

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

October 17, 2023

9:00 a.m.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

DR. MATTHEW SUTHERLIN, CHAIR - ADE Coordinator of Standards
Systems Support
MR. PHIL BALDWIN Retired Bank Executive
DR. SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY Division of CTE Associate Director
MS. TOYCE NEWTON Former Board of Education Member

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MR. STEPHEN REYNOLDS
MS. KALEE HAYWOOD

ALSO APPEARING:

MS. DORIE SUMMONS DESE Charter Schools Director

LOCATION:

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

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

I N D E X

PRELIMINARY MATTERS 3

CONSENT AGENDA 3

PROCEDURES 4

1) CROSS COUNTY ELEMENTARY TECH. ACADEMY 5

2) GARFIELD SCHOLARS' ACADEMY 15

ADJOURNMENT 38

CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER 39

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Good morning. The October
3 17, 2023 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is
4 called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to the
5 Department of Education and ask that you please
6 silence all of your electronic devices.

7 The goal is to facilitate a fair and responsible
8 hearing; so, therefore, I ask that each person
9 speaking please state your name and title for the
10 record. I ask that you continue to speak clearly
11 into the microphone throughout your presentation for
12 the benefit of the Panel, this audience, and the
13 viewing audience. The meeting is being live-streamed
14 and recorded, and a transcript of the meeting will be
15 posted on the DESE website.

16 All right. Good morning, everybody. Good
17 morning to the Panel Members that are hear and
18 online. We have Dr. Wright-McMurray online, as well
19 as Ms. Newton.

CONSENT AGENDA

20
21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And we have a consent
22 agenda before us today. If there's no questions,
23 then I'll accept a motion to pass the consent agenda.

24 MR. BALDWIN: So moved.

25 MS. NEWTON: So moved.

1 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay. So I have a motion
2 by Mr. Baldwin and a second by Ms. Newton. All those
3 in favor.

4 MR. BALDWIN: Aye.

5 MS. NEWTON: Aye.

6 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Aye.

7 DR. Wright-McMurray?

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Aye.

9 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

10 All right. The motion passes.

11 **ACTION AGENDA PROCEDURES**

12 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Ms. Haywood,
13 would you like to come up and give us the proceeding
14 procedures?

15 MS. HAYWOOD: Hi. Good morning. My name is
16 Kalee Haywood, and I am with DESE Legal. And I'm
17 just going to quickly review the proceedings and the
18 procedure for how we move forward with the action
19 agenda.

20 Each party will have 20 minutes to present their
21 amendment or request that they're asking for. Any
22 opposition would then also have 20 minutes to present
23 their side. And then if there is opposition, the
24 applicant would have 5 more minutes to respond to any
25 arguments of the opposition. As far as I know, we

1 have not received any opposition to any of the
2 requests today.

3 All right. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Thank you very much.

5 MS. HAYWOOD: You're welcome.

6 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Just to state for the
7 record, we will be reviewing the presentation for
8 Garfield and then also Cross County today. District
9 conversions and Premier have been removed from the
10 agenda for today. We will revisit those next month.
11 So I just wanted to put that on the record.

12 And, then, Ms. Summons, are you ready with our
13 first item?

14 **1) CONSIDERATION OF THE CROSS COUNTY ELEMENTARY TECHNOLOGY**
15 **ACADEMY AMENDMENT REQUEST**

16 MS. SUMMONS: Good morning. Dorie Summons,
17 DESE Charter Office.

18 Cross County Elementary Technology Academy is
19 requesting a waiver of the Rules Governing Class Size
20 and Teaching Load, Section 3.01.3 and Section 4.01,
21 and Arkansas Code 6-17-812.

22 Mr. Prince is representing Cross County School
23 District.

24 MS. STACY: Good morning. I'm Jessica Stacy,
25 the principal for Cross County Elementary.

1 We're here today seeking a Class Size waiver for
2 our current 4th grade class, to increase the
3 individual class size of this grade to a maximum of
4 four additional students through the '25/'26 school
5 year when this class will be -- will complete 6th
6 grade and move to our high school. We currently have
7 60 students total between our two 4th grade
8 classrooms.

9 While this class has always been large, this
10 year we had an increase in board-to-board transfers,
11 along with four students who moved into our district
12 and enrolled after school began on August 2, 2023,
13 and two students who moved into the district and
14 enrolled at the end of July.

15 Also, in late July, finding another teacher was
16 not possible. We hired our final teacher, a
17 5th-grade math teacher, at the very end of June, and
18 she was the sole qualified applicant at the time.

19 At our school we have several items in place to
20 help with having a class size that is a few students
21 over the 28-per-class limit for 4th grade. We have a
22 special education teacher in the ELA classroom for an
23 hour each day to support students with IEPs or other
24 struggling students. We have our NIET system of
25 support, which includes strong data-driven PLC

1 meetings. Our master teacher conducts field testing
2 with the 4th grade, where their progress and data are
3 closely monitored and tracked before being presented
4 to all of the teachers in our PLC meetings. So she's
5 with the 4th-grade students several times per week.

6 And our district has implemented Kagen
7 Cooperative Learning district-wide, which provides
8 structures and accountability for students to learn
9 from each other in small groups, which aids in
10 managing a large class.

11 With the implementation of these systems, we're
12 confident that we can provide our students with high-
13 quality instruction.

14 Thank you for your time.

15 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And I didn't want to
16 interrupt you while you were speaking. But --

17 MS. STACY: Uh-huh.

18 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: -- can I -- can I get you
19 to swear that --

20 MS. STACY: Oh.

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: -- what you said -- yeah,
22 it's okay.

23 MS. STACY: I'm sorry.

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: It's okay. So do you swear
25 that the testimony you have given is the truth, the

1 whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

2 MS. STACY: I do.

3 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you very
4 much. Appreciate it.

5 Do you have any questions, Mr. Baldwin?

6 MR. BALDWIN: So I appreciate the discussion.

7 MS. STACY: Yes.

8 MR. BALDWIN: And I'm looking at your enrollment
9 report.

10 MS. STACY: Um-hum.

11 MR. BALDWIN: And it shows 61 -- I think it
12 shows 61 in 4th grade.

13 MS. STACY: So we do have one homeschool student
14 who only spends about 40 minutes a day with us --

15 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

16 MS. STACY: -- and he's included in that number.
17 So he's there just for the --

18 MR. BALDWIN: I see.

19 MS. STACY: -- just for the last 40 minutes of
20 the day.

21 MR. BALDWIN: So is that -- is that two classes?

22 MS. STACY: That's two classes, yes.

23 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

24 MS. STACY: Two teachers.

25 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. That's -- that was my

1 question.

2 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay.

3 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And -- and what class is
5 that student present for?

6 MS. STACY: Science.

7 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Science. Okay.

8 MS. STACY: Yes.

9 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay. Dr. Wright-McMurray,
10 do you have any questions?

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I don't. I would like to
12 thank the district for giving a very detailed
13 explanation of how they're going to provide those
14 additional supports to students that may have
15 additional needs above their peers as they're
16 increasing that enrollment. So that did answer the
17 questions that I initially had in reviewing their
18 material.

19 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

20 MS. Newton?

21 (ZOOM AUDIO INTERFERENCE.)

22 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Ms. Newton, did you have
23 any questions?

24 MS. NEWTON: No, I don't have any questions.

25 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay. All right. Thank

1 you.

2 Anybody else have any other questions?

3 (NO AUDIBLE RESPONSE.)

4 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. If there are no
5 other questions, I'll entertain a motion.

6 MR. BALDWIN: I'll make a motion to approve the
7 request as stated.

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Second.

9 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Mr. Reynolds is coming up.

10 MR. REYNOLDS: I was just going to come up and
11 give my legal review real quick.

12 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay.

13 MR. REYNOLDS: I did have one --

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Oh, sorry.

15 MR. REYNOLDS: -- I just have one clarifying
16 thing. So I spoke with the charter, and based on
17 their rationale for their waiver and based on their
18 plan, my recommendation would be that they rescind
19 the 4.01, the Teaching Load section of the Class Size
20 and Teaching Load rules, and the accompanying statute
21 that goes along with that section of rules, and just
22 limit their waiver to Section 3 of the Class Size and
23 Teaching Load rules, which just deals with class
24 size, and the accompanying standard 1-A.5.

25 So it would leave 1-A.5 -- the waiver would

1 leave 1-A.5 and include Section 3 of the Class Size
2 and Teaching Load rules, because that's really all
3 they need.

4 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Um-hum.

5 MR. REYNOLDS: So I'll ask for the charter to
6 verify that on the record, that they want to make
7 that amendment, and then we can have a motion.

8 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you.

9 MR. REYNOLDS: Sorry about that.

10 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: No, you're good.

11 MS. STACY: Okay. That's -- that will work.

12 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you.

13 MR. REYNOLDS: All right.

14 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. We'll go back
15 to -- if there are no more questions, then I'll
16 entertain a motion.

17 MR. BALDWIN: What exactly did he say?

18 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Chair Sutherland?

19 MR. BALDWIN: Sorry.

20 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So he was clarifying that
21 it's basically just the Class Size section of the
22 rules that they're waiving --

23 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: -- not the Teaching Load
25 portion. So the Teaching Load -- Class Size would be

1 -- in this case, you're looking at 28 students. And
2 so they're going over that 28 students as opposed to
3 the Teaching Load which would be 150 students a day.
4 And so they're not waiving that portion; just the
5 Class Size portion.

6 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

7 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Does that make -- make
8 sense?

9 MR. REYNOLDS: That's right.

10 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah. Yeah.

11 MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you for explaining that.

12 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Oh, sorry. Sorry. I was
13 explaining from a Standards perspective.

14 MR. REYNOLDS: No, that's exactly right.

15 MR. BALDWIN: So in your request are you going
16 to amend that, I guess, to remove the Class Size --

17 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Well --

18 MR. BALDWIN: -- waiver request and just have --
19 because it's titled as both.

20 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So the rules -- the rules
21 are both -- "Class Size" and "Teaching Load" is the
22 name of the rules.

23 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And so that's the reason
25 it's that way. But I'll let Mr. Reynolds --

1 MR. REYNOLDS: Yeah. So Section 3 is -- deals
2 with just Class Size; Section 4 of the rules deals
3 with Teaching Load. And the charter doesn't need --
4 based on their rationale for their waiver, they don't
5 need the Teaching Load section of the rules. So I'm
6 asking that they limit -- limit their waiver to the
7 Class Size section, which is Section 3.

8 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay.

9 MR. BALDWIN: Which is Section 4.

10 MR. REYNOLDS: Section 3.

11 MR. BALDWIN: Section 3?

12 MR. REYNOLDS: Section 3 is Class Size; Section
13 4 is Teaching Load.

14 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

15 MR. REYNOLDS: The rules encompass both, but I'm
16 just --

17 MR. BALDWIN: So we'd be waiving Section 3?

18 MR. REYNOLDS: Right.

19 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

20 MR. REYNOLDS: Right.

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Any other questions online?

22 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Chair, this is Sonja. How
23 are you?

24 A couple of things: One, having a bit of
25 difficulty hearing panel discussions on our end.

1 And then, two, so just for my clarification, the
2 initial motion that was set forth, does that now need
3 to be amended, or are we moving forward with that
4 same motion?

5 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: I don't think --

6 MR. BALDWIN: I think we need to make a new
7 motion --

8 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

9 MR. BALDWIN: -- because it's a bit different.

10 So I would make that motion that we allow you
11 all to waive Section 3, that's the Rules Governing
12 Class Size, and then accomplish your request of the
13 four additional students.

14 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And we would need to waive
15 1-A.5 to the standard.

16 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. That's --

17 MS. NEWTON: I, too, am having some problems
18 hearing. I think I know generally what Mr. Baldwin's
19 motion is, but there is some interruptions.

20 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: I think they're working on
21 that now. Can you hear us now?

22 MS. NEWTON: I can hear you. I could always
23 hear you. I just couldn't understand all of what was
24 being said.

25 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So the motion was -- and

1 correct me if I'm wrong -- but to waive Section 3 of
2 the Class Size and Teaching Load rules and Standard
3 1-A.5.

4 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

5 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Do I have a second?

6 (NO AUDIBLE RESPONSE.)

7 MR. BALDWIN: They may not have heard that.

8 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Do I have a second?

9 MS. NEWTON: I'll second.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Oh, sorry.

11 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay.

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I did. I seconded.

13 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

14 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay.

15 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I was on mute. Sorry.

16 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay. All right. Thanks.

17 So I have a motion and a second. All those in favor?

18 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

19 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All those opposed -- which
20 we don't have any.

21 All right, then the motion passes. Thank you
22 very much.

23 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you.

24 **2) CONSIDERATION OF THE GARFIELD SCHOLARS' ACADEMY NEW**

25 **OPEN-ENROLLMENT CHARTER SCHOOL AMENDMENT**

1 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right, Ms. Summons.

2 MS. SUMMONS: Okay. Garfield Scholars' Academy
3 has submitted an application to establish an
4 open-enrollment charter school beginning in the
5 '24/'25 academic year. The charter will follow a
6 traditional educational model. The applicant was
7 asked to provide additional information, and they
8 came before the panel in August. They're here this
9 morning.

10 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

11 All those who plan on testifying for the
12 charter, if you'd stand and raise your right hand.
13 All right. Do you affirm that the testimony you're
14 about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and
15 nothing but the truth?

16 (ALL WITNESSES ANSWER AFFIRMATIVELY)

17 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you very
18 much.

19 DR. KENNON: Okay. Good morning.

20 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Good morning.

21 DR. KENNON: I am Dr. Melanie Kennon. I am the
22 Chair of the Garfield Educational Foundation. And we
23 were asked to take a look at some issues in our
24 original application and answer some questions a
25 little more fully for you.

1 The first one, you have a -- should've been
2 given a copy of the new and improved budget. That
3 budget was crafted along with Ken Rich with -- who's
4 Director of Finance -- Financial Services for APSRC.
5 And so we're very comfortable with it and confident
6 that it will provide us with the opportunities we
7 need to educate those students at Garfield.

8 You may ask how we were able to go from a
9 shortfall in our original budget to a surplus. We
10 streamlined a staffing model. We will have no rent
11 in the first several years, so that freed up a lot of
12 money. Our new location already has furniture,
13 equipment, such as classroom televisions,
14 whiteboards, etc., playground, kitchen equipment that
15 we will be able to utilize and not have to buy at
16 this point. We've -- there are additional federal
17 monies, which I was unaware of at the time, that can
18 serve as revenues. And we made some salary
19 adjustments to non-instructional personnel.

20 So we were able to bring our first-year surplus
21 to \$69,985.75, and our second-year surplus was
22 brought to \$130,094.58. We were very careful and
23 specific in adding our totals up for curriculum,
24 etc., and were able to -- to really make a huge
25 difference in that.

1 We also budgeted for 150 students. You asked us
2 what our bottom line was, and the bottom line is 80
3 students. We have -- in order to -- if we don't get
4 more than 80 students, then we -- the way we would
5 address that is to combine grade levels when
6 possible, which fits into our model anyway of
7 multi-age grouping, streamlining staff in that way.
8 We would scale back the TEAMS approach until we got
9 more students and outsource janitorial services.

10 So those were some of the ways that we thought
11 that we would be able to open the doors, 80 students
12 and above, if we needed to.

13 Now, having said that, according to -- I want to
14 also speak about the pool of students that we have at
15 -- in that general geographic area. According to the
16 Rogers Public School attendance zone, there are 116
17 elementary students in Garfield school zone. This
18 year, Garfield Elementary has 91 students that are
19 currently enrolled in that area. Many of them had
20 gone ahead and transitioned into the Rogers School
21 District, knowing that that was on the horizon with
22 the closing of the school.

23 We have about 10 to 15 students that are
24 school-choicing to Pea Ridge currently. However,
25 within that large geographical area, in the Garfield

1 zone there are 1,050 children who are potential
2 students for Garfield Scholars' Academy.
3 Little Flock has a pool of 532 students. Avoca has a
4 pool of 250 students. Grace Hill has a pool of 395
5 students.

6 And as we distributed -- we put out a survey to
7 families on Facebook, through the water bill in
8 Garfield, and various avenues. And as we distributed
9 the survey to determine potential enrollment and the
10 sustainability of Garfield Scholars' Academy, we
11 found great interest in having a local school,
12 particularly one that meets the needs of this
13 agricultural community. We also found homeschool
14 parents who now wanted their children to attend
15 Garfield, as well as interest from parents who live
16 in Eureka Springs and drive past the school on U.S.
17 62 to work in Rogers every morning.

18 Currently, the results of our survey, I'm happy
19 to announce, showed that families of 84 students who
20 -- who want to attend Garfield Scholars' Academy in
21 the '24/'25 school year and beyond. We did a study
22 that looked at three years out, so we have a pool of
23 students for three years that would transition
24 through. If we're approved today, we think that that
25 number will grow greatly when the residents see that

1 Garfield Academy Scholars -- Garfield Scholars'
2 Academy is on schedule to become a reality for them.
3 We've budgeted for a cap of 150 students in the
4 first year; 175 in Year Two. I -- as I said, I sat
5 down with Ken Rich at -- Director of Finance Services
6 at APSRC, and we carefully crafted a conservative
7 budget and calculated how many students we would
8 need. And that number, again, is 80.
9 Geographically, if you look at the Garfield
10 school zone, it covers a lot of area. It's -- it's
11 huge and encompasses many communities. Benton County
12 enjoyed a 28.4 percent growth, according to the last
13 census, and is on target to exceed that in the
14 '24/'25 school year. For example, we also know that
15 -- just one example, we've got 175 new homes that are
16 going in Avoca as we speak, just -- and those are
17 just minutes away from the school site. We see great
18 potential for growth for Garfield Scholars' Academy,
19 as Rogers is essentially landlocked, and families are
20 moving out north of -- of Rogers into those rural
21 communities.
22 Okay. You had some questions about our school
23 site. We have been blessed with a site in the
24 Baptist -- First Baptist Church for the first and
25 second year, if we want it, and beyond. We

1 understand that there are currently several approved
2 schools -- charter schools that are operating in
3 church facilities. And we -- as we stated before, we
4 will make every effort to make sure that those things
5 that are religious in nature are hidden or not a part
6 of the school.

7 But this church has graciously offered their
8 expansive facility for \$1.00 a year in rent as a way
9 to help their community. And we will also be paying
10 any additional utilities incurred by the -- over and
11 above what's incurred by the church. And so that has
12 allowed us some breathing room with our budget.

13 If the current school complex at Garfield
14 Elementary School comes up for sale -- that was a
15 question -- and is affordable, we will entertain the
16 idea of transferring to that existing building, if
17 and when that happens. If the current building is
18 not affordable or will be too expensive to purchase
19 and renovate, then we have a resident in Garfield
20 that has offered a 20-acre tract of land on which we
21 could build a school. So we would start a capital
22 building campaign and stay at the Baptist church
23 until we -- such time as a new school can be built
24 with very little debt.

25 Okay. Another question that we had was about

1 our fiscal services. We are contracting with APSRC
2 to handle all of our back-office operations for at
3 least the first two years until we get an employee
4 adequately and effectively trained. And APSRC will
5 assist us with this ongoing training.

6 Student services, such as eSchool and COGNOS,
7 will be handled by the office manager/clerical staff
8 who has 20 years' experience with these systems in
9 the front office of a large school district in the --
10 the state.

11 As far as our library media services -- that was
12 also a question -- we will have a three-day-a-week
13 librarian who will handle the DCTE standards -- I
14 mean -- excuse me -- the library media standards and
15 we will make every attempt to hire a certified school
16 librarian, which would be our preference. We want to
17 do things the right way. We don't want to circumvent
18 any of that, if we can help it. We will consult with
19 DESE's program advisor to school libraries and seek
20 their support as we make selections about what we
21 should put in the library and set up selection and
22 challenge policies with their direction.

23 Professional development monies have been set
24 aside and written in this budget for training on
25 library media standards to our classroom teachers as

1 well. So there will be an embedding of those
2 additionally into the curriculum.

3 Another question came about DCTE standards and
4 how would -- those would be addressed. Our TEAMS
5 approach will give all students opportunities -- oh.

6 MR. REYNOLDS: Sorry to interrupt. I just
7 wanted to say we've lost internet, so two of our
8 board members are no longer present. So we're -- I
9 guess we're going to have to wait --

10 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: -- for a few minutes.

11 MR. REYNOLDS: -- for a few minutes --

12 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: -- Yeah. Okay.

13 MR. REYNOLDS: -- to see what's going on.

14 DR. KENNON: Okay.

15 MR. REYNOLDS: All right.

16 DR. KENNON: At what point did we lose internet?

17 MR. REYNOLDS: I just noticed it about a minute,
18 two minutes ago, so.

19 DR. KENNON: Okay.

20 MS. SAWYER: All right.

21 MR. REYNOLDS: Sorry.

22 MR. BALDWIN: It was about when you were talking
23 about the building.

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yes.

25 MR. BALDWIN: I think is when it --

1 DR. KENNON: About the building. Okay.

2 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yes.

3 MR. BALDWIN: Yes.

4 DR. KENNON: All right.

5 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So we'll just put it on
6 pause --

7 DR. KENNON: Okay.

8 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: -- until we get them back
9 on.

10 (Whereupon, due to technical difficulties, a
11 recess was taken, after which the proceedings
12 continued as follows, to-wit:)

13 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Dr. Wright-McMurray, can
14 you hear us?

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I can.

16 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay. Ms. Newton, can you
17 hear us?

18 MS. NEWTON: Yes.

19 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay. Good.

20 All right, we'll let you get started again.

21 DR. KENNON: Okay. Where would you like for me
22 to start? What was the last that you heard?
23 Dr. Wright-McMurray, do you --

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I -- you were sharing
25 about the building and where -- if the opportunity

1 presented itself, then you would pursue getting the
2 school building.

3 DR. KENNON: Gotcha.

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Further beyond where you
5 are now --

6 DR. KENNON: Okay.

7 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- is you were trying --
8 you were giving a little more detail on that, then we
9 lost audio.

10 DR. KENNON: Okay. All right. So the church
11 building, that facility, has been offered to us for
12 \$1.00 a year. We will pay all the utilities over and
13 above what the church normally operates on. If the
14 current school complex housing the Garfield
15 Elementary School comes up for sale and is
16 affordable, then we may be able to transition into
17 that existing building. If the current building is
18 not affordable, too expensive, or -- to purchase and
19 renovate, then we have a resident in Garfield that
20 has offered a 20-acre tract of land to be donated on
21 which we could build a school. So we would -- so we
22 would begin a capital building campaign and stay in
23 the Baptist church until such a time as a new school
24 could be built with little debt -- little or no debt.

25 As far as fiscal services, we have contracted

1 with APSRC to handle all of our back-office
2 operations for at least two years of operation until
3 we get an employee adequately and effectively
4 trained. APSRC will assist us with that ongoing
5 training.

6 Student services, such as eSchool and COGNOS,
7 will be handled by the office manager/clerical staff
8 who has 20 years' experience with these systems in
9 the front office of a large school district in which
10 they're working currently and have expressed an
11 interest in coming to work for us.

12 Another question had to do with library media
13 services. We intend to have a three-day-a-week
14 librarian. And we'll make every attempt to hire
15 someone who is a certified school librarian. That is
16 our preference. We want to make sure that we do
17 things the right way for our students. We will
18 consult with DESE's program advisor for school
19 libraries and seek their support as we make
20 selections for what is to be put in the library and
21 set up those selection and challenge policies.

22 We have also written into the budgets,
23 professional development monies for the training of
24 library media standards for our classroom teachers.

25 We had a question about the DCTE standards. And

1 our TEAMS approach will give all the students
2 opportunities to explore different careers and
3 interests and participate in entrepreneurial business
4 experiences for skill development, like writing
5 business plans and setting up budgets, those kinds of
6 things.

7 Keyboarding and technology skills are to be
8 embedded in K-5 classroom curriculum. And we
9 understand that we will need to have standalone
10 courses, as students approach middle school, to
11 address career readiness in other DCTE standards. So
12 we -- we are thinking forward in terms of, as we add
13 grade levels, what we will need to have in place.

14 And I believe those were all of the questions
15 that you put forward for us.

16 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

17 DR. KENNON: You're welcome.

18 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Mr. Baldwin, did you have
19 any further questions?

20 MR. BALDWIN: So thank you for responding to our
21 questions.

22 DR. KENNON: Um-hum.

23 MR. BALDWIN: I think that's a comprehensive
24 response. And specifically on the revision of the
25 budget, that was very helpful for me to look at. And

1 I did go through the revised budget, and I laid your
2 old budget next to it, so I'd went line-by-line --

3 DR. KENNON: Um-hum.

4 MR. BALDWIN: -- and I was comfortable with the
5 changes you all had made. I think you probably dug
6 into the numbers a bit --

7 DR. KENNON: Um-hum.

8 MR. BALDWIN: -- and reconsidered some things.

9 DR. KENNON: We did.

10 MR. BALDWIN: And so I appreciate that.

11 Also, one of my questions was on number of students, and I
12 like -- I like that you did a survey, and that you've
13 given us a break-even number of 80 students.

14 DR. KENNON: Um-hum.

15 MR. BALDWIN: And it looks like you're expecting
16 84 students just right now.

17 DR. KENNON: Just right now.

18 MR. BALDWIN: So you would be --

19 DR. KENNON: I think that number will go up
20 dramatically once -- you know, once they know that
21 it's going to be a reality.

22 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. And I did -- I don't live
23 far from Garfield, so I did drive up to your
24 community, and I saw the church, and I saw the old
25 school building and the new subdivisions being built.

1 So I do know that Garfield is a growing area. I
2 think you mentioned 175 new houses being built in the
3 area.

4 DR. KENNON: Um-hum.

5 MR. BALDWIN: So I do think that your --

6 DR. KENNON: And that's just one example.

7 MR. BALDWIN: Yes, there's more.

8 DR. KENNON: So.

9 MR. BALDWIN: But I think your estimate of
10 students will actually be much higher than the
11 estimate, based on what I am seeing, --

12 DR. KENNON: Yeah.

13 MR. BALDWIN: -- once you get up and running.
14 So maybe those are statements, not questions, but I
15 did appreciate your response --

16 DR. KENNON: Thank you.

17 MR. BALDWIN: -- to the questions.

18 DR. KENNON: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

20 Dr. Wright-McMurray?

21 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And I will say -- we're
22 still having a -- well, I will say for myself, I'm
23 still having a bit of difficulty hearing when my
24 colleague Mr. Baldwin makes his comments, so I'm
25 going to apologize if I say anything that he has

1 asked in that process.

2 So, again, thank you guys so much for going back
3 and talking a little bit more and responding to our
4 questions. I do appreciate you taking that time and
5 that space to do that.

6 So I did hear you say that you guys went back
7 and you did work with APSRC, and you do anticipate
8 working with them --

9 DR. KENNON: Yes, ma'am.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- even going forward.

11 DR. KENNON: Um-hum.

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I was trying to see in the
13 budget where that is accounted for.

14 DR. KENNON: It's under --

15 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Is --

16 DR. KENNON: "fiscal services." That --

17 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

18 DR. KENNON: Yeah. -- that \$60,000.

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Okay. That answers
20 that question.

21 And then, also, it sounds like you did a little
22 bit more work and are being a bit more intentional on
23 identifying your students and where they're coming
24 from and what you anticipate will be your -- I guess
25 your population of students to draw from.

1 DR. KENNON: Um-hum.

2 MS. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Do you mind just giving a
3 little bit more detail on how you plan to do some
4 active recruiting of those students so that they're
5 aware that you're there, that they know to seek you
6 out for enrollment?

7 DR. KENNON: Part of what we did -- my partner
8 in crime, Joy Sawyer, has gone to some of the
9 festivals that they hold up in that area where you
10 see a lot of families coming, and we have put out
11 information about the -- the possibility of a school.
12 That's how we got a lot of the response from the --
13 from those families on the survey.

14 Additionally, we've also put out information in
15 the water bill for the residents of Garfield. And
16 also we have plans to do a mass mailing and other
17 opportunities that we see up there to -- to recruit
18 students and make sure that all the little areas --
19 we've gotten on those pages -- Facebook pages of
20 Avoca and Gateway that they have and put out
21 information about the school.

22 So, Joy, did you want --

23 MS. SAWYER: Yes.

24 DR. KENNON: -- to add anything?

25 MS. SAWYER: Yes. I have also been in

1 conversations with the local newspaper in Pea Ridge.
2 The KNWA television station up there has been very
3 involved in following this story about the Garfield.
4 So once we are approved, we will let them know. They
5 will announce. We do -- we will get our online
6 presence, website and all of those things, going, you
7 know, pretty quickly, because we do want to start the
8 enrollment process in -- in November so that they
9 have until about February, you know, to get enrolled.

10 And our local radio station up there, KURM,
11 Melanie did a spot with them on Friday last week.
12 And we will notify them as well, and they will begin
13 helping us. So we do have -- and then, of course, we
14 have the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette that is following
15 the story. So we do have several, you know, media
16 outlets and things up there too that just through
17 reporting will be promoting us, you know. And -- and
18 we -- we feel like our enrollment will increase just
19 once the story is out there that we're going to
20 exist, so.

21 DR. KENNON: Um-hum. And we -- we had a lot of
22 interest generated from that radio interview. And we
23 had a -- one of the moms, as well, was interviewed
24 about her reasons for having that local school. And
25 so, as Joy said, we think the interest is there, and

1 -- and we'll be able to generate even more interest.

2 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Other questions,
3 Dr. Wright-McMurray?

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: No. Thank you.

5 DR. KENNON: You're welcome.

6 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

7 MS. Newton?

8 MS. NEWTON: I, too, have had some difficulty
9 hearing primarily Mr. Baldwin and the speakers. But
10 I think I have enough information to be concerned
11 about the recruitment and the possibilities of having
12 the students needed. It just seems the plan is
13 looser than I'm comfortable with. There is a lot of,
14 I'm sure, interest. And I heard you say -- talk
15 about the parents driving through, and that's a
16 significant number that you're depending on. But
17 that's one of the things that concerns me. It
18 doesn't seem -- it doesn't appear as solid as I would
19 be comfortable in moving forward in terms of what the
20 commitment is and what the student body will actually
21 look like.

22 DR. KENNON: Well, we have 84 students whose
23 families have signed up on the survey indicating that
24 they want to be a part of the school. The pool of
25 students that we have is 1,050 in that area, who the

1 -- there were several homeschool parents that signed
2 up and have indicated interest and some from Eureka
3 Springs. But that -- those -- those are small in
4 number, yes, but we -- we have a solid 84 that are
5 ready to come, and we need only 80 to be able to
6 function fiscally and responsibly with our budget.

7 MS. SAWYER: And -- and I have looked at the --
8 at the surveys also. The -- the parents that have
9 shown interest that would be coming from Eureka
10 Springs are not included in that survey.

11 DR. KENNON: Okay.

12 MS. SAWYER: They did not fill the -- the survey
13 out. I did not really actively post it on Eureka
14 Springs, you know, Facebook pages and things like
15 that. There are just a lot of questions coming
16 through as, you know, "Can" -- "Can anybody in
17 Arkansas attend the school? We may be interested
18 because we drive by there." So that -- that is not
19 included -- those people from Eureka Springs are not
20 included in that 84 number.

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Did you have any other
22 questions, Ms. Newton?

23 MS. NEWTON: No, I don't.

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay. Mr. Baldwin, did you
25 have any other questions?

1 MR. BALDWIN: I don't.

2 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Dr. Wright-McMurray?

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: No, I don't have any
4 further questions.

5 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Oh, I was just asking if
6 you had any other questions.

7 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: No, I don't. Can you not
8 hear me?

9 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Oh, yes, we can -- we can
10 hear you.

11 DR. KENNON: Okay.

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

13 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. If there are no
14 other questions, I'll entertain a motion.

15 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. I'll move that we approve
16 the charter application as presented. I believe
17 you-all have answered our questions. And I do think
18 you've done a thorough job of looking at, as best you
19 can, students. And I believe the students will be
20 there, so --

21 DR. KENNON: I think so, too.

22 MR. BALDWIN: -- I'm supportive of that.

23 DR. KENNON: Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So we have a motion by
25 Mr. Baldwin. Do I have a second?

1 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Second.

2 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. I have a
3 motion, and a second by Dr. Wright-McMurray. All
4 those in favor?

5 MR. BALDWIN: Aye.

6 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Aye.

7 All those opposed?

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Aye.

9 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Any abstentions?

10 MS. Newton, I'm not sure if I heard your vote.

11 MS. NEWTON: I have -- aye.

12 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Oh, okay. All right.

13 Thank you very much.

14 All right. The motion passes.

15 DR. KENNON: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Congratulations.

17 DR. KENNON: Thank you.

18 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. We'll take just
20 a few minutes to fill out our voting sheets, and then
21 we'll come back with those.

22 (Whereupon, a recess was taken, after which the
23 proceedings continued as follows, to-wit:)

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. We'll start
25 with you, Mr. Baldwin.

1 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Yes. Thank you. I voted
2 for the charter application. And I believe that a
3 local elementary school in Garfield is good now and
4 will be needed in the future even more. And I do
5 believe the students will be well served by this
6 action.

7 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

8 All right. Ms. Newton.

9 MS. NEWTON: I'm having some problems with my
10 voting sheet. But I voted for the amendment.
11 There's a logical plan for student recruitment and
12 enrollment.

13 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Thank you very much.

14 Dr. Wright-McMurray?

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I voted for. I support
16 the charter application. Garfield Scholars' Academy
17 has offered a well-thought-out plan to meet the needs
18 of students in their community, which includes
19 career/technical education in the early grades. I am
20 encouraged by their community support and look
21 forward to positive outcomes for their students.

22 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

23 And then I voted for the application. I believe
24 that Garfield Scholars' Academy will be an important
25 part of the community, enhance educational

1 opportunities, and will enable students to go to
2 school in the community in which they live.

3 Thank you very much. And congratulations.

4 DR. KENNON: Thank you.

5 MS. SAWYER: Thank you.

6 **ADJOURNMENT**

7 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. If there's no
8 other new business, I'll entertain a motion to
9 adjourn.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So moved.

11 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right.

12 MR. BALDWIN: Second.

13 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. All those in
14 favor?

15 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

16 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you very
17 much. Y'all have a great day.

18 (Whereupon, the meeting was concluded at
19 9:57 a.m.)

20

21

22

23

24

25

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss
COUNTY OF FAULKNER)

I, AMY WAID, Certified Court Reporter #853 and Notary Public, do hereby certify that the facts stated by me in the caption on the foregoing proceedings are true; and that the foregoing proceedings were reported verbatim through the use of the voice-writing method and thereafter transcribed by me, or under my direct supervision, to the best of my ability, taken at the time and place set out on the caption hereto.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or employed by the parties hereto, nor financially interested or otherwise, in the outcome of this action, and that I have no contract with the parties, attorneys, or persons with an interest in the action that affects or has a substantial tendency to affect impartiality, that requires me to relinquish control of an original deposition transcript or copies of the transcript before it is certified and delivered to the custodial attorney, or that requires me to provide any service not made available to all parties to the action.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not knowingly identified on a preferred provider list, whether written or oral, for any litigant, insurance company, or third-party administrator involved in this matter. This transcript is prepared at the request of the Arkansas Department of Education, and all fees are billed directly to the Arkansas Department of Education in compliance with Arkansas Board of Court Reporter Examiners Regulations Section 19.

The foregoing certification of this transcript does not apply to any reproduction of the same by any means unless under the direct control and/or supervision of the certifying reporter.

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL this 27th day of November, 2023.

Amy Waid

Amy Waid, CCR
Certified Court Reporter #853
My Commission Expires: 5/5/27

Amy Waid
Arkansas Supreme
Court-Certified
Court Reporter
CCR No. 853