

In The Matter Of:
Department of Education
In re: Odyssey Charter School

Hearing
July 8, 2019

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STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

IN RE: ODYSSEY CHARTER :
SCHOOL :

Hearing taken pursuant to
notice at the Carvel State Office Building,
820 N. French Street, 2nd Floor Auditorium,
Wilmington, Delaware, beginning at 5:00 p.m.,
on Monday, July 8, 2019, before Gloria M.
D'Amore, Registered Professional Reporter and
Notary Public.

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APPEARANCES:

On behalf of the
Department of Education:
JOHN CARWELL, JR.

On behalf of the Delaware State
Board of Education:
VINCENT LOFINK

On behalf of the Delaware State
Board of Education:
REV. PROVEY POWELL, JR.

On behalf of the Delaware State
Board of Education:
DORCAS OLATUNJI

- - - - -

1 MR. CARWELL: Good evening.

2 Can I have your attention,
3 please?

4 I declare this Public Hearing
5 to be open.

6 My name is John Carwell,
7 Junior. I'm an Education Associate of the
8 Delaware Department of Education Charter
9 School Office. I've been appointed by the
10 Secretary of Education to conduct this Public
11 Hearing.

12 At this time, I would ask that
13 the other people with me introduce themselves
14 for the record.

15 REVEREND POWELL: Reverend
16 Provey Powell, Jr., State Board of Education.

17 MR. LOFINK: Vince Lofink,
18 State Board of Education.

19 MR. CARWELL: Thank you.

20 The Charter of Odyssey Charter
21 School was placed on formal review by the
22 Department of Education.

23 As required by law, the matter
24 was referred to the Charter School



1 Accountability Committee for investigation
2 and report.

3 This joint Public Hearing is
4 being held by the Department of Education and
5 the State Board of Education to assist in the
6 decision of whether the criteria set forth
7 for remedial action in the Delaware Code have
8 been satisfied.

9 This hearing provides the
10 Secretary and the State Board an opportunity
11 to receive public comment about this formal
12 review.

13 I would like the record to
14 reflect that the notice of the time and the
15 place of today's Public Hearing was posted on
16 the Charter School Accountability Committee's
17 official place of business, on the Department
18 of Education official website and on the
19 State Public Meeting Calendar on the State's
20 official website on May 17, 2019.

21 Further, the school personally
22 was notified of the time, date and place of
23 today's public hearing on May 16, 2019.

24 A court reporter is present so



1 that a record of this hearing can be made.
2 It will be necessary for each speaker to
3 clearly identify his or herself before
4 beginning to speak so that the court reporter
5 will be able to note who you are.

6 The record of this hearing will
7 be provided to the Secretary of Education and
8 Members of the State Board of Education
9 together with any written or electronic
10 comments received during the course of the
11 formal review process.

12 To date, comments received on
13 this formal review are listed on the
14 Department's official website.

15 We will proceed in the
16 following manner.

17 First, we will hear from any
18 representatives of the Charter School who
19 wish to comment on the formal review process.
20 Then we will take comments from anyone else
21 who desires to speak.

22 And if you haven't already
23 signed up, there are sign-up sheets inside
24 the inner foyer of this auditorium. And if



1 you have not signed up yet and would like to,
2 I'll pause for a minute or two for you to do
3 that. And on the right column of that sheet
4 is a box to indicate whether you intend to
5 speak or not. But I would ask that anyone
6 who hasn't signed in, would you please sign
7 in.

8 I'll just pause for that.

9 Just to note, those who have
10 not signed up will not be permitted to speak.
11 If you do intend to speak, please sign in
12 now. I think we're all set.

13 So I reserve the right to limit
14 comment that is purely repetitive or
15 cumulative.

16 This hearing's purpose is
17 strictly to collect public comment.
18 Questions of the Department of Education or
19 the State Board of Education are not
20 permitted and will not be acknowledged.

21 At this point, I will accept
22 comments from any representatives of the
23 school. And our time limit, given the number
24 of sign-ups, will be a three-minute time



1 limit for the public and five minutes for
2 school representatives.

3 So we will hear from the school
4 now. Please come to the podium and introduce
5 yourself so that the court reporter can know
6 who you are.

7 MR. WOLCOTT: Josiah Wolcott.
8 I'm President of the Odyssey Charter Board.

9 Mr. Carwell, thank you. I
10 would like to thank the Members of the State
11 Board of Education, Reverend Powell and Mr.
12 Lofink. Thank you very much.

13 I would also like to thank
14 everybody that is in the audience right now
15 for taking their time out on another
16 beautiful summer day to come here to the
17 Public Comment Session. Each of your voices
18 are important. We enjoy hearing from all of
19 you regardless of the content.

20 But I would also like to thank
21 the entire school community, as a whole, for
22 its support during this time of formal
23 review. And I look forward to bigger and
24 brighter things.



1 Thank you.

2 MR. CARWELL: Any other
3 representatives of the school?

4 At this point, I will accept
5 comments from anyone else who desires to
6 speak. Actually, I'll go down the list.
7 We'll pause for one minute. I'm going to
8 grab the other sign-in sheets.

9 (Pause.)

10 MR. CARWELL: Back on the
11 record.

12 First we'll hear from Michael
13 Roussos. Sorry if I mispronounced your name.

14 And if you would, if you have
15 any written, typed out documents, if you
16 could submit those as well. It will make it
17 easier on the court reporter to transcribe.

18 MR. ROUSSOS: Hello. I'm
19 Michael Roussos. I'm a parent. And I'm
20 reading a statement that was submitted by
21 another member of the community that cannot
22 be here this evening. His name is George
23 Fournaris. F-O-U-N-A-R-I-S.

24 Dear Secretary Bunting. I am



1 writing in support of maintaining the
2 American Hellenic Educational Progressive
3 Association's current role on the Odyssey
4 Charter School's Board of Directors and in
5 support of all of the guidance and assistance
6 the AHEPA family provided since the school's
7 founding.

8 I am writing as a former Board
9 Member of the school and as past president of
10 the AHEPA Chapter 95 in Wilmington, Delaware.

11 However, I am also writing as a
12 Certified Public Accountant with over
13 30 years experience auditing or managing
14 state and local government finances.

15 Although I am currently not a
16 member of the leadership of either the school
17 or the Chapter, I have maintained a deep
18 interest in both organizations over the
19 years.

20 I have also followed the
21 current controversy closely. I am deeply
22 disturbed by the misinformation that has been
23 disseminated by the local media and also the
24 Charter School Accountability Committee.



1 Although the Committee's report lists
2 potential violations of the school's charter,
3 it is clear that the Committee has already
4 made up its mind that the allegations are
5 true.

6 It is very upsetting that AHEPA
7 has been vilified and accused of financially
8 profiting from the school.

9 AHEPA was founded in 1922 in
10 Atlanta, Georgia to teach English to recent
11 Greek immigrants and to fight discrimination
12 and hate of the Ku Klux Klan.

13 Wilmington Chapter 95 was
14 formed the following year. AHEPA has grown
15 to be the largest association of the American
16 citizens of Greek heritage and non-Greek
17 Philhellenes.

18 AHEPA and its sister
19 organization, the Daughters of Penelope, have
20 given back over the years by funding
21 hospitals, cancer research, battered women's
22 shelters and affordable housing.

23 AHEPA National Housing
24 Corporation is one of the largest providers



1 of affordable housing for the elderly with 95
2 apartment communities in 21 states.

3 With the formation of Odyssey
4 Charter School, Wilmington AHEPA Chapter 95
5 entered a new charitable arena.

6 I'm going to skip ahead now.

7 As a Certified Public
8 Accountant and Chief Certified Government
9 Financial Manager, I am not blind to the fact
10 that some serious issues may exist.

11 Allegations of potential misappropriation of
12 funds, violations of laws and violations of
13 policies are disturbing to me professionally.

14 Although the actions in
15 question were done with the advice of legal
16 counsel and the Charter School Office, they
17 are disturbing to me personally because they
18 involve two organizations to which I have
19 devoted significant volunteer efforts.

20 Perhaps, because I have worked
21 with all sides involved in this dispute, I
22 might be in a better position to see the
23 situation and resolution clearly.

24 The school's audits are



1 performed in accordance with Generally
2 Accepted Auditing Standards and under
3 Government Auditing Standards.

4 The auditor's report contains
5 the following language.

6 MR. CARWELL: Time, sir.

7 MR. ROUSSOS: Thank you.

8 MR. CARWELL: Please submit
9 your comments.

10 MR. ROUSSOS: Thank you.

11 MR. CARWELL: We'll take public
12 comment from anyone else who desires to
13 speak.

14 I'll go down the list.

15 Marina Lurz. Please introduce
16 yourself.

17 MS. LURZ: Marina Lurz.

18 L-U-R-Z.

19 I'm a little nervous. Sorry.

20 I'm a proud parent of two sons who attend
21 Odyssey Charter School. I am a member of the
22 Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, which is
23 where the founding fathers were members of
24 the AHEPA Chapter 95.



1 For many years, these founding
2 fathers had talked about and put many hours
3 of planning into Odyssey. They wanted to
4 create a school that would teach the Greek
5 culture, Greek language and have a great
6 education for all of our New Castle County
7 children.

8 Excellent education is exactly
9 what they have had since the school opened.
10 It was voted the number one school in
11 Delaware.

12 This group of men had a dream,
13 and they made their dream come true to a
14 reality.

15 The day in 2006, when they
16 opened their doors, I was ecstatic. My
17 oldest son at the time was only a year old.
18 And I was so happy when that time came that I
19 would be able to put him into the lottery.

20 Finally, the time had come to
21 fill out the paperwork for the lottery. I
22 was so nervous because of how high in demand
23 the school was. The waiting list for many
24 was so long.



1 In early 2010, I found out my
2 son at least made it onto the waiting list.
3 Until I received a phone call from Courtney
4 in May to say that there was a spot if I
5 chose to still send him. I'll be honest, I
6 don't even think I let her finish telling me
7 before I said, yes, I accept. He will be
8 there in the fall for kindergarten. I was so
9 excited for my son that he would be getting a
10 great education at a great school.

11 I could hardly contain myself.
12 I called my parents, brother, sister,
13 ex-husband and all of my closest friends.
14 And I wanted to shout it from the rooftops.

15 Odyssey has been a number one
16 school in Delaware since it opened its doors,
17 and they still continue to be a number one
18 school.

19 I am in full support of AHEPA
20 Chapter 95 and everything they have done and
21 will continue to do for the school. I
22 honestly don't think the school would be
23 where it is today without the local AHEPA and
24 the AHEPANS nationwide.



1 I thank them for all their
2 fundraising they have done to help and
3 support for the school.

4 I thank the administrators and
5 all of the staff for everything they have
6 done for the school.

7 In my heart of hearts, I worry
8 that if the AHEPA majority changes, the
9 school will change and in turn will not
10 continue to be what the founding fathers
11 created.

12 I feel that their dream, their
13 reality, all their amazing work they have
14 done, and as for what their motto is,
15 Nurturing a life-long love of learning, will
16 be lost.

17 Please allow the AHEPA to
18 continue to have the majority on the Board.

19 Thank you for your time.

20 MR. CARWELL: Let's pause for a
21 moment. I'm going to put another sign-in
22 sheet by the door. These are both filled up.
23 Be right back.

24 (Pause.)



1 MR. CARWELL: Back on the
2 record.

3 Next we will hear from Mr.
4 James Bellenger.

5 MR. BELLENGER: James
6 Bellenger. B-E-L-L-E-N-G-E-R.

7 I'm a parent. Five years ago,
8 my daughter wanted to go to school with her
9 best friend, which went to Odyssey.

10 At that time, I never even
11 heard of the school. But being a normal
12 father, I let her have her way. I figured if
13 it's not very nice, we could move her by
14 ninth grade.

15 I've been so pleased with it.
16 My son is there. And she has been there for
17 five years now.

18 I have no Greek affiliation
19 whatsoever. But I've been very pleased with
20 the school. And if I had any more kids, I
21 would be sending them there, too.

22 Thank you.

23 MR. CARWELL: Next we will hear
24 from Nikoletta Klezaras.



1 MS. KLEZARAS: Hello. I'm
2 Nikoletta Klezaras. K-L-E-Z-A-R-A-S. I'm
3 the Chapter President of the Daughters of
4 Penelope, Xanthus 149 in Wilmington,
5 Delaware. And I am also the proud aunt of my
6 two nephews who attend Odyssey School.

7 The objective of the Daughters
8 of Penelope are to promote Hellenism,
9 Education, Philanthropy, Civic Responsibility
10 and Family and Individual Excellence.

11 The Daughters of Penelope
12 cultivates the ideals and traditions of
13 Hellenism, promotes opportunities of
14 education and promotes the spirit of
15 cooperation and works closely and in harmony
16 with the whole AHEPA Family AHEPA, Daughters
17 of Penelope, Maids of Athena and Sons of
18 Pericles.

19 Today, the Daughters of
20 Penelope is a leader in philanthropic,
21 educational and cultural activities with
22 local chapters in the United States, Canada,
23 Greece and Cyprus.

24 My brother AHEPANS share these



1 objectives. They had a dream to further our
2 AHEPA family objectives and create an
3 educational journey -- what is known today as
4 Odyssey Charter School. Many doubted they
5 could accomplish such an ambitious goal, but
6 they did. And now Odyssey Charter School has
7 one of the best scholastic achievement
8 records in the State of Delaware.

9 For those of you who may not
10 know, the Odyssey is an epic poem written by
11 Homer that tells the tale of Odysseus and his
12 long journey home. During his travels, he
13 experiences obstacles which teaches him life
14 lessons that we can apply to our lives today.

15 The Odyssey School is a journey
16 such as Odysseus, where the students grow,
17 learn and experience life lessons through the
18 development of education.

19 We all know that a second
20 language is required as part of State
21 curriculum. Starting this education as early
22 as kindergarten provides a solid learning
23 foundation for young minds.

24 The Odyssey School has created



1 a foundation that sets itself apart from
2 others. Some schools are know for their
3 arts, while others for science.

4 The Odyssey School is known to
5 promote lifelong learning through awareness
6 of world citizenship and culture that ties
7 the ancient world into the modern one.

8 The Odyssey School teaches its
9 students about a broader world view with
10 exposure to other world cultures.

11 In today's modern world, who
12 wouldn't want to promote a world of
13 understanding, respect and appreciation for
14 all the cultures.

15 The passion that is shared by
16 my brother AHEPANS, Daughters of Penelope,
17 Maids of Athena and Sons of Pericles is and
18 will always be to maintain the core mission
19 and goals of the Odyssey School.

20 In order for that to happen, I
21 support the Odyssey Charter School Board and
22 believe that it is in the best interest of
23 the school to retain the AHEPA Family
24 majority.



1 The Odyssey School teaches its
2 students about a broader world view with
3 exposure to other world cultures. And I
4 think I already said that already.

5 I'm done. That's it. Thank
6 you.

7 MR. CARWELL: Next we have
8 Katherine Klezaras.

9 MS. KLEZARAS: My name is
10 Katherine Klezaras. I'm a grandmother, the
11 yiayia of two boys who attend Odyssey.

12 Please forgive me if I stumble
13 on my words, as I am not used to public
14 speaking.

15 But with all of the things I've
16 been hearing, I felt it important that I
17 speak from the heart. I believe if more
18 people looked deeply into their own hearts,
19 we would not be here today.

20 My husband and I were in the
21 process of relocating when the idea of
22 Odyssey was in its early stages. I followed
23 closely as many friends, who were good,
24 honest, hardworking people gave of their



1 time, talent and treasure to make their dream
2 of a school based on the ideals of ancient
3 Greece and the inspiration of our great
4 country a reality.

5 They took baby steps, but in
6 2006, their efforts paid off with the first
7 class of the school. These students are
8 going to graduate in June. How proud those
9 visionaries would be to see how far their
10 ideas have come.

11 We were living in Massachusetts
12 when our daughter told us that she had
13 applied for the lottery for our oldest
14 grandson to enter the school. I was so
15 impressed by the early growth and success of
16 the school, I was really excited of the
17 prospect of his entering Odyssey. But all we
18 could do is wait.

19 Then one day in 2010, our
20 daughter called and told us the great news.
21 Our grandson was accepted and was starting
22 Odyssey in September. We were so happy that
23 we went straight to church and lit a candle
24 of thanksgiving.



1 Over the years, I have seen my
2 grandson grow in so many ways. A couple of
3 years later, he was joined by his brother.
4 The school has had an impact on each of them
5 in different ways.

6 But the one thing that is
7 consistent is helping them grow as students
8 and citizens of the world. These
9 well-rounded experiences would not have
10 happened if they had gone to the local
11 school.

12 There is a parental pride. But
13 the pride of a yiayia, the grandmother, is
14 without equal. I attend their holiday
15 concert to see my grandson sing. Not only
16 was I proud of him, but also seeing little
17 black, brown, yellow, white and red children
18 joining together to sing Greek Christmas
19 carols was magical. Where else but Odyssey.

20 Then I experienced their Ellis
21 Island recreation.

22 I'll skip down.

23 As a yiayia and friend of many
24 of the founders of the school, I do not want



1 to see the school veer off its course. I am
2 afraid that all that has been developed over
3 the 13 years will be lost. Odyssey will be
4 forced to change its governance and focus.

5 Can it be better? Of course.
6 Any organization, whether it's government,
7 business, a school or even a family needs
8 tweaking from time to time. But to mess with
9 its success by changing the governance will
10 change the mission and vision of the school
11 and will make Odyssey, I fear, just another
12 school. It has come too far to become just
13 another school.

14 My friends, many of them now
15 departed, gave their all to make this a very
16 special school. I want the words, where else
17 but Odyssey, to come to mind whenever we
18 speak of Odyssey. Don't make it become just
19 another school. Tweak it to make it better.
20 But I beg you, please retain AHEPA family
21 majority.

22 I fear deleting that majority
23 will change the mission and vision of the
24 school as intended by its founders.



1 Thank you.

2 MR. CARWELL: Next we have Mr.
3 Muhammad Omar.

4 MR. OMAR: My name is Muhammad
5 Omar. M-U-H-A-M-M-A-D. O-M-A-R.

6 Good evening, everyone. My
7 name is Muhammad Omar. I am a parent of a
8 child that goes to Odyssey Charter School.
9 And I just wanted to come here and present
10 some heartfelt, basically, feelings, really.

11 And my personal statement
12 pertains to the ongoing investigation against
13 AHEPA's management of Odyssey Charter School.

14 I wanted to mention that I
15 fully support the structure or the current
16 structure of the Board with AHEPA keeping the
17 majority.

18 I fail to see that removing
19 AHEPA from holding majority of the Board
20 could provide any benefit to the school or to
21 the student.

22 In fact, from my knowledge, it
23 is due to the initiatives taken by AHEPA that
24 the school has flourished greatly in the



1 past. And, therefore, I would like to see
2 them continue to serve the school without any
3 unnecessary hindrance to their
4 decision-making capacity in the school's
5 current operation, as well as future
6 betterment initiatives.

7 Thank you.

8 MR. CARWELL: Next we will hear
9 from Katie Manley.

10 MS. MANLEY: K-A-T-I-E.
11 M-A-N-L-E-Y.

12 Good evening. My name is Katie
13 Manley. And I am the President of the
14 Odyssey Charter School Education Association.

15 I'm here today in that
16 capacity, but also as a parent and a teacher.

17 First and foremost, I want to
18 voice my support of this amazing school. Not
19 once in the past six years have I ever
20 questioned the rigorous academic programming
21 or our dedicated staff. Everyone, our staff,
22 administration, parents and the Board must
23 work together to make it successful. And
24 Odyssey is a great school. It is great



1 because of the people that pour their heart
2 and soul into it, the staff.

3 I would like to clarify a few
4 things in regard to our local association.

5 At the first public comment
6 hearing in June, Ms. Tami Soltow said, that
7 the main reason the union was cultivated was
8 because of the Board. She did not say it was
9 to deal with the Board. She did not say it
10 was to bring down the Board or AHEPA.

11 To further expand on her
12 statement, the union was formed due to a lack
13 of trust in the Board and their decisions.

14 In the early stages of
15 seriously pursuing unionization, our previous
16 headmaster's contract had not been renewed.
17 It took months for the Board to clearly
18 communicate their plan moving forward. In
19 fact, they admitted that they chose not to
20 review his contract, even though there was no
21 plan.

22 Finally after several months
23 and after receiving support from the staff,
24 Denise Parks was named Head of School, a



1 title the Board was reluctant to even give to
2 her. However, shortly after being told that
3 our leadership model would not change, it did
4 just that with the hiring of a Campus
5 Operations Officer, creating a dual-headed
6 leadership model.

7 The possibility of a
8 three-headed model was also discussed and was
9 also being explored. And it was then that
10 many staff members realized that not only did
11 we have no voice in this process, there was a
12 continued lack of transparency.

13 In addition to these concerns,
14 staff members were fearful for the future
15 direction of the school as our jobs as we all
16 continued to be at will employees.

17 As a Charter School, we know
18 that we do not receive capital funding. And
19 there are certain budgetary restraints
20 because of that, even though we continue to
21 grow.

22 However, high-paying
23 administrative jobs were being created while
24 teachers were paid ten percent less than Red



1 Clay, an average of nine to thirteen percent
2 less than other districts in New Castle
3 County.

4 At the same time, money was
5 being spent in places other than where it
6 should not have been, which is in our school.
7 As soon as the Board chose to accept public
8 funds, they made themselves accountable to
9 the state. By purchasing the new buildings
10 with bonds issuances backed by the state,
11 they now have to follow laws on how this
12 money can be spent.

13 We deserve a Board to make
14 decisions in the best interest of our school.
15 We want and deserve better contracts, job
16 security and better salaries. So all of
17 those factors led to the formation of the
18 union. To be clear, what was not a factor
19 was any personal vendetta or agenda. That
20 rumor is one hundred percent inaccurate.

21 The members of OCSEA are deeply
22 committed to the success of our school.
23 Never one has OCSEA tried to cast out AHEPA,
24 as some have put it. On the contrary, we



1 have repeatedly voiced our appreciation of
2 all that AHEPA has done for the school. And
3 we have maintained they should remain as
4 members of our Board.

5 What we have done quite
6 reasonably is ask for a Board composition of
7 more representatives of our stakeholders with
8 no AHEPAN or AHEPAN-appointed majority.

9 As our Charter clearly states
10 on Page 5, and I quote, It is acknowledged
11 that Board Membership may need to expand and
12 adjust in response to the growth and
13 ever-changing needs of the school.

14 Thank you.

15 MR. CARWELL: Next we will hear
16 from -- and I'm sorry if I mispronounce the
17 name. I think it's Eva Jannelli. I can't
18 make out the last name.

19 MS. JANNELLI: E-V-A.
20 J-A-N-N-E-L-L-I. And I'm a teacher at
21 Odyssey. And I'm here today on behalf of the
22 Greek Department.

23 I will read you a letter
24 written by the Dean of the Greek Department,



1 who could not be here today, Dr. Marina
2 Mattheoudakis, who cannot be here today. Dr.
3 Mattheoudakis, along with most of the Greek
4 teachers, unfortunately or fortunately for
5 them, are in Greece for the summer.

6 The letter is signed by all the
7 Greek teachers with the exception of one who
8 was absent that day. I'm intending to read
9 all of the letters. If I run out of time,
10 I'll give you the printed copy so you can
11 enter them into the record.

12 The inception of the Odyssey
13 Charter School was the result of a beautiful
14 idea to create a unique Charter School
15 founded upon the strengths of the American
16 educational system, combined with the
17 classical ideals of Greek pedagogy, Greek
18 language studies, and an outward-looking
19 internationalist approach, as embodied by the
20 enshrined statement of the school.

21 This idea was the brainchild of
22 members of the AHEPA philanthropic
23 organization. The founding of OCS was made
24 possible by the significant personal



1 financial contributions of many AHEPA
2 members, who have continued to support the
3 school ever since, both financially and
4 through the time they have devoted by serving
5 as volunteers, patrons and members of the OCS
6 Governing Board.

7 I'm going to shorten it.

8 OCS has undergone significant
9 qualitative growth and expansion over the
10 years both academically and structurally.
11 All the while, AHEPA members have sought to
12 preserve and strengthen the all-important
13 fundamental core of OCS, which is the Greek
14 language based academic intent and
15 internationalist mission.

16 Without AHEPA'S unmediated
17 involvement, support and resources, it is our
18 fear that OCS would quickly drift away from
19 its central guiding principles and
20 institution-defining strengths and it will
21 become an ordinary school.

22 Do I have time to read all 23
23 names?

24 MR. CARWELL: You have one



1 minute left.

2 MS. JANNELLI: I will give you
3 the letter. It's unanimous by all of the
4 Greek Department.

5 MR. CARWELL: Next we will hear
6 from Dimitri Dandolos.

7 MR. DANDOLOS: D-I-M-I-T-R-I.
8 Last name. D-A-N-D-O-L-O-S.

9 I am a proud American citizen,
10 a member of the Delaware Greek-American
11 Community and an AHEPA member.

12 From 2006 until June 30, 2018,
13 I was a Board Member and the last few years,
14 Board President of Odyssey Charter School.
15 And I have volunteered my services and given
16 time, talent and financial contribution to
17 the school.

18 Thus, I would like to set the
19 record straight, as it relates to AHEPA's
20 role at the school and my personal
21 involvement.

22 During the early planning days,
23 I asked Mr. George Righos, Odyssey's founder,
24 why we want to start a school.



1 His answer was simple. This
2 country and this community has embraced us as
3 its grown children and has given us so much.
4 Creating a school will allow us, in a small
5 way, to say thank you to our country and our
6 community.

7 Enumerating a number of things
8 that you've heard from other people, so I'm
9 not going to go through them, but they're on
10 the public record.

11 However, I would like to bring
12 some clarity to a couple of the main
13 differences that have been stated in the
14 public record.

15 The AHEPA Gala. The AHEPA
16 organization expended more than \$35,000 to
17 sponsor a gala for the benefit of Odyssey, so
18 that all of the proceeds would be delivered
19 to the campus projects in their entirety,
20 which they have.

21 As part of the arrangement,
22 Odyssey was asked to provide updated
23 marketing materials for the use of the
24 prospective donors. Odyssey spent



1 approximately \$11,000 for these deliverables,
2 and I contributed another \$3,000 to share for
3 common print expenditures.

4 To date, the gala has already
5 generated more than \$110,000. And many
6 millions have been identified by AHEPA
7 National to support the Odyssey projects.

8 Any reasonable and unbiased
9 person will say, I want the same deal and
10 sign me up for your next fundraising event.

11 I'm going to skip the Ithaca
12 Early Learning Center, but it is on public
13 record.

14 At the last public hearing,
15 Members of the CSAC were very concerned that
16 Odyssey and AHEPA were in front of the DOE
17 four-years-ago under very similar
18 circumstances. However, I believe, they are
19 unaware of the details of that situation that
20 are not reflected in the public record.

21 I would urge the members of the
22 committee to reach out to members of the past
23 administration in the Governor's office, Jack
24 Markell, DOE's office, Mark Murphy, and



1 Members of DANA, to learn most of the truth
2 about the events of four years ago and how
3 they were resolved in AHEPA's favor.

4 You will find that the Odyssey
5 Board has always acted ethically and why the
6 school's charter was reapproved having AHEPA
7 as the organization that is essential to the
8 school's future.

9 Nevertheless, the damage to the
10 reputation of our school and the honorable
11 men and women who have served with
12 selflessness and dignity is the real damage
13 here. The resources lost and time spent have
14 negatively impacted the innovation and
15 accomplishments that Odyssey is well-known
16 for.

17 In conclusion, without AHEPA,
18 there is no Odyssey as it has been created
19 and evolved since 2006.

20 It is with AHEPA's continued
21 participation that the Odyssey project will
22 be able to reach its projected outstanding
23 educational outcomes and achievements.

24 Thank you.



1 MR. CARWELL: Next we will hear
2 from Maryann Yarram.

3 MS. YARRAM: My name is Maryann
4 Yarram. Last name is spelled Y-A-R-R-A-M.

5 I am a parent, a staff member,
6 a union member of Odyssey Charter School. I
7 have invested ten years of my life in this
8 school and have kept my hopes in this school.

9 Education is a collaborative
10 effort. In their book, District Leadership
11 That Works, by Marzano and Waters, two
12 leading researchers in the field of
13 educational leadership, state that research
14 shows that the highest performing schools in
15 the world have tightly coupled district and
16 school leadership systems in place and as a
17 result have high student achievement rates.

18 The recommendations, however,
19 made by CSAC are imbalanced and too specific.
20 I feel as though the voices of those of us
21 that had a different perspective had not been
22 heard at all. They favored only one side.
23 You are demanding a change in the Board
24 leadership, but by demanding a change in the



1 Board's leadership to the level that where
2 AHEPA, Odyssey's founding organization, be
3 moved to a minority representation in the
4 Board. By doing so, you are publicly
5 humiliating the very same organization that
6 relentlessly worked hard to bring Odyssey to
7 the high caliber functioning school that it
8 is.

9 Education is a collaborative
10 effort and AHEPA had a major role in it.

11 Besides giving it a vision and
12 a mission, members of AHEPA worked to provide
13 the school with its campus. They have
14 undertaken a large mission that requires the
15 support of all stakeholders at this point.

16 We are on the verge of becoming
17 a K-12 school with building projects that
18 need to be completed. If you insist that the
19 AHEPA majority has to change, you will
20 potentially risk diluting the passion with
21 which they have worked to build the school
22 thus far.

23 If projects have to stop in the
24 middle, it's because we didn't have anyone to



1 raise the money we needed to complete the
2 projects that were already started.

3 By changing the Board, you will
4 stall the projects and that will negatively
5 affect the school overall.

6 I am not saying that they are
7 the only ones responsible for the school
8 success. But what I am saying is, that they
9 worked on a voluntary basis because they
10 believed in the school.

11 A public humiliation of this
12 sort will affect the passion with which they
13 will work for the school.

14 As a Charter School, we need
15 people to work passionately for the school to
16 raise money that is needed for the school to
17 fill the gaps that we can't fill with the
18 money that the state gives us.

19 By having the Greek leadership
20 is more than ensuring that we get the funds
21 needed to build buildings. It is also about
22 making a paradigm shift in education. It's
23 about connecting the ancient world to the
24 modern. It's about studying ancient myths to



1 understand human nature.

2 Thank you.

3 MR. CARWELL: Next we will hear
4 from Jen Ballas.

5 MS. BALLAS: Jennifer Ballas.
6 B-A-L-L-A-S.

7 Hi, everyone. I'm hear to read
8 my letter that I wrote to Secretary Bunting
9 earlier today.

10 I am offering my support for
11 all of the recommendations put forth by the
12 Charter School Accountability Committee.

13 However, I want to be sure you
14 are aware of the length AHEPA will go to
15 maintain their OCS Board control, either
16 directly or indirectly, no matter what
17 Odyssey Board changes you require.

18 AHEPA OCS Board Member, as well
19 as regular AHEPA members in general, have
20 publicly and privately harassed and bullied
21 me. This occurred during and after my tenure
22 on the OCS School Board.

23 My fear is AHEPA will do the
24 same to the new non-AHEPA OCS Board Members



1 or to manipulate them towards AHEPA's favor.

2 I worry that AHPEA will try to
3 get non-AHEPA OCS Board Members elected that
4 favor AHEPA, like Elias Rigas, who currently
5 is a non-AHEPA OCS Board Member, but who is
6 aligned with AHEPA through back channels via
7 the Greek Orthodox Church.

8 Just to show the lengths that
9 AHEPA will go to assert their dominance, I
10 have included screenshots where I have been
11 threatened and bullied by a high-ranking
12 AHEPA member publicly.

13 Back in March of 2019, I shared
14 a blogger's article on my Facebook page. I
15 made no derogatory comments, just posted the
16 article.

17 After I spoke at the last
18 Public Board Meeting, I was attacked by AHEPA
19 Member who threatened and tried to intimidate
20 me, and things that Mr. Manny Kanas, who used
21 to be AHEPA Board President, said, I was a
22 loud mouth, disrespectful, rude piece of
23 useless flesh that is a total puppet to Dr.
24 Nick. He told me I was stupid. And he



1 wanted me to go away. And that the cat had
2 my tongue, even though I did not have time to
3 quickly respond to him. And that scorned
4 women are the worst.

5 So while I am used to AHEPA
6 attacks, what about new non-AHEPA OCS Board
7 Members. How do we assure that these new
8 non-AHEPA Board Members do what is right for
9 OCS and not for AHEPA?

10 I am not sure how to solve the
11 issues. But AHEPA will use any and all
12 tactics to try and retain control over OCS.

13 But I just want to make you
14 aware of the potential and probable behavior
15 AHEPA will go to when they no longer are the
16 majority of OCS School Board.

17 As a blogger today posted,
18 AHEPA stated that they must retain control
19 for the school to continue to grow with the
20 mission and vision of the pioneering creator.
21 And I say no. Anyone who loves the school
22 will keep the mission alive and will stand
23 and fight for the school. You don't have to
24 be AHEPA.



1 And I will tell you, the AHEPA
2 organization, they need to go. Maybe you
3 should make them ex officio or give them no
4 control and no seats on the Board. Things
5 may get better and money spent where it
6 belongs, which is in the school and with the
7 teachers and to the students.

8 Thank you.

9 MR. CARWELL: Next we will hear
10 from Cory Brewster.

11 MR. BREWSTER: I'm Cory
12 Brewster.

13 I sent this letter to Ms.
14 Susan Bunting and to whomever it may concern.

15 I want to start by stating that
16 I am speaking from the position of a parent.
17 And I am not a Member of AHEPA and have no
18 affiliation with AHEPA as an organization.

19 Regardless of opinion or
20 affiliation, I believe we can all agree that
21 what truly matters concerning any school is
22 whether or not the law is being followed and
23 that the children are being treated as
24 extraordinary as each of them are, along with



1 being taught and positioned for success.

2 Obviously, all schools must
3 follow the established laws of the state.
4 But I implore the DOE, please do not allow
5 the narrow agenda of a few to destroy the
6 needs and success of many.

7 I am of the opinion that
8 Odyssey Charter School has shown that it is a
9 successful entity and is accomplishing its
10 conception's primary goal, to develop an
11 environment that produces intelligence,
12 empathy and stability in the young people it
13 serves.

14 Both my son, Caleb, nine, and
15 my daughter, Audrey, six, attend Odyssey
16 Charter School.

17 When our son, Caleb, was
18 accepted to kindergarten at Odyssey Charter
19 School, it was a dream come true. Charter
20 Schools are the closest that most of us who
21 cannot afford private schools have come to
22 having the ability to participate in a
23 semi-private setting. And most importantly,
24 have a significant voice in school goals and



1 directions, like those parents who can afford
2 private schooling for their children.

3 Since attending Odyssey Charter
4 School in 2015, our son, who struggles with
5 challenges of ADHD and anxiety, has
6 flourished not only academically, but also
7 socially.

8 The staff, including the
9 administrators and teachers, have all gone
10 above and beyond to work with my family to
11 make sure that Caleb has the best environment
12 and strategies for him to succeed, not only
13 as an individual, but also as a growing
14 member of his community.

15 Now our daughter, Audrey, is
16 finishing her kindergarten year with the same
17 great success.

18 While I totally agree with
19 complete transparency concerning any public
20 school, I also believe that there should
21 always be an objective inventory of the
22 complete body of said public school's work.

23 If any infractions have
24 occurred, please allow the OCS Board the



1 opportunity to adjust their plans of action
2 to be in line with preexisting state law and
3 policies.

4 It is my opinion as a parent
5 and conscientious person that both AHEPA and
6 Odyssey Charter School have worked in
7 coordination to produce one of the best
8 learning institutions that I have witnessed.
9 Any void in its Charter status would be a
10 blemish not only on the New Castle County
11 School System, but a blemish on the country's
12 learning institutions as a whole by allowing
13 negative influence and differences of opinion
14 to thwart innovation and creative ideas on
15 how to better our schools for the sake of the
16 children that they serve.

17 Thank you.

18 MR. CARWELL: Next we will hear
19 from Kristin Casapulla.

20 MS. CASAPULLA:

21 C-A-S-A-P-U-L-L-A. Like the sub shop, I know
22 most of you are probably asking.

23 My name is Kristin Casapulla.

24 And I am here as a parent of a rising seventh



1 grader and rising fifth grader, who have been
2 students at Odyssey Charter School since
3 kindergarten. So we have been there quite a
4 while.

5 And I apologize. I don't have
6 anything prepared. I wanted to speak from
7 the heart. So I probably won't speak as
8 eloquently as some of those who came before
9 me. But I wanted to say two things.

10 I fundamentally disagree with
11 Ms. Yarram's position that the AHEPA
12 organization has not been heard. Because if
13 there are any math teachers here, they will
14 tell you that the majority of people who have
15 been here tonight have been for AHEPA
16 maintaining their control of the Board. So I
17 think that we have very much heard from the
18 AHEPANS and their position in this matter.

19 And I don't know as fact,
20 because I don't do Facebook in general, let
21 alone the OCS Parents Page, but I think
22 personally I think that a lot of the parents,
23 like myself, who are pro and equal
24 representation on the Board, don't shout from



1 the rooftops why they think that should be
2 because the facts speak for themselves. And
3 they don't feel like they need to write
4 letter upon letter upon letter to the
5 Secretary of Education and maybe they feel
6 like they don't need to come to the public
7 hearings and come up here and speak.

8 The other thing that I wanted
9 to say, the main reason I'm here, and I
10 promise you, I have not spoke to Jen Ballas
11 in years. I have known who Jen Ballas is
12 from the very beginning of my oldest going to
13 Odyssey because she has always been an
14 outspoken and supportive member of the
15 Odyssey community. My oldest is in class
16 with one of her children. And like I said,
17 probably the last time I spoke to her was
18 years ago at her daughter's birthday party at
19 Tiger Kicks.

20 So I am not here for anyone
21 asking me to be here. I am not here based on
22 any conversations that I've had. But I
23 personally want to publicly thank Jen Ballas
24 and any of the other hostile individuals, as



1 they have been called, who brought this all
2 to light, and made us all aware of what is
3 going on. And I know that Jen, she is
4 somewhere, there you are, and I apologize to
5 the other ones that I am aware of, I know Jen
6 Ballas has been bashed and belittled in many
7 ways. Specifically on that nasty Odyssey
8 Charter School Parents Page. And I just
9 wanted to say thank you for looking out for
10 our children. It takes an extremely brave
11 person. It takes grit and a lot of footwork.

12 I don't have time to do the
13 dishes. And you have somehow found the time,
14 and not just Jen. I know there are others,
15 and I thank you as well for putting in the
16 hard work that it took to get us here and for
17 keeping our children's backs where they need
18 to be.

19 So thank you. Thank you,
20 everyone.

21 MR. CARWELL: Next we will hear
22 from John Nicholson.

23 MR. NICHOLSON: John Nicholson.
24 Thank you for the opportunity



1 to speak today in support of retaining the
2 Odyssey Board structure where AHEPA appoints
3 the majority of the members and the
4 president.

5 My wife and I are parents of
6 two Odyssey students, a rising 4th grader and
7 a rising 2nd grader, who is in the immersion
8 program.

9 I work for a global company,
10 and part of my job is to negotiate deals and
11 help resolve relationship issues where deals
12 are going badly. There are a few guidelines
13 I try to keep in mind.

14 First, no one believes
15 themselves to be a bad person. Understanding
16 this makes diplomacy possible.

17 Second, avoid attributing to
18 the malice that which can be explained by
19 error.

20 And third, the law of
21 unintended consequences bites hard.

22 When you feel like you've been
23 wronged, it's easy to look at the actions of
24 the other side and assume malicious intent.



1 Once you're looking for
2 evidence that the other side has behaved
3 badly, you interpret facts and actions in
4 certain ways. This is simply human nature.

5 For example, many people who
6 support maintaining the AHEPA-appointed
7 majority on the Board wrote letters to
8 Secretary Bunting and Members of this
9 Committee reflecting their position.

10 However, they did not see those
11 letters posted as part of the public record.
12 Some leapt to the conclusion that they were
13 intentionally not being posted because of the
14 position taken.

15 Fortunately, however, someone
16 called DOE, spoke to someone knowledgeable
17 and discovered that there was reasonable
18 explanation for suspicious behavior, as is
19 the case for the issues raised by the Public
20 Integrity Commission.

21 The number of Charter Schools
22 across the country that have failed
23 demonstrate the difficulty of creating a
24 successful one, let alone one that is the



1 top-rated public and charter school in the
2 state. And this is where the law of
3 unintended consequences comes into play.

4 Odyssey is a complex dynamic
5 system that deals with all of the issues of a
6 K-12 school about to have its first class of
7 seniors being a Charter School with all its
8 fundraising implications and being a
9 landlord.

10 This dynamic system will
11 already be impacted by the creation of the
12 union, which I support, its own major
13 construction project and being next to a
14 major construction project for the next few
15 years.

16 The more changes a complex
17 system must absorb, the more likely it is to
18 suffer some kind of failure through
19 unintended consequences of the changes.

20 With its outstanding program
21 and partnerships with Harvard, UD and other
22 Greek Institutions, Odyssey is on the verge
23 of becoming a truly unique international K-12
24 educational environment.



1 I ask that you accept the
2 proposal from the Odyssey Board and not
3 require a change to the Board's structure.

4 As a non-Greek parent and donor
5 to the school, I believe AHEPA's continued
6 leadership on the Board is essential to the
7 future success of the school.

8 Thank you.

9 MR. CARWELL: Next we will hear
10 from Tim Skibicki.

11 MR. SKIBICKI: Tim Skibicki.

12 Hello. My name is Tim
13 Skibicki. I have no Greek affiliation. I am
14 a parent of two daughters who have attended
15 Odyssey Charter School for a total of
16 12 years together.

17 I am an architect. I've been
18 focusing on K-12 school design in the State
19 of Delaware for nearly 20 years. I have
20 worked with probably at least half of the
21 districts in the State of Delaware. There
22 are 19 districts, believe it or not. I've
23 done a lot of K-12 school design in Delaware.

24 I fully support AHEPA's current



1 role with the Odyssey Charter School, and
2 here is why.

3 I worked as the architect to
4 support Dimitri Dandolos and the OCS School
5 Board as they moved the school out of that
6 small building on Lancaster Pike into the
7 Barley Mill campus where the school resides
8 today. That transformation was challenging
9 to say the least.

10 However, the Odyssey Charter
11 School Board with its AHEPA majority and
12 tremendous support from the AHEPA members
13 never wavered from that mission.

14 That transformation was
15 challenging. Sorry. In fact, the group
16 operated in a persistent, dedicated and
17 professional manner throughout the entire
18 process. Again, the passion that's evident
19 when someone is working for something they
20 believe in was on display.

21 I witnessed firsthand how
22 Dimitri worked full time on a completely
23 volunteer basis for almost four years on the
24 Barley Mill campus process. During this



1 time, he performed multiple roles for the
2 school, not the least of which was the major
3 Capital Improvement Directors Plan. I
4 believe Dimitri performed his roles
5 admirably.

6 I had the privilege to work on
7 the Barley Mill campus project. In the end,
8 approximately 250,000 square feet of K-12
9 learning environment was constructed for
10 \$25,000 a square foot. I've never ever seen
11 anything like that in my career. This was a
12 staggering low number and represents
13 incredible savings to the taxpayers of
14 Delaware.

15 I feel forever indebted to the
16 AHEPA original founders and countless AHEPA
17 volunteer and the school staff for their role
18 in making this education available to our
19 daughters.

20 I believe in order to maintain
21 its current successful trajectory, Odyssey
22 Charter School no doubt will meet the
23 continued support of AHEPA and the added
24 motivation that the AHEPA majority school



1 board can only provide.

2 I believe that the continuity
3 in this case will continue to pay dividends
4 for the school, the campus and future of the
5 campus and as well as the school.

6 Thank you.

7 MR. CARWELL: Next we will hear
8 from Tami Soltow.

9 MS. SOLTOW: Tami Soltow.
10 S-O-L-T-O-W.

11 I came here tonight prepared
12 with a five-page document of what I wanted to
13 say. But the moment I sat down here and
14 began listening to others, not only that, but
15 after I read the latest AHEPA E-mail, I'm
16 going to change my hostile scorned woman
17 statement.

18 Let me just say, I don't need
19 to recite the facts because I know the CSAC
20 has done their homework. You've read the
21 information. You know the laws. You know
22 the facts.

23 So I'm not going to go over the
24 five, the financial impropriety, the breach



1 of fiduciary duty. Rather, I'm going to talk
2 one word tonight that is resonate, and that
3 is control.

4 Every person that has come up
5 here before has talked about AHEPA and
6 control of the school. It is not about
7 control of the school. It is about a school.

8 The facts are that since its
9 inception, the five have made every single
10 decision, not only who sits on the School
11 Board, but the decision that the School Board
12 makes. They have the control.

13 And yet, everyone didn't agree
14 that it is the teachers who are responsible
15 for the greatness of this school. Not the
16 AHEPA five.

17 This control that they have is
18 wrong. What else is wrong is the idea that
19 none of the greatness that they did, AHEPA
20 did, and we have seen the voluminous amount
21 of propaganda they have spewed out of the
22 greatness they have done, not one of those
23 things could not have been done without
24 control of the school.



1 And if they don't want to
2 relinquish control by getting rid of the
3 five, well, aren't they telling us how
4 inadequate a minority truly is. Their
5 control is the very reason we are here
6 tonight. Their refusal to listen. The
7 unionization, the vote of no confidence,
8 which was a good vote.

9 We're an AHEPAN school. DOE
10 can't tell us what to do with our school. It
11 is all about control. And the control that
12 they have over the decisions -- our Charter
13 is only for K through 12. Yet, they give
14 away hundreds of thousands of dollars to an
15 Ithaca building without Board approval,
16 without telling the Board for years all about
17 control.

18 And let's not sugarcoat the
19 fact that laws, rules, regulations and codes
20 may have been broken. You break something,
21 it's wrong. And it's all about control. All
22 about control.

23 We, the teachers, have people
24 who work passionately for the school.



1 And I implore Secretary Bunting
2 to go with your recommendations. Do not
3 allow this control to further.

4 MR. CARWELL: Thank you.

5 Next we will hear from Colm
6 DeAscanis.

7 MR. DEASCANIS: Good evening,
8 Members. Thank you for having me tonight.

9 First of all, you're probably
10 the first person who has gotten my name right
11 on the first try. So thank you.

12 What happened to our happy
13 family at OCS. I fell in love with this
14 school before our children were even old
15 enough to come here. We have four daughters
16 at the school. I have two nephews and a
17 niece. Two others cousins and scores of
18 friends that run around shouting from the
19 rooftops how much we love the school -- the
20 idea of the school.

21 We came a year early to see
22 kind of what it was like for the open house.
23 And when it changed from a Red Clay School
24 District to a State Charter. At first, we



1 were like, Oh, that's going to hurt us
2 because we're in Red Clay. It's not in our
3 district. No, it won't. We have an
4 advantage. That's important. There's just
5 so much to be available to the entirety, to
6 all of the state, to all of the children.

7 I happen to live in an area
8 where most kids go to private school. And
9 they always ask you, Why don't you go to
10 private school? Or why don't you go to
11 parochial school? I say because we have the
12 most magical school with Odyssey Charter
13 School.

14 Having been there, my oldest
15 daughter is in seventh grade. We have one in
16 kindergarten. We have one in fourth. And we
17 have one going into sixth.

18 The teachers have always been
19 happy. Going on field trips. Meeting
20 different parents at different sporting
21 events. Children play sports. Happy.

22 And over the years, I've seen
23 this slow creation of this anger, which is
24 probably justified in some ways. Because any



1 time you have a complex organization, a
2 dynamic organization, like a school starting
3 from K through 2 or 3 at first, and then K
4 through 5 and working its way up trying to
5 get fifth grade and sixth grade and going K
6 through 12 and finding a campus.

7 I still remember when Dimitri
8 talked to me and asked me to get involved. I
9 am a Professional Engineer licensed in
10 Delaware. I worked on 50 school projects in
11 all three counties, private and public.

12 I said to Dimitri, I don't want
13 to do this. I just want to be a parent. I
14 just want to be a parent. But if you stick
15 with this, I'll give you everything I have.
16 And we did. We negotiated. I worked
17 tirelessly as they did. I saw the work they
18 put in on it volunteering on a 36-acre
19 campus, a very complex land development site
20 that was being constructed with an overbuilt
21 commercial development giving 36 acres to a
22 school, a give a home to look into.

23 It was very complex. It's
24 running a school. And also being a landlord.



1 I saw the hours. I work with a lot of
2 volunteer organizations. And what they did
3 and what Dimitri has done and others have
4 done, their biggest handicap, from what I've
5 seen, honestly speaking, is humility.

6 When you serve humbly, you
7 don't spend your time telling your story.
8 You keep working. You make mistakes. You
9 don't talk politics. When things come to
10 brew, I don't follow social media, I know
11 there were probably conversations. But what
12 I saw behind the scenes was tireless
13 dedication.

14 I'm happy as a parent. I'm
15 happy as a citizen and taxpayer. And I think
16 we should keep the school that everyone says
17 is so great and it is so great the way it was
18 founded and the way it has been. We can
19 cause irreparable damage if we change it.

20 Notwithstanding, the parents
21 are dedicated and all the teachers are
22 dedicated. That is true. And I think it
23 should stay the way it is.

24 Thank you very much for your



1 time.

2 MR. CARWELL: Thank you, sir.

3 Next we will hear from Audrey
4 Eubanks.

5 MS. EUBANKS: I came in late.
6 And I'm here for information. So I'm going
7 to defer and send a letter.

8 MR. CARWELL: Thank you, ma'am.
9 That is the last person who has
10 signed up to speak.

11 Are there any other folks?
12 Would you please sign in?

13 MR. MATTHEWS: I did sign in.
14 I checked the box.

15 MR. CARWELL: I'm sorry, sir.
16 Please come forward. My apologies if I
17 missed you.

18 MR. MATTHEWS: My name is Mike
19 Matthews. M-A-T-T-H-E-W-S. I'm a teacher in
20 Red Clay School District. And I'm the past
21 President of the Delaware State Education
22 Association.

23 Arrogance and hubris are the
24 two words I want to use tonight. And I want



1 to give you a little history.

2 I was in the audience of the
3 Red Clay School Board meeting in November of
4 of 2008 when a member of the Odyssey School
5 Board stood up out of turn and screamed at
6 the Red Clay School Board because they were
7 questioning why the Board went around them
8 and attempted to do a modification of their
9 Charter and attempted to purchase a property
10 without going to their authorizer, Red Clay,
11 first.

12 I've never seen that before,
13 anyone yelling at School Board Members out of
14 turn standing up in the audience.

15 So, I guess, I was not
16 surprised when a few months later, the
17 Odyssey School Board, run by the five member
18 majority, clearly upset that they were being
19 held accountable by their authorizing agent,
20 decided to pull their Charter from Red Clay
21 and go to the State of Delaware.

22 Four years later, August 2012,
23 I was a member of the Red Clay Education
24 Association at our new hire orientation. A



1 friend of mine, very good friend of mine who
2 worked at Odyssey five years, was there.

3 I went up to her and said, What
4 are you doing here? You told me such great
5 things about Odyssey. I know it is a
6 wonderful school and great things going on
7 there.

8 Her flippant response to me
9 was, Their Board of Directors does not take
10 kindly to women with strong opinions. So she
11 jumped ship and came to Red Clay.

12 Six years later, as President
13 of the Delaware State Education Association,
14 I get contacted by three dozen teachers from
15 the Odyssey Charter School who tell me they
16 want to unionize.

17 Now, I am all for unionizing
18 Charter Schools, but they tend to be a loss
19 leader in our industry. A lot of work. And
20 not a lot of rewards. So we played hard to
21 get. Because we had a lot other things on
22 our plate.

23 They told me to listen to six
24 months of Board audio before we met with



1 those three dozen teachers. I listened. And
2 I was stunned at what clearly can only be
3 described as violations of best practices in
4 transparency law -- some of the things I was
5 hearing on these Board audios.

6 We met with the 36 -- with the
7 three dozen teachers. They shared our
8 stories, and it was they who decided to take
9 this step to organize and unionize.

10 And why I say arrogance and
11 hubris. I get it. Those who have spoken up
12 today in favor of maintaining the five-member
13 majority for AHEPA, you know they have been
14 part of the success of the school. They have
15 been part of the success of the school. But
16 the success of the school will continue.

17 The school needs to follow
18 better practices in understanding that they
19 are a public school. A public school should
20 not have outside influence from any private
21 organization.

22 And the fact that so many have
23 gotten up here tonight and said without the
24 AHEPA majority, the school will fail, you



1 just told those hundreds of teachers at that
2 school that they are failing. And I reject
3 that on its face.

4 This is arrogance and hubris
5 that has led us to the point where we are
6 today. And as a taxpayer of Red Clay, I
7 reject the continued notion that this school
8 will fail with a less than five-member
9 majority of AHEPA representing it.

10 Thank you, CSAC, for doing what
11 you've done. And I hope you follow through
12 on the recommendations.

13 MR. CARWELL: Next we will hear
14 from Manny Kanas.

15 MR. KANAS: Manny Kanas.
16 K-A-N-A-S.

17 I am a grandfather of two
18 Odyssey Charter School students and my family
19 has been in this school since it started.

20 As a stakeholder, I have
21 invested in both the success in the academic
22 performance and the financial stability of
23 OCS.

24 Under the guidance and



1 direction of AHEPA, the Odyssey Charter
2 School has not only been one of the best
3 performing academic schools in the region,
4 but it has been financially sound due to the
5 creative solutions and efforts employed by
6 the governing Board Members of AHEPA.

7 As you all know, Charter
8 Schools in general only get 75 percent of
9 their funding from state and local sources.
10 The remaining funds have to be secured from
11 external sources, like fundraisers, like the
12 5K Run, which we control, and we run. Okay.

13 Well, I like to see somebody
14 step up to the plate and make \$25,000. Go
15 ahead, Jen, bring it up.

16 The AHEPA Board, both past and
17 present, and especially the work effort
18 skills and time committed by Mr. Dandolo are
19 directly responsible for the success of the
20 immersion program and the financial stability
21 of the school. These facts cannot be denied.

22 With regard to maintaining and
23 projecting the vision and mission of the
24 school, some have claimed that the highly



1 specialized administration and execution of a
2 dual language Greek-English immersion program
3 does not need oversight from the AHEPA. This
4 shows a complete lack of understanding of the
5 intricacies and details involved in
6 developing and maintaining such a specialized
7 program.

8 To be blunt, any structural
9 change to the OCS Charter will directly
10 jeopardize the Greek-English program. And
11 this, in fact, will impact 1,800 students and
12 their families.

13 In conclusion, the current
14 Board of Directors has accepted and addressed
15 all of the recommendations from the Public
16 Integrity Commission report, with the
17 exception of agreeing to change the structure
18 of the Board to have a minority appointed by
19 AHEPA. I believe that such a structural
20 change would be repudiating of the Committees
21 and contributions made by so many AHEPA
22 volunteers to date and would place the
23 AHEPA's future involvement at a risk at the
24 school.



1 I ask the Department of
2 Education and Dr. Bunting to accept the
3 proposals from the Odyssey Board and not
4 require a change to the Board to put the
5 AHEPA-appointed positions in the minority.

6 Thank you.

7 MR. CARWELL: Thank you, sir.
8 Next we will hear from Seta Sorenson.

9 MS. SORENSON: I'm Seta
10 Sorenson.

11 Well, I don't know if I'm the
12 last person to speak or not. But I
13 appreciate everyone that showed up today.

14 My name is Seta Sorenson. I'm
15 here today to show parent support for the
16 Odyssey Charter School community of the
17 leaders, teachers and students.

18 I have two boys that are going
19 to Odyssey Charter School. One is in
20 kindergarten right now, who will go into the
21 Greek immersion program this coming fall.
22 And a second boy that will be in sixth grade.

23 The comparison of education is
24 amazing to traditional public school. I have



1 been in a traditional public school with both
2 of my kids, and now with coming to OCS, it
3 has been amazing experience as a parent to
4 see a child flourish with the teachers that
5 do so much for our kids.

6 We were even able to host a
7 Greek student this year which I never thought
8 I would do, host a student in general. But
9 we hosted a Greek student through the
10 immersion program was an amazing experience.

11 I know OCS Board has had
12 missteps when it comes to governance. And I
13 hope the DOE and the School Administration
14 and the Board can and will work through this.

15 OCS's mission, as everyone
16 mentioned earlier, is nurturing the life-long
17 love of learning. And that is what I want
18 for my children.

19 We, as adults, have to make the
20 right decisions for our students. And I hope
21 that your decision will continue to keep OCS
22 open and ensure 1,800 students that are going
23 to the school will continue to have a number
24 one Charter School to return to.



1 Thank you.

2 MR. CARWELL: Thank you.

3 Next we will hear from Tony
4 Bariglio. B-A-R-I-G-L-I-O.

5 My name is Tony Bariglio. I am
6 a commercial real estate broker and partner
7 at Patterson Woods here in Wilmington,
8 Delaware.

9 My association with Odyssey
10 started in 2008. I appreciate being given
11 the opportunity to express my thoughts here
12 today.

13 I have witnessed the growth of
14 Odyssey Charter School for the past 14 years
15 and the overwhelming contribution of AHEPA
16 and its members.

17 I'm here to offer my total
18 support for AHEPA maintaining majority of the
19 Odyssey Charter School Board.

20 My reasons are as follows.
21 AHEPA and its members contributed their time,
22 money and energy, as well as significant
23 resources to OCS since its inception and have
24 never lost sight of the mission and vision of



1 this outstanding school. Their focus has
2 always been the children of OCS.

3 It is very disturbing to me to
4 hear the assault that has taken place on the
5 Greek community, on certain individuals and
6 on AHEPA by the press.

7 Also, there are people who are
8 complaining about AHEPA's role in the
9 governance of the school, yet have no
10 knowledge of the many things that AHEPA has
11 accomplished for OCS.

12 The actions and decisions made
13 by the OCS Board have always been made in
14 good faith. They purposely consulted with
15 attorneys and professionals to ensure that
16 they were compliant with the law. And more
17 importantly, they made the right decisions
18 for the long-term benefit of the school and
19 the students.

20 I think the results speak for
21 themselves. The school has an amazing record
22 of success in the areas of enrollment,
23 academic, Greek programming and school
24 leadership.



1 Over the past 12 years, I have
2 personally represented exclusively the
3 Catholic diocese as it relates to closing of
4 Catholic schools. And I have also
5 exclusively represented many of the existing
6 Charter Schools assisting them with their
7 real estate requirements.

8 I also sit on the Board of DMA
9 as Vice Chair. These experiences have given
10 me much insight on the inner workings and
11 behind-the-scene activity on how these
12 schools function.

13 I personally believe it is in
14 the best interest of the students and school
15 to accept the proposal made by the OCS Board
16 to allow AHEPA to retain its majority of the
17 Board.

18 Thank you.

19 MR. CARWELL: So at this point,
20 I will ask the School Representatives if they
21 would like to make any closing remarks.

22 MR. WOLCOTT: Thank you again,
23 Members of the State Board of Education, Mr.
24 Carwell and everybody else who has come here



1 tonight.

2 This is an important night for
3 Odyssey. I can guarantee that the Members of
4 the Administration and Board of Directors
5 have listened to every word that has been
6 said here tonight. And we will all do what
7 is in the best interest of the school going
8 forward.

9 So we look forward to the
10 continuation of this process and its
11 conclusion in the days to follow.

12 Thank you very much.

13 MR. CARWELL: Thank you, sir.

14 I want to thank you all for
15 participating today.

16 The Secretary will consider
17 your comments in making her decision at the
18 conclusion of formal review process.

19 This hearing is now closed.
20 Thank you.

21 (The Hearing was concluded at,
22 approximately, 6:21 p.m.)

23

24



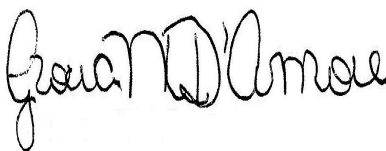
1 State of Delaware:

2 New Castle County:

3
4 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

5
6 I, Gloria M. D'Amore, Registered
7 Professional Reporter and Notary Public, do
8 hereby certify that the foregoing record,
9 Pages 1 to 75 inclusive, is a true and
10 accurate transcript of my stenographic notes
11 taken on Monday, July 8, 2019, in the
12 above-captioned matter.

13 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set
14 my hand and seal this 10th day of July, 2019,
15 at Wilmington, Delaware.

16
17
18 
19 _____

20 GLORIA M. D'AMORE, RPR

21
22
23
24



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