

**Minutes of the North Carolina Charter School Review Board**  
**State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction**  
**September 11, 2023**  
**9 AM**

Attendance – CSRБ Members	
TBD (nonvoting)- Absent Dr. Rita Haire- Absent Dr. John Eldridge Alex Quigley Hilda Parlér Dr. Shelly Shope- Absent	Eric Sanchez Bruce Friend Dave Machado Todd Godbey Dr. Bartley Danielsen- Absent Stephen Gay- Absent
Attendance – Other	
<i>Office of Charter Schools</i> Ashley Baquero, Director Joseph Letterio, Consultant Melanie Rackley, Consultant Jenna Cook, Consultant Dr. Natasha Norins, Consultant Nicky Niewinski, Consultant Dr. Brandi Gill, Consultant Davida Robinson, NC ACCESS- Absent Dr. Barbara O’Neal, NC ACCESS- Absent	<i>Attorney General</i> Zach Padget- Absent  <i>SBE Attorney</i> Allison Schafer- Absent  <i>Teacher/Principal of Year</i> William Storrs- TOY Maria Mills- POY TJ Worrell- POY Ryan Henderson- TOY- Absent

Recording of September CSRБ Meeting:

**Call To Order**

**Pledge of Allegiance:** Dr. John Eldridge, Board Member

**Mission and Ethics Statement:**

- Mission and Ethics Statement, Mr. Bruce Friend, Board Chair
- Recused from Warren Young Explorers School- Mr. Eric Sanchez

**Approval of the Agenda and Minutes**

**Motion:** Ms. Hilda Parlér motioned to approve agenda for September Meeting

Second: Mr. Eric Sanchez

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

**Motion: Dr. John Eldridge motioned to approve August Special Called 2023 minutes as amended.**  
Second: Ms. Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

Passed                       Failed

**Introduction of new CSRБ member: Alex Quigley**

**September Charter School Review Board Meeting**

**Director Updates:** Ms. Ashley Baquero, OCS Director

- Approval of revised 2023 calendar + 2024 calendar
  - October 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> is the only change in the calendar (Tuesday/Wednesday). Due to the AIM conference October 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>.
  - 2024 calendar has no concerns/feedback
  - Mr. Friend asked if those days are being set aside for 2<sup>nd</sup> interviews.
    - Ms. Baquero: 2<sup>nd</sup> interviews and Renewals. Not as tight of a timeline since we don't have to go to SBE to do final approval.
    - Mr. Friend: We may even have 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, interviews. We may have to take our time to make sure we are getting high quality work.

**Motion: Ms. Hilda Parlér motioned to approve Revised 2023 Meeting Calendar and 2024 Meeting Calendar**

Second: Dr. John Eldridge

Vote: Unanimous

Passed                       Failed

- Ms. Baquero introduced new people and new staff that were hired in the OCS. We now have 211 Charter Schools; so we have restructured the office into 3 teams to assist in having quality charter schools.
- Mr. Friend congratulated the new staff and acknowledged OCS for their work handling the changes in the legislative session.

**Amendments:** Ms. Nicky Niewinski, OCS Consultant

Neuse Charter School- Mission Statement

- Ms. Niewinski went into detail on what changes occurred in the mission statement and asked for approval.
- Ms. Parlér asked what they mean by a 'Diverse Perspective'. Ms. Niewinski said that the students were able to see diverse cultures, races, in the activities that occurred at the school.

**Motion: Dave Machado motioned to approve Neuse Charter School's request to amend their mission statement.**

Second: Dr. John Eldridge

Vote: Unanimous

Passed                       Failed

Casa Esperanza Montessori Charter School- Mission Statement

- Ms. Niewinski went into detail on what changes occurred in the mission statement and asked for approval.

**Motion: Mr. Todd Godbey motioned to approve Casa Esperanza Montessori Charter School’s request to amend their mission statement.**

Second: Mr. Eric Sanchez

Vote: Unanimous

Passed                       Failed

**Introduction to 2023 Charter Application Interviews:** Ms. Melanie Rackley, OCS Consultant

- Ms. Rackley gave a quick 2022 Recap of recommendations as well as the statutes dictating CSRБ’s decision-making process.
  - She also touched on definitions and State Board rule references because of the legislative changes this past session. Any rule, law, or other change is on the presentations hyperlinked for ease of access.
  - She also mentioned the two reconsider votes (ALA- Monroe & Heritage Leadership Academy) that have been moved to the October meeting.
  - Delineation of Duties between OCS and CSRБ
  - Round 1 vs. Round 2 interviews. Accelerated applicants have a 2nd interview in October if needed and non-accelerated applicants have a 2nd interview in December.
- Mr. Friend asked if they are looking at the application itself? Or are we looking at changing the application for next year?
  - Ms. Rackley, any changes have to go through the State Board and those changes normally happen at the end of the cycle (November/December time).
- Mr. Friend asked for an update on how the schools opened this year are doing and if it could be on the October Agenda.
- Mr. Machado asked if the CSRБ approves a school today, they will be opened based on the ‘Ready to Open’ plan/rule.
  - Ms. Rackley said yes, and Ms. Baquero clarified that it is up to the board to follow the Ready to Open policy that is required by state law. Mr. Eldridge asked her to clarify on first year funds, Ms. Baquero says that no state funding occurs until they pass those requirements outlined in the Ready to Open policy. She also touched on the details of the allotment process.
- Mr. Friend asked about any disadvantage to applicants based on what month they get approved.
  - Ms. Rackley said that the only people to ‘benefit’ is the accelerated applicants as they can begin the Ready to Open in September. Others begin the year after so they have a year to plan.
- 2023 Applications broken down by County

- 3100 students are estimated to enroll in year 1 of these schools opening to 8500 students by year 5.
- Mr. Friend called a break until 9:50 am.

Warren Young Explorers School- Accelerated, 2024

- Ms. Melanie Rackley introduced the Board of Directors of the School; as well as their mission, number of students, and other details pertaining to their application.
- Ms. Caroline Hundley introduced the board members, the mission of the school, and the factors of their accelerated application that impact the Warren County community.
  - The biggest factor is educational and economic development. Obstacles to education reform and business growth are there due to the lack of a strongly educated workforce.
  - Touched on the 4 pillars that will dictate their learning/lesson plans based on the needs and opportunities of the community. Touched on the two partnerships (successful schools from Durham and Pembroke) that are helping guide their plans.
- Dr. Eldridge asked about the site visit update
  - Ashley Baquero mentioned strengths – large facility with plenty of room for programs; and concerns –100-year-old building. Talked with the board about both. Last time it was in use was in 2017, still being used for adult classes (such as photography).
- Mr. Friend asked if they've worked to get it in code.
  - Board member said that they are working to pass inspections and the town is willing to work with us.
- Dr. Eldridge asked if sprinkler system is in place
  - Board Response: no sprinkler in place, the first floor is ready to go but the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor is not ready yet.
- Dr. Eldridge asked if approved would they be able to get those inspections.
  - Board response: yes, they have a relationship with architectural and engineering firm who is ready to go if approved today.
- Mr. Friend asked if that was accounted for in budget.
  - The board responded that yes it has.
- Ms. Parlér has some questions/concerns with the enrollment projections (the inconsistency between the form and the packet).
  - The board chair went into detail on the discrepancies and also the proposed enrollment. Dr. Eldridge asked for an update on proposed enrollment and the board member provided that.
- Dr. Eldridge asked how they are going to get 104 students on Day 1, citing a 46% decline in public education attendance.
  - A member of the board mentioned that their talks with parents in the community as well as a survey that went out to several parents give them a strong feeling that they will fill those seats.
- Mr. Quigley says that data shows that schools need to open at 75% of total enrollment to succeed. We just need to operate on the assumption that there may not be as many students who come. Dr. Eldridge cited his own school opening that was 54 students short.
  - Mr. Quigley mentioned that they should shoot for 140 students who say 'yes' and if not, this may make it harder for SBE to approve funding.
- Mr. Friend mentioned that the survey had more of what Warren County was not doing, asked for elaboration.

- A board member mentioned that their 4 pillars, their holistic approach to education, and creative expression will help set them apart and fill the needs of the community.
- Mr. Friend asked how they are going to spur economic development if they are stopping at your school after 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The second question was about staffing.
  - A board member responded saying: “We’re hoping to establish community partnerships with this school so that students can work with them even after they leave Warren YES”. Mentioned a High School they can go to. No vocational courses are available in Warren County, and they say that there is a desire from the children for this to be there. Staffing would need a staff development plan / platform to bring them all together.
  - Dr. Eldridge asked if there’s a specific plan in place, to which the speaker mentioned a few potential options.
- Ms. Parlér and Dr. Eldridge asked how you take a lesson on the farm and transform it into academic lesson.
  - A board member said learning is done in a collaborative manner. Their hope is that it can help get people into small businesses like the speakers.
  - Other speaker (Reagan, not on list) mentioned the potential learning groups/companies/platforms they are looking to use. Also mentioned other creative ways they can do that.
- Mr. Machado asked why the board chose to submit an accelerated application vs. a regular application.
  - The Board chair said there’s an urgent need for this school in Warren County and kids cannot do the typical structure of a school day that is currently being provided. Also mentioned parents being very passionate about this idea.
- Mr. Friend mentioned that there is \$0 towards Staff Development and instructional technologies.
  - A member of the board mentioned that it is in the salary budget citing her work in nonprofit experience.
  - She also mentioned that instructional technology is in the \$37,000 operational budget for instructional materials. Said she could reallocate some of the Teacher Assistant budget to cover if need be.
- A board member gave closing statements reiterating the need in the community and addressed some of the questions that were previously raised/answered. Mentioned contingency plans in case the building they planned to be in did not work.
  - A board member gave her child’s story about how they must drive almost an hour each way to go to school. Said how difficult it was to do the things that people take advantage of (Dinners together, homework, social interaction, etc.)
- Mr. Machado mentioned he likes the strength of the board, their involvement in the community as well as the location of the school. He expressed concerns about the enrollment numbers as well as the age of the building. Dr. Eldridge added that every RTO school opened under-enrollment, touched on budget / income levels that would allow them to break even.
- Mr. Quigley asked if they are allowed to change their application and add to the number of students, Ms. Baquero mentioned that CSRFB would have to review it / approve of it. Mr. Quigley still has concerns about the numbers.
- Ms. Parlér has concerns about the age of the building as well as the numbers in the budget.
- Mr. Friend highlighted the passion and strength of the board, but also asked why they went with an accelerated application. Mentioned other holes that were missing in their budget. Concerned with opening it up next year.

- Mr. Quigley says that he wished they were in a regular application as accelerated applications need to be more ready. Says SBE is going to probably use this to question giving funding.
- Dr. Eldridge mentioned that the specialization of the school is going to pose a massive challenge to hiring staff. Reiterated the concern over accelerated application. Dr. Norrins and Ms. Baquero added that 7 schools have asked for a delay and mentioned that all were under-enrolled.
- Mr. Quigley said that this board could find the teachers and that there is a need for innovation in the school space.
- Mr. Godbey echoed previous sentiments. Asked what the options are for moving forward. Dr. Eldridge gave the 3 options available (approve, deny, ask for interview 2).
- Mr. Friend and Dr. Eldridge talked about timeline concerns as well as the fact that there was a lot of unanswered questions.

**Motion: Mr. Bruce Friend motioned to NOT approve Warren Young Explorers School’s charter application**

Second: Ms. Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous, Eric Sanchez Recused

- Passed  Failed

Discussion:

- Mr. Friend, Mr. Quigley, and Dr. Eldridge reassured the board that the application is not bad but they just needed more time to get things done.

Carolina Achieve- Standard, 2025

- Ms. Rackley introduced the Board of Directors to the School; as well as their mission, number of students, and other details pertaining to their application.
  - The Board chair introduced the board members, gave his credentials, why the community needs the school. Focus is going to be reading, writing, and arithmetic with an entrepreneurial lens.
  - Another board member mentioned her goals for Carolina Achieve and the personal reasons behind her child’s journey.
  - A board member with charter school experience introduced himself as well as his credentials serving as a board member in another Durham County Charter School.
  - Another member introduced himself and his credentials and his journey in the Charter School space.
  - Another board member introduced herself and her credentials and why she wanted to be on this board.
- Ms. Parlér asked about the Support Staff as well as some curriculum questions.
  - A board member explained that there were only 30 minutes for history/science mentioned because a lot of the lessons/topics are fused together. Meant to help boost student understanding.
    - She also mentioned that Student success coaches are more than just an advisor/counselor/homeroom teacher. 3 touchpoints throughout the day, so they are always checking in on them. This would take place in all grades.
- Dr. Eldridge asked about the potential for a 9-12 expansion – Mr. Friend also seconded this – to finish what they started.

- A board member mentioned that it Meant to help alleviate the demand in Durham Public Schools as well as the other Charter School in the area. They are open to expansion in the future.
- Mr. Friend asked where the administrative assistants/PowerSchool managers/data people are in the budget.
  - A board member Mentioned the data managers as well as admin assistants and where they would be located.
- Mr. Machado wants to know the thinking behind a Thursday First day as well as the change from traditional schedule to year-round; what is an 'Alternative Setting' for disciplinary violations; facility and relationship with Research/West Triangle High School; and asked about the phrase 'Age-Appropriate content' listed in the application.
  - A board member mentioned that the change to year-round was based on the success of those types of programs in other schools around the area. Thursday start so that the teachers can get to know the children. Want to really focus on the personal relationships with the children. Shifting to the alternative sites, a member of the board said that for weapons violations 'alternative sites' will be organized with partnerships with other schools.
  - The board member added that the curriculum is organized with experts, and parents are kept in the loop. It won't discriminate against any protected class.
  - A board member mentioned that the partnership with strong high schools is so students can continue to succeed after leaving, even if it is not on the same campus. Said they would elaborate on that further soon.
- Mr. Godbey asked about the partnership with West Triangle High School as well as enrollment discrepancies.
- Mr. Sanchez asked why EDS students were so low considering the number of low-income individuals in that area.
  - The speaker mentioned that between Orange County and Durham County the number of EDS students is different and that they were going based on our estimates of more Orange County residents.
    - Also added that they were marketing in all the neighborhoods so that all students regardless of status or race can have access to this school. There is a Weighted Lottery.
- Mr. Godbey, Mr. Machado and Mr. Sanchez both mentioned the % of EDS students, to which board chair said it was a typo and that it should be closer to 30%
- Mr. Friend asked if the woman was the presumed head of school or if she was on the board?
  - It was explained she is on the board and not a paid employee anymore since it changed to a standard application.
- Mr. Friend asked if being on the campus of West Triangle HS in play?
  - Board chair said the partnership was a blessing but the commissioners did not allow it. They are currently looking at other alternatives to keep the same demographics/economics.
- Ms. Parlér asked about what they're talking about in the Affinity Groups and why they need parental consent. Can 'Adult' topics occur/need to be brought up?
  - Ad Hoc groups are based on circumstances and things that happen at school. The Counselor will reach out to parents if they want their kid into this group. Cited what is happening in her child's school. Doesn't think they are going to occur very often. Cited one example at her school in Florida. Adult topics may happen.
  - Ms. Baquero said that all curriculum/RTO topics are reviewed to ensure that they are all in line with State Law. Said that they are a good potential tool to address mental health.

- A board member added that this is to ensure the safety of all children.
- Mr. Friend asked how the board disseminated the interest surveys.
  - The Board said every way possible. Social Media, In-person events, flyers, daycare center visits with a goal to hit every socioeconomic background.
- Mr. Machado asked if a parent doesn't want to have their child in the affinity groups can they be opted out?
  - The board said it's Opt-In only, occurs outside of content so it wouldn't affect learning.
- Mr. Godbey mentioned that affinity groups are common in the Wilmington Area.
  - A Board Member mentioned that there are other goals on top of just their academic and professional goals and that this would be a good way to help it.
- The Board Chair gave a closing statement highlighting the need for this school in the district and reiterating the board's interest. Said that there are 1000s of children in both Orange and Durham County who won't succeed in this economy and that this school has the board and ability to put a dent in that deficit and provide the skills needed for these students to succeed today.

Discussion from CSRБ:

- Mr. Friend said that this board is highly credentialed and that they did their homework on other charter schools. The Board is well qualified.
- Mr. Sanchez said that there was a lot of ideas and concepts in the application and their goals were ambitious. EDS answer was concerning, and they were very generic.
- Mr. Machado wants some further clarification on the Weighted Lottery program
- Ms. Parlér still has concerns about the Affinity Group
  - Mr. Friend asked for clarification and the response was unclear.
- Mr. Eldridge said that the news media has made it difficult to have this type of learning due to the highly politicized nature of this material. It's based on the community's standards as well as the current legislation that is out. Makes having those conversations with parents difficult. Must be very clear.
- Mr. Sanchez sees the affinity groups as doing what they say they're going to do with their mission statement.
- Ms. Mills added that it helps people collect data and construct for the day as it allows them to see what issues are systemic, small group, or individual.
- Mr. Friend thinks the budget was well done. Wishes he had heard from more of the board members.
- Mr. Quigley is recusing since he is Board Chair of West Triangle High School but says the land issue is true. (Since he recused, he should not have contributed to the discussion.)
  - Mr. Friend asked if there would be shared resources between the two schools. A Board Member stated that yes there would be shared services and shared resources and they have been working with them to do that. However, the initial plan is dead.

**Motion: Mr. Bruce Friend motioned to invite Carolina Achieve back for a 2<sup>nd</sup> interview**

Second: Mr. Sanchez

Recused: Alex Quigley

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed                       Failed



**Renewal Guideline Vote:** Mrs. Jenna Cook, OCS Consultant

- Recommending changes – in particular the 10 year and non-renewal – to be more in line with statute.
- Mrs. Cook outlined the new changes and pointed out that the statute is linked into the document.
- 7-year renewal there was a ‘not currently designated as low-performing’ added to the guidelines.
- 5-year renewal, 3-year renewal, and 7-year renewal have all changed the ‘comparability of student subgroups’ requirements.
- Mr. Friend asked how many in renewal cycle: Mrs. Cook answered 17
- Ms. Parlér asked about the bullet points in the document. Mrs. Cook said she would remove those as those were just formatting errors.
- Mrs. Cook: The way the statute is written is that if a school fits the criteria, then they must get a 10-year.

**Motion: Dr. John Eldridge motioned to approve renewal guidelines as presented**

Second: Ms. Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed                       Failed

**Motion to Adjourn:** Ms. Hilda Parlér

Second: Mr. Bruce Friend

**2:00 pm**

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**State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction**

**September 12, 2023**

**9 AM**

Attendance – CSAB Members	
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Attendance – Other	
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CSRБ Meeting Recording:

**Call To Order**

**Pledge of Allegiance:** Mr. Bruce Friend, Board Chair

**Mission and Ethics Statement:**

- Mission and Ethics Statement, Mr. Bruce Friend, Board Chair
- Alex Quigley recuses from Rocky Mount Prep
- Eric Sanchez recuses from Monroe Academy and Rocky Mount Prep

**School Improvement Plans:** Mrs. Jenna Cook, OCS Consultant

Monroe Academy:

- Mrs. Cook gave an overview of previously approved school improvement plans and also the schedule for future plans.
- Mrs. Cook presented Monroe Charter Academy’s academic performance.
- Board Chair from Monroe Academy presented on the goals:
  - Mentioned specific statistics on growth, academic performance, and school report card grade for the past two years.

- Mr. Friend asked what target enrollment and if this is the most recent data; (1) said it was 160, and yes, it is the most recent data.
- Read Goal 1 to the board and outlined strategies and action steps to achieve this goal.
  - Additionally mentioned professional development plans to help the staff.
- Read Goal 2 and outlined strategies and action steps being taken to achieve this goal.
  - Mentioned attendance data metrics that will be used and other leadership programs to help teach/train employees/staff for this goal.
- Read Goal 3 and outlined strategies and action steps being taken to achieve this goal.
- Read Goal 4 and outlined strategies and action steps being taken to achieve this goal.
  - Recruiting new members and establishing training for existing members was also mentioned.
  - Board retreats and attendance at such was also talked about to help build a stronger board.

Discussion from CSRБ:

- Mr. Friend is curious about the goal regarding attendance, particularly staff attendance. Has that been an issue at the school? How many days is staff out of town/out of school.
  - Board Chair said that it was an issue with 3 staffers (12 total last year) and they are no longer with the school.
  - Jim Seagal Board Chair and other Board Members were introduced.
  - Dr. Eldridge asked if anyone assisted with this. Board Chair mentioned that she reached out to several parties.
  - Mr. Machado and Ms. Parlér thanked them for doing their work.
- Mr. Quigley asked how many kids, and what grades. Board Members mentioned that it's 158 in K-6. Dr. Eldridge and Mr. Quigley asked how many were tested, and the staff said 80.
  - Dr. Eldridge asked what distinct goals for reading are. The Board says they are homing in more on understanding the reading as opposed to just being able to understand it/read it.
- Ms. Parlér asked a question about accountability/insurance that goals are being fulfilled, the members responded with plans and new staff hires to assure this.
- Ms. Parlér asked if the board would have the ability to supervise this, to which they said yes. Also said that they are going to try and avoid taking kids out of instructional time to do the small groups.
- Dr. Eldridge asked if coaching is only directed at kids or if staff are involved to. Board member said that there are other programs that staff are taking so they can take what they learned school wide.
- Mr. Friend asked how many mandatory leadership trainings have been done so far. A board member answered that he believes all were there and they met last night. Mr. Friend and the board member discussed where the minutes were and the website issues.
- Mr. Friend commented that he sees low-performing schools have perpetually under-involved board members. The school leader answered that he is personally at fault and he and the board have put in a renewed effort to do better with these improvement goals. Mr. Friend reiterated that they will not hesitate to close schools if they are continually low-performing.
- Mr. Machado and Ms. Parlér asked for documentation of training and board meetings and Mr. Machado and Dr. Eldridge both recommended making it an open meeting.

- Mr. Quigley stated that we are seeing schools come before the CSRFB with great plans and then next year the data is poor and we would feel bad to close. Is there a cycle forming that is process-driven? He said that they have more time now to give recommendations. Asked how can we repeat this cycle from continuing and how they look at the composite “you’ve been here for 5 years, your time is up” data? We should do these closing decisions in May but we don’t have the data.
- Mr. Friend and Mr. Quigley agreed this conversation needed to occur and discussed what they needed to do in order to be more accountable.
  - Mr. Friend said focus first on the 3 year renewal. Other data points we can look at to see what is transpiring. No indication of the board was actually meeting.
  - Dr. Eldridge asked about what schools have been closed down last year, mentioned one that he was ready to close down but they couldn’t cause they were pressured to look at school improvement plans.
  - Mr. Quigley and Mr. Friend both asked how many 3 year charters have been given back to back.
  - Ms. Baquero mentioned that for renewals this year, OCS looked at data for 10 years and said that is a way to get more data faster, but due to short staff across all divisions (OCS, EC, etc.) it is hard to get data fast to the board. Have a constant monitoring plan in place so things don’t snowball.
  - Mr. Friend and Mr. Quigley both said that they need to see a downloaded file of the student enrollment applications by May
  - Dr. Eldridge mentioned that the next school is already not following the rules so what do we do.
  - Mr. Godbey said since we are going to be asking for this data, the schools are going to be looking at what we are going to next, are we going to act fast. From now on, we’re not going to be giving schools a 10 year run around. Mr. Quigley agreed.
  - Mr. Friend said they have the ability to be more proactive and take action on schools.
  - Mr. Quigley said we want to support schools and that worked in the past, but turnaround is incredibly difficult. We as a board shouldn’t be burdened to ask for a plan and things like that, they should already have that plan in place. It should be the responsibility of the board and its members.
  - Dr. Eldridge asked OCS/DPI when they – the CSRFB – can get unofficial results as most testing can be seen very shortly after. Ms. Baquero said there would be legal things she’d have to deal with that. Also mentioned statistics on multiple 3 year renewals and the number of schools who are low performing in that category.
  - Mr. Machado stated similar sentiments as above. He also said that these schools were given a 3 year renewal and they should be supported. But at the same time if the school comes up – like Monroe who is in first renewal – we should look year by year and have them show the data. Ms. Parler agreed

**Motion: Dr. John Eldridge motioned to approve Monroe Charter Academy’s school improvement plan**

Second: Mr. Dave Machado

Recuse: Mr. Eric Sanchez

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed                       Failed

Rocky Mount Preparatory:

- Mrs. Cook gave an overview of previously approved school improvement plans and also the schedule for future plans.
- Mrs. Cook also touched on school performance data and introduced the board.
- Keen Gravely introduced his plan and mentioned specific date-driven goals with the goal to drive growth in proficiency.
  - He also mentioned detailed policies and new committees to address problems that the board is / has run into.
- Dr. Heather Collins – Head of School/Principal – gave more detail on the goals and plans. Also explained the details of the timeline and the goal to get ‘back to basics’.
  - Mentioned specific dates that professional development and trainings have been completed.
  - Mentioned new instructional strategies to help move students from underperforming to performing at or above grade level.
  - Mentioned new disciplinary policies and support to help create a different understanding of what is expected of students. Also touches on ways to deal with / help students who do have to miss instructional time.
  - Discussed a retreat that occurred and what was discussed there. Additionally talked about future retreats and board retreats that will be occurring in the future.

Discussion from CSRБ:

- Dr. Eldridge asked how many board members and who attended the July meeting. Also mentioned the growth level and said it was scary low.
- Ms. Parlér asked how can you guarantee 100% growth for all students seeing those numbers and where are the tutors coming from? The principal answered the questions for her and also mentioned that they are not going to delay. Explained the difference between the weekly and daily meetings.
- Mr. Friend asked when they last met as the website has minutes from May as the most recent on the website. The board said it would be corrected.
- Mr. Friend asked what the status is on the financial concerns letter they talked about in August. Dr. Eldridge asked who is doing the report, is it an audit, what’s happening. The Board President said he hasn’t gotten that report – it would be out Thursday – and mentioned what he does/does not expect to find in that report. Will send to OCS when report is available.
- Mr. Friend asked if they are planning to remove the interim tag from the current principal. The Board President lauded her and said he’d confer with board regarding making the position permanent.
- Mr. Friend mentioned State Board requirements for growth and asked how they are going to fulfill those goals if they have one year to do this. There’s no wiggle room here. An additional board member agreed.
- Dr. Eldridge asked if the board reviews financials every meeting. Board President said yes and more frequently than that. Dr. Eldridge asked how it is the last administration’s fault then. A member said he’d like to go into closed session to discuss that.
- Dr. Eldridge asked if they could highlight the changes in the plan since we last met in August. A member of the board outlined the changes that occurred. They zoomed in on what was achievable (‘Want More Do More’ and ‘Get Better Faster’).
- Ms. Parlér asked about the ‘Want More Do More’ session and a board member explained what it does for the coaches at their school.

- Mr. Machado asked Ms. Baquero how many 3-year renewals, she responded 3. Mr. Machado reiterated in previous conversation that it was disappointing to see them come back so many times with poor data.

**Motion: Ms. Hilda Parlér motioned to approve Rocky Mount Preparatory’s school improvement plan**

Second: Mr. Bruce Friend

Recuse: Mr. Alex Quigley and Mr. Eric Sanchez

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed  Failed

**Charter Application Interviews Introduction:** Ms. Melanie Rackley, OCS Consultant

Liberty Charter Academy- Standard 2025

- Ms. Rackley introduced the Board of Directors to the School; as well as their mission, number of students, and other details pertaining to their application.
  - She also went over the rules, and then also explained that the EMO would have 30 minutes at the end of the school’s presentation.
- Mr. John O’Day introduced himself and mentioned the board will introduce themselves. Also introduced the board member who could not be here.
  - Explained the reasoning behind expanding to K-12 from K-8 last year.
- Doug McCall introduced himself and gave his credentials.
- Matthew Schneider introduced himself and gave his credentials. Also touched on how a classical education and a liberal arts education has shaped and impacted his life.
- Victor Jones introduced himself and gave his credentials.
  - Mr. Jones also talked about the community impact that this would have as a local town councilman.
- AJ Miller introduced himself and gave his credentials. He talked about his time in the financial industry and how he’d focus on the school’s financials.

Discussion from CSRБ:

- Ms. Parlér expressed concerns with the enrollment chart
  - A board member mentioned the exact number of classes per year that they would have. Also expressed that the demand in the area is going to make it harder to turn students down than it is to get them in.
  - Mr. Friend asked what makes him think that way. The Board President mentioned Revolution Academy and other schools have waitlists that would fill our school. Survey from April ‘23 says that 80% would likely go to this school since it’s K-12. Gave specific numbers after Ms. Parlér asked about waitlist info of other schools.
  - Another Board Member gave his story with his kids in Revolution Academy
- Dr. Eldridge was concerned about the budget item for FRL as opposed to the NSLP.
- Ms. Parlér is curious about the governance model, and how/why technology is limited.
- Mr. Machado is curious why K-9 first year, and what is 0 period in your high school. Additionally, asked about clarifications on the title of math classes. What their metric is to reward teachers and what is the goal with their weighted lottery.

- A Board Member mentioned that it is less likely for students to transfer their 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> year. Also, schools in the area are K-8 and has high demand for quality high schools. Would cause people to transfer in after 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- A member of the board mentioned that they would be willing to adjust for the math exams, but they did that for traditional purposes. Dr. Eldridge said that it would be beneficial to do that for transcript purposes and board member said it can be adopted.
- Mr. Friend was curious about when the last survey was done. Who owns the facility?
- Ms. Mills was curious about the personnel year 1 with a 10-year difference in ages (Kindergarten – 9<sup>th</sup> grade).
- Mr. Sanchez was confused about the EDS numbers. Mentioned that the goals seem rather modest considering goals cap out at a certain number. What do you do, as the question in your application says that the EMO does everything. How did they come up with the numbers in the Lunch program.
  - The Board President mentioned that a surcharge is going to be added to people who pay for lunch to pay for their FRL program. Another member reiterated that it has been done before and answered Mr. Sanchez's question on Hispanic enrollment at 10%.
- Mr. Sanchez asked what they calculated per meal. A board member answered that the \$3.25 would have enough of a surcharge that 40% of kids would eat but then was corrected saying that the \$3.25 would be the cost for those who are lower income. Did not have the numbers for the full price lunch.
  - Mr. Godbey asked if all kids eat in classroom and the board said yes they would.
- Mr. Machado asked if they would discuss that math change or if they were going to change it. Board member said they are willing to adjust for the benefit of the kids but would have to talk with the other board members before making any changes.
- Mr. Godbey asked if there is any mental health / counselor support. A board member outlined the Student Support Specialist and the role they would have based on personal experience. Said that it plays a very big role at Revolution Academy.
- Mr. Godbey asked how many students at Revolution, A member of the board answered him and said 650-700 and only 1 Student Support Specialist. The Board member did mention that there was an additional PE teacher hired who was trained in crisis support. Mr. Godbey mentioned that it was more important now – and echoed by Dr. Eldridge – that support staff is needed.
- Mr. Friend asked what the rationale behind co-employing teachers by the EMO and the Teachers. A board member said that if an exit strategy was needed, they would negotiate with the teachers. Mr. Friend said that that is not clear in the application. The member of the board also said they could renegotiate / rework the contract. Mr. Friend said that he does not think co-employment is unique in this proposal.
- Mr. Friend asked who made the budget, the board president said EMO and that there were some changes. Mr. Godbey said that there were some big changes to the budget and a board member came up to discuss changes and address questions from Mr. Friend and other members.
- Mr. Friend questioned the number of dollars per student in technology, and a member of the board said they were planning to have a limited technology approach. Explained the rationale behind this. Mr. Sanchez asked if it's going to be a college preparatory school that doesn't prep them for college. Ms. Mills, and Mr. Godbey all had concerns with testing and how they would share that. A board member mentioned a stacked schedule that Revolution does and how they would implement that in their school. Also noted the success of it at Revolution.

- Mr. Sanchez asked why the board would enter a contract where they have no power to hire/terminate the people who follow that vision. The President of the Board answered that they wouldn't do that as they work on a team. Mr. Sanchez asked if there's an inherent conflict in a for-profit company who wants to make a 14% profit each year, and a non-profit who wants to educate kids. He also said that the fees are like other schools. This board has the ability to adapt and re-assess the contract and the concerns – between the two groups – as needed.

EMO: American Traditional Academies

- Mr. Friend asked the EMO a contract question. Representative from EMO mentioned that it would just be the first 5 years of the contract.
- Mr. Friend asked who would own the facility. EMO said that ACD would fund the school and give it financing until the school can own its facility. Mr. Sanchez asked for clarification on EMO's mentioning of 'people' and EMO gave specific examples.
- Mr. Sanchez asked about the 14% again. EMO said that the 14% is not profit and that there are other expenses involved. Also cited that other EMO's just long-term lease the building as opposed to trying to get the building into the school's hand.
- Mr. Sanchez asked if the board was kept in the loop when ACD was hired and EMO said that based on the contract, it was strictly EMO's decision.
- Mr. Friend asked if enrollment was short or if they were short on rent, would the EMO be okay with that. EMO gave an example of when they stepped in to cover something the board could not do.
- Mr. Friend went into detail on the facility budget. EMO said that she fixed the budget to have that 2% surplus every year and that they fixed the budget after deliberating with the board.
- Mr. Quigley asked where the \$500,000 is, EMO said that the bank had the money. Mr. Quigley asked when they would be paid back and EMO said that it is wrapped in with the development plan. Mr. Quigley then asked if it's basically like a developers investment and asked if EMO is going to pay the principal in the startup year.
- Mr. Quigley asked where / what is the \$800,000+ listed in the budget is going towards. EMO said that once they expand they are going to bring all of those positions in house. Currently, they contract out a lot of those positions but not all.
- Mr. Friend asked for clarification on funds used that are the schools vs. ATA's funds. EMO gave an example where the funds could be used. Mr. Friend asked if the board has discretion to purchase whatever type of material they want, or does the EMO dictate what providers they must use. EMO said there is some discretion that the board has but not total control/discretion.
- Mr. Friend asked about the co-employment and what prevents them from assigning them to another school. EMO said that there is a 1 year contract every year. Mr. Godbey said that in reality they cannot just stop working for you and go work for the school. EMO agreed with that, and said that board approval is needed for both hiring and firing of employees. RMO specified that they could hire and fire anyone except teachers.
- Mr. Machado asked if the school is not able to pay that 14% what happens? EMO mentioned that they would open another line of credit. Mr. Quigley asked where that money comes from and EMO said it comes from ACB. Mr. Quigley and EMO went over what the initial \$500,000 budget would go towards and also, Mr. Quigley asked about Marketing costs as well as why they're reducing their fee.
- Mr. Quigley asked what that initial funds are going towards. EMO listed out individual items. Both also discussed the costs of the application fee.
- Mr. Quigley recommended seeing the budget of the EMO moving forward.
- A board member gave closing statements tying in personal sentiments and stressed the importance of getting this right the first time. Another member of the board said that the program



that is planned for Liberty Charter Academy has worked tremendously for their kids and thinks it would be good here too. The Board President stressed the importance of having an EMO involved to help where the board was unable to.

Discussion from CSRБ:

- Dr. Eldridge says he believes that it is the board’s responsibility to hire a good staff. Additionally, he cited the current times – with legislation and politics – and how CSRБ cannot write a check to help fund the school. Dr. Eldridge also restressed the importance of focusing on the success of the kids and not what the board has decided to do regarding the contract with the EMO.
- Mr. Quigley asked if that would be the purpose of the 2<sup>nd</sup> interview. Mr. Friend said possibly but that he agrees with both that there is value of having an EMO but also value of doing things yourself. Mentioned that facility costs plus the fee for the EMO, you’re looking at nearly 36% of the budget. He adds that if the board is comfortable with that, then it’s fine, but he thinks it’s steep.
- Mr. Godbey, Mr. Quigley, and Mr. Friend continued to discuss the contract between the board and the EMO and the pros and cons associated with such. Also recommended having someone with K-12 experience on the board. Ms. Parlér said in the end it is a business decision and the board would have to decide what’s best for them.
- Mr. Godbey asked about the 12-step audit as a sweep model and there was general disagreement with this among board members. Mr. Machado went into details about the parties involved and Mr. Eldridge reiterated that there needs to be outside funding for these first-time charter schools to get off the ground.
- Mr. Friend asked if there is a typo on page 12 and EMO said yes.
- Dr. Eldridge said it was beneficial to eventually own the building in the end.
- Mr. Sanchez mentioned his overall concerns related to the EMO and the contract.
- Mr. Quigley also expressed concerns about the retirement number in the budget. EMO mentioned what the match would be and Mr. Quigley still was concerned about that number.
- Mr. Friend asked if the board had the ability to terminate a non-teacher they didn’t like. EMO said no, because they would need that organizational chart that makes sense for things to run smoothly.
- Mr. Sanchez expressed concerns he addressed previously again.
- Mr. Quigley went into more details on the financial costs associated with this contract to drive home the point of Mr. Friend that it is steep.

**Motion: Dr. John Eldridge motioned to bring Liberty Charter Academy back for 2<sup>nd</sup> interview.**

Second: Ms. Hilda Parlér

Vote: 4-3 Oppose- Mr. Eric Sanchez, Mr. Bruce Friend, Mr. Alex Quigley

- Passed                       Failed

Highlands Charter Academy- Standard 2025

- Ms. Rackley introduced the Board of Directors to the School; as well as their mission, number of students, and other details pertaining to their application.
- Ms. Caroline Kelly introduced the board and Mr. Leonard Castelli and all of their credentials. She additionally explained her and her vice chair’s reasonings behind starting this school as well as why they think there’s a need in the area.

Discussion from CSRБ:

- Mr. Quigley asked if the Supt supported it and the Board President said that it was a conversation between them that eventually resulted in verbal support.
- Dr. Eldridge asked about the number of students and where they'd come from. The member of the board mentioned that in April they created a website and 110 families expressed interest, last night it was 190 families. Focus heavily on outreach in the northern parts of the county. Have interpreters to help assist with Hispanic families.
- Mr. Friend asked about key staff missing in the budget as well as other budget items missing (including the facility).
  - A board member said that the numbers within the budget were averages, also noted that there are other cost-saving mechanisms for professional development. Additionally mentioned that the vans can become buses if need be.
  - The member of the board mentioned past fundraising experience and realty experience. Mentioned benefactors that were willing to give the money; and also mentioned that they are not able to look into facilities yet since they don't know about the charter. Others expressed concern but the previous speaker came back up and said they are looking towards the community for that facility. Mr. Friend reiterated that there is no money allocated for the facility rent/mortgage.
  - Mr. Friend reiterated that the financial officer is not the auditor; several board members mentioned costs associated with building including what their schools were currently experiencing. Mr. Friend also noted the cost of trailers should that be the way they go initially.
- Mr. Machado asked about why not the weighted lottery and why transportation plan is so poor.
- Mr. Godbey and Ms. Parlér mentioned the passenger vans/carpooling issues as well. Mr. Godbey followed up by commenting that it is imperative to market in a bilingual way. Wants further elaboration on marketing plan.
- Mr. Godbey also asked about mental health support.
- Mr. Sanchez had questions on the EDS / Weighted lottery items Mr. Machado brought up; also was confused about the goals and wanted clarification.
- Dr. Eldridge asked about ELL staff in the budget. Also asked if Transit companies exist in Moore County to partner with since vans are an issue with the Ready to Open team.
- Mr. Quigley and Mr. Sanchez read out the description for the headmaster and others mentioned it.
- Dr. Eldridge mentioned that debt services are expensive and that is something the board would need to prep for. Mr. Quigley said that if there is not a letter of support from a big donor one really couldn't count that as revenue.
  - Mr. Godbey mentioned that facilities is a big part of the budget; but the budget as a whole is what is tying up members.
  - Dr. Eldridge said that 60-65% is for staffing.
- Mr. Sanchez mentioned his EDS concerns again and said that there were ways to look at cutting expenses.
- A member of the board mentioned that in April they couldn't put in certain things into the budget due to the uncertainties of certain things. Dr. Eldridge agreed and Mr. Friend said the application is strong but the budget is a bit weaker.
- Mr. Machado said that they wanted documentation on donors that might have warranted a \$0 expense for facility; and Dr. Eldridge mentioned there must be certain things that are needed to get in the door / get a facility eligible for students to come in. He gave examples such as ADA access, sprinklers, and more.
- A board member and the Board President gave closing remarks thanking the board for hearing their application. President asked if they could come back in December.

Discussion by CSRFB:

- Mr. Friend said he likes the application but recommended denying this one and starting again with an accelerated application for next year if they still wish to open when they plan to. Mr. Machado added that the bar is higher for an accelerated application so be careful with this route. Mr. Machado also recommended coming back next year with a new application – be it accelerated or not.
- Mr. Quigley mentioned that the board and school seem great but says it is a big issue that the budget had that big error. Several members chimed in adding concerns about retirement and facilities being the biggest concerns in that budget.
- Mr. Sanchez said that the budget being changed may come with more benefits for the school.

**Motion: Mr. Eric Sanchez motioned to NOT approve Highlands Charter Academy’s application**

Second: Mr. Alex Quigley

Discussion:

- Mr. Godbey: Minutes will show that there is support from the board on the academic plan, just not the financial aspect of it.
- Mr. Quigley added that there is a need to see public funding not funding that is fundraised. We don’t want to rely on fundraising for everything.
- Dr. Eldridge noted that there is no capital funding given.

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed                       Failed

Triad International Studies Academy- Standard 2025

- Ms. Rackley introduced the Board of Directors to the School; as well as their mission, number of students, and other details pertaining to their application.
- Dr. Chaowei Zhu introduced the board, gave his credentials and why it should be approved in the Guilford County and Greensboro area.

Deliberation by CSRБ:

- Ms. Parlér is curious about evidence of need, what a global student is, and facility update. Mr. Friend seconded.
  - A board member mentioned that they have identified facilities and have community support. Someone here who is an investor. Updated mission statement
- Mr. Godbey is curious why Guilford County, cites data differences between what’s presented in application vs. what is in Guilford county data.
- Mr. Machado is curious about the pool of teachers; only 5 days allotted for professional development. Demographics also show only 4% of their projected students would be Asian.
- Mr. Friend had concerns about PD days, and then was curious as to what day students would get off that are different from traditional LEA schedules. In terms of EDS, help him understand how their plan will work if 75% of the class is taught outside of native language and a majority of the kids you’re bringing in are already struggling with their own native language.
  - A member of the board said that the use of context clues, and physical, verbal cues will help them immerse faster. If it is determined that they can’t even understand the English portion than they will support in that regard.

- Mr. Sanchez asked a question about the ‘4 languages by grade 8’ goal; also, what are the other goals outside of the bilingual goal.
- Mr. Friend asked if those facilities identified earlier are conducive to the demographics the school is trying to attract.
  - A board member mentioned that she thinks there is similar demographics in the area they have facilities of interest. Also cited their surveys and how it showed interest across the county. Gave examples of what was near/around their facilities of interest as well.
- Mr. Friend asked where they planned to find the teachers. Also asked about salary competitiveness.
  - A member of the board mentioned that the projected salary is lower because they have allocated the extra money for bonuses. Mentioned other ways to get money to pay for teachers / programs that they can apply for that will help get teachers for either a limited cost or for free. Mentioned programs that get teachers from abroad. Also mentioned sponsoring visas for their teachers.
- Mr. Friend asked what the elective courses would be
  - A board member mentioned that PE, Dance, Art, etc. and that the immersion teachers would be doing most of the work for those courses to save costs. Mentioned the elective teacher would be there one day a year.
- Mr. Godbey mentioned the health insurance cost being relatively low and clarified Guilford County’s signing bonus – per their website – in the area
  - A board member answered those questions with other examples of schools in Guilford County.
- Mr. Friend asked about similar schools in NC
  - Several people mentioned East Voyager
- Dr. Eldridge mentioned the Guilford County Pay Scale.
- The Board President mentioned that the calendar is 2023-2024 because it is a planning year. Mr. Friend asked if they are copying Guilford’s calendar, and a board member said yes. They also mentioned the number of celebrations they will be having and how they will be similar and different from Guilford County Schools. Also said that they added the 2023 calendar to their application because Guilford County did not have the calendar out for the year they planned to open.
- A Board member gave Closing Remarks stressing the success of other schools and the importance/need of this type of school. Also listed the benefits of their school in providing more options for students.

Discussion from CSRБ:

- Ms. Parlér had concerns about the language becoming a barrier.
- Dr. Eldridge noted that there is an interest in Guilford County for Language Immersion Programs and noted that it is important to start young.
- Mr. Machado said he was not sure if it demonstrated need but noted that East Voyager had a very rough start.
  - Ms. Parlér and Mr. Sanchez and Mr. Quigley noted that there is not a lot of need.
- Mr. Godbey asked about a waiver for teachers and discussion ensued that questioned the number of licensed teachers. A board member said that 50% is going to happen year 1 with a target for 60% of H1 Visa holders.
- Dr. Eldridge regrets he doesn’t know more than one language and stresses that this type of school is important. In favor of bringing them back to listen more to what they have to say.
- Mr. Sanchez and Dr. Eldridge mentioned the importance to dive more into the academic plan and they also touched on examples of schools in Chatham and other counties.

**Motion: Mr. Eric Sanchez motioned to bring Triad International Studies Academy back for a 2<sup>nd</sup> interview.**

Second: Dr. John Eldridge

Vote: 6 to 1, Mr. Dave Machado opposed

- Passed  Failed

**Motion to Adjourn: Dr. John Eldridge**

Second: Mr. Bruce Friend

**3:14 pm**