

**MINUTES**  
**of the meeting of the**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS of SOMERSET ACADEMY OF LAS VEGAS**  
**September 23, 2019**

The Board of Directors of Somerset Academy of Nevada held a public meeting on September 23, 2019, at 6:00 p.m. at 50 N. Stephanie St., Henderson NV 89074.

**1. Call to order and Roll Call**

Board Vice-Chair Sarah McClellan called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. In attendance were Board members Cody Noble, Travis Mizer, Sarah McClellan, Will Harty, Gary McClain, and John Bentham (arrived at 6:07 p.m.).

Also present were Principals Ruby Norland, Elaine Kelley, Lee Esplin, Kate Lackey, Cesar Tiu, and Jessica Scobell. Academica representatives Crystal Thiriot, Ryan Reeves, and Marc Clayton were also in attendance.

**2. Public Comment and Discussion**

Holly Steed spoke about the need for facilities for the performing arts program at the Sky Pointe campus.

**10. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Nathan Costanzo, under NRS 288a.515**

Member Bentham stated that Nathan Costanzo had received notice for agenda item 10; adding that the Board would discuss this item in closed session, pursuant to NRS 241.030(1)(2).

Member Bentham stated that the meeting was back in open session.

**Member Harty moved to submit a letter to the State in support of Nathan Costanzo. The motion was seconded, and the Board voted unanimously to approve.**

**3. Student/School Achievement Recognition**

Somerset Stephanie students Sophia Kutz and Ashna Shirodkar were recognized for service to the school.

**4. Consent Agenda**

- a) Minutes from the August 8, 2019 Board Meeting
- b) Approval of Somerset Academy of Las Vegas Sun Safety Policy
- c) Approval of Appointment of the Executive Office Manager as the Designated Official for the National School Lunch Program
- d) Approval of Recommendations from the Finance Committee:
  1. School Financial Performance

2. **Acceptance of Grant Funds for the 2019/2020 School Year from:**
  - a. **AB 309**
  - b. **Read by Grade 3**
  - c. **Approval of Revised Enrollment Targets for Losee Campus**

Member Bentham stated that items 4b and 4c would be pulled from the consent agenda.

**Member McClellan moved to approve Consent Agenda items 4a and 4d. Member Noble seconded the motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve.**

**4b. Approval of Somerset Academy of Las Vegas Sun Safety Policy**

The Sun Safety Policy was reviewed.

**Member McClain moved approve the Somerset Academy of Las Vegas Sun Safety Policy. Member McClellan seconded the motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve.**

**4c. Approval of Appointment of the Executive Office Manager as the Designated Official for the National School Lunch Program**

Ms. Crystal Thiriot addressed the Board and stated that with the current leadership structure it was necessary to have a designee for NSLP; adding that executive office manager Sandy Smith was the proposed designee. Discussion ensued regarding the designee being the primary contact person for NSLP.

**Member McClain moved to approve the appointment of the executive office manager as the designated official of the Nation School Lunch Program. Member Harty seconded the motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve.**

**5. Interview of Board Member Candidates:**

- a. **LeNora Bredsguard**
- b. **Deniece Nohara**
- c. **Cynthia Roocke**

Ms. Thiriot stated that the applicants had been interviewed by the search committee and three candidates were selected to be interviewed by the Board. The Board asked a series of question to the candidates. The questions included the following topics:

- Desire to serve on the Board
- Work experience in the different grade levels
- Availability for the many duties of a Board member
- Oppositional attitudes between school districts and charter schools
- Vision for role as Board member
- Advantage/challenge of being a member who is or is not a parent and balancing the needs of the entire system
- Community experience as related to being a Board member
- How the mission and vision of Somerset differs from other charter schools and CCSD schools
- Biggest challenge facing the State of Nevada's education system

**LeNora Bredsguard:** Ms. LeNora Bredsguard addressed the Board and reviewed her personal, community, and educational experience. During the interview session she relayed the following:

- She was excited to use her extensive history in education as a parent, a PTO president, working in special education, as a literacy specialist, a project facilitator with CCSD, and as an assistant principal.
- She had worked with all grade levels while she was a project facilitator with CCSD and was currently an assistant principal at Galloway Elementary School.
- With the recent passing of her special needs son, she had more time to devote to a new project and was excited to delve deep and help others grow.
- She had recently attended a work course with school district and charter school leaders during which they worked to eliminate any friction in order to help the students.
- She believed in community collaboration to help everyone understand the systems and processes in order to help grow the students.
- As an educator she would bring a passion to support education and have the ability to listen to other ideas and bring them to fruition.
- She had worked with the Chromosome 18 Registry and Research organization for 30 years including time serving on the board. She had also worked on many committees including the Nevada Report Card and the Nevada Association for the Nevada Alternate Assessment.
- The biggest challenges in education would be how resources were used and providing teachers and administrators enough time to collaborate and solve problems together.

**Deniece Nohara:** Ms. Deniece Nohara addressed the Board and reviewed her education experience. During the interview session she relayed the following:

- Two of her children attend the Somerset Stephanie campus and, because she wanted to be involved in their education, this would be a good opportunity to stay involved.
- She had attended SPCSA charter board meetings and as principal of Discovery Charter School she had presented at meetings. Her schedule was flexible.
- While working at a charter school she was able to identify needs and had the flexibility to search for solutions. Charter schools need to market themselves as schools of choice. Although the perception of some in the school district was that charter schools take away funding, the focus should be what was best for the students.
- The Board responsibilities would include ensuring that Somerset was in compliance with all regulations, as well as creating an environment where students and educators could be successful.
- While an assistant principal and a principal her students attended the school she served and she had to be able to separate the role of parent and administrator.
- The Somerset vision of an equitable education, how that could be accomplished, and what that would mean for the students, set Somerset apart from other schools and systems.
- The biggest challenge in education would be funding and not having adequate support for the students.

**Cynthia Roocke:** Ms. Cynthia Roocke addressed the Board and reviewed her education and community experience. During the interview session she relayed the following:

- Although she had been skeptical of charter schools, she had seen CCSD fall behind in some areas of education. When she looked into Somerset Sky Canyon she found that the

teachers and staff were more involved and the programs were better suited to help her grandchild, this led to a desire to be more involved in the school herself.

- Because she was retired she had availability and she would enjoy being involved with the schools.
- She could be a great advocate with her friends, neighbors, and CCSD associates to explain the role of charter schools.
- Her goal as Board member would be to ensure that the principals, teachers, and students received what they needed to accomplish their goals.
- As a teacher, she sometimes had to make decisions that might not help her daughter, but would help the majority of her students.
- While serving as a trustee for the North Las Vegas Library Board she proposed and prepared a packet to prepare new members for the role of a library trustee.
- The cooperative learning in the Somerset system more closely mirrored her philosophy for teaching students.
- The distribution of funding was a big challenge for education to ensure that all aspects of student growth are attained.

## **6. Nomination and Election of one new Board Member**

Each Board member took several minutes to voice opinions about each of the candidates and then weighed in on his or her choice. Member Harty stated that, with a granddaughter in the system, Ms. Roocke would be his choice. Member McClain's first choice would be Ms. Bredsguard, with Ms. Nohara as his second choice. Although all were great candidates, Member McClellan would choose Ms. Bredsguard. Member Bentham stated that Ms. Bredsguard stood out and would be his choice. Member Mizer's choice would be Ms. Nohara because she had worked for CCSD and a charter school. Member Noble stated that he would prefer someone with administrative experience and both Ms. Nohara and Ms. Bredsguard would be good choices; however, his top choice would be Ms. Bredsguard.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that Ms. Bredsguard was a first cousin to one of the current Somerset principals. The principals were polled and all expressed support of Ms. Bredsguard and did not think the relationship would be a concern. Mr. Ryan Reeves addressed the Board and explained that, according to statute, the entire Board would need to acknowledge the relationship.

**Member McClellan nominated Ms. LeNora Bredsguard as the new Board member for Somerset Academy, and the Board voted unanimously to elect Ms. Bredsguard as the newest member of the Board.**

## **7. Update on Academic and School Initiatives by Campus Principals**

Assistant Principal Jill Dayne addressed the Board and provided an overview of the MAP assessment. She explained that students who scored in the 86<sup>th</sup> or above percentile had a high likelihood of being advanced or above grade level; students who scored in the 65<sup>th</sup> through 85<sup>th</sup> percentile had a high likelihood of being proficient or at grade level; students who scored in the 50<sup>th</sup> through 64<sup>th</sup> percentile were bubble students; students who scored in the 40<sup>th</sup> through 49<sup>th</sup> percentile were more than six to nine months behind; and students who scored in the 1<sup>st</sup> through 39<sup>th</sup> grade level were truly below grade level.

Discussion ensued regarding growth data and how the MAP assessment would be used to develop action plans for the students. Documents with the MAP data from each campus were distributed and reviewed.

## **8. Update on Administrative Coordinator Position**

Principal Elaine Kelley addressed the Board and reviewed the proposed responsibilities for the administrative coordinator position. She stated that the principals had discussed the position and did not feel that it was currently needed. Member Noble stated that the Board had given the principals a directive to bring back a candidate and that they had the expectation that a candidate would be presented. Member Bentham stated that he had been contacted about the principal cohort's concerns regarding the position and had suggested having further discussion in an open meeting. Prior meeting board minutes were reviewed and Ryan Reeves of Academica noted that the Motion previously approved by the Board seemed to delegate any further action with regard to the administrative coordinator position to the Principal Cohort. Ms. Kelley confirmed that understanding, and further noted that bringing the decision of the cohort back to the Board was acknowledging the Board's authority to take further action, should it mandate any. Discussion ensued regarding the previous action taken by the Board and the procedure for correct communication between the principal cohort and the Board. Member McClellan suggested having an ongoing discussion at each Board meeting to assess whether all the needs of the system were being met without an administrative coordinator.

**Member McClellan moved to postpone the decision on the Administrative Coordinator position, in lieu of status checks at future board meetings. Member McClain seconded the motion, and the Board voted to approve with a vote of 6 to 1 with Member Noble voting in opposition.**

## **9. Review of EMO Evaluation**

Mr. Reeves reviewed the evaluation survey results and stated that almost all of the areas of concern had already been addressed with personnel changes and additions. Member Harty asked if the other charter systems had also completed the survey, and if the results were consistent with the Somerset results. Mr. Reeves replied that all systems were surveyed and that the results were consistent. He further stated that the scores in the procurement and state reporting areas were unexpected and that he would be working to resolve any issues in those areas. He acknowledged that the facility management had been unstaffed; however, two additional personnel had been hired in that department.

## **11. Academica Announcements and Notifications**

Mr. Reeves reviewed that improvement in Star ratings for all Academica managed schools; adding that Somerset Academy produced more 5 Star schools than any Nevada charter school network ever had. Mr. Reeves further reviewed the graduation rate recording error which resulted in the high schools receiving 2 Star ratings. He stated that, due to the reporting errors, the high schools were not given a notice of concern from the SPCSA, contingent upon the upcoming graduation rates being above 90 percent. Principal Esplin stated that Sky Pointe had a 97% graduation rate in 2019. Principal Scobell stated that Losee had a 98% graduation rate in 2019.

Ms. Thiriot reminded that Board that the CSAN conference would be held on September 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>.

**12. Member Comment**

Member Harty stated that he would like Academica to investigate the options for additional facilities to meet the needs expressed by Ms. Steed during public comment. Mr. Reeves stated Academica had worked on obtaining projected costs after Doral Academy had tasked their foundation with raising funds for a theater. He further stated that, although a separate theater could be cost prohibitive, there were other options that could be explored.

Member McClellan thanked the principals for providing the data report and thanked Ms. Thiriot for her hard work. She stated that she would like to ensure that all of the campuses were being offered the support they need to be more successful.

Member Bentham spoke to the lack of space and parking at the facilities and agreed with Member Harty that facility options needed to be explored. He stated that he would like to celebrate the success and growth at the campuses and ensured that the Board would continue to work with and support the schools. He thanked that Board members for the support given to the campuses. He also thanked the representatives from Academica Florida and Somerset Florida for their assistance and support. Member Bentham stated that he would like to ensure that all Somerset students displayed good sportsmanship.

Member Bredsguard that she was excited to get to know more and be involved with Somerset.


**13. Public Comment and Discussion**

There was no request for public comment.

**14. Adjournment**

**The meeting was adjourned at 10:57 p.m.**

Approved on: 10-21-19

  
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**Secretary of the Board of Directors  
Somerset Academy of Las Vegas**