

## CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, January 23, 2020 | 10:01 a.m. to 2:38 p.m.

Puget Sound Educational Service District, Renton, WA

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### Attendance:

Betsy Cohen, Jessica Garcia, Dan Grimm, Heather Lechner, Harium Martin-Morris, Dr. Kristina Mayer, Dr. Margit McGuire, Gayle Pauley, Steve Sundquist, and Cindi Williams.

Leadership Team: Joshua Halsey, Executive Director; Krystal Starwich, Deputy Director; Leslie Hayden, Oversight Specialist; Kara Lowe, Oversight Specialist; Aileen Miller, Assistant Attorney General; Elizabeth McAmis, Assistant Attorney General; and Amanda Martinez, Executive Assistant.

### Call To Order

#### Roll Call

Chair Williams called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. The following Commissioners were present: Betsy Cohen, Jessica Garcia, Heather Lechner, Harium Martin-Morris, Kristina Mayer, Margit McGuire, Steve Sundquist and Cindi Williams. Commissioner Gayle Pauley was present via teleconference and left the meeting at 2:45 p.m. Commissioner Dan Grimm arrived at 10:45 a.m. It was determined that a quorum was present to proceed with the meeting.

### Consent Agenda

The meeting minutes for the November 14, 2019 Commission meeting and standing committee updates were reviewed. Chair Williams moved to approve the consent agenda and remove the legislative ad-hoc committee minutes. Commissioner Mayer seconded. The motion passed, with no opposes; no abstentions.

### Public Comment

The following members of the public provided testimony:

Sean Thumbolt Dizon, student at Rainier Valley Leadership Academy (RVLA), stated that he had noticed students and teachers trying to fix challenges that have occurred at the school and that RVLA is an amazing school in his opinion. He noted that the teachers continue to come back to help the students “no matter what” and that they want to educate the students and help them become the next leaders in the world.

Chineka Jones, seventh grade English teacher at RVLA, stated that the teachers and staff at RVLA are the community and foundation for all scholars, and she has the opportunity to impact scholars daily as a teacher at the school. Ms. Jones believes RVLA has strong routines and a non-nonsense approach to teaching and learning which allows the scholars to know the expectations and welcomes them to be critical thinkers. She believes these students deserve teachers that look like them, motivate them and is personally invested in this school because the staff see and believe in the scholars.

Najee Ladd-Ali provided public testimony on behalf of RVLA's transition to a community school. Mr. Ladd-Ali grew up in South Seattle and currently teaches PE at RVLA. He provided a brief history of his school history as a member of the community. Mr. Ladd-Ali spoke highly of Ms. Coleman, Ms. Maughan, Ms. Williams and the other staff rebuilding RVLA as a community school. He believes that the school is highly favored in the community and will teach kids to be successful.

Misk Alqaysi, student at RVLA, stated that the teachers help students engage in the subject and give them something to look forward to because they are warming and accepting. Ms. Alqaysi is prepared for the future and has fun while doing so. Ms. Alqaysi stated that RVLA is the best school she has attended.

Maleah Williams, student at RVLA, described her passion for the school, and the staff's commitment to educating healthy young people. Ms. Williams stated that she has been given many opportunities to succeed, overachieve and practice leadership, along with given many second chances like most of the scholars at RVLA. Ms. Williams stated that the students are a part of solving problems with Ms. Coleman's and other staff members help. Ms. Williams states that all students are passionate about the school and the student's faces light up at RVLA.

Leah Dual, student at RVLA, stated that the beginning of the year was hard, but that there has been a positive change in students and teachers throughout the year. Ms. Dual had previously attended a different charter schools with predominately white teachers, and feels more connection with the teachers of color at RVLA because she can relate to them.

Jenissi Gyan, student at RVLA, stated that she has learned a lot about herself and thanked the staff and admin for helping her to think about her future and what she wants to become.

Aesha Busuri, student at RVLA, has attended RVLA from year 1 and believes that the changes at the school has helped her become a leader. Ms. Busuri believes the changes at the school is good and would like RVLA to have a chance to show that.

Freddie Harris, custodian at RVLA and community member, expressed that RVLA is a great asset to the community and he strongly supports the school and the community.

Prince Darren Witcher, student at RVLA, provided public testimony regarding his experience at the school. Mr. Witcher stated that last year he went to a different school and feels like he is doing better at RVLA. He stated that RVLA is like a family and he feels they have a lot less friction than at other schools.

Aimee Kelly, Parent Coordinator and founding staff member at RVLA, stated that she has been through all iterations of RVLA and sees Ms. Coleman’s leadership involving the community and partnering with the school being reflected in the parent’s desire to see a community school with staff and curriculum that reflect their students.

Duran Woods, Recruitment Manager at RVLA, acknowledged the students that have left and realized that looking at the numbers could be disheartening. Mr. Woods encouraged the Commission and RVLA to re-focus on what they do have, not what they have lost, since they still have amazing students and amazing staff at the school.

Rahman Branch, Associate at CT3, has vast background and knowledge consulting with schools nationally and asserted that RVLA has both the “why” and the “what” for the making of a successful school. Mr. Branch stated that the leadership’s goals around strategic planning, community engagement, mission of serving and supporting their students, is moving in the right direction. Mr. Branch believes that in 3-5 years the Commission will be celebrating RVLA and the exemplar they are to the charter sector in Washington.

Patrick D’Amelio, CEO of Washington State Charter Schools Association (Wa Charters), stated that Wa Charters is prepared to provide RVLA with technical assistance and contingency funding and is in full support of their transition to a community led school. Mr. D’Amelio commented on the leadership of RVLA, including the community, staff and students, and urged the Commission to remove barriers for this school to continue to transition to the community school.

Sarah Okun, Director of the True Measure Collaborative, stated she has observed a deep commitment by the staff and leadership of the school to serving all students that walk through their doors while seeking guidance and partnerships with external partners. Ms. Okun notes that Ms. Coleman and Ms. Maughan provide their own distinct and complementary strengths as leaders and partners in RVLA and are the right leaders for this school now and moving forward. Ms. Okun urged the Commission to approve RVLA’s transition to a community led school.

Jess Peet, board member at RVLA, provided public testimony on behalf of the board. Ms. Peet attested to the changes that have taken place at RVLA and reinforce that the board stands committed to the transition because it is responsible to the community and the right thing to do and that the board remains committed to excellence. Ms. Peet stated that the board has grown to 9 members with two thirds reflecting the diversity of the community. Ms. Peet expressed her gratitude to have the

opportunity to serve on this transition team at the board level and to hear the impact of the teachers and staff on the students' lives and is thankful for the opportunity to move forward.

Renee Davis, former founding parent at Impact | Puget Sound Elementary provided public comment on her experience with the school. Ms. Davis removed her child from the school and feels that her child was left behind academically without having her needs met. Ms. Davis feels she did not receive the academic space she was promised and asked the Commission to look deeper into the students and families that have left the school, including why they left and what education they received while at the school.

Emily McLeod, founding parent at Impact | Puget Sound Elementary, provided public comment regarding her experience at the school. Ms. McLeod has been involved in the parent Village Action Committee and stated that she has been proud and honored to be involved with the other parents and has always felt welcomed at the school. Ms. McLeod stated that she is proud to represent the school and that everyone has been helpful from the home office, leadership and teachers and are willing to work with the parents on where the kids are. Ms. McLeod stated that her children are thriving and that was her main reason for becoming involved in the school community.

Lindsay Russell-Mitchell, founding parent at Impact | Puget Sound Elementary, provided public comment regarding her experience at the school. Ms. Russell-Mitchell stated that when Ms. Coleman was at Impact she was a huge inspiration and was a passionate leaders at the school and when Ms. Coleman left there were challenges. Ms. Russell-Mitchell felt that parents could go to leadership with questions, be a part of the solution, and that leadership was receptive to the collaboration. Ms. Russell-Mitchell expressed that she is a proud parent at Impact | Puget Sound Elementary and would like to continue the work that Ms. Coleman started there.

## **Green Dot Washington State Rainier Valley Leadership Academy**

Executive Director Halsey provided a memo outlining the proposed contract amendments regarding Rainier Valley Leadership Academy's (RVLA) transition proposal from Green Dot National to a stand-alone charter school operator. A major proposed change to the charter contract reflects the updated organizational structure, codified in the new Attachment 13.

Executive Director Halsey provided specific updates on the lease obligations for Green Dot Public Schools Washington State (Green Dot), including the Tacoma building that was formerly Destiny Middle School (Destiny). The concerns for this item are codified in the charter contract section 9.14.4 stating that by June 30 of each year, RVLA must have the funds secured for the lease obligation for the upcoming school year of the former Destiny building. Executive Director Halsey pointed Commissioners to materials received, including letter of support, the secured funds for this this current school year and next school year of the funds needed to cover the lease obligation of the former Destiny building.

Commissioner Garcia continued her recusal of discussion and considerations regarding Green Dot.

James Heugas of Washington Charter School Development (WCSD) affirmed that in the event that RVLA is unable to procure additional grant funds WCSD will sufficiently cover the future lease costs for the former Destiny building. Mr. Heugas stated that WCSD is the landlord for both the Destiny building and RVLA's current building. He stated his motivation and commitment to continue to work with RVLA. Mr. Heugas has received authorization to utilize financial supports for the former Destiny lease and is continuing to work on a method to break that lease and dissolve the obligation from RVLA.

RVLA provided a budget with a worst-case scenario of 240 students enrolled, which would still leave the organization with a positive net balance of \$1.1M and exceed the finance requirement of 60 days cash on hand.

Green Dot's Board Chair, Joe Hailey, provided an update on the organizational assessment. The audit will be taking place in January and will provide feedback at Green Dot at their March board retreat.

Commissioner McGuire withdrew her motion to deny Green Dot authorization to make the material and substantial changes proposed in its transition plan, particularly the organizational restructure, because they reflect too significant a departure from the organization and school that formed the basis for the Commission's authorization and the charter contract.

Commissioner Mayer moved to allow the material and substantial changes to Green Dot Public Schools Washington State charter school contract to allow for the proposed organizational restructure. Chair Williams seconded. The motion passed, with no opposes; no abstentions.

Commissioner Sundquist provided background of Commissioner Garcia's recusal with Green Dot, and the two year timeline.

Commissioner Sundquist moved to release Commissioner Garcia from her recusal upon the effective date of the RVLA contract. Commissioner Cohen seconded. The motion passed, with no opposes; no abstentions.

## **Willow Public Schools Discussion and Consideration**

Executive Director Halsey provided an update regarding Willow Public School's (Willow) failure to comply with the requirements of the Stipulation and Stay of Revocation Agreement and their response to the Commission's Notice of Perceived Problem.

Willow has requested three reasonable changes regarding communication with Commission staff. Executive Director Halsey stated that with slight modifications Commission staff are able to comply with the requested communication preferences of Willow. The relationship between Willow and staff seems to be moving in the right direction of being open and collaborative, and Willow has met every deliverable on time since the issuance of the Notice of Perceived Problem.

Executive Director Halsey provided an overview of the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Math and Reading Performance from Willow. Last year's data indicated regression in reading. Willow's fall 2019 to winter 2019 assessment window fall within the "normal" range with 61% of students meeting their reading goal and 41% of students meeting their math goal for the period. Executive Director Halsey noted that these results are both significant and important

improvements in relation to last year's data. Superintendent McDonald provided steps for further improving student outcomes, which includes additional instructional time and tutoring in mathematics and embedded coaching for math instructors.

Chair Williams moved to find that Willow missed deadlines under its Stipulation and Stay of Revocation Agreement and the annual compliance calendar but, given the circumstances that these missed deadlines do not, at this time, warrant a lifting of the stay of revocation or other corrective action. Willow is placed on notice that going forward the Commission expects strict compliance with the remaining conditions of the Stipulation Agreement and probation, and the Commission may lift the stay and immediately revoke the charter contract for future non-compliance. Commissioner Lechner seconded. The motion passes unanimously, with no opposes; no abstentions.

## **Spokane International Academy Expansion Consideration**

Executive Director Halsey provided an overview of Spokane International Academy's (SIA) approved charter contract transfer and their desire to expand the number of students served in their new building. SIA is hoping to go from serving 450 students to 936 students Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the 2021-2022 school year. SIA has reported they have received has 440 student applications for next year already.

Travis Franklin, school leader at Spokane International Academy, and Ken Vorhees, board chair, engaged in discussion with the Commission. This discussion included:

- Clarification from Mr. Franklin regarding SIA's current practice of not filling in spaces when students transferred out mid-year. Backfilling was not done due to a concern of the Spanish language instruction, however, SIA does not anticipate an issue complying with this requirement of the Commission.
- SIA anticipates 450-500 applications for the school at the new location.
- Mr. Franklin explained his history in the Mead School District and the community that he is deeply vested in and is looking forward to increase learning opportunities for the new community.

Chair Williams moved to approve SIA's petition to expand the number of students they hope to serve from a maximum of 450 to 936. Commissioner Cohen seconded. The motion passed, with no opposes; no abstentions.

## **Charter School Growth Data Review**

Lyria Boast, Commission consultant from Public Impact, provided an overview of the 2018-19 Median Growth Percentile Results. Commissioners reviewed comprehensive data across each of the schools and engaged in a discussion regarding the results and interim methods of assessment for the schools.

## Chair Report

### Commissioner Appointment Updates

Chair Williams provided an update on Commissioner appointments. Dr. Felder has been appointed and will begin his service in March. Commissioner Sundquist and Chair Williams will not seek reappointment after their terms end in March.

### Ad-hoc Commissioner Nomination Committee Update

Chair Williams provided an update of the Nomination Committee that is being housed currently with the Executive Committee. A pipeline of Commissioners are still needed, with focus on financial expertise and eastern Washington representation.

## Executive Director Report

### General Updates

Executive Director Halsey introduced two new staff members. Leslie Hayden and Kara Lowe are the Oversight Specialists hired in December. Ms. Hayden and Ms. Lowe both provided an overview of their background.

Executive Director Halsey provided an update regarding the audit on the agency's oversight processes and procedures. A report of the findings will be presented at the February Commission meeting.

Executive Director Halsey provided an overview of the State University of New York (SUNY) Active Ingredients Project. Executive Director Halsey will be participating in a convening in February in Austin and will share out learnings at an upcoming Commission meeting.

Executive Director Halsey provided an overview of the charter contract renewal process. The formal process will begin in the spring for Rainier Prep, Summit Olympus, and Summit Sierra.

### School Closure Updates

Executive Director Halsey provided an update regarding SOAR Academy (SOAR) closure. Commission staff will meet with SOAR, Seneca Family of Agencies, Puget Sound Educational Service District and Washington State Charter Schools Association (WA Charters) to continue the closure process of the school.

### Summit Public Schools Washington Atlas and Sierra Investigation Update

Executive Director Halsey provided an update on the investigation of Summit Public Schools Washington Atlas and Sierra regarding Special Education services. The schools are still under investigation and Executive Director Halsey will provide an update at the February Commission meeting.

### New School Application Update

Deputy Director Starwich provided an update on the New Charter School Application. Nine Notices of Intent to Apply (NOI) had been received by the deadline. Public Forum formatting updates have been discussed by the authorization committee at their December retreat and will be presented to the Commission at the February meeting. The 2020-21 New School Application will be presented and considered at the March Commission meeting.

### State Board of Education Annual Charter School Report Review

Executive Director Halsey provided the draft of the State Board of Education's Annual Charter School Report to the Governor, the Legislature and the public.

## **Executive Session**

No Executive Session was needed.

## **Next Steps**

Chair Williams identified the following next steps:

1. Continue developing a Commissioner Pipeline / Executive Committee
2. Closure Updates and Reflections/ Lessons Learned
  - a. SOAR Academy
  - b. Green Dot Destiny
  - c. Green Dot Excel
  - d. Ashé Preparatory Academy
3. Charter School Replication and Expansion Application Implementation
4. Strategic Plan Update – Equity Policy Implementation
5. Facilities and Funding Deep Dive with Charter School Development
6. Charter Contract Renewal and Non-Renewal
7. SQSS Data Results
8. Oversight Audit Results and Recommendations
9. New School Application Process
10. Legislative Updates
11. Communications Update
12. Charter School Funding Analysis

## **Meeting Adjournment**

Chair Williams adjourned the meeting at 2:38 p.m.