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BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION  
STATE OF NEW MEXICO

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS  
PUBLIC INPUT MEETING  
ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES ACADEMY  
August 22, 2012  
4:00 p.m.

Frank O'Brien Papen Community Center  
Las Cruces, 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:

MR. M. ANDREW GARRISON, Chair  
MS. CAROLYN SHEARMAN, Vice Chair  
MR. EUGENE GANT, Secretary  
MS. CARLA LOPEZ  
MR. VINCE BERGMAN  
MR. GILBERT PERALTA

STAFF:

MS. KELLY CALLAHAN, Director, Charter School Division  
MS. CORDELIA CHAVEZ  
MR. BRAD RICHARDSON  
MS. SHELLY CHERRIN  
MS. RACHEL STOFICK

1 THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, everyone. The  
2 Public Education Commission community input meeting,  
3 August 20th to 24th, 2012, is back in session. This  
4 meeting is being conducted pursuant to New Mexico  
5 Statutes Annotated, Title 22, Section 8B-6J, 2009.  
6 The purpose of these community input hearings that  
7 will be held from August 20 through August 24, 2012,  
8 is to obtain information from the applicant and to  
9 receive community input to assist the Public  
10 Education Commission in its decision whether to  
11 grant the proposed charter applications.

12 According to this section of the law, the  
13 Commission may appoint a subcommittee of no fewer  
14 than three members to hold a public hearing.  
15 According to law, these hearings are being  
16 transcribed by a professional court reporter. The  
17 total time allocated to each applicant is 90  
18 minutes, which will be timed to insure an equitable  
19 opportunity to present applications.

20 During the hearing, the Commission will  
21 allow for community input about the charter  
22 application. The time for public comment will be  
23 limited to 20 minutes. If you wish to speak on  
24 behalf of the applicant, please sign in at least  
25 15 minutes before the applicant's presentation.

1           And I see that a couple of folks arrived  
2 just now. I have the sheet up here. So if you're  
3 part of the local school district we have five  
4 minutes for you, anyway. So you have a set time  
5 separate from the comments, and you'll hear this  
6 again.

7           Please be sure that you indicate on the  
8 sign-up sheet whether you are here in opposition or  
9 support of the charter school. The Commission  
10 Chair, based on the number of requests to comment,  
11 will allocate time to those wishing to speak. If  
12 there are a large number of supporters or opponents,  
13 they are asked to select a speaker to represent  
14 common opinions. We will try to allocate an  
15 equitable amount of time to represent the community  
16 accurately.

17           The Commission will follow this process  
18 for each community input hearing: The Commission  
19 will ask each applicant or group to present here in  
20 front. They will be given 20 minutes to present  
21 their application in the manner they deem  
22 appropriate. The Commission will not accept any  
23 written documentation from the applicant, but the  
24 applicant may use exhibits to describe their school,  
25 if necessary.

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1           Following the applicant's presentation,  
2           the local school district representative or  
3           representatives will be given five minutes to  
4           comment on the proposed application. Subsequently,  
5           the Commission will allow 20 minutes for public  
6           comment, as I have described.

7           And, finally, the Commission will be given  
8           45 minutes to ask questions of the applicant.

9           I'd like to ask Secretary Gant if you  
10          would take roll call, please.

11          COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Peralta.

12          COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Here.

13          COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Bergman.

14          COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: Here.

15          COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Shearman.

16          COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Here.

17          COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Lopez.

18          COMMISSIONER LOPEZ: Here.

19          COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Garrison.

20          THE CHAIR: Here.

21          COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Gant.

22          You have a quorum.

23          THE CHAIR: Thank you, sir. Academic  
24          Opportunities Academy.

25          For the record, please state the name of

1 your school, the names of the founders of the  
2 school, and, of course, your name and title.

3 MR. CASAVANTES: Academic Opportunities  
4 Academy. My name is Mark Casavantes. I'm a  
5 founder. My last name is spelled  
6 C-A-S-A-V-A-N-T-E-S. Was there another item?

7 THE CHAIR: Name of the school. Got it.  
8 Name of the founders of the school.

9 MR. CASAVANTES: Oh. Wes Clarkson. He's  
10 still a founder of the school and still involved.  
11 The thing is he moved up to work at McCurdy School,  
12 the charter school up there. And he has bad knees  
13 and hips that are due for replacement. And I guess,  
14 in doing his move, he was not able to come down  
15 here.

16 THE CHAIR: So when -- when did he start  
17 doing work for McCurdy?

18 MR. CASAVANTES: This school year. He  
19 just -- has been in the process of moving. And I  
20 think he just completed it maybe a week -- a few  
21 weeks ago, I think.

22 THE CHAIR: Thank you for that  
23 information. You will have 20 minutes to present  
24 information about your application, and you may  
25 begin, sir.

1 MR. CASAVANTES: Okay. Well, I want to  
2 start with that the last meeting was very  
3 educational to me, okay? And I was -- I've been  
4 processing what was told to me the last -- the last  
5 meeting. And I am trying to see if the errors in my  
6 plan are fatal or not. That is the question that  
7 I'm asking myself.

8 I sought solutions to problems in  
9 education, and I think that you all saw that that  
10 was my intention in trying to -- in the writing of  
11 this application, and that I -- that we wrote a  
12 creative plan, and I thought it would address the  
13 needs of the students in New Mexico.

14 And I'm just going to summarize some of  
15 the errors. I think the errors in the plan, the  
16 budget, were some numbers did not coincide. The  
17 problem with tutors versus educational aides and to  
18 adjust the staff and budget on those items, and the  
19 community advisory group's role in governing -- or  
20 what their role is in the school. Community  
21 involvement in the various communities, partnership  
22 agreements and getting partner -- those agreements  
23 in writing. The selection of board members.

24 And then I guess the -- maybe the  
25 arrangement between the Texas entity and the

1 New Mexico entity, and that our goal would be to set  
2 it up similar to the way the other school in  
3 Las Cruces is doing it with a partnership.

4           Anyway, our plan is to have a main  
5 educational space with a principal leader in the  
6 center that is observing and guiding how the  
7 students and staff is working, and making the  
8 adjustments, providing corrections and so forth.  
9 It's a dynamic system. But it is geared for  
10 providing what each individual student needs at any  
11 given time. And it is a self-paced, individualized  
12 program based on how -- what they know and don't, to  
13 find their educational gaps, to fill those gaps, to  
14 find the next things that they need to learn in the  
15 scope and sequence, to -- and that the students have  
16 a choice in what they are able to work on.

17           Because the interests of, let's say, boys  
18 and girls are different. The people with different  
19 learning styles have different -- learn better under  
20 different situations. And so we want to provide  
21 those opportunities. And that we are using a  
22 curriculum mapping and database software that has  
23 some algorithms that select -- "You had -- you had  
24 errors here. You're going to get a choice of these  
25 assignments." And the students get to work on these



1 assignments on an individualized basis with some  
2 guidance.

3           And if they need -- and that we provide  
4 the different levels of guidance. Might be just,  
5 like I say, tutorial-type advice and guidance. And  
6 some students might need a lot more standards. In  
7 fact, we are thinking of having the tutors -- you  
8 know, close the gaps -- to have a tutor assigned to,  
9 let's say, the bottom 5 percent, another tutor  
10 assigned to the bottom 25 percent, and another tutor  
11 working on the 25 to 50 percent, to narrow -- and  
12 that they work with only those students in trying to  
13 narrow the gap.

14           And that a class will only have -- one of  
15 the things in the regular classroom is that  
16 students -- there are students in the classroom that  
17 don't need the instruction. They already know the  
18 material, and they're listening to it again and  
19 again. And then there's others that it's over their  
20 head. And then there is a group that it is  
21 appropriate for them.

22           And the thing is that what we're trying to  
23 do is have the group that's in this classroom be  
24 needing the same instruction, so that you're wasting  
25 nobody's time and being efficient with your staff so

1 that you get the most productivity in learning in a  
2 school year.

3 And I've also thought that some of the  
4 tutors might be, let us say, at a tutor station,  
5 where students go up there if they had a question.  
6 So depending on the situation, those that need to be  
7 kind of checked have tutors going to those students  
8 and monitoring and checking to see if they're making  
9 the progress; other students that can individually  
10 go up to a tutor and get help and so forth. And the  
11 plan was to -- is, like I said, to try to solve some  
12 of these problems that we have in education and to  
13 be efficient and effective.

14 And, then, some of the other components is  
15 a lot of students are disillusioned with the  
16 educational system. They -- they don't see that  
17 they can get a very good-paying job upon graduation.  
18 And so we have attempted to solve that problem  
19 through a dual-credit program in nursing and  
20 computer programming. And -- and that if we have a  
21 student that starts by the sixth gr- -- oh. But one  
22 of the things I think you had the question about  
23 what happens.

24 Below the sixth grade, our plan is that  
25 they kind of are doing -- are going to have

1 integration of both subjects. And they don't make a  
2 choice until the sixth grade. The sixth grade, they  
3 make a choice based on if they're going to go on the  
4 nursing route, or they're going to go for computer  
5 science -- computer programming. And we picked  
6 those areas because those are areas where we believe  
7 that, when a student graduates, that we could get  
8 them appropriate -- an appropriate job that they  
9 would be self-sustaining.

10 And -- and so that's -- that's one of the  
11 goals that we're trying to solve. And I think that  
12 if you -- if a student sees that there's opportunity  
13 for good employment upon graduation, they will --  
14 they would be interested in staying in school,  
15 attending school, because they see that there's a  
16 reason for attending. And I think I basic- -- that  
17 basically presents our plan.

18 THE CHAIR: Thank you, sir.

19 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

20 THE CHAIR: I ask that you yield the table  
21 briefly for the local school district. We have  
22 Superintendent Stan Rounds and Dr. Steven Sanchez.  
23 Good afternoon, gentlemen.

24 MR. ROUNDS: Good afternoon.

25 THE CHAIR: For the record, state your

1 name and the role you play at the local school  
2 district. And you will have five minutes to comment  
3 about the application for the Academic Opportunities  
4 Academy.

5 MR. ROUNDS: Very good. Thank you so  
6 much, and good afternoon. I'm Stan Rounds. I'm  
7 Superintendent of Schools here in Las Cruces. With  
8 me today is Associate Superintendent Steven Sanchez,  
9 Dr. Steven Sanchez, who's the Associate  
10 Superintendent for Teaching, Learning, and Research.  
11 Dr. Sanchez will give you some highlights within a  
12 document we will submit to you, both today and then  
13 by e-mail, so you'll have it for the record about  
14 our objections.

15 THE CHAIR: We won't accept any written  
16 documentation today. But surely, you have the time  
17 line to turn in the written work to our office.

18 MR. ROUNDS: Very good. I misunderstood  
19 that. Thank you so much. Basically, the District  
20 stands in opposition to this. As we look at the  
21 charter school laws on the books, the charter school  
22 law requires several things, including high rigor,  
23 high relevance, a requirement that what is brought  
24 before you is differentiated from what the school  
25 district is able to offer and afford our children.

1 And Dr. Sanchez will talk about the issues we have  
2 with this particular application, if I may.

3 THE CHAIR: Thank you, sir.

4 DR. SANCHEZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman,  
5 members of the Commission. Very briefly, the school  
6 proposes to develop an individualized prescription  
7 for students not meeting appropriate benchmarks to  
8 insure that students pass the State assessments,  
9 although no details are really provided how this  
10 will be accomplished in the application.

11 They've established an attendance marker  
12 of 99.5 percent and note that parents will sign  
13 attendance contracts. The contract -- contacted  
14 regularly by school personnel, and that continued  
15 unexcused absences will result in the removal of the  
16 student from the charter school and removing them to  
17 the public school setting. Perhaps this is the most  
18 troubling comment made in the proposal.

19 The school -- the application identifies  
20 four -- four focus areas by grade level that are  
21 common to the school programs already in existence  
22 in Las Cruces Public Schools; for example, music in  
23 the lower grades, dual language, career academies,  
24 with little detail on how the proposed instructional  
25 model is different from what is already offered to

1 students in Las Cruces; and notably, that ELL  
2 students may be placed on a modified graduation plan  
3 that may not be as rigorous as the one proposed for  
4 other students.

5 This is identified on Page 23, and perhaps  
6 only meets minimum State requirements; whereas,  
7 other students will be required to meet much higher  
8 standards.

9 Tutors working with certified teachers --  
10 the application identifies two per teacher -- will  
11 provide direct instruction to students in meeting  
12 the goals outlined in their individualized plan.  
13 And little detail, including research data or past  
14 performance data, is provided as to why this  
15 approach is an answer to reversing the achievement  
16 gap and engaging high expectations for student  
17 achievement on the NMSBA, as proposed.

18 There is documentation -- has  
19 documenta- -- documented the experience of the  
20 founders with impressive credentials. And I was  
21 impressed with their credentials; yet there is no  
22 mention of success, student achievement data in  
23 achieving the goals, as articulated in this proposal  
24 as part of that narrative.

25 Another thing that we noted is replacing

1 board membership from nominations of existing board  
2 members, not allowing parents or other community  
3 members to serve on the board, perhaps. This  
4 appears to be somewhat contradictory to the  
5 community inclusiveness addressed in prior sections  
6 of the application.

7 The application, on Page 50, notes that  
8 enrollment will be based on the size of the building  
9 to be leased. While the founders mention that they  
10 have engaged in a community study of available  
11 properties, there is no discussion of whether  
12 available properties meet all applicable occupancy  
13 standards, as required by the State of New Mexico,  
14 that can potentially house the charter school.

15 The Commission should explore this issue  
16 in depth, as another charter school in our community  
17 is experiencing great difficulty in finding suitable  
18 quarters to house their school.

19 They also talk about establishing a high  
20 school program; yet there is no discussion of State  
21 and Federal requirements to employ highly-qualified  
22 teachers in the various subject areas proposed. The  
23 application notes seven teachers from Grades 1  
24 through 12, complemented by tutors in various  
25 subject areas; no mention of qualified elementary

1 teachers; market availability for multiply-certified  
2 secondary teachers teaching in the elementary  
3 setting; one ESL teacher, when the proposal notes  
4 that all students will be placed in the  
5 dual-language program that prepares students to be  
6 proficient in three languages.

7 The proposal notes that it will serve all  
8 segments of our diverse community; yet proposes to  
9 not provide transportation. Personally, this was a  
10 little troubling to me. This calls into question  
11 how this limits the population to be served, since  
12 many parents in impoverished areas are not able to  
13 transport their students across the city based on  
14 the location of the school, once it's established.

15 Cost-cutting measures, identified in the  
16 proposal on Page 59, during start-up are troubling  
17 and need to be further explored by the Commission to  
18 insure that the school has the capacity to open its  
19 doors and meet the learning expectations identified  
20 in the charter application. And, lastly, the  
21 proposal asks the founders --

22 MS. CHAVEZ: Mr. Chairman, time is up.

23 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much,  
24 Superintendent Rounds and Dr. Sanchez. We  
25 appreciate your attendance today, and I assure you



1 we will read the rest of that when it gets turned  
2 in.

3 MR. ROUNDS: Thank you, sir.

4 THE CHAIR: So if that seemed aggressive,  
5 she's been on the time clock all day long. She's  
6 put me in time-out twice. So I don't know what to  
7 do with Cordy.

8 MR. ROUNDS: That's fine.

9 THE CHAIR: Just obey her; that's what  
10 I've decided.

11 MS. CALLAHAN: That's always wise.

12 THE CHAIR: We will now hear public  
13 comment from the community of Las Cruces. And the  
14 first name I have is Tita Brewster -- or Tita?

15 MS. BREWSTER: Yes, correct.

16 THE CHAIR: Okay. So you will have -- I'm  
17 going to give four minutes for each individual  
18 speaker to comment on the application. Good  
19 afternoon.

20 MS. BREWSTER: Good afternoon. Thank you  
21 very much for -- for allowing me to speak today.

22 I've known Mark Casavantes for over  
23 40 years. And throughout this time, I found him to  
24 be extremely intelligent and creative. And I know  
25 what he's trying to do is in the best interests of

1 our children.

2 My family has been here in the Mesilla  
3 Valley for over five generations, and I know that,  
4 without pointing fingers, everyone here will admit  
5 that there are some discrepancies in how our  
6 children are learning, how they're able to learn.  
7 And they all need individual -- because of the way  
8 evolution is in teaching and learning, I think that  
9 someone with a creative idea to help those children  
10 who otherwise might not get help is -- it's a --  
11 it's a no-brainer. It's something that we should do  
12 and look at.

13 And Mark mentioned -- I heard a few  
14 minutes ago about his application perhaps having  
15 some flaws. Hopefully, they're not fatal flaws.  
16 Hopefully, they can work -- he can work within the  
17 community to meet the requirements that will be  
18 necessary. Some comes from lack of information.  
19 But I'm sure, and I hope, that you will listen and  
20 help put this together to where this will accomplish  
21 the needs of the most important people around here,  
22 and that -- those are the needs of our children.

23 And thank you again for your help. But  
24 please see what we can do about meeting the needs of  
25 everyone and help us meet the requirements. I have

1 offered to work on Mark's board. I've worked on  
2 several boards locally: Jardín de los Niños; Big  
3 Brothers and Big Sisters. Our son is 43 years old  
4 now, so I have the time, and I retired. So let's  
5 see what we can do to help out. Thank you all for  
6 all the hard work that you do. Thank you.

7 THE CHAIR: Thank you for your comments.  
8 Bonnie Burn. Good afternoon.

9 MS. BURN: Good afternoon. I'm sorry I'm  
10 not as well prepared as Mr. Rounds and Dr. Sanchez.  
11 But I believe, on the bit of information I heard  
12 here, that the concerns about the charter school  
13 that I came with may have been reinforced.

14 I am very concerned about charter schools  
15 and the for-profit goals that they have. I'm  
16 concerned also about the students that will be  
17 admitted. And I'm concerned that, in this school  
18 district in the last two years, we have had at least  
19 two new charter schools: The American School  
20 [verbatim], which is supposed to be teaching  
21 English, which I think the public schools does very  
22 well.

23 We've just completed a study in 2011, and  
24 the literature search that we did demonstrated that  
25 sometimes there are significant gains for the

1 children; but other times, the charter school  
2 results are the same as the public schools. So  
3 whether or not we have another public charter  
4 school, I don't know that it's going to make a great  
5 deal of difference.

6 The League supports publication, and we  
7 also support alternatives for children who are  
8 having difficulty. The Las Cruces Public Schools  
9 does have an alternative high school, and they have  
10 several good charter schools. So I believe that  
11 this particular proposal would need to be really  
12 investigated a little further before the League  
13 would support it. Thank you very much.

14 THE CHAIR: Thank you for your comments.  
15 John Griffith.

16 MR. GRIFFITH: Good afternoon.

17 THE CHAIR: Good afternoon.

18 MR. GRIFFITH: I feel privileged to be  
19 here today as part of a community effort to meet the  
20 needs of our students. I think it's just terrific  
21 that there is this aspect of our process where  
22 people can come forward with a lot of creativity and  
23 ideas about how to do things differently or better  
24 or in a new way. And I read his proposal, and I was  
25 impressed by -- I think someone mentioned the

1 creativity involved.

2 I think we're in a time when there's need  
3 for creativity in education. And, personally, my  
4 background is I'm working with online course design,  
5 and I'm aware of all the changes that are coming  
6 along because of the potentials with that  
7 technology. So I'm really happy to see this going  
8 on, that your Commission has a chance to hear these  
9 proposals and that the school district is here and  
10 that they get a chance to hear these proposals.

11 Personally, I'm not in a position to  
12 evaluate what the gentleman has brought forward as  
13 far as viability goes. I was a little surprised  
14 that he had four schools. I don't know if he still  
15 is applying for four. I thought that was a little  
16 bit ambitious. And I would hope that someone with  
17 this much drive and innovation might have an  
18 opportunity to exercise his -- his goals and work on  
19 this in maybe a limited fashion, where he could  
20 start out in a small school of some kind, someplace  
21 that really desperately needs his help, and so that  
22 he might have an opportunity to see what he could do  
23 with this.

24 But other than that, I can't really  
25 comment on his particular proposal. Just happy, as

1 I said earlier, that you guys are undertaking these  
2 questions. I want to say that some people have said  
3 that private schools are for-profit schools, and  
4 that that's a bad thing. I'm not representing the  
5 Chamber of Commerce or anything. But I don't see  
6 anything wrong with an undertaking that makes a  
7 profit in the United States. I don't think we  
8 consider that to be a pejorative right out of the  
9 gate.

10 And I sincerely doubt that this gentleman  
11 is motivated because he's trying to get rich quick.  
12 So I would question any -- any concerns that --  
13 because this is a private school, and there might be  
14 a profit involved, that we need to be concerned or  
15 worried about it. So I'm actually a little  
16 concerned that the League would have that as a  
17 pejorative right out of the gate. I know that there  
18 are outfits out -- there.

19 MS. CHAVEZ: Mr. Chairman, time is up.

20 MR. GRIFFITH: Okay. Thank you.

21 MS. CHAVEZ: Also, Mr. Chairman, there is  
22 one individual in the audience that would like to  
23 sign up that did not get the opportunity to sign up.

24 THE CHAIR: I will allow that. Federica  
25 Lanza.

1 MS. LANZA: Thank you.

2 THE CHAIR: Here's the sign-in sheet.

3 MS. LANZA: I came to the meeting mostly  
4 to learn more about the proposed charter school. I  
5 know the public school does a great job. And I hope  
6 that these meetings will start something else in  
7 terms of thinking about other ways to support  
8 children in public school.

9 As a mom, I like the idea of having  
10 options. And, as a mom, I have one very bright  
11 child who is not gifted, but bright, who gets bored  
12 easily in the classroom. I'd like to have the  
13 opportunity to have my child in a place where he can  
14 learn at his own pace and where he can be stimulated  
15 and have his needs met.

16 So, again, I don't know much about this  
17 proposal, and that's why I'm here. But, again -- I,  
18 as a mom, I like to have the opportunity to have  
19 options.

20 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Colleen  
21 M. Blackman?

22 MS. BLACKMAN: I just retired from the  
23 Las Cruces Public School System a year ago, and I  
24 have been a teacher at Doña Ana Branch, San Andres,  
25 Vista Middle School, Lynn Middle School, and worked

1 as a gifted facilitator for 17 years. And I still  
2 want to continue my interest in helping students  
3 learn.

4 And, overall, the 30 years that I have  
5 taught, as we all know, children need to feel  
6 important. I believe that all children have an area  
7 that they have to search for for expertise. And I  
8 was really happy to see and hear about your  
9 proposal.

10 They have to have -- feel like they're  
11 engaged and can advance with the ungraded system,  
12 like, if it's science or English or whatever. Then  
13 that will keep them motivated. And I think then, we  
14 could possibly raise our retention level. But I  
15 would like to see -- I agree with Stan and Steven  
16 Sanchez about how I would like to see the entire  
17 proposal. And I think that, you know, we need to  
18 see and look at more.

19 I am concerned about the profit as well,  
20 because we're losing the kids because they're not  
21 motivated. And I believe in the technology  
22 component. I bought myself a tablet, and I'm  
23 working, and I'm learning, too, because we've got to  
24 stay ahead of learning through technology and  
25 motivating the child in their area of expertise.



1 And it's our job as teachers and parents to find  
2 that area that they like and can thrive in.

3 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. That  
4 concludes our public comments section. We will  
5 continue with the Public Education Commission  
6 questions for the applicant. The Chair will open up  
7 the floor for questions. Commissioner Gant.

8 COMMISSIONER GANT: Mr. Chair, members,  
9 audience. Sir, we have a couple of questions. And  
10 as you know, we went through this this morning --

11 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

12 COMMISSIONER GANT: -- over at Deming.  
13 And you'll probably hear a lot of the same  
14 questions.

15 MR. CASAVANTES: I understand.

16 COMMISSIONER GANT: Don't feel like we're  
17 beating on you. But maybe we are. I assume you  
18 know this, but I'm going to say it anyway. I am not  
19 sure why we need another charter school. We have  
20 eleven high schools -- and part of your school is  
21 one through twelve -- four comprehensive; one early  
22 college high school; one traditional high school  
23 that's an alternative high school that goes from  
24 9:00 in the morning to 9:00 at night; three charter  
25 high schools; Holy Cross High School; Mesilla Valley

1 Christian High School; 37 elementary schools,  
2 traditional, private, and charter; and 12 middle  
3 schools, traditional, private, and charter.

4 So parents in this district, really, no  
5 larger than this community is, right around 100K --  
6 around 100,000 -- they really have a lot to choose  
7 from. So I'm not sure what you can bring to the  
8 table that parents can't find, students can't find  
9 out there to satisfy their needs for education.

10 Can you -- I assume you know what goes on  
11 in these -- all these schools. Can you tell me what  
12 is so different from yours -- so completely  
13 different that we should authorize this school?

14 MR. CASAVANTES: I understand your point.  
15 I -- I don't think that all of the components -- I  
16 mean, you can find components that are available  
17 elsewhere. But I don't think you find a -- the --  
18 the collection of items in one plan like in our  
19 plan.

20 And then, also, I just want to address  
21 some of the things that -- we are a nonprofit  
22 501(c)(3), and so we're a nonprofit. Those that  
23 were thinking that we were a profit organization.

24 And then as far as identifying facilities,  
25 we're using a firm called Insight that has

1 identified eleven facilities that are meeting our  
2 criteria in Las Cruces.

3 And -- and the -- one of the things, too,  
4 was that this is the -- that this year, there was no  
5 start-up funds, and there was no indication of how  
6 we could resolve that issue. You know, I brought up  
7 that I have found an entity that -- that would loan  
8 us \$1.5 million to start up our schools. But we're  
9 not to have any loans, so -- not to be in any debt.  
10 So, therefore, we're going to seek grants to get  
11 this school started.

12 And, you know, it's one of those things  
13 that you cannot foretell how much -- how much grant  
14 funding you're going to -- you're going to be  
15 receiving. But we will attempt to get all the funds  
16 necessary to open these schools.

17 And the transportation issue, from what I  
18 understand, that those are -- that can be achieved  
19 through a federal grant and not through New Mexico,  
20 and that's why it wasn't in the application.

21 And -- and that -- the students that  
22 graduate from any of these areas are not -- not  
23 graduating with a career that they can be  
24 self-sustaining. They may have some individuals  
25 that are in dual credit and so forth, but not an

1 attempt for every student that comes to us to  
2 graduate -- if they enter the sixth grade with us,  
3 to complete a -- an associate's degree by the time  
4 they graduate. And we're seeking to do this, not to  
5 the gifted and talented and the best students in the  
6 schools, but to the average students that would come  
7 to us.

8 COMMISSIONER GANT: This morning, sir, you  
9 mentioned -- and I just jotted a note with lots of  
10 question marks -- you said you were going to have  
11 sixth-grade students enrolling in college courses  
12 for dual enrollment.

13 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

14 COMMISSIONER GANT: Is that correct?

15 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

16 COMMISSIONER GANT: Do you think a  
17 sixth-grader is prepared academically and socially  
18 and maturely to go out on a college campus and sit  
19 in a classroom?

20 MR. CASAVANTES: I'm not proposing that  
21 they be in the college classroom. I believe that --  
22 you know, that the -- that the courses we're hoping  
23 to bring would be online courses with a -- a nurse  
24 and computer programmer to -- and we're going to be  
25 integrating computer programming and nursing

1 starting in the first grade. And we plan to  
2 integrate this with the standards, and so that, by  
3 the time our students get to the sixth grade, they  
4 have a lot more background and knowledge about  
5 nursing and computer programming than students of an  
6 older age.

7 COMMISSIONER GANT: Do you think you're  
8 going to have a sixth-grader --

9 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

10 COMMISSIONER GANT: -- ready to have --  
11 with all the math and science required to take these  
12 online courses so they can be very successful? Once  
13 they fail an online course, you may not get them  
14 back.

15 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir. One of the  
16 things is that we -- is that we were intending to  
17 have one course of the sixth grade, okay, like an  
18 Introduction to Nursing or an Introduction to  
19 Computer Programming, where we're not planning, in  
20 the sixth grade, to have a class like pre-calculus  
21 or calculus and so forth. But I believe that there  
22 are courses that we can prepare students for that  
23 they would be successful in the sixth grade.

24 And I'm saying, like, the Introduction to  
25 Nursing and Introduction to Computer Programming.

1           COMMISSIONER GANT: All right. You just  
2 said you believe there's courses out there. Have  
3 you talked to any universities or community  
4 colleges, and do you have --

5           MR. CASAVANTES: Yes.

6           COMMISSIONER GANT: It's not in the -- in  
7 the application, so I don't know what courses you're  
8 talking about. I don't know what universities or  
9 community colleges are offering these. Can you give  
10 me one example?

11           MR. CASAVANTES: Almost every major has a  
12 course that's an introduction into the field:  
13 Introduction to Engineering, Introduction to  
14 Nursing, Intro- -- and so they -- and those courses  
15 are usually not as rigorous as other courses. And I  
16 mentioned at the other meeting in Deming that we  
17 have talked to New Mexico State University, and  
18 they -- they would not want us to do this initially.  
19 We would have to earn the ability to -- to do it in  
20 the sixth grade.

21           They would consider that with some  
22 students in the freshman year that pass some tests  
23 that they could start this. And then we would --  
24 and then after we have proven that they can be  
25 successful, they would be -- they would consider

1 possibly having us start sooner.

2 COMMISSIONER GANT: All right. Moving on  
3 to your budget. You have, on Function Code 1000,  
4 Object Code 51100, Job Class 1611, you talk about  
5 instructional assistants.

6 MR. CASAVANTES: Uh-huh.

7 COMMISSIONER GANT: And then we talked  
8 this morning about tutors.

9 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

10 COMMISSIONER GANT: Are these -- you know,  
11 it was kind of confusing after the whole thing was  
12 talked about. Are these tutors the instructional  
13 assistants? Yes or no?

14 MR. CASAVANTES: They're the instructional  
15 assistants, yes.

16 COMMISSIONER GANT: And, therefore,  
17 they're going to have to be -- meet the qual- --

18 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

19 COMMISSIONER GANT: -- qualifications for  
20 the State of New Mexico?

21 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

22 COMMISSIONER GANT: And do you think you  
23 can find -- I can't remember how many were in there.

24 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, we will have to  
25 adjust the staffing number and budget, because we

1 would not be able to have the same number of staff  
2 using the instructional aides as we could when we  
3 were planning to use tutors.

4 COMMISSIONER GANT: Well, as I said this  
5 morning, and I believe it was said by Commissioner  
6 Shearman, that what we see in front of us --

7 MR. CASAVANTES: I understand.

8 COMMISSIONER GANT: -- whether it's paper  
9 or computer is what you're voted on; not promises to  
10 do something different down the road.

11 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

12 COMMISSIONER GANT: Again, Function Area  
13 2100, Object Code 51100, Job Class 1211 to 1511;  
14 these are the professional services required by  
15 students in special needs. And you've said that, in  
16 your application, that you were going to contract  
17 these out with a company in Tucson, Arizona. But  
18 now you said this morning you'll find somebody in  
19 the state of New Mexico to do it.

20 Well -- but then in the same budget, you  
21 don't have any money in the budget line to contract  
22 these. So you haven't put any money in, whether  
23 it's salaried or contract. And I can't find it.

24 MR. CASAVANTES: You can't find it? Well,  
25 in my comments, I will locate that information and



1 forward it to you.

2 COMMISSIONER GANT: Let's go to land and  
3 buildings, if you will.

4 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

5 COMMISSIONER GANT: That's Function 2600.  
6 You talked earlier about that you worked with this  
7 company -- I -- the name escapes me.

8 MR. CASAVANTES: Insight.

9 COMMISSIONER GANT: Insight. Did they  
10 tell you how much it was going to cost to set up a  
11 facility lease, how much per square feet for a lease  
12 it's going to cost in the City of Las Cruces?

13 MR. CASAVANTES: They're aware of the  
14 budget figure we have in there, and they're going to  
15 do their best to try to meet that target.

16 COMMISSIONER GANT: Sir, the new school  
17 that's opening up, New America, is \$14 per square  
18 foot. And you have a very large number, I believe,  
19 that you want to have set up for. And you want to  
20 have multiple buildings; right? Is that correct?

21 MR. CASAVANTES: In one site or -- each  
22 site will just have one building.

23 COMMISSIONER GANT: How many sites are you  
24 planning?

25 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, we have applied at

1 five sites.

2 COMMISSIONER GANT: No. In Las Cruces, is  
3 it going to be one building?

4 MR. CASAVANTES: One building.

5 COMMISSIONER GANT: A rather large  
6 building?

7 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

8 COMMISSIONER GANT: And do you plan for  
9 any renovation?

10 MR. CASAVANTES: We are working to try to  
11 find the facilities that do not require a lot of  
12 renovation.

13 COMMISSIONER GANT: Well, I wish you luck  
14 in that one. But being from here for 32 years, I  
15 think you're going to find it very hard to find a  
16 building that will meet E-Occupancy that does not  
17 need to be renovated.

18 Twenty six hundred, 54311 through 54416,  
19 is the budget line for maintenance and repairs and  
20 utilities. Absolutely zero in the budget. Please  
21 explain to the Commissioners and to the community  
22 why -- I mean, this is a very big cost, one that  
23 keeps going up every year. So what's your plans to  
24 cover that? It's not in the budget.

25 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, we do feel that

1 there -- like I mentioned earlier, there are some  
2 items where I do think that we could re- -- and I  
3 know that you said once, you have a budget, it's  
4 pretty much fixed. But the price of tablet  
5 computers has gone down. And some of the things --  
6 some other aspects of our budget, let's say, field  
7 trips and some other things might have to be  
8 curtailed to -- to -- to provide more money towards  
9 facilities.

10 COMMISSIONER GANT: Reference the budget  
11 and salaries and all that type of information, this  
12 morning you stated that you're going to find  
13 principals for all five locations. So we won't go  
14 down that road again.

15 MR. CASAVANTES: Okay.

16 COMMISSIONER GANT: All right? Although  
17 you did say that you and your -- I back up. That  
18 raises a question.

19 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

20 COMMISSIONER GANT: Since your cofounder  
21 is no longer -- is he still working for this one?

22 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes. Yes, sir. He will  
23 return.

24 COMMISSIONER GANT: So he's going to be  
25 working for both McCurdy and this one?

1 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir. And he will  
2 return here in the next school year.

3 COMMISSIONER GANT: So what is he doing  
4 for McCurdy, if I may ask?

5 MR. CASAVANTES: He is a math teacher.

6 COMMISSIONER GANT: Okay. And I need to  
7 ask this question. Maybe it's out of line. And,  
8 Kelly, you tell me if I'm out of line, please. You  
9 mentioned this morning that once you set up the  
10 schools with the proper principals and they are  
11 properly trained, that you and your cofounder were  
12 going to back out.

13 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

14 COMMISSIONER GANT: Are you telling me  
15 that there will be no financial remuneration for you  
16 and your cofounder once you back out?

17 MR. CASAVANTES: We are planning to --  
18 while we are working in the schools, we'll be paid  
19 as teachers. And then when we pull out, we are  
20 looking at some options for how we would be  
21 compensated. But it appears, in the New Mexico  
22 system, there is either not much money available, or  
23 it's difficult and so forth, and that we may have to  
24 depend on the Texas applications and our Texas  
25 charter schools for our compensation.

1                   COMMISSIONER GANT:   Okay.   Dr. Sanchez  
2   already brought up one of the problems I had with  
3   this -- I'm going to bring this one up again,  
4   because this really has bothered me all along with  
5   your application, in that I had a strong feeling  
6   that you were going to have one centralized board  
7   for all five schools.   And that's -- I guess that's  
8   what you were talking about when you were talking  
9   about the New Mexico -- it's called "the New Mexico  
10  board."   Was that the -- the gist of what you were  
11  doing?

12                   MR. CASAVANTES:   You know, I was -- I had  
13  a difficulty trying to find out what was acceptable  
14  to New Mexico, as far as what they -- what was -- if  
15  we were to have a board for each campus or a  
16  New Mexico board, or that if we had a board for each  
17  campus, that we had representatives from each  
18  individual campus make up a New Mexico board.

19                   And it wasn't, I think, until recently  
20  that I -- my understanding is that each school would  
21  require its own independent board, and it would have  
22  to have five members.

23                   But I was -- when -- I brought this  
24  question up, and I had not received an answer in  
25  time for the application to be -- when it was turned

1 in.

2 COMMISSIONER GANT: And who did you bring  
3 that up to?

4 MR. CASAVANTES: I can't recall. But I  
5 have brought -- I had brought it up.

6 COMMISSIONER GANT: And I understand that  
7 you're a very experienced individual, as well as  
8 your cofounder. So going to the State statutes,  
9 22-8 NMSA, 1976 -- '78 -- it's right there, clear as  
10 it can be, what a school board and a school  
11 requires. So, you know, that's why I raise this  
12 question, because it leaves me in doubt as to -- as  
13 if this charter or this series of charter schools,  
14 that the governance boards and the direction they're  
15 taking -- you're taking with the governance boards,  
16 really, whether you have an understanding of what a  
17 governance board is and how it's supposed to  
18 function and the New Mexico Open Meetings Act. To  
19 me, it seems very strange to have -- they don't even  
20 do that with the State's colleges and universities.  
21 Each one of them has its own board of regents, you  
22 know. To have one single board spread out across  
23 five locations from Carlsbad to Deming, Alamogordo,  
24 Cruces, and Anthony, wasn't logical to me.

25 Explain to the Commissioners and the

1 community, please, your concept of the open  
2 architecture.

3 MR. CASAVANTES: Okay. That -- there is  
4 going to be a main space similar to -- like this --  
5 let's say this room, where students would be  
6 working. And then around the perimeter of this  
7 room -- I think I have a diagram, but this may not  
8 be the most -- what do you call it?

9 MR. GANT: Sir, would you just explain?  
10 Maybe you have it up there. I don't --

11 MR. CASAVANTES: Okay. That the  
12 classrooms would be surrounding the main academic  
13 space, with the lead teacher in the middle, and that  
14 the kids that needed to be instructed in a  
15 particular concept would be pulled out to these  
16 conference-room-style classes. And so the only  
17 students that are in the class are students that  
18 need that instruction.

19 Then the traditional classroom, when you  
20 have 30 kids or 24 or whatever kids in a classroom,  
21 they -- some of them have already learned the  
22 material and are wasting their time, and there's  
23 others that maybe it's over their head. This way,  
24 the class that you pull out -- and the other thing  
25 is that we -- the teacher has the ability to take

1 the amount of time necessary to teach these students  
2 successfully.

3 There's no bell schedule, so that the  
4 students can be taught and -- to conclusion each  
5 concept before they're released, or the teacher can  
6 even release some of the students once they find  
7 that they are capable of the material. They can be  
8 released to the main academic space to continue  
9 their work, and the ones that need further  
10 instruction are kept in the classroom until they  
11 are -- they have had all the instruction that's  
12 necessary for them to be successful.

13 COMMISSIONER GANT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.  
14 No more questions at this time.

15 COMMISSIONER LOPEZ: Mr. Chair?

16 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner Gant.  
17 Commissioner Lopez.

18 COMMISSIONER LOPEZ: I have some  
19 follow-up. You said that you -- you and the other  
20 founder would serve as teachers, and then you would  
21 pull out, and you would figure out some way of being  
22 compensated. What would you be compensated for?  
23 What would you be doing at that point?

24 MR. CASAVANTES: Are you talking about  
25 after we're not there?



1 COMMISSIONER GANT: Yes.

2 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, like I said, it  
3 appears that, in New Mexico, it's very difficult  
4 for -- for us to be compensated. And we're planning  
5 to start the Texas application in November. And so  
6 that we are going to figure that we are probably  
7 going to have to be compensated through the Texas  
8 charters.

9 COMMISSIONER LOPEZ: Thank you.

10 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner Lopez.  
11 Commissioner Bergman, and then Commissioner  
12 Shearman.

13 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: Thanks. Thank you,  
14 Mr. Chair. On Page 23 of your application, I want  
15 to explore a statement that you made there. And it  
16 reads -- it's in the third paragraph. "Our  
17 development plan is to begin the first year with  
18 enough lessons and learning activities in our  
19 database to meet the needs of our students for the  
20 first four months of the first school year."

21 So you're going to start a school year  
22 with only four months of curriculum and lesson  
23 plans. And you do say, in the next sentence, that,  
24 "As the year progresses, our teachers will be  
25 assigned to create additional learning activities."

1 I don't -- I'm not a teacher, but I think  
2 teachers are pretty busy. I'm not sure how they can  
3 teach classes and also be developing another five  
4 months of curriculum. Can you address that issue  
5 for me?

6 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir. Okay. Well,  
7 currently, Wes is working on developing the  
8 curriculum. And we changed our idea to have a  
9 single strand all the way through the year, and  
10 then -- and then start a second strand and so forth  
11 until we eventually have all the -- enough strands  
12 with enough variety. But -- so we have modified  
13 that from what we wrote in the application. We feel  
14 that's better to do one strand all the way through  
15 instead of do four months.

16 Let's see. Refresh me on the other  
17 questions.

18 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: I was just -- that  
19 was it.

20 MR. CASAVANTES: Oh, about the teachers  
21 wri- --

22 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: Then the teachers  
23 would be doing that -- in addition to their  
24 teaching, they would be doing the next five months.  
25 That's what the next sentence says.

1 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes. We are planning on  
2 hiring our teachers on a longer school year than the  
3 traditional -- traditional teacher, so that we can  
4 have them write curriculum during that time.

5 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: That's an  
6 interesting point. Later, you do state in there  
7 that you're going to ask your teachers to work  
8 during the summer to work on the next year's stuff.  
9 So it almost sounds like your teachers are going to  
10 be on an annual contract to --

11 MR. CASAVANTES: We're looking at about  
12 the same number of days as a central office person  
13 would work.

14 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: Okay. I think  
15 that's all I have, Mr. Chairman.

16 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner  
17 Bergman. Commissioner Shearman.

18 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Thank you. Good  
19 afternoon.

20 MR. CASAVANTES: Good afternoon.

21 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: This morning you  
22 and I talked a lot about student goals.

23 MR. CASAVANTES: Uh-huh.

24 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: And I think I  
25 said -- I know I did at the time -- that not only

1 are these goals important to the application in this  
2 phase, where we're looking at either approving the  
3 school or otherwise; but, should the school be  
4 approved, then these goals will come back with you  
5 at renewal, so that we may look at the goals and  
6 say, "Did you get it done, or didn't you?"

7 And so that's why I really look at goals.  
8 So I want to go back over those, even though we did  
9 it this morning.

10 MR. CASAVANTES: Uh-huh. Yes, ma'am.

11 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: On Page 11 of your  
12 application, under "Student Academic Performance,"  
13 as I have told you this morning, I wrote myself some  
14 notes as I was going through this. The first that I  
15 wrote is that, realistically, there will be no  
16 student performance data until years 4 and 5.

17 MR. CASAVANTES: Uh-huh.

18 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Students must be  
19 full time for two years for the goal to apply.

20 MR. CASAVANTES: Uh-huh.

21 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Year three will be  
22 set as the previous year's performance level.

23 MR. CASAVANTES: Uh-huh.

24 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: And then the  
25 fourth and fifth year, then, will be -- hopefully,

1 the students will progress from that. There is no  
2 student performance goals for Grades 1 through 3, 9  
3 and 12, because SBA is not given in those grade  
4 levels. And the goals are not measurable because  
5 they both have disclaimers.

6 The first is, "Depending upon the  
7 performance mix of our students at the beginning of  
8 the school year"; and the second is, "Assuming a  
9 90 percent year-to-year reenrollment rate and a  
10 normal distribution of newly enrolling students."  
11 Gives us really nothing to work on should this  
12 application come back for renewal, or this school.

13 Under "Student Academic Growth," I see the  
14 same -- pardon me -- better I should turn the  
15 page -- no specific measurable goals; not  
16 acceptable. In Section D-1 and 2 are not acceptable  
17 here for the same reason.

18 I -- next, I'd like to go to -- I think  
19 that said enough about goals. There are others that  
20 we could talk about, but it's -- the one I did want  
21 to get to -- oh, my goodness; my computer is going  
22 nuts. Hello. Wake up.

23 COMMISSIONER GANT: Space bar.

24 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Thank you very  
25 much. I don't like those.

1           The one I wanted to get to is high-school  
2 college readiness. And it says, "100 percent of our  
3 graduating eighth-graders will be ready for high  
4 school beginning in year one and beyond."

5           And this morning, I asked you, "How will  
6 you prove that?" And you've had some time to think  
7 about it.

8           MR. CASAVANTES: Well, I think that -- I  
9 mean, I'd be glad to read -- you know -- as I told  
10 you this morning, I know that when the -- this was  
11 written, we were trying to make sure we didn't box  
12 ourselves in a corner. And I see that -- I see from  
13 your response what your perspective is. And we  
14 didn't know that perspective. I would gladly modify  
15 and change the requirements to meet whatever you  
16 desire to have as the goals and be measurable and so  
17 forth to your satisfaction.

18           COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: But they're not  
19 here.

20           MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, ma'am, I agree.  
21 Yes.

22           COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Okay. And under  
23 your curriculum section, in F-1, you talk about,  
24 "Each student will be provided a tablet computer."  
25 And I asked you where that was in the budget. And

1 at that time, you weren't completely sure.

2 MR. CASAVANTES: That's another -- that's  
3 another item that I'm going to have to look for it  
4 and find out what line item it is and so forth.

5 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Okay. Let me move  
6 on to -- I'd like to talk about Page 50, Section 3.  
7 And we talked about the chart that you have there  
8 listing the grade and the number -- pardon me -- the  
9 year and the grade and the number of students that  
10 were projected for each grade.

11 And I suggested to you that that did not  
12 correspond to the budget, because your budget has  
13 been built on 300 students every year. And this  
14 shows 200 -- pardon me -- 300 and then 400. So --  
15 and you said at the time this is incorrect.

16 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, ma'am.

17 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: But this doesn't  
18 match the budget.

19 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, ma'am, that's  
20 correct.

21 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: I noticed in your  
22 waiver lists -- and we didn't talk about this this  
23 morning. But it's on Page 53. And you say, "If  
24 driver education is required, we will not be able to  
25 provide that service due to the small size of the

1 school."

2 You're not sure, huh, whether or not it's  
3 required?

4 MR. CASAVANTES: No, I'm not for sure  
5 that's required.

6 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: And the other  
7 thing I'd like to do is look at your application --  
8 pardon me -- your Appendix L, your teacher salary  
9 schedule. And if this is correct, I'd like to apply  
10 for a job, because -- let me find it. Under  
11 Level III, Master's Plus 45, your 29 will make  
12 \$6,243,125. I'm sure it's a mistake. I just  
13 thought I would give you an easy question, instead  
14 of everything I do is difficult.

15 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes.

16 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Thank you,  
17 Mr. Chairman.

18 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner  
19 Shearman. Commissioner Peralta.

20 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: I have a couple of  
21 things I want to bring up, but I think Commissioner  
22 Bergman indirectly touched on this when it was  
23 brought up about teachers and responsibilities. So  
24 I want to make some sense out of this.

25 But I believe what I want to lead up to is



1 that there might be a possibility, in dealing with  
2 recruitment of teachers -- when I look at -- and I  
3 believe this is on Page 43 -- when you look at  
4 salaries for staff, I believe it was noted that  
5 there were seven regular teachers --

6 MR. CASAVANTES: Uh-huh.

7 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: -- on staff? And  
8 you budgeted \$350,000, I believe, for staff?

9 MR. CASAVANTES: I can't recall that.

10 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Which would be  
11 equivalent to a Level III teacher's salary at  
12 \$50,000 per year. And I think you alluded this  
13 morning, too, that you would like to recruit  
14 teachers with master's or even doctorate degrees for  
15 your --

16 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, the tutors were  
17 going to be -- when we had the plan for tutors, we  
18 were planning to do that with the doctor's and the  
19 master's degrees. But it appears that that's out of  
20 the question right now. And so that's -- but we did  
21 plan to have more than one certification and hire  
22 some teachers who had more than one certification.  
23 And also we were going to have them working a longer  
24 school year. So that's one of the reasons why we  
25 had a little higher salary than normally.

1 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Okay. And that's  
2 what I want to get at. I believe in your  
3 application, it says 227 days for the school year?

4 MR. CASAVANTES: That sounds reasonable.

5 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Okay. So my point  
6 is, that's roughly 30 to 40 extra days than someone  
7 in the public school would be at a Level III. So my  
8 point to be is how -- if I were a Level III teacher,  
9 for \$50,000 a year, I think I would prefer to go  
10 work for 185 or 190 days in a traditional school  
11 versus your school. So the challenge there is how  
12 are you going to recruit these teachers?

13 MR. CASAVANTES: We don't plan to have all  
14 Level III teachers. We plan to have the spectrum.  
15 But we budgeted at the Level III level, and we plan  
16 to have new teachers at level -- some teachers at  
17 Level I, some at Level II, some at Level III. And  
18 they were going to -- some are going to trans- --  
19 move up from a Level I to a Level II and so forth.

20 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: But, again, my  
21 point is, to go work at your school, you have to  
22 work an extra 30, 40 days for the same salary you  
23 would at a traditional school. So what's your  
24 selling point to get these teachers to go work for  
25 you for longer days at the same pay rate of a

1 traditional teacher -- traditional school?

2 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, I think part of it  
3 is we're going -- we budgeted at the Level III, but  
4 we're not going to have all our teachers at the  
5 Level III. We're going to have them throughout the  
6 spectrum, and that -- that they are going to be paid  
7 more than their counterparts in the public schools  
8 for those additional days.

9 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Okay. And I'm  
10 still confused.

11 Second point here, I'm still confused on  
12 this first year, where you and Mr. Clarkson were  
13 going to kind of get the ball rolling. I know there  
14 was questions about whether you guys were going to  
15 be the actual administrators on site. I know  
16 there's four or five sites that you're applying for.  
17 But you did allude to saying that you were possibly  
18 going to try and recruit principals for your site  
19 schools; correct?

20 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

21 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Okay. And if, say,  
22 you're able to recruit one or two, and you are  
23 lacking a principal here or there at another site,  
24 what takes place?

25 MR. CASAVANTES: We might have to fill in

1 until we could find something. I mean --

2 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: And that's "we"?  
3 Who's "we"?

4 MR. CASAVANTES: Wes Clarkson and myself.

5 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Are you licensed  
6 administrators?

7 MR. CASAVANTES: We're both Level III-B,  
8 licensed in New Mexico.

9 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Okay. Thank you.

10 MR. CASAVANTES: Thank you.

11 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner  
12 Peralta. Are there other questions from  
13 Commissioners? Seeing none, any member of the  
14 public, including the applicant, may submit written  
15 input following this hearing. Written comments can  
16 be sent to the Commission via the Public Education  
17 Department Web site, at [ped.state.nm.us](http://ped.state.nm.us), through the  
18 Calendar listing on the front PED Web page, through  
19 the Public Comments section on the PED Web page, or  
20 by using the link, [ped.state.nm.us/comments](http://ped.state.nm.us/comments).

21 You will be directed to an e-mail format  
22 in which to write your comment. Make sure you  
23 identify the school you're commenting on in the  
24 drop-down menu. Please note that any written input  
25 must be received by no later than close of business

1 on the third business day following the hearing on  
2 the application you wish to comment on.

3 I want to thank you for your presentation  
4 and your hard work in preparing your application.  
5 The Commission will now recess the hearing until  
6 tomorrow morning at 8:00 a.m., where we will meet in  
7 the district of Gadsden at the Women's Intercultural  
8 Center to hear further applications. We're in  
9 recess.

10 (Proceedings in recess at 5:10 p.m.)

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3 Court Reporter in the State of New Mexico, do hereby  
4 certify that the foregoing pages constitute a true  
5 transcript of proceedings had before the said  
6 NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION, held in the  
7 State of New Mexico, County of Doña Ana, in the  
8 matter therein stated.

9 In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my  
10 hand on September 4, 2012.

11  
12  
13 \_\_\_\_\_  
14 Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR-CRR, NM CCR #219  
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