

**CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL**

**JULY 17, 2025**

**9:00 A.M.**

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A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

DR. SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY, Chair, Division of Career and  
Technical Education - Senior Associate Director  
DR. JOHN BACON, IMPACT Arkansas Fellowship - Executive  
Director  
MS. EDIE STEWART, Goodwill Industries of Arkansas - Senior  
Vice President  
DR. TINA MOORE, ADHE - Director of Workforce Development  
MR. PHIL BALDWIN, Retired CEO, Citizens Bank  
MS. TOYCE NEWTON, Former State Board of Education Member

NON-VOTING PARTICIPANTS:

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

LEGAL:

MR. DANIEL SHULTS, ADE Litigation Attorney

LOCATION:

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

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**P R O C E E D I N G S**

**I. ACTION AGENDA**

CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So next I would like to invite Mr. Shults up to the microphone. Would you please come forward and provide an overview of the procedures for today's action agenda?

MR. SHULTS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning. Thank you all.

Generally, no. We have kind of two tiers there and I have -- apologize that there -- I'm not sure if there is anything on the consent agenda. Those are items that are generally reviewed in kind of a pro forma manner.

On the action agenda, all persons with the exception of attorneys, must be placed under oath by the chair. Any charter school or applicant who wishes to present before the board, has 20 minutes, but the chair may extend that time if they -- if the chair sees that is appropriate. Any parties to action before the board may also have, collectively, 20 minutes and the chair may also extend their time if necessary. The charter school or applicant would have five minutes of response to any of the opposition if it's presented to them. The authorizer will follow presentations, discussions, public

1 charter school applications, renewals or requests.  
2 And questions, if any, for the open-enrollment  
3 charter school -- sorry it's a little squeaky. In  
4 addition, you may receive written comments.

5 Thank you.

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

7 Okay. So after that explanation, we'll go right  
8 into our action agenda.

9 **1. CHARTER SCHOOLS REQUESTING LOCATION CHANGES**

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So first on our agenda  
11 for this morning, we're going to be doing charter  
12 schools requesting location changes.

13 And so I would like to invite Dr. Darrell Smith  
14 to please come forward and give us an overview of the  
15 -- the following items.

16 DR. SMITH: Good morning, Panel. Darrell Smith,  
17 assistant commissioner, Office of School Choice.

18 Thank you all for being here. I certainly appreciate  
19 your time this morning.

20 **1.a. CHARTER AMEDEMMENT REQUEST - ARKANSAS LIGHTHOUSE CHARTER**  
21 **SCHOOLS**

22 DR. SMITH: Our first action item on the agenda  
23 today is a amendment request from the Lighthouse  
24 Charter to basically relocate their middle school  
25 grades to their existing high school and to change

1 the day from Flightline to Jacksonville Lighthouse  
2 Middle School. So with us today is LaShawnDa Noel,  
3 executive director of Arkansas Lighthouse to make the  
4 presentation.

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you, Dr.  
6 Smith.

7 Before we get started with any testimony from  
8 the Charter, I would like to do a swearing in. So  
9 all those giving testimony today on behalf of  
10 Arkansas Lighthouse Charter Schools please stand and  
11 raise your right hand. And if there is anyone that  
12 is joining online as well, if you could please also  
13 stand and raise your right hand if you're going to  
14 make any testimony on behalf of Arkansas Lighthouse  
15 Charter. So with that, do you swear the testimony or  
16 statement you're about to give is the truth, the  
17 whole truth and nothing but the truth?

18 MS. NOEL: I do.

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Okay. With that,  
20 I will invite the executive director, LaShawnDa Noel,  
21 to come forward and begin her presentation.

22 MS. NOEL: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good  
23 morning, Charter Panel Members.

24 I am LaShawnDa Noel, CEO/Superintendent for  
25 Arkansas Lighthouse Charter Schools, where our

1 mission is to engage, embrace and empower scholars,  
2 families and community members to create a vibrant,  
3 supportive local ecosystem for all through education.  
4 We strive to empower scholars to be academically  
5 sound, technologically savvy, culturally competent  
6 and sustainability conscious.

7 We stand before you this morning with an  
8 amendment request to relocate and close out the  
9 Jacksonville Lighthouse Flightline campus, located at  
10 1030 Canon Drive on the Little Rock Air Force Base,  
11 changing the name to Jacksonville Lighthouse Middle  
12 School and moving its location back to our existing  
13 campus at 251 North First Street in Jacksonville,  
14 Arkansas. This change is being requested due to the  
15 lease for the existing facility on the Little Rock  
16 Air Force Base being nonrenewed and the public  
17 schools or military installation program being  
18 permanently discontinued. Per the Little Rock Air  
19 Force Base, this decision not to extend the lease was  
20 based on several factors, including future USAF and  
21 Little Rock Air Force Base operational needs, and  
22 current evolving mission critical sets and  
23 initiatives. Consequently, there was no decision to  
24 be made by Arkansas Lighthouse Charter School because  
25 the lease term gave Little Rock Air Force Base the

1 absolute right to make the decision to reclaim and  
2 repurpose the facility. As the Arkansas Lighthouse  
3 Charter Schools board of directors and leadership  
4 team considered the impact of the closure of the  
5 Flightline campus, several community partners  
6 independently suggested or requested that Arkansas  
7 lighthouse engage in a meaningful conversation with  
8 Jacksonville North Pulaski School District to explore  
9 potential collaborative or partnership opportunities.  
10 In light of the impending closure of Flightline, the  
11 discussion and open -- openness to available options  
12 to best serve our students, families and community  
13 were warranted. Simultaneously, the board engaged  
14 with legal counsel and other available resources to  
15 ascertain the viability of such a collaboration and  
16 its families to determine the desirability of such a  
17 partnership from their perspective. Based on the  
18 vetting and feedback, our families requested that we  
19 provide additional and/or alternative opportunities  
20 for partnership. It was determined that such a  
21 collaboration was likely not variable at this  
22 juncture. Arkansas Lighthouse Charter Schools  
23 leadership determined that Flightline scholars,  
24 grades 5 through 8, would move back to the main  
25 campus at 251 First Street in Jacksonville proper

1 beginning the 25-26 school year, as the main campus  
2 has historically served grades K-12, and would not  
3 impact traffic patterns or plans, scheduling or the  
4 academic program.

5 Our goal is to serve as many families as our  
6 capacity allows. Enrollment is an ongoing priority  
7 for us. As such, our operations team is always  
8 focused on recruiting. One of the primary ways that  
9 we recruit is taking care of the families we  
10 currently have. Currently, those families have  
11 assisted us in recruiting more families and other  
12 students, helping us growing enrollment from 347  
13 scholars in 24-25, to an anticipated 507 scholars for  
14 the 25-26 school year.

15 The scheduling process is anticipated to become  
16 more efficient. Scholars will benefit from an  
17 increase in instructional time as well as having  
18 additional electives and club time. Plans include  
19 ensuring there is enough space on the first floor for  
20 grades 5 through 7. Core classes in 8 through 12  
21 will be placed on the second floor. Elective courses  
22 will be located on the second floor and in the  
23 gymnasium. We anticipate the academic program will  
24 continue to move forward as well.

25 In the past two years, the elementary school



1           increased their overall school growth and performed  
2           above the state average in growth. Math, ELA and  
3           science, all subjects, saw improvement in  
4           achievement. We are still reviewing the 24-25 school  
5           year data. Our growth data, is not out for this  
6           year.

7           The middle school and high school improved by  
8           increasing the middle school's ELA scores going into  
9           the 24-25 school year and increasing their Algebra  
10          scores by eight percent. They are still  
11          outperforming the local middle school in proficiency  
12          in every subject, 23-24 school year and '24 school  
13          year. The high school is outperforming the local  
14          public high school in math and increased their  
15          Algebra 1 score going into the 24-25 school year by  
16          six percent. They have gone up in math every year  
17          since the 22-23 school year. The high school  
18          outperformed the state average concerning growth of  
19          the bottom 25 percent.

20          To continue to impact positive change, we are  
21          revising our middle and high school master schedule.  
22          We are moving from an A/B schedule to a seven-period  
23          schedule that will include a flexible intervention  
24          period. Core teachers will also have common playing  
25          time which we have never had. PLCs will focus on

1 data collected from the Arkansas performance learning  
2 descriptors and assessments based on the Arkansas  
3 Blueprint Standards.

4 All scholars will be located on the same campus.  
5 This will provide us with the opportunity to combine  
6 all resources, including two academic principals, one  
7 with a mathematics background and one with a literacy  
8 background. Our goals all center around our scholar  
9 and school community as a whole. Remaining true to  
10 who we are, this shift does not impact our goals of  
11 progressing in the areas of growth, achievement and  
12 the pursuit of a one hundred percent graduation rate  
13 to college or careers producing high demand and/or  
14 high earnings.

15 Thank you.

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. Thank you  
17 for the presentation.

18 Mr. Shults, from Legal, will you please come  
19 forward and let us know if there is any legal  
20 concerns regarding this request?

21 MR. SHULTS: No, Madam Chair, we don't have any  
22 concerns.

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

24 So at this point, I will open it up to our panel  
25 members for any questions, starting with, Ms.

1           Stewart.

2           Do you have any questions for Charter?

3           MS. STEWART: Yeah, I just have a few questions.

4           Good morning.

5           MS. NOEL: Good morning.

6           MS. STEWART: Thank you for being here this  
7 morning.

8           So in thinking about the lease and all of that  
9 kind of falling apart, when were you notified of  
10 that?

11          MS. NOEL: So we were originally we notified the  
12 early part of December and January.

13          MS. STEWART: Okay.

14          MS. NOEL: It was not finalized. We were just  
15 notified that it was a possibility.

16          MS. STEWART: Okay. And so then, at that point,  
17 that's when the board was engaged?

18          MS. NOEL: Uh-huh.

19          MS. STEWART: Okay.

20          MS. NOEL: Yes, ma'am. I'm sorry.

21          MS. STEWART: Just a couple of more questions.

22 I know -- I know the panel probably has some  
23 additional as well. Just to clarify, so the  
24 enrollment will be moving -- or, I guess, a better  
25 way to put the question is: what are the numbers in

1           grades 5 through 8? Just thinking about full  
2           capacity. I know you mentioned you've gone from 347  
3           to an anticipated 525. What is the breakdown for  
4           those moving into that space?

5           MS. NOEL: So we have approximately 242 scholars  
6           moving into the space. What we -- what I want us  
7           understand is they have always used that space. We  
8           have shuttled those scholars back and forth between  
9           the Flightline and high school space. So it will not  
10          be impacted in a negative manner.

11          MS. STEWART: Okay. So I appreciate that. So  
12          the -- the staff, that shouldn't be an issue as well  
13          --

14          MS. NOEL: No, ma'am.

15          MS. STEWART: -- moving into that space?  
16          Finally, one last question. You mentioned two  
17          specialists: one for math and one for literacy; is  
18          that correct?

19          MS. NOEL: Two -- two principals.

20          MS. STEWART: Does that -- that covers both?

21          MS. NOEL: Both campuses.

22          MS. STEWART: Both campuses.

23          MS. NOEL: Our elementary and our middle/high  
24          school campus.

25          MS. STEWART: Okay.

1 MS. NOEL: Yes, ma'am.

2 MS. STEWART: For a total of -- a possible total  
3 of 525?

4 MS. NOEL: 502, currently, but yes, I would take  
5 525.

6 MS. STEWART: Okay, thank you.

7 MS. NOEL: And we are continuing to enroll new  
8 students every single day. So yes, that -- that  
9 number could be at 525.

10 MS. STEWART: Okay. Thank you.

11 That's all I've got.

12 MS. NOEL: Thank you.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right.

14 Dr. Bacon?

15 DR. BACON: Yes. Thank you.

16 And I appreciate the information you shared.  
17 You answered a lot of the questions I had. Sort of  
18 going back bigger picture, I'm sure you can  
19 understand when things were in the paper, on news,  
20 all sorts of it, it seemed a bit chaotic and  
21 confusing from the outside looking in. I would be  
22 curious what kind of communication, what kind of  
23 messaging has been given to your parents, your  
24 students, your staff? Sort of reassure them that  
25 Lighthouse is strong, Lighthouse is here, Lighthouse

1 is moving forward. Just kind of how does that look  
2 from an internal perspective?

3 MS. NOEL: So, internally, that's the message  
4 that we're pushing, currently. We're here; we're not  
5 going anywhere; we heard your voice. And so we have  
6 communicated that information as much as possible  
7 throughout the summer break. And I think our  
8 enrollment number is a testament of the community  
9 understanding that we're here. But we have  
10 continuously communicated with our school community  
11 as a whole: our parents, our staff, as well as our  
12 scholars. Big pushes in social media, of course.  
13 And then, formal letters to our staff and our  
14 parents.

15 DR. BACON: And so obviously that's been  
16 successful from the student enrollment side because  
17 you're describing perhaps an increase for this year.  
18 I think that's wonderful. Did you have a lot of  
19 turnover in your staff or did that create any issues  
20 with the --

21 MS. NOEL: We actually -- we did.

22 DR. BACON: Yeah.

23 MS. NOEL: At the elementary school, we did have  
24 quite a bit of turnover. We do have what I feel are  
25 our anchored folks that are still present, but we did

1           have quite a -- quite a bit of turnover. Some of  
2           that was also in reference to the new law that is  
3           coming into place that says that our staff must be  
4           certified.

5           As you know, many of ours weren't, and so they  
6           felt like this might be a great time to exit. But  
7           most of it was just centered around the drama of  
8           everything. And so at the elementary school, we are  
9           seeing -- or we will see quite a few new faces; at  
10          the high school, everyone remained.

11          DR. BACON: Okay. I mean, that's --

12          MS. NOEL: Or middle and high school level,  
13          everyone remained.

14          DR. BACON: I mean, that's understandable to me.  
15          And your -- last question for me: you hit on  
16          enrollment being up a little bit. Your goal for  
17          enrollment long term is, what?

18          MS. NOEL: I mean --

19          DR. BACON: Like what can -- what can you --

20          MS. NOEL: We had -- 1,019 is --

21          DR. BACON: So you can handle 1,019 --

22          MS. NOEL: Absolutely.

23          DR. BACON: -- you know that down the --

24          MS. NOEL: Absolutely. Because with the  
25          buildings, the facilities, that 1,019 would not be a

1                   problem.

2                   DR. BACON:   Okay.

3                   MS. NOEL:   We have a -- we have the elementary,  
4                   the high school and then we also have the gymnasium  
5                   or activity area that has three additional classrooms  
6                   in that space as well.

7                   DR. BACON:   Thank you.

8                   MS. NOEL:   Thank you.

9                   CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY:   Dr. Moore?

10                  DR. MOORE:   Good morning.

11                  MS. NOEL:   Good morning.

12                  DR. MOORE:   And thank you for sharing this  
13                  information.  It is helpful and gives a lot more  
14                  context.  Just a couple more questions.  So you have  
15                  the three different LEA's, do you plan to merge any  
16                  of those or are you keeping three separate LEAs?

17                  MS. NOEL:   We were going to keep the three  
18                  separate LEAs.  We are doing that at the  
19                  recommendation of -- we're doing that, I think, just  
20                  to ensure that we have separate, like, elementary,  
21                  middle school, high school.  If it is recommended  
22                  that we do something different, we will of course  
23                  hear that, but I -- I feel like keeping the three  
24                  separate LEAs will be best for us.

25                  DR. MOORE:   Okay.  I just wasn't sure since they



1           were going to be on the same campus and sharing the  
2           same resources. How does the leadership look for  
3           that? Are you having separate principals and  
4           leadership and each one of those buildings completely  
5           separate -- not buildings, but --

6           MS. NOEL: Yes.

7           DR. MOORE: -- each of those --

8           MS. NOEL: Yes. They are -- they are two  
9           separate buildings.

10          DR. MOORE: Okay.

11          MS. NOEL: So we -- we will have an elementary  
12          principal and then we also will have our middle high  
13          school principal.

14          DR. MOORE: Okay.

15          MS. NOEL: And they both have experience in  
16          those areas.

17          DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you. And then, my  
18          other question is: you did -- one of your waivers is  
19          for class size -- do you anticipate class size  
20          changing much from what it was already because of the  
21          turnover of teachers and consolidating into one  
22          building or two buildings?

23          MS. NOEL: We do -- we do not. We have been  
24          working -- we have been working hard. And I've been  
25          pushing the leaders to fill those vacancies and

1           ensure that we are meeting classroom guidelines as it  
2           relates to capacity, so we should not have any  
3           issues.

4           DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

5           That's all I have right now.

6           MS. NOEL: Thank you.

7           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. Mr. Baldwin?

8           MR. BALDWIN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

9           Thank you for being here today. Very helpful  
10          presentation. Let me ask you -- and I'm going to  
11          really focus on the students that are moving. And so  
12          it sounds like there's about 242 students moving and  
13          that would be grades 5 through 8. So when they --  
14          when they move, talk to us about the number of  
15          classrooms they move into and are the teachers -- it  
16          sounds like maybe they're going to be different  
17          teachers now that would be greeting them. Talk to us  
18          about that process that they'll experience.

19          MS. NOEL: Thank you for your question. So  
20          again, our middle school and high school have always  
21          really shared the space at the high school, whether  
22          it's through -- last year, we -- we used the high  
23          school space for high school students as well as  
24          elective classes. And so the middle school students  
25          were transported on B days to come in and do their

1           electives. So they're familiar with the teachers;  
2           they're familiar with the building layout, so that  
3           won't be an issue. Our teachers will not change.  
4           Our high school enrollment numbers were a little bit  
5           lower, which allow for us to push and pull in and so  
6           we have plenty of space for those middle school  
7           students to be housed in that building permanently.  
8           And so they won't be impacted negatively.

9           MR. BALDWIN: I guess I'm trying to -- I don't  
10          -- I've not seen your building, so I'm thinking about  
11          these kids coming. Will they be in classrooms with  
12          30 kids per classroom or 40? I mean, what does it  
13          look like? It's not one big room, is it for the --

14          MS. NOEL: No, sir.

15          MR. BALDIWIN: Okay.

16          MS. NOEL: So our middle -- our high school  
17          building is a two-story building. Floor -- floor one  
18          has about 15 classrooms as well floor two. So again,  
19          there's plenty of space for us to have students  
20          spread out, having enough room to move around. I  
21          would love to have the problem of having 30-plus  
22          students in the classroom, but we don't have that  
23          issue. Maybe one day, but there -- there is plenty  
24          of space.

25          MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

1 MS. NOEL: Yes.

2 MR. BALDWIN: I just wanted to envision how that  
3 would be. Thank you. The -- you've got the support  
4 of the parents it sounds like. I know one of the big  
5 deals when you change buildings with young kids is  
6 the transportation for mom and dad to get kids to  
7 where they need to go to. Have you -- have you  
8 worked through that process? Is there anything that  
9 is still pending for transporting kids?

10 MS. NOEL: No. Actually, we plan to run our  
11 transportation as we did last year, minus the  
12 shuffling of students back and forth. So everything  
13 will basically remain the same.

14 MR. BALDWIN: And then, my final question would  
15 be -- and I'm sure you guys have done this -- looked  
16 at the financial impact of moving from really two  
17 buildings to one campus. And my guess is it's a  
18 positive financial impact. Talk to us a little bit  
19 about that if you could.

20 MS. NOEL: You know, fortunately we -- our lease  
21 at the base did not cost us anything. They were  
22 great partners for us. And so this move really isn't  
23 impacting or changing much; everything is really  
24 staying the same again. Again, we're just moving  
25 children permanently into the space. It has allowed

1           us to -- for those teachers who may have departed at  
2           the middle school level -- and we may have had one or  
3           two -- we have not had to replace them because we  
4           have everyone in the same space. So it's -- it's  
5           allowing for us to free up some of those resources.

6           MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you.

7           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Ms. Newton?

8           MS. NEWTON: Hi, I think my question maybe a  
9           question of clarification because I'm trying to  
10          remember. If I remember correctly there was strong  
11          inference drawn in establishing the Charter based on  
12          the fact that it was on a military base. And I, in  
13          my mind, I think I remember that connection being an  
14          advantage for the school; is that correct? Do I  
15          remember correctly? And if that's correct then, but  
16          now? I saw it as a military connection, not  
17          necessarily require military service, but having that  
18          atmosphere of careers and -- and the order and all  
19          that. So if my assumption is -- and my memory is  
20          correct, what -- what happens now?

21          MS. NOEL: So the charter -- actually, the  
22          military piece came on after. So it came on -- I  
23          want to say in year maybe two or three. So we were  
24          already really established. I think the military  
25          piece was in addition, but we're not losing that.

1           We're still very much partners with the Little Rock  
2           Air Force Base and the military. We continue to  
3           participate in programming. They are poised to -- to  
4           bring their counselors over still because we do still  
5           serve military scholars. So that's not going away.  
6           I think the only piece that looks different is the  
7           fact of us not physically being on military base, but  
8           for us, the partnership has to remain because we  
9           still have those students in our space.

10           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Ms. Newton, do you have  
11           any other questions? Ms. Newton?

12           MS. NEWTON: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

13           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Do you have any other  
14           questions?

15           MS. NEWTON: I don't have any other questions.

16           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

17           So, Executive Director Noel, thank you so much  
18           for your presentation and for providing your  
19           clarification, I think that's helped the panel member  
20           to -- panel members to better understand the why  
21           behind your amendment request.

22           And so I don't any questions?

23           Are there any other questions from the panel  
24           that need to be addressed before we entertain any  
25           motions?

1 MS. NEWTON: One -- one further question.

2 What will -- what is the attraction of your  
3 school? And this is, like, the PR in this -- that  
4 your enrollment is increasing to the extent of this.  
5 So what -- in light of, in lieu of the media and all  
6 the attention and moving away from the base -- so  
7 what is the attraction for communities to -- I mean,  
8 for parents to still want their children to be a part  
9 of this -- this charter.

10 MS. NOEL: You know this -- I'm so happy you  
11 asked that question. This -- this time has taught us  
12 a lot. And sometimes you need people to teach you  
13 about yourself, and we've learned a lot. I think for  
14 us it's going to always be that small,  
15 family-oriented system or space that attracts people  
16 to us, attracts our families, attracts our scholars.  
17 We do, though, have this agricultural piece that we  
18 have highlighted for the past few years that is  
19 gaining momentum. And we're seeing scholars come in  
20 to us who really want to lean into agriculture --  
21 agricultural sciences and that has been, I think, the  
22 great thing that has pushed us forward. Again, our  
23 parents came out, they rallied, they let us know that  
24 Lighthouse is theirs and so we heard them, and we  
25 situated ourselves.

1 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

2 I don't have any further questions. Thank you.

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So if there are no  
4 further questions, then I will accept the motion on  
5 the amendment request of Arkansas Lighthouse Charter  
6 Schools.

7 MR. BALDWIN: I move we accept the request to  
8 relocate the campus that has been on the Air Force  
9 Base to the, I guess, you can call it the primary  
10 location for the Lighthouse Charter School.

11 DR. MOORE: I second the motion.

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. There is a motion  
13 by Mr. Baldwin and second by Dr. Moore that we accept  
14 the amendment request to move locations of the  
15 Jacksonville Arkansas Lighthouse Charter Schools from  
16 the Little Rock Air Force Base to their new location.  
17 Is there any discussion on the motion?

18 (NO RESPONSE)

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Seeing none, all  
20 those in favor, indicate by saying aye.

21 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Any opposed?

23 Motion passes.

24 Okay. If we could please go to our voting  
25 sheets and indicate our votes.



1 MS. NOEL: Thank you.

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

3 Okay. If we could indicate how we voted.

4 I will start with Dr. Moore.

5 DR. MOORE: I voted yes. I vote to approve the  
6 Jacksonville Lighthouse Charter School's amendment  
7 request to relocate the Flightline campus to the  
8 Jacksonville Lighthouse Middle School location.

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

10 Mr. Baldwin.

11 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I also voted yes. I think  
12 it makes sense. There's really -- not a choice for  
13 them. I think they've reacted well in this  
14 situation, and I think it advances the -- the  
15 experience for the students to be together, I think.

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

17 Ms. Newton.

18 MS. NEWTON: I voted yes for the amendment, and  
19 my explanation is: all potential impact on students,  
20 facility and parent issues were discussed and have  
21 positive approaches and logical positive conclusions.

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

23 Ms. Stewart.

24 MS. STEWART: I vote for the Charter amendment  
25 request for Arkansas Lighthouse Charter Schools to

1 relocate Jacksonville Lighthouse Flightline to  
2 Jacksonville Lighthouse Middle School location.

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

4 And Dr. Bacon.

5 DR. BACON: I voted to approve the amendment for  
6 Jacksonville Lighthouse Charter School. I have a lot  
7 of confidence in the school's leaders. I want to  
8 name specifically John Osborn and Debra Brown who I  
9 know will continue to provide a positive learning  
10 environment for Lighthouse.

11 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

12 **1.b. CHARTER AMENDEMENT REQUESTS - eStem PUBLIC CHARTERS**

13 **1.b.1. REQUEST TO SPLIT eSTEM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BETWEEN TWO**  
14 **LOCATIONS**

15 **1.b.2. REQUEST TO RELOCATE eSTEM JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

16 **1.b.3. REQUEST TO RELOCATE eSTEM HIGH SCHOOL**

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Next on our  
18 agenda, charter amendment request for eStem Public  
19 Charter Schools.

20 Dr. Darrel Smith, please come forward and please  
21 provide some overview of the amendment request.

22 DR. SMITH: Thank you, Madam Chair.

23 Our next item on the action agenda is eStem  
24 Public Charter Schools. They have submitted an  
25 amendment request to, basically, do some relocating

1 of their buildings and some reallocating of grade  
2 levels. In attendance today is Nicholas Patterson  
3 who is the superintendent of eStem to do the  
4 presentation.

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

6 So with that, we are ready to hear the amendment  
7 request presentation. Before we begin, all those  
8 giving testimony today on behalf of eStem Charter  
9 Schools, please stand and raise your right hand.  
10 That does include anyone who is joining via Zoom.  
11 Okay. Do you swear that the testimony or statement  
12 you're about to give is the truth, the whole truth  
13 and nothing but the truth?

14 MR. PATTERSON: I do.

15 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. With that, thank  
16 you, you may begin your presentation.

17 MR. PATTERSON: Thank, y'all. My name is Nick  
18 Patterson. I'm the CEO of eStem. And on behalf of  
19 the eStem faculty and staff, I thank you all for  
20 giving us the opportunity to discuss the future of  
21 our schools. This panel has been instrumental in  
22 providing innovative opportunities for charter  
23 schools to continue to adapt, learn and provide  
24 quality education to students, so I appreciate that.  
25 I began as the CEO of eStem in July 2024, and at that

1           time, it was clear that our enrollment and our  
2           facilities footprint were out of balance. Throughout  
3           the summer of my first year and the first few months  
4           of school, we made a concerted effort to recruit new  
5           students. However, unfortunately, we did not achieve  
6           the intended results of needing almost 800 students  
7           to get those two things back into balance.

8           Throughout the second-half of the year, instead  
9           of spending more money on marketing and recruitment,  
10          our team began to explore ways to utilize our  
11          existing facilities more efficiently, thereby  
12          providing more resources directly to the education of  
13          our students. The plan that we have put before you  
14          is the result of our staff, some of the consultants  
15          that we've worked at -- or that we've worked with to  
16          achieve our goal, to adjust our operations to ensure  
17          that we invest our resources in students. With this  
18          new campus structure, eStem Public Charter Schools  
19          will create a sustainable and efficient district that  
20          will provide a consistent academic program at the  
21          elementary, junior high and high school levels. We  
22          are proud of the proposed plan which is fiscally  
23          sound and rooted in our mission to make our students  
24          college ready, career ready and world ready. I know  
25          there are a handful of questions about our

1           restructure, so I have those kind of grouped into  
2           themes and I just kind of like to walk through those  
3           a little bit for the remainder of my time.

4           So the first series of questions that I saw were  
5           around the decision making and the planning process.  
6           And so these changes in this whole restructure came  
7           about from three different things. The first was our  
8           current building occupancy rates. So when I started,  
9           I looked at all of the occupancy of our five  
10          buildings and they ranged from 38 percent full to 83  
11          percent full. So we had no building over 85 percent  
12          capacity at the time. We had over 800 available  
13          seats in our buildings, including 700 available seats  
14          in our four buildings located in downtown Little  
15          Rock, two on Third Street and two in East Village.  
16          We also worked with Mariposa Consulting which is the  
17          Consulting Group that helped us to try to recruit  
18          students. That was that concerted effort I talked  
19          about at the beginning. And we made a very good  
20          faith effort to recruit a lot more students. We  
21          committed tens of thousands of dollars to  
22          advertising, to mailers, to open houses, to  
23          everything we could to try and get more bodies into  
24          the school to maintain at five buildings; we just did  
25          not achieve those intended results. We did not see

1           that type of demand coming back from our recruitment  
2           efforts at that point. We also worked with Afton  
3           consulting, which was a financial consultant, to  
4           review our financial model given the declining  
5           enrollment and the fixed-facilities cost. To be  
6           frank, we weren't operating at a sustainable level  
7           with a very high-fixed facilities cost and declining  
8           enrollment and therefore declining revenue. So to  
9           solve these issues, we work with Afton to create a  
10          new financial model built around our 24-25 third  
11          quarter ADM which was 2,381 students. We separated  
12          all of our revenue into two buckets, our recurring  
13          revenue and our non-recurring revenue; and we built a  
14          model that allocated 65 percent of recurring revenue  
15          to personnel, 23 percent of recurring revenue to  
16          non-personnel, non-facilities and 12 percent of  
17          recurring revenue to facilities. And we wanted to  
18          make sure that we stay within those guardrails so  
19          that we could be sustainable for next year and every  
20          year going forward. We took all non-recurring  
21          revenue and created a special pot that we used to  
22          fund supplemental activities or one-time special  
23          projects. So to meet both the personnel and  
24          facilities guidelines, or guardrails for our new  
25          model, we could not operate at five buildings. So we

1           needed to figure out how to operate down at four  
2           buildings. So that was the overarching kind of  
3           driving decision that led us to make the decision  
4           that we felt like eStem Public Charter Schools needed  
5           to operate with four buildings instead of five.

6           Once we had made that decision, we had to  
7           determine which buildings made the most sense, and so  
8           this is where we did an analysis of each of our  
9           buildings. The one that we ultimately decided to  
10          exit was our facility on the UA Little Rock campus.  
11          And the reason for that is kind of three- or  
12          four-fold. First, the UA Little Rock building only  
13          has a capacity of 600 students, so for us at the high  
14          school that meant we could only have 10th, 11th and  
15          12th grade; there we couldn't have 9th grade there.  
16          We needed to have 9th grade in a separate location.  
17          The original plan called for us to expand at UALR,  
18          move into a different building, take over some  
19          additional space and be able to do a full 9-12 there.  
20          But as we got into those discussions, it turns out we  
21          have had to do a lot of work with sprinklers in the  
22          building. We would have to have a sprinkler one  
23          floor above and every floor below the floor we were  
24          going to use. At our current state, that was just  
25          financially prohibitive to make those types of

1 changes.

2 The second piece was that the UALR facility  
3 lacked a cafeteria or a lunchroom, and so we were  
4 having to lease additional space from UALR to do  
5 lunch; and that was an additional cost. The other  
6 four buildings that we were looking at in downtown  
7 Little Rock all have a multi-purpose and cafeteria --  
8 or a cafeteria. The facility at UA Little Rock was  
9 also six miles from our other campuses. So six miles  
10 from the downtown campus on Third Street, seven miles  
11 from the campus on East Village. And we had parents  
12 who had all three drop offs. So they were having to  
13 go all the way, stop at each location, so that one  
14 was just an outlier for that reason as well.

15 And finally, the facility on the UA Little Rock  
16 campus was leased, whereas we own the other four  
17 buildings. So that should make that a little bit  
18 more of an easy decision that if we're going to get  
19 out of the facility, the leased one would probably  
20 make the most sense.

21 So once we decided that the UA Little Rock  
22 campus was the one that we would need to move away  
23 from, we had to figure out how to organize the other  
24 buildings that we were going to have around some  
25 non-negotiables. We still wanted to be K-12 district



1           and we still wanted to make sure that every student  
2           who attended eStem the previous year had a spot. We  
3           did not want to shrink in size.

4           So we decided to look at what building could  
5           serve as the high school, and we settled on the  
6           larger building in East Village which is --  
7           previously was our East Village Elementary School.  
8           We chose that building for a couple of reasons. One,  
9           the layout of the building, it's one floor big wide-  
10          open hallways, large classrooms. Second, it has the  
11          capacity to accommodate 9th through 12th grade in one  
12          building which we'll be able to do for the first time  
13          in a while at least. It has a lunchroom, the largest  
14          lunchroom of any of our buildings actually, and it  
15          has access to outside area that we can set up for  
16          lunch as well. And outside area that we can set up  
17          for instruction which will be nice additions to a  
18          high school. And we have the most parking available  
19          down in East Village. We have over 160 parking spots  
20          already secured in East Village for our staff and  
21          students, compared to limited parking options on  
22          Third Street. So once we decided that that building  
23          was the one that's the best fit for the high school,  
24          then we had to rearrange all the other buildings to  
25          make that work. It made sense for the smaller East

1 Village building, right there next to it, to become  
2 the junior high. That allows us to accelerate some  
3 learning for middle school students. We have a lot  
4 of students in middle school who are already taking  
5 high school classes and would like to take more high  
6 school classes, and this makes this very easy because  
7 the buildings are separated by a breezeway. You can  
8 walk right between them. And so our goal is to  
9 accelerate some of those middle school students at  
10 the high school.

11 And then from that point, we needed to  
12 consolidate the two elementary schools as we had two  
13 buildings left, we had one, we had downtown  
14 elementary and East Village Elementary. We were  
15 using the East Village Elementary School as the high  
16 school, so we wanted to consolidate those into one  
17 elementary school spread across both the Gazette  
18 building and the Federal Reserve building. Once  
19 again, those are directly across the street from each  
20 other. So the way that we set that up is: K-4 would  
21 be in the Gazette building and 5-6 would be directly  
22 across the street in the Federal Reserve building.  
23 So ultimately what this allows us to have is an  
24 elementary campus on Third Street serving about  
25 1,200-and-something students that -- between K-6; and

1           then about a mile away, we have our secondary campus,  
2           serving 7 through 12.

3           Another question that I saw was around the  
4           traffic patterns for these schools, so fortunately  
5           this doesn't actually impact our traffic patterns  
6           that much. As recently as two years ago, we had this  
7           number of students in all of these locations. So we  
8           have traffic patterns that are designed to support  
9           this amount of students. So two years ago in the  
10          Gazette building, we have 892 students; this year  
11          we're projecting 885. We feel like our traffic  
12          patterns can support that. In the Federal Reserve,  
13          two years ago, we had 406; this year we have 379. We  
14          feel like our traffic patterns can support that as  
15          well. Two years ago, in our large building down in  
16          East Village, we had 772; this year we're projecting  
17          721, so we feel good about that as well. And the  
18          only place where we have a significant increase is in  
19          our small village in East Village. We went from 292  
20          two years ago to 393, but our police officers who we  
21          work with and consult with on traffic recently met  
22          with the city of Little Rock and the head traffic  
23          engineer, and they feel comfortable that they'll be  
24          able to support that increase. The reality is it's  
25          only an increase of 50 students. When you count the

1           decline at the large building and the increase at the  
2           small building, it's a 50-student increase. So they  
3           feel good about supporting that.

4           The second kind of theme of questions that I saw  
5           were around our relationship with UALR and how kind  
6           of that process has worked. We have a positive  
7           relationship with UALR, and we are going to continue  
8           to partner with UA Little Rock on CTE, concurrent  
9           credit. We started a collegiate academy, so we will  
10          have our first group of students who will actually be  
11          leaving campus from East Village and going to UALR to  
12          take classes on campus at UALR. So we're excited  
13          about that, and we're excited about all of that  
14          continuing. When I let Dr. Drale know that we need  
15          to consolidate down to our four buildings, she  
16          understood and she has -- you know, was -- realized  
17          that this was an enrollment issue that we needed to  
18          fix, and we needed to make sure that we were  
19          sustainable. So we had a very productive  
20          conversation about that. Both sides have been very  
21          supportive of each other as we've gone through this  
22          move, and we've had a -- have and continue to have a  
23          positive relationship.

24          There was also a question about kind of large  
25          space and athletic fields. We've always rented

1           those, so even when we use, like, the Jackson  
2           Stephens Center for graduation at UALR, we rented  
3           that. So we can continue to do that. We also have  
4           relationships with UALR around athletic fields that  
5           we will continue to pursue. We also use Arkansas  
6           School for the Deaf, Burns Park, others, so we're  
7           looking at all of those options as well. But those  
8           have always been rental activities and nothing about  
9           this restructure plan stops us from being able to do  
10          that.

11                 And then, there were a couple of questions as  
12           well around just kind of next steps and what this  
13           means for our enrollment and our kind of future  
14           goals. We still have room to grow in this new  
15           structure. So, I think, the capacity across these  
16           four buildings is a little over 2,700 students.  
17           Right now, we're projected to be about 2,381 for next  
18           year. So we still think there is room to grow, and I  
19           think with some of the momentum that we have around  
20           growth awards, performance on the simulated grades  
21           and some of the other exciting things we're doing, we  
22           expect there to be more interest in eStem as well.  
23           And so we're excited to have room to accommodate  
24           those students as well.

25                 Our goals have not changed. We still want to

1           ensure that every student is college ready, world  
2           ready and career ready, and that's what we're going  
3           to focus on and build our programs for. We're just  
4           going to be able to do that in a much more  
5           sustainable way now where we actually have resources,  
6           more resources to invest in the education of our  
7           students.

8           And finally, there was a question about turning  
9           around the high school's academic performance. So  
10          since I -- when I first started, I went back and  
11          looked at all the available data and unfortunately  
12          that high school has just been stuck at a C for a  
13          little bit. We did have -- we did exceed the state  
14          average on the new simulated grade by over 20 points.  
15          We were .008 percent away from a B on the new  
16          ratings. So we were seven points away out of 900.  
17          So we feel very confident about the momentum that we  
18          have going at the high school and the -- what we'll  
19          be able to continue in this new location. We won  
20          2024 Office of Education Policy Growth Awards for  
21          best overall growth scores, best math growth scores.  
22          We won a top five percent growth in graduation award  
23          in high school from the Arkansas Department of  
24          Education. We also won a peer-network growth award.  
25          So we feel confident in the momentum that we have

1           going at high school. We have the vast majority of  
2           that team coming back. We have the director coming  
3           back. We just have them all in a new location. So  
4           we're optimistic about what we're going to be able to  
5           achieve there.

6           So I'll stop there and see if there any  
7           questions from you all, but hopefully this is the  
8           helpful.

9           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All right. Thank  
10          you.

11          Mr. Shults from Legal could you please come  
12          forward and let us know if there are any concerns?

13          MR. SHULTS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

14          No. Changes of these nature don't implicate  
15          legal concerns, generally, so no concerns.

16          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

17          Okay. Panel Members.

18          Dr. Bacon, do you have any questions?

19          DR. BACON: Yes.

20          First, I want to thank you for the details and  
21          the time you all spent obviously responding to some  
22          of the questions. I think that was really, really  
23          helpful. And also just commend you and your team for  
24          taking -- making the hard calls and doing the tough  
25          work when it's time to -- to make a change and be

1           proactive and not waiting for events to control that  
2           for you. So I really want to say, I appreciate you  
3           guys for taking on that task and -- and presenting a  
4           plan.

5           I think I just kind of want to go through the  
6           three, since you'll have three schools, and talk a  
7           little bit about each. But first, so the downtown  
8           junior high now will be -- or it's actually -- is  
9           already a combined junior high; right? You had 7th  
10          and 8th grade combined already --

11          MR. PATTERSON: Yes.

12          DR. BACON: That's a change that was made. So  
13          really they're just changing location?

14          MR. PATTERSON: Correct.

15          DR. BACON: That's cool. I was just looking at  
16          the -- the growth charts from OEP, it was actually  
17          the top ranked, number one overall growth school from  
18          middle school and junior highs in the state.

19          MR. PATTERSON: Correct.

20          DR. BACON: So phenomenal. Phenomenal. I would  
21          love to know, just sort of for anybody listening or  
22          for those of us here in involved in the work: what  
23          are the things, maybe two or three top things, that  
24          you all would attribute that phenomenal success at  
25          the middle school and junior high level that maybe



1           could be a lessons learned for others?

2           MR. PATTERSON: Yeah. So I think the few things  
3           that really jump out are staff consistency. That  
4           school has done a really good job of maintaining  
5           their staff. We have an excellent school director  
6           there who has built a culture that people want to  
7           work in and want to stay in and she has done a great  
8           job of having that staff year after year, which I  
9           really do think makes a huge difference.

10          Secondly, they just really dove into the  
11          numbers. So they really started looking at the  
12          individual student level for all the data. So  
13          looking at their scale scores, their expected growth  
14          scores and really putting plans in place specific to  
15          the student, not the class, not the grade, but the  
16          student to make a difference. So really making sure  
17          that each student is trying to get the instruction  
18          that they need and developing a plan for those  
19          students. We've incorporated some new tools like  
20          i-Ready which gives us a lot more data, a lot more  
21          ability to drill down to the student level and that  
22          principal and our academics team, Dr. Page over here,  
23          has really dived into that -- dove into that and made  
24          sure that that is the common practice now. We're  
25          starting to see -- I think the junior high is an

1           early adopter. With their success, everybody else is  
2           starting to see that work as well.

3           DR. BACON: I like to name names, so that's  
4           Melissa Gray --

5           MR. PATTERSON: Yes.

6           DR. BACON: -- who is the director of that  
7           school, who is also a recent graduate of the Master  
8           Principal Program, I believe --

9           MR. PATTERSON: Yes.

10          DR. BACON: -- all three years. A phenomenal  
11          leader. Moving to the elementary school. And so I  
12          know that both elementary schools have sort of been  
13          stuck at, like, at C level for a few years, some  
14          academic needs. I believe the downtown elementary  
15          has been on the upswing and improving; am I right?  
16          They -- what was their simulated grade?

17          MR. PATTERSON: A B, simulated.

18          DR. BACON: I thought so.

19          MR. PATTERSON: So yeah. They've been --

20          DR. BACON: Moving down to a B --

21          MR. PATTERSON: Yes.

22          DR. BACON: -- from a C, seeing positives. Now  
23          that sort of East -- it sounds like East Village  
24          Elementary is being absorbed kind of into downtown  
25          and using the downtown location, and I assume the

1           downtown leadership out there?

2           MR. PATTERSON: Yes.

3           DR. BACON: Was there -- what changes or what is  
4           -- what is happening to feel confident that those  
5           students will be absorbed and that things will  
6           continue on that positive track academically?

7           MR. PATTERSON: Yeah. So the leadership from  
8           downtown elementary is still in charge. There are --  
9           a lot of the teachers have moved over from East  
10          Village to downtown elementary. So there will be  
11          some consistency there. I think the biggest  
12          challenge is just going to be the size, right, and  
13          the increase in size that we're going to expect for  
14          this first year. It is not something that we haven't  
15          seen before. We have experienced being that size.  
16          That's -- as you well know. So I do think they have  
17          a pretty good plan in place, but I think a lot of it  
18          is just going to be procedures and just making sure  
19          that we have clear, consistent plans and processes  
20          for what that elementary school looks like. I think  
21          the data piece that we've been doing that is --  
22          started with the junior high and is now kind of  
23          expanding throughout our -- our district are already  
24          in place, I think we'll be able to do those. All --  
25          a lot of our teachers who came either from downtown

1 or stayed at downtown or came from East Village are  
2 familiar with it, so I think it won't be like  
3 starting over from scratch which I think will work to  
4 our advantage.

5 DR. BACON: And then finally, looking at the  
6 high school -- I know as you mentioned here -- I  
7 think they've been around a C for three or four  
8 years. Before that there was a time when I think  
9 that school was, like, the junior high on the top; it  
10 was an A; it was award-winning; it was phenomenal.  
11 What can be different moving this -- sort of this new  
12 start, fresh start for the high school? Now it's a  
13 9-12 like most of the traditional high schools around  
14 here. What do you see that can be different for the  
15 high school to maybe get them back to that? I know  
16 you said they're on the upswing. Some really  
17 positive growth. I mean, is there anything that that  
18 you think will be different now than where it's been,  
19 maybe in the last few years?

20 MR. PATTERSON: Yeah. So I think one thing that  
21 will really stick out is as we start looking at the  
22 role of graduation with distinction and graduation  
23 with merit. And I think just being able to kind of  
24 be back in downtown Little Rock. I think there's  
25 going to be some opportunities for partnerships that

1           will help us maybe get some of those certifications  
2           and things like that that help you kind of tip the  
3           scale towards graduation with distinction or  
4           graduation with merit. That ends up being a valuable  
5           part of the formula for how -- the school grades, and  
6           I think that an area that we have a lot of room to  
7           expand and grow into. And I think being down in East  
8           Village and downtown Little Rock is going to set us  
9           up well for success to -- to explore that. I think  
10          with my conversations with Jana Young, the director  
11          of the high school, that is what she sees as, like --  
12          the opportunity for growth there is really building  
13          up internships, the ability to get professional  
14          certifications and things like that.

15                 DR. BACON: Awesome. All right. Thank you.

16                 That's all I have.

17                 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right.

18                 Dr. Moore.

19                 DR. MOORE: Thank you so much. This is --  
20          information is very robust and very helpful. So most  
21          of my questions have been asked. I did -- and if  
22          it's in here and I'm overlooking it, I apologize.  
23          When were the parents notified about the change in  
24          location?

25                 MR. PATTERSON: Yeah. So they were notified on

1 May 9th.

2 DR. MOORE: Okay.

3 MR. PATTERSON: So that was -- that was the day  
4 that we kind of went public with the announcement to  
5 parents. We then submitted, like -- as part of that  
6 announcement, we created a survey where parents were  
7 able to ask questions and we then kind of followed up  
8 answering all of those questions. We would collect  
9 those and then put out frequently asked questions.  
10 But the date was May 9th.

11 DR. MOORE: Okay. And then, have you heard  
12 anything in those surveys that you had, and the focus  
13 groups and different information, about the impact  
14 maybe on some students that lived close to UALR or  
15 their parents work close to UALR that they may not be  
16 able to continue with eStem because of the change?  
17 Or --

18 MR. PATTERSON: So we actually have not seen a  
19 lot of withdrawals at the high school level, no more  
20 than what you would typically expect a year. But  
21 there -- those when -- we kind of do a withdrawal  
22 survey and we ask information about that. There is  
23 -- they have not indicated that it's because of this  
24 move. Now, that doesn't mean that -- that's not what  
25 they said, but that's not what -- the indication that

1           we're getting at this point is that it's because of  
2           this.

3           One thing that we are excited about being  
4           downtown is all four buildings now are within a mile  
5           of the Rock Region METRO Transport Center. So we do  
6           think we will be able to utilize -- we have a strong  
7           partnership with Rock Region METRO. We give every  
8           student who wants one a free bus card so that they  
9           can take city buses. We think that will help being  
10          able to get down to this -- the hub and then from  
11          there to either East Village or Third Street pretty  
12          efficiently.

13          DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you. And I will say,  
14          one of my colleagues at work, her child attends eStem  
15          and -- downtown, and she sings her praises all the  
16          time and is very appreciative of the communication  
17          with parents and just the culture at your school.  
18          She's -- and she works in education. So she's very  
19          pleased. So Congrats on at least one very pleased  
20          parent.

21          MR. PATTERSON: Well, we appreciate that. Thank  
22          you.

23          DR. MOORE: That's all I have. Thank you.

24          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Very good.

25          Mr. Baldwin.

1 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you. Yes.

2 I -- just like everyone, I appreciated this.  
3 It's nice to be able to read it ahead of time and you  
4 did a good job of walking through that with us. And  
5 I just also want to want to say it seems like you all  
6 have made a bunch of what I would call hard  
7 decisions. And oftentimes people are afraid to make  
8 hard decisions, so I commend you, you and your team  
9 for doing that. It seems -- it seems logical, and I  
10 think sets the school up financially for a different  
11 future reality.

12 Talk to us a little bit about Afton consulting.  
13 You have that mentioned. I would be interested in  
14 knowing how you found them, what you think about them  
15 and is this a long-term relationship or is this just  
16 for this point in time?

17 MR. PATTERSON: Yeah. No. That's -- excuse me.  
18 So we got connected with Afton consulting through  
19 Equitable Facilities Fund, which is a group that kind  
20 of holds debt for charter schools. So obviously, our  
21 plan and our goal would be to refinance all of our  
22 buildings on long-term notes with Equitable  
23 Facilities Fund. As part of that, they set us up  
24 with Afton consulting as a resource to help make sure  
25 that all of our numbers and everything looked good



1           and made us attractive as a, like, a refinancing  
2           option for EFF. We've been incredibly pleased with  
3           them. We are continuing with them, yes. So we've --  
4           I've just signed an agreement to continue with them  
5           for next year. We find them incredibly helpful, and  
6           they are -- just an -- a great thought partner. And  
7           then they just have a whole bunch of national  
8           expertise. So -- like, for example the guardrails  
9           around 65 percent, in '23 12 percent. They were able  
10          to pull those from just national norms of how that --  
11          they have seen successful charter schools operate.  
12          And they were able to say, if you can get close to  
13          this, we know you're going to be okay. And so I  
14          think it was just -- that type of insight was  
15          incredibly helpful.

16                 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. I'm glad you're going to  
17          have an ongoing relationship. I think --

18                 MR. PATTERSON: Me --

19                 MR. BALDWIN: -- that's good.

20                 MR. PATTERSON: Me too.

21                 MR. BALDWIN: We had received some budget  
22          projection information, just some narrative. And I  
23          just wanted to ask about those. So it says here that  
24          you have a staffing -- new staffing structure which  
25          saves about 1.1 million. And then reduced facilities

1 costs will save 1.1 million and then the nonrenewable  
2 CMO lease is 220,000. So get behind the members and  
3 tell us a little bit about that. And does that --  
4 does that mean that you end up having -- I guess I'm  
5 wondering what your bottom line --

6 MR. PATTERSON: Yeah.

7 MR. BALDWIN: -- is projected to be.

8 MR. PATTERSON: Yeah. Absolutely. So the  
9 staffing restructure, you know, those are always  
10 difficult. But yeah, so we decreased from about 289,  
11 I'm sorry, 279 to 257 staff or something along those  
12 lines. So, I mean, it was a decline of 20-plus  
13 staff. A lot of that we were able to absorb just  
14 through attrition which was nice and better than the  
15 alternative. Some of it was through typical  
16 nonrenewals and then some of it was through a  
17 reduction in force that we had to -- that we had to  
18 do. But we do anticipate those savings associated  
19 with that. The facilities cost of \$1,000,000, so  
20 some of that is just additional fees that we had to  
21 pay to UALR for things like leasing the lunchroom,  
22 athletic fields, some of that that were -- parking --  
23 that we're just not going to need to do anymore. So  
24 we'll be able to anticipate those savings. And then  
25 the CMO lease, so the -- I should have mentioned

1           earlier, the one building that is going to still be  
2           under 85 percent utilized, that's where the CMO is  
3           going. So we're going to get rid of our separate  
4           office and we're all going to move in from -- the  
5           vast majority of us are going to move into that  
6           building to make it a little bit more efficient as  
7           well. So that -- that's a nice savings as well. So  
8           ultimately, for our budget for next year, what we're  
9           -- was on our approved budget, we are coming in about  
10          \$528,000 in the black, which is the number that we  
11          actually need to hit in order to have 60 days cash on  
12          hand.

13               MR. BALDWIN: Okay. That - that's great. And  
14          the timing for this is -- this all happens in August?

15               MR. PATTERSON: Yes, sir.

16               MR. BALDWIN: All right.

17               MR. PATTERSON: Actually, July 30 for us.

18               MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you.

19               CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Ms. Newton.

20               MS. NEWTON: Something I heard consistently from  
21          the panel was logical and the word -- oftentimes it's  
22          overused -- I think, is pivoting. And I think I want  
23          to use it today just to say that you've done an  
24          excellent job in responding to situations and making  
25          adjustments. And certainly you haven't been without

1 issues, I'm sure throughout the -- the granting of  
2 the Charter, but it's -- it's refreshing to see -- to  
3 hear this information and hear the response and  
4 reaction to it. So I just wanted to say I appreciate  
5 the foresight and making the adjustments as needed  
6 before it becomes -- before the black becomes the  
7 red. So thank you for that.

8 MR. PATTERSON: Thank you.

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

10 Again, thank you, Superintendent Patterson, for  
11 your presentation and clarifying the questions that  
12 we're presented to you. I don't have any questions  
13 at this time.

14 So if there are no further questions from any  
15 panel members, then I will accept the motion on each  
16 of the amendment requests from eStem Public Charter.

17 DR. BACON: So that that was going to be my  
18 question. Is it three separate amendment requests?  
19 I mean, three separate motions or is it one?

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: It's one. I think we  
21 can put it all in one because it'll be one -- it's  
22 one on the voting sheet. So --

23 DR. BACON: Okay. Okay.

24 Well, before I make that motion, I want to --  
25 I'm in the name checking today. We left off Melissa

1 Bravo, your phenomenal, elementary school director.  
2 I don't want to leave her out.

3 So I would make a motion to approve the  
4 amendment request for eStem Public School.

5 MS. STEWART: I second.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. I have a motion  
7 by Dr. Bacon and a second by, was it Ms. Stewart?

8 Edie, was that you or --

9 MS. STEWART: Yes. Yes. eStem, yeah.

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. A motion by Dr.  
11 Bacon, a second by Ms. Stewart, that we accept the  
12 amendment request submitted by eStem Public Charter  
13 Schools to split their elementary schools into two  
14 locations and relocate the eStem junior high school  
15 and relocate the eStem High School.

16 Are there any discussion -- is there a  
17 discussion on the motion?

18 DR. MOORE: Before we vote, I do just want to  
19 clarify what Dr. Bacon asked because we have separate  
20 amendment requests forms. So just to clarify that we  
21 do only need to vote once and that that will cover  
22 all of them because in the past we had to do it  
23 separately when we had separate forms.

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I'm looking at the  
25 voting sheet and it's -- as it's written, we do have

1           several items on the agenda today that will require  
2           separate votes, and this is not one of them.

3           DR. MOORE:   Okay.

4           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY:   So it's -- everything is  
5           listed in this one.

6           DR. MOORE:   Okay.

7           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY:   So I'm believing from  
8           the guidance from the Charter Office that this is a  
9           one motion, one vote.

10          DR. MOORE:   Okay, good deal.   Thank you.

11          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY:   Thank you.

12          Is there any other discussion on the motion?

13                       (NO RESPONSE)

14          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY:   If not, all those in  
15          favor, say aye.

16                       (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

17          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY:   Okay.   Any opposed, nay.

18          Okay.   Ayes have it.   Motion carries.   Please go  
19          to your voting sheet.

20          Okay.   If we can share how we voted.   I'll start  
21          with Mr. Baldwin.

22          MR. BALDWIN:   Yes, thank you.

23                I vote to approve the several building  
24                relocation requests of students as described in the  
25                application.   I think this improves the school's

1 financial condition -- future financial condition and  
2 I believe also will improve student education.

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

4 Ms. Newton.

5 MS. NEWTON: I voted for the motion and with the  
6 explanation, it's a well thought out approach, taking  
7 all variables into consideration, resulting in  
8 positive conclusions and outcomes.

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

10 Ms. Stewart.

11 MS. STEWART: I vote to approve the eStem  
12 Charter amendment request to consolidate from five  
13 locations to four as described. I believe this will  
14 help firm up their -- their financial impact.

15 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

16 Dr. Bacon.

17 Ah. I just erased everything I had typed.

18 Okay. I said, I vote to approve the amendment  
19 request for eStem because of my confidence in the  
20 leadership team's ability to make the tough calls  
21 necessary to rightsize the organization and continue  
22 the positive academic momentum of the schools.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

24 And Dr. Moore.

25 DR. MOORE: I vote to approve all amendment

1 requests from eStem Public Charter Schools to  
2 relocate campuses based on fiscal and operational  
3 needs. Appropriate communication with families was  
4 conducted and the overall impact on students should  
5 be positive.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All right.

7 Thank you.

8 **2. CHARTER SCHOOLS REQUESTING TO DEFER SCHOOL OPENING TO THE**  
9 **2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR**

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Next on our  
11 agenda, open-enrollment public charter schools  
12 amendment request to defer school opening to the  
13 2026-2027 school year.

14 Dr. Darrell Smith, could you please come forward  
15 and give more explanation of the amendment request?

16 MS. NEWTON: Madam -- Madam Chair, while he's  
17 coming forward, I'm just -- I'm thinking, was eStem  
18 one for the first three or four charters that were  
19 established based on the law that was passed? Do --  
20 does anybody remember? I remember KIPP --

21 DR. BACON: It was one of the early ones. You  
22 know, LISA had been around. I think Academics Plus  
23 in Maumelle. I think eStem was pretty early. None  
24 of us knew what a charter school was when we started.

25 DR. SMITH: But you did it well. You did it



1 well.

2 **2.a. CHARTER AMENDMENT REQUEST FOR IOTA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**

3 DR. SMITH: Next on our action agenda, is a  
4 request to extend the start date. Originally, when  
5 IOTA Community Schools came before this panel, they  
6 requested a start date of August of 2025. And they  
7 are here today to request an extension to August of  
8 2026. And so Jocquell Rodgers is here to present her  
9 rationale for the extension request.

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you for  
11 that explanation.

12 Before we get started, all those who will be  
13 testifying today on behalf of IOTA Community Schools,  
14 please stand and raise your right hand. That does  
15 include any joining us via Zoom. Do you swear that  
16 the testimony or statement you are about to give is  
17 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

18 MS. RODGERS: I do.

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you. Dr. Rodgers,  
20 you can please come forward and begin your  
21 presentation.

22 MS. RODGERS: Good morning. My name is Jocquell  
23 Rodgers. I am the executive director of IOTA  
24 Community Schools.

25 Our mission is to prepare students for a pathway

1 to economic sustainability through transformative  
2 education opportunities. We operate, currently, four  
3 schools in Memphis: two middle schools, two high  
4 schools, and we're excited about the opportunity to  
5 come into Arkansas to operate an elementary, K-5, and  
6 a 6-8. We have two separate charter proposals. We  
7 have decided to push to the 26-27 school year, quite  
8 frankly, because time is not on our side. We really  
9 wanted to be very intentional about our entry into  
10 Little Rock. So we spent quite a bit of time  
11 searching for an adequate location for our students,  
12 especially in the Southwest Little Rock community,  
13 and we -- we work towards some partnerships with  
14 other organizations. And, again, time just was not  
15 on our side.

16 One of the things we have done, though, we have  
17 hired our -- we call them a principal in residence,  
18 as they are training. So the -- we already have our  
19 principal hired who will begin training with us in  
20 our Memphis schools. As we continue, we have -- we  
21 are having very strong conversations right now about  
22 a facility and so we feel far more poised to begin in  
23 the 26-27 school year.

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

25 Mr. Shults, from ADE legal, can you please come

1 forward and let us know if there's any legal concerns  
2 regarding the amendment request?

3 MR. SHULTS: Hello, good --

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Hello.

5 MR. SHULTS: -- morning, CAP. No. This is a  
6 policy decision. There's no legal concern.

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

8 Okay. So on to our panel. Doctor Moore, do you  
9 have any questions?

10 DR. MOORE: Yes.

11 Could you elaborate about the partnerships? I'm  
12 not as familiar with organizations having to partner  
13 with someone to be able to open their doors.

14 MS. RODGERS: Well --

15 DR. MOORE: So could you speak more --

16 MS. RODGERS: Yes --

17 DR. MOORE: -- to --

18 MS. RODGERS: -- ma'am.

19 DR. MOORE: -- to what you mean by that?

20 MS. RODGERS: Well, what we were trying to do  
21 was kind of cohabitate. I met Dr. Stewart as part of  
22 that conversation because while our missions are very  
23 much aligned, we were having conversations with  
24 Goodwill about possibly utilizing some space they had  
25 for our school. But it was a timeline. It was just

1 a lot of things would have had to happen with their  
2 board. And because they have two boards, it was just  
3 -- it was getting towards March and then April, so  
4 the timeline just wasn't working for us. It wasn't a  
5 -- it wasn't necessarily in partnership that they  
6 were operating a school with us. We were just trying  
7 to cohabitate. Really looking for a facility that  
8 would offer the space we needed especially for the  
9 democratic -- demographic we were hoping to serve.  
10 We also looked at the Meadowcliff facility that is  
11 empty. It required a lot of work in order to be  
12 prepared for the current school year, for the 25-26  
13 school year. And then we had been in talks with,  
14 actually, Jacksonville around a management agreement.  
15 And so the just kind of shifting priorities, did not  
16 allow us to get into a facility to open for the 25-26  
17 school year.

18 DR. MOORE: Okay. How does this compare to your  
19 model in Memphis?

20 MS. RODGERS: So in Memphis, our organization  
21 started out of -- as transformation schools. So we  
22 were in buildings that already existed. They were  
23 schools that already existed. And so we partnered  
24 with those schools to increase their academic  
25 performance. With the agreement, the Achievement

1 School District in Memphis, we have two schools with  
2 the Achievement School District currently and then  
3 two schools with the Tennessee Public Charter  
4 Commission. Three schools -- Wooddale is  
5 transitioning to the Charter commission this year.  
6 They all came with buildings, so they were already  
7 established schools. We came in as the partner for  
8 Transformation. Bluff City is a school that -- we  
9 transformed a church into a school, so it is the one  
10 property that we actually had to establish very much  
11 like what we're seeking to do here in Arkansas.

12 DR. MOORE: Okay. So just to elaborate a little  
13 on what you mentioned because you have that you're  
14 currently talked with another organization and you  
15 said change in -- shift in priorities or -- are what  
16 you were focusing on. So what is the primary goal?  
17 Do you think that you'll partner with another  
18 organization just for cohabitation or more of the  
19 actual school partnership if they're --

20 MS. RODGERS: So when I say shifted priorities,  
21 we have been having conversations with Ms. Noel at  
22 Jacksonville around the possibility of a management  
23 agreement with them and IOTA transitioning to that  
24 management agreement. That was one option that we  
25 had. And then, currently, we recently went to -- met

1           with eStem and the campus at UALR. And so we're also  
2           looking at possibilities -- shift -- moving into that  
3           space. So it's a conversation we're having.

4           DR. MOORE: Okay. That's the only questions I  
5           have at this time. Thank you.

6           MS. NEWTON: Could I ask a --

7           MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

8           MS. NEWTON: -- question kind of segue from  
9           that, Madam Chair?

10          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yes. You're recognized.

11          MS. NEWTON: And I -- I can't remember, but how  
12          -- does this change -- or the various considerations  
13          for moving, does it change the demographics of the  
14          students that you are, you know -- I heard mention  
15          Southwest --

16          MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

17          MS. NEWTON: -- and then Jacksonville and maybe  
18          here or there.

19          MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

20          MS. NEWTON: How does that change? And, I  
21          guess, it's a procedural question with the -- with  
22          this panel -- the Charter Office: how does that jive  
23          in the sense of you came, likely -- I can't remember  
24          --

25          MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

1 MS. NEWTON: -- what -- we want to do this with  
2 this group of students who have issues around or --

3 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

4 MS. NEWTON: -- can be -- their education can be  
5 improved. So now -- and the other part of that  
6 question too: is that -- does the Department  
7 evaluate, now, the move as it relates to time? Does  
8 that make sense? You know, so here we are one year  
9 going into another year --

10 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

11 MS. NEWTON: -- and how does the Department  
12 regulate the procedure -- no -- the guidelines to  
13 follow for charter moving from one academic year to  
14 the other? You could say, so -- so many things could  
15 change within a year. So those are a couple of  
16 things that -- so how does it change their  
17 application for this is who we want to serve, and  
18 this is how we'll reach out to them? And that --  
19 because I see, you know, like I say, over here over  
20 there maybe over there, but we're really not sure.

21 MS. RODGERS: Right.

22 MS. NEWTON: Because you look at the Goodwill  
23 and the partnership there, that's a totally different  
24 population, possibly, than you would see in  
25 Jacksonville. So I'm just a little bit -- I'm just

1 I'm confused.

2 DR. SMITH: Yeah. Let --

3 MS. NEWTON: I'm just concerned --

4 DR. SMITH: Yeah. Let -- let --

5 MS. NEWTON: -- by --

6 MR. BALDWIN: Let me tag into Toyce's question  
7 because I think it's a great question. I guess what  
8 I'm thinking, as you were talking, is at what point  
9 in time should they come back for -- for a  
10 reapproval? Because it seems like they changed  
11 materially what they intended to do. There should be  
12 a reapproval process and not -- not just a --

13 DR. SMITH: Yes, sir. Let me -- let me address  
14 that real quick.

15 MS. RODGERS: Okay. All right.

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And that was Mr. Baldwin  
17 asking the question? I'm sorry.

18 DR. SMITH: Yes, ma'am.

19 MR. BALDWIN: Yes.

20 DR. SMITH: Darrell Smith, Department of  
21 Education.

22 So to answer your question, so at this point,  
23 what we're doing is add -- you're -- basically, their  
24 amendment request is just to extend the start date,  
25 right, so -- till next year. As they -- things



1           settle in and we kind of -- they kind of decide what  
2           direction they're going to go, whether it's going to  
3           be a management issue, would be in Jacksonville or if  
4           it is going to be in southwest -- the original  
5           request -- or if it's something else. When they  
6           decide that, yes, they will come back before this  
7           panel and make their presentation regarding whatever  
8           it -- a lot of it -- it's different from what the  
9           original contract was -- was created for. So if we  
10          do make a material change in the contract to  
11          different student population, they'll basically kind  
12          of reapply. If --

13                MS. NEWTON: Well, again -- and that's what I  
14                was wondering --

15                DR. SMITH: Right.

16                MS. NEWTON: -- because I was trying to draw the  
17                parallel between the population, your school and your  
18                mission --

19                MS. RODGER: Yes, ma'am.

20                MS. NEWTON: -- and your success in West Memphis  
21                to this population --

22                MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am

23                MS. NEWTON: -- looking at how they would  
24                correlate.

25                MS. RODGERS: Jacksonville is a very different

1 population than Memphis, so--

2 MS. NEWTON: Well, that's -- that's my --

3 MS. RODGERS: Absolutely. Yes, ma'am.

4 MS. NEWTON: -- whole -- and it's a different --  
5 so many things could happen that would make a  
6 different.

7 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

8 MS. NEWTON: You know the recruitment or the  
9 local -- you know, so many things can -- you know  
10 when you initially went into your process, I'm sure  
11 you had meeting -- community meetings.

12 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

13 MS. NEWTON: So these parents and -- and  
14 communities say we want this and somebody else may  
15 say that -- that's not important to us at all. We're  
16 going in a different direction. So I could see us  
17 potentially looking at a totally different  
18 application.

19 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am. And just I think for  
20 a little context, given this -- the conversations  
21 with the Lighthouse, I think, came about given their  
22 situation they were having at the school. And so we  
23 kind of met with them as thought partners initially  
24 just to see how we could support with academic  
25 supports and things of that nature. And so they are

1 continuing to operate.

2 MS. NEWTON: But it seemed like it would be vice  
3 versa.

4 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

5 MS. NEWTON: Yeah.

6 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

7 MS. NEWTON: With considering already who they  
8 are --

9 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

10 MS. NEWTON: -- and doing what they do. Yeah.

11 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

12 MS. NEWTON: But that -- that's my concern  
13 because I remember the presentation. I remember --

14 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

15 MS. NEWTON: -- the demographics.

16 MS. RODGERS: Wraparound services?

17 MS. NEWTON: Yeah.

18 MS. RODGERS: Absolutely.

19 MS. NEWTON: And all that. So it's --

20 MS. RODGERS: And we would be able to -- we  
21 would be able to continue that model in the UALR  
22 space because we're not seeking to do high school  
23 there. We would be seeking to do a K-8 in the space,  
24 and it would be to serve the community students in  
25 surrounding -- surrounding UALR. Yes, ma'am.

1 MS. NEWTON: But you do agree that that model  
2 doesn't fit every school in every community --

3 MS. RODGERS: Oh, absolutely.

4 MS. NEWTON: -- and every district?

5 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

6 MS. NEWTON: Okay. That was that was my --

7 MS. RODGERS: Absolutely.

8 MS. NEWTON: That was my --

9 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

10 MS. NEWTON: -- point.

11 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am. But strong Tier 1  
12 academics is our intention for all students.

13 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

14 MS. RODGERS: And so that was the -- that was  
15 the conversation with Lighthouse just supporting  
16 their academic needs. They wanted to look into how  
17 to begin interventions for their students, which is  
18 something that we do quite well and do a lot.

19 MS. NEWTON: Thank you.

20 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Just to assist me  
22 because I'm chairing via zoom as to provide when you  
23 -- Dr. Rodgers before you speak, will you reintroduce  
24 yourself again before you speak?

25 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And then, Panel Members,  
2 if you would kindly assist me with letting me know  
3 when you want to speak so I can kind of keep track of  
4 who's talking.

5 Okay. So, Ms. Newton, do you have any other  
6 questions?

7 MS. NEWTON: No. I'm sorry I don't have any  
8 other.

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

10 Mr. Baldwin?

11 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

12 Really just one question.

13 MS. RODGERS: Yes, sir.

14 MR. BALDWIN: And -- as you were talking, I was  
15 thinking about the decision process that you're going  
16 through to select sites or site -- a site. And if  
17 you could explain to us who all is involved in that  
18 from your team and if you have any professional  
19 consultants here, real estate, you know, consultants  
20 or folks that are involved in helping you with that  
21 selection process? And then, ultimately, who makes  
22 the go, no go decision and kind of the timing we  
23 expect to make that for the next year.

24 MS. RODGERS: Yes, sir.

25 Jocquell Rodgers speaking.

1           We have been working with the APSRC as well as  
2           with Walton and with -- through the selection process  
3           of a property. And so I am the ultimate decision  
4           maker along with my CFO, Daniel Penaranda, and so he  
5           and I work very closely together. We manage all of  
6           the meetings. And so I have the ultimate decision,  
7           but I definitely listen to the person who holds the  
8           purse strings. Yes, sir.

9           MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you.

10          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. Ms. Stewart.

11          MS. STEWART: Yes.

12          So good morning.

13          MS. RODGERS: Good morning.

14          MS. STEWART: Thank you for being here. Just a  
15          quick question following up on some of the other  
16          questions. So when you're talking about, you know,  
17          who you're working with currently, could you describe  
18          how -- maybe how far along you are in that just from  
19          the perspective of today to --

20          MS. RODGERS: Yes.

21          MS. STEWART: -- you know, at this point next  
22          year?

23          MS. RODGERS: So, again, Jocuell Rodgers  
24          speaking.

25          So we are still having conversations with

1 Lighthouse, and we just began the conversation this  
2 week regarding the eStem property. Of course, they  
3 exited -- they were -- they were actually moving out  
4 as we were coming in. And so Nick and I have worked  
5 together when he was in Memphis. So we are familiar  
6 with each other. So we began the conversation around  
7 that particular property Tuesday. We were here  
8 Tuesday to have that conversation.

9 MS. STEWART: Okay. Thank you.

10 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

11 MS. STEWART: And just kind of piggybacking on  
12 what Ms. Newton was referencing, thinking about  
13 moving forward --

14 MS. RODGERS: Yes.

15 MS. STEWART: -- what would -- what would it  
16 look like from a recruitment standpoint? Just out of  
17 curiosity from, you know, if locations are changing,  
18 is there a shift that you're making connecting with  
19 those communities?

20 MS. RODGERS: So with the UALR campus --  
21 Jocquell Rodgers speaking.

22 With the UALR campus, it really is more proximal  
23 to where we were intent -- intending to move anyway.  
24 It is very close to that southwest community. And so  
25 that is where we still intend to recruit. That is

1           the community we really hope to connect with. And I  
2           think they would benefit most from the opportunity to  
3           work with our organization. So we are still --  
4           Southwest Little Rock is still our targeted  
5           demographic.

6           MS. STEWART: Okay. That's all I have. Thank  
7           you.

8           MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

9           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And Dr. Bacon.

10          DR. BACON: Just a couple of things.

11          So on the amendment request, I note that we're  
12          -- we were going to do K-5 for 25-26. Now we're  
13          saying in 26-27, K-5 and 6-8. So talk a little bit  
14          about that shift.

15          MS. RODGERS: Yes, sir. So what we have -- when  
16          we look at a financial model, we want to do slow  
17          growth for elementary because one of the things we  
18          know is when you are able to really begin with those  
19          students with kindergarten, you shift their  
20          trajectory, especially with those foundational  
21          skills. And we're hoping to do kindergarten, and  
22          possibly pre-K, if the funding is available. But  
23          with a middle school, unless we are going to grow  
24          slowly and then work with our own middle school  
25          students, the opportunity would just take a lot



1 longer. With a middle school -- you really have a  
2 much greater financial opportunity with middle school  
3 because those -- you can start a full middle school  
4 with students that we -- we've experienced working  
5 with middle school students that we have not impacted  
6 initially through the elementary grades, but we know  
7 how to provide those interventions. Most of our  
8 middle school students who come to us, currently 60  
9 to 70 percent of them, come to us two or more grade  
10 levels behind. And so we really understand how to  
11 provide those education services. Those full  
12 wraparound services to help grow and move middle  
13 school students forward. So we're confident because  
14 it is -- the area where we are most familiar is  
15 middle school and so we're confident about the  
16 opportunity to start a full middle school, but a slow  
17 growth of elementary school.

18 DR. BACON: And so just sort of in case  
19 someone's listening or someone -- could be helpful --

20 MS. RODGERS: Yes, sir.

21 DR. BACON: What are you looking for? You're  
22 looking for one facility that can manage K through 8  
23 --

24 MS. RODGERS: Yes, sir.

25 DR. BACON: You're looking for two things

1 nearby? Okay.

2 MS. RODGERS: Preferably, one building --

3 DR. BACON: Okay.

4 MS. RODGERS: -- that can house both schools.

5 DR. BACON: And so what's the ultimate  
6 enrollment for the K-8?

7 MS. RODGERS: The ultimate enrollment is 650 to  
8 700 students.

9 DR. BACON: Okay. And so with this, your plan  
10 now would be finding a place for 26-27 and starting  
11 then recruiting K through 8?

12 MS. RODGERS: Well, it would -- we would still  
13 do the slow growth --

14 DR. BACON: Okay.

15 MS. RODGERS: -- elementary model --

16 DR. BACON: So in elementary, you would start  
17 with --

18 MS. RODGERS: -- and then a full middle.

19 DR. BACON: You would start with just  
20 kindergarten or what did --

21 MS. RODGERS: Yes, sir.

22 DR. BACON: -- you --

23 MS. RODGERS: Start with kindergarten.

24 DR. BACON: Okay. So kindergarten and then go  
25 ahead and do 6-8?

1 MS. RODGERS: Yes, sir.

2 DR. BACON: Okay. Okay.

3 That's all I have.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

5 Again, thank you, Dr. Rodgers, for your  
6 presentation and the additional explanation of where  
7 you currently in the process of trying to find a  
8 location for 26-27. I -- I guess, my thoughts would  
9 be the possibility of us being able to have an  
10 opportunity to touch base back with you maybe around  
11 October --

12 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am, absolutely.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- as a panel to be able  
14 to kind of get a progress report on where you are  
15 thus far.

16 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And so we can kind of  
18 see how things are progressing and have some  
19 additional conversations at that time.

20 So -- and that's kind of -- to Panel members,  
21 what are -- what are our thoughts on that?

22 MS. NEWTON: I think it's a very good thought  
23 because at this point, I don't think I could vote in  
24 favor of extending the time without many questions  
25 being answered. I think Lighthouses is there -- the

1 camp -- the collaboration and UALR. And we -- I  
2 don't know, at this point, whether or not they --

3 MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

4 MS. NEWTON: -- want you.

5 MS. RODGERS: Absolutely. It's -- they're  
6 conversations. Yes, ma'am.

7 MS. NEWTON: You know, discussions are one thing  
8 and availability is something else. I think there  
9 are too many balls in the air for me at this point  
10 and I'd like to wait till maybe October to see where  
11 -- what the status is then as opposed to doing  
12 something now.

13 MS. RODGERS: Understood. Yes, ma'am.

14 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So, I guess, where my  
15 thoughts were to -- to give the opportunity to  
16 address the amendment, potentially, maybe think about  
17 contingency of -- we could have a touch point back in  
18 October or so to kind of see progress so that we  
19 could give the Charter the -- at least the  
20 opportunity to have the authority to continue the  
21 process beyond this time period and not being  
22 required to start 25-26 which we already know it's  
23 not going to happen because they don't have a space.  
24 So that's more what I was thinking.

25 MS. NEWTON: Then what -- what action do we say

1           -- we take today, Madam Chair? Just to say, I  
2           understand we're getting some help maybe. So --  
3           where -- what is the conclusion today or what do we  
4           advise the -- IOTA to -- how to proceed?

5           DR. SMITH: Yeah. Maybe I could shed just a  
6           little bit of light on that.

7           Darrell Smith, Department of Education.

8           I think what -- at this point, what we're --  
9           you're -- the request that's before you is just to  
10          allow them to take their existing contract, that we  
11          approved a year ago, and allow them to extend it now  
12          -- the start date contingent upon a meeting, you  
13          know, reappearing before this board in October with  
14          an update. And obviously, at that point, if you feel  
15          like we need to go through a reapproval process  
16          depending on where they're at in the process or maybe  
17          at that point even say, you know what, just not  
18          really sure where -- this is the best thing right  
19          now. We just need to stop and start over. You  
20          certainly have that right. But at this point, what  
21          we have -- I think the request is just to give them  
22          the opportunity to continue moving forward as they --  
23          go with the existing plan until we -- until they can  
24          finalize what's going on. Otherwise, a -- a no vote  
25          or, you know, at this point, would basically nullify

1           the existing contract. And then that would have to  
2           -- they really would have to come back and start the  
3           whole process over again. So what we're asking for  
4           is just the -- the request is to just say let's --  
5           let's vote on extending it, have them come back in  
6           October with an update on where they're at in the  
7           process. If at that point there's a material change  
8           to the original contract because of either the  
9           population they're serving, the location they're  
10          serving, then at that point they would -- they would  
11          address that with this panel -- the different -- with  
12          a different type of presentation and -- and at that  
13          point, probably a different contract.

14                 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I think that was more so  
15          my question to the Charter, would they'll be willing  
16          to do that? So if we -- if we said today that we  
17          will allow you to go forward, would you be willing to  
18          come back in October and give us a status update?  
19          That was my question to the Charter. And I  
20          appreciate Dr. Smith's additional clarification on  
21          what that would look like as well, but that was my  
22          question.

23                 DR. MOORE: Madam Chair, I feel good about that  
24          because I do have a lot of concerns. I have concerns  
25          of why even -- and what Dr. Bacon asked about you

1           changed the grades served, but like, why was that not  
2           the original plan if you knew your sweet spot was  
3           already middle school? Why did, you know -- so I  
4           still have a lot of questions.

5           MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

6           DR. MOORE: But, obviously, at this point, and  
7           this juncture, you're not going to start school in  
8           August.

9           MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

10          DR. MOORE: So we need to go -- move forward  
11          with that.

12          But I do agree with you, Dr. Wright-McMurray,  
13          that October would be a great time to come back and  
14          get an update to see the status and we can ask more  
15          questions then based upon what progress has been  
16          made.

17          MS. RODGERS: Yes, ma'am.

18          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So with that, if there's  
19          no further questions on the amendment -- and I don't  
20          have any other questions for the Charter in regards  
21          to -- to that -- then I will accept a motion on the  
22          amendment request of IOTA Community Schools.

23          DR. MOORE: I move that we approve the charter  
24          amendment request for IOTA Community Schools to  
25          extend their school opening to the 26-27 school Year,

1           contingent upon them returning in October to provide  
2           status updates of their progress.

3           MS. STEWART: I second.

4           This is Edie Stewart.

5           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So there's a  
6           motion by Dr. Moore, a second by Ms. Stewart, that we  
7           approve the amendment request for IOTA Charter to  
8           extend their start date to 26-27 school year,  
9           contingent upon revisiting with the Charter Panel in  
10          October and providing a status update on the progress  
11          of the finding a location and -- in regards to their  
12          charter moving forward with their new school year.

13          Any discussion on the motion?

14          MR. BALDWIN: Madam Chair, this is Phil Baldwin.  
15          Just one -- one clarifying comment and maybe question  
16          on the motion.

17          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

18          MR. BALDWIN: So a status update, I think what I  
19          would like to be included in the status update would  
20          be a revised plan, a very detailed plan about who  
21          you're going to serve, what, you know, what the --  
22          and so not just --

23          MS. RODGERS: And we will know that by October,  
24          yes.

25          MR. BALDWIN: -- we found a building; we think



1           we're going to start building. But I'd like a whole  
2           lot more than just that.

3           MS. RODGERS: Yes, sir.

4           MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

5           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right.

6           So, Dr. Smith, can we say that we would then  
7           work with you and your office to make sure we get all  
8           the questions and asks of the Charter over to you  
9           before the October meeting, so you could work with  
10          them to make sure they come back to us with a  
11          thorough report of their status?

12          DR. SMITH: Absolutely. And we will certainly  
13          be working closely with Ms. Rodgers and IOTA  
14          throughout this process as well. So this won't be  
15          like the last time. We will be talking throughout --  
16          over the next couple of months. So we'll -- we'll be  
17          there certainly if there's some additional questions  
18          or concerns that we have as they start finalizing  
19          where, you know, as they -- finalizing their plans.  
20          At that point, we'll be able to address any, you  
21          know, any kind of contractual changes that are --  
22          that are necessary and bring those to the board  
23          during our, you know, during our briefings. At  
24          whatever time that -- then you can, at that point,  
25          ask whatever questions you need to.

1 MR. BALDWIN: And a question -- Madam Chair, may  
2 I ask -- ask one more question.

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yes. Go ahead, please.

4 MR. BALDWIN: We -- you know, it seems to me  
5 like October makes sense. Does that -- does that  
6 make sense to the school? Can you -- can you  
7 accomplish this?

8 MS. RODGERS: This is Jocquell Rodgers speaking.  
9 Yes. We will certainly have a far better plan,  
10 and our timeline will be more succinct by October.

11 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you.

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Is there any  
13 other discussion on the motion?

14 (NO RESPONSE)

15 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Hearing none, all  
16 those in favor, please, say aye.

17 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Any opposed?

19 Okay. Motion passes.

20 Please go to your voting sheets.

21 Ms. Stewart, if you could share how you voted.

22 MS. STEWART: Yes.

23 I vote for the Charter amendment request to  
24 defer opening to the 2026-2027 school year contingent  
25 upon a full charter briefing and progress update in

1           October.

2           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY:   Okay.

3           Doctor Bacon.

4           DR. BACON:   I vote to approve the amended  
5           timeline for IOTA to open schools in Little Rock and  
6           look forward to the detailed October status report.

7           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY:   Okay.

8           Doctor Moore.

9           DR. MOORE:   I vote to approve the IOTA Community  
10          Schools amendment request to defer opening to the  
11          26-27 school year, contingent upon their  
12          representatives reporting back in October on their  
13          progress and status as it relates to students and  
14          families served, location, partnerships,  
15          organizational structure and other relevant  
16          indicators as determined by the Charter office.

17          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY:   Okay.

18          And Mr. Baldwin.

19          MR. BALDWIN:   Yes.

20          I voted in favor of the one-year extension  
21          requested, subject to an update and strategic  
22          reconsideration report being presented to the Charter  
23          Panel in October of 2025.

24          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY:   Okay.

25          And Ms. Newton.

1 MS. NEWTON: I voted for the motion contingent  
 2 on clarification of issues raised today and potential  
 3 issues that may arise.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

5 **2.b. CHARTER AMENDMENT REQUEST FOR PINECREST FAYETTEVILLE**

6 **2.c. CHARTER AMENDMENT REQUEST FOR SOMERSET ACADEMY SCHOOLS**

7 **2.c.1. SOMERSET ACADEMY BENTONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL**

8 **2.c.2. SOMERSET ACADEMY BENTONVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL**

9 **2.c.3. SOMERSET ACADEMY BENTONVILLE (K-5)**

10 **2.c.4. SOMERSET ACADEMY LITTLE ROCK HIGH SCHOOL**

11 **2.c.5. SOMERSET ACADEMY LITTLE ROCK MIDDLE SCHOOL**

12 **2.c.6. SOMERSET ACADEMY LITTLE ROCK (K-5)**

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. To our next  
 14 action item agenda -- action agenda item. So  
 15 open-enrollment public charter school amendment  
 16 request to defer school opening to 2026-2027 school  
 17 year for Pinecrest Fayetteville.

18 Dr. Darrell Smith, could you please come forward  
 19 and give us a little bit more detail on the amendment  
 20 request.

21 DR. SMITH: Absolutely.

22 Darrell Smith, the Department of Education.

23 The next seven items on your action agenda all  
 24 come with the same organizations, so we're going to  
 25 kind of talk about them all at one time I think.

1           That way we won't have seven different presentations  
2           there because they all -- it all relates to the same  
3           organization between Pinecrest and Somerset. Todd  
4           German, the chairman of the board, is in attendance  
5           today and will be ready to answer your questions and  
6           present and explain their request for an extension  
7           for one year of their opening.

8           And again, their original contract date for  
9           Somerset was August of 2025, for Pinecrest, it was  
10          also for August of 2025; and they are asking for a  
11          one-year extension for both of those schools.  
12          Although, there are six campuses related to Somerset.  
13          And then certainly Mr. German can explain the  
14          rationale behind the six different campuses, as well  
15          as the Pinecrest thing at this time.

16          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you for that.  
17          Thank you for the clarification. So before we get  
18          started, it is our understanding that there will be  
19          one representative that will speak on behalf of  
20          Pinecrest and Somerset, Dr. Smith?

21          MR. GERMAN: Yes.

22          DR. SMITH: Yes. Mr. German is in attendance  
23          here in the room. He also has several members of his  
24          staff online.

25          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Very good.

1           So all of those giving testimony today on behalf  
2           of Pinecrest and Somerset, that is in person and  
3           online, please stand and raise your right hand.  
4           Okay. Do you swear that the testimony or a statement  
5           you're about to give is the truth, the whole truth  
6           and nothing but the truth?

7                        (ALL ANSWER AFFIRMATIVELY)

8           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Can you unmute,  
9           please, and -- so I can verbally hear. Sorry. Thank  
10          you.

11                       (ALL ANSWER AFFIRMATIVELY)

12          MR. GERMAN: I said, I do too.

13          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. Thank you.  
14          Okay. So, Chairman German, you may begin your  
15          presentation.

16          MR. GERMAN: Okay. Hello, Board Members.

17                I'll be very frank. I'm a little embarrassed  
18                and frustrated to be here asking for this extension  
19                today. But we have made tremendous progress, and I  
20                think we'll -- we provided the PowerPoint for you to  
21                hopefully get through some of the questions. It's  
22                very important today that we do get this extension  
23                and we already had scheduled to come back in October  
24                to give an update; but I need this extension today,  
25                not contingent, because we've already bought 1

1 property and we have contracts on others. I have the  
2 team online in case we need anything.

3 I thought we might just get right into this  
4 little PowerPoint. I dislike Zoom and I dislike  
5 PowerPoint even more, but I thought as we -- up to  
6 you -- as we get through any questions as we do it  
7 because I think the card might answers -- may  
8 preemptively answer a lot of the questions that we  
9 have. So my biggest question is: which button? Is  
10 it the arrow? Okay.

11 The basically is the -- what we're doing. And  
12 again, I just want to be clear -- it was useful  
13 sitting through these other presentations. We're not  
14 changing anything about the charters that were  
15 approved. This is just the timeline thing. Because  
16 remember, what we bring is scale. These are going to  
17 be giant schools somewhere around 1,700 to 2,000  
18 kids, and we have to be in the right area and the  
19 investment to do that is -- is enormous as we get  
20 going.

21 To clarify, we're doing Somerset in -- right now  
22 we're looking in West Little Rock, Somerset in the  
23 Bentonville/Rogers area and Pinterest, I think, down  
24 closer to Fayetteville. But it's -- the area is all  
25 about the same.

1                   The right arrow? Oh, okay. Wrong way.

2                   This is our stuff. I don't know if you can see  
3                   that.

4                   This gives a -- to ask what we've been doing all  
5                   this time? We've looked at the total locations and  
6                   if anything, I blame myself for overpromising and  
7                   underestimating the difficulty it was going to be to  
8                   acquire big sites in these large-growth areas. It's  
9                   always hard. It's been very difficult. We've had  
10                  buyers change prices on us in the middle of  
11                  negotiations. We've had land we thought was perfect,  
12                  except the \$1,000,000 of fill that it needed. The  
13                  other one that undisclosed wetland areas, you know,  
14                  it's pretty much everything you can -- anybody's  
15                  involved with real estate can understand. This is  
16                  all PowerPoint stuff.

17                  This is an important slide. So in Bentonville,  
18                  to me one of the -- the very important one is the  
19                  green ones because that's the Roselawn. Rose, it's a  
20                  giant facility that we purchased. I mean, it's it's  
21                  purchased now. So we would really like to get this  
22                  approved today. But the ones in red are important  
23                  because they're all the ones that we put a ton of  
24                  time in negotiating with and working with that didn't  
25                  work out. So that's where -- we haven't been sitting



1           on our hands wondering. We've been working on it.  
2           We do -- we're negotiating on the -- the yellow ones  
3           and then the dark orange are kind of in backup. And  
4           then here in Little Rock, you're going to see a  
5           picture. We're negotiating actively with a -- a  
6           large department store that recently closed. And  
7           then we do have a backup site in case something falls  
8           apart with that. Gives you an idea of the things we  
9           have. Let's see. The -- one on the -- your -- your  
10          left is the building we acquired. It's 60,65  
11          thousand square feet. Fabulous. Right on the way to  
12          Rogers on the main strip. It's going to be a  
13          wonderful, wonderful site. I've gone through it.  
14          It's amazing. It was a call center. It has a  
15          thousand cubicles in it. So just -- we need time to  
16          renovate it into a school. The Bentonville/Rogers  
17          one, you can kind of see the little -ol. That is a  
18          former school, so that one's going to be almost  
19          move-in ready. And obviously, we have to cut the  
20          names off because we're still negotiating. In Little  
21          Rock, we've also had to cut the name off, but that's  
22          a big, recently-closed department store. In a high-  
23          growth area of town. We need to be in the high-growth  
24          areas to be able to do the -- I can neither confirm  
25          nor deny what -- what it is . This gives you

1           Roselawn. Just kind of the idea. And this is a  
2           multi -- a three-floor building and kind of a  
3           timeline for that.

4           So, I think with that, unless anybody online has  
5           something to jump in, I thought I might ask you guys  
6           questions -- answer your questions if we haven't  
7           answered them already.

8           MS. NEWTON: I have a question.

9           MR. GERMAN: Sure.

10          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Are you done with your  
11          presentation?

12          MR. GERMAN: Oh, yes, ma'am. Well, yes, I'm  
13          done with the presentation.

14          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

15          MR. GERMAN: Unless we need to jump, you know,  
16          bring something back up, but --

17          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

18          Just procedurally, Mr. Shults, are there any  
19          concerns -- legal -- that we need to have addressed  
20          at this time?

21          MR. SHULTS: I was listening outside.

22          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: You know the drill by  
23          now.

24          MR. SHULTS: I think the previous answer  
25          applies. I don't believe we have any concerns.

1 Thank you.

2 MR. GERMAN: Okay.

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Perfect. Thank you so  
4 much.

5 So with that, Ms. Newton, I will start with you.  
6 What questions do you have?

7 MS. NEWTON: My question is the amendment  
8 request is contingent on all schools -- all sites  
9 being available or is, you know, it's a --

10 MR. GERMAN: No. I think they -- on that the --  
11 there really are three. There's -- the Pinecrest is  
12 one K-12. And then, if you remember in our previous  
13 conversations -- good to see you all again -- we  
14 have -- the two Somerset schools have three separate  
15 charters. And a lot of -- and I explained to the  
16 lady earlier -- the big reasons is for grants. When  
17 you do that, they will all be on campus, but it  
18 allows you to apply for multiple grants. And we've  
19 -- we've done that a lot. So -- but this will be --  
20 I think technically these are -- effectively, these  
21 are three different extensions.

22 MS. NEWTON: I see.

23 MR. GERMAN: Yes.

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Any other questions,  
25 Ms. Newton?

1 MS. NEWTON: No, I don't have any further  
2 questions.

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. Thank you.  
4 Ms. Stewart.

5 MS. STEWART: I guess, my main question is:  
6 we've got three separate amendment requests; right?

7 MR. GERMAN: Yes, ma'am.

8 MS. STEWART: So for each one of these, there  
9 are the locations that you shared in the PowerPoint?

10 MR. GERMAN: Yes, ma'am.

11 MS. STEWART: And are they at different points?  
12 You mentioned the one has already been purchased.

13 MR. GERMAN: A little -- they are a little bit,  
14 but we're close.

15 MS. STEWART: Okay.

16 MR. GERMAN: Roselawn, we've purchased, so that  
17 one is actively going through architecture review and  
18 doing all the rest. The other two, we're at the very  
19 end of the negotiations. I really wanted to have  
20 that signed before I came in, but we didn't until --  
21 the previous one, now, I was a little nervous. But  
22 we're very close. I will not promise you anymore  
23 that we're definitely going to do it, but we are  
24 looking very good, and we have some backup just in  
25 case.

1 MS. STEWART: Okay. And then, finally, there  
2 will be an update?

3 MR. GERMAN: Yes. I think we --

4 MS. STEWART: And that has already --

5 MR. GERMAN: We already talked to Charter Office  
6 --

7 MS. STEWART: Yes.

8 MR. GERMAN: -- just to kind of give an update  
9 in October.

10 MS. STEWART: Okay.

11 MR. GERMAN: We will have somebody here in  
12 person to do it.

13 MS. STEWART: Okay.

14 MR. GERMAN: Probably me, yes.

15 MS. STEWART: Okay.

16 That's all I have.

17 MR. GERMAN: Okay.

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Dr. Bacon?

19 DR. BACON: I don't really think I have any  
20 questions. I did just want to make a point. I was  
21 seeing here that you reviewed over 25 potential  
22 locations, and I appreciate your diligence. I can't  
23 imagine the time and energy and effort that's going  
24 into --

25 MR. GERMAN: At a certain point, they know your

1 coming and it gets --

2 DR. BACON: Right.

3 MR. GERMAN: -- hard to --

4 DR. BACON: The evaluation process. So I, you  
5 know, I really appreciate the presentation and that  
6 you provided that in advance. I don't really have  
7 any questions.

8 MR. GERMAN: All right. Thanks.

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Dr. Moore?

10 DR. MOORE: I think you've addressed all my  
11 questions. I do want to apologize because I believe  
12 you were here last time --

13 MR. GERMAN: Yes.

14 DR. MOORE: -- and I thank you for coming back.

15 MR. GERMAN: Well, you know, last time -- I'll  
16 go off -- off script again -- when the Zoom died, it  
17 was a lesson to all. Everybody jokes me for always  
18 being in person at everything, that's why.

19 DR. BACON: Right.

20 DR. MOORE: Yeah.

21 MR. GERMAN: Even if I didn't get to speak, you  
22 know, I still was here.

23 DR. BACON: Thank you for coming back. I will  
24 say, I saw your airborne patch, so --

25 MR. GERMAN: Cool.

1 DR. MOORE: -- I guess that's why you're  
2 dedicated to make sure you show up in person. And  
3 so, thank you. I have no questions.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And Mr. Baldwin?

5 MR. BALDWIN: So really just a comment and a  
6 question.

7 It's a brave, new world with real estate,  
8 especially, in Northwest Arkansas. It's crazy how  
9 hard it is to buy stuff and the value that people  
10 want for it. And it's just the fact that the area is  
11 growing. So it's a good thing, but I can't even  
12 imagine, like Dr. Bacon's comment, how hard it's  
13 been.

14 MR. GERMAN: And you have to remember the  
15 commitment that we and our partners have, the school  
16 we pay for it. It's not going to generate any money  
17 for, hopefully, next year --

18 MR. BALDWIN: Yeah.

19 MR. GERMAN: -- so it's a -- it is a big  
20 commitment. And we're -- it just shows the  
21 commitment we have to Arkansas.

22 MR. BALDWIN: And we thank you for that  
23 commitment. The only -- the question would be -- and  
24 I can't remember the details of your proposal, but  
25 I'm just thinking through -- I'm a banker, so I'm

1           thinking through the financial commitments you all  
2           are making for all these buildings with the  
3           acquisition, the renovation and you talk about  
4           architects going in and looking at. Is all that --  
5           talk to us, remind us about how that works and is  
6           that --

7           MR. GERMAN: I think for a lot of these --  
8           because of our scale, we've kind of grouped it into  
9           the long terms. And one of our belief would be that  
10          the one in Rogers is done by one of our partners and  
11          he said -- he's a real estate speculator recently and  
12          he built many, many schools. He's been one of the --  
13          he and his team have allowed us to grow the way we  
14          do. And like many commercial properties, they do it  
15          knowing that this is a long-term commitment. So he's  
16          -- he eats it up front and does his things and then  
17          we negotiate a market lease with them and then it  
18          goes from there and eventually it catches up. And  
19          then a few of them, we may do some of our own or  
20          others are long-term lease. And then, we have a  
21          little more flexibility when we start paying the rent  
22          and things like that.

23          MR. BALDWIN: Okay. So you're -- you have  
24          partners that will acquire and then you will lease  
25          from them?



1                   MR. GERMAN: We have partners with it and  
2                   Somerset has enough scale that we can do it on our  
3                   own as well if we need to.

4                   MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Is that --

5                   MR. GERMAN: And often, with our long-term  
6                   leases, we will scale that for enrollment because,  
7                   again, we're -- we want forever landlords, and  
8                   they'll do it. They -- they know our enrollment ramp  
9                   up as we did in the application and our usual ramp --  
10                  will ramp up as children do.

11                  MR. BALDWIN: If you do the acquisition on your  
12                  own, do you have cash on hand?

13                  MR. GERMAN: Yes. We have --

14                  MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

15                  MR. GERMAN: -- a fortress balance sheet.

16                  MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you.

17                  MR. GERMAN: I think I have -- we have over six  
18                  months in reserves.

19                  CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So a question -- so what  
20                  I believe I heard to say is that you have secured  
21                  some locations; you're looking for others?

22                  MR. GERMAN: One we have. We have absolutely  
23                  secured one. And we have -- we're in final  
24                  negotiations with two.

25                  CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

1                   MR. GERMAN: And then, we have -- we have one or  
2 two backups as well, in case those fall apart.

3                   CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And the location that  
4 you secured?

5                   MR. GERMAN: That's in Rogers, Arkansas.

6                   CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And ready to go for next  
7 school year?

8                   MR. GERMAN: It will be. It's a -- the building  
9 is finished. We've got to convert it from a giant  
10 call center to -- to a school. But that's doable.

11                  CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All right. So it  
12 will be your desire that we grant permission today to  
13 move forward with the amendment without contingency I  
14 think I heard you say?

15                  MR. GERMAN: With no contingency.

16                  CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

17                  MR. GERMAN: We would like to move forward today  
18 and then we'll give you an update in October, but I  
19 don't want it contingent on anything.

20                  CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So which I  
21 believe what we did with the previous charter, that  
22 we allowed them to move forward with their amendment,  
23 but just giving us an opportunity to at least have a  
24 touch point in October. Okay. Okay. So that's all  
25 the questions I had. And also, thank you for coming

1 back to our great state once again.

2 MR. GERMAN: Well, again, my daughter lives in  
3 Bentonville, so it's easy to come back. I'm not  
4 going to see her today. I'm going to run to a plane,  
5 hoping you say yes.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you so much  
7 for that. We appreciate it.

8 So with that, I will entertain a motion. And  
9 just a reminder to the panel that this is an  
10 amendment request that has several schools and votes  
11 attached to it. So just for my clarification before  
12 you get started -- I guess I should back that up. So  
13 for my clarification as reviewing our motion, do we  
14 include in that motion Pinecrest and Somerset, each  
15 of the campuses? How should we best word that to  
16 make sure that we are appropriately doing the motion  
17 and then for the voting sheets? And I probably need  
18 guidance from Legal or from the Charter Office on  
19 that.

20 MR. SHULTS: Charter Office seems to be  
21 occupied.

22 The -- so I -- we were discussing that. I think  
23 you have two options. I think you can either,  
24 essentially, articulate in your motion if you think  
25 these are sufficiently similar if -- and really

1           there's no limitations. But if you think it's the  
2           best practice you can say, I -- we're -- we move to  
3           approve or whatever the motion is related to those  
4           six items and essentially batch the votes. We can  
5           vote them in separately and legally I don't think  
6           there's a difference. But I do know that you have  
7           your rationale sheets, so that's more of a logistical  
8           concern, I think, for the board than a legal concern.

9           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

10          MR. SHULTS: And so if you -- if -- to perhaps  
11          make more succinctly, if you want to vote on them all  
12          at once, just identify the items that you're voting  
13          on the in the motion and I think you're fine.

14          DR. MOORE: So the motion would still need to  
15          state --

16          MS. STEWART: Every?

17          DR. MOORE: -- every single one?

18          MR. SHULTS: Uh-huh. You can accomplish it in  
19          either -- essentially, you can batch the votes, or  
20          you can do it individually. I think that the real  
21          question is: if you want to treat them all the same,  
22          then batching them is inappropriate. If you want to  
23          treat them differently, then obviously you would take  
24          separate votes.

25          MR. BALDWIN: And the legally, you're okay if we

1           treat them the same? You're saying it's appropriate  
2           for the motion?

3           MR. SHULTS: Well, I think that's a decision for  
4           you to make. Whatever your substantive decision is,  
5           but if you're -- if you wanted to -- obviously -- and  
6           I am probably stating the obvious. But if you wanted  
7           to give different treatment to the different items,  
8           you wouldn't batch those votes.

9           MR. BALDWIN: Right.

10          MR. SHULTS: It would only work if you're giving  
11          them all the exact same treatment.

12          MR. BALDWIN: Okay. So if we -- if we do that,  
13          then we -- then it's legal to do one motion?

14          MR. SHULTS: Yes, sir. And you see this all the  
15          time in different bodies of legislature. You're  
16          voting on all of them at once. It's all about how  
17          you word your motion.

18          MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

19          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So with that  
20          further explanation of how a motion she made, I will  
21          now entertain a motion on Pinecrest and River --  
22          Pinecrest and Somersets request to defer opening of  
23          their charter to 26-27 on the named campuses -- on  
24          their six chartered campuses that are located in  
25          Bentonville and Little Rock.

1 MS. NEWTON: I -- I'll take stab at that.

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: You're so brave.

3 MS. NEWTON: Okay. I'd like to present a motion  
4 that the request for extending the opening for  
5 Somerset Little Rock Middle School, for Somerset  
6 Academy Bentonville Elementary and Somerset  
7 Bentonville High School to be granted -- the request  
8 of the charter agency be requested.

9 DR. MOORE: There's some more.

10 MS. NEWTON: Is that -- there's some more?

11 DR. MOORE: That's not all of them. Yeah. It's  
12 all of those.

13 MR. GERMAN: There should be seven altogether, I  
14 think.

15 MS. NEWTON: Oh, okay. Well, as well as  
16 Somerset Little Rock Elementary, Somerset Little Rock  
17 High School and Somerset Academy of Bentonville  
18 Middle School.

19 MR. GERMAN: I think that's it.

20 MR. BALDWIN: Good job. I second that.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And then you give me the  
22 glorious task of trying to word all that correctly.

23 Okay. So we have a motion by Ms. Newton and a  
24 second by Mr. Baldwin that we approve the amendment  
25 request by Pinecrest and Somerset to defer their

1 opening to the 26-27 school year for all six charters  
2 to be located in Bentonville and Little Rock.

3 MR. GERMAN: Seven, technically.

4 DR. MOORE: Seven.

5 MR. BALDWIN: Seven.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Sorry, seven.

7 MR. BALDWIN: Yeah.

8 DR. SMITH: So yeah. Let me -- I just want to  
9 make sure that we got the Pinecrest and then the six  
10 Somerset campuses that -- all inside that motion? So  
11 that we all --

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yes. Yes.

13 DR. SMITH: We want to cover all of those  
14 campuses in that motion.

15 MR. BALDWIN: Yeah. So if I'm -- if I'm looking  
16 at the agenda, I see -- let's just -- let me read  
17 through this so we answer your question.

18 DR. SMITH: Yes, sir.

19 MR. BALDWIN: Pinecrest Fayetteville is the  
20 first item.

21 MR. GERMAN: So b and c, c: 1 through 6.

22 MR. BALDWIN: Yeah. III.2.b. And then Somerset  
23 Academy is next; and then Bentonville, Somerset,  
24 Bentonville High School is next; Somerset Academy  
25 Bentonville Middle School; Somerset Academy,

1 Bentonville, K through 5; and then Somerset Academy  
2 Little Rock High School; Somerset Academy Little Rock  
3 Middle School; and Somerset Academy Little Rock, K  
4 through 5.

5 DR. SMITH: That's correct.

6 So as a amend -- so as a -- according to the  
7 action agenda, if you want to just -- kind of some --  
8 help that. I guess make it a little shorter, so you  
9 don't have to say all of that. Basically it would be  
10 on the action agenda 2.b, c: 1 through 6.

11 DR. SMITH: Correct? Isn't that right?

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yes.

13 DR. SMITH: So --

14 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So you have -- we  
15 made -- you have a motion; you have a second; we've  
16 heard explanation. Is there any further discussion?

17 MS. NEWTON: Will we have to give an explanation  
18 on each of the seven?

19 DR. SMITH: No. Just one.

20 MS. NEWTON: Just one. Okay.

21 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Was there any further  
22 discussion on the motion?

23 (NO RESPONSE)

24 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. I'm hearing none.  
25 All those in favor say aye, aye.



1 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

2 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All -- any opposed, nay.

3 Okay. Granted. Motion carries.

4 If you could please go to your voting sheets.

5 So I know that we're all kind of going through  
6 the various paths, but it is from my understanding  
7 Legal and Charter is recommending because of the way  
8 that we did the motion, we voted -- we voted in  
9 batch. So when you provide your response to your  
10 voting, then you can respond in batch because we  
11 don't have to go through each tab.

12 DR. MOORE: Dr. Wright-McMurray, do you need us  
13 to copy and paste in the -- each tab even though  
14 we're only going to state it once?

15 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yeah. I probably would  
16 do that for the record for the Charter Office; but  
17 for our record, when we -- when you respond, just  
18 respond off of one tab.

19 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So I'll give everyone a  
21 minute -- about a minute to finish that up. Like,  
22 your first tab and then we can do subsequent tabs as  
23 we finish up our meeting.

24 I'll start with Dr. Bacon.

25 DR. BACON: I said, I vote to approve the

1           amended timeline for the seven Pinecrest and Somerset  
2           schools as I'm confident leadership has been diligent  
3           in identifying and procuring appropriate school sites  
4           in Fayetteville, Bentonville and Little Rock.

5           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

6           Dr. Moore.

7           DR. MOORE: I vote to approve the Pinecrest and  
8           Somerset Academy School amendment request to defer  
9           the start date for campuses listed on the July 17th,  
10          '25, agenda in III.2.b and III.2.c, 1 through 6.  
11          Intentional site selection has been evident and I'm  
12          confident in the organization's ability to move  
13          forward.

14          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Mr. Baldwin.

15          MR. BALDWIN: I voted to approve a one-year  
16          extension for all seven Pinecrest and Somerset School  
17          locations for schools to allow time for purchase and  
18          development of all properties.

19          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Ms. Newton.

20          MS. NEWTON: And I -- my vote is in favor of the  
21          requests that have been noted 2.b., 1 through 6.  
22          Applicant shows actions and follow through measures  
23          consistent with plans for extending the opening to  
24          the 26-27 school year.

25          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Ms. Stewart.

1 MS. STEWART: I vote to approve the amendment to  
 2 defer the start date of Pinecrest Fayetteville,  
 3 III.2.b.1 and Somerset Academy Schools III.2.c, 1  
 4 through 6, due to financial stability and site  
 5 selection with the progress checking in October.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

7 And then, I think, we just determined that we'll  
 8 just put that into our other tabs as we need to.

9 So --

10 MR. GERMAN: Thank you all. See you in October.

11 MR. BALDWIN: Thank you.

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Thank you.

13 Oh, I have a request for a five-minute break.  
 14 So if we could take a quick five-minutes and plan to  
 15 hop back together at 11 -- we'll say -- we'll make it  
 16 seven -- at 11:10, if we can hop back on and give  
 17 folks a chance to kind of stretch their legs for a  
 18 second. We've been going for a bit.

19 (WHEREUPON, after a break was taken, the  
 20 proceedings were resumed as follows, to-wit:)

21 **3. CHARTER AMENDMENT REQUEST FROM THE ACADEMIES AT RIVERCREST**  
 22 **DISTRICT CONVERSION CHARTER**

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Let's go ahead  
 24 and resume our meeting, it's 11:10, with our next  
 25 agenda item is going to be a bit easier. So the next

1 item on our agenda is the conversion charter  
2 amendment request from the Academies of Rivercrest.

3 So, Dr. Smith, if you'll please come forward and  
4 provide more detail on the amendment request.

5 DR. SMITH: Yes, ma'am. Welcome back, Panel.

6 Again, Darrell Smith, Department of Education.

7 One -- well, getting close to the end of our  
8 action agenda. So the next item on our action agenda  
9 is actually the Academies of Rivercrest. They are  
10 making a request to combine some grade levels into an  
11 existing building, as well and make a name change to  
12 that. This is a conversion charter, so the rules  
13 change just a little bit because of just the way  
14 they're set up in the state. This request would have  
15 just kind of come through an LEA change request, but  
16 since it came in after June 1st, there is a rule that  
17 requires them to come before this panel and get an  
18 affirmative vote for them to do that.

19 So without any delay, let me introduce Shantele  
20 Raper. She's the school leader at the Academies of  
21 Rivercrest.

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

23 So before we get started, all those giving  
24 testimony today on behalf of the Academies of  
25 Rivercrest, please stand and raise your right hand,

1 including those on Zoom. Okay. Do you swear that  
2 the testimony or statement you are about to give us  
3 is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the  
4 truth?

5 (ALL ANSWER AFFIRMATIVELY)

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Great. Thank  
7 you.

8 And did we get a yes online, I'm sorry.

9 SUPT. COX: Yes.

10 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All right. Thank  
11 you. Okay.

12 So, good afternoon, Shantele. How are you  
13 today?

14 MS. RAPER: I'm doing well. I'm doing well,  
15 Sonja. How are you today?

16 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Very good, very good.  
17 So if you want to begin your presentation.

18 MS. RAPER: All right. So yeah. Good morning.  
19 Shantele Raper. I serve as the assistant  
20 superintendent at Rivercrest School District. My --  
21 our superintendent, Mike Cox, is online.

22 We have just a very simple request, an LEA  
23 reconfiguration, just to simply unit -- unify our  
24 current two LEA structure to a more practical single,  
25 7-12 LEA. This change reflects how we already

1           operate and will just simplify the accountability and  
2           improve access and better serve students. We're also  
3           requesting a name change that better reflects our  
4           school. We provided a handout with bulleted points,  
5           and so if you have any questions about that, I am  
6           happy to answer those.

7           CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And as we have done with  
8           all others, could we get Legal to let us know if  
9           there are any concerns that we need to be aware of.

10          DR. SMITH: Mr. Shults is incapacitated. He is  
11          not available at this moment. I guess, technically  
12          incapacitate -- I guess he's not really incapacitated.  
13          He is not available at this moment. We'll put it  
14          that way. I certainly don't want to speak for Legal,  
15          but again, doing the legal review with them, I don't  
16          believe there's any legal issue related to this  
17          request.

18          CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All right.

19          DR. SMITH: And there he -- he can speak for  
20          himself now.

21          MR. SHULTS: I apologize. I know we've been a  
22          little -- trying to do multiple things today and  
23          we're a little shorthanded. So I do apologize.

24          And I adopt the statements of the Department.  
25          We don't have any concerns.

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. Thank you so  
2 much.

3 Okay. So with that, I will go to the panel. So  
4 Mr. Baldwin, do you have any questions?

5 MR. BALDWIN: I have no questions.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Did you say yes or no?

7 MR. BALDWIN: No. I have -- I have no  
8 questions.

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

10 Ms. Newton?

11 MS. NEWTON: I have no questions.

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: No? Okay.

13 Ms. Stewart?

14 MS. STEWART: No questions.

15 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

16 Dr. Bacon?

17 DR. BACON: No questions, but just a comment.

18 I really appreciate this -- with your rationale.  
19 I feel like sometimes you make decisions just  
20 because, but you've really laid out some very  
21 specific reasons why this is the smart move for your  
22 district; so I appreciate you all taking the time to  
23 do that.

24 MS. RAPER: Thank you.

25 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

1 Dr. Moore?

2 DR. MOORE: No questions.

3 Similar -- similarly, I just want to commend you  
4 on this, especially, as we're moving to the new  
5 diploma pathways and redefining acceleration. I  
6 think you've opened up a lot of opportunities for  
7 your students.

8 MS. RAPER: Thank you.

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

10 And I will say that Dr. Moore stole my comments,  
11 so I won't have to repeat them. But thank you so  
12 much for -- kind of be a little bit -- for thinking  
13 on this and taking the opportunity. And we  
14 appreciate you coming down and being in front of us  
15 today to be available for questions.

16 MS. RAPER: Thank you.

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: All right. So if there  
18 are no further questions from any panel members, then  
19 I will accept the motion on the amendment request on  
20 behalf of the Academies of Rivercrest.

21 MS. STEWART: I make a motion to accept the  
22 request for the Academies at Rivecrest for an LEA  
23 change, a name change and consolidation from two  
24 schools, 7-8 to -- and 9-12 -- to one school, 7  
25 through 12.



1 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

2 DR. MOORE: I second.

3 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So there's a  
4 motion by Ms. Stewart, second by Dr. Moore that we  
5 accept the amendment request on behalf of the  
6 Academies of Rivercrest. Is there discussion on the  
7 motion?

8 (NO RESPONSE)

9 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Seeing none. All  
10 those in favor, please say aye.

11 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

12 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Any opposed?  
13 All right. Motion passes.

14 If you'll please go to your voting sheets.

15 Okay. So if we could please share how we voted.

16 Ms. Newton.

17 MS. NEWTON: I voted in favor of the motion.  
18 The LEA change enhances the delivery of services to  
19 the impacted students.

20 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

21 Ms. Stewart.

22 MS. STEWART: I vote for the amendment request  
23 to change from two schools to one 7 -- grade 7  
24 through 12 to better serve students and families and  
25 increase operational efficiency.

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Dr. Bacon

2 DR. BACON: I vote to approve the amendment as  
3 it reflects thoughtful consideration of changes that  
4 are student focused.

5 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Dr. Moore.

6 DR. MOORE: I vote to approve the amendment  
7 request for Rivercrest School District to reconfirm  
8 -- reconfigure the district conversion Charter to one  
9 LEA, serving grade 7 through 12 to better serve  
10 students.

11 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

12 And Mr. Baldwin.

13 MR. BALDWIN: I voted to approve the requested  
14 LEA change as presented in the Charter amendment  
15 request form and as described in the Rivercrest  
16 rational letter.

17 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Very good.

18 **4. PROCESS FOR PLACEMENT OF ITEMS ON A CONSENT AGENDA**

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So we have gotten  
20 through all of our items on our action agenda. So  
21 we're now on to our consent agenda.

22 And Dr. Darrell Smith I'd like to come forward  
23 to discuss the process for placement items on the  
24 agenda.

25 DR. SMITH: Thank you, Madam Chair.

1                   Darrell Smith, Department of Education.

2                   On July 11, this panel engaged in a work session  
3                   that worked through the roles of this board and of  
4                   this panel as well as some of the authority  
5                   structures. And one of the things that we discussed  
6                   was the process for putting -- how the agenda was  
7                   going to be developed and what was going to be on the  
8                   consent agenda and what would be on the action  
9                   agenda. And during that process, there was a seven  
10                  question kind of process -- or seven questions that  
11                  would be asked on every item that was -- that was  
12                  brought before us to bring to you on the agenda and  
13                  the process -- whether or not those -- what -- how  
14                  would we determine who's going to be consent agenda  
15                  based on the answers for those questions. And at the  
16                  conclusion of our work session, we agreed that we  
17                  would bring it before the -- this panel as an  
18                  official -- to approve that process, so that we were  
19                  all -- it would be very clear on how we were putting  
20                  things together on the consent agenda. Just as a  
21                  reminder, there were seven questions you can see on  
22                  -- in your packet, how they would be -- how the  
23                  answers would be to those questions, if any of those  
24                  answers are in -- either yes or no or go against  
25                  that, it would automatically pushed on the action

1 agenda or if any committee member had a concern about  
2 the request, then it would automatically be put on  
3 the consent -- I mean, excuse me -- it would be put  
4 on the action agenda. So at this time, we are just  
5 asking for your vote to approve the process that we  
6 discussed at -- during the work session.

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

8 And so I need to correct myself. We had one  
9 more item on the action agenda. I guess I was  
10 getting a bit excited that we were going to move off  
11 the agenda. So that is -- our last item on our  
12 action agenda is for us to vote on the process for  
13 placement of items on the consent agenda. And I know  
14 that Legal has told me that they don't have to come  
15 forward and make any comments on that.

16 So with that -- with that explanation, are there  
17 any questions that need to be addressed by any of our  
18 panel members? And I'll just quickly go.

19 Ms. Stewart?

20 MS. STEWART: I have no questions, but I  
21 appreciate this clarification.

22 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

23 Dr. Bacon?

24 DR. BACON: I have no questions. Thank you.

25 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Dr. Moore?

1 DR. MOORE: I just have one clarifying question  
2 that I know it would have been really handy if I've  
3 had it the other day. But as I read through this  
4 another time, even though I already had gone through  
5 it, just on No. 4, which says "Has the office  
6 received parent, staff or community feedback or  
7 objections?" I can understand that if there were  
8 objections, then it wouldn't be on the consent  
9 agenda, but what if you just received positive  
10 parent, staff or community feedback? I mean --  
11 DR. SMITH: I -- yeah. I guess that would be  
12 for negative objections.  
13 DR. MOORE: Yeah.  
14 DR. SMITH: Yeah.  
15 DR. MOORE: So just maybe through that lens --  
16 DR. SMITH: Sure.  
17 DR. MOORE: -- because if it was positive  
18 feedback -- because you could receive feedback --  
19 DR. SMITH: Absolutely.  
20 DR. MOORE: -- and it might be good.  
21 DR. SMITH: Absolutely.  
22 DR. MOORE: But that wouldn't need to --  
23 DR. SMITH: Thank you for the clarification.  
24 DR. MOORE: So just to --  
25 DR. SMITH: Yeah. We'll put that on our

1 clarification --

2 DR. MOORE: Okay.

3 DR. SMITH: -- when we -- as we move forward.

4 DR. MOORE: All right. That's all.

5 DR. SMITH: Absolutely.

6 DR. MOORE: That's my only question. Thanks.

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

8 Mr. Baldwin?

9 MR. BALDWIN: I'd like to thank the team, ADE  
10 team, for putting this together. I think this is  
11 well done and I think it's going to be very useful  
12 for all of us.

13 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All right.

14 And Ms. Newton?

15 I voted for the amendment. Matters of  
16 consideration of efficiency by panel members is  
17 greatly enhanced by this request.

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Well, we were just  
19 taking questions, but we have -- but at least we've  
20 got that part out of the way when it's time to share  
21 your vote.

22 MS. NEWTON: Oh, I'm sorry.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: That's okay. I -- I  
24 feel you.

25 DR. SMITH: It's lunchtime.

1 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I was already down to  
2 the consent agenda. I was off the action.

3 MS. NEWTON: Well, I don't have any questions.

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I understand. Very  
5 good.

6 So if there -- and I will just echo that I  
7 greatly appreciate the Charter Office for taking the  
8 time to meet with us and walk through that process  
9 and then kind of give us a heads up on what's coming.  
10 I can see that you guys are committed to and are  
11 moving in the direction of wanting to be more  
12 efficient and supportive of what we do; so I do  
13 greatly appreciate that, and I don't want that to go  
14 unnoticed.

15 So -- so with that, are there any additional  
16 questions that need to be addressed?

17 (NO RESPONSE)

18 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. If not, then I  
19 will accept a motion on the process for placement of  
20 items on the consent agenda.

21 MS. NEWTON: So moved. And since I've already  
22 voted, so moved to accept the recommendation.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Very good.

24 DR. BACON: I'll second.

25 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So there is a

1 motion by Ms. Newton and a second by Dr. Bacon. All  
2 those in -- oh, is there any further discussion?

3 (NO RESPONSE)

4 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All those in  
5 favor, say aye.

6 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

7 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Any opposed?  
8 Motion passes.

9 Please go to your voting sheet.

10 Okay. So Dr. Bacon.

11 DR. BACON: I vote to approve the adoption of  
12 this approach and appreciate the Charter unit's  
13 efforts in clarifying this process.

14 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Dr. Moore.

15 DR. MOORE: I vote to approve the new Charter  
16 Office process for placement of items on the consent  
17 agenda and appreciate the efforts for transparency  
18 and clarity.

19 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Mr. Baldwin.

20 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I voted in favor of the  
21 consent agenda template prepared by the ADE team and  
22 appreciate their efforts to bring this to us.

23 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

24 MS. NEWTON: I also --

25 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Ms. Newton.



1 MS. NEWTON: Again, also I voted in favor of the  
2 matters of consideration -- because the matters of  
3 consideration allows efficiency by panel members.  
4 Our ability to do that is greatly enhanced by this by  
5 this request.

6 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Ms. Stewart.

7 MS. STEWART: I vote to approve the process for  
8 placement of items on the consent agenda and  
9 appreciate the ADE's work with the CAP to create this  
10 process that will help with transparency.

11 CHAIR WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Okay. Very good.  
12 (The action agenda concluded at 11:26 a.m.)  
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## C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS )

) ss

COUNTY OF PULASKI )

I, Miranda McEntire, Certified Court Reporter #852, 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 in the action.

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL this 17th day of July, 2025.



MIRANDA MCENTIRE, CCR

Certified Court Reporter #852

