

Arkansas Charter Authorization Panel Meeting
February 28, 2025

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Dr. Sonja Wright-McMurray at 9:03 AM. Members in attendance were Dr. John Bacon. Via zoom Dr. Toyce Newton, Phil Baldwin.

II. Consent Agenda

Mr. Dustin Wood, State Director of School Choice, presented the minutes from the previous meeting. Dr. Bacon made a motion to accept and was seconded by Mr. Baldwin. Motion passes.

III. Legal Review

Brianne Franks presented the rules and procedures of the meeting to the board.

IV. Action Agenda

- Charter School Blanket Renewal – Dustin Wood, State Director of School Choice, Arkansas Department of Education, presented the blanket renewal for 10 Charter schools. The Arkansas Department of Education wanted to request an extension due to anticipated legislation and changes to the program. This would provide the best outcome for the schools to make accommodations. The chairperson read aloud all 10 schools for the record and then opened for acceptance of a motion. Mr. Baldwin made the motion and was seconded by Dr. Bacon. Motion carried.
 - Name of Charters by Name:
 - Arkansas Virtual Academy
 - Hope Academy
 - Adventure Academy Online
 - Centerpoint Academy
 - Fountain Lake Charter High
 - Mountainburg Middle Brain Academy
 - Mountain Home High
 - Rivercrest Jr. High
 - Southside Charter High
 - Southside Junior High
- Friendship Charter Amendment Request – Dr. Darrell Smith, Assistant Commissioner of the Arkansas Department of Education introduced the charter school representatives and provided an overview of the request to add additional campus. He provided that the issues that were presented last time had been worked through the department. The Chairperson swore in the members of the charter school. Mr. Tran spoke to the school and briefly recapped what the amendment request was about. The chairperson asked several questions surrounding the student population size and the charters schools number expectation. Dr. Bacon asked if the school understands the reporting requirements of an open enrollment charters school. Mr. Baldwin asked questions concerning the facilities and budget. Mr. Tran responded to all questions with favorable outcomes aside from the budget line of questioning. This presented concerns on the board, however, Dr. Smith mentioned that the department looked at it as an LEA item and that he believes that it should not be a concern. Mrs. Franks was asked to provide legal guidance to the panel. The board expressed great concern as this item was asked for several times. Dr. Smith asked that the board would approve on contingent that the school provides the budget. The board discussed the possibility of meeting again soon after the receipt of the documents. The board decided on a March 5 public special meeting of the CAP to discuss the budget. Ms. Newton moved to conditionally approve the school charter amendment requests contingent upon the school providing the financial items no later than March 3. Dr. Newton seconded the motion. The board voted unanimously to approve.
- **V. Reports**

KIPP Delta report was introduced by Dr. Smith and updates were provided by Mr. Kevin Smith the superintendent. Dr. Smith presented the findings from the DESE and its improvement since then. He mentioned that DESE provided KIPP with a summary of improvements that are expected. OSCPE Team continues to meet with the KIPP Delta to provide visibility of their progress. Dr. Smith mentioned that the interim superintendent is working diligently with all stakeholders to get the school on positive footing. George Cotton, Sr., Vice Chancellor of Development at UAPB, spoke to his involvement and his board actions in supporting the school in its efforts to improve. Mr. Kevin Smith spoke to the board regarding the steps they are taking towards improving school status. Mr. Smith mentioned improvements of the middle school in competing at the top level of the state. Mr. Smith then presented his slide show and entertained questions throughout the demonstration. He spent time discussing the IEP issues and the steps they made to mitigate all 4 complaints with 3 being successfully met at this point. Additionally, he spent time discussing the financial concerns as this was a major concern to contributing to their situation.

- Dr. Bacon inquired about the board composition and how the information is being relayed to them. Dr. George Cotton spoke about how they are going to be expanding the board to include both national and local parents involved. Dr. Bacon continued to inquire about the financial situation and how they got to that point and the steps they are taking to mitigate future actions. Dr. Cotton mentioned the professional developmental steps the board is taking to both educate themselves and ensure future negative events do not take place. Finally, Dr. Bacon inquired about the SPED issues and what steps are being taken to ensure that faculty and staff are meeting the needs of the children.
- Mr. Baldwin mentioned comments of encouragement and echoed other concerns from the board.
- Ms. Newton offered additional comments of encouragement and discussed the history of KIPP Delta and its impact on the school communities that the school serves.

VI. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Baldwin and seconded by Ms. Newton. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned.

Minutes Prepared By:

Mr. Seth R. Seaton
Charter School Office Analyst
Arkansas Department of Education

Minutes Approved by Charter Authorization Panel Chairperson

Dr. Sonja Wright-McMurray