

Minutes
Charter Authorizing Panel Meeting
June 13, 2023

I. Call to Order

The Charter Authorizing Panel met on June 13, 2023. Panel Chair Deborah Coffman called the meeting to order at 9:00AM.

Present: Ms. Deborah Coffman, Dr. Sonya Wright-McMurray, Mr. Kim Davis (virtual), Mr. Phil Baldwin (virtual), Toyce Newton (virtual)

The transcription of this meeting may be accessed on the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education website at the following:

<https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/about/archived-minutesvideo>

II. Consent Agenda

II.1. Minutes

Presenter: Dorie Summons, Public School Charter Director

Dr. Wright-McMurray made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2023 Charter Authorizing Panel meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Baldwin. The motion was carried unanimously.

III. Action Agenda

III.1. Consideration of Amendment Request for Premier High School of Arkansas

Presenter: Dorie Summons, Public School Charter Director

Description: District is requesting to increase the Charter (Premier High Schools of Arkansas) enrollment cap to 950. The district's enrollment cap is currently 875.

NOTE: Mr. Felton adjusted the request to 975 at the start of his presentation to the Charter Authorizing Panel.

Mr. Felton explained why the enrollment cap needs to be increased and how the cap will be divided among each campus. The Little Rock campus will decrease its enrollment cap by 75. The Fort Smith campus will decrease its enrollment cap by 125. Texarkana will increase its enrollment cap to 50. Premier Online will increase its enrollment cap to 250.

Dr. Wright-McMurray asked how the Charter decided to ask for 975. Mr. Felton stated that it was developed after researching historical trends among other

public school districts such as Little Rock and North Little Rock School Districts. She also wanted to know how the district would engage online students. Mr. Aaron Duvall (CTE Director) highlighted the successes that the district has made through its JAG program and discussed the Charter's plan to expand this program in the future. There was a discussion between Mr. Davis and Ms. Coffman about why the Charter needed this increase now even though it is not exceeding its current enrollment cap. Ms. Coffman explained that this request by the Charter more accurately reflects the current number of students they serve.

Mr. Baldwin asked about how the increased enrollment cap would affect the Charter's bottom line financially. Ms. Katie Stephens (Executive Director of Finance) answered that the Charter anticipates a \$378,000 surplus with the projected changes. Ms. Newton inquired about the financial impact of the Charter on the local economy. Mr. Felton suggested that he would be interested in this information as well and hopes to acquire it soon.

After a follow-up discussion, there was a motion by Dr. Wright-McMurray and a second by Mr. Baldwin to grant the Charter's Amendment request. The motion passed unanimously.

III.2. Consideration of Amendment Request for Arkansas Virtual Academy

Presenter: Dorie Summons, Public School Charter Director

Description: Arkansas Virtual Academy Charter School is requesting to reinstate the waiver of Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-2403 concerning the minimum teacher compensation schedule.

Superintendent Johnson explained that the district needed to reinstate the waiver due to recent Arkansas Virtual Academy Board of Directors decisions. Dr. Wright-McMurray asked if reinstating this waiver would put the Charter in compliance with the LEARNS Act of 2023. Ms. Shastady Wagner of the DESE Legal staff answered that this would allow the Charter to make their own determination about salary schedules. Mr. Davis mentioned a salary schedule that was presented to the Charter Authorizing Panel during the May 2023 meeting. Superintendent Johnson explained that that was a draft and had not been approved by the Arkansas Virtual Academy Board.

There was a discussion about how this decision will affect other Charters and their decisions to reinstate Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-2403. Ms. Wagner (DESE Legal) clarified that other Charters could ask for this waiver to be reinstated. However, Ms. Coffman clarified that while that was the case, in this instance, the Arkansas Virtual Academy was making the best decision for them at this time.

There was a motion by Mr. Baldwin and a second by Dr. Wright-McMurray to accept this amendment. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Dr. Wright-McMurray and it was seconded by Ms. Newton. The motion was carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:53AM.

Minutes prepared by Feather Linn

Charter Authorizing Panel Chair