

The Somerset County Board of Education met in an open called session at the J. M. Tawes Technology & Career Center, Tuesday, April 12, 2007 at 6:00 p.m. Present were Chairman Richard Scott, Mr. Jack Willing, Mr. Paul, Mr. Stan Pruitt, Superintendent Karen-Lee Brofee, and Ms. Tilghman. Vice Chairman Miles was absent due to death in the family.

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Scott at 6:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Scott led the Board in the pledge of allegiance.

3. Role Call

The roll was called by Melissa Tilghman indicating four board members and the Superintendent were present.

4. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

5. SAFE Charter School Application: Presentation and Discussion

Process of the Application

Dr. Brofee informed the Board that she was in receipt of a fax sent by Julius Thompson stating that SAFE had decided to delay the opening date of the Charter School to FY2008, and making an apology for any offensive remarks that he had made in public regarding Somerset County Public Schools. Mr. Thompson had made clear that if the Charter was denied, he would be appealing the decision to the State Board. Dr. Brofee expressed surprise that no SAFE members were present this evening and the minutes were checked and confirmed from the final interview meeting with SAFE to make certain that the date, time, and location were given.

The Superintendent discussed the Charter School Review Team members and the process used in reviewing the Charter Application. The Central Office Review Team consisted of eleven staff members, Mr. Turner, Mr. Lawson, Mr. Bloodsworth, Mrs. Reich, Mrs. Holland, Ms. Carter, Mrs. Miller, Mr. Elebash, Dr. Brofee, and Mrs. Smoker, and Mr. Webster. Information was gathered through Anne Arundel School District as they have a working knowledge of the operation of Charter Schools. A scoring procedure was adapted from the Anne Arundel with their permission which enabled staff to independently assess all critical aspects and indicators of the Charter Application to determine its viability. The main focus of the teams review of the application was the Student Program and the Operation Stability of the school.

Dr. Brofee explained that the review procedure had to focus on the application's strengths and concerns and not on such items as cost to the taxpayer, a fear of charter schools, personalities, or pressures. The process needed to be open and without any prejudices or preconceived notions.

1. Instructional Programs: Mrs. Holland and Mr. Elebash

Mrs. Holland and Mr. Elebash began their Instructional Review of the Charter

Application and identified strengths as:

- School, Community, and Parent Relationship
- Dedication
- Calvert School Curriculum
- Individual Learning Plans
- Computer Based Foreign Language and Technology Skills

Challenges found are as follows:

- Intervention Plan needed for below level students
- Implementation of Technology
- Calvert Curriculum is not aligned with Maryland's Voluntary State Curriculum
- Work Schedule is not clear
- Highly Qualified Dual Certified Educators are needed
- NCLB and Special Education Requirements are not met
- No Grading policy in place
- No Food Service or Physical Ed. plans
- Schedule of contracted services with SCPS are needed
- Mr. Thompson stated he would withdraw from his position as CEO when the Charter School opens which is a concern

2. Student Assessment

Mr. Bloodsworth was responsible for the review of Student Assessment Procedures and found that the Charters Applications Strengths were:

- Testing used in identifying student need
- Use of portfolios with students

Challenges in this area are:

- Holistic scoring and Rubrics not mentioned in Program
- MSA and HSA testing procedure and schedule
- Full daily schedule not available
- Knowledge of Technology Software
- Student Teacher Ratio greater than that of SCPS

*** Dr. Brofee interrupted Mr. Bloodsworth to inform the four Board members that Mr. Miles had a death in the family and therefore would not be present.**

3. Governance Structure

Mr. Turner reported to the Board that Mr. Thompson has met with the union representative, and has used a significant amount of funding and has put in a lot of time promoting the Charter School Facility. Mr. Turner concluded that the Governing Board of the Charter School lacks the experience needed in operating a Charter School and is concerned that the its Board will change members three months after the school's opening. There is no evidence of a grade reporting system and clarification of community involvement is needed. Mr. Turner concluded that the Charter School does not offer any unique programs that are not offered by Somerset County Public Schools.

4. Business Management

Mrs. Miller discussed with the Board her review area of the Charter School and her findings were as follows:

- Accounting system breakdown is not included.
- CPA program seems complex.
- Dependency upon Financial Consultants is excessive.
- Organization Chart is not aligned with the budget.
- Personnel Leave tracking system is needed.
- Absence of Family Medical Leave Act is problematic.
- Procedure for recruiting, hiring, and keeping highly qualified teachers is omitted.

Mr. Paul questioned the Charter School's plans for continued funding after the first year. Mr. Willing expressed concerns of CPA Firm and its experience in educational budgets. Trice and Grier is the audit firm that will overlook the CPA Firm.

The Charter proposes enrolling two additional students per year per grade (20 to 22) as a means to create a contingency fund. The teachers will be considered SCPS BOE employees and we will make the final decisions/approvals in the hiring process.

Mr. Daugherty informed the Board that the Charter School hoped that we would provide transportation, but if not parents will be responsible for student transportation.

Commendations and Concerns:

The Review Team concluded that the Charter School group has show an admiral passion in the opening of the school and appreciates the joint collaboration efforts of SCPS. There are three areas of concern that need to be addressed before the Charter School can be approved and they are: 1) Delivery of program and capacity to sustain it; 2) Fiscal Control and Budget Practices; and 3) Personnel Issues.

Recommendation from the Superintendent and Central Office Team

The Review Team used the scoring process adapted from the Anne Arundel School System. Out of 530 points the Charter Application received 189 points. A minimum of 318 points were needed to designate viability.

Dr. Brofee stated that she reluctantly needed to recommend that the Board deny a charter to SAFE for the Somerset County Public Charter School at this time.

5. Board Action

Mr. Paul moved and Mr. Willing seconded to a role call as to the voting decision of the Charter Application. Chairman Scott – Nay, Mr. Paul – Nay, Mr. Willing – Nay, and Mr. Pruitt – Nay. Vice Chairman was not present to vote.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent, moved by Mr. Willing and seconded by Mr. Pruitt to deny the Charter School Application as presented. The vote was unanimous with the four Board members present.

6. Comments from the Board

Mr. Paul expressed that he would like to see a Charter School add value to our system and it's critical that it be able to succeed as it would reflect the Somerset County Public School System. More collaboration is needed in order for the Charter School to be successful.

Chairman Scott commended the Administration on a job well done.

7. Adjournment

A motion was called for by Chairman Scott, moved by Mr. Pruitt, and seconded by Mr. Willing to adjourn at 7:15 p.m. The vote was unanimous.