



Charter School Review Commission

Meeting Minutes

Date: February 26, 2025

Time: 10:00 am

Location: Valencia College, 1800 S. Kirkman Road, Room 6-202, Orlando, Florida 32811

Members Present:

- John-Anthony (Jay) Boggess, Chair
- Suzanne Legg, Vice Chair
- Sara Clements
- Jim Murdaugh
- Frank Mingo
- Jana Saylor

Call to Order

Chair John-Anthony Boggess called the meeting of the Charter School Review Commission (CSRC) to order at 10:00 a.m. A quorum was confirmed with the presence of Vice Chair Suzanne Legg and Commissioners Sara Clements, Jim Murdaugh, Frank Mingo, and Jana Saylor.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Boggess led the Commission and attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Opening Remarks

Chair Boggess welcomed attendees and acknowledged the historic nature of the meeting, as it marked the Commission's first official action on charter school applications. He provided an overview of the procedures to be followed in reviewing and deciding upon applications.

Approval of Minutes

Vice Chair Legg moved to approve the minutes of the February 28, 2024, meeting. Commissioner Murdaugh seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Action Items

1. Consideration of the Charter School Application for Newberry Community School

Chair Boggess introduced the first action item: the review of the charter school application for

Newberry Community School. He invited public comment, during which concerns were raised about the impact on students' academic performance, transportation logistics, and facilities constraints.

Legal Review

James Richmond, Deputy General Counsel for the Florida Department of Education, addressed the Commission regarding a legal dispute over the vote threshold required for the conversion. He advised that, per Florida statute, 50% of the vote was sufficient to proceed, regardless of prior rules. After hearing from representatives of both the applicant and the school district, the Commission voted to uphold the legal interpretation allowing the application process to continue.

Evaluation and Recommendation

Adam Emerson, Executive Director of the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice, and Susie Carello, representing the Florida Charter Institute, presented the evaluation of the application. They highlighted the academic model focused on STEAM education, project-based learning, and differentiated instruction. The financial and governance plans were also reviewed, including a partnership with the City of Newberry to ensure teacher benefits and operational support.

School District Response

Alachua County School Board Member Tina Certain and Attorney Amy Envall raised concerns regarding funding, governance, and the school's ability to meet special education and English learner requirements. The district also questioned whether the city's involvement met statutory requirements for charter formation.

Commission Discussion and Vote

Commission members deliberated on the application, addressing concerns regarding governance, facilities, and funding. Commissioner Clements moved to approve the application as recommended by staff. Commissioner Murdaugh seconded the motion. The application was approved unanimously.

Chair Boggess acknowledged that Commission member Jana Saylor had excused herself from the remainder of the meeting due to a prior commitment.

2. Consideration of the Charter School Application for Bradenton Classical Academy

Chair Boggess introduced the second application for Bradenton Classical Academy.

Evaluation and Recommendation

Mr. Emerson and Christine Noe presented the evaluation findings. The application was recommended for denial due to concerns about curriculum alignment with Florida standards, financial sustainability, and special education provisions. The review team found that the applicant did not sufficiently address these issues despite multiple revisions.

Applicant Response

Representatives from Bradenton Classical Academy contested the findings, arguing that the curriculum could align with Florida standards through partnerships with other Hillsdale-affiliated schools. They also cited procedural concerns regarding the evaluation process and sought intervention from the Florida Department of Education Inspector General.

School District Response

Lori Breslin, Executive Director of Student Support and Family Engagement for the Manatee County School District, echoed the concerns regarding financial stability, statutory compliance, and the overall feasibility of the school's plans.

Commission Discussion and Vote

Commission members deliberated on the application, expressing reservations about the lack of alignment with state requirements and concerns about financial planning. Vice Chair Legg moved to deny the application, with Commissioner Clements seconding the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to deny the application.

Adjournment

With no further business, Chair Boggess called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Murdaugh moved, and the motion was seconded and approved. The meeting adjourned at 11:47 a.m.
