Minutes of the North Carolina Charter Schools Review Board

Remote

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

Thursday July 23, 2025

9:00 AM

Attendance – CSAB Members	
Jeremy Wall (nonvoting) Dr. Rita Haire Dr. John Eldridge - Absent Hilda Parlér Dr. Shelly Shope Eric Guckian - Absent	Eric Sanchez - Absent Bruce Friend Lindalyn Kakadelis Todd Godbey Gerald McNair - Absent Stephen Gay
Attendance – Other	
Office of Charter Schools Ashley Baquero, Director Joseph Letterio, Consultant Nicky Niewinski, Asst. Director Jenna Cook, Consultant Melanie Rackley, Consultant - Absent Dr. Brandi Gill, Consultant Dr. Natasha Norins, Consultant - Absent Julie Whetzel, Consultant	*CSRB Attorney* Steven Walker - Absent

Livestream Recording: Special Called Meeting of the NC Charter Schools Review Board - (Virtual) - July 23, 2026

Call To Order

Pledge of Allegiance and Salute to NC Flag: Mr. Bruce Friend

Mission and Ethics Statement: Mr. Bruce Friend

- Mission and Ethics Statement read by Mr. Friend. No conflicts were declared by any board members.

Approval of the Agenda

Motion: Hilda Parlér moved for approval of the agenda
Second: Stephen Gay
Vote: Unanimous
☒ Passed ☐ Failed

<u>Special Called Item: Charlotte Secondary School Amendment Request - Relocation over 10-Miles:</u>
Julie Whetzel, OCS Consultant

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Ms. Whetzel** presented the amendment request on behalf of Charlotte Secondary School (CSS), a Mecklenburg County public charter school serving approximately 156 students in grades 6–12 since 2007. The school recently lost its facility and secured a sublease with Movement Freedom at 2701 Freedom Drive — approximately 12 miles away — triggering the legislative requirement for CSRB approval of any relocation exceeding 10 miles. Ms. Whetzel noted the arrangement is expected to reduce annual facility costs by approximately $143,600 (from $669,500 to $525,900). She further noted that Charlotte Secondary remains under a **financial non-compliance determination**, which is a separate matter from a prior single audit resolution that has been resolved.
- **Ms. Parlér** asked Ms. Miller (Head of School) for an explanation of what occurred with the original landlord and whether the school left in good standing. Ms. Miller explained the background of the facility loss: a $1.2 million upfit loan at 9% interest signed in 2012–2013 became unsustainable over time. After unsuccessful attempts to renegotiate with the landlord across three years, the landlord ultimately asked the school to vacate. An **active lawsuit** is pending between the school and the former landlord, with the school's attorney (Ray Ashburg, Avantis law firm) having identified approximately 13 alleged breaches of the original lease by the landlord.
- **Dr. Haire** raised several substantive concerns and questions: the demographic difference between the two schools (CSS approximately 46% Black and 35% Hispanic; Movement Freedom approximately 88% Black and 7% Hispanic); scheduling and shared-space logistics for 13 combined grade levels (K–12) sharing a gym and cafeteria; the school's continued $5 million capital campaign; a $250,000 grant line in the budget requiring the school to roughly double its prior year's donation intake; the status of the pending lawsuit and financial exposure; the school's continued four-day instructional week and its impact on student contact time; the school's **declining academic performance** (lower overall performance in 2022–23 than in prior years, with no post-COVID recovery); and the status of the interim board chair and board stabilization. Dr. Haire stated her personal intention to support the motion but urged the school to prioritize exiting low-performing status.
- **Ms. Kakadelis** asked whether CSS planned to recruit from the Movement Freedom community given proximity, and whether there was room to accommodate enrollment growth beyond the current cap of 176 students per the charter. KTT (Movement Schools CEO) confirmed physical space could likely accommodate up to 176 but could not specify a higher maximum without further calculation. Ms. Kakadelis also expressed support for a potential memorandum of understanding prioritizing Movement Freedom rising students for CSS enrollment slots.
- **Dr. Haire** and another board member both flagged concerns about the sublease agreement, specifically an unexecuted **Exhibit B** (Shared Gym Operating Agreement) and lease language indicating that CSS (as subtenant) would be responsible for 50% of additional rent costs — including real estate taxes, insurance, common area maintenance, utilities, and repairs — with respect to the building and property, which Dr. Haire encouraged the school to have its attorney

review carefully before signing. Ms. Miller confirmed the lease had been received the day prior and was already under attorney review.

Motion: Stephen Gay moved that the board approve Charlotte Secondary Schools request to relocate over 10-miles.
Second: Ms. Lindalyn Kakadelis

Result: Motion passed unanimously (7-0)

Motion: Ms. Hilda Parlér moved to adjourn

Vote: Approved unanimously

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:55 AM