

Minutes of the North Carolina Charter School Review Board

State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction

January 12, 2026

9 AM

| Attendance – CSRБ Members | |
|---|---|
| Jeremy Wall- (nonvoting) Dr. Rita Haire Dr. John Eldridge - Absent Eric Guckian Hilda Parlér Dr. Shelly Shope – Remote | Eric Sanchez Bruce Friend Lindalyn Kakadelis – Remote After Lunch Todd Godbey Gerald McNair Stephen Gay |
| 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 <i>Teacher/Principal of Year</i> Lindsay Phillips – TOY - Remote Jake Wilson – POY |

Recording of Jan. 12 CSRБ Meeting: [Day 1- January NC Charter Schools Review Board - Jan. 12, 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 January 2026 Meeting

Second: Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

Motion: Hilda Parlér moved to approve December 2025 minutes.

Second: Dr. Rita Haire

Vote: Unanimous

Passed Failed

January Charter Schools Review Board Meeting

Charter Application Amendments: Julie Whetzel, OCS Consultant

- HYPE Leadership Academy (RTO) – 2nd Delay

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Julie Wetzel (Office of Charter Schools)** presented that Hype Leadership Academy is requesting a second delay to open in August 2027 instead of fall 2026, originally scheduled for August 2025
- The school was unable to secure a suitable facility in Hoke County; negotiations with a church fell through after the congregation voted not to lease the facility
- **Board Chair** confirmed the school is still working with North Carolina Educational Solutions (NCES) and the Romine Group, which has committed \$300,000 in financial support
- **CSRБ Member** raised concerns about NCES being a new nonprofit without a website or established financial history, despite being referenced two years ago
- **CSRБ discussion** centered on the pattern of delays becoming standard practice, with concerns that four years from approval results in significantly different circumstances (board changes, enrollment projections, budgets) than originally approved
- The proposed enrollment chart shows a slight increase of 10 students per grade level through the first five years

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to grant HYPE Leadership Academy’s request for a 2nd delay

Second: Stephen Gay

Vote: Unanimous

● Passed Failed

Community School of Digital and Visual Arts

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Jenna Cook (Office of Charter Schools)** reported that the school was granted a three-year renewal with stipulations in 2025 due to concerns about board governance, open meetings compliance, timely posting of board minutes, and late annual audit submissions
- The school has demonstrated improvement: April through November minutes were submitted and posted on time with more detailed content; FY25 annual audit was submitted on time; board members completed required training
- **Board Chair** highlighted that Michael Palmer and Joe Battle, both former chairs, provide steadiness and commitment to the organization
- **Principal** presented current academic reality: D in math and F in reading for 2024, with growth without proficiency being the main issue, particularly in reading comprehension
- **Chief Operating Officer** reported the school closed FY 2024-2025 with a fund balance of \$412,000 but had to revise the budget by 10% due to enrollment decline from 180 to 145 students
- **CSRБ Member concern** was raised about financial sustainability: enrollment dropped 21% in April and now down to 145 (approximately 34% total drop from peak of 220)
- **CSRБ discussion** focused on whether selling the building (\$3.5 million offer price with approximately \$1-2 million in equity) would provide meaningful financial relief given mortgage payments of \$14-17K and potential lease payments of \$15-20K
- **CSRБ Member** noted concern that after being open since 1998, the school should have millions in reserves but projects only \$50-80K remaining by end of year

2026 Charter School Renewal School Business Report: Amanda Fratrick, Business Systems Manager, Office of School Business Services

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Amanda Fratrick (Director of School Business)** explained that financial non-compliance policy has three levels: cautionary (30 days, correctable issues), probationary (serious concerns, monthly state funding payments possible), and disciplinary (most serious, monthly installments required)
- Less than 10% of charter schools statewide are on any level of financial non-compliance at any given time
- **Chair Friend** raised concerns about terminology, noting that "cautionary non-compliance" creates problems for schools with bond holders and banks who react negatively to the word "non-compliance" even when issues are minor
- **Amanda Fratrick** clarified that cautionary status means the school IS non-compliant (e.g., hasn't submitted audit) but can be resolved quickly; once resolved, status is lifted
- Governance non-compliance (also three levels) addresses non-financial law violations such as failing to maintain 50% certified teachers for multiple consecutive years

- **CSRFB discussion** focused on whether cautionary status could be renamed or restructured since it's technically non-compliance but often easily correctable
- Traditional public schools' audit deadline is December 31st while charter schools have October 31st deadline; charter schools that request extensions receive until end of November.

Financial Status of Renewal Schools

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Amanda Fratrick** reported that of 39 schools up for renewal, 34 are not on financial non-compliance, one school (Old Stream Academy 78C) has not yet submitted their audit, and four schools are currently on financial non-compliance
- Financial indicators reviewed include declining ADM, declining revenue, expenditures greater than revenues, negative unassigned fund balance, significant shifts over time, and audit findings
- **Virtual Charter Schools (00A and 00B):** Both have extraordinarily large, unassigned fund balances (\$10 million and \$16 million respectively), likely related to 2023 removal of \$790 cap on local per-pupil transfers
- **Asheville Peak Academy (11F):** On probationary status for internal control deficiencies (spending without invoices); going through audit resolution process and expected to be removed from non-compliance soon
- **Success Institute Charter School (49D):** Negative unassigned fund balance two years in a row, though smaller than last year; increased ADM should result in more funding, but concerns remain about low cash balance and large accounts payable
- **ALA Charlotte (60N):** Most concerning with negative unassigned fund balance equal to 20% of total revenue, growing significantly between years
- **Davidson Charter Academy (29A):** Consistently spending more than revenue despite positive fund balance; expenses exceed revenue even excluding capital outlays
- **Experiential School of Greensboro (41N):** 40% drop in ADM between years, though likely explained by recording a lease liability
- **Rocky Mount Prep Academy (64A):** Declining fund balance not attributable to capital expenditures; multiple audit findings including EC licensure, contracts without required state language, less than 50% licensed teachers, and salary exceptions
- **ALA Coastal (65F):** Several years of expenses exceeding revenue not due to capital outlay
- **Old Mainstream Academy (78C):** Audit not yet received; director's wife has been ill; previous years showed healthy fund balance and increasing ADM

LUNCH

Renewal Voting and Discussion: Ms. Jenna Cook, OCS Consultant

- Jenna Cook presented information regarding the charter school renewal voting process.

10-Year Placements:

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Board discussion** confirmed that these schools meet legislative requirements for automatic 10-year renewal based on performance, financials, and compliance
- **Pioneer Springs Community School:** Board Member requested confirmation that corrective action was resolved; Jenna Cook confirmed all items were closed
- **Bradford Preparatory School:** Jenna Cook confirmed on Friday afternoon that all non-compliance items related to training were closed by the January deadline
- **Old Mainstream Academy:** Motion made to hold vote until February meeting due to audit not yet being submitted; Amanda Fratrick confirmed if they don't submit audit by end of week, cautionary non-compliance letters will be sent, which would disqualify them from 10-year legislative mandate
- **Davidson Charter Academy:** Amanda Fratrick noted expenses exceeding revenues as a concern, though school is not on financial non-compliance
- **Wake Preparatory Academy:** Board Member questioned whether students are primarily from Wake County as originally planned in application, or if comparability should be based on actual enrollment location (Franklin County where school is located)

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to grant the following charter schools a 10-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026:

Clover Garden
New Dimensions School
Davidson Charter Academy
FernLeaf Community Charter School
Pioneer Springs Community School
Telra Institute
Moore Montessori Community School
Kipp Pride College Preparatory
Roxboro Community School
Carolina Charter Academy
Faith Academy Charter School

Second: Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to grant a 10-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026, for Wake Preparatory Academy.

Second: Gerald McNair

Vote: Unanimous (Hilda Parlér recused)

- Passed Failed

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to grant a 10-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026, for Bradford Preparatory School.

Second: Todd Godbey

Vote: Unanimous (Stephen Gay recused)

- Passed Failed

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to grant a 10-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026, for Unity Classical Charter School.

Second: Todd Godbey

Vote: Unanimous (Eric Sanchez recused)

- Passed Failed

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to delay the vote for Old Main STREAM Academy's renewal until February 2026.

Second: Todd Godbey

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

7-Year Placements

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Institute for Development of Young Leaders (IDYL):** Board discussion noted the school's growth exceeded each of the last three years and was only excluded from legislative 10-year criteria because three years ago they were 6 points (not 5) from LEA comparability; strong subgroup data; previously on financial non-compliance cautionary status but has been removed
- **Girls Leadership Academy of Wilmington (GLOW):** Met or exceeded growth each of the prior three years; serves a very specific population; strong subgroup comparability; board did exceptional job presenting
- **Paul R. Brown Leadership Academy:** Mr. Godbey commended the school's turnaround from being last in their county to second; Ms. Kakadelis praised board chair Minnie Price for the remarkable difference in leadership; school was on life support a few years ago but has made miraculous turnaround; Dr. Wray humbly acknowledged that seven years was appropriate when asked
- **Concord Lake Steam Academy:** Previously received two 5-year charters; met or exceeded growth 3 out of 3 years; enrollment increased from 585 to 869; comparable to

LEA 2 out of 3 years (three years ago was 2.5 points away); audit findings for EC teacher licensure have been addressed

- **Gate City Charter Academy:** Met growth 2 out of 3 years; comparable to LEA 2 out of 3 years; subgroup data performs well; not currently low performing
- **Success Institute Charter School:** On financial non-compliance cautionary status (negative unassigned fund balance, expenditures exceeding revenue, 10% ADM decrease); however, exceeded or met growth 3 out of 3 years; came out of low performing status; enrollment declined due to building sharing situation and rumors of building sale (currently at 105 students); **Mr. Gay** noted the school has been around 25 years, treading water but maintaining good relationship with Statesville schools and community support; **CSRБ concern** raised about declining enrollment and trending down compared to themselves and LEA; school has long-term understanding with Big Brothers Big Sisters for facility

Motion: Todd Godbey moved to grant Paul R. Brown Leadership Academy a 10-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Dr. Rita Haire

Vote: Unanimous

- **Passed** Failed

Motion: Dr. Rita Haire moved to grant Concord Lake STEAM Academy a 10-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

- **Passed** Failed

Motion: Todd Godbey moved to grant The Institute for the Development of Young Leaders a 10-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Eric Guckian

Vote: Unanimous (Eric Sanchez recused)

- **Passed** Failed

Motion: Hilda Parlér moved to grant Gate City Charter Academy a 7-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Gerald McNair

Vote: Unanimous

- **Passed** Failed

Motion: Lindalyn Kakadelis moved to grant Success Institute Charter School a 7-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to grant Girls Leadership Academy of Wilmington a 10-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Lindalyn Kakadelis

Vote: Unanimous (Todd Godbey and Eric Sanchez recused)

- Passed Failed

5-Year Placements

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Commonwealth High School and Stewart Creek High School:** Both are alternative schools on dropout recovery/prevention model; **Chair Friend** noted guidelines aren't set up for alternative school comparison; both highly effective in their work; graduated over 1,000 students who likely wouldn't have graduated otherwise; serve students who are parents themselves or need to work jobs; **CSRБ consensus** that these schools meet critical needs with no other options available for students; both selected Option C alternative model measuring persistence, achievement, and growth; have rolling admissions allowing students to enter/leave throughout year
- **Cross Creek Charter School:** Met or exceeded growth 3 out of 3 years; comparability barely within threshold all three years; low performing this past year; **CSRБ discussion** on whether to move from 5 to 7 years given consistent growth and comparability close to threshold; **Ms. Kakadelis** noted consistency in applying grace for schools close to comparison numbers; **Chair Friend and Mr. Godbey** expressed concern about trend appearing to move downward and current low-performing D rating despite growth
- **American Leadership Academy Coastal:** One year of comparability, only met growth one year, not low performing; financial concerns noted with expenses exceeding revenues year-over-year but not on financial non-compliance; enrollment growth trending in right direction
- **Union Day School:** Teaching students with 10 different languages according to presentation; enrollment had slight decline then continued growth; comparability and subgroup comparability fit guidelines well
- **Raleigh Oak Charter School:** Asked for 7 years; last renewal was 3 years; currently low performing with D rating; did not meet growth; dropped 9 points in comparability this past year; enrollment increased significantly from 355 to 573; **CSRБ discussion** noted all metrics trending in wrong direction (met to not met growth, C to D, performing well to low performing); **Ms. Kakadelis** noted school goes after grants and suggested 5-year term would be more appropriate; this is school's first year as low performing

Motion: Dr. Shelly Shope moved to grant Commonwealth High School and Stewart Creek High School a 10-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Lindalyn Kakadelis

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

Motion: Lindalyn Kakadelis moved to grant Crosscreek Charter School a 7-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Gerald McNair

Vote: 5:5 Tie

Nay: Bruce Friend, Hilda Parlér, Todd Godbey, Eric Sanchez, Eric Guckian

- Passed Failed

Motion: Todd Godbey moved to grant Crosscreek Charter School a 5-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

Motion: Todd Godbey moved to grant American Leadership Academy-Coastal a 5-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Eric Guckian

Vote: Unanimous (Hilda Parlér recused)

- Passed Failed

Motion: Hilda Parlér moved to grant Union Day School a 5-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Eric Sanchez

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to grant Raleigh Oak Charter School a 5-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Dr. Rita Haire

Vote: 9:1

Nay: Eric Guckian

- Passed Failed

3-Year Placements

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Asheville Peak Academy: Chair Friend** initially suggested considering 5 years based on exceeding growth last 2 years and strong subgroup data; **Heather Cox (EC Section Chief)** reported school has outstanding EC non-compliance since 2022 (Indicator 11: 60% in 2022-23, 0% in 2023-24, preliminary 10% in 2024-25); school has virtual EC staff and director which presents challenges; **Nicole Sinclair (EC Assistant Director)** explained services provided onsite via computer but students not consistently logging on; vendor changed last year after previous compliance issues; **CSRБ concern** about systemic issue with multiple years of non-compliance despite office support
- **Thomas Academy (Alternative School):** Serves grades 6-12 in Columbus County; **Ms. Kakadelis** advocated for 7-year term noting school works with group homes, maintains school rating, and comparability definition doesn't fit alternative model well; serves 100% African-American population in targeted housing areas; offers 4-year college paid by donors for all graduates; **CSRБ consensus** this is very unique school doing difficult work; audit findings for EC teacher licensure and concussion forms
- **Next Generation Academy:** Previously granted 3-year renewal with stipulations in 2023; fulfilled all stipulations; met or exceeded growth 3 out of 3 years; enrollment continues to increase; previously on financial non-compliance probationary but removed completely after FY25 audit; comparability not quite at LEA level; subgroup data pretty good except one category; enrollment at 87 according to Infinite Campus; **CSRБ discussion** noted things trending positive and school would likely be back soon anyway if issues continue
- **Summit Creek Academy:** Comparable to most local districts 2 out of 3 years; met or exceeded growth 2 of 3 years; serves ED population; across subgroups students outperform district peers overall in proficiency for 3 consecutive years; ED and EL students achieve higher proficiency rates compared to peers across state in last 2 years; compiled with state and federal laws throughout charter term
- **Experiential School of Greensboro:** Have not met growth for last 3 years; comparable or in ballpark of LEA; noted by school business as having 40% ADM drop
- **Irredell Charter Academy of Arts and Sciences:** Has not met growth for last 3 years; fairly comparable to local LEA; feels like placement is correct
- **American Leadership Academy Charlotte:** Met growth each of last 3 years; moved from F to D; enrollment continues to be strong at 365; serves higher low-income poverty population than local LEA; moved from cautionary to probationary financial non-compliance based on FY25 audit due to growing negative unassigned fund balance; **Mr. Gay** noted Charter One EMO has deep pockets so not worried about financial side; **Mr. Godbey** raised concerns about financial escalation despite EMO backing, two of last three years with F rating, and suggested 3 years with stipulations instead of 5; school recently moved and got stable location; **Chair Friend** expressed concern about low academic performance (consistently in 20s behind district, CLP for 3 of 3 years) and significant financial non-compliance despite EMO backing
- **Rocky Mount Preparatory Academy: Jenna Cook** reported school did not meet stipulation requiring growth 2 out of 3 years (only exceeded growth this past year);

compliance concerns with school nutrition and digital learning; significant audit findings including incorrect employee pay rates, EC teachers without required licensure, contract without indebtedness sentence, and more than half teachers not licensed; school was notified about 50% teacher licensure requirement in April 2025; **CSRБ extensive discussion** about this being potentially fourth consecutive 3-year renewal; **Chair Friend** noted concerns about 800+ student enrollment with such poor performance; school has not completed required charter application amendments since April; school nutrition non-compliance for insufficient meal counts, missing meal components, incomplete production records; digital learning reported minimal participation in required Infinite Campus training modules; **Ms. Kakadelis** raised concerns about assumption possibility given 800+ students; **CSRБ consensus** school needs to return in February to address questions about unmet stipulations and ongoing compliance issues before renewal decision

- **Classical Charter Schools of Wilmington:** Met growth each of last 3 years; off on 5% comparability metric; subgroup data concerns in a couple categories; serves targeted neighborhoods that are 100% African American according to charter application; **Ms. Kakadelis** advocated for 7-year citing statute change in 2023 for schools serving targeted subgroups. Ms. Kakadelis noted their charter application stated “the targeted population for Classical Charter Schools of Wilmington is students in grades K-5 who live in the Wilmington housing units of Jervay, Hillcrest, Houston Moore, and Greenfield Village. According to the 2010 US Census Tracts, there are a total of 889 children aged 0 to 10. By the time the school opens in 2013, 295 of these children would be eligible to apply for the 228 slots for the first year. Of the 295 children, 100% of them are African American.” African-American reading proficiency at 46.4% compared to nearby schools at 29.2%; very small student population (130 students); **CSRБ discussion** about whether statute applies given application language about neighborhoods rather than specific racial demographics.

Motion: Hilda Parlér moved to grant Ashville PEAK Academy a 3-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Todd Godbey

Vote: Unanimous

- **Passed** Failed

Motion: Todd Godbey moved to grant Thomas Academy a 7-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Lindalyn Kakadelis

Vote: Unanimous

- **Passed** Failed

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to grant Next Generation Academy a 5-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Gerald McNair

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

Motion: Todd Godbey moved to grant The Experiential School of Greensboro a 3-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Eric Sanchez

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

Motion: Gerald McNair moved to grant Summit Creek Academy a 5-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

Motion: Eric Sanchez moved to grant Iredell Charter Academy of Arts & Sciences a 3-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Gerald McNair

Vote: Unanimous (Lindalyn Kakadelis recused)

- Passed Failed

Motion: Stephen Gay moved to grant American Leadership Academy-Charlotte a 5-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Lindalyn Kakadelis

Vote: 3:6 (Hilda Parlér recused)

Nay: Dr. Rita Haire, Todd Godbey, Eric Sanchez, Dr. Shelley Shope, Eric Guckian, Gerald McNair

- Passed Failed

Motion: Todd Godbey moved to grant American Leadership Academy-Charlotte a 3-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Stephen Gay

Vote: Unanimous (Hilda Parlér recused)

- Passed Failed

Motion: Gerald McNair moved to postpone the renewal vote until February for Rocky Mount Preparatory

Second: Stephen Gay

Vote: Unanimous (Eric Sanchez recused)

- Passed Failed

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to grant Classical Charter Schools of Wilmington a 5-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Eric Guckian

Vote: 9:1 Nay – Lindalyn Kakadelis

- Passed Failed

Z.E.C.A. School of Arts and Technology - Three-Year Renewal w/Stipulations

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- School was granted 3-year renewal with stipulations in 2023 after board voted to close but state board reversed and gave 3 years with stipulations
- **Jenna Cook** confirmed school completed all objective stipulations; however, one stipulation was no financial compliance warnings and school is currently on cautionary status for ADM drop greater than 10%
- School has met or exceeded growth over last 3 years
- Enrollment hovers around 90-100 students; currently at 87 per Infinite Campus (close to 80-student threshold)
- Comparability not quite at LEA level; some subgroup concerns
- **CSRБ discussion** noted enrollment drop was partially attributed to board's previous closure vote discussion destabilizing the school
- **Chair Friend** noted adding stipulations wouldn't address main concern of enrollment drop; if drop continues, school will appear before board again soon regardless of stipulations

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to grant ZECA School of Arts & Technology a 3-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

Virtual Charter Schools - Five-Year Renewals

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Chair Friend** explained that legislation passed two summers ago allowed charter schools to operate virtual remote academies similar to traditional public schools; legislation established 5-year renewal terms for all remote academies
- **Steven Walker (Legal Counsel)** confirmed statute interpretation: remote charter academies receive 5-year renewal term with up-or-down vote (not variable like traditional renewal statute)

- Both NC Virtual Academy and NC Cyber Academy have been operating for a decade under pilot program
- **CSRB discussion** noted guidelines used for traditional schools don't align well with virtual schools; may need separate renewal guidelines for remote academies in future
- **Eric Sanchez** raised concern about extraordinarily large, unassigned fund balances (\$16 million for NC Cyber Academy, \$10 million for NC Virtual Academy) and questioned where money goes and why it's not being used to improve academic performance
- **Mr. Godbey** noted concern about approving 5-year renewals for schools that have been continually low performing for all 10 years and have not met growth except one school for one year
- **Rita Haire** questioned whether families understand quality of education being delivered or if they need flexibility/schedule; raised question about actual core student group that stays ongoing versus high fluidity
- **Chair Friend** cautioned against apples-to-oranges comparison; noted these schools often have high fluidity of students arriving at various points throughout year, sometimes from other schools recommending transfer; some states give alternative designation because of when students arrive and how far behind academically
- **Mr. Godbey** noted ambiguity in every conversation about these schools due to different enrollment types and fluid nature; expressed frustration at not knowing what board is voting for
- When asked if renewal term could be different than 5 years, **Steven Walker** confirmed legislation is interpreted as 5 years or nothing

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to grant NC Cyber Academy and North Carolina Virtual Academy a 5-year renewal term starting July 1, 2026

Second: Eric Guckian

Vote: 7:3 Nay: Hilda Parlér, Todd Godbey, Gerald McNair

- Passed Failed

Director's Updates: Ms. Ashley Logue, OCS Director

Ready to Open (RTO) Process Improvements

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Ashley Logue** presented proposals for improving RTO process after nearly one year of review; office has already implemented improvements including increased technical assistance, facility/enrollment check-ins, reduced submissions from 135 to 79, and new shared drive system
- Office held public workshop on January 5th to gather stakeholder feedback; received some feedback primarily from operators and those working with RTO boards
- **Proposal #1 - Phased RTO Presentations:** RTO schools deemed at risk of opening successfully would present virtually in May (new requirement); all schools meeting or exceeding standards would not appear in June (existing practice); schools not meeting

expectations would appear in June (existing practice); provides early warning system before schools are too close to opening with staff hired and enrollments committed

- **Proposal #2 - Revised Minimum Guidelines:** Enrollment would use tiered approach (85-100% = strong readiness, 75-84% = moderate readiness, under 75% = not ready but board may consider extenuating factors like conservative break-even budget, contingency funding, substantial cash reserves, credible growth plan, management company backing, or facility cost advantages); break-even budget best practice recommended at minimum 100 students (not 80) unless school has supporting documentation; facility reports would be more thorough with CO timelines, inspection status, construction status, traffic/DOT status; RTO progress reports replaced with more detailed readiness reports
- **Chair Friend** questioned why board vote needed if these are best practices; **Ashley Logue** explained RTO tends to elicit feedback from outside forces so wanted board approval
- **Mr. Godbey** suggested May presentations should be in-person not virtual if school is at risk; noted feedback was that finding board members is difficult but if at risk of not opening, they should show up in person
- **Mr. Gay** asked about better definition of what constitutes enrollment; **Ashley Logue** explained office now conducts one-on-one virtual meetings to review enrollment paperwork and what schools are collecting
- **Mr. Godbey** questioned 100 being "best practice" rather than "not less than" given that schools expecting 90 kids won't get 90
- **Chair Friend** noted if school is building for 450 kids and \$40 million into it, break-even budget of 100 is pointless: same issue as break-even of 10 kids
- **Eric Sanchez** asked about deploying successful school leaders as mentors to help RTO schools; **Ashley Logue** noted groups like Great Schools NC provide mentorship programs and office has implemented current charter school leaders presenting at planning sessions who offer direct contact information
- **Chair Friend** suggested this is starting point; board needs to look at entire process from pre-application through RTO to help charters be more successful; referenced pre-application boot camps that helped prepare applicants before even downloading application
- **Mr. Godbey** noted lessons learned from past suggest board might need to give year delay to school even if not requested when passion is no longer viable strategy
- **CSRB discussion** about holding schools more accountable in application process to catch red flags earlier (needs assessment, marketing, budget) rather than discovering issues in May when enrollment is at 72 students

Motion: Ms. Hilda Parlér moved to approve the updated Ready to Open process as presented.

Second: Dr. Rita Haire

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

Adjourn:

3:00 pm