

Lawrence Sheila

From: Longfellow Chuck
Sent: Monday, July 8, 2019 1:32 PM
To: Travers Leroy
Subject: FW: OCS Review/The Shorter Family

From: Bunting Susan <Susan.Bunting@doe.k12.de.us>
Sent: Monday, July 8, 2019 10:37 AM
To: jshorter614@comcast.net
Cc: Longfellow Chuck <Chuck.Longfellow@doe.k12.de.us>
Subject: RE: OCS Review/The Shorter Family

Thanks for sharing. I am copying the head of the Charter School Accountability Committee, who will post your email as part of the official record.

Susan S. Bunting

Susan S. Bunting, Ed.D.
Secretary of Education
Department of Education

From: Jenn <jshorter614@comcast.net>
Sent: Monday, July 8, 2019 10:07 AM
To: Bunting Susan <Susan.Bunting@doe.k12.de.us>
Subject: OCS Review/The Shorter Family

Good Morning Susan!

I would like to share our story for why we chose and continue to choose Odyssey.

We had heard great things about the school since 2013.

Our kids were currently with Christina School District at this time. I was ok with this until our oldest transitioned to Kirk Middle. He began to anxiety about going to school which was never a problem before. His lunch was being stolen weekly. His mental well-being was disturbed.

Me coming from Gauger chalked it up to life. It would make him stronger, right? I survived and he will to.

Then when our second son was in fourth grade at Marshall elementary he had his life threatened and nothing was done. That was the last straw for us.

One day after school our Son came home and said another student held a pair of scissors to his neck and said I wish you were dead. I was told that nothing would be done by the principal because his hands were tied. Apparently, there was a check list he needed to follow. The threats didn't stop there.

We applied for OCS and won the lottery summer of 2015.

Going into our fourth year and adding two more kids to Odyssey, we would not change a thing. The education that our children have received has more than made us proud to be part of OCS.

As far as the board we agree changes should be put in place that makes sure no one is able to put us in this position again.

Thank you,

The Shorter Family

Sent from XFINITY Connect App

Lawrence Sheila

From: Ted Hantzandreou <tghantz202@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 11, 2019 8:37 AM
To: Bunting Susan
Cc: infocso
Subject: Odyssey Charter School

Dear Secretary Bunting,

I am writing in support of AHEPA's current role on the Odyssey Charter School. AHEPA volunteers have provided guidance, support and assistance since the School's founding. The academic success Odyssey has achieved, as well as, year-after-year fundraising to meet building demands for the the still increasing student population is a testament to AHEPA's desire to make Odyssey one of the best schools in the State and Country!

As an AHEPAN, a business owner and a donor to the school, I full-heartedly support AHEPA's role with the School.

Sincerely,

Theodore Hantzandreou
Libby's Restaurant
227 W. 8th St.
Wilmington, DE 19801
302-655-4246

Lawrence Sheila

From: Longfellow Chuck
Sent: Monday, July 8, 2019 9:09 PM
To: Travers Leroy
Subject: Fwd: Odyssey Charter School - Final CSAC Public Hearing 7/9/19

For record

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From: Bunting Susan
Sent: Monday, July 8, 2019 8:50:45 PM
To: Marco Boyce
Cc: Longfellow Chuck
Subject: RE: Odyssey Charter School - Final CSAC Public Hearing 7/9/19

Mr. Boyce,
I am forwarding your email to the head of the Charter School Accountability Committee, who will post it as a part of the public record.

From: Marco Boyce [mailto:marco.boyce@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, July 8, 2019 4:36 PM
To: Bunting Susan <Susan.Bunting@doe.k12.de.us>
Subject: Odyssey Charter School - Final CSAC Public Hearing 7/9/19

Dear Ms Bunting,

As a parent of a rising 3rd grade student and future kindergarten student at OCS, I'm writing to voice my full support of the OCS board --particularly its current State-approved composition of a majority of AHEPA members.

Charter schools are supposed to be unique endeavors. OCS's uniqueness as a Greek language and cultural school is what primarily attracted our family to enroll. Having a majority of AHEPA members on the board ensures that the primary mission of OCS will remain undiluted by the predilections and vagaries of time.

If financial oversight and elective transparencies are determined to be needed, these can all be accomplished via numerous means. None which require the diminution or dilution of AHEPA's representation on the OCS board.

Sincerely,

Marco K. Boyce
302-545-3643
New Castle, DE

Lawrence Sheila

From: Manny <doctorrok1@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 10, 2019 1:53 PM
To: Bunting Susan
Cc: infocso
Subject: Apology

Secretary Bunting and Members of the Charter School Accountability Commission:

I'm writing to respond to a letter posted by Jen Ballas on July 8, 2019, where she showed screenshots of inappropriate and unacceptable things that I wrote to her on Facebook.

I should not have attacked her personally and I have apologized to her directly.

My comments were solely personal ,and I take full responsibility for them.

In making such comments, I did NOT represent the AHEPA or the Greek Community at large, and I did not live up to the standards of behavior associated with any of those communities or the standards I set for myself.

Thank you ,
Manny Kanas

Sent from: MANNY KANAS
302-740-1242-Cell
302-738-2865-Office
doctorrok1@aol.com

My I-pad

Lawrence Sheila

From: Kirsten Reburn <klreburn1973@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 10, 2019 11:19 PM
To: infocso
Subject: Odyssey Charter School

Good evening,

This letter is in support of the Charter School Accountability Committee's recommendations regarding Odyssey Charter School.

I have been a faculty member of Odyssey Charter School for 4 years and I love this school so much. I come from a district that did not support their teachers and made life unpleasant for them. Odyssey was the school that renewed my love for teaching and I thank God everyday for the opportunity to teach my students.

I am proud of the mission and philosophy of the school and the unique academics we offer to students. This mission and philosophy began with the vision of AHEPA and I agree that they did a fantastic job. I am appreciative of what they have done and continue to do for the good of the school. However, Odyssey is changing and growing, and so the board must also change and grow to represent the stakeholders.

I am concerned with the actions of several board members in the last few years that have been brought to light recently. I do think their desire is to control what they believe to be "their" school. I feel as if they have lost sight of the fact that our primary function is to do what is in the best interest of the STUDENTS.

It is true that Odyssey is one of the top schools in Delaware and the fact that AHEPA believes this is solely due to their control of the board is offensive to the teachers who are in the trenches every single day. We are all putting in time above and beyond the school day to work with struggling students, and run clubs and sports at a salary of at least 10% less than our closest district colleagues.

We do not always have enough textbooks for our classes and our technology is seriously lacking as well as the promises of a gym and timely expansions to our academic buildings, the expenditures brought to light are disturbing. The addition of 2nd administrative position at a salary of \$150,000 was a massive slap in the face to teachers who are finding they need to work 2 jobs and those of us with children. Their desire to find a position for a former board president at another \$150,000 was and is infuriating.

If AHEPA really cares about the school, they would gladly accept the recommendations and move forward for the good of the students.

No one wants AHEPA to disappear, the staff just want to be heard and have open communication. We want a voice, I really don't think that's too much to ask.

I implore your committee to follow through and hold the board at Odyssey Charter School to the recommendations you have put forth.

Thank You,
Kirsten Reburn
Odyssey Charter School Staff Member

Lawrence Sheila

From: Longfellow Chuck
Sent: Monday, July 8, 2019 1:29 PM
To: Travers Leroy
Subject: FW: Odyssey Charter School

From: Bunting Susan <Susan.Bunting@doe.k12.de.us>
Sent: Monday, July 8, 2019 10:44 AM
To: Longfellow Chuck <Chuck.Longfellow@doe.k12.de.us>
Subject: FW: Odyssey Charter School

Susan S. Bunting
Susan S. Bunting, Ed.D.
Secretary of Education
Department of Education

From: cps@cpses.com <cps@cpses.com>
Sent: Monday, July 8, 2019 10:44 AM
To: Bunting Susan <Susan.Bunting@doe.k12.de.us>
Cc: infocso <infocso@doe.k12.de.us>
Subject: Odyssey Charter School

Charter School Accountability Committee
Delaware Dept. of Education
The Townsend Building
401 Federal St., Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901-3639

VIA EMAIL

July 8, 2019

RE: Odyssey Charter School

Dear Charter School Accountability Committee Members,

I am writing to provide some additional information to CSAC and to rebut some of the statements and comments you have received during this Formal Review process for Odyssey Charter School.

I have assisted the Board of OCS for over 6 years and have direct, first hand, knowledge of the governance issues surrounding OCS. I put together the financing team that successfully issued \$34,600,000 of bond financing (closing February 2015) through which OCS purchased its Barley Mill Campus. Governance issues arose at that time and with the assistance of an independent professional organizational consultant were successfully resolved to everyone's satisfaction (including CSAC) at that time.

The most important issue before you is AHEPA's retention of its ability to appoint a majority of the board. There are 4 reasons, enumerated below, an AHEPA majority is necessary and essential to the continued success of Odyssey Charter School.

1. The bonds issued to finance the Barley Mill campus were public securities, issued by the State of Delaware through its Department of Economic Development were subject to federal and state securities laws requiring detailed disclosure on all aspects of OCS's operation including specifically its board composition. The governance of OCS was thoroughly reviewed by DEDO, their legal representatives, bond counsel, disclosure counsel, OCS counsel, trustee's counsel, investors counsel and by financial analysts of potential bond investors. **Prominent in the disclosure documents on OCS was the fact that AHEPA formed the school and in accordance with the bylaws was able to appoint a majority of board members and the President of the board.** Two issues of concern arose. The power of a board Executive Committee and the lack of turnover of board members both AHEPA appointed and parent and teacher members. The issue of an AHEPA majority was never raised by any of the above participants including CSAC during the major charter modification required for the Barley Mill purchase and school expansion to k-12.

I was directly involved in the rewriting of OCS's bylaws as required by investors through the bond documents. The Executive Committee was abolished and term limits were imposed requiring new appointments and elections for both AHEPA and non AHEPA members. After the new bylaws were put in place during the spring of 2015 a new nominating process was established and several new AHEPA members and all other positions were filled through a newly established nominating committee and process with new quality applicants.

2. You are told the AHEPA majority are bad stewards with many conflicts of interest. **I am sure you are aware that these "bad stewards" have created and grown a charter school that ranks among the very best in Delaware and is in very high demand by parents. Despite allegations of financial impropriety, the schools audits are clean and free of any operational comments.** The CBOC for Odyssey has been meticulous in its oversight and reporting for several years now. The bond investors have held monthly conference calls with school leaders and scrutinize financial results, operations and capital budgets monthly. The analysts for the bond investors are among the very best in the country with very deep experience in charter issues. So they have also added a level of oversight that most are not aware of. In addition OCS has an outstanding dual language program utilizing the Greek language which is recognized by the Department and national and international universities. Your potential actions put all of this at risk.

During the bylaw revision process the independent consultant (Dick Haviland of Brandywine Organization Consultants - recommended by Paul Stock of DANA) prepared and conducted a survey that included all board and school leaders and 10% of all parents and teaching and other staff (drawn at random). To the question of how important is the continuing involvement of AHEPA, 70% replied it was vital or very essential. Another 23% said it was important but not essential. Only 7% considered it not important.

3. You have received comments that Odyssey can remain a Greek school and work with the Greek Ministry and universities with or without AHEPA. Unfortunately this is not the case. While perhaps theoretically true, **almost all of the financial support OCS has received and many of its most creative programs are all in place specifically because of AHEPA's involvement and run through it and its membership.** Take away the AHEPA majority and all of their initiatives will be compromised. It is little known but shortly after the bond financing was completed and the bylaws were revised, the then headmaster came forward, with the support of then board members Jen Ballas (who continues to negate Greek control to this day) and Kate Klemas, with a proposal to make Greek optional. This was defeated by the board, but with current school leadership in the hands of good, but non-Greek people, there will be no way to block future efforts of this kind. The fact that school administration is not lead by leaders fluent in Greek language, culture and hellenic education principles almost demands that the board remain actively involved in academic programming.

One of Odyssey's core missions is to "Enhance each student's understanding of Mathematics, English, Science, and other Western languages by utilizing the Modern Greek language, with a Mathematics focus as a vehicle to explore the roots of vocabulary, mathematical concepts, and scientific theories." You have heard from Marina Mattheoudakis that without AHEPA she would not be at OCS.

4. Ongoing fundraising will be severely compromised. You have heard about AHEPA fundraising commitments. The campus is not completed yet and major work and fundraising remains. **Actions to diminish AHEPA's control will place these commitments and the Greek dual language program at risk.**

In closing, Odyssey Charter School is truly unique in many ways. Because of these difference and unlike, say a Newark Charter School (another Delaware highly successful charter), Odyssey requires a strong level of operational engagement from its Board of Directors with an AHEPA majority. Without this level of engagement Odyssey will slowly but inexorably flounder and change its mission. I have observed firsthand the efforts of those who are putting personal grievances ahead of the welfare and educational opportunity of 1,900 students and their families.

Odyssey has grown into a \$27 million business in a very short time. It has had its hiccups and bumps, to be expected of any fast growing organization with a unique mission and vision. However I can personally attest, as I have been at the table for most of the past 6 years, that all of its decisions have been made with the objective of providing the best possible outcomes for its students. And, unlike its current critics, no decisions were made putting personal objectives ahead of the good of the school.

Respectfully submitted,

C. Peter Svahn
24 Abigail's Path, Plymouth, MA 02360
p 508-224-7696
f 508-224-7697
c 614-579-5504
cps@cpses.com

