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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  
11:45 a.m.  
119 East Pine Street, Conference Center  
Deming, 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: The Public Education  
2 Commission, August 20 through 24, 2012, community  
3 input meeting is back in session.

4 This meeting is being conducted pursuant  
5 to New Mexico Statutes Annotated, Title 22,  
6 Section 8B-6J, 2009. Is the mic okay? Are we okay  
7 in the back with the microphone? Can you hear me  
8 fine? Thank you, sir.

9 The purpose of these community input  
10 hearings that will be held from August 20th through  
11 August 24th, 2012, is to obtain information from the  
12 applicant and to receive community input to assist  
13 the Public Education Commission in its decision  
14 whether to grant the proposed charter applications.  
15 According to this section of the law, the Commission  
16 may appoint a subcommittee of no fewer than three  
17 members to hold a public hearing. According to law,  
18 these hearings are being transcribed by a  
19 professional court reporter.

20 The total time allocated to each  
21 application is 90 minutes, which will be timed to  
22 insure an equitable account to present. During the  
23 hearing, the Commission will allow for community  
24 input about the charter application.

25 The time for public comments will be

1 limited to 20 minutes. If you wish to speak on  
2 behalf of the applicant, please sign in at least  
3 15 minutes before the applicant's presentation. Be  
4 sure that you indicate on the sign-up sheet whether  
5 you are here in opposition or support of the charter  
6 school.

7 The Commission Chair, based on the number  
8 of people requesting to comment, will allocate time  
9 to those wishing to speak. If there are a large  
10 number of supporters or opponents, they are asked to  
11 select a speaker to represent common opinion. We  
12 will try to allocate an equitable amount of time to  
13 represent the community accurately.

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

25 Following the applicant's presentation,

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1 the local school district representative or  
2 representatives will be given five minutes to  
3 comment. Subsequently, the Commission will allow  
4 20 minutes for public comment, as I have described.  
5 Finally, the Commission will be given 45 minutes to  
6 ask questions of the applicant. Commissioner Gant,  
7 will you please take another roll call?

8 COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Pogna --  
9 correction. Commissioner Peralta.

10 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Here.

11 COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Bergman.

12 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: Here.

13 COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Shearman.

14 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Here.

15 COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Lopez.

16 COMMISSIONER LOPEZ: Here.

17 COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Garrison.

18 THE CHAIR: Here.

19 COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Gant is  
20 here. You have a quorum.

21 THE CHAIR: Thank you, sir. Academic  
22 Opportunities Academy. For the record, would you  
23 please state your name and your title and the names  
24 of the founders of the school?

25 MR. CASAVANTES: My name is Mark

1 Casavantes. Sorry about that. My name is Mark  
2 Casavantes. I'm the founder, and also Wes Clarkson  
3 is a founder. And my last name is spelled  
4 C-A-S-A-V-A-N-T-E-S.

5 THE CHAIR: You will have 20 minutes to  
6 present information about your application, and you  
7 may proceed, sir.

8 MR. CASAVANTES: Thank you. Welcome, and  
9 I appreciate the opportunity to present our plan for  
10 a charter school and welcome you. And first is our  
11 mission statement, which is -- which I think  
12 addresses a lot of the issues that we think will  
13 need to be solved in this area. And -- in Deming.

14 And one of the things is that we think  
15 that students should be able to graduate from high  
16 school with the ability to earn a decent income.  
17 And I think that would solve a lot of the problems  
18 with dropouts, interest in school attendance, and  
19 many other issues. And so we're planning to have a  
20 dual-credit program and dual -- dual-language  
21 program, because we feel also that being bilingual  
22 along the border is a very important skill to have.

23 And the two fields that we're planning to  
24 deal with, and we selected because they are  
25 currently needing fields [verbatim] economically is

1 nursing and computer programming. We did not go for  
2 additional -- additional fields, because it would  
3 take a lot of resources to satisfy that requirement.  
4 But we did want to have a choice between two  
5 programs.

6 And we plan to test our students and staff  
7 for drugs. I understand that that's a major issue  
8 in -- in this community. But instead of kicking out  
9 those people that get -- and staff -- if there are  
10 teachers, to be removed. But if they're students,  
11 we would want to rehabilitate and correct that issue  
12 and try to work with those students to get them free  
13 of drugs.

14 And we also have a goal to have none of  
15 our dropouts of our own. And then we would look to  
16 have -- you know, to welcome all that have dropped  
17 out from the surrounding community.

18 Okay. And in our system, some of the  
19 things we've -- you know, we have looked at  
20 everything on a student-centered, what-do-they-need,  
21 solve-the-problems type approach. And you know, you  
22 often heard stories about would you want somebody  
23 operating on your parents that got a 70 in medical  
24 school or those sort of things.

25 We believe that one of the things we need

1 to do to change education is to change the standard  
2 and change it to a 90, and that, using this system,  
3 we would not have failures. We'd just have  
4 different progresses through the curriculum.

5 And students can work at their pace. We  
6 believe that students can complete more than one  
7 year during a school year. And we also plan to  
8 provide feedback and training to good students to be  
9 excellent students. You know, we have no tolerance  
10 for gangs, but we welcome all the students; but the  
11 gang behaviors and so forth need to be left outside  
12 the school.

13 We -- you know, I am a personal proponent  
14 of freedom and so forth and not to be overly  
15 restrictive in, like, dress code and so forth and  
16 uniforms and so forth. But we are going to leave  
17 that to the individual community advisory groups to  
18 make the final decisions on those sort of things.  
19 And that, since our school is an open environment,  
20 and we plan to have -- like, the classrooms to have  
21 large windows so you can clearly see inside the  
22 classrooms, that there is no place where students  
23 will not be supervised. And -- and I think that  
24 that will make it a safe and comfortable environment  
25 for all students.



1           And then we will conduct various drills  
2 to -- to insure their safety on a monthly basis.

3           We believe in awards and recognition of  
4 the students that do well. We -- one of our key  
5 components is our curriculum mapping and database  
6 system and software. And it will provide a super  
7 grade book, similar to how, like, a TD Ameritrade or  
8 one of those kind of financial institutions have  
9 monitoring of the stocks. We're going to have  
10 metrics that nobody is using before, and in a  
11 presentation manner that -- that would be  
12 understandable to parents, students, and staff and  
13 so forth.

14           And, like, the carpets, you know, where  
15 they have a screen that has various colors, that  
16 would have all the standards and all the subjects  
17 and show the students' strengths and weaknesses in  
18 each subject area. And we plan to have our teachers  
19 see this data, monitor it, understand it, and  
20 provide training and instruction to the students  
21 based on that data.

22           Let's see. And we plan to have dual  
23 credit with our students graduating with an  
24 associate's degree in nursing and computer  
25 programming. We've looked at it. I think that we

1 might have to have a graduated program that -- where  
2 we might just be able to get a CNA or a similar  
3 program, if they interrelate. And if they enter by  
4 the sixth grade, I believe we can get them an  
5 associate's degree and a high school diploma upon  
6 graduation. And some of the -- some of the metrics  
7 is progress, efforts, mastery, improvement.

8           You know, we also want to use -- we might  
9 have to postpone this a couple of years based on our  
10 budgeting availabilities. But we plan to have  
11 instructional information, like periodic table and  
12 so forth, and our best performing students and -- so  
13 that they are always being recognized.

14           And we considered other fields, but we  
15 felt that these were the two that were best for our  
16 students at this time. I contacted every -- every  
17 college and university in New Mexico and basically  
18 got almost no response, except for NMSU. So it  
19 looks like that would be our partner.

20           And one of the things is that they have  
21 a -- you know, we're going to have to comply with  
22 what they require and so forth. But it would --  
23 negotiate with them about starting college credits  
24 in the sixth grade, like an introductory course.

25           And my dad was one that he kind of experimented with

1 me and -- when I was in the third grade. And he got  
2 me into Texas Western, now UTEP. And I got a B as a  
3 third-grader in geology. So I know that -- I've had  
4 that kind of experience and so forth. And I think  
5 that it would -- it would be very positive for the  
6 students to have that experience, and I think that  
7 that would lead them into more success in college in  
8 the future.

9 And this is kind of a projected way of  
10 earning their credits through the -- you know,  
11 starting in the sixth grade. And we'll be planning  
12 to comply with all the standards, plus, you know,  
13 the college readiness standards of ACT and SAT, and  
14 also the requirements of our college partner,  
15 university partner.

16 We're going to need an extended day. And  
17 then we also -- the extended day, a lot of parents  
18 do not fully support students or understand how to  
19 support them and so forth. So we're going to try to  
20 do everything within the school day so that they  
21 leave without any homework and -- and be free of --  
22 and parents will be free of that responsibility.

23 It's kind of a projection of our school  
24 day. We also like to compete in academic  
25 competitions in the area. I was an academic coach,

1 and I've taken the team to regional competition in  
2 Texas. And I know that once you get to that upper  
3 level, you see how much improvement there is and  
4 how -- how steep the competition can be.

5 I talked a little bit about our curriculum  
6 mapping and the real-time data. So parents will be  
7 monitoring the students' performance at home.

8 One of the things, too, is that as soon as  
9 the student completes the requirements of a grade  
10 level in any subject, that the next day, they would  
11 be in the next grade level. So if they finish  
12 third-grade math, the next day, they're in  
13 fourth-grade math. And with our system, since it's  
14 individualized and self-paced, it would not  
15 interfere with -- with the operations of the school,  
16 because everybody is going to be working on a  
17 self-paced basis.

18 And then, also, when a student is  
19 retained, they're retained a full year. And we want  
20 to find out where they are in the continuum and take  
21 them from that point and move them forward and try  
22 to catch them up so they don't lose an entire year  
23 when they're retained.

24 We're going to have the testing -- one of  
25 the things is we plan to have our teachers prepare

1 to teach and teach, and not be involved in  
2 administrative duties, to the extent it's possible.  
3 And so we're going to have a testing center that  
4 will do the testing, grading, and so forth, and free  
5 the teachers from that. And then we'll -- I was  
6 going to say, all that kind of administrative  
7 duties, to take that away from teachers.

8 And then we'll have a main educational  
9 space. And we're going to have our administrator to  
10 be a true instructional leader in the center, with  
11 the children, observing things, guiding it,  
12 directing it, making the modifications, guiding the  
13 staff, and making the corrections necessary, because  
14 I know that most of the time -- administrators, a  
15 lot of times, are in their office, and they don't --  
16 they're really not in there with the kids and doing  
17 the supervision that we would like to see.

18 Our classrooms are going to have about  
19 12 students. They're going to be conference-room  
20 style. And we're going to have more dialogue and  
21 discussion and so forth in presenting information  
22 than just teachers teaching to the students in,  
23 like, "the sage on the stage," so to speak.

24 And students are going to have a choice of  
25 the assignments. And we're going to have -- try and

1 have things that might be more interesting for boys  
2 and more interesting for girls; and then, also, the  
3 different learning styles and so forth. So they  
4 will pick from an activity.

5 I know initially, we might not have that  
6 diversity, as we try to just maybe have one strand  
7 through the -- all the curriculum, and build a  
8 second strand and a third strand and so forth as we  
9 develop a curriculum. But it's our goal to  
10 eventually have wide, diverse choices of activities.

11 And then, also, my sister is an industrial  
12 engineer with Raytheon, and she's a Six Sigma  
13 expert, and she's been a consultant to the British  
14 during the Falklands War and to the Russians when  
15 the government of Russia collapsed. And she's  
16 agreed to provide us the training for Six Sigma.  
17 And I believe that that is a approach that will find  
18 the root causes and problems that are in the schools  
19 so that they can be corrected and addressed.

20 And we're planning to have our campus  
21 advisory groups, board members, teachers, staff,  
22 possibly even the students be familiar with this  
23 process; and that our community adviser groups will  
24 study every aspect of our operations and make  
25 improvements on a continuing basis. So however we

1 start, we will continue to continually improve and  
2 refine our program.

3 One of the things is that we don't want to  
4 have anybody that -- you know, a lot of times, these  
5 campus advisory groups have been dominant [verbatim]  
6 by administrators or teachers and so forth, and  
7 there hasn't been the real open dialogue that's  
8 necessary for real change. So we're not going to --  
9 we're going to have that the ratio as six to one,  
10 that there's only one higher-level person in any  
11 given group so that we -- we foster an  
12 open-communication environment.

13 And then we plan to select, from our  
14 community advisory groups, people that have  
15 demonstrated skills and so forth so that we can have  
16 good oversight of our schools.

17 And we also plan to hire a couple of our  
18 students that are -- you know, when they're close to  
19 graduation part-time, and upon graduation, we will  
20 allow them to become full-time, and things like  
21 this, or possibly as tutors. We also are seeking  
22 volunteers for our program.

23 This was an item that was brought up in  
24 our previous meeting about -- we were planning to  
25 have -- have members from the community present

1 various art programs. But we understand we're going  
2 to have certified teachers of these. And so we're  
3 going to try to seek out the artists of the various  
4 types to -- to work on, I would say about a two-week  
5 basis on their different programs, so we can have a  
6 rich and diverse fine arts program.

7 And then also our physical fitness, we've  
8 looked at some of the things to do. And we are  
9 looking at also doing sort of the same thing with  
10 the dance program, and then also a martial arts  
11 program. But to -- you know, maybe they would --  
12 you know, it would be the traditional martial arts,  
13 where they teach discipline and respect and so  
14 forth, but no physical contact with students. I  
15 mean, they're just going to get maybe heavy bags or  
16 punching bags or things like that, but they're not  
17 going to be hitting each other.

18 And then these are some of our current  
19 partnerships that we've been working on. And we're  
20 growing some kind of all the time. But these are  
21 the -- these are our current partnerships.

22 And we know it's an awesome responsibility  
23 to educate your children and that they are precious  
24 to each and every one of the parents. And we really  
25 want to improve education. And the way we wrote our



1 plan and did everything was based on improving  
2 education and that we plan to continuously improve  
3 everything we do regarding education.

4 And that we plan to operate with about  
5 300 students with a maximum cap of 400; and kind of  
6 go through a mitosis program, if we go to a second  
7 campus, and grow it to 400, and then split it into  
8 two groups of 200, hire additional staff so that  
9 they can observe the operations, and so forth.  
10 Because it is a unique system.

11 And that's it, with two minutes to spare.

12 THE CHAIR: Thank you, sir.

13 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

14 THE CHAIR: We will now hear from the  
15 Deming School District. If you would please come  
16 forward, and, for the record, please state your name  
17 and the role you play in the local school district.  
18 And you will have five minutes to comment about the  
19 school. If I could ask the applicant to yield the  
20 table to Superintendent Moore.

21 MS. MOORE: My name is Harvielee Moore. I  
22 am Superintendent of Deming Public Schools. Thank  
23 for you this opportunity. You know quite a bit  
24 about Deming Public Schools. I have five minutes,  
25 so I'm going to jump to some of the

1 high-school-level exit, dual credit. We do have  
2 associate's degrees. We do have increasing numbers  
3 of students participating in the dual-credit program  
4 since the legislators were generous in funding it  
5 and evening the playing field, and our students can  
6 access that opportunity.

7 We also have career tech opportunities.  
8 Our nursing program is one of the finest in the  
9 nation. Our VIGA [ph] group, our club recently took  
10 second in the international competition. And we are  
11 aware that that is because of skills they've had  
12 that they've learned for job opportunities and being  
13 marketable when they exit.

14 We also have hands-on mentoring with  
15 businesses and job shadowing, and we're increasing  
16 that opportunity through Doña Ana, NMSU, Western,  
17 Eastern, and others -- schools that work with us.

18 We are aware that in an impoverished area,  
19 it is very important that students have hope and  
20 they know what they're exiting to. They have to  
21 believe that they can get through pre-K through 12  
22 and that that world out there does exist; it is real  
23 and it can be theirs. And that is one of our  
24 biggest goals and one of our biggest challenges.

25 I do want to say that we have read the

1 application. There are some commendable pieces in  
2 it. We're a little confused about how many teachers  
3 will be there. And I saw discussion of the sixth  
4 through twelfth, and I'm curious about the lead-in.  
5 But I'm sure I'm not the one to know that. I would  
6 just like to comment on it.

7 I would like to say also that when we look  
8 at -- we have entrepreneurship opportunities as  
9 well. We have one program where the students build  
10 houses and then sell them, and that money goes back  
11 into their program. They've completed their fifth  
12 house. And we did receive permission and permits  
13 for the students to completely add a wing to our  
14 preschool developmental -- model school, which is  
15 for the developmentally delayed children. And it  
16 will have the kinds of hands-on textures and  
17 opportunities that the children need when they play  
18 in their playground. It's completely enclosed and  
19 safe, with textures and steps and opportunities.

20 When they're walking they'll say, "Okay,  
21 now, listen for the dog." And when they step --  
22 where the student walks, it goes "Woof-woof." And  
23 they have opportunities to begin to make this real.  
24 And we have seen such progress.

25 The rigor and relevance that we put

1 into -- and the relationship that we're building is  
2 K-12, pre-K-12, in the Deming Public Schools.

3 And we are working very hard to increase  
4 our test scores. But we're more than a test score.  
5 We're about exiting and going on to post-high-school  
6 opportunity.

7 As I said earlier, we have -- all of our  
8 staff are highly qualified. Our staff receive  
9 training in AIMS [ph], and we -- educational  
10 development, language standards. We're working on  
11 the core standards nationwide that are coming.  
12 We're about three years into it, working diligently  
13 with the hands-on project.

14 I think an important thing to note is that  
15 the parent participation has increased tremendously.  
16 We have parents -- parent groups at every school.  
17 We have parent groups in the community. We also  
18 have supporters. I've recently added a fifth grade  
19 advisory to the Superintendent. And the students  
20 there are fifth-grade representatives, a girl and a  
21 boy from each of the schools, and we're talking  
22 about career building. And it was a fifth grader's  
23 idea, and it was fabulous. We're going into our  
24 second year, and we're going to add sixth grade as  
25 well. So it's very exciting.

1 I have business people and community  
2 people who work with me as advisers from every board  
3 district on budget. So we have an outreach to the  
4 community. And we do want to be thinking outside  
5 the box. We don't want to be totally traditional,  
6 but we also want to be in full compliance. All our  
7 audits come in clean and clear. We have been given  
8 acclamation from the Legislative Financial Committee  
9 after a four-month in-depth study two years ago.  
10 And they said that Deming Public Schools, Gadsden,  
11 and Hatch serve among the highest numbers of  
12 disadvantaged children in the state, yet receive  
13 less funding on the State Equalization Guarantee.  
14 We're 85th in Deming, out of 89 districts.

15 We try to put those dollars in the  
16 classroom. Put 64 to 65 percent of our dollars in  
17 the classroom. And for the last three years, we  
18 have lowered administrative costs. As you know,  
19 with funding being cut, the economic downturn --  
20 I -- I ran out of time. I just --

21 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your  
22 comments.

23 MS. MOORE: Thank you.

24 THE CHAIR: We are now to the point of  
25 public comment from the community of Deming. And as

1 I look at the list, we have no one signed up to  
2 speak. So we will move to the Public Education  
3 Commission's question period of the applicant. I  
4 ask the applicant to move on up. And we'll begin  
5 our question period with Commissioner Gant.

6 COMMISSIONER GANT: I have a couple of  
7 questions, more than a couple. And I'll start with  
8 some background questions.

9 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

10 COMMISSIONER GANT: As I understand it,  
11 you and your cofounder run a private school in  
12 El Paso. Explain to us and the community -- the  
13 Commissioners and the community -- how that helps  
14 prepare you to run a charter school in the State of  
15 New Mexico, and how that charter school -- I mean,  
16 that private school -- has any interface with the  
17 charter schools that you are considering.

18 MR. CASAVANTES: Okay. That's a lot of  
19 questions. Okay. Well, that's not the -- the  
20 background and whatever that would qualify us for  
21 the charter school. I helped found the location of  
22 Premier High School in El Paso, which is a charter  
23 school, the largest charter school system in Texas.  
24 And then Wes Clarkson had also been the director of  
25 Paso Del Norte, a charter school in El Paso. And he

1 also founded, the El Paso Independent School  
2 District, Delta Academy, which is a joint venture  
3 with the Sheriff's Department Juvenile Justice  
4 School.

5 And then both of us have been  
6 administrators in -- in Texas and New Mexico. I was  
7 at Highland High School for a summer and -- as an  
8 assistant principal in the summer-school program. I  
9 taught at Cibola and Highland in Albuquerque. And  
10 currently, Wes is at the McCurdy School, which is a  
11 new charter that was awarded last year.

12 And so -- and then we've been teachers.  
13 And then, prior to that, I've been a Navy officer, a  
14 general contractor. I was enlisted in the  
15 Air Force.

16 THE CHAIR: Speak up just a tad.

17 MR. CASAVANTES: Oh, sorry. Been a  
18 designer for Denny's and [inaudible] and Scotford  
19 Oil Refinery in Edmonton, Canada. So we have a  
20 diverse background and have areas that would relate  
21 to opening a charter school, besides just the school  
22 that we operated in Texas. And then we are  
23 basically ceasing those operations because we plan  
24 to start here.

25 And then I've -- I wish I had, like, more

1 knowledge of the law and so forth in learning about  
2 the law. But I know the school in Colorado that  
3 also opens a school, I think, in Albuquerque and  
4 Las Cruces, they have a partnership agreement with  
5 their schools. And so -- and I know we didn't -- I  
6 wasn't aware of the different ways that you can set  
7 up governance and so forth.

8 But I think we eventually would like to do  
9 that, have a joint amendment or something to that  
10 effect, so that we can have a similar type of  
11 oversight of our schools that the school that came  
12 from Colorado did.

13 Did I address all of your questions? I  
14 don't know.

15 COMMISSIONER GANT: A lot of information.  
16 Thank you.

17 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

18 COMMISSIONER GANT: This question --  
19 you're proposing a charter school in this community.

20 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

21 COMMISSIONER GANT: Who approached you or  
22 why did you pick this community to set -- did  
23 someone from this community approach you to set up a  
24 charter school?

25 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, to be honest with



1 you, we looked at where the greatest need was in  
2 New Mexico. And we feel that Deming is the greatest  
3 need in New Mexico to improve schools. And -- and I  
4 think if you can look at their -- at their data,  
5 that you would concur.

6 COMMISSIONER GANT: Are there any  
7 community members? If there are, they aren't here  
8 right now --

9 MR. CASAVANTES: You know, I've been here  
10 many times. I've been all over the place.

11 COMMISSIONER GANT: Please don't  
12 interrupt.

13 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. I'm  
14 sorry.

15 COMMISSIONER GANT: Are there any  
16 community members that have volunteered to be on  
17 your board of governance, or you have approached to  
18 be on your board of governance? And why aren't they  
19 here if you have?

20 MR. CASAVANTES: Because they're currently  
21 employed. They are not able to be here.

22 COMMISSIONER GANT: But you have people  
23 who are willing to be on this governance board?

24 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

25 COMMISSIONER GANT: How come they're not

1 on the application? This is addressing an issue.  
2 On Page 30, I'm referencing this Cenpatico Division  
3 of School-Based Services in Tucson. I guess you are  
4 planning to use these as the contractor that  
5 provides services such as special ed administration,  
6 professional development, compliance services,  
7 psychology and evaluation reporting, counseling and  
8 behavior services, SLPs, OTs, PTs, et cetera. Why  
9 are you going to Tucson instead of using --

10 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, at that time, that  
11 was an entity that we were looking at. But -- and  
12 since this has been written, I believe that we would  
13 use somebody from New Mexico. And we would be  
14 selecting somebody from New Mexico to provide the  
15 contract services.

16 COMMISSIONER GANT: I got a little  
17 confused on selection of replacement board members,  
18 once a board member decides -- if you're on the  
19 governance board -- decides to leave the governance  
20 board. It seemed to me that what you were asking  
21 the current governance board is to give you a  
22 name -- a list of nominees that they pick to be on  
23 the governance board.

24 And I am curious how parents can even  
25 think about being part of the governance board if

1 it's the old governance board picking the new one.  
2 This ends up being -- I don't like the word  
3 "nepotism," or "good 'ole boys" or like that. That  
4 sounds like what it's going to end up being.  
5 Explain this.

6 MR. CASAVANTES: Okay. Our intention is  
7 to select from the community advisory groups that  
8 are made up of the community that have demonstrated  
9 that they have the capacity, interest, and so forth  
10 to be board members. That's where we -- that's the  
11 pool that we believe, which is from the community.

12 COMMISSIONER GANT: All right. Next  
13 question. In your -- and I don't have it up right  
14 now. But in your application, you talk about the  
15 first principal, teacher/leader, or however it was  
16 defined.

17 MR. CASAVANTES: Uh-huh.

18 COMMISSIONER GANT: And you indicated that  
19 the two founders, you and your other founder, will  
20 be the -- the first principals, if you want to call  
21 them that, of the charter schools. Now, it's hard  
22 for me to understand, since you have written this,  
23 and you have a desire to open up five charter  
24 schools in five different communities, how two  
25 individuals can be the principals for these two

1 schools -- or five different schools.

2 MR. CASAVANTES: Well --

3 COMMISSIONER GANT: That was in your -- in  
4 your --

5 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Our  
6 plan is -- I think when we met in our capacity  
7 interview, I addressed that as well, is that we plan  
8 to be like the catalyst, and that -- that we will  
9 eventually not be principals there. But we will be  
10 principals, and we will be working to select  
11 principals to replace us; and that even if -- even  
12 if the -- we hire a principal from the very  
13 beginning, which I think we could, the -- they're  
14 going to need training, and we are going to have to  
15 go through -- to understand and implement this  
16 system, which I think is very unique. It's going  
17 to -- I think require us to show them what we --  
18 what this plan is about and so forth.

19 COMMISSIONER GANT: So I go back. So you  
20 think you can hire five competent, well-trained --  
21 across New Mexico, from Carlsbad to Deming to  
22 Cruces, Anthony, Alamogordo -- five individuals who  
23 are willing to be trained in your system if we  
24 authorize this in September, and be ready to go in  
25 August.

1 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

2 COMMISSIONER GANT: And where are you  
3 going to get the money --

4 MR. CASAVANTES: Well --

5 COMMISSIONER GANT: -- to train these  
6 people in the next year, if there's no stimulus  
7 money?

8 MR. CASAVANTES: I understand. I know  
9 it's an issue. And I -- I am working with -- on a  
10 plan to have grants. I have talked to a couple  
11 of -- Daniels foundation, and they have an interest  
12 in our school. And -- but they will not do anything  
13 until we have a signed charter with the State of New  
14 Mexico. They will make no agreement; they will make  
15 no funding.

16 They will -- but -- and then we're looking  
17 for some other sources that we're going to be  
18 seeking. And we believe we will have enough funding  
19 to open our schools using grants.

20 COMMISSIONER GANT: You put up a long list  
21 of partners up here on the board.

22 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

23 COMMISSIONER GANT: How many of those do  
24 you have written agreements with?

25 MR. CASAVANTES: Written agreements?

1 Probably two.

2 COMMISSIONER GANT: Okay. You have the  
3 Boys and Girls Club up there. Which one?

4 MR. CASAVANTES: El Paso, Alamogordo.

5 COMMISSIONER GANT: All right. In your  
6 application, you talk about a New Mexico board.

7 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

8 COMMISSIONER GANT: What is that?

9 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, because we also  
10 have a Texas board, you know, we were trying -- I  
11 was trying to identify that as a separate, and so  
12 forth. And going back to what I said about the  
13 Colorado program, I understood that that's the way  
14 we had to set it up. That was my understanding at  
15 the time that it was written.

16 COMMISSIONER GANT: Did you go to training  
17 meetings with the CSD, when they provided trainings  
18 on putting together the application?

19 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir. I did go to  
20 one. And then I was -- I wasn't able to go to all  
21 of them. But I was sent the information by the  
22 Columbus Community School.

23 COMMISSIONER GANT: Going to your budget.

24 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

25 COMMISSIONER GANT: Who developed your

1 budget?

2 MR. CASAVANTES: I worked with Mr. Vigil  
3 with the Coalition.

4 COMMISSIONER GANT: Now, go to your  
5 teachers, which is Function 1000, Object 51100,  
6 1411, "Teachers." All right? You start out with  
7 seven teachers, \$350,000, and you maintain seven  
8 teachers at \$350,000.

9 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

10 COMMISSIONER GANT: No allocations, no  
11 thoughts or anything about inflation? Giving  
12 raises? Anything like that? I mean, it's not in  
13 the budget. So I've got to ask the question.

14 You did the same thing for vocational and  
15 technical teachers, instructional assistants?  
16 There's -- you know, it's -- no leeway for raises or  
17 anything like that for any of these important  
18 people. No thought to that at all?

19 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, I know -- well, we  
20 knew that there was some areas where we did -- we  
21 will be experiencing some savings. And I -- I  
22 didn't do it that way. I -- it's my fault. But I  
23 do know that we have some, like, tablet computers  
24 that we're planning to use for the system, and that  
25 the prices have come down significantly, which we

1 think would be able to be transferred to -- put in  
2 those categories.

3 COMMISSIONER GANT: You probably know that  
4 what you've provided to us is what we vote on,  
5 not --

6 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

7 COMMISSIONER GANT: -- not what you plan  
8 to do.

9 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

10 COMMISSIONER GANT: All right. Explain to  
11 me, on Function 1- -- 1000, Object Code 51100,  
12 Class -- Job Class 1415, which is your teachers --  
13 "Teacher, Vocational and Technical." There's two of  
14 them across the five years. Talk to me about those.  
15 What do they do? I couldn't find a job description.

16 MR. CASAVANTES: I believe one is going to  
17 be the nursing component teacher, and the other is  
18 going to be the computer programming teacher.

19 COMMISSIONER GANT: But there's no job  
20 description. That's my point. There's no job  
21 description.

22 Student travel. There's quite a bit of  
23 student travel. Where do you plan to travel in the  
24 state of New Mexico? Or where are you planning to  
25 travel?



1 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, our plan was to be  
2 involved in academic competitions, wherever they --  
3 hopefully within the vicinity; but that's where we  
4 were planning to use that money for.

5 COMMISSIONER GANT: These professional  
6 folks that you were going to hire through the  
7 company in Tucson, and now you say you're going to  
8 do it through some outfit in New Mexico, I find  
9 neither budgeted for them in salaries or budgeted  
10 for them in contracts. Maybe I'm missing --

11 MR. CASAVANTES: I believe we put in  
12 there -- I got --

13 COMMISSIONER GANT: Then show me the  
14 function, page number.

15 MR. CASAVANTES: Let's see here. I'm not  
16 able to pull it up right now, but I definitely will  
17 give it to you.

18 COMMISSIONER GANT: All right. We'll go  
19 to something else then. Function 2600, Object 54311  
20 through 54416, which deals with facility and  
21 maintenance; maintenance, repair, electricity,  
22 utilities, et cetera.

23 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir. We put it  
24 as -- as a lump sum for the -- under the billing, I  
25 think it was \$150,000. And that was to include our

1 utilities and so forth.

2 COMMISSIONER GANT: So you're going to  
3 rent this complex for \$150,000, and you're going to  
4 include all the repair, the utilities, which could  
5 add up to a great deal, because you're going to have  
6 a lot of students and staff. I mean, electrical  
7 bills could drive you right out the roof. And so  
8 you won't have much left for a building. It's going  
9 to eat up probably \$50,000 of what you've allocated  
10 for utilities and repairs and maintenance,  
11 et cetera. Okay?

12 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir.

13 COMMISSIONER GANT: And it would have been  
14 nice, I think, for our knowledge, the Commissioners'  
15 knowledge, to have the breakout. You say Mr. Vigil  
16 did this for you?

17 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

18 COMMISSIONER GANT: Are you contracting  
19 with the Coalition?

20 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, sir, we will.

21 COMMISSIONER GANT: And how much is that  
22 going to be?

23 MR. CASAVANTES: I think it's going to be  
24 \$50,000 -- you know when we first did it, when we  
25 wrote the budget, we were thinking of doing it

1 independently and having -- I think it was an office  
2 manager. But the -- we think that it's a better  
3 idea to go through with the -- with the Coalition.

4 COMMISSIONER GANT: Well, Mr. Chair,  
5 someone else can ask questions. I might have some  
6 later. Thank you.

7 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner Gant.  
8 Other questions? Commissioner Shearman.

9 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Thank you. I'd  
10 like to -- good afternoon, or good morning, or  
11 whatever.

12 MR. CASAVANTES: Good afternoon. Yes,  
13 ma'am.

14 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: I'd like to start  
15 with your student academic performance goals on  
16 Page 11 of your application.

17 My first -- when I read these, my first  
18 comment was -- and let me just read you what I wrote  
19 down. "Realistically, there will be no student  
20 performance data until years four and five.  
21 Students must be full-time for two years for the  
22 goal to apply. Year three will set the previous  
23 year's performance."

24 So that means years four and five will be  
25 the only ones that you'll have any data on to base

1 this goal. Was that your plan?

2 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, you know, our --  
3 our plan is to have immediate results and so forth.  
4 But when we're going to be doing a performance  
5 contract, you know, it gets into are you backing  
6 yourself into a corner, that you cannot provide --

7 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Well, goals back  
8 you into a corner, and that's where you're going to  
9 be, because it's where we want you to tell us where  
10 you're going to go with your school and how your  
11 students are going to progress. And then when your  
12 school is approved and when it comes up for renewal,  
13 this is what we look at to tell us, Did you do it?  
14 Yeah, I want you backed into a corner.

15 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, ma'am. No, I  
16 understand.

17 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: My second  
18 observation is that there are no student performance  
19 goals for Grades 1 through 3, 9, and 12, because you  
20 based your goal on NMSBA, and those are the grades  
21 that don't take it.

22 MR. CASAVANTES: Oh, yes.

23 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: My third  
24 observation was the goals are not measurable because  
25 they both have disclaimers. The first disclaimer

1 is, "Depending on the performance needs of our  
2 students at the beginning of any school year," and  
3 the second is, "Assuming a 90-percent year-to-year  
4 re-enrollment rate and a normal distribution of  
5 newly enrolling students."

6 MR. CASAVANTES: I understand your point.

7 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Yeah, okay. Let  
8 me move to student academic growth. Goals are not  
9 measurable because they do not state what growth  
10 students will achieve. Instead, we have  
11 disclaimers; "expected growth," which, again, you  
12 know, gives you too much wiggle room.

13 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, ma'am.

14 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: On 11-D-3 on  
15 Page 12 -- let me get there -- okay. Achievement  
16 gaps in proficiency and growth between the student  
17 subgroups. No goals are listed. This is an action  
18 plan. I'm -- there's nothing here that tells me  
19 these students are going to do this; they're going  
20 to have this much growth, any of those kinds of  
21 things. It's not there.

22 On Page -- I'm sorry; I'm losing it.  
23 Page 14, under High School College Readiness,  
24 "One-hundred percent of our graduating  
25 eighth-graders will be ready for high school

1 beginning in year one and beyond."

2 MR. CASAVANTES: What page are you on?

3 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Fourteen. How are  
4 you going to prove that?

5 MR. CASAVANTES: I think it's a -- I can't  
6 prove it.

7 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: All right. Let's  
8 move on to Page 15, please. Graduation rate.

9 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, ma'am.

10 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Your chart.  
11 What's your cohort group for your graduation  
12 statistics?

13 MR. CASAVANTES: I didn't prepare this  
14 part, so I don't know offhand.

15 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Just let me let  
16 you know that in New Mexico, the core grade group is  
17 ninth-graders who began together, and, of that  
18 group, how many of them graduate together.

19 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, ma'am.

20 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: So it needs to be  
21 apples to apples here for --

22 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, ma'am.

23 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Let me go on,  
24 please, to Page 16. "Our goal is for NMSBA scores  
25 are identical to the MAP scores above." I'm not

1 able to really figure that one out, what your target  
2 is, what your measurability is, what your time frame  
3 is.

4 MR. CASAVANTES: Again, I didn't prepare  
5 this part, so I'm not familiar with it. Sorry.

6 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: I'm going to  
7 Page 18. In your curriculum, there's a -- tablet  
8 computers are shown that will be provided to  
9 students.

10 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, ma'am.

11 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Can you tell me  
12 where that expense is located in the budget?

13 MR. CASAVANTES: I believe we had it --  
14 I'm trying to remember. I know that it was, like,  
15 \$600 per each tablet, or somewhere in that  
16 neighborhood, times the 300 or 400 students. I  
17 don't recall exactly where that was. But I do  
18 remember it was that amount.

19 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: I didn't find it,  
20 either.

21 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, ma'am.

22 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: On Page 18, also,  
23 11 -- pardon me -- 2-F-2, "Provide research and/or  
24 data substantiating how the philosophy...", blah,  
25 blah, blah. I've got a bibliography, but I don't

1 have any explanation of your research or your data.  
2 I have where it came from, but no information  
3 pertaining to it. Okay?

4 And then on Page 19 -- oh, before I go to  
5 Page 19, I missed a couple of questions I had  
6 scribbled on the front. Are you a qualified and  
7 registered nonprofit in New Mexico?

8 MR. CASAVANTES: I'm recognized by the  
9 IRS, and I am a Texas nonprofit. I have not filed  
10 with the State, you know, the Secretary of State. I  
11 believe that, in New Mexico, we were going to be a  
12 government entity. And so that's why I didn't  
13 pursue that further.

14 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Ms. Callahan, can  
15 you help me with that? I thought they had to be a  
16 qualified nonprofit to even turn in an application.

17 MS. CALLAHAN: Mr. Chair, Commissioner  
18 Shearman, the -- the law -- if this is a company  
19 applying for, yes, they have to be a nonprofit. If  
20 they are an individual, as in a parent group,  
21 community group, or other type of application, they  
22 can apply without any other qualifications. So it  
23 depends on what this school's consideration is going  
24 to be. Is it as a nonprofit, or as an individual  
25 entity?



1 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: What is  
2 Connections?

3 MR. CASAVANTES: Pardon me?

4 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Is not Connections  
5 a business? Am I thinking of something -- I've got  
6 too many things --

7 MR. CASAVANTES: I don't know.

8 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Okay. Is any of  
9 this instruction going to be delivered online?

10 MR. CASAVANTES: The dual-credit portion,  
11 I believe, a good portion of that will be online,  
12 because, you know, it would be -- I think it's the  
13 easiest way to present the college work. But the  
14 other work is -- is -- is going to be --

15 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: And you said, in  
16 response to one of Commissioner Gant's questions,  
17 "Who would be the principal of these schools," and  
18 you said you and your other founder partner --

19 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, ma'am.

20 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: -- would be the  
21 principals?

22 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, we're going to get  
23 it going. And, like I said, is that our intention  
24 is to, you know, eventually be out of the picture.

25 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Well, let's talk

1 about year one, though. Year one, the two of you  
2 would be principals of all five schools?

3 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, we're planning to  
4 have principals for each location that are going to  
5 be the principal leaders for each school. And we  
6 are going to guide and train and get it going and so  
7 forth. And once we feel that it is self-sustaining  
8 or they understand how things are going, we're going  
9 to remove ourselves from these schools.

10 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Let me boil it  
11 down to this. Who's going to make this \$80,000 a  
12 year at each school as the principal?

13 MR. CASAVANTES: It's going to be the  
14 principal that's going to be at the school.

15 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Okay. Is that  
16 you, or is that these people you're going to be  
17 bringing in?

18 MR. CASAVANTES: They're going to be the  
19 people we're bringing in.

20 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Let me go to the  
21 staffing plan on Page 42. Let's skip over there.  
22 Okay. "Full capacity, 400 students, Grades 1  
23 through 12. The teachers will include up to  
24 about..." -- well, you're not painting yourself into  
25 any corners there -- "...twelve full-time regular

1 education teachers and one special education  
2 teacher. Tutors in the instructional group will  
3 include up to about 24, with assignments for regular  
4 education, and up to about two with assignments for  
5 special education."

6 Are you calling tutors what we call  
7 instructional aides or instructional assistants?

8 MR. CASAVANTES: Our plan is to hire  
9 students from the universities that -- that are  
10 pursuing a master's or a doctorate degree, and many  
11 of them come from a foreign country, where they are  
12 only able to work in an educational institution.

13 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: New Mexico has got  
14 some pretty strict laws and salary schedules for  
15 instructional aides. Would those come into play  
16 here?

17 MS. CALLAHAN: I didn't hear the question.

18 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: I'm talking about  
19 instructional assistants, pay requirements, and the  
20 teaching requirements.

21 MS. CALLAHAN: They have to be licensed,  
22 Mr. Chairman, and members of the Commission.  
23 Educational assistants do have to be licensed.

24 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: So let me just  
25 follow with that. These are called "tutors" -- does

1 it matter? -- that will be in the classroom.

2 MS. CALLAHAN: Mr. Chair, Commissioner  
3 Shearman, are they going to be paid?

4 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Yes.

5 MS. CALLAHAN: They are going to be paid?  
6 Then they would require licensure to be an  
7 educational assistant, if that was the identified  
8 role. As far as tutors, there's not a designation,  
9 really, in the budget, unless they're volunteers.  
10 If they're volunteers, they can tutor and they can  
11 come in.

12 I don't believe that there's any in the  
13 chart of accounts that has specifically to tutors.  
14 It is only educational assistants. And so that  
15 would have to be clarified. There are some problems  
16 that universities do -- they pay the students as  
17 part of a work-study program, if that's something  
18 that they're looking at.

19 But if the school is going to pay them,  
20 they're, going to have to be licensed as an  
21 educational assistant, or there's going to have to  
22 be another code or classification that would not  
23 require licensure, you know, if they were going to  
24 be an administrative assistant of some type. But  
25 then they couldn't work with students.

1 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Thank you. If I  
2 recall in the narrative somewhere, it said these  
3 would be halftime without benefits?

4 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, ma'am.

5 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: How does that opt  
6 with the law, to be part-time with no benefits?

7 MS. CALLAHAN: Mr. Chair, Commissioner  
8 Shearman, I don't believe there's a designation  
9 about the time. An FTE is an FTE. So if it's a .2,  
10 they need a license, or full-time.

11 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Okay. Thank you.  
12 On your budget -- and I know Mr. Gant asked you this  
13 about teachers -- you've got seven full-time regular  
14 classroom teachers.

15 MR. CASAVANTES: Uh-huh.

16 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Two vocational  
17 teachers and one special education teacher. So with  
18 your ratio that you propose to have -- and tell me  
19 again what it is? Student-teacher ratio? One to  
20 ten?

21 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, we were looking at  
22 it with the entire staff-to-student ratio would be  
23 about -- a little bit more than ten to one. But I  
24 didn't calculate it for what it was with just  
25 teachers to --

1 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: One teacher and  
2 two aides?

3 MR. CASAVANTES: Pardon me.

4 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: One teacher and  
5 two aides, as I recall, to a classroom of 30?

6 MR. CASAVANTES: We are using a pullout  
7 program. We have a main educational area, where  
8 students are working and being guided on the  
9 activities that they're working on. And then  
10 classroom instruction is on a kind of a pullout  
11 basis, based on -- based on what their testing shows  
12 that they are needing to -- to learn.

13 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Well, I don't know  
14 how to measure that, then. Because you say seven  
15 regular classroom teachers.

16 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes.

17 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Three hundred  
18 students the first year.

19 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes.

20 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: That's -- well,  
21 even if I use nine teachers, including the two  
22 vocational, that's 33 apiece.

23 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes.

24 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: And if we just use  
25 seven, that's 42 apiece. So I'm not sure how we're

1 getting --

2 MR. CASAVANTES: Because of the tutors  
3 that we plan to have, that, you know -- we were  
4 looking at -- you would be gaining more -- you know,  
5 you get -- with a limited budget, you get to a point  
6 where you cannot get more individualized contact  
7 unless you do something like this, you know. When  
8 you have everybody a certified teacher, you're stuck  
9 at a certain ratio, and you cannot provide more help  
10 than that. And so we were looking at using tutors  
11 to have more staff in the building to work with the  
12 students.

13 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Well, I -- I have  
14 a concern that tutors working with the students --

15 MR. CASAVANTES: Yeah, I understand. I  
16 understand.

17 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: -- without a  
18 teacher there, or --

19 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, there is -- the  
20 principal lead teacher that was an administrator is  
21 present in that main educational space and is  
22 supervising all the activities in that space.

23 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Okay. Thank you.

24 Let me just talk about your staffing plan. And

25 Page 50, I'm looking at the charter, where you have

1 the grade levels broken down by year. Comparing  
2 that to your budget in year one, you're projecting  
3 200 students, the budget was -- your budget was  
4 billed on 300 --

5 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, ma'am.

6 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: -- in year one.  
7 In year two, you have a projected budget of  
8 300 students, but it's still the same number of  
9 teachers.

10 MR. CASAVANTES: Let me say that this is  
11 incorrect. We intended it to be 300 all the way  
12 across, and this was an error.

13 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Okay. So this is  
14 incorrect.

15 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, ma'am.

16 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Oh, it's the same  
17 number of teachers, but then that stands to reason.

18 Okay. On Page -- where you talk about who  
19 you're going to hire, teachers, and you want -- you  
20 plan to hire teachers with master's and doctorates.

21 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, I think that we  
22 were planning to hire tutors. I believe that's the  
23 intention. And -- and then one of the things we  
24 were considering is for teachers to have more than  
25 one certification, to -- where they were available.



1 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: In your budget  
2 narrative, your narrative for line 17, "We plan to  
3 hire master's and doctor's level students" -- pardon  
4 me -- "who have a student visa from a local" --

5 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes.

6 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: Okay. These are  
7 the ones that you want to hire as your tutors.

8 MR. CASAVANTES: Yes, ma'am.

9 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: But if they're  
10 functioning as instructional aides -- (Indicates.)

11 MR. CASAVANTES: I understand the issue.

12 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: I think I'm  
13 finished. Thank you very much.

14 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner  
15 Shearman. Commissioner Bergman.

16 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: Thank you,  
17 Mr. Chair. I'm going to explore the relationship of  
18 these community advisory groups, because, to me,  
19 that sounds like it's an outside group, kind of like  
20 what used to be PTA or something. I know it's not  
21 called PTO. I don't know what it's called. I don't  
22 have kids in the school.

23 But, as I read the application, it seemed  
24 like this "CAG," as you called it, was going to be  
25 deeply immersed in the actual management and

1 operation of this charter school.

2 And I'm looking specifically here at  
3 Page 39, for instance, of your application. And  
4 about the middle of the page, as you're talking  
5 about how you're starting up your school, it says,  
6 "Then the founding members and the CAG will work  
7 together on behalf of the Academic Opportunities  
8 Academy... ." That sounds like they're going to be  
9 involved in the management in the early stages.

10 And then you drop down to the next  
11 paragraph. You've got the CAG selecting the  
12 backgrounds and everything for your people that you  
13 want to hire. In other words, they're working up  
14 your job identification factors.

15 And then I drop down further at the  
16 bottom, and it says, "Training for the board members  
17 and the members of the CAG will take place at the  
18 school."

19 And then the next sentence says, "The  
20 content of this training will focus on the job tasks  
21 of employees, the curriculum, and the instructional  
22 plan."

23 So, here again, it sounds like this CAG is  
24 going to be involved in the intimate details of your  
25 application, of establishing all that. And -- and

1 it says -- and then, on Page 40, where you're  
2 talking about your board meetings, "Time is going to  
3 be set aside for CAG to deliver reports."

4 And this statement -- and I didn't jot it  
5 down; I don't have the page number. I think I saw  
6 in that application where you said CAG was going to  
7 actually participate in the evaluation of the  
8 administrators and the staff, and the evaluation of  
9 the administrators done by the board of governors  
10 solely, and then staff is evaluated by the principal  
11 solely. So explain this CAG group to me, please.

12 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, it's -- in many  
13 schools, they call it "campus improvement teams," or  
14 I don't know what term is used in New Mexico. But  
15 they were -- they were used to -- to look at aspects  
16 of the school to improve -- improve things and  
17 research things.

18 It's kind of like a subcommittee of the  
19 board. And I -- I don't recall writing that myself,  
20 so -- but as far as some of those statements --  
21 and -- so I did not intend them to be involved in  
22 management or administration, okay? If that's  
23 what's in there, that's -- that was not my  
24 intention.

25 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: An outside group.

1 And I found the other one on Page 41. It says, "The  
2 CAG will be asked for their input on these  
3 evaluations." There, again, that sounds like  
4 management to me.

5 MR. CASAVANTES: I understand. I  
6 understand your point completely.

7 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: And here, again --  
8 and I found the other thing I wanted, on Page 47.  
9 I'll read it to you. It says that, "In the near  
10 future, we will ask the people present at these  
11 meetings to elect representatives willing to  
12 participate in the Community Advisory Group," comma,  
13 "an essential decision-making group for the school."

14 That sounds like management, also, if they  
15 are an essential decision-making group for the  
16 school. I think there's some blurred lines here  
17 somewhere.

18 MR. CASAVANTES: I agree. One of the  
19 things, like -- items like the dress code or some of  
20 those things, I -- we were thinking that these  
21 community advisory groups would set that -- that  
22 information, because we wanted the community to be  
23 involved in that kind of aspect.

24 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: Parental  
25 involvement is a need anymore for any school to be

1 successful. But parents aren't involved in the  
2 management of the school like that.

3 MR. CASAVANTES: I understand. I  
4 understand.

5 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: Let me just look  
6 here and be sure that was all I had. Oh. And in  
7 your complaint resolution process, if there were  
8 complaints about the school, et cetera, et cetera --  
9 here, again -- this is this Page 48 -- it sounds  
10 like, when you wrote that, "Complaints may be  
11 addressed either to the CAG or the principal lead  
12 teacher." I'm not picking on you. That's just  
13 what's in your application.

14 MR. CASAVANTES: I understand.

15 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: It sure sounds like  
16 they're immersed in your school when they're in as  
17 part of the complaint procedures.

18 MR. CASAVANTES: I know it's repetitive  
19 and so forth, and I -- I consider that to be an  
20 error.

21 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: Okay. And I --  
22 this is just briefly. On your graphics up there, at  
23 some point, you talked about our "college partner  
24 standards." And yet in your comments early on, you  
25 stated you were in contact with all the universities

1 and colleges in the state, and only ENMU bothered to  
2 even respond.

3 MR. CASAVANTES: That's true. That's  
4 true.

5 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: And so right now,  
6 it doesn't sound like the colleges are on board,  
7 either.

8 MR. CASAVANTES: They don't want -- the  
9 main issue of contention is to offer college credit  
10 below a certain level. You know, that's the --  
11 that's the -- that's the main issue that they have.  
12 They want -- some of them only want just juniors and  
13 seniors to be considered for any college credit,  
14 and -- and then maybe some -- some sophomores.

15 And so that -- that's kind of where the --  
16 the -- the areas of disagreement, or where they  
17 don't want to come on board is the -- even NMSU has  
18 agreed only to accept students into their program at  
19 the freshman level, and we would have to demonstrate  
20 performance for them to expand it.

21 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: And I understand  
22 that when you're applying, you're in a gray area,  
23 because you can't sign agreements; you can't do  
24 anything. And I know that's tough.

25 MR. CASAVANTES: No, I understand. But,

1 you know, that's the understanding that we had. And  
2 so --

3 COMMISSIONER BERGMAN: Okay. I think I'll  
4 quit, just in case someone else had a final comment.  
5 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

6 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner  
7 Bergman. Commissioner Gant.

8 COMMISSIONER GANT: A couple of quick --  
9 Mr. Chair, a couple of quick -- I have one minute  
10 and 3 seconds. First of all, it's on Page 59,  
11 paragraph 4-A, bullet 4. It's No. 2. It's talking  
12 about the fact you may not have all the budget you  
13 want, cash shortfalls and all that. And you state  
14 in there that you will be willing to hire long-term  
15 substitute teachers as long-term substitutes, and  
16 then make them regular employees.

17 Do you think that a teacher who has been  
18 certified as a Tier 1 or 3 or 2 with a diploma is  
19 going to be hired on as a substitute at the pay of a  
20 substitute teacher?

21 MR. CASAVANTES: Well, this year, we have  
22 a special circumstance with no start-up grants. And  
23 we were looking at all kinds of options of how we  
24 could possibly open and deal with -- with it. And,  
25 you know, I've gone through several iterations. One

1 is I have the ability to get a \$1.5 million loan.

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

3 MR. CASAVANTES: Financial --

4 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner Gant.

5 The time has ended for the Public Education

6 Commission questions of the applicant.

7 Any member of the public, including the  
8 applicant, may submit written input following this  
9 hearing. Written comments can be sent to the  
10 Commission via the PED -- that's Public Education  
11 Department -- main Web site at [ped.state.nm.us](http://ped.state.nm.us),  
12 through the Calendar listing on the front Web page,  
13 through the Public Comments section on the front Web  
14 page, or by using the link,  
15 [ped.state.nm.us/comments](http://ped.state.nm.us/comments).

16 You will be directed to an e-mail format  
17 in which to write your comment. Make sure you  
18 identify the school you're commenting on in the  
19 drop-down menu. Please note that any written input  
20 must be received by no later than close of business  
21 on the third business day following the hearing on  
22 the application you wish to comment on.

23 I want to thank you for your presentation  
24 and for your hard work in preparing your  
25 application. The Commission will now recess the



1 hearing until 4:00 p.m., where it will resume in the  
2 community of Las Cruces. Thank you. We are in  
3 recess.

4 (Proceedings in recess at 1:05 p.m.)  
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## 1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

2 I, Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR, CCR #219, Certified  
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 Bernalillo, in the  
8 matter therein stated.

9 In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my  
10 hand on August 31, 2012.

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