

My name is Patrick Pullinen – I am a Board member for the Expeditionary School at Black River. I would like to thank you for this opportunity to update you on the status of ESBR – more importantly I would like to ask that consideration be given by those responsible to move our application along in the approval process. And see us on the June Agenda

As you may know, ESBR is in its third year of operation as a recognized school. During this time, it has maintained an enrollment of 15 students who attend mostly tuition free, as the school is funded through various fundraisers and philanthropy. As a result, enrollment is capped because of budget constraints. This hinders our growth and development and it leaves parents, students and staff uncertain about the 23-24 school year.

At the beginning of the second year, we submitted our first application. This process went well beyond the three – four months we were told would be the time frame. It stretched beyond the 6 months Secretary French inadvertently reported to the House Education Committee recently – WE/he all knew it was 19 months. It was at the end of the 19 months that the sub committed supported the Commissioners recommendation to deny our application for approval. However, we were encouraged to resubmit our second application with well wishes and the Sub. Committee board chair expressing that he “hoped we would be expedited in the process”, and that

certainly made sense in a system that seems to be back logged with applications and reapprovals. Our hope is that his words will resonate with those here today. Especially considering the pending recommendation regarding a moratorium on Independent Schools.

That has brought us to our second application which has been submitted and was greeted with a multitude of questions warranting a 20 page response on behalf of ESBR. Many of the answers to those questions existed in our application. It leads one to wonder if this is standard practice for all applications? Not wanting to fail a second time we hired Dr. Harry Chaucer to guide us through the process. We also hired attorney Mark Oettinger to make sure we dotted our I's and crossed our t's. We are confident in our submission. We also have undergone a site review in 2022.

ESBR is a non-traditional school based on the Expeditionary School model. Being able to start from scratch we have been able to build our programs around state mandated Act 77 Flexible Pathways and Act 61 Community Connected Schools. We address IEPs through traditional plans working with the local LEA or through personalized learning maps. While visiting an Expeditionary School in Colorado, then President, Obama praised the school remarking the school was an example of "what's possible in education if we're willing to try new ideas and new reforms based not on ideology, but on what

works to give our children the best possible chance in life.” Students attend because they feel safe, comfortable, supported, productive and enjoy the size.

ESBR has been well supported by the community of Ludlow – through the many donations for fundraisers, attendance of events, providing support allowing us the use of the local school building and most recently voting in strong support for a request for \$75,000 to provide bridge funding for the 2023-24 school year. You will be hearing from several parents in attendance today supporting the school. You will also hear about some recent developments at ESBR by my colleague and fellow Board member Gary Blodgett

In closing I would like to reiterate Mr. Lovett’s request that we find a way to expedite our second application for approval so that we can move forward for year four.

I would be happy to answer any questions. Thank you for your time.