

Alabama Public Charter School Commission
May 12, 2020 10:00 A.M.
Via Zoom

MINUTES

The Alabama Public Charter School Commission (APCSC) met on Tuesday, May 12, 2020, in a Zoom meeting to consider matters relevant to duties of the Alabama Public Charter School Commission outlined in the *Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act* for public charter schools in Alabama.

Members of the Commission who participated in the meeting via Zoom were as follows:

Henry Nelson
Allison Haygood
David Marshall
Marla Green
Jamie Ison
Paul Morin
Sydney Raine
Kim Terry
Lisa Williams (late)
Eddie Hill (late)

Welcome, Introductions, Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Logan Searcy reviewed the protocol for a Zoom meeting to ensure efficacy. Henry Nelson officially opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. He asked for a roll call of the Alabama Charter School Commission (APCSC). Eight members were present at the time of the roll call which represented a quorum. Lisa Williams and Eddie Hill arrived after the meeting had begun which resulted in all ten members of the commission participating. Chairman Nelson asked for a motion to approve the agenda and the minutes from the May 7, 2020 meeting. Allison Haygood made the motion to approve the agenda and the minutes, and Kim Terry seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous with 8 votes to approve.

Presentation from Breakthrough Academy Marion, Alabama

Henry Nelson invited the school leader, Darren Rahmalo from Breakthrough Academy to address the commission who then introduced Colonel David J. Mollahan, president of Marion Military Institute (MMI). Col. Mollohan explained the importance of providing school choice for a quality education in attracting exceptional candidates for employment in the existing schools and colleges which would greatly affect the local economy. He also discussed the focus of Breakthrough's curriculum on leader development, describing it as unique in developing children into responsible citizens, and Breakthrough's partnership with MMI which would provide tutors to Breakthrough students. Dr. Larissa Clachar, a Breakthrough founding board member and a professor at Judson College, then discussed the school's academics, including the inclusion of foreign language, and reiterated the school's proposed focus on leadership and community service. Mr. Rahmalo then provided a power point discussion of the school's mission and core values, the decline in Perry County schools' enrollment, the decline in the community's population, and key components of the school's proposed curriculum. Mr. Rahmalo also addressed findings from School

Work’s report including discrepancies in the report, questions concerning School Work’s terms (ie. culturally responsive), and components in Breakthrough’s application that were either present and not credited or not applicable (ie 3 year audit). Mr. Nelson thanked Breakthrough for their presentation and then called for discussion from commission members by roll call. Mr. Raine had a question concerning input from the community, specifically Perry County Schools, and how the community was informed of the public forum. Mr. Rahmalo explained that the information for the public forum was disseminated through social media which has been “liked’ by over 400 people. Mr. Marshall asked Mr. Rahmalo how they intended to serve the potential 18 – 20 special education students with one special education teacher. Mr. Rahmalo responded that decisions to hire more teachers would be based on enrollment trends and data and the appropriate number of teachers would be hired, as needed. Mr. Marshall also asked for an update on the acquisition of a facility and Mr. Rahmalo responded that conversations with Marion Academy had not taken place due to the Covid pandemic. Ms. Ison had a question concerning financial management and Tyler Barnett and Chris Reynolds, representing New Schools for Alabama, responded that they provide back office support for charter schools to help ensure sustainability and viability. Ms. Williams applauded Breakthrough for their community support yet expressed that there were several “holes that needed to be plugged.” She stated that the application has merit, yet it needs more time put into it. Mr. Nelson asked about additional community support and asked Mr. Rahmalo to share his teaching experience; Mr. Rahmalo responded. Ms. Haygood had concerns regarding the instruction that would be offered to students at Breakthrough and Mr. Rahmalo discussed the protected time, foreign language, and other aspects of the curriculum. David Marshall made a motion to approve Breakthrough Academy’s application. Kim Terry seconded the motion. Due to technical difficulties, Eddie Hill’s vote was not counted and the motion was thought to have carried with 5 Yes and 4 No votes. However, Logan Searcy received a “no” vote via text from Eddie Hill and the motion did not pass with 5 Yes votes and 5 No votes as follows:

<u>Yes Votes</u>	<u>No Votes</u>
Henry Nelson	Eddie Hill
David Marshall	Sydney Raine
Kim Terry	Allison Haygood
Marla Green	Jamie Ison
Paul Morin	Lisa Williams

Lisa Williams desired more discussion yet was unable to ask questions due to technical difficulties. Sydney Raine suggested that Breakthrough Academy review the negative comments and report back to the commission at a later date. Mrs. Searcy asked the attorney about the legality of Mr. Hill’s vote through text. The commission’s attorney, Lane Knight, reported that a 5 No/ 5 Yes vote does not carry, with the addition of Eddie Hill’s vote through a text message. He suggested that the commission allow further discussion and then make another motion and take a revote. Attempts were being made to assist Mr. Hill in gaining audio access. Commissioner Williams was invited to express her prior questions and concerns. She stated that she would like to see Breakthrough return to the July meeting with an improved application addressing the concerns raised by School Works so that the institution would have better control and performance. Eddie Hill responded via cell phone and agreed with Ms. Williams that the application needed more work. Attorney Knight cited law in regard to participation and recommended that a roll call be taken in order to affirm Mr. Hill’s participation. Ms. Ison then asked for clarification regarding the time frame for Breakthrough’s opportunity to make corrections to their application and

return to the commission. Mrs. Searcy replied that the commission had approved an additional application cycle with a July 13 submission date.

A second roll call for this meeting was conducted to verify participation in the meeting and eligibility for voting on motions. Members of the Commission who participated in the meeting via Zoom were as follows:

- Henry Nelson
- Allison Haygood
- David Marshall
- Marla Green
- Jamie Ison
- Paul Morin
- Sydney Raine
- Kim Terry
- Lisa Williams
- Eddie Hill

All members of the commission were present. Mr. Marshall asked if a conditional approval was legal. Attorney Knight responded that conditional approval was not an option. Mr. Morin then stated that he had voted “Yes” yet he did think that the application needed a more substantial plan of efficacy, so he favored Breakthrough spending more time to address the application’s missing components. Marla Green asked if Breakthrough could be provided a list of the commissioner’s concerns and Mrs. Searcy stated that the recording of the meeting would be available to anyone who needed to review the proceedings. Mrs. Searcy asked Attorney Knight if an external evaluator would be required for the second time that an applicant submits an application. Mr. Knight suggested that the established process should be followed for each application submission but stated that he would research his response. David Marshall made a motion to approve Breakthrough Academy’s application. Kim Terry seconded the motion. Following a roll call vote, Logan Searcy reported the motion did not carry with 4 Yes votes and 6 No votes as follows:

<u>Yes Votes</u>	<u>No Votes</u>
Henry Nelson	Eddie Hill
David Marshall	Sydney Raine
Kim Terry	Allison Haygood
Marla Green	Jamie Ison
	Lisa Williams
	Paul Morin

The commission held a five minute break and the recording was paused.

Ivy Classical Charter School Autauga County

Chairman Nelson invited Bradley Neave to speak on behalf of Ivy Classical School. Mr. Neave discussed data in Autauga County and stated that graduates in Autauga County are not college/career ready. He reported that Autauga County’s application was awarded participation in the Barney Charter School Initiative, against fierce competitors. Mr. Neave spoke to the need for an option for a classical curriculum in that area stating that the future location of air force bases, such as Maxwell and Gunter, would be based on public school opportunities in the area. He also stated that Ivy Classical had solid community support and over 350 pre-enrolled students. Mr. Neaves expressed a large interest from parents of autistic children and stated that community partners, additional training, and Housing tutoring would be used to

meet the needs of all children, especially those with special needs. Mr. Neaves also discussed early drop-off, a partnership with the YMCA, a desire for transportation, and concerns with the evaluator’s report. Mrs. Searcy called roll in order for commissioners to express questions and concerns to Ivy Classical. Ms. Williams commended the classical curriculum yet stated that the rubric was approved and the commissioners need to adhere to it to ensure that the application meets every standard. Paul Morin agreed with Ms. Williams and wanted to ensure financial solvency and operational effectiveness. Allison Haygood asked how many students were enrolled and if Ivy Classical has community support. Mr. Neave reported over 350 students were enrolled and that community support is indicated through the Board for Ivy Classical which is composed of community members. He also stated that they have the support of Autauga County school system and the YMCA. Ms. Haygood then asked about the financial status which is one of the lowest rated categories on the application. Mr. Neave reported that the school had just received 501 C3 status and commented on the fund-raising opportunities that would be utilized. Mr. Marshall expressed his desire to offer different, positive options in public school and he complimented Mr. Neave on the board’s partnerships and plans for transportation. Mr. Marshall asked about the present status of locating a facility. Mr. Neave responded and then introduced his wife, an industrial designer who has researched industrialized construction, to comment on the facility which may include modular facilities which can be constructed much faster. Mr. Marshall then asked how many special education teachers would be hired. Mr. Neaves responded that one teacher and two paraprofessionals would be utilized. Ms. Terry complimented Ivy Classical on their emphasis on special education; Marla Green commended them for community inclusion; and Jamie Ison commended their school leadership. Mr. Nelson asked questions regarding the land acquisition and the facility. A representative from Ivy Classical responded to the value of the land that is expected to be donated, the required loan, and the timeline for the facility, as well as “Plan B.” Mr. Nelson commented on the possible benefits of the classical curriculum. Board members and their expertise were then cited, such as experts in finance and industrial construction.

A motion to approve Classical Ivy’s application was made by David Marshall and seconded. It was a unanimous decision with 5 No votes, 4 Yes votes, and one abstention. The votes were as follows:

<u>Yes Votes</u>	<u>No Votes</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Henry Nelson	Paul Morin	Eddie Hill (due to inability to adequately hear)
David Marshall	Sydney Raine	
Kim Terry	Allison Haygood	
Marla Green	Jamie Ison	
	Lisa Williams	

Mr. Marshall stated that he would like to encourage Ivy Classical to resubmit their application in the summer cycle due to the merit of the application and the need in the area. Several commissioners agreed with these comments.

Magic City Acceptance Charter School Appeal

Logan Searcy introduced Dr. Janice Drake, the rotating commissioner for the appeals process from Birmingham City Schools. Chairman Nelson invited Dr. Mike Wilson, leader for Magic City Acceptance to speak. Karen Musgrove shared the opportunity to present with Dr. Wilson. Ms. Musgrove provided a power point presentation which focused on the early indicators of success, the experience and background of the founders, community support, funding, and the facility. Dr. Wilson discussed the coordination of services with the Magic Center Acceptance Center which provides medical services and

after-school activities. He also discussed the instructional standards that would be used, the proposed timeline, staffing, and the need for a school that provides a safe, nurturing environment. Ms. Musgrove then discussed the financial management capacity and Dr. Wilson discussed his experience with minority students and students with special needs. Dr. Wilson then introduced several guest speakers – two students who discussed bullying related to their sexual orientation. Roll call was taken to solicit discussion from the commission. David Marshall commended the school’s plan for funding, financial capacity, leadership, and the facility. He did ask about the inclusion of social studies and Dr. Wilson responded. Jamie Ison congratulated the board on the leadership yet asked about finances for the school, apart from the Acceptance Center. Dr. Wilson cited several grants received and the possibility of future grants. Lisa Williams cited that she was bothered by the fact that children had been bullied yet the rubric did indicate that most categories did not meet the standards created for the application. Mrs. Searcy reported that Eddie Hill is no longer on the call. Mr. Nelson reported that Dr. Wilson was a “hands-on” principal who had led a very diversified school in the past. Mr. Nelson also spoke of a personal experience with a child who was different and unable to attend public school in the Birmingham schools. It should be noted that the Zoom meeting reached full capacity with 100 participants and others trying to access the meeting. Attorney Knight cited all conditions that must exist to approve to overturn the decision of the local board.

A motion to overturn the decision by the local authorizer was made by David Marshall and seconded by Henry Nelson. The motion failed to carry with 6 No votes, 2 Yes votes, 2 members absent, and one abstention. The votes were as follows:

<u>Yes Votes</u>	<u>No Votes</u>	<u>Abstain</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Henry Nelson	Marla Green	Paul Morin	Eddie Hill
David Marshall	Kim Terry		Sydney Raine
	Allison Haygood		
	Jamie Ison		
	Lisa Williams		
	Janice Drake		

Adjourn

Allison Haygood commented on the value of the rubric and the good efforts of the applicants. Allison Haygood made the motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Jamie Ison. The motion to adjourn was approved unanimously.