

Minutes of the North Carolina Charter School Review Board

Virtual Meeting

April 6, 2026

9 AM

| Attendance – CSRБ Members | |
|---|---|
| Jeremy Wall- (nonvoting) Dr. Rita Haire Dr. John Eldridge Eric Guckian Hilda Parlér Dr. Shelly Shope | Eric Sanchez - Absent Bruce Friend Lindalyn Kakadelis Todd Godbey - Absent Gerald McNair Stephen Gay – Absent |
| Attendance – Other | |
| <i>Office of Charter Schools</i> Ashley Logue, Director Joseph Letterio, Consultant - Remote Melanie Rackley, Consultant Jenna Cook, Consultant - Remote Dr. Natasha Norins, Consultant Dr. Brandi Gill, Consultant Nicky Niewinski, Asst. Director Julie Whetzel, Consultant Megan Carter, Consultant | <i>CSRБ Attorney</i> Steven Walker - Absent <i>Teacher/Principal of Year</i> Lindsay Phillips – TOY - Absent Jake Wilson – POY - Absent |

Recording of April 6 CSRБ Meeting: [April NC Charter Schools Review Board - April 6, 2026](#)

Call To Order

Pledge of Allegiance & NC Flag Salute: Bruce Friend, Board Chair

Mission and Ethics Statement:

- Mission and Ethics Statement, Bruce Friend, Board Chair

Approval of the Agenda and Minutes

Motion: Gerald McNair moved to approve agenda for April 2026 Meeting

Second: Lindalyn Kakadelis

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

March 2026 Meeting Minutes:

Motion: Hilda Parlér moved to approve the March 2026 meeting minutes

Second: Gerald McNair

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

March Charter Schools Review Board Meeting

Charter Application Amendments: Julie Whetzel, OCS Consultant

Maureen Joy Charter School: Mission Statement

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- The Office of Charter Schools (presented by Julie Whetzel) introduced Maureen Joy Charter School's request to amend their mission statement. The school is a K-8 public charter school in Durham County serving approximately 600 students, open since 1997.
- The school is in a renewal year, and the updated mission statement language was described as more closely reflecting current practices and priorities.
- The new proposed mission statement reads: *"Maureen Joy Charter School exists to develop the whole child through high quality instruction, school community partnerships, and the promotion of a positive self-identity."*
- No board members raised substantive questions or objections regarding this request; it was presented as a straightforward administrative revision.
- All required documentation was confirmed as received by the Office of Charter Schools, with school leadership available online for questions.

Motion: Hilda Parlér moved to approve Maureen Joy Charter School's amended mission statement

Second: Dr. John Eldridge

Vote: Unanimous

• Passed

Failed

Pocosin Innovation Charter: Mission Statement

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Julie Whetzel presented Pocosin Innovative Charter's request to amend their mission statement. The school is a K-8 public charter school in Washington County serving approximately 270 students, operating since 2019, and is also in a renewal year.

- The updated mission statement was described as better reflecting the school's current practices and strategic priorities.
- The new proposed mission statement reads: *"To provide a high-quality education preparing today's students for tomorrow's world with a solid foundation to become respectful and productive citizens focusing on regional agricultural and related industries."*
- All required documentation was confirmed as received, with school leadership available online for questions.
- No board members raised substantive questions or objections regarding this request.

Motion: Dr. John Eldridge moved to approve Pocosin Innovation Charter's amended mission statement

Second: Lindalyn Kakadelis

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

NE Carolina Prep: Remote Charter Academy Amendment

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Julie Whetzel introduced the request from North East Carolina Preparatory, a K-12 public charter school in Edgecomb County approved as a regional remote charter academy in its 24-25 school year, currently serving approximately 43 students in grades 6-12. The school requested to convert its designation from a regional to a statewide remote charter academy.
- Board member **Lindalyn Kakadelis** raised questions about enrollment projections and whether the school would cap enrollment at 130 students. School's Executive Director responded that the school would continue to accept students as long as quality could be maintained, with a board decision required if enrollment approached or exceeded 150.
- **Lindalyn Kakadelis** also raised the question of enrollment priority, asking whether regional students would be given preference in the lottery should demand exceed capacity. The Executive Director indicated this was a consideration the board would need to address and that geographic clustering for testing purposes was being explored.
- Board member **Bruce Friend** (Chair) pressed on logistics for testing students located far from campus, noting that in-person testing requirements cannot be waived. The Executive Director stated that all enrolled families had been informed of and had agreed to travel to campus for required testing.
- Board member **Dr. Rita Haire** noted that academic results from year one were not submitted, as the first-year cohort did not include students in grades that required End-of-Course (EOC) assessments.
- **Eric Guckian** expressed concern during board discussion that expanding from approximately 40 students to 130 lacked a sufficiently detailed plan and that he was not comfortable approving the statewide designation under the current framework.
- **Bruce Friend** expressed support for the request, noting the actual vote pertained only to the regional-to-statewide designation change and not enrollment projections, while advising the school that the logistical challenges of serving geographically dispersed students could make statewide expansion less practical than anticipated.

Motion: Lindalyn Kakadelis moved to approve NE Carolina Prep’s request to amend their Remote Charter Academy from a regional academy to statewide.

Second: Dr. Rita Haire

Vote:

Yay: BF, RH, SS, JE, LK, GM

Nay: HP, EG

- Passed 6:2 Failed

BH2 Stream (RTO): Relocation over 10-miles/outside LEA

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Julie Whetzel presented the background: BH2 Stream was approved as an accelerated application in September 2025 to open in Edgecomb County on July 13, 2026, serving grades K-6 with planned expansion to K-8. The school came before the board in February 2026 requesting a relocation to Nash County (over 10 miles away and in a different LEA), which the board tabled. Today, the school returned with a third proposed location — 226 Coleman Avenue in Edgecomb County — approximately 14.5 miles from the originally approved site, with an ECO (Certificate of Occupancy) only for the first floor.
- **Board Chair Friend** opened questioning by noting that the school, as an accelerated applicant, was expected to have a facility secured at time of approval. He asked whether the school had considered requesting a delay. The school’s proposed Principal/Executive Director stated the board had considered delaying but that a recent enrollment event attracted 127 families with over 300 applications, signaling strong community support.
- **Dr. Rita Haire** raised concerns about board member attendance at Ready-to-Open (RTO) planning sessions. Julie Whetzel clarified the records reflected OCS-sponsored planning session attendance, not internal board meetings. Dr. Haire also questioned the timeline of facility decisions, the funding situation given the school's departure from its originally planned church facility, and the school's July 13th opening date, noting no employees had been hired as of the April update.
- **Dr. Shelley Shope** asked for clarification on the occupancy capacity of the first floor (confirmed at 250) and the timeline for obtaining the second-floor ECO.
- **Dr. John Eldridge** questioned the proximity of the proposed site to Rocky Mount Preparatory School and raised procedural concerns about whether an accelerated applicant can request a year-long delay. He also noted that the absence of a traffic study and the most recent fire inspection having occurred in July 2024 meant the site had not been fully vetted. Dr. Eldridge stated his view that the school had effectively ceased to qualify as an accelerated applicant given the multiple facility changes.
- **Bruce Friend** noted that without approval of this amendment, the school would have no facility for the 2026-27 school year. He reiterated, echoed by Dr. Eldridge, that approving an unvetted site set a problematic precedent. Bruce Friend outlined three options available to the school: (1) continue with the original approved location, (2) withdraw the application, or (3) request a delay, which would require a board vote and submission of board meeting minutes.
- **Lindalyn Kakadelis**, who made the motion to deny, stated she did so "with an extremely heavy heart," acknowledged the passion of the school's board and leadership, but could not support the

amendment given the lack of facility certainty and the departure from the requirements of an accelerated application. She encouraged the school to reapply.

Motion: Lindalyn Kakadelis moved to deny BH2 Stream’s relocation request.

Second: Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

2026 Ready to Open Updates: Dr. Natasha Norins, OCS Consultant

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Dr. Natasha Norins** (Office of Charter Schools) presented the April RTO update for the 2026 cohort. She outlined the next steps: schools showing partial or insufficient readiness in critical areas in May would appear before the board (virtually or in person), with final RTO votes scheduled for June 8th.
- The RTO cohort was reviewed school by school. Key observations included: BH2 Stream Academy had 48 enrolled students (17% of its 280 ADM projection) at time of slide preparation, though the school’s leader noted 172 had since enrolled; Carolina Collegiate High School had 233 applicants (116% of its 200 ADM); Focus Academy had 32 enrolled students (16% of its 200 ADM); ID YL Wake had 182 enrolled (52% of its 350 ADM); Rise Academy had 89 enrolled (55% of its 250 ADM); NC Connections Academy had 752 enrolled (100% of its 750 ADM); and Warren County had 154 enrolled (75% of its 204 ADM).
- **Board Chair Friend** raised the concern that schools should not be granted a ready-to-open exit if their enrollment contingency has not been met, citing two instances in prior years where schools did not meet enrollment minimums after receiving conditional approval. He stated he would not support a ready-to-open vote contingent on enrollment targets being met going forward.
- Board member **Lindalyn Kakadelis** raised the question of when new charter schools can access the student information system (Infinite Campus at DPI) to record enrolled students. Dr. Norins explained that access is granted only after board approval and the charter agreement is executed on July 1. Lindalyn Kakadelis and **Dr. John Eldridge** jointly noted this created a structural challenge in verifying true enrollment prior to the board's decision. Friend agreed to request that the Office of Charter Schools inquire with DPI about whether earlier SIS access could be arranged.
- **Dr. Rita Haire** observed that the two schools with the lowest percentage of projected enrollment attained were both accelerated applicants, suggesting a potential correlation and warranting further review.
- **Eric Guckian** expressed the view that the board needs to ensure stronger support structures — including adequate staffing for OCS and partnerships with external organizations — to enable schools to succeed, rather than relying on "hope" as a strategy

2026 Low Performing Schools Presentations: Dr. Brandi Gill, OCS Consultant

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Dr. Brandy Gill** (OCS School Improvement Consultant) introduced United Community School, noting the school has been on the Comprehensive Support and Improvement list for six years.
- The school's Executive Director, Board Chair, Board Member, K-3 Principal, and 4-8 Principal presented the school's progress. The school has been operating since 2014, currently serves approximately 215 students K-8, employs 23 lead teachers and assistants, and is in its 12th year of operation.
- The school's three improvement goals were presented: (1) exceed growth in reading and math; (2) improve EOG scores by five points in each subject; and (3) continue implementing targeted small-group interventions. Key strategy changes included a full curriculum switch to the I-Ready platform for both reading and math in the current school year, along with an academic interventionist now in her third year of pulling and coaching students in Tiers 2 and 3.
- **Dr. Shelley Shope** requested clarification on whether the I-Ready diagnostic data presented reflected mid-year benchmarks or end-of-year projections; the school confirmed the data was from beginning-of-year to middle-of-year and that end-of-year results had not yet been collected.
- **CSRБ member** asked about teacher salaries; the school confirmed the school follows the North Carolina state salary schedule and adopts the schedule as issued each year.
- **Lindalyn Kakadelis** noted the historical academic record: out of the past eight scoreable years (excluding two COVID years), the school earned a D in seven and a C in one and has received three consecutive three-year renewals. She asked the school leader to more clearly articulate specific intervention strategies, and identified the curriculum change as the most substantive new action taken. She also encouraged the school to present data on "legacy students" (those enrolled since kindergarten) at future appearances, as this context would allow the board to better assess the school's true academic value-add.
- **Dr. Rita Haire** confirmed that Ken Hall remains board chair and asked about current enrollment (215 students), teacher retention trends, and the school's chronic absenteeism rate of approximately 8.25%. The school leader described the school's multi-step response to tardiness and absenteeism, including parent conferences, truancy letters, and principal meetings, and noted the school does not provide transportation.

Accelerated and Fast-Track Application Process; Ashley Logue, OCS Director

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Ashley Logue** (Director, Office of Charter Schools) presented a legal and policy overview distinguishing accelerated applications from fast-track replication applications. Ashley Logue noted that the rules and policies governing both processes are outdated because they still reference the former Charter Schools Advisory Board and the State Board of Education as the authorizing body, rather than the CSRБ.
- Ashley Logue explained that accelerated applications have minimal statutory basis — the only statutory reference is that a planning period *may* be required — and that the acceleration process appears to have originated from a state board policy. This gives the CSRБ significant flexibility to revise acceleration requirements. By contrast, fast-track replication is governed by a detailed statute (G.S. 115C-218.3) and several corresponding rules, leaving little room for modification without legislative action.
- **Board Chair Friend** raised the broader point that revision opportunities are not limited to accelerated applications and expressed interest in revisiting the overall application submission timeline and the RTO exit process.
- Multiple board members — including **Bruce Friend, Dr. John Eldridge, Lindalyn Kakadelis, and Dr. Rita Haire** — expressed the view that the distinction between "accelerated" and standard applications may be unnecessary and potentially counterproductive. They suggested that schools

should simply proceed through RTO and come before the board when ready, regardless of a predetermined accelerated label.

- **Dr. Rita Haire** noted that the existing policy language referencing a "five-year marketing plan" and an "exceptional need" standard is often not being rigorously applied or submitted by applicants and called for stronger evidence of community demand and interest.
- **Ashley Logue** noted that rule changes require a minimum of approximately eight months and a structured rulemaking process and committed to consulting the DPI rules coordinator to determine timelines and procedures. She requested that board members begin collecting their ideas for potential revisions.
- **Bruce Friend** volunteered to circulate a shared document to gather board member ideas about process improvements and stated the goal was long-term structural revision rather than short-term adjustment.

Adjourn:

Motion: Bruce Friend

Second: Dr. Rita Haire

12:15 pm