

September 9, 2021

MINUTES OF THE
UTAH STATE CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

Thursday, September 9, 2021

USB E Board Rooms

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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
Member Erik Olson

Staff Present:

Jennifer Lambert
William Evans
Stewart Okobia
Greg Connell
Marie Steffensen
Smriti Dhakal
Assistant Attorney General David Jones

Others Present:

Matt Hymas (USB E), Angie Stallings (USB E)
Presenter: Ben Rasmussen (USB E)

Online:

Teacher of the Year Nominees: David Buckley, Judy Johnson, Rachel Wilkinson, Skyy Hagen
Staff: Jenna Magnetti, Liz Bunker, Robert Kohutck, Amber Hellstrom

Call to Order

Chair Tonks called the meeting to order at 10:36 AM.

Public Comment

No public comment was made.

September 9, 2021

Board Chair Report

Chair Tonks welcomed everyone to a new school year. She spoke about the anniversary of 9-11 and remembering where each person was that day. She expressed gratitude for our first responders and invited any board members to share 9-11 remembrances as well.

Various board members shared their memories of 9-11.

Executive Director Report

Director Lambert shared updates regarding the board goals.

Consent Calendar

A) August 12, 2021 Minutes, B) Monthly Financial Report, C) Meeting Schedule-Revised

Motion

Member Phillips moved, and Member Smith seconded, “to accept the Consent Calendar.” The motion carried unanimously.

Board Elections

Nominations received were for DeLaina Tonks as Chair, and Bryan Bowles as Vice Chair.

Motion

Member Phillips moved, and Member Smith seconded, “Chair Tonks continue in her role as Chair of the State Charter School Board and that Vice Chair Bowles also continue in his role as Vice Chair of the State Charter School Board.” The motion carried unanimously.

Spotlight—Teachers Nominated for Teacher of the Year

Staff Members Evans and Steffensen presented about the Utah Teacher of the Year process and recognized the applicants from charter schools for the 2022 Teacher of the Year award. Four of the nominees were able to join and were invited by the board to share thoughts about teaching during the pandemic.

Training on the Government Records and Management Act

USBE Records Officer Ben Rasmussen, provided GRAMA training to the board. He provided guidance on general GRAMA requirements, email communication, and text messages.

September 9, 2021

OEK Funding Amounts

Staff Member Steffensen presented on the history of Optional Enhanced Kindergarten funding. In FY22, there is a surplus of funds available after awarding applicants. Possible options to allocate surplus funding were presented.

Discussion

Member Phillips brought up a question about those who asked for funds in the past but were unable to be funded. Staff reviewed the historical slides. Member Phillips discussed reopening the application, and why that could be beneficial to schools. Staff stated that was one of the possible recommendations. Staff clarified funding protocol with reopening the grant and was advised to follow the protocol that has typically occurred.

Motion

Member Phillips moved, and Member Smith seconded, “that the OEK monies be opened up to all schools on a competitive basis, both those who have applied, and those who have not for review, as per the surplus, per the SCSB review process”.

Discussion

Member Speicher affirmed her position that it is important to reopen this grant, and to let schools know that language should be included that we are here to support you, and that this could be a great resource.

The motion carried unanimously.

Carry Forward Funds Spend Plan

Director Lambert presented on the Carry Forward Spend Plan. This has been presented to USBE pending SCSB approval. There have been decreases in spending due to not traveling, not making copies, etc. due to the pandemic. There is one time funding of ODPG as well as the carry forward that Director Lambert would like to use for additional staff to fulfill the mission and vision of the board. One employee would be for three years, and one would be for five years. Director Lambert is also recommending an external board review by NACSA with the carry forward funds. Mentoring and Regional Seminars are recommended to continue with flexibility as staff seeks to bring in training from local and national presenters, as was intended by the legislature. The final area, CHSU (start up funds) is the largest area of carry forward funding, but also the most restricted per the legislative requirements of the funding.

Discussion

Chair Tonks stated that this supports the SCSB move from reactionary to a proactive role as an authorizing board, and that she is pleased with the proposed spend plan.

Motion

Member Speicher moved, and Member Smith seconded, “to approve the SCSB carry forward spending plan for 21-22 as outlined.”

September 9, 2021

Discussion

Member Speicher asked a question about the timeline for NACSA review. Director Lambert explained that she would work with purchasing on the timeline. Member Phillips commented that a strong message is sent to charter schools that the board is going to participate in a review, and that the board is seeking to become better.

The motion carried unanimously.

Review Board Policies

Chair Tonks asked Director Lambert to guide the board through the policy review.

New School Applications

Discussion

Director Lambert provided historical context that a previous school was invited to apply for a charter school. At the time, the applicant board decided to leave the school. However, the director submitted the proposal that was invited to apply and came before the SCSB with a new board. This policy was created to address how much change is allowable during the new charter school process.

Member Phillips suggested that the application instructions be linked in the policy. She also suggested a new statement (item 5) that the SCSB can allow boards to bypass different steps of the process. Chair Tonks asked if item 2 covers her suggestion, as it is not timebound. Director Lambert suggests adding to item 1, rather than creating item 5. Member Smith cautioned that she does not want this to be seen as a way for applicants to miss deadlines. Director Lambert suggested the wording “or on a modified schedule deemed sufficient by the vote of the board.” Member Olson stated that by publishing an exception in a policy, it could open the door to applicants petitioning the board for flexibility and suggested using caution in such an inclusion in a policy. Member Phillips stated her agreement with Member Smith and Member Olson. Vice Chair Bowles stated that he believes this is already covered in the policy as written.

Motion

Member Smith motioned and Member Phillips seconded “to adopt the Utah State Charter School Board New School Application Policy, with the addition of a hyperlink to the application instructions.”

The motion carried unanimously.

All Other Applications

Discussion

Director Lambert stated there is not a historical context to provide for this policy. She did mention that the word “replication” is no longer used and is simply referred to as a

September 9, 2021

“satellite”. Member Phillips asked for the application to be linked to the policy document. Director Lambert stated that staff would do their best to update, but it may be difficult to update yearly.

Motion

Vice Chair Bowles motioned, and Member Speicher seconded “to pass this policy as is, if we strike the word “replication” in line one and add a link to a page that will allow individuals, considering an application, to use a hyperlink to find the application more easily.”

Discussion

Member Phillips asked if Vice Chair Bowles is also open to adding a hyperlink to the application process instructions. Director Lambert said staff will add hyperlinks wherever they can.

The motion carried unanimously

Optional "Fast Track" Replication and Satellite Application Process

Discussion

Director Lambert shared the historical context that this was created a few years ago to allow an option for existing schools to move through the replication and satellite process faster. This option has never been used. She recommended striking the word “replication” as it is no longer used. She also stated that most satellite schools have asked for extensions of time, rather than fast tracking. Another recommendation stated from staff would be to align with the oversight model to reference “high performing” schools.

Motion

Member Smith motioned and Member Bassett seconded “to approve the Utah State Charter School Board Optional Fast Track Satellite Application Process, strike “application”. I would like to direct that we insert the hyperlinks wherever possible into this document and that we adopt the language for high performing schools that is standardized for designated high performing schools and add to consent.”

Discussion

Member Phillips noticed that there was a section of the policy that referenced performance criteria, and she could not find that on the website. She would like that to be linked as well into the policy. Director Lambert stated that this refers to “CSAF” but that it could be clearer. Member Speicher affirmed using the high performing criteria.

The motion carried unanimously.

September 9, 2021

Requirement of Signed Charter Document for Full Approval and Prior to Release of Any Public Funds

Discussion

Director Lambert shared the historical context that this was created a number of years ago when funds were disbursed to a school that did not have a signed charter agreement in place. This policy has been used a number of times by staff in working with schools to ensure that agreements are signed in a timely manner. This policy was created before the recodification, so it is recommended that the codes be updated. Member Phillips suggested technical updates to the policy, such as formatting, possessives, acronyms, and grammatical errors. Vice Chair Bowles has provided an updated copy with the grammatical errors corrected to Director Lambert. She asked for any other grammatical updates to be sent to staff to revise and edit.

Motion

Member Smith motioned and Member Speicher seconded “to revise and edit this policy, the Utah State Charter School Board Requirement of Signed Charter Document for Full Approval and Prior to Release of Any Public Funds, that the edited and updated, in accordance with our discussion, and be placed on consent for our next meeting.”

The motion carried unanimously.

Motion

Member Phillips motioned and Member Smith seconded “that the board instruct staff to hyperlink any policies we have with appropriate forms and pages and information, and that staff be directed to update any obsolete dates or references to board rule that have been renumbered and the like.”

Discussion

Member Phillips discussed wanting to empower staff to be able to update policies. Director Lambert stated that this shows the policies are living documents and will be reviewed by the board on a regular basis, and that they are thought about to guide staff and the board.

The motion carried unanimously.

Closed Session

Motion

Member Phillips motioned and Member Smith seconded “to go into closed session to discuss competence, character of an individual.”

Member Phillips-yes

September 9, 2021

Member Smith-yes

Member Speicher-yes

Member Olson-yes

Member Bassett-yes

Vice Chair Bowles-yes

The board requested that AAG Jones remain with them in the closed session.

Return from Closed Session

Chair Tonks declared the meeting open upon returning from the closed session.

Motion

Member Phillips moved and Member Smith seconded “that the board authorize its executive leadership to seek a bonus for our Executive Director under the parameters allowed by public processes, and that it be a significant bonus as determined by the executive officers of the board.

The motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn

Motion

Member Olson moved “to adjourn our meeting today.” A second is not needed and the meeting is adjourned.