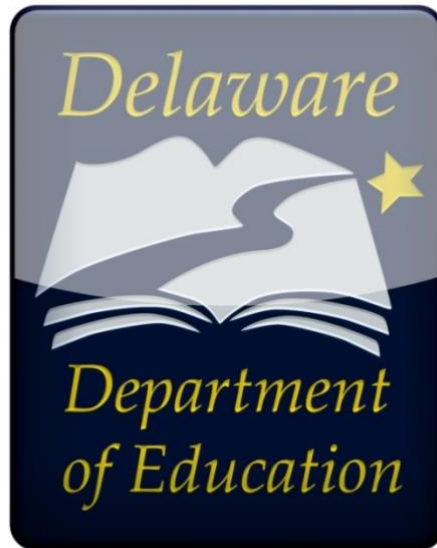


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Odyssey Charter School

**FORMAL REVIEW
FINAL REPORT**

CSAC Initial Meeting: April 1, 2020
CSAC Initial Report Published: April 6, 2020

On March 12, 2020, Governor Carney issued a declaration of a state of emergency for the state of Delaware due to a public health threat. The State of Emergency allows all public meetings of executive branch public bodies, including the CSAC, to be conducted electronically, either by means of telephone conference call or video-conference call. This CSAC Meeting was open to the public electronically only. These changes were reflected on the State's Public Meeting Calendar.

On February 10, 2020, the Department of Education (DDOE) placed the charter of Odyssey Charter School (OCS) on Formal Review, pursuant to Title 14, Delaware Code, Section 515(b), to determine whether the school is violating the terms of its charter and, if so, whether to order remedial measures.

The following were in attendance (electronically) at the Final Meeting of the Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC) on April 1, 2020:

Voting Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee

- Chuck Longfellow, Ed.D., Chairperson of the Charter School Accountability Committee, and Associate Secretary, Operations Support, DDOE
- Susan Veenema, Education Associate, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- Brian Moore, Education Associate, School Climate and Discipline, DDOE
- Gregory Fulkerson, Ph.D., Education Associate, Language Acquisition, DDOE
- April McCrae, Ed.D., Education Associate, CTE / STEM initiatives, DDOE
- James Pennewell, Education Associate, Capital Project Management, DDOE
- Cathy Wolfe, Education Associate, Federal Funds / LEA Indirect Costs, DDOE
- Charles Taylor, Community Member, Retired Head of School

Non-voting Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee

- Audrey Noble, Ph.D., Vice President, Delaware State Board of Education
- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, Delaware Charter Schools Network

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

- Darryl Parson, Deputy Attorney General, Department of Justice, Counsel to the Committee
- Leroy Travers, Lead Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Finance Office, DDOE
- Alicia Balcerak, Administrative Secretary, Charter School Office, DDOE

Representatives of the School

- Elias Rigas, Board Chair
- Erin Allard, Board Vice-Chair
- Alisa Moen, Board Member
- Denise Parks, Ed.D., Head of School
- Riccardo Stoeckicht, Co-Head of School

Discussion

Dr. Longfellow explained that the purpose of this meeting is for the CSAC to review the relevant statutory criteria as to whether the charter holder is violating the terms of its charter and, if so, whether remedial measures might be warranted to determine what recommendation to make to the Secretary. his discussion and recommendation will be outlined in a Final Report, which will be issued following this meeting, no later than April 6, 2020.

Dr. Longfellow noted that the grounds for formal review were outlined in a letter to Odyssey Charter School's Board Chair dated February 10, 2020, which outlined the following potential violations of the school's charter:

- Failure to meet current probation condition 1a; The Majority of Board) members are not members the AHEPA Family organizations. ("AHEPA family" is understood to include the following organizations: AHEPA, Daughters of Penelope, Maids of Athena, and Sons of Pericles), nor are they members of the immediate family of members of the AHEPA family organizations.
- Failure to meet current probation condition 1b; A nominating committee consisting of only the non-AHEPA Family board members nominates potential future non-AHEPA Family board members for the non-AHEPA Family board member vacancies and appoints them through a fair and transparent nomination/selection process.
- Violation of 14 Del. C. § 512(15): "The school shall have a satisfactory plan to ensure the effectiveness of its board of trustees....".

Dr. Longfellow gave the school the opportunity to provide a statement.

Mr. Rigas addressed the committee and thanked everyone for the work that they have put in throughout this formal review process.

Ms. Moen stated that the Board has addressed probation conditions 1a and 1b in an effective and proactive manner. She stated that the new Board is well positioned to bring about structural and governance changes that will improve the school's operations and improve communications with families, the community, students, teachers and staff. She stated that the last month has been a time of great unity for their school community. Ms. Moen also stated that school has received strong leadership from the Board Chair, Mr. Rigas, and has provided frequent and thorough communication with parents. Ms. Moen explained that the co-heads of school have provided the same level of communication to teachers and staff. Ms. Moen thanked the DDOE for its guidance and explained that they are in the first week of "level three" remote learning. Ms. Moen stated that they are making decisions each day that are in the best interests of OCS students. The new Board's work has recently been focused on meeting the school community's remote learning.

Ms. Moen explained that the Board's last in-person gathering was focused on communications and diversity workshops led by 4th Dimension Leaders. The school plans to continue working with this group as things normalize. Mr. Rigas had a follow-up session with 4th Dimension last week.

Dr. Longfellow asked for any additional questions or comments from the CSAC.

Dr. Noble commented that she was encouraged by the positive comments shared at the recent public hearing, particularly comments from a past Board member who had been critical of the Board in the past. Dr. Noble asked the OCS Board when they anticipated filing the AHEPA appointed Board seats.

Ms. Moen stated that AHEPA had previously stated that they intended for the Non-AHEPAn positions to be filed prior to filling the AHEPAn positions. She stated that the Non-AHEPAn Nominating Committee (NANC) was reviewing applications for the teacher representative, but currently have suspended in-person interviews due to the ongoing pandemic.

Dr. Noble asked if there were assurances from AHEPA that their appointees would be individuals that have not previously served on the OCS Board. Mr. Rigas stated that no one has indicated that AHEPA intends to bring back any former Board members. In fact, he stated, AHEPA appeared to be looking away from the AHEPA organization to fill seats, when possible. As an example, he added, AHEPA's most recent appointee was a non-AHEPAn. Ms. Moen reiterated that AHEPA appears to be dedicated to diversifying their Board appointments.

Dr. Fulkerson asked the school to provide the selection criteria for the Board's Diversity and Inclusion Committee and a description of the committee's central focus.

Ms. Moen stated that they have invited parents to submit their interests and received ten responses. She added that they aspire to have diverse representation on the committee. They will select members based on their qualifications and backgrounds, but it is not their intention to turn away potential volunteers. The committee will choose areas of the school within which to focus their impact. These could include working with outside consultants or working with internal school programs.

Ms. Massett commended the school on working with 4th Dimension Leaders on their diversity issues, in particular, facilitator Angela Harvey-Brown, who has great experience in this area.

Dr. Longfellow asked if the school has taken any steps to build or rebuild their relationship with Academia Antonio Alonso (AAA).

Ms. Moen stated that the Board has not yet reached out to AAA. In recent weeks, she added, the Board has been focused on implementing the school's "level three" online learning plan. Ms. Parks stated that she has been in contact with AAA's Head of School, Ms. Mercedes Alonso, regarding academic and programmatic support. Mr. Rigas added that AAA representatives have participated in some committees and they hope to engage with them on the Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

Dr. Longfellow made a motion to place no additional conditions on OCS's Charter. Ms. Veenema seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Dr. Longfellow noted that any unsatisfied probation conditions placed upon the charter from the May 2019 formal review remain in place.

Next Steps:

- The public comment period ends on April 13, 2020.
- The Secretary of Education will announce her decision at the April 23, 2020, State Board of Education meeting.