

Alabama Public Charter School Commission
February 10, 2022 10:00 A.M.
Via Zoom

MINUTES

The Alabama Public Charter School Commission (APCSC) met on February 10, 2022 at 10:00 A.M. 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.

The Alabama Public Charter School Commission (APCSC) also met on Monday February 14, 2022 at 2:30 P.M. in a Zoom meeting to conclude matters from the February 10, 2022 meeting.

Welcome, Introductions, Approval of Agenda and Minutes

David Marshall welcomed everyone to the meeting. Roll call was taken by Mrs. Logan Searcy. Six members were present which represented a quorum. Members of the Commission who participated:

David Marshall	Sydney Raine	Julie Ann McCulley (absent)
Dick Brewbaker	LaKeisha Wheeler	Paul Morin (absent)
Ty Moody	Steve Siple (absent)	
Anthony Overton	Marla Green (absent)	

Chairman Marshall asked for a motion to approve today's agenda and the minutes from the December 13, 2021 meeting. Commissioner Brewbaker made a motion to approve today's agenda and the minutes. Commissioner Raine seconded. The vote was unanimous. Minutes and agenda were approved.

On February 14, 2022 Chairman David Marshall welcomed everyone back to the conclusion of the February 10, 2022 meeting. Chairman Marshall requested Mrs. Logan Searcy take roll. Nine members were present which represented a quorum. Members of the Commission who participated:

David Marshall	Paul Morin
Dick Brewbaker (left meeting early)	Steve Siple
Ty Moody	Marla Green
Anthony Overton	LaKeisha Knight (entered the meeting late)
Sydney Raine	Julie Ann McCulley (absent)

Presentation from Covenant Academy

Chairman Marshall introduced the first item on the agenda a presentation from Covenant Academy in support of their application. Technology issues delayed the presentation several minutes. Unable to resolve the technology issues the representative from Covenant Academy Ms. Brenda Hartzog made comments via cellphone. Her comments included thanking the commission for the opportunity to speak about the implementing an educational program that will benefit students in Mobile County. She stated their program will be a benefit for our community and

students. It will provide parents another option. We believe that our educational model, which is hands on, engaging, and being there for the children will make a difference with the education in Mobile County. Ms. Hartzog stated that the leadership team has worked very hard in getting everything together for this program and the team looks forward to putting everything in action.

After the opening of the conclusion of the February 10, 2022 meeting Chairman Marshall offered the opportunity for Covenant Academy to make a presentation due to the technology issues that took place February 10, 2022. Ms. Brenda Hartzog spoke for Covenant Academy. Mrs. Hartzog's presentation lasted 25 minutes and included slides with information on the qualifications of the Interim Principal Brenda Hartzog. She also shared a list of Board of Directors and Advisory Board members that have educational backgrounds/expertise. Ms. Hartzog shared slides with proposed course offerings by grade level for K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. She also presented a sample of a daily schedule (K-5). She shared by grade level the proposed connection courses (electives) that students will have the opportunity to participate in. Ms. Hartzog also shared that the founders and consultant have shared information about a "Proposed Charter School" at several community meetings such as the K4 New Parent Orientation, Sport Academy Parent Meetings, and a Public Hearing. Parent Surveys were also given to the parents of the K4 K5 students. She stated response was very favorable. She shared Recruiting/Marketing Strategies that will be used upon the applications approval. Mr. Hartzog shared a list of funding sources that will be used to ensure the success of Covenant Academy of Mobile. In addition to state and federal funds the list included grants that have been applied for or that will be applied for. She also shared a list of community leaders and the amounts of their financial pledges and also, the community leaders and businesses that are willing to help upon approval. Ms. Hartzog also shared the names of the Board/Advisory members that have experience/expertise in finances. Ms. Hartzog concluded her presentation and turned the meeting back to Chairman Marshall.

Consideration the Application of Covenant Academy

Chairman Marshall thanked Ms. Hartzog for her comments. Chairman Marshall moved to allow commissioners an opportunity to ask questions. Commissioner Moody asked for clarity of the curriculum in the application which is the FLIPS model. Dr. Moody asked what program will be used to deliver the substance of the curriculum for Math, Science? Ms. Hartzog shared that for Reading and Math they had several teachers researching several curriculums that were rated by Ed. Reports. Using the top rated curriculums by Ed Reports the curriculum committee chose the same company Savvas for Reading Language Arts and Math. In K-5 Reading Language Arts the program is called My View. As the school expands to include grades 6-8 the program becomes My Perspective. Providing continuity for the program. This curriculum can be used at the high school level and the data collected from its use will be used to determine effectiveness for use in high school. enVision Math by Savvas offers the same continuity K-8 as the reading language arts program. Ms. Hartzog stated both programs offer diagnostic tools to be used for assessment and both offer instruction on each child's level. They also have materials for enrichment. Commissioner Moody also asked is the current school Covenant only a preschool or are they a private school now that plans to go charter? Ms. Hartzog responded that the current Covenant Academy has the K3 K4 program. The K-12 charter school is separate. She stated they are not extending Covenant Academy. The parents from the K3- K4 will have to complete an application and apply for Covenant Academy of Mobile. The K3-K4 program is a pool of students who can apply but we have to reach outside of that to pull in students from surrounding communities. Ms. Hartzog stated we are not transitioning just from K3-K4, they are two separate schools.

Commissioner Overton asked how are your current recruiting efforts going? Have you had some changes along the way to increase your efforts or the effectiveness of your efforts? Ms. Hartzog stated that they have not done any recruiting or advertising at this time because they didn't want to advertise the school without knowing whether or not they've been approved. She also stated that if approved they plan to meet next week to put into action what is in the application. Ms. Hartzog stated that word is already out, and they will be ramping up effort to meet their goal of preregistration in Sept/Oct/Nov. Commissioner Raine asked to hear the funding strategy. How are you going to generate additional funding for the school? Ms. Hartzog shared that they have filed the 501C3 for with the government and are awaiting on approval. Covenant Academy has applied for the New Venture Funds Grant and are expecting to hear this month on their status. She stated that they have written for grants with local organizations and have been told to reapply once they have gotten the 501C3 approval. Covenant Academy will work to form partnerships with local organizations. Commissioner Marshall asked how history and social studies will be given the same importance in the STEAM model as the other curriculum such as science? Ms. Hartzog responded that social studies K-5 will be integrated using My View literacy curriculum. Instead of being taught separately students will have opportunities in K-5 to read stories related to social studies in their LEA block. In middle school there will be specialty teachers to teach social studies, and civics. Middle school will be taught differently than K-5. Ms. Hartzog stated all subjects will be taught. Commissioner Marshall stated that in Covenant Academy's charter application it stated they had not hired a leader and they had given rational why they had not. Commissioner Marshall asked if they are still waiting based on today's results to formally recruit the school leader? Ms. Hartzog's response was yes. She stated that once they get approval today their goal is to start advertising right away and have the principal in place as soon as possible. Certainly, no later than July 1, 2022. Efforts will be underway to hire not only a principal but also for an operations officer or director to have them in place, so they'll have enough time to learn the program. Ms. Hartzog said she'll be there until they can get someone. Her goal is to be there side by side to make sure the leader is comfortable and ready to lead Covenant Academy of Mobile. Commissioner Marshall asked without naming names, do you have specific individuals in mind that you are seeking to be candidates for the position? Ms. Hartzog said no, not specific individuals at this time. Once we're approved, we'll get out there and get going with recruiting and advertising and see who applies. Commissioner Brewbaker asked do you have, even informal, commitments for funding based on your approval today? Ms. Hartzog replied yes we have. We have two lenders who are standing by, and we have letters of support. Ms. Hartzog asked Mr. Ruggs, school founder, to speak to this question. Mr. Ruggs stated that they arranged for some precommitment letters to obtain funding through some local lenders They have two letters of commitment. In addition, they will be applying for grants. Commissioner Brewbaker asked Do you have any commitments from local businesses or civic organizations other than banks? Mr. Ruggs responded that they have. He also stated a lot of business leaders in this community are fond of what we've been doing in this community, and they are insinuating financial support when we get this approval. Mr. Ruggs said approval will drive momentum and draw in more business leaders. Mr. Brewbaker asked for clarification that Covenant has not at this point approached anyone for any of the leadership positions, like a financial officer or head of school. Commissioner Brewbaker asked you haven't approached anyone for the leadership team? Mr. Rugg stated that Mr. Brenda Hartzog is listed as interim principal. She is a well established leader and well know name in this area. Covenant will not be void of a dominate leader during this process. Covenant's attorney Nash Campbell asked

to speak. He stated that he has reached out to his contacts, and they are very interested to see if the application passes. Mr. Campbell stated he believes that they will be able to get a well qualified, seasoned leader from another charter school quickly. Chairman Marshall asked if there were further questions or comments. After a pause Commissioner Marshall asked to move forward on the vote to approve Covenant Academy of Mobile. He called for a motion to approve the application of Covenant Academy of Mobile. No motion was made. Chairman Marshall asked again for a motion to approve the application. He then asked if there were additional motions that anyone would like to put forward. Commissioner Brewbaker stated he had a point of inquiry. Commissioner Brewbaker stated that he needs more time, and he needs to look at the application again. He is not ready to vote. Commissioner Brewbaker asked can this be tabled until a called meeting in a week? Chairman Marshall reminded the commission that there is a 60 timeline for a vote on a submitted application. Mr. Marshall asked the commissions attorney Lane Knight for clarification/advice. Mr. Knight stated that the time frame is correct. The commission must either vote to accept or deny the application within 60 days of the filing of the application. Which for this application would need to happen no later than February 15, 2022. Mr. Knight also advised that it is his understanding that this meeting could be suspended and then reconvened and would comply with the Alabama Open Meetings Act. Chairman Marshall asked if anyone had a motion? A motion was made by Commissioner Brewbaker to suspend the meeting until Tuesday, February 15, 2022. Commissioner Raine seconded. Before the vote on the motion Mr. Knight asked Mr. Nash Campbell to verify for the record that the applicant and he as their attorney have no objections to this and are satisfied with the plan as laid out by the commission. Mr. Campbell responded that they are in agreement. Chairman Marshall called for a vote on the motion to suspend the meeting until Tuesday February 15, 2022. The vote was unanimous. The motion to suspend the meeting until Tuesday February 15, 2022 was approved.

February 14,2022 -conclusion to February 10,2022 meeting. Chairman Marshall thanked Ms. Hartzog for her presentation. He then asked for the commissioners to be given an opportunity to make comment or ask questions. Commissioner Morin's question: You plan to stay for the indefinite future regarding the oversight of the job search, finding the permanent head of school, and then mentor as they get the school up and running. Did I hear that correctly? Ms. Hartzog responded yes and will stay until the leader can fly. Being a mentor, I will be there as long as necessary working with the leader until they are ready to open school. She stated that even after the school opens, she plans to be right there. Commissioner Morin also asked what did you say was the curriculum regarding STEM education? Have you considered partnerships with Dolphin Island Sea Lab, and Gulf Coast Maritime Museum? Ms. Hartzog responded that Know Atom will be used in the STEAM program and that that yes there are various opportunities to work with various organizations to support the school. She said that they are aware of the support systems that are there. Commissioner Siple asked how many years are on the lease of the building? Nash Campbell, attorney for the applicant, responded that they are looking at a 5 year lease to match the contract term. Commissioner Siple noted in the 5 year budget plan that the school is showing a 3.7 million dollar deficit over the 5 year period. Mr. Siple asked is that an accurate depiction of the budget and expectation at this point or do I have old numbers? Ms. Hartzog stated that those numbers were at the time the application was submitted and they will change. She stated they did not have all the financial information they needed from the State Department of Education.

She also said that there would be extra funds coming from the state that they didn't know about or get answers for. Nash Campbell added that in discussing the lease terms that it has been discussed, especially that first year, that the Ruggs possibly having much softer terms as far as lease agreement. He continued for instance cutting that lease in half to avoid that deficit expenditure, to keep that deficit from being so high. That's why we haven't hit the hard numbers yet. And we didn't want to claim an agreement with New School in Alabama until we actually have that agreement. No further questions were asked. Chairman Marshall thanked the commissioners for their comments and questions. He also thanked the applicant especially Ms. Hartzog for the presentation and it answered the questions from Thursday (February 10). Chairman Marshall asked if there was a motion to approve the charter application for Covenant Academy? Commissioner Raine made a motion to approve the charter application for Covenant Academy of Mobile subject to the inclusion in the charter contract of the pre-opening condition that a school leader be hired prior to opening. Commissioner Moody seconded the motion. Chairman Marshall asked if there was any discussion around the motion. Commissioner Green asked for clarification of a yes vote. Logan Searcy provided the verbiage to be added to the charter contract. Chairman Marshall asked for additional comments. He then called for a vote to approve the charter application of Covenant Academy of Mobile with the pre-opening condition that a school leader be in place prior to school opening. The vote was unanimous. The motion was approved.

Consideration of the Resolution for Covenant Academy

Commission Marshall asked for a 10 minute recess for commissioners to review the resolution of the vote that Lane Knight had prepared. Chairman Marshall called the meeting back to order. He asked Logan Searcy to call roll. Eight commissioners returned from the recess. There is a quorum. Chairman Marshall asked after reviewing the resolution during the recess are there any questions or discussion? Chairman Marshall then asked is there a motion to approve the resolution? Commissioner Siple made the motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Moody seconded. The vote was unanimous to approve the resolution. Chairman Marshall congratulated the applicant and their team.

Adjourn

Commissioner Marshall **suspended** the meeting until 10:00 AM Tuesday February 15, 2022 via Zoom.

After the meeting was suspended scheduling issues arose and the day and time were changed to 2:30 PM Monday February 14, 2022 via Zoom.

Chairman Marshall thanked everyone for reconvening the second half of the meeting and willingness to serve. He asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting Commissioner Siple made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Raine seconded. Chairman Marshall adjourned the meeting.