

MINUTES OF THE
UTAH STATE CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

Thursday, March 21, 2023

USBE Board Rooms

250 East 500 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84111

www.youtube.com/utahscsb

Members Present:

Vice Chair Cynthia Phillips

Member Krystle Bassett

Member Stephanie Speicher

Member Erik Olson

Member Rabecca Cisneros (Virtual)

Member Michelle Smith (Virtual)

Staff Present:

Paul Kremer (Virtual)

Marie Steffensen

Lisa Cooper

Smriti Dhakal

Andrew Vardas-Doane (Virtual)

Brendan McGinn

Amber Hellstrom

Jenna Magnetti

Others Present:

AAG Kevin Olsen

(10:15 am) MEETING BEGINS

Introduction of New SCSB Staff - Amy Pace

Public Comment

None

Member Thought -Krystle Bassett shared how empathy and listening to students are key in creating impactful educational solutions. Through the Super Council, students express their needs for practical skills and school improvements, highlighting the value of student feedback. Incorporating this feedback into daily educational design is essential for addressing students' real-world needs and comfort.

Consent Calendar

Vice Chair Phillips recused herself from voting on the consent calendar due to conflicts of interest.

“I’ll move that we approve the consent calendar” – Member Olsen

“I’ll second that” – Member Speicher

Motion Carries, all voted yes besides Vice Chair Phillips who recused herself.

Executive Director Report

1. Team and Staff Updates
 - a. New member Amy Pace has joined the team, bringing strategic initiatives to fruition and drafting new policies and procedures.
 - b. The internal audit with the Utah State Board of Education is underway, focusing on technical assistance with an anticipated draft report.
2. School Fiscal Oversight
 - a. Anticipated higher spending in the current fiscal year than the previous year, with expected carry forward funds to be less than before.
 - b. Upcoming budget planning meetings for the 2526 fiscal year.
3. Utah Charter Access Point Revamp:
 - a. Ongoing updates to the central website, merging multiple sites into one and refreshing content.
4. Expectation Setting with Charter Operators:
 - a. Ongoing communication with Charter operators to maintain adherence to established timelines, rules, and processes while remaining open to emergency situations.
5. Supportive Authorizer Initiatives:
 - a. Introduction of a "Letter of Awareness" to support oversight by acknowledging issues, expressing empathy, and initiating action.
6. Comprehensive Reviews and Support:

- a. Continued comprehensive review visits with Charter schools, utilizing SWOT analysis to provide supportive feedback.
7. Utah Fits-All Scholarship Program:
 - a. Engagement with the Utah Fits-All scholarship team to assist schools in becoming providers and navigating the new education landscape.
 8. Executive Resources and Strategic Goals:
 - a. Acknowledgment of supportive resources from legislative bodies and plans for a comprehensive communication strategy.
 9. Charter Agreement Fidelity:
 - a. Ongoing discussions with schools about financial health and governance using the "Letter of Awareness".
 10. Next Steps and Priorities:
 - a. Team strength assessment and the adoption of the "Traction" philosophy for systematic work processes.
 11. School Visits:
 - a. Visits to American Prep Academy and Dual Immersion Academy highlighted strong programs in financial literacy, economics, and bilingual education.
 - b. Visits to Athlos Academy and City Academy addressed specific concerns and showcased unique school features and student engagement in learning.

COVID Online Programs Update:

COVID-related online programs that were discontinued due to geographic concerns were reviewed, with no additional schools found to be affected. The implications of online learning being statewide for all schools were noted and will be discussed in upcoming authorizing committee meetings.

Readiness to Open Review #1:

Two new schools preparing to open were discussed: Elevated Charter School, an online school without facility requirements, and American Principals Academy, which had hired a business manager but not a director yet. Concerns about the readiness to open will be brought up with the authorizing committee for further support.

Status of Bond Work:

The role and importance of bonding for charter schools were discussed, including the process of financing facilities development and the significant growth in tax-exempt bond financing. The Utah Charter School Finance Authority's role in facilitating access to the municipal bond market was highlighted, with over \$1 billion in financing facilitated for charter schools. The internal analysis

policy of the board emphasizes early identification of financial distress signs for schools that have issued bonds.

Proposal to Present at NACSA:

A proposal to present at NACSA focusing on innovation was discussed. The tentative title "Junctions of Innovation: Revolutionizing Charter Education" reflects the aim to showcase innovative practices on staff and board levels, and in schools and stakeholder collaborations. The proposal is still in development, awaiting the call for proposals to open.

Legislative Report:

An update on various education bills was given. This included HB 84, which required safety measures in school buildings, and HB 31, which focused on clarifying the roles and responsibilities of charter authorizers. Discussions also covered the failed passage of bills concerning school neutrality, materials amendments, and school chaplains.

Start-Up and Implementation Grant:

Adjustments to the start-up and implementation grants were discussed, taking into account the suggestions from the finance committee. A motion was made to initiate the rule-making process based on the work of the staff and finance committees. The grants are aimed at supporting small and large school expansions.

Charter Agreement Language Updates:

Ongoing efforts to simplify and reduce the length of charter school agreements were discussed. The goal is to make them cleaner, easier to read, and more sustainable. The role of the authorization committee in reviewing and providing feedback on the draft of a charter agreement was emphasized, as well as involving various stakeholders in the process to ensure collaborative and bilateral agreements.

Merger Language Process:

The merger process for charter schools was discussed, noting the lack of a specific charter law outlining the merger process in Utah. The board is considering adopting nonprofit merger guidelines from Minnesota, which provides guidance for both the authorizer and charter operators, with plans to engage the Authorization Committee to take the lead on this process.

Motions

"I will make a motion that the board directs staff to initiate the rule making process based on the work of the staff and finance committees"- Member Cisneros

"I will second that" – Member Bassett

Motion Unanimously Passed

"My motion was to charge staff to do more research on the potential of taking on Spa as part of our portfolio" – Member Speicher

"I'll second it so that we can at least get this to a discussion and a vote" Member Olsen

Member Cisneros – No

Member Smith – No

Member Bassett - No

Vice Chair Phillips – Yes

Member Speicher – Yes

Member Olsen – Yes

Motion Fails

ADJOURN

Motion to Adjourn made by Member Bassett (4:13pm)