

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

July 19, 2017

*Tiffanie N. Harrison, CCR
P.O. Box 883
Little Rock, AR 72203*

BEFORE THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

July 19, 2017
8:30 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

MS. DEBORAH COFFMAN	Chairman
DR. IVY PFEFFER	Vice Chairman/Deputy Commissioner
DR. ERIC SAUNDERS	Asst. Commissioner - Fiscal & Administrative Services
MR. GREG ROGERS	Asst. Commissioner - Fiscal & Admin. Services
MS. STACY SMITH	Asst. Commissioner - Learning Services

ALSO APPEARING:

MS. ALEXANDRA BOYD	Public School Program Coordinator
MS. VIRGINIA PERRY	Public School Program Advisor

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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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good morning. Welcome to the July 19th meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel. I'd like to call the meeting to order and welcome everyone to the Arkansas Department of Education. I would ask at this time that you please silence all electronic devices.

This panel will -- this panel oversees the authorization, renewal, revision, and revocation of charters, and it is our goal to facilitate a fair and responsible hearing. I'll ask that each person coming to the microphone, please speak clearly into the microphone, state your name, and title for the record. As you continue to talk, I would ask that you continue to speak into the microphone for the benefit of this panel, as well as our viewing audience that is watching us today via live streaming.

This meeting is being live-streamed and recorded, and our court reporter, Ms. Tiffanie Harrison, is here today to develop a transcript of this meeting, which will also be posted on the Arkansas Department of Ed. website.

REPORTS

REPORT-1: CHAIR'S REPORT

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: So, good morning. And Ms.
2 Alexandra -- Ms. Boyd you are recognized to get us
3 started this morning. I don't have a chairs report.
4 Does anyone have a report? Then we'll start with
5 you.

6 REPORT-2: CHARTER SCHOOLS UNIT REPORT

7 MS. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just really
8 quickly -- well, if you guys can handle this
9 question, we can take care of it right now. We have
10 10 applications for open enrollment charter schools,
11 which will be heard next month in August. Currently,
12 we only have two dates for hearing on the August
13 calendar, and so we would like to add a date so that
14 only about three applications will be heard a day.

15 In addition, we also will have some amendment
16 requests, but they shouldn't be too long.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is your recommendation --
18 we have currently August 16th and 17th on the
19 calendar. Is your recommendation to add Tuesday or
20 Friday?

21 MS. BOYD: I don't have a recommendation. Either
22 works for us. Whatever makes sense for the calendar.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer?

24 DR. PFEFFER: I would recommend Tuesday be
25 added.

1 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: August 15th?

2 DR. PFEFFER: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All in agreement? Okay.

4 If you'll add August the 15th.

5 MS. BOYD: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And I'm assuming that they
7 will start at 8:30 as well?

8 MS. BOYD: Yes, ma'am.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right.

10 CONSENT AGENDA

11 1: MINUTES - May 17, 2017

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: On our Consent Agenda, we
13 have the minutes from May 17th. Have you had a
14 chance to look those over? Is there any discussion?
15 If not, I'll accept a motion to approve.

16 DR. PFEFFER: Motion to approve minutes.

17 MS. SMITH: Second.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion has been made by
19 Dr. Ivy Pfeffer, seconded by Stacy Smith to approve
20 the minutes for May 17, 2017. Any discussion? All
21 those in favor?

22 PANEL MEMBERS (Collectively) Aye.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: A little louder.

24 PANEL MEMBERS (Collectively) Aye.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? Motion

1 passed.

2 ACTION AGENDA

3 A-1: REQUEST FOR OPEN ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENT:
4 KIPP DELTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Ms. Perry, you
6 ready for Action Agenda Item 1, Request for Open
7 Enrollment Charter School Amendment from KIPP Delta
8 Public Schools.

9 MS. VIRGINIA PERRY: Good morning. Virginia
10 Perry, Program Director with the ADE Charter Unit.
11 The first item on the action agenda comes from KIPP
12 Delta Public Schools. It's an amendment request, and
13 on behalf of the school we have Scott Shirey, the
14 Executive Director here to speak today.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis, if you will give
16 us our process.

17 MS. DAVIS: Good morning. Jennifer Davis, Staff
18 Attorney for the Department. The procedures you're
19 going to follow for both action items today will be
20 that all persons wishing to provide any testimony to
21 you will need to be sworn in, with the exception of
22 attorney.

23 The applicant will have 20 minutes to make its
24 presentation to you for amendment, followed
25 collectively by 20 minutes for any opposition that

1 there may be. The applicant will then have an
2 additional five minutes to address any concerns or
3 questions that arose. You can then ask any questions
4 of the applicant, the Department, or anyone who you
5 feel may have the answers that you need, and you can
6 take the matter under advisement, or vote on it
7 today. If you vote on it today, you do have a Google
8 Doc that you can state your reason for your vote.

9 And just a reminder that any -- because this is
10 kind of considered a contract negotiation, anything
11 that the applicant agrees to, or states verbally,
12 that is different than what's in their presentation,
13 or their written materials, does become part of any
14 amendment that you may grant.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Davis. If
16 all the representatives from KIPP Delta Public
17 Schools will please stand, and anyone speaking in
18 opposition raise your right hand. Do you swear or
19 affirm that the testimony you're about to give shall
20 be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
21 truth?

22 REPRESENTATIVES (Collectively): I do.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Good morning, Mr. Shirey.

24 MR. SHIREY: Good morning.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: You may state your full

1 name and title for the record, and you may begin.

2 MR. SHIREY: Scott Shirey, Executive Director,
3 KIPP Delta Public Schools, and good morning, Chairman
4 Coffman and members of the Board. I do have a
5 PowerPoint, which I don't know if it's on the screen
6 or up for -- oh, there we go. So, you can see our
7 requests are laid out there. Number one, to increase
8 our enrollment cap in Blytheville from 810 students,
9 that's across nine grades, to 1,110 students starting
10 in the 2018-2019 school year.

11 Increase our grades served in Blytheville from
12 4-12 to K-12, starting in 2018-19 school year. And
13 we're going to ask for some flexibility on how we
14 phase in. I'll talk about that in a minute.

15 And then reconfigure KIPP Blytheville College
16 Preparatory School, to serve grades K-6 starting in
17 the 2018-2019 school year. And I'll sort of go
18 through all of this, and give the rationale, and
19 hopefully you can get the vision and we'll go from
20 there.

21 So, right now in our Blytheville School System
22 this upcoming school year, we had a 4-6 campus and a
23 7-12 campus, so that's the reason 2018-2019, we'd
24 like to go into a K-6, 7-12 model, and basically grow
25 our elementary program to include those younger

1 grades. Obviously, having 4-12 we want to make sure
2 we have the complete system for our students and
3 families, and having students at the lowest levels,
4 helps us complete that picture. Furthermore, we know
5 high schools are expensive to run; more than
6 elementary, so making sure we have the full model in
7 place.

8 You can see on the next slide the one possible
9 idea would be -- for next year, would be K-1 in 2018-
10 2019, K-2, 2019-2020, and then following K-3. This
11 is why we're asking for the opportunity to expand to
12 K-3, but to have flexibility in terms of what's the
13 best way to get there. And, obviously, we would want
14 to communicate that well in advance to the
15 Blytheville School District. We can circle back to
16 that. I'm sure there will be a few questions there.

17 Just in terms of achievement data, I think we're
18 doing okay. I'd like to do better, but as you can
19 see from the next couple of slides, we are
20 consistently outperforming the Blytheville School
21 District, and obviously our demographics are most
22 closely matched to the Blytheville School District,
23 in terms of poverty, in terms of race, and just in
24 terms of the population. Most of our students in
25 that area are from the Blytheville School District.

1 So, you can see the comparisons at the district
2 level, outperforming them in everything, with the
3 exception of writing, and you can also see school by
4 school. Although it's not apples to apples, we
5 consistently outperform them.

6 A couple of other highlights, beyond just the
7 test scores, we're really proud this year. You can
8 see -- what this is is a picture of a mural design
9 that our students drew up, and they were selected
10 across all the KIPP schools, 200 across the country,
11 to go to Las Vegas and do this mural, actually the
12 first week in August. So, it's a really cool
13 experience. They going to go paint this gigantic
14 mural, and again, they competed against students from
15 200 schools across the KIPP network and this was the
16 mural design that was chosen. So, beyond the
17 academic staff, there's some really exciting things
18 happening in Blytheville.

19 One other exciting bit of news from Blytheville,
20 there's one of our juniors who actually has our first
21 36, perfect ACT score, so we're really proud of that
22 accomplishment.

23 Getting back to sort of the design, currently --
24 we had the opportunity to purchase a school building
25 from the Blytheville School District a couple of

1 years ago. We renovated part of it, about 63,000
2 square feet. We renovated part of it, the part that
3 is not circled. The part that is circled has not
4 been renovated yet, so that's additional space that
5 will allow us to have a media center, additional
6 classrooms for this expansion, and that makes more
7 sense than us just building new buildings. And
8 obviously, like I said, we purchased that from the
9 Blytheville School District. It was a building they
10 weren't using, or were no longer going to use, so
11 it's a good use of resources in the community.

12 In order to -- and these are just some more
13 close-ups, and then the campus location. In order to
14 do that, there's a couple of other pieces on the
15 financial end. We're actually seeking approval for
16 10.6 million dollars in loans through New Market Tax
17 Credits. That's why we're here earlier than usual.
18 Usually we come in October or February, asking for
19 those expansions of upgrades, but given this
20 incredible opportunity, this deal will allow us to
21 fully renovate the central campus, and then construct
22 a construction for a multipurpose campus on our 7-12.
23 It's all modular, as we'd like to put in a gymnasium,
24 or stage, just some permanent facility.

25 So, combined with the USDA loan -- and I'll try

1 to break this down a little bit. You have a letter
2 in front of you, which explains it pretty well, so I
3 actually can point you to that right now. Ms. Boyd
4 passed this out. It's probably the best explanation.
5 I'd like to read the first couple of paragraphs.
6 We're seeking to approve 10.6 million dollars in
7 loans from New Market Tax Credits. In order to do
8 this, it's a partnership through Hope Enterprise
9 Corporation. We'll have a 99-year lease with KIPP
10 Delta Development Organization for this deal.

11 Next paragraph, these loans and real estate
12 transactions will allow KIPP Delta's Blytheville
13 Arkansas campus to be fully renovated for the
14 construction of a hardened multipurpose building on
15 its high school campus. The renovations at Central,
16 our elementary campus, will allow KIPP Delta to serve
17 students in grades kindergarten through sixth. So
18 those are the big pieces there.

19 If you skip down to the third paragraph, in 2016
20 the United States Department of Agriculture awarded
21 KIPP Delta Community Facilities loan obligation in
22 the amount of nearly 10 million dollars for a term of
23 40 years, at a fixed interest rate of 2.75 percent.
24 So, we thought we couldn't get any better than that,
25 2.75 percent over 40 years is pretty fantastic;

1 however, when you mix this with a New Market Tax
2 Credit opportunity -- and if you go down to the last
3 paragraph on that page, you can see the benefits to
4 KIPP Delta, and the students are pretty incredible.
5 We expect to save an additional 3.7 million dollars
6 in debt service payments, over the period, utilizing
7 the New Market Tax Credit Program, in conjunction
8 with the USDA loan.

9 So, just to put this all in perspective, if we
10 were to go to a traditional bank -- at the six
11 percent loan, we're actually saving close to 10
12 million dollars just through the USDA deal over 40
13 years. When you add the New Market Tax Credit in,
14 there is an additional savings of 3.7 million. So,
15 this is an opportunity that came to us, and partly
16 because of that opportunity, and because we wanted to
17 expand, we said this is a great time to take
18 advantage of it and belt out our Blytheville campus
19 to make sure we have the capacity to serve K-12 at a
20 very reasonable rate, which means that less of our
21 money will go into facilities, and more of our money
22 will go into students and programming.

23 I know that's a high-level summary. We did
24 submit this for approval through the Commissioner.
25 It was approved, as you can see on the next page.

1 So, that approval has been taken care of. And,
2 obviously, to take advantage of this opportunity, we
3 would -- we are seeking approval from the Board to
4 have permission to expand to those grades K-3. We
5 sort of walked through this page already with the New
6 Market Tax Credit Program overview, and how it works.
7 I know it's very technical, so I won't bore you with
8 all of that, unless there are specific questions, and
9 I'll do my best to answer all of those.

10 In summary, the big plan is we have two campuses
11 in Blytheville. We'd like the elementary campus to
12 serve K-6. We'd like the high school campus to serve
13 7-12. We have a plan to utilize USDA and New Market
14 Tax Credits, so we have proper facilities for our
15 students. Our academic scores are okay. We can get
16 better. We are still outperforming again, our peers,
17 but I think this opportunity will allow us to do
18 better, and giving our kids good -- our kids a stable
19 home.

20 And again, just to be clear, the flexibility we
21 are requesting is that you give us permission to
22 expand to K-3, except grant us a little bit of
23 flexibility in terms of how we phase in, over the
24 next two to three years, with the condition that we
25 communicate to the Blytheville School District in an

1 appropriate amount of time.

2 In other words, if we're doing K-1 next year,
3 let them now in March that we're doing K-1. If we
4 end up, because of leadership, having to -- or,
5 because of great leadership, if we're going to do K-3
6 all at once, let them know. Or just do third grade
7 -- depends on leadership. Again, we're here a little
8 earlier than expected, so we can get the New Market
9 Tax Credit deal passed through.

10 So, that was a mouthful, and I'll pause for
11 questions, and we can dive in deeper on any areas. I
12 appreciate you taking the time to listen to us today.

13 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Shirey. Ms.
14 Davis, is there anyone here to speak in opposition?
15 Mr. Shirey, do you have any final words before we
16 begin questions and answers?

17 MR. SHIREY: No, thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Dr. Saunders?

19 DR. SAUNDERS: Yeah, could you -- I wasn't real
20 clear. So, on the expansion of the grades, that's
21 not determined how that would look yet; did I
22 understand that correctly? That you would determine
23 that internally later?

24 MR. SHIREY: Yeah. So, currently our --
25 actually, I'll show you on this. So, currently in

1 this building, I don't know if you can see the laser,
2 but the parts that aren't blue, we'd taken advantage
3 of for our 4-6. We have one leader in that building
4 with 4-6. We are currently looking for an
5 exceptional school leader, who will help us grow
6 down, or complete that. So, depending on strength of
7 leadership, we want to phase in appropriately, and so
8 that might look like expanding down to third grade,
9 and it might make more sense to add K-1 and build
10 back up.

11 I don't have that full plan yet, because I don't
12 have the leader hired yet, but we do know that over
13 the next two to three years we want to make sure we
14 renovate that building and add K-3 so we can complete
15 the elementary model. Does that give you enough
16 clarity?

17 DR. SAUNDERS: I think so.

18 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Other questions?

19 DR. SAUNDERS: I did have one more.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Go ahead, Dr. Saunders.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: Just curious, do you know the
22 retention rate. I don't know mean "retention" in the
23 form that we use it, but how many of your students,
24 after their first year of enrollment, come back the
25 second year?

1 MR. SHIREY: Typically, we have across the
2 network 85 percent of students returning. When you
3 take out students who moved away from the community,
4 we usually cut that in about half, by a third. So,
5 in other words, over 90 percent of the students who
6 were with us, and continue to live in the area,
7 choose to return to KIPP Delta in the subsequent
8 year.

9 Blytheville, a year ago, had numbers that were
10 well below our KIPP Delta average. It's something we
11 worked incredibly hard on this year, and our
12 attrition rates were significantly cut in
13 Blytheville. The high-water mark for us is our
14 elementary school in Helena, which at the end of the
15 year, we had a 2.9 percent attrition, which is pretty
16 low. And so, there's a lot we can learn and bring
17 that to Blytheville.

18 DR. SAUNDERS: And I do want to point out,
19 looking at your student performance numbers, it looks
20 like you're doing a great job, and I just want to
21 commend you on that?

22 MR. SHIREY: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Davis, do you have any
24 issues to bring before us? Any additional questions?
25 I will now accept a motion. Dr. Saunders, do you

1 have more questions? You want to discuss?

2 DR. SAUNDERS: I guess I'm just a little uneasy
3 on how the roll out -- on the expansion, how it will
4 look. It doesn't include the -- when it will be.

5 MR. SHIREY: If I can suggest, I would be
6 comfortable with an imposed deadline to say if we can
7 get -- or maybe if we can get permission to go K-3
8 with the notification of how we're going to phase
9 that in, to be delivered in a -- you know, to the
10 Blytheville School District by whatever it is, March
11 31st, whatever is a reasonable time period. We can
12 put that in writing, because it is important and we
13 want to make sure we're -- and I think this is why
14 this process exists, that we're fair and transparent,
15 and they have time to plan as well.

16 The other thing I want to point out, we've done
17 a lot of demographic studies on this. So, when we
18 increase our cap from 810 to 1,110, when we look at
19 kids in Mississippi County, and we run buses across
20 the area, there's a student population of about 5,000
21 students. It's larger than the Helena communities
22 and Forrest City communities. So, that 1,110 would
23 just put us over about 20 percent of students, and we
24 think that's pretty reasonable.

25 We believe in choice, and we want to make sure

1 that the school districts obviously have the
2 opportunity to perform. We're not trying to
3 monopolize anything, just provide a choice. So, that
4 total enrollment count would just be about 20 percent
5 of the area.

6 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: When do you begin your
7 application process?

8 MR. SHIREY: We typically will start recruiting
9 in January. We have our lottery in April.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So, by sometime in early March
11 or mid March, you would kind of have an idea of how
12 many students would be applying?

13 MR. SHIRY: Yes. We could send a letter and say
14 it looks like -- I mean, I can imagine one or two
15 scenarios, because the way that we're structured, we
16 have a lot of requests for third grade, so it might
17 be the most logical thing that our school, our 4-6
18 school is great. They've got a bigger capacity,
19 let's roll them down to three. We notify Blytheville
20 School District by March we're adding third grade, as
21 we phase into K-3.

22 It might also make sense that we found an
23 incredible elementary leader, who has the right
24 background, who's been trained over the course of the
25 year with us, and we want to go K-1, and roll up.

1 Again, we would notify the Blytheville School
2 District, and say we're including K-1, and opening K-
3 1 this year. Again, flexibility on how we get there.
4 I think it's important to let them know we plan to go
5 K-3, and just communicate transparently how we will
6 phase-in.

7 DR. SAUNDERS: So, just to clarify, so a
8 notification will be given to the local district by
9 March 31st ?

10 MR. SHIREY: Yeah, and I'd like to put the
11 parameters in writing, so that it'd help the
12 accountability on that, so it's not just my word. As
13 Ms. Davis said, make sure we put that as part of the
14 agreement.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So, as a superintendent, if
16 you were to get that letter by March 31st that
17 indicated the potential number of students --

18 MR. SHIREY: And grades.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- and grades, then that would
20 help you to make staffing decisions within the
21 timeline?

22 MR. SHIREY: (Non-verbal response in the
23 affirmative.)

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any other questions for
25 clarification? Mr. Rogers?

1 MR. ROGERS: Is there an expiration time for the
2 tax credits that you are applying for. Are they set
3 to expire?

4 MR. SHIREY: Yes. I don't have that specific
5 date, but I think we were trying to -- do you know
6 the date of -- before the end of the calendar year.

7 MR. ROGERS: Which is why you're --

8 MR. SHIREY: Which is why we're here. Which is
9 why we had to do this request off schedule.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Davis?

11 MS. DAVIS: So, I have that notification by March
12 31st to the Blytheville School District. I'd also
13 request that that notification be sent to the Charter
14 Office as well, so that way we are aware of that
15 plan. And I think there was a confusion. It was
16 mentioned an enrollment cap of 1,110, but their
17 paperwork had requested 1,100, so a difference of 10
18 students. I just want to make sure we're clear on
19 which number it is.

20 MR. SHIREY: What is in the official --

21 MS. DAVIS: Eleven hundred.

22 MR. SHIREY: Eleven hundred is fine.

23 MS. SMITH: Okay. So, when I'm looking at some
24 of the documentation, I'm looking at it as a school
25 district and then as an individual school. So,

1 Forrest City, what grades does Forrest City currently
2 have?

3 MR. SHIREY: Forrest City would be serving grades
4 5-7 this year. We have authorization to go to 5-8.

5 MS. SMITH: Okay. Then, KIPP Delta College Prep,
6 that's K-12?

7 MR. SHIREY: We'll fall Pre-K through 12. We
8 actually serve about 22 percent of Phillips and Lee
9 County when combined. We're doing all of the
10 demographic analysis for each community we serve, so
11 we can be thoughtful in our planning.

12 MS. SMITH: Okay. And so, I guess I'm looking at
13 the information here. So, your maximum enrollment
14 for KIPP Delta Public Schools total is 2,310. Is
15 that all three schools combined?

16 MR. SHIREY: That's all three communities
17 combined.

18 MS. SMITH: Three combined, okay. And so, we're
19 asking specifically for the Blytheville one to add
20 200 additional spots?

21 MR. SHIREY: From 810 to 1100.

22 MS. SMITH: And so, that would then put the max
23 enrollment -- so we would be adding an additional 200
24 spots to this 2310 as well, correct? I mean, I'm
25 just making -- I'm following.

1 MR. SHIREY: Yeah, let's do 290 spots, from the
2 810 to the 1100 for the Blytheville Community, which
3 would increase of the overall --

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: To 2600?

5 MR. SHIREY: Yes.

6 MS. SMITH: Okay. All right. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any other questions? I'll
8 accept a motion when you're ready.

9 DR. SAUNDERS: I'd like to make a motion to
10 approve.

11 MR. ROGERS: Second.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion has been made by Dr.
13 Saunders, seconded by Mr. Rogers to approve the
14 amendment request for KIPP Delta Public Schools. Any
15 discussion? All those in favor?

16 PANEL MEMBERS (Collectively) Aye.

17 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Any opposed? Motion
18 passes. Congratulations.

19 MR. SHIREY: Thank you-all. Have a great day.

20 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: If you will wait just a
21 moment, each member will respond. They have to put
22 it in writing about their decision, and then they'll
23 read those responses to you.

24 MR. SHIREY: Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Dr. Pfeffer?

1 DR. PFEFFER: I voted in favor of the motion. I
2 have no concerns of their planned expansion with
3 appropriate funding.

4 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Mr. Rogers?

5 MR. ROGERS: I voted for it. I thought it was a
6 good opportunity to take advantage of the tax credits
7 before they expire to allow -- to offer additional
8 choices to students.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Saunders?

10 DR. SAUNDERS: I voted in favor, and I don't have
11 any concerns.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And Ms. Smith?

13 MS. SMITH: I voted for; no concerns.

14 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Shirey.

15 MR. SHIREY: Thank you-all.

16 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Are we ready to move on?

17 A-2: REQUEST FOR OPEN ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENT: THE
18 EXCEL CENTER

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Ms. Perry, action item
20 number 2, Request for Open Enrollment Charter School
21 Amendment for the Excel Center.

22 MS. PERRY: Yes, ma'am. It's been brought to my
23 attention that there is no amendment request for the
24 Excel Center, but Mr. Brian Marsh, the interim
25 President and CEO, would like to come and address the

1 panel to give an update on their status.

2 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Okay. Ms. Davis, if this
3 is just a discussion, then no need to swear in, or --

4 MS. DAVIS: Yeah, that would be correct.

5 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: And our timelines are --

6 MS. DAVIS: Right. So, I mean, if you decide at
7 some point to take action on it, then no, but if
8 you're not taking any action, because they're not
9 requesting it, then you're good.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: All right. Good morning,
11 Mr. Marsh. If you will state your name and title for
12 the record.

13 MR. MARSH: Brian Marsh, interim president and
14 CEO of Goodwill Industries of Arkansas. Good
15 morning, Madam Chair, and esteemed members of the
16 panel. I would like to update the panel on the
17 progress towards the adult high school known as the
18 Excel Center and Goodwill.

19 We are currently -- have been working through
20 the construction of the classroom area that will be
21 completed in August. We have hired three of the 12
22 members of the staff. We have identified three
23 additional members that we anticipate offering
24 positions within the next 10 days. We do have the
25 need for a director. Our director has resigned, and

1 we are in the process of interviewing and hiring
2 another director.

3 We are on track for opening, and excited with
4 both our training and our engagement of our board,
5 the school board, and the Goodwill board, and we just
6 wanted to make ourselves -- avail ourselves for any
7 questions or concerns, so that we can ensure that the
8 panel understands where we are, and how things are
9 progressing.

10 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Panel, any questions?

11 MS. SMITH: Just a comment. I'm actually looking
12 forward to this actually being off the ground. When
13 we think about charters and what they should be, they
14 should be innovative, they should be different, and
15 this is. And it's also meeting a population in our
16 state that we currently do not meet their needs, and
17 if we're going to look at taking people that have
18 dropped out, or for whatever reason haven't been
19 successful in the actual K-12 system, once they're
20 over 21, and they're looking for that degree, that's
21 a high school degree, I think this is something that
22 can make a difference for a lot of families in
23 Arkansas. So, I'm looking forward to actually seeing
24 this come to fruition.

25 MR. MARSH: We're very excited. We've had 130

1 individuals express interest, and 44 already
2 completed applications.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: That's excellent.

4 MS. SMITH: Well, and I again want to note that
5 this is not taking away funding from public school
6 funds in any way, because they are -- have the grant
7 backing, and so I think this is a great opportunity.

8 MR. MARSH: Our Goodwill board has pledged
9 support for the three years that our charter is
10 active, and in support, they've pledged over a
11 million and a quarter a year to support the school.

12 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Excellent. Dr. Saunders?

13 DR. SAUNDERS: I want to muddy the waters just a
14 little bit here, just for an explanation. So, I met
15 with them this morning concerning the possible
16 amendment on the school year dates, and it's -- it
17 kind of ran into some issues, and it was not that a
18 student cannot enroll after a certain time. It would
19 not inhibit that, but issue with trying to start a,
20 if you would, a reporting cycle after other reporting
21 cycles have -- for example, we still need to collect
22 cycle one. We still need to collect cycle two.

23 For federal and state reasons, at those times,
24 by those deadlines. So, you know, there's not a
25 mechanism in place to be able to say October 1

1 numbers -- to report October 1 numbers in December,
2 as the simple version.

3 And so, we discussed what the issues were, so
4 basically, the idea was -- didn't necessarily need
5 that waiver, but we continue to do all the reporting
6 requirements that we have, and report them as they
7 are throughout the year, on the different cycle
8 reports. So, whatever that case may be. And it's
9 really a first-year thing, but it -- that way it did
10 not stop them from being able to move forward.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you. Dr. Pfeffer?

12 DR. PFEFFER: And what's your planned opening
13 date?

14 MR. MARSH: Planned opening date is October 16th,
15 classes start.

16 DR. PFEFFER: Okay. We look forward to visiting
17 when we have opportunities.

18 MR. MARSH: Excellent. You're all welcomed to
19 come up and visit the facility, and we'd love to take
20 you on a tour.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: I want to see it.

22 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: We accept.

23 MR. MARSH: Wonderful.

24 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: I think as you heard, we're
25 all very excited. As with any school, or school

1 district, in our state, if you need us, we're right
2 here. Feel free to call us, any of us. We're more
3 than happy to serve, support, in any way that we can,
4 so that you're successful.

5 MR. MARSH: Wonderful. We have a very good
6 working relationship with Ms. Boyd, and her
7 department, and feel very comfortable in moving
8 forward. So, no issues.

9 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you.

10 MR. MARSH: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Thank you for coming today.
12 We appreciate having that update. Ms. Boyd?

13 MS. BOYD: That's all we have for today, Madam
14 Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Is there any other issue
16 before us today, Ms. Davis?

17 MS. DAVIS: (Non-verbal response in the
18 negative.)

19 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Panel members do you have
20 anything else? I'll accept a motion to adjourn.

21 DR. SAUNDERS: So moved.

22 DR. PFEFFER: Second.

23 CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Motion made by Dr.
24 Saunders, seconded by Dr. Pfeffer. All those in
25 favor?

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PANEL MEMBERS (Collectively): Aye.

CHAIRPERSON COFFMAN: Meeting is adjourned.

Thank you everyone.

(The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 a.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss.
COUNTY OF PULASKI)

I, TIFFANIE N. HARRISON, 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 July 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.

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TIFFANIE N. HARRISON, CCR
Certified Court Reporter
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