



**JOINT RETREAT BETWEEN THE  
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF WAUPACA BOARD OF EDUCATION AND  
CHAIN EXPLORATION CENTER GOVERNANCE COUNCIL  
MINUTES**

**January 3, 2022**

Pursuant to the regulations, the School District of Waupaca (SDW) Board of Education (BOE) and the Chain Exploration Center (CEC) Governance Council (GC) met in a retreat format on the above date in the Waupaca High School Library.

The purpose of the Minutes is to capture the essence of discussions through the actions voted on. These Minutes should not be interpreted to represent a transcription of the meeting. To watch a recording of this meeting, please click [here](#).

**Call to Order:**

School Board President Stephen Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

**Roll Call:**

Present in the WHS Library:

SDW BOE Members: Stephen Johnson, Patrick Phair, Dale Feldt, Steve Klismet, Betty Manion, and Steve Hackett. Excused: Mark Polebitski.

CEC GC Members: Megan Sanders, Sandy Robinson, Becky Lange, MaryKaye Ristow, and Sarah Zoeller. Excused: Autumn Beese and Matt Kolinski.

**Also Present:**

Present in the WHS Library: Ron Saari, Sandy Lucas, Mark Flaten, Carl Hayek, Steve Thomaschefsky, Laurie Schmidt, and Carrie Naparalla.

**Approval of Agenda:**

A motion was made by Patrick Phair and seconded by Dale Feldt to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

**Review of Board Meeting Norms:**

The SDW BOE reviewed their collective commitments.

**Presentation by Nick Pretasky, Associate Director, WRCCS:**

Board member and CEC Liaison Betty Manion introduced Mr. Nick Pretasky, Associate Director of the Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools (WRCCS). Mr. Pretasky advised that WRCCS supports many charter schools across the state and outlined the many services WRCCS provides, focusing on providing governance board training and working with authorizing entities.

The CEC was established to provide an alternative form of education for our students in the District, to attract more students into the area who may be interested in an alternative form of education, to prevent some students from leaving the District to attend a charter school out of the area, and in response to a community summit that was held indicating an interest in having a charter school.

Mr. Pretasky advised that a charter school in a school district can be an innovation center where new ideas can be incubated on a smaller scale; provides learning improvement to meet the needs of all learners; provides autonomy (which comes with accountability); provides financial sustainability by keeping students in the district and/or helping a building to remain open; provides community connection whereby business people who may not have been happy with the school district are given a new purpose to reconnect with the school; as well as provides family and student choice.

It was asked how much involvement does the District have or not have when it comes to the charter school's "autonomy" and what does that look like, as there seems to be some over-sensitivity relating to that word. Mr. Pretasky advised there needs to be a shared understanding of the word. With autonomy comes accountability, so it should be spelled out very clearly in the charter school contract with clear performance metrics written in the contract. There should also be tracking of those performance measures, which can be a tool for the GC as well as the BOE. The performance measures should align with the contract expectations, as well as how the charter school fits in with the District's strategic plan. If the charter school is getting the desired results, it could be granted more autonomy.

"Charter" just means contracted out, and the authorizer is the school board. The charter contract is between the charter board and the authorizer that includes autonomies, waivers, performance measures, terms, and services. Charter school contracts cannot be longer than five years. District policies would apply for all students and staff, except those waived in the charter school contract. There are three things all charter schools must have and cannot waive – educator effectiveness, they need to have licensed teachers, and have to provide state accountability tests.

There are three duties of a charter authorizer – to uphold best practices for schools (on behalf of the taxpayers in the district), to encourage and endorse school autonomy (and will need to hold them accountable), and to assure student and public interests. To be an effective authorizer, the school board should be encouraging autonomy. It was mentioned that as an authorizer, it is difficult to know what's going on at the charter school without hearing directly from the staff. But Mr. Pretasky cautioned, when do you know enough or when do you know too much? There is a difference between a school board member role and an authorizer role. It is important to stay out of the day to day operations.

A comment was made that because the District's buildings and grounds are a representation of the School District, the BOE wants to make sure those are in stellar condition to attract students. Mr. Pretasky added that it is a landlord-tenant relationship between a school district and charter school as it relates to its buildings and grounds.

An inquiry was made as to whether the school board or governance council handles the corrective action for the charter school, and then at what level does the charter school's autonomy continue? Mr. Pretasky advised that it would require communication between the BOE and the GC.

Mr. Pretasky advised there are eight key governance council responsibilities, highlighting that it is very important to be sure to stay true to the charter school's mission and vision. He added that before the charter school hires a new staff member or offers a new class or project, it needs to recognize the accountability and sustainability of that proposal.

Mr. Pretasky commented that it does become troublesome when discussing how all of these responsibilities work together (the authorizer, governance council, service provider, and charter school). District administration is a service provider to the charter school, almost like having a separate contract between the administration and the charter school. Similarly, HR and food service are services the district provides to the charter school. The school board is the authorizer, but the school board expects the administration to hold the charter school accountable, so district leadership sometimes has to take on different roles.

Discussion was then had regarding whether the CEC GC can hire independent contractors without SDW BOE approval. Mr. Pretasky suggested that as an authorizer, the BOE doesn't want to be in the means (day to day operations). However, then where does the liability fall when a charter school contracts out for a service? Mr. Pretasky suggested that it is important that the hiring be done legally, and if the charter school wishes to contract out for a service to be paid on a stipend basis with funds raised by the charter school, that individual has to have proper insurance, and the charter school should get legal involved to create the contract with that independent contractor. Communication is key in this situation and the School District and CEC GC must work together.

Mr. Pretasky concluded his presentation by adding that, at the end of the day, all that matters is trust – do we trust one another or not. The lack of trust is one of the main reasons charter schools fail. There has to be a partnership among the authorizer, governance council, district administration, and school leadership for the charter school to succeed.

Board President Stephen Johnson concluded the meeting by adding that communication is key but it has been difficult through the pandemic, however, the BOE will commit to increasing that as we move forward.

**Adjournment:**

A motion was made by Dale Feldt and seconded by Steve Hackett to adjourn the meeting at 7:03 p.m. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.