

Tuesday, January 9, 2018

11 am

**Michael A. Bilandic Building
160 N. LaSalle Street, Room N-505
Chicago, IL 60601**

I. Roll Call

Operations Committee Chair Troy Ratliff called the meeting to order at 11:04 AM. Commissioners participating were Troy Ratliff and DeRonda Williams. Richard Van Evera and Lisa Schuchart participated by phone. Commission staff participating was Hosanna Mahaley-Jones, Shenita Johnson, Jennifer Thomas, and Miguel Garcia.

II. Approve Minutes of May 31, 2017 Meeting

Commissioner Williams moved to approve the minutes from the May 31, 2017 Committee meeting. Commissioner Van Evera seconded the motion. Commissioner Ratliff called for the vote. All present voted in favor to approve. Commissioner Ratliff declared the minutes for the May 31, 2017 approved.

III. Public Participation

No members of the public were present.

IV. Budget Update

Executive Director Hosanna Mahaley-Jones welcomed the Commissioners and staff and wished everyone a Happy New Year. Jones then gave the Commissioners a few minutes to review the 2nd quarter budget update. She then explained that during this past summer, the State of Illinois stated that it was going to sweep \$100,000.00 from the surplus in the budget. This sweep was scheduled to occur in October of 2017; however, it had not yet taken place. Mahaley-Jones then stated that as of December 31, 2017, the Commission was under budget by approximately \$35,000.00. She further stated that as of 2nd quarter, there were no expenditures in the school monitoring and support category, but expenses are anticipated after the new year.

Commissioner Ratliff asked about the budget template, specifically the absence of the “year-to-date” column. General Counsel/Managing Director Shenita Johnson responded that the column may have been inadvertently hidden, but that staff would make certain that future versions displayed all columns.

V. Enrollment Update

Mahaley-Jones then proceeded to provide an update on student enrollment to the Commissioners. She provided the current student enrollment cap then proceeded to detail the enrollment numbers for each quarter. She explained that 1st quarter enrollment counts are projections provided by the schools prior to the start of the school year. 2nd quarter enrollment counts are a “true-up” of 1st quarter enrollment, and 3rd quarter enrollment counts are essentially a projection as the enrollment counts must be certified at the beginning of the 3rd quarter. She then stated that overall student enrollment count is down by 164 as compared to 1st quarter projections. She then reminded the Commissioners that the only revenue the Commission receives is from the 2.5% operational fee assessed to schools from their quarterly General State Aid (GSA) payment. She then stated that Commission staff has submitted a request to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) for an increase in the Commission’s appropriation to \$1.2 million. She further stated ISBE has not approved the appropriation; however, if the appropriation is increased, the Commission could sufficiently cover expenses related to monitoring, support and renewals.

Mahaley-Jones reminded Commissioners about the Commission meeting scheduled for January 23rd. General Counsel/ Managing Director Shenita Johnson added that staff will review the expenses for both Amandla School and the Commission to determine what wind-down expenses would be for the school. Johnson further stated that the Commission will review Amandla’s 4th quarter GSA payment and determine if a reduction in the 4th quarter operational fee may be necessary.

Commissioner Williams inquired about the decline in HSA-Belmont’s student enrollment and Johnson responded that the decline is likely based on the new location and transportation. Commissioner Williams then asked about LEARN’s over-projected student enrollment count in the 1st quarter and the decline in student enrollment. Johnson responded that LEARN 9 anticipated serving 3-4 sections per grade, but unfortunately, did not achieve enrollment.

VI. Staff Report

Mahaley-Jones provided an update on staffing. She stated that the former Operations Manager was no longer with the Commission and a position for administrative support would be opening soon. She then asked the Commissioners to forward names of anyone who may be a good fit for the role. Mahaley-Jones noted that three (3) Commissioner terms were up for renewal, in which terms for Commissioners Feinberg and Williams

were renewed; however, Commissioner Robbins' term was not. She then stated that the Commission will be thanking her for her service at the next Commission meeting.

Mahaley-Jones then noted that there had been a slight uptick in interest in the Commission from the media, particularly by WBEZ. However, she stated that no articles or stories regarding the Commission had been published as of yet.

Mahaley-Jones then acknowledged that the Commission received two (2) appeals on January 5th, 2018. She provided the Commissioners with a brief overview of the schools that have submitted the appeals.

- ACE Tech is a high school serving approximately 326 students in the Washington Park neighborhood of Chicago. The decision to revoke ACE Tech was based on CPS' determination that the school failed to meet or make reasonable progress.
- Chicago Classical is a new school proposal started by local community members in the South Loop neighborhood of Chicago. The proposal identifies an independent building and is proposed to be a K-8 school, serving 504 students.

Mahaley-Jones then provided an update on the appeals timeline and stated that the public hearings are currently scheduled to occur on Tuesday, February 13th & Thursday, February 15th. She asked the Commissioners to confirm their availability to preside at any of the hearings. Commissioners Ratliff and Schuchart both stated that they were available to preside over both public hearings. If necessary, Commissioners Williams and Van Evera stated that they were available to preside over the February 15th public hearing. Mahaley-Jones further stated that conflicts would be sent soon. Mahaley-Jones acknowledged that because the Commissioners are serving in a volunteer capacity, she thanked the Commissioners in advance for their time and dedication. She further noted that she has witnessed how engaged they are in recent public hearings and praised them for the questions they pose to school leaders.

Legislative Update

Mahaley-Jones then stated that House Bill 768, which seeks to eliminate the Commission's authority to review charter school appeals, was transmitted to Governor Rauner's desk on January 3, 2018. She further explained that the Governor now has 60 days to review the bill, at which time he will either veto the bill or it would become law.

Commissioner Williams asked if the Governor does nothing, does the Commission still vote on the appeals. Johnson stated that the issue is something to watch closely and

that staff will confer with the Commissioners when the time draws near. Commissioner Ratliff then asked if the Commission is actively engaged on this issue, to which Mahaley-Jones responded yes.

Commissioner Williams then inquired if the staff had any views on the two (2) Chicago appeals. Johnson responded that ACE Technical High School appeared to have a conditional charter contract for two (2) years and was revoked because they did not fulfill the obligations. Commissioner Ratliff then stated that he believes that Chicago Public Schools (CPS) will be very prepared for the appeal, but that ACE Tech will most likely view themselves as a turnaround school. Johnson then added that Chicago Classical Academy is a new school with an independent building and independent support for the proposal.

Commissioner Ratliff then asked for any other questions from the Commissioners, of which there were none, and moved on to the rest of report.

Litigation Update

Johnson reported that the final ruling by the Circuit Court regarding the three (3) Chicago Public Schools (CPS) appeals affirmed the Commission's decision. Johnson also reported that there have been some conversations with Chicago Public Schools' counsel regarding if they will accept the Circuit Court decision; however, CPS' counsel had not made any decisions as of yet.

Johnson then provided an update on the pending litigation with Waukegan regarding LEARN 9. Johnson stated that staff is waiting to see if the appellate court will hear oral arguments or rule based on briefs that have already been filed.

Johnson then stated that the Commission has three (3) schools going through renewal and five (5) in the Annual Review process. She added that the School Support Team has been engaged for both LEARN 9 and Bronzeville and that site visits for both schools have been conducted.

Elgin Math and Science Academy

Johnson stated that all required documentation for certification has been submitted, and ISBE is in the process of reviewing. EMSA did hire their principal by December 15th as required. The formal announcement will be made on January 15th in order to allow the principal to notify the current school community. The principal will begin working

full time later this month to prepare the school for opening. Johnson then stated that the staff has been checking in with the EMSA team at least once a month to ensure that they are on track with the preopening checklist. Commissioner Ratliff asked if the renovations on the school had been started and Johnson responded that the renovations will begin in the Spring.

VII. Commission Bylaws Amendments

Commissioner Ratliff asked if the Commissioners had items that they would like to discuss regarding the proposed by-laws. Johnson then stated that she wanted to give context as to why the bylaws were amended before discussion commences. Johnson introduced Commission NURF Fellow Miguel Garcia who provided the background on the amendments to the bylaws. Garcia stated that the Commission requested an overview to the bylaws that were previously updated in 2013, to make certain that they were up to date and efficient, and to ensure that they were streamlined pursuant to the Illinois Charter School Law. Garcia provided research on the bylaws, which involved consideration of authorizers in Georgia, North Carolina, Utah, and Washington, which all received high marks from the National Association of Charter School Authorizer (NACSA) quality authorizer review.

After time was allotted for review of the amendments, Johnson paused the review to confirm if there were any questions or comments from the Commissioners. Commissioner Ratliff responded that he was impressed with the work and only had objections with some of the language. Garcia then proceeded to review the amended items in Articles 1, 2, & 4. Garcia then asked if there were any questions. Commissioner Williams then asked if the bylaws, due to removal, were consistent across Commissions, to which Garcia replied yes. Commissioner Ratliff asked if staff can change “its” charter schools for bylaw 2.2 to something more consistent and to change the language to “proposal to remove” from “to remove”.

Garcia went on to Article 5 and explained what was originally written and the changes. Commissioner Ratliff then asked if there were any questions or comments on Article 5, to which there were none. Commissioner Ratliff then stated that under Article 5.2 the word “full” should be added in from of the word “terms”. He also stated the language should state “appointed” instead of “elected”.

Garcia then provided the amendments for Articles 6 and 7. Commissioner Ratliff asked if everyone could go back up to Article 5. He stated that in the voting procedures

section of the bylaws, it states that the first person called in a roll call vote should be the person who made the motion. Johnson responded that it was existing language and that staff can remove it if the Commissioners agreed. It was discussed and decided that the language be removed. Johnson then thanked Commissioner Ratliff for identifying the outdated and unnecessary language.

Garcia then stated that Article 8 which details the fiscal year of the Commission is new. He added that staff thought it was an important addition even though it was not included in all bylaws. Commissioner Williams asked if there were any changes to the exhibits, to which Garcia stated there were none.

Johnson then stated that a motion will be made to adopt the amended bylaws at the January 23rd meeting. She further stated that suggested edits will be addressed prior to the meeting and that if there are any further questions, please inform the staff.

Commissioner Ratliff then affirmed that the bylaws state that if any of the Commissioners want to amend, there is a requirement of a 14 day advance notice. He then stated that Commissioners also receive the new amendments at least 14 days before they are discussed. Johnson replied that the requirement can be added. Garcia then stated that if there are any more amendments that the Commissioners want to add, to please let him know. Commissioner Ratliff then asked if the Commissioners have to take any actions right now, to which Johnson responded that there will only be a recommendation for the first reading from committee to the full Commission at the January 23rd meeting.

VIII. Closed Session

No closed session.

IX. Adjourn

Commissioner Ratliff then declared the meeting adjourned at 11:49 AM.