

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA
APPROVED WORKSHOP MINUTES

Charter Application Review for Resilience School

October 27, 2015

The School Board of Alachua County, Florida, met in workshop session duly called at 9:30 a.m. in the Kirby-Smith Boardroom, 620 E. University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida. Present were: Leanetta McNealy, chairman; April Griffin, Robert Hyatt, Gunnar Paulson, and Eileen Roy members; Superintendent Owen Roberts; Jaime White, Board Attorney, and staff members.

Chairman McNealy introduced Mrs. Karen Clarke and requested that she formally introduce the charter school applicants. Mrs. Clarke welcomed Ms. Wendi Bellows, Ms. Leah Fox, and Ms. Elizabeth Labbey.

Dr. Paulson began the meeting with a reminder that the application, if approved, should read that the charter's governing board should be comprised solely of Alachua County community members and should not include members outside the county. Originally, the charter read, only 75% membership would be voted in from Alachua County.

Dr. Paulson reiterated that according to his research, high school charter schools historically are not as successful, and reminded the applicants that their students are still the district's students. He spoke of his experiences with charter schools located in Alachua County. Applicants must be aware that some charter students, for one reason or another, will return to district schools. Curriculum must be aligned with current Florida Standards; students must take state mandated EOCs and be assessed regularly so that no matter what grade or location the student is currently in, they must not "fall between the cracks."

Mrs. Roy expressed concerns regarding discipline procedures for the proposed charter school. Applicants were reminded that suspension or expulsion of students does not fall under charter school domain. The district ESE Office and Superintendent would conduct those meetings and make those decisions.

Mr. Hyatt pressed the applicants to specifically identify the charter's target population. The applicant's responses were vague mentioning Title I students and students currently enrolled in an elementary charter school within Alachua County who needed additional options for middle school and high school. The Board used the term "pipeline" to describe student recruiting efforts. The applicant's opinion is that there are very few options for secondary students to choose from. The applicant's responses left the entire Board still pursuing further inquiry into the proposed charter. Resilience School were asked to clarify their vision, mission, and targeted student body. What are the specialties of the proposed charter? What are the academic, social, and environmental opportunities being offered that will cater to an identified group of middle and high school students whose needs are not currently being met by an ACPS school or teacher?

The applicants kept referring to "community support" for the school and mentioned several times that community parents had shown great interest in additional secondary charter school options. Dr. McNealy requested the applicants expand on how this information was retrieved. The applicants referenced their

FaceBook page, which currently has 275 likes, and a survey that was shared with the community during informal Strategic Planning meetings. The applicants based need for the proposed charter school on the opinions of 75 completed survey forms. When Dr. Paulson pressed for the data feedback from the survey, applicants shared that results were incomplete and a data report did not exist but that they would provide their current research to the Board.

Mrs. Griffin shared her concerns after review of the proposed charter application referencing low teacher salaries, certification issues, and minimal benefits for staff. Mrs. Griffin discussed “bare-bones” faculty and the additional responsibilities that would be shared by all. Nothing in the application reflected recruitment or hiring of ESE to accommodate the special needs of students with different disabilities and IEPs. What curriculum will be used? Is it state adopted? Will the charter use the same textbooks and digital resources that the district adopted? All curriculum materials MUST be aligned with the current Florida Standards.

Dr. Roberts spoke directly to the applicants;

- ☐ What is the uniqueness of your student population?
- ☐ The application does not identify a specific set of measurements or metrics to monitor student success or offer feedback on teacher performance. If teachers are allowed to create and design their own curriculum, how will the administrators ever be able to establish a set of guidelines or identified areas to measure EACH teacher’s performance? What standards will hold the school accountable for successful instruction and achieving students?
- ☐ No specific school site was identified in application. Applicant’s response was unclear -- somewhere in the NW 6th Street corridor.
- ☐ Concerned over quoted daily attendance, 85% is not acceptable. It was noted that an ACPS district high school that is currently reporting a 91% daily attendance and the district is working to achieve 100% daily attendance.

Mr. Hyatt requested a more clearly defined list of courses and course descriptions that will be offered at the proposed charter school specifically addressing electives such as the Fine Arts.

Dr. McNealy closed the workshop with a request. She asked the proposed charter school applicants to consider the concerns and comments that were shared by the Board and the superintendent during the workshop. Dr. McNealy also suggested that the applicants, although not mandatory, submit responses or answers addressing each major area of discussion.

Staff Attorney Brian Moore concluded that according to state law and district policy, the application cannot be amended in any way but responses may be listed in reflection on the completed application review instrument. All commentary shared for clarification, would be reviewed prior to the Board Meeting scheduled for action on November 17, 2015.

Mrs. Karen Clarke added, in order to meet deadlines and submit all information prior to the Board meeting, the applicants would need to submit responses no later than November 2. Documentation and recommendation for the Superintendent will be submitted to Rose Ramos on November 4, 2015.

The workshop was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.