weeks. So we've also
17 reached out to them.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: All right. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Other questions?

20 Ms. Ley, you mentioned that you had talked about
21 this during board meetings and sent letters to
22 parents. Have you had any parents that were unhappy
23 with the decision?

24 MS. LEY: Yes. We have right now 800 students
25 that's between K through 12 and seven parents did not

1 like it. They did stay and did not pull their kids.
2 We did lose five kids.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

4 MS. SMITH: So was this based on a parent survey
5 or an open meeting?

6 MS. LEY: We did have a meeting at the board and
7 we also had a link made on our computer. We've had a
8 Face -- we've posted it on Facebook and we've posted
9 it on our website, and then we had a link where they
10 could send all their comments.

11 MS. SMITH: Okay. And so you're saying the
12 majority of your parents in your school were in favor
13 of it and you had a small percentage who were not?

14 MS. LEY: Yeah. Out of 800 families, we had
15 seven that didn't like it and two still will remain
16 there next year.

17 DR. GOTCHER: Losing five.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Did you lose those five
19 students immediately?

20 MS. LEY: I'm sorry; say that again.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Did you lose those five
22 students immediately?

23 MS. LEY: No. No, not at all.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: They'll leave at the end
25 of the year?

1 MS. LEY: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions?

3 Ms. Davis, are there any remaining issues
4 regarding this request?

5 MS. DAVIS: No.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Then I'll accept a
7 motion.

8 DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair, one question for Ms.
9 Smith.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure.

11 DR. GOTCHER: I'm looking at their -- I'm
12 thinking of next year with -- they didn't by chance
13 put a break in the assessment calendar? I didn't
14 have a chance to really look to see what next year's
15 assessment calendar looks like and that window.

16 MS. LEY: We looked at it.

17 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. I figured you might, Ms.
18 Ley. I just thought of it as I was looking at your
19 calendar. That would've been --

20 MS. LEY: Sure.

21 DR. GOTCHER: -- an inopportune time to take a
22 break, so --

23 MS. LEY: Yes. I think you're going to be real
24 excited when you see our assessments this year. I
25 can't wait. You're going to be really pleased.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We always love good news.

2 DR. GOTCHER: That's right.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Any other
4 questions?

5 Then I'll accept a motion.

6 DR. GOTCHER: Motion to approve.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: Second.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion has been made by
9 Dr. Gotcher. Dr. Saunders, did you second?

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Seconded by Dr. Saunders
12 to approve the request.

13 Any discussion?

14 DR. GOTCHER: I have a comment afterwards to Ms.
15 Ley just to --

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right.

17 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All those in favor?

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed?

21 Motion is passed.

22 And, Ms. Ley, if you'll stay on the line, we
23 will write our responses and then read those to you.

24 MS. LEY: Yeah, sure. Thank you. I'm sorry I
25 couldn't be with you.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's quite all right.
2 It's difficult to come down for a few minutes.

3 MS. LEY: Yes. I'd rather spend our money, gas
4 money on students.

5 DR. GOTCHER: Good choice.

6 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

8 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for. I fully support but
9 have a few concerns, namely -- and I have this in
10 quotations -- called the "maintenance of stakeholder
11 support." I feel it must be monitored for this to be
12 truly successful.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

14 MS. HALEY: I voted for the request. I have no
15 concerns.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

17 MR. LESTER: I voted for the request and I have
18 no concern with the year-round schedule.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

20 DR. PFEFFER: I voted for the request. The
21 school has gotten input and put much consideration;
22 the approval supports their local decision-making.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

24 MR. ROGERS: I voted for. With the majority of
25 the school support, as well as community support, I

1 don't have any concerns at this time.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: I voted in favor of it. I
4 thought that it provides more flexibility to take
5 advantage of learning opportunities.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

7 MS. SMITH: I voted for, but I do have some
8 concerns regarding parent input. But it was
9 presented today that the majority supports the
10 calendar change. I encourage you to continue to
11 receive feedback from your parents and community
12 throughout the year. I'll just say that out of 800
13 folks, I mean, and only 7 pulled, it just -- I would
14 like to know -- I mean, I would encourage you to do a
15 paper survey of your parents for more input. Just
16 because 7 voiced concerns there may have been more
17 that had concerns, so I just have a little bit of
18 uneasiness about that. But I know there is research
19 out there that supports it, so just continue -- I
20 encourage you to continue to look for input from your
21 community and from your parents.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And, Dr. Gotcher?

23 DR. GOTCHER: Yes. And thank you, Ms. Smith;
24 that phrase "maintenance of stakeholder support" I
25 got from an actual research and meta-analysis on the

1 year-round model. And I think, Ms. Ley -- and I'll
2 have this conversation with you outside of the
3 meeting just to give you a couple of pieces of
4 information. But the success of this, although it
5 may have the support, there are multiple unintended
6 consequences of a year-round model. And while it
7 does address wonderful opportunities for your kids,
8 that "maintenance of stakeholder support," you're
9 going to have to keep this process -- probably have
10 ongoing parent meetings, et cetera, because there
11 will be some concerns as you go down the road
12 according to what we've read. So anyway, while I
13 support it, I'll visit with you off-mic sometime.
14 Does that sound good?

15 MS. LEY: That would be great.

16 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you, Ms. Ley.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Congratulations, Ms. Ley,
18 and good luck to you. We look forward to hearing --
19 we look forward to hearing your success on the
20 assessments as well as the calendar.

21 MS. LEY: (inaudible) So, thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

23 Panel Members, as we prepare for the next two
24 agenda items is there a preference on the order that
25 we take topics, such as governance, finance,

1 academics? Anybody have a preference? Would you
2 like to kind of group those questions together so we
3 can have some meaning-making?

4 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, Madam Chair, I think that's a
5 wise suggestion. Since we've got so much support
6 here, I think beginning with the fiscal issues might
7 be a great beginning because those are issues that
8 are very quantitative in nature, very fact-based --
9 and maybe just a suggestion. Mr. Rogers, do you have
10 any issue with that? I see your team is ready. We
11 can start with the fiscal issues, and then what
12 happens after that I'm open to my Panel's -- or my
13 fellow colleagues.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Would y'all like to take a
15 quick break and refresh your coffee?

16 All right. We'll take about an 8-minute break
17 and then we'll resume with Agenda Item 4.

18 (BREAK: 9:13 - 9:27 A.M.)

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis, will you go
20 over the hearing -- the procedures?

21 MS. DAVIS: The hearing procedures for the next
22 two action items will be a little different than the
23 ones you did this morning -- or that you did
24 previously. It'll be, after getting sworn in,
25 everybody who wants to provide testimony, the

1 applicant will have 20 minutes to present its case to
2 you regarding any kind of modification or probation
3 or revocation of its charter. After that, you may
4 ask any questions of the applicant or of any ADE
5 staff. If there is anybody here to speak for public
6 comment, they will be heard after the question-and-
7 answer period by you and each person will have 3
8 minutes for public comment. But everything else, as
9 far as you will have a Google doc to make any of your
10 notations, will still be the same.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

12 A-4: HEARING AND POTENTIAL ACTION ON OPEN ENROLLMENT CHARTER
13 SCHOOL: COVENANT KEEPERS COLLEGE PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I would ask that everyone
15 representing Covenant Keepers please stand. And is
16 there anyone here to speak in opposition, Ms. Perry?

17 MS. VIRGINIA PERRY: No, sir. No, ma'am.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If you will raise your
19 right hand, do you swear or affirm that the testimony
20 you're about to give shall be the truth, the whole
21 truth, and nothing but the truth?

22 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mary Perry, you are
24 recognized.

25 MS. MARY PERRY: Good morning. Mary Perry,

1 Division of Learning Services.

2 At its regularly scheduled meeting on March 9,
3 2017, the State Board of Education formally requested
4 the Charter Authorizing Panel review Covenant Keepers
5 Charter School regarding academic performance.

6 During the March 15, 2017 Charter Authorizing Panel
7 meeting, the Panel discussed the Board's request and
8 voted to conduct a review at today's meeting.

9 As stated in the March 17, 2017 hearing letter
10 to Covenant Keepers, included in the Panel agenda
11 packet for today, possible actions allowed by the
12 statute include placing the school on probation,
13 modifying the open-enrollment charter, and/or
14 revoking the charter. Included in the agenda packet
15 are documents prepared by the Arkansas Department of
16 Education staff, documents submitted by the Charter,
17 and the presentation prepared by the Charter for the
18 Panel.

19 Representatives of the Charter are present to
20 begin the presentation. Dr. Valerie Tatum,
21 superintendent of Covenant Keepers is here to begin.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And just so that the Panel
23 knows, you do have board members in attendance today;
24 is that correct?

25 DR. TATUM: Yes, we have three.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Dr. Tatum,
2 you're recognized.

3 DR. TATUM: All right. Good morning, everyone.
4 I am Dr. Tatum from Covenant Keepers Charter School.
5 And we're so, so, so excited to come before you to
6 really share the impactful things that have been
7 going on this year. But just a note of reminder that
8 we were just a little bit before you, February 17th
9 of 2016, so we have our first year of data, as Ms.
10 Barnes wanted to know; there were some grave
11 concerns. So we wanted to really just start there,
12 if we could.

13 At the February 17, 2016, we tried to answer
14 those questions, because you needed to see two years
15 but we brought first year. And just be mindful that
16 we are in the midst of ACT Aspire as we are speaking
17 now -- well, not like right now, but tomorrow we
18 begin again -- just to pretty much prepare you for
19 where we're going as far as removing ourselves or
20 taking ourselves away from academic distress.

21 Our vision and mission -- our mission is to
22 change the trajectory of students' academic path
23 through the development of higher order thinking
24 skills, peacemaking strategies, and leadership
25 abilities within a culture of high expectations. Our

1 vision is to help academically underserved students
2 rise above their circumstances as a result of a
3 collaborative learning effort of our faculty, staff,
4 parents, students, and our wonderful community.
5 Students will strive for a continual improvement and
6 high school readiness.

7 Now Ms. Jones and I will share the PowerPoint
8 presentation, along with Ms. Whipps. So she'll come
9 and I'll be back.

10 MS. JONES: All right. A history of Covenant
11 Keepers, we are serving the 72209 Zip Code.

12 And this is Jenna Jones from Covenant Keepers
13 Charter; I'm the data coordinator and the internal
14 school improvement specialist.

15 In 2013, we were granted a three-year renewal.
16 We requested to move the high school, LEA 6044703,
17 and we requested to move our middle school to 5615
18 Geyer Springs Road. In 2016, as Dr. Tatum stated, we
19 were here in February and six voted yes for our
20 renewal to be granted for three years and two voted
21 no in favor of a five-year renewal. During the March
22 31st meeting the State Board of Education, in 2016,
23 unanimously approved our three-year renewal.

24 We'd like to discuss the coordination that we've
25 had with Dr. Denise Airola to take a closer look at

1 our school-wide concordant scores for the past three
2 years, as these schools are what determine our
3 academic distress status. The 2014 concordant score
4 was 43.06%, 2015 with 42.986%, and our 2016
5 concordant score was 50.896%, giving us a three-year
6 average of 45.839%. As you can see, since we have
7 that percentage it still means that we're classified
8 as academic distress but our proficiency increased
9 last year by almost 8%, according to the concordance.
10 Our growth or value-added, as determined by the
11 concordance, was also similar to the average of
12 schools in the state, with our growth at 80.40% and
13 the state average at 80.85%.

14 Our students also showed improvement on their
15 ACT Aspire interim assessments this year. These
16 percentages are based on ACT Aspire's linking study,
17 predicting that if a student meets a certain score
18 they're predicted to score proficient on the ACT
19 Aspire summative assessment. We started off the
20 school year with only 14% proficient in reading, 15%
21 in math, and 31% in English, but by Interim 3 they
22 had grown to 31% in reading, 30% in math, and 61%
23 proficient in English.

24 Looking at the percentage of students who scored
25 proficient in 2015-16, compared with our interim

1 assessment predictions for 2016-17, we're projected
2 to continue our pattern of improvement. This is
3 taken directly from our percent proficient as it is
4 on the ESEA flexibility document. As students do not
5 take all parts of the ACT Aspire during interims, I'm
6 only showing the reading scores comparison to the ELA
7 score. On last year's ACT Aspire summative test,
8 only 19.72% of our students scored proficient in
9 math, but this year we're projected to have 30% of
10 our students score ready.

11 Now I'd like to show you some growth from our
12 students at Covenant Keepers. Dr. Sarah McKenzie
13 from the Office for Education Policy at the
14 University of Arkansas assisted us with this data,
15 but unfortunately she could not join us today.
16 Arkansas' growth model measures how much students
17 grew academically compared to how much we thought the
18 student would grow based on prior test performance.
19 This example slide shows a single student's score for
20 grades 3 through 7 and these scores are used to
21 predict a student's score in 8th grade. If the
22 student actually scores at the green level, that is
23 more growth than expected; the blue level is
24 unexpected, and the red level is less than expected.
25 Each student's scores are averaged at the school

1 level to get a measure of how effective the school is
2 and this measure is based on state assessments.
3 Compared to the schools serving similar populations,
4 which is 6th through 8th grade, over 90% free and
5 reduced lunch, Covenant Keepers has the highest
6 growth score and the highest percentage of at-risk
7 students who met or exceeded in ELA or math on the
8 ACT Aspire, even though CK serves a greater
9 percentage of free and reduced lunch students than
10 these listed below. I also want to highlight that
11 the percentage of our students meeting or exceeding
12 in our TAGG groups is higher than those schools, as
13 well.

14 This value-added growth chart shows the
15 relationship between growth on the vertical axis and
16 the percentage of free and reduced lunch for all
17 schools in the state serving students in middle
18 school, grades 6 through 8. You can see that there's
19 a negative relationship between growth and free and
20 reduced lunch; the higher the poverty level the lower
21 the growth. But compared with other schools
22 throughout the state serving students in grades 6
23 through 8 Covenant Keepers is exceeding growth for
24 the level of free and reduced lunch students. As you
25 can see, the green dot is Covenant Keepers and the

1 orange dots are the other three middle schools in
2 Little Rock that we compared ourselves to.

3 We believe that students who continue at
4 Covenant Keepers for three years, from 6th grade all
5 the way through 8th grade, show evidence of the
6 greatest growth out of the students in our school.
7 This year 28 of our 8th grade students have been with
8 CK since 6th grade, and this is approximately 50% of
9 the class. Using a correlation table of ACT Aspire
10 with NWEA scores, we looked at 6th grade NWEA MAP
11 entrance data from fall 2014 and compared it to 8th
12 grade ACT Aspire Interim 3 results. At the beginning
13 of 6th grade only two of the students would've been
14 predicted to meet the benchmark readiness on the ACT
15 Aspire reading assessment if it had been
16 administered. But now 10 students are predicted to
17 meet readiness benchmark on the ACT Aspire as 8th
18 grade students, based on the Interim 3 results on the
19 ACT Aspire. At the beginning of 6th grade, this
20 cohort of students, zero students would've been
21 predicted to meet readiness benchmarks on the math
22 ACT Aspire assessment if it had been administered.
23 But now six of those students who've been with us for
24 three years are predicted to meet readiness
25 benchmarks as 8th grade students based on Interim 3

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results.

Covenant Keepers has not only shown academic progress since our last review but has also shown gains in fostering a positive school culture. Comparing 2015 to this school year, the number of students with five or more referrals has decreased from 50 students with five or more referrals to 27 students. We attribute this success to our one-on-one mediation meetings between teacher and student, our parent reflection meetings, our mental health professionals on campus, and the use of SWIS software to collect and analyze student referral data for the purpose of decreasing future referrals. Out of these 27 students with five or more referrals, 8 of the students are returning students and only 3 have been with us for all three years of school. So this shows as students become more accustomed to our school culture and more services are offered to those students they're less likely to receive multiple referrals for behavioral infractions.

Dr. Tatum will now discuss what we're doing to strengthen our teachers and our leadership team.

DR. TATUM: Over the past year we have always prized our-self on our professional development, and so we wanted to grow within and really develop the

1 great leaders, teacher leaders, as well as the
2 leadership team that we have onboard. So with that,
3 we wanted to just share our opportunities of the
4 teachers' leadership team to be a part of some of the
5 invested organizations that are listed. So we have a
6 leadership team initiative, 2017. Ms. Jones is going
7 to be a part of Impact Arkansas, which is a
8 fellowship with -- that is done by the Walton's, and
9 they've actually asked for three other teachers and
10 leadership team members to be a part of that as well.
11 So we look for them to go and be a part of that 2017,
12 this fall, as well. R.I.S.E. Arkansas, the reading
13 initiative for student excellence, we are -- we've
14 been slated to attend a meeting on Thursday, March
15 [sic] 18th because, again, we're always looking for
16 ways to be a part on how we can impact Covenant
17 Keepers.

18 Of course, we could not bring our school, our
19 students and our parents and teachers to you, so we
20 wanted to just take time and give you a snippet of
21 the voices from within and what they're saying about
22 Covenant Keepers.

23 (WHEREUPON, a video was shown. This video may
24 be viewed on the ADE website.)

25 DR. TATUM: And, finally, the impactful things

1 could not have happened without Dr. Wilde and Ms.
2 Sharesa White that has always challenged us to think
3 outside of where we are and really hone it on all of
4 our student needs, not just academically but socially
5 and emotionally, which has really made a difference
6 in providing our students and families the wraparound
7 services we needed to really make sure that student
8 achievement was happening in our building. Ms.
9 Sharesa White has helped us tell our story; she's
10 edited, she's cut out the fluff. And things that may
11 not be working through our leadership team we have --
12 she has made some painful statements where we've left
13 with tears, but now we want to just give a huge
14 shout-out to Dr. Wilde and Ms. Sharesa White for
15 taking on such a challenge at Covenant Keepers and
16 helping us to look at ourselves through a light of
17 who we really are. I also want to give a shout-out
18 to Scott Smith, APSRC, which is an excellent team
19 that has come onboard. They have helped us for many,
20 many years, and even up to yesterday and calling,
21 making sure that everything was going -- that we had
22 everything that we needed. So they have also lended
23 themselves an instructional specialist, Elizabeth
24 Sharp; she's our ELA individual. And our teachers
25 have really embraced her and her knowledge and they

1 are excited about every time she comes to our
2 building. She is really making an impact in the
3 classroom. And also I can't say enough about Eric
4 Woodruff, who's our math individual. He is coming
5 and he has also embraced our teachers; they have
6 embraced him with open arms to help make successful
7 things happen at Covenant Keepers.

8 That's it.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You have five additional
10 minutes -- or if you're ready for us to go ahead and
11 move forward?

12 DR. TATUM: Yes, we're ready.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

14 All right, Panel. Mr. Rogers, would you like to
15 start us off?

16 MR. ROGERS: No, I wasn't ready to.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. I can start with
18 someone else.

19 MR. ROGERS: Yeah.

20 MS. SMITH: Can we hear from ADE staff, School
21 Improvement --

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

23 MS. SMITH: -- some of those folks?

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Ms. White,
25 Sharesa White -- Ms. White, if you'll introduce

1 yourself and give us some background of your
2 interaction with Covenant Keepers.

3 MS. WHITE: Sharesa White, School Improvement
4 Specialist.

5 So this is my first year to work with Covenant
6 Keepers. And what I'd like to speak on at this time
7 is what have they done differently this year that
8 they haven't done in the past. The first thing is
9 intentional and consistent SILT meetings that
10 includes data review, analysis of that data, and then
11 making decisions that will impact and support both
12 teachers and students; also, the use of pre-tests.
13 You know, when I started working with them they, you
14 know, mentioned that they were not doing pre-tests;
15 they didn't see the need for it. But through our
16 conversations and discussions they determined that
17 there was a need, so now they are utilizing pre-tests
18 and using that information to inform instruction.

19 Also, with their interventions they're now
20 progress monitoring those interventions and making
21 sure that their interventions are fluid, that those
22 students are moving in and out as needed, and that
23 wasn't happening on a consistent basis last year.

24 So what can I validate at this time? There has
25 been improvement on their leading indicators, as

1 evidenced in that 45-day report that you have before
2 you. You will see a decrease in discipline
3 referrals. You will see a decrease in the Ds and Fs
4 in the various grade levels. You will see a decrease
5 in Ds and Fs in ELA and math on their unit
6 assessments. So they are embracing the process and
7 this year really has been a refinement of the
8 process. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any questions for Ms.
10 White?

11 MS. SMITH: So academically you feel like
12 they're heading in the right direction based on the
13 45-day report and your personal working experience
14 with them?

15 MS. WHITE: Absolutely.

16 MS. SMITH: Okay.

17 MS. WHITE: Absolutely.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

19 DR. PFEFFER: You mentioned the leading
20 indicators, and so can you just kind of go through
21 what those primary leading indicators that you're
22 looking at and --

23 MS. WHITE: Yes. Yes. So in the 45-day report
24 we look at attendance, grades, discipline; the unit
25 assessments primarily. And so when you look in their

1 45-day report you will see absolutely that there has
2 been increases and decreases on the positive side.
3 So, yes, those are leading indicators that we ask
4 them to look at. And they've been setting goals in
5 those various leading indicators, as well.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Anything else?

7 Thank you, Ms. White.

8 MS. WHITE: Okay. Thank you.

9 MS. SMITH: I know that one of the concerns that
10 we had voiced before -- Ms. White, I think we're done
11 with you -- was about the numbers and if the numbers
12 were correct. The sheet I have says that there's 180
13 students. Did we get the number of students enrolled
14 in the data systems correct?

15 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am. That was no fault by
16 us; it was where we were at the October 1st and there
17 was -- Ms. Hill, which is our HR individual, was
18 conversating back and forth. So the individual -- I
19 believe her name is Ms. Tiffany -- said to go on and
20 submit because she couldn't find the error on her
21 side. So, therefore, if you look through the emails
22 -- and I did attach those --

23 MS. SMITH: Right.

24 DR. TATUM: -- that I started out -- I did call
25 Ms. Howell and then we worked with Amy Thomas, I

1 talked with Greg; it was just a lot of going back and
2 forth. So to date, the numbers are still out there
3 as 180 but on our side it is correct.

4 MS. SMITH: Okay. So the 161 --

5 DR. TATUM: 161. Yes, ma'am.

6 MS. SMITH: 161 is the correct number. Okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Other questions?

8 MS. SMITH: Okay. I'll keep going.

9 So I think in our last presentation we heard
10 lots of information about the academics and the
11 directions we were heading, and I felt like -- I
12 voted to approve because I felt like we were heading
13 in the right direction. And then Ms. White today
14 confirms that as far as the Department and working
15 together. I will say this time in reviewing I dug a
16 little bit deeper into some of the finance and trying
17 to look at where we have issues and why we have
18 issues, and I'll say I came across one thing that
19 kind of surprised me and I just need some more
20 explanation. And this could be kind of a touchy
21 subject but I feel like it's -- when we're talking
22 about having financial issues I think it -- one of
23 the first places you start looking at is you start
24 looking at administrative salaries, administrative
25 costs, that type of thing. And when I looked at what

1 the state average that superintendents make it's
2 generally about \$125 per student.

3 DR. TATUM: Uh-huh.

4 MS. SMITH: And when I look at your salary in
5 comparison to the number of students it shows up as
6 \$818 per student. And that's giving you more
7 students than you actually have, so it's actually
8 more than that. I need some -- and when I look at
9 your salary ranking amongst schools, your salary
10 ranking is up there among some very large school
11 districts in average.

12 DR. TATUM: Uh-huh.

13 MS. SMITH: And when I look at your current
14 employees' and current teachers' salaries and raises
15 that have happened over the years, there's no
16 increases for others and quite a large increase from
17 your beginning to what your current is. So I need
18 some -- I need some explanation about that salary.

19 DR. TATUM: Okay.

20 MS. SMITH: And what is your current salary?

21 DR. TATUM: It's \$138,000.

22 MS. SMITH: \$138,000?

23 DR. TATUM: Uh-huh.

24 MS. SMITH: Okay.

25 DR. TATUM: So what do you want me to explain?

1 MS. SMITH: So I guess it's just how does -- I
2 just -- maybe I need to hear from your board --

3 DR. TATUM: Okay.

4 MS. SMITH: -- to give me an explanation as to
5 why for 161 students their superintendent makes close
6 to \$140,000, in comparison to other districts. I
7 mean, that's a pretty lofty salary for the size of
8 the district and I just need some explanation about
9 that. So I need to hear from somebody on the board
10 on how that decision and determination was made.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If you'll state your name
12 and title, please.

13 MR. BUCKLEY: My name is Noland Buckley, board
14 president, Covenant Keepers.

15 MS. SMITH: Okay. Can you kind of -- just kind
16 of give me some background on how the decision was
17 made for that salary amount?

18 MR. BUCKLEY: Basically, over -- I've been with
19 Covenant Keepers since they started. And on the work
20 and as far as the -- everything that we've seen, as
21 far as the board is concerned, and the many hats that
22 Dr. Tatum has -- had to do over the course of time to
23 get to where we are today, which is a very positive
24 situation where we are, we felt that she deserved the
25 salary that she had, that she gets.

1 MS. SMITH: Are you aware of the salary ranges
2 of superintendents for the state, of other districts?

3 MR. BUCKLEY: I was not aware of the salary
4 rankings but -- as they are, but I'm aware now.

5 MS. SMITH: Are you surprised to know that she's
6 in the top quarter of the state in salaries?

7 MR. BUCKLEY: Just -- yes, I am.

8 MS. SMITH: Okay.

9 DR. DUNN: And I'm Dr. Caron Dunn; I am the vice
10 president of the board. And as the board president
11 had mentioned, just because of the fact that she's
12 done quite a bit of work in order to make progress in
13 the education of the students -- and although we had
14 been on academic -- what is it --

15 DR. TATUM: Distress.

16 DR. DUNN: -- distress, we're making really good
17 strides. And we felt as though that because of that
18 that the gain and the increase in her salary was
19 needed. We think that Dr. Tatum is doing a good job
20 and she's really made a lot of progress in the school
21 and she continues to make that progress as well.

22 MS. SMITH: How many employees are -- okay. I
23 see one name on the list that's the same last name,
24 so I assume that's a relative that works at the
25 school, to Dr. Tatum. Do you have a relative that

1 works --

2 DR. TATUM: Yes. Uh-huh.

3 MS. SMITH: Okay. Is it just the one relative?

4 DR. TATUM: Yes.

5 MS. SMITH: Okay. I will just say that that's a
6 concern to me. This is a huge red flag, especially
7 when you're looking at finances, cutting it close,
8 being concerned about whether or not, you know, we're
9 going to make it through the year. I know some of
10 the history with repayments, some of those things.
11 Those are red flags, just red flags.

12 DR. DUNN: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers?

14 MR. ROGERS: Cindy.

15 MS. DAVIS: I would prefer if we get all of ADE
16 staff that may provide testimony today to go ahead
17 and get sworn in, as well.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

19 MS. DAVIS: I would feel better.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If the ADE staff will
21 please stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear
22 or affirm that the testimony you're about to give
23 shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
24 the truth?

25 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

2 Ms. Smith, if you'll give your name and title.

3 MS. SMITH: I'm Cindy Smith, Fiscal Services and
4 Support Coordinator.

5 MR. ROGERS: Do you want me to ask questions or

6 --

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Go ahead.

8 MR. ROGERS: Okay. So I guess what I'm needing
9 to know is did you do a review of the finances for
10 this charter school?

11 MS. CINDY SMITH: Yes. I reviewed the
12 unrestricted fund balances of this charter and did
13 the same review that I would've done for a typical
14 school district. My concern would have been last
15 year's ending balance was \$110,000 in the negative.
16 If this was a school district, we would have gone
17 straight into state takeover. There would've been no
18 question. A district could not have operated this
19 way. There's just a lot of things in this, a lot of
20 red flags, the revenue, it just does not compare to
21 the expenses right now. At this point in the year
22 they have I believe, just as the budget shows,
23 \$67,000 left on their expenditure side. That's not
24 going to get them through -- they're going to expend
25 more than \$67,000, so their budget will exceed what

1 they had predicted.

2 DR. GOTCHER: Am I hearing that's for the second
3 year in a row, if that prediction holds true?

4 MS. CINDY SMITH: I don't know what the ending
5 balance will be. I'm just saying that --

6 DR. GOTCHER: All right.

7 MS. CINDY SMITH: -- they have budgeted
8 \$1,053,000 in expenditures; they have \$67,000 left of
9 that budget, and it's going to be more than that by
10 the end of the year with salaries and benefits and --
11 I just don't see how it won't be. They may have a
12 small ending balance, but it's a very big concern.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Ms. Smith, can you provide the
15 Panel an indication of their payment history, if
16 they're paying their bills on time, et cetera? Is
17 that something that has been addressed to your
18 office?

19 MS. CINDY SMITH: I have received a few emails
20 from EDD and from ATRS. They send me a blanket list
21 each month --

22 DR. GOTCHER: Right.

23 MS. CINDY SMITH: -- of who has been late on
24 their payments. And they have occasionally appeared
25 on those lists.

1 MR. ROGERS: So I guess I just want to bring up,
2 you know, if this was a traditional public school
3 they would be in fiscal distress.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So why are they not in
5 fiscal distress?

6 MR. ROGERS: Because we don't put Charters on
7 fiscal distress.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

9 MS. CINDY SMITH: Yes, they would definitely be
10 in fiscal distress, if not state takeover already.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. And have they
12 reached out to you for assistance?

13 MS. CINDY SMITH: I have been there one time and
14 visited with Dr. Tatum and that was the extent of --
15 you know -- I did voice concerns and we did offer
16 some assistance, but we've not been back out.
17 They've not reached back out to us at all.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Dr. Pfeffer.

19 DR. PFEFFER: Yes. I think my questions would
20 be directed at the board members. And just in your
21 working relationship with Dr. Tatum, how much
22 information is shared with you or how is information
23 shared with you with regards to finance issues and
24 staffing issues and things like that? Are you
25 regularly updated? Are you surprised today to hear

1 the conversation around the concerns of the budget?
2 Have you all had discussions? Can you just give me
3 an update?

4 DR. DUNN: Yes. We have had discussions and I
5 would like the finance person to come up, Mr.
6 Hamilton, to discuss those issues, because we do get
7 briefings on that.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Well, before we do that,
9 we'd like to hear from the board members. We'd like
10 to know from each board member what they know about
11 the financial situation of the school.

12 DR. DUNN: Well, like what I know is that we do
13 get updates on the finances each month, every time we
14 meet. And there were some concerns with the new
15 development of the schools where they had the money
16 -- yeah, student low fund [sic], and where we got a
17 little bit more money than we were supposed to and
18 we've been paying that back. And I think that we're
19 on target to pay that back by the -- yeah, pay that
20 in full. So we talk about that and -- but pretty
21 much I think that these concerns are rectifiable
22 because what our accountant has said and put forth
23 before us as far as the budget and how much we will
24 have at the end of the year, so --

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If you'll state your name,

1 please.

2 MR. DAVIS: My name is Ed Davis. And Dr. Tatum
3 has been totally transparent with us regarding
4 numbers and she's supplied us with documentation
5 about things related to the fiscal side of the
6 school. And I know behind me, Mr. Hamilton, could
7 speak a little bit more on it than I can.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Buckley, may we hear
9 from you?

10 MR. BUCKLEY: Yes. I want to just reiterate the
11 same thing that Dr. Dunn just said. We get -- every
12 month we get updates on financials in every category.
13 And we -- you know -- we run a tight budget but we've
14 always met our budget in every area.

15 MR. HAMILTON: Deron Hamilton, CPA. I work with
16 Covenant Keepers. One of the things that the young
17 lady was talking about earlier, which is -- it was
18 just accurate, is the spending. The spending numbers
19 that she has is accurate; however, she has to look at
20 the board report to also notice that there is
21 additional local revenue that hasn't been seen in
22 prior years. So not only is she, Dr. Tatum, working
23 off of the charter funding, but she also has
24 additional local revenue that's contributing to
25 helping her meet the needs of the students. In

1 addition, I want to say this, if you look at the
2 board report or the package that you guys received
3 today, it says a negative fund balance. That report
4 was ran on April 5th. Revenues can be recorded up
5 until April 10th. So those revenues for that month
6 have not been recorded, so it's a little bit
7 misleading when you look at that. So each board
8 meeting, each member of the board receives the
9 following: they receive (1) a board report with all
10 the fund balances; they receive an expenditure report
11 that shows expenses compared to budget, and we
12 discuss what items are areas of concern; and then,
13 finally, they receive a revenue report that shows the
14 revenues received from all funding sources, and we
15 discuss those as well.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Hamilton, are you in
17 attendance at each board meeting?

18 MR. HAMILTON: I'm in attendance probably 80%.
19 But the reports are presented at every meeting.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

21 Mr. Rogers.

22 MR. ROGERS: You referenced local revenue.

23 MR. HAMILTON: Yes, sir.

24 MR. ROGERS: What is that local revenue? Is
25 that local revenue recorded in APSCN? Because if it

1 was then my office would've been able to see it and
2 we wouldn't have shown a negative balance. So now
3 you've opened up --

4 MR. HAMILTON: No, no. No, no.

5 MR. ROGERS: Okay. That's why I asked.

6 MR. HAMILTON: No, let me explain.

7 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

8 MR. HAMILTON: The report was ran on April 5th;
9 the revenues didn't get recorded until April 8th or
10 9th. So the local revenue is recorded in APSCN.

11 MR. ROGERS: What local revenue is that?

12 MR. HAMILTON: I'll let Dr. Tatum explain that,
13 but it is recorded.

14 MR. ROGERS: And then, hold on. So you also
15 talked about -- I'm sorry, can I --

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Go ahead.

17 MR. ROGERS: Okay. So I also am concerned that
18 it was unrestricted balance ending negative \$110,000
19 at the end of the fiscal year last year.

20 MR. HAMILTON: Yes, sir. But you know all about
21 that; you know the reason, what happened. And so it
22 was -- it was -- go ahead.

23 MR. ROGERS: Which reason are you talking about
24 ending in negative last year?

25 MR. HAMILTON: Dr. Tatum -- the fact of the --

1 go ahead.

2 DR. TATUM: We had a -- I met with you back in
3 July. There was a --

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If you'll speak into the
5 microphone please.

6 DR. TATUM: My apologies. We met back in July
7 and there was a \$212,000 amount of student growth
8 funds, so we --

9 MR. ROGERS: But that should've been reflected
10 in negative end fund balance for last year.

11 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir. So I guess I'm wondering
12 what is the --

13 MR. ROGERS: Of your unrestricted fund balance,
14 according to the reports that y'all had a negative --
15 you ended June 30th or the month after that, when the
16 books were cleaned up, with a negative \$110,000 --
17 negative.

18 DR. TATUM: Uh-huh.

19 MR. ROGERS: Now the student growth payment
20 would've been made during that time. We asked for
21 the repayment of it based off incorrect data, which
22 we can go back and forth how that data got incorrect.
23 But it was -- since we're talking about it, it was
24 incorrect data that led to Covenant Keepers receiving
25 \$212,000 more than they should have.

1 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir. That's correct.

2 MR. ROGERS: And we did meet because we talked
3 about trying to get a repayment of that, because any
4 other school district would've had to pay that
5 payment back in August. And we talked about it and
6 knew at that time that Covenant Keepers couldn't
7 afford to do that, so we have been working with you
8 to make your payment, and you have made that payment.

9 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir.

10 MR. ROGERS: And I think the balance is zero
11 now, that we have throughout the year gotten the
12 money back. But to say that it's all bookkeeping
13 errors and timing issues that you ended with a
14 negative \$110,000 ending last year I think is a
15 little misleading. As you indicated that Cindy was
16 misleading, I think that's misleading. I do think
17 there are some cash flow issues and I do think there
18 are some fund balance issues. So I'd like to know
19 what that local revenue is and how is it recorded in
20 APSCN?

21 DR. TATUM: And I'm not sure what you're
22 referring to. I would have to really look at that.
23 But I have been proactive with my board and with Mr.
24 Hamilton and with APSRC looking at what we will be
25 ending with, and that's about \$89,000 or \$90,000 that

1 our ending balance would be for this particular
2 school year.

3 MR. ROGERS: What was the ending balance last
4 year?

5 DR. TATUM: It was the negative \$110,000.

6 MR. ROGERS: Okay. That's -- and that's where
7 I'm going at, that you ended last year with negative
8 \$110,000, which was irregardless of what -- the money
9 you had to pay back of the overage of student growth
10 this year.

11 So if you ended at negative \$110,000 last year,
12 you haven't had an increase in student count but your
13 expenditures are going up, and you also had to pay
14 back \$212,000 that you were overpaid this year, how
15 -- what is your fund balance going to be this year?

16 DR. TATUM: And it's going to be about \$80,000,
17 \$90,000, so -- but I know that we were booking those
18 payments through that \$110,000. And I guess I'll
19 just have to go back and really look at that with Mr.
20 Hamilton to --

21 MR. ROGERS: Okay. I'm getting -- I'm sorry;
22 I'm getting confused now. Which payments are we
23 talking about? Are we talking about the extra
24 revenue? Because that's really what I started on.
25 I'm sorry.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Let's see if Dr. Pfeffer
2 can dig us out of it.

3 DR. PFEFFER: Well, I was just going to see if
4 Ms. Smith would speak to the school's projection of
5 ending with \$80,000 to \$90,000. Is that -- does that
6 look like it would be a possibility?

7 MS. CINDY SMITH: The report that I have here in
8 front of me was ran April 18th, so that would've been
9 after the postings, and it showed an ending balance
10 of \$72,000. I do not -- if they are on the same
11 course that they are on -- that they were on last
12 year I don't think it will be as high as \$80,000. I
13 don't think they will have the negative balance that
14 they had, but I just don't see it being that high if
15 they have the same salaries and benefits to be paid
16 out that they had last year. And if she has had a
17 salary increase, then that will be -- because last
18 year their revenue was \$1.1 million and they budgeted
19 \$1.2 this year. Their expenditures last year were
20 \$1.4 and they budgeted \$1 million this year. So that
21 would be a \$400,000 decrease in expenditures, which I
22 don't know where that would be coming from with
23 salary increases. I mean, everything goes up each
24 year; we all know that. And then they also had to
25 pay back the \$200,000 for the student growth that I

1 don't think was accounted for in the budget, so --

2 DR. PFEFFER: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith, before you
4 leave the microphone, explain to the rest of us what
5 it means to have a negative ending balance. I know
6 what it means in my checkbook, so --

7 MS. CINDY SMITH: It means the same thing in the
8 school world. They may have had some money left in
9 their checking account if they had some federal
10 dollars left, if they had some special ed. dollars
11 left, but they -- at the end of the year. Now I'm
12 not -- their checking account may not have shown a
13 negative, but our books showed a negative because we
14 close later than what the month would be on the
15 ending of the checkbook. So they may have received
16 in the beginning of July money that kept their
17 account from being in the negative. Those checks may
18 not have posted the bank account but they have been
19 posted to the accounting.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. That's
21 helpful.

22 Dr. Gotcher.

23 DR. GOTCHER: Yes. I'm not sure who can answer
24 this, but I believe one of the questions Mr. Rogers
25 was asking, on page -- because they're not quite --

1 yeah, it's page 2 of the revenue streams account --
2 \$19,900 miscellaneous revenue from local sources.

3 MS. CINDY SMITH: Right.

4 DR. GOTCHER: What is the source of that local
5 revenue?

6 MS. CINDY SMITH: That would have to be a
7 question that they would answer. \$19,900 is just
8 typically money that maybe is raised, donated, if the
9 students have to pay money, you know, for attending
10 the school. The only other money that they do show
11 coming in is the charter school funding from the
12 State.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Can you -- on the
14 documentation that you have for, I believe you said,
15 April 18th, does it indicate that local revenue was
16 added?

17 MS. CINDY SMITH: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And how much?

19 MS. CINDY SMITH: Year-to-date it's showing
20 \$342,824. They probably have had money put in that
21 local revenue to help pay back that foundation or the
22 state student growth -- I'm sorry, I don't want to
23 say the wrong thing -- not the state, but the student
24 growth money. They probably had some assistance in
25 paying that back. That would be my assumption just

1 looking at the report, because they had only budgeted
2 \$180,000 in the 19-900 account.

3 DR. GOTCHER: And currently we don't have a
4 mechanism of accountability of what that source is;
5 we just know that it's received?

6 MS. CINDY SMITH: Not on this report. And then
7 if we go in and actually pull an APSCN report, unless
8 they have detailed where that money came from we
9 can't see their receipts.

10 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. Maybe Dr. Tatum --

11 MS. CINDY SMITH: And so a lot of times there's
12 not enough detail for us to know where the money came
13 from.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Understood. I just know it's
15 increased. And I think Dr. Tatum's got an answer for
16 us.

17 DR. TATUM: And that is from the local grants
18 that we have received and then our -- in being
19 transparent we shared that information with the City
20 of Fire Community Development, which is our
21 sponsoring entity, that helped us pay for it and
22 float the -- you know -- take care of the money.

23 DR. GOTCHER: And, Dr. Tatum, is there an
24 expectation from this sponsoring entity to pay that
25 back or is that just part of the grant --

1 DR. TATUM: Yes.

2 DR. GOTCHER: -- in support of your educational
3 institution?

4 DR. TATUM: That's exactly it.

5 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Tatum, would you
7 explain your plan for decreasing your budget for
8 \$400,000? Did you make some cuts?

9 DR. TATUM: Yes, we did. And we've looked at
10 the budget with Mr. Hamilton. And as I looked at it
11 as of yesterday different areas has gone down in the
12 spending revenue. I was looking for that report.
13 Mr. Hamilton, you've probably got it; can I look at
14 it?

15 Yes. And every year we have to look at our
16 expenditure report and then we have to begin to move,
17 if you're looking at it, some of the reds that's out
18 there because it still shows that that money is
19 available. So what we have to do is go back and
20 begin to shift the money around to make sure that
21 we're ending strong. So we're not doing anything
22 different this time that we haven't done in the past.
23 And so it shows quite a bit of money out there, but
24 we just have to go back and shift and play with those
25 numbers to insure that we're going to finish strong.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. My question was,
2 what budget cuts did you make so that you could
3 reduce your budget by \$400,000? Did you
4 intentionally not hire a teacher? Did you
5 intentionally cut back on technology? Did you
6 intentionally cut back on some other service?

7 DR. TATUM: We really didn't do -- we didn't cut
8 any of the classroom teachers; all of those are in
9 place. We cut back on just some of our general
10 supplies that we usually buy. I did look at my
11 salary and determined that, you know, there needs to
12 be a cut. Before Ms. Smith said that I had already
13 looked at this and we were going to take on those
14 cuts. But today, we didn't really make any necessary
15 cuts except for in the general supplies because that
16 wasn't where -- we didn't know all of this
17 information was out there, if I'm answering your
18 question kind of, sort of.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

20 MR. ROGERS: Go ahead.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. My question is for the
23 board member -- is it Dr. Lott, is that correct --
24 yes, ma'am, on something you said earlier. I just
25 want to back-up on something that Ms. Smith brought

1 up earlier, and it's reflective though I think of an
2 entire school. And, you know, she was discussing the
3 superintendent's salary and so I got to looking and I
4 noticed that in 12-13 to 13-14 that there was an
5 increase a little over -- from \$117,000 to \$135,000,
6 about a 15% increase in the superintendent's salary.
7 And what you had mentioned about it was reflective of
8 the gains being made and everything. And looking
9 back on the school history, during June 2012, which
10 would've been prior to that, that's when the school
11 was placed on a one-year probation for audit
12 findings, and then later, for the 12-13 school year
13 and the 13-14 school year, it was placed in academic
14 distress. And so I'm trying to rectify that in my
15 mind. Can you help me out with that?

16 DR. DUNN: What I was meaning by that is through
17 our report -- Ms. Jenna Jones had given us a report
18 on the academic progress, and I would ask her to come
19 up as well. But she talked about how our students
20 are making steady gains in math and science and some
21 of the things that they are doing to change the
22 culture of the school, and compared to the previous
23 year, and some increases in their student scores as
24 well on the practice exams before this exam period
25 that's coming up for the state exams. So that's what

1 I was speaking of when I was talking about some of
2 the gains that we've made or that she has made with
3 the school.

4 Yes, there are -- there's a lot of work to be
5 done, of course, but I feel as though she is really
6 trying to make a difference in the lives of the
7 students and make a difference in their education.
8 And I know these are obstacles that are really up
9 there, and it seems as though the school won't make
10 it, but I do believe firmly that the school can make
11 it. I've been on the board for almost a year-and-a-
12 half now, so I'm kind of new and green to it. But I
13 believe that with the steady progress that she's
14 making with the faculty and some of the changes with
15 how the students are actually gaining their
16 educational stride is we're on the right track.

17 So if you don't mind, I'd like to ask Ms. Jenna
18 Jones to come.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah, she's welcome to. But I
20 think this would go to a bigger question, and it
21 would be for any of you board members. Do you on
22 your own seek information, do your own research, I
23 guess, instead of just relying solely upon what's
24 presented to you at a board meeting?

25 DR. DUNN: Yes.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: And what do you do to do that?

2 DR. DUNN: Well, I have -- you know -- as I've
3 been training to be a board member I have looked at
4 Department regulations and different things, and I
5 went to the board training as well on how to do that
6 and some of the things to look for. I know that, you
7 know, in hiring and as far as the fiscal issues that
8 we're having as well, those are some things that we
9 talked about. And also trying to understand the
10 numbers as far as how it affects the school and how
11 the school is affected by some of the things that are
12 negative in our balances, especially at the end of
13 last year having that negative balance and at the
14 end. But I believe that we are really trying -- the
15 school is really trying to reverse some of the
16 negative issues in the finances with the local
17 funding that we receive from the sponsoring City of
18 Fire to help us with that. And I think that it's one
19 of those things that if we continue to work towards a
20 better fiscal standing I think that with the City of
21 Fire sponsorships and with some of the things that
22 we're going to go back as a board to talk about,
23 really talk about it seriously, about, you know, the
24 hard decisions to make cuts and how to make those
25 cuts so that we can balance the budget for the end of

1 the year and going forward, not making the same
2 mistakes over. So I feel like, yes, right now it
3 seems as though the board here may suggest, "Well, I
4 don't think they're going to change their ways," but
5 I believe that we can change our ways. And, again,
6 like I said, I've been on the board just a year-and-
7 a-half, so I'm still learning and I'm on the learning
8 curve, but I think that we can really build a
9 consensus and really build our finances as well as we
10 move forward and do better. So, yeah.

11 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

13 DR. PFEFFER: And, Dr. Lott, I wanted to follow-
14 up on a question that Dr. Saunders asked -- and board
15 members and other board members may need to speak to
16 this also. But the question was, you know, how much
17 research or how far do you go in asking questions
18 about the operations of this school. And one area
19 that we've recently been working with Covenant
20 Keepers on were some concerns that came up about
21 staffing. One of the waivers that cannot be granted
22 to charters is the requirement that employees have
23 background checks as a condition of employment. I
24 don't know if Dr. Tatum has been able to make you all
25 aware, but as of yesterday there was a serious issue

1 with background check issues of employees. And I
2 think that most of that has been cleared up at this
3 time, but my concern is that there are employees that
4 are hired without having completed a background check
5 process and that really does rest with the board and
6 the superintendent in insuring that those things are
7 followed through. So my question would be: what
8 assurances are there that those things are really
9 looked at and those questions are asked? Because
10 students are put in jeopardy when they do not have a
11 teacher in their classroom and we were pretty close
12 to a serious, serious situation. So I guess that's
13 my question: what is the process? What might need to
14 be the process?

15 DR. DUNN: Well, I think that moving forward --
16 and presently I know that we've had -- from my
17 understanding, there have been background checks for
18 our teachers, our staff, and this one slipped through
19 the cracks. But that's always the utmost and
20 foremost in front of my mind as far as the safety of
21 the students because that's a big concern. And I
22 think that going forward for the board that we're
23 going to talk about some things as far as the
24 background checks and what needs to be done moving
25 forward to insure that those things are going on.

1 Also, I do visit the school occasionally,
2 regularly, and so these are some issues that I do
3 discuss, like hiring or disciplinary actions and
4 different things like that, and just seeing how the
5 teachers are thinking. We did an evaluation of Dr.
6 Tatum in February and we found that there were some
7 things that she would need to grow from, to
8 strengthen, and some weaknesses as far as development
9 of the staff and some concerns that we saw that she
10 needed to improve upon.

11 But I think too that we're going to look at our
12 policies and our procedures. Now that's one thing
13 that we had really talked about is looking at the
14 policies and procedures to insure that everything is
15 followed by the letter. If you have policies in
16 place you should be able to follow them and not, you
17 know, change course just on a whim. Because if
18 you're not following your own policies then you're
19 not doing what you said you're going to do. And
20 those are some of the things that we're going to help
21 Dr. Tatum with in order to insure that we can make
22 sure everything is tight, everything is done decently
23 and in order, so that we can be a better school for
24 it and that we can, you know, protect our children as
25 well. And I'm going to let the other board members

1 speak.

2 MR. BUCKLEY: Yes. I just want to -- everything
3 Dr. Dunn said I agree with. And we will --
4 basically, you know, policy as far as the charter
5 policies and hiring practices and background checks,
6 we do have that and we follow that. Now, of course,
7 I wasn't aware of the past incident you were talking
8 about, but as far as my knowledge concerning -- we do
9 do background checks in all areas. And hopefully in
10 the future we will definitely discuss, like Dr. Dunn
11 said, that everything is in place and that we move on
12 these. We, you know, are looking at it very closely
13 to make sure that nothing falls through the cracks.
14 So I'm sure the board is going to definitely zero-in
15 on that.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

17 DR. GOTCHER: Just to be clear, Dr. Pfeffer, is
18 there an active employee without a background check
19 that has been --

20 DR. PFEFFER: Yesterday, we had identified about
21 50% of their employees who had not had all their
22 background checks completed. My understanding is
23 that we think everything has been cleared up as of
24 this morning. But yesterday, out of their -- well,
25 out of their nine employees, their nine teachers,

1 there were five. So our understanding is that it's
2 been cleared up this morning.

3 DR. GOTCHER: And how long had that been known
4 before it was cleared up?

5 DR. PFEFFER: Now we made a visit yesterday to
6 -- once we became aware of it we immediately visited
7 the school, because it was a matter of law as being
8 eligible for employment.

9 DR. TATUM: And, Dr. Gotcher --

10 DR. GOTCHER: Yes.

11 DR. TATUM: -- I would like to clean that up.
12 In the beginning, the FBI checks had been done. All
13 of our teachers had pretty much had that piece done.
14 There's a portion that has come into law, the
15 maltreatment piece, and so that is the piece that we
16 pulled from the ADE off of the background registry.
17 We get it from Clara Toney in Dr. Pfeffer's office.
18 So that piece was left with the teachers to actually
19 mail in. And so when I went to DHS yesterday and I
20 talked with Dennis Robbins, of course he told me it
21 was an ADE issue, and so I don't know if it's ADE or
22 DHS or what. But then I was turned in -- talked -- I
23 talked to John Lowden and so he went on and he did
24 all of the registry checks right there. So in moving
25 forward my goal is to just take them and get them

1 down there and hand-walk them. So there's been such
2 a gap and we didn't -- I didn't know, and I take
3 ownership of that because the background check and
4 all of that information is given in a packet when
5 teachers are hired on and so they had it. So it
6 wasn't as though they didn't have the background
7 checks; it was that maltreatment piece.

8 MS. WHIPPS: Laurette Whipps. I was one of the
9 teachers that had this problem. I've been there
10 since 2009, and maltreatment was not required of me.
11 My background check was done at the State Trooper
12 headquarters during that time. So I had the on-hand
13 copy which I showed to them when they came and we
14 kind of cleared that up and the maltreatment was
15 taken care of right away. But the whole thing was
16 the maltreatment for everyone. And I had four
17 teachers that worked under me that had the same
18 problem, mailed their things in, had copies of the
19 things that they mailed in, but for some reason it
20 never got in the system. We didn't know that there
21 was a website that you could go to to see that
22 information, that we know now, so we can refer to it,
23 see who has their things in. Because the school
24 literally just gets a receipt back from what you did;
25 we don't have that stuff on file. So I told the head

1 office to pull my file right now because I want to
2 know, because I know my stuff was in here. She
3 pulled it. My husband came over with my copy.

4 I just want you guys to know that we don't just
5 come in and start teaching; everyone has to do the
6 background checks, so --

7 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer, follow-up?

9 DR. TATUM: And also I did go out on ELS -- and
10 thank you for that. I did go out on ELS and even
11 some of the employees that have left us they're still
12 out there and they don't have that maltreatment
13 piece. So there is a total, total disconnect. So
14 it's not just a Covenant Keepers five-teacher thing;
15 it is totally, I would imagine, in my mind, a
16 statewide thing where there is a disconnect,
17 according to Dennis Robbins. And that's the name
18 that I was given yesterday with -- I think her name
19 was Ms. Jacks. So there is truly a disconnect in
20 trying to get the information delivered in a timely
21 manner.

22 DR. PFEFFER: And just to follow-up, there were
23 two teachers who did come here yesterday to do their
24 FBI and State Police background. So it wasn't all
25 just the child maltreatment piece, so --

1 DR. GOTCHER: There were two that came that had
2 not --

3 DR. PFEFFER: Yes.

4 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

5 MS. WHIPPS: It was my self; I did come on up to
6 do the electronic, but I also showed her the copy
7 that I had. And then Ms. Ameia [ps], one of our math
8 teachers, came up; she said she had done it online
9 and didn't really understand why it hadn't been done.
10 So I'm not --

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Tripp, do you want to
12 respond to this conversation?

13 MR. WALTER: Yes, Madam Chair, if I may briefly.
14 Tripp Walter, Staff Attorney, Arkansas Public School
15 Resource Center.

16 We just found out about this matter I guess late
17 yesterday afternoon after Dr. Pfeffer's visit. To
18 the extent that there are any issues that need to be
19 cleared up or protocols and policies that need to be
20 changed on the schools, we will be glad to assist to
21 make sure we can bring those to resolution and help
22 avoid future problems on their end, if there is a
23 problem there.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: While we have you at the
25 microphone I'd like to ask a question. Do you have

1 standard operating procedures that you share with
2 school districts for things such as this, licensure?

3 MR. WALTER: I don't think we have any per se.
4 We certainly have different things we can tell them.
5 We can certainly develop -- we have the ability and
6 have developed policies and procedures for many of
7 our members on various issues, both charter schools
8 and traditional school districts. And we'd certainly
9 be glad to help put one in place here if it will be
10 helpful.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

12 MR. WALTER: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Are we ready to move
14 beyond that one?

15 Mr. Rogers.

16 MR. ROGERS: I just had a follow-up to what Dr.
17 Saunders was talking about earlier. The board
18 president -- I don't remember his name, I can't read
19 my handwriting --

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Buckley.

21 MR. ROGERS: Did you say that you've been a
22 board member since the beginning of Covenant Keepers?

23 MR. BUCKLEY: Yes, I have.

24 MR. ROGERS: Okay. Maybe -- and Dr. Tatum may
25 have -- but my recollection back when Dr. Saunders

1 was talking about the salaries was that there was
2 some financial difficulties before with Covenant
3 Keepers which -- a loan that either Dr. Tatum took --
4 or I think she actually had a reduction in her salary
5 at that time to help with the financial issues. Do
6 you recall what I'm talking about there?

7 MR. BUCKLEY: Yes, I do.

8 MR. ROGERS: And then some months later the
9 money was given back to her. Were y'all aware at
10 that time that her salary had increased back up from
11 the \$30,000 cut?

12 MR. BUCKLEY: Yes, sir. We were.

13 MR. ROGERS: And so y'all approved that at that
14 time?

15 MR. BUCKLEY: Yes, sir.

16 MR. ROGERS: And you have the board minutes to
17 show that?

18 MR. BUCKLEY: I believe so, sir. Yes, sir.

19 MR. ROGERS: And then the other thing I have is
20 the grant from the City of Fire. Is that an ongoing
21 grant? Is that a grant -- because y'all's sponsoring
22 entity, that's City of Fire Ministries?

23 DR. TATUM: No. That's Community Development;
24 that's a 501(c)(3).

25 MR. ROGERS: Okay. So that's not your City of

1 Fire which -- so it's a different grant? I'm
2 confused. Because I heard one grant was from City of
3 Fire and then I think you were saying it was a local
4 grant, so I'm just trying to figure it out.

5 DR. TATUM: Okay. We had two local grants and
6 then the City of Fire Community Development is our
7 sponsoring entity.

8 MR. ROGERS: Okay. So --

9 DR. TATUM: So that has nothing to do with City
10 of Fire Ministries; that has nothing to do with any
11 of that. We have a sponsoring board.

12 MR. ROGERS: Okay. And that sponsoring board is
13 the one that gave you the grant that is the increase?

14 DR. TATUM: That gave us the money, yes. Yes.

15 MR. ROGERS: And that's an ongoing grant or was
16 it just a one-time grant for this year?

17 DR. TATUM: Well, I would look at it -- if
18 they're our sponsoring entity and they see a
19 shortfall, if we go and ask, then of course they take
20 care of it.

21 MR. ROGERS: And it's a grant -- it's a grant;
22 you don't -- it's not a loan, you don't have to pay
23 it back?

24 DR. TATUM: No, sir. No, sir.

25 MS. SMITH: Who's their board? Who's on the

1 City of Fire board or makes those decisions? Are you
2 on their board?

3 DR. TATUM: No. Oh, no.

4 MS. SMITH: No. Okay.

5 DR. TATUM: I'm not on their board at all.

6 MS. SMITH: Okay. So who was -- who do you go
7 to to ask for grants for that?

8 DR. TATUM: We have about six, seven individuals
9 that we go to with the City of Fire and they work at
10 local businesses and different things.

11 MS. SMITH: So it's a collective group of
12 business owners --

13 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

14 MS. SMITH: -- that have donations that --

15 DR. TATUM: Now I don't -- I can't talk about
16 their pot of money, how they do it; we just go and
17 ask. So how they get it to City of Fire Community
18 Development, that's not --

19 MS. SMITH: Okay. So they have a working board,
20 Community Development, and you can apply for grants
21 through them, City of Fire Community Development?

22 DR. TATUM: Yes, we can.

23 MS. SMITH: Okay. Okay.

24 DR. TATUM: I do want to go back to the budget
25 summary report and that it said that we ended at --

1 Mr. Hamilton, if you would come up -- we ended at a
2 negative \$10,000, which of course we had an
3 overpayment, which of course we paid that off. So
4 now we started at zero. But if we look at our legal
5 balance we have \$121,000, but our unrestricted legal
6 balance now is \$80,000. So I guess I'm confused.
7 And if you look at the history -- I'm on the finance
8 sheet that you all gave us.

9 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

10 DR. TATUM: Okay. Now if you look at 2013, we
11 ended at \$74,000; beginning balance, \$102,000; 2015,
12 overpayment, we started out with a negative \$10,000.
13 You all follow me?

14 MR. ROGERS: Uh-huh.

15 DR. TATUM: Okay. Now since then we paid that
16 \$212,000 back, come down to zero. So I want to stay
17 with 2016. At the end of 6/30 it shows us at
18 \$115,000. So I'm going now to say our legal balance
19 is --

20 MR. ROGERS: Before you -- that's based off of
21 your budget. So as to what she testified earlier,
22 the revenues and expenditures model that you're going
23 through right now does not reflect \$115,000 over.
24 That is your FY17 budget. So if we took that FY17
25 budget, based off what you did, revenues and

1 expenditures, that would happen. But based off the
2 history of projection of where we're going, that's
3 what she was talking about earlier, not -- this is
4 actual -- when you go to 14, 15 and 16, those are
5 actuals; that is where you actually ended. Now when
6 you go to this FY17 budget that is nothing but --
7 that is a projection based off your budget, your
8 revenue and expenditures. So to say you're going to
9 end at \$115,000 is not --

10 DR. TATUM: No, sir.

11 MR. ROGERS: -- quite accurate.

12 DR. TATUM: No, sir. I wasn't going to say
13 that. If you look at it now, our unrestricted legal
14 balance is \$80,000. So I'm saying to you we're
15 putting the money in the school, the kids and the
16 salaries, and we're not going to end at a negative.
17 So with us coming through so much money, we're going
18 to continue to spend the money to make sure that we
19 don't end in a negative. So I'm wondering if it's
20 \$50,000, \$80,000, or \$100,000. We are spending money
21 on kids and we're not going to end at a negative.

22 MR. HAMILTON: And just to add to that the fact
23 that we started in the hole coming into the year and
24 then to be able to -- I think that this shows real
25 fiscal management actually -- listen to my point,

1 listen to my point. To go from a negative \$110,000

2 --

3 DR. TATUM: Yes. Yes.

4 MR. HAMILTON: -- to as we are today \$80,000

5 positive --

6 DR. TATUM: Yes.

7 MR. HAMILTON: -- I think that that shows that
8 they're trying to manage their resources.

9 DR. TATUM: No, we're not trying; we're making
10 it happen.

11 MR. ROGERS: Where would you be without the
12 grant from City of Fire Development?

13 MR. HAMILTON: Well, we have it. We have it.

14 MR. ROGERS: But --

15 MR. HAMILTON: I understand what you're saying.

16 MR. ROGERS: But that's why I ask --

17 MR. HAMILTON: But I also don't think we're
18 going to have the issue with the student growth.

19 MR. ROGERS: Well, okay.

20 DR. TATUM: But what do you mean if we didn't --

21 MR. ROGERS: Well, that -- no, no, no. Let me

22 --

23 DR. TATUM: We're like any of the other schools;
24 if you have a short --

25 MR. ROGERS: That's why I asked if it was a

1 continuing grant, Dr. Tatum, because if it's not a
2 continuing grant then there is more of a revenue
3 issue, which is why I've asked and been trying to
4 figure out what was the local grant and where it was
5 coming from.

6 DR. TATUM: Okay.

7 MR. ROGERS: Because obviously without that
8 additional \$300,000 you wouldn't even have an
9 opportunity to be ending in a positive; you would be
10 ending in a negative, as what happened last year.

11 DR. TATUM: Well, sir --

12 MR. ROGERS: And so --

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Let me interject here. I
14 think the point, Dr. Tatum, is: is there a commitment
15 from City of Fire to always be there if they're
16 needed?

17 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am. They've been there for
18 almost 10 years. So this is our first time to really
19 go and ask them.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

21 DR. TATUM: So it's not where we've been in a
22 place where we've had to go and ask. I'm sure if we
23 go and ask today or tomorrow, then -- of course
24 that's like any other charter school or whatever when
25 you go and you ask your sponsoring board, "Hey, I

1 need money to do this." I'm not looking at -- we
2 went to our sponsoring board that we can go back to
3 and we can ask about money. So, Greg, you're saying
4 what if we didn't have; I would say what if many of
5 the other schools didn't have.

6 MR. ROGERS: No, that's not what I was saying.
7 Is it going to continue?

8 DR. TATUM: It can continue. Now I can't count
9 their money, but I can guarantee you it can continue.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

11 DR. TATUM: It can continue.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

13 MS. SMITH: So I just need some clarification
14 and understanding. The City of Fire Community
15 Development, so that is your sponsoring board entity.
16 Is that --

17 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am. Holds the 501(c)(3).

18 MS. SMITH: Okay. So when I just Googled it, it
19 says Authorized Official/Title or Position; it names
20 you as the leading person. So do you organize that
21 board or not? Because that's where I'm confused.
22 And like the address for the practicing location is
23 8300 Geyer Springs.

24 DR. TATUM: And, Ma'am, that's where our old --
25 okay.

1 MR. SMITH: So I just need clarification on
2 that. That to me is completely confusing me.

3 DR. TATUM: And I'm trying to be as transparent
4 as I always have been. 8300 is where we were at the
5 inception of Covenant Keepers in 2008 -- 8300. When
6 I walked in here, 2008, we had a 501(c)(3) sponsoring
7 entity, City of Fire Community Development, Inc.
8 That's a collective group of individuals.

9 MS. SMITH: Okay.

10 DR. TATUM: Okay. You follow me?

11 MS. SMITH: Yeah. That's what I -- this is what
12 I need to know from you. Thank you.

13 DR. TATUM: Okay. Now they gave me the job to
14 work here when we did the -- to work at Covenant
15 Keepers. Okay? Our school moved to 5615. Now when
16 we're talking about the sponsoring entity that may be
17 where the board has things mixed up. I've never sat
18 on that board, ever. It's a collective group of
19 individuals that have come together and they started
20 the school, just like any other incorporation. So if
21 the internet is telling you me -- yes, it may say a
22 lot of things out there that are wrong. We still get
23 individuals looking for our school going to 8300
24 Geyer Springs, when we're at 5615.

25 MS. SMITH: Yeah. It shows from 2009 that you

1 were the lead person organizing it or setting it up,
2 is what this -- is what information is on here.

3 DR. TATUM: Okay. Leading Organizer --

4 MS. SMITH: The authorized official registered,
5 the NPI member is Dr. Valerie Tatum.

6 DR. TATUM: Okay. And again all I could say,
7 Ma'am, Ms. Smith, I never, ever, ever sat on that
8 board, ever.

9 MS. SMITH: Okay.

10 DR. TATUM: I am the executive director of
11 Covenant Keepers Charter School.

12 MS. SMITH: Okay. Thank you.

13 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Tatum, would you clear
15 up another confusion? In some of our wording and
16 some of our conversation there's kind of been a
17 distinction between local board and board.

18 DR. TATUM: Okay.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So help us walk through
20 that.

21 DR. TATUM: Our local board are the ones
22 standing here today.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And how many people are on
24 that?

25 DR. TATUM: Seven.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And sometimes another
2 board is referenced, and that's when you're
3 referencing --

4 DR. TATUM: When I say another board I think of
5 the sponsoring entity.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Gotcha.

7 DR. TATUM: I just call them a board.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Gotcha. Okay. That's
9 helpful. Thank you.

10 DR. TATUM: Okay.

11 MR. ROGERS: Can I ask one more?

12 MS. SMITH: Just, you know, on another website
13 it gives the address for City of Fire Community
14 Development as 5615 Geyer Springs, the second address
15 you gave me.

16 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

17 MS. SMITH: So specifically your school.

18 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am. And, Ms. Smith, I'm as
19 transparent as it comes. I have no reason to deviate
20 from that. I cannot -- I don't have --

21 MS. SMITH: So who do you go to -- who right now
22 is the chief person on -- when you're going to them
23 to ask them for money who is the person, the contact
24 person you go to?

25 DR. TATUM: I go to -- you want me to say the

1 name?

2 MS. SMITH: Yes.

3 DR. TATUM: Ms. Diane Jackson. I go to her.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers, you have
5 another question?

6 MR. ROGERS: Is APSRC still working with you?

7 DR. TATUM: Oh, yes, greatly.

8 MR. ROGERS: Can I ask them a question, a
9 finance question?

10 DR. TATUM: Yes. Yes.

11 MR. McRAE: Scott McRae, Finance Specialist,
12 APSRC.

13 MR. ROGERS: How often are you working with
14 Covenant Keepers right now?

15 MR. McRAE: Well, recently, I think in the last
16 couple of months not as much as at the beginning of
17 the year when we had the issues with the student
18 growth funding. You know, at the beginning of the
19 year there was plans put in place to get that
20 negative \$110,000 balance back up to a positive. We
21 did most of our work at the beginning of the year.
22 Recently, the fund balances have looked good compared
23 to the negative \$110,000, so we haven't worked with
24 them quite as much recently.

25 MR. ROGERS: When is the last time you were

1 working with them?

2 MR. McRAE: It's probably been January,
3 February.

4 MR. ROGERS: And is that because y'all don't
5 have any other concerns with how their fund balance
6 is going to end, and so financially y'all think
7 they're good and y'all just haven't been there or is
8 there something else?

9 MR. McRAE: Well, their current legal balance
10 through March was \$121,000, which, you know, for a
11 charter school they're not going to carry over a
12 large amount of money. You know, there's really not
13 a balance that's required --

14 MR. ROGERS: Right.

15 MR. McRAE: -- for them to end with, as long as
16 they can, you know, obviously pay their bills. So,
17 you know, if they end with, you know, \$40,000,
18 \$50,000, \$60,000, you know, that's all up to the
19 local board that that's enough to, you know, move
20 into the next year.

21 MR. ROGERS: So, and y'all -- and APSRC,
22 everything is good with them, which is why you
23 haven't been there since January? That's really what
24 I'm --

25 MR. McRAE: Yes. Just looking at the legal

1 balance currently, with three months to go, if they
2 continue to go in the same path they have been, you
3 know, they should end with a positive number.

4 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. McRae, may I ask a
6 clarifying question?

7 MR. McRAE: Yes, ma'am.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Do you have any method or
9 procedure where you periodically look at a charter
10 school to see how they're doing financially so that
11 you can be a step ahead and prevent issues? Or do
12 you -- is it a wait for them to call you model?

13 MR. McRAE: Oh, no. No. I have certain things
14 that I do just sitting in my office. We have
15 programs that we look at to track balances and just
16 making sure they're, you know, in the positive and
17 they're working through their budget or working
18 towards their budget.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So you would alert Dr.
20 Tatum if you saw a red flag or potential red flag?

21 MR. McRAE: Oh, yes, absolutely. And I did, you
22 know, yesterday, just in relation to this finance
23 report that was presented.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You alerted her to an
25 issue?

1 MR. McRAE: Yes. You know, just with the
2 negative balance. That negative balance is not an
3 accurate picture of their fund balance because it was
4 generated before revenue was posted for March. You
5 know, the report shows a negative \$14,000 but the
6 actual number -- their unrestricted legal balance is
7 \$80,251 through March.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

9 MR. McRAE: Okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

11 MS. SMITH: Is it possible for us to just take
12 like a 10-minute break? I need to get some
13 understanding about something and I would like to
14 talk to Legal. Can we -- can I do that?

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure. And Mr. Tumilson,
16 is he here from Standards?

17 DR. PFEFFER: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. When we come back
19 I'd like to hear from you as well.

20 MS. SMITH: Is that okay?

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes. A 10-minute break.

22 (BREAK: 10:49 - 11:06 A.M.)

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Mr. Tumilson, if
24 you would come to the microphone and introduce
25 yourself.

1 MR. TUMLISON: Dave Tumilson, Standards
2 Monitoring Unit.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Tumilson, if you would
4 walk us through the accreditation report and kind of
5 give us a little bit of information about -- we have
6 some lettering there, I's and C's and J's. If you'll
7 kind of walk us through that report.

8 MR. TUMLISON: Okay. The report you're
9 referring to is the initial accreditation report and
10 it's an October 1 snapshot of everything that's in
11 eSchool and APSCN. And the codes that you're looking
12 at is something we use internally. The "I" is
13 Invalid data; this is a 6-8 school and all these
14 first ones are dealing with a 9-12, the 38 required
15 courses and courses that are for 9-12 grades. So,
16 none of this would apply to any of the situation with
17 a 6-8 school.

18 On the second page, down at the bottom, you'll
19 see a "C." That's just a Corrected exception; we
20 caught everything. Everything that comes out on the
21 initial report are exceptions and then we go in and
22 validate them as to whether they're accurate or they
23 don't really apply, and then that is a code that we
24 use. Due to the waivers that they have, licensure
25 and qualified personnel, just about everything comes

1 off.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And then as we move on to
3 page 4 there is a "J."

4 MR. TUMLISON: Let's see, page 4. Yeah, that's
5 a Job Code violation. John Scroggins was actually --
6 they entered a wrong job code for him; he's not
7 necessarily special education supervisor. So the "J"
8 was a job code. They'd entered it in wrong into
9 APSCN, and that's how we correct it to move it.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So it has been corrected?

11 MR. TUMLISON: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

13 MR. TUMLISON: Everything on their initial
14 accreditation report has been taken off. And we --
15 and I don't know if I sent somebody -- I don't know
16 if we sent the final copy out or not; it just came
17 out in the last little bit, last few days, and it'll
18 be mailed out this week. They'll receive a final
19 accreditation report and on the district page, which
20 is the first page, it'll have No Exceptions Found.
21 And then on the actual school it'll say they're
22 accredited also with no exceptions found. And then
23 it's always confusing to school districts because
24 they don't really understand what they're looking at,
25 so they call and explain in a panic. The standards

1 annual override report, that's everything that we
2 have removed and it comes off and so they have a
3 record of what we actually removed off of the report.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

5 Any questions for Mr. Tumblison?

6 Can we move to special ed. conversations? Who's
7 here to speak regarding special ed.?

8 MS. HALEY: We have someone from finance; we
9 have someone from nontraditional programs, one of our
10 program advisors, Kristin Hughes; and we have Dr.
11 Jody Fields for IBE data. We could ask Kristin to
12 come up first.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. If you'll state
14 your name and title please.

15 MS. HUGHES: Kristin Hughes, Special Education
16 Unit.

17 MS. HALEY: So I think Kristin can just give a
18 one- or two-liner in terms of monitoring with
19 Covenant Keepers. And it was last year?

20 MS. HUGHES: Yes.

21 MS. HALEY: Okay.

22 MS. HUGHES: It was the 15-16 school year they
23 reported one special education teacher and a child
24 count of 13 students.

25 MS. HALEY: And were there any monitoring

1 findings?

2 MS. HUGHES: They went through the self-
3 monitoring process first. They reported back 100%
4 compliance. I then requested to review two of those
5 folders that they received, just to verify their
6 findings. I did find areas of possible noncompliance
7 and worked with Mr. Scroggins during a 90-day
8 verification period. On March 17, 22, and 31, they
9 provided additional evidence that cleared out those
10 possible areas of noncompliance.

11 MS. HALEY: So there weren't any egregious
12 findings?

13 MS. HUGHES: No, there was not a finding.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

15 Any other special ed. considerations or
16 concerns?

17 MS. HALEY: I think there were a couple of
18 coding errors that have been corrected, if you want
19 Dr. Fields to come up. It's up to you all.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Fields.

21 MS. HALEY: Oh, I'm sorry. She's not here right
22 now.

23 MS. HUGHES: She had to go to a conference call.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Oh.

25 MS. HALEY: There were a couple of coding errors

1 in terms of students reported on a December 1 child
2 count that were not -- that were entered in one
3 system and not another. And Jody has worked -- Dr.
4 Fields has worked with I think Mr. Scroggins to
5 correct those. There was a teacher, Mr. Scroggins,
6 that was reported incorrectly and that was noted
7 earlier in Standards, and that's been corrected as
8 well.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So there are no
10 outstanding issues in special ed.?

11 MS. HALEY: (Shaking head from side to side.)

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

13 MS. HALEY: I believe Ms. Pepper Wiley is here
14 from Finance, and I believe she told me that they had
15 over-expended. Possibly we might ask Pepper and
16 Chris Foley to come up.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: State your name and title
18 for the record please.

19 MS. FOLEY: I'm Chris Foley, Finance
20 Administrator in Special Ed.

21 MS. WILEY: Pepper Wiley, Special Ed. Finance --
22 or Camille Wiley, whichever you choose. As of the
23 Commissioner's Memo Finance 17-041 --

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If you'll speak --

25 MS. WILEY: -- the total budgeted --

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If you'll speak directly

2 --

3 MS. WILEY: I'm sorry.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- into the microphone.

5 Thank you.

6 MS. WILEY: As of the newest Commissioner's
7 Memo, the 041, that gives us an adjusted allocation
8 amount. With their carryover and the new amount for
9 6B their total budget would be \$33,360.57 for Title
10 6B, and at this time on the expenditure report
11 expenditures total \$35,895.11. So part of this
12 salary will need to continue to be paid out of
13 another fund for the rest of the school year.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And, Ms. Foley, do you
15 have anything to add to that?

16 MS. FOLEY: No.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

18 Doctor -- go right ahead.

19 MS. WILEY: I don't have anything else.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Tatum --

21 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- would you like to
23 address that overture?

24 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am. And that was where I
25 said earlier I did know that; I was aware of that.

1 So that's a part of that budgeting piece and moving
2 things around to make sure that we're finishing
3 strong.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Any questions
5 regarding special ed.?

6 MS. HALEY: I have a question that's not
7 directly related to special ed., but it was in just
8 regard to the PBIS services that you all had
9 referenced in using the SWIS system to look at
10 student discipline data and make improvements in
11 terms of kids being suspended and expelled. And I'm
12 just wondering, you mentioned one of the individuals
13 from Jonesboro I think that you-all have been working
14 with for PBIS. It was --

15 MS. JONES: Yes. Ann Murten [ps].

16 MS. HALEY: Ann Murten. Yeah. And so I believe
17 y'all have been using SWIS consistently, but I'm just
18 wondering in terms of other aspects of PBIS if you
19 have regular team meetings and how -- if you're
20 looking at your routines and rituals and all those
21 things more than just looking at the SWIS discipline
22 data?

23 MS. JONES: Yes, ma'am. Those conversations
24 come out of looking at the data and our PBIS team
25 meets regularly to make decisions. So if we look at

1 the data and see that we have a lot of referrals
2 happening during lunchtime -- we've had a talk with
3 all the teachers in the school about policy changes
4 that need to happen during lunch. So putting
5 teachers in strategic areas, making sure that we're
6 definitely keeping an eye on students and being
7 engaged with them so that we can find out what's
8 going on at the time and help to squelch some of the
9 issues that may occur during that time.

10 MS. HALEY: And have you all discussed just like
11 consistent expectations and rules and consequences
12 across teachers and grade levels and all of those
13 sorts of issues?

14 MS. JONES: Yes. At the beginning of the year,
15 during our teacher boot camp this came out of the
16 PBIS training that we had during the summer. We
17 looked at our student handbook and we took out the
18 expectations for the students that we felt were
19 applicable for every classroom and those are posted
20 in every classroom. And the teachers also have a
21 policy for student redirection in the classrooms, so
22 it's not an immediate dismissal from the classroom
23 but a system that allows the teachers to talk to the
24 students individually to work one-on-one with them.
25 And even if our cultural coordinator needs to step in

1 and have a mediation meeting between the teacher and
2 the student, that's usually a resort before
3 disciplinary action or records or write-ups need to
4 occur.

5 MS. HALEY: And I have one more question just in
6 terms of Child Find and students being referred for
7 possibly needing at IEP and having a disability under
8 IDEA. Who is the person, that teacher -- if they
9 were going to refer a student, or a parent were going
10 to refer a student, who would they give that referral
11 to at Covenant Keepers? Is the staff aware of that
12 or is there a central procedure?

13 MS. JONES: Yes. If the staff discovers that a
14 student in their class may require services they know
15 to report that to John Scroggins, our special
16 director -- our special education teacher.

17 MS. HALEY: Okay. And I'm just asking because
18 you have low numbers in terms of kids with IEPs. And
19 then I was looking in our referral tracking system
20 and there was only one referral, which I know you're
21 a middle school so there wouldn't be as many as in
22 the elementary but you might expect more than that.
23 So, I was just wondering what your procedures were.

24 MS. JONES: Yes, ma'am.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Who is the disciplinarian

1 outside of the classroom? Who is the building
2 disciplinarian?

3 MS. JONES: That's Leonard Blocker.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is Mr. Blocker here today?

5 MS. JONES: He's not here today.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

7 Dr. Tatum, would you address expulsions? How
8 many expulsions this year?

9 DR. TATUM: If I'm not mistaken, I don't think
10 we've had one. But then again, I'm thinking maybe
11 one.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And out-of-school
13 suspensions?

14 DR. TATUM: Out-of-school suspension, last --
15 out-of-school suspensions, I don't have that
16 information. They're going to pull it up, because
17 we've looked at all of those things. So I want to
18 make sure that we tell you the right number.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So my next question is
20 going to be in-school suspension.

21 DR. TATUM: In-school suspension -- in-school
22 suspensions, we may have had 16 but they may be the
23 same students that's going to in-school suspension.
24 So 16 times, but it could be just maybe three kids
25 that have gone maybe three times.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: For out-of-school?

2 DR. TATUM: No, in-school. I thought -- in-
3 school suspension.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. 16 in-school
5 suspensions?

6 DR. TATUM: Uh-huh. And we're waiting on the
7 out-of-school.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And what is your policy
9 with in-school suspension? Do students' grades still
10 count during that time?

11 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am. And that's a reason
12 that grades really dropped, the Ds and Fs, because
13 when students didn't do their homework or just missed
14 assignments then they would actually go into the ILE
15 after having a reflection meeting with the parent.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And what about out-of-
17 school suspension, do grades count during that time?

18 DR. TATUM: No, they don't. They're allowed to
19 make-up their work when they're out --

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'm sorry?

21 DR. TATUM: -- at the discretion of the teacher,
22 according to our handbook.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

24 MS. WHIPPS: I'll speak on that as well.

25 Laurette Whipps again. I'm kind of over the

1 curriculum with the teachers and making sure students
2 who are out of the classroom are getting what they
3 need. We have a program called Edmodo. All teachers
4 place all their lesson plans on there with their
5 notes for students to be able to refer to. Any
6 assignment is placed on there. If it's a quiz, if
7 it's homework, whatever, teachers have to update that
8 daily. So if a student is in ISS they have a
9 Chromebook where they're working on that particular
10 item, or if they're out of school we do ask them to
11 refer to it. If they don't, we do give them those
12 amount of days, according to the handbook, to make it
13 up when they do return.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Miss -- I'm sorry; Ms.
15 Whipps, so one more quick question. Do you have a
16 progressive discipline policy in that, you know, two
17 strikes, three strikes, four strikes and then you're
18 out?

19 MS. WHIPPS: That's a Mr. Blocker question, but
20 as far as in the classroom it is progressive. If a
21 student has a disciplinary issue, like Ms. Jones
22 said, we have a policy set up where we follow these
23 procedures. If it doesn't work, then we do a parent
24 meeting -- we call them reflection meetings -- to try
25 to get the child in order. If the child still is

1 having problems then we have to refer to Blocker, and
2 the parent is aware that that's our next step to
3 refer it; they'll go to ISS. You know, if it
4 continues after ISS, then we do have to go to
5 suspension.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

7 MS. JONES: And I also want to add to that that
8 we have New Beginnings Behavioral Health Services on
9 our campus. And using that SWIS data we look at that
10 and determine whether a student needs to be referred
11 for possible behavior health reference to receive
12 those services. And it's not just the student that
13 receives the service but also the families. And so
14 when we have a reflection meeting we're able to talk
15 to the parent about whether they would like their
16 child to receive those services and so we can work
17 together with that partnership.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

19 Dr. Gotcher.

20 DR. GOTCHER: General question?

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: General question.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Dr. Tatum --

23 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir.

24 DR. GOTCHER: -- earlier in our conversation
25 regarding the staffing did I hear that there is a

1 relative?

2 DR. TATUM: Just one. Uh-huh.

3 DR. GOTCHER: Just one. And can you describe
4 that individual and that person's salary?

5 DR. TATUM: That's Mr. Tatum, which is my son.
6 And his salary, I think it's over the nine years he's
7 been there; it may be at \$32,000, I think.

8 DR. GOTCHER: And his position?

9 DR. TATUM: He's a parapro/tutor.

10 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. And these are the kind of
11 things that come to my office as Deputy. Has there
12 been -- and I haven't seen it only because this was
13 prior to my employment here -- has there been a
14 disclosure statement that's been filed with the
15 Department? When there's a relationship -- I think
16 maybe --

17 DR. TATUM: Yes.

18 DR. GOTCHER: -- I might have Ms. Davis respond
19 to that, if she can help me, if I'm correct in that.

20 DR. TATUM: And we did. We did in the very
21 early stages. When Scott Smith was the attorney here
22 --

23 DR. GOTCHER: Understood.

24 DR. TATUM: -- here at ADE, we did.

25 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

1 DR. TATUM: Uh-huh.

2 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis, do we have that
4 on file?

5 MS. DAVIS: I'll have to go back through those
6 years and look, but I will let you know here in just
7 one moment.

8 DR. GOTCHER: Sure.

9 MS. DAVIS: So I went back through the last four
10 years and I did not see one, but I will go back
11 further.

12 DR. GOTCHER: Understood. All right. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Just following up on that, is
16 that -- are there similar positions to that within
17 the school or is that the only position like that?

18 DR. TATUM: When you say "similar positions" --

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. The parapro/tutor, is that
20 the only one in a position like that or are there
21 others?

22 DR. TATUM: A relative or that's in -- we have
23 other positions like parapro/tutor?

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

25 DR. TATUM: Yes, that's true; we do.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: You do have other positions?

2 DR. TATUM: Yes.

3 DR. SAUNDERS: And are they paid at that --
4 around that same amount?

5 DR. TATUM: Over -- if they've been there over
6 those years, then yes, sir, that's true.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: Do you know what the starting
8 amount for that position is?

9 DR. TATUM: Well, they've gotten increments of
10 money over time because they've been there top of
11 eight, anywhere to nine years. So they just had a
12 salary increase as well, according to our salary
13 schedule on the website. So those positions start at
14 a base salary, to answer your question.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah. I'm just curious what that
16 base salary is, if you know what the base salary is
17 for that position, and how it relates to your
18 teachers' pay at that base zero?

19 DR. TATUM: It's definitely not comparable to.
20 When they start out, it's not.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

22 DR. TATUM: It may be on the website. It may
23 be. I don't have it committed to memory, but I know
24 it's not comparable to our teachers' salary.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you.

1 DR. GOTCHER: Can I just follow up based upon
2 that information? I don't see a salary schedule; I
3 see salary totals and --

4 DR. TATUM: It's \$25,000. They looked it up.

5 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. It begins at \$25,000?

6 DR. TATUM: \$25,000. Uh-huh. And there should
7 be a salary schedule out there.

8 DR. GOTCHER: And there may be. I may just have
9 not found it as of yet. There it is. No, that's
10 just for licensed salary.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And a licensed educator
12 begins --

13 DR. GOTCHER: Licensed educator, according to
14 the 15-16 salary schedule, is \$34,500. But that's --
15 again, I may have grabbed the wrong document. But --

16 DR. TATUM: It should be out there on our
17 website. They're checking it out.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Other general questions?

19 DR. GOTCHER: I want to explore this a little
20 bit too.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

22 DR. SAUNDERS: I'm shifting gears just a little
23 bit. I wanted to come back -- probably the board
24 president, if you could answer one question.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Buckley.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: I wanted to follow-up. I was
2 looking at -- and it comes back to what was
3 referenced earlier and it was in regards to receiving
4 a little over -- Mr. Rogers may correct me -- a
5 little over \$200,000 last year that was not
6 anticipated; is that correct?

7 MR. ROGERS: (Nodding head up and down.)

8 DR. SAUNDERS: And so that was not anticipated.
9 In looking at your general revenue that's a
10 considerable amount of the budget, you know, more
11 than 10% of your overall budget. So that was revenue
12 that came in that would not have been budgeted for,
13 and then when it came time to pay it the money was
14 not available. So my question is, for that 200,000
15 plus dollars, where did that money go?

16 MR. BUCKLEY: It's my understanding basically it
17 -- basically had to disperse it within the charter.
18 I'm not sure. I would have to probably get Dr. Tatum
19 to speak on that. I'm not sure exactly where that
20 money went.

21 DR. TATUM: Where did it go?

22 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay, yes. What was it spent on?

23 MR. BUCKLEY: What it was spent on?

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

25 MR. BUCKLEY: Oh, okay. I believe just whatever

1 the school administration -- my understanding, what
2 it normally -- what they normally would -- where they
3 would put it, so --

4 DR. SAUNDERS: Were you presented as a board
5 with the idea that "Hey, we have \$200,000 coming in
6 that's extra that we did not budget for and this is
7 how we would like to spend it?"

8 MR. BUCKLEY: No, I wasn't aware that we were
9 over budget on that \$200,000, so --

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Dr. Tatum, would you be
11 able to tell me about where that \$200,000 was spent?

12 DR. TATUM: I guess I'm confused. You're saying
13 \$200,000 that we -- \$212,000 that we didn't have at
14 the beginning or last year?

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Last -- well, it would've been
16 somewhat both. It was -- I mean, my understanding is
17 it was \$212,000 that was not budgeted for --

18 DR. TATUM: And that is correct.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: -- and you received?

20 DR. TATUM: And Scott did a revenue piece on
21 that where we were looking at that and it went to
22 technology; there was quite a bit of bus repairs that
23 had to be done during that time. And I don't have it
24 committed to memory -- oh, and there was some
25 maintenance things that we done on the inside and

1 making sure that the building was at standard, as far
2 as replacing carpet, I think repainting the walls.
3 It was some different things that we had to do
4 because of wear-and-tear in the building that we're
5 in, and they wanted us to do that.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. Can you -- just to give
7 the totality of \$212,000 on technology, what were you
8 looking at with technology? What was being done with
9 that?

10 DR. TATUM: Technology, we went to some type of
11 Wi-Fi. Now I'm not technologically sound --

12 DR. SAUNDERS: That's okay.

13 DR. TATUM: -- but we went to a widespread of
14 technology. We're expanding to be a one-to-one
15 school. And then we did do two softwares, MindPlay
16 and Ascend Math, which was pretty extensive as well.
17 So those are the types of things when I talk about
18 technology. It wasn't just all hardware; it was some
19 software as well.

20 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And then you said on
21 transportation there were some repairs?

22 DR. TATUM: There were some repairs to a bus
23 where we -- Caterpillar and -- I don't even know the
24 other one's name, but they began to pretty much
25 bicker amongst each other because it was an

1 electrical issue, if you will. So one said they
2 didn't and we took it to the next, and it was back
3 and forth. So what we did, we finally took it back
4 to the holder of it and Caterpillar had to get
5 involved. So all of that chain of information, all
6 of that began to happen. So we kept getting hit with
7 bills after bills because of the two individuals,
8 taking it to one, they're not fixing it, they're
9 taking it back. So again, of course, not being a bus
10 person we just took it back to the original owners
11 and the bus is running fairly well now.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: And so that was one bus. About
13 how much money was that?

14 DR. TATUM: For the bus repairs?

15 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah.

16 DR. TATUM: Oh, gosh. I'm going to say
17 probably, if Scott worked the numbers, anywhere from
18 \$70,000 to \$80,000.

19 DR. SAUNDERS: To repair the bus?

20 DR. TATUM: To repair the bus, uh-huh, because
21 it was an electrical issue. Yes, I'm sure it was
22 quite extensive.

23 DR. SAUNDERS: Is this a normal school bus?

24 DR. TATUM: It's a normal school bus, a yellow
25 school bus.

1 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. You know that the cost of
2 a new school bus is generally anywhere between
3 \$80,000 and \$100,000?

4 DR. TATUM: I found that out. Yes, sir. Yes,
5 sir. Yes, sir.

6 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. And then you said the
7 other expenditures were building, carpet --

8 DR. TATUM: Building, carpet, maintenance, and
9 then the technology piece.

10 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay. All right. Thank you.

11 DR. TATUM: But I could -- I'll just have to get
12 those numbers for you --

13 DR. SAUNDERS: That's okay.

14 DR. TATUM: -- so I'll be spot-on.

15 DR. SAUNDERS: All right.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Tatum, just to address
17 the technology, I believe the last time I was there
18 you were experiencing difficulty having all your
19 computers on the network at one time. And so is that
20 what you've resolved?

21 DR. TATUM: The Commissioner was really great.
22 We told him about the problem when he visited our
23 school and he asked over and over, "How is it you're
24 sitting in the central part of Little Rock 72209 and
25 you don't have the Wi-Fi you need?" So something

1 magical happened when he left our building and we
2 haven't had that problem since. Right, Ms. Jones?

3 MS. JONES: Yes.

4 DR. TATUM: Right. So that has totally been
5 rectified.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And so you have good
7 bandwidth?

8 DR. TATUM: Yeah. Oh, yes, totally.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good.

10 Dr. Gotcher.

11 DR. GOTCHER: Yes. Dr. Tatum, just to follow-up
12 -- and I'm sure you're aware of this: according to
13 the website 16-17 administrator and classified salary
14 schedule there are two classroom tutors listed, Mr.
15 Stephen Tatum, nine years experience at \$34,500, and
16 Mr. Brandon Baker, classroom tutor, also with nine
17 years experience at \$32,500.

18 DR. TATUM: Uh-huh.

19 DR. GOTCHER: There is a licensed salary
20 schedule but there is no classified salary schedule.
21 So maybe just for the sake of the Panel, why is there
22 a difference in salaries of two classroom tutors of
23 the same years of experience and there is no
24 rationale for a classified salary schedule or there
25 is not a posted salary schedule?

1 DR. TATUM: And when we get the website
2 requirements we go by what it says. It just tells us
3 to put a salary schedule out there and so I don't
4 really think the classified was a part of the
5 requirement. So we just put it out there all
6 together.

7 DR. GOTCHER: And that may be. That certainly
8 may be. But a salary schedule would imply a span of
9 experience versus salaries. So if that's not
10 required, that's certainly understandable. But that
11 probably needs to be changed on the website to
12 reflect administrator classified salaries as opposed
13 to salary schedule --

14 DR. TATUM: Okay.

15 DR. GOTCHER: -- because the reader probably is
16 going to dig deeper to find out where is the
17 schedule. So that's something you can check with
18 Standards.

19 DR. TATUM: And that's -- there's salary
20 requirements -- not salary, but there's a list of
21 things every year that we have to update --

22 DR. GOTCHER: Right.

23 DR. TATUM: -- and put on the website, which is
24 --

25 DR. GOTCHER: State required information.

1 DR. TATUM: There you go. Yes. And so that's
2 just -- we'll clean it up.

3 DR. GOTCHER: Okay. Again, just delineating
4 between a salary and a schedule --

5 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir. Schedule.

6 DR. GOTCHER: -- would probably be for the
7 benefit of the readers of the website. All right.
8 Thank you.

9 DR. TATUM: No problem.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith, let's wait just
11 a second.

12 Ms. Davis.

13 MS. DAVIS: Okay. So I've looked back through
14 the file and I do not have a signed Commissioner's
15 approval letter, but that doesn't mean that there
16 isn't one. I would have to go check the paper files.
17 But in 2011, it does appear that there is a series of
18 contract disclosure forms that were turned in. At
19 the time -- and, again, this is April of 2011 that's
20 dated on the documents. At the time, Mr. Tyron Tatum
21 was the executive director on the board, in addition
22 to -- I guess he provided some janitorial services to
23 the school as well -- in addition to Dr. Tatum also
24 disclosing it. And there is a disclosure that
25 Stephen Tatum was the director of Child Nutrition and

1 had been for a couple of years; I don't know exactly
2 when that started. But then there's also another
3 form that said, later on, that they voted to remove
4 him from that position, but it did say that he had
5 been there for several years. And then there's also
6 the request to hire him as the tutor. And then
7 there's also a letter from Dr. Tatum that was given
8 to Legislative Audit I guess under a finding that was
9 discussed in their June 30, 2010 report about Stephen
10 Tatum's salary being increased without the proper
11 disclosures. As a result of that, it says that Mr.
12 Tyron Tatum resigned from the school board. And I'm
13 not sure when the removal of the Child Nutrition --
14 how that factored into this, but there is at least
15 some documentation that they were requesting to hire
16 him as the tutor. Again, it's dated in our office
17 and it looks like he was removed about the same time
18 that they were requesting that he be approved as a
19 tutor. I can go check the files to see what we have
20 signed, but that's what I have electronically at my
21 disposal right now.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Sure. And I think, based on some
23 earlier conversations we've had regarding other
24 districts, \$5,000 is the trigger to have to re-
25 request a disclosure; is that right? So a natural

1 progression on a salary schedule would not have to be
2 --

3 MS. DAVIS: It's \$5,000 for the initial hire and
4 \$2,500 for any increase.

5 DR. GOTCHER: Any increase. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Davis.

7 MS. DAVIS: You're welcome.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

9 MS. SMITH: Mr. Buckley --

10 MR. BUCKLEY: Yes.

11 MS. SMITH: -- are you on the City of Fire
12 Community Development board?

13 MR. BUCKLEY: I am on a church board for
14 Community Fire.

15 MS. SMITH: You're on a church board?

16 MR. BUCKLEY: Yes, ma'am.

17 MS. SMITH: Okay. And does the church board
18 discuss money donations given to Covenant Keepers,
19 the school?

20 MR. BUCKLEY: No, ma'am.

21 MS. SMITH: Okay. Are you surprised to know
22 that your name is listed on the -- with the Secretary
23 of State's office as a member of the City of Fire
24 Community Development board?

25 MR. BUCKLEY: No, ma'am.

1 MS. SMITH: Okay. So you're aware that you're a
2 part of that?

3 MR. BUCKLEY: Yes, ma'am.

4 MS. SMITH: But you're telling me right now that
5 you're not on the City of Fire Development entity?

6 MR. BUCKLEY: I'm on the church board.

7 MS. SMITH: Okay.

8 MR. BUCKLEY: Yes.

9 MS. SMITH: Okay. Okay. Thank you.

10 Dr. Tatum --

11 DR. TATUM: Yes.

12 MS. SMITH: -- are you on the board of the City
13 of Fire Community Development?

14 DR. TATUM: Ms. Smith, for the last time, I am
15 as transparent as it comes. I have no reason to lie
16 to you, Ma'am. I am not on that board.

17 MS. SMITH: Okay.

18 DR. TATUM: I am not on the board.

19 MS. SMITH: Okay. So I guess this is my
20 confusion --

21 DR. TATUM: Okay.

22 MS. SMITH: -- because there are various sites
23 -- here's the Secretary of State's --

24 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

25 MS. SMITH: This is what's filed in the

1 Secretary of State's office. And what I want --
2 before you keep talking you just need to stop and
3 listen. I looked at other charter schools to see is
4 it common to have the principals or the
5 superintendents on the boards of the entities, and
6 it's not uncommon. So if you said to me, "Yes, I
7 am," it wouldn't be an uncommon thing for that to
8 happen with charters. Okay. But this document from
9 the Secretary of State's office specifically says
10 that you're on the board; it says that Tyron Tatum is
11 on the board; it says that Mr. Buckley is on the
12 board; it says that Mary Buckley is on the board. So
13 unless the Secretary has it wrong, somebody is
14 filling something out, and it's in numerous different
15 sites where it even explains who's leading, and it
16 says Community -- I mean, and then you get into the
17 church. So you've got the City of Fire Ministries
18 and then you have this City of Fire Community
19 Development board. And one of the tax forms says
20 \$1.8 million and that they have a regular board that
21 meets, and it lists the six names and your name is
22 mentioned on that one too. That was in 2014 posted.

23 So I'm just telling you right now this doesn't
24 pass the smell test to me. I don't know what the
25 details are. I don't know -- I don't have all the

1 current documents, but something right here is not
2 passing.

3 And I'll tell you what; I started this by saying
4 that I had questions about your salary and that right
5 there was the biggest red flag to me. When you have
6 160-something students and you make \$140,000, which
7 is what the salary schedule for this year says,
8 something is not matching up. And then when we start
9 asking questions about this other entity and you're
10 not on the board, you have no reason to lie to me,
11 you're transparent, you're not on the board,
12 everybody's names -- the same names are listed, and
13 so something is not -- something is not lining up.

14 DR. TATUM: And I will agree with you. And so I
15 will get out there and I will get that information
16 changed. I don't -- I don't fill that out.

17 MS. SMITH: So the name you gave me earlier,
18 Diana Jackson, when I looked her up she's not listed
19 as any member of the board but she is listed at the
20 church as the women's ministry -- women's minister.
21 So how does that work?

22 DR. TATUM: And if we go back to 2008, this is
23 the same animal we began to deal with because the
24 mistake of the 501(c)(3) came out of a vision with
25 the City of Fire Ministries. That's been the hassle

1 from here to there. We are mistaken to be City of
2 Fire Ministries, where we're not.

3 MS. SMITH: And that's right. So you can have
4 City of Fire Ministries folks on this board; I mean,
5 there's -- that can happen.

6 DR. TATUM: But we did -- yes, ma'am.

7 MS. SMITH: But it's not clear who the board is.

8 DR. TATUM: And I know that.

9 MS. SMITH: It's not clear who the board is.
10 And over multiple times it's very clear that City of
11 Fire Community Development and Covenant Keepers are
12 one and the same, and that's on this sheet. It says
13 the other name for --

14 DR. TATUM: dba.

15 MS. SMITH: Yes, which that's okay. And if you
16 look at other charter schools you see the same thing.

17 DR. TATUM: Yes.

18 MS. SMITH: But I'm going to tell you today,
19 with your testimony it's almost like you tried to
20 separate the two, which to me -- it didn't make any
21 sense to me.

22 DR. TATUM: Separate which two?

23 MS. SMITH: Covenant Keepers and City of Fire
24 Community Development.

25 DR. TATUM: City of the Fire -- City of Fire

1 Community Development dba is who we are. That's our
2 501(c)(3). We have to dba that name. I don't know
3 what you're wanting me to say or look for or --

4 MR. ROGERS: And now I'm confused and I just --
5 so help me out with that. I asked you earlier who
6 was granting you the money --

7 DR. TATUM: City of --

8 MR. ROGERS: -- and you said City of Fire
9 Development Center. Now you just --

10 DR. TATUM: Community Development.

11 MR. ROGERS: Development. But then --

12 DR. TATUM: No.

13 MR. ROGERS: -- now you've just said that's who
14 y'all are.

15 DR. TATUM: No. No, sir.

16 MR. ROGERS: Did I misunderstand? That's why I
17 jumped up because that's -- that gets back around to
18 where I was asking where the grant was coming from.
19 And I have a question, Stacy: who's the registered
20 agent on that piece of paper with the Secretary of
21 State?

22 MS. SMITH: Valerie Tatum.

23 MR. ROGERS: Now, Dr. Tatum, when you're the
24 registered agent you're the one that receives all the
25 notifications from the Secretary of State's office

1 when filing stuff has to be done, when reports are to
2 be filed. So to tell Ms. Smith that you don't know
3 -- now I'm having a hard time understanding the
4 difference of everything they're telling me because
5 if you're the registered agent on there then the
6 Secretary of State's office is sending you stuff
7 about that City of Fire.

8 DR. TATUM: They send -- yes, they do send it to
9 me and I pass it off to someone else to work, yes.

10 MS. SMITH: Who do you pass it off to?

11 DR. TATUM: One of the sponsoring agency
12 individuals, Ms. Jackson, I would imagine her. I
13 give it to her. I guess I'm asking how do I clean
14 this up at this point? What will satisfy you, Ms.
15 Smith? Do we need to be one in the same, two
16 different entities? What are you asking? What is
17 the "if" about? What do I need to show you or figure
18 out?

19 MS. SMITH: Let me ask you this: do you receive
20 any other direct funds from City of Fire Community
21 Development? Do you personally receive any other
22 direct payment or funds from the Development
23 corporation?

24 DR. TATUM: Valerie?

25 MS. SMITH: Yes, Valerie. So, I mean, within --

1 do you receive any other funds? Besides your pay
2 coming from Covenant Keepers, do you receive any from
3 City of Fire?

4 DR. TATUM: No, ma'am, I don't.

5 MS. SMITH: Okay. It is not uncommon for
6 entities who -- the charter entities to have the
7 superintendent or the principal on their board of
8 directors. That is not uncommon. If you go and you
9 look on the Secretary of State's office, there are
10 several listed.

11 DR. TATUM: Uh-huh.

12 MS. SMITH: Okay. But it's also -- that board
13 should be making decisions, looking at the money,
14 knowing what's being sent to the school. And in your
15 testimony today you have clearly stated more than
16 once "I am not on the board, I have nothing to do
17 with the board; if we need money, I ask" -- you gave
18 me the name Diana Jackson.

19 DR. TATUM: Uh-huh.

20 MS. SMITH: But everything that's on file says
21 you are on the board, that you are the registered
22 agent, and it's just not matching up to me. So I
23 don't know exactly what needs to be cleaned up, but
24 it's obviously that something needs to be cleaned up
25 because this isn't jiving to me. And it started

1 today with me saying how is it possible for you to
2 have that type of salary. I mean, heck, I want your
3 job; it would be a great raise for me.

4 DR. TATUM: Well --

5 MS. SMITH: But I don't understand. I just -- I
6 don't understand it. It doesn't make sense to me.

7 DR. TATUM: And let me help you understand the
8 salary. I've made tough decisions over the last two
9 years; leadership was one. Many mornings I'm in that
10 building or leaving late because I'm having to work
11 to make up positions I let go, because I want to be.
12 And I will be the loudest voice to my leadership team
13 and to my teachers; therefore, I am there sometimes
14 up to 16, 18 hours. That's why the proof is in the
15 pudding 2016. 50.896 -- eight points, that's Dr.
16 Tatum. This year, moving forward, I can guarantee
17 you the 16, the 18 hours that I am overworking we're
18 going to have greater growth. I am working; I'm in
19 the trenches; I'm in the community; I'm going to
20 neighborhood association meetings; I'm going to
21 Cloverdale, Henderson, Mabelvale, elementary schools;
22 I'm looking at other leadership teams. Ma'am, I
23 can't -- I'm not sitting there, trust me, twiddling
24 my fingers. But I'm saying this to you, Ms. Smith:
25 yes, it looks pretty on paper, but let me tell you,

1 Ma'am, I am working hard. And guess what, I really
2 feel like what I've done over the last two years or
3 three I probably should've asked for my board -- I
4 should've asked them -- when they said, "Is this
5 enough," I probably should've said I need more. It's
6 hard work out there. We've made a choice to be at
7 72209; that's where we're going to stay; that's where
8 the work is. I commend eSTEM for what they're doing.
9 I love John Bacon, phenomenal job. I love
10 Superintendent Akdemir and what they're doing every
11 single year.

12 MS. SMITH: Are your teachers working as hard as
13 you?

14 DR. TATUM: You better believe they are.

15 MS. SMITH: Then why didn't they get the raise
16 that you got?

17 DR. TATUM: And you know what --

18 MS. SMITH: They didn't get the same raises that
19 you got. And I'm done talking right now. I'm done.
20 I don't have any more questions. But they didn't get
21 the same raises that you did. And when you look at
22 the salary schedule, when you go all the way back
23 it's not there. And let me tell you something: if
24 I'm going to stand up there as a superintendent of a
25 district --

1 DR. TATUM: You cut me off.

2 MS. SMITH: -- and tell you how good I am, the
3 first thing I'm going to do is I'm going to praise
4 the teachers that are in the classroom.

5 DR. TATUM: And, Ma'am, if you would just take
6 time to come -- because a little over a year ago --
7 if you go back and you look at February 17, 2016, you
8 were the main one, Ms. Smith; you gloated over us.

9 MS. SMITH: It's not about academics today.

10 DR. TATUM: You had all of this, all of this
11 going. My salary was still over \$100,000. I made a
12 decision to come back. I praise my teachers. I give
13 them raises. And guess what, as we began to stay
14 open my teachers will see much more because they're
15 worth it. I'm in the classroom just like they are.
16 My day doesn't end when their day ends. So guess
17 what, I have a baby Covenant Keepers that I have to
18 keep alive. So whatever it takes, 3 a.m. in the
19 morning, 5 a.m., midnight, husband ringing the phone,
20 midnight you're ready to go -- Ma'am, it's hard work
21 out there in 72209. That's why the growth is where
22 it is and we're going to have greater growth in
23 moving forward.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

25 MR. ROGERS: Just trying to bring it back down

1 just a little bit. I'm just still really even more
2 confused, Valerie. I just need you to help me get
3 right in my head because I swear I thought I heard
4 that you just said that the City of Fire Development
5 -- Community Development is doing business as us.
6 And so that -- and so I'm not trying to get you
7 frustrated; I'm just trying to get myself straight.

8 DR. TATUM: And you're not. And I've gotten
9 myself -- and to clear your head and to clear my
10 head, there is a group of people with City of Fire
11 Community Development, Incorporated. They meet.

12 MR. ROGERS: I get that.

13 DR. TATUM: I don't have time to meet with them,
14 so I can't be them and Covenant Keepers.

15 MR. ROGERS: Who is "they?" Who? And I think
16 that's what --

17 DR. TATUM: The sponsoring entity board.

18 MR. ROGERS: "They," who is that board? What
19 are the names of that board and how often do they
20 meet? I guess that would help me understand.
21 Because when Stacy is showing me -- when she's
22 talking about that list of people there, I think that
23 if I could just understand who "they" are and then
24 how the process that you went to meet with them to
25 ask them for funds to help Covenant Keepers -- but

1 then -- and maybe I -- I'd have to go back and look,
2 but I swear that you just said "they are us."

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Walter, can you assist
4 Dr. Tatum in helping us to explain this?

5 MR. WALTER: No, I don't believe so.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

7 MR. ROGERS: So -- and that's just what I'm
8 trying to get straight in my head. So what you're
9 telling me is -- because now they've given me this
10 piece of paper, Valerie, and I'm even more confused
11 because the corporation name is City of Fire
12 Community Development, Incorporated; the fictitious
13 name is Covenant Keepers. So it sounds like City of
14 Fire on this Secretary of State's piece of paper --
15 which you're listed as the registering agent, so you
16 get this every -- there's a fee you have to pay every
17 year to stay this. You get that.

18 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir.

19 MR. ROGERS: And so if you're listed as the
20 registering, you knew that City of Fire Development
21 -- Community Development, Incorporated is also doing
22 work under Covenant Keepers College Preparatory
23 Charter School. That's on that piece of paper you
24 get, that you hand over to Ms. Jackson to pay to
25 renew that each year. So you have that. And so

1 that's why I'm not understanding when you say "no,
2 they're not us," but then you say "they are us."

3 DR. TATUM: Okay.

4 MR. ROGERS: And that's where I need you to help
5 me.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis, are you there
7 for assistance?

8 MS. DAVIS: I am.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Come on up.

10 MS. DAVIS: Okay. And I don't know that I can
11 clarify everything. I will just say that there are
12 other charter schools that their sponsoring entity
13 was created for the purpose of administering the
14 school. I think some of this confusion, or at least
15 my own confusion -- you may share it, you may not --
16 is the fact that the City of Fire Community
17 Development is pretty much -- it seems to be the same
18 people as the school and the same people as the
19 church itself, and it seems that it's all
20 intertwined; that Ms. Jackson is the one who gives
21 out the money from the Community Development
22 sponsoring entity but is also a minister at the
23 church; Mr. Tatum is, you know, in the church but he
24 was also the executive director of the Community
25 Development and he also at one point in time I think

1 had a janitorial service at the school; the son works
2 at the school and is also one of the church
3 leadership team, as well as the other tutor. And I
4 think that my confusion is just about the fact that
5 there's three entities but it's the same people. And
6 that may or may not be yours, but I think that that
7 just --

8 MR. ROGERS: No.

9 MS. DAVIS: So I'm not as concerned about --

10 MR. ROGERS: No, that's not where I'm confused.
11 What I'm confused is --

12 MS. DAVIS: Right.

13 MR. ROGERS: Because I understand that there are
14 charter schools that operate --

15 MS. DAVIS: Right.

16 MR. ROGERS: -- with their CMOs and they're
17 listed; I get that.

18 MS. DAVIS: Right.

19 MR. ROGERS: My confusion is when we first
20 started talking about this --

21 MS. DAVIS: Right.

22 MR. ROGERS: -- Dr. Tatum said they are not the
23 City of Fire Community Development, Incorporated,
24 that charter -- that the Covenant Keepers Charter
25 School went to them and got a grant of \$300,000. So

1 if they are different, who did they go get that grant
2 from? And now they're saying that they're not
3 different, but they are different.

4 MS. DAVIS: Right.

5 MR. ROGERS: So that's where I'm confused.

6 MS. DAVIS: Right.

7 MR. ROGERS: Are they different or are they not?

8 MS. DAVIS: And I can't explain to all the
9 confusion, but I know that that's part of I think
10 some of the confusion that has been brought up by
11 several of the members. So that, I can't speak to.
12 So that may or may not have had any assistance.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: For just a point of
14 clarity, Mary Perry, will you come to the microphone?
15 You have a vast knowledge of charter schools.

16 MS. PERRY: Yes, ma'am.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So talk us through a
18 little bit in your historical knowledge of instances
19 with charter schools where there has been the
20 501(c)(3) that is a body that oversees or --

21 MS. PERRY: Uh-huh.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- or has the financial
23 relationship with the charter school. I know we've
24 had that instance before with other charters and
25 they've gone to them for -- to borrow money, loans,

1 grants --

2 MS. PERRY: Right.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- things like that. In
4 your opinion then, is that what's happening here? Is
5 there -- clear this up for us.

6 MS. PERRY: Yes. Mary Perry, Division of
7 Learning Services. I don't think that I can clear it
8 up for you. That's part of the concern here. There
9 is -- I will tell you, when you have the situation
10 where you have a sponsoring board and a school board,
11 the board that is ultimately responsible is the
12 sponsoring entity board. That's the board that has
13 the ultimate responsibility because they're the ones
14 with the name on the dotted line for the application;
15 they're the name on the contract that was granted.
16 Regardless if the superintendent signs, that's the
17 name so that's the entity with the ultimate
18 authority. They may very well have delegated much
19 authority to a school board. And so you do have --
20 the configurations are not the same from one charter
21 to the other in Arkansas, and they're not the same
22 from state to state with charter schools, so that's
23 the key piece. And here we don't have the clarity
24 because it's hard for us to determine who is on the
25 charter -- the sponsoring entity board. Some states

1 refer to that as the charter holder board versus a
2 charter school board. And you have -- sometimes you
3 have a charter sponsoring entity board that does many
4 things other than charters. They're a huge nonprofit
5 organization and only one of their projects is the
6 charter school, and so that's a very common thing
7 that you'll see some places. Here I'm not sure what
8 we're looking at, Madam Chair. I apologize that I
9 can't shed any light on it.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And so, Ms. Perry, in your
11 experience, when there has been a sponsoring entity
12 board and then a -- I'm going to call it a local
13 school board --

14 MS. PERRY: Sure.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- or that -- or charter
16 school board -- I think I'll call it that -- is there
17 usually a person from the sponsoring entity board
18 that is the named person that there is a contact
19 with? Or in other charter instances does the
20 authorizer work with the sponsoring entity board or
21 the charter board?

22 MS. PERRY: That would depend on, again, from
23 state to state. But if you ultimately wanted to get
24 the group who was responsible you would want to have
25 a contact name and number for that sponsoring entity

1 board to know who to go to. In cases where there was
2 much confusion, any serious problems that can't be
3 rectified by the charter school board, you've got to
4 know who to go to and call and say, "This is serious;
5 we need to be dealing with you now. You are the
6 group of ultimate -- with ultimate responsibility."

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. That's very
8 helpful.

9 Dr. Tatum, who is the contact person that would
10 -- on the sponsoring entity board that this
11 authorizer would contact?

12 DR. TATUM: Diane Jackson.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And is Ms. Jackson
14 available today?

15 DR. TATUM: I can't speak for her schedule.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

17 DR. TATUM: But I can get you the contact
18 information.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

20 MR. ROGERS: And Ms. Jackson is on the City of
21 Fire Community Development board?

22 DR. TATUM: That is correct.

23 MR. ROGERS: So the Secretary of State's office
24 piece of paper has not been updated.

25 DR. TATUM: Okay.

1 MR. ROGERS: So she hasn't updated --

2 DR. TATUM: You're saying has she -- or you're
3 asking me has she or it's not updated?

4 MR. ROGERS: I guess I'm trying to understand
5 because I'm just trying to put it together here. You
6 receive it because you're the registering agent and
7 you said you pass --

8 DR. TATUM: And I pass it on.

9 MR. ROGERS: -- pass it on to her. So she's on
10 the board but she hasn't put herself on the board
11 with the Secretary of State. How long has this been
12 going on?

13 DR. TATUM: I'm not sure because I don't get out
14 there and look at that, so --

15 MR. ROGERS: But you -- okay.

16 DR. TATUM: Go ahead.

17 MR. ROGERS: No, that's all right. But as a
18 registering agent you get it and that's why -- and
19 I'm not trying to keep beating this horse but that's
20 where I'm getting confused, because everything comes
21 to you, Val. And so I'm trying to rectify in my mind
22 how you don't see it when it comes to you. And the
23 other -- and you can -- and when you go --

24 DR. TATUM: When I say that I don't see it, I
25 don't -- of course, I see it; I open it up and look

1 at it, but I pass it on. Like other information or
2 mail that comes to me, I read it and I pass it on.
3 So I look at it but I'm not out there -- and I didn't
4 think to look at it before coming in here because I
5 thought this animal had been cleaned up years ago, so
6 evidently not. So I have to get with her and say,
7 "What do we do to satisfy the separation between
8 Covenant Keepers and City of Fire Community
9 Development; what do we do," because that's a whole
10 board within itself that I don't sit on.

11 MR. ROGERS: So who else is on the board besides
12 her? Because when I look at that, the names on
13 there, she's not on there. And I think that you're
14 on there.

15 DR. TATUM: Mary Buckley.

16 MR. ROGERS: I think your husband and your son
17 are on there.

18 DR. TATUM: No.

19 MR. ROGERS: It's over there now, so I don't
20 remember. So I'm trying to -- I'm just going from my
21 short-term memory now, so -- but that's what I think
22 would help me if I know who is the board and why
23 hasn't it been updated.

24 And then going back to the grant again, so is it
25 just that you just go to Ms. Jackson and say, "We're

1 running short at Covenant Keepers; we need this much
2 to finish out the year?" How does that work? Does
3 she take that to the board?

4 DR. TATUM: We start with this board here, our
5 local school board; we have that conversation with
6 them. And then I go to the -- to Ms. Jackson --

7 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

8 DR. TATUM: -- and I speak --

9 MR. ROGERS: Can I just -- I'm sorry; I'm going
10 to keep asking you questions. So when you go to this
11 local school board and you tell them, "We're in
12 financial difficulty right now, so we need to go to
13 City of Fire," is that in the board minutes? Did
14 they pass a resolution? How does that happen?

15 DR. TATUM: Yes, it's all in the board minutes
16 of this board.

17 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

18 DR. TATUM: They were there. And so we've
19 talked about it I would say just about every month to
20 show that we're making satisfaction on those
21 payments.

22 MR. ROGERS: Okay. So they have given -- at
23 that point they have given their approval for you to
24 go ask the City of Fire Development for --

25 DR. TATUM: At its very inception, yes. Yes,

1 sir.

2 MR. ROGERS: Okay. So who do you go ask at that
3 point?

4 DR. TATUM: Who do I go ask? I go and ask Ms.
5 Diane Jackson and let her know, along with the
6 letter, this is the shortfall that we're having. And
7 so from that point -- my only contact was once, so I
8 don't have to go -- because they have it from the
9 very beginning, so I don't go every month. This is
10 the bill that they said they would satisfy.

11 MR. ROGERS: Okay. And that's -- I guess that's
12 where I'm getting lost.

13 DR. TATUM: So if you take \$212,000 to them --
14 okay, I don't -- I didn't have to go back and ask the
15 next month, the next month, and the next month.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It was a one-time request?

17 DR. TATUM: Ma'am?

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It was a one-time request?

19 DR. TATUM: It's a one -- yes.

20 MR. ROGERS: So they turned around and just --
21 you said, "Hey, I need \$212,000 to pay this back,"
22 and they just --

23 DR. TATUM: I don't know what they said. I just
24 give them the money; I give it to her. Then, in turn
25 they -- she -- I say "they," she tells me these are

1 the installments that we will be making, and that's
2 pretty much it.

3 MR. ROGERS: So did the City of Fire Community
4 Development ever want to talk to you about why you
5 need the money or what you're planning on doing with
6 the money?

7 DR. TATUM: Of course we had the conversation,
8 Mr. Rogers.

9 MR. ROGERS: But that -- and that's where I'm
10 getting lost because --

11 DR. TATUM: We had a conversation. Of course it
12 wasn't "huh, here's a letter."

13 MR. ROGERS: Well --

14 DR. TATUM: Okay. I sit down; I have to explain
15 the shortfall, the \$110,000. Of course I'm
16 intelligent enough to do that. So, again, I had it
17 all laid out in a conversation so she could
18 intelligently go and explain it to the individuals; I
19 mean, I wasn't there. I sat down with her one
20 afternoon after I met with you and the slew of
21 individuals that was there with APSRC.

22 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

23 DR. TATUM: So I interpret that to say one time,
24 "This is where the problem is and we need this
25 money." So what else -- I guess where do you --

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I think his question that
2 he's asking you, did you present before the
3 sponsoring entity board. And your answer --

4 DR. TATUM: A presentation?

5 MR. ROGERS: Yes. I can't find it. I can't
6 find a website or anything for your sponsoring
7 entity. All I do, when I come back I come right back
8 around to City of Fire Ministries, I come back to
9 your church, I come back to Covenant Keepers. So
10 when I asked you were there board minutes when you
11 went and talked to the City of Fire Development
12 Center -- since I can't show that that exists
13 anywhere other than at Covenant Keepers I don't
14 believe that's in there; I also don't believe that
15 you talked to her, and that's why I'm trying to get
16 the process figured out. Because you just said, "I
17 get a check from her when I go tell her I need the
18 money." Then as I'm trying to dig deeper in to make
19 sure I understand you start acting like I'm trying to
20 get on you, when all I'm trying to do is understand.
21 You said, "I take this to her and she tells me the
22 installments." So then that's when I asked, "Well,
23 how does she know what it's for?" And then you got
24 upset again.

25 DR. TATUM: Sir, and I --

1 MR. ROGERS: All I'm trying to do is understand
2 it. So I don't have any more questions. I'm just
3 frustrated by the whole process.

4 DR. TATUM: And I apologize for that. I'm
5 trying to get through the conversation, because I'm
6 asking you -- I'm telling you as transparently as I
7 possibly can, Mr. Rogers.

8 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

9 DR. TATUM: I'm telling you. And so I would
10 really equate that to a messy management of names and
11 not really turning it over like we should.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yeah. Okay.

13 DR. TATUM: Go ahead.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We're going to move along
15 with this, and I want to bring Mr. Buckley back up.
16 Mr. Buckley, your name appears on this state --
17 Secretary of State document as a member of the
18 sponsoring entity board. Are you -- I think we've
19 asked you this question, but I want to just clear up:
20 are you a member of the sponsoring entity board?

21 MR. BUCKLEY: When City of Fire was first --
22 first, the church was started; I was on the board.
23 And as far as my understanding, City of Fire
24 Development Center is the umbrella of -- as far as
25 Covenant Keepers is concerned --

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Correct.

2 MR. BUCKLEY: -- and my name is probably on that
3 list.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: But you no longer sit on
5 the board?

6 MR. BUCKLEY: To my knowledge, I have not made
7 any decisions or anything on that board. No.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

9 MR. BUCKLEY: I'm on the church board of City of
10 Fire Ministries.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Right. You're on the
12 church board, which is a different board.

13 MR. BUCKLEY: Right. Correct.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And on the sponsoring
15 entity board, do you know when you were on that did
16 you meet regularly?

17 MR. BUCKLEY: As far as the sponsor?

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

19 MR. BUCKLEY: I'm not sure as far as the board
20 is concerned for its regular -- I mean, I met regular
21 with the church board because --

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure. But when you were
23 -- your name was listed as a member of the sponsoring
24 entity board. I just wondered if during the time
25 that you were serving on that board did you meet

1 regularly and sometimes discuss Covenant Keepers?

2 MR. BUCKLEY: I've never discussed Covenant
3 Keepers on the City of Fire Ministries.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

5 Mr. Lester.

6 MR. LESTER: Hi. I want to talk a little bit on
7 the federal money side.

8 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir.

9 MR. LESTER: You're a school-wide Title 1 school
10 and you receive approximately \$94,000 in Title 1
11 money. And you spend -- you set aside about \$1,000
12 for your homeless; the other is a data curriculum
13 coordinator. What is the role of this person in your
14 school as far as being supplemental to the students?

15 DR. TATUM: What is the role of me or --

16 MR. LESTER: The data curriculum coordinator.

17 DR. TATUM: These two right here, the
18 instructional specialists.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is that Ms. Jones?

20 DR. TATUM: And Ms. Whipps. Uh-huh.

21 MR. LESTER: Okay. What is their role? What do
22 they do for the school?

23 DR. TATUM: They're instructional specialists,
24 so they really work through the curriculum piece and
25 professional development training. They look at the

1 different supplies and things that we need. And so
2 that's pretty much their whole piece there.

3 MR. LESTER: Do you mind going through what you
4 do in your -- okay. Thank you.

5 MS. JONES: All right. As data coordinator I
6 look at all of the interim assessments we've been
7 doing with ACT Aspire and also our NWEA testing
8 school-wide. I also help teachers coordinate our
9 Friday assessments in math and ELA and review the
10 data with them. We make intervention decisions based
11 on that data. I'm also the test coordinator for the
12 school and so that goes hand-in-hand with data, just
13 scheduling assessments, making sure the technology is
14 running smoothly in coordination with our IT
15 director. I also work hand-in-hand with our math and
16 science teachers, and Ms. Whipps works hand-in-hand
17 with our social studies and English teachers, just
18 helping them look at the curriculum and align it with
19 what the students need in the classroom. And I work
20 with the help of Eric Waldorf in that through APSRC
21 and ADE.

22 MS. WHIPPS: Again, Laurette Whipps. My focus
23 is literacy. Again, Ms. Jones really focuses and
24 hones in on the math aspect. So I meet with the
25 teachers regularly. I set the PLC meetings. I look

1 at their data to see where their students are
2 struggling. I coordinate, you know, with teachers
3 how to separate their students to get what they need
4 or what area do we need to focus on. I sit down with
5 Jones, Ms. Jones, and we go over whatever data has
6 been shared with us from their ACT Aspire interims,
7 and we make decisions from there as a team.

8 MR. LESTER: All right. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Tatum -- okay, go
10 right ahead.

11 MR. LESTER: Also you receive a 10.03(a) grant,
12 and what do you spend it on? What do you -- how do
13 you utilize that supplemental money?

14 DR. TATUM: Pretty much it's for our different
15 portions of the PD and for Ms. Jones as she's working
16 as the school improvement specialist for us.

17 MR. LESTER: Okay. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Tatum, I have
19 documentation to show that you have about 47% of your
20 student population is now language English proficient
21 --

22 DR. TATUM: Uh-huh.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- for this school year.

24 DR. TATUM: Yes, ma'am.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And I know that you've

1 worked that community hard and really pulled in
2 students that may be new to our country or new to our
3 state or, you know, whatever situation they find
4 themselves in. So you've really kind of changed the
5 demographics of your school over the nine years;
6 visually, I've seen that. So talk to us a little bit
7 about ESL training and support that you're providing
8 to your teachers. I know that you -- when I was
9 there last, your secretary I believe was bilingual;
10 is that correct?

11 DR. TATUM: Yes. Uh-huh.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And so are there other
13 people in the school that are fluent in other
14 languages? Talk to us a little bit about --

15 DR. TATUM: Yes. We have an out-of-school time
16 program, so there's two other individuals there that
17 help and assist in crossover to make those contacts
18 with the parents because the needs are so great. And
19 so all together we have four individuals that are
20 there that's on the grounds really working, providing
21 -- helping us provide the wraparound services for
22 those families. And then we have two community
23 volunteers that can come in at-hand when we schedule
24 them well ahead of schedule.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: How many languages are

1 spoken in your school?

2 DR. TATUM: To my knowledge, just one. Two.
3 Yeah, two.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: English and --

5 DR. TATUM: English and --

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- Spanish?

7 DR. TATUM: -- Spanish.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And have any of your
9 teachers had ESL training?

10 DR. TATUM: Yes, quite a few. And Ms. Jones can
11 speak to that.

12 MS. JONES: I also serve as the ESL coordinator
13 for the school, making sure that our students are
14 receiving the appropriate assistance and
15 accommodations in the classroom. I provide six hours
16 total a year for our teachers in ESL training and I
17 do a lot of work one-on-one with those teachers.
18 Whenever I observe them in the classroom that's one
19 of the things I'm looking for, to make sure that they
20 are taking care of those students and making sure
21 that they have comprehension of what's being taught
22 in the classroom as well, and provide them with
23 additional materials that they may need to serve
24 those students.

25 I also have an intervention group with our --

1 it's made up mostly of our first and second year
2 students that are new to the United States and really
3 supporting them in their class work. So they'll have
4 an assignment in math or an assignment from their
5 English class and we'll get together after lunch and
6 just talk through it and I'll be able to scaffold
7 that information for them.

8 As far as additional training, we have
9 encouraged several of our teachers to participate in
10 the ESL academy that's taking place this summer as
11 well.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Jones, how are you
13 accommodating these students with your interim
14 assessments or your formative assessments?

15 MS. JONES: I missed the first part of your
16 question. I apologize.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: How are you accommodating
18 these learners with your formative assessments or
19 your interim assessments?

20 MS. JONES: So during the interim assessments we
21 allow the same accommodations that we do during the
22 summative assessments, meaning extended time, and we
23 also allow them to use their English to Spanish
24 dictionaries as well. We don't want to provide so
25 many accommodations during those tests because we

1 know that they won't receive those during the
2 summative, and so we just want to provide the same
3 that is stated in their ELPAC for both the formative
4 and the summative.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And are you also the ELPAC
6 chair?

7 MS. JONES: I am. Yes, ma'am.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

9 DR. PFEFFER: I have a question for Ms. Whipps.
10 And I was looking on the website and you are a 6th
11 grade English Language Arts teacher; correct?

12 MS. WHIPPS: I do teach 6th grade English as
13 well. Yes, ma'am.

14 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. And then you -- but you do
15 a lot of work with coordination for curriculum
16 coordinating --

17 MS. WHIPPS: Yes.

18 DR. PFEFFER: -- and things like that?

19 MS. WHIPPS: Uh-huh.

20 DR. PFEFFER: So in looking online and on the
21 page where, you know, students and parents have
22 access to curriculum and homework, I'm noticing that
23 the curriculum is still referred to as Common Core
24 curriculum. And I wanted to just verify with you
25 that you all have updated to the updated Arkansas

1 Academic Standards --

2 MS. WHIPPS: Yes, uh-huh.

3 DR. PFEFFER: -- and discussed, you know, the
4 fact that the Common Core State Standards still being
5 there as a curriculum foundation could be presenting
6 a problem with regards to alignment and instruction.
7 And so could you speak to that a little bit?

8 MS. WHIPPS: Yes, ma'am. I did note with the
9 team with the change in the standards the website
10 probably still doesn't reflect it. So that's
11 something we need to update.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Whipps, while you're
13 there -- and this is really for you and Ms. Jones,
14 both -- looking at the concordant score -- and I
15 don't know if you got a copy of this?

16 MS. WHIPPS: We did. Yes, ma'am.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. As I look at that,
18 certainly there is -- 2016 is showing progress from
19 2015, but there was a dip -- and certainly
20 understandable; you know, we've had some changes over
21 the last few years. But what is consistent is that
22 students are underperforming. And talk to me a
23 little bit about -- I know you're working hard and
24 you're trying to change that, but what is going to
25 make that change and how long should we expect that

1 change to come? I mean, the school has been in
2 existence nine years and we've seen these same
3 struggles. And I know that you've certainly done a
4 great job of reaching out to the community and
5 everything, but let's just talk academics.

6 MS. WHIPPS: I'll start off with our struggles.
7 You know, we started out actually really strong when
8 we were doing the Arkansas standards. Our students
9 were pretty proficient up there with everyone else.
10 We did start to take a dip when it was time to switch
11 over to Common Core and getting our teachers really
12 acclimated to the deliverance of the Common Core.
13 And one of the changes that we put in place for that
14 for our teachers was the switch in our curriculum
15 when we decided to move to Expeditionary Learning for
16 ELA. This really helped our teachers. Of course, it
17 took us some time to dive into that. And I was kind
18 of working on my own at first, and I brought in the
19 other English teachers to help, but focusing on what
20 works for our students, what can we remove from this
21 to replace it with something that would really help
22 our students more. We finally got that underway and
23 this year has really shown that in our ACT Aspire
24 interim assessments that what we're doing right now
25 is really working. And I think it was just a matter

1 of our teachers truly understanding how to teach that
2 rigor of Common Core. I'm constantly having Monday
3 workshops with our teachers on how to push the rigor.
4 The rigor doesn't come from the teacher; it really
5 comes from the student. I can give you tools in
6 order to implement this rigor, but if the students
7 are not taking this in and applying it correctly then
8 it's not going to happen for them. I can talk all
9 day long, but the students really need to be the ones
10 who are pushing this out and thinking on their own,
11 and moving more from thinking from the teacher.

12 MS. JONES: I also do want to remind you what
13 our mission is. It's to serve 72209. And the
14 students that come to us are several grade levels
15 behind and so our goal is to make as much growth as
16 possible. I know that growth does -- should
17 eventually turn into proficiency, and so that's what
18 we're pushing for. With our numbers being -- you
19 know -- from the past three years, 43, 42 and 50, we
20 believe that with one or two more years we will be
21 off academic distress because we're going to continue
22 doing the things that we know that work, really using
23 those formative assessments to inform interventions
24 and to improve Tier 1 instruction as well.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: But I would think you're

1 not satisfied with less than half of your kids
2 proficient, and so those kids are going on into
3 future grades unprepared. And so the students in
4 72209 deserve the very best; that's what we're asking
5 for, not half. We're asking for the best.

6 MS. WHIPPS: And I agree with you one-hundred
7 percent. So looking at them coming in three to four
8 grade levels behind and then leaving us only two
9 grade levels behind, you know, we are truly preparing
10 them. I wish that I could take them from an 8th
11 grader coming to us at the 3rd grade level and
12 putting him directly, or she directly, on 8th grade.
13 That's an impossible task. But if I can get you as
14 close as I can and I can build your thinking
15 mentality where I'm going to continue to grow myself
16 when I hit high school, despite what I'm being faced
17 with, I'm still going to be able to take this in,
18 study on my own, get the help, ask the questions that
19 need -- I mean, our focus this year was the growth
20 mindset for our students. So if they take this
21 growth mindset with them, even if they're still two
22 levels behind, they're going to make that gain over
23 the next year-and-a-half.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

25 DR. SAUNDERS: Do you have a follow-up? Okay.

1 I know that in your presentation you did a thing
2 there with comparison to similar schools -- and, you
3 know, the term "similar schools" or whatever else can
4 be interpreted 100 different ways. So let me tell
5 you one thing that I just did, and just for
6 discussion was, you know, I tried to look at schools
7 within the 72209 Zip Code that serve similar
8 students, and basically was able to find one I
9 thought that matched pretty close and that was
10 Cloverdale. And within Cloverdale, for example --
11 I'm looking right now at 14-15 data -- they have
12 actually a higher LEP percentage, Cloverdale, than
13 you do. They have a higher low-income percentage
14 than you do, as well as a three times special
15 education percentage than you do. And so just
16 stating that right there it's a very comparable
17 population, very comparable school within the area,
18 with similar demographics of the students. And what
19 I looked at, I looked at the trends in the data. So
20 I looked at 6th grade literacy/math, 7th grade
21 literacy/math, 8th grade literacy/math. 6th graders
22 at Covenant Keepers outperformed Cloverdale by a
23 ways.

24 MS. JONES: And this is 2014, correct?

25 DR. SAUNDERS: 14-15 data.

1 MS. JONES: 14-15. Okay.

2 DR. SAUNDERS: 14-15. But then that wasn't the
3 case in 7th grade and it wasn't the case in 8th
4 grade. And so that led me to thinking, well, is it
5 the case that as the students are there longer they
6 are no longer performing at a similar school -- at
7 the rate of a similar school? So then I pulled up
8 the 15-16 data. I pull up the 15-16 data and I get
9 the exact same thing. In 6th grade they are
10 outperforming but not in 7th grade and not in 8th
11 grade. And so as the kids are there longer -- they
12 start off up here, compared to with a similar school,
13 but then after two years it's flip-flopped. Can you
14 address that?

15 MS. JONES: I do want to state that, looking at
16 our 7th and 8th grade students, they don't make up
17 all of the students that have been with us three
18 years, is what I'm saying. So the 7th grade students
19 we have, some of those are brand-new students; same
20 with our 8th grade students. So that is something --
21 that is something to look at and shows that we do
22 have more improvement still to make with our math and
23 ELA.

24 DR. SAUNDERS: Okay.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. I think we've

1 addressed this from every angle.

2 As I recall, initially, Ms. Davis, the State
3 Board asked us to review this charter.

4 MS. DAVIS: Uh-huh.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And do you have any
6 outstanding issues that you'd like us to be aware of
7 before we make a motion?

8 MS. DAVIS: I do not. I just -- if anything, I
9 would remind you of what your options are today.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Please do.

11 MS. DAVIS: And that would be that you can take
12 no action -- that would be an option for you; you may
13 modify this charter; you may put the charter on
14 probation; or you may vote to revoke the charter. So
15 those would be your options or, like I say -- so --
16 or any of the above actions.

17 DR. GOTCHER: One more time.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah, please.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: No action, modify the
20 charter, probation, or revoke the charter.

21 And any of those actions would then go before
22 the State Board in May?

23 MS. DAVIS: They would.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And then the State Board
25 at that time would review or not review?

1 MS. DAVIS: Uh-huh.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And then if they decided
3 to review they would either review in June or have a
4 special board meeting?

5 MS. DAVIS: That's correct.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

7 MS. SMITH: I need clarification on probation.
8 If someone is on probation, what are we looking at
9 there? I mean, what is --

10 MS. DAVIS: I'm going to get Alexandra up here.
11 She will probably speak more clearly to what that
12 impact is.

13 MS. BOYD: So if you put the Charter on
14 probation you can outline what that probation
15 entails. So you may require additional reporting,
16 additional monitoring, additional information. Also,
17 you want to keep in mind that probationary status
18 will put the school in jeopardy from not being able
19 to receive certain funds. So like the facilities
20 funding that's available to schools, if the school is
21 on probation they can't receive that funding.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And do they receive
23 facilities funding now? They're on academic
24 distress.

25 MS. BOYD: Yeah, they're on academic distress,

1 so they don't receive that funding now. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So they don't receive
3 that.

4 DR. GOTCHER: I think in my history here we
5 don't -- we haven't placed a charter on fiscal
6 distress --

7 MS. BOYD: Right. So --

8 DR. GOTCHER: -- because -- go ahead.

9 MS. BOYD: Because the law doesn't provide for
10 us to do that. The laws or the rules don't provide
11 for us to do that. And in the past we haven't put
12 schools -- in the recent past, we haven't put schools
13 on probation that are already -- that already have a
14 label of high intervention, like academic distress or
15 priority or focus, because those schools are already
16 receiving levels of intervention. So if you want
17 more intervention above what goes on provided by that
18 label, then I guess that's where probation may be
19 appropriate. Does that make sense?

20 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, ma'am. Thanks.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Boyd, just for
22 clarification, how often does Covenant Keepers reach
23 out to your office for assistance? Or does your
24 office --

25 MS. BOYD: Right. So we --

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- make the contact?

2 MS. BOYD: We visit all schools annually. We
3 try to visit new schools twice a year. I would be
4 operating off of memory to know if -- to remember if
5 they've reached out to us. Sorry.

6 Ms. Virginia Perry says that in the last three
7 months they have -- six months they haven't reached
8 out to us, but she has been on-site three times. And
9 Mr. Freddie Scott has been attending their board
10 meetings.

11 I can't recollect them reaching out to us, but I
12 can't say that they haven't for sure since I've been
13 Program Advisor and Director of the Charter Office.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

15 MS. SMITH: I would like to talk to Ms. Virginia
16 Perry and Mr. Scott, please.

17 Ms. Perry, if you'd just take a moment and kind
18 of give me your -- just from visiting the school on
19 three occasions, kind of your summary of -- did you
20 see effective practices? Did you have things that
21 concerned you or did you see things that were going
22 in the right direction? Just your --

23 MS. VIRGINIA PERRY: In the times that I've been
24 there everything appeared to be in order. I
25 basically observed -- the last visit I was there to

1 do classroom observations and I can testify to the
2 rigor definitely being there. The students were
3 actively engaged. The lesson objective was a
4 measurable objective and the instructional practices
5 were relevant to the kids actually meeting the actual
6 objective. I actually noticed a newcomer ESL or ELL
7 student that was there and accommodations were
8 definitely being provided to that student. Classroom
9 rotations and transitions were orderly. I spent time
10 with Mr. Scroggins, the special education teacher,
11 and reviewed files there, and I've been able to see
12 evidence of the work that he's done with Ms. Hughes.
13 Everything appeared to be in order.

14 MS. SMITH: Okay. Thank you.

15 Mr. Scott, in attending board meetings -- and
16 this has been a discussion that we've had regarding
17 other charters too, about training boards to
18 recognize their role as board members. And so in
19 your attendance of a board meeting have you seen that
20 this board acts as an acting board or is it kind of a
21 -- I mean, what is your observations there?

22 MR. SCOTT: Certainly. Freddie Scott,
23 Operations Manager, Charter Schools Office. I
24 attended one board meeting, January 24th. The plan
25 was to have an unannounced board meeting where I

1 would just observe. Also I presented to them a
2 rubric that's been created, a dashboard with key
3 performance indicators of best practices for -- from
4 a governance perspective; I shared that with them. I
5 noticed that there's a need for some professional
6 development from the standpoint of holding a
7 superintendent accountable in those key areas of
8 academics, finance, and operations. My plan was to
9 revisit that and offer to them professional
10 development in those areas. I was pleased from a
11 professional skill-set standpoint that they have
12 dynamic individuals on the board who are willing to
13 learn.

14 MS. SMITH: Okay. Thank you, sir. Thank you,
15 Ms. Perry.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

17 DR. GOTCHER: Madam Chair, just a comment. I'm
18 not addressing anyone, but just for the sake of
19 comment -- I recall approximately a year ago, maybe
20 longer -- one of the things that I look at in all of
21 our educational institutions is the mission
22 statement, and I recall bringing up the opening
23 statement of your original mission statement about
24 providing academically rigorous college preparatory
25 programs for all students. And I recall at the time

1 having -- I may have addressed to Dr. Tatum how I
2 haven't seen that. Because I've always believed that
3 when you think of a charter that's providing
4 expansive opportunities for pupils and parents -- I
5 do believe that Covenant Keepers has addressed a need
6 for a particular body of students, and when I look at
7 their current mission statement and how it's changed
8 through the years -- I don't know how many changes
9 it's evolved -- but now the mission is to change the
10 trajectory of the students' academic path through
11 development of higher-order thinking skills, et
12 cetera. So I appreciate that the institution has
13 recognized that what was maybe at the beginning in
14 the 72209 area has changed, and so I want to commend
15 them for being responsive to the students that they
16 serve. However, today, I'm not as concerned with the
17 trajectory of students' academic paths. I think the
18 evidence is certainly promising. I believe the data
19 is demonstrating that they are moving in the right
20 direction. But I think I'm most concerned -- and to
21 be honest, surprisingly concerned -- that the
22 finances are not as strong as I was hoping, and so
23 I'm very thankful that our team has been able to
24 provide some insight. But I also am most concerned
25 about the governance and the structure, or the lack

1 of, as we've learned through the discussion.

2 So I'm not sure what my next step needs to be as
3 a Charter Panel member, but I know that I've moved
4 from -- I've moved from seeing some promise in the
5 academic trajectory, according to the mission
6 statement, to some grave concerns in governance and
7 finance. So I'm still pondering our next steps as a
8 Charter Panel.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Additional discussion?

10 DR. PFEFFER: Yes. And following up on what Dr.
11 Gotcher was saying there, just looking at this from
12 the statistics end, My School Info, their district
13 per-pupil expenditures are \$11,540, and they do serve
14 a student population that is low-income. But their
15 average years of teaching experience is one year and
16 that, coupled with some of the discussion we had on
17 the governance and the finance, that is very
18 concerning to me. And we know that improvement is
19 not going to occur and be sustained without having a
20 quality educator workforce ongoing. And I do have
21 concerns about the governance structure over
22 overseeing all of that, because for average years of
23 teaching experience to be one year -- and the data
24 that was reported to us, there was a turnover rate of
25 67% as reported in their October 1 from, you know,

1 previous year to current year. I think that would've
2 been last academic year to this. So, you know, those
3 are just some -- those are some numbers that concern
4 me.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

6 MS. HALEY: I just have -- I don't know if it's
7 a question or just a discussion, because Ms. Boyd
8 shared that if a charter in the past had been on an
9 intensive intervention path, whether it be academic
10 or fiscal, that the Charter Panel had not typically
11 put the charter on probation. But Covenant Keepers
12 is in academic distress at this point, because we
13 don't have fiscal distress, but what I'm hearing are
14 fiscal and governance issues. And I'm just
15 wondering, you know, being on academic distress isn't
16 necessarily going to be -- the intervention isn't
17 going to be focused on fiscal and governance
18 exclusively, so I'm just wondering if this might be a
19 time to do that.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional discussion?
21 Then I'll accept a motion.

22 DR. GOTCHER: One more bit of discussion, Madam
23 Chair. I apologize.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's all right.

25 DR. GOTCHER: Ms. Davis or maybe Ms. Boyd,

1 either one; I know that Ms. Boyd started it. If this
2 Panel outlined a very specific probationary step --
3 steps, multiple steps, that is an option this Panel
4 has. It can have a calendar, it can have due-dates,
5 it can have all of those pieces, as specific as this
6 Panel so chooses. Correct?

7 MS. BOYD: That's correct.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And can that include
9 fiscal and governance?

10 MS. BOYD: Yes. That can include anything that
11 has to do with the charter itself. You all are the
12 authorizing body and so you hold the authority to
13 request any information or compliance you need from
14 the Charter.

15 DR. GOTCHER: And while I recognize that is our
16 -- is an option for this Panel, my concerns are the
17 things that may or may not be discovered through that
18 probationary period, as we've discovered today. So
19 that is my comment and that is my pause for not
20 making a motion for a detailed outline for probation.
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: When the Panel is ready I
23 will accept a motion.

24 MS. BOYD: Something that might help, if you do
25 go with probation and a detailed list of information

1 you want, at any public meeting you can amend that
2 information without going through the complete
3 hearing procedures that we did today. So, for
4 instance, if they come forward to give you a report,
5 if you want something different or you want something
6 additional after they give the report, you can
7 request that in that public meeting -- and the
8 emphasis is, to clarify, what you need instead of
9 completely new information. I guess if you were
10 requesting something completely new then you would
11 have to go through a new hearing procedure. So, for
12 instance, if you do probation and you want more
13 information about finance and then you want more
14 detailed information about finance in the future, you
15 wouldn't have to hold another hearing procedure. But
16 if you do probation and only talk about finance and
17 then talk about academics, and you wanted more
18 academic information in the future, then you would
19 have to have a new hearing. Does that make sense?

20 DR. GOTCHER: And, Madam Chair, I'm afraid the
21 probationary pathway is too expansive for anyone to
22 do in a motion. I don't know what this would --

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I think the motion is
24 probation and then you detail --

25 DR. GOTCHER: At a later date?

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Right. Do you detail
2 today what would go into probation? Guidance.

3 MS. DAVIS: I think that you could, if you
4 decided to vote for probation, give the areas in
5 which you wanted to -- and what we did in the
6 previous meeting when we had requested a charter come
7 back with specific information for review, you could
8 collectively get your information to the Charter
9 Office so that way they can include it in the letter.
10 So that way you're not having to think like
11 immediately but, you know, the general areas in which
12 you want.

13 DR. GOTCHER: I'm not ready to make a motion.

14 DR. SAUNDERS: I'm not ready to make a motion,
15 but I just -- I do want to say I have concerns not
16 just about the academic and the finances, but I
17 think, you know, when we talk about governance and
18 kind of what Dr. Pfeffer was talking about earlier.
19 I've always been told that you can, you know, look at
20 somebody's priorities by their checkbook and their
21 calendar, where they spend their time and where they
22 spend their money, and you look at this district and
23 it has some of the highest expenditures per student
24 basically across the state. And so you're looking at
25 how those funds are spent, which we addressed many of

1 them today, but then I look up based upon the data
2 reported to ADE from the school, that there's not a
3 before-school program for kids, there's not an after-
4 school program for kids, nor a weekend program, nor a
5 summer program. So I just -- I have concerns kind of
6 from the top down, like I said, about the way you
7 allocate your resources, and resources being time and
8 money, so --

9 DR. TATUM: And we have those that you
10 mentioned, before-school tutoring. We will have a
11 summer-time; we've had it for two years. And we do
12 have out-of-school time now.

13 DR. SAUNDERS: I would make sure that you update
14 your information that you submit to the Department to
15 reflect that.

16 DR. TATUM: Yes, sir. Will do.

17 DR. GOTCHER: Help me understand, Dr. Saunders.
18 So what you just reported is not on --

19 DR. SAUNDERS: It's not being reported to us.
20 It would pull from the cycles. There's a LEA profile
21 page.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Right.

23 DR. SAUNDERS: We have the opportunity to enter
24 those pieces of information, as well. There's the
25 academic programs, enrichment programs that are

1 offered, which is displayed on the profile on My
2 School Info. And matter of fact, we just put out a
3 Commissioner's Memo last week about that, re-pulling
4 for Cycle 7 to populate that data. So you can
5 address that Commissioner's Memo and know exactly
6 where that is and make sure that's accurate.

7 DR. TATUM: What's the name of that again?

8 DR. GOTCHER: And that just -- that's concerning
9 because if those things are happening and we don't
10 have evidence of that -- that's what I was referring
11 earlier to those layers that are yet to be discovered
12 or may be discovered if we place them on probation.

13 So I'm concerned, Panel, if we sit here and
14 discuss things longer what other things might we
15 discuss, and my sense of concern just continues to
16 grow.

17 MS. SMITH: I make a motion to revoke the
18 charter based on financial concerns, governance
19 issues, and academic distress.

20 MR. ROGERS: Immediately or June 30th?

21 MS. SMITH: June 30th.

22 MR. ROGERS: I second.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion has been made by
24 Ms. Smith, seconded by Mr. Rogers to revoke the
25 charter, effective June 30, 2017.

1 Any discussion?

2 I'm going to take an individual vote.

3 Dr. Gotcher.

4 DR. GOTCHER: I vote for the revocation, June
5 30th.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

7 MS. HALEY: I vote against the revocation, June
8 30th.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

10 MR. LESTER: I vote for the revocation on June
11 30th.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

13 DR. PFEFFER: I vote for the revocation.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

15 MR. ROGERS: For.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

17 DR. SAUNDERS: For.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

19 MS. SMITH: For.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Six-one, motion passes.

21 If you'll give us a moment, we'll give you the
22 detailed reasons.

23 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

25 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for the revocation of the

1 charter as of June 30th. My reason: an increased
2 revelation of inconsistencies in reporting, financial
3 concerns, and governance transparency issues led me
4 to vote for the revocation of this charter, effective
5 June 30, 2017. My decision is based on what I feel
6 based upon the evidence is in the best interest of
7 students.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

9 MS. HALEY: I voted against the revocation.
10 While I recognize there are serious issues with
11 finance and government, I believe the charter has
12 provided a needed service to the population they
13 serve and would prefer they have been placed on
14 strict probation prior to revocation.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

16 MR. LESTER: I voted for the June 30th
17 revocation. I believe that the charter should be
18 revoked based on continued failure to meet academic
19 and fiscal performance criteria deemed appropriate
20 and relevant to the charter -- for the charter by the
21 authorizer.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

23 DR. PFEFFER: I voted for the revocation. Out
24 of concerns for the governance structure combined
25 with questions about finances and current data lead

1 to too many concerns to support the continuation.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

3 MR. ROGERS: I voted for the revocation on June
4 30th due to ongoing academic issues, questions
5 surrounding governance, data input and fiscal
6 responsibility. The two years longer they said for
7 it to get up to achieving standards just was too much
8 for me because they're on academic distress right
9 now, and just to continue on and on, I think this is
10 in the best interest of the students.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders.

12 DR. SAUNDERS: Yes. I had concerns over the
13 governance, finances, and academics.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

15 MS. SMITH: I voted for. While I believe the
16 school has been working on academic improvement, as
17 testified by Ms. White from ADE School Improvement,
18 as shown in previous CAP meetings, however, I have
19 many concerns regarding the lack of transparency in
20 governance and finances, alongside the current
21 academic distress.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith -- Ms. Davis,
23 would you address the next steps for this charter?

24 MS. DAVIS: Yes. I think that they passed out
25 possibly the copy of the rules. I have it right

1 here. So, you know, this will have to go before the
2 State Board and -- for the decision. However, there
3 are rules, Section 7 of the Public Charter School
4 Rules, that deal with the closure or dissolution of a
5 charter school that require 15 days after the
6 authorizer votes to non-renew or revoke the charter
7 school or sponsoring entity shall furnish to the
8 Department of Education -- there's a complete list of
9 like inventory, account numbers, debts and
10 obligations that are owed. So that is something that
11 the charter will probably need to start compiling --
12 and, you know, of course pending the State Board --
13 but start compiling that information. There should
14 be a timeline established by the Department to send
15 written notices of closure, as approved by the
16 Department, that would go to all the parents and
17 legal guardians of the students, employees of the
18 charter, creditors of the charter, and school
19 districts in which students of the charter reside.

20 There's also rules regarding the notices that
21 must be sent as far as the effective date of closure
22 and the last date of instruction. And then contact
23 information of the person employed by the charter
24 school or sponsoring entity that handles those
25 inquiries. Parental notices must also include the

1 school districts residence and contact information
2 for the enrollment office; a statement that parents
3 should contact the resident school district or any
4 other charter school where the student intends to
5 enroll and ask that they request transfer of those
6 educational records, and other contact information.
7 So these are, again, additional information that the
8 school might want to go ahead and start compiling.
9 There's also requirements regarding employee notices
10 and benefits. And the Charter Office can set
11 deadlines for these notices but work with the school
12 in case that there are reasons why those notices
13 can't go out. And there's also an additional entire
14 section that deals with assets of the school and what
15 happens with those upon dissolution. But at this
16 point there is an entire list of things that the
17 district, as far as assets that were bought with
18 school money and state money, of what they need to
19 start compiling.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

21 Any final words before lunch recess?

22 And it is five-till-one. What time would you
23 like to reconvene?

24 All right. We'll regroup at 1:30. Thank you.

25 (LUNCH BREAK: 12:53 - 1:37 p.m.)

1 (COURT REPORTER'S NOTE: Dr. Saunders was not
2 present for the afternoon session of the Charter
3 Authorizing Panel.)

4 A-5: HEARING CONTINUATION AND POTENTIAL ACTION ON OPEN-
5 ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL: ROCKBRIDGE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis, will you go
7 over the guidelines?

8 MS. DAVIS: Yes. Okay. So for this action item
9 you will need a motion to un-table it, since you did
10 table it last meeting; so you will need a motion to
11 un-table it. And you had already -- it's a
12 continuation of last month's meeting or last month's
13 -- the time that they met, so there will be no more
14 presentation; it will be purely a question-and-
15 answer. You can ask the applicant, you know, if they
16 want an update, but it's still back to the question-
17 and-answer period and for you to make your decision.
18 And your decision today is much like the last action
19 item: you can vote to take no action, you can vote to
20 modify their charter, to put their charter on
21 probation, or revoke their charter. However, though,
22 I would go ahead and re-swear anybody in who wants to
23 -- even though it is a continuation from last time,
24 but just so there's no confusion.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. If all

1 representatives from the Charter would please stand
2 and all of the Department and anyone else that might
3 speak regarding this issue, raise your right hand.
4 Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you're
5 about to give shall be the truth, the whole truth,
6 and nothing but the truth?

7 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

9 Mary Perry, you are recognized for Action Item
10 5.

11 MS. MARY PERRY: On March 15, 2017, the Charter
12 Authorizing Panel began a full review of the
13 Rockbridge Montessori School open-enrollment charter.
14 As stated in the February 16, 2017 hearing letter to
15 the Charter, and by Ms. Davis a few moments ago,
16 possible actions allowed by the statute include
17 placing the school on probation, modifying the open
18 enrollment charter, and/or revoking the charter.

19 At its March 15, 2017 meeting the Panel tabled
20 action until today's meeting and requested specific
21 information from the Charter. The Panel packet
22 includes documents prepared by the Arkansas
23 Department of Education staff and documents submitted
24 by the Charter.

25 With a motion and vote to table -- to un-table,

1 excuse me, from the Panel the hearing that began on
2 March 15th can continue with questions and answers.
3 And as you know by the swearing in, there are quite a
4 few folks here ready to take your questions from the
5 Charter.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. I'll accept a
7 motion to un-table.

8 DR. GOTCHER: Motion to un-table.

9 MS. SMITH: Second.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion has been made by
11 Dr. Gotcher, seconded by Ms. Smith to un-table.

12 Any discussion?

13 All those in favor?

14 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed?

16 Motion approved.

17 Any preference from the Panel as to the
18 organization of our initial questions? I can take it
19 down the list of the things we asked them to send;
20 does that work?

21 MS. SMITH: Yeah. I'd like it if we take it --
22 if we'll go by the list and just finding out
23 specifically what things have been cleaned up in the
24 month that we asked them to come back, since we had
25 lots of things last month that were up in the air,

1 including their numbering, their coding, special ed.
2 findings, their board operations, governance. So
3 that would be helpful to just go down the list.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Nuckols, I'm assuming
5 we'll start with you. And you have with you today
6 your -- several board members. If you would let us
7 know who you have with you?

8 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes. Yes, good afternoon, Ladies
9 and Gentlemen. Steven Nuckols, Head of School for
10 Rockbridge.

11 Yes. Mrs. Gober is in attendance today with
12 special ed.; Mrs. Nuckols is here, curriculum
13 director, along with our school board members: Mr.
14 Jack Ciak, our treasurer; Mr. Roy Albert, secretary;
15 and Mr. Bennett is the board president.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. I think we
17 started off with your organization chart of your
18 board, so -- and there may have been some
19 reorganization within your staff. Is that correct?

20 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am, that is correct.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. So, why don't you
22 start with the organization of your staff and then
23 we'll ask your board president to give us the
24 organization of the board.

25 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am, of course. So as you

1 can see based on documentation that was submitted for
2 myself, being Head of Schools, a description of
3 duties and responsibilities that are currently
4 listed. There are several -- to include additional
5 duties that have consumed quite a bit of time at
6 Rockbridge, knowing that E-school data input is
7 extremely important, all tied to enrollment and
8 attendance, along with child nutrition, as I've taken
9 that on as well; and knowing that's been a huge
10 piece, especially as we become CP qualified this year
11 and knowing that's been the best for the children and
12 knowing it is costly in a sense, but we do know that
13 for the children's sake that's certainly an advantage
14 for them.

15 I also serve as human resource officer for the
16 school, all dealings with health insurance, et
17 cetera, Arkansas Teacher Retirement and things of
18 that nature. So along with running day-to-day
19 operations of the school there are additional job
20 duties and responsibilities that I must carry on
21 with. Of course, we have been without an office
22 administrator -- well, I should say the whole time --
23 until just recently, knowing the need and the --
24 well, basically the requirement in order to free me
25 up to do the tasks that are needed. And so we've --

1 we were able to find a part-time office
2 administrator. She currently is a student at UALR
3 but is able to give us at least about 15 hours a week
4 at the school to operate as a front office assistant,
5 answering phones, faxing requests, and doing initial
6 paperwork that I typically have been doing the last
7 several months in order to maintain the
8 recordkeeping. So that's been a great help.

9 In addition too, we did have a teaching
10 assistant that resigned and she has been since
11 replaced in the past two weeks. So there was not an
12 additional cost; it was a one-for-one trade in that
13 sense. And then carrying on then with Mrs. Nuckols
14 continuing as curriculum director for the school and
15 driving the Montessori vision for the school, and
16 knowing that she's really the true expert in knowing
17 what requirements -- AMI requirements that are needed
18 to be in place for us to become AMI credentialed.
19 And that's our, of course, long-term goal, knowing
20 that that's certainly something we are reaching for
21 and beginning that initial processes for doing so as
22 we contact an initial consultant that will come in
23 and assist us in becoming AMI credentialed.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And special ed. teacher?

25 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am, of course. Mrs. Wade,

1 currently on staff still with Lighthouse, is still
2 assisting us in continuing the IEP process. In fact,
3 some additional IEPs were completed and sent to Mrs.
4 Hughes just recently as an initial update. She
5 continues to work primarily in the evenings, helping
6 us, and continuing conferences as we are -- we
7 actually just wrapped those up just recently; and
8 knowing that she's going to be on staff with us full-
9 time in the fall, as she has indicated, which will be
10 a great addition to the staff; knowing that Mrs.
11 Gober is currently still working and providing these
12 services for our children during the day. But Mrs.
13 Wade will certainly be able to continue that and be
14 in place for the fall as we move ahead.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And Mrs. -- where will
16 Mrs. Gober go in Fall?

17 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am. So we're currently
18 discussing that. She can certainly move back into
19 the principal role, given that Mrs. Wade would
20 certainly fill the need of special ed. However, if
21 the numbers in special ed. increase we'll still have
22 to look at that because in even the past two weeks
23 I've had two additional children coming with IEPs.
24 So knowing that the caseload really determines the
25 staff needs, we'll have to look at that as enrollment

1 continues for the fall and see what truly is the
2 need.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And currently you don't
4 have a principal; is that correct?

5 MR. NUCKOLS: Well, yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You're serving in those
7 roles?

8 MR. NUCKOLS: I'm currently serving in that
9 capacity as well. Yes, ma'am.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Thank you.
11 Let's hear from your board president.

12 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If you'll state your name
14 and title please.

15 MR. BENNETT: Gary Bennett, president. I'm
16 currently serving as president of the school board.
17 Mr. Andrew DeClue is serving as vice president; he
18 was here this morning but had to return to his job.
19 Mr. John Ciak, a CPA, is serving as our treasurer.
20 Mr. Roy Albert is currently serving as our secretary.
21 And we have three additional at-large members: Mr.
22 Randy Sharp, Mr. Lee Allen, and Christine Delongi --
23 Alongi -- excuse me.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And how long have you been
25 a board member?

1 MR. BENNETT: Approximately a month. We've had
2 a lot of turnover in the board since the last Charter
3 Panel meeting. We had -- was it three members
4 resign?

5 MR. NUCKOLS: Correct.

6 MR. BENNETT: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And do you have any
8 members that have been on the board the full time?

9 MR. BENNETT: No, ma'am.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

11 All right, Panel. Questions for Mr. Bennett?

12 MS. SMITH: So I would like -- I saw in here
13 that you have had some school board training?

14 MR. BENNETT: I'm working through that training
15 right now. I'm working through the initial six hours
16 offered through the APSRC. They have some additional
17 training opportunities tomorrow evening regarding the
18 new educational laws that were passed in the recent
19 legislative session, and then I'm planning on making
20 that a regular topic at our board meetings as we
21 proceed forward.

22 MS. SMITH: Was it presented to you that this
23 Charter Panel had grave concerns about how the board
24 had operated previously and the lack of governance
25 and direction by the board? Were you aware that that

1 was one of the concerns?

2 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am.

3 MS. SMITH: Okay. And so kind of talk to me a
4 little bit about -- I know several new board members
5 have been added?

6 MR. BENNETT: Yes.

7 MS. SMITH: Talk to me a little bit about the
8 expectation and how board members were sought and
9 what their understanding of their role is.

10 MR. BENNETT: Okay. Well, I believe Mrs.
11 Nuckols and Mr. Nuckols were the primary people that
12 sought out additional board members. We have
13 discussed with them what the expectations are about
14 participating in regular meetings, trying to visit
15 the school on a regular basis. I'm going to
16 encourage the board members to visit the school
17 ideally at least once a month to observe in the
18 classrooms so we can get a feel for what is happening
19 in the Montessori environment. I would like to -- I
20 plan on being a regular contact with Mr. Nuckols and
21 just keep up-to-date on what is transpiring,
22 especially in the days leading up to our regular
23 board meetings.

24 MS. SMITH: Okay. Thank you.

25 MR. BENNETT: Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sir, do you have a child
2 in the school?

3 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am. I have two children
4 at Rockbridge currently. They're 13 and 9. This is
5 their sixth year in a Montessori program. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

7 DR. PFEFFER: And my question is also for Mr.
8 Bennett. Sorry about that. Mr. Bennett, I'm looking
9 at the organization chart, and I know you're new --

10 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am.

11 DR. PFEFFER: -- but I know that in, you know,
12 starting you're going to want to learn and understand
13 as much as possible about the organization. When I
14 look at this organization chart with the duties
15 listed and I look at the role of Mr. Nuckols and the
16 many things that he is going to be doing in his
17 position, how do you -- as the board president, how
18 do you feel about the capacity of one person to be
19 able to do all of that and to do it well with -- you
20 know -- with just the total dynamics of a school?

21 MR. BENNETT: I do have some concerns over that
22 and as I get more familiar with the process, how the
23 school works, I would like to explore if we need to
24 bring on additional staff, if the budget allows, to
25 help spread his workload so he can become more

1 proficient, so he could be a more proficient leader.

2 DR. PFEFFER: Do you -- and I think that's a
3 fair answer. My concern is just are those questions
4 being asked now? Are those questions being asked in
5 terms of, you know, do we have sufficient staffing.
6 Are you aware that, you know, average years teaching
7 experience is zero, and --

8 MR. BENNETT: Yes.

9 DR. PFEFFER: -- you know, just looking at that
10 as a total what are --

11 MR. BENNETT: I have not asked those questions
12 but to be honest, since I've been on the board we've
13 been focusing on addressing the points that were
14 brought up at the meeting last month and that's been
15 our primary focus is to address and rectify those
16 issues. And this would definitely be on our agenda
17 to address in the coming months.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And have you met with your
19 board members, the other --

20 MR. BENNETT: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- members of your team?

22 MR. BENNETT: Yes. We've had two meetings where
23 -- we've had two meetings since we were here last
24 month or since the school was here last month.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And can you kind of

1 summarize the expertise that your board members bring
2 to the conversation, background -- you know -- does
3 anyone have a finance background, anyone have an
4 academic background?

5 MR. BENNETT: Yes. Mr. Ciak is a CPA, so he is
6 a -- works in nonprofits, so he's very familiar with
7 nonprofit finance. Mr. Allen is an academia; I
8 believe he's a professor at UAPB. We have several
9 parents that are involved but whose children have
10 been in Montessori for a few years and they're very
11 interested in seeing the school be successful.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And your background?

13 MR. BENNETT: I'm a civil engineer, work for the
14 federal government. But my children have been in
15 Montessori programs and I'm fairly familiar with the
16 basics of Montessori.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

18 MR. BENNETT: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Other questions? Just
20 hang on.

21 MR. BENNETT: Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

23 MS. HALEY: I'm sorry; you may have already
24 talked about this. But is there anyone on the board
25 that has been there more than six months?

1 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Nuckols, I do not believe that
2 is the case?

3 MR. NUCKOLS: (Shaking head from side to side.)

4 MS. HALEY: Okay.

5 MR. BENNETT: No, ma'am.

6 MS. HALEY: And the last -- there are two
7 members, I see, that have been either absent or last
8 time participated remotely for the last two board
9 members.

10 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am.

11 MS. HALEY: And they're fairly new, as well. So
12 I'm just wondering about the consistency in terms of
13 the membership and representation of the
14 stakeholders.

15 MR. BENNETT: And we're trying to shift our
16 meetings around to try to accommodate everybody's
17 schedule. I know at the last meeting two of the
18 members could not be there, one got stuck at work and
19 the other one -- well, both of them had to work that
20 evening. So we're trying -- we're going to try to
21 shift to a different night of the week to see if we
22 can try to get more members there on a regular basis.

23 MS. HALEY: Thank you.

24 MR. BENNETT: Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Walter.

1 MR. WALTER: Tripp Walter, Staff Attorney,
2 Arkansas Public School Resource Center. I'm sorry to
3 perhaps get us off track. I just wanted to let the
4 Panel know that one of the things that we have been
5 doing with Rockbridge within the last couple of
6 months -- and I think we talked last time about our
7 increased involvement with Rockbridge, which is
8 ongoing -- is to assist them with the agenda
9 preparation and postings and meetings and everything
10 surrounding that. And one of the things we are
11 obviously trying to do on those lines is to get them
12 to work towards regular meeting dates, protocols,
13 setting the agenda, agenda sheets for them to work
14 off of, et cetera. And I'm sure Mr. Scott can tell
15 you more about the process from what he's seen. But
16 I just wanted to jump in now and make you aware of
17 what's going on in that area -- and postings and
18 obviously keeping Mr. Scott and the Charter Office
19 apprised of upcoming meetings.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And, Mr. Walter, does
21 APSRC have a member of your team that will be
22 attending these board meetings until they're running
23 smoothly?

24 MR. WALTER: Right now, we have had at least one
25 and sometimes three. Those include my-self, Mark

1 White, our director of Legal Services, and Tyler
2 Barnett, our director of Charter Development.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Other questions?
4 Mr. Lester.

5 MR. LESTER: Mr. Nuckols, the last time we were
6 with you I informed you about your Title 1 status
7 being targeted --

8 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

9 MR. LESTER: -- and told you with the
10 percentages of children you had on free and reduced
11 that you would qualify for school-wide. And you have
12 talked to Ms. Webb in my office regarding that.
13 Where is your status on looking into your commitment
14 to the planning, as well as the checklist that needs
15 to be taken care of?

16 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir. I honestly have not dug
17 into the checklist extensively to see what the
18 processes are for that, although we're very much
19 interested in moving ahead with it. I know that
20 that's certainly something that we qualify for and
21 that money could certainly be used to our advantage
22 in making -- on making additional staff additions;
23 and knowing that certainly for the children's sake
24 that's certainly a priority.

25 MR. LESTER: Well, part of that checklist deals

1 with timely meetings and that sort of thing, going to
2 school-wide. So this is the time of year to get that
3 --

4 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes.

5 MR. LESTER: -- process started.

6 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

7 MR. LESTER: Okay.

8 MR. NUCKOLS: Understood.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Could we hear from Mr.
10 Scott, Freddie Scott?

11 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Would you share with us
13 your experience in going to the school board
14 meetings?

15 MR. SCOTT: Absolutely. Freddie Scott,
16 Operations Manager, Charter School Office.

17 I've had the luxury of attending several of the
18 board meetings and with the intent of having an
19 unannounced meeting to just observe and then
20 ultimately an announced meeting to provide some more
21 detail on a dashboard that recognizes key performance
22 indicators and best practices for any board. So in
23 those particular scenarios the challenge was the
24 board composition, the changes, but it is what it is.
25 And what we have now is a board that's relatively

1 new, they're eager to learn, and I've expressed to
2 them an importance of obtaining professional
3 development in the various areas; legal is one. So
4 they have access to APSRC. There's also training
5 provided through the Arkansas School Boards
6 Association. Our Charter School Office and my-self
7 have been willing to offer professional development
8 as well, and those are key areas that are outside
9 typically the areas you see in legal. There are
10 certain things at the end of the day that each board
11 should hold -- be in a position to hold the
12 superintendent accountable for; so from a board
13 composition standpoint having someone that understood
14 Montessori, for example, and academics -- and they do
15 have that. But they have plans to receive, the
16 entire board receive, Montessori training.

17 On the financials, to make sure that there are
18 key financial reports, that they were not just
19 received but they could digest, they could understand
20 and make valid decisions on operations as well. And
21 so having someone on board within their local school
22 board that would understand that so they weren't
23 making quick rash decisions on the spot and rubber-
24 stamping.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

1 Any questions for Mr. Scott?

2 I have a follow-up question for Mr. Bennett.

3 Mr. Bennett, were you in a -- was your first board
4 meeting March 28th?

5 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am. We tried to meet the
6 previous week but did not have a quorum present, so
7 -- but, yes, ma'am, the 28th.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And on the agenda I see
9 adoption of charter policy manual.

10 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And then, so I'm assuming
12 that was adopted at that March 28th meeting?

13 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Would you walk us through
15 the process of how you reviewed that to make your
16 decision to adopt?

17 MR. BENNETT: I believe Mr. Nuckols gave us a
18 brief overview of the manual. We did not review
19 specific areas of the manual, just had a -- Mr.
20 Nuckols gave us a brief overview, Mr. Scott may have
21 talked to the board as far as some aspects about it,
22 and then we made a motion and voted.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

24 MR. BENNETT: Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

1 MS. HALEY: Did you all each have a copy of the
2 manual to look through before you adopted it?

3 MR. BENNETT: Yes, we did have a copy.

4 MS. HALEY: Okay. Everyone had their own copy
5 to review?

6 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am.

7 MS. HALEY: Okay.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And you still have your
9 own copy?

10 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Tripp?

12 MR. WALTER: If desired, I can go into more
13 detail about the manual as it's something that we
14 produce. And actually it is something that they have
15 been using at least in part, as I understand it, for
16 quite sometime just in the interest of accuracy and
17 transparency. I just wanted to make sure that it had
18 been formally adopted by the board going forward, so
19 whatever uses they made of it it would be clearly on
20 the record. Essentially what the manual does, it has
21 parts for both more governance and operations; it has
22 student pieces; it has basically a -- it's a complete
23 set of policies from board governance to student
24 side. I know we talked last time obviously
25 extensively about purchasing and bid procedures. I

1 know that was obviously a concern of Mr. Rogers. It
2 has a specific section in there on that which lays
3 out the state law and procedures for handling most
4 purchasing matters. So it's a pretty comprehensive
5 guide that a school can use, either in full or to
6 augment their current policies.

7 And while we're on that point I would point out
8 that over our time working with Rockbridge since
9 inception we've also developed several policies for
10 them to use mostly in the student handbook side.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So I think our concern is
12 -- or my concern is -- let me just say, first of all,
13 I'm so happy to hear they have written policies and
14 procedures. That's fabulous, and thank you for doing
15 that. I just want to make sure that, because this is
16 relatively a new board, that we don't set that mode
17 of operation of somebody presents something, they
18 tell me a little bit about it, and I approve it,
19 because the sense of responsibility of being a board
20 member is to read every word.

21 MR. WALTER: Absolutely.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And so that's why we were
23 -- I was asking those questions, because I wanted --
24 it's really incumbent upon a new board to know
25 exactly what you're approving --

1 MR. WALTER: Absolutely.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- each time.

3 MR. WALTER: Yes, ma'am.

4 MR. NUCKOLS: One addition, there is one member
5 of the current board that has been on for six months,
6 Mr. Lee Allen.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'm sorry?

8 MR. NUCKOLS: Mr. Lee Allen is the one member
9 that has been on the board for more than six months.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. And I believe he
11 was the one that was absent?

12 MR. NUCKOLS: Correct. Yes, ma'am.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: In your board minutes for
14 April 13th you hired a teaching assistant and the
15 part-time office assistant?

16 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: In your minutes there's no
18 information that tells us about looking at your
19 finances to be able to pay for those positions. So
20 talk us through that a little bit.

21 MR. NUCKOLS: Of course. Yes, ma'am. So, of
22 course, the contracts were presented for the board's
23 review to look at both of those positions. They are
24 both hourly contracts, for both the teaching
25 assistant at \$10.50 per hour, as well as the front

1 office assistant. Again, the teaching assistant is a
2 trade one-for-one since we lost the previous, and of
3 course adding the part-time teaching -- pardon me --
4 the front office receptionist.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Also in those same
6 minutes, on number 6, it said a complete update of
7 the school's financial report was not provided due to
8 the fact that the accounting firm under contract with
9 the school did not provide the information after
10 multiple requests.

11 MR. NUCKOLS: I'm sorry; could you rephrase
12 please?

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yeah. I'm on the minutes.

14 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Your board minutes from
16 April 13th, item number 6.

17 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It said that your
19 financial report was not available, even though you
20 had made multiple requests.

21 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am, that's correct. We've
22 continued to work with Complete Consulting, Mr. Chris
23 Bell and his associates. However, he was not able to
24 be reached in order to provide the financial updates
25 for the board at that date and time, and so I was not

1 able to get that information, as the board requested.
2 However, Mr. Hamilton is here with us today from
3 Complete Consulting that could give us an overview of
4 the financial status.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Are y'all ready -- any
6 questions more about governance before we move into
7 finance?

8 DR. PFEFFER: I do have one more. And so when
9 you took the role as superintendent/director/school
10 district -- and I realize that this was all in a
11 fluid -- basically a fluid situation after December
12 when Ms. Gober kind of stepped down from what she was
13 doing and began working with special education. But
14 I am looking at your -- from your website, your list
15 of positions and salaries, and it doesn't appear that
16 any of that has changed. So -- and so this may be
17 for your board, and I realize they are very, very
18 new, but when I'm thinking about governance and who
19 is the school leader -- and last time when I asked
20 that I got two different answers -- so if you are the
21 school leader and -- but you are still making the
22 same salary as before, and we're not sure yet what
23 Ms. Gober will be doing next year, what is that
24 process going to be? And this may be where the
25 school board members may need to address it. Who's

1 going to make that decision? How is that decision
2 going to be made? And will there be changes in
3 salaries and job duties?

4 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am, I understand. So,
5 again, I do believe it's really incumbent upon our
6 enrollment for the fall and what that looks like,
7 what the needs will be on the special ed. side.
8 Knowing that Ms. Gober has quite a bit of experience
9 in public school education, and also as an
10 administrator, and having that as a backup plan for
11 her to move back into a principal role would
12 certainly be ideal; however, not knowing what special
13 ed. will bring us and the numbers there we certainly
14 want to keep that as a possibility for her to
15 maintain that role as well.

16 DR. PFEFFER: So if the -- Mr. Bennett, do you
17 mind coming back? So as the board president,
18 insuring that the right person is the leader of the
19 school, how is that decision going to be made and how
20 -- you all are a very new board, but if you don't
21 have a grasp of the leadership and the salaries that
22 need to be in place in order for you to have the
23 leaders I don't know how successful things are going
24 to be moving forward.

25 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am. Well, what we intend

1 to do is to -- we'll look at the staffing. We'll
2 look at the staff members and see where good fits
3 are, where the needs are, and then we can -- then as
4 a board we can discuss what salaries we can pay based
5 on that. But we would like to look at the staff
6 members and the administration and see how things are
7 going, where we need to make improvements, what's
8 working well, and then where we can make changes to
9 make the school improve as we move forward.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

11 MS. HALEY: Mr. Nuckols --

12 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

13 MS. HALEY: -- so you're currently serving in
14 the role as principal as well. Is that what I'm
15 hearing?

16 MR. NUCKOLS: That's correct. Yes.

17 MS. HALEY: Okay. And so you're aware we had
18 several concerns in special education. So as a
19 principal and as a superintendent, is it you who is
20 now responsible for insuring that the staff is aware
21 of special education laws and procedures and services
22 for students and that they are complying with
23 requirements around notice and all of the things that
24 go along with that?

25 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am, that is correct.

1 MS. HALEY: And so I know you've been busy in
2 the last -- since we last met with lots of things,
3 but how are you going to get yourself up to speed in
4 terms of special education regulations to insure that
5 you're compliant and that the students are receiving
6 the services and that the parents are receiving the
7 notice and things that they are entitled to for
8 meetings and are part of the process?

9 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am. I certainly need
10 additional professional development in that area and
11 I know the Panel has a submission of professional
12 development that I have noted in moving ahead.
13 Granted, I need to add special ed. to that given the
14 importance and the critical need that we have in that
15 area, so I certainly want to do that as we look ahead
16 -- and I know there are professional development
17 opportunities coming up in that area. So as I -- I
18 know we'll get to that soon, but special ed. is
19 certainly an area that we want to address and knowing
20 the critical needs that we have and additional
21 children that are coming to us with special needs.

22 MS. HALEY: Right. And we're not -- I don't
23 think we're going to dive into special ed. just yet,
24 but are you aware of the requirement that at an IEP
25 meeting that a representative of the LEA is in

1 attendance with knowledge of special education and
2 funds available to provide those services?

3 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

4 MS. HALEY: You are? And if so, who has that
5 been at IEP meetings and served in that role?

6 MR. NUCKOLS: I have attended those meetings --

7 MS. HALEY: Okay.

8 MR. NUCKOLS: -- yes, ma'am -- with Ms. Wade and
9 parents. On a good note, we had parent conferences
10 last week, three evenings last week for the parents
11 to come at their convenience after work. And a lot
12 of those meetings, the special ed. meetings were
13 conducted even then --

14 MS. HALEY: Okay.

15 MR. NUCKOLS: -- to accomplish those IEPs.

16 MS. HALEY: Okay. Thank you.

17 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

19 DR. GOTCHER: Good afternoon, Mr. Nuckols.

20 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

21 DR. GOTCHER: I was encouraged to see a piece in
22 the minutes regarding public comment. Let me see if
23 I can get to it. I think it's a standing agenda
24 item, Agenda Item 1, the board sets aside time to
25 hear from citizens. Since our last visit there's

1 only been one, the March 28th board meeting; is that
2 correct?

3 MR. NUCKOLS: We had one on the 13th of April.

4 DR. GOTCHER: 13th --

5 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

6 DR. GOTCHER: -- and then March 28th. Okay.

7 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

8 DR. GOTCHER: Did you have parents attend? And
9 if so, what have been some of their comments since
10 the Charter Panel last met?

11 MR. NUCKOLS: I'm sorry; could you --

12 DR. GOTCHER: Have there been any parents that
13 have attended --

14 MR. NUCKOLS: Oh, parents.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, parents or public. And what
16 have been the general comments, if they have chosen
17 to comment?

18 MR. NUCKOLS: We have not had any parents come
19 to the board meeting at this point in time, although
20 it's obviously advertised on the website and parents
21 are aware that it's open to public comment. However,
22 I will say that was -- the 13th meeting was the first
23 time that we've included that in the minutes itself,
24 in the agenda, if you will.

25 DR. GOTCHER: Yes.

1 MR. NUCKOLS: And that's something we had to
2 correct.

3 DR. GOTCHER: Good. All right. I think, just
4 as a fellow superintendent, encourage participation;
5 it might need to be more than just posting. And
6 there's no better way to include your public than at
7 the public board meetings. And so as opportunity
8 allows have student presentations, have students of
9 the month, teachers of the month, all sorts of things
10 that can include parents at those board meetings, if
11 you're not already doing that. I didn't see that but
12 --

13 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

14 DR. GOTCHER: -- that's something to consider
15 because I think that's real important to the culture
16 --

17 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

18 DR. GOTCHER: -- of an institution.

19 MR. NUCKOLS: I do foresee that growing, the
20 parent participation. As we discussed last board
21 meeting, Mr. Bennett and other members of the board
22 have expressed interest in having Mrs. Nuckols,
23 curriculum director, come in and provide Montessori
24 training. And, of course, parents would be
25 interested in seeing that as well, so that gives an

1 ample opportunity to attend the board meeting and
2 know about what's going on. And certainly, that will
3 certainly change the scope of having parent
4 participation.

5 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you. And, Madam Chair, I
6 haven't seen your list. Are we going to -- there are
7 some other pieces. I was just going to ask --

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'm just working down to
9 governance.

10 DR. GOTCHER: Just working down the list. I've
11 got a question at the end of that. So, thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis, I need your
13 help. On our letter to Mr. Nuckols, under
14 Governance, it says 1599/1381 approval or proof that
15 approval has been requested. And is that the same as
16 the section that we received under 6-24-101?

17 MS. DAVIS: It is. And I will say that they did
18 submit the documentation. They were missing
19 something and then they provided it for the approval;
20 it has not been completely reviewed yet. And here's
21 the problem, is typically we do not offer approval
22 for the superintendent because that person is hired
23 by the board. Mr. Nuckols should have been --
24 approval should have been to hire him in the position
25 he was in prior to. I'm not sure what the title was

1 but the finance position that he was in. But we
2 don't offer retroactive approval either. So at this
3 point we would not approve or deny his hiring as
4 superintendent because that's not required by law for
5 us to do that for him, but we can't go back and
6 approve for the other, so it's kind of a mess. But
7 they did submit it.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I don't know how to mark
9 that on my list as in complete or still an issue.

10 MS. DAVIS: At this point there's nothing to
11 approve. They did submit it, but we would not
12 approve it because it's not required approval by law
13 for him to have this. Legislative Audit may at some
14 other point point out that they should've had
15 approval for his previous position, which would've
16 been required by law, so -- but there's nothing that
17 we could do about that at this time.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So there's no correction
19 procedure?

20 MS. DAVIS: That's correct.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

22 MS. DAVIS: There's no retroactive approval
23 either. And I don't know if this is the point to
24 point it out, and I think that somebody else has said
25 this as well -- they might have. I am uncertain if

1 on the org chart that they provided if Mrs. Nuckols
2 is reporting to Mr. Nuckols -- and if so, that's
3 going to be an issue.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Nuckols.

5 MS. DAVIS: I don't know. Maybe it's just the
6 way it's lined out too, so --

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Could you address that
8 please?

9 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am. So per the org chart,
10 it does appear that way in the reporting process;
11 however, our hope, again, by the fall that Mrs. Gober
12 will be able to move back into the principalship and
13 then that task org will obviously change at that
14 point and provide the proper assessment of staff.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So are you currently
16 evaluating your wife --

17 MR. NUCKOLS: Well --

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: -- as curriculum director?

19 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes. Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: My sister used to be my
21 principal; it's tough.

22 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

24 DR. PFEFFER: And I was going to wait until we
25 were talking more about special ed., but I'll go

1 ahead and ask this now. Because it would seem that
2 the decision, whomever is going to be making the
3 decision -- and I'm kind of wondering -- for Mrs.
4 Gober's role going forward -- because, you know, her
5 salary is commiserate with that of a building
6 administrator or, you know, the superintendent role.
7 It would seem that that is all contingent upon having
8 a special education teacher, or teachers, as needed.
9 Now has someone been hired?

10 MR. NUCKOLS: For special ed.?

11 DR. PFEFFER: For special ed.

12 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am. Mrs. Cheryl Wade has
13 officially been hired. Yes, ma'am.

14 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. And is that reflected in
15 the school board meeting minutes?

16 MR. NUCKOLS: Now just for clarification, not
17 for the fall; she hasn't signed the contract for the
18 fall as of yet because she's still in contract with
19 Lighthouse Academy. But her -- she did submit a
20 letter of intent for hiring this fall. Yes, ma'am.

21 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. So because I had understood
22 the other day when we visited that you had hired her
23 for the fall. And so you have not -- you do not have
24 a special education teacher employed for the fall?

25 MR. NUCKOLS: That's correct. Yes, ma'am.

1 DR. PFEFFER: Right now, the only person would
2 be Ms. Gober because she is working on an ALP?

3 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am. That's correct.

4 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

6 MS. HALEY: So you've hired Ms. Wade right now
7 or she's under a contractual agreement?

8 MR. NUCKOLS: That's correct. Yes.

9 MS. HALEY: Contractual agreement?

10 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

11 MS. HALEY: Okay.

12 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Any other
14 governance questions at this time? We can always
15 come back.

16 Mr. Walter.

17 MR. WALTER: Thank you. I hope this is the
18 appropriate time, and obviously if it's not I'll come
19 back, but I thought this might be the appropriate
20 time to address the governance situation and our
21 services and what that will all look like going
22 forward. We have -- we are going to enter into new
23 agreements with Rockbridge for additional services,
24 as we're under now with them, concerning finance
25 issues and also governance/policy issues. And those

1 were just finalized -- I think those were just signed
2 by Mr. Nuckols on Monday night, and those require
3 making some changes in the leadership and not to
4 include current employees.

5 DR. GOTCHER: Not to?

6 MR. WALTER: Not to include current employees
7 being the leader of the school. There's nobody
8 picked out or anything like that, but that was one of
9 the conditions of our going forward with providing
10 the additional services. And so we will be moving
11 forward and assisting them in those areas. And one
12 of the conditions of the agreement also is hopefully
13 that the person, the new superintendent, would be
14 somebody agreeable to both the Department and the
15 APSRC.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And what's your timeline?

17 MR. WALTER: The agreements will run through
18 June 30, so somewhere in that timeline.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So to translate what I
20 think I heard you say is that before June 30th a new
21 superintendent will be put into place, or a new
22 superintendent will be put into place effective July
23 1?

24 MR. WALTER: That we will go ahead and go
25 through that process and hopefully have somebody

1 installed by the end of that period.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

3 MR. WALTER: But it's our -- the thrust of the
4 agreement is to have that -- is to make sure that
5 process goes through and is done.

6 DR. GOTCHER: And, Mr. Walter, am I hearing that
7 the purpose of that is to assist with the
8 relationship between the current superintendent and
9 curriculum director to try to remove those pieces
10 that are currently problematic?

11 MR. WALTER: Yes. And to also try to address
12 some of the issues that have been brought to bear by
13 this Panel.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Agreed.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Anything else?

16 Okay. Next on the list is Special Education.

17 MS. HALEY: Mr. Nuckols, I had just asked you
18 about the LEA issue. We had asked you -- or I had
19 asked you at the last meeting to submit a plan and
20 you did submit a couple of items that specifically
21 dealt with IEPs and compensatory education. For us,
22 a plan to implement special education and insure you
23 have written procedures in place is much larger than
24 just those two issues. So that will be what I -- my
25 first point. Secondly, I would like to ask our

1 program advisor for nontraditional to just kind of
2 come up and talk to us about what's happened since
3 our last meeting in terms of things that you have
4 provided and things that she's observed.

5 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: State your name and title
7 for the record, please.

8 MS. HUGHES: Yes. Kristin Hughes, Special
9 Education Unit.

10 Since the last Charter Panel I have been to
11 Rockbridge once with the intent to review some
12 updated evidence. When I got there, there was not at
13 that time updated evidence to review. I answered
14 just kind of some general questions at that time.
15 Ms. Gober then came to our office once and she
16 provided an updated daily class schedule to meet the
17 new IEP minutes. Still at that time I hadn't seen
18 the actual IEPs that she said she didn't have access
19 to, that the contracted provider still had those but
20 that she would get them to me. I have received 11 of
21 the 22 IEPs. Now I understand there may be 24, with
22 two additional students, so -- but currently I've
23 received 11 IEPs. I'm not certain if those are the
24 IEPs that were presented in the IEP meetings because
25 they don't have the signatures, the appropriate

1 signatures on it. I'm not sure if that was a draft
2 or what. I don't know specific times on compensatory
3 education services. I have received an email stating
4 that they have calculated 72 days of missed
5 instruction for students on IEPs, so they are in the
6 process of planning how that's going to be provided.
7 I don't know how much comp-ed individually per
8 student. I've received some more emails as of about
9 1:00 today. I haven't had the opportunity to compare
10 them to the other IEPs. Some of them were duplicate
11 students. So I'm not sure if those were updated, if
12 the conference has occurred. Again, I don't have
13 that documentation with me to compare it to since I
14 just got it at about 1:00.

15 MS. HALEY: So when you were at Rockbridge you
16 visited once, you said?

17 MS. HUGHES: Yes. I visited once prior to the
18 last Charter Panel and then once this -- after the
19 Charter Panel. So I've been there twice just meeting
20 one-on-one with Ms. Gober.

21 MS. HALEY: Okay. And so the last time you were
22 at the Charter Panel you were in the special
23 education classroom?

24 MS. HUGHES: Right. Well, it's kind of like an
25 open concept, so --

1 MS. HALEY: Okay.

2 MS. HUGHES: The designated -- they do have a
3 designated special education classroom setting. Yes.

4 MS. HALEY: And so, generally, what did you see
5 going on at the charter?

6 MS. HUGHES: When I arrived, Ms. Gober was
7 providing instruction to three students. They then
8 went to their general education setting so that she
9 could visit with me. It was a little distracting
10 because, again, it was kind of an open concept and
11 there was kind -- there were kids walking around.
12 And the time I was there one of the teachers was
13 having maybe a stressful morning and was loud, and I
14 thought it was somewhat disruptive. But I was there
15 for about an hour on that one.

16 MS. HALEY: So, in summary, we've received --
17 you've received some of the documentation --

18 MS. HUGHES: Yes.

19 MS. HALEY: -- that we need, but not everything?

20 MS. HUGHES: Correct.

21 MS. HALEY: And the written procedures we
22 received are limited to the IEP meetings and the
23 compensatory ed. Was there anything else?

24 MS. HUGHES: She's provided updated class
25 schedules to me, the IEP minutes that she said was in

1 the IEP goals. Again, I haven't -- I don't have all
2 of them yet --

3 MS. HALEY: Right.

4 MS. HUGHES: -- to cross-reference. But I have
5 received a class schedule and then another schedule
6 for the compensatory services where they were going
7 to provide instruction for that during the same time
8 other students were receiving their minutes.

9 MS. HALEY: So basically the plan was they were
10 -- the students who had not received services were
11 going to be put in the same classes that are already
12 going on, added to those classrooms, and that be the
13 compensatory services?

14 MS. HUGHES: That is currently my understanding.

15 MS. HALEY: Okay. And did you see any
16 documentation that the other teachers had been
17 provided copies of the IEPs and accommodations and
18 all that sort of thing?

19 MS. HUGHES: No, I don't believe I have.

20 MS. HALEY: Okay. Do y'all have any questions
21 for Ms. Hughes?

22 DR. GOTCHER: Ms. Haley, just to that question,
23 are there evidences of documentation that teachers
24 have received the appropriate accommodations? Can we
25 get that question answered? Is someone here that can

1 answer that?

2 MS. HALEY: There were not when we monitored.
3 And so that was part of what we would want to see in
4 terms of a comprehensive plan for how you're going to
5 do business basically in special education, and we do
6 not have that.

7 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

8 MS. HALEY: Now Ms. Gober might be able to
9 answer that question; Mr. Nuckols might be able to
10 answer that question in terms of if now teachers do
11 know what accommodations are to be implemented and if
12 there is documentation that that's actually going on
13 and all those sorts of things. But it was not based
14 on what we reviewed before and we have not received
15 evidence.

16 MS. HUGHES: And nor was the progress on the
17 measurable annual --

18 MS. HALEY: Right. Progress on goals.

19 DR. GOTCHER: Understood.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

21 MS. SMITH: So kind of going back to what Mr.
22 Nuckols said earlier -- you commented that you just
23 kind of had conferences recently and had gone back
24 and held all these special ed. conferences like in
25 the last, what, week or --

1 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am. Last week, we did
2 have parent-teacher conferences for all parents.

3 MS. SMITH: Okay.

4 MR. NUCKOLS: And some of those IEPs were
5 conducted during that time.

6 MS. SMITH: Okay.

7 MR. NUCKOLS: The IEP conferences were conducted
8 during that time.

9 MS. SMITH: So have your teachers received their
10 accommodations for their students or is that
11 something you're still working through?

12 MR. NUCKOLS: We are still working through that
13 process. They do not have them all. No, ma'am.

14 MS. SMITH: Okay. Thank you.

15 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is Ms. Gober here? Ms.
17 Gober? There she is.

18 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am. Sarah Gober.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Could you give us an
20 update from your perspective, please?

21 MS. GOBER: It's been a whole new learning for
22 me and it's been a lot, but we have updated most of
23 the IEPs. We're waiting on a couple of parents to
24 finish out some. We've had some issues about having
25 tried to reschedule. We have given the teachers the

1 accommodations for their students but not in a format
2 for every student on one sheet, which is what we hope
3 to have a spreadsheet for them to know. The
4 compensatory education, we have put students together
5 for the goals. Like if Daniel has -- his
6 compensatory education needs to be math, three-digit
7 multiplication, I would have him in with other
8 students that I'm working with that also -- like
9 goals, not just making up time.

10 MS. SMITH: Are your general ed. teachers in the
11 room while you're doing the IEPs with the parents?
12 These last conferences that you've had with parents,
13 have you included the classroom teacher?

14 MS. GOBER: Yes.

15 MS. SMITH: Okay. So they're a part of that
16 decision-making with the teachers?

17 MS. GOBER: Yes. I will say that our special --
18 I mean, our parent-teacher conferences are set on
19 times and they might have to be pulled out for a few
20 moments and come back. But, yes, they were invited
21 in as part of that. Yes.

22 MS. SMITH: Okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. There's a
24 difference between "invited in" and "participated."

25 MS. GOBER: I'm sorry. They were there. And we

1 ask our teachers to give -- because we have no
2 grades, it's up to the teacher and the portfolio that
3 they bring of work to be able to determine the
4 education of the child also.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So I'll see teacher names
6 on those IEPs?

7 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I won't, but --

9 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

10 MS. HALEY: So, Ms. Gober, can you just kind of
11 walk us through like -- so you had IEP meetings
12 during parent-teacher conferences, basically?

13 MS. GOBER: Some. Some. Some we had
14 beforehand.

15 MS. HALEY: Okay. And so how did you let the
16 parents know there was going to be an IEP conference?

17 MS. GOBER: We sent out notices many times.
18 Most of the time I would call because that's -- we're
19 wanting them to know that we're going to cover not
20 only rewriting the IEPs -- some of the IEPs are not
21 being actually written, just they need to be -- yes,
22 they were quite sloppy. And we also need to talk
23 about compensatory education and what we need to do
24 to see the goals, to see -- and also let them know
25 that if we have to do an extended year because of the

1 compensatory education that we could be doing that
2 and they would be aware of that. And so we sent out
3 -- I try to call most of the time because that's a
4 lot of information --

5 MS. HALEY: Right.

6 MS. GOBER: -- for a parent and a lot of --

7 MS. HALEY: Right, right.

8 MS. GOBER: -- educational jargon --

9 MS. HALEY: Right.

10 MS. GOBER: -- that they don't understand.

11 MS. HALEY: Right.

12 MS. GOBER: And then I will just follow-up with
13 a -- many of them we would send back -- the second
14 notice would be a note, a letter, taken by the
15 student home.

16 MS. HALEY: So when you sent notices what notice
17 did you use? Was it -- I mean, was it just a letter?
18 What form did you use?

19 MS. GOBER: I used the -- on the script program.

20 MS. HALEY: The Notice of Conference?

21 MS. GOBER: The Notice of Conference.

22 MS. HALEY: Okay.

23 MS. GOBER: Yes. I sent all that.

24 MS. HALEY: And so the people -- the regular ed.
25 teacher was listed as an attendee and the LEA

1 supervisor and all of that --

2 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

3 MS. HALEY: -- as required? And they were at
4 the meeting?

5 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

6 MS. HALEY: Okay. Okay. Thank you.

7 MS. GOBER: You're welcome.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley, help me
9 understand 72 days of missed instruction. How do you
10 make that up?

11 MS. HALEY: Well, what happened is, like we
12 talked about last time, the students have not had
13 services --

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Right.

15 MS. HALEY: -- since the middle of October, when
16 that teacher left, and until Ms. Gober started
17 providing services in March. Okay. And so what
18 happens is that we -- what would happen with any
19 district is we would talk to the district about
20 meeting with the parent in an IEP conference to
21 determine what compensatory services would be
22 required based on the time they missed. It's not an
23 hour-for-hour kind of determination; it's what should
24 the goal progress have been, what was set in terms of
25 criteria, and where are the students. So it might be

1 different for every student. But basically it should
2 not be that a student is just placed in a class
3 that's already going on and that be called
4 compensatory services because (a) they're pulled out
5 of something else. So unless their IEP was revised,
6 now not only are they getting the compensatory
7 they're pulled out of a regular class that they
8 probably should have been in; so all those things.
9 We would want compensatory services to be in
10 agreement with the parent -- after school, in the
11 summer, in breaks, you know, whatever is beneficial.
12 But just putting them in another class and doubling
13 up time when another group is already receiving
14 services -- for every student at least -- would
15 probably not be what would be considered
16 compensatory.

17 MS. GOBER: And I would just add that the
18 Montessori model really adds a layer of protection
19 for that because we do in Montessori every lesson --
20 there's no whole group lesson; everything is done in
21 small groups. And so when I tell my teachers that I
22 need -- that Daniel needs the three-digit
23 multiplication she would make sure that Daniel was
24 not in a single lesson during the time that I had
25 him; she would make sure that his small group lesson

1 was either before he came to me or after he came to
2 me. So that's the advantage of having the Montessori
3 because -- and not only that, we have multilevel
4 classrooms. And so if they're in Mrs. Nuckols' class
5 and they're going over science and he -- I pull him
6 out of that particular science to do that, he can
7 take the science even over in Mrs. Stenhammer's [ps]
8 class when she does a small group and it would all be
9 the same lesson and it would all be small group and
10 all be on his level because he would be with other
11 students that were in grades around him.

12 MS. HALEY: So when you re-did the IEPs, or are
13 re-doing the IEPs, do they reflect the compensatory
14 time and the special ed. time? Because the important
15 part is a parent knows exactly what's going on.

16 MS. GOBER: That's what I'm having to tweak.

17 MS. HALEY: Okay.

18 MS. GOBER: Mrs. Donna Broyles was very, very
19 nice to come and help one day along with -- Kristin
20 Hughes has been a wonderful asset. And so as I would
21 write an IEP, of course they would have to try to
22 tweak it because this is all new to me also, and so
23 that was something that I had not done to begin with.
24 But after they came in and helped me see what I
25 needed to do, that has been added, and the phone

1 calls went back to parents, "This is what's wrong.
2 Let me re-do that."

3 MS. HALEY: Right. Because that's the key --

4 MS. GOBER: Right.

5 MS. HALEY: -- that the parent knows exactly and
6 that students are in the least restrictive
7 environment, which is the regular classroom, as much
8 as possible.

9 MS. GOBER: Right. And that has increased
10 totally, probably all subjects. That has increased
11 my inclusion time versus -- I mean, not increased my
12 inclusion time, but that my inclusion time -- because
13 most of our students try to get the lesson in the
14 classroom, so that inclusion time is where we're --
15 I'm having help to do that also.

16 DR. GOTCHER: May I ask a question for Ms.
17 Haley?

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: For who?

19 DR. GOTCHER: Ms. Haley.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes. Yes.

21 DR. GOTCHER: You don't have to go to the
22 microphone; you can stay right there. When you hear
23 some of the testimony that's been presented, what is
24 the typical course of action with the Special Ed.
25 Department and what are things that come to mind for

1 you and your folks, as you have done and as you move
2 forward? Because obviously we're dealing not with
3 just state issues but IDEA and guidelines that
4 supersede state. So help this Panel understand your
5 concerns as a special ed. director for the State of
6 Arkansas.

7 MS. HALEY: Well, I mean, we're very concerned.
8 There are findings of noncompliance but they're not
9 just compliant procedural findings; there are kids
10 who haven't received services, and so -- and for
11 quite a substantial amount of time. And then we have
12 a staff who is trying to do the right thing but don't
13 have a good understanding of the requirements of
14 special ed. yet, which are many. So my biggest
15 concern is the whole leadership and governance
16 structure in terms of somebody understanding the
17 requirements and making sure -- it's up to the
18 teacher to make sure the IEPs are written, but then
19 it's up to somebody else to make sure they're
20 implemented and make sure that they know students
21 can't be suspended for more than 10 days without due
22 process and all those sorts of things. So for us,
23 there will be written findings. We have ordered
24 compensatory education. We'll make sure that that
25 happens. But that's what we'll do at the state

1 level. I mean, if there were -- if this goes up to
2 another level, if parents were to come and say that
3 they wanted their students to receive compensatory
4 services in another setting, Rockbridge would be at
5 risk for providing that education somewhere else,
6 since they hadn't gotten it. And especially if there
7 was a lack of progress demonstrated, which is hard
8 for us to see because there hasn't been documentation
9 that the students have been assessed to insure that
10 they're progressing on their IEP goals.

11 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Nuckols, have you
13 taken into consideration or planned for what
14 additional costs there may be to run a summer program
15 to meet these requirements?

16 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am, we have discussed
17 that. Knowing that Ms. Wade's intent, again, is to
18 still come on actually as early as the first of June
19 when she finishes her course of instruction at
20 Lighthouse to assist us with the compensatory
21 education, since Rockbridge will still be in session
22 until mid-June, the 15th of June. So that will
23 certainly give us an opportunity to make progress in
24 catching up on those hours. And, of course, the
25 remainder, of course, we will have to staff as long

1 as it takes to get the children where they need to be
2 by the end of summer. And so there is still money
3 allotted for special ed. and certainly we'll be able
4 to tap into that so that it won't be a problem on
5 that end, given the pot of money that's set aside
6 specifically for special ed.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Other special ed.
8 questions?

9 Data Reporting. Who wants to take -- Ms. Smith.

10 MS. SMITH: So who has -- so from our people at
11 ADE, has the data been -- is the data correct at this
12 point?

13 MS. HALEY: So I believe in special education
14 the data has been corrected. Is that right, Jody?

15 MS. FIELDS: Correct.

16 MS. HALEY: Okay.

17 MS. SMITH: Okay. Were the other numbers in
18 eSchool, enrollment numbers, anything like that, or
19 Title -- I mean, all those numbers are good to
20 everyone's knowledge? Mr. Nuckols, are you aware or
21 -- what changes or -- what have y'all put in place?

22 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am, I am. I made those
23 changes myself, specifically in eSchool, and My SPED
24 so that those numbers currently match, especially
25 concerning the 1 December count that was required by

1 the state. We're making sure that those numbers were
2 accurate. And Dr. Fields with ADE, I know her office
3 and UALR was certainly a great help in providing
4 assistance, in doing so, in cleaning those up. And
5 that in fact may be -- I believe it is in your
6 packet, the correspondence between my-self and Dr.
7 Fields.

8 MS. SMITH: Yes.

9 MR. NUCKOLS: Knowing that she was firmly the
10 expert there and guided me through that process to
11 make sure the number is correct.

12 MS. SMITH: Okay.

13 MS. HALEY: Ms. Coffman --

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

15 MS. HALEY: -- you had -- or Dr. Gotcher had
16 asked earlier what our procedures will be. So what
17 will happen, Dr. Gotcher, at the end of their
18 verification, which is coming up soon, if it hasn't
19 come to an end, there will be findings; there's no
20 doubt about that. And there will be compliance
21 action plans and Rockbridge will have to determine
22 why certain things happened and what their plan --
23 written procedures going forward, such as how are you
24 going to make sure that teachers have accommodations
25 and that they understand how to implement them and

1 all those. And we will be monitoring that closely.
2 So there's further action still to come beyond the
3 Charter Panel in terms of special ed.

4 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you, Ms. Haley.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Let me -- is
6 David Tumlison still here?

7 Mr. Tumlison, if you will give us an
8 accreditation report.

9 MR. TUMLISON: Dave Tumlison, Standards Review.
10 Rockbridge had an onsite campus -- onsite standards
11 review. We were on campus, on their campus on
12 January 27, 2017. We used our new transitional
13 checklist, which is a very modified version of what
14 we used to use. Several of the items that we go
15 through we do from a desk audit and some of the other
16 items we can find onsite, like assessing their
17 handbook and their board minutes and things of that
18 nature. There were a few findings.

19 And as we arrived that day Mr. Nuckols was very
20 accommodating, and as we went through the process I
21 sort of noticed that deer-in-headlight look because
22 he had not had access to our checklist. We had sent
23 it to the school, to Mrs. Nuckols, and somewhere in
24 between it got lost. But as we went through the
25 process he was very willing to help every way he

1 could and we tried to relieve the stress as much as
2 we could. The few findings we did have -- and I kept
3 wondering why until I looked at it; they opened in
4 15-16, the fall of 15-16. Our unit used to do
5 workshops on everything that was covered in these
6 areas and since their school had started we no longer
7 do these workshops, such as our workshop on website
8 requirements. There were just two areas there. And
9 he said if he had known he'd had them there. The
10 parental involvement was not on the website, and then
11 the ACSIP reports. I showed him what we were looking
12 for, what we wanted. They did have sort of a light
13 parent involvement policy; it wasn't what we would
14 look for, and they have updated that. Then there
15 were some issues on AIPs and I had to explain to him
16 what AIPs were; he was not aware. This is another
17 item we used to cover. We used to do what we call
18 our New Administrative Workshop; we'd go over
19 everything, and he would have benefited greatly from
20 that. But we showed him what we were wanting. I
21 forwarded him a copy of it and they were very, very
22 prompt in making all the corrections that came up on
23 our onsite review and everything has been taken care
24 of from that list. And then, once again, in March,
25 we sent out our initial accreditation report and then

1 going over what their waivers were. These items were
2 all covered and all the exceptions were able to be
3 removed from the initial accreditation report, and
4 both of -- well, their school, their Montessori
5 school has been accredited on the accreditation
6 report.

7 DR. GOTCHER: Has been?

8 MR. TUMLISON: Pardon?

9 DR. GOTCHER: It is currently accredited?

10 MR. TUMLISON: Yes.

11 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

12 MR. TUMLISON: Well, we don't accredit; we make
13 the recommendation --

14 DR. GOTCHER: Recommendation. Gotcha.

15 MR. TUMLISON: -- and the Board will act upon
16 that -- State Board.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

18 Any questions?

19 Thank you very much.

20 MR. TUMLISON: You're welcome.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Finance is our next topic.
22 Mr. Rogers, would you like to start with Ms. Smith?

23 MR. ROGERS: Cindy had to leave. So you have
24 adopted a policy manual that had finance in it, but
25 is it a complete finance manual? I mean, I know that

1 Tripp referenced bid procedures, but I guess I kind
2 of want to know what all is in it.

3 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir. So the Charter Panel
4 does -- excuse me -- the charter policy manual does
5 address our procurement and things of this nature,
6 and APSRC has had a great take in constructing that
7 for us. However, I know that some of those
8 guidelines are very general and we need additional
9 help in providing specific guidelines that will be --
10 in addition to help Rockbridge for future bidding
11 processes. Knowing that there were some failures on
12 our part in moving ahead and doing those properly,
13 although I do know that, based on the documentation
14 that you may have in front of you concerning the
15 specific vendors, that there were some bids put forth
16 and they were done properly, while others fell
17 through the cracks.

18 MR. ROGERS: And I know that your audit has been
19 completed, but you haven't had your exit conference
20 yet; you're still --

21 MR. NUCKOLS: Correct. Yes, sir. I did touch
22 base with Audit by phone, spoke with Mr. Thompson.
23 He indicated that the two individuals who were
24 conducting audit for Rockbridge, one has since moved
25 on from Audit, Mr. Tyler Kronig [ps], so I was not

1 able to touch base with him. Mrs. Stephanie Simmons
2 was the other individual who was conducting the
3 audit; haven't heard back from her. But we were
4 referenced to another individual, Mr. Thompson. He
5 did indicate by phone on the 17th -- excuse me --
6 that there would be an upcoming initial interview,
7 but according to him, per the phone conversation, he
8 didn't have specifics yet, given our course load that
9 he was maintaining. So I'm assuming our case load
10 has shifted to other individuals who are currently
11 handling it. But as of now I don't have any
12 specifics that he indicated to me.

13 MR. ROGERS: Okay. So, yeah, on the bid
14 procedures, so --

15 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

16 MR. ROGERS: Yeah. On the -- I think that Patti
17 sent you an email asking you for some -- we just
18 picked some that were over \$10,000. And it was
19 interesting; there was only one that you'd put a bid
20 out in the paper for, which was for food service.

21 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

22 MR. ROGERS: But then Linda Mooney, I understand
23 she's a -- is she still an employee?

24 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

25 MR. ROGERS: But she was being paid under a

1 contract, an independent contract. Was this in
2 addition to her salary contract with Rockbridge?

3 MR. NUCKOLS: To my understanding, sir, she has
4 always been a salaried employee with Rockbridge as a
5 classroom teacher. So if there is a -- if there's an
6 issue there it has to be tied into coding on the
7 finance side. And I know that Complete Consulting
8 has been -- they're aware of that, and I don't know
9 if Mr. Hamilton may be able to speak to it. But she
10 has never been an independent contractor so-to-speak
11 for Rockbridge.

12 MR. ROGERS: So you think it was just a regular
13 salary?

14 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

15 MR. ROGERS: The contract?

16 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir, that's correct.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Can we bring up Mr.
18 Hamilton?

19 Mr. Hamilton, can you address this issue?

20 MR. HAMILTON: Deron Hamilton.

21 MR. ROGERS: Is that simply what it is, a coding

22 --

23 MR. HAMILTON: It's a reimbursement.

24 MR. ROGERS: -- disbursement?

25 MR. HAMILTON: It was actually a reimbursement

1 for training, the AP check.

2 MR. ROGERS: For \$12,681, reimbursement of
3 training?

4 MR. HAMILTON: (Nodding head up and down.)

5 MR. ROGERS: What was she being trained on?

6 MR. HAMILTON: Montessori.

7 MR. NUCKOLS: Montessori training.

8 MR. ROGERS: Wow, that is expensive.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's accurate.

10 MR. ROGERS: Is that accurate?

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It's accurate.

12 MR. ROGERS: All right. Then, also, I had --
13 that was it. I was just wondering.

14 MR. NUCKOLS: If I could clarify, the teachers
15 travel to various sites around the country for the
16 Montessori training and sometimes it's -- it's in a
17 different city each year. So there are three years
18 of Montessori training for each classroom teacher to
19 become fully credentialed. And so that's the tie-in.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And for an extended number
21 of days; isn't that correct? And for an extended
22 number of days?

23 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: When they go to training,
25 they go for --

1 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am. So for the entire
2 summer, each summer over the three-year cycle the
3 teachers are involved in training, along with spring
4 break and fall break. So there's another four weeks
5 in addition to that where they're out doing training.

6 MR. ROGERS: And so each one of them, it's about
7 \$12,000? Because I'm assuming it's still a coding
8 issue since it was coded into contracts and it
9 should've -- if it should've been employee
10 reimbursement. So I'm just -- I'm assuming it's
11 still that.

12 MR. NUCKOLS: To my knowledge, yes, sir.

13 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So will Mr. Hamilton make
15 that correction? Is that who's in charge of making
16 that correction or journal entry?

17 MR. NUCKOLS: Well, I've technically been with
18 Complete Consulting for about a month, and so I'm
19 still kind of working my way -- working with Chris,
20 but I will commit to making that transition. And
21 just to say about Complete Consulting, I think that's
22 why Chris wanted to bring some additional CPAs on
23 board, because he knew he needed to get that
24 bandwidth to be able to take care of things like
25 this.

1 MR. ROGERS: Okay. Okay. The other thing I
2 have is just looking at your current duties -- and I
3 know we haven't seen the audit yet, but I can't see
4 -- I can't think that there's not going to be some
5 kind of segregation of duties finding on your audit,
6 just looking at everything that you're over on the
7 org chart. Who else besides you is responsible for
8 making payments on behalf of the Charter?

9 MR. NUCKOLS: Pardon me?

10 MR. ROGERS: Who else, besides you, is
11 responsible for making payments, bill payments on
12 behalf of the Charter?

13 MR. NUCKOLS: As far as the billing processes
14 for --

15 MR. ROGERS: For making any payments --

16 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

17 MR. ROGERS: -- or bills that you get in --

18 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

19 MR. ROGERS: -- or like payroll.

20 MR. NUCKOLS: I supervise those. They come --
21 either they're mailed directly to the school or some
22 of the vendors are mailing those invoices to Complete
23 Consulting for processing. But, initially, whichever
24 the case may be, they go through an online system
25 called AVID that -- there's an approval process; it

1 comes to me first for approval, then it goes to
2 another staff member for a second look before it goes
3 over to Complete Consulting for a third look, and
4 then final processing.

5 MR. ROGERS: What other staff member?

6 MR. NUCKOLS: Mrs. Gober is the second approving
7 authority, and then at that point it goes to Complete
8 Consulting staff for a third look before processing
9 continues. And these are all standard bills that
10 come across the desk.

11 MR. ROGERS: So part of your contract with
12 Complete Consulting, they make the payments for you
13 after you and Ms. Gober approve them?

14 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

16 MS. HALEY: I just had -- we brought this up
17 last time, but the charge for the cleaning service,
18 and I don't think that was bid. It was like over
19 \$70,000. It was more than the food service.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: \$82,000.

21 MR. ROGERS: \$82,000.

22 MS. HALEY: For the year. And so I'm just --
23 there was a note in there that it was \$3,000 a month
24 and then that stopped because they weren't doing a
25 good job or -- so I'm just wondering if you can tell

1 us a little bit more about that?

2 MR. NUCKOLS: Of course. Yes, ma'am. So prior
3 to interviewing any of the cleaning services, the
4 staff was trying to maintain that themselves. But,
5 of course, trying to run a school it becomes very
6 difficult. So there were interviews set up for
7 various cleaning services. The first one did a fair
8 job but over time the lack of progress was seen and
9 performance fell through. So the staff went back to
10 cleaning, so they tried it again, and then there was
11 another attempt made to hire someone else that could
12 be more competent for about \$3500 a month, but that
13 was cleaning only. And after that fell off, a third
14 look was taken for Razor Cleaning [sic], the service
15 that they offered, which is not only cleaning but
16 major mechanical repairs, which we've actually had to
17 take advantage of over the last several months,
18 including air conditioning issues, heating issues,
19 water damage repair from every time it rains,
20 torrential downpours, and flooding in the building at
21 times, replacing the ceiling tiles; plumbing services
22 are also included. They're to the school almost
23 every week.

24 MS. HALEY: So it's cleaning and maintenance?

25 MR. NUCKOLS: Correct. Yes, ma'am.

1 MS. HALEY: And does your contract with them
2 specify -- I mean, that's a set fee for the year or
3 --

4 MR. NUCKOLS: It is a multi-year contract.
5 Typically, it is a \$6,000 payment per month.

6 MR. ROGERS: How often does your building flood?

7 MR. NUCKOLS: Well, until the church put in the
8 French drain, which was just recently, it would --
9 there would be some leakage to some degree every time
10 there was a torrential downpour. Over last
11 Christmas, the staff members came in; there was
12 almost an inch of water in four of the classrooms
13 that had to be cleaned up. So a restoration service
14 was called in in order to make the clean-up and
15 repairs. That has gotten better though with the
16 installment of the French drain.

17 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is there someone onsite
19 all the time?

20 MR. ROGERS: Of course, daily cleaning and we
21 can give them a call at any time for emergency
22 services in which they come out and provide necessary
23 fixes.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Do you pay for anything
25 additional, such as cleaning supplies?

1 MR. NUCKOLS: No, ma'am. No, ma'am.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Materials?

3 MR. NUCKOLS: No, ma'am. That's all included in
4 the fee; cleaning supplies and the storage thereof,
5 they bring them out as needed.

6 DR. PFEFFER: May I ask?

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes.

8 DR. PFEFFER: So just to clarify though, there
9 are at least three services here that did not go
10 through the proper bidding process, is that correct,
11 with the vendors they're currently using?

12 MR. ROGERS: Those over \$10,000, yeah, that --
13 that's just the ones that we pulled. So both of
14 those, yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Nuckols, in your new
16 relationship or your upgraded improved relationship
17 with APSRC, Mr. Walter said that there would be
18 financial and governance. Will that financial
19 replace Complete Consulting or be in addition to?

20 MR. NUCKOLS: We are certainly looking at that
21 as an option. Yes, ma'am. And also in talks with
22 another financial firm that may be able to provide
23 the accounting assistance as needed. That decision
24 has not yet been made, but those are options that
25 we're looking at. The board has certainly been

1 active, a big part in looking at other options that
2 could assist us, especially on the accounting side.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Other questions?
4 Open general questions.

5 Dr. Gotcher.

6 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair.

7 Mr. Nuckols, since our last time --

8 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

9 DR. GOTCHER: -- how would you rate, in any way
10 you want to express it, just your responsiveness to
11 this Panel's requests? How would you rate your
12 team's responsiveness to these requests?

13 MR. NUCKOLS: I think the entire team has worked
14 aggressively the past month to make improvements.
15 Granted, there are still -- there is still much to be
16 done, obviously, but it has certainly been at the
17 heart of our operation at Rockbridge to see
18 improvements made so that the school can be provided
19 with the correct education that the children deserve,
20 and certainly to provide them with something unique,
21 something that they may not have otherwise, except in
22 a private setting. So, again, there's much work to
23 be done still but I know that, per the Panel's
24 request and the notes that were made to us via a
25 letter, that much of that has been corrected. We

1 look ahead to making further corrections so that
2 we'll be in compliance, and knowing very well that
3 there's still much to grow on.

4 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you. I think my only
5 follow-up just is a comment. While I believe you and
6 I know that you've been responsive, but the evidence
7 has got to match the responsiveness and I think that
8 it's working but still definitely concerns as you
9 have said. So thank you for your candid answer. I
10 appreciate it.

11 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, sir.

12 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Perry, is there
14 another -- any person that we need to hear from?

15 MS. PERRY: No, ma'am, I'm not aware of any.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'd like to speak to the
17 board members, if all the board members would come up
18 to the microphone. I'd like for you -- if you would,
19 introduce your-self and then kind of give us --
20 you've heard this conversation now. We take the
21 responsibility of a board member very seriously. I
22 hope you've seen us take that very seriously. It's
23 important to ask questions and not assume that you
24 know or, you know, to really -- it's your
25 responsibility to really know what's going on to make

1 wise decisions for the school. So will you kind of
2 talk to us about what you've heard, what you're
3 processing, what we can expect from you?

4 MR. CIAK: Well, my name is Jack Ciak and as
5 previously stated I'm treasurer of the board right
6 now. In general, I'm very encouraged, as Mr. Nuckols
7 said, with the level of effort that's been put forth
8 to satisfy the concerns that are raised here, not
9 only in terms of the actual effort but the spirit in
10 which it was conducted -- and as he said, for the
11 benefit of all involved. I've only been on the board
12 myself for about six weeks now and I'd already had a
13 large list of to-do items in my mind, which continues
14 to grow as a result of this. But, quite honestly,
15 I'm looking forward to the opportunity to put more of
16 these things in place that will certainly give you
17 folks comfort, give us comfort, and just overall in
18 general. Yes, I appreciate the severity of what's
19 going on. I actually look forward to serving in this
20 type of role, of the oversight role, and I think it
21 will be an incredible assistance to the staff to have
22 a functioning board that can do that. And everything
23 I've seen from the meetings that we've been in
24 attendance we're inclined to be moving in that
25 direction.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

2 MR. ALBERT: I'm Roy Albert; I'm the secretary.
3 I'm also encouraged by -- more so by the make-up and
4 the members of the board itself. It's been a
5 transition from I'm sure the previous board members,
6 but the members that are on the board at this time
7 are enthusiastic, they're knowledgeable, and they
8 really want to do what it takes to get the school
9 where it needs to be. The children are the most
10 important thing before everybody's mind and everyone
11 has made a commitment to bringing whatever skills,
12 whatever concerns, whatever it takes to get the job
13 done. Rockbridge has a bright future if the board is
14 in the stewardship, and that is directing the ship.
15 And we are going to direct the ship in the manner in
16 which it has to be done.

17 MR. BENNETT: While we've made progress in the
18 last month, we still have a lot more to go. After
19 hearing the testimony today I know we've got a lot of
20 things left to do. We would like to address
21 everything, get everything back on track. The
22 special education program, I would like to see that
23 thrive and succeed to where we can provide the
24 services for the children that we need. I see a lot
25 of potential with this school. I think it's

1 wonderful that we are -- that this charter is able to
2 provide a Montessori education to a lot of children
3 that may not have access to this type of education,
4 and I think it's a wonderful and unique opportunity
5 for the citizens of central Arkansas. And I look
6 forward to the challenge of the board working with
7 Mr. Nuckols and the staff at Rockbridge to insure
8 that this school can grow and thrive and continue to
9 progress and educate our children.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Gentlemen.

11 Board, additional questions, comments?

12 MS. SMITH: I have a comment.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Go ahead.

14 MS. SMITH: Just a comment. I just want to say
15 this: this is a charter that's in its second year.
16 It's not one that's been around for a long time; it's
17 in its second year. Within the Charter Office here
18 at ADE we recognize in the last year that there have
19 been so many charters that we didn't have the
20 capacity to support as needed, and one of the areas
21 that we saw that lots of charters were struggling was
22 in the area of governance -- and I think we've seen
23 that several times reflected. We've added to the
24 Charter Office. Mr. Scott specifically is directed
25 to assist with boards at charter schools. I kind of

1 think -- when I look at the timeline of when this
2 charter was approved and I look at the issues that
3 they have right now, I think some of them go hand-in-
4 hand with areas that we've identified here at the
5 Department that we needed to be able to provide more
6 support. I think they're kind of hand-in-hand and
7 that's at no fault. I think, one, it's been a growth
8 of the number of charters and the responsibilities
9 that we have at the Department to assist. I also
10 think the partnership and collaboration that we at
11 the Department have tried to work with APSRC in
12 determining where are needs they can meet and where
13 are the areas of need that we can meet in trying to
14 just develop a better partnership there, whether it's
15 providing professional development, assisting boards,
16 but just continuing the conversation and dialogue
17 there. I thought it was kind of telling when you
18 talked about the accreditation report, and many of
19 the things that were on the cited accreditation list
20 we quit providing professional development to that
21 area. That to me -- and those were areas that they
22 were not aware of and at this point our Charter
23 Office is not providing that information. I mean, I
24 think those are things that we have to consider. I
25 think that a lesson that I have learned, and

1 especially today, is before approving a charter
2 making sure that that charter understands the
3 governance piece and the responsibility of the board
4 of directors.

5 I think this charter -- while the intent was
6 pure in what they wanted to achieve and their passion
7 is evident, opening a school is not just as easy as
8 opening a school. There are lots of laws, especially
9 federal laws with special education that have to be
10 followed. And I can tell you most general ed.
11 teachers, they themselves are not aware of the
12 special ed. laws and requirements. Most elementary
13 and middle school and secondary principals, they've
14 had a crash course in it but they really rely on
15 their special education teachers and LEA supervisors
16 to guide them in those areas. And so these are areas
17 that I think we need to identify at the Department
18 and our partners at APSRC in making sure that we're
19 providing the support for people to be successful.

20 I think some of the areas here -- I don't want
21 to take the responsibility off of your shoulders as
22 the superintendent or as the board of directors
23 because, I said it last month, receiving a waiver
24 does not waive your responsibility to know what
25 you're supposed to do. So it's still your

1 responsibility. So as of today, I look at this as a
2 second year charter. They're not in academic
3 distress. They will receive their first compliance
4 citing in special education, which to me is a normal
5 first thing that would happen to any school district.
6 They have expressed today plans to correct. I think
7 they still have a long ways to go. I visited this
8 school yesterday; they were very willing to show me
9 around and show me what was going on. I saw some
10 really good things going on and then I saw some
11 things that need to be improved. But I think this is
12 a second year school. I don't think it's -- I don't
13 think we're in the same boat as we were in in other
14 schools that we've listened to or talked to. They
15 have a long ways to go still.

16 I will say I appreciate -- you were asked very
17 direct pointed questions and I felt like that you
18 answered those questions with integrity today, even
19 when the answers didn't show favor on you. So I do
20 appreciate that.

21 Those are just my comments that I wanted to make
22 to the board -- to the Panel.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

24 MS. HALEY: We're still really concerned about
25 special education moving forward because, for one

1 thing, we don't even know if there's going to be a
2 licensed teacher next year. And so the lack of
3 understanding in just the written procedures that
4 were submitted to us is evident about not -- no one
5 not wanting to do the right thing, but not
6 understanding the comprehensive nature of what the
7 right thing is in terms of procedures and practices.
8 And for me it's a combination of waivers -- and I'm
9 talking about waivers for the principal, waivers for
10 the superintendent and that kind of thing. So I
11 think one of the things that we were told, I think,
12 is we could decide to revoke a waiver as an action.
13 Is that correct?

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You can -- yes, you can
15 modify the charter.

16 MS. HALEY: Right.

17 MS. DAVIS: It would be a modification --

18 MS. HALEY: Okay.

19 MS. DAVIS: -- of the charter.

20 MS. HALEY: Okay. Because even though
21 superintendents and principals don't know a lot, they
22 are responsible and they have a little bit of
23 knowledge about this is the required thing to do
24 under federal law for lots of different areas. And I
25 just -- I'm afraid that that's missing. And I don't

1 know if Mr. Walter, when he said that they were going
2 to be in charge of bringing in a new superintendent,
3 if that's going to be a certified person or you
4 haven't made that decision.

5 MR. WALTER: If I may briefly address that, I
6 mean, it will be the board's responsibility, not
7 ours. That's just a condition of our enhanced
8 services going forward.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: That's a condition that
10 you made with the board?

11 MR. WALTER: Well, with the school. Yes.

12 MS. HALEY: And is the condition that the person
13 be certified or just a new --

14 MR. WALTER: No. That's --

15 MS. HALEY: Okay.

16 MR. WALTER: That's not in the agreement.

17 MS. HALEY: Okay.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Walter, could you
19 expand on that partnership or that -- I don't know
20 what you're calling it -- your relationship? Will
21 that include any assistance with these special ed.
22 issues? Can you kind of be a little more specific --
23 or you don't have to be extremely specific but --

24 MR. WALTER: Yes, just -- if you can give me
25 just a second. Yes, ma'am.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Can you be a little less
2 general?

3 MR. WALTER: Basically what the services we'll
4 provide is we're going to have somebody during this
5 period over at the school on a weekly basis to help
6 provide administrative oversight; help with various
7 processes and systems; special education budgeting is
8 part of the things that we are going to do;
9 assistance in preparation of budget; review staffing
10 needs, contracts; helping with various data entry
11 items, such as Indistar, those type of issues; any
12 correction, corrective action plans that are
13 required; and technical assistance going forward as
14 needed once the audit findings and exit conference
15 comes around on the governance and policy piece;
16 address the issues or help the school address, I
17 should say, the issues that you have brought forward
18 and any other compliance pieces that are necessary to
19 get them back to correct any issues they have with
20 the Department as a whole; and also policies and
21 procedures review; and up to six hours of board
22 training and continued attendance at the school board
23 meetings, if that helps kind of flesh out our
24 thoughts.

25 MS. HALEY: So, Mr. Walter, you said special ed.

1 budgeting. But what about special ed. in general and
2 procedural items, are you going to -- is part of what
3 you're going to do provide support for that, as well?

4 MR. WALTER: Well, we certainly can in
5 conjunction to the extent that we are able and in
6 conjunction with any staff that they have.

7 DR. PFEFFER: And is this agreement one that's
8 been approved or assigned by their school board or
9 governing board?

10 MR. WALTER: It was brought before the board for
11 permission I think two meetings ago to enter into an
12 agreement, and that agreement has been executed, as I
13 understand it, on Rockbridge's end, and is about to
14 be on ours.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

16 DR. GOTCHER: And with respect to Mr. Rogers, my
17 question is for our charter team. So if he has a
18 question --

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

20 DR. GOTCHER: -- for Mr. Walter, I'll defer.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

22 MR. ROGERS: So, hey, Tripp, before you run off,
23 I just want to make sure I understand.

24 MR. WALTER: Yes, sir.

25 MR. ROGERS: This agreement that you've got with

1 Rockbridge now, as part of the compromise of the
2 agreement y'all are going to help them seek out new
3 leadership for the school district? Did I understand

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Correct.

5 MR. ROGERS: -- for the school, is that what I
6 understood you saying?

7 MR. WALTER: Yes. We'll be of assistance in the
8 process. We obviously -- I mean, that's obviously a
9 board decision but --

10 MR. ROGERS: Right. But y'all are going to help
11 them select somebody that could step into that role
12 of superintendent to help? I'm just -- I'm not
13 trying to put words in your mouth; I'm just trying to
14 understand.

15 MR. WALTER: No. I mean, to the extent that we
16 can -- again, that was one of the conditions for us
17 moving forward that that piece be in the agreement --

18 MR. ROGERS: So --

19 MR. WALTER: -- that there would be changes in
20 leadership.

21 MR. ROGERS: Okay. So I think I'm hearing you;
22 I think we're saying the same thing.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Yes, you are.

24 MR. WALTER: I think the only thing that we
25 perhaps might not be saying is that it's really going

1 to be the board's call in the --

2 MR. ROGERS: Oh, right, right. Yeah.

3 MR. WALTER: -- process. We would offer
4 technical services around that, I'm sure, just as we
5 do anything on an ongoing basis with them being our
6 members.

7 MR. ROGERS: But as a part of this agreement
8 y'all are going to help the board find somebody else;
9 y'all can't say, "Hire this person," but you can say,
10 "Hey, here's five people; what do you think?"

11 MR. WALTER: Well, again, that's not spelled out
12 to that level of detail. Again, it's their call.
13 We're not -- I mean, we're not going to be selecting
14 their next director. That's not our --

15 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

16 MR. WALTER: That's not our ability to do.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We're trying to build some
18 confidence in what we think -- the service that
19 they're going to receive.

20 MR. WALTER: Right. And as to that piece,
21 again, it was a condition for us to provide
22 additional services going forward that there be
23 leadership changes, as I've expressed. I mean,
24 again, the hiring of a superintendent is a -- is
25 going to be a board function or any other leadership

1 is going to be a board function. To the extent that
2 we are asked to assist in that process we will be
3 glad to do so.

4 MR. ROGERS: And by when are they supposed to
5 have a new superintendent?

6 MR. WALTER: June 30th.

7 MR. ROGERS: Of like coming up or next year?

8 MR. WALTER: Yes, sir. This year.

9 DR. GOTCHER: And I'm hearing that Mr. Walter is
10 preserving that line between board --

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Right.

12 DR. GOTCHER: -- and services. So, I'm hearing
13 that.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I just wanted to make sure
15 that I was clear on my next question for Mr. Bennett.

16 Mr. Walter is a very good attorney and he
17 doesn't give a lot away. But what I picked up from
18 what he said was it's up to the board to make the
19 right decisions and to ask for the right assistance.

20 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Did you hear that?

22 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. So if you're not
24 getting the service you need, he has said to you you
25 need to keep asking for the right things.

1 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay.

3 MR. BENNETT: And that's what we will do.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. I wanted to make
5 sure you heard what I heard.

6 MR. BENNETT: Okay. Thank you.

7 DR. GOTCHER: Great point, Madam Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. You know, I
9 work right beside a whole group of lawyers, so --

10 DR. PFEFFER: So I do have a question just for
11 my fellow board members here.

12 So, Mr. Rogers, last time a huge concern for you
13 was finance and by this time we should have had more
14 information, and we don't. But just based on where
15 we are now how comfortable are you with financial
16 matters? And does the conversation we've just had
17 with APSRC, are you feeling more comfortable going
18 forward with financial issues?

19 MR. ROGERS: In a word, no. I still have
20 problems with the bid procedures, still have problems
21 with the segregation of duties; I'm concerned about
22 what the audit, the Leg audit is going to show next
23 week or whenever they have that opportunity. I wish
24 we would've had to see that. I think the easiest
25 thing, like I say, if this was a normal -- a

1 traditional, then Fiscal Services probably would've
2 already recommended early intervention on them. So I
3 do have concerns going forward with it to make sure
4 that -- and I know that they've adopted the
5 generalized policies that APSRC puts in them but they
6 are generalized, and so I'm concerned about how
7 they're going to make that their own. And it really
8 -- just the governance structure of it, having so
9 much on -- and I think Mr. Nuckols is trying to do
10 the right thing, but he's carrying a lot on his
11 shoulders that I just don't know how that's going to
12 work.

13 DR. PFEFFER: And I think I would agree too
14 because it just seems that the conversation today has
15 been full of good intentions and promises and just --
16 there's still such a lack of defined sustainable
17 leadership. And I'm concerned by the fact that by
18 now we don't have a definitive plan to have a special
19 ed. teacher on staff. I'm, you know, a little bit
20 surprised that, you know, still trying to get some of
21 the paperwork right and just not -- without being
22 really walked through processes, some of those things
23 not being farther along than they are. And just
24 glancing here at some of the stats on My School Info
25 and the student-to-teacher ratio is 27-to-1. And I

1 went back and kind of looked at the number of
2 teachers they have and the number of students they
3 have and just thinking through the number of people
4 working there, and that was my observation when I
5 went. There are a lot of students compared to the
6 adults working there. So I share the concerns about
7 -- I don't know how the segregation of duties is
8 going to be addressed and some of those other
9 leadership pieces. I do appreciate what we have
10 heard from APSRC in terms of, you know, already
11 having talked about an agreement but -- and I think
12 Ms. Smith made some good points, but I don't know
13 that it's -- I don't know that I feel quite the same
14 way as feeling good about where they are in year-two
15 and feeling like it's okay to be there in year-two,
16 so --

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

18 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I
19 could address our charter team; I'll just call it
20 that. I'll start with Ms. Mary Perry, and I'll ask
21 you the same question that I asked Superintendent
22 Nuckols. How would you rate their responsiveness
23 since the last -- our last Charter Panel meeting?

24 MS. MARY PERRY: I think they get a very good
25 mark for effort. I am concerned about the quality.

1 DR. GOTCHER: The latter part again?

2 MS. PERRY: The quality --

3 DR. GOTCHER: Quality.

4 MS. PERRY: -- of what we've received from them
5 is a concern with quality.

6 DR. GOTCHER: Understood.

7 MS. PERRY: Cooperation and effort marked very
8 highly.

9 DR. GOTCHER: Thank you. I'm encouraged by
10 that.

11 I think I want to follow-up with what Ms. Smith
12 offered, and I certainly appreciate my colleagues'
13 comments. And I do recognize there has been some
14 changes in standards in terms of training and I
15 recognize some of the things that may have been
16 offered in previous traditional and charter schools
17 has not been afforded to this team. However, I think
18 back to where I was a little over a month ago,
19 whenever the time was. Number one, I'm encouraged by
20 the comments and the transparency, Ms. Smith, of
21 Superintendent Nuckols and the responsiveness, albeit
22 the quality may not be there, by the team, by the
23 institution. But now I trickle down to why we're all
24 here and that's about the students. When you think
25 about what is best for our students in this state and

1 the responsibility that we have, I look back at my
2 notes and I'm just wondering, special ed. team, are
3 we at a point of no return in being able to provide
4 the services to provide them what is federally
5 required and our duty to support that? They are a
6 new institution and certainly there's a lot of grace
7 in that, and I think grace has been given. But I
8 think where I am today is the issue of the special
9 ed. students and wondering can we move forward
10 knowing the inadequacies that have existed up to this
11 point, so --

12 MS. SMITH: Okay. So maybe I misunderstood, so
13 I need to clarify some things. If I heard or
14 understood correctly, you do have a contract pending
15 or an intent for someone to come and work in the fall
16 that is special ed. certified, that currently works
17 at the Lighthouse charter?

18 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am, that's correct.

19 MS. SMITH: And has your board already hired
20 that person for next fall or you just have the intent
21 for that person to come?

22 MR. NUCKOLS: She has given us a Letter of
23 Intent for employment at Rockbridge in the fall.
24 Yes, ma'am.

25 MS. SMITH: Okay. And have you taken -- so has

1 there been action on that for her to be hired for
2 next year by the board?

3 MR. NUCKOLS: No, ma'am.

4 MS. SMITH: Okay. So you're waiting for that.
5 Okay.

6 MR. NUCKOLS: Correct. Yes, ma'am.

7 MS. SMITH: That same person you currently have
8 under contract to come and supervise your -- Ms.
9 Gober. So they come -- that same person who is
10 special ed. certified comes to your facility now and
11 assists Ms. Gober and her duties while she's under
12 her ALP?

13 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am. That's correct.

14 MS. SMITH: And that is a licensed special ed.
15 person?

16 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am. This is Cheryl Wade.
17 She is licensed with Lighthouse Charter in Pine
18 Bluff.

19 MS. SMITH: Ms. Gober, are you currently in
20 courses or class work for your --

21 MS. GOBER: The next class I can take is --

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You'll have to come to the
23 microphone please.

24 MS. GOBER: The next class I could take would be
25 -- starts May 30th at ASU online.

1 MS. SMITH: With the changes occurring and the
2 new special ed. teacher coming in the fall, are you
3 planning on still taking courses and enrolling in
4 that course on May 30th?

5 MS. GOBER: I am currently doing that. Yes.
6 But the board meets between now and then and there
7 may be a reduction of force, because of where I was
8 brought in to where I am now, and that will determine
9 that.

10 MS. SMITH: Okay. So right now you're saying
11 that you're still planning on taking course work?

12 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am.

13 MS. SMITH: Okay. And if I heard earlier when
14 they were talking about is restructuring and stuff,
15 the possibility of you being moved back to an
16 administrative role -- so even if you move back to an
17 administrative role, are you still possibly looking
18 at getting your special education --

19 MS. GOBER: Yes. Because in charters everybody
20 wears several hats and I could be that assistant
21 person that we would need for the full person on
22 special ed.

23 MS. SMITH: Okay. So there is a plan to meet
24 special education for the school now and in the fall?

25 MS. GOBER: Yes, ma'am. In mind's eye, yes,

1 ma'am.

2 MS. SMITH: Okay. Then the question about the
3 finances -- and, Greg, the phrase has slipped my mind
4 -- the duty -- the two-people signature.

5 DR. PFEFFER: Segregation of duties.

6 MS. SMITH: Segregation of duties. Thank you.
7 Thank you. Has there been a finding of an issue with
8 segregation of duties? Because when he explained the
9 process that he approves and then it goes to Ms.
10 Gober, who is not related -- now I think if it was
11 going to his wife that would be an issue. It goes to
12 a separate person that's not related and then goes to
13 the financial. So where is the problem there? Is
14 there -- has there been a finding?

15 MR. ROGERS: I don't know yet because we haven't
16 got the Legislative audit yet.

17 MS. SMITH: Okay.

18 MR. ROGERS: That's the whole thing. But when
19 you look at his -- when you look at what all he's
20 covering, from everything through being one of the
21 person's who approves bills to the person who signs
22 off on the invoices, to the person who signs off on
23 contracts once it has board approval, he is wearing a
24 lot of hats.

25 MS. SMITH: Uh-huh.

1 MR. ROGERS: And it is a problem in -- it's even
2 a problem in a lot of smaller school districts too.
3 But there is a lot of hats under the finance role
4 that he is having to wear. So if there is not a
5 segregation of duties audit finding on that I would
6 be surprised. Do I know that there's going to be one
7 for sure? No, not yet.

8 MS. SMITH: Okay.

9 MR. ROGERS: But that hasn't been issued yet.

10 MS. SMITH: Is it written in policy -- do you
11 have it written in policy somewhere that you have a
12 second person who checks you that's not related? Is
13 that written anywhere, the assigned person who's
14 doing it? Is that written down anywhere or has that
15 just been a practice, and how long has that practice
16 been in place of the two approvals?

17 MR. NUCKOLS: I do not know the answer to that
18 question, Ms. Smith.

19 MS. SMITH: Since you've been the superintendent
20 have you always had a second person approve your
21 finances once you approve them?

22 MR. NUCKOLS: Yes, ma'am.

23 MS. SMITH: Has that person always been someone
24 that's not related to you?

25 MR. NUCKOLS: For signing off on --

1 MS. SMITH: Yes.

2 MR. NUCKOLS: For signing off on the checks?

3 MS. SMITH: Uh-huh.

4 MR. NUCKOLS: That's correct.

5 MR. ROGERS: But without a written policy, which
6 they just adopted now -- and I don't even know what's
7 all in it -- that will be a finding. If it is not
8 written, when the auditor comes and looks at it, if
9 they don't have a policy for segregation of duties,
10 who approves it, who doesn't, those can potentially
11 be findings. I'm not saying they are, because I
12 haven't seen it.

13 MS. SMITH: Right.

14 MR. ROGERS: I want to keep saying that. I'm
15 not saying that they're going to have any findings.

16 MS. SMITH: So if they do have findings -- and
17 earlier, you said based on everything that you've
18 seen right now if they were a public school they
19 would've been put into fiscal intervention?

20 MR. ROGERS: Early intervention.

21 MS. SMITH: Early intervention, not fiscal
22 distress?

23 MR. ROGERS: No.

24 MS. SMITH: Early intervention?

25 MR. ROGERS: Uh-huh.

1 MS. SMITH: Okay. I just -- I guess for me
2 today, in contrast to where we've been from someone
3 who was academic distress, fiscal distress,
4 longstanding academic distress -- I mean, to brand-
5 new, I think we're at two different places. I mean,
6 I'm still saying there's issues that have to be
7 corrected, but I did hear a plan about special
8 education today. I did hear a plan they at least had
9 balance or seemed to be some balance in the
10 accounting procedures, but they still have clean-up
11 to do and acknowledgement and a plan on how that
12 could be corrected. So I just wanted to clarify some
13 of that today.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

15 DR. PFEFFER: And, Ms. Davis, you alluded to
16 this earlier and I want to follow back up on it with
17 the transition. Because this was all at our last
18 meeting; it was very unclear, really, who was in the
19 leadership role at the school. And since then Mr.
20 Nuckols -- you know, it has kind of solidified that
21 he is that -- in charge of the everyday operations.
22 But that was never a board decision; is that correct?
23 Or is that something we're wondering right now? And
24 where does that leave things?

25 MS. DAVIS: Well, I'm not sure if that was a

1 board decision by their sponsoring entity that hired
2 them, much like a school board would hire either the
3 superintendent -- it's a little unclear on that. I
4 don't have any documentation on him being hired in
5 the financial position. So, yeah, I mean, it's kind
6 of unclear, so -- and they might have approved --
7 they may -- I say "they," the entity, the board may
8 have approved his hiring as superintendent, but we
9 wouldn't -- it wouldn't come through us anyway; it's
10 for Commissioner approval.

11 DR. PFEFFER: Right. I'm just -- I didn't -- I
12 was just trying to think about that and does that
13 make any difference with anything right now --

14 MS. DAVIS: Well, I mean --

15 DR. PFEFFER: -- in terms of --

16 MS. DAVIS: -- in general -- and I had sent
17 several questions in trying to figure this out to the
18 Charter Office because it does seem -- and I think
19 Ms. Gober just said that they all wear several hats,
20 and I think that that has been at least a confusion
21 for me is that they're all wearing multiple hats and
22 trying to figure out what hat are they wearing and
23 what situation in order for us to do.

24 DR. PFEFFER: Because the only thing that I've
25 seen -- I mean, I've seen the org chart change with,

1 you know --

2 MS. SMITH: Right.

3 DR. PFEFFER: -- those names there. But when
4 you look at, you know, the salary schedule or the
5 list of employees you still have the same things with
6 people. And I realize when changes are made --

7 MS. DAVIS: Right.

8 DR. PFEFFER: -- in the middle of the year, you
9 know -- but, okay. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any additional questions
11 or comments?

12 MR. ROGERS: I guess just a comment. What
13 you're saying, I do -- the other thing I've been
14 trying in the past month to get -- but it's in the
15 past month, and that concerns me that it took Lisa
16 requesting a full review to get them in front of us
17 last month to flesh out all the problems that they
18 have concerning the whole thing from special ed. to
19 finance to all of it. To go back in a month and then
20 jump through every hoop, get APSRC to get a special
21 agreement with them, have a whole new board, all this
22 happened in the past month because special ed.
23 started asking the questions. And my concern is,
24 yeah, they are new but it took us getting on them to
25 get there, when there's 150 kids sitting at this

1 school. And it scares the crap out of me that what
2 if we wouldn't have asked those questions and those
3 150 kids are there and those 20 kids who are there
4 with IEPs weren't getting what they needed. So while
5 we've been giving them kudos today, I'm still not
6 happy about it because it took our people catching it
7 and saying, "Y'all are messing up," to get them here.
8 And so I guess I just want to be balanced on that,
9 that, yeah, they've jumped through a whole lot in the
10 last month but it's only because there were two votes
11 to close them last month. And so that -- I just want
12 to just comment on that, that I'm glad that they're
13 trying as hard as they are and doing everything they
14 are, but what happened if we wouldn't have said that?
15 And I know we can't answer that question because
16 we're here now, but that's just my concern.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Bennett.

18 MR. BENNETT: If I could make one final comment,
19 through -- and through discussions today I haven't
20 had the opportunity to bring this up, but one of the
21 things we have looked at doing is bringing on a
22 compliance officer to help us with these governance
23 issues, with finance. And we've actually had the
24 possibility of applying for some grant money to
25 assist with their salary as well. So that is one

1 option that we are definitely exploring and we would
2 like to take advantage of, if given the opportunity,
3 just to help us be better stewards of the money -- of
4 the public funds that's being entrusted to us and to
5 hopefully make sure that we're educating the children
6 as we need to.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Hopefully the lesson today
8 is the minute you know there's a problem you start
9 asking for help.

10 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It's never a sign of
12 weakness to ask for help.

13 MR. BENNETT: No, ma'am.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: It's a sign of strength.

15 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am. And since I'm new to
16 the board I'm new to the problems. But my intention
17 is that if we see a problem while I'm on the board I
18 would like to address it head-on and address it as
19 quickly as possible and take advantage of the charter
20 school staff here at the Department of Education and
21 the APSRC. They've both been very wonderful through
22 this process in helping us. You know, I feel like
23 everybody wants us to succeed and wants the school to
24 succeed, and I just hope that we continue to have
25 that opportunity.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: There's no person in this
2 room that will say no to you if you ask.

3 MR. BENNETT: Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And if they do, you let us
5 know.

6 MR. BENNETT: Yes, ma'am. I will.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

8 DR. GOTCHER: No, ma'am.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other comments,
10 questions?

11 I'll accept a motion when you're ready.

12 DR. GOTCHER: And a question for Ms. Davis.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis, are there any
14 -- sorry -- any remaining issues that we need to
15 discuss?

16 MS. DAVIS: I do not have anything. I'm pretty
17 sure y'all have covered it all.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. We just like
19 to be thorough.

20 DR. GOTCHER: And the same four options?

21 MS. DAVIS: Yes. You can take no action, you
22 can modify their charter, you can place them on
23 probation, or you may revoke them.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Let me ask a clarifying
25 question on the take-no-action. So we tabled last

1 month. If we were -- if the board decided to table
2 to come back in and check, do they automatically pick
3 it up next month or could they table to a further out
4 time?

5 MS. DAVIS: Generally, you table to the next
6 meeting.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you.

8 MS. DAVIS: And I say that just so that way if
9 you decided that you wanted them to come back in two
10 months then that would be another full hearing, just
11 to let you know.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you. That's
13 very helpful.

14 DR. GOTCHER: And one special ed. clarifying
15 question: 72 days of missed instruction for students,
16 Ms. Haley, is that -- that could be made up through
17 the summer before the start of the second school
18 year. And if that doesn't happen, I'm just still not
19 clear. What if kids are underserved?

20 MS. HALEY: So it's not, you know, like I said,
21 hour for hour.

22 DR. GOTCHER: Sure.

23 MS. HALEY: So it doesn't necessarily mean if
24 they miss 72 hours they're going to provide 72 hours
25 of compensatory education. It means whatever they

1 determine is appropriate, once we review and accept
2 that. But we have the option to withhold funds in
3 special education too, in addition to findings of
4 noncompliance. And so if the district is not
5 complying with what's set forth in their corrective
6 action plan then that would be an option open to us
7 and then we could recommend further action, either
8 through the Panel or, you know, Standards of
9 Accreditation or whatever the appropriate entity
10 would be.

11 DR. GOTCHER: Understood.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'm ready for a motion.

13 MS. HALEY: Can I ask one more question of Ms.
14 Davis?

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Sure.

16 MS. HALEY: Can you -- the waivers that the
17 Charter has in terms of licensure is for the
18 superintendent and the principal and teachers and --

19 MS. DAVIS: They have waivers of -- hang on;
20 I've got the waiver chart up here. They do have a
21 waiver of -- hang on -- certified personnel, they do
22 have a waiver of principal, and they do have a waiver
23 of the superintendent license. And, of course, all
24 associated rules and standards that would go along
25 with it.

1 MS. HALEY: Okay.

2 MS. SMITH: I'd like to make a motion to put
3 Rockbridge Montessori on probation, and within that
4 probation they have a 90-day report; every 90 days
5 they would submit a report to the Charter Office,
6 addressing the areas of special ed., governance,
7 finance, and required reporting. Within each of
8 those 90 days, if the Charter Office sees that there
9 is a problem they can bring it to our attention at
10 the Charter Authorizing Panel. But it's not about
11 them coming before us every 90 days; it's them
12 putting in a report with the Charter Office for them
13 to check on those specific four areas of concern.

14 DR. GOTCHER: Second.

15 MS. SMITH: Can I do that? No?

16 MS. DAVIS: No, you can do that. That's fine.
17 I just would probably say that -- instead of maybe
18 putting a time limit on how long they're going to be
19 on probation that maybe at some point you would like
20 for them to come back maybe in a year for a complete
21 review by you or something of that nature, so that
22 way it's not just on the Charter Office for every 90
23 days and that they may stay on probation perpetually
24 but they're doing great or not doing great.

25 MS. SMITH: Okay. So within a year then it

1 would be reviewed to determine whether or not they're
2 off probation or they continue on?

3 MS. DAVIS: Yeah. I would just say with
4 probation status to be reviewed in a year.

5 MS. SMITH: In a year. Okay.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Do you agree to that?

7 MS. SMITH: So there would be four reports;
8 three reports submitted to the Charter Office, the
9 fourth report would be an annual review with us.

10 DR. GOTCHER: And before I second, it doesn't
11 change our opportunity to bring them back at any time
12 if -- exactly.

13 MS. SMITH: We can bring them back at any time.

14 MS. DAVIS: Right. And you could --

15 DR. GOTCHER: Second.

16 MS. DAVIS: You could do that on your own
17 information that you gather or on any of the reports
18 from the Charter Office.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Discussion?

20 MS. SMITH: My reason for that, making that
21 motion is I do think there are big concerns today
22 that have been shared. I do think there is a plan of
23 action -- but as Mr. Rogers stated, we've had a lot
24 of action in a month. Can it be maintained? I don't
25 know. This 90-day report in the Charter Office, they

1 can put their hand on the pulse to determine are they
2 doing what they said they would do with APSRC, are
3 they doing what they said and committed to us with
4 their special ed. teacher, does that person actually
5 start in the fall, did they hire a new
6 superintendent. I mean, I think there are several
7 things that have been testified today that that
8 report can do a 90-day -- can do a check. And I
9 think the Charter Office can make a streamlined
10 process of what that report looks like, the
11 information they need, and not make it be something
12 that is burdensome but does it address the concerns
13 that we have. That was my reason and intent for the
14 motion.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

16 DR. PFEFFER: You said then that the review
17 would take place within a year. Could we insure that
18 the review would take place in time so that if
19 overall progress had not been made the recommendation
20 -- I mean, so you're just saying at some -- you're
21 not going to set a date for April or May or March for
22 the review?

23 MS. SMITH: I think if we got to September or
24 October next year and they were submitting a report
25 in the Charter Office and didn't have a special ed.

1 teacher, they didn't make the -- the board is not
2 meeting as they're supposed to governance-wise, the
3 board is not -- you know, Mr. Morgan has attended
4 meetings and there's lack of governance by the board,
5 then that report would come to us and then we could
6 call them back in immediately.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You'll have three reports
8 by January.

9 MS. SMITH: Uh-huh.

10 DR. GOTCHER: And that was the discussion I had,
11 Ms. Smith, because while I support the probationary
12 motion if by September/October grave concerns emerge
13 again I would not feel comfortable as a panel member
14 moving forward with students underserved yet another
15 year, so --

16 MS. SMITH: Right.

17 DR. GOTCHER: Okay.

18 MS. SMITH: And acknowledging that within this
19 time period they are going to have special ed.
20 compliance findings, so they're going to have to
21 address those issues. Mr. Lester today asked about
22 Title 1 and, you know, are they going to follow-up on
23 that. There are several things that time will tell
24 whether or not those have been addressed.

25 MR. LESTER: And the exit legislative audit

1 also.

2 MS. SMITH: Yeah, the legislative audit piece
3 that's coming up there. I mean, I think those things
4 -- only time -- but I think at the same time, we do
5 have concerns. If they're not correcting and we're
6 not satisfied with those concerns, then at any time
7 we can bring them back in. But I don't think we need
8 to drag them in here every month and I don't think
9 they need to come before us every 30 days. I think
10 that's why we have expanded the Charter Office with
11 more people so that they can address some of the
12 specific needs.

13 DR. PFEFFER: Would we need to have an end-date
14 though when either you will be off probation or a
15 determination will be made? Do we need to have some
16 type of --

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: There's a review. There
18 will be a full review.

19 DR. PFEFFER: One year from now?

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Within.

21 DR. PFEFFER: Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So probably sometime
23 January, February, if not before.

24 Any other discussion?

25 The motion has been made by Ms. Smith, seconded

1 by Dr. Gotcher to put Rockbridge Montessori Academy
2 on probation, with a review within one year by this
3 Panel, with 90-day reports going to the Charter
4 Office. Is that the gist?

5 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, that's a very good gist.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. I'm going to
7 take a roll-call vote.

8 Dr. Gotcher.

9 DR. GOTCHER: For the motion to place on
10 probation.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

12 MS. HALEY: For the motion to place on
13 probation.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

15 MR. LESTER: For the motion to put on probation.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

17 DR. PFEFFER: For the motion to place on
18 probation.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

20 MR. ROGER: No.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders -- he's not
22 in here.

23 Ms. Smith.

24 MS. SMITH: For the motion.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. 5-to-1, motion

1 carries.

2 If you'll give us a moment to write out the
3 reasons and then we'll read those reasons to you, and
4 then we'll have any comments.

5 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Gotcher.

7 DR. GOTCHER: I voted for the motion to approve
8 the probation. Concerns have been well noted and a
9 new direction appears to have taken place. I
10 strongly encourage the new board to take its place
11 and move this school towards excellence.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Haley.

13 MS. HALEY: I voted for the motion. We have
14 continuing concerns with special education program
15 administration and, most importantly, services to
16 students with disabilities. I would expect that
17 future reports to the Charter Office be comprehensive
18 and of quality, not just quantity.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Lester.

20 MR. LESTER: I voted for the motion. Although I
21 agree that there are several areas of concern, I
22 think that probation is the appropriate choice at
23 this time.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer.

25 DR. PFEFFER: I voted for the motion. During

1 the past month, I do acknowledge that the Charter has
2 begun to address concerns. I think that the
3 probation sends the message that this is a limited
4 time in which we expect that changes will begin, not
5 just addressing but seeing the real change. So I did
6 vote in favor.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers.

8 MR. ROGERS: I voted against it. While I
9 appreciate the Charter's sense of urgency to change
10 or adopt policies to address our concerns, I still
11 have a lot of concerns with the finance, SPED, and
12 overall governance. I hope the Charter takes this
13 opportunity on probation to continue to improve.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Smith.

15 MS. SMITH: I voted for it. I believe
16 probationary status will address the concerns of this
17 Panel. I would encourage Rockbridge to continue to
18 work with the Charter Unit and APSRC.

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any final comments?

20 I do appreciate your sharing of information
21 today. Mr. Bennett, heavy, heavy work falls to you
22 and to the board. But I hope that -- and I feel
23 confident that your board is walking away with a
24 sense of urgency. And I think as Ms. Haley alluded
25 to is that we're not looking to see that things are

1 starting; we're looking to see that things are
2 changing. So your kids deserve the very best. Thank
3 you.

4 Ms. Perry or Ms. Boyd, do we have any additional
5 business today?

6 MS. BOYD: No, ma'am.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We're glad to have you
8 back.

9 MS. BOYD: I'm glad to be here. Thank you.

10 [APPLAUSE]

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. I'll accept --

12 MS. BOYD: Yeah, please stop falling into Dr.
13 Gotcher's claps for me. He's just hamming it up. I
14 don't deserve that.

15 DR. GOTCHER: Yes, you do.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I'll accept a motion to
17 adjourn.

18 DR. GOTCHER: So moved.

19 MR. LESTER: Aye.

20 DR. PFEFFER: Second.

21 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All those in favor?

22 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Meeting adjourned. Thank
24 you, everyone.

25 (The meeting was adjourned at 3:52 p.m.)

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A-4: COVENANT KEEPERS

EXHIBIT ONE (1)

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A-4: COVENANT KEEPERS

EXHIBIT TWO (2)

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 State Department of Education, Charter Authorizing Panel, in Little Rock, Arkansas, on April 19, 2017, 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: May 3, 2017.

SHARON K. HILL, CCR
 Certified Court Reporter
 Certificate No. 670

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