

February 11, 2021

MINUTES OF THE
UTAH STATE CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

Thursday, February 11, 2021

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DRAFT

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 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 (USB), Tyler Bastian (Roots), Kim Frank (UCN), Royce Van Tassell (UAPCS), Aland Howard (CGA), Dave Mortensen (CGA), Bret Puterbaugh (CGA), Josh Daniels (CGA), Kim Goates (CGA), Scott Morris (CGA).

Call to Order

Chair Tonks called the meeting to order at 10:04 AM.

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Public Comment

No public comment was made.

Board Chair Report

Chair Tonks discussed the books “Loving your Enemy” by Arthur Brooks and “Them” by Ben Sasse and noted that they taught that the antidote to contempt is embodying warm-heartedness. Chair Tonks reported that Meghan Peacock of Utah Virtual Academy was recognized as the Employee of the Month of State Charter School Board Authorized Schools, that Itineris Early college High was recognized in Newsweek’s “Top STEM High Schools 2020” list, and Beehive Academy invited and accepted into the Diver Charter Coalition.

Chair Tonks clarified the role of the State Charter School Board and noted that the governing board of local charter schools are the appropriate place for people to go with issues with their specific school to cut down on layers of bureaucracy and affect change where it can be most effective.

Executive Director Report

Executive Director Lambert noted that AMES was recognized as an ESSA distinguished school in 2020-2021, then discussed the new hires of Liz Bunker and Andrew Vardas-Doane who were hired as portfolio managers on the School Performance team and explained the roles of William Evans and Robert Kohutec on that team as well.

Consent Calendar

A) January 14, 2021 Minutes, B) Monthly Financial Report, C) Exhibit A: Leadership Learning Academy, D) Term Extension Request: Providence Hall

Motion

Member Phillips moved, and Member Bassett seconded, “to remove “D) Term Extension Request: Providence Hall’ for discussion” The motion carried unanimously.

Motion

Member Smith moved, and Member Speicher seconded, “to adopt the remaining three items on the Consent Calendar.” The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion to Motion Removing “D) Term Extension Request: Providence Hall”

Wise reasons for term limits, review of processes, only school to make this request, honoring local control of school’s governing board.

Motion

Member Smith moved “to put item ‘D’ back on the Consent Calendar”. The motion was withdrawn.

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Motion

Member Smith moved, and Member Phillips seconded, “to approve item ‘D’.” The motion carried unanimously.

Resolution in Support of All Utah Students

The need to ensure all students receive education in welcoming environments and the expectation for schools to act in accordance with law was discussed.

Member Phillips read the resolution.

Motion

Vice Chair Bowled moved, and Member Smith seconded, “to be in support of that (resolution) and as part of that, I want to note how proud I am of our schools.” The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion

Member Speicher shared a personal story of discrimination, and the beautiful yet delicate safe haven of schools was discussed.

Retention Rate Report

Mr. William Evans displayed the results of charter schools’ retention rates, and noted that Roots Charter High School has maintained a very high enrollment year-over year while also growing.

School Spotlight

Roots Charter High School

Mr. William Evans discussed the model of Roots Charter High School, the farm, philosophies, retention, and student success.

Students of Roots Charter High discussed the love they felt at the school, feeling of family, the adaptation of a 2-4-3 philosophy (inspired by Mr. Rogers), helpfulness of teachers, and learning good habits on the farm.

Mr. Tyler Bastian discussed finding students who have fallen through the cracks, never focusing on retention rate reports but instead on making school welcoming.

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2021 Legislative Session

Mr. Royce Van Tassell discussed Public Ed Appropriations Committee recommendations to prioritize one-time appropriation of \$5M for base funding, and three bills that focus on reporting requirements.

Ms. Kim Frank provided more history on the three bills concerning reporting requirements, and discussed a bill concerning who is liable for debts when charter schools close and the proposal of a risk pool that would be funded.

Member Phillips discussed appreciation for the associations and their hard work and combined efforts, focus on strengthening SCSB's position and that of charter schools, and the importance of having additional strong authorizes in the state and intent to work for good of all.

Motion

Member Phillips moved, and Member Smith seconded "that this board support HB42, HB 134 and HB 300 as presently constituted." The motion carried unanimously.

Motion

Member Phillips moved, and Member Smith seconded, "that the SCSB give the Legislative Committee and leadership direction to support bills that come out in support of topics we have been given prior direction that the board has supported in prior meetings." The motion carried unanimously.

Canyon Grove Academy

Application to Amend Charter and Probation Status Review

Ms. Marie Steffensen displayed a presentation and discussed history, committee recommendations, SCSB partnering with Ed Direction, mentoring and customized leadership coaching, honoring distance flexibility with opportunity to amend in future, operation in districts, status of Probation letter being met if the SCSB approves committee recommendations, and staff's recommendation of removing Canyon Grove Academy from Probation.

Motion

Member Smith moved, and Vice Chair Bowles seconded, that the board approve all three recommendations from the Authorizing Committee (mentoring, distance program, and expanding to multiple districts through 2022), and adopt staff's recommended action (to end Probation). The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion to Motion

Pleasure with Canyon Grove Academy requests and work that brings them into compliance, innovative charter schools pushing limits of statute and board rule, statutory expectations needing to be met, and expecting Canyon Grove Academy to come back in a year to formalize model was discussed.

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Motion

Member Phillips moved, and Member Speicher seconded, “to put Canyon Grove Academy on Warning with an emphasis on the monitoring, refinement, and compliance of the school’s model related to teacher supervision and learning, monitoring and recording of attendance, as well as academic achievement.” The motion carried with Member Smith dissenting.

Discussion to Motion

Receptiveness to unique models, concern with inhibiting progress by putting Canyon Grove on Warning, concerns with communication, clarifying expectations was discussed.

Representatives of Canyon Grove Academy discussed appreciation for SCSB and staff and progress made at the school, potential impact of bonding if on Warning status.

Adjourn

Motion

Vice Chair Bowles moved to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.