

In The Matter Of:
Department of Education
In Re: New Moyer Academy

Application
February 24, 2014

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P U B L I C H E A R I N G

IN RE: NEW MOYER ACADEMY APPLICATION

Carvel State Office Building
820 North French Street
2nd Floor Auditorium
Wilmington, Delaware 19801

Monday, February 24, 2014
6:21 p.m.

BEFORE: Jennifer Nagourney, Executive Director,
Charter School Office, Delaware
Department of Education

Ilona Kirshon, Deputy Attorney General
and Counsel for the State Board of
Education

Donna Johnson, Executive Director, State
Board of Education

Pat Heffernan, Member, State Board of
Education

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1 MS. NAGOURNEY: Good evening. I
2 declare this public hearing to be open. My name
3 is Jennifer Nagourney and I'm the Executive
4 Director of the Charter School Office of the
5 Delaware Department of Education. I've been
6 appointed by the Secretary of Education to
7 conduct this public meeting. New Moyer Academy
8 has filed an application for a major modification
9 of their charter to change their goal and
10 targets. I will now ask the others with me today
11 to introduce themselves.

12 MS. KIRSHON: Ilona Kirshon, Deputy
13 Attorney General and Counsel to the State Board
14 of Education.

15 MS. JOHNSON: Donna Johnson,
16 Executive Director, State Board of Education.

17 MR. HEFFERNAN: Pat Heffernan, Member
18 of the State Board of Education.

19 MS. NAGOURNEY: This public hearing
20 is being held by the Department of Education and
21 the State Board of Education to give the school
22 an opportunity to provide information about and
23 comment on the application and also to receive
24 public comment. Let the record reflect that the



1 notice of the time, date and place of today's
2 public hearing was published in the News Journal
3 and the Delaware State News. In addition, notice
4 was posted at the Charter School Accountabilities
5 Committee's official place of business, on the
6 Department of Education's official website and
7 the State public meeting calendar on the State's
8 official website. Further, the applicant was
9 personally notified of the time, date and place
10 of today's hearing.

11 The court reporter is present so that
12 a record of this hearing can be made. It will be
13 necessary for each speaker to clearly identify
14 himself or herself before beginning to speak so
15 that the court reporter will be able to note who
16 you are. The record of this hearing will be
17 provided to the Secretary and members of the
18 board together with any written or electronic
19 comments received at or before this meeting.

20 We will proceed in the following
21 manner. First, we will hear from any
22 representatives of the charter school who wish to
23 comment on the application and then we will take
24 comments from anyone else who wishes to speak.



1 If there is anyone else who wants to speak that
2 has not signed up, please raise your hand.

3 (No response.)

4 MS. NAGOURNEY: I do not believe we
5 will need to put a time limit on any comments. I
6 will be as liberal as time and reason allows in
7 accepting comments, however, I do reserve the
8 right to limit comment if it is purely repetitive
9 or cumulative. At this point we will accept
10 comments from any representatives of the school.

11 DR. STEPHENSON: Good evening, my
12 name is Dr. Keith Stephenson, K-E-I-T-H,
13 S-T-E-P-H-E-N-S-O-N. I thank you for the
14 opportunity to provide testimony as to why the
15 modifications should be approved. The
16 modification that we are requesting is an
17 enrollment modification that has a maximum number
18 of students moved from 600 to 305. Before I get
19 started I would just like to set the context for
20 the enrollment numbers.

21 The current board for the Moyer
22 Academy did not participate in the original
23 creation of the enrollment numbers. The current
24 board started in 2012, July of 2012, and these



1 numbers were created with the origination of the
2 charter and it was approved in 2010. It is our
3 belief that the numbers were established to be
4 able to satisfy the cost of the facility, which
5 was approximately \$500,000.00 a year as a lease
6 payment. Since the building has been purchased
7 that number has dropped in half, more than half
8 actually. So, at this point we would like to
9 just focus simply on the quality of education
10 versus the quantity of students that are in the
11 building.

12 So, while there is a lot of research
13 out there it's noted within the application as to
14 the benefits of having small schools the fact is
15 that Moyer has its own data to be able to support
16 our work throughout the last year with a small
17 student body. Our student body has definitely
18 grown. We have grown by 20 percent over the last
19 year from 182 to 227 students and with the growth
20 in students we consider this still a small
21 school.

22 Last year academically both in Math
23 and ELA we had some of the largest growth within
24 the State, 17 percent growth in Math and



1 17 percent growth in ELA. Also, there was a
2 significant growth in Science, Social Studies and
3 the one we are the most proud of is Special
4 Education. When we look at the demographics
5 throughout the State, large demographics of
6 African American students with over 97 percent,
7 it's a very unique school.

8 Historically and nationally this has
9 been a group of students who school districts,
10 charter schools, have had challenges with
11 educating and in our school we have made some
12 progress with that. So, we are clearly not where
13 we would like to be, but I think this data is
14 proof that we are on the right track. From a
15 school cultural perspective at this point last
16 year we had 50 percent fewer suspensions than we
17 had at this time last year. In addition to that,
18 we have 30 percent of the reportable offenses,
19 another that was a concern prior, but we have
20 30 percent fewer than we did last year.

21 Also proof that the school is on the
22 move our attendance rates last year were reported
23 at 82 percent. This year ten percent higher
24 prior to all of these snow days. So, we have



1 some work to do because we have taken a hit for
2 our attendance rates with the snow, however, we
3 are confident that we will be able to pick that
4 up and meet the needs.

5 I would just like to, again, thank
6 you for the opportunity to present to you this
7 evening. We are confident that we can continue
8 to develop our students, develop our staff to
9 meet the needs of all of our students. So, as
10 you go forward and consider our modification
11 please keep these things in mind. Thank you.

12 MS. NAGOURNEY: Thank you.

13 MS. WALLS: Good evening. My name is
14 Alana Walls, A-L-A-N-A, and the last name is
15 W-A-L-L-S. I'm the principal at Moyer Academy
16 and I came into the position as the principal in
17 October of this current school year and a lot of
18 the things that we have been able to do this year
19 have been due to the smaller numbers that we have
20 at the school.

21 For example, we have been able to
22 establish significant close relationships with
23 our scholars that we have been using to leverage
24 to help them to modify the behaviors and increase



1 their academic achievement. Many of our students
2 have commented on the fact that one of the things
3 they love the most about the school is that they
4 have easy access to the administration, to the
5 teachers and they feel loved and supported and
6 this is something that they did not have in other
7 schools partially due to the size of the school.

8 In addition to that, with the smaller
9 numbers we have been able to allow our teachers
10 to be able to engage in professional learning
11 communities, which has permitted us to properly
12 manage the school-wide implementation of various
13 instructional strategies that have been proven to
14 be successful in increasing academic achievement
15 such as the identified strategies of using the
16 guided notes and the binder control.

17 As we move into the next year where
18 we are looking to have an increased population,
19 but not at the 600 students, we are looking to be
20 able to have a block schedule and also develop
21 opportunities for our students to develop
22 individual learning plans, which is going to
23 allow us to be able to make sure we know each and
24 every one of our students, to make sure we are



1 able to identify how each of them are learning
2 best and to provide them with the individualized
3 instruction that is going to allow them to
4 continue to grow and increase their achievement.

5 I do thank you for your time this
6 evening and I do hope that you will take the time
7 to consider our application. Thank you.

8 MS. NAGOURNEY: Thank you.

9 MS. WONGUS: Good evening, my name is
10 Nikia, N-I-K-I-A, Wongus, W-O-N-G-U-S. I'm the
11 current business manager for the New Moyer
12 Academy. After coming to work over a year ago I
13 can tell you that our audit findings from fiscal
14 year '12 to fiscal year 2013 went from six major
15 findings to one, which shows that currently all
16 of our processes are in place, that they are
17 being adhered to and followed.

18 Also, I would like to mention that
19 end of school year '13 we were able to set aside
20 some contingency pays for all staff members,
21 which is over \$330,000.00 at 182 student
22 enrollment. I would like to mention for the
23 fiscal year '14 our current overall budget is
24 within the 58 percent ratio spending because we



1 have completed over seven months of the year.
2 So, we are within that setting overall with our
3 budget, which means that we will not be looking
4 towards going into our contingency funds.

5 So, as it is right now Moyer is in
6 the proper state to meet all of its current
7 fiscal year financial obligations. Again, I
8 thank you for your time and please consider our
9 modification. Thank you.

10 MS. NAGOURNEY: At this point we'll
11 accept comments from anyone else who desires to
12 speak.

13 MR. CURRY: Christopher Curry,
14 C-U-R-R-Y. I serve as the chairman of the board
15 for the New Moyer Academy. I came in as the
16 founding chairman of the board, but when the
17 charter was established I was not a part of that
18 process. I would like to say with understanding
19 all that Dr. Stephenson has indicated as well as
20 Ms. Walls and Ms. Wongus we were able to
21 literally turn -- we're not totally turned around
22 yet, we're working, but we were able to do all
23 that you heard with a very minimum enrollment.
24 We were able to purchase our facility. We were



1 able to show that all of our staff were paid and
2 even deal with all of the things we needed to
3 deal with with minimum enrollment.

4 But I want to just say to you that
5 one of the things I said to the board
6 immediately, We cannot have 600 young scholars in
7 this facility without having a strong foundation.
8 What was lacking at Moyer in my opinion was there
9 was no foundation. If we were to fill the place
10 up with a lot of students and a lot of young
11 people had discipline problems and issues, we
12 would create a major catastrophe for ourselves.

13 So, I asked the board if we can come
14 before this group and say let's get the
15 foundation strong and then we can continue to
16 grow, but to open up and have 300, 400, 500, 600
17 students with the level of students that were
18 being attracted to Moyer it would have never,
19 ever turned around to the level that it has
20 turned around.

21 So, I would hope that you would
22 please consider the fact that even though when we
23 first came to you all we may not have had all the
24 data we have now we have some verification that



1 with 187, with 227, we were able to handle all of
2 the fiscal things that we needed to handle and we
3 were able to show that the academics are turning.
4 Now we believe if we get this foundation very
5 strong there is not much we won't be able to do
6 in the field of this education process. Thank
7 you.

8 MS. NAGOURNEY: Thank you. Anyone
9 else desire to speak?

10 (No response.)

11 MS. NAGOURNEY: If not, I would like
12 to thank you all for participating today. The
13 Secretary will review your comments as part of
14 the application process and your comments will
15 also be available for the State Board to
16 consider. This hearing is now closed. And your
17 initial report for the CSAC initial meeting will
18 be available on-line later tonight by 9:00 p.m.

19 (The hearing was concluded at 6:34
20 p.m.)

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23
24



1 State of Delaware)
2 New Castle County)

3
4
5 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

6
7 I, Christina M. Vitale, Certified Court
8 Reporter and Notary Public, do hereby certify
9 that the foregoing record, pages 1 to 12
10 inclusive, is a true and accurate transcript of
11 my stenographic notes taken on Monday, February
12 24, 2014 in the above-captioned matter.

13
14 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my
15 hand and seal this 26th day of February, 2014, at
16 Wilmington.

17
18 

19
20 Christina M. Vitale, CCR



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