

State Board of Education Independent School Approval Review Committee

Draft Meeting Minutes

Meeting Place: Virtual Teams Meeting/Video/Teleconference

Call in #: 1-802-828-7667

Conference ID: 794 382 866#

Date: April 13, 2022

Present:

State Board of Education (SBE) Subcommittee Members: Tom Lovett-Chair, Patrick Brown, Jenna O'Farrell, Lyle Jepson

Agency of Education (AOE): Patrick Halladay, Cassandra Ryan, Pat Pallas Gray, Maureen Gaidys, Deborah Ormsbee

Other: John Wallace – Attorney representing the Howard Center

Call to Order/Roll Call/Amendments to the Agenda

Tom Lovett convened the committee meeting at 1:02 pm and called the roll.

Vote to Approve the Agenda for from April 13, 2022 Meeting

There were no amendments to the agenda. Jenna moved to approve the agenda for April 13, 2022. Lyle seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Public to Be Heard

Mr. Wallace represented the Howard Center with questions about the timeline for the process for approval of the Jean Garvin School at the Howard Center. They have been waiting five months for a response.

Vote to Approve Minutes from March 10, 2022 Meeting

Jenna moved to approve the minutes of March 10, 2022. Lyle seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Stone Path Academy – There is nothing to report. Stone Path's next check-in with Emily Simmons is upcoming.

Updates from AOE Staff: list of schools for desk review (with rationale and assurances draft)

Tom reported that the assurances document is in draft form and will not be reviewed at the meeting.

Patrick Halladay reported on desk reviews. Staff believe that desk reviews are not currently necessary but would like to retain the option for minor amendments and Kindergarten approvals. Another other category of review would not be subject to a desk review process. On site reviews are preferable. The Howard Center would not fall under a desk review. It includes a special education review as part of the process.

Assurances were discussed. Cassandra explained that they have presented a draft to the legal team and have not yet received approval to release it to schools. The document is intended to be an addendum to the application. The document points out the purpose for reaching out to the schools and references the Rule changes. Once distributed, upon receipt of the assurances from the school, the addendum will be attached to the application. The timeline for completion of the document will be reflective of the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (LCAR) Rule change approval. Currently, certification statements within the assurances document include topics relating to the specific rules noted below.

Rule 2226.8

- Non-discrimination – Public Accommodations Act
- Fire Codes
- Immunizations

Rule 2225.7

- Health Safety Regulation

Communications Plan (to schools)

Staff have put together a communication plan, which is dependent upon the application status of the school. Patrick shared the plan. As soon as the Rules are approved, staff will reach out to schools.

1. Independent schools that have had a renewal or amendment visit/review completed but have not yet been approved by the SBE will be asked to sign the assurances document in advance of SBE approval.
2. Independent schools that have submitted an application and have not yet been reviewed, will be asked to sign that they are in compliance with the rule changes. This will be an addendum and no new application is required.
3. Those schools that are up for renewal in 2024 will be asked to sign the assurances document and a review will take place in the future to ensure compliance. There would be no addendum with future applications. The requirements will be included within the application itself.

The Jean Garvin School at the Howard Center is currently in category #1 above.

Staff is asked to put together information and communicate to schools so that the schools will know what will be sent to them regarding the assurances.

Approval Schedule: staggered cohorts, transition of schools with 2024 and 2025 approvals

Patrick Halladay outlined pros and cons to proposals with options that will eliminate any future “bubble” of schools needing review.

Option 1 - 2020 renewals would be reviewed in 2022 and would be reviewed again in 2025.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accredited schools would be “synched” up with the NEASC cycle that they are on.

Option 2 - 2020 renewals would be reviewed in 2022 and would be reviewed for renewal in 2026. 2021 would be renewed in 2022 and would be next up in 2027.

Following discussion regarding an audit, staffing, and staff onboarding, it was decided that staff will ask for a legal opinion on the legality of each option in advance of the next State Board meeting. Staff will attempt to communicate their findings with Tom and the committee prior to that meeting.

Once LCAR has completed the Rule change process, the AOE can act on the schools that have been reviewed by creating green sheets with signed assurances, which will then be sent to the SBE for action. It is expected that those that have already been reviewed will be available for committee review during the summer months. There are several who are NEASC approved schools (4) that will be ready for review. Each should be available for the August meeting of the committee. Recommendations would be provided at the end of August to the full SBE.

Discussion took place regarding the 60-school back log, with up to 10 which are ready for review now. Future visits will average 1 - 2 per week.

The Jean Garvin School at the Howard Center will be in the first group of approvals when the Rules are adopted by LCAR.

Action Items:

1. The committee will recommend to the SBE the staff’s desk review/site visits work plan.
2. Staff is asked to put together information and provide it to schools so that they will know what will be sent to them regarding attestation.
3. Following discussion regarding an audit, staffing, and staff onboarding it was decided that staff will ask for an opinion on the legality of each approval schedule option and will communicate the outcome to Tom and the committee in advance of the next SBE meeting.

Adjourn

A motion was made by Jenna O’Farrell to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Patrick Brown. The meeting adjourned at 2:15p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Lyle P. Jepson