The D.C. Public Charter School Board met in Suite 210, 3333 14th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., at 6:30 p.m., Rick Cruz, Chair, presiding.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

RICK CRUZ, Chair
SABA BIREDA, Vice Chair
STEVE BUMBAUGH
LEA CRUSEY
RICARDA GANJAM
JIM SANDMAN
NAOMI SHELTON

STAFF PRESENT

SCOTT PEARSON, Executive Director, DC PCSB
NIKHIL VASHEE, DC PCSB
ALSO PRESENT

KAREN ALSTON, Eagle Academy Public Charter School
SHELLEY ANDERSON, Meridian Public Charter School
EDIE ASHTON, Meridian Public Charter School
MARY BLATCH, YouthBuild Public Charter School
MURIEL BOWSER, Mayor of the District of Columbia
NOEL BRAVO, YouthBuild Public Charter School
CHRIS CODY, Hope Community Public Charter School
BRISA CRUZ, Meridian Public Charter School
WENDY EDWARDS, Early Childhood Academy Public Charter School
MELISSA HAMMETT, Eagle Academy Public Charter School
GRACE HU, Amidon-Bowen Elementary PTA
THANN INGRAHAM, Early Childhood Academy Public Charter School
VALERIE JABLOW
STEVE LANNING, YouthBuild Public Charter School
CLAIRE LIBERT, YouthBuild Public Charter School
JACK McCARTHY, AppleTree Public Charter School
MATTHEW MCREA, Meridian Public Charter School
JAMIE MILES, AppleTree Public Charter School
SURAJ PATEL, YouthBuild Public Charter School
OKIEMUTE PELA, Hope Community Public Charter School
ELISHA PETERSON
KIRA PORTER, Meridian Public Charter School
HAROON RASHED, Hope Community Public Charter School
MAHMIA RICHARDS, Meridian Public Charter School
DEBRA ROBINSON-FOSTER, Early Childhood Academy Public Charter School
JAMES SEITZ, Meridian Public Charter Middle School
SAUMIL SHAH, Two Rivers Public Charter School
BARRY SHARP, Imagine Schools
JOE SMITH, Eagle Academy Public Charter School
SHAWN TOLER, Imagine Schools
JESSICA WODATCH, Two Rivers Public Charter School

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CHAIR CRUZ: All right. Good evening, everyone. We're going to get started. My name is Rick Cruz. I'm the Chair of the Public Charter School Board, and I'm going to call our January 27th, first meeting of 2020 to order.

I am joined this evening as I always am by my full Board here. I'll start on the right with Ricarda Ganjam, Steve Bumbaugh, Naomi Shelton, our Vice Chair Saba Bireda, Jim Sandman, Lea Crusey, and our Executive Director Scott Pearson.

As usual, we'll start with public comment before we get into the hearing. But as you all have seen, we have a special guest this evening who I think wants to say a few words. And if you want to sit at the witness desk, Mayor, or if you just want to stand. This is kind of unusual. So however you want to do it.

MAYOR BOWSER: Okay. Well, greetings everybody and thank you to the members of the
Board. I'm delighted to be with you today. And I am, and have been since last summer, checking in with a number of our independent boards and commissions in the District of Columbia.

You may actually be surprised by the number of boards and commissions that help set policies and govern very important functions in Washington, D.C. But there are actually over 1,700 people, like the people you see here, that serve on one of these boards that help to make very important policies and governing decisions for the residents of the District of Columbia.

I want to also introduce a couple of folks to you as well. Our Deputy Mayor for Education Paul Kihn who's in the front row who works with me with our public education team which includes D.C. Public Schools, the University of the District of Columbia, our parks and recreation department, and the Public Charter School Board.

And so we have been very pleased that Scott has participated with our public education
team and help to guide the policies that serve
all of the District's children.

Also, Steve Walker is here. Steve is
the Director of my Office of Talent and
Appointments. And he is responsible for helping
to recruit and get fine folks like the ones up
front appointed to various boards and
commissions.

I particularly point out Steve today
because you too could serve on a D.C. board or
commission. So please go to our website at
mota.dc.gov to see if there is another way that
you would like to serve residents of the District
of Columbia by serving on one of our boards and
commissions.

I also wanted to take a moment to
thank Scott for his excellent service to D.C.'s
public school children. So give Scott a big
round of applause.

(Applause.)

MAYOR BOWSER: Scott has certainly
been in leadership here and has helped to build
school choices for kids all across the District of Columbia. And I don't know what he's doing next, but I know he'll be great at it and we wish him well. And we also wish the current Board well because they have the big task of recruiting Scott's replacement. This is one thing I know for sure, that they will have great people to choose from.

Our public education system is really the envy of the nation. And when we go out and talk about what we have been able to build here in D.C. in our urban school district that is showing year over year gains in reading and math, gains in all the subgroups of our children. We know that we are getting a lot right and it's very important for us not to let up one bit in demanding what all of our kids need.

So that's just a little preface to say that I'm here to check on you and let you ask me questions and to see what's going on. So what is important about this time of the year as well is that we are preparing for our 2021 budget which
will start this October.

We are privileged in a lot of ways in our city that we have been able to attract people and businesses and make really historic investments in public education. Just I've been mayor for five years. This will be my sixth budget.

And each year, the public education budget gets bigger largely because we have been able to attract more people and families back to our public schools. But also because we have been very focused on keeping pace with making investments that match rising costs.

We have also been very focused on making sure that we have fair agreements with our teachers, that we are putting the types of special interventions in schools that serve kids where they need to be served, and, of course, making investments in quality school buildings and associated adults in buildings that help kids succeed, social workers, nurses, and mental health supports. And we will continue to make
those types of investments.

    We are also very focused on safety and
safety in our school buildings. And I know that
is one concern that we have worked with Scott on
over the years in making sure the types of
supports that we can provide from D.C. government
to help with school safety is important.

    There has been also another big focus
of our administration and that has been on school
transportation. I think one of the first things
that I talked to Scott about was how could we
expand Kids Ride Free on bus, to stay focused on
the train and all parts of the city and making
sure they were served.

    I am frequently reminded of a time
when we didn't have any kids ride free. And now
it has been so ingrained in our system that I
think people think I has always been the case.
But it's really I think we established that back
in 2014, and it has grown and improved over the
years.

    So I wanted, again, just to be here to
say that our resources in the Deputy Mayor's office are available to you on a whole range of issues and another thing that we work on because there's so much we can do to help manage issues from D.C. government to support the Public Charter School Board.

One, another thing that I know is a key factor for all of us when we're thinking about public education is how do we attract the best talent and retain the best talent. So affordability for housing is a huge concern for all of our workers, and we know that it is one for our teachers as well.

So in all of the things that we do, and most recently, we have been able to make available surplus funds and make those available to the public charter schools. I asked in that transmission that we focus on how we can make our salaries competitive for our teachers, and that's hugely, hugely important to the work that we will continue to do together.

So those are a few of the things that
I wanted to hit on. But I wanted to make sure that I left time for members of the Board and members of the public to ask us any questions.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. Thank you very much for joining us this evening. And I'd say many of the things you touched upon in terms of the full suite of different resources and the different ways the city comes together to support our students, in particular, our most vulnerable at-risk students is a constant theme in the conversations we're having.

In particular, as we spent a lot of time over the last two months asking different members of the community to weigh in on what they think the PCSB needs to do moving forward and how that should impact the next Executive Director. Because as you know, we're in the midst of that search.

So what we've heard from families and parents in particular about, how do we make the system coherent? How do we make sure that safety and mental health? And all of those pieces which
we play a part in but we're not the only one that plays a party in how we make all these pieces come together. So thank you for those investments and prioritizing those pieces because it all needs to come together.

I'd also say one of those big pieces are facilities. So I'd like to also say thank you for the news today about the Ferebee-Hope disposition and KIPP getting to open a second high school. It's a huge investment in a great charter network, and we look forward to seeing more facilities available to schools. So thank you for that work.

Those -- I share what we have heard from these conversations around the ED search because they've been incredibly validating and they've been a great opportunity to hear parents and families and community members talk about the same things we're thinking about which is how we play our role in the context of DCPS and then all the agencies that are working to support, again, those students who may bring the most challenges
to school.

And that maybe as a city and a country over decades, we haven't always served as well. And now we are increasingly looking for ways to focus that. So our priorities moving forward are to continue to build on that to make sure that every student in the city has an opportunity to be in a top school and that we're meeting them where they are so that we can support them whatever challenges and whatever assets they bring. So thank you being here.

MAYOR BOWSER: Absolutely. And I appreciate that. And it may be worthwhile kind of pausing a little bit on that. And probably most people in this room are familiar, but I have been a little bit surprised that others are totally unfamiliar with Scott's role and how Scott's role is filled and what my role is in it. So let me go there.

So all of the folks there are appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the council. And it's their job to hire the
Executive Director. And so I met recently, I think you know, with a group of new charter school leaders and kind of had a conversation about this very issue.

And so what I told them is because I have had the experience of hiring folks who lead for children in that we have gone out with some pretty extensive community outreach around the subject. I thought a lot of the qualities that people shared with us about what they were looking for, the next public school chancellor, may inform your process as well.

So what we will do, I'm going to ask the Deputy Mayor to make sure that we share with you what we heard in many, many community-wide conversations. Conversations with teachers, conversations with kids, and with the general public about what they were looking for in the next DCPS Chancellor.

You won't be surprised that people want somebody who knows public education, is experienced in public education. And a lot of
times, we hear about a traditional public
education experience. They want people to work
together across sectors.

You also won't be surprised that many
D.C. residents don't make distinctions between
D.C. public schools and D.C. public charter
schools. They just want their kid to go to a
great school and a great school that is serving
their kid where they are.

Now we have some other priorities that
we want a great school in every neighborhood at
every grade level for families. And
increasingly, we want people to be able to be
served closer to home. That is starting to be a
factor that we see rising in the estimation of
D.C. residents.

So that is some work that we have
done. We have put it in a report that is
publically available and we will want to convey
that to you as well.

CHAIR CRUZ: Great. That would be
fantastic. Are there specific priorities or
areas beyond the ones you discussed that we can be helpful on as this Board and PCSB does its work moving forward?

MAYOR BOWSER: Well, yes, thanks for asking. For us, we just want to make sure -- and I think you know as mayor, the folks hired me to make sure that their tax dollars are being used most efficiently to help the most people the fastest. And that's what we're looking for. And there are always opportunities, we think, to make sure that we are being efficient in how we do our work.

And so as we move forward in serving public school kids, who can we best do that? What are the inefficiencies in our system? And how can we, with the Deputy Mayor, with the members of this Board and Chancellor Ferebee, identify those inefficiencies? Get rid of them and let's serve kids.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. Any of our Board members have a question?

MEMBER SHELTON: So I guess my
question would be to either of you, to the Deputy
Mayor or to you, Mayor Bowser. In thinking about
how we make sure that we are collaborating across
all of those channels, so all of the
organizations and agencies that work with
students.

A few weeks ago, we had a meeting with
the traditional school board to talk about the
search for the ED. And recognizing that there
should and can be more collaboration across those
different channels, what are the best ways that
we can start to move forward and having a very
deliberative discussion around where and how we
can align on things versus there being this very
segmented set of conversations and efforts that
are happening?

MAYOR BOWSER: Sure. So we concluded,
I think, around the time Paul started
collaborative cross-sector task force that had
existed for a number of years that I started when
I became mayor. I think we got of traction on
some issues, and quite frankly, no traction on
others. So I think that there are some things that we learned in that discussion that can feed more specific talks with us as always and with the Board as specific issues arise.

We always -- the Board is always included. Scott sits as a member of my cabinet. So he is there for all of the high level discussions on budget, policy, procurement, safety, you name it, that every agency director in my cabinet has. And he participates in my public education group where we meet regularly as well.

So that is a good venue, but we are certainly open to other specific policy discussions as well. I have asked the Chancellor to set up kind of regular discussions with the State Board of Education, and I'm happy to make he and the Deputy Mayor available for similar outreach.

MEMBER SHELTON: Thank you.

CHAIR CRUZ: Do you want to open --

I'm sorry.
MEMBER GANJAM: I have a question.

Mayor Bowser, one question. As a mother now thinking about school options for your own child, what's going to be most pressing for you as you look at schools?

MAYOR BOWSER: Well, I'm trying to figure out who she's going to be. Right now, I would like her to go to our neighborhood school which is Shepherd Elementary. And that's probably where she's going. For me, I will tell you that she's getting what she needs out of school.

Proximity to my home is also very important to me. I rather not spend an hour commuting. I want her to have friends in the neighborhood. I want her to be close to home. And if that school is right for her, that's probably where she's going to be.

CHAIR CRUZ: Mr. Bumbaugh?

MEMBER BUMBAUGH: Do you have thoughts, Mayor Bowser, on one or two things this body could do differently?
MAYOR BOWSER: Yes. So one conversation I had and one thing I will likely do differently, in talking to some of the public charter school leaders that I just met with, I realized that I use this body, this Board, and specifically the Executive Director as the spokesperson for the LEAs. And I don't know that that's right. Okay?

And so that's one thing that I think we'll do differently. We'll think about how we communicate with the LEAs like we communicate with DCPS, like I communicate with DCPS. So that's -- you can imagine how hard that is, though, right?

(Simultaneous speaking.)

CHAIR CRUZ: Because we do it.

MAYOR BOWSER: But that has been kind of the shorthand that I've used in my mind. If I want to talk to the public charter schools, I'll talk to Scott. So that's kind of one thing that I'll do differently.

But you may want to think about if
there is a role here for a way for that
information to come from the LEAs to the Board in
some way so that you can actually speak in kind
of one voice around what's going on. But that is
something that I know that we'll do differently.

I think that there is -- if we want to
talk with some real kind of practicality, some
things that we can do around when we're going to
have a new school. How does it fit into the
ecosystem of schools, geographically, the needs
that have been identified.

One very practical thing but also
serious is, like, what is the difference between
a middle school that starts in 4th grade and 5th
grade or 6th grade, and why are they all
different? And how does that impact parents in
their decisions? Those are some of the things
that trick up to us as we're budgeting and things
like that.

Other things that we may have been
able to see five years ago as needing to be
addressed, I think that we have addressed from
how we count students at the beginning and audit. We've addressed those things to how we're making sure we have enough crossing guards, school nurses, and police officers. We've addressed those things as well.

So there are a lot of things that I would've said five years ago are just practical problems between how we communicate with each other or manage those public school dollars I think that have really been addressed. There are a few more, and we're all going to work through them.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. Any questions? Otherwise, we can take a few questions from --

MAYOR BOWSER: Absolutely.

CHAIR CRUZ: -- the audience. Does anyone want to get up and say anything while the mayor is here?

MAYOR BOWSER: Yes.

MR. McCARTHY: Mayor Bowser, Jack McCarthy.
CHAIR CRUZ: Jack, can you come up here? Just want to make sure we get you on the - or there.

MR. McCARTHY: Mayor Bowser, Jack McCarthy, AppleTree Institute. Like many people, you would like a school near where you live or work. Is it possible to offer incentives to developers to build schools, and particularly early childhood schools, into some of these new buildings that are being built for residences and offices so that people could have greater proximity.

I think it requires planning at the very earliest level. And there have been groups that have met on this for some time. But if you put your support behind something like that, I think it could have a big impact.

MAYOR BOWSER: That's a great question, and the answer is yes, with other priorities too. So a lot of what the District has put its priority for incentives and new development on is housing and affordable housing
which remains our top priority.

If you go in other neighborhoods and they'll say one of the priorities is below-market commercial rents so that there's a mix of amenities. In some places, it may be that the amenity that people seek is childcare or early childhood education.

So I think that you point to a good way of us to be thinking about things is how do we get -- use all of our tools to have more spaces built. Now we're very proud in the last three we've added 1,000 new early childcare seats.

And in some of those, it has been that we provided grant dollars to help expand with existing locations. And in other cases, people are opening up brand new. And in still other cases, we are using some excess space in District buildings.

So we're always looking for ways from zero to three and starting at three for new spaces. This year, for example, Stephens School
will open with childcare and early learning seats.

CHAIR CRUZ: Any other questions?
(No audible response.)

MAYOR BOWSER: Well, very good.

CHAIR CRUZ: All right.

MAYOR BOWSER: Thank you, everybody.

CHAIR CRUZ: Yeah, thank you so much.

MAYOR BOWSER: Looks like you have a full agenda.

CHAIR CRUZ: Yes.

MAYOR BOWSER: And good luck to you.

(Applause.)

CHAIR CRUZ: All right. We're going to turn to our public comment. Thank you. And Lenora, do we have the -- oh, there we go. Thank you. Thank you, James. All right.

We're going to turn to our public comment. I'm going to invite three people at a time. As always, anyone can either add their public comment now or after this meeting at publiccomment@dcpcs.org.
We have six, seven -- or six individuals signed up for this evening. I'm going to start with Grace Hu, Kira Porter, and Elisha Peterson. If the three of them could join us at the witness table here, and we'll start with the three of you. And then I've got three more after that.

And if you make sure your mic is on, you've got two minutes. And please state your name and/or organization before you begin speaking.

MS. HU: Good evening. Is this on?
Yeah.

CHAIR CRUZ: Yeah.

MS. HU: Good evening. My name is Grace Hu, and I am testifying today as a parent from Southwest D.C. I'm a member of the Amidon-Bowen Elementary PTA and local school advisory team. I'm also a former teacher and an advocate for educational equity for all D.C. students.

Eagle Academy's application to relocate to Half Street Southwest does not
provide an accurate picture of the school landscape and demand for students in my neighborhood.

In discussing how it hopes to recruit an additional 100 student to meet its projected enrollment of 250, Eagle refers to the presence of only two schools in the area, Van Nuys Elementary and Amidon-Bowen Elementary.

It does not mention the fact that AppleTree will have an expanded footprint and will need to aggressively recruit families once it opens at its new location near the Waterfront Metro which is a five-minute walk from Amidon-Bowen.

It does not mention that Amidon-Bowen expanded to five pre-kindergarten classes last school year and could be opening a third kindergarten class, a third -- sorry. That Amidon-Bowen expanded to five pre-K classes last school year and could be opening a third kindergarten class in the next few years.

It does not mention that while
Southwest D.C. is undergoing major development, much of the new residential housing has been expensive apartments and not affordable family housing. This means we have a finite number of school aged children, and unregulated school expansions and openings create a zero sum game for our schools.

I urge you to conduct due diligence on the demand for seats and claims that have done community engagement before approving any future charter applications. If the main evidence for engagement is a two sentence letter from the local ANC, as it is in this case, that is not good enough and you should hold applicants to a higher standards.

Specific to Southwest D.C., our ANC is only one of many civic organizations. Please help us avoid a situation in which we have multiple schools within a small area that are underenrolled and subsequently underinvested. This will be bad for both charter and traditional public schools.
In closing, I urge you to ask Eagle Academy the follow questions. Exactly how and where are you going to recruit new families needed to hit your enrollment other than a local ANC who you've engaged? And how did you engage the local community during the years you were located in the New Jersey, Southeast location?

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. Ma'am?

MS. PETERSON: Hi, I'm Elisha Peterson. I live and work in D.C. I'm a pediatric anesthesiologist and pain medicine physician at Children's. I'm a Ward 1 resident. And most importantly, I come before the esteemed Public Charter School Board today as a parent who has two current Meridian Elementary Public Charter School students and one perspective student.

So I'm here today because I enthusiastically support the Meridian Middle School move from the current location of 3029
14th Street, Northwest to the 770 Kenyon Street, Northwest which is where the former Chavez Prep building is that's currently vacant.

And I enthusiastically support it for two primary reasons. One being is that the size of the current location of the Meridian Middle School frankly does not any longer suite the capacity of the student body. The kids have spilled out of that school.

Not only subjective observation but objectively we know that Meridian is growing based off of its PARCC growth targets as it being named a leveler per the Education Policy Institute.

In light of the conversations that we've had surrounding proximity, that leads to the second reason why I enthusiastically support the move to Chavez School. Being that it is vacant, it is in Ward 1, and we want to keep the feeder school from Meridian Elementary within Ward 1 where I'm currently residing and many of the families who have their children in Meridian
Middle School reside.

The concern is that if we don't obtain this property, this could displace many families, particularly families who do have children at the elementary campus as well. So acquisition of the Chavez Prep location would meet both the strategic and the logistical goals of Meridian at large.

So in closing, I will say that if we do not obtain the Chavez location, as a parent who has children in Ward 1, live in Ward 1, I would hate to have to no longer be a part of Meridian. It is considered a part of our family.

And we certainly want to by all means support the move and we're delighted absolutely with the possibilities that this provides as the Chavez School does have 20 large classrooms. It has a gymnasium. And it does allow that capacity for Meridian to serve them scholastically, academically, and athletically.

So thank you.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. Thank you.
And thank you to both of you. Both the Eagle and
the Meridian location will be on the hearing
tonight, and we'll be voting on it next -- in
February. So more to come following on from
public comment.

So again, Kira Porter if she is here,
Brisa Cruz, Devon Underwood (phonetic), and Jimmy
Seitz. If any of those four who are on my list
could come forward. Kira Porter, Brisa Cruz,
Devon Underwood, James Seitz. All right. And
the same, make sure the mic is on. You have two
minutes, and please state your name at the top.

MS. CRUZ: Okay.

CHAIR CRUZ: Yeah, there we go.

MS. CRUZ: Okay. Good evening. I am
a former student at Meridian Public Charter
Middle School, and I'm currently in the 7th
grade. And today, I will be testifying the
relocation of Meridian Public Charter Middle
School.

Meridian Public Charter Middle School
should get the building on Kenyon Street because
it will help expand the students' educational opportunities. For example, if we had a bigger gym and we had the new building, we could do more activities in the huge gym that will help the students learn more and experience physical education better.

And if we had a full science lab, we could do more hands-on activities which will help the students understand how science is connected to the real world. And there are so many classrooms which means we could have more elective classes like drama, dance, and art which will give an amazing school and life experience at the same time for the students.

And in conclusion, Meridian Public Charter School -- Middle School should get the building on Kenyon Street because it will benefit the students which is the first place which the school exists for. And it will help benefit our educations as well.

Thank you for giving me this moment to testify for the relocation.
CHAIR CRUZ: Again, your name? We missed that.

MS. CRUZ: Brisa Martinez Cruz.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you, Brisa. You may need to press the button at the base.

MS. PORTER: Hello.

CHAIR CRUZ: Oh, there we go.

MS. PORTER: Okay.

CHAIR CRUZ: You're on.

MS. PORTER: Hi. I'm Kira Porter.

I'm in 7th grade, and I'm currently a student at Meridian Middle School. Since I've been at Meridian Middle School, I have grown socially and academically. The teachers and staff are very welcoming, and I'm grateful for all the knowledge that they have given me.

If we were given a bigger school, we would be able to share this knowledge with more students. Meridian excels in athletics as well. With additional students, we will be able to participate in more challenging events like a football team that can actually have contact, a
basketball team, cheerleading.

Our school will be able to have more extracurricular activities. I, for one, am a dancer and there is no dance team at Meridian. And there are students that like to draw. We don't have an art class, so it's kind of challenging to include other talents if there's only two -- what am I trying to say? If there's only two special classes like gym and music.

Giving Meridian a bigger school could also improve us socially. We will be able to gain more students at this school, help students expand their friend groups, and step out of their comfort zones.

I, for one, am an introvert and I don't like talking to people. But since I've came to Meridian, I've gained a bigger friend group and I've exposed myself to a happy set of view to how the world can be because everybody at Meridian is so cheerful. And I can just walk in there and smile and be accepted.

Having more students can increase our
attendance as well. If you have a smaller number
of students, mostly likely it will count our
attendance as a smaller rate because there's not
enough students to count as to come every day.

But if we have a larger amount of
students, we will be able to have way more larger
attendance and we'll be able to have more kids
come to school and just get their knowledge like
every other student at bigger schools.

In addition to including more
students, we will also be able to have a gym. PE
class will have more physical fitness with a
bigger gym. We will have a place for after
school athletic practices like cheerleading and
basketball instead of having to borrow another
gym and maybe not even be able to use it for
games or practices.

In conclusion, Meridian should get a
bigger school because it will allow us to have
more advantages as a school. It will allow us to
grow and push larger amount of kids to success.

Thank you for your time.
CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. Nice job as an introvert coming out and talking to this group. Thank you both.

MR. SEITZ: Good evening. They made it pretty easy for me. My name is James Seitz. I serve as the health and PE teacher at Meridian Public Charter School. Recently, I earned a distinction of becoming the OSSE's member of the leadership cadre here in Washington, D.C.

I've taught health and PE in D.C. over eight years now. In that time, I found that there are many different challenges and issues when it comes to facing -- or when it comes to teaching PE here in the District. Space is always the issue.

As a teacher at Meridian, space is extremely limited as I just said. Our classroom -- well, even more limited for an inner city D.C. school. With workout space in the classroom, it's about 35 by 30 with low ceilings which limits our activity like they just mentioned.

However, I found creative ways --
however, I found ways to be creative with the limited space that doubles as our gym. And to take advantage of our limited choices for nearby outdoor spaces when available if weather permits.

Nevertheless, if we were able to utilize the fully renovated gym space at the questioned site, then I have no doubt that I will greatly -- that the gym will greatly assist my efforts to ensure the students have adequate access in truly engaging rigorous fitness program.

Like they said just a minute ago, it would definitely help with our after school activities. The athletic program is nearly a mile walk for our students to go to a half sized gym at the moment at the Meridian Elementary School campus. It would probably be the small gym for the small kids works. But it does not work at all for middle school.

This new -- yeah, the new access for the fully functioning gym would literally level the playing field for our students, both in D.C.
-- or sorry, in D.C. middle schools, both
counterparts in public and private schools.

Thank you for this evening. Thank
you, guys.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. Thank you for
coming out. All right. We have two
opportunities for public comment. I want to see
if there's anyone else who had public comment at
this point before we open up a public hearing on
Eagle, Meridian, and Two Rivers new locations.
And then we'll have public comment at another
time.

MS. JABLOW: Hi. Before I start, I
wanted to say that I have commentary that I would
give as me, but that I would also like the
opportunity to give commentary for several people
who are unable to be here tonight. So is that
okay?

CHAIR CRUZ: Commentary as in multiple
statements?

MS. JABLOW: One is from me and the
other is from people who cannot be here on whose
behalf I would deliver it. They wrote it, and I
would say it.

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay. You can submit it
by -- if you can submit their written testimony
to us.

MS. JABLOW: I have already.

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay.

MS. JABLOW: I did before I got here.

But I was told that I could also deliver it in
person.

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay. How many
individuals are you speaking?

MS. JABLOW: It is two individuals
along with their neighbors in Ward 8.

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay.

MS. JABLOW: So neither --

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay.

MS. JABLOW: -- of them could be here.

So anyway, my name is Valerie Jablow. I'm
commenting as a D.C. resident on two applications
for new campuses, Eagle and Meridian.

Less than a year ago, Eagle was
approved to have a school at 2345 R Street, Southeast starting this year. Eagle's application now to sell that property means that Eagle received 20 million dollars in D.C. revenue bonds to build a school that never opened. Continuing the public harm, it was only when your Board report on Eagle was posted a few days ago that the public learned that 2345 R would not be sold but leased to another charter school.

How are we, D.C. taxpayers, supposed to respond to being literally the last to know while also having no say in what happens to a building built with our tax dollars and whose neighbors never wanted it?

Similarly shocking, Meridian's application to take over Chavez's lease at D.C. Bruce School at 770 Kenyon, Northwest implies that Chavez was looking for the highest bidder. Indeed, in 2019 before closing its middle school there, Chavez told its D.C. revenue bond holders that it wanted to, quote, monetize the asset, unquote, that is 770 Kenyon.
So we do not know what part of Meridian's 8.5 million dollar bid to assume this lease represents profit to Chavez, how much of that will pay off D.C. revenue bonds used to renovate the property, whether TenSquare's concurrent contracts with both Chavez and Meridian affected each LEAs exclusive control in this deal, and why 770 Kenyon was not rented to another charter school this year rather than sitting empty for Chavez to monetize the asset.

Even something as basic as Meridian's lease is obscured. Your Board memo does not say if it will be finalized before your vote. We thus do not know if, as their application states, Meridian will be paying the same low rate that Chavez had in its 2007 lease.

D.C. taxpayers have a right to know how public funds are used for our schools. But in both cases here, public funds appear to be used to prioritize the interests of operators over the interests of the public. Thank you.

And I will just read the statement on
behalf of Tina Batchelor and Camille Joyner, Ward 8 residents, as well as several of their neighbors who could not be here to do so tonight.

Eagle's September 30th, 2016 amendment application stated that they had just found out a few weeks before their petition that they had to move from 2017 New Jersey Avenue, Southeast. They had been in talks with the Naylor Road School about purchasing its property located at Naylor Road and R Street, Southeast as early as February 2016 and completed purchase in August 2016. It appears they were trying to make the matter urgent.

Eagle has claimed in separate applications in 2016 and 2019 that they had community buy in. However, neither is true. At an ANC meeting in 2019, the councilman for Ward 8 denied giving approval for Eagle Academy at the R Street location. In 2017, the ANC voted against a letter approving Eagle at the R Street location.

In Eagle's December 9th, 2019
application, they claimed to have some support from the current 8A03 ANC chair. However, the chair has directly denied giving such support.

In 2016, Eagle Academy applied for a revenue bond for renovation and refinancing of the R Street property before they had the approval of the charter board. For six months, Eagle Academy constructed the building at the 2345 R Street location without a valid permit, and the project was shut down. After construction restarted, they were subsequently shut down and cited several more times for construction violations.

If the charter board votes to approve this application, Eagle Academy now has the 2345 R Street property as a real estate developer and landlord. They're not intending to occupy the property yet they still have the benefit of a low interest D.C. revenue bond.

If they are indeed a developer, they need to relinquish the low interest bond and pay market rate for the property. Eagle Academy
needs to choose to be either a real estate
developer or an educational institution.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you.

MS. JABLOW: Thank you.

CHAIR CRUZ: All right. If there

isn't additional public comment, we'll have more

public comment time when the public meeting

starts. We're going to move on to our public

hearing items. Nikhil, did I give you enough

time to get over to the -- so Nikhil Vashee is

going to come up and take us through the hearing

items for Eagle, Meridian, and Two Rivers.

MR. VASHEE: Hello. I'm Nikhil

Vashee, Specialist on the School Quality and

Accountability Team. This is a public hearing to

discuss Eagle Academy Public Charter School's

amendment request to relocate and rename one of

its existing campuses, Eagle Academy PCS

Fairlawn, effective for school year 2020-21.

If the school could please join me

with any representatives. If approved, this

multi-campus local education agency will continue
operating its program for grades pre-kindergarten 3 through 3rd at two campuses in Ward 6 and 8.

The school's campus names will be Eagle Academy PCS Capitol Riverfront, formerly names Fairlawn campus, and Eagle Academy PCS Congress Heights. Representatives from the school are present to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIR CRUZ: If you'd like to start with any opening remarks.

MR. SMITH: Sure.

CHAIR CRUZ: Make sure the mic is on.

MR. SMITH: Am I good now? Yeah, okay, yeah. Eagle Academy originally looked -- we have always been in Ward 6 since our founding in 2003. First, we were in the blue castle and were there for a long time. And then we also were on New Jersey Avenue with our other campus where we still are today.

So our intent and hope had always been to have a Ward 8 school and a Ward 6 school because that's just our history. We were not
able after two years of searching to find a
location in Ward 6 as you might imagine with all
the construction going on down there. So we
found a location where we could build a school in
Ward 8 that was in a good area and a good
neighborhood and one we thought would be growing
and developing with people coming in.

Following that, we found just recently
that we were able to find a location along the
waterfront so we could stay in our current Ward
6, Ward 8 situation. And there were also several
charter schools that were desperately in need of
space.

So we felt it would be appropriate for
us to take our building and offer it to those
schools that just had no other place to go. And
we found that with Lee Montessori. We have
reached an agreement with Lee Montessori who was
in desperate need of that space to continue their
growth.

We also have worked on a lease
agreement with Douglas Development Corporation
for their new construction they have on Buzzard's Point. We will actually I think be the first charter school -- Scott, you can correct me if I'm wrong -- actually put in a development. I think it's a 1,000 unit apartment complex that's going up along Buzzard's Point right across from the soccer stadium.

So we thought that was a very good opportunity for us and would also allow us to remain in Ward 6 which are our historical roots. And so that's why we were able to do this. It's a little convoluted. I wish things had gone easier. I wish the space had been available to us much earlier.

But it wasn't because Buzzard's Point wasn't going to be developed. And now it is. We've got a soccer stadium. It's got a large complex going up and more coming. So there are going to be a lot of children in that area. And we feel it's important for Eagle to maintain its historical roots and also the opportunity to serve the families on Buzzard's Point with their
educational needs.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. Board members, questions?

MEMBER SHELTON: Just really quickly. Do you have any response to any of the comments that were just shared?

MR. SMITH: I would just say that they do not necessarily represent the facts of the situation. We have kept Public Charter School Board, I believe, informed on what's going on and how it developed. And I would stand by what we have told and worked with Public Charter School Board.

MEMBER SHELTON: And in terms of what was suggested as far as members of the public, just general constituents and residents here, could you walk through or give an overview of and clarify any of the statements that were made?

MR. SMITH: I'm not sure what you mean by that. But there were people who opposed our school being there. But there were a lot of people who supported our school being there. We
I have petitions from Ward 6 residents asking -- or Ward 8 residents asking us to locate our school there.

Karen, do you know how many people we have signed on that petition? About 500. Okay. And we did have a petition with 39 names on it opposing us. So everybody has their view, and everybody has -- we wanted to serve the community. So I thought that would be a good place to do it.

When we took over that property, all three homes on that property were abandoned. It was rat-infested. It was not conducive. There were people who did not belong to that sleeping there. And we have converted that property into a beautiful 22,500 square foot building.

It will serve the community well. It has 12 classrooms in it. It has a full sized rec room. It has a playground. It's certainly meant to be a community space, a space that does not exist for that community now.

MEMBER CRUSEY: Thank you. You
mentioned that there had been some families that
expressed a desire for you to locate in Ward 8.
So two questions.

One, what is the school's plan to
support families that would be traveling from
Ward 8 to be able to access this facility? And
then two, I think the lottery is open. Will this
location be listed on the lottery for families to
apply to attend next year?

MR. SMITH: Are you talking about our
Buzzard's Point location?

MEMBER CRUSEY: Yes, the Capitol
Riverfront.

MR. SMITH: Capitol Riverfront?

MEMBER CRUSEY: Yeah.

MR. SMITH: Yeah. The school is
Capitol Riverfront. It's been Capitol Riverfront
for a number of years, and it's just going to
move from its current location on New Jersey
Avenue over to the Half Street location.

So we have 169 students in there this
year. I'm trying to remember. Karen, help me
with this. I think it's about 120, if I got that number about right, that have indicated they would like to continue? Melissa, does that sound right?

MS. HAMMETT: Yes, so for the second location, we worked with My School DC since there was some information on the actual location for this coming school year. So what My School DC has done is listed the location.

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay, yeah. If you can just come up to the mic. Sorry. Or maybe -- yeah, or sit up at the desk.

MS. HAMMETT: Hello. Can you hear me? Okay. So with the information around the possibility of relocating to a new campus in Ward 6, we notified My School DC of the uncertainty of the actual location. So what My School DC has done is listed Eagle Academy as just a second location. And then it says the actual address is to be determined.

So the second location is already listed in the My School DC application. But once
we receive approval, if it is approved for the
Half Street location, they will update that
information in the My School DC lottery.

That information has also been
communicated with our current families that are
at the 1017 address of if it is approved, that
the location will move to the Half Street address
for the coming school year. So those families
have -- we had a parent family meeting that took
place on January 17th to communicate that if
approved, our campus for 1017 would actually move
to Half Street.

Of our current population, we
currently still have 169 families that are
enrolled and still attending as of today. Of
that population, 120 families communicated that
if we are able to obtain the Ward 6 campus that
they would be willing to relocate with us.

CHAIR CRUZ: Could you state your name
so we have that --

MS. HAMMETT: My name is --

CHAIR CRUZ: -- for the record?
MS. HAMMETT: -- Melissa Hammett, and I'm in charge of registration and recruitment for Eagle Academy.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you.

MS. HAMMETT: So I work with our current families and new recruiting families. I attend FS, so that's mostly the part of my role at Eagle Academy.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you.

MS. HAMMETT: Thank you.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: So this might be a question for both of you, so stay there.

MS. HAMMETT: Sure.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: I read in our memo that you have a budgeted enrollment for Half Street of 250. You're at 120 now for people who've said they'll want to be there. So how are you going to make up the rest of 130?

MS. HAMMETT: I think part of it is even with the current enrollment that we have at Capitol Riverfront, there was some contingencies around our certificate of occupancy and how many
families we were actually eligible to enroll. So
we did still have a wait list of families who
actually wanted to attend the Capitol Riverfront
campus once we actually informed families that we
would be staying there.

But some of the issue was around that
occupancy that we have. Even with the
application still being open, we still have some
interest from families who actually wanted to do
midyear enrollment with us. But like I stated in
the beginning, our enrollment is still at 169.
We were audited for 170, so it's kind of held
steady.

So I think that with some of the
families that would actually want to attend with
new recruitment and those who actually have
sibling preference and those families that are
also willing to relocate from our Congress
Heights campus, we would be able to secure our
enrollment.

If I could just indicate that
currently we have 88 families that are currently
at our Ward 6 school that are from Ward 8. So we actually have families that commute from across town. But some of it is, like I said, space accommodation in facilities. So I think we would be able to secure our enrollment ceiling at least at 230 range to 250 in students.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: I missed you somewhere. Okay. So you have 120 now.

MS. HAMMETT: Yeah, of returning families.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Of returning families?

MS. HAMMETT: Yes, who have completed the survey --

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Yeah.

MS. HAMMETT: -- of if they are interested if we actually relocate to the Half Street address. Some families of the 169 were unresponsive to that survey.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Okay.

MS. HAMMETT: We currently have a survey that's still active where we're asking
families --

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Right.

MS. HAMMETT: -- to engage us if they would attend or not.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Okay.

MS. HAMMETT: But a lot of it would actually be new recruiting families as well.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: That's what I think I was getting at --

MS. HAMMETT: Yes.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: -- is how many people do you think are new recruits. Because part of the public comment was the idea that you might be pulling from existing schools in that area. So --

MS. HAMMETT: I agree with that. But I think with us already being within the community, I don't think we would necessarily be pulling from those families who are not already interested in attending the options that are available within the community.

MR. SMITH: There will be 1,000 new
units. We'll be on the first floor. And in that building we're in, there were 1,000 new units that will be available this coming spring. And many of those -- more than half of those units are two-bedroom and three-bedroom units.

So I don't think the question is whether we're going to get enough students. I think the question is, will we have to have a lot of (unintelligible) students? That's a lot of families moving in, 1,000 units.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Thank you.

MS. HAMMETT: You're welcome.

CHAIR CRUZ: Any other?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR CRUZ: All right. So unless any of our Board members have additional questions, we will be voting on this in February. So I appreciate you guys coming forward and sharing.

I think -- oh, sorry. Naomi has another question.

MEMBER SHELTON: I do have a question.

You're working with a developer, correct? Are
they giving you all estimates in terms of, like, the -- like, who's moving into the building?

MR. SMITH: I'm sorry. I'm not sure what you're --

MEMBER SHELTON: In terms of -- is the building market rate? Is there --

MR. SMITH: The building is being built by Douglas Development Corporation.

MEMBER SHELTON: Like, have they given --

MR. SMITH: I'm not into their business. I really am not. I'm into trying to lease the space in their building which I was fortunate enough to be able to do.

MEMBER SHELTON: Right. And I guess the question I'm trying to ask is whether or not they have an estimate of how many families are going to be moving into the building. You're saying there are 1,000 units, but --

MR. SMITH: They do. I mean, they have a number of two-bedroom units and some three-bedroom units and some just one-bedroom
units. But it's going to be over -- it's going
to be approximately 1,000 units. It's really
three buildings joined as one.

MEMBER SHELTON: Understood because
I've lived in the neighborhood for quite some
time. I guess the point that was made, although
it was about another school, the idea of who's
moving into a two and three-bedroom unit looks
very differently now than it did 25 years ago and
whether or not they're actually families that are
going to be moving in versus unmarried folks who
are going to have roommates or people who just
want more space versus families moving in.

MR. SMITH: Yeah.

MEMBER SHELTON: And if you had any
corversation with the developer about what their
estimates are.

MR. SMITH: I don't have any exact
numbers other than that they have multiple units
and they are expecting families. If they were
not expecting families, they would've put that
unit to its original use which was retail.
But they believe they have enough families coming in that having a school in there would be a very attractive asset for them. Otherwise, they would not have done that with us. And that's the best answer I can give you. I don't have numbers from that at all. But it's a lease with them, and they believe that that's going to help them with their units.

CHAIR CRUZ: Yeah. I think just to follow on from Naomi's question, to the extent that you could get some additional information from them as to who they anticipate being in the building given that that's just -- it would add to the conversation around need and would address some of the concerns, I think, that were laid out earlier.

MR. SMITH: The representatives of Douglas Development Corporation actually toured our schools to see what kind of schools we were running. And it was on that basis that they came back to us and said, we'd love to be able to lease to you. We're going to change what we're
doing and put it up.

So they believe there will be families moving in, and they think they will be having children. And they think that going through grade 3 is absolutely perfect for them, that when the children get beyond grade 3, families often -- and Douglas Development has been doing this forever.

They believe families will start looking for a place with some lawn or further out and either moving to Ward 3 or Virginia or places like that. That's -- I mean, that was my conversation with them.

I can ask them how many they expect to move in, but their guess is going to be like anyone else's guess. They're going to take who comes. So that's exactly what we're going to do.

CHAIR CRUZ: I think it'd be additive to the record to have their guesstimate as things are shaping up.

MR. SMITH: Okay. I will do that.

CHAIR CRUZ: Excellent. Thanks.
MEMBER BUMBAUGH: Just I also --

CHAIR CRUZ: Oh, sorry, Steve. I didn't see you.

MEMBER BUMBAUGH: Just to follow up on this, I think what folks are getting at is if this is a new development that's being leased or sold at market rate, it's going to be a very different demographic than you've served. And that will have implications for the strategy for putting an instructional plan together.

Me, personally, I think the idea of socioeconomically and racially integrated schools is a wonderful one. But if that's not what a school has been doing and they're shifting to that. There are all kinds of challenges and considerations that need to be taken into account.

MR. SMITH: I was going to say I would invite you to our Ward 6 school to look to see what we have. But go ahead, Karen.

MS. ALSTON: I think -- and I told the team -- I'm Karen Alston. I'm the chief
marketing officer. And I told the team specifically that I was not going to speak tonight, but here I am.

So first of all, I would invite all members of the Board to view our Ward 6 school. A question I am asked probably every other work by a members of the press is to send me a photo from our Ward 6 school. Our Ward 6 school demographic is completely different from our Ward 8 school demographic. I'll be very honest and very frank.

And so we have had to change internally and my boss is here. I'm constantly beating him over the head that we have to change our own internal messaging in how we are messaging to the community and the community's comments to us.

So one of the things that reporters reach out to me for is I always post photos of the first day of school at both campuses. If you go on our social medial sites and take a look at that, you can see that.
So it's been great for us because the parent engagement in our Ward 6 school is starting to implicate the parent engagement in our Ward 8 school. And the parents were very adamant that we stay in Ward 6. There was news articles. We've had parents reach out to the mayor's office. They wanted us to stay in Ward 6. And to Joe's point, we have been in Ward 6 since our opening in 2003.

So even the concept of us marketing to other schools, to be honest -- and I'm the person in charge of marketing. We have demand from our parents at our current school who want to come. So that is my priority is really marketing the people who are calling us every week saying, is there a space? Is there opportunity for my child to come?

And then after we get that settled, think about, is there anything else we need to do? And we also realize the construction that's happening there, the bridge that's coming in this new development.
And I hear you, Naomi, that of 1,000 units, maybe 20 percent of that would be people with children because the changing neighborhood, that changing dynamic, what's happening over there with the baseball stadium, the apartments, the condos, everything that's happening along the wharf. We all see it. We all know it.

So I'm excited about this opportunity because I think there'll be great think pieces and great articles and great documents that we can begin to develop on not only mixed incomes but the opportunity to have a successful school of all types of demographics that is a great example of the city and a great example of parents working together.

MEMBER BUMBAUGH: Thank you.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thanks, Karen. All right. One last time. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: I'm open. Whatever you want to do.

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay. I think we're good.
MR. SMITH: I have great people, so --

CHAIR CRUZ: I think we're good.

Thank you. Thank you, Karen. Thank you, Joe.

Thanks, everyone. All right. Nikhil, Meridian?

MR. VASHEE: Yes.

CHAIR CRUZ: Team Meridian.

MR. VASHEE: Yeah, Team Meridian wants to join me at the dais. This is a public hearing to discuss Meridian Public Charter School's amendment request to relocate its middle school program to a new facility at 770 Kenyon Street, Northwest effective for school year 2020-21.

If approved, students in grades pre-kindergarten 3 through 5th will remain at the same 13th Street facility and students in grade 6 through 8 will move to the new site and the school will continue operating its program as a single campus across two facilities in Ward 1.

Representatives from the school are here to answer any questions you may have. And they'll now introduce themselves and give any opening statement they may have.
MS. ANDERSON: Good evening, members of the Public Charter School Board, staff, and members of the public. Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you about our request to move our middle school campus to a permanent location.

My name is Shelley Anderson, and I am the very proud principal of Meridian Public Charter Middle School. I am joined today by our head of school, Mr. Matt McCrea, Board chair, Edie Ashton, and finance committee member, Mahmia Richards.

After a multi-year community engagement process and a long-term search for a new facility, we are very excited about the possibility of moving to a much larger permanent facility, just three blocks from our current incubator space, just a short walk from where we are tonight.

While we were excited to grow and open a separate middle school campus in the 2015-16 school year, knowing that school facilities are
extremely limited in Ward 1, we moved into our
current incubator space on a temporary basis. We
began looking in earnest for a new space at the
beginning of last school year as we worked to
complete our 20-year charter review.

If approved, this move will allow us
to serve our students in the way we always
envisioned we would. Currently, our school is
housed above the CVS right up the street on 14th
Street and Irving. We have no gym, no cafeteria,
limited common space, and no outdoor space.

The new and recently renovated
facility includes a gymnasium, sufficient
classrooms to allow us to grow from a current 6th
through 8th grade student population of just
under 150 to a campus of 300-plus students,
equipped science labs and other regular school-
based amenities that our current space lacks.

You have heard some wonderful
testimonies from two of my students. I was very
proud of them. You've heard from some of our
parents. You heard from our PE teacher. And I
know that there have been other families and parents who have also submitted testimony. They can tell you in detail about all of the supports that we need.

I believe that it's important to note, as I said, as the proud principal, that even in our limited space, we have definitely positively impacted students in the community we serve.

We currently have the most diverse student body in the -- one of the most diverse student bodies in the city. And we were recently recognized as being a leveler school because of our outstanding results with closing the achievement gap for at-risk students.

We currently have a three-star rating which meets or exceeds the star rating for all other Ward 1 middle schools. Last year, 100 percent of our 8th grade students successfully navigated the lottery system and all were accepted to one of their choices and nearly half of them were accepted to a Tier 1 school or a selective high school.
We also have many innovative partnerships and programs, including a partnership with American University who comes in and partners with our social studies department to teach civics and our partnership with One World Education which provides curriculum and an opportunity for young people to speak like they did tonight in front of people like yourselves.

I'm excited to lead our students and teachers to even greater accomplishments when we truly have a space that can accommodate everything that we have the potential for. Thank you.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you.

MR. McCREA: Good evening. As a relatively new head of school, I started in July, I want to echo what Shelley has shared with you.

I've engaged extensively with our parents and extended Ward 1 community over the last six months through one-on-one meetings, parent forums, and community meetings. And I'm happy to say that everyone has expressed strong
support for this move.

   It will allow us to realize our long-
term vision of building a school that is both
deply integrated into our community where
students can learn and grow inside and outside
the classroom.

   As our financials demonstrate, we are
in an excellent position and are well equipped to
manage this move. Additionally, we have
demonstrated strong academic growth over the last
several years, surpassing all but a few schools
in the city according to the performance
management framework.

   This move will allow us to expand and
depth a strong middle school program, better
serving our student population and the larger
Ward 1 and D.C. community. It is a win for our
families and a win for all of D.C. I appreciate
your time and consideration.

   CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you.

   MS. ASHTON: Thank you, Matt and
Shelley. I'm Edie Ashton, and I'm the chair of
the Meridian PCS Board. I can tell you that this proposed move is something that the Board has been working on with the school community for several years. We conducted surveys and met with parents and families in school year 17-18 and 18-19 to learn about their hopes and dreams for their children.

Virtually all of them expressed a desire for a middle school campus that would allow us to expand programming during the day and after school to offer more athletics, arts, and activities that will keep our students engaged and enriched.

To that end, we have been searching for a facility for more than a year now. We engaged with a realtor that specializes in school facilities and have toured buildings all over Ward 1 and the rest of the city.

When this space became available, we visited and responded to the RFP. This is by far the best facility we visited. It is close to both our current middle school location as well
as our existing elementary school campus. It's larger and better equipped as you heard. And since it's in a residential neighborhood, arguably safer than our current middle school.

It can serve as a permanent home for Meridian's PCS middle school for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration, and we are happy to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay. Thank you.

MS. ASHTON: This will be a joint effort to answer questions.

CHAIR CRUZ: Certainly.

MS. ASHTON: So I don't know how we want to --

CHAIR CRUZ: All right. Naomi?

MEMBER SHELTON: So what's your --

like, where are you in terms of your discussions with the city?

MR. McCREA: In what -- I'm sorry. I what regard specifically?

MEMBER SHELTON: The terms of the lease --
(Simultaneous speaking.)

MR. McCREA: The terms of the lease?

The plan currently is to take over the lease that Chavez had with the city as well, an identical lease to what they left.

CHAIR CRUZ: And when will that be finalized?

MR. McCREA: We're in the process now. I don't have a set date for you unfortunately, Rick.

CHAIR CRUZ: Ricarda?

MEMBER GANJAM: How are you thinking about school culture and climate as you are going to now have 6th, 7th, and 8th graders in the same building?

MS. ANDERSON: I'm glad you asked. One of the things that we really pride ourselves on is our school's culture and climate. We have student houses which is an initiative that started by The Ron Clark Academy. Think Harry Potter. And one of the things that houses do is it instills a sense of community into the
students.

One thing that we've noticed with the houses is that kids have a sense to get to know each other. They get to know staff better. It gives them a common purpose and a goal, and it has positively impacted our current discipline referrals.

We currently have zero suspensions which is a huge achievement for us. Much different than our suspension rate last year. And just in the faces of the students, the kids who spoke today talked about walking in a school and smiling. And that is definitely something that you would see if you came on our campus.

So to answer your question, we've started the model and we plan to continue it as we move up.

MEMBER GANJAM: And this was the first year of that model?

MS. ANDERSON: So this was -- this is my second year at the school. We started it a little bit last year. But this is the first year
where we have really been able to fully use our
culture plan as set. And we have seen very, very
positive impacts.

MEMBER CRUSEY: Thank you for that.
How have -- how you approach that similarly for
the 6th grade faculty and instructional team to
integrate in with the 7th and 8th grade?

MS. ANDERSON: So once a year, we
bring our 6th graders up to tour our campus. And
one thing that we do is -- we did it last year
and our plan is to do it this year. As we showed
them around, we also let them participate in the
house system.

And so they mimic sort of, like, what
it feels like to be inducted into a house. And
one of our sort of, like, rites of passage with
these houses is that we have this big pep rally
where they come up with their own chant and it's
a lot of excitement. There's a lot of dancing.
There's a lot of booing and trash talking by the
other houses. And it's very memorable.

And that becomes what kids talk about.
That becomes what staff talk about. I know last year, it was my first year there, and it was one of those things. Have you heard what they're doing at the middle school? Because it was definitely different and it was something that people were talking about and looking forward to.

So I have no doubt that this is something that they're excited about. People have already started to sort of, like, recruit younger brothers and sisters and friends into which house they think that they should belong to. We have t-shirts. We have colors. It's kind of a big deal.

MEMBER CRUSEY: Thank you for that. But just to clarify, I appreciate hearing about the student experience which does sound like a lot of fun. The adults that support those kids are going to be an important part of ensuring that this process works well. How have the instructional team, the adults that serve the 6th graders, been integrated into the new middle school environment?
MR. McCREA: That's a great question.

So we do a lot of our professional development across both of our campuses together. So this isn't two schools. This is one Meridian community that works hand in hand. Math teachers are working with other math teachers, ELA teachers with other ELA teachers. And even across content areas, teachers are very comfortable working together.

We don't anticipate this being, like, two separate communities having to integrate as a result of that. We also -- in much of our community engagement, also engage our internal community. Staff are very well aware of the move. Staff are very excited for the move.

I've had a number of them ask for the opportunity to join the middle school team. We're trying to work out exactly what that would look like given the split in the campuses being a little bit different. But we have worked diligently to ensure that Meridian is one community and not two schools.
CHAIR CRUZ: I want to start by acknowledging the academic growth that you mentioned earlier. For those of us who've been on the Board awhile and have seen this school evolve and address a number of challenges. So congratulations on that.

And then I'll ask, how do you not just continue that but ratchet it up, in particular with respect to the middle schools? So as the middle school principal, what are those academic objectives?

So we've heard a lot about the facility. And clearly, especially in the middle school years, having a gym and theater space and all of that will add to the experience for students. Specific to academics, how do you see the middle school evolving? What are the plans? I'd love to hear some more about that.

MS. ANDERSON: So the plan is really to move from good to great. We are passionate about being excellent in everything we do and giving all of our students access to the very
best, not only with high schools but also in colleges.

One of the things that we've done to prove that is that we've added in a college and career readiness class. It's something that every child takes. And during this class, there's a focus on literacy because that is one of the hallmarks of being college ready.

But they also have time where they research colleges and careers of their choice. They also visit local college campuses. And the 8th graders also write their essays for the selective high schools.

That is also just one part of our plan to bring in additional classes where our 8th graders will be able to take some high school courses in the 8th grade which would give them the opportunity to be on that pathway to college that we know is so important that all of our students have access to.

CHAIR CRUZ: And if you see -- you mentioned the literacy objectives and college and
career ready -- or college readiness and high
school classes. If you had to identify one or
two specific areas where you'd like to see the
middle school performing better that are baked
into your objectives for the next few years, what
would those be? Would those be the same things,
or --

MS. ANDERSON: So right now, our
schoolwide academic goal is an improvement in
writing. We have a push across curriculums for
there to be a focus on writing. We know that
kids have to learn how to not only listen and
speak but also to read and write well.

And part of that is making sure that
everyone in the campus teaches reading and
writing intentionally and as if that was their
objective. Because literacy is so important to
the welfare of our students.

So I would say me as a former English
teacher and then also based on what I've seen
from my students, that continues to be a push.
We feel that as our students become more
competent and confident in their ability to write
and to speak and to critically think about what
they read that the sky is truly just the limit.
There's no limit to their potential and what they
can do in all other content areas.

MR. McCREA: Just to add on to that,
Rick. With only 92 students at our current
middle school, we haven't quite hit an economy of
scale that makes it really powerful to be able to
do things like we would want to do them.

Our ELA teacher teaches 7th and 8th
grade. He's the only ELA teacher on the campus.
Same with math, science, social studies across
the board. When we grow to 150 and if our plans
to make it to 300 are eventually achieved, we
start to have multiple ELA teachers that can look
at and collaborate on data and curricular
improvement together. We start to have multiple
math teachers that can push each other's practice
in the way that we don't currently have.

I know that Shell is excited to lead
that team and excited to build a team that cannot
just receive the coaching but also push each
other in their own areas of expertise.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. Any other
questions from our Board?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR CRUZ: All right. Well, again,
we'll be taking this us up as a vote in February.
So thank you all for joining us this evening. So

Nikhil, Two Rivers up next?

MR. VASHEE: Yeah, Two Rivers is up
next. This is a public hearing to discuss Two
Rivers Public Charter School's amendment request
to relocate its middle school student from its
4th Street campus to its Young campus and
reconfigure the school's grade bands.

Two Rivers educates students in grades
pre-kindergarten 3 through 8 across two campuses,
4th Street and Young. Presently, the 4th Street
campus consists of two facilities that serve
grades PK3 through 5 and 6 through 8
respectively. The Young campus only serves PK3
through 5.
If approved, effective for school year 2020-21, Two Rivers will relocate grades 6 through 8 from the 4th Street campus so that the 4th Street campus will only serve grades PK3 through 5 and occupy only one facility.

In turn, the school will add the middle grade's program to its Young campus so that the Young campus will serve grades PK3 through 8 in two facilities directly adjacent to each other.

Further, the Young campus will be split into two campuses and would receive a PMF score separately for its PK3 through 5 students and one for its 6 through 8 middle school. Therefore, in total, Two Rivers would operate three campuses.

Representatives the school are present to answer any questions you may have, and they will now introduce themselves and read their opening statement.

MS. WODATCH: Thanks so much. Good evening. I'm Jessica Wodatch. I'm the Executive
Director and one of the co-founders of Two Rivers Public Charter School. I'm also a parent there. I have a 7th grader and two alums. And I'm joined by one of our Board members, Saumil Shah, who's a member of our finance committee and also our strategic planning committee.

Thanks so much for having us this evening. So I also wanted to just start by thanking Teri Quinn who's the staff member at the Public Charter School Board who's assisted us with this. This is fairly straightforward and yet we needed to go back and forth quite a few times to get this done. So we appreciate the support of the staff.

So as was explained, we currently have two campuses, one on 4th Street and one at Young. We have a middle school building. It serves 150 students. A number of years ago, we opened a new elementary school. So we have two elementaries. And the plan was always for the two elementaries to merge into one larger middle school.

We're at that moment. So our current
middle school building is not large enough to serve everybody altogether. A number of years ago, we worked with our community to decide where we would site the new middle school.

Though there were lots of pros and cons of a number of different sites, the most economical and the one in the end being most preferred by our community was to build the new middle school at our Young site.

There is green space there. And as you've heard from many people tonight, the gym, my friends, the gym. So there is a gym that is currently shuttered at the Young campus that we would be able to renovate as part of the middle school expansion.

So the community was excited about us moving to Young. What we would be doing is building a new building on the same property with the Charles Young Elementary School. It would be its own building, but it would be connected with the current building. And we'd renovate a few of the spaces like the gym in the current building.
as well.

We have worked with members of the community because we're already on the site. Really the only sticky situation is around transportation and infrastructure. And we appreciate any and all help on that. But we've been working with multiple city agencies for many years to try and alleviate concerns that we have there. But we've also incorporated that into the design of the new building.

Our middle school is a four-star middle school. That would be the ward's first four-star middle school. So we'd be excited to bring that to Ward 5. And we're happy to answer any questions that you have.

CHAIR CRUZ: Great. Thank you.

Steve?

MEMBER BUMBAUGH: If I'm recalling your 4th Street campus correctly, you have PK3 through 5 on one side of the street and you have the middle school on the other?

MS. WODATCH: That's correct.
MEMBER BUMBAUGH: What's going to happen to the space where the middle school is now?

MS. WODATCH: Yeah. So I think we got that changed in what's in the materials that have been submitted though that wasn't just stated. So our hope is actually to expand and to use the current middle school building for some of the elementary school.

We're currently operating our elementary school at, I believe, 84 square feet per child which is definitely under what is expected and hoped for, for elementary schools. So if we could move some of our grades across the street, that would alleviate some of the space.

We also have, like, I'm sure many a charter school, staff members working in closets and very small locations. And so we'd be able to use some of the space for offices as well.

MEMBER BUMBAUGH: So you would be giving the kids and your staff more space, but there's no plan to add students?
MS. WODATCH: That's correct.

MEMBER BUMBAUGH: Okay. Thank you.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Your favorite topic, I'm sure, traffic, parking. I've been to the Young campus, and it is a little difficult to drop off. So can you just talk about what you're doing to alleviate any parent concerns around that?

MS. WODATCH: Sure. We have a unique situation at the Young school, and this is a situation shared by Phelps which is the high school behind us. The road which leads up to Phelps is technically a driveway. Or it's not actually a road, and so there's a lot of challenges getting members of different agencies to take care of the road.

We've been working with the community at Phelps, and we have some very active parents to try and get that road repaired. So that's one of our challenges is just that the city isn't taking care of that street.

We have built in a turnaround into the
middle school design which we think will help and would allow drop off. We currently don't have a drop off option at that campus because the campus is so large. And so there are tradeoffs, right? We have beautiful green space. And so we would be able to do that.

And we're also in conversations with the folks at Phelps about some different alternatives as well that we feel like might be able to alleviate some of that congestion. We are working with city council members and we're trying to work with folks at DDOT as well.

MS. WODATCH: And then what's just been the community's overall reaction to this move? It's a big shift for some families.

MS. WODATCH: I think that it's always hard to change where you're going to school every day or dropping off your children every day. But people have had a really long amount of lead time to prepare for that change.

And I think because of the amenities, because they'll be getting a new building and
because there'll be -- we have a gym right now.

But anyone who's played against our citywide championship volleyball team would tell you that in order to serve, you actually have to stand next to the door. It's tight.

So I think people are very excited about having a bigger gym and better facilities. We've been able to design it so that there's some outdoor space that will be closed, so just available to middle school students and where teachers can have eyes on at all times.

We don't currently have that on our very busy 4th Street location. So there's a lot of excitement about the amenities that will be available. I think there's some trepidation about the traffic.

We also are losing the closeness of a Metro stop. But the majority of our students do not come by Metro. They come either by car or by bus and a smaller percentage who walk. So we think that that will be able to be handled.

So overall, people are looking forward
to it and excited. And we're having a kickoff at
the end of this week with our community, our
middle school principal, and our ops team. And
we're hoping to give people tours of the gym. My
own middle schooler told me already that she
wants to be there right away. She can see that
gym. So people are excited.

MEMBER SHELTON: What's the status of
the construction at the new campus?

MS. WODATCH: So we have obtained kind
of our early permits and are still waiting for a
series of other permits to come through. As with
all building projects, there's tension. We're
still on track for an on time opening. But we
are on top of that. Our Board committees are
very active in assisting and helping with that.

So we feel optimistic though we also
are cautious. We renovated the Young campus in
around the same amount of time. So we feel like
we've had experience successfully doing this
before. We've done, at this point, multiple
building projects with our buildings. So we feel
optimistic about being able to open on time.

MEMBER SHELTON: And what are your contingencies if the timeline is off?

MS. WODATCH: So we currently have the middle school building. So that would be the contingency for all 150 of those students. And then we also have some classrooms at Young that are currently used for specials that if we needed to flex for a month, we would be able to flex for a month.

As with many charter schools, we're familiar with making those kinds of tradeoffs if we need to. So for example, our Spanish teacher, instead of having her in a classroom for a month might travel to other classrooms. So we could use those classroom spaces at Young.

Not ideal, but certainly I think within the realm of possibility. We have enough room for all of the students next year, even without the new building.

MEMBER GANJAM: Just going back to the 4th Street location.
MS. WODATCH: Sure.

MEMBER GANJAM: Are students going to need to walk between the two buildings during the day?

MS. WODATCH: So we currently do walk between the two buildings. Our middle schoolers don't have very many specials classrooms. So they cross the street multiple times a day for their arts block. Once a month, we cross the whole elementary school to the middle school to have a meeting together in the gym.

The idea would be that they would not on a daily basis need to cross the street, that they would be able to have the majority of their classes there. But we are familiar with that. People know that you must use the crosswalk. We can see you from everywhere. So if that was something that we needed to do during the day, we're prepared to make sure that children are chaperoned appropriately.

MEMBER GANJAM: What is the status of the protesters at the Planned Parenthood next
door?

MS. WODATCH: Yeah, thanks for checking. So some of you may or may not know that a number of years ago when they were opening the Planned Parenthood, there were protesters that came and targeted our students in what was an extremely difficult time for our families and children and staff.

The number of protesters has decreased since the Planned Parenthood itself opened. We, of course, have nothing to do with them other than being their neighbors. So I would say on a rare occasion, we did have someone earlier this year yelling at children. And we did just have a lot of protesters.

But we've enjoyed and I think we copied Scott on the thank you note to the police for their help last week. The city has been very supportive in helping us make sure that things stay calm. But for the most part, it has not been an issue in the past couple of years.

CHAIR CRUZ: So after 15-plus years of
founding and then overseeing the school, you're stepping down. And perhaps I'm overly sensitive to business as usual while also doing a search. But this question is more for Saumil to speak on behalf of the Board.

This is -- it's a big transition for the school and you're also taking on a building project which I'm going to assume and I can see in the notes requires financing and fundraising and all of that. So how's the Board thinking about all these initiatives and then the day-to-day running of the school that you want to continue to get better across a growing number of students?

MR. SHAH: Yeah, sure. So I think on the -- I think from a staffing perspective on the getting better for students, we recently hired a new CAO, amazing Kenneth. You should come and visit him. But he will be remaining on, knows the curriculum, is, like, excited to sort of build upon all the successes that Two Rivers has had. So I'm excited about that, as well many
other team members be remaining.

But we have absolutely huge shoes to fill in Jessica, and we know that. And so we've kicked off a fairly robust sort of engagement process with the Two Rivers community to learn more about, like, what's needed in the next executive director. We've launched the job description in the last few weeks and having a search committee call tomorrow.

And so we know that there is a lot that is happening that is great, and we want to maintain. And we know that we can continue to improve.

On the, like, taking on all the work at once, the middle school project has been sort of in the works for a long time before we knew that Jessica was leaving. And so given all the moving pieces and the complexity facilities in the city, we felt that we needed to continue moving in this direction.

We also have, like, a healthy sort of cash on hand cushion. We were able to get
financing at very good interest rates. And so from a financial perspective, felt comfortable moving forward with the construction at this point.

MS. WODATCH: And I just want to note that, well, one, you don't work somewhere and pour your heart into it for a long time and then just up and leave. So they know that I'll be nearby. But also my daughter will be in 8th grade at new building school. So --

CHAIR CRUZ: You'll have an eye out on it.

MS. WODATCH: -- I'll be staying very involved.

MR. SHAH: We also heard Scott was looking.

(Laughter.)

CHAIR CRUZ: Well, Jessica, thank you.

Scott's, like, maybe not.

MR. PEARSON: Seriously, Jessica.

Thank you for launching an amazingly great school and for your service to the community.
MS. WODATCH: Thank you.

CHAIR CRUZ: Any other questions otherwise?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR CRUZ: All right. Thank you.

All right. We are going to switch from a public hearing to our public meeting. And to start with that, can I ask for a motion from our Board to approve the agenda?

MEMBER SHELTON: I move to approve the January 27, 2020 Board meeting agenda.

CHAIR CRUZ: Can I get a second?

MEMBER GANJAM: Second.

CHAIR CRUZ: I got a motion and a second. All in favor?

(Chorus of aye.)

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay. Any nays?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR CRUZ: No. All right. Agenda approved. Another opportunity for public comment should there be anyone who'd like to make any public comment at this point.
(No audible response.)

CHAIR CRUZ: All right. Are there any public officials in attendance who would like to be recognized?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay. Well, then we're going to jump right into our charter renewals. Nikhil, you're the man this evening. And I think if we go in order, we're going to start with AppleTree Public Charter School.

MR. VASHEE: Yes. So I'm going to start by just stating the standard for review. So --

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you.

MR. VASHEE: -- the Board will vote tonight on the charter renewals of four public charter schools. I'm going to read the charter renewal standard once, and it applies to each school.

The School Reform Act requires charter schools to apply every 15 years to renew their charter. The law requires that the Board shall
not renew a school's charter if first the school committed a material violation of applicable laws or a material violation of the conditions, terms, standards, or procedures set forth in its charter, including violations relating to the education of students with disabilities. Or secondly, if the school failed to meet the goals and student academic achievement expectations set forth in the charter.

Additionally, there is a fiscal component to the review. We are required to revoke a school's charter if we determine that the school engaged in a pattern of non-adherence to generally accepted accounting principles, has engaged in a pattern of fiscal mismanagement, or is no longer economically viable.

So with that standard stated, our first school up for renewal is AppleTree Public Charter School. AppleTree currently educates 540 students in grades PK3 and PK4 across six campuses in Wards 1, 6, 7, and 8.

The school chose the PMF as its goals.
The school was required to earn an average PMF score of 50 percent at each of its individual campuses for the past five years. Every campus has met the 50 percent standard. So the school has met its academic goals. Furthermore, the school has also passed our financial and compliance review.

Based on these findings, DC PCSB staff recommends that the Board vote to approve this school's charter renewal application and renew the charter of AppleTree PCS for another 15-year term. Staff from the school are here to answer your questions and will now introduce themselves and read any opening statement they have.

MS. MILES: Good evening. My name is Jamie Miles. I'm the chief of schools at AppleTree Early Learning Public Charter School.
And beside me?

MR. McCARTHY: My name is Jack McCarthy. I'm the Board chair.

MS. MILES: So here's a brief opening statement just to simply say thank you very much
for allowing us this opportunity to be before you tonight. We've had the opportunity to review the report prepared by the staff. We feel that it accurately sort of captures who we are as an organization, our areas of growth, as well as our strengths as an organization.

AppleTree has been serving D.C. for 15 years -- 15-plus years or 15 years as a charter school. And we touch students from all wards of the District. So tonight we are eagerly anticipating and looking forward to an approval so that we can continue to serve the wonderful students and families of Washington, D.C.

So at this time, we are open for questions from the Board.

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay. Thank you.

MS. MILES: Thank you.

CHAIR CRUZ: Board members?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay. Well, then I'm going to -- I will jump in. Sorry. It's a very quiet group right now. So first of all, thank
you. I mean, for those of us who've been to the schools and had a chance to spend time with you all, I'm really appreciative of the great work you all are doing. And that is reflected when you look at the outcomes across the board in the schools and the improvement over time.

There's one campus, though, that stands out and I would love for you to address a bit about the Southwest campus and share a little bit about what's been going on there and how you see that community's performance evolving over time.

MS. MILES: So Southwest, generally we've done okay there. This year, we did -- our scores did drop there. And just quite frankly, it was a challenge for us. We had a school leader to leave us very late. Well, late in the summer, like, early August. We didn't hire a new leader until August of that particular school year.

Following that, she got into a car accident and she was out for several months in
therapy and rehab. During that time, we also
lost a significant number of lead teachers,
social workers. And we're trying to stay afloat
as we were before you a few months ago talking
about the closing of our Southwest campus.

So across the board, it was just a
very challenging year. Not an excuse, but the
reality that we were facing at the time. And a
plan of just really trying to stay afloat and to
keep moving in survival.

The morale there just was not where we
wanted to be. The culture was not a traditional
school at the time. I think we had a flood at
the school at the same time the school was
closed. It was just a lot happening in that
building during that transition period.

Also when they noted that -- actually,
prior to each year, we've seen our scores there
be sort of steady. But really what hit us was
our PBRS scores. And those PBRS scores dropped
significantly that particular school year which
actually dropped our PMF overall in totality.
And that was the first time those scores had dropped in the four -- or I think about four years there. And again, our PBRS is just a positive behavior rating scale where our teachers are looking at our students and just knowing the culture and the dynamics that we were facing there at the time just did not hit the target where we wanted to be.

But as we prepared for the next school year and reopen our Southwest campus, one thing that we found across the board that has helped us to be successful is getting leaders on board sooner rather than later.

So we're currently in the process of hiring our school leader so that they can start their training and professional development of learning and growing, those opportunities now. We continue to engage with the community, the agencies in the area. Making sure we have staff in place.

We are in full recruitment mode right now, ensuring that we have the best people on the
bus in the right seats, moving in the right
direction so we don't find ourselves in that
situation moving forward. And of course, we
secured a location. So we won't have those
challenges.

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay. Thank you.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: On the other side
of that, you saw 12 increases at two of your
campuses last year, Douglas Knoll and Lincoln
Park. What was that attributed to?

MS. MILES: Having amazing leaders
with the right talent. Also we have our own
internal residency principal program. Not the
individuals coming into our organization who have
been principals before can't be successful. But
it is a very unique niche in early childhood and
being able to really adapt our curriculum,
implement our curriculum, monitor our staff in
those things.

So both of those leaders have been
through our residency principal program. So we
were able to really dig in and train and support
them as well as on of the two leaders, they were a very early hire. As a matter of fact, last Friday, I think four years ago was when we hired that particular -- or last Friday, excuse me. Four years ago last Friday was when we hired that particular individual for our Douglas Knoll campus.

So we definitely see getting leaders on board very early. Making sure they get the training and support that they need is super essential as well as the right staff. Our Douglas Knoll campus was a campus in previous years where just our staff and model wasn't where we wanted it to be.

We had a lot of -- we work as a network of schools, and we had a lot of junior staff members. And they did not have the seniority or the experiences. So balancing out that classroom or that building as well to put more senior staff in the building has contributed to that.

Go ahead, Lea.

MEMBER CRUSEY: At this point, you probably have quite a few alumni. In your research, have you been able to track the progress and success of students that started under your care and have proceeded on through public schools in D.C.?

MR. MCCARTHY: Anecdotally, yes. We have been working for five and a half years to get a cohort analysis of our graduates done working with OSSE. And fortunately, we have now finally gotten most of the cohorts. We're working with the American Institutes for Research on that examination. And we will be able to give definitive information on that rather than anecdotal.

I mean, we have a number of Board members who had children matriculate through the school and they all did well. But we would just like to have definitive information to be able to say how kids are doing. But by and large, it has all been positive.
MEMBER CRUSEY: Do you look forward to reading about that?

MR. McCARTHY: Yes, we look forward to finally -- five and a half years to get cohort information is a long time. And we really appreciate Hanseul Kang and Elizabeth Groginsky who've worked very closely with us and the American Institutes for Research over that time to put that together.

MEMBER CRUSEY: We've lost her to New Mexico, right?

MR. McCARTHY: We have, but --

MEMBER CRUSEY: One of the researchers I think is now an appointed official in New Mexico.

MR. McCARTHY: Yeah. No, well, she was the assistant superintendent. But we still -- we have the data and it's being analyzed, so --

MEMBER CRUSEY: Sorry. I had a question. When can we look forward to this, do you know?

MR. McCARTHY: I would hope that later
in this calendar year, we would have that
analysis done. But it really depends on AIR.

CHAIR CRUZ: Scott?

MR. PEARSON: One of the things that
stood out to me was how overall your class scores
have improved across the campuses and across the
different domains and across the years. Do you
have any reflects as to why that's the case? And
then perhaps a related question. Has the Every
Child Ready curriculum evolved over the years, or
is it pretty static over the review period?

MR. MCCARTHY: Yes. So our core
values are mission first, trust among the adults,
research to practice, continuous improvement, and
being solution focused. What that means is that
we get a lot feedback from our teachers all the
time. We do listening tours on Every Child
Ready. And Every Child Ready has continuously
improved.

What we do now is very different than
what we did three years ago. Not radically
different but constantly improved. It is on a
technology platform so that it's easier to use. It's faster, better. And we're continuing to improve the technology part of that as well. So it is not static, and it is consistent with evolving best practice is probably the best way to put it.

Your other question, Scott, was the class scores? Okay, sure.

MS. MILES: So in response to our class scores, over the years, we've just become more and more familiar with the tool. We have a team of individuals, basically our entire academic team at AppleTree Public Charter School. They're class reliable, so we go through the training. We become reliable, in addition to all of our school leaders are required to be reliable as well. And we have teachers throughout our organization who are also reliable.

Spent a lot of time really analyzing the tool, running the tool, providing professional development for the tool as well as
getting it into our buildings to really see
what's happening and being able to get feedback
in that area.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA:  This is going to
be a little bit off topic.  But I'm curious about
the relationship between your charter networks
schools and your contract schools and what you
share with those schools, what you've learned.
Do their scores look similar to yours? Just
curious about that relationship.

MS. MILES:  So in terms of -- if I'm
fully understanding your question.  So really
across the board, we look the same.  Our
curriculum is the same.  The way we train our
teachers is the same.  The way we support our
school leaders is identical.

So we work really, really hard to
ensure that we see that consistency across the
board.  Of course there are variabilities.  But
generally, that's how we support our professional
network, PD.  We come together.  We operate as
one organization, even though we definitely have
AppleTree standalone campuses as we call our PCS campuses and our AppleTree@ model campuses which are our partner schools.

Their class scores are pretty much the same as well. We see areas of growth. We see strengths. But we're training and supporting throughout that process. Did I answer that?

Okay.

CHAIR CRUZ: Very good. Any other questions from the Board?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR CRUZ: Otherwise, unlike earlier items, this one actually is up for vote now. So if there aren't any other questions, I would ask for a motion.

MEMBER SANDMAN: I move to approve the charter renewal application of AppleTree Public Charter School.

MEMBER SHELTON: Second.

CHAIR CRUZ: All right. I got multiple seconds. I got a motion and a second.

All in favor?
(Chorus of aye.)

CHAIR CRUZ: Any nays?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR CRUZ: All right. Unanimous approval. Congratulations --

MS. MILES: Thank you very much.

CHAIR CRUZ: -- and thank you. Thank you, guys. All right. Nikhil, Early Childhood Academy?

MR. VASHEE: Mm-hmm.

CHAIR CRUZ: All right. The Early Childhood Academy team would like to join us.

MR. VASHEE: Our next school is Early Childhood Academy Public Charter School. Early Childhood Academy educates 285 students in grades PK3 through 3rd at a single campus in Ward 8. This school chose the PMF as its goals.

The school has met its standard of earning a 50 percent average over the review period with an average of score of 68.7 percent. This school has also passed our financial and compliance review.
Based on these findings, DC PCSB staff recommends that the Board vote to approve this school's charter renewal application and renew the charter of Early Childhood Academy for another 15-year term. Staff from the school are here to answer any questions you have and will now introduce themselves.

MR. INGRAHAM: Hi, I'm Thann Ingraham, Principal.

MS. EDWARDS: I'm Wendy Edwards, Executive Director.

MS. ROBINSON-FOSTER: And I'm Debra Robinson-Foster. I'm the financial manager.

CHAIR CRUZ: Great. Thank you. Any opening remarks that you'd like to make?

MS. EDWARDS: Sure. So I didn't write anything, but --

CHAIR CRUZ: Even better.

MS. EDWARDS: -- we are exhilarated to be at year 15. We started with 110 students in pre-kindergarten in two very small community centers that were not built to be schools. Our
goal was to be out of those buildings in five years. We ended up staying the building for 14 years. We were never able to reach our capacity of 300 students because of the occupancy of those two buildings.

We have made a lot of progress with academics, with Tier 1 standing. As you know, we have fallen over the last few years. And that's the center of our attention right now, how we're going to get our scores back up to Tier 1 status.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you.

MEMBER BUMBAUGH: So with your PMF scores, you meet the requirements for renewal. But there are definitely pretty significant drops over the last couple of years. Just can you go a little deeper and explain? Are we measuring the right thing? Have you had a change? What's your explanation for that?

MS. EDWARDS: So as we look at our demographics, what we have identified was a trending up in, first, the number of students with disabilities. It has trended upward for the
past five years. A trending up in the number of homeless families. That has trended up over the past three years.

And I think that even though we have put a number of systems in place and programs in place to address that, we haven't necessarily been able to address it as we expected.

So about -- we began -- we used coaches. We had instructional coaches that began working with us about three years ago. And they worked specifically on -- one was on pre-K level, one was on K, and one was on 2, 3. We put that in place so that it could support teachers and instruction in the classroom.

We found that even with that in place, it did not bring our test scores up. We increased our special education program. We went from one special ed teacher to three. We now have three and two full-time assistants. We still struggle with our special ed students.

So what we decided this year was we needed some external support because internally
we weren't reaching goals that we wanted to reach. We vetted a lot of educational partners and ended up contracting with instruction partners to -- they're out of Tennessee -- to support us in finding out first what's going on in our classrooms that is preventing our students from achieving where they should. And then after finding that out, helping us to develop an action plan for improvement.

Instruction partners did a walk through at which time they determined that what was happening in a lot of our classrooms was that there was high mastery of instructional activities that were not the appropriate level of rigor.

So students were getting good scores and teachers were seeing a lot of progress. But they determined that this was not progress at the grade level standard. And teachers were not really aware that they were not teaching at the grade level standard.

So because of their work, what we know
we have to do is first make sure teachers are able to unpack the Common Core standards for reading and math so that they understand what the grade level rigor looks like and what they need to do to get their children where they need to be.

And secondly, we need to make sure that the teachers are able to deliver that instruction in such a way that the children are engaged, that they are learning, and that the teachers are able to clearly assess whether they know and can do what's expected for that grade level.

That was a big eye opener for us as well as the teachers because our teachers really felt that they were teaching what the children needed to know. And so when it was time for our children to take the tests and they did not do well, there was kind of this big what went wrong.

So that's where we're starting with, instruction partners. We're putting together an action plan, and they will continue to work with
us throughout the school year.

MEMBER CRUSEY: Thank you for walking us through that. So this partnership applies to this academic year?

MS. EDWARDS: Yes.

MEMBER CRUSEY: Cool.

MS. EDWARDS: We're working with them now.

MEMBER CRUSEY: Since I can, how has the -- has the new building opened?

MS. EDWARDS: Yes, yes.

MEMBER CRUSEY: Can you catch us up on how that's going?

MS. EDWARDS: It's fabulous. So we moved in, in the summer. It didn't quite open exactly when we expected it to because we still had to get our C of O. We got our C of O a little late. But we did move in. School started on time. Our enrollment went up from 254 last year to 285 this year. So we are headed toward our 300 capacity.

MR. PEARSON: One real bright spot in
the school's performance across all the years is your attendance rate. It's very high compared to other schools in Ward 8. It's very high compared to other schools serving young children. Any best practices to share with us about how you have achieved and maintained that?

MS. EDWARDS: We have an excellent family support coordinator who reaches out who tracks all of our students' attendance. And when she sees a trend that a child is missing a day, a week, or consecutive days, reaches out to the parents.

We have meetings that Mr. Ingraham or I attend where we try to provide as much support as we can to the parent. If it requires us helping the parent understand how to navigate public transportation, get the SmarTrip cards and get the child on public transportation or helping them with the uniform or with food.

We try our best to act as a resource for the parents. And because of that, I think our attendance has been strong.
CHAIR CRUZ: So we started out this evening's conversation with the mayor talking about some of the citywide challenges of which I would include homelessness, housing, and security as one. You mentioned that as something that's complicating your ability to serve students as fully as you'd like.

I'd love you to share a little bit about what you're doing, even if you're not fully satisfied with it, and anything that the royal we, the larger community of PCSB, PCSB in partnership with the DME could be doing to help.

MS. EDWARDS: I think when it comes to our families who have homeless status, the best thing we can do for them is help them understand that we are here to support them. Homeless status isn't always something that a parent wants to reveal. And so oftentimes, they try to hide it. They may say, I don't need any help from you.

But because we have, again, a strong family support coordinator who develops
relationships with our parents, they often are able to feel comfortable kind of explaining what their situation is, explaining their challenges. And once we know what their challenges are, then we can try to find the resources to address them.

So I think the big obstacle is helping parents feel comfortable to talk with us about what their needs are. Because most don't. They feel ashamed.

CHAIR CRUZ: And anything we can be doing as a city more generally?

MS. EDWARDS: Yeah. I'd love more wraparound services for our students. We have a psychologist who we primarily contract to provide services for our children with disabilities. But we have so many children in the gen ed population because of homelessness and other factors who really need the support of counseling.

And so we try to stretch his services as far as we can. But additional services to provide counseling and that kind of support would be awesome, especially in the early childhood
level.

We have a number of students who we have tried to find external support for. And what my family support coordinator has found was that most of the mental health services that are provided in the communities start with children that are seven years old, and our children start at three. And we have children who need those services at three. And so it's been really difficult to even point parents in the right direction for support in the community.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. Any other questions?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR CRUZ: Otherwise, I'll take a motion on Early Childhood Academy.

MEMBER BUMBAUGH: I move to approve the charter renewal application of Early Childhood Academy Public Charter School.

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay. I've got a motion. Okay. Can I have a second?

MEMBER SHELTON: Oh, second.
CHAIR CRUZ: All right. We've got a motion and a second. All in favor?

(Chorus of aye.)

CHAIR CRUZ: Any nays?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR CRUZ: No. Unanimous.

Congratulations. Thank you for the work that you do. All right. I believe we now have Hope Community Public Charter School.

MR. VASHEE: Yes. Our next school is Hope Community Public Charter School. Hope Community currently educates 700 students across two campuses. Hope Tolson, which serves grades PK3 through 8 in Ward 5, and Hope Lamond serving grades PK3 through 5 in Ward 4.

The school adopted the PMF as its goals and committed to meeting a 50 percent average PMF score at both of its campuses. Hope Community met this goal at both of its campuses with an average score of 55.6 percent at Hope Lamond and 52.7 percent at Hope Tolson. The school has also passed our financial and
compliance review.

Despite meeting the standard of review, Hope Community PCS did raise concerns with its management organization, Imagine Schools, Inc. regarding the terms of their management agreement and certain aspects of Imagine Schools' performance.

The school submitted to DC PCSB a corrective action plan developed in conjunction with their management organization intended to resolve these issues. And DC PCSB will continue to monitor the implementation of this plan.

Based on these findings, DC PCSB staff recommends that the Board vote to approve this school's charter renewal application and renew the charter of Hope Community PCS for another 15-year term with the condition that the school must submit to DC PCSB by June 1st, 2020 a revised management agreement with Imagine Schools, Inc. as well as an assurance that all components of the corrective action plan that has been submitted to us has been executed substantially
as described within the plan.

And staff from the school are here to answer any questions you may have and will now introduce themselves.

MR. TOLER: Shawn Toler, Executive Vice President for Imagine Schools.

MR. CODY: Chris Code, Board Chair for Hope Schools.

MR. RASHED: Haroon Rashed, Principal at Imagine Hope Tolson.

MS. PELA: Okiemute Pela, Principal at Imagine Hope Lamond.

CHAIR CRUZ: Do you guys have some opening remarks?

MR. CODY: I'll just keep it very quick. I just want to thank the Board and specifically Scott's staff for working with the Hope Community Board, Imagine as we affirm our relationship over the process that we went through with the action plan as well as looking forward to approval in moving these schools forward over the next 15 years.
CHAIR CRUZ: Okay. Board members?

Steve?

MEMBER BUMBAUGH: Thank you for being here tonight. One of the things that jumps out if you look at the Tolson campus and the Lamond campus is that at Tolson, the scores are fairly consistent across the years. At Lamond, they kind of jump up and down. You want to walk us through that? Like, what's the difference between -- what do you attribute that to?

MS. PELA: Good evening. At Imagine Hope Lamond, over the past five years, there has been some fluctuations in our test scores, specifically last school year. Excuse me. There are several factors that we've looked at. In the 2018-2019 school year, our overall performance was a 20 -- or sorry, 62.8 percent and we dropped a total of 10 points this school year.

We attributed that to several factors, one of which there was a shift in our academic structure. Where the years prior, we departmentalized within our testing grades.
Whereas in this past school year, we went to a more traditional model where we had some of our teachers teaching content that they weren't most familiar with. So that was definitely a contributing factor.

At the end of the school year, there were also some changes that were made in administration. We had a shift in our principal and myself who was the vice principal at the time did shift into that role. And so with any change, there definitely is going to be a shift in morale and some questioning. And so I think those two things were the main components.

This year, what we've done to ensure that we don't repeat that, especially in our testing grades, is we went back to the model that has proven more successful for us in departmentalizing our 3rd through 5th grade classes to ensure that teachers who are teaching the content that they're most comfortable and familiar with is, again, one of our practices.

We've also teamed with our national
team to ensure that our coaches and all of our
teachers are prepared for the rigor that is
requirement for these state standardized tests.
We do have some new teachers on our staff. And
so in knowing what those shifts did to our test
scores last year, I specifically want to make
sure that's no longer the case this year.

There was also a shift in our re-
enrollment rate which could be contributed to
several factors as well. Two that stand out to
us were one of which were some of our residency
issues that we identified throughout the school
year.

So several of our families were, in
fact, not D.C. residents. And so that affected
our re-enrollment rate. In addition, anytime
there is a shift in administration or a change,
some parents did have questions and wanted to
make sure they were making the right choice for
their students.

And so this year, we've done a lot
around family engagement, one of which being a
nationally recognized school of character has really helped our initiatives in recruiting families as well as retaining the families that we have. And so this year coming, we do anticipate that we will remain on the steady rise towards Tier 1. You're welcome.

MEMBER CRUSEY: Thank you for that.

One your Board, are there currently three parent Board members?

MR. CODY: There's two parent Board members, one from each school.

MEMBER CRUSEY: One from each school?

MR. CODY: Yes.

MEMBER CRUSEY: Okay. Thank you. Has that always been the case that you seek to make sure that there is a parent from each school?

MR. CODY: Yes.

MEMBER CRUSEY: And it sounds like there's one more seat to fill for that?

MR. CODY: What was the question?

MEMBER CRUSEY: It sounds like there's one more seat to fill for that?
MR. CODY: Yes.

MEMBER CRUSEY: Thanks.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: I wanted to talk a little bit about the relationship with Imagine and specifically as the renewal report points out, the fees associated with management of this school. And so I just would like to understand what -- just for the record, what the school gets out of that relationship because it is such a high annual payment, at least as I'm seeing it. So I think it's a fair question to ask. Sort of what does the school get in return?

MR. TOLER: Sure. So we provide a lot of support to schools from the legal standpoint as well as the academic standpoint. So each of our schools, we have -- well, we have a regional director that would support each of the schools. We also have academic coaches in the schools. We have a legal team, a marketing team that would also assist the schools.

Aside from that, there's a national academic and character team. We are a school of
character development, so we do have a full team that supports the school. I mentioned marketing as a part of that team. Also, the academic team, our national director of curriculum and instruction supports both schools.

So there's a wide variety of support that is covered within that 12 percent. And Barry, I don't know if you want to add anything.

Barry Sharp is our CEO. Would you like to add anything to —

MR. SHARP: Barry Sharp from Imagine Schools. Not too much to add. It's a fair question. It's a full service operating agreement. It also includes the back office financial support for the school who is also in the process of hiring, replacing an operating regional director to help support operations from that side.

So it's a full service beast. Several people are shared between the school, and many are dedicated from the regional office which is what Shawn runs.
MR. CODY: I would like to follow up.

The Hope Community Board has asked a similar question, and Imagine did provide us more with an itemized layout, I don't have the documentation with me, of dollar value versus services. And so this was a question that the Board has looked into as well over the past two years and was provided by Imagine. And we were okay with what was presented to us.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: I ask because as the report notes, if the Hope Board feels like some of your student progress achievement issues are related to high staff turnover and there's an observation that you're not able to pay staff as highly given your management fees, it seems like there's a tension there.

And so I don't know if you guys have had that specific conversation. But I don't know if you disagree with that conclusion. But I would just kind of like to hear a response to that.

MR. TOLER: We have -- no, we have
talked about that, and we have raised teacher salaries. We put together a market study also. We did look across the District as well.

And so we are -- we've put together also a task force specifically to look at teacher salaries to ensure that we are paying teachers at their value and to increase our teacher salaries. So we have look at that specifically and worked over the last year and a half to actually devise a revised pay scale --

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Okay.

MR. TOLER: -- for teachers.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Okay. And do you feel that that's -- you've been able to see that result in higher teacher satisfaction or the quality of teachers that you're getting?

MR. TOLER: Absolutely. And we -- of course, we plan to see that even more as we continue. We did raise teacher salaries and we did receive some new teachers and just allowing teachers to also feel more valued and to put towards their craft in becoming master teachers.
So we have seen that, and we look to see that even more in the future.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: That's helpful.

Thank you.

MEMBER CRUSEY: This is a difficult question with every state, and we'll call ourselves a state for the purpose of this question, evaluates schools differently. But how would you say these schools are performing relative to schools that you support and operate elsewhere?

MR. TOLER: You mean across the country? You want to take that on?

MR. SHARP: I'll address that a little bit. I think in an overall sense, I think we've seen particularly in the Hope schools a little degradation in math instruction and math scores. And that's not inconsistent with some of the activity we've seen around the rest of the country in terms of struggling a little on the math side of the equation with higher performance on the ELA front.
So you can't really equate the testing scores all across. But in terms of the challenges, challenges of dealing with an urban environment versus a suburban environment, it's fairly consistent. Teacher turnover is an issue, not just here but other places.

And so we see that challenge. But knowing that we've got strong leadership in the school, strong principals, that helps us kind of improve, I think, across the board.

MEMBER CRUSEY: So understanding that, it sounds like there's an academic piece and then there's a human capital piece here. How is the management organization responding to that? And I care most about the academics, but I'm also interested in the human capital piece.

MR. SHARP: Yeah. From an academic perspective, Shawn mentioned we have a national academic and character team. So we have a group that's working with our schools and somewhat episodically based on whether they're performing really strongly or need help in particular areas
through different levels of ongoing and routine
support on the academic side.

So we have a group that supports the
two Hope schools. It's call the rise up team
that meets regularly with local folks including
the coaches that are local, coaches that are
regional from that perspective. So that's part
of the academic piece to help make sure that
we're improving.

MR. TOLER: And with that academic
support, the rise up team, their national
academic and character team supports the coaches
but also school leadership, provide professional
development for school leadership as well as
teachers also and the academic coaches.

So it's a full academic model. So
they come in and we host them there. When we saw
the decline in our math scores and some decline,
as you mentioned, in Lamond earlier and the flat
rate of scores at Tolson, we did call for that
team to come together and to offer additional
support for the school.
MR. PEARSON: I had a related question relating to the services received from the management organization. The schools' two buildings are leased by the school from a subsidiary of Imagine.

And I was noticing on page 41 of the review report that occupancy expenses at the school are 22 percent of revenues which is considerably higher than the sector median of 16 percent. So I guess my question for the Board is, do you believe that you're getting market rate for the buildings that you are occupying?

MR. CODY: I think the Board is still looking into that. As we noted in the action plan, that's a discussion that we're still working with Imagine as we finalize our operating agreement. The lease is also part of what we're proposing new ideas for and new recommendations.

So that is part of the discussions that are ongoing. I think the Board here would like a better rate. But that's something that we're still looking into.
CHAIR CRUZ: So I'll continue in that vein of questioning. For Mr. Cody, what recourse do you believe the Board has -- should? And what conditions would need to be met if in the short term or the long term you determine that the Imagine relationship was not one that you wanted to continue -- that the Board wanted to not continue or discontinue?

MR. CODY: So the Board over the course 15 years has taken a cultural shift. I'm four years into my term on the Board. And over the past five years, the prior chair decided to move from more of a Board that was present, had oversight, to a much more working Board.

And so since I've been now probably one of the more tenured members on the Board, the working Board has moved towards an idea of providing -- looking more towards evaluation, putting performance measures in as a Board, working with outside entities so we can actually track Imagine's performance and look at -- as we said in the action plan, do that twice a year.
We were working with SchoolWorks. We brought them in to help the Board with a strategic plan in connection with Imagine so we can actually implement much more of a dashboard that the Board can work with to actually track the progress of our schools as well as the management company.

CHAIR CRUZ: And if that's not to your -- does not meet the expectations -- or the performance doesn't meet the expectations of the Board, what recourse do you have as a Board?

MR. CODY: Currently or what we are moving towards?

CHAIR CRUZ: What you're moving towards. So what I'm basically asking is if you would say for the public record what this action plan is moving us toward.

MR. CODY: So the action plan is moving us towards -- prior to the action plan, the Board's operating agreement was one that basically was a three-year term but had automatic renewals built in that limited the Board's
ability to, one, evaluate the organization by having action if there was need to act on the management organization.

The action plan that we have discussed with management or are working through will move the operating agreements into one-year terms that will have -- each entity will have an option prior to that one-year closure to release the other one from the agreement.

We're also building in two performance evaluations. We're restructuring how we view more of our regional office, our academic office, our financial office and the connection of the hierarchy of the school. And then removing, like I said, the three-year terms and the automatic renewal process of the three-year terms.

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay. And then I guess Scott, question for you. As the Board chair who'll be signing this renewal should we choose to renew with this condition by June 1st, what will staff be looking for in order to determine that they've met that condition?
MR. PEARSON: There is a detailed action plan that is contained in Appendix B of the renewal report. And so we will be checking the schools' actions against each one of the items in there.

And it relates -- as I recall, there's four sections. One is about financial management. One is about enrollment management. The third is about hiring this new regional director.

And then the fourth which we're going to be paying very close attention to is it has a number of commitments in terms of that Mr. Cody just referred to in terms of revisions to the management agreement that would provide the Board with considerably more authority and the ability to make year-to-year decisions about whether to renew the management agreement.

CHAIR CRUZ: And if we determine that is not met, what --

MR. PEARSON: Well, we would -- if we determine that it was not met, I would recommend
that the Board not sign a final charter agreement
--

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay.

MR. PEARSON: -- which we have to do
before the end of June --

CHAIR CRUZ: June.

MR. PEARSON: -- 30th or else the
school will not be paid in July.

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay. Just so we're very
transparent on what the expectations are.

MEMBER CRUSEY: I have one more
clarifying question. Is that okay? Mr. Cody,

MR. CODY: The new titles will
regional academic officer and regional finance
officer.

MEMBER CRUSEY: And can you just
confirm for me that is the Board this Board that
holds this charter who has the sole and final
decision on hiring, evaluating, selecting that person?

MR. CODY: Based off what the new operating agreement will be, yes.

MEMBER CRUSEY: Okay. And is there a member of the Board whose employer is the management organization?

MR. CODY: Is there a member of the Board whose --

MEMBER CRUSEY: Who works for the management organization?

MR. CODY: Yes.

MEMBER CRUSEY: Okay. Thank you. Appreciate it.

CHAIR CRUZ: All right. If there aren't any other questions, I will take a motion on Hope.

MEMBER CRUSEY: I move to approve the charter renewal application of Hope Community Public Charter School with the condition as proposed by staff.

MEMBER SHELTON: Second.
CHAIR CRUZ: Okay. I've got a motion and a second. All in favor?
(Chorus of aye.)
CHAIR CRUZ: Any against?
(No audible response.)
CHAIR CRUZ: No. Okay.

Congratulations, and we'll look forward to the approach of June 1 and finalizing those conditions -- or finalizing your meeting of those conditions. Thank you. And the last renewal application for the evening, YouthBuild.

MR. VASHEE: All right. Our final school of the night is YouthBuild Public Charter School. YouthBuild is an adult school serving 118 students aged 16 through 24 at a single campus in Ward 1.

Pursuant to its charter agreement, the school committed to meeting six goals specific to its mission. YouthBuild fully met all six of its charter goals. In addition to its goals, YouthBuild has shown strong performance on DC PCSB's adult education performance management
framework. The school has also passed a financial and compliance review.

Based on these findings, DC PCSB staff recommends that the Board vote to approve this school's charter renewal application and renew the charter of YouthBuild for another 15-year term. Staff from the school are here to answer your question and they'll now introduce themselves and state any opening statement they may have.

MR. LANNING: Thank you. Let me start --

MEMBER SHELTON: Can you turn on your mic?

MR. LANNING: Oh, forgot to push the button. My apologies. All right. I'm Steve Lanning. This is Head of School Clair Libert. We have Suraj Patel who's one of our Board members. Noel Bravo, another Board member over there. Mary Blatch, another Board member in the audience.

So let me start by saying good
evening, Public Charter School Board members, staff, students, families, and members of the public. My name is Steve Lanning. I serve as Chair of the YouthBuild DC PCS Board of Trustees, and I'm honored to be here this evening on behalf of the YouthBuild Board.

As I said before, I'm joined here by Claire Libert, Head of School. Thank you for giving us this opportunity to tell you a little bit more about YouthBuild DC. YouthBuild is unique among adult public charter schools and high school, both traditional and alternative in Washington, D.C.

It's the only school designed to help opportunity youth build math, literacy, and employment skills and earn a GED, now a D.C. high school diploma while at the same time building and refurbishing housing for D.C.'s low income residents.

We are very proud of the accomplishments of our students over the last five years, and we are excited about the road
ahead. Let me turn it over to Claire who will help you get to know more about YouthBuild.

    MS. LIBERT: Great. Thank you, Steve.

Members of the Board, staff, students, and families, I too am honored to be here today on behalf of our students and staff and to speak with you about our program. So this evening, I want to share more information about our students, our model, our results, and our vision for the future.

    First, our students. YouthBuild serves so-called opportunity or disconnected youth. So young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who have dropped or age out of school or have recently immigrated to the United States and have often been out of school for several years.

    As you may know, we educate a very high need student population. So this year, virtually all of our students are low income. Almost 30 percent qualify for special education services. Approximately 25 percent are experiencing homelessness. Roughly 20 percent
are parenting, and another 15 percent speak little to no English.

At any given year, between 15 and 20 percent of our students are actively involved in the justice system. And many have experienced tremendous violence and displacement in their lives.

On average, our students have attended five to ten and sometimes more schools before they reach our doors. Case in point, actually two of my former students from when I was a 9th grade teacher at Ballou High School, almost ten years ago, are now students at YouthBuild. And while it's heartbreaking to think that they didn't graduate on time, I am so glad that we have a school like YouthBuild where they can return and finish the work that they started.

So our model and our team. YouthBuild DC PCS' goal is to enable students who've often faced tremendous hardships themselves to transform their lives as they give back to the community. So when students enter YouthBuild,
the learn about the YouthBuild model and build resilience, empathy, teamwork, and leadership skills.

Once enrolled, students begin academic coursework and earn their OSHA safety certification. Learning then rotates between school and our construction site. And then the YouthBuild model, education, and training are integrated. So students use real world challenges from construction related fields to solve math problems, build literacy skills, and explore science and social studies concepts such as issues related to housing and income equity.

YouthBuild is also a dual language program, allowing students to earn their GED and certifications in English or Spanish. Students typically enroll in our school for the school year and then rotate between the classroom and the work site, spending four to six weeks in class and then two weeks on the construction site.

Learning is personalized so that
students can move at their own pace. While working towards a GED, students can also earn what's called the HBI PACT, or Home Builders Institute Pre-Apprenticeship Certification Training, as well as specialized certifications in high demand fields such as electrical, weatherization, and green building.

And as part of this work, YouthBuild students have developed, repaired, and renovated housing for hundreds of low income D.C. residents. Over the past three years, for example, YouthBuild students helped build a wheelchair ramp to a previously inaccessible home.

They worked with the 4 Brothers of Charity to completely renovate a transitional housing shelter for homeless veterans. And currently, we are working with Central Union Mission right downtown to do repairs and renovations throughout their main shelter.

So YouthBuild construction service and community development are vehicles to prepare
students for the next steps in their lives. In addition to providing students with a career pathway, construction is a metaphor at YouthBuild.

As students learn hard construction skills like how to hang drywall and use a power saw, they also learn soft skills like employment and career preparation, including the importance of showing up on time, drug free, and ready to work.

Perhaps the school's greatest strength, though, is our community of skilled, caring, and incredibly committed staff. While staff turnover plagues urban education, here at YouthBuild we have a dedicated core of staff members who've been there for 15 to 20 years since before it was even a school. In addition, we have a number of YouthBuild graduates on staff, sort of exemplifying our motto that once YouthBuild, always YouthBuild.

Our case management, operations, transitions, construction, academic, and special
education teams collaborate closely to integrate
instruction between the construction site and
academic program, align career services with
industry needs, and quickly identify and address
non-academic barriers to student achievement.

We also reach outside our organization
through partnerships with programs such as ACE
Mentoring and the National Association of Home
Builders. Through these partnerships, YouthBuild
students gain access to paid internships,
apprenticeships, and well paid employment.

And what results from all that hard
work and all those years of dedication? Most of
our students enter YouthBuild far below grade
level. A typical student at YouthBuild enters
reading at a 4th or 5th grade level and may have
years of catch up work to do before they're ready
to earn a GED or enter post-secondary education.

YouthBuild enables these students to
earn a construction certification, access
apprenticeships and employment, and obtain living
wage construction-related work as they move
forward in their career paths.

As you know from reading our charter renewal report, we have met our charter goals and achievement expectations every year. And we have achieved Tier 1 status for the last three school years.

Most importantly, we've enabled students to make tremendous progress in their lives. On average, eight out of ten of our GED test takers pass the GED, one of the highest rates in the sector. Student gains in math and literacy are outstanding. This year, more than 75 percent of our post-tested students have demonstrated gains so far.

We've been recognized for our excellent ESL growth, consistently being among the top three performers in the sector. And just last year, more than 75 percent of exiting students surveyed obtain employment or enter post-secondary education within three months of exit. And more than 90 percent of those students remain employed or in college nine months after
leaving YouthBuild.

In short, we're very proud of the work we have done, and we're humbled and excited about the work we have yet to do. At this stage, I'd like to introduce Suraj, a member of our Board, who is going to read a few words from Amira Kamara. She's one of the alumni members of our Board. She would've loved to come today, but she's actually at home with her son. And so she shared a written statement instead.

MR. PATEL: Dear Public Charter School Board members. My name is Amira Kamara, and I'm a GED graduate of YouthBuild DC Public Charter School. My experience at YouthBuild will always be a memorable one. I not only had the chance to learn new skills and earn my GED, but I was recognized for being a leader and a productive young woman.

YouthBuild taught me how to make a difference in my community by cleaning the environment and building park benches, bird houses, and homes for low income families in
Washington, D.C. I was also grateful for the opportunity to learn technical skills that will help me gain employment in the construction industry which will enable me to provide for my family.

I am currently in the Year Up program learning computer and electric skills and hope to continue to study and earn my degree in electrical engineering. YouthBuild's impact on me was greater than educational.

They were also instrumental in helping me get resources like diapers, a stroller, clothing, housing, and also food every month for my family through the community school's program. My case manager and staff were very supportive, and they continue to support me even after I've graduated.

I'm presently serving on the Board of Trustees for YouthBuild Public Charter School. My experience on the Board has helped me build my leadership skills and given me insight into how a nonprofit charter school works. I am also a
member of the Young Women's Advisory Council of the Washington Area Women's Foundation.

A school like YouthBuild brings enormous benefits to the youth of Washington, D.C. because it helps them not only earn their GED but become responsible leaders in their communities.

Thank you, Amira Kamara, YouthBuild PCS Graduate 2018.

MS. LIBERT: So with incredible students and alumni like Amira, we are very excited about YouthBuild's future. We are currently engaged in a strategic planning process with the goal of expanding career preparation pathways for students.

So additionally, working with PCSB, we've increased our enrollment cap to 122 students and we've added multiple enrollment periods throughout the school year. This past year, we served more than 160 students over the course of the year. And with additional funded enrollment spots, we hope to expand and apply
YouthBuild's unique community service model to in
demand fields such as information technology or
health care.

In short, we are poised to grow, and
we are excited about what the future holds.
Thank you for giving us this opportunity to share
more about our program and our students. We're
happy to answer any questions you have.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. Steve, arm
wrestle?

MEMBER BUMBAUGH: So first of all,
thank you. You all do really important work in
this city, and you do it well. I have a question
about some of the outcomes that are measured as a
percentage. For example, GED pass rates,
entrance into the workforce or post-secondary,
persistence in those areas. You're crushing your
goals around the percentages which is great.
Well done.

I notice that the number of students
who are being measured goes up and down pretty
significantly. Can you explain to us why we see
that big fluctuation?

MS. LIBERT: Yes. So for example, for GED subjects, it varies year to year where students come in, right? If the majority of students are coming in at a 4th grade reading level, that year, it's probably not going to be a huge number of GED graduates. But that's okay. We're going to focus more on the growth in classes that year perhaps.

Same thing for some of the exit numbers. If a lot of students actually stay in the program longer than that year, you're not going to see a ton exiting. So it just kind of varies, yeah.

MEMBER SHELTON: A question that was asked of some of the previous schools. In what ways could the city be helpful to you all in the work that you do?

MS. LIBERT: What a wonderful question. We were just talking about this. If I had anything in the world for the school, it's we look at what the students need, right? The
things that most frequently get in the way of
pursuing their education and coming to school
every day and making all the achievement gains we
want them to.

I'd say first and foremost, which I
think you would hear from just about anyone,
particularly in our sector, the adult education
sector and the young adult education sector in
particular, is access to housing.

Those 25 percent of our students who
are homeless, our case managers work tirelessly
to find housing for them. And very frequently,
we're relying on the drop-in center at the Latin
American Youth Center which is incredible and
helpful and they do amazing work.

But the need is much greater than
that. And that 25 percent is the students who
will talk about it, right? There's probably a
higher number who will not discuss it still and
who are in varying degrees of homelessness where
they're couch surfing or they're -- especially
this age group, 16 to 24 year olds.
They're living with friends. They're living with someone for a short period of time that changes next week. It changes two weeks from now. That instability is one of the greatest barriers to their work with us into their education. So anything we can do around increasing access to housing would be amazing.

I think, two, in my magic bucket of dreams would be childcare. For that 24 percent of students right now who have small children, we do a lot of work around daycare vouchers, making sure we're getting into spots. But those are the students who found a way to make it work and come to us. There are plenty more students who are not coming to us because they have young children at home and aren't able to make that happen.

MEMBER SANDMAN: I'd like to commend you for the quality of the model you've developed, for your fidelity in implementing it, and for the clarity of your presentation tonight. I have no question. I just want to say thank you.
MS. LIBERT: Well, thank you too.

MEMBER GANJAM: I do have a quick question on engaging returning citizens. It sounded like you have a high proportion of returning citizens. How are you engaging them in the program, and how are you enabling them to work?

MS. LIBERT: Yeah. I mean, certainly a big part of that is the intake process. So our case managers meet one on one with every single student who comes in the door. There's the whole enrollment piece. We get their residency paperwork. We make sure they're within our age range.

But then it's really in that intake process we reassess what's going on. How long has it been since you were in school? And sometimes it's been years.

One of those two students of mine from Ballou, he'd been incarcerated for some of that period. And so it's coming back. And there's a lot of work we do around what does it mean to be
in school. Sometimes you've forgotten because it's been so long. You've got to get used to, like, sitting in a classroom again. And how do you do this? But we're very mindful about it.

A big part of that too is what we call mental toughness. It's part of the YouthBuild model. It's our orientation. So through that orientation week, it's talking about both what you're getting out of this experience at YouthBuild and also all of the supports we have in place to help you do that.

I think too one of the greatest parts of our program is the construction site. When being back at school is a challenge, you get that reprieve for two weeks where you're just hands on. You're doing work. You know you're doing something to help other people. And it's a little bit of a relief sometimes to get back in. And then you come back to school and you're ready to go.

MR. LANNING: If I could just add. I mean, just engaging with students through the
years and the Board, one thing that YouthBuild
does provide a lot of these students is that
someone cares about them. And it gives them this
real incentive to come back to school because
it's one of the few places where they feel
there's a support network, and that's critical to
their success.

MS. LIBERT: Kind of adding on that,
I mean, it happens sometimes when our students
are with us and then they become incarcerated
while they are students with us. But they know
that as soon as they're released again, we're
here for them. And they know they're going to
talk to their case manager get ready to re-
enroll.

CHAIR CRUZ: Scott, did you have a
question?

MR. PEARSON: We had another school
serving opportunity youth that came to us and
applied for a change in their charter that would
have them serve students up to age 30 because
they said frequently they would be working with a
student who was 23 and then that student -- or 24
and the student would age out at a time when it
felt wrong to let that student go. Has that been
an issue that you all have faced?

             MS. LIBERT:  I mean, it happens every
year, right? Twenty-four year olds age out of
the program. I think at the same time, though,
we're feeling the pressure of demand from younger
ages too where students are coming to us. The
number of 16 and 17 year olds has increased
substantial over a couple years.

            And so we're trying to find these
alternative paths for younger students while also
recognizing for our older students when they do
age out, either we prepared for them and they've
got career, education pathway or it's post-
secondary education. Or we're working with other
schools in our neighborhood too.

            Like, Carlos Rosario, if we're no
longer able to serve you, there are partners who
can. And so we kind of have a warm handoff.

            CHAIR CRUZ: So I was five years ago
the lone dissenting vote in support -- or lack of support for the continuance at that time. So I really am sincerely glad to see what you guys have achieved, in no small part through the investment and support of an external turnaround firm who I'd just love you to share a little bit about how you've managed the transition from what I believe was deep support to maybe more coaching, et cetera, and transition on both the Board and then the leadership of the schools. If you could just provide us a little context for the now.

MS. LIBERT: Yeah, absolutely. So when I joined YouthBuild in July 2018 as director of operations, Andrew Touchette who'd been the resident leader from TenSquare, he was making the handoff to Jason Ellis who was the head of school prior to me.

And he stayed on part time, like, a few days a week for the majority of last school year to continue that coaching and support which I also received and which I continue to receive.
from other members of the TenSquare team.

That's sort of, like, the gradual release model, right? They're not a charter management organization. So we've developed those skills. We continue to receive the consultation and support, and it just decreases a little bit every year as does the cost. If Suraj wants to add anything there, but yeah.

MR. LANNING: And it's going to go till June 2021. So it adds a great level of confidence to know that this has -- it's a slow handoff and so supports there that build the infrastructure.

MS. LIBERT: I'll say too it's especially helpful. I mean, we're a very small school. There's 122 students at maximum. And so being able to work with outside partners to things like talent recruitment and data analysis across the sector is incredibly helpful.

CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. All right. Well, if there aren't any other questions, similarly, I will take a motion on YouthBuild.
MEMBER SHELTON: I move to approve the charter renewal application of YouthBuild Public Charter School.

VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Second.

CHAIR CRUZ: All right. I've got a motion and a second. All in favor?

(Chorus of aye.)

CHAIR CRUZ: Any nays?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR CRUZ: No. Unanimous.

MEMBER CRUSEY: I just want to be on the record --

CHAIR CRUZ: Oh, I'm sorry.

MEMBER CRUSEY: -- I'm recusing myself from this vote.

CHAIR CRUZ: Sorry about that. So one recusal, six in favor. You are nonetheless renewed. Congratulations. Thanks. All right. Nikhil, you too are emancipated from your place at the front of the room. Okay.

What we've got next is our consent calendar which those of us who follow us
regularly, I know that we are just going to vote
on some more perfunctory items. Any recusals
with respect to the consent calendar before I ask
for a motion?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR CRUZ: All right. Can I get a
motion on the consent calendar?

MEMBER SANDMAN: I move to approve all
items on the consent calendar.

MEMBER GANJAM: Second.

CHAIR CRUZ: All right. I got a
motion and a second. All in favor?

(Chorus of aye.)

CHAIR CRUZ: That's unanimous. And
then any new business before we -- Board members,
anything? You want to spend a little extra time
together today and discuss anything?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR CRUZ: Okay, no. And then one
last opportunity for public comment.

(No audible response.)

CHAIR CRUZ: Then I will take a motion
to adjourn.

MEMBER SHELTON: I move to adjourn the January 27th, 2020 Board meeting.

CHAIR CRUZ: Can I get a second?

MEMBER CRUSEY: Aye.

CHAIR CRUZ: Second. I've got a motion and I think that was a second. All in favor?

(Chorus of aye.)

CHAIR CRUZ: And Lea, that's an aye?

Yes. A very emphatic aye. All right. We are adjourned. Thank you, Board members.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 9:25 p.m.)
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Note: The data represents the average youth employment rates per year for YouthBuild's programs.
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Public Hearing and Public Meeting

Before: DCPCSB

Date: 01-27-20

Place: Washington, DC

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

[Signature]
Court Reporter