



CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, November 17, 2016 | 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

South Seattle College, Georgetown Campus, Colin Education Hall
6737 Corson Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98108

Attendance:

Commissioners: Betsy Cohen, Dan Grimm, Kaaren Heikes, Dr. Stacy Hill, Dr. Margit McGuire, Dave Quall, Steve Sundquist, and Cindi Williams

Absent: Raymond Navarro, Jr., Trish Millines Dzik

Leadership Team: Joshua Halsey, Executive Director; Paula Kitzke, Special Education Program Review Supervisor; Aileen Miller, Assistant Attorney General

Guests: Whitney Spalding-Spencer (NACSA); Bill Kiolbasa, Chief Financial Officer of WA Charters

Call To Order:

Roll Call

Chair Sundquist called the meeting to order at 10:14 a.m. The following Commissioners were present: Steve Sundquist, Dan Grimm, Kaaren Heikes, Margit McGuire, Stacy Hill, Dave Quall, Cindi Williams and Elizabeth Cohen. It was determined that a quorum was present to proceed with the meeting.

Chair Sundquist introduced Betsy Cohen, new commissioner, appointed by Senate Majority Leader Schoesler.

Consideration of the October 13, 2016 Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Minutes for the October 13, 2016 Commission meeting were reviewed and approved. Steve Sundquist moved. Margit McGuire seconded. Motion carried, with no opposes. Cindi Williams and Elizabeth Cohen abstained.

Public Comment

There was no public comment provided.

Chair Report

Chair Sundquist provided an update on the Commissioner appointment process. In summary, the Governor has completed his appointment, Washington State Board of Education (SBE) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) have identified designees, Democratic caucuses in both the House and Senate have made their appointments, Republican caucuses have made their Senate appointments and are still working on the House Republican appointment. 10 of 11 Commissioners have been appointed or designated. Commission would benefit from having an active list of individuals interested in serving as Commissioners, this would help streamline the process.

Commission invited both candidates for Superintendent of Public Instruction to be briefed on Charter Schools before the election, but were not able to schedule meetings.

Executive Director Report

General Updates

Executive Director Halsey covered the items as they appeared in his report with some additional updates.

Executive Director Halsey continues to work with OSPI to incorporate the Department of Education's (DOE) State Educational Agency (SEA) Charter School Program (CSP) Grant expectations into the New School Application materials. Commission's new school application is aligned to serve as CSP grant application. He is also working with OSPI to develop a staffing plan for the CSP grant.

Executive Director Halsey discussed his recent attendance at and participation in the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Annual Leadership Conference. He encourages Commissioners and staff to attend future conferences as budgets permit. The next conference will be in Phoenix, AZ in October.

Executive Director Halsey gave an overview of the Annual Authorizer Report that he submitted to the SBE on behalf of the Commission on November 1, 2016. The report was brief this year, since there was a limited period of time during which the Commission and its schools were operational. Next year there will be more information to report.

Executive Director Halsey described the regional equity convening he attended with Commissioners Sundquist and McGuire, along with representatives from the Washington State Charter Schools Association (WA Charters). He pointed out that Washington state has the fifth largest achievement gap in the nation and suggested that the Commission should explore developing a racial/equity policy to guide its work. Representatives from WA Charters have agreed to work with Executive Director Halsey on these issues and the Commission will be returning to this topic (race equity) in April. Chair Sundquist asked Executive Director Halsey and Aileen Miller, AAG, to look into sanctuary cities; since we hold

schools accountable for following the law can we hold harmless a school if they, for moral reasons, decide not to comply to protect families.

Executive Director Halsey provided a summary of OSPI's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated Plan, a 244-page plan that can be accessed on OSPI's website.

Executive Director Halsey provided an overview of the charter school finance presentation that Bill Kiolbasa, Chief Financial Officer of WA Charters, will provide Commissioners later today. The presentation is a continuation of the discussion of the September meeting with the presentation by OSPI's TJ Kelly and Dierk Meierbachtol, and is designed to help Commissioners understand the financial landscape for charters, particularly going into Legislative session.

Authorized Schools Update

Commission and OSPI Special Education Program Review Supervisor Paula Kitzke provided an overview of the charter school tours she has conducted. She reports that schools are working hard to make sure that every student who qualifies for special education receives the services to which they are entitled. They are seeing a higher percentage of children with special education needs in charters as compared to their surrounding districts. For example, Green Dot Destiny has about 20%. Paula did report that she's seen some innovative planning here in part because of Seneca Family of Agencies; the focus on mental health and family engagement is fairly high.

Commissioner Grimm asked if there is data available regarding the percentage of students in charter schools who have been designated for special education and what are the natures of the disabilities. Executive Director Halsey stated that he will look into this request and provide a response during the Commission's January 2017 monthly meeting.

Executive Director Halsey provided an update on the quarterly charter school board observations that were conducted during October and November. Based upon the observations made to date, all charter school boards are extremely engaged in the work and are demonstrating good stewardship of public resources. The three remaining observations will be incorporated into the overall score/assessment of the schools in the organizational framework.

Executive Director Halsey provided an update regarding the new charter school orientations that have occurred for the three charter schools opening next fall: Willow Public School, Green Dot Seattle and Summit Atlas. Executive Director Halsey provided a copy of the New School Orientation Guidebook to Commissioners to review. The intent of providing new charter schools with a year-long professional development series is that it aligns to charter school research that states that charter schools that get started on the right foot are more likely to succeed.

Commission Travel Policy and Process Updates

Executive Director Halsey identified a need to refine the policy and make sure that there is more understanding of the process. Staff will bring language to the Commission for consideration in January.

Lawsuit Challenging Constitutionality of Charter School Act Update

Executive Director Halsey provided a brief update regarding the November 4th hearing before Judge Chun; no known timeline for issuing his order; he was well prepared and had clearly done his research. Summary Judgement hearing is scheduled for January 27th at 1:30 in King County Superior Court.

Commission Bylaws Updates

Executive Director Halsey provided a brief update regarding the comprehensive update to the bylaws that will be presented in January for Commission consideration.

Legislative Strategy Consideration

Executive Director Halsey provided a list of three legislative strategies for Commission consideration. The following legislative strategies were adopted by the Commission. Chair Sundquist moved. Commissioner Cohen seconded. Motion carried.

- Advocate for ample and equitable funding for all public schools in order for the state to comply with the McCleary decision including charter school access to local levy money or equivalent.
- Work to secure state funding in order for the children in charter public schools to access the state's special education Safety Net Program.
- Protect the intent and integrity of the Charter School Act by advocating for a limited set of technical changes that will clarify and strengthen the Act.

Performance Framework: Academic Framework Development

Whitney Spalding-Spencer (NACSA), who provided a review of proposed Academic Framework's targets, tiers and metric weighting via a PowerPoint presentation, solicited Commissioner feedback on the potential new format of the Academic Framework, as well as the potential targets and weighting system. The Commission also discussed the following five guiding principles for the Academic Framework:

- The Commission will consider multiple measures in making high-stakes decisions regarding charter schools.
- Charter schools are public schools, and state and federal accountability ratings are particularly important when deciding whether to renew or revoke a school's charter.
- Schools that Exceed Standards on the state system (Achievement Index) will have a presumption of renewal, and schools that Fall Far Below Standards will have a presumption of non-renewal.
- The Commission expects schools to serve all students well and to perform well in comparison to other schools that students might attend, as well as schools serving similar student populations.
- Recent performance should be counted as more significant than earlier performance.

Commissioners discussed the principles and provided the following feedback:

- Consider modifying to include “presumption **but not guarantee**”.
- Clarify that that the principles are designed to help the Commission make decisions about schools such as the renewal of a charter school’s contract.

The Commission discussed at length the Academic Framework and identified the following next steps:

- Commission staff will provide Commissioners with a visual example of a report that includes all three frameworks and a report that will be used to communicate a charter school’s results.
- Provide Commissioners with additional and detailed information about the Achievement Index.

Charter School Finance Overview (Part 2)

Bill Kiolbasa, Chief Financial Officer of WA Charters, provided the Commissioners with a PowerPoint presentation on charter school finance.

Charter School Oversight Overview: Financial Oversight

Executive Director Halsey provided an overview of the financial oversight process the Commission utilizes with all authorized charter schools. This session was in response to Commissioner questions regarding what financial oversight of charter schools entails. The overview includes the criteria used, how accountability has been codified in the charter contract and the Financial Framework’s indicators and goals. Executive Director Halsey described the yearly and quarterly report and the audits charters are subject to, including performance, finance and accountability.

New School Application Consideration

Executive Director Halsey provided the New School Application and scoring rubric for Commission consideration. He noted several changes that were made to align the New School Application to the Charter School Act and the SEA CSP grant opportunity. The Commission annually reviews its application process for improvements. Generally, in early fall/late summer, the Commission collectively reflects on process improvement. Executive Director Halsey reviewed the history of this process.

The New School Application and scoring rubric were adopted by the Commission. Chair Sundquist moved. Commissioner Williams seconded. Motion carried with no opposition or abstentions.

2017 Monthly Commission Meeting Calendaring Consideration

Executive Director Halsey provided a 2017 monthly Commission meeting calendar for Commission consideration. The February meeting was moved to the 16th instead of the 23rd with all other dates remaining the same. The 2017 monthly Commission meeting calendar was adopted by the Commission. Chair Sundquist moved. Commissioner Cohen seconded. Motion carried with no opposition or abstentions.

Executive Session

At 3:10 pm, Chair Sundquist adjourned open session. An executive session was held pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(1)(g). The planned 40 minute Executive session was extended for 10 minutes with Chair Sundquist reconvening the Commission into open session at 3:59 p.m.

NEXT STEPS

The following next steps were identified:

1. Academic Framework
2. Commissioner Appointment (1 opening)
3. ED evaluation: Compensation recommendation and goal setting for ED (Draft goals for January)
4. Commission bylaws updates
5. Commission travel policy updates
6. Election of officers and standing committee assignment
7. Commission policy regarding Performance Audit of Schools?
8. New Charter School Application launch

Meeting Adjournment

Chair Sundquist adjourned the meeting at 4:02 p.m.