

**Minutes
State Board of Education Meeting
May 30, 2017**

The State Board of Education met Tuesday, May 30, 2017, in the Arkansas Department of Education Auditorium. Chair Mireya Reith called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Present: Mireya Reith, Chair; Dr. Jay Barth, Vice-Chair; Dr. Fitz Hill; Diane Zook; Ouida Newton; Susan Chambers; Brett Williamson; Charisse Dean; Johnny Key, Commissioner.

Absent: Joe Black and Meghan Ables, 2016 Teacher of the Year.

Action Agenda

Review of Charter Authorizing Panel Decision to Revoke the Charter of Covenant Keepers Charter School

Charter School Director Ms. Alexandra Boyd said on Wednesday, April 19, 2017, the Charter Authorizing Panel met and voted to revoke the charter of Covenant Keepers College Preparatory Charter School, effective June 30, 2017, with a vote of six-to-one. She said on Thursday, May 11, 2017, the State Board of Education voted to review the decision made by the Panel.

Staff Attorney Ms. Jennifer Davis reviewed the hearing procedures.

Office of Education Policy Dr. Sarah McKenzie presented data regarding Covenant Keepers's academic performance. She said the school is performing mostly similar to Little Rock middle schools. She said the longitudinal student growth score is 80 and scored similarly to the state average.

Attorney Mr. Jess Askew said there are two boards for the school. City of Fire Community Development Inc. has a sponsoring entity board, and the school has a school board. He said the school has a positive fund balance. He said there are no issues on the audit. He said the school paid back an overpayment. He said Dr. Tatum received a salary increase in 2016. He said in March 2016 the school charter was renewed for three (3) years. He said the school has experienced academic improvement. He said the school is willing to provide credit card receipts. He said it is reasonable to review academic distress issues.

Superintendent Dr. Valerie Tatum said ADE expressed concerns about student growth. She asked how we got here after being renewed last year.

Covenant Keepers Board Member Mr. Ernest Sanders said the school board receives an extensive financial report each month.

Accountant for Covenant Keepers Mr. Deron Hamilton said his office provides a board report including revenue and summary of expenses each month. He said the school board members ask appropriate questions regarding the finances.

Mr. Askew said a grant from City of Fire Community Development was provided to Covenant Keepers. He said the grant funds were received from the Walton Family Foundation. He said there is \$123,000.00 fund balance today. He said there are private funders willing to support charter schools.

Public School Accountability Coordinator Mr. Elbert Harvey said the school improvement unit did not identify any red flags regarding the school's latest 45-day report.

Assistant Commissioner for Public School Accountability Ms. Annette Barnes said she made a previous motion to renew the school's charter for three years. She said the charter has shown growth.

ADE Finance Coordinator Ms. Alisa Moore said the audit indicated a negative balance. She said all funds are taken into consideration. She said during the on-site visit in November 2016 several red flags were identified and additional documents were requested. She said she would have expected to see a form with proper approvals (signatures) that indicated proof of reconciliation.

ADE Fiscal Support Coordinator Ms. Cynthia Smith said she did correspond with Ms. Alexandra Boyd and Mr. Greg Rogers to request the additional documents. Ms. Smith said the negative balance reported for FY2016 was the impetus for the on-site visit in November 2016. She said the even amount payments to American Express was a red flag to ask for more detailed information.

Ms. Boyd said she did talk with Dr. Tatum on the phone and requested the additional information.

Assistant Commissioner for Fiscal and Administrative Services Mr. Greg Rogers stated that he sent emails to Dr. Tatum also requesting the additional information.

Dr. Tatum said at the end of the first five years, the school reviewed their goals. She said the mission and vision was changed in preparation for the three-year renewal. She said she discusses the goals with the school board monthly.

Finance Specialist for Arkansas Public School Resource Center Mr. Scott McRae said the fund balance was a result of an overpayment from ADE that had to be repaid to the state. He said although the school year ended on June 30, 2016, the school was able to make the repayment before the books were closed for the school year resulting in the negative fund balance. He projected to end this year with \$59,000. He said the

balance was in line with previous end of year balances. He said it was not uncommon to receive additional local funds.

Mr. Hamilton said he has worked for Covenant Keepers for four to five years. He said at the end of each month the cash is reconciled. He said the American Express expenses are approved, coded, and payments are reconciled monthly. He said he has not seen a pattern of even numbered expenses.

Dr. Tatum said the policy is that all expenses of \$10,000 or greater must be approved by the school board.

Covenant Keepers Assistant to the Director Ms. Marquita Hill said the even numbered expenses were made to vendors.

Ms. Smith identified employees listed on the website as employees that are not identified in APSCN as receiving a W-2 form. She said a vendor receives a 1099 form.

Mr. Hamilton said the employees received 1099 forms. He said they may not have been coded correctly in APSCN.

Ms. Tatum said the website may need to be updated to provide more specific information.

Dr. McKenzie said proficiency has improved a little. She said the analysis presented included all students in the school.

Dr. Tatum said she has been transparent with the community regarding the academic distress status. She said parents are still supportive of the school because they are looking for a more complete package of services for their children. She said the school improvement office has been very supportive in focusing on the academic needs of students.

Covenant Keepers School Improvement Specialist and Data Specialist Ms. Jenna Jones said she worked with teachers to develop pre-tests and mid-module assessments. She said the ACT Aspire interim assessments helped teachers monitor the progress of students. She said the work has made an impact on the teaching culture.

Dr. Tatum said four of the six school board members have announced they will leave the board effective June 30, 2017. She said board members are appointed by the board president. She said the school will have vacant math and science positions.

Dr. Tatum said she felt attacked during the Charter Authorizing Panel meeting. She felt the questions were outside of the issue of academic distress. She said the experience was eye-opening, yet painful. She said she is now more committed to serving the students and the school.

Ms. Boyd said the students could enroll in their traditional zoned school or vacant positions in local charter schools.

State Board members discussed the information presented.

Ms. Barnes said 2017 assessment data would be received in July. She said it would be October before the ADE has additional data to determine progress.

Ms. Boyd said lotteries are conducted in February or March. She said Covenant Keepers would begin the renewal process again in December 2018.

Public Comment Little Rock City Director Ms. Joan Adcock said students and families feel safe in Covenant Keepers.

Public Comment Superintendent Dr. Valerie Tatum said she has asked Mr. Scott Smith Executive Director of Arkansas Public School Research Center to help find an academic leader for the school. She asked the Board to not put the school on probation. She promised the school would improve.

Executive Director of Arkansas Public School Research Center Mr. Scott Smith said the role of APSRC would include working with Covenant Keepers to identify a future academic leader, make the ADE aware of academic or fiscal needs, and report evidence of progress to the State Board.

Ms. Chambers moved, seconded by Mr. Williamson, to not revoke the charter and to request additional information as soon as it is available (November State Board action agenda) to include academic performance and growth, and to use the standard communication/reporting procedures with the ADE regarding any financial concerns. The motion carried unanimously.

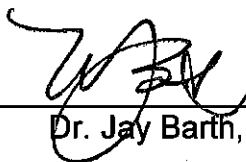
Adjournment

Ms. Dean moved, seconded by Ms. Chambers, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1:34 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Deborah Coffman



Johnny Key, Commissioner



Dr. Jay Barth, Chair