

CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

APRIL 25, 2023
9:00 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

MS. DEBORAH COFFMAN, Chairperson,
ADE Assistant Commissioner - Public School Accountability
MR. PHIL BALDWIN - Retired Bank Executive
MS. KARLI SARACINI, ADE Assistant Commissioner -
Educator Effectiveness and Licensure
DR. SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY - Associate Director,
Division of CTE
MS. TOYCE NEWTON, Former State Board Member

NON-VOTING PARTICIPANTS:

MS. SHASTADY WAGNER - DESE Legal Counsel
MS. DORIE SUMMONS - DESE Charter Schools Director

LOCATION:

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

I N D E X

	Page
Call to Order	3
Consent Agenda	3
Action Agenda	4
1. Waiver Clean Up	4
2. Consideration of Fort Smith Virtual Academy Amendment Request	5
3. Consideration of Mountainburg Middle School Brain Academy Amendment Request	14
4. Consideration of Arkansas Military First Responders Amendment Request.	19
5. Consideration of Responsive Education Solutions Amendment Request	33
6. Consideration of Arkansas Lighthouse Charter School Amendment Request	44
Adjournment	55
Court Reporter's Certificate	56

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
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18
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CALL TO ORDER

CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Good morning. The April 25, 2023, meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. I would like to welcome everyone to the Arkansas Department of Education auditorium and ask that you please silence all of your electronic devices. We are happy to see all of you this morning.

We will facilitate a fair and responsible hearing and I'm going to ask that if you come to the microphone, that you please step to the microphone, state your name and title for the record and continue to speak clearly into the microphone for the benefit of the panel, the viewing audience and for the recording of this meeting. The entire meeting is being live streamed and recorded and a transcript and a video of the meeting will be posted on the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education website. So we appreciate all of you being here and panel members, good morning.

CONSENT AGENDA

CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: If you'll look at our consent agenda, we have three items: our Minutes from our February meeting, financial documents that have been

1 requested and if you have questions or conversation
2 or if you're ready for a motion.

3 MR. BALDWIN: I move for approval of the consent
4 agenda.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

6 MS. SARACINI: I second.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion by Mr.
8 Baldwin and a second by Ms. Saracini to approve the
9 consent agenda as presented. All those in favor?

10 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed? Consent agenda
12 approved. All right. That takes us to our action
13 agenda and Ms. Wagner.

14 **ACTION AGENDA**

15 **1. WAIVER CLEAN UP**

16 MS. WAGNER: Good morning. Shastady Wagner with
17 DESE legal. The first thing on our action agenda is
18 the waiver clean up. So what it was is these --
19 these charters -- there is one adult education
20 charter, The Excel Center, and then it's Exalt
21 Academy, Hope Academy and Premier High School of
22 North Little Rock. All of them have the statute and
23 the rule, but they didn't have the accompanying
24 standard to go with it so they're flagging in the
25 system and it's just a clerical error that we needed

1 to correct. But I brought it to you guys because we
2 have to have an action. We've done this waiver clean
3 up before. This is just catching some more that need
4 to be cleaned up.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. Any questions for
6 Ms. Wagner? I'll accept a motion.

7 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Motion.

8 MS. SARACINI: Second.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion from Ms.
10 Wright -- from Dr. Wright-McMurray and a second from
11 Ms. Saracini to approve the waiver of cleanup as
12 presented. All those in favor?

13 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All opposed? Motion is
15 approved.

16 **2. CONSIDERATION OF FORT SMITH VIRTUAL ACADEMY AMENDMENT**
17 **REQUEST**

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Next action item. Mr. Coy,
19 you're recognized.

20 MR. COY: Thomas Coy, DESE Charter Office. I'm
21 here to present a request by Fort Smith Virtual
22 Academy. They are requesting to change grade levels.
23 They currently serve grades K-8 and I believe they're
24 wanting to start serving grades K-12, with an
25 enrollment cap of 500. I see Dr. Hall on Zoom so --

1 and other representatives from Fort Smith School
2 District -- so if you all have questions for the
3 folks from Fort Smith, I'm sure they're happy to
4 entertain any of your questions.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. Dr. Hall?

6 DR. HALL: Yes, ma'am.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Good morning. Any --

8 DR. SAMATHA HALL: Good morning.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any guidance you'd like to
10 provide or a rationale?

11 DR. HALL: The main rationale is that what we
12 have found with the K-8 virtual charter is that we
13 have a very coordinated system now with dedicated
14 teachers seeing them transition from that 5th to 6th
15 -- elementary to middle school. We have -- you know,
16 basically it's just a very coordinated effort with
17 everybody on the same page. Our high school, they're
18 still running their virtual -- using their virtual --
19 the digital learning waivers and it's a little
20 disjointed. It's extra work for the high school --
21 running an extra program -- and so what we would like
22 to do is pull them in with us so that we have a
23 K1-K12 program.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

25 MS. WAGNER: Hi, Dr. Hall -- we needed to swear

1 everybody in --

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Oh.

3 MS. WAGNER: -- that's going to testify.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Oh, gosh.

5 MS. WAGNER: That's okay.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: You think --

7 MS. WAGNER: Sorry.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- I might have done this
9 before. All right. Dr. Hall, if you'll raise your
10 right hand.

11 (WITNESS RAISES RIGHT HAND)

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Do you swear or affirm that
13 the testimony you are about to give shall be the
14 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? I
15 need you to affirm, please.

16 DR. HALL: Yes, ma'am.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. All right. Now
18 back to where we were. So changing grades from K-8
19 to K-12 for the consistency and I believe you also
20 had a waiver for CPR instruction?

21 DR. HALL: Since we are primarily virtual, we
22 were trying -- we were asking for the waiver for the
23 physical class because we don't have the students on
24 campus for that need.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So do your students come in

1 at all?

2 DR. HALL: Well, the K-8 -- they come in -- like
3 today we're doing (Zoom audio distortion) this week,
4 so we do have the kids for that.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Ms. Wagner, do you
6 have any legal concerns?

7 MS. WAGNER: No. I just wanted to note that
8 since this is only going to be for her virtual kids
9 and as Dr. Hall has expressed, if kids want to come
10 in and take these classes on campus, they can. As
11 long it's for virtual, then I have no legal concerns.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any questions for Dr. Hall?

13 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I have just one question.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Wright-McMurray.

15 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Good morning. Thank you
16 for joining us. I -- thank you for providing the
17 supporting documentation. I just had a couple of
18 questions. I was looking at the results of your
19 survey.

20 MR. DAVIS: Microphone. Microphone on.

21 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Can you hear me? Okay.

22 MR. DAVIS: There you go.

23 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay. Good. I was
24 looking at the results from your survey -- I just was
25 curious. The two areas that fell below the mean of

1 3.5, did you guys have any discussion on how you were
2 going to address that going forward in the future? I
3 think the one was teachers in a collaborative groups
4 that fell below. And then also students, parents and
5 community seemed like they had an opportunity to be
6 engaged fell below.

7 DR. HALL: I apologize, but I'm having a real
8 hard time understanding her microphone. It's cutting
9 in and out.

10 MR. JONES: I think Dr. Hall -- she's asking
11 about the HRS survey data.

12 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Yes.

13 DR. HALL: Okay.

14 MR. BALDWIN: 3.5 or below and I think she wants
15 you to address those if I heard her correct.

16 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thank you. Yes, that is
17 correct. Thank you.

18 DR. HALL: Okay. Sure. Well the one -- the
19 one was actually by the administrator which didn't
20 (Zoom audio distortion) three to five people with
21 (Zoom audio distortion). I believe that was going to
22 be a communication piece and that is something that
23 we are working on.

24 This year as we're taking that into account and
25 then it's on providing formal ways for them to

1 provide input. We have a lot of informal ways so
2 that's what we are looking to address is a better
3 formal way. We're looking at some things like having
4 a permanent (Zoom audio distortion) with a feedback,
5 question, comment type thing within our platform.
6 And then of course we're trying to get some more
7 formalized -- we are working on formalizing a
8 parent/teacher organization. We've been working on
9 that throughout the year, but that has been a little
10 more complicated than we anticipated. But --

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any other questions? Ms.
12 Saracini? Mr. Baldwin, any questions?

13 MR. BALDWIN: Uh-huh. I just have one question.
14 I'm sure you have explained this in here, I just
15 couldn't find it. I'm looking at your budget
16 projections and, I guess, if you could explain to us
17 the reduction in budget for the 9-12 curriculums. If
18 I'm reading this right, it should have been \$164,000
19 reduction. I was just curious about that.

20 DR. HALL: Yes. We would actually save money
21 with this process. Currently, our 9-12 we are using
22 Pearson Virtual School and we are using their
23 teachers as well. So we are paying quite a bit of
24 money for the instruction piece that goes along with
25 the curriculum.

1 What we are looking at for next year if we pull
2 this thing together would be -- well, first we'd be
3 Virtual Arkansas for the 9-12, but only to do their
4 curriculum for the four cores: math, english,
5 science, social studies and using our own teachers
6 for those subject areas. We're reconfiguring to add
7 a couple high school certified teachers and then we
8 would use their teachers for the electives. And our
9 rational for that for the high school is that we
10 don't want to limit them and it's feasible to try to
11 offer every single elective that we could to have
12 kids -- to have teachers -- teachers doing that would
13 just be too much strain for the amount of students
14 and (Zoom audio distortion). So -- but the net gain
15 on that that we would save by taking on the
16 curriculum ourselves and using our local teachers is
17 where we end up with all -- it would actually cost us
18 a little bit less up front instead of a little bit
19 more.

20 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Hall, are your teachers
22 on site with you? How do -- what is your work
23 situation for teachers?

24 DR. HALL: Well currently, I, my secretary and
25 the SPED teacher and the K-5 teachers are all located

1 at one site. And my 6-8 teachers are located at
2 another site. Both on campus -- both in Fort Smith
3 on campuses. We are looking at a permanent site that
4 will need a little bit of renovation so that we can
5 have all of us in one place for next year.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right. Any other
7 discussion?

8 MR. BALDWIN: No.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. I'll accept a
10 motion.

11 MS. SARACINI: Motion to approve.

12 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Second.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion by Ms.
14 Saracini and a second by Ms. -- Dr. Wright-McMurray
15 to approve the amendment request for Fort Smith
16 Virtual Academy. All those in favor?

17 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Opposed? Motion is approved.
19 Ms. Newton is trying to get on. Can someone reach
20 out to her and help her get to the Zoom link? Okay.
21 Dr. Hall, thank you for your time today.

22 DR. HALL: Thank you so much.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And our office will be
24 reaching out to help you get your LEA change request
25 submitted before June.

1 DR. HALL: Perfect.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you.

3 DR. HALL: Yes, ma'am. Thank you so much.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Wagner, do you want to
5 present the next item. Let me -- before we move on,
6 do we need to go into our voting sheets and vote for
7 Fort Smith Virtual? All right. Let's do that real
8 quickly. Dr. Wright-McMurray, if you would like to
9 enter your comments into the record?

10 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I voted for the request
11 that they're asking for -- requesting a new charter.
12 This action will allow for more efficient
13 administration and support of their students.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

15 MR. BALDWIN: I voted to approve the request
16 made by the license committee. I support it.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini?

18 MS. SARACINI: I support the amendment request
19 to allow for K-12.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. And I also voted for
21 the amendment request because it's very clear,
22 concise and in the best interest of students. So
23 thank you very much. All right. Let's move on to
24 our next item.

25 MS. WAGNER: Okay. Before we delve directly

1 into the next item, I didn't go over the operating
2 procedures for our hearings, and I should have done
3 that, so that was my bad. But the Chair will swear
4 everybody except their attorneys who are testifying
5 in. The applicant will get 20 minutes to present
6 their amendment request. We have received no
7 opposition to any of these amendment requests. And
8 then the panel gets to ask their questions and then
9 you take your vote. So that's our operating
10 procedures.

11 **3. CONSIDERATION OF MOUNTAINBURG MIDDLE SCHOOL BRAIN ACADEMY**
12 **AMENDMENT REQUEST**

13 MS. WAGNER: Next up is Mountainburg Middle
14 School Brain Academy's amendment request. Dr. Atwell
15 is here to present for Mountainburg School District.
16 Mountainburg is asking to change their grade levels
17 from serving -- they were serving grades 5-8. Now
18 they wish to serve just grades 6-8. So they're going
19 to move 5 back to their elementary school?

20 DR. ATWELL: (Nods head up and down)

21 MS. WAGNER: Their elementary school. So Ms.
22 Atwell will take over.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Good morning, Dr. Atwell. If
24 you will raise your right hand.

25 (WITNESS RAISES RIGHT HAND)

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Do you swear or affirm that
2 the testimony you are about to give shall be the
3 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

4 DR. ATWELL: I do.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. You have 20
6 minutes to present or to set up your amendments.

7 DR. ATWELL: All right. Thank you. We request
8 approval to reconfigure. Our district serves three
9 schools with grade spans Pre-K-4, 5-8 and 9-12. And
10 we would like to reconfigure to keep 5th grade at
11 elementary an additional year. We feel that the 5th
12 graders have more in common with their peer group at
13 the lower grade levels than they do with upper grade
14 level students.

15 This move will allow us to best meet their
16 developmental needs, to increase the amount of time
17 that they have for literacy and math instruction and
18 minimize class changes -- different instructors. We
19 want to have a transition model where a student in K-
20 4 is in a single classroom. When they move to 5th
21 grade, they start working with a two-man team and
22 then they move up to the 6th grade middle school
23 where they have multiple classes and schedule
24 changes.

25 This reconfiguration will allow us to better

1 meet their needs with intervention and extension
2 support with our staffing and it helps us recognize
3 much efficiency with staffing. This request was
4 approved at my school board last night and we're
5 pending your approval today and then state board
6 approval.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Thank you. Any
8 questions? Dr. Wright-McMurray?

9 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Well, I guess my only -- I
10 would like to have a little more detail on the steps
11 that you guys took? I know you said that you feel
12 like that's going to be best outcome for the students
13 if you could keep them at the lower level --

14 DR. ATWELL: Uh-huh.

15 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: -- but do you mind just
16 sharing, like, the process that you and your team
17 went through to come to that decision.

18 DR. ATWELL: Okay. We operate as a professional
19 learning community and so I meet on a weekly basis
20 with my District 90 coalition -- that's the building
21 principals, the instructional facilitators,
22 curriculum people -- and as we review and look at our
23 data -- we reviewed our process, our progress, our
24 district goals -- we recognize the need for
25 interventional support and to -- and steps that we

1 can take to facilitate improvement in literacy and
2 math instruction and character development and
3 discipline.

4 And so as part of our problem solving -- and
5 also from the fiscal aspect -- as I look at our
6 budget, and I look at staffing, look at our
7 shortages, efficiency, what we can do, we just
8 recognized the need. And so I started talking with
9 the principals; we met with the teachers; we've had
10 team meetings with the grade levels of teachers that
11 will be impacted; we've had parent support and
12 community support, board support for the motion and
13 so it's just -- it's a cumulative result of our
14 continual improvement process.

15 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thank you for the
16 additional details.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini, any questions?

18 MS. SARACINI: So not only student needs, but
19 also staffing concerns -- this addresses that?

20 DR. ATWELL: Yes, ma'am.

21 MS. SARACINI: Okay.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

23 MR. BALDWIN: No questions.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: If there are no additional
25 questions, I'll accept a motion.

1 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Motion.

2 MS. SARACINI: Second.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion by Dr.
4 Wright-McMurray and a second by Ms. Saracini to
5 approve the amendment request for Mountainburg Middle
6 School Brain Academy. All those in favor?

7 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All those opposed? Hearing
9 none, motion passes.

10 DR. ATWELL: Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. If you'll give us
12 a quick second and we'll fill out our forms. I voted
13 for the amendment of moving the students -- the
14 5th-grade students to the elementary based on the
15 data makes sense to me. Ms. Saracini?

16 MS. SARACINI: I support the amendment request
17 for reconfiguration which will allow the district to
18 meet the needs of the students as well as address
19 staffing needs.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Wright-McMurray?

21 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I support the amendment
22 request. The district has amended a well thought out
23 and collaborative plan to identify needs and to
24 implement strategies to improve outcomes for their
25 students, administration and it will improve the

1 educational experience of their 5th-grade students.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

3 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I also support the request.
4 I think this is a thoughtful and student focused
5 decision.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, Dr. Atwell.

7 DR. ATWELL: Thank you.

8 **4. CONSIDERATION OF ARKANSAS MILITARY FIRST RESPONDERS**

9 **AMENDMENT REQUEST**

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Next item No. 4
11 please. Feather Linn you are recognized.

12 MS. LINN: My name is Feather Linn. I am with
13 the Standards and System Report Unit. Arkansas
14 Military First Responders is requesting to transfer
15 the charter from American Quality Schools to Arkansas
16 Military and First Responders Academy, a local
17 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. They need to also
18 rescind their waiver of Arkansas Annotated Code
19 § 6-17-2403 and Dr. Durand is here today to answer
20 questions.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Durand if you will raise
22 your right hand, please.

23 DR. DURAND: Yes, ma'am.

24 (WITNESS RAISES RIGHT HAND)

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Do you swear or affirm that

1 the testimony you are about to give shall be the
2 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

3 DR. DURAND: Yes, ma'am.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. And I know you
5 have a presentation?

6 DR. DURAND: Well, it's just to keep me on track
7 more than -- more than anything else.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right. And if you
9 will state your name and title --

10 DR. DURAND: Sure. I'm --

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- and you'll have 20
12 minutes.

13 DR. DURAND: I'm Kevin Durand. I'm the Chief
14 Academic Officer for the Arkansas Military and First
15 Responders Academy and I'll be presenting here
16 shortly. I just wanted to also extend the apologies
17 of Lieutenant Colonel Smedley who is currently at
18 Quantico finishing up his commander's course and so
19 he could not -- was not able to be -- to be with us
20 today.

21 So some important milestones just sort of to set
22 the scene. Earlier this semester -- earlier this
23 spring -- we received the approval from the U.S.
24 Marine Corps for a Junior ROTC program for the
25 entirety of our students. And so that was a big

1 stepping stone in completing the parts of our charter
2 that had been presented to the Charter Authorizing
3 Panel before and had been approved.

4 Phase I construction -- just as a matter of
5 update -- is on schedule. We had the meeting last
6 Tuesday. It's on schedule for July 6th, so it's
7 always nice to have a little bit of float in terms of
8 getting the building ready. We have received our
9 501(c)(3) status; and so having met those criteria in
10 terms of the agreement that we had with American
11 Quality Schools, we have now come to ask for the
12 transfer of the charter from American Quality Schools
13 to the Arkansas Military and First Responders Academy
14 with -- now that we are the local holding the
15 501(c)(3).

16 And then we'll open -- opening day -- I'm still
17 in baseball mode. Sorry. School -- school will
18 begin on August 16th this fall. The -- one of the --
19 the first is the transfer of charter request,
20 obviously from HUSN. The second part of the
21 amendment is the recension of the waiver concerning
22 the Arkansas teacher minimum salary contingent on
23 LEARNS Act participation and those sorts of things.
24 So I would be -- I know there are lots of documents
25 before you, so I'd be happy to take any questions

1 that you might happen to have.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Durand, and your location
3 will be 10 --

4 DR. DURAND: 10710 I-30, just south of the
5 Baseline overpass and just north of the 430/30
6 interchange.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And are you going to be in
8 the South City Church?

9 DR. DURAND: Yes, ma'am.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. And then you will be
11 off in a section -- it looks huge online. So are you
12 off in to, like, a section of the church where the
13 religious items will be moved?

14 DR. DURAND: Sure. So we're completely
15 restructuring the church. The congregation of South
16 City is in the process of moving.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

18 DR. DURAND: And so we have a -- we actually
19 have a lease agreement with them such that they are
20 meeting one Sunday a month and then one Wednesday a
21 month during the school -- during the year until next
22 June -- so June of '24 -- as they're -- as they're
23 in the process of making their transition to another
24 location.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Perfect. All right.

1 Ms. -- Dr. Wright-McMurray any questions?

2 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Yes. I just wanted to --
3 excuse me -- get a little bit of clarity on your
4 leadership plan.

5 DR. DURAND: Sure. Yes, ma'am.

6 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I noted that, in the memo
7 that you submitted, it was contingent upon one of
8 your leaders -- their outcome of the race in Chicago
9 for Mayor, so it's dependent upon how they did there
10 --

11 DR. DURAND: Right.

12 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: -- and how they're going
13 to be able to lead your organization. And so just
14 wanted to get a sense of -- now that we know the
15 outcome of that --

16 DR. DURAND: Sure.

17 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: -- is he going to be a
18 part of that leadership? And then also -- it also
19 mentioned that there is a younger successor but
20 doesn't name that person. So I'm just wondering what
21 are your -- what are the plans for the leadership
22 there?

23 DR. DURAND: So in the transition to the
24 Arkansas Military and First Responders Academy to the
25 board, the board will be in the position of

1 overseeing the operations of the charter. Mr. Paul
2 Vallas, who is part of the group that initially came
3 before the board and made the pitch for AMFRA was, as
4 you know, running for Mayor of Chicago and came
5 second.

6 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Yes.

7 DR. DURAND: His involvement with us has mainly
8 been as an advisor and has been a resource that we
9 can go and say, you know, we're working on a little
10 bit of improvement, how -- what sort of advice can
11 you give us with regard to that? He did sort of help
12 us with the presentation with the Marine Corps at
13 Quantico so that we could establish the Marine Corps
14 JROTC program. And while he is the CEO of -- in the
15 charter itself, he is stepping back and leaving the
16 board as it is constituted with -- as it is currently
17 constituted as the organization that will be directly
18 in charge of -- in charge of AMFRA. And so Ms. Moody
19 -- Ms. Sharmin Moody is our president of the board,
20 and she will be leading board and then the board will
21 be directly -- we -- Lieutenant Colonel Smedley and
22 myself and the rest of the members of the AMFRA team
23 will be directly responsible to the board.

24 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: And --

25 DR. DURAND: And you have a second one. I

1 missed it. I'm sorry.

2 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Yeah. And then the second
3 one in the -- it says item three -- there's mention
4 of a younger successor. Has that person been named,
5 or do you have any idea who that's going to be that's
6 going to be working with -- it looks like Dr. Hall
7 and Mr. Vallas?

8 DR. DURAND: So Mr. Hall is no longer part of
9 the organization. Due to some very serious health
10 concerns, he is no longer part of the group. And I
11 believe that that reference is actually to Lieutenant
12 Colonel Smedley who was brought on in November --

13 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

14 DR. DURAND: -- as the commandant.

15 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Okay.

16 DR. DURAND: And then we -- I came on in -- I
17 guess, February 6th as the chief academic officer.
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini?

20 MS. SARACINI: I just want to clarify and
21 understand, you are anticipating 140 as --

22 DR. DURAND: Between 140 and 160. Yes, ma'am.
23 We did budgeting on 140. We're kind of looking at
24 160.

25 MS. SARACINI: Okay. So you feel that you have

1 sufficient staffing needs to meet --

2 DR. DURAND: Yes, ma'am.

3 MS. SARACINI: -- that number? Okay.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

5 MR. BALDWIN: So my questions are kind of
6 financial --

7 DR. DURAND: Okay.

8 MR. BALDWIN: -- and I guess I'm thinking back
9 to when we visited before.

10 DR. DURAND: Sure.

11 MR. BALDWIN: And American Quality Schools,
12 Incorporation -- I internalized that as providing
13 support of technical expertise, knowledge expertise
14 --

15 DR. DURAND: Uh-huh.

16 MR. BALDWIN: -- and also potentially financial
17 expertise if needed and that may not have been true,
18 but --

19 DR. DURAND: Right.

20 MR. BALDWIN: -- that's how I thought about it.
21 So my question is with the new -- with the transfer
22 of the charter to the American -- Arkansas Military
23 and First Responders Academy explain to us, is there
24 any decrease in the level of financial support from
25 the original organization or, I guess, probably

1 they're stepping away?

2 DR. DURAND: Right.

3 MR. BALDWIN: So maybe talk to us about the --
4 what type of financial support you have from the move
5 --

6 DR. DURAND: Sure.

7 MR. BALDWIN: -- from nonprofit and then I've
8 got a separate question on the budget issue.

9 DR. DURAND: Okay. Sure. So American Quality
10 Schools did the initial outlay in terms of the cost
11 required to get the charter off the ground in terms
12 of making it -- making the proposals and the like
13 initially. But we're not actually receiving any
14 funding from American Quality Schools. And so we
15 have a CSP grant that is covering the -- not the
16 implementation -- the planning period.

17 And then we have a CSP grant that's also going
18 into the implementation period for this first year.
19 Also, the South City Church -- as part of the lease
20 that they signed with us -- well, initially with KLS
21 -- is providing \$100,000 into our operating as part
22 of that agreement. And so that funding is the place
23 where -- plus the planning funds -- the place where
24 we're drawing -- and APSRC is handling the backside
25 of the house in terms of finances piece because one,

1 they're experts and I'm not. And so that's the place
2 where funding is at the moment.

3 And in terms of -- in terms of budgeting, we put
4 the budget together in such a fashion that at -- for
5 example, at 140 students, maybe a little less than
6 that, the numbers work out such that we end up with a
7 small surplus at the end of the first year and then
8 surpluses provided we keep our student body at the
9 spot that we're projecting.

10 MS. NEWTON: (Zoom audio distortion) Okay.
11 Sorry. Sorry about that.

12 DR. DURAND: I hope I'm not the only one hearing
13 voices.

14 MS. NEWTON: (Zoom audio distortion) video but
15 it (Zoom audio distortion)

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Newton -- Ms. Newton, we
17 can hear you.

18 MS. NEWTON: (INAUDIBLE)

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: There she is.

20 MS. NEWTON: Oh. There I am. There I was.
21 There I am. Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. And, Ms. Newton,
23 we're right in the middle of Arkansas Military First
24 Responders.

25 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

1 MR. BALDWIN: So the change in the charter
2 administration doesn't --

3 DR. DURAND: That's -- it's --

4 MR. BALDWIN: -- affect the finances?

5 DR. DURAND: No, sir.

6 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Looking at your budget
7 there's a line that's called foundation spending.

8 DR. DURAND: Uh-huh.

9 MR. BALDWIN: \$1,000,078?

10 DR. DURAND: Uh-huh.

11 MR. BALDWIN: Is that a single foundation?

12 DR. DURAND: That's the foundation from the
13 state. So the -- that's the first student --

14 MS. NEWTON: I can't hear anything he's saying.

15 DR. DURAND: I'm sorry. That's the first
16 student funding. Yes, sir.

17 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I'm sorry, Ms. Newton? What
19 did you say?

20 MS. NEWTON: I couldn't hear anything he was
21 saying. So --

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Make sure you're speaking
23 directly into the --

24 DR. KEVIN DURAND. Okay.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- microphone. Thank you.

1 Any other questions Mr. Baldwin?

2 MR. BALDWIN: No.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So one of the things that I
4 know the charter office is going to need to stay in
5 touch directly with someone. Who in your
6 organization is the direct contact? Is it going to
7 be you --

8 DR. DURAND: Yes, ma'am.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- that the charter office
10 can reach out to --

11 DR. DURAND: Yes, ma'am.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- and get quick responses?

13 DR. DURAND: Uh-huh.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right. Any other
15 questions for Arkansas Military? Ms. Newton, do you
16 have any questions for Arkansas Military First
17 Responders?

18 MS. NEWTON: No, ma'am.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Then hearing none
20 -- you're also -- so we're changing the 501(c)(3) and
21 then you're rescinding the waiver?

22 DR. DURAND: Yes, ma'am.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Here comes Shastady.

24 MS. WAGNER: Hi. So this rescension of the
25 waiver is to comply with LEARNS Act -- so I have no

1 legal concerns about this.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Just make sure -- have
3 to check all my plugs that I've got plugged here.
4 And then you're maintaining your -- are you -- I
5 think the question we had in the charter office was
6 you had originally said you were going to be a 9-12
7 and that you would start with grade 9, but then you
8 move forward a year.

9 DR. DURAND: Uh-huh.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So are you starting this year
11 with grade 9 or grade 9 and 10?

12 DR. DURAND: Grade 9 -- grades 9 and 10. Yes,
13 ma'am.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: 9 and 10. Okay. So our
15 office will reach out to make sure that you have the
16 proper LEA change request --

17 DR. DURAND: Sure.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- so that we get you off to
19 a good start.

20 DR. DURAND: Perfect. Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any other questions? All
22 right. I will accept a motion.

23 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Motion.

24 MR. BALDWIN: Second.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So I have a motion by Dr.

1 Wright-McMurray and a second from Mr. Baldwin to
2 approve the Arkansas Military First Responders
3 amendment requests. All those in favor?

4 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All those opposed? Amendment
6 is approved.

7 DR. DURAND: Thank you so much.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: You're welcome. If you'll
9 put your notes in, please. I voted for the
10 amendment. We're excited to get this school opened,
11 and there will be approximately 140 students in
12 grades 9-10. Ms. Saracini?

13 MS. SARACINI: I support the amendment request
14 to turn over the charter to a local non-profit
15 organization -- looking forward to seeing it get
16 started this fall.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Wright-McMurray?

18 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I support the amendment
19 request. The transfer will allow for more effective
20 (Zoom audio distortion) operation of the charter
21 school.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. Mr. Baldwin?

23 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I voted to support the
24 amendment request. It seems like a reasonable
25 request and appears appropriate.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Newton?

2 MS. NEWTON: I could hear only you, Ms. Coffman.
3 I can't hear anyone else, and I got in on the very
4 end of it, but I think it's a necessary change for
5 the better. But I'm not hearing anyone -- I could
6 hear mumbling, but I couldn't hear all of you.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right guys, step it up.
8 Right into that microphone. Thank you, Ms. Newton.
9 Thank you. We look forward to getting this charter
10 open and coming to visit. All right. Our next
11 agenda item. Ms. Summons?

12 **5. CONSIDERATION OF RESPONSIVE EDUCATION SOLUTIONS AMENDMENT**
13 **REQUEST**

14 MS. SUMMONS: Good morning, Dorie Summons,
15 Public School Charter Director. Responsive Education
16 Solutions is requesting to transfer the Arkansas
17 Charter School's granted to the Texas-based
18 Responsive Education Solutions to Responsive Ed
19 Arkansas. The request would allow -- excuse me --
20 would apply to the following schools: The Founders
21 Classical Academies of Arkansas, Premier High Schools
22 of Arkansas, Premier High School Springdale, Premier
23 High School of North Little Rock. They also put in a
24 request to rescind the waiver of Arkansas Annotated
25 Code § 6-17-2403. We also have Mr. James Taylor, who

1 is the chief financial officer and chief technology
2 officer, here to present along with his team from
3 Responsive Ed.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. Mr. Taylor, if
5 you and anyone on your team that may speak -- if you
6 will stand and raise your right hand.

7 (WITNESS RAISES RIGHT HAND)

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Do you swear or affirm that
9 the testimony you are about to give shall be the
10 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

11 MR. TAYLOR: Yes.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. If you'll get
13 very close to that microphone so Ms. Newton can hear
14 you.

15 MR. TAYLOR: That works. I did have a
16 presentation that we provided. Is that --

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dan?

18 MR. TAYLOR: -- available?

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: That's Lighthouse.

20 MR. DAVIS: (INDISCERNIBLE)

21 MR. JAMES TAYLOR: That's Lighthouse. Yes.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Uh-huh.

23 MR. DAVIS: This one?

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Responsive Ed.

25 MR. TAYLOR: It would be Responsive Ed.

1 MS. NEWTON: I'm sorry, Ms. Coffman. You see
2 that I can't hear a word. I can hear you clearly,
3 others no, but I may have to disconnect. I tried the
4 phone, and it doesn't work. So sorry to interrupt.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: That's all right. We're
6 trying to find the presentation.

7 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: There we go.

9 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah. That looks good. That looks
10 familiar. Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And you have the clicker?

12 MR. DAVIS: Coming right up.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: James, check it and make sure
14 it's on on the side.

15 MR. DAVIS: One more second and I'll have you
16 -- all right. It should be able to play now. Is
17 that you doing it or me?

18 MR. TAYLOR: I'm trying to click, and I am not
19 getting --

20 MR. DAVIS: I'll scroll for you.

21 MR. TAYLOR: Okay. I want to thank you all very
22 much for allowing us to be here today. We are very
23 excited about some of the changes that have been
24 happening within the Responsive Education Solutions
25 Organization and part of that is what we are

1 presenting to you here today. I wanted to just
2 present the team that we have. I am James Taylor. I
3 am the CFO and chief technology officer for
4 Responsive Education Solutions. Rhonda Bradford is
5 the superintendent of schools for our charters here
6 in Arkansas. Susan Provenza is the state director of
7 our Founder's Classical Academy Schools. Dennis
8 Felton is our state director for Premier High Schools
9 and Virtual Learning. Katie Stephens is our
10 executive director of finance. Curtis Shack, our
11 executive director of data and systems management.
12 And then Mr. DuVall and Ms. Pearson are not here
13 today, but they oversee the CTE and our special
14 programs respectively. Next.

15 We are seeking an amendment to move the charters
16 that are currently assigned to the Responsive Ed
17 Texas Organization over to a new organization,
18 Responsive Ed Arkansas, that would be dedicated to
19 operating our Responsive Ed Arkansas Charter Schools.
20 As part of this process, we expect and would look for
21 the retention of the academic accountability, the
22 fiscal assets, all responsibilities associated with
23 those contractual relationships, organizational
24 leadership and obviously the respective charters to
25 move with -- with this amendment request.

1 Through this process we expect as little to
2 change as possible. The charters affected by the
3 amendment are listed in this slide which include:
4 The Founders Classical Academies of Arkansas, Premier
5 High Schools of Arkansas, Premier High School of
6 North Little Rock and the Premier High School of
7 Springdale. The purpose of this move is to establish
8 Responsive Ed Arkansas as an organization dedicated
9 solely to the operation of Arkansas charter schools.
10 Helping facilitate the ability for us as an
11 organization to better align the purposes of our
12 nonprofit corporation with the success of our
13 Arkansas schools and students and ultimately serve
14 more students here in Arkansas.

15 Just as a little history, Responsive Education
16 Solutions was awarded three charters in 2012. We
17 have -- we opened three schools and over the course
18 of the time until today, in ten years we have
19 currently ten schools open and operating in the State
20 of Arkansas. In 2022, Responsive Education Solutions
21 was renamed to Responsive Ed Texas in anticipation of
22 this restructure and in 2023, we established the
23 organization, Responsive Ed Arkansas. So our request
24 today is to align the interests of our Arkansas
25 schools under this Responsive Ed Arkansas umbrella.

1 Responsive Education Solutions has been going
2 through some changes over the last couple of years.
3 We have established a national organization which is
4 now named Responsive Education Solutions. We have
5 established centers of competency within our larger
6 organization of -- group of -- of organizations which
7 include Blue Learning, which is a charter management
8 organization, Bright Thinker where we develop and --
9 and manage our proprietary curriculum that we use in
10 our schools as well as deliver virtual or online
11 educational services. And then of course our charter
12 -- our charter holders -- our charter schools
13 themselves, they're currently under Responsive Ed
14 Texas.

15 Once we make this change if you approve, the
16 organization would change to be structured as is
17 displayed here with Responsive Ed Arkansas separate
18 from Responsive Ed Texas. Our schools under
19 Responsive Ed Arkansas would be as -- as is indicated
20 here. I'm not going to run through every single
21 number, but these are all of our -- all of our
22 charters and associated campuses with those charters.
23 As part of the transition, the board and executive
24 oversight will remain the same. The Arkansas
25 leadership will remain the same. There is no

1 financial impact. There is no fiscal impact to this
2 restructuring as all of the assets, all of -- all --
3 everything that is associated with the reporting and
4 maintenance of our financial records and assets will
5 remain with the new organization.

6 School operations, educational programs and
7 personnel will remain same. Contractual
8 relationships, including with the charter management
9 organization, would remain the same. So the question
10 is what would change? Responsive Ed Arkansas will
11 employ a superintendent, the staff, school
12 administrators, teachers, support staff and
13 exclusively support the Arkansas charter schools.
14 Over the next two years, we will be purposefully
15 evaluating and making necessary changes to focus and
16 better serve our Arkansas Schools.

17 I want to thank you for the opportunity and
18 request that you grant our amendment related to --
19 related to the transfer of our charters to this new
20 organization. Now we also have the second amendment
21 which relates to rescinding our waiver for the
22 minimum salary schedule for teachers so that is also
23 part of this request here today. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you. All right.
25 Questions, Ms. Wright-McMurray?

1 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Thank you for your
2 presentation and sharing information on your
3 rationale for this big change. One question that I
4 do have is just for my clarification. I was looking
5 at your projection for next year and looking at the
6 Blue Learning reimbursement. It looks like it wasn't
7 charged to any other school other than the Founders
8 Classical. Am I reading that correctly or -- I'm
9 just trying to get an understanding of why that looks
10 like that.

11 MR. TAYLOR: It is charged to all of the schools
12 and they -- but because we have multiple charters, we
13 -- we pass it through the one organization when we do
14 the reimbursement. So those individuals are covered
15 under -- as costs under the Founders Classical and
16 then Blue Learning reimburses directly to that one
17 organization.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini?

19 MS. SARACINI: Thank you for the presentation
20 and I like seeing the rescinding the -- the waiver
21 for teacher salary -- that you were going to raise
22 that. So thank you for thinking of those teachers.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

24 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I, you know, when I started
25 reading this, I thought you guys were going to change

1 some of the governing structures and I anticipated
2 those because of future growth of Arkansas, Texas and
3 maybe elsewhere. And so when you kept everything
4 essentially the same is what you're saying I was a
5 little bit surprised. So -- and maybe it's just that
6 I don't understand. So the executive leadership and
7 the board of directors is still the Texas entity?
8 And that's a question.

9 MR. TAYLOR: So the board -- the board is with
10 the Arkansas entity, but it is currently the same as
11 -- same board as the Texas entity.

12 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

13 MR. TAYLOR: Over the next two years, we will be
14 looking specifically at that to make some
15 modifications.

16 MR. BALDWIN: So you're going to bring in some
17 Arkansas faces?

18 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, we are.

19 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. That's good -- that
20 answered my question. Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Newton, do you have any
22 questions?

23 MS. NEWTON: (Zoom audio distortion)

24 MR. DAVIS: She's on the phone and laptop in the
25 same room right there together.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Right.

2 MS. NEWTON: I don't -- I'm sorry. I don't
3 (Zoom audio distortion)

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So Ms. Newton, I think what I
5 heard you say was you did not have any questions?
6 All right. Moving forward, if there are no
7 additional questions, I'll accept a motion.

8 MR. BALDWIN: I make a motion to approve --

9 MS. SARACINI: Second.

10 MR. BALDWIN: -- as requested.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion from Mr.
12 Baldwin and a second from Ms. Saracini to approve the
13 amendment request for Responsive Ed Solutions. All
14 those in favor?

15 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed? Hearing none.
17 Motion is approved. Thank you. Give us just a
18 second.

19 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you very much.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. I voted for the
21 amendment. I think it's very clear and not
22 convoluted at all so I'm excited about it. Ms.
23 Saracini?

24 MS. SARACINI: I also support the amendment
25 request.

1 MS. NEWTON: Can you hear me now, Ms. Coffman?

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes, Ms. Newton.

3 MS. NEWTON: And again, I struggled with the
4 video but, Ms. Saracini just talking. I could hear
5 you and you only clearly. So --

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I'm taking all the bragging
7 points today. Thank you, Ms. Newton.

8 MS. NEWTON: I'm going to have to say -- I
9 guess, I might as well get off. I don't know --
10 because I'm not able to communicate or, you know,
11 hear and back and forth.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Mr. Baldwin?

13 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I support the amendment
14 request. The new structure appears reasonable and
15 appropriate.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. And Ms. Newton, did
17 you have a vote, or did you want to abstain?

18 MS. NEWTON: I want to abstain.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Motion passes.
20 Thank you so much. Do you all need to take a quick
21 break before we do our last item. Do you want to do
22 that? Let -- maybe we can get some of the sound --

23 MS. SHASTADY WAGNER: Sure.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Ms. Newton, we
25 are going to take a quick break and let the charter

1 team reach out and see what -- if we can figure out
2 what the sound problem is.

3 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

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

6 **6. CONSIDERATION OF ARKANSAS LIGHTHOUSE CHARTER SCHOOL**

7 **AMENDMENT REQUEST**

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Summons, do you want to
9 present our last item please?

10 MS. SUMMONS: Dorie Summons, DESE Charter
11 Director.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Real close to the microphone.

13 MS. SUMMONS: Okay. Dorie Summons, DESE Charter
14 Director. Arkansas Lighthouse Charter School is
15 requesting a district name change to Arkansas
16 Lighthouse Charter Schools, Incorporated, to operate
17 all of the Jacksonville Lighthouse Charter School
18 campuses and requests that the enrollment cap of
19 1,019 be incrementally met over the course of the
20 next five years, amend the traditional calendar of
21 178 days to a 12-month/year-round calendar beginning
22 of the school year of '23/'24 and rescind its waiver
23 of Arkansas Annotated Code § 6-17-2403. We have
24 LaShawnda Noel, who is the superintendent here, as
25 well as her team for questions.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Wagner? We need you
2 please before we get started.

3 MS. NEWTON: I'm here. Ms. Coffman, I am --
4 this is Toyce, of course, and I used two different --
5 my laptop and my desktop and I did not hear a word
6 that Ms. Summons said. I hear everything that you
7 say, and I don't know. I would think it was my -- if
8 I were in my home office, I would think it was me.
9 But I'm here with technical assistance that I need,
10 but like I say on two different computers. I'm able
11 to --

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Let's try Ms. Wagner and see
13 if she -- if you can hear her?

14 MS. WAGNER: Can you hear Ms. Newton?

15 MS. NEWTON: I can barely.

16 MS. WAGNER: I guess they're on.

17 MR. DAVIS: Can you hear me, Ms. Newton?

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I think he decided to work on
19 the microphones for a minute.

20 MR. DAVIS: Can you hear me?

21 MS. NEWTON: I can.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Solve The Problem has
23 solved the problem.

24 Ms. Saracini: He always does.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, Dan. All right.

1 Ms. Wagner --

2 MS. WAGNER: Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- in this amendment request
4 is a request to change their school calendar. Has
5 that typically been a charter panel decision or a
6 local board decision?

7 MS. WAGNER: No. That's more a local board
8 decision. I think she just brought it because she
9 originally thought -- which Ms. Noel is here so she
10 can speak to this as well -- but I think she thought
11 she had to get a waiver of that, and she doesn't. So
12 --

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

14 MS. WAGNER: -- because she's going to comply
15 with the 12-month calendar. So that's a policy
16 decision. She's just going to update -- I think --
17 the panel of that.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right. Thank you.
19 All right. Ms. Noel? If you and your team will
20 stand and raise your right hand.

21 (WITNESSES RAISE RIGHT HAND)

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Do you swear or affirm that
23 the testimony that you are about to give shall be the
24 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

25 MS. NOEL: I do.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. And I believe you
2 have a presentation -- a slide?

3 MS. NOEL: I do, but I -- yes, I do.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right. If you
5 will state your name and title for the record, then
6 we will begin. Speak close to that microphone so
7 that Ms. Newton may hear you?

8 MR. DAVIS: Give me just a second. All right.
9 You should be good.

10 MS. NOEL: Good morning. Ms. Newton, can you
11 hear me?

12 MS. NEWTON: Yes. I can hear.

13 MS. NOEL: Wonderful. I am LaShawnda Noel. I
14 serve as CEO and superintendent for Arkansas
15 Lighthouse Charter Schools. We are here this morning
16 to officially change -- request to change the name of
17 the charter district from Arkansas Lighthouse
18 Academies to Arkansas Lighthouse Charter Schools, to
19 request the incremental enrollment cap and to request
20 the waiver on the teacher salary schedule. So as it
21 relates to the name change, last summer the local
22 board decided to break ties with the national charter
23 management organization. It was a really different
24 time. It fell in between summer and school beginning
25 and so the former secretary allowed us to continue to

1 do business as Arkansas Lighthouse Charter Schools
2 and we are here today to officially make that change.

3 The enrollment cap piece -- we are proposing to
4 incrementally get to our enrollment cap of 1,019 over
5 the course of the next few years. We feel this will
6 be in the best interest of the charter district. We
7 feel like our teachers and our students, as well as
8 our facilities, would appreciate us for doing so. As
9 you know, we have three campuses, one of which is on
10 the Little Rock Air Force Base. That space is very
11 small. We're working with the base to get some
12 additional space, but until that time we want to be
13 responsible in how we are growing and so that is one
14 of the major reasons that we are requesting that.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Before you -- can you back up
16 to that slide. So in the yellow part here, is that
17 where you're -- can you talk a little bit about that
18 because that was a little confusing to me?

19 MS. NOEL: So the yellow -- so for '25/'26, that
20 is the year that we are hoping that we will have the
21 additional space on the air force base. So that "FL
22 Mod Build" that is when we are anticipating we will
23 either have some additional modulars on the air force
24 base or a build -- an actual buildout. Why the air
25 force base is the campus that we're focused on is

1 because our 5th-8th grade population is our fastest
2 growing population and those grades sit on the air
3 force base.

4 And then, of course, we'll skip this piece, but
5 finally the salary schedule. I submitted some
6 additional information there. I know this is very
7 confusing what is up here, but recently, our board
8 approved in just this past week the new teacher
9 salary schedule that we're proposing in order to meet
10 the Arkansas LEARNS Act. And that is all.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And so that's -- that's also
12 the reason to request the --

13 MS. NOEL: The --

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- the rescension of the
15 waiver of --

16 MS. NOEL: Yes.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- salary schedule?

18 MS. NOEL: Yes.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Ms. Wright-McMurray,
20 do you want to start?

21 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I don't have any
22 questions.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini?

24 MS. SARACINI: It's very clear. Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

1 MR. BALDWIN: I have a question but it's not
2 really on what you all are asking for us to do
3 because I'm just intrigued by the 12-month
4 scheduling.

5 MS. NOEL: Yes.

6 MR. BALDWIN: Is there another school in
7 Arkansas doing that?

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Oh, yes.

9 MS. NOEL: I do believe so.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes.

11 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Well, I think it's really a
12 good idea. Help me understand the process that you
13 went through to do that. Don't be lengthy because I
14 really love the idea. I'm just curious.

15 MS. NOEL: So we have kind of been playing with
16 this idea for some time -- trying to understand how
17 to assist our scholars in the summer to prevent that
18 summer slide and different things that happen to our
19 scholars. This became very apparent during the
20 pandemic of course. And so we have been working with
21 our school leaders as well as our staff members, but
22 also our community at large to try to figure out how
23 we answer this question. One of the things that
24 became very apparent over the past year is teacher
25 burnout for us and what we are looking at doing is

1 really focusing on the teachers' mental health as
2 well as the scholars' mental health. So you will see
3 in the proposed schedule that I have before you,
4 there are times without -- throughout the school year
5 where we have built in breaks to answer those pieces
6 as well.

7 MR. BALDWIN: My compliments to you all.

8 MS. NOEL: Thank you. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Newton, do you have any
10 questions?

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

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Well, hearing
13 none -- I will just say that, you know, I'm excited
14 when I see a very detailed progressive cap. So I
15 just want to know what to expect, and it makes sense
16 and I love it when it makes sense. So I'll accept a
17 motion.

18 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: So moved.

19 MS. SARACINI: Second.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: To approve?

21 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: Approve.

22 MS. SARACINI: Yes.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion from Dr.
24 Wright-McMurray, a second from Ms. Saracini to
25 approve the amendment request for Arkansas Lighthouse

1 Charter School to Arkansas Lighthouse Charter
2 Schools, Incorporated. All those in favor?

3 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed? Motion passes.
5 So our team will reach out to make sure that we get
6 the proper LEA change request to get that into the
7 system.

8 MS. NOEL: And I just want to say thank you all
9 for hearing us. I'm hopeful that you won't -- I love
10 coming to you all, but I'm hopeful that we won't see
11 you all for a while. It feels like we've been up
12 here every year. So thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Come as often as you need to
14 make it the best for students.

15 MS. NOEL: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. We'll take a
17 moment to fill out your voting sheets. Dr. Wright-
18 McMurray?

19 DR. WRIGHT-MCMURRAY: I said I support the
20 amendment request for changes for Lighthouse to be
21 more responsive to student needs and meet the
22 expectations of the LEARNS Act.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini?

24 MS. SARACINI: I support the amendment request.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

1 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I support the amendment
2 request. Very good presentation and thoughtful
3 changes for students.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Newton?

5 MS. NEWTON: I support the request also.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Ms. Summons,
7 before we end our meeting, you said that we may need
8 to reschedule our May meeting. So can we take a
9 moment and look at our calendars very quickly. It's
10 currently scheduled for May 16th, and I believe two
11 of our members will be out of town. Will you all be
12 back on Friday? What time Friday are you available?

13 MS. SARACINI: I'm free all afternoon.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All afternoon? Mr. Baldwin?

15 MR. BALDWIN: I'm good in the afternoon also.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Dan?

17 MS. NEWTON: What's the date now?

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: May 19th. Would you be
19 available that afternoon -- Friday afternoon?

20 MS. NEWTON: Yeah. Friday afternoon maybe.
21 We've got a site visit for that day. So I anticipate
22 we'll be finished by Friday afternoon, but --

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Dan, is the room
24 available on May 19?

25 MR. DAVIS: Yes, ma'am. I was just checking

1 that. Got something in here on Thursday, but you're
2 good for Friday.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Wagner, are you available
4 on the 19th?

5 MS. WAGNER: Yes.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Charter office? Everybody
7 good? Could we start at noon?

8 MS. WAGNER: Sure.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Noon it is. Noon on Friday
10 and we'll let the communications team know as well?
11 All right. Any other -- any other -- LeeAnn, y'all
12 good with that too?

13 MS. BRAZEAL: I think.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

15 MS. BRAZEAL: I won't be there, but

16 (INDISCERNIBLE)

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. I'm expecting several
18 more charters to submit amendment requests to rescind
19 that salary schedule. So we need to get that done in
20 a timely manner so it can get on the state board
21 agenda. All right. Any other business before this
22 panel? Miranda, thank you for being here today.
23 I'll accept a motion to adjourn.

24 MS. SARACINI: I'll make a motion to adjourn.

25 MR. BALDWIN: Second.

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CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion and a second.
A motion from Ms. Saracini and second from Mr.
Baldwin to adjourn. All those in favor?

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any opposed? Meeting is
adjourned. Thank you everyone.

(The Action Agenda was concluded at 11:25 a.m.)

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 May, 2023.



MIRANDA MCENTIRE, CCR
 Certified Court Reporter #852

