

**Alabama Public Charter School Commission  
June 16, 2022 10:00 A.M.  
Via Zoom**

**MINUTES**

The Alabama Public Charter School Commission (APCSC) met on June 16, 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.

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

Chairman Marshall asked for a motion to approve today's agenda and the minutes from the May 20, 2022, meeting. Dick Brewbaker made a motion to approve today's agenda and the minutes. Marla Green seconded. The vote was unanimous. Minutes and agenda were approved.

**Update on Quality School Reviewers**

Chairman Marshall asked Logan Searcy share updates on the selection of the Quality School Reviewers. She shared that Cognia was chosen and each of the commissioners should have received a copy of the proposal. Cognia has sent a timeline. They will begin working with the commission in the fall. Cognia will contact each school and schedule their Quality Review for the Spring of 2023. Also, during the fall Cognia will be working with the commission on developing the rubric to be used during the Quality Reviews. The rubric will include the commission's framework. They will also be working with the schools in areas of school improvement such as professional development. Mrs. Searcy encouraged the commissioners to contact her after they have read Cognia's proposal with any questions or concerns. Chairman Marshall thanked her for the updates.

**Meeting Schedule**

Chairman Marshall shared that up until now most meetings have been scheduled one, two at a time and he suggested it would be worthwhile to schedule out for the remainder of the year or at least into the fall. He asked Logan Searcy to share the dates that have been discussed. These dates will be posted on the commission website and sent to all commissioners. Proposed dates: August 2, 2022, at 10:00 A.M.- For consideration of any summer cycle applications received. September 13, 2022- For any relevant issues and to work with Cognia to develop the rubric for the Quality Reviews. October 28, 2022 –To consider the resolution for University Charter School. November 8, 2022 – Collaborative meeting with Cognia on rubric for Quality Reviews. November 18, 2022 – Public Hearing for University Charter School. February 10, 2023 – Next cycle of applications. Chairman Marshall reminded the commissioners that the meeting dates are subject to change if the need arises. He then asked for any questions or comments regarding the dates. Commissioner Green asked when would be the appropriate time to discuss safety plans/active shooter plans? Mrs. Searcy asked if she could address this. She shared that the department has an online platform

for all schools to upload their safety plans and that all charter schools have that. It is part of all charter schools pre-opening contracts to have safety plans. Chairman Marshall said if this is something the commissioners want to see it could be made available. Mr. Marshall also said that the larger question of when an item should be proposed for the agenda would be anytime. Just bring the item to Chairman Marshall or Mrs. Searcy attention and it can be included in any of the upcoming meetings.

### **Consideration of University Charter School Request**

Chairman Marshall noted that the representative for University Charter had to leave Zoom meeting due to fire alarm sounding and asked for a motion to postpone and move to the next item on the agenda and come back to University Charter's item if the representative is able to return to the meeting. Commissioner Green made the motion to postpone and move to the next item on the agenda and return to University Charter's item if possible. Commissioner Morin seconded. The vote was unanimous, 6 yes. The motion to postpone to the next item and come back is approved. Chairman Marshall noted that the representative for University Charter School was able to return to the meeting. Commissioner Green made a motion to entertain University Charter's item at this time. Commissioner Moody seconded. The vote was unanimous, 6 yes to accept the motion to entertain University Charter's item at this time. The motion was approved. Chairman Marshall turned the meeting over to University Charter School's representative, Dr. J.J. Wedgworth. Dr. Wedgworth thanked everyone for their patience and appreciates being allowed the time to address the commission. Dr. Wedgworth stated that their request was not an attempt to evade accountability in any form. University Charter values the importance of the accountability process. University Charter has a very unique set of circumstances for the commission to consider. University Charter will respect the decision. They will do whatever they are asked to do by the commission. Dr. Wedgworth shared that the Quality School Review that should have taken place in year four did not take place due to the RFP vendor process being delayed. University Charter is also up for renewal in September 2022, and it was proposed that they also have a full Quality School Review in the fall of 2022. Dr. Wedgworth stated that due to the huge process to do both of those processes at the same time is not logistically possible to do both to fidelity. University Charter ask that the commission consider their waiver in whatever form the commission sees fit for them to demonstrate accountability. Chairman Marshall thanked Dr. Wedgworth for her comments and reviewed the timeline for charter school and renewal and due to the circumstances, it was true that there would be an overlap and that would be a lot for a school to go through at the same time. Chairman Marshall said that since it was on the commission and not University Charter that he was in favor of granting the waver only in this very specific situation. Chairman Marshall asked for discussion/questions. Commissioner Brewbaker asked are we going to wave or postpone? Chairman Marshall stated the request was to waive but the commission could entertain postponing. Commissioner Brewbaker pointed out that if the commission agreed to the waiver request, even in these specific circumstances, it would be setting a precedent. Chairman Marshall asked for further discussion/questions. Commissioner Morin asked Mrs. Searcy to clarify Cognia's proposal and timeline. He stated that it appears the reviews will be in the spring so the request for a waiver is moot. Commissioner Morin agrees that waving would set a dangerous precedent. He is not comfortable waving. Mrs. Searcy explained that in Cognia's timeline the rubrics would be developed in the fall and the actual Quality School Reviews would take place in the spring. She also shared that there are enough data points data points to be used for school renewal and that going forward the Quality School Reviews would be more about continuous improvement than renewal. Dr. Wedgworth interjected that the only reason for the waiver request was the timeline. She stated it didn't make sense to have the renewal process in year five and then go back and look at year four data. Dr. Wedgworth asked if we do the review in the spring would we be looking at year four? Mrs. Searcy responded no; it would be about continuous improvement going forward. Dr. Wedgworth asked would

we be having a Quality review using year five data. Chairman Marshall said it would be a contemporary review and not looking back at year four data. Dr. Wedgworth said University Charter would be good with that. She said this information is new to her since they submitted their request. She said University charter will be good with whatever is decided. Commissioner Moody asked now that the new information has been presented do you think the waiver is necessary? Dr. Wedgworth asked what would be the new timeline? Will we do School Quality Reviews in year five and nine? Chairman Marshall: From there on out we wouldn't deviate from the timeline. Dr. Wedgworth: Would it make more sense to do year six and nine since you've already looked at year five in the renewal process? This would give a little space between when you looked at the data. Mrs. Searcy reminded the commission that due to the Pandemic all of the charter schools timelines have been flexible. Also, there are six schools in the contract with Cognia and that needs to come in as well. Chairman Marshall asked Dr. Wedgworth if the review was moved to September would that be amicable to you? Dr. Wedgworth: We will do what ever works. Commissioner Brewbaker: I have a lot of concerns and unless it's absolutely necessary a wavier would put the commission in a very bad spot. Dr. Wedgworth: We have shifted away from waving to the timeline. Commissioner Moody: Are you simply asking to postpone to year six and nine instead of waving the Quality Review? Mrs. Searcy: Is it going to be to be at the beginning of year six? Commissioner Morin: May I ask Dr. Wedgworth it would be better for you in the spring or at the beginning of the year next school year? Dr. Wedgworth: The beginning of school is busy but so is the spring. If I could choose, I would choose the early on into year six timeline. Chairman Marshall: I am hearing some agreement. This has been a good discussion. What I'm hearing is that we change the request from a wavier to a request that we delay the School Quality Review until the fall of 2023, the beginning of year six. Is there more discussion? Commissioner Brewbaker: If this is merely a postponement and we are just being flexible do we need to do this as a motion? Do we need a motion to allow flexibility? Or can't we leave that administratively up to the department? Mrs. Searcy: You all could allow me to work with Dr. Wedgworth to decide what is the best time for her weather its spring or fall that would be great. Commissioner Morin: Since we've contracted with Cognia is there a way we can ask them in conjunction with you and Dr. Wedgworth work on that path so we're setting her up for success having their support through the process? Mrs. Searcy: That's true and you're working with Cognia on the rubric and somewhat with professional development, is going to be a collaborative process between the school, Cognia and the commission. I would love to have that flexibility to work with University Charter and Cognia to come up with something that's going to be useful to them as well as provide accountability for the commission. We're not giving them a waiver at all we are working with them, building a process to not only give the commission what it needs but to help them with their continuous improvement. Chairman Marshall: My observation is that the initial request is moot. If Dr. Wedgworth were to withdraw that request I do have a question for our attorney. Would we need to have a vote to have Mrs. Searcy to handle this administratively because we are no longer voting on a formal request being made from a charter school? Mr. Knight: This is not something specified by the act to vote on. There was discussion back and forth between Chairman Marshall and Mr. Knight about items such as the accountability timeline that have been voted on before. Mr. Knight advised that it would be appropriate to vote on any deviation even if it's to give Mrs. Searcy the flexibility to do that from an administrative basis. It would be prudent to make sure that everyone is on the same page and that it has been voted on and is the will of commission as a body. Mrs. Searcy suggested that the wording in the timeline read that the charter schools would have two Quality School Reviews within the five years they are reviewed allowing for some flexibility as to when those reviews occur so Mrs. Searcy can work with the charter schools on when those reviews happen. Chairman Marshall: That would allow the commission to grant some wiggle room. That would be a blanket amendment we would be making to the entire process. What thoughts do the commissioners have? Commissioner Brewbaker: We could pass a resolution that says that when appropriate the state department could use administrative

discretion on the timing of certain reviews. It doesn't have to be complicated. We're just granting some administrative discretion to the state department working with schools. Chairman Marshall: That sounds like a possible path forward. In that case is a motion to grant administrative discretion to the state department with regards to our accountability timeline. Mr. Knight asked to clean up a comment from earlier in the meeting. He asked Commissioner Moody if she was asking a question or making a motion when she asked could she make a motion. Commissioner Moody: Asking a question. Chairman Marshall: Is there a motion on the floor that gives the state department administrative discretion with regards to our accountability timeline? Commissioner Brewbaker made the motion to give the state department administrative discretion with regards to the charter commission's accountability timeline. Commissioner Moody seconded. The vote was unanimous, 6 -yes. The motion was approved

### **Consideration of Empower Community School Request**

Chairman Marshall turned the meeting over to Anthony Oliver, the representative from Empower Community School, to share their request revise their enrollment/growth plan. Mr. Oliver shared that the original plan was to open with two locations however one of the locations needed renovations that exceeded their expectations, and they would be opening at one location only in year one. Because of that they are requesting to lower their enrollment target to 110 for year one. They have already met that target. Mr. Oliver also shared that the revised budget was attached, and they were comfortable that they could meet the projected expenses. They have already raised \$385,000 of the \$400,000 local dollars. He also stated that the renovations would continue at the second location. Commissioner Moody asked if they were planning to have the younger grades and if so, would they move them to the second location when renovations were complete. Mr. Oliver responded yes; they are planning on moving as many of the younger grades as they can to the second location. Chairman Marshall commented that after hearing the budget plan addressed, he was comfortable with the request. Chairman Marshall asked for any other questions or comments or a motion. Commissioner Brewbaker made a motion to accept the request of Empower Community School to revise their enrollment/growth plan and budget. Commissioner Moody seconded. The vote was unanimous, 6 yes. The motion to accept Empower Community School's request to revise their enrollment/growth and budget plan was approved.

### **Website Tour**

Chairman Marshall said it took some time to work through that item, but it was fruitful, and we arrived at a conclusion that is satisfactory. Since we have new commissioners, I have asked Logan to give us a tour of the commission's website so we will know where certain documents are on our website. Logan shared that the website is very transparent and that everything is on the website. Logan went across the tool bar at the top of the home page link by link sharing what was on each dropdown. Demonstrating how each worked. Commissioner Green asked is this where she could find out about safety here? Logan: Yes- Most school have that in their applications and their applications are here. Commissioner said she meant was to see what the state requires. Logan: I'm going to share that with you. That is not on your site because that is a state requirement. Commissioner Morin: Could a back link be added to our site to take us to those safety requirements sine safety is a major concern right now? Logan: Sure, I can do that. Logan shared that all the schools are doing a great job being transparent and keeping their sites current. She asked if there were any other questions or comments about the website. Commissioner Green: Good job, very crisp, clear. Chairman Marshall Thanked Logan for the walk through, he also thanked her for making the website happen. He also said they don't say it often enough.

## **Adjourn**

Chairman Marshall thanked everyone for their time and work. Asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Morin made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Moody seconded. The vote was unanimous, and the meeting was adjourned.