

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools
Special Called Board of Education
Minutes
April 1, 2013

TOPIC	DISCUSSION/MOTION	FOLLOW-UP/OUTCOME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll Call 	Present: Cheryl D. Mayes, Chair Dr. JoAnn Brannon Amy Frogge Dr. Sharon Gentry Michael W. Hayes Anna Shepherd, Vice-Chair Jill Speering Will Pinkston Dr. Jesse Register, Director of Schools Absent: Elissa Kim and Akaninyene Eyoh and Marquetta Bowling, Student Board Members Ms. Mayes called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pledge of Allegiance 	Led by Chris Henson, Chief Financial Officer.	
GOVERNANCE ISSUES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motion to Suspend the Rules 	Ms. Mayes said because the item of discussion is included on the agenda, there would be no need for a Motion to Suspend the Rules.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Bill 702 – Statewide Charter Authorizer 	Mr. Clay presented the Board with an update on House Bill 702. Mr. Pinkston made the motion to authorize the Director of Schools and CLASS representatives to bring an amendment to the legislature that would attempt to provide fiscal assurances concerning HB702. Ms. Speering seconded. Mr. Pinkston made the following statement: Due to the lack of the fiscal assurances in HB702, two assurances should be proposed: (1.) A guardrail to prevent the charter appeals process from inadvertently creating a fiscal cliff. (2.) Local accountability for schools that are majority locally funded. Ms. Speering read the following statement: The House Bill 702 attempts to overhaul the charter schools appeals process, and the proposed amendment restricts legislation to only five counties, with the bill, in part, led by my friend Karl Dean. Last week, the Mayor found himself in a similar situation where Metro Government was feared to lose local control when the Mayors of five satellite cities wanted to break away from Metropolitan Government. The Mayor sent a letter to the Davidson County Delegation asking for the lawmakers to work with him to defeat the legislation that would dilute the	VOTE: 8-0 – Unanimous

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Bill 702 – Statewide Charter Authorizer – continued 	<p>purpose of a consolidated government. A compromise with the satellite cities has been reached, and the controversy that threatened a unified fifty year old Metropolitan Government. I offer congratulations to the Mayor, who settled this through compromise. As a city, we know the Mayor’s unfaltering commitment to education. I know the Mayor’s heart, he is a caring man that wants the best for the students of MNPS. I am afraid that he does not understand how HB702 has the potential to bankrupt MNPS. I would like to invite the Mayor to talk with the Board around HB702. MNPS’ budget request for 2013-2014 is \$764 million, a six percent increase over this year’s budget. The six percent increase will cover a small employee raise, rising insurance costs and inflation, but a third of the increase is needed to accommodate five new charter schools scheduled to open August 1st costing \$14.8 million. With those five charter schools opening, the total number of students attending charter schools in MNPS will be 4,400 students. Charter schools draw from the MNPS district, but facility and administrative expenses are not reduced and there is no reduction in the cost to maintain MNPS. The appeals process must be a compromise, but it must also ensure fiscal responsibility to taxpayers. The fiscal impact of charter schools and vouchers must be limited in order to guarantee our commitment to the Tennessee Constitution which states, “The State of Tennessee recognizes the inherent value of education and encourages its support. The General Assembly shall provide for the maintenance, support, and eligibility standards of the system of free public schools.” Local decisions, accountability, and oversight must remain with the Board because it represents the people of Davidson County. The Board is committed to be good stewards of the taxpayers’ dollars. On November 13th, the Board voted to close Smithson-Craighead Middle after three years of dismal scores. Although the state failed to close the school for whatever reason, this Board took the appropriate action by closing the school. Parents and students were offered an array of choices for the following year. Drexel Academy, a school initially denied by the Board, is one of the lowest performing schools in MNPS. If HB 702 is passed, it could result in large numbers of charter schools being forced into the district without preparation nor local control or oversight. Davidson County taxpayers are responsible for two-thirds of the cost of educating children in Nashville; MNPS should maintain oversight of all charter schools authorized by a state appeals panel.</p>	


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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House Bill 702 – Statewide Charter Authorizer – continued 	<p>Ms. Frogge made the motion to authorize Dr. Register to consider independent legal counsel for this Board to explore legal options with the state concerning House Bill 702. Mr. Hayes seconded.</p> <p>Ms. Frogge made the following statement: I am disappointed that Kevin Huffman is not here, because I wanted to talk to him. I wanted to talk to him because I am tired of folks communicating through news media, social media, and sound bites about something as important as the education of Nashville’s children. Instead, here we are. The news will now report our talking points, it will report their responses, and no one will actually sit down- like adults- and have an honest dialogue about the hard decisions facing us. Instead of collaboratively focusing on the best interests of our 81,000 public school children here in Nashville, we’re being forced into a face-off that could result in lawsuits, budget cuts, and other counterproductive measures for everyone involved. But if we are truly committed to making Nashville a leader in education, we should- at the very least- be able to sit down and talk like grown-ups. What we need to discuss is our obligation to be the best stewards of taxpayer dollars in funding our schools. A full 42% of Nashville’s taxes go toward public education. This board has expressed an authentic concern about the fiscal impact of the charter authorizer bill that we hoped to discuss today- not to mention the loss of local control of our schools to an appointed board far removed from our communities. Unlike Mr. Huffman and the nine-member panel that would review charter applications under this bill, I am an elected representative of my community. I answer parent emails, I engage in public dialogue, and I respond to requests to speak. In short, I am accountable to voters, and they are free to remove me from office should I fail to do my job. Right now, our legislature is considering some very experimental education reforms. Nationally, only 17% of charter schools outperform traditional public schools, which means that 83% perform the same or worse. I want to preface my next remarks by saying I recognize that there are many great individuals at our charter schools here in Nashville who are devoted to education and doing wonderful things for children. I also have great respect for Alan Coverstone and the work that his office is doing. Our charter schools here seem to be doing well, and I think this is due in large part to careful selection of the right charter schools by the Office of Innovation. However, the statement that all of our best schools in Nashville are charters is misleading, and I believe that charter school success here in Nashville has been</p>	<p>VOTE: (8-0) - Unanimous</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Bill 702 – Statewide Charter Authorizer – continued 	<p>greatly overplayed. The claim that our best schools are all charters is based on a one-year snapshot of middle schools alone which took into account only growth scores. As we learned at our last meeting, we begin to see reliable data only after three years, and school growth is very fluid from year to year. We also learned at our last meeting that right now we really have no fair way to compare charter schools with our traditional schools because they are such different animals. Other issues, including attrition rates at charter schools, have yet to be explored. So, clearly, we are implementing experimental reforms here, and I am not willing to barrel down this path without more information and without robust discussion. Some are also circulating myths about charter school funding. The argument goes like this: Districts spend the same per pupil allotment on children regardless of whether the child attends a traditional or charter school, and therefore we as school boards should not be worried about the finances. Or worse yet, we school board members are using financial concerns as scare tactics. The truth is that charters cost our district more money. By contract, charters must receive the full per pupil allotment and we also provide them with some free services, but at the same time, districts must also maintain the infrastructure of traditional schools. Because our district is not losing enough children to charter schools to affect our current school infrastructure, our charter schools cost more. That is simply a fact. A good charter school may be worth the extra cost if it fills a specific need for us and performs well, but opening more and more charter schools with no regard for budget will have disastrous effects for our city. If too many charters serving small percentages of our student population are imposed on us without notice, we could face increased taxes, fewer resources for our traditional schools, or more likely, see neighborhood schools close. This is what is happening nationwide, and it genuinely concerns me. Instead of hearing meaningful dialogue and serious debate about these vital issues, we hear a lot of blame statements, like this: “School boards are hostile, resistant to change, not open to innovation, fear competition, and/or are somehow devoted to the status quo.” As it applies here in Nashville, this is a ridiculous argument, given the fact that this district is approving greater than the national average of charter schools and given the fact that this district has shown an extreme openness to innovation, which helped us obtain Race to the Top dollars. I can also tell you that I personally knew almost nothing about the status quo in education, or charter schools in general, when I decided to run for school board last year, and I will embrace any sort of reform that is proven to work. I have</p>	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Bill 702 – Statewide Charter Authorizer – continued 	<p>no innate bias, I am beholden to no group, and I came into my seat with absolutely no agenda other than to help provide the best education possible, by whatever means, for my own children and thousands of others in this city. But to win me over, you must give me the facts and engage in thoughtful discussion, not feed me propaganda. I am not willing to use my own children as guinea pigs. What I want for them is a balanced education with an emphasis on educating the whole child through not only academics, but also through exposure to many other drivers of achievement, including the arts, athletics, and deep, creative thinking- not just an unrelenting focus on test scores alone. This is what our best private schools offer, and it's what all children deserve. So what do I think is the real answer for education reform? It is collaboration, pure and simple. This is why I am disappointed today. We cannot continue to have one-sided discussions with no real discourse, with no regard for reality, and without collectively addressing the facts. To get where we want to be, we must all work together to find the right direction for our schools. There are no cheap, quick, easy fixes, and nothing good will happen if we all remain at odds.</p> <p>Mr. Hayes said what specifics need to be discussed with legal counsel? Ms. Frogge said she would like the Board to discuss seeking legal counsel to understand the Board's options. Mr. Pinkston said it is wise for the Board to think about options, there a few issues to be considered. Is the bill constitutional? Will the Board still fund schools? I support forward thinking towards the future. Mr. Hayes stated that if the hiring of legal counsel does not exceed \$25,000, it may not require a motion. Dr. Brannon asked if Metro Legal could offer counsel? Ms. Frogge said she would prefer to use outside entities. Dr. Brannon asked if legal counsel fees are more than \$25,000 what would be the process? Ms. Frogge said she did not know. Dr. Register said if he begins talks with legal counsel, direction from the Board would be required.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjournment 	Ms. Frogge adjourned the meeting at 4:11 p.m.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signatures 	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: flex-end;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>Chris M. Henson Board Secretary</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>Cheryl D. Mayes Board Chair</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Date</p> </div> </div>	