

CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

FEBRUARY 19, 2026

9:00 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

DR. SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY, Chair
DR. JOHN BACON
MS. EDIE STEWART
DR. TINA MOORE
MR. PHIL BALDWIN
MS. TOYCE NEWTON

NON-VOTING PARTICIPANTS:

DR. DARRELL SMITH, Office of School Choice and Parent
Empowerment

LEGAL:

MS. JULIA RANEY, ADE Attorney

LOCATION:

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
- Auditorium
#4 Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201

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1 concerning the application to the authorizer to be
2 considered at the time of the authorizer's review of
3 the application.

4 That's it. Thank you.

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

6 **I.1. EXPEDITED RENEWALS OF SCHOOL CHARTERS EXPIRING JUNE 30,**
7 **2026**

8 **III.1.a. CAVE CITY HIGH SCHOOL CAREER AND COLLEGIATE**
9 **PREPARTORY SCHOOL**

10 **III.1.b. CAVE CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL CAREER AND COLLEGIATE**
11 **PREPARATORY**

12 **III.1.c. CROSS COUNTY ELEMENTARY TECH ACADEMY**

13 **III.1.d. CROSS COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL - A NEW TECH SCHOOL**

14 **III.1.e. FAYETTEVILLE VIRTUAL ACADEMY - A DISTRICT CONVERSION**
15 **CHARTER SCHOOL**

16 **III.1.f. MOUNTAIN HOME HIGH SCHOOL CAREER ACADEMIES**

17 **III.1.g. SOUTHSIDE CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL**

18 **III.1.h. SOUTHSIDE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

19 **III.1.i. WESTWIND SCHOOL FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS**

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So first item
21 that we will have to discuss is the charter office
22 has recommended renewals for some of our existing
23 charter schools. I believe those will be done --
24 some of them will be done sectioned in batch. And
25 Dr. Smith is going to come forward and give us an

1 overview of that section and explain what we will be
2 reviewing today.

3 DR. SMITH: Good morning, Panel, Madam Chair.
4 Welcome back. Hopefully, we won't be here quite as
5 long as we were last two weeks so -- last month. I
6 greatly appreciate you.

7 Arkansas Code 6-23-307 gives -- has created a
8 provision for us to recommend an expedited renewal
9 process for schools that are performing well, both
10 academically, financially and organizationally. And
11 today, we are recommending that ten schools be
12 considered for expedited renewal. These are schools
13 that -- where their charters are expiring on the end
14 of this year, so on June 30th of '26. And so we are
15 recommending that these schools go ahead and go
16 through the renewal process just based on our review
17 of the -- of their performance over the last three or
18 four years. And so they've shown significant, you
19 know, significant improvement or high achievement in
20 their academic performance, both -- they've shown
21 financial stability as well as organizational
22 stability. And it is a pleasure that we do recommend
23 that these ten schools, nine conversion schools and
24 one open enrollment, receive renewal today.

25 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

1 Ms. Raney, can you come forward and let us know
2 if there's any legal concerns with this process? Or
3 if there are any legal concerns with any of the
4 charters that are being brought forward?

5 MS. RANEY: Good morning, Julia Raney, ADE.

6 We have no legal concerns, but I do want to let
7 you know that you can vote in batch for each school,
8 which means y'all can all vote for one, basically.
9 Okay.

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

11 MS. RANEY: Thank you.

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. Thank you.

13 Okay. So we'll go to any questions from the
14 Panel.

15 So, Ms. Stewart.

16 MS. STEWART: I don't have any questions at this
17 time.

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Dr. Bacon?

19 DR. BACON: Yeah.

20 I don't have any questions. I would just say
21 thank you to the DESE team. The one-pagers that sort
22 of summarized the academic and financial progress for
23 each of these schools were extremely helpful, so I
24 appreciate you all preparing that for us.

25 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Dr. Moore?

1 DR. MOORE: I don't have any questions, but
2 would request that maybe in the future we could hear
3 a report from Fayetteville Virtual Academy because I
4 was really surprised by their high performance being
5 a virtual charter; because often virtual platforms
6 tend to struggle. And I was really impressed with
7 their letter grades. So -- but no questions other
8 than that.

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

10 Mr. Baldwin?

11 MR. BALDWIN: I have no questions. And I do
12 like the one-page reports as Dr. Bacon said.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Ms. Newton?

14 MS. NEWTON: I have no questions. I still have
15 a problem with the -- I still have problems hearing
16 primarily you Dr. McMurray -- Wright-McMurray, but
17 just so -- yeah. That -- it may be my device.

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. That's okay.
19 I'll try to --

20 MS. NEWTON: I have no -- I have no questions.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- get closer to the
22 mic.

23 MS. NEWTON: Okay. I have no questions.

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. Thank you.

25 Okay. So if there are no questions -- or no

1 further questions that we need to address, then I
2 will accept a motion on the recommendation from the
3 charter school office to expedite a renewal of
4 charter contracts for five years for the following
5 schools -- I will read the school names for the
6 record and then we can just vote and batch for those
7 schools. Cave City High School Career Collegiate and
8 Preparatory School, Cave City Middle School Career
9 and Collegiate Preparatory School, Cross County
10 Elementary Tech Academy, Cross County High School - A
11 New Tech Academy, Fayetteville Virtual Academy,
12 Mountain Home High School Career Academies, Southside
13 Charter High School, Southside Junior High School,
14 and Westwind School for the Performing Arts.

15 DR. MOORE: I move that we accept and approve
16 the expedited renewals of the school charters in this
17 batch.

18 MS. STEWART: I Second.

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So we have a motion by
20 Dr. Moore, a second by Ms. Stewart, that we accept
21 the recommendation from the charter office to renew
22 the charter contracts for five years for the schools
23 that were listed. Is there any discussion on the
24 motion?

25 (NO RESPONSE)

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CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Seeing none. All in favor, say aye.

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Any opposed? Any that would like to abstain?

Okay. Very good. Motion carries.

(The action agenda concluded at 9:09 a.m.)

