

NC Charter School Advisory Committee Meeting
State Board of Education 7th Floor Meeting Room
NC Department of Public Instruction

February 27, 2012

Meeting Minutes

Attendance/NCPCSAC	Aaron Means (phone) Kwan Graham (phone) John Betterton (present) Richard Hooker (phone) Alfred Dillon -Absent Rebecca Shore (present) Tim Markley (phone)	Jennie Adams (present) Paul Norcross (present) Baker Mitchell (present) Alan Hawkes (present) Robert Landry (present) Joseph Maimone (phone) Cheryl Turner (phone) Kate Alice Dunaway (absent)
Attendance/SBE/DPI	<i>State Board of Education, Executive Director</i> Martez Hill <i>State Board of Education, Legal Council</i> Katie Cornetto <i>Office of Charter Schools</i> Patricia Gillott, Admin Asst. Dottie Heath, Consultant Thomas Miller, Consultant	<i>Attorney General's Office</i> Laura Crumpler

Welcome and Overview	John Betterton welcomed the members, called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m., and took attendance. Aaron Means made a motion to accept the agenda as proposed. Jennie Adams seconded. It was unanimously approved.
Minute Adoption	Mr. Betterton, as chair, asked for a review of the minutes from the January 10, 2012, meeting. Paul Norcross said that he wanted some corrections made and read the list he had sent to Pat Gillott. Regarding page 11 of the minutes, while discussing Mendenhall's application, he said the minutes did not mention that there were hard copies of letters of support from the board members who were not present. He said that Mr. Fuanice of Acadia Northstar had said he would provide a full detail of the fee structure. He said he wanted the minutes to reflect that not having a tax ID at this point was normal for applicants. Mr. Betterton said that the audio tapes would be reviewed by OCS to verify the additions/corrections, and the minutes would come back to the NC Charter School Advisory Council for approval at their next meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Adams to accept the January 11, 2012 minutes as presented. Seconded by Kwan Graham. The motion unanimously carried.
Application Process Sub-committee Report	Ms. Adams said she is prepared to share the changes that her sub-committee feels are needed. She said her sub-committee recognizes that there will be

<p>– Jennie Adams</p>	<p>replications in this charter school application process, and, therefore, changes in terminology in the application need to be made to meet this need.</p> <p>She outlined several desires: (1) more clarification on the financial pages specifically on page 10; (2) for charter school replication, it should be exactly like the private to public school applications; (3) a history of the ABC performance of the children in the original school being replicated to be provided in the application; (4) for page 15 on revenue projections, the sub-committee wants a letter of assurance required to prove that the funds are available; (5) on Page 18, they would like a line put in for total revenues, deficits, etc. so that the Council members will not have to do the totals themselves; (6) applicants must show levels of insurance and projected costs for all items on the applications; (7) language for the section dealing with EC children must be consistent and changed to Exceptional Children; (8) demonstration, through metrics, that the applicant had attained its mission; and (9) the potential for the Council to recommend another fast track group.</p> <p>Discussion ensued as Mr. Norcross suggested that the dynamics of the application is much different. He recommended that this be tabled because the Council does not need to fundamentally change the application. Mr. Betterton added that it was very important for them to go through these discussions. Ms. Adams clarified that she just wants to know if these are on the new application. Mr. Norcross said that an applicant having to attach the last three years of audits would clarify this. Ms. Adams said her group did not have a lot of changes but wanted assurances that their concerns were being addressed.</p> <p>Martez Hill asked when they expected these changes to go into effect. Ms. Adams responded it would be for the schools opening in 2014-15. Ms. Crumpler reminded the Council members that the new application with their recommended changes would need to go to the SBE for final approval before being used. Mr. Hawks asked if these suggested changes from the application committee could be incorporated into the on-line version of the application. The response was that they were still waiting for Julian AlHour, who was working on the on-line application.</p> <p>Mr. Mitchell asked how important the mission statement is for applicants. Mr. Norcross stated that it is vital and drives the application. Robert Landry said he agreed with Mr. Norcross. They feel the mission statement needs to be concrete so groups can live by it. Ms. Shore and Mr. Hawks also concurred. Mr. Mitchell added that during questioning of one of the interviewees about their mission statement they were not able to answer questions related to their mission statement. He further added that one the council members made a motion to suspend further questioning. Mr. Mitchell further added that the mission statement is one of the most critical aspects of the application.</p> <p>There was no more discussion on the application process.</p>
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<p>Policy Sub-Committee Report - Cheryl Turner</p>	<p>Cheryl Turner discussed the possibility of having a permanent fast track approval process where conversion schools and other fast track schools (schools that were well enough prepared to “wave” the training time) could be put on a different timeline. This waiver policy for fast tracking schools would be as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A letter of intent would be due September 15th. This would have the contact information, grade levels, etc. This would also be the time to request the fast track. Those who did this would have to attend a meeting at DPI by the Office of Charter Schools in October (2) The NC Advisory Council would then review the applications in December and have recommendations to the SBE in January. Final SBE approval could then be given in February, which would make the planning year for fast track charters from February through June. Schools approved for this fast track waiver would open that fall. (3) The sub-committee did not come up with a final rubric for these permanent fast track approvals but did feel if the SBE did not think they were ready for fast tracking it would not preclude them from reapplying through the regular application process. <p>After this presentation, there was much discussion by Council members about who could be considered for fast tracking. The concern was that all applicants should not think they could get this faster process, but the feeling was that defining “fast track” could be difficult. Mr. Mitchell added that even trying to clarify what a “replication” was could be difficult. It was suggested that they come up with a rubric that included such things as: “Do you already have a facility?” “Have you had a successful school before? Then give your ABC data and financial statements,” This would allow The Council to consider the waiver without trying to define exactly what a replication is. The Council clearly stated that if an application did not make it through the application process as a “Fast Track” school, it could still be considered for the regular track. Because of this, The Council members said they feel it is very important that these “Fast Track” applicants “pass muster.”</p> <p>Discussion then turned to the important purpose the planning year serves, the importance of transparency in replication, and the need for a rubric to expose potential issues or a lack of transparency from the applicants. Mr. Betterton added that the issue would be verifying all of the information from the application. Ms. Turner added that conversion schools may not have used state testing and, therefore, may not have ABC type data to submit. If they did not, what should the Council then consider?</p> <p>It was added that a question should be added about whether or not the school</p>
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has been or is currently under investigation. Ms. Crumpler agreed that they could ask: “Are you under investigation by any group or are your teachers under investigation?” Regarding private conversions, Ms. Crumpler told the NC Charter School Advisory Council that they would have to be sure that their rubric is created such that it would give them this type of information in a different way. Then she reminded them that private schools do not have to comply with federal laws, IDEA, state finances, Sunshine Laws, etc. and, therefore, these schools would need more training.

Mr. Betterton suggested that one of the options might be that during the interview process the Council could cancel the faster application process and recommend they go forward as a regular application with a planning year. Ms. Turner said that Mr. Mitchell has created a draft rubric. Mr. Maimone added that he does not feel a planning year would hurt anyone. Mr. Mitchell asked The Council not to look at the label but just to look at the rubric. Ms. Turner stated that it was important that the rubric be set up for exactly what they are looking for. Ms. Adams stressed again that it is important to know if the school or anyone at the school is under investigation. Dr. Markley suggested that they request an accreditation report from conversion schools as it might be the only evidence they have.

Ms. Turner said there were two things the sub-committee was working on. The first was an annual school review. She added that if the Office of Charter Schools did annual reviews on all of the charter schools, then when a charter applied for a renewal, that information would be included also and be reflected in the design of the rubric. The scores could indicate schools needing help.

The second thing Ms. Turner said they were working on was a renewal rubric to facilitate the process of renewal and also to allow some schools to get a fast track renewal because of their track record. She said the sub-committee feels the renewal rubric is not needed at this time because everything is going to change.

Dr. Markley asked what the rubric would be based on. Mr. Betterton asked what else would be involved and was told, “finances.” It was added that this is not a high need now because so few schools are up for renewal this next year.

Mr. Betterton suggested that the points be put in the boxes rather than at the top. Ms. Crumpler spoke and said that she does not like points because the end result does not always reflect the overall picture. She said she feels subjective judgments are better. Mr. Betterton stated there were other things that have to be added so that everything would be in the renewal document. Mr. Norcross added that it needs to be simple with “Yes” or “No” responses. Ms. Crumpler said if they do this, it must be verifiable things that do not require subjectivity. Ms. Turner said the suggestions were clear cut. Ms. Crumpler suggested that Mary Watson and Philip Price review the document.

	<p>Ms. Turner said the policy committee needs to set up another meeting.</p> <p>Mr. Maimone stated that The Council should be able to make recommendations to the SBE about whether or not it would be appropriate for schools to use regional people for dealing with state exams rather than their assigned testing coordinators. They said they wanted guidance from Laura as to whether the NC Advisory Council could ask for onsite testing, but it was added that it may be a moot issue with going to state wide on-line testing.</p>
Next Meeting	<p>Mr. Betterton asked to confirm their next meeting dates for Tuesday and Wednesday, April 24th and 25th. After discussion, it was agreed to use those two dates and start at 9:00 a.m. but Mr. Betterton said he would confirm as the date got closer.</p>
Automation Report – Paul Norcross & Julien Alhour (from DPI)	<p>Mr. Norcross told the NC Charter School Advisory Council members that they would need an NCID number to access the application. He directed them to: https://Schools.nc.gov/charterapp. Using the computer, Julien Alhour walked the NC Advisory Council members through how to access the application and answered questions as he went through the screens. He said that all applicants would have to have NCID's to complete their applications on line and the directions for getting that would be on the opening screen.</p> <p>Mr. Norcross added that council members could now get on line to try to flush out potential issues with the goal being that it would be up and running by March 1, 2012. Mr. Norcross gave the overview of the document and stated that green would indicate an area was complete, red would indicate incomplete, and black would indicate that an area had not been touched.</p> <p>The validation page was reviewed, and Mr. Norcross asked Mr. Alhour if individual parts could be sent to a printer. Mr. Alhour said that the applicants must have at least one page done to be able to validate. Mr. Norcross added that 500 words is a quarter of a page; 2,000 words is a full page at Arial 10pt.</p> <p>Mr. Norcross suggest that under “Proposed grades served” 13th be eliminated because it shows up several times. Mr. Norcross said the applicant's mission statement would be limited to 750 characters, which is slightly less than ½ of a page. Under “Governance,” Mr. Norcross said they needed to add a hot button to statutes. Mr. Alhour reminded everyone that issues and bugs are being corrected based on recommendations of Mr. Norcross, staff from OCS, and legal counsel</p> <p>It was noted that applicants can submit multiple pdf files if they want and that more attachment fields have been added. Mr. Alhour says they are still working on additions. There was discussion on the length for various sections. The comment was made that after the applications are all in, they can realign length</p>

	<p>based on industry average. Mr. Norcross added that legal counsel recommended not limiting section lengths on this first go round until they get a norm. Ms. Crumpler clarified by saying that it is possible that certain schools might need more space to clarify issues such as a school proposing single gender admissions.</p> <p>Though the goal is to have this automated application on line and live by March first for applications for the 2013-14 school year, the committee recognizes that not all applications will be done on line for this pass.</p> <p>There was discussion that when the application is printed, the questions and the answers all look alike. The question was asked if it is possible to change this. Ms. Crumpler said they could change the question appearance by making it bold, but Julien Alhour added that the developer was getting nervous with all of the changes as their department was short handed and had other projects they were working on that had deadlines too. Mr. Norcross added that April 13th is the due date, and they need to get the rubric together. When Mr. Norcross said that this was just phase one of the application, Mr. Alhour said that the only thing his department has been scheduled for has been the application conversion to online. Mr. Norcross stressed that the Council needed to get the rubric on line. Mr. Alhour said they have done this with other groups but this was not put to them to do. Mr. Norcross asked if it could be ready by April 14th. Mr. Alhour, said it was not on their radar yet. Mr. Norcross thanked Mr. Alhour for the cooperation of their team.</p>
<p>Enrollment and Grade Expansion</p>	<p>Mr. Landry asked about enrollment and grade expansion on their agenda and where item #3 came from (which dealt with LEA Impact statements). Mr. Betterton said that it was part of a discussion from the last SBE meeting and they were asking the NC Charter School Advisory Council to think about it and discuss. Mr. Hawkes said that he felt strongly that the Advisory Council should not get into this argument because it was a political issue. He added that dealing with this would change Senate Bill 8 and that the SBE needs to do the hard work on this issue. Mr. Betterton commented that whenever an issue regarding charter schools comes up, the Council needs to be involved rather than on the outside. He went on to clarify that he did not say the Council would be making the decision just that they should be involved.</p> <p>Mr. Hill addressed the Council's concern by reiterating that every issue is political. He explained the SBE's desire for the Council to share their views in shaping this decision. He went on to remind them that they are an advisory body that the State Board respects their input. He said that the law still requires they look at local LEA impact statements, and the SBE is asking for recommendations. Mr. Hawkes again emphasized the Council to avoid getting into the political end. Mr. Hill concluded by saying that if the Council wants a voice, they must speak up. If not, then they will not have a voice; so he wanted them to consider this further.</p>

	<p>Ms. Adams stated that the LEA impact statement is important, and may lead the Council to not forward an application to the State Board. Mr. Hawkes believed the SBE should pay attention to that info. He said the Council should only look at the merit of the application. Dr. Landry added that a new charter school can impact the LEA and if a charter can come in and improve things for these students, then they should be able to look at that. Mr. Betterton added that is why he feels the Council should look at it. Mr. Norcross said he would like a policy statement from the full Council about their opinion.</p> <p>Mr. Betterton asked for a couple of individuals to volunteer to serve on a subcommittee to discuss this issue. Mr. Hill reminded them that there is a possibility if they look at these LEA impact statements that they could come up with a recommendation, and added that he is hoping that the traditional public schools and charter schools will be able to learn from each other.</p> <p>Mr. Hawkes said that he would like to remind The Council that Currituck County Schools supported the Water's Edge application. He wondered how much that statement influenced their opinion. Further, if a county like Durham said 40% of their buildings were empty, is that sufficient to not move an application forward? Ms. Crumpler said LEA impact statements could show that something that is going on and then gave the example of fraudulent letters of reference being given in one of the applications. She recommended a middle ground. Mr. Hawkes requested the issue be tabled. Mr. Hill stated that the SBE has asked that the NC Charter School Advisory Council consider coming up with feedback on this issue. Mr. Betterton added that it is important they look at it so if it does come up, The Council will not have to start from scratch.</p> <p>A discussion followed as to if they created a committee to work on this, who would be willing to serve. Mr. Markley agreed to be on the team. Ms. Adams agreed to be on the team. Mr. Hawkes said he refused because it puts his soul at risk. Ms. Crumpler reminded them that this would be a committee to look at impact statements for LEA's and create processes and guidelines. She reminded them that it would have to be a public meeting.</p>
Policy TCS 3	<p>Mr. Maimone then brought up Policy TCS 3, which will be discussed Wednesday. He felt that these types of things should be reviewed by the Council before being submitted to the SBE. Mr. Hill clarified the process for adoption of the policy, and Mr. Maimone stated that he feels this should have come to Council first. Ms. Crumpler clarified that charter school requests for changes to their charters have always been sent to OCS to distinguish whether changes were small changes and not things that need to go to the SBE. This policy would streamline the process for all charter schools.</p> <p>Mr. Norcross stated that Council members might not be receiving SBE communications and should be added to all of the SBE communication lists. Mr. Hill stated he would add the council to his mailing list.</p>

Adjournment	Mr. Norcross motioned to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Markley seconded. Unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 12:39.

Minutes submitted by staff of The Office of Charter Schools.