

MINUTES OF THE
UTAH STATE CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

Thursday, April 13, 2023

USBE Board Rooms and Basement West
250 East 500 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84111
www.youtube.com/utahscsb

Members Present:

Chair Bryan Bowles
Vice Chair Cynthia Phillips
Member Krystle Bassett
Member Michelle Smith
Member Erik Olson
Member Rabecca Cisneros

Staff Present:

Jennifer Lambert, Director SCSB
Liz Bunker
Joanne Castillo
Lisa Cooper-Loock
William Evans
Marie Steffensen
Andrew Vardas-Doane

Others Present:

AAG Kevin Olsen
Deputy Superintendent Angie Stallings
USBE Liaison Joseph Kerry
Dave Mortensen, Counsel for American Preparatory Academy
Carolyn Sharette, Executive Director, American Preparatory Academy
Lisa Brunsen, Compliance Officer, American Preparatory Academy
Casey Crellin, Chief Financial Officer, American Preparatory Academy

MEETING BEGINS (10:13 AM)

Chair Bowles moved the Mission, Vision, and Value review to the Working Lunch portion of the agenda.

Public Comment (10:14 AM)

Jonathan Bejarano

Board Member Thought – Vice Chair Phillips (10:18 AM)

Vice Chair Phillips recounted the circumstances surrounding the creation of the office and powers of The Tribune of the People in Ancient Rome. Vice Chair Phillips continued a thought on dissent, its role in public discourse, and what it might look like in the States today.

Board Chair Report (10:28 AM)

Chair Bowles introduced the June Charter School Celebration at Smith's Ballpark. Chair Bowles mentioned that the Board Meeting that month would be held later than our typical Board Meetings. School Performance Coordinator William Evans indicated discounted tickets would be available. Director Lambert clarified which schools in the evaluation cycle would be considered for recognition, but all Charter Schools authorized by the SCSB (students, faculty, administrators, leadership, and their families) would be invited to attend the game at a discounted rate. Chair Bowles recognized the attendance of USBE Member Joseph Kerry, Deputy Superintendent Angie Stallings, and Assistant Attorney General Kevin Olsen. Chair Bowles excused Member Speicher's absence.

Executive Director Report (10:34 AM)

Director Jennifer Lambert introduced the SCSB micro-credentialing system now named GBOT in honor of a previous resource. Staff integrated the learning management system ahead of schedule with many more trainings than initially mandated by the Board's adopted goal. Member Smith expressed excitement for the system and asked if possible CEUs could be granted to educators who use the system or if university partnerships could grant them some credits. Director Lambert stated that the SCSB cannot grant credit, but staff have begun conversations with individuals in higher education. However, such partnerships would be a longer-term goal and could not be presented in June when this specific Board goal was due. Began conversation on where the LMS would be housed in terms of current systems. Director Lambert acknowledged School Support Coordinator Marie Steffensen, Financial Education Specialist Lisa Cooper-Loock, IT Developer Amber Hellstrom, and LMS Coordinator/Liaison to SCSB Saba who have been instrumental in making this system a reality for schools authorized by the SCSB. Chair Bowles commented on the exceptional nature of the LMS and the Newsletter. Vice Chair Phillips expressed appreciation of the tool's ability to allow Governing Boards to target specific learning needs.

Director Lambert shared that Superintendent Dixon highlighted some of the great things Charter Schools were doing in Utah using the ESSER funds at CCSSO. Director Lambert highlighted Mountain Heights Academy's Lora Gibbons as the only K-12 educator who was awarded the 2023 Utah Governor's Medal for Science and Technology: K-12. Director Lambert acknowledged the UMA students accepted to the Nation's top military schools as well as the schools who experienced above 80% growth in the Acadience reading assessment.

Consent Calendar (10:47 AM)

Member Smith: "I move to adopt the Consent Calendar"

Member Bassett: "I'll second that."

Motion passes unanimously.

Waiver Request of R277-623-4 – American Preparatory Academy (10:48 AM)

Member Olson abstained from the discussion and vote of this agenda item.

School Support Coordinator Marie Steffensen presented the School Climate Survey Waiver Request and why the request was brought before the Board. Ms Steffensen gave the staff recommendation that the USBE hear the request and make the decision.

Dave Mortensen, Counsel for American Preparatory Academy
Carolyn Sharette, Executive Director, American Preparatory Academy
Lisa Brunsen, Compliance Officer, American Preparatory Academy
Casey Crellin, Chief Financial Officer, American Preparatory Academy

Director Sharette requested clarification on statute and USBE Board Rule with respect to the survey they administer. Mr. Mortensen identified the differences in language in specific Statute and USBE Board Rule, and he indicated that APA would like to create their own climate survey. As the survey and its information that is not something the SCSB interacts with at all, Chair Bowles suggested that a motion be made to allow the USBE to consider the waiver without the SCSB making a recommendation on whether or not the LEA should be granted the waiver. Vice Chair Phillips introduced conversation with AAG Olsen and Deputy Superintendent Stallings centered on whether the SCSB was required to make a favorable or unfavorable recommendation on this matter.

Member Smith: “I would like to move that we allow APA to move forward with their waiver request with the recommendation that the State Board of Education carefully consider the difficulties that the statutes and rules currently impose on schools.”

Vice Chair Phillips: “I’d like to second that.”

Chair Bowles Restatement: “This Board recommends that the State Board carefully consider the request for American Preparatory Academy relative to the climate survey.”

Discussion:

Member Smith expressed a desire for guidance from USBE that could be more broadly applied to charter schools with respect to statute and Board rule. Vice Chair Phillips agreed that further clarification is needed. Chair Bowles agreed that the original motion was to be recognized.

Motion passes unanimously.

FY24 SCSB Budget (11:05 AM)

Director Lambert described how the budget was created and how the funds flowed to the SCSB are allocated, and she identified how the Legislature changed how it perceived the SCSB allocation as of this last legislative session. Director Lambert indicated that there was interest in adjusting the way the start-up funds are figured before identifying some possible changes.

Director Lambert identified the three types of areas in which the funds allocated to the SCSB would be separated: as the start-up funds restricted to any charter school opening regardless of authorizer, training and mentoring, and primary operational budget. Chair Bowles acknowledged how careful the staff is with the money that they spend, and he expounded on why the carry forward start-up funds were necessary. Chair Bowles expressed appreciation for the generosity of the Legislature this year in funding education. Vice Chair Phillips cautioned the Members to remain vigilant in safeguarding the programs that need the funds that the Legislature was so generous in giving.

Member Olson: "I move that we approve the proposed budget"

Member Smith: "I will second that motion."

Discussion: none

Motion passes unanimously.

Chair Bowles recognized that the great history the Board has with Director Lambert facilitated the passing of the budget in this meeting. Chair Bowles also commended Ms. Steffensen for assisting the Board in their preparation for hearing APA's request.

FY24 SCSB Meeting Schedule (11:13 AM)

Director Lambert presented the proposed schedule with alternate dates to accommodate USBE schedules in January and March. Vice Chair Phillips reminded the Members that sometimes the SCSB meets twice in January depending on how many full applications the Board will consider, and there might be a mini-meeting to consider Board positions on legislative matters. Chair Bowles stated that this calendar can be amended.

Member Bassett: "I move to approve the 2024 Meeting Schedule as outlined."

Vice Chair Phillips: "I will second it."

Discussion: none

Motion passes unanimously.

RECESS (11:17)

Working Lunch (11:43 AM)

In response to March's request for more information regarding the outliers mentioned in the financial review, Financial Education Specialist Lisa Cooper-Loock presented a training on metrics that the staff looks at, what the outliers of those metrics look like, what they mean, and the most meaningful way of contextualizing them. Members volunteered possible reasons some outliers might be present. Ms. Cooper-Loock identified how various combinations of these metrics gave the reader a better picture of what might be occurring with respect to a specific school. Director Lambert commented that these contexts were considered before presenting the

information to Board. Vice Chair Phillips introduced conversation regarding the schools with large numbers of days cash on hand. Member Smith began discussions around the target cash on hand number of 30 days. Chair Bowles expressed appreciation for the alacrity, comprehensiveness, and accessibility of the presentation.

Director Lambert and Data Analyst Andrew Vardas-Doane presented on current annual targets and introduced possible revised targets. Director Lambert provided historical context and described why certain changes were made in the way Staff approached the Annual and Comprehensive Reviews. Director Lambert mentioned how having more than 10 years of data to analyze allowed Staff to identify what metrics were useful and meaningful. By sensibly re-framing the data, Staff uses these compassionate metrics in reviewing schools. In the presentation, Data Analyst Vardas-Doane presented how the data was analyzed, why specific choices were made in the analysis, and what they mean in conjunction with other metrics or as viewed over time. Both individuals presented on the challenges of what to do with the data, the challenges of how different calendars held by the schools affects the data, and how to make the data accessible. Members expressed support for the direction staff is going with the metrics and appreciation in knowing that all these factors were considered prior to presentation to the Board. Director Lambert introduced discussion on smart goals and assessment plans.

RECESS (1:30 PM)

RECONVENE (1:40 PM)

Vice Chair Phillips began discussions on the Board's Strategic Plan by reintroducing a conversation on smart governance goals, identifying where the Board could step up in some areas, and where they could step back in others. Vice Chair Phillips asked Members to digitally prioritize what they want in the goals, suggest some measurable smart Board goals, contribute to how those goals can help staff balance between support and compliance, and identify how the goals demonstrate how the Board wishes to resolve involving potentially punitive consequences.

Chair Bowles spoke on the importance of creating a Memo of Understanding (MOU) between the State Charter School Board and the Utah State Board of Education. He asked the Members to articulate what elements they wanted addressed in the MOU. Vice Chair Phillips indicated this action was time-sensitive because of a legislative requirement that this MOU be completed by the next legislative session, or language would be included in a proposed bill. Vice Chair Phillips indicated that conversations with USBE leadership created a greater understanding of how the SCSB is set up in relation to the USBE, and she began conversation around what an administrative solution means in understanding the limits of the SCSB's autonomy within the current statutory framework. Vice Chair Phillips began conversations on some realities in the current relationship. Member Smith began conversation regarding creative solutions involving steps to make sure that the SCSB is only financially responsible for things the SCSB can control. Member Cisneros began conversation revolving around Deputy Superintendent Stallings' suggestion that changes could be made in Board Rule to address the MOU. Chair Bowles identified some areas he would particularly like to see addressed in an MOU.

Member Smith: "I move that we go into closed session for the purpose of discussing pending ..."

Member Bassett:

Chair Bowles: "I see Member Basset seconds."

Discussion: none

Roll Call:

Member Bassett: "Aye"

Member Olson: "Aye"

Vice Chair Phillips: "Aye"

Member Smith: "Aye"

Member Cisneros: "Aye"

Motion passes unanimously.

Closed Session (2:13 PM)

BOARD RECONVENES (3:08 PM)

Member Smith: "I move to adjourn."