

In The Matter Of:
Department of Education
Renewal Application of Newark Charter School

Public Hearing
October 15, 2018

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STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

PUBLIC HEARING

IN RE :

RENEWAL APPLICATION OF
NEWARK CHARTER SCHOOL

Newark Free Library
750 Library Avenue
Newark, Delaware

Monday, October 15, 2018
5:00 p.m.

BEFORE :

JOHN CARWELL
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

VINCENT LOFINK
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

On behalf of the Department of Education:

CATHERINE T. HICKEY,
DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDING

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1 MR. CARWELL: Good evening,
2 everyone. I declare this public hearing to
3 be open. My name is John Carwell, an
4 education associate with the Department of
5 Education, and I have been appointed by the
6 Secretary of Education to conduct this
7 public hearing.

8 The Newark Charter School has
9 filed an application to renew its charter
10 for a term of 10 years. As is required by
11 law, the matter was referred to the Charter
12 School Accountability Committee for an
13 investigation and report. This joint
14 public hearing is being held by the
15 Department of Education and the State Board
16 of Education, and I'd like to introduce
17 who's with me here at the table.

18 MS. HICKEY: I'm
19 Catherine Hickey. Good evening. I'm a
20 deputy attorney general with the Delaware
21 Department of Justice, and I'm here today
22 as the attorney for the Hearing Officer.

23 MR. LOFINK: I'm Vince Lofink
24 with the State Board of Education.



1 MR. CARWELL: Thank you.

2 I would like the record to
3 reflect the notice of the time, date, and
4 place of today's public hearing was
5 published in The News Journal and the
6 Delaware State News on September 20th,
7 2018. In addition, notice was posted at
8 the Charter School Accountability
9 Committee's official place of business on
10 the Department of Education's official
11 website and on the state Public Meeting
12 Calendar on the State's official website.

13 Further, Newark Charter School
14 was personally notified of the time, date,
15 and place of today's public hearing on
16 September 10th, 2018.

17 A court reporter is present so
18 that a record of this hearing can be made.
19 It will be necessary for each speaker to
20 clearly identify his or herself before
21 beginning to speak so this court reporter
22 will be able to note who you are.

23 The record of this hearing will
24 be provided to the Secretary of Education



1 and members of the State Board of
2 Education, together with any written or
3 electronic comments received during the
4 course of this renewal-decision process.
5 To date, we have not received any written
6 comment for this public hearing.

7 We will proceed in the
8 following manner: First we will hear from
9 any representatives of the school who wish
10 to speak or to comment on the renewal
11 application. Then we will take comments
12 from anyone else who desires to speak.
13 There are sign-up sheets at the back of the
14 room on the table by the door. Anyone who
15 has not signed up as of yet, please feel
16 free to do so. And I'll just pause to make
17 sure everyone who would like to speak signs
18 up. Sign in whether or not you desire to
19 speak. There is a check box if you want to
20 speak.

21 (Pause.)

22 MR. CARWELL: I intend to be as
23 liberal as time and reason allows in
24 accepting comments; however, I do reserve



1 the right to limit comment.

2 (Discussion off the record.)

3 MR. CARWELL: At this point we
4 will accept comments from representatives
5 of Newark Charter School. Come forward and
6 sit at this table.

7 MR. MEECE: My name is Greg
8 Meece, M-e-e-c-e, School Director of Newark
9 Charter School.

10 Thank you, Mr. Carwell. We at
11 Newark Charter School are happy to share
12 our school story with the members of the
13 Accountability Committee and with the
14 public. We are proud to be a part of the
15 Delaware public education landscape for the
16 past 18 years. This is our fourth school
17 renewal. As head of school at Newark
18 Charter since the start, I have seen
19 firsthand the hard work and dedication of
20 our students, parents, teachers, and staff.
21 It took our school from an idea to a middle
22 school, living its first two years in
23 rented trailers, to a three-building school
24 of over 2,380 students in kindergarten



1 through grade 12. Like our other charter
2 schools, Newark Charter School demonstrates
3 what can be accomplished when autonomy and
4 accountability and choice combine with
5 inspiration, innovation, and commitment to
6 meet the needs of the community we serve.

7 During our three previous
8 renewal periods, our school has done what
9 we said we would do, and we did it to the
10 best of our ability. Our track record has
11 been consistent and strong. Our past
12 success suggests a bright and promising
13 future for the next renewal period, which
14 we hope will be for 10 years.

15 Our finances are strong. We
16 have operated in the black every year. Our
17 financial projections show a positive
18 balance during each of the years of renewal
19 period. External audits conducted each
20 year reveal no audit findings. And
21 Standard & Poor's has given our school its
22 highest bond rating for charter schools
23 which place it among the top five charter
24 schools in the nation. We have met all



1 standards on the Delaware Department of
2 Education financial framework every year.

3 Market demand is strong. We
4 have achieved a capacity enrollment, with a
5 waiting list, every year. Our waiting list
6 is typically more than 3,000 students long.
7 Student attrition is less than 1 percent.

8 Our customer satisfaction is
9 high. Our School Council surveys parents
10 each year. These surveys show the rate of
11 satisfaction with the school is
12 consistently between 98 and 100 percent.
13 Our teachers and staff, too, are satisfied.
14 Several times The News Journal named Newark
15 Charter School a Top Workplace award winner
16 based on employees' reported satisfaction.

17 Our operations are excellent.
18 Our attendance rate is high, and our
19 discipline rate is low. On the
20 Organizational Framework, the measuring
21 tool to evaluate charter school operations
22 and compliance issues, Newark Charter
23 School has met the standard in every
24 category every year. This year we scored



1 100 out of a possible 100 points.

2 But stable enrollments,
3 satisfied customers, strong financials, and
4 sound operations would mean little without
5 student success. We are proud to be named
6 a National Blue Ribbon school twice. We
7 were cited by the Department of Education
8 as a Superior School, a Reward School, a
9 Recognition School, a School of Continued
10 Excellence, and a National Distinguished
11 Title I School.

12 In 2018 Smarter Balanced
13 testing in math and ELA, Newark Charter
14 School ranked first, second, or third in
15 the state in every grade. Our high school
16 students have the second highest SAT scores
17 in the state. In the last two years,
18 100 percent of our graduates were accepted
19 into colleges and universities all over the
20 country.

21 Closer inspection of the data
22 reveals more good news. When the data are
23 disaggregated by subpopulations, such as
24 race, low income, English-language



1 learners, and special education, our
2 students' performance tends to be higher
3 than the state average for all students.

4 Newark Charter School is a
5 public school that welcomes students
6 regardless of their background or
7 abilities. Students are admitted through a
8 lottery only, as intended by Delaware law.
9 We currently have almost 200 children with
10 IEPs, special education, and 150 additional
11 students with 504 Accommodation plans for
12 other disabilities. Our population of
13 students with intense or complex
14 disabilities has grown steadily every year.
15 We are proud that the National Association
16 of Special Education Teachers has named
17 Newark Charter School an exceptional
18 charter school in special education the
19 last two years.

20 Our percentage of minority
21 students has increased every year for
22 18 consecutive years. Our student
23 diversity closely mirrors the population of
24 New Castle County, Delaware.



1 What distinguishes Newark
2 Charter School is evident to anyone who has
3 visited our school. We are a community
4 whose members share a common vision of what
5 excellence looks like for every student.
6 We pull together in the same direction
7 every day to achieve that vision. We have
8 never strayed from our core mission, which
9 is as vital today as when the school was
10 first conceived in the year 2000.

11 We are grateful to the Delaware
12 Department of Education and the State Board
13 of Education for having faith in Newark
14 Charter School from the start and for being
15 an essential part of our growth and
16 continuing success. Working together, we
17 have created something special, and in
18 doing so, we have changed the lives of
19 literally thousands of young people.

20 Thank you.

21 MR. CARWELL: Thank you,
22 Mr. Meece.

23 MS. HICKEY: Mr. Meece, would
24 you mind sharing your written comments just



1 for the court reporter?

2 MR. CARWELL: Are there any
3 other representatives of Newark Charter
4 School who desire to speak?

5 (No response.)

6 MR. CARWELL: At this point, I
7 will accept comments from anyone else who
8 desires to speak. Did you sign in?

9 MS. WHITE: I did sign in, but
10 I forgot to check.

11 MR. CARWELL: Please introduce
12 yourself.

13 MS. WHITE: My name is
14 Jean White. I just have two questions for
15 the head of the Newark Charter School.

16 My one question is: What is
17 the percent of minorities in the school,
18 the racial minority? That's the first
19 question.

20 And the second question is:
21 What is the percent of free-and-reduced
22 lunch of students in the school?

23 MS. HICKEY: Ms. White, perhaps
24 we didn't explain this well at the



1 beginning. This is not an interactive
2 hearing. It is an opportunity for members
3 of the public to come and provide
4 information and their thoughts in this
5 forum so that it can be recorded. And then
6 the individuals and the entities that make
7 the decision on renewal will consider those
8 comments.

9 MS. WHITE: Whether this gets
10 renewed or not is what it's about?

11 MS. HICKEY: Yes. Mr. Meece,
12 perhaps he would be willing to speak to you
13 afterwards.

14 In addition, there's a lot of
15 information on the Delaware Department of
16 Education website, or through the Delaware
17 Department of Education website you can get
18 to the website for the individual school,
19 and that frequently has a lot of
20 information about the percentage of the
21 population as they're broken down into
22 different categories.

23 MS. WHITE: Thank you.

24 MS. HICKEY: You might be able



1 to find it that way.

2 MR. CARWELL: I'd be happy to
3 direct you. I can give you my business
4 card, and give me a call and I'll direct
5 you to that information.

6 MS. WHITE: I happened to see
7 the legal notice in the paper, and I was
8 coming to the Newark Free Library anyway.
9 I thought this was an opportunity to come
10 to one of your meetings.

11 Okay. Thank you very much.

12 MR. CARWELL: Is there anyone
13 else who desires to speak?

14 (No response.)

15 MR. CARWELL: If not, I want to
16 thank all of you for participating today.
17 The Secretary will consider your comments
18 in deciding, at the conclusion of the
19 renewal process, what decision to submit to
20 the state board.

21 This hearing is now closed.

22 (Hearing concluded at
23 5:15 p.m.)

24 - - - - -



1 C E R T I F I C A T E

2 STATE OF DELAWARE)

3)

4 NEW CASTLE COUNTY)

5
6 I, Kimberly A. Hurley,
7 Registered Merit Reporter and Notary
8 Public, do hereby certify that the
9 foregoing record, pages 1 to 14 inclusive,
10 is a true and accurate transcript of my
11 stenographic notes taken on Monday,
12 October 15, 2018, in the above-captioned
13 matter.

14 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have
15 hereunto set my hand and seal this 20th day
16 of October, 2018, at Wilmington.

17
18
19
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21
22
23
24


Kimberly A. Hurley, RPR, RMR



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