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BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
STATE OF NEW MEXICO

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
COMMUNITY INPUT HEARING
COLUMBUS COMMUNITY SCHOOL
August 21, 2013
9:00 a.m.
Columbus Center
Columbus, New Mexico

REPORTED BY: Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR-CRR, NM CCR #219
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A P P E A R A N C E S

COMMISSIONERS:

MS. CAROLYN SHEARMAN, Chair
MR. EUGENE GANT, Vice Chair
MR. JAMES CONYERS, Member
MS. CARMIE TOULOUSE, Member

STAFF:

MR. TONY GERLICZ, Director, Options for Parents
MR. BRAD RICHARDSON

INTERPRETER: MR. LOUIS LUNA

1 THE CHAIR: Ladies and gentlemen, good
2 morning. By my computer clock, it's 9:00 a.m. Let
3 me just let you all be aware that we do not have
4 microphones to use this time. So if you would like
5 to move up closer to the front of the room so you
6 can hear better, that might work better for you. We
7 will try to raise our voices as much as possible.
8 But we certainly want everyone to be able to hear.
9 So, please move closer to the front, if you would
10 like to.

11 I call back into session this hearing of
12 the New Mexico Public Education Commission. I will
13 ask Vice Chair Gant -- pardon me -- yes, Vice Chair
14 Gant -- for roll call.

15 COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Toulouse.

16 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Present.

17 COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Conyers.

18 COMMISSIONER CONYERS: Here.

19 COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Shearman.

20 THE CHAIR: Here.

21 COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Gant
22 here. You have enough people.

23 THE CHAIR: Thank you. I will ask
24 Commissioner Gant to lead us in the Pledge of
25 Allegiance and the Salute to the New Mexico Flag.

1 (Pledge of Allegiance and Salute to the
2 New Mexico Flag conducted.)

3 THE CHAIR: Thank you. I would also like
4 to thank the community of Columbus for their
5 hospitality this morning. The coffee and the
6 doughnuts certainly were welcome this early cool
7 morning, and we appreciate your hospitality, and we
8 are glad to be here.

9 Commissioners, we need to approve the
10 agenda. May I hear a motion?

11 COMMISSIONER GANT: So moved.

12 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Second.

13 THE CHAIR: Moved and seconded to approve
14 the agenda. All in favor, please say "Aye."

15 (Commissioners so indicate.)

16 THE CHAIR: Any opposed, same sign?

17 Thank you. We'll move, next, to the
18 public hearing. And let me get this information out
19 to everyone.

20 This meeting is being conducted pursuant
21 to New Mexico Statutes Annotated, Title 22,
22 Section 8B-6J 2009. The purpose of these community
23 input hearings that will be held from August 19
24 through August 21, 2013, is to obtain information
25 from the applicant and to receive community input to

1 assist the Public Education Commission in its
2 decision whether to grant the proposed charter
3 applications. According to this section of the law,
4 the Commission may appoint a subcommittee of no
5 fewer than three members to hold a public hearing.

6 According to law, these hearings are being
7 transcribed by a professional court reporter. The
8 total time allocated to each application is
9 90 minutes, which will be timed to ensure an
10 equitable opportunity to present applications. And
11 Brad will be our official timer today.

12 During the hearing, the Commission will
13 allow for community input about the charter
14 application. The time for public comments will be
15 limited to 20 minutes. If you wish to speak
16 regarding the application, please sign in, and we
17 ask that that be done at least 15 minutes before the
18 presentation begins. However, I believe the sign-in
19 sheet is still back on the table. So, if you wish
20 to sign in, please do.

21 Please be sure that you indicate on the
22 sign-up sheet whether you are in opposition or
23 support of the charter school. The Commission
24 Chair, based on the number of requests to comment,
25 will allocate time to those wishing to speak. If

1 there are a large number of supporters or opponents,
2 they are asked to select a speaker to represent
3 common opinions. We will try to allocate an
4 equitable amount of time to represent the community
5 accurately.

6 The Commission will follow this process
7 for each community input hearing:

8 The Commission will ask each applicant or
9 group to present at the table in front. And I
10 appreciate your already being there. They will be
11 given 20 minutes to present their application in the
12 manner they deem appropriate. The Commission will
13 not accept any written documentation from the
14 applicant, but the applicant may use demonstrative
15 exhibits to describe their school, if necessary.
16 However, the setup time for exhibits and so forth
17 will be included in the 20 minutes.

18 Following the applicant's presentation,
19 the local school district representatives, which
20 includes superintendent, administrators, and board
21 members, will be given ten minutes to comment.

22 Subsequently, the Commission will allow
23 20 minutes for public comment, as described above.

24 Finally, the Commission will be given 40
25 minutes to ask questions of the applicant.

1 Commissioners, are we ready to begin?

2 COMMISSIONER GANT: Yes.

3 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Yes, ma'am.

4 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Columbus
5 Charter School, please come forward, as you already
6 are. For the record, please state the name of your
7 school, the names of the founders of the school, and
8 any other person who is here today on behalf of your
9 school. You will have 20 minutes to present
10 information about your application. And the
11 20 minutes will begin after you introduce
12 yourselves.

13 MR. SKINNER: Okay. Thank you. We want
14 to welcome the Commission and welcome the Charter
15 School Division for coming to Columbus. I want
16 to -- the name of our school is Columbus Community
17 School. The founders are Jack Long and myself,
18 Philip Skinner. And a couple of others representing
19 us this morning are some of our Board members. And
20 I just would like to recognize them. Fred Williams,
21 if you would stand. Diane Cook is here. She's in
22 the back.

23 And am I missing -- am I missing any of
24 the other Board members that are here this morning?

25 MR. LONG: This one.

1 MR. SKINNER: And Jack Long is a Board
2 member also. I am not a proposed Board member. I
3 am just one of the founders.

4 I'm just going to step over here so that
5 I -- everybody can hear me, if it's okay with you.

6 THE REPORTER: That's fine with me.

7 MR. SKINNER: Again, thank everybody in
8 the audience for coming. We appreciate that, and we
9 appreciate the support of --

10 THE CHAIR: Pardon me for interrupting
11 you. I meant to ask everyone. Please turn off your
12 electronic devices so we don't have anything ringing
13 in the middle of presentations. I apologize. Thank
14 you.

15 MR. SKINNER: That's okay. There are lot
16 of reasons -- this is our third year attempting a
17 charter school here in Columbus. And there are lots
18 of reasons to deny a charter school here. And I'm
19 just going to go through a few of those reasons that
20 you might want to deny a school here.

21 And Jack and I are the founders. We're
22 not professional educators. And all of the work
23 that we do is volunteer. We pay everything out of
24 our own pocket to -- to work on the charter school
25 here and to attend meetings and trainings in

1 Albuquerque.

2 Our electric company, for example, is in
3 Deming. Ninety-six percent of our children qualify
4 for free lunch here in Columbus. Our phone company
5 is in Arizona. Fifty-seven percent of our families
6 are at or below the poverty level. Our school board
7 and administration are from Deming.

8 Our health-care provider, which is located
9 over here, is from Hatch. We've not had a high
10 school in Deming -- in Columbus, I'm sorry -- for
11 over 60 years, we've not had a high school here.

12 Our Catholic church here, which is well
13 attended, is a mission from the Deming church. The
14 county seat is in Deming. Our unemployment rate
15 here in Columbus is consistently at 20 percent or
16 more. And we are the poorest county in the state of
17 New Mexico.

18 I bring up these things to show you
19 that -- that every community needs an anchor, needs
20 a base in which to grow itself out of poverty, if we
21 believe that education and poverty and economic
22 development are integrally linked together, okay?
23 And so our present school administration would say
24 that we don't do well scholastically down here
25 because we're a poverty community.

1 And, so, we keep going around in this
2 vicious cycle. And, so, we are looking to do a
3 charter school down here so we can provide our
4 students with a better education, and, through
5 providing a better education, eliminate the poverty
6 that's in our community. And thank you for the
7 opportunity to address this.

8 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr. Long?

9 MR. LONG: Our program is -- we call it
10 STEM, Science, Technology, Energy, and Math, and
11 curriculum-based. And it's also project-based;
12 project-based, because, in a project curriculum,
13 students know why they're learning what they're
14 learning.

15 Our emphasis here is on our local
16 resources. We have probably as much sun as anybody
17 in the United States here in southern Luna County in
18 Columbus. We have an abundance of -- of -- of
19 material to build adobe houses. More than half the
20 population of the world live in adobe houses. I
21 have an adobe house that I built. I don't use
22 central -- I don't use coolers; I don't use central
23 heating. It saves on all my -- I have no utility
24 bills. So, if you were to ask me to prove where I
25 live with a utility bill, there's no way I could

1 prove where I live.

2 This is important. These savings on these
3 types of issues for -- as we -- because we link
4 community development with education. We say that
5 if a person isn't educated, a person doesn't have
6 the opportunities that others have that are
7 educated.

8 Another part of our curriculum is that of
9 what's called "dual language." Dual language is
10 recognized as a very efficient way for students to
11 learn both languages on the border. Our students
12 will speak -- half the school will be -- half the
13 class periods will be in Spanish without
14 translation; the other half will be in English.

15 Any of our students who lack in English --
16 because that's one of the concerns in this
17 community, the lack of English of the students
18 learning English. Any students that lack English in
19 our community will be -- we will concentrate on
20 bringing them up to the level that they should be.

21 But the economic development is a very
22 important part of our project.

23 Project learning is -- is -- some people
24 kind of think we're kind of vocationally oriented.
25 We're not vocationally oriented. We don't want --

1 our students will learn, say, for building design,
2 the history of building with rammed earth and with
3 adobe, using all the integrated academic subjects.
4 And, so, our -- our goal is academics; it's not
5 vocational.

6 We had a criticism that we didn't require
7 that our -- our head administrator be expert in
8 these areas. We want our head administrator to be
9 expert in education. We want them to be
10 compassionate. The other technical stuff is -- we
11 have those experiences in our community. Because we
12 intend to incorporate community skills in our
13 program.

14 But our program is really academically
15 based. We're interested that our students can read
16 well; they can talk. One of the projects requires
17 that the students give presentations to the
18 community, as well as to class and the school. So
19 each student will be required to be able to give
20 presentations.

21 As Phil said, this is our third year. We
22 hope we don't have to go another year, but we're
23 prepared to go another year. We've been attempting
24 to get schools down here for well over 20 years. We
25 tried -- our first -- one of our first attempts was

1 to get an independent school district. The State
2 allows communities to apply for independent school
3 districts. So that was our first attempt.

4 In those days, the people who went before
5 you were called the "State School Board," and they
6 came down, and they decided that, yes, we needed a
7 school here, but we weren't ready.

8 We're telling you now that we think we're
9 ready, and we hope that we can get your approval on
10 a charter school here in Columbus. Thank you.

11 THE CHAIR: Thank you. We'll now move to
12 comments by the local school district. And, if you
13 gentleman would like to vacate your table, we'll ask
14 representatives from the school district to come
15 forward.

16 MS. MOORE: Good morning, and thank you.
17 Harvielee Moore, Superintendent of the Deming Public
18 Schools. I'll ask Mrs. Mary Lou Cameron to come
19 forward and sit with me, if that's okay.

20 I'll just come up and introduce myself to
21 the audience. If I have just a few minutes, I'm
22 going to do it quickly.

23 THE CHAIR: Okay.

24 MS. MOORE: (Spoken Spanish.) It is a
25 pleasure to visit with you and to be able to talk

1 about our schools and our designs that we have for
2 these students. It's nice too see you all here.
3 Appreciate being part of the community; always have,
4 and will continue to do so. Very proud of your
5 students; very proud of your children. Would like
6 to, at this time, introduce Mr. Ron Wolfe, one of
7 our new Board members. Thank you for being here,
8 Ron. It's a pleasure to see you here.

9 And we do have a few of our
10 administrators, the principal of the school and
11 others, if you need to call on them.

12 At this time, let me just say that Deming
13 Public Schools is a stable district -- I'll just
14 stand -- is a stable district, pre-K through
15 post-high school. We have increased the numbers of
16 students graduating to 74.8 percent. In an
17 impoverished area, that is considered to be
18 significant. Our dropout rate is down to
19 2.8 percent. We're very proud of that. Our truancy
20 rate has gone down 15 percent since last year.
21 We've worked on that consistently and will continue
22 to do so.

23 We have more first-generation students
24 going to post-high school than ever before in the
25 history of Deming Public Schools. They are

1 first-generation, surveyed by College One [verbatim]
2 through the American Association of School
3 Administrators. It's a very objective outside
4 group. They interview the students, find out that
5 they are the first in their families ever to
6 graduate from high school and go on to college.

7 At New Mexico State University, the CAMP
8 program has, in the past, traditionally, four or
9 five or six people from Deming High School.

10 Forty percent of that program are now Deming High
11 School graduates, and they are doing very well.

12 Dr. Bejarana is our contact there, if you need to
13 verify that.

14 As we look at this transition of our sixth
15 grade into town, it was very successful. We have
16 our intermediate school principal here today, if you
17 want to ask her any questions.

18 We are a 5,300-plus population of
19 students. As Mr. Skinner said, this is an
20 impoverished area, but the people are rich in
21 dignity and pride, and we are very aware of the
22 wonderful talents and the skills that are there and
23 the potential of our children.

24 Last year, the Columbus School scores
25 significantly rose. We have changed how we're doing

1 some things. We have more writing, more
2 interjection of language enrichment and enhancement.

3 We were very privileged, in that the
4 United States Department of Education sent their
5 teaching ambassadors to visit Columbus Elementary.
6 Dr. Kareen Borders wrote a beautiful write-up about
7 Columbus Elementary and the significant education
8 that's taking place there. It was posted on the
9 United States Department of Education blog; may
10 still be available there. We have copies if you
11 want to see that.

12 We have now been notified that Mr. Arne
13 Duncan, the Secretary of Education for the United
14 States of America, will be visiting Columbus
15 Elementary September 10th, and he will want to talk
16 to our students, to our teachers, and to look at why
17 his people said that we are doing more to overcome
18 the opportunity gap than most schools they have
19 visited.

20 So we are going to continue the journey.
21 We're going to continue to serve every child that's
22 in our school system and we're going to continue to
23 serve them equitably and well.

24 A few years back, I talked to the
25 community, and I said, "If you help us pass a bond,

1 we will build you a school." You not only helped us
2 pass a bond, you helped us pass it three to one.
3 Thank you. Thank you again. And we built you a
4 school. And that is for your children, not ours.
5 It's not our school; it is your school. It belongs
6 to the state of New Mexico's citizens, to the
7 citizens of Luna County, and, especially, to the
8 people of Columbus. (Spoken Spanish.) It's your
9 school.

10 And, in that school, we cannot get all our
11 parents across. Many of our parents live in
12 Las Palomas. We pick up our children at the port,
13 many of them. They are American citizens. We have
14 been directed by the Public Education Department to
15 make the port one of our staging zones. We pick
16 them up faithfully every morning, and we get them to
17 school safely. The children are pre-K through
18 post-high school, as I said.

19 We offer dual credit. The last few years,
20 students who come from migrant families serving the
21 Johnson Farm area and Columbus area are graduating
22 in the top 10 percent of Deming High School. Three
23 years ago, the valedictorian was one of these
24 students who didn't learn English starting until
25 fourth grade. He said, by ninth grade, he could

1 equitably compete. Last year, the valedictorian,
2 again, started learning English in school. We
3 taught him well. He graduated valedictorian. He
4 got a full ride to New Mexico State University.

5 The salutatorian, a young woman who didn't
6 start learning English until eleven -- the age of
7 eleven -- she graduated, scored extremely high on
8 her ACT, got a full ride to Williams College in
9 Boston.

10 These are not exceptions. This is what is
11 happening now. Your children are going on, if they
12 want it. And we're opening the door and will
13 continue to work with you to do that. We need your
14 assistance if we care about our students. And I
15 know I sound like I'm logging [ph], I'm not. I'm
16 actually retiring June 30th, 2014.

17 But, again, I have a passion for the
18 children and the dignity of the people in Columbus,
19 and I appreciate the opportunity to bring forth to
20 you some of the successes that we've seen by working
21 together.

22 I want to say that, if the children give
23 their very best every day at school, they are
24 succeeding. And their parents are right there with
25 them. This new 55-mile zone that recently got

1 passed, the federal government approved it -- Luna
2 County went after it for a long time -- will help
3 more parents to come into school and visit the
4 schools in Deming. Before, it was a 25-mile zone;
5 now, it's 55 miles.

6 So that's going to make some change there;
7 it's going to help us. When the parents can't
8 cross, Mr. Madrid will tell you they've set up
9 Skype. And they will have as many as 400 parents in
10 a restaurant in Las Palomas meeting with the
11 principal, who had another 40 or 50 or 70 in his
12 office in the school area.

13 So, we are very unique, a little different
14 here, but, at the same time, we find ourselves doing
15 the best we can with what we've got.

16 We do bus the children to school. We run
17 activity buses. We're willing to run a double bus
18 if the children need to come in and be brought home.
19 We are wanting them to participate fully in every
20 activity that they choose to participate in.

21 I want to say, also, that, when students
22 come to school ready to learn -- and Dr. Kareen
23 Borders wrote -- the regional teaching ambassador
24 for the United States Education Department in
25 Washington. She wrote, "These children come to

1 school happy. They share and learn and they teach
2 each other. They skip and play, put their backpacks
3 on and go home and return the next day to a loving
4 community that embraces them and helps to educate
5 them for the future."

6 And, truly, we believe -- a big part of
7 our philosophy is very simple. We believe that,
8 because we're educators, it is our solemn obligation
9 to elevate society, and we do believe we do that
10 every day, and so we try very much to do it well.

11 I know that this isn't about us. It's
12 really about the application. In looking at the
13 application, I have -- I don't see any services
14 proposed that we are not already doing. I will say
15 that the adobe, using the earth to have and to give
16 children hands-on projects is very commendable.

17 We do have a program where students build
18 homes, sell them, and are self-sufficient now, and
19 they fund their entire program through the projects
20 that they're doing. They've built and sold five
21 homes successfully now. So we do have opportunities
22 for all students to participate in equally. And
23 that's another goal that we have as we move forward
24 with the next steps of opening the door to post-high
25 school for everyone, and, at the same time, working

1 with parents.

2 We've gone from having a handful of
3 parents -- the International Parent Teacher Club
4 works with us to -- we've talked with the president,
5 we've met with them -- to having hundreds of parents
6 participate. I mentioned the 300-plus, 400 --
7 almost 400 parents at the restaurant talking to the
8 principal through Skype. It's just one of several
9 ways we outreach to parents, and we will continue to
10 do so.

11 The community here is a beautiful
12 community. It has a wonderful legacy and a great
13 history. And Deming Public Schools put its first
14 schools in in 1883. I'm very proud to announce we
15 have received international accreditation for
16 advanced ed. At the time we got it, we were one of
17 seven districts in the state of New Mexico to get
18 it. We are now up for renewal in another year.

19 One of the commendations they gave us was
20 that we outreach to all parents, and we bring them
21 in. And our community is broad-based.

22 So, if you have questions, I think I have
23 54 seconds left. Thank you for the clock. It's
24 very helpful. I would stand for questions,
25 otherwise. Thank you for the opportunity.

1 THE CHAIR: Thank you for your
2 presentation. We are to the section on the agenda
3 for public comment. If someone could hand us the
4 sign-in sheet, please?

5 Now, we've got quite a few names on the
6 side for the school district. Did we just run out
7 of room on the community side? Is there anyone else
8 from the District who wished to speak who did not?

9 Okay. So I've got 22 -- I have 33 names
10 on the community list and 20 minutes. That's less
11 than a minute per person. Would any of you like to
12 group together and select a spokesperson so you will
13 have a little bit more time to speak to the
14 Commission?

15 Let me give you all just a couple of
16 minutes to see if you can maybe group some, because,
17 this, you're going to have, like, 30 seconds apiece,
18 and that's not very long to speak. Let me give you
19 a couple of minutes to talk among yourselves and see
20 if any of you would like to select a spokesperson.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Point of order. Is
22 it possible for you to amend that schedule?

23 THE CHAIR: No, sir, it is not. It's the
24 same schedule that we have for every application
25 we're hearing.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

2 THE INTERPRETER: There was a gentleman
3 that was saying that he would like to ask if there
4 is anybody that would like to represent in a group
5 fashion to be able to talk about students going from
6 here to Deming.

7 THE CHAIR: Yes, sir.

8 MR. SKINNER: Mr. Chairman, I suggest we
9 start going through the list. And if some of
10 those -- if they heard something they were going to
11 say, they're maybe going to say "Pass" to you and go
12 by them.

13 THE CHAIR: That's fine. Unless we have
14 groups set up, let's go ahead with 30 seconds
15 apiece, then. I'm sorry for such a short time, but
16 it's a long list. All right. Are you ready, sir?

17 The first name on the list is Del Escolar?

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm sorry. What's
19 the name?

20 THE CHAIR: D-E-L. Last name,
21 E-S-C-O-L-A-R? No? Or was that -- oh, I see.

22 MR. GERLICZ: Roberto Gutierrez.

23 THE CHAIR: Please go ahead.

24 MR. GUTIERREZ: I would like to -- to
25 state that your decision that's going to be made,

1 you know, in the near future, or today, should be
2 based on the principles of freedom and equality:
3 Freedom for those 500 students and their parents to
4 have a school in their community, and equality,
5 which, hopefully, that school will be similar to a
6 school in Animas, in Lordsburg, in Los Alamos, with
7 those same type of programs and opportunities that
8 are found in those districts.

9 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much.

10 Sheila -- I'm sorry.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'll pass and give
12 my time to him.

13 THE CHAIR: You pass.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I pass.

15 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Martha
16 Skinner.

17 MS. SKINNER: I'll pass.

18 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Fred Williams?

19 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you. Good morning.

20 I want to speak about the sociology, briefly, of the
21 Village of Columbus. I think you need to look at
22 recent history of the Village of Columbus. And it's
23 attempting to reestablish a strong village
24 community.

25 And I think one way of doing that is by

1 augmenting the school system that would contribute
2 to the unique identity of this area.

3 MR. RICHARDSON: Thirty seconds.

4 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

5 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Gregorio Corona.

6 MR. CORONA: Good morning. Thank you for
7 the opportunity --

8 THE CHAIR: Please go ahead.

9 MR. CORONA: I'm a parent, and I have two
10 children in the school. And, for me, it's very
11 important that they assist. Today, that my oldest
12 child is going to Deming. There's much more
13 distance between us, and I can't support her like I
14 would like to. For me, if we could have a school
15 here, it would be a great opportunity.

16 MR. RICHARDSON: Thirty seconds.

17 MR. CORONA: Thank you.

18 THE CHAIR: Thank you. George Dominguez.

19 MR. DOMINGUEZ: Thank you, and good
20 morning to all. I would like to say that I am here
21 passing through. I have been a neighbor at the high
22 school in Columbus. So I am visiting. I thank you
23 for providing the opportunity to speak.

24 MR. RICHARDSON: Thirty seconds.

25 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Thank you.

1 MR. DOMINGUEZ: I would like to say that
2 yesterday, when I came to visit, I heard a family
3 parent who was saying that his child was unable to
4 graduate, because, every day, he was going to school
5 every day. But, however, he would not access the
6 classes. So I think that we need to take that into
7 account, that it would be better that these students
8 be able to study here close to the care of the
9 family.

10 THE INTERPRETER: Another person that
11 would like to pass their 30 seconds.

12 MR. DOMINGUEZ: So I'm not surprised.
13 There is no comparison between the school systems
14 here in the U.S. and in our country. However, I am
15 very surprised that one child spent so much time
16 traveling from Columbus to New Mexico in Deming.
17 So, therefore, he, instead of being able to have
18 more time to study, he is not able to do that. I
19 believe it would be necessary to have a high school
20 here.

21 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 THE CHAIR: Ladies and gentlemen, please,
24 in the interest of time, let's hold applause and
25 that sort of thing. We really want to hear what

1 people have to say.

2 MR. RICHARDSON: Madame Chair, can I ask
3 you a question?

4 THE CHAIR: Yes. (Consults with Mr.
5 Richardson.) Diana Skinner.

6 MS. D. SKINNER: Good morning. As part of
7 this project, we have been speaking with the parents
8 of Palomas, to know how they feel with this
9 project -- how they feel about this project. And I
10 have the results in my hand, where I can say that
11 98 percent of them are in favor of a charter school.

12 MR. RICHARDSON: Thirty seconds.

13 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Your time is up.

14 MS. D. SKINNER: Thank you.

15 THE CHAIR: I believe the next name is
16 Lucia Casias. No? Lucia Duran.

17 MS. D. SKINNER: They would like to pass
18 their time to me to speak.

19 THE CHAIR: I tell you what. We're going
20 to move the pass time to the end.

21 I believe it's Dora -- help me with this.

22 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: She is passing her
23 time.

24 THE INTERPRETER: She is passing her time.

25 THE CHAIR: Passing. Teresa Carrera?

1 Teresa?

2 THE INTERPRETER: She is also passing.

3 THE CHAIR: Teresa --

4 MR. GERLICZ: Maria Teresa Alten [ph]?

5 THE CHAIR: Ysidro Diaz?

6 MR. DIAZ: I also forward my time.

7 THE CHAIR: Irma Torres?

8 THE INTERPRETER: He passes his time as
9 well, Mr. Flores.

10 THE CHAIR: Irma Torres? Irma?

11 THE INTERPRETER: She passes her time for
12 the clinic. [Verbatim.]

13 THE CHAIR: Dora Perez? No Dora Perez?
14 Manuel Perez?

15 THE INTERPRETER: She passes.

16 THE CHAIR: Is she here?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

18 THE CHAIR: Elizabeth Sanchez?

19 MS. SANCHEZ: Good morning. I am a mother
20 of a single child. I would like to see -- I would
21 really like if we had a junior high and a high
22 school here in Columbus, due to the time factor and
23 traveling for my child.

24 MR. RICHARDSON: Thirty seconds.

25 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ivan Ortega?

1 THE INTERPRETER: Pass.

2 THE CHAIR: Vivian Haggas [ph]?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She's passing her
4 time.

5 THE INTERPRETER: Pass.

6 THE CHAIR: Diane Cook. Please come
7 forward, so we can hear you.

8 MS. COOK: What I'd like to say is that
9 Ms. Moore stood up and gave a glowing description of
10 the Deming Public Schools and all of their
11 successes. I would like to know why it is that the
12 community is still not happy with what is
13 progressing in the Deming Public Schools. She gave
14 all the reasons why Deming is so great, but no
15 reasons why this charter should not be accepted.
16 And I submit that, basically, we need to follow the
17 dollars. If this is accepted here, Deming stands to
18 lose money.

19 MR. RICHARDSON: Thirty seconds.

20 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Paul Nimick.

21 MR. NIMICK: My name is Paul Nimick. I'm
22 a resident of Columbus. I would like to speak in
23 the affirmative; I'm in favor of a charter school in
24 Columbus. It would be good for Columbus. And I am
25 strongly in favor of U.S. citizens and parents of

1 U.S. citizens having the option of choosing
2 something other than the public education system, as
3 it presently stands in Luna County.

4 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Nancy Patterson.

5 MS. PATTERSON: Pass my time. I'm
6 passing.

7 THE INTERPRETER: She passes.

8 THE CHAIR: Passing? Linda Sanchez?

9 MR. SANCHEZ: As a community member and an
10 educator for Deming Public Schools here at Columbus
11 Elementary, I was a participant in the 32-mile
12 traveling, and became, I feel, a successful person.
13 My children went through the District the same.
14 There are many successful people in Columbus.
15 Deming Public Schools has lots to offer for us, and
16 we are just getting better and better every year.

17 Our scores are going up. The students are
18 learning, and we are producing good, productive
19 citizens.

20 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Armando Chavez?

21 MR. CHAVEZ: Hello. My name is Armando
22 Chavez. I'm the principal at the elementary school
23 here in town. It's an honor to work with the
24 community here in Columbus. And the children
25 deserve -- they deserve the opportunities that

1 Deming Public Schools can offer.

2 It goes far beyond curriculum. We're
3 talking extracurricular activities that students
4 would be able to partake in in the district that I'm
5 not sure if a charter school would be able to offer
6 all the children as well. And I just wanted to
7 state that.

8 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Vera Diana
9 Sanchez?

10 MS. SANCHEZ: As part of the community, I
11 have lived here. I went to school in Deming. And
12 after that, I went to college. And, as you can see,
13 I am part of the system in Deming. And I am a
14 person who has been able to overcome or excel. And
15 I believe that what you need to think about as
16 parents is the future of your children.

17 MR. RICHARDSON: Thirty seconds.

18 MS. SANCHEZ: I believe the school --

19 THE CHAIR: Ma'am, your time is up. Thank
20 you very much. Kim Perea?

21 MS. PEREA: My name is Kim Perea. I'm a
22 fifth-grade teacher at Columbus Elementary. This is
23 my ninth year. I just want to say, even if the
24 Deming Public Schools wanted to build a high school
25 in Columbus, I would not be for that, either. My

1 job is to offer opportunity for my students to grow
2 and to learn about what's out there in the world.
3 And I feel if they stay just in Columbus, that they
4 won't have those opportunities to grow and to be
5 able to make choices for their life.

6 And, so, that's my job, to provide this
7 opportunity for my students to go out there and be
8 successful in the world.

9 MR. RICHARDSON: Thirty seconds.

10 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Jesus Saenz.

11 MR. SAENZ: I'm an assistant principal at
12 Red Mountain Middle School. And, as the
13 sixth-graders have come up to the middle school, I
14 can see that our schools offer a lot for the kids.
15 The kids really become part of the community in
16 Deming. And I see that they grow and go on into
17 post-secondary schools and into college and do very
18 well.

19 My two kids have gone through Deming
20 Public Schools, and I feel that it is -- it has
21 educated them to a point that they're now in
22 college, and they go to college.

23 MR. RICHARDSON: Thirty seconds.

24 THE CHAIR: Thank you. The next name on
25 the list is Ted -- perhaps Burns?

1 MR. BURNS: Pass. I'll pass my time.

2 THE CHAIR: Oh, okay. Thank you. The
3 next name is very stylized, and I don't know -- it
4 starts with an "L."

5 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: I can't read that
6 one, either. Mary Lou Cameron?

7 MS. CAMERON: I'm going to pass. Thank
8 you. Many of us thought it was a sign-in.

9 THE CHAIR: Please state your name.

10 MR. MENDOZA: Alonzo Mendoza. I would
11 like to say that we are in support of the school in
12 Columbus. The quality of the education is not
13 measured by the place the school is at. We support
14 a secondary school or a junior high and high school
15 here in Columbus. And we feel that the students
16 will be in the hands of the teachers, and so I think
17 the students will have everything that they need if
18 they -- that they're receiving everything that is in
19 Deming.

20 (Applause.)

21 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: How much time do
22 we have left?

23 THE CHAIR: So we have a total of
24 six-and-a-half minutes left at 30 seconds each. Is
25 there anyone who would like to speak? Tony, were

1 you asking a question?

2 MR. GERLICZ: (Indicates.)

3 THE CHAIR: Oh, okay. I see a lady over
4 here. Thirty seconds, please.

5 MS. D. SKINNER: With the 98 percent in
6 favor of the Palomas and Columbus parents, I am -- I
7 would like to see that they consider all of the
8 parents in Palomas that are in favor of a school,
9 that they feel confident of the school and the
10 teachings that would be given here. As parents, we
11 feel more confident. Thank you.

12 MR. RICHARDSON: Thirty seconds.

13 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Anyone else?

14 MS. AGUILAR: Could I --

15 THE CHAIR: Yes.

16 MS. AGUILAR: My name is Gloria Aguilar.
17 I have two children in the school system. For them
18 to study and the insecurity of them to be able to be
19 away from the school, I had to place them into the
20 school systems in Palomas. So, for me, as a parent,
21 it is -- I would be more comfortable with the
22 security that we can provide that they be out of
23 school the whole day -- out of home the whole day.
24 Excuse me.

25 MR. RICHARDSON: Thirty seconds.

1 THE CHAIR: Anyone else who has not
2 spoken? Well, I guess it really doesn't matter.
3 Yes, sir.

4 MR. NIMICK: I would just like to point
5 out to the committee. I believe the only people who
6 have spoken against the proposition are the
7 employees of the Deming Public Schools; is that
8 correct?

9 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Yes, sir.

10 MR. GUTIERREZ: About ten, 12 years ago,
11 the Deming School Board, the then State Public
12 School Board and Superintendent Adam Morgan were
13 convinced by a few leaders in the -- in the
14 community that there was a secondary school needed
15 in Columbus. They said that the timing was not
16 right, but that there definitely was a need.

17 I think, you know, it's been ten, twelve
18 years.

19 MR. RICHARDSON: Thirty seconds.

20 MR. GUTIERREZ: So we need to consider
21 that again.

22 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Anyone else?

23 MS. CASTRO: My name is Susana Castro. I
24 have two children in school here. And it is
25 important that they're having a really hard time to

1 cross the border. They start at 8:15, 8:20 in the
2 morning for classes, and they have to be ready at
3 6:00 in the morning. It's a lot for them to have to
4 just cross the border. Thank you.

5 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Anyone else? Yes,
6 sir.

7 MR. WILLIAMS: I think the Commission
8 needs to look at the request from the Village of
9 Columbus similar to a request from a Native American
10 pueblo in some ways. There may be unique needs of
11 this community that would be better served by a
12 school system within the community rather than
13 busing them up to Deming.

14 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Anyone else? Yes,
15 ma'am. Mrs. Skinner.

16 MS. M. SKINNER: As you know, Columbus has
17 had a hard time the last few years with the drug
18 wars in Mexico, and even our little wars here in
19 town. But we need our kids here to help us bring
20 back the pride of the Village of Columbus. And they
21 have ideas; they have energy. And they have
22 enthusiasm. Us seniors are getting kind of worn
23 out.

24 So we would really appreciate having our
25 kids back here and give them some of that hometown

1 spirit that they could use.

2 MR. RICHARDSON: Thirty seconds.

3 THE CHAIR: Please state your name.

4 MS. M. SKINNER: Martha Skinner.

5 THE CHAIR: Anyone else? I see no one.

6 Okay. Thank you very much for your input.

7 The next item on our agenda is time for
8 the Public Education Commission to ask questions.
9 This will be 40 minutes. And we ask that the
10 founders of the school come back up to the table so
11 that we might ask you some questions.

12 And while the founders are coming up, I
13 would just like to make one observation, one point,
14 so that we're all on the same page here. The
15 Commission, in making the decision on whether to
16 grant or deny an -- any charter school application,
17 is based on the content of the application.

18 There is part of that application that
19 asks about community support. That is a part of it.
20 But what we are primarily looking at is the
21 application itself; and, frankly, that's all we can
22 look at.

23 So we appreciate your -- your concern and
24 your interest and your letting us know your opinions
25 today. That is part of this. But the primary part

1 is this application. Is this a complete, complete
2 plan for a school that would really benefit our
3 kids? So, just so that you'll know that.

4 Commissioners, our time starts now. Do
5 you have questions? Commissioner Conyers, I'll
6 start with you.

7 COMMISSIONER CONYERS: Thank you. Good
8 morning. Buenos días. I do have a couple of
9 questions. And I'm from the other end of the state,
10 so I'm not so familiar with your geography here.

11 But I heard the 32 miles. What's the
12 average time on a bus, like, round-trip or during
13 the day, what would that be for your students to go
14 to Deming?

15 MR. SKINNER: I think it's about an hour
16 each way, and 45 minutes going out.

17 MR. CONYERS: Okay. Another challenge we
18 have in New Mexico, and especially the rural areas,
19 is staffing. I come from a rural area. And what
20 thoughts do you have about getting the -- the high
21 quality staff you would like here?

22 MR. SKINNER: One, we built some
23 above-average pay into the budget so that we could
24 attract some quality staff.

25 We think that the -- the mission here,

1 the -- the need here, will attract a -- a passionate
2 educator who wants to make a difference, who wants
3 to make a change, who can see what we're trying to
4 accomplish here. And, Jack, did you have --

5 MR. LONG: No, that's pretty good.

6 MR. SKINNER: The -- I believe State
7 statute also permits us to accept teachers from
8 Mexico, also. And, so, if we ran into that
9 situation, we would be applying for teachers from
10 Mexico. They need to be bilingual, obviously,
11 but --

12 MR. CONYERS: Right. Okay. Thank you.

13 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Toulouse?

14 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madame Chair, I
15 really don't have any questions. I just -- my only
16 comment is, is there going to be a consistent enough
17 pool of students who don't want to bounce back and
18 forth between the two? Because that's what I see.
19 When you have kids, there may be more activities for
20 a teenager in Deming. They want to go up and do
21 those things.

22 So I guess the question, how do you plan
23 to keep your students from not wanting to run off to
24 where there's more activities for them?

25 MR. SKINNER: Well, go ahead. You want to

1 speak.

2 MR. LONG: Well, the charter school is an
3 alternative. You know, part of the process is you
4 not allow people to come in and out. And those
5 students who feel that they want the activities of
6 Deming are free to go to Deming still. We feel that
7 there's enough students and that our program will be
8 a strong enough program that they'll want to stay
9 here in Columbus.

10 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: I just -- coming
11 from a large family, where we've gone through a lot
12 of teenagers, and now my oldest grandson is a
13 teenager, knowing this year they want something; the
14 next year, they want something else. There's a
15 girlfriend; there's a boyfriend. There's an
16 activity. And I can just see that there will be a
17 sense of -- be hard to keep that continuity so that
18 their education doesn't get confused.

19 MR. SKINNER: Approximately 800 students
20 cross the border every day from Palomas. And I am
21 convinced that those parents want the best education
22 that they can get for their children. Our school
23 district now is not doing -- not doing a good job
24 educating our children. They will say lots of
25 wonderful things. But proficiency rates are around

1 25 percent or less in Luna County, okay? And
2 Hispanic students are getting even the shorter end
3 of that stick, okay?

4 And so we have 800 -- approximately 800
5 students that cross that border. Those parents want
6 the best for their children. They're all U.S.
7 citizens. They pack them up every day and put them
8 across that border, because they want a good
9 education for their children. And we intend to
10 provide a great education for those children. And I
11 think those parents won't take very long -- when
12 you're in a poverty situation, sometimes we have to
13 kind of lead out front. But it won't take very long
14 for them to catch up and want to have their students
15 here all the time.

16 MR. LONG: I think that, if you look at
17 the buses, I think that's around nine buses that
18 takes the kids to Deming. This is the high school
19 and middle school. They have one activities bus.
20 The Superintendent says they can have more. But, if
21 you're talking about the desires of kids wanting
22 activities, this should show.

23 Almost one-tenth of the kids don't want to
24 stay in Deming. They come on an activities bus. So
25 we think that we'll be able to provide sufficient

1 activities, that, in addition to our curriculum,
2 that will attract our kids and want them to stay
3 here in Columbus.

4 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Thank you.

5 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Gant?

6 COMMISSIONER GANT: Madame Chair, members.
7 I'll pick up on that. What activities, specific
8 activities, will you offer to encourage the students
9 to stay? I mean, are you going to have athletics?
10 Are you going to have band and chorus, all this
11 other stuff they have up there? Football?
12 Basketball?

13 MR. SKINNER: Probably not, okay? And we
14 don't intend to compete with Deming High School on
15 those levels. We are interested in parents who want
16 a quality education for their children. And right
17 now, the Deming School District is not providing a
18 quality education for these children.

19 COMMISSIONER GANT: Again --

20 MR. SKINNER: Yes, sir.

21 COMMISSIONER GANT: -- I ask, specific
22 activities, what will you offer, outside the
23 academics?

24 MR. SKINNER: Okay. The community
25 service -- one of the things that we wanted to do

1 in -- with rammed earth and adobe building was to
2 identify some homes in the community where our
3 children could provide community service and maybe
4 build a home for somebody. We're -- we are not --
5 we plan to take field trips and do things like that.

6 We are planning on having an
7 entrepreneurial aspect to the school, where we would
8 be a leader, national leader, in passive solar
9 and -- and rammed earth, where we would expect
10 people to come from all over the country to study
11 here at our school. And our students would be
12 participating in that, in teaching and -- and
13 developing a Web site.

14 So not the traditional activities that --
15 band and football team, no, we would not be doing
16 that, but lots of other ways to learn and have
17 children grow than through those things.

18 MR. LONG: Plus, we -- we have the
19 mechanism for community input. If the community
20 decides that they want -- or the kids decide that
21 they want a certain program, certain -- say, soccer
22 or something like that, we have the opportunity. We
23 haven't planned that because we were interested in
24 the academics, the academic part of it, and the
25 economic development part.

1 So the -- if there are to be academics
2 [verbatim], it'll be from the community and from the
3 students, because the students are involved in the
4 governance process as well. And, so, they will be
5 able to determine whether or not they want these
6 activities.

7 COMMISSIONER GANT: Page 4, you state that
8 you have chosen a -- a site for the school. Where
9 is it?

10 MR. SKINNER: If you look just to the west
11 here -- east -- thank you --

12 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: East?

13 MR. SKINNER: -- there's an old school.
14 When they built the new school here, they shut down
15 the old school. There are five classrooms and a
16 gymnasium that are -- the original school was built
17 in 1955. The five classrooms and the gymnasium are
18 probably 20, 25 years old. So they're still usable.
19 They are not being used at this time for educational
20 purposes. And we have written a letter to the
21 school district saying that's what we would like, to
22 use those classrooms for the beginning of the
23 charter school.

24 We have some property directly behind here
25 is where we would do our construction of our -- our

1 campus. And we hope to build our own campus through
2 the rammed earth and adobe process.

3 COMMISSIONER GANT: Do you know how much
4 it would cost to bring those five classrooms and
5 that gymnasium up to standards to meet these
6 standards?

7 MR. SKINNER: No, I do not. I do know
8 that the facilities people came down here and took a
9 look at them, okay? And I was not told that they
10 were not up to standard.

11 COMMISSIONER GANT: Do you know if there's
12 asbestos, lead paint, or anything like that?

13 MR. SKINNER: I do not. In the other
14 building, probably so, in the one built in 1955.
15 The other ones were built 20 years ago, so I don't
16 anticipate there being a problem.

17 COMMISSIONER GANT: Where will you get the
18 money for the renovation?

19 MR. SKINNER: I don't foresee a need for
20 renovation.

21 COMMISSIONER GANT: How long has that
22 building been sitting there?

23 MR. SKINNER: As long as the new
24 elementary school, five years ago. I'm sure they're
25 dirty. I'm sure they need to get in there and get

1 cleaned out and stuff.

2 COMMISSIONER GANT: You indicate that you
3 are going to contract out for food services for
4 breakfast and lunch. In Columbus, is there a
5 company that can do that?

6 MR. SKINNER: Not at this present time
7 that I'm aware of, no, sir.

8 COMMISSIONER GANT: So where would you get
9 it?

10 MR. SKINNER: Well, the -- I think it's
11 through a program, one or two. I'm a little bit --
12 there's a State program that provides funding for --
13 for their breakfast and lunch. That's where we
14 would get the money to do it. I think it's about
15 three-fifty a day. We may contract with somebody to
16 come in and use our facilities to -- to prepare
17 those lunches and -- breakfasts and lunches.

18 COMMISSIONER GANT: Is there a kitchen in
19 that classroom building down there?

20 MR. SKINNER: No. In the old 1955 school,
21 there's a kitchen, okay? But not in the five
22 classrooms or the gym part, no.

23 COMMISSIONER GANT: Will that kitchen in
24 the 55-year-old -- whatever it is -- old school be
25 available to you?

1 MR. SKINNER: Possibly, possibly. The --
2 the school district is, right now, in the process of
3 turning over the whole facility to the Village of
4 Columbus. And the deal has not been totally
5 finalized. But, then, we would be dealing with the
6 Village of Columbus on the five classrooms, the gym,
7 and the possible use of the kitchen.

8 COMMISSIONER GANT: But if you used that
9 kitchen, you would have to bring it up to code?

10 MR. SKINNER: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

11 MR. LONG: The Village has almost a
12 million dollars to bring that facility -- not up to
13 school code, but up to code. And they could be
14 easily -- use that on -- for the kitchen, to bring
15 that up to code. And we would provide money for --
16 for the free lunch and breakfast program.

17 And, also, through rentals; we expect to
18 pay the Village rentals. So the Village now has
19 no -- no secure rentals for any of those facilities,
20 except the possibility of a charter school.

21 COMMISSIONER GANT: At Page 36, you talk
22 about an ad hoc nominating committee to select
23 Governance Board members. Describe the makeup of
24 the ad hoc committee. Who's on it?

25 MR. LONG: The ad hoc committee would be

1 people selected from the community. It would be
2 chaired by a Board member, probably two Board
3 members, at least, in the ad hoc committee. And
4 there would be staff, and there would be students in
5 that ad hoc committee.

6 COMMISSIONER GANT: One question on the
7 budget. It refers to rental land and buildings.
8 You start out with -- at year one with approximately
9 \$45,000, go up to \$60K the second year, \$50K the
10 third year, then drop to \$20K, then back to \$60K in
11 the fifth year. I don't understand this --

12 MR. SKINNER: The landlord of the -- of
13 the property -- oh -- that we are going to build the
14 campus on, would -- I intend -- I think it'll be
15 Southern Luna County Economic and Community
16 Development Corporation will be the landlord. They
17 are sensitive to the fact that -- that -- of the
18 school budget, and they are willing to adjust their
19 rental income based on the -- the budget of the
20 school.

21 COMMISSIONER GANT: Is this landlord,
22 whoever it may be, willing to put in the total
23 infrastructure required?

24 MR. SKINNER: No, sir. No, there's not
25 money in the budget for that. There's money to put

1 in some port- -- if for some reason, we don't get
2 those, then we would be putting in some portables.
3 And our plan would be to put some portables there,
4 to begin with, use a couple of other facilities that
5 are close to the campus here, maybe using this
6 building during the day for some of our activities.

7 There's a church across the street that
8 has agreed to let us use a room there. And, so, we
9 would have, obviously, a limited infrastructure
10 starting out, but it would be State standards.

11 COMMISSIONER GANT: When I talk about
12 infrastructure, I talk about sewer, water,
13 electricity, all those.

14 MR. SKINNER: Oh, those things are there.
15 Yes, sir, they're already there.

16 COMMISSIONER GANT: In the ground?

17 MR. SKINNER: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

18 COMMISSIONER GANT: And, then, you talk
19 about, if you don't get that school building down
20 there, you possibly have different locations, and
21 you're going to spread the school out around the
22 community.

23 MR. SKINNER: We are -- we will do what we
24 need to do to get started here. And we are a poor
25 community. We don't -- drive around. There's no

1 shopping mall that's sitting vacant, okay? We have
2 to be creative.

3 We've selected this location because of
4 this facility that's here, the possible use of that.
5 There is a kitchen there. Maybe we can contract
6 with the Head Start people who are already working
7 here in this kitchen. Next door is a community
8 park. We could use that for our basketball and
9 volleyball activities.

10 There's a health center just right next
11 door to it, too. Those would be our nursing -- our
12 health facility that we would contract with. And,
13 so, we're using what we have. That's all we can do
14 is use what we have.

15 COMMISSIONER GANT: Madame Chair, one more
16 question that -- and it may not seem like a serious
17 question, but it is to me.

18 MR. SKINNER: Okay.

19 COMMISSIONER GANT: What's the difference
20 between children, students, being bussed 32 miles up
21 the road on a hard road -- very good road, by the
22 way -- compared to some others I've been on in the
23 state? What's the difference between those students
24 driving to Deming in a bus than the farm and ranch
25 students that spend an hour, two hours driving to

1 Deming? What's the difference?

2 MR. LONG: You're -- I grew up on a farm
3 in Wyoming. And we were all transported to the bus.
4 Also, in Oklahoma. In Oklahoma, I had to walk three
5 miles.

6 COMMISSIONER GANT: Speak up.

7 THE CHAIR: Please.

8 MR. LONG: Here, the difference is
9 two-and-a-half academic years. That's one
10 difference. They are -- if you take from the sixth
11 grade through the twelfth grade, the amount of time
12 they're on that bus, it comes to two-and-a-half
13 academic years. That's one of the differences.

14 Well, maybe the farmer -- but he's a
15 farmer. It's not a community. This is a community.
16 We're not a farm. We're not individuals. We are a
17 community. We have our own community values. We
18 have our culture.

19 Deming -- the school district is called
20 the Deming School District. This is -- the county
21 is called Luna County. So we want to have a
22 community, Columbus Community School, in our
23 community. We're a community. We're not a farmer.

24 COMMISSIONER GANT: You don't consider --
25 you don't think a rancher or a farmer considers

1 itself as a community?

2 MR. LONG: I guess they could probably
3 apply for a charter school -- I don't know -- if
4 there are enough in the area. It's different. A
5 rancher is a rancher. They live there -- it's a big
6 difference. How else would they go to school, you
7 know? Have their own home schooling? I -- that's
8 often -- that's often used -- we often hear that
9 concern, that farmers have to travel, too.

10 But there's not a community. We're a
11 community.

12 COMMISSIONER GANT: Thank you, Madame
13 Chair.

14 THE CHAIR: Thank you. I'd like to go to
15 Page 4 -- no. Before I do that, I noticed in your
16 Executive Summary, the student population cap is
17 identified as 395. In the application, it's 500,
18 and, in the facilities letter, it's 390. Can you
19 clarify to me why we're getting so many different
20 numbers?

21 MR. SKINNER: We made a mistake.

22 THE CHAIR: Who did?

23 MR. SKINNER: Well, Jack and I collaborate
24 on this. So I'm doing budget and facilities, and he
25 tends to do the -- more the curriculum or the

1 other -- the other parts of the application.

2 So, sometimes -- not very much, we hope --
3 but, sometimes, we make a mistake and don't
4 communicate with each other well enough.

5 But we were going to cap it at around 395.
6 And Jack and I had this debate back and forth.
7 The -- you -- you know, you get small schools
8 assistance when you stay under 400 now. And we
9 studied that, and we looked at it. And we finally
10 found out, really, it's not that much. The real
11 sweet spot is 200 students or around in that area,
12 or 175 students.

13 And I said, "Jack, we want to get the most
14 amount of money we can."

15 He says, "Bill, no, we want to serve the
16 community."

17 We want as many students coming to our
18 school as possible. And that's when we opened it up
19 to the 500. And it's just poor communication on our
20 part. But we want as many as we can coming.

21 MR. LONG: Another reason is that we
22 started with only the seventh grade, starting. Then
23 the school district decided that they're going to
24 take all the sixth-graders to Deming. That was --
25 this year is the first year in a number of years

1 that they've taken the sixth-graders to Deming.

2 Sixth-graders are roughly 90 -- 90
3 students. So we didn't -- we didn't get that number
4 into -- into the Executive Summary, because we wrote
5 it early on.

6 THE CHAIR: I would encourage you to
7 communicate with the PSCOC, because they have the
8 number wrong, and they also have the grade level
9 wrong; or, at least, according to what I read in the
10 application. So, if they're coming out here to look
11 at your facilities, they're looking at facilities
12 for 390 students, sixth through twelfth. And, as I
13 recall, your application is seventh through twelfth;
14 is that correct?

15 MR. LONG: It's sixth through twelfth, but
16 there is some places we didn't change, because the
17 change came in the middle of -- when we were doing
18 the application. We weren't able to get it all
19 coordinated, I guess.

20 THE CHAIR: Your application says seventh
21 through twelfth, and that can't change. That's what
22 the application is. It's -- that's -- so if this
23 school were approved, you would be approved for
24 seventh through twelfth, and the sixth-graders would
25 not be included.

1 Okay. On Page 4, I'm looking at your
2 goals. And I would like to just read to you the --
3 the information in Section D, goals related to the
4 school's mission. "The goals must be specific and
5 measurable based on identified indicators and
6 expected performance levels that can be measured by
7 reliable instruments. They must be ambitious, but
8 attainable. All goals must represent a time frame
9 by which achievement can be accomplished. Finally,
10 ensure that your measuring instrument is valid and
11 reliable. Formative or summative assessments...",
12 so forth and so on.

13 Then, I looked at your goals. And you
14 have four goals listed here, none of which are
15 measurable, none of which reference a time frame,
16 none of which reference a measuring instrument.
17 And, as far as I can see, none of them specifically
18 target academics.

19 So, in my view, you have no goals here at
20 all, because they don't meet the requirements.

21 MR. LONG: What page is that on?

22 THE CHAIR: Four.

23 MR. LONG: Oh. You're talking about the
24 Executive -- no. What page is that on?

25 THE CHAIR: Page 4.

1 MR. LONG: Four. Okay. As far as
2 academic goals, our understanding was, when we went
3 through the training process, that the academic
4 goals were going to be in -- established during the
5 contract period. So we didn't put -- and the other
6 two years, the division -- or the Commission -- put
7 all the -- had the academic goals in the
8 application.

9 This has no -- this application gives no
10 academic goals. We wrote this application with the
11 assumption -- and you know when assumptions
12 happen -- anyway, with the assumption that our
13 academic goals were going to be contracted. During
14 the contract process would be --

15 THE CHAIR: That's fine. It just struck
16 me that none of the wording even related to
17 academics. But I'm back to my original concern that
18 these goals don't meet the requirements as stated in
19 Section B.

20 All right. Could we move on to Page 5,
21 under -- oh, I just lost it -- under -- under E,
22 "Education Program and Curriculum." You say you
23 selected the STEM curriculum, and then go on to say
24 the second aspect of our curriculum is that of
25 multicultural, one-way dual language of English and

1 Spanish. I just -- I just felt it was interesting
2 that those were not at all identified in your
3 mission statement.

4 There was no reference to those at all.
5 And those are -- particularly your STEM and your
6 dual language are so specific in themselves, I would
7 have thought they would have been part of the
8 mission. Just an observation on my part.

9 Page 27, where you talk -- well, no, I
10 believe Mr. Gant's already talked about that.

11 Page 40, where you talk about the school
12 day. "Our school day is seven instructional hours.
13 There are 180 school days, 1,260 instructional
14 hours," but you don't break it out. I would have
15 appreciated knowing how that school day was going to
16 be structured. Do those seven hours include lunch?
17 Do they include the lunch period?

18 MR. LONG: No. No, those are academic
19 hours.

20 THE CHAIR: So what is the lunch hour? Is
21 it an hour?

22 MR. LONG: In the attachment, we have a
23 schedule of a school day.

24 THE CHAIR: So it would be 30 minutes for
25 lunch?

1 MR. LONG: Oh, yeah.

2 THE CHAIR: So your actual day is
3 seven-and-a-half hours long, the actual day?

4 MR. LONG: Yes, if you -- if that's -- if
5 you count the lunch. Seven hours would be just for
6 the academic part of school.

7 THE CHAIR: The instruction. And then
8 another half-hour for lunch?

9 MR. LONG: Right.

10 THE CHAIR: What time do you intend to
11 start school each day?

12 MR. LONG: We intend to start at 8:00.

13 THE CHAIR: And finish at?

14 MR. SKINNER: 4:00, is it? I'm not doing
15 the math in my head very well.

16 THE CHAIR: That's eight hours.

17 MR. SKINNER: 3:30, then.

18 THE CHAIR: Okay. So 3:30. And you will
19 function on a year-round schedule, roughly aligned
20 with the Deming Public -- Columbus Elementary School
21 schedule?

22 MR. SKINNER: Yes.

23 THE CHAIR: So could you describe that
24 year-round schedule for me, please?

25 MR. SKINNER: Like, when the vacations,

1 and --

2 THE CHAIR: Yes.

3 MR. SKINNER: Exactly, no. Summer is
4 about six weeks. You take a couple of weeks off at
5 Christmas; you take a week off at Thanksgiving.

6 There's a spring break time of two or three weeks.

7 And --

8 THE CHAIR: Well, you're just very
9 specific about your instructional hours. So I'm
10 trying to visualize how that year is going to look
11 that you're actually going to attain those
12 1,260 hours.

13 MR. SKINNER: What -- and I'm -- one of
14 the disadvantages that -- that Jack and I do have is
15 that is -- is we're -- we're not professional
16 educators. And, so, we -- we recognize that. We
17 recognize State statute says that members of a
18 community can apply for a charter school. And, so,
19 that's what we are. We know our community; we're a
20 part of our community. And we recognize the needs
21 here in our community.

22 Are we professional educators? No. No,
23 we're not professionally trained in that.

24 And, so -- but, we do recognize that we do
25 need to hire great people to -- to help us in that

1 area.

2 THE CHAIR: Let's go to Page 62, please.
3 I'm looking at "Evidence of Support." I see the
4 people who are here today. I hear what they have
5 had to say.

6 But your evidence of support in your
7 application totals 106. Now, I read in your
8 application that the population in Columbus is
9 approximately 1,600. You didn't give a number of
10 parents or families of potential students who live
11 in Palomas. So I'm just looking at the 1,600 in
12 Columbus. And 106 as a percentage of 1,600 is
13 .66 percent. To my mind, that is a very low
14 percentage.

15 MR. SKINNER: Well, I'm going to make it
16 even worse. The 106 includes Palomas, also.

17 THE CHAIR: It does include Palomas.

18 MR. SKINNER: Yes, ma'am. And there's
19 approximately 5,000 people that live in Palomas.
20 And, again, the majority of students in the
21 elementary school here are coming from Palomas, not
22 from Columbus.

23 I -- I -- I'm caught off guard a little
24 bit. We didn't recognize that there was a number
25 that we were supposed to hit as a target.

1 THE CHAIR: I don't believe there is a
2 number that you're supposed to hit as a target. I
3 am simply saying, to my personal mind, that's a
4 pretty low amount of support.

5 MR. SKINNER: Oh.

6 MR. LONG: That was done by a limited
7 survey. We didn't go out and collect signatures.
8 We didn't go house to house. We didn't go into the
9 memory distribution [verbatim] lines to get those
10 numbers. I don't remember how that was done,
11 because that was done last year.

12 But, it was a survey of a very limited
13 number of people. And those were the -- everyone in
14 that survey, that's what they -- that's what we had
15 in it. But it had nothing -- it doesn't relate
16 to -- to the population of Palomas or the
17 population -- we never tried to get to every single
18 person.

19 THE CHAIR: Oh. I wanted to look at
20 your -- your budget. And the number of teachers
21 that you have identified in that budget, it
22 definitely correlates to the number of teachers and
23 the teacher-pupil ratio that you identified in the
24 application. However, it shows -- if I could just
25 get this computer to cooperate -- it shows, in the

1 first year, seven-and-a-half regular education
2 teachers and one special education teacher, for a
3 total of eight-and-a-half.

4 Now, by my reckoning, with 210 students
5 that you project in the first year, you would need
6 every one of those students to hit your 14.24-to-1
7 teacher ratio, which says, to me, that special
8 education teacher is going to be a classroom
9 teacher, a full-time, in-the-classroom teacher,
10 rather than being able to move around and serve all
11 of the special education students in the school.

12 MR. LONG: We had her only a percentage of
13 the time.

14 THE CHAIR: I'm sorry?

15 MR. LONG: We had her only a percentage of
16 the time being a classroom teacher, not -- she had
17 to be a -- seven-tenths of the time, she had to be
18 dealing with the --

19 THE CHAIR: Had to be --

20 MR. LONG: Dealing with the education --
21 with the special education students.

22 THE CHAIR: And three, slash, ten -- who's
23 going to cover that classroom the rest of the time?

24 MR. LONG: I don't think we -- we didn't
25 schedule her as having her in the classroom.

1 THE CHAIR: Then you have a disconnect
2 between your pupil-teacher ratio and the number of
3 students that you expect?

4 MR. SKINNER: Where are you getting the
5 pupil-teacher ratio?

6 THE CHAIR: I believe it was off the first
7 page of your application.

8 MR. SKINNER: Okay. I've -- not
9 remembering it very well. I can't answer the
10 question very well. We -- we -- we budgeted -- I
11 don't know. We budgeted special education based on,
12 more or less, a 10-percent -- or a 12-percent, which
13 is what we have been told is a -- somewhat of a
14 state average. Twelve percent of your students will
15 be in special education.

16 So we were budgeting the special education
17 teacher for those students based on around a
18 12-percent figure. And that special education
19 student -- special education teacher -- would be for
20 the special education students. And I also put an
21 instructional assistant with that special education
22 teacher. If the other numbers don't work out, I --
23 I don't have an answer for that.

24 THE CHAIR: Okay. The student-teacher
25 ratio was on Page 3, under the "Educational Plan."

1 And you actually show, in year one, a 14.12 student
2 to one teacher. And your budget actually provides
3 for a 14.24. So you're not quite hitting what you
4 put in the plan.

5 But I still go back to, if your special
6 education teacher is assigned a classroom, and then
7 still has time to work with -- is supposed to work
8 with the special education students, when that
9 teacher is out of the classroom, who, then, covers
10 that classroom?

11 MR. LONG: We -- our -- our special
12 education students are integrated into all the
13 classrooms. And that teacher -- the teacher -- the
14 special education teacher's role is to work
15 throughout those seven classrooms as -- more or
16 less, as a consultant, and whatever else he or she
17 needs to do as a special education teacher.

18 But our students are integrated. And, so,
19 we felt that, since she's going to be working -- or
20 he's going to be working -- throughout all the
21 classrooms, I think that that should be -- should
22 take into consideration as part of the ratio.

23 THE CHAIR: But the ratio dictates that
24 that teacher be a full-time classroom teacher in
25 order to hit this ratio. And they can't do both.

1 So -- okay. Just so long as you know,
2 either you don't have enough teachers allocated, or
3 your special education teacher is not going to be
4 able to be a special education teacher, from the way
5 I'm looking at it.

6 I -- I believe those are all my questions.
7 Thank you very much. Anyone have any follow-up
8 questions? Commissioner Gant?

9 COMMISSIONER GANT: Madame Chair. I'm
10 looking at your class schedule here. Do you
11 consider the 30 minutes of assembly as instruction?
12 What instruction would be going on during that
13 30 minutes of assembly, from 8:00 to 8:30?

14 MR. LONG: As I say, our curriculum is
15 project-based. Part of the -- part of the assembly
16 is to allow the students to give presentations,
17 allow students to design and do the agenda. We
18 consider that part of -- part of the academics of
19 the school.

20 Even -- even -- we think that students
21 recognized, that's part of the issue -- I mean,
22 parts of the goal of assembly is to recognize
23 students for their work. And we believe that that's
24 part of instruction.

25 COMMISSIONER GANT: All right. The last

1 30 minutes, from 3:20 to 3:50, 30 minutes, what
2 happens during "Reflection"? What is that, as far
3 as instruction?

4 MR. LONG: Students and teachers discuss
5 how the projects are going, what's going in the
6 project, how it relates to the specific academics,
7 the specific courses, to think about it, to -- to
8 interact with it, to collaborate. Those types of
9 things, we believe, are part of instruction.

10 COMMISSIONER GANT: Thank you.

11 THE CHAIR: Commissioners, anything else?
12 All right. We thank you very much for your
13 presentation. You can stay there, if you would
14 like.

15 We are now finished with the question part
16 of the hearing. Any member of the public, including
17 the applicant, may submit written input following
18 this hearing. Written comments can be sent to the
19 Commission via the PED Web site -- please notice on
20 the sign-in table back there, there are little --
21 little half-sheets with the address on there, but I
22 will read it to you anyway just to be sure -- using
23 the link, www.PED.State.nm.us/Comments.

24 You will be directed to an e-mail format
25 in which to write your comment. Make sure you

1 identify the school you're commenting on in the
2 drop-down menu. Please note that any written input
3 must be received by no later than close of business
4 on the third business day following the hearing on
5 the application you wish to comment on.

6 However, since today is Wednesday,
7 Thursday, Friday -- the third day would fall on a
8 Saturday -- we have extended that until Monday, for
9 your comments.

10 We thank you all for your presentations
11 today. The Public Education Commission will meet in
12 Santa Fe on September 26 and 27, 2013, to render
13 their decision on approval or denial of this and
14 other new charter school applications.

15 The Commission will now recess this
16 hearing until 2:00 this afternoon in the community
17 of Anthony. This hearing is recessed. Thank you
18 all for being here.

19 (Proceedings in recess at 10:35 a.m.)
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1 BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
2 STATE OF NEW MEXICO

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5 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

6 I, Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR, CCR #219, Certified
7 Court Reporter in the State of New Mexico, do hereby
8 certify that the foregoing pages constitute a true
9 transcript of proceedings had before the said NEW
10 MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION, held in the State
11 of New Mexico, County of Luna in the matter therein
12 stated.

13 In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my
14 hand on August 30, 2013.

15
16
17 *Cynthia Chapman*

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