

April 15, 2021

**MINUTES OF THE**  
**UTAH STATE CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD MEETING**

Thursday, April 15, 2021  
[www.youtube.com/utahscsb](http://www.youtube.com/utahscsb)

**A[[RPVED**

**Members Present:**

Chair DeLaina Tonks (\*refrains from voting, unless otherwise noted)  
Vice Chair Bryan Bowles  
Member Cynthia Phillips  
Member Krystle Bassett  
Member Michelle Smith  
Member Erik Olsen  
Member Stephanie Speicher

**Staff Present:**

Jennifer Lambert  
William Evans  
Assistant Attorney General David Jones  
Amber Hellstrom  
Stewart Okobia  
Greg Connell  
Marie Steffensen  
James Madsen  
Jenna Magnetti  
Robert Kohutek  
Smriti Dhakal  
Andrew Vardas-Doane  
Liz Bunker

**Others Present:**

Matt Hymas (USBE), Jonathan Hafen (Tuacahn), Karren Pyfer (UMS), Chris Wright (UMS), Charles Kavanaugh (UMS, Tim Own (UMS),

**Call to Order**

Chair Tonks called the meeting to order at 10:06 AM.

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### **Board Chair Report**

Chair Tonks noted that this an electronic meeting due to Covid and thanked staff, participants, and board members.

Vice Chair Bowles shared a painting and the story behind it, which illustrates his step-father's farm where the trees faded over time; which is not how the farm looked, but the way the artist desired; describing a metaphor of painting our own lives the way we would like them to be.

Vice Chair Tonks noted that Erik Olsen has officially been sworn in as the newest member of the State Charter School Board, then congratulated Beehive Science & Technology Academy as Utah Best of State 2021 winners for: 1) Best Principal, 2) Best Support Personnel, 3) Best Public School K-12, and 4) Best Charter School.

### **Executive Director Report**

Executive Director Lambert had Ms. Marie Steffensen report on her findings as being liaison to the Charter School Readiness Board and noted an MOU with DWS and USBE for testing and pre-school component being added to the Data Gateway, and score retrieval for kindergarteners, early childhood program grants.

Executive Director Lambert congratulated Jeff Bossard of Itineris Early College High School for being awarded as the Employee of the Month of State Charter School Board Authorized Schools for April 2021, then updated the board on progress on equity resolution.

### **Consent Calendar**

*A) March 4, 2021 Minutes, B) Monthly Financial Report, C) Amendment to Exhibit A: St. George Academy, D) Amendment to Bylaw: Legacy Preparatory Academy, E) Waiver Amendment: Itineris Early College High School, F) Providence Hall Credit Enhancement Certification*

### **Motion**

Member Smith moved, and Member Krystle Basset seconded, "to adopt the consent calendar." The motion carried unanimously.

### **School Spotlight: Bridge Elementary**

Mr. William Evans discussed the amazing change Ms. Lani Rounds is implementing at the school where every student has one-on-one time with teachers and members of staff, offering full-day kindergarten, before and after school care free to the community; providing breakfast, lunch, and after school snacks to students.

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## **Tuacahn High School for the Performing Arts**

### *Request to Enter VSIP*

Mr. Greg Connell, and representatives of Tuacahn High for the Performing Arts (THS) presented, noting that THS is requesting permission to enter into the Voluntary School Improvement Process (or VSIP). Mr. Connell discussed the context of the school and its relationship to the Tuacahn Center for the Arts (TCA) 501(c)(3) tax exempt non-profit foundation, location, mission and vision, grades served, enrollment, 2020 Financial Audit results, SY2019 RISE data, complaints SCSB staff received in February 2021, composition of governing board having members on both THS and TCA boards, importance of school autonomy and not getting involved in HR matters, issuance of a Notice of Concern (NOC) from SCSB staff, proposed resolution of to giving the school to another 501(c)(3) entity created by the school community, current law only allowing gifting of a charter to another high-performing charter school or district via VSIP, desire to continue with process as is and petition the legislature for a future provision to allow the charter to be gifted to a 501(c)(3) of the community. Transferring of assets, needing new location, transferring of governance and ceasing affiliation with TCA, and needing a new name was also discussed.

Chair Hafen disclosed that he is friends with SCSB Member Erik Olson.

### **Motion**

Vice Chair Bowles moved, and Member Phillips seconded, “that we approve, at this point, both the opportunity to enter the VSIP process for this school setting and simultaneously that we approve the opportunity to amend their charter as we heard discussed here today as well, both of those options, requesting that the staff work with the school to determine and implement all of the steps of either process that is determined to be the best for this school moving forward in its evolution.” The motion carried unanimously with the following votes:

- Member Bowles—Yes
- Member Phillips—Yes
- Member Smith—Yes
- Member Bassett—Yes
- Member Speicher—Yes
- Member Olson—Yes

### **Discussion to the Motion**

Appropriateness of approving amendment to charter agreement at this point was discussed.

## **Utah Mountain School**

### *Readiness to Open*

Ms. Marie Steffensen and Mr. Stewart Okobia presented, discussing context, the school’s mission and vision, lack of enrollment, inability to certify school with current data; academic, governance, and finance issues; and R277-552-3 and expiration of authorization.

Representatives of Utah Mountain School responded to concerns and questions from board members about enrollment, real estate, compensation, deadlines, process, and academic plans.

### **Motion**

Member Phillips moved, and Vice Chair Bowles seconded, “that we encourage UMS to continue to enroll students through June in hopes that we may be able to certify them as a viable school, but with the

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understanding that at that time we may not be able to certify them if their enrollment isn't appropriate, and we may take action to disallow the opening of that school." The motion failed with the following votes:

- Member Bowles—No
- Member Phillips—No
- Member Smith—No
- Member Bassett—No
- Member Speicher—No
- Member Olson—No

### **Motion**

Member Smith moved, and Member Phillips seconded, "that we direct staff to continue to monitor the progress of Utah Mountain School and report back to us at the May meeting and also direct staff to not take action on the certifications until we have had a chance to consider their reporting in May and June." The motion carried unanimously with the following votes:

- Member Bowles—Yes
- Member Phillips—Yes
- Member Smith—Yes
- Member Bassett—Yes
- Member Speicher—Yes
- Member Olson—Yes

### **Discussion to the Motion**

Board members expressed sentiment that they hope UMS will succeed and prove them wrong. Concerns with enrollment, lack of caution with assurances, overpaying director, and issues with budget. Directing staff to not certify or deny until after June meeting.

### **SCSB Innovation Goal**

Mr. William Evans displayed the new Innovation goal draft:

"The SCSB portfolio of charter schools will exemplify Utah's commitment to providing students with unique pedagogies and evidence-based practices that will ensure they receive the best education possible. For the 25-26 cohort, the SCSB will begin publishing new models and practices to inspire new school applications. Further, the SCSB will increase the percentage of SCSB schools in the top 100 schools in the state."

### **Motion**

Member Speicher moved, and Member Phillips seconded "to accept the new innovation goal for the 2025-2026 cohort as this goal has been presented by staff." The motion carried unanimously.

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### **2021 Legislative Session**

Member Phillips highlighted HB 425, sponsored by Rep. Snow, which dealt with how to handle situations when a charter school closes and owes federal monies; and legislature designating allocations to the SCSB to be treated like allocations to the USDB which will allow for greater autonomy.

Executive Director Lambert discussed SB 184 which suspended the accountability stem for this year, SB 107 which requires all LEAs to provide an option to attend in-person learning for four days a week, four house bills that dealt with reducing the number of reports LEAs need to submit, and HB 293 which deals with open meeting minute amendments now requiring schools to post their minutes and not just make them available.

### **Public Comment**

No public comment was made.

### **Adjourn**

#### **Motion**

Member Smith moved, and Member Phillips seconded, “to adjourn.” The motion carried unanimously.