

BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION

STATE OF NEW MEXICO

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS  
COMMUNITY INPUT HEARING

Solare Collegiate Charter School

July 19, 2018

8:30 a.m.

New Mexico Activities Association

6600 Palomas, Northeast

Albuquerque, New Mexico

REPORTED BY: Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR-CRR, NM CCR #219

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1 APPEARANCES  
 2 COMMISSIONERS:  
 3 MS. PATRICIA GIPSON, Chair  
 4 MS. KARYL ANN ARMBRUSTER, Secretary  
 MR. TIM CRONE, Member  
 5 MS. DANIELLE JOHNSTON, Member  
 MS. TRISH RUIZ, Member  
 6 MS. CARMIE TOULOUSE, Member  
 STAFF:  
 7  
 8 MS. KATIE POULOS, Director, Charter School Division  
 MS. MELISSA BROWN, Staff/Time Keeper  
 9 MS. KAREN WOERNER, Staff  
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1 that correct?  
 2 THE CHAIR: Bordering.  
 3 I am Patricia Gipson. I'm the Chair of  
 4 the Commission. I represent District 7, which is  
 5 most of Doña Ana County into Otero County, and I  
 6 butt up with Commissioner Johnston's district.  
 7 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: I'm Carmie  
 8 Toulouse. I'm District 3. And I do want to differ  
 9 a little with Commissioner Robbins. He has the far  
 10 northeast. I have all of the southeast and a good  
 11 part of the much nearer northeast. I go from the  
 12 river basically up to Louisiana.  
 13 If you get on the south side of town, I go  
 14 up to Wyoming. I go to the Base. I go all the way  
 15 down. And I have one very small district that butts  
 16 up with Karyl Ann on the far west side of town. So  
 17 I'm the only person with a district all within one  
 18 county.  
 19 THE CHAIR: We'll let Commissioner Ruiz  
 20 go.  
 21 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Good morning. I'm  
 22 Commissioner Ruiz. And I am from Hobbs, New Mexico.  
 23 I have Union, Otero, Quay, Harding, Roosevelt,  
 24 Chaves, Eddy, and Curry Counties.  
 25 THE CHAIR: You're up.

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1 THE CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. And I  
 2 hope you can hear me. I don't think that's going to  
 3 be an issue. But in case, just raise your hand back  
 4 there if you can't hear anyone, because that -- we  
 5 also have a -- we're doing a transcript of this. So  
 6 I will ask you, please, when you come up, to  
 7 identify yourself, and also to speak as loudly as  
 8 you can so that we can get this all accurately for  
 9 the transcript.  
 10 So I thank you all for coming. This is a  
 11 Community Input hearing today by the Public  
 12 Education Commission, and we're going to take just a  
 13 moment to introduce ourselves.  
 14 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: I'm David Robbins,  
 15 District 2, which is eastern Albuquerque.  
 16 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And I am the  
 17 Secretary. I'm also Karyl Ann Armbruster. And my  
 18 area is District 4, which is a lot of places:  
 19 Los Alamos, Rio Rancho, Corrales, Bernalillo,  
 20 wherever. It's all -- Jemez. It's a little  
 21 gerrymandered there, but not --  
 22 COMMISSIONER JOHNSTON: I'm Danielle  
 23 Johnston, and I represent District 8. We run from  
 24 Mora in the north down to Alamogordo on the south,  
 25 east of the mountains and between District 10; is

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1 COMMISSIONER CRONE: I'm Tim Crone. I  
 2 represent Northern New Mexico, Colfax, Taos, most of  
 3 Rio Arriba, all three precincts, and most of  
 4 Santa Fe County. I'm AFT New Mexico Vice President  
 5 and local President.  
 6 THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you all, once  
 7 again, for coming. And I will ask you at this point  
 8 in time to please silence all your electronic  
 9 devices. And I'm just going to read through a short  
 10 description of how we're going to proceed this  
 11 morning.  
 12 This meeting is being conducted pursuant  
 13 to New Mexico Statutes Annotated, Title 22, Section  
 14 8B-6J 2009. The purpose of these community input  
 15 hearings that will be on July 19th, 2018, is to  
 16 obtain information from the applicants and to  
 17 receive community input to assist the Public  
 18 Education Commission in its decision whether to  
 19 grant the proposed charter application.  
 20 According to this section of the law, the  
 21 Commission may appoint a subcommittee of no fewer  
 22 than three members to hold a public hearing.  
 23 According to law, these hearings are being  
 24 transcribed by a professional court reporter.  
 25 The total time allocated to each

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1 application is 90 minutes, which will be timed to  
2 ensure an equitable opportunity to present  
3 applications.

4 During the hearing, the Commission will  
5 allow for community input about the charter  
6 application. The time for public comments will be  
7 limited to 20 minutes.

8 If you wish to speak regarding the  
9 application, please sign in at least 15 minutes  
10 before the applicant's presentation. Please be sure  
11 that you indicate on the sign-in sheet whether you  
12 are here to support or not support the charter  
13 school.

14 The Commission Chair, based on the number  
15 of requests to comment, will allocate time to those  
16 wishing to speak. If there are a large number of  
17 supporters or opponents, they are asked to select a  
18 speaker to represent common opinions. We will try  
19 to allocate an equitable amount of time to represent  
20 the community accurately.

21 The Commission will follow this process  
22 for each community input hearing:

23 The Commission will ask each applicant or  
24 group to present at the table in front. They will  
25 be given 20 minutes to present their application in

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1 MS. GONZALES-ZAMORA: Hi. I'm Veronica  
2 Gonzales-Zamora, the proposed chair for Solare.

3 THE CHAIR: Who's timing? Okay. Thanks.

4 MR. IVEY-SOTO: Good morning, Madam Chair,  
5 members of the Commission. Daniel Ivey-Soto,  
6 counsel for Solare Charter School.

7 MS. KATIE RARICK: My name is Katie  
8 Rarick, and I'm the proposed business manager for  
9 Solare.

10 MR. LUIS OLIVAS: My name is Luis Olivas,  
11 and I'm a proposed board member.

12 MS. NORMA BINDER: Good morning. Norma  
13 Binder, a member of the founding team and proposed  
14 board member.

15 MR. PETER LORENZ: Peter Lorenz, member of  
16 the founding team and proposed vice chair.

17 MS. CAMILLE VASQUEZ: Good morning. My  
18 name is Camille Vasquez. I'm the proposed secretary  
19 and proposed member of the academic committee.

20 MR. MIKE WALLACE: Mike Wallace, proposed  
21 member of the academic committee and also a proposed  
22 board member.

23 MS. ABBY LEWIS: Abby Lewis, also counsel  
24 for Solare.

25 MR. SUBRAMANIAN IYER: Subramanian Iyer,

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1 the manner they deem appropriate. The Commission  
2 will not accept any written documentation from the  
3 applicant; but the applicant may use exhibits to  
4 describe their school, if necessary. However, the  
5 setup time for exhibits, et cetera, will be included  
6 in the 20 minutes.

7 Following the applicant's presentation,  
8 the local school district representatives, which  
9 include superintendent, administrators, and board  
10 members, will be given 10 minutes to comment.  
11 Subsequently, the Commission will allow 20 minutes  
12 for public comment, as described above.

13 Finally, the Commission will be given  
14 40 minutes -- but we reserve the right to extend  
15 that, if necessary -- to ask questions of the  
16 applicant.

17 Commissioners, are you -- are we all  
18 ready?

19 Okay. Thank you. And you're already  
20 here. So I will ask you, for the record, to please  
21 state the name of the school and your names.

22 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: Good morning. My  
23 name is Rachael Sowards, and I am the lead founder  
24 and proposed school administrator for Solare  
25 Collegiate Charter.

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1 founder and board member.

2 MS. AMBER MACIAS MAYO: Good morning. I'm  
3 Amber Macias-Mayo.  
4 May I proceed?

5 THE CHAIR: Yes. That's everyone that  
6 needs to introduce?

7 Your time begins, so you can.

8 MS. VERONICA GONZALES-ZAMORA: Good  
9 morning. And I'm Veronica Gonzales-Zamora, proposed  
10 chair for Solare Collegiate.

11 Is that better?

12 THE CHAIR: That's better.

13 MS. VERONICA GONZALES-ZAMORA: Veronica  
14 Gonzales-Zamora, again, a proposed chair of Solare  
15 Collegiate.

16 I am an Albuquerque native. I'm a  
17 commercial litigator. And for the summer, I'm a  
18 visiting faculty member at the University of New  
19 Mexico School of Law.

20 I grew up in the South Valley, the 87105  
21 district. And my parents, early on as a kid,  
22 realized that I had a certain potential. And there  
23 weren't a lot of options at that time when I was in  
24 grade school for my parents to get rigorous  
25 education and individualized support and cultural

1 programming.

2 So my parents drove me 45 minutes a day to  
3 another school out of district for eight years. And  
4 eventually, I became the first graduate of college  
5 in my family and also first lawyer in my family.

6 And what inspired me to be part of this  
7 governing board is -- proposed governing board -- is  
8 that I recognized the value of a high-quality  
9 educational program that was a smaller school for  
10 me, and, as a result, found some success and  
11 inspired others in my family to do the same.

12 I'm excited to be here before you with  
13 members of our proposed board. We all have a  
14 variety of skills and talents. But one thing we  
15 share in common is our passion for education. We  
16 all share a fundamental belief that every student is  
17 capable of attending college. And our goal is to  
18 make that a realistic opportunity, that every  
19 student, regardless of their background,  
20 demographics, is capable of going to college.

21 Our goal really is to balance the  
22 strengths and needs of the community in 87121 with  
23 the best practices. And in doing that, we've  
24 created a program -- the best program that we can  
25 come up with.

1 As a board, we've been meeting since  
2 December of last year and have really developed a  
3 mission, and you can hear more back from my  
4 colleagues, that we believe speaks to the strengths  
5 and needs of this community.

6 MS. AMBER MACIAS-MAYO: Good morning.  
7 Again, my name is Amber Macias-Mayo. I'm going to  
8 talk to you briefly about three particular points  
9 this morning.

10 The first point is going to be my  
11 background and my experience as a parent in the  
12 educational system.

13 The second point is going to be community  
14 involvement and engagement.

15 The third point I'm going to bring up is  
16 what we all have in common, not just our board at  
17 Solare Collegiate, the PEC, but also everybody in  
18 this room.

19 As I -- well, I may not have stated, but I  
20 am also an attorney. I am a family law attorney at  
21 Walther, Bennett, Mayo & Honeycutt; I'm a partner.  
22 I'm very passionate about working with families in  
23 difficult times to see what we can do to make things  
24 just a little bit better.

25 I'm also very passionate about New Mexico

1 students, children, in general. I've been married  
2 for many years, and I have two sons of my own who  
3 are both out of high school now, almost 18 and  
4 almost 21. I deserve a pat on the back for that  
5 one.

6 So this all sounds great; right? You  
7 know, I'm a success story.

8 But if you know how it all started out for  
9 me, it could have been so much different; and, in  
10 fact, I was doomed to fail. So, just briefly, to  
11 tell you, I was born to a drug addict in San Diego,  
12 California. My mother never recovered from being a  
13 drug addict, and, in fact, died just a few years ago  
14 from an overdose.

15 My father was -- is -- an alcoholic and  
16 has never been in my life.

17 The first ten years of my life in  
18 San Diego, the place that I found stability and  
19 support was in school. I was in public school, yes.  
20 And although there's strengths and weaknesses to  
21 just about everybody we meet, including teachers,  
22 there was always somebody who was pressing me to do  
23 better and saw the potential, as Veronica spoke  
24 about a moment ago, in me. And I excelled in school  
25 because it was my place of support and stability.

1 But at 10 years old, I was removed from my  
2 mother for obvious reasons and sent to Alamogordo to  
3 live with my grandmother. Now, there isn't enough  
4 time in the day to explain my grandmother to  
5 everybody. Suffice it to say she's tough, and she's  
6 strong. And she instilled in me morals and values.  
7 She herself was an educator. She taught high school  
8 Spanish.

9 But where she excelled was not in the  
10 areas that I excelled. I was math and science,  
11 predominant. She couldn't help me. She tried to  
12 find resources to help me. But she wasn't able to  
13 help me. All she could do was tell me, "Just keep  
14 doing your best, go to the school, see what they  
15 could do to help you."

16 And they did. I did do well. However, I  
17 was still overcoming my past, and I was still  
18 overcoming not having my parents, and I was still  
19 trying to find the support that I felt like I  
20 needed.

21 I had two children very young, and I  
22 married very young. And I had my children and  
23 married before I finished college. But that desire  
24 for education and being included never left me.  
25 Suffice it to say I did complete my college

1 education and went on to law school, and I'm doing  
2 fine now.

3 But my story is not that unique to the  
4 students in New Mexico. In fact, I would bet it's  
5 not even that unique to a lot of the people sitting  
6 in the audience today; all right? And what I want  
7 you to get from that is that the support that I  
8 received at school was key in my development.  
9 Family support, yes; I'm grateful that I had my  
10 grandmother. But it was key. It was key for me.

11 Now, as a parent, I wanted my children to  
12 have everything I didn't have. I wanted them to  
13 have a nuclear family, mom and dad. They did. They  
14 have extended grandparents who have been  
15 instrumental in helping me raise them. And I wanted  
16 them to get the best education they could, because  
17 in my mind, that was the key out; right?

18 My kids attended APS, and they did well.  
19 My boys did very well in elementary school. In  
20 middle school, they became boys, started giving me  
21 some problems. But they're like I am, in that I  
22 like to think of it as I operate like a bowling  
23 alley with bumpers; all right? I'm pretty good  
24 about staying in the lane. I want to know what the  
25 rules are. I want to know what the guidelines are,

1 of what he got in the charter school so that he  
2 finished high school.

3 I'm going to move on really quick to a  
4 couple of things. One is community support.

5 All of our board members are involved in  
6 the community. And my work on boards has taught me  
7 one thing, and that is everybody at some point has a  
8 talent, and most people want to be involved to help.  
9 But they don't know how to get started, and they  
10 want to feel included.

11 So as soon as the people who reach out and  
12 say, "You're in my community, and I want to help,"  
13 and we say, "Yes, you have a talent, we want your  
14 help," it becomes a circle, right, where now we want  
15 to help, and the community wants to get involved,  
16 and they're asking how, we're encouraging them,  
17 they're encouraging us, we learn from each other.

18 Community involvement is very important.  
19 And there's much more, I'm sure, that we can do, and  
20 we will do, as soon as we open the communication  
21 about what's needed. But the reason I say that is  
22 because I want to bring you to the final and third  
23 point, which is that we all, in this room, have  
24 something in common, okay, whether we're sitting on  
25 this board now, whether you're in the PEC, whether

1 and I want to stay in the lane, even if I bump up  
2 against the rails now and then.

3 My oldest son was like that. He'd bump up  
4 against the rails, but then he'd get back in line.  
5 He did well at APS. He had some bumps. He  
6 graduated and did okay. He was able to excel under  
7 our traditional model of schooling.

8 My youngest son, not so much. And I did  
9 everything I thought I could do to help. He did  
10 well in elementary school. In middle school, we  
11 started seeing problems. In high school, we found  
12 out he was just not going to do well in the  
13 traditional model. Now, when I talk about bumper  
14 rails, it was like ping-pong at that point. The kid  
15 was back and forth.

16 He asked me to attend a charter school.  
17 And I wasn't for it. I didn't want my kid attending  
18 what I thought was a second-rate school, someplace  
19 that wasn't going to challenge him. Eventually, I  
20 let him do it. He convinced me, because what was  
21 working -- what we were doing wasn't working. And I  
22 want you to know that my son graduated with A's and  
23 B's when he was failing high school. He's  
24 registered to start college. And he understands  
25 that he learns differently, but he's so appreciative

1 you're in the audience. Doesn't matter. We all  
2 want our children to succeed. We all do.

3 How they succeed and how we define  
4 success, we may differ. Traditional school, charter  
5 school, we may differ, but we all want them to do  
6 well. And that's why we're here today, to talk  
7 about what we can do to make things better for them,  
8 even if it isn't a traditional path, and open up the  
9 lines of communication with the community to tell us  
10 what you need, so if we haven't already addressed,  
11 it, we can.

12 MS. NORMA BINDER: Good morning. My name  
13 is Norma Binder. I'm a member of the founding team.

14 What I'd like to do this morning is  
15 address our core belief that literacy is the  
16 foundation for educational achievement and present a  
17 very brief overview of the plan for Solare  
18 Collegiate students.

19 We know that today's adolescents must have  
20 strong skills in speaking, in listening, and reading  
21 and writing to be prepared for high school, higher  
22 education, and the workplace. We will have four  
23 years to prepare students with a school day that's  
24 structured to include 130 minutes of literacy  
25 instruction and active student engagement.

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 18</p> <p>1 This will include 50 minutes of language 2 arts, which is critical in that 3 fifth-grade-to-eighth-grade span; 50 minutes of text 4 analysis that's consistent with those Common Core 5 standards; and 30 minutes daily of independent 6 reading. 7 Students will build vocabulary, gain 8 nuance, gain comprehension, and be actively involved 9 in nonfiction texts, including social studies, 10 social sciences, and science content. 11 Independent reading alone does not build 12 strong readers; we've seen that. However, if there 13 is truly a school-wide culture built that reading is 14 important by -- for adults and students and includes 15 celebration and accountability, it works. We've 16 seen it. When successfully orchestrated in school, 17 reading builds independence, it builds endurance in 18 kids, and it builds joy. 19 Holistically speaking, it's these 20 characteristics, independence, endurance, and joy, 21 that all students need to be successful, no matter 22 what they're trying to do. 23 Science and social studies content is 24 build into the Solare Collegiate curriculum. Guided 25 instruction of texts will be incorporated into the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 20</p> <p>1 currently live in 87121 and have for a few years 2 now. And I am pursuing a nursing degree at CNM, and 3 I am a program coordinator for a nonprofit in the 4 South Valley. 5 So I want to talk to you guys all today 6 about another core belief of ours, which is, "Voice 7 strengthens identity." 8 When I was little, I dreamed a place that 9 I saw on TV and was inspired by singers, artists, 10 dancers, people who were doing amazing great things 11 in the world. I always excelled in school. I was 12 good at it, and it made me feel very important. 13 But when I was in high school, reality hit 14 me that -- I mean, I had always dreamt of college, 15 but that's what it was; it was a dream. I never 16 actually thought that I was going to make it there. 17 Like I said, I was good at school, it came 18 easy to me, and I was very fortunate for that. But 19 I always felt that I wasn't good enough to actually 20 go to college. 21 I was embarrassed to admit it to anybody, 22 you know, that I had -- that I really actually 23 wanted to go somewhere, or to leave a little 24 village, you know, where -- where I grew up, with no 25 running water, you know, in a very poor family. And</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 19</p> <p>1 content areas. Our Professional Development Plan 2 for all teachers will include those strategies that 3 students need to tackle complex texts. So we need 4 to train teachers and -- in their instruction as 5 well as working with students to have the strategies 6 they need to be able to work independently. 7 PARCC and some of the other data tells us 8 most students arrive in fifth and sixth grade with 9 some academic deficiencies in reading and math. 10 We'll train our teachers to analyze student learning 11 and monitor their progress and build plans that 12 address the needs of individual students to fill in 13 those gaps. The interventions we plan are not a 14 one-size-fits-all. Nor will the interventional 15 instruction take the place of that critical 16 grade-level instruction. 17 Our academic plan is rigorous, and yet 18 it's holistic, addressing the needs of the whole 19 child and honoring their successes and 20 accomplishment in very constructive ways. 21 Thank you for the opportunity to present 22 this morning. 23 MS. CAMILLE VASQUEZ: Hello. My name is 24 Camille Vasquez. Again, I am a first-generation 25 college student. I'm from Northern New Mexico. I</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 21</p> <p>1 so I never really felt like it was attainable. I 2 never actually got to practice to speak my truth, to 3 tell my story, to speak my mind, and to give my 4 opinion. I would get to answer questions; but it 5 was never a focus. I was never taught that. 6 Here I am, 25 years old, and finally 7 learning to speak my voice and trying to strengthen 8 my identity. And as you can tell, I'm currently in 9 the process. But I say this all because what I have 10 learned from working day to day and hand in hand 11 with people in this community, in the South Valley 12 community, exchanging, you know, ideas and how we 13 can make it better, is that families and kids, 14 parents and kids, they both feel the same way. They 15 feel like they've not had a voice or like they don't 16 know who they really are here, because they have to 17 be someone else. 18 And that's why I'm here with this school. 19 Solare is purposely designed and focused on oral 20 literacy, so our kids in the community feel 21 confident and competent enough to speak, to express 22 and to ask even a room full of people or one single 23 person a hard question and to express what they 24 aspire to be. 25 Through living here, our strong community</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 22</p> <p>1 engagement and new forged relationships, we 2 understand the South Valley is vibrant, beautiful, 3 and a place full of culture. With the community 4 input, Solare has partnered with Instituto Cervantes 5 to create a "Spanish as a heritage language" 6 program, where students can test and actually 7 receive accreditation with a Spanish equivalency 8 diploma.</p> <p>9 We have partnered with the National 10 Hispanic Cultural Center to create a curriculum that 11 is focused on our South Valley culture and 12 community, because, like I mentioned, we really do 13 understand how different and unique it is. The lead 14 founder came to my organization with an idea. She 15 took our advice, our input, our concerns, and our 16 requests that were based on the community that we 17 serve. With help, advice, input, and other requests 18 from other community members, she brought everything 19 she had gathered and put together to the table of 20 we, the founding board.</p> <p>21 We, the founding board, have questioned, 22 added, taken away, changed, edited, and reviewed all 23 aspects of the school. We have discussed and we 24 understand the South Valley is a special place. It 25 is not like other areas. We, Solare, agree and</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 24</p> <p>1 2017, I wanted to be laser-focused on it being a 2 high school and college preparatory school. In my 3 ten years of teaching, simplicity in teaching was 4 what I excelled at. Reading to become a better 5 reader, writing to become a better writer.</p> <p>6 Those are the skills that I taught and had 7 high levels of success for students. I thought, in 8 designing for students, it should be simple.</p> <p>9 However, starting conversations with 10 community members beginning in December of 2017 and 11 in the formal grouping of our founding team 12 beginning in December, I realized there had to be 13 more, that I had Fernando Ortega from ACCESS 14 New Mexico say to me "Rachael, if you want to be 15 taken seriously, you have to absolutely offer the 16 Spanish language."</p> <p>17 So we had conversations with him, as well 18 as other community stakeholders, with families. We 19 did outreach to families to say, "What is it that 20 makes a school sing to you, a place where you would 21 want to send your child?" And it was identified 22 that Spanish language was important; but not only 23 Spanish language, but in a way that would meet the 24 needs of our families.</p> <p>25 Over half of our families identify Spanish</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 23</p> <p>1 celebrate this.</p> <p>2 We know the importance of community input 3 and support. We are open to work with and welcome 4 any group that wants to help shape our program to be 5 a success for our kids.</p> <p>6 Solare wants to empower our students. We 7 want to provide a safe space for them to understand 8 who they are in their community, in the state, and 9 in this country and in the world. We want to 10 empower our students to find their voice and to find 11 themselves. We understand how integral it is to 12 support our students, to develop their individual 13 voice so they can be doing what I'm doing right now 14 and standing up for something that they believe in, 15 at age 10, 15, 18, and for the rest of their lives, 16 because when you know who you are and what you 17 believe in and that you have a voice, you are 18 unstoppable.</p> <p>19 Thank you.</p> <p>20 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: Good morning. My 21 name is -- again, is Rachael Sowards, and I am the 22 lead founder of Solare Collegiate. I want to finish 23 up by giving you a little bit of background that 24 Camille alluded to.</p> <p>25 When I started this process in August of</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 25</p> <p>1 as their primary language spoken at home. We 2 understand many of our students will come to us with 3 various levels of Spanish proficiency.</p> <p>4 We wanted to have a program that would 5 have the expertise and specialty to be able to reach 6 students that are going to be fluent speakers that 7 need to work on their reading and writing Spanish 8 skills, or if they were brand new speakers with no 9 Spanish language ability.</p> <p>10 With that, quite naturally, we added the 11 New Mexico cultural component -- we had added the 12 New Mexico language component. And that was 13 something that we are in the process of designing 14 with the National Hispanic Cultural Center, as well 15 as with ACCESS New Mexico.</p> <p>16 MS. LAUREL PIERCE: That's your time.</p> <p>17 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Thank you. I was the 18 official timekeeper.</p> <p>19 THE CHAIR: Is there anyone here from APS? 20 Okay. Cross that off my list.</p> <p>21 So we are now to the Public Comment 22 portion. And based on the list, speakers will be 23 given 1.3 seconds -- one minute -- sorry. One 24 minute. Sorry. Barely get to get up here and we 25 say goodbye to you. 1.3 minutes.</p>

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1 MS. POULOS: One minute, three seconds.  
 2 1.05 minutes.  
 3 THE CHAIR: I'm a humanities teacher.  
 4 Please, everyone understand that.  
 5 MR. DANIEL IVEY-SOTO: Madam Chair, based  
 6 on the instructions given at the beginning of the  
 7 hearing, may the supporters of the school aggregate  
 8 their time with a few speakers instead of having  
 9 everybody get up with just one minute and three  
 10 seconds?  
 11 THE CHAIR: You can. I thought that would  
 12 have been done. Because so many people signed up to  
 13 speak in support and chose not to speak, I thought  
 14 that had already been done. Maybe it has not.  
 15 So I will give those -- I'll give both  
 16 those in support and not in support, if you want --  
 17 if you wish, to -- I'll give you, like, two minutes  
 18 to figure this out.  
 19 MR. DANIEL IVEY-SOTO: It comes out to  
 20 10 minutes a side; is that correct? It comes out to  
 21 10 minutes each side?  
 22 THE CHAIR: No. 20 minutes total. It's  
 23 not divided evenly among supporters, because there  
 24 were 19 people that signed up that wished to speak.  
 25 MR. IVEY-SOTO: Got it. Thank you.

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1 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: In state  
 2 government doing budgets, you round it down.  
 3 THE CHAIR: So you have that?  
 4 Okay. So I would say thank you, but it  
 5 didn't work out. We tried. So we've got, still,  
 6 the 20 minutes.  
 7 So the first on my list is Raymond Nance.  
 8 And, once again, as you come up and speak,  
 9 if you would, please, clearly state your name for  
 10 the record.  
 11 FROM THE FLOOR: Raymond Nance. I am a  
 12 2012 Charter School Teacher of the Year. As we are  
 13 aware, there are a number of problems with education  
 14 in the State of New Mexico, but when we do look  
 15 around and find bright points, those bright points  
 16 are charter schools specifically addressing student  
 17 needs.  
 18 I know Rachael Sowards from when we worked  
 19 together in the ASK Academy, what you'll recognize  
 20 as one of the top schools in the state. I know her  
 21 as a dedicated educator. She doesn't accept  
 22 failure. She is a problem-solver, and she is  
 23 working to bring together a top team of educators to  
 24 put together a school to try to meet specific needs  
 25 in the City of Albuquerque addressing specific

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1 THE CHAIR: So you've got two minutes to  
 2 figure this out. And then I need to know so I need  
 3 to know who to cross off.  
 4 MR. IVEY-SOTO: Absolutely.  
 5 (A discussion was held off the record.)  
 6 THE CHAIR: So, so far, from Solare's  
 7 side, I have received no information that anyone  
 8 is --  
 9 MS. VERONICA GONZALES-ZAMORA: Madam  
 10 Chair, there is one individual, Monica Gonzales, she  
 11 had an emergency and had to leave. So she will  
 12 submit written comments.  
 13 THE CHAIR: Monica Gonzales was not signed  
 14 up to speak.  
 15 MS. VERONICA GONZALES-ZAMORA: Okay.  
 16 Sorry about that.  
 17 (A discussion was held off the record.)  
 18 THE CHAIR: So that didn't work real  
 19 swell. So we've -- we're down by one speaker. So  
 20 you now probably have --  
 21 MR. IVEY-SOTO: One minute, seven seconds.  
 22 MS. POULOS: 6.66666 seconds.  
 23 THE CHAIR: So 1.7; I'll round up. Isn't  
 24 that the financial rule? You round up when it's --  
 25 FROM THE FLOOR: That's right.

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1 issues.  
 2 You know, they're looking at what our  
 3 students need. How can we help them learn? They  
 4 are preparing a unique solution for students whose  
 5 needs are not being met in the traditional  
 6 educational system.  
 7 And it's for that reason, I want to put  
 8 out there my support for the Solare Charter School.  
 9 Thank you.  
 10 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Samuel Naranjo.  
 11 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning, Madam  
 12 Chair. And my name is Samuel Naranjo, and I am a  
 13 former student of Rachael Sowards. She was my  
 14 literacy teacher at Cochiti Middle School.  
 15 I would like to start out with all the  
 16 goals she has helped me accomplish. It's been my  
 17 goal since sixth grade to acquire a 4.0 GPA. She  
 18 has encouraged me every quarter of the school year  
 19 to be the best version of myself I could possibly  
 20 be.  
 21 Back when I was in sixth grade, I hated  
 22 reading. It was my least favorite class that I  
 23 would never want to step a foot in. Since then, she  
 24 has pushed me to read, and I enjoy the class as well  
 25 as I enjoy reading.



<p style="text-align: right;">Page 30</p> <p>1 If I would list every accomplishment 2 Mrs. Swards helped me with, we would be here for 3 hours. If it wasn't for her, most of my 4 accomplishments would have not been accomplished. 5 Mrs. Swards is very flexible in learning. 6 If you have trouble with something, she will make it 7 her top priority to give you every possible way to 8 make sure you understand what was taught. 9 I believe there are five necessary 10 features that a school leader should have. They are 11 communication skills, relationship orientation, 12 dedication, support, and organization. 13 I am honored to say Mrs. Swards has all 14 of these. Mrs. Swards has communication skills. 15 She knows how to talk to her students. 16 THE CHAIR: Time is up. Sorry. Thank you 17 so much. 18 Next is P. Kim Herrera. 19 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning. My name is 20 Kim Herrera. And I was here to talk about three 21 things. Let's see how quickly I can do it. 22 I wanted to talk about Malachi, Solare 23 Collegiate Charter School, and trees. 24 Again, my name is Kim Herrera. And I'm 25 from Bob's Burgers. My family has owned the company</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 32</p> <p>1 THE CHAIR: Next on the list is -- I'm not 2 sure if it's Reverend Trey Hammond? Can't read it 3 real well. I'm sorry. 4 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Yes. 5 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning. My name is 6 Trey Hammond. I am pastor at La Mesa Presbyterian 7 Church; co-chair, Albuquerque Interfaith. I stand 8 here in opposition to the application. 9 First, Albuquerque Interfaith has had a 10 long concern that out-of-state for-profit 11 educational companies have been creating platforms 12 to access New Mexico public education dollars, which 13 are scarce enough as they are. 14 Secondly, Albuquerque Interfaith believes 15 charter schools shouldn't be recruiting people from 16 the outside, but they should emerge from the 17 residents of a community itself, who identify their 18 needs. And leaders themselves are the ones that 19 create a platform, not something parachuted in from 20 essentially a franchise or a profitable education 21 enterprise headquartered elsewhere. 22 And, finally, I personally have some 23 concerns about, in some of the charter applications, 24 it's stated that there's more local support than 25 there might be. In my experience of a similar</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 31</p> <p>1 for over 50 years. And in the past 25 years, I have 2 run the location over at Rio Bravo and Isleta. I've 3 had the opportunity to meet many of my employees' 4 children. 5 One of those is a boy named Malachi He 6 came into my office. He had just received an award. 7 The award was for class role model. We did a dance, 8 high five, gave him a dollar. He was happy. And 9 the cool thing about Malachi is he's the perfect 10 combination of the heart and head; he's also being 11 tested for gifted. 12 Unfortunately, I know that his 13 circumstances will limit his potential, because I've 14 seen it a lot, many, many times. His options are 15 going to be to perhaps go to one of the private 16 schools in the city. But if he doesn't get a full 17 scholarship, he wouldn't be able to attend. And 18 even if he did, transportation would be a problem 19 for him. So kids like Malachi need a more practical 20 option. I think that Solare can offer that. 21 I was at Solare and doubling down on 22 something for values, literacy -- 23 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Time. 24 THE CHAIR: Time is up. I'm sorry. 25 FROM THE FLOOR: -- and leadership skills.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 33</p> <p>1 application for the Altura Prep school in the 2 La Mesa neighborhood, I met with the folks as a 3 courtesy, but found my name was on their application 4 as an endorsement. 5 Thank you. 6 THE CHAIR: Next is Julie Radoslovich. 7 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning. My name is 8 Julie Radoslovich. I'm the principal and director 9 of South Valley Academy. I stand in opposition. 10 Today, I'm representing La Rea, an organization of 11 nearly 15 nonprofits and schools serving the 12 South Valley. I share a letter of opposition today. 13 Nearly 35 South Valley organizations and residents 14 are opposed to the opening of Solare Charter School. 15 New Mexico's school system has historically 16 supported autonomy and innovation. Across the 17 state, many schools have served in a way that 18 complement local school districts and meet a unique 19 need. 20 Therefore, we respectfully request that 21 the Public Education Commission not support the 22 opening of this charter school. We also request the 23 Public Education Commission take the following steps 24 to improve and assure that key community partners 25 are at the table:</p>

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1           1. Work with existing charter and  
2 district leaders to establish clarity.  
3           2. Require that all new charter school  
4 applicants demonstrate collaboration and partnership  
5 with local schools, school districts, and school  
6 boards, including tribes and nonprofits.  
7           3. Conduct an impact study with the  
8 Legislative Finance Committee or Legislative  
9 Education Study Committee, including a feasibility  
10 study of new school locations.  
11           THE CHAIR: Time is up. Thank you.  
12           MS. MELISSA BROWN: Whoever else is doing  
13 the timing, I'm waiting until people say their  
14 names. That's why our times are off.  
15           THE CHAIR: I apologize. It looks like  
16 the last name may be "Baade." But I am struggling  
17 with reading this.  
18           FROM THE FLOOR: Madam Chair, members of  
19 the Commission, my name is Robert Baade, the  
20 director of Robert F. Kennedy Charter School that  
21 operates in the 87121 ZIP code serving the  
22 South Valley. RFK has been around for 20 years now,  
23 and its mission is to serve students that are not  
24 being so well-served by the public school system.  
25           Ms. Swards came and met with me. We had

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1 a good conversation. I told her that she's crazy  
2 for wanting to start a charter school. It's going  
3 to take all her time and every bit of her energy. I  
4 suggested that she be working closely in the  
5 South Valley. She didn't live in the South Valley.  
6 We had a conversation about that.  
7           I serve on a number of nonprofits. I work  
8 with a number of institutions in the South Valley.  
9 They have concerns that they didn't understand this  
10 charter. And there is a level of community  
11 involvement here; it's clear. But it's not at a  
12 grassroots level. The community is really not aware  
13 of this school and what their intentions are.  
14           I really recommend that the PEC be  
15 thoughtful before they're approving charters that  
16 are being developed somewhere else and being put in  
17 the community without the community's involvement.  
18           THE CHAIR: Time. Thank you.  
19           Next is Isaac De Luna.  
20           FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning. My name is  
21 Isaac De Luna. I am the political director for the  
22 New Mexico Dream Team, the largest youth-led  
23 organization in the state, with over 20 chapters  
24 across the entire state of New Mexico.  
25           I am here today to express my opposition

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1 against the Solare school, the main reason being  
2 that I myself am a young parent of a five-year-old  
3 who's about to begin kinder. And I just can't wrap  
4 my mind around how it is that we keep spending this  
5 money into new institutions when we can actually  
6 analyze what is happening with the ones that we  
7 already have.  
8           And instead of defunding or divesting from  
9 other schools, let's make sure that we make the best  
10 with what we already have, instead of pandering to  
11 schools that I do not understand, and I do not know  
12 what their real intentions are, especially in the  
13 community that I serve, which is the South Valley.  
14           And with that, I would like to say that I  
15 think that not looking what we can do best with the  
16 schools that we already have is called  
17 mismanagement. And I would hate to call you all  
18 mismanagers of our -- of my child's education and  
19 everyone else's education in the state.  
20           Thank you.  
21           THE CHAIR: Thank you.  
22           Next is Kip Bobroff.  
23           FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning. Kip  
24 Bobroff. I'm a leader with Albuquerque Interfaith.  
25 And I've taught education and equity in the law at

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1 the University of New Mexico School of Law. Before  
2 I begin, I'd like to ask all of those in opposition  
3 to this school to please stand.  
4           (People stand.)  
5           Members of the board, this is outrageous  
6 that we are this far into this testimony, and the  
7 name of the outfit that is sponsoring this school,  
8 Building Excellent Schools, has not been mentioned.  
9 I would urge you to inquire where is the funding  
10 that funded this operation from, what are their ties  
11 to it, and why should New Mexico be turning over our  
12 schools, our children's education, to outside  
13 operators.  
14           There are charter schools, and there are  
15 charter schools. There are charter schools like the  
16 neighborhood charter schools of Albuquerque  
17 Interfaith that are firmly based in the community  
18 that really are grassroots and connected to that  
19 community.  
20           And then there are grasshopper charter  
21 schools that like to come in and talk to people and  
22 have conversations and then claim that they have  
23 support. There's also --  
24           THE CHAIR: Sorry. Time's up.  
25           FROM THE FLOOR: Thank you.

<p>Page 38</p> <p>1 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Next is Diane                  2 Garcia.                  3 FROM THE FLOOR: Hi. My name is Diane                  4 Garcia.                  5 THE CHAIR: You're not close enough to the                  6 mic, or it might not be on.                  7 FROM THE FLOOR: My name is Diane Garcia,                  8 and I'm here to support Solare Collegiate. I'm an                  9 heir of the Atrisco Land Grant. I was born and                  10 raised in Albuquerque's South Valley, ZIP code                  11 87105. And I'm here because I want people in the                  12 South Valley to have a choice.                  13 We have too many failing APS schools. We                  14 need to be honest, you know. This is what I want                  15 for my nieces, nephews, cousins, family, friends.                  16 Thank you.                  17 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Jade Rivera. Jade                  18 Rivera.                  19 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning,                  20 Madam Chair, members of the Commission. My name is                  21 Jade Rivera. I am the founder and director of                  22 Albuquerque Collegiate Charter School.                  23 I am here today in strong support of                  24 Solare and Ms. Sowards and her founding team.                  25 I think -- want to address a couple of</p>	<p>Page 40</p> <p>1 representing that organization.                  2 And we are in support of Solare Academy                  3 simply because we know, having worked out in the                  4 community, that we are all defenders of a child's                  5 potential, and we believe that the administration                  6 and leadership really has the thought -- the                  7 potential of all the children in South Valley in                  8 mind, and that they are going to work really hard                  9 with organizations like ours and other nonprofit                  10 organizations to bring in the support and everything                  11 that the children of the academy need in order to                  12 become -- reach their full potential.                  13 So thank you.                  14 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ellen Bernstein.                  15 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning, members of                  16 the PEC. My name is Ellen Bernstein, and I'm the                  17 president of the Albuquerque Teachers Federation.                  18 Over three decades ago, when charter schools were                  19 first conceptualized, they were proposed as public                  20 schools, in which teachers were free from                  21 bureaucratic constraints and empowered to draw upon                  22 their expertise to create schools with innovative                  23 teaching and learning opportunities.                  24 Charter schools were intended to be a path                  25 to innovation, not a bridge to privatization. Yet</p>
<p>Page 39</p> <p>1 things that we've heard today. First and foremost,                  2 charters are public schools. I don't think I need                  3 to tell you all that; but I want to address it                  4 for -- for the folks that are here. Charter schools                  5 are public schools. These are public dollars going                  6 into public schools.                  7 I would also recognize that this school                  8 does not have an affiliation with a for-profit                  9 entity, and members of this team are from the                  10 community. They represent all walks of life, from                  11 our city, from our community, many of them living in                  12 and being from and having deep roots in the                  13 South Valley of our city. I also feel that they                  14 have been incredibly thoughtful in their                  15 application.                  16 With that, it is the highest scoring                  17 application that we have ever seen through the PEC                  18 authorization process, which I believe is incredibly                  19 rigorous, having gone through this process one year                  20 ago.                  21 THE CHAIR: Time is up. Thank you.                  22 Sharon Tenorio.                  23 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning. My name is                  24 Sharon Tenorio. I am the chief of marketing and                  25 outreach for Big Brothers Big Sisters, and I'm here</p>	<p>Page 41</p> <p>1 charter schools, as a market-based reform, never                  2 became a grassroots movement. The charter school                  3 movement attracted billionaire philanthropists who                  4 actually have, at the root of their efforts, the                  5 undermining of our public schools.                  6 This is one of those charter schools.                  7 Funded by money that Betsy DeVos sent to the state,                  8 who is known to be -- have a focus on privatization,                  9 and now the Koch Brothers Latino outreach effort,                  10 the LIBRE initiative, along with corporate school                  11 moguls, Building Excellent Schools, which is funded                  12 by the Waltons.                  13 THE CHAIR: Time is up. Thank you. Next                  14 is Patricia Baros.                  15 FROM THE FLOOR: Hi. I am Patricia Baros.                  16 I'm a lifelong resident of the South Valley,                  17 attended schools in the South Valley, raised my                  18 family in the South Valley. I am in support of                  19 Solare Collegiate Academy, because I think                  20 communities -- I think our community, family, and                  21 children need more opportunities, more resources.                  22 We have the choices every day to shop                  23 where we want to shop, go where we want to go.                  24 Families should have the choice to choose a school,                  25 choose a business that they want to participate in.</p>

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1 I just think that the more choices that our families  
 2 and the more resources that we have, the better for  
 3 our students and the more success we'll get from  
 4 that.

5 THE CHAIR: Thank you.  
 6 Dwayne Norris.

7 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning. I'm Dwayne  
 8 Norris. I'm a fifth-grade teacher at Bandelier  
 9 Elementary School, national board-certified teacher,  
 10 and one of the vice presidents of Albuquerque  
 11 Teachers Federation. And I am standing here in  
 12 opposition to this.

13 I am listening to what's going on here.  
 14 And I know that we all have -- I believe that most  
 15 people in this room, almost everyone, has the best  
 16 interests of children. What I want to know is who  
 17 is going to pay for this? We know that there is  
 18 money coming down from the feds, from Betsy DeVos  
 19 and the Department of Education to start this  
 20 charter. But it will be the taxpayers who end up  
 21 paying for this charter, and that money, just as my  
 22 president said just a moment ago, comes directly  
 23 from our public school budgets.

24 Those budgets are continuing to shrink  
 25 year after year. And it takes 15 percent more money

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1 to educate a child at a charter school than it does  
 2 at a public school. Everything negative that's been  
 3 spoken about public schools so far today, this will  
 4 only exacerbate those problems.

5 We have overcrowding in the classroom. We  
 6 have a lack of opportunities in some areas. But  
 7 everything that is positive about this school and  
 8 has been spoken about is also being addressed in the  
 9 public schools. But the funding issue is the issue.

10 THE CHAIR: I'm sorry. That's time.  
 11 FROM THE FLOOR: Thank you.  
 12 THE CHAIR: Next is Peter Sanchez.  
 13 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning. My name is  
 14 Peter Sanchez. I am the CEO of the Atrisco  
 15 Companies. The Atrisco Companies are the successor  
 16 organization of the Atrisco Land Grant. I have been  
 17 working with Rachael Sowards for over a year. She  
 18 has a grassroots movement. We represent the  
 19 South Valley. Our heirs have been there for over  
 20 400 years.

21 We have approximately 30,000 heirs, most  
 22 of which live in this community and are part of this  
 23 community. You've heard from two of the heirs here  
 24 today, who still have family in the South Valley on  
 25 the west side.

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1 So I'm here to say we're in support of  
 2 Solare. We need a school like this of this caliber,  
 3 of this ability, and we would hope that you can  
 4 support them as well.

5 Thank you.

6 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Next is Krishna  
 7 Kandath.

8 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning. My name is  
 9 Krishna Kandath. More than 50 percent of the  
 10 charter schools are failing, in my view right now,  
 11 even UNM, CNM, Rio Rancho. A lot of the statistics  
 12 [unintelligible]. Good intentions don't run charter  
 13 schools. You need people. You need ideas. You  
 14 need resources.

15 Unfortunately, some charter schools are  
 16 better equipped than others. I think this school  
 17 has that advantage, that promise. They have a  
 18 board, a group of people with high levels of  
 19 integrity. They come out of a variety of  
 20 specializations, backgrounds, and I think that's  
 21 going to be one of those critical factors to make  
 22 that school work.

23 I think many charter schools lack that  
 24 right now, because which you will see, every year in  
 25 the hearings, these charter schools struggle with

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1 fiscal control, the biggest challenge. While  
 2 they're already under-resourced, often fiscal  
 3 mismanagement is what leads to the downfall of these  
 4 schools also, and I think this school is so  
 5 well-positioned, I can see the school going forward  
 6 and doing very well for that particular school.

7 Thank you.

8 THE CHAIR: Thank you. And, finally,  
 9 Michael Loftin.

10 FROM THE FLOOR: Thank you. I'm Michael  
 11 Loftin. I'm the executive director of Homewise.  
 12 Homewise is a non-profit organization that  
 13 lets people buy their first home. We let 674  
 14 modest-income families buy their home in  
 15 Albuquerque. The biggest concentration of those  
 16 folks, 237, purchased their homes in the  
 17 South Valley and the west side.

18 Our mission is to help families improve  
 19 their overall financial security with smart home  
 20 ownership. Another way people improve their  
 21 situation is with access to quality education. And  
 22 that's why we're supporting the application for the  
 23 Solare school. We think it will provide the  
 24 children and families that we've helped purchase  
 25 homes have access to another high-quality education

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1 opportunity, something that is much needed.  
 2 And I met with -- they reached out to me  
 3 to talk with me about what they were doing. I was  
 4 very impressed. Our team was very impressed. We  
 5 think this would be a major addition to helping  
 6 improve the South Valley and the West Mesa, and we  
 7 really urge your support.  
 8 THE CHAIR: Thank you.  
 9 I thank you all. I'm going to ask for a  
 10 10-minute break, and release you all for a time.  
 11 But I'm going to ask for a 10-minute break.  
 12 Thank you.  
 13 (Recess taken, 9:44 a.m. to 9:53 a.m.)  
 14 THE CHAIR: All right.  
 15 Thank you, all. I appreciate the  
 16 opportunity for a break. We are now on to the  
 17 portion for the PEC questions. So this is an  
 18 approximate 40 minutes.  
 19 We will be timed, but if -- if  
 20 Commissioners feel a need that there's -- additional  
 21 time is necessary, we can extend our time. So...  
 22 MS. MELISSA BROWN: 40 minutes?  
 23 THE CHAIR: Yeah, 40 minutes. So thank  
 24 you, once again. I truly do understand all the  
 25 time, the effort and the energy that goes into

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1 working on these applications, so that anyone who's  
 2 willing to take that on, for whatever reason, is of  
 3 questionable sanity, you know. We'll say that. But  
 4 I appreciate the -- the time and the effort.  
 5 I guess I'll just start with a couple of  
 6 questions, and then we can just go around and see.  
 7 So I guess -- and I want to -- and I want  
 8 to say that sometimes the questions that come from  
 9 the Commission just end up seeming like they're  
 10 really, really pointed. And I don't want that to  
 11 appear that there's any kind of indication that  
 12 we're -- you know, we're going after you, or for or  
 13 against. But these are, you know, the key questions  
 14 that we've got.  
 15 So we may be focusing on certain things,  
 16 and it's, "Oh, God, that didn't go well." That's  
 17 not necessarily the case. But we've got this  
 18 limited time to try to just hone in on certain  
 19 things. So don't take it personally when we spend  
 20 maybe a little bit of time on certain things.  
 21 But one of the -- one of the questions  
 22 that I had early on in the application was that even  
 23 though you received very high ratings for the -- the  
 24 mission portion, it was clear that there was no  
 25 uniqueness that was identified in that mission. And

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1 the statute and the guidance is to clearly identify  
 2 the uniqueness of this mission. I didn't see it in  
 3 the answer, and the raters clearly did not identify  
 4 that the mission shows a uniqueness.  
 5 So it's a concern of mine, because the  
 6 statute speaks to show us how you're unique. And it  
 7 wasn't -- in my eyes, it was not there. And in the  
 8 reviewers' eyes, it was not -- it clearly was not  
 9 there, because it wasn't identified.  
 10 So I'll give you an opportunity to speak  
 11 to that.  
 12 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: So, again, Rachael  
 13 Sowards, the proposed head administrator.  
 14 And when you look at our mission  
 15 statement, it's through the academic rigor,  
 16 individualized supports, and character development,  
 17 Solare Collegiate Charter School will equip students  
 18 in Grades 5 through 8 with the skills necessary to  
 19 excel in the high schools and colleges of their  
 20 choice, I would offer that offering a Spanish  
 21 language program that prioritizes spoken Spanish,  
 22 reading and writing of Spanish, is highly rigorous,  
 23 particularly at the middle-school level.  
 24 And so when I think about components that  
 25 are compelling and unique in regards to our school

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1 design, that is one of the points that I see  
 2 immediately is the rigor.  
 3 Within the bucket of character  
 4 development, our focus on students' voice and  
 5 student identity, that's something I think is  
 6 integral in the development of young adults.  
 7 Middle-schoolers -- I love middle-schoolers.  
 8 Teaching them to use their voice in the classroom,  
 9 outside of the classroom, that is something that it  
 10 helps to build their character.  
 11 I think you're absolutely right that I  
 12 didn't articulate it well in the written portion  
 13 regarding the mission of the school. But it is  
 14 there. It's all embedded in the individualized  
 15 supports, character development, and the rigorous  
 16 academics.  
 17 THE CHAIR: Okay. And I'm going to -- and  
 18 I'm going to say that the directions were for it to  
 19 be stated in the mission, to tell us from the get-go  
 20 what your uniqueness is. And embedding in -- and  
 21 I'm going to say that, by and large, any public  
 22 school would probably say, "Well, we've got that  
 23 same mission, that we want to make kids that are,  
 24 you know, college-ready, that we want to do that.  
 25 We want to offer that"; so that, you know, it's --

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1 it's not different than what you would probably  
 2 have -- I'm not saying about what they are  
 3 accomplishing. I'm not talking about the outcomes,  
 4 but that just about any public school will say,  
 5 "Well, that's exactly what we do."  
 6 So that, you know, embedding it into your  
 7 educational plan doesn't -- that's not the promise  
 8 to the community, "This is our mission. And this is  
 9 the uniqueness of this mission."  
 10 And so that's -- it is -- I'm -- you know,  
 11 I'm not hiding the fact it's a concern of mine, you  
 12 know.  
 13 I just closed the application. Sorry. If  
 14 anyone else wants to jump in, go ahead.  
 15 Commissioner Robbins?  
 16 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: You three at the  
 17 front table there, there were comments made about  
 18 outside influences and supports and financing.  
 19 Could you address who is providing the current  
 20 support and financing to get this initial work done?  
 21 MR. IVEY-SOTO: Yeah, I'll be happy to.  
 22 And -- 'cause, actually, the last couple of days,  
 23 I'll be perfectly honest, I was a little bit  
 24 concerned when I started hearing things come out on  
 25 that issue.

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1 Once again, my name is Daniel Ivey-Soto.  
 2 I'm legal counsel to the school, and also, on an  
 3 aside, former teacher at Ernie Pyle Middle School in  
 4 the South Valley, as well as former high school  
 5 vice president of the Albuquerque Teachers  
 6 Federation.  
 7 So the school has benefited during the  
 8 planning year from a grant from Excellent Schools  
 9 New Mexico. The funding for the school -- for  
 10 Excellent Schools New Mexico has come primarily from  
 11 the Daniels Fund, which, depending upon how you look  
 12 at it, is either from Hobbs or from Colorado. But  
 13 in either event, it's tied to New Mexico very  
 14 deeply. And also from a number of donors within  
 15 New Mexico, who are interested individuals who are  
 16 interested in quality educational choices.  
 17 I was actually quite concerned, actually,  
 18 I will say, since you asked that question, about the  
 19 issue that was raised by the president of the  
 20 teachers federation about the funding from the  
 21 Waltons. And so I did go look looking on that issue  
 22 because I wanted to be sure, and also because I had  
 23 read one of the letters that was coordinated by the  
 24 Center for Civic Policy that quoted the National  
 25 Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

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1 Turns out the National Alliance for Public  
 2 Charter Schools, in the last year that was reported,  
 3 received \$2,928,707 from the Walton Foundation.  
 4 I also noted, since I know you guys have  
 5 another hearing coming up, that the NACA Inspired  
 6 Schools Network received \$283,650 from the Walton  
 7 Foundation.  
 8 And so I do think it's of some concern  
 9 about out-of-state corporate dollars trying to  
 10 hijack education in New Mexico. In our case,  
 11 however, we've chosen to tie ourselves to the  
 12 Atrisco Land Grant heirs, the Instituto Cervantes,  
 13 the National Hispanic Cultural Center.  
 14 And, by the way, I do want to point out  
 15 that our director actually lives on La Vega in the  
 16 South Valley, where she owns a home with her family.  
 17 Thank you.  
 18 THE CHAIR: You're not going to identify  
 19 the ZIP code? I find that so fascinating about  
 20 Albuquerque folks. So it's -- you know, it's --  
 21 really? All right.  
 22 MR. IVEY-SOTO: 87105.  
 23 THE CHAIR: We do have multiple ZIP codes.  
 24 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: For the record,  
 25 40 years ago, I lived in 87105. For the record.

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1 THE CHAIR: Thank you. You know, I've  
 2 spent a lot of time with the LESC over the past,  
 3 probably -- I guess this is the second year that the  
 4 interim committee has been doing a big, deep  
 5 dig-down into how to fix education in New Mexico,  
 6 and spent -- and sent folks to various countries to  
 7 explore how they do their teacher training  
 8 differently, how they -- how they educate their --  
 9 especially their -- their early childhood, how they  
 10 do it differently, what those outcomes are from  
 11 those different platforms.  
 12 And at the same time, I've also spent a  
 13 fair amount of time, unfortunately, through that  
 14 same time, having to look at the overarching school  
 15 safety issues that we have and those very difficult  
 16 discussions that we're having about what do we do to  
 17 make our schools safer.  
 18 And there is -- there's commonality in  
 19 those discussions, because both are very rooted in  
 20 trying to take care of the social, emotional  
 21 well-being, and have children -- and children learn  
 22 best when children are allowed to be children, and  
 23 that to make our schools safer, we have to take a  
 24 look from within and to help to take care of and to  
 25 heal those issues with social emotional problems.

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 54</p> <p>1 And that's how we go forward.  2 And some of my concern with the curriculum  3 is that there is very little opportunity for  4 expression. Where is the art? Where is the music?  5 Where is my opportunity to express myself and to  6 learn differently?  7 And I -- especially at -- and those  8 Commissioners that know me, it's not an age group  9 that I identify well with. I'm a secondary school  10 person, and I admire people who want to spend their  11 time with those hormonal individuals. It is -- it  12 is a challenging time in their -- in their  13 maturation process. And it's also that time period  14 where we generally target where those students who  15 later on come back and have unfortunately committed  16 heinous acts, it's that age group where folks  17 generally identify that's where something started to  18 go awry.  19 And I worry about -- I understand a  20 concentration in the literacy component. But  21 there's -- there just doesn't appear to be, in the  22 scheduling, opportunity for expression.  23 MR. IVEY-SOTO: I'm going to start, and  24 I'm going to yield over to Rachael on that.  25 So, first of all, as -- as you know, I --</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 56</p> <p>1 clear understanding and opportunity to find out what  2 they are and to grow in terms of who they are and to  3 understand that -- that they -- that they're a  4 unique individual.  5 One of the most horrifying things to me,  6 when I was a high school teacher, when I was talking  7 to my students at the end of a semester, was one of  8 my students who said to me, "You know, you never  9 called on me."  10 It happens, despite our best intentions.  11 She was a good student. There was no reason for me  12 to call on her, because she was a good student all  13 the time. Except that she didn't feel that way.  14 And this school builds that in with each student.  15 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: Yeah. And to add on  16 that to just a couple of things. You mentioned our  17 focus on student voice. That is -- I was a teacher  18 for ten years. In my third year of teaching, I had  19 a school leader who came into my classroom with a  20 timer and timed how many minutes I was talking at  21 students versus how many minutes we were having  22 conversations, how many minutes where students were  23 leading. And it completely revolutionized the way  24 that I was teaching.  25 And written into our application, by</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 55</p> <p>1 so -- sorry. Let me just organize my thoughts.  2 Middle school -- you're absolutely right. Middle  3 school is where we lose kids. That's the first  4 place where they really, like, start to check out.  5 What we also know is that -- is that one  6 of the most important dynamics for school is the  7 engagement of parents, which, unfortunately, is the  8 one area that we have the least control over.  9 What -- part of what we provide in our --  10 in our application, however, in addition to an  11 extended day and more time with the students, is  12 also the opportunity for each student to be  13 supported with 50 minutes of individualized tutoring  14 on a daily basis.  15 Now, I understand you're talking about --  16 about the arts; you're talking about music; you're  17 talking about other areas of expression. But part  18 of what we're building in -- and this goes to the  19 voice that we were talking about before. Part of  20 what we're building in isn't just simply, "Please  21 come join the group in the class; now we're done."  22 Part of what we're building in is time  23 with each student in a structured, intentional daily  24 opportunity to have time with each student, so  25 that -- so that, in fact, each student has a really</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 57</p> <p>1 design, our teachers will spend no more than  2 20 percent of the time per day doing direct  3 instruction. I wholeheartedly believe that student  4 engagement in the classroom is really how you get  5 high levels of mastery and high levels of student  6 growth.  7 With that, you mentioned our enrichment.  8 Our intention is that will include things like  9 socio-emotional. I spent some time at a charter  10 school where they've revolutionized the position of  11 dean of students. They call it a dean of culture,  12 because is it's so more much than a dean of  13 students.  14 Students who struggle need a pat on the  15 back in the morning. They check into the dean's  16 office every day. They have little notes or a  17 checklist, whatever it is that those students need  18 to feel special and to excel in the classroom.  19 We want to replicate that, because it was  20 such a powerful experience seeing that dean of  21 students not being a disciplinarian, but helping  22 students to figure out, How do I manage the  23 day-to-day of middle school?  24 I taught for ten years, eight of which  25 were middle school. I dabbled in ninth grade for</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 58</p> <p>1 two years, then went back to middle school.  2 Students in middle school thrive on structure. They  3 will tell you otherwise. They'll deny it. But when  4 they walk into the classroom, and they know what to  5 expect in the first 15 minutes on a Wednesday, that  6 breeds safety, and it feels like a safe place for  7 students to learn.  8 When I say "structured," I don't mean  9 militant. Structure is simply prior planning.  10 That's something that we really value. In our  11 regular school day, there's an a.m. and p.m.  12 advisory that's meant for team building with  13 students, as well as building a relationship with an  14 adult in our building.  15 Intentionally smaller in size in our  16 classroom, we're proposing 26 students per  17 classroom.  18 Advisory is smaller than that, so they can  19 build authentic relationships with purpose and  20 infusing those personal skills to develop.  21 Do I need a method for keeping my locker  22 cleaned out? Support in preparing my materials  23 before class? Figuring out how to have a  24 conversation with someone I'm upset with?  25 That's what that time is designed for.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 60</p> <p>1 teacher and your administrators.  2 Voice strength and identity is really  3 meant to help these students figure out who they are  4 so that we can encourage this healthy socioeconomic  5 well-being, right, something we learned later as  6 adults, something I didn't learn until I was 27 or  7 28 years old.  8 So it's really something that we're  9 starting to integrate from an early age to create  10 healthy practices for the rest of their lives.  11 THE CHAIR: Thank you.  12 Oh, I'm sorry.  13 MS. NORMA BINDER: Norma Binder. Just to  14 clarify, we do have -- it's been described as  15 New Mexico culture. But one of the advantages of  16 being a charter is that we perhaps will not have an  17 endorsed music teacher, an endorsed art teacher, and  18 so and so on.  19 However, we can offer -- and intend to  20 offer -- dance, flamenco, all the -- all the art  21 forms built in art, working with santos, whatever  22 the -- as the community grows and thrives and we can  23 approach the -- the fine arts, dance, music, the art  24 forms, sculpture, within that context.  25 So it may not be an exact period, the way</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 59</p> <p>1 And then following that, we have a weekly community  2 circle that occurs every Friday, our abbreviated  3 day. That, in and of itself, is dedicated to  4 celebrating our wins and building our school  5 culture.  6 I think I hit all my points.  7 Also, we have that New Mexico cultural  8 enrichment. The intention of that is to be very  9 hands-on, project-based, and having students take  10 the lead in that course.  11 MS. VERONICA GONZALES-ZAMORA: And just to  12 add to that -- again, Veronica Gonzales-Zamora.  13 One of our core foundation beliefs is  14 "Voice strengthens identity" that's identity as an  15 individual, as a member of the South Valley, as a  16 member of this proposed school, as a member of  17 New Mexico, et cetera, et cetera.  18 And, really, when you're in a large  19 classroom with a lot of students, it's hard to be  20 your own identity; right? Maybe you're a number;  21 maybe you're just another student; maybe you're  22 trying to get the attention of our teacher.  23 But when you're in a smaller classroom,  24 you have that ability to create a community with  25 your classmates, to create a community with your</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 61</p> <p>1 I saw it in the application. But it's -- it's --  2 the intent is to embed it thoroughly into social  3 studies and -- and community work.  4 And thank you.  5 THE CHAIR: Thanks. Commissioner  6 Johnston?  7 COMMISSIONER JOHNSTON: Thank you. First  8 of all, I'd like to thank everyone who's come here  9 today, because seeing both sides of the community  10 comments has -- has been informative for me. It's  11 far and away, in my history, the best attended  12 community input meeting. So I appreciate that.  13 The questions -- and I've made all of  14 these notes. In 1986 -- all of my background is in  15 rural school districts in New Mexico -- the Estancia  16 school district decided it was time that we had a  17 middle school. And I had been teaching there for  18 ten years and was a brand new administrator. 1986.  19 I had the good fortune of being selected  20 the first middle-school principal. We included  21 sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. I bring this up  22 because the Chair's question about uniqueness -- so  23 I think that I come to this with an internal bias,  24 because having come to middle schools in New Mexico  25 in '86, there was a drive at UNM at that time to</p>



<p style="text-align: right;">Page 62</p> <p>1 really place an emphasis on middle school, because  2 middle school education is the time when we struggle  3 with what to do.  4 The uniqueness of this is you are looking  5 at fifth grade. And I saw that when I read the  6 application. So I thought immediately, okay.  7 You're looking at the core beliefs, at the pillars,  8 student voice. To a young person in puberty, that  9 voice is the most difficult thing they'll find,  10 because they don't know who they are. How they  11 exist within the context of the community in which  12 they're growing up.  13 These are the unique things that I saw in  14 the application that come -- that are my biases. So  15 I read through that.  16 In addition, I have watched Ms. Binder in  17 a math classroom. I had the opportunity -- I hired  18 Ms. Binder. It was at a charter school, under an  19 alternative licensure. I watched her take math  20 games in a hallway that was less wide than that --  21 that corridor, and teach students, through movement  22 and concrete touching, math skills that they -- they  23 had not mastered. So that was a bias. That was my  24 bias.  25 I eventually became a high school</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 64</p> <p>1 funding for people who are interested in starting  2 charter schools. I have seen that. That's another  3 bias.  4 I am not without question on this. But I  5 see the uniqueness. I see the solid foundation. I  6 see and respect the folks within the community who  7 are concerned about this. But I urge them to -- to  8 reach out and get your questions answered; because I  9 firmly believe that your concerns, for the most  10 part -- because we'll always disagree, all of us.  11 But I believe those can be assuaged by knowledge.  12 And I -- I see, through these six core  13 subjects, these six core beliefs, giving  14 middle-schoolers a voice. We still look for that,  15 because middle school is such a difficult, difficult  16 time. We have to understand that -- that the brain  17 is not growing at that point. It's going into the  18 physical changes. And the brain is resting in most  19 cases. And we have to adjust our education to that  20 resting brain, and we have to work with that social  21 and emotional maturity, so that when that brain  22 finally does, has time to wake up, because the feet  23 have quit growing and the hands have quit growing  24 and all of those things have happened. And that's  25 my bias again.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 63</p> <p>1 principal, and I have extensive experience with the  2 benefits of the Daniels Foundation. I know of the  3 Daniels Foundation's affiliation with Excellent  4 Schools New Mexico because of learning about it. I  5 had that bias.  6 The others, it's been a good learning for  7 me to learn that there is funding that I question.  8 But the Daniels Foundation has benefited students  9 with scholarships, full four-year scholarships  10 across the state for any number of years. It has to  11 be longer than ten, because I went to a charter  12 school, to a middle school in '06, when charters  13 were brand new.  14 Mr. Baade and I were in there together.  15 We were very vulnerable financially, because we were  16 so new. We hadn't been taught. We were  17 well-intentioned, but we didn't know. And people  18 misused funds. Adults who were running the schools  19 were doing it for adult benefit.  20 And I don't even have to -- I walked into  21 an embezzlement into that middle school, that  22 charter school, walked right into the middle, not  23 knowing.  24 Excellent Schools New Mexico has provided  25 professional development opportunities through</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 65</p> <p>1 But I don't want anyone in this audience  2 to think that I have not heard -- and I've written  3 down supports and concerns, and will continue to  4 follow those through. But I do see positives for  5 the entire community, and taking a risk oftentimes  6 creates a good thing.  7 Thank you.  8 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Toulouse?  9 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madam Chair, I  10 want to make a comment, and then I have a question.  11 I'm not going to talk as long as some of  12 my peers have. But, you know, my family's been in  13 Albuquerque since 1904. We came down from Santa Fe.  14 I have relatives all over the state, all over the  15 north.  16 But I also represented the South Valley  17 for 12 years on the CNM Board. And it is a very  18 complex situation. For every person who likes one  19 thing, somebody else doesn't. I used to tell  20 people, on a good day, if I had two constituents  21 together, I only had three opinions.  22 And so when I'd hear people talk, I  23 listened. And I listened more to the people from  24 the South Valley than from the people outside and  25 the people that are giving me talking points -- I've</p>

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1 heard all along -- I mean, it does not cost  
 2 15 percent more for a child in charter schools  
 3 because we don't give them any more.  
 4 I mean, right now we're dealing with the  
 5 State trying to cut back lease reimbursements and  
 6 people having to find that. But I don't hear those  
 7 things. But I do hear the community's comments.  
 8 But also, you have -- to be very, very  
 9 general, you have four populations, I would say, in  
 10 the South Valley. You have your old Hispanic  
 11 families who have been on that land for hundreds of  
 12 years. You have your new families from Mexico, some  
 13 of them several generations, some of them brand new.  
 14 You have old Anglo families that moved in there, you  
 15 know, a long time ago. All of those have mixed.  
 16 So you have people to -- I'm a mongrel;  
 17 you can't tell from my complexion who my relatives  
 18 are. And -- but the other group -- and this is  
 19 where I'm getting to -- what are you doing to  
 20 address the Native Americans? Because a lot of the  
 21 students out of Isleta Pueblo come into Albuquerque  
 22 schools, and many of the families there have looked  
 23 at our charter schools. I don't see that in your  
 24 plan.  
 25 We've already addressed -- I don't see a

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1 uniqueness. I see a great plan. I don't see a  
 2 uniqueness. We have other dual language and  
 3 cultural schools and ones that teach the arts and  
 4 the dance; we need those. I'm not saying we don't,  
 5 and I think we should have them.  
 6 But what I wanted, I don't see addressing  
 7 that Native American population that's right there  
 8 next to you.  
 9 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: Thank you for both  
 10 of the questions. I want to reiterate what you  
 11 said. We are -- we see our community outreach as  
 12 being ongoing. We've been working on this for a  
 13 year. We have many more years to go, hopefully.  
 14 Any organizations that do have concerns,  
 15 please reach out to us. You can find my information  
 16 on Facebook, on our website. I'm glad to meet with  
 17 anybody who has concerns.  
 18 And to your point, you're absolutely  
 19 right. When we did some demographic research, we  
 20 found that overwhelmingly in southwest Albuquerque,  
 21 Albuquerque Public Schools was primarily Hispanic.  
 22 That being said, we do have some relationships that  
 23 we've -- we've established with Isleta Pueblo.  
 24 For example, our vendor, [unintelligible],  
 25 is a gentleman from Isleta Pueblo. He was hoping to

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1 come. I don't think he made it today. It is an  
 2 organization we began to have relationships with. I  
 3 met him at the charter school conference in  
 4 December. And he has a child who goes to the  
 5 charter school in Los Lunas.  
 6 And so working with him as far as  
 7 networking is something that we do plan to do  
 8 long-term.  
 9 Previous experience that I have, I worked  
 10 at Cochiti Elementary and Middle School on the  
 11 Cochiti reservation for the last two -- prior to  
 12 this -- two years there. So I do have experience in  
 13 working with -- with families. The advice that I  
 14 had received is don't be too heavy-handed as far as  
 15 outreach goes. Wait and build natural  
 16 relationships. And long-term, that's been our  
 17 approach as far as community outreach in general  
 18 goes.  
 19 I went; I listened; I went to events. I  
 20 didn't formally present to a community about Solare  
 21 Collegiate until February of 2018.  
 22 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: What I don't see  
 23 is planning for a cultural element. That even with  
 24 your Hispanic culture, you're right next -- all  
 25 those irrigation ditches were originally Native

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1 American ditches. I also know that the South Valley  
 2 campus at CNM is drawing more students out of Isleta  
 3 before they choose to go on to UNM, the ones that  
 4 want.  
 5 You're a perfect place for people with  
 6 children to come. I know we had, several years ago,  
 7 a group from Isleta that were proposing a charter  
 8 school. And then the Pueblo stepped in, and other  
 9 groups stepped in, and they didn't actually need it  
 10 at that point. But there are parents there who work  
 11 in Albuquerque who are looking for other education  
 12 choices. The people at the Pueblo, their students  
 13 can go to either Los Lunas schools or APS. And so  
 14 you're in a position -- that cultural element needs  
 15 to be taught to your folks, too.  
 16 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: Right.  
 17 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: And I -- there --  
 18 New Mexico culture is such a blend of Hispanic and  
 19 Native American that -- my background is  
 20 anthropology. And I am one of the two people that  
 21 studied that overlap period. Most people studied  
 22 the Hispanic or the Native American. I grew up  
 23 here. I have relatives on both sides. I can see  
 24 where you have Hispanic elements that meshed right  
 25 in with the pueblo elements and kinship and family

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1 structures and all kinds of things, that it's  
 2 important when you're that close, we need to teach  
 3 that.  
 4 A lot of our schools are missing that,  
 5 too. You happen to be in a location where you can  
 6 draw those students. So if we would approve you, I  
 7 would hope that that would come in there. I don't  
 8 know. We listen. I'm listening today. I'm going  
 9 to listen tomorrow.  
 10 I'm listening -- this is my sixth round.  
 11 I will look at the written comments. I have read  
 12 your application. It's beautifully done. I don't  
 13 have a problem at all, compared to the stuff we were  
 14 looking at six years ago. But I just -- I need,  
 15 now, with the number of schools we have, to see a  
 16 real uniqueness.  
 17 I see the need. We have needs all over  
 18 this state. But we have so many other schools, and  
 19 our money is getting tighter, and the Legislature is  
 20 breathing down all of our necks. And we don't want  
 21 them to come up with a limit on charter schools or a  
 22 moratorium on charter schools. We need to have that  
 23 opening. So we do have to look at it carefully for  
 24 uniqueness. And I'm still looking.  
 25 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: And I appreciate

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1 Get ready.  
 2 THE CHAIR: So you'll take a break?  
 3 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: But what I want  
 4 to say, in a couple of different areas, number one,  
 5 I was very impressed with the amount of work that  
 6 you did on your application. I think the part that  
 7 I really particularly liked is that you sought out  
 8 help and advice from other successful charter  
 9 schools, or not.  
 10 I think that it's difficult -- I sort of  
 11 add to this combination is that I am an AFT member,  
 12 and I was a local president; so I am about  
 13 traditional public schools. I think it's  
 14 unfortunate for traditional public schools that we  
 15 bind their hands, for want of a better word, to not  
 16 being able to be more innovative.  
 17 I did not read Albuquerque's mission  
 18 statement. But I'm going to tell you that every  
 19 school district in the country wants to give their  
 20 children the most potential and to fulfill --  
 21 they're all the same.  
 22 I thought yours was different in the sense  
 23 that, of course, that has to be your goal. In the  
 24 end, we educate children, that is the goal, to be  
 25 whatever they want to be and so forth. It says

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1 your feedback, yeah. I think the New Mexico  
 2 cultural component is purposefully flexible as far  
 3 as the design. The intention is, it's very hands-on  
 4 and project-based. That lends itself to allowing  
 5 for a variety of cultural approaches being  
 6 integrated into that course.  
 7 Thank you.  
 8 THE CHAIR: Sure.  
 9 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I'm sorry. You  
 10 just didn't recognize me. I forgot my little crown  
 11 today because of my 39 years of teaching, more  
 12 teaching years than most of you are age. I taught  
 13 middle school for 33 years in special education.  
 14 And, you know, the real plan is you just put them in  
 15 a locker, turn on it on high, and take them out.  
 16 But I lived through it, and I do want to  
 17 say that although I do live in Los Alamos, and my  
 18 last 17 years were in Los Alamos, and, yes, it's a  
 19 very different population, I just want to tell you  
 20 my first school in California, in Long Beach, was  
 21 drawing children, before IDEA, from Carmelitos  
 22 Housing Development. That gives you a clue that  
 23 I've not always been in the same place; because I  
 24 think that's very different. It is very different.  
 25 And I'm not going to be brief, by the way.

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1 that.  
 2 What was innovative for me was you had  
 3 different groups; you had extended time; you had  
 4 a -- really specifically talking about the college  
 5 prep in your school's one. I don't believe that  
 6 Albuquerque says, "Oh, well, we won't educate  
 7 everybody for college." I don't believe that's true  
 8 at all. I think it's how you are able to do it. I  
 9 think it's really unfortunate, as I said, that  
 10 traditional public schools aren't able to do the  
 11 innovations.  
 12 One of the things, when Ms. Poulos was  
 13 introduced to me via phone, and my biggest complaint  
 14 was pretty much what Ms. Bernstein was saying, was  
 15 where is this sharing of success or failure from  
 16 charter schools to traditional public schools, as Al  
 17 Shanker saw. And I don't see a lot of it.  
 18 I think we're maybe going a little bit  
 19 towards that, because it's important. We're talking  
 20 about children. We're not talking about, "Your  
 21 school is better than my school." It's not that.  
 22 It's about children. And if you care about  
 23 children, then you share, and you do what's best.  
 24 I also thought that, to me -- remember, I  
 25 taught special education -- one of the things that

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1 gives pride, that gives voice to people, is being  
 2 able to communicate on a level of literacy. So when  
 3 they can't read, and they can't do math at some  
 4 level -- no one will ever -- all children will never  
 5 be proficient. I could do one of those -- but they  
 6 have to have a certain level so they can  
 7 communicate.

8 They have to know certain things about  
 9 history so they can know that the Civil War was not  
 10 against the British; although, right now, I'm not  
 11 sure about that. But, regardless, those are  
 12 things -- it's cultural literacy. A person wrote a  
 13 whole book about that. Those are important things.

14 So that's why I saw a number of what you  
 15 were looking at is unique, because there's only so  
 16 much you can do unique, you know what I mean? Like,  
 17 if you have 50 schools, how unique can each one be?  
 18 But I think the way you're going about it makes me  
 19 see that, that you're doing that.

20 So the other thing -- I do have a  
 21 question, however. And I wanted to see -- those are  
 22 very high proficiency levels that you listed,  
 23 impressive. And I will be excited if you get them.  
 24 So what's your Plan B if they don't do that, if they  
 25 don't get to those levels because you don't know --

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1 I mean, it's an unknown for sure. What would you be  
 2 doing?

3 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: I think that the way  
 4 that we believe we are going to get to these high  
 5 levels of proficiency is a maniacal focus on the  
 6 growth of our students at every level. I think of a  
 7 student -- I don't want to say a name, because I  
 8 have a prior student here.

9 I had a student identified as special  
 10 needs, English language learner in seventh grade  
 11 reading at a first-grade learning level. Our  
 12 priority with that particular student was get the  
 13 maximum amount of growth as possible. It wasn't  
 14 realistic for her to get a "4" at the end of the  
 15 PARCC evaluation by having me as a teacher for two  
 16 years. No, it wasn't.

17 We were able to grow her multiple levels.  
 18 She was on a trajectory. Our first focus is the  
 19 growth base, whether it be the PARCC evaluation or  
 20 the NWEA math assessment or whatever metric we are  
 21 choosing to use, how are our students doing  
 22 growth-wise? Long-term, yes, we want to have that  
 23 proficiency of focus.

24 But we know to get there, we first have to  
 25 focus on that individual student's growth. I think

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1 of my son who's going to be a first-grader this  
 2 year. He's autistic. He's high-functioning  
 3 autistic. He's never going to be a strong tester.  
 4 He may never test proficient. But what are his  
 5 teachers doing to support him, to show his best  
 6 learning self?

7 And that is what we like to focus on. We  
 8 like the data, because it gives us concrete  
 9 information that we can use to make better  
 10 decisions. But we also know that there have to be  
 11 internal steps there to get to that point.

12 Finally, I spent about a month at a  
 13 charter school outside of Boston. The State of  
 14 Massachusetts recently stopped using the PARCC  
 15 evaluation. But the last year that they used the  
 16 PARCC evaluation, their special ed student  
 17 population was outperforming the State of New Mexico  
 18 on the PARCC evaluation.

19 So that, right there, tells me that we  
 20 have so much more potential for our students than --  
 21 for them to grow using that specific metric. We  
 22 have so much room for growth, and I am confident  
 23 that with the team that we've created and the plan  
 24 that we have, that we will be on that path to  
 25 growing.

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1 MR. IVEY-SOTO: And if I may, I want to  
 2 address your initial comments. And going back to --  
 3 you're absolutely right. Al Shanker, the venerated  
 4 president of the American Federation of Teachers,  
 5 charter schools was his concept. And -- and, you  
 6 know, one of the things, as we've been reaching out  
 7 to folks in our targeted communities, is -- is --  
 8 and I think you can see this with some of the  
 9 discussion toward -- is this particular area is very  
 10 relational. We get it. We get that.

11 And we have an understanding that a rising  
 12 tide lifts all ships. And so we don't plan to  
 13 operate as a silo in the middle of a community of  
 14 families. Our intent is to be relational with folks  
 15 and to be collaborative with folks as we do what we  
 16 do.

17 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And I did hear  
 18 that. But you said we get more time.

19 THE CHAIR: Yeah, we can use more time.

20 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Another positive  
 21 I wanted to say -- and, actually, it's not just in  
 22 your school, but others in here -- is I do think  
 23 it's commendable for people who have means, who have  
 24 educated themselves, who have escaped poverty, if  
 25 that were the case, to come back to an area where

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 78</p> <p>1 there is a need and be willing to do that.  2 Because I will tell you from my  3 experience, it is much easier to work with students  4 who are not hungry, who are not from drug-addicted  5 families, who are not from communities with no  6 support, who come to school having fed; it is  7 easier, regardless of the disabilities, whether it's  8 from autism to learning disabilities to whatever you  9 want to call it.  10 So I think that it's admirable, not just  11 for you, but for all of these people who are  12 teachers, when you choose to go to a school to make  13 a difference. Because you don't have to. You could  14 just go to nice little places. We just happen to  15 live in Los Alamos, and I wasn't going to drive to  16 Santa Fe.  17 But down to my "Teacher," I have two  18 parts. Let me ask you questions, two questions.  19 You can answer them both.  20 One is I see your schedule. I'm  21 wondering, within that schedule, do individual  22 teachers have a prep period? That's part of the  23 question. And the other part is you talked about  24 the equivalent -- teaching an equivalent of 67 days.  25 Am I correct on that? And so I'm wondering how that</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 80</p> <p>1 schools in the community who have extended days,  2 that's the pay scale that they've chosen to utilize.  3 So we wanted to mimic that.  4 THE CHAIR: Can I just tie in on the --  5 when I looked at it, it was about \$44,000.  6 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: Uh-huh.  7 THE CHAIR: So is that based on -- are you  8 looking at just hiring first-years? So where -- how  9 did that \$44,000 come about?  10 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: And, Katie, feel  11 free to jump in here if I'm incorrect. So we took a  12 third-year first -- Level 1 license and about a  13 fifth-year Level 2 license and averaged that. We  14 assumed it's based on the intensive professional  15 development that we're going to do internally that  16 that's going to be most attractive to Level 1 and  17 Level 2 teachers.  18 However, as a Level 3 teacher and a person  19 who worked really hard to get that licensure, if the  20 right person is a Level 3 teacher, that is the  21 person that we're going to hire. We assumed it's  22 based on our model, based on the information that we  23 received from other charter schools in the community  24 about the type of teachers that they are attracting.  25 We assumed it's going to be typically Level 1,</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 79</p> <p>1 pay -- and I did look for this pay, and I'm sure  2 it's in there.  3 THE CHAIR: That's what the budget was  4 for, \$44,000.  5 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So they're  6 really not getting, per hour, the same as they would  7 get.  8 MR. IVEY-SOTO: We're still above minimum  9 wage.  10 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: To speak to that, in  11 our design is we're asking our teachers to do a lot.  12 We are also rewarding them for that. Our teachers  13 will have two preparatory periods per day. That's  14 100 minutes of prep time. As somebody who taught  15 for ten years, in 50 minutes, it's really  16 challenging to get a lot done.  17 We want to make sure our teachers have  18 time to do more of the work that they typically take  19 home to finish within their school day. We want to  20 have a space for them to be able to do that.  21 Additionally, we are proposing, at this  22 point, paying 10 percent above the district pay  23 rate. We know that that does not cover the  24 additional days that the teachers are working. And  25 this is just based on a practice that other charter</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 81</p> <p>1 Level 2 teachers.  2 THE CHAIR: You didn't build in a lot for  3 your 2 or 3 in terms of increasing in salaries. I  4 think the second year was about \$1,900, the third  5 year was about \$1,000, something like that.  6 MS. KATIE RARICK: Yes. We increase for  7 inflation, yes. We also know that depending on what  8 passes up in Santa Fe every year, the minimums may  9 change. The increases required may change. So this  10 was based on the information we have today in  11 building a five-year projection. We understand that  12 as the Legislature changes, the budget will also  13 need to change.  14 THE CHAIR: Sorry. Just --  15 MR. IVEY-SOTO: The minimum is rough. I  16 mean, the SEG is rough to try to work with. And you  17 can't always trust what the Legislature is going to  18 do.  19 THE CHAIR: I know.  20 COMMISSIONER CRONE: Who's responsible for  21 that?  22 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: You can't do that;  23 remember? You can't do that.  24 MS. VERONICA GONZALES-ZAMORA: I wanted to  25 add a quick comment. From the governance</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 82</p> <p>1 perspective, mission drives our decision on the 2 governing board. So to us, that means making 3 decisions about finances and budget to support the 4 extra prep period, to support the extra pay for the 5 longer school day and extra school days. 6 To the extent that those have to be 7 adaptable, the board is certainly willing to do 8 that. And we plan to do that with monthly 9 dashboard, so that we can see how students are 10 performing, whether we're meeting our goals and 11 whether the achievement is where we want it to be. 12 So we have this incremental check-in; so we're 13 constantly seeing, as a governing board, how we can 14 support our mission, support our school leader and 15 staff. 16 THE CHAIR: I need a little bit of 17 clarification because numbers aren't my forte. And 18 when it gets to asterisks, asterisks, asterisks -- 19 I'm looking. And on the application -- it's 20 actually Page 168 -- but it's the chart that talks 21 about the salaries of the head of school. It's the 22 leadership team, including the operations, culture, 23 curriculum, and instruction. 24 And this person is morphing into this 25 after Year 2, and this person is morphing into this</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 84</p> <p>1 So in Year One, assuming enrollment and 2 everything else is up to snuff, it is -- that is my 3 secondary leadership role. And then because we 4 anticipate having, by the 24 percent special ed 5 population in Year One, and a 25 percent English 6 Language Learner population, we'll have that student 7 support coordinator. 8 Those two positions, because of the 9 responsibility as we grow in enrollment, those 10 transition into Director of Operations, which we 11 have budgeted for a financial incentive for that 12 position, as well as the Dean of Student Supports 13 in, I believe, Year Three. 14 MR. IVEY-SOTO: And let me just explain on 15 the CSP -- 16 THE CHAIR: That's \$60,000, is that for -- 17 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: One position. 18 THE CHAIR: That's for one position. 19 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: The \$60,000 is for 20 the Manager of Operations. If we are to receive the 21 CSP funding, we would be able to reallocate some of 22 the costs that are in our current budget, start-up 23 costs, such as materials, to the CSP funds, so we 24 may be able to hire that Dean of Culture in Year One 25 as opposed to Year Two.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 83</p> <p>1 after Year 3. And I'm lost. 2 But there's a \$60,000 that's allotted in 3 Year One for that leadership team. And there's 4 \$55,000 that's allotted for the student supports. 5 But that money is only actually going to be used if 6 the grant comes in. 7 Is that how I'm reading Year One? 8 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: No. 9 THE CHAIR: Because I thought it said -- 10 or does the Dean of Culture -- because it says Year 11 One, if CSP funds are earned, the Dean of Culture is 12 added in Year Two; Year One, if the CSP funds are 13 available. So that Dean of Cultures, is that 14 included in -- is that just one component of that 15 leadership team? 16 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: Uh-huh. Yes. 17 THE CHAIR: So there's \$60,000 allotted 18 for how many folks? 19 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: In Year One, 20 absolute, we must have -- well, asterisk -- but we 21 did -- manager of operations. So that'll be my -- 22 basically, the -- we're trying to change from a 23 principal/assistant principal, to having an academic 24 lead, proposing to be myself, and then an operations 25 lead.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 85</p> <p>1 MR. IVEY-SOTO: And what happens with the 2 CSP funding is because that's federal -- it's 3 awarded by the State, but it's federal money. And 4 so, consequently, it's reimbursement. 5 THE CHAIR: Right. 6 MR. IVEY-SOTO: So we don't get that money 7 until we spend the money. 8 THE CHAIR: Right. 9 MR. IVEY-SOTO: And that's why the 10 asterisk is there; because we have to spend it on 11 something else. And then we get the money, and then 12 we can spend it on what we want. 13 THE CHAIR: But it doesn't explain why the 14 asterisk asterisk is there. 15 All right. And I -- if I can, it's 16 Page 201 on the application. But it's talking about 17 how you're going to roll out your grades. Because 18 it -- I just need a little clarification on that, 19 because it's my understanding that in Year One, 20 you're going to have two fifth grades and four sixth 21 grades. But in Year Two, you're adding two more 22 fifth grades. 23 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: Four more fifth 24 grades. 25 THE CHAIR: You're going to have four.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 86</p> <p>1 You're having four fifth grades. So you're 2 adding -- because you only started with two. So 3 you're adding a fifth grade. So you're adding two 4 fifth grades. 5 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: That cohort of 52 6 will matriculate out, which is why you can have that 7 wonky numbering that occurs. So we, in our first 8 year, as we build our reputation, it's an atypical 9 breaking point. It's going to be more challenging 10 to recruit for fifth grade. So our goal is to get 11 two classes of 26 fifth-graders. That group will 12 phase out, and then Year Five we'll be at 13 105 students per grade level, 416 students, total. 14 THE CHAIR: It just looked wonky to me. 15 COMMISSIONER JOHNSTON: Yes. 16 THE CHAIR: Sure. 17 COMMISSIONER JOHNSTON: And, Commissioner 18 Toulouse, I won't speak as long as -- one is an 19 observation on the acquisition of a second language 20 and the experience that I've had over the years as 21 an administrator and watching teachers of language. 22 That's both first language and second 23 language -- the importance of the cultural component 24 in the acquisition of language and our tendency to 25 see that as such an academic pursuit instead of a</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 88</p> <p>1 Academy. I'm also on the board of Big Brothers Big 2 Sisters. Been doing that for the past two years. 3 He's just finished his sophomore year. I 4 plan on continuing with him. I plan on continuing 5 to mentor students in that area. I think it's a 6 wonderful opportunity to both help where I can and 7 to get to know that community a little bit better. 8 When I first met the student that I'm 9 mentoring, he was -- he was not proficient in 10 writing in English, an incredibly low level. And I 11 was very concerned about what that would mean for 12 his future and where he's going to go. 13 As I try to show him the opportunities 14 he's going to have, part of the mentorship is also 15 to help these students get to where they want to be 16 in life, whether it's college or somewhere else, 17 helping him to understand there's opportunities. 18 And one of the reasons I wanted to join this charter 19 school is because I wanted as many students as 20 possible to have that opportunity. 21 I am committed to the area. For me, the 22 way in which I plan to involve myself is to continue 23 to mentor students in the South Valley area. 24 COMMISSIONER JOHNSTON: And I may -- thank 25 you, Mr. Wallace. I'm talking about adult community</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 87</p> <p>1 cultural pursuit. 2 I'm very fortunate to have a daughter who 3 has a Master's in Spanish linguistics. I'm very 4 proud of her, because she did her entire Master's in 5 Spanish Linguistics at New Mexico State. She called 6 me one day [unintelligible] and said, "Mom, I now 7 have a [unintelligible] vocabulary in Spanish that I 8 can translate into English." 9 So that cultural component. And the 10 reason she has been able to do this is because of 11 the teaching and the cultural component. 12 The question for the governing council, I 13 am very aware of the attendance at this meeting and 14 the supporters and those who have their concerns. 15 Governing board members, how -- can you 16 give me some thoughts about -- leaving this meeting 17 today -- because should this application be granted, 18 you are going to have to strengthen your 19 relationship with the community; that's the 20 culture -- what are some of the ways that you think 21 you might do that? 22 FROM THE FLOOR: My name is Mike Wallace. 23 I'm a proposed board member for Solare Charter 24 School. And, Madam Chair, members of the Committee, 25 I actually mentor a child over at South Valley</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 89</p> <p>1 relationships. How do you, as adults, plan to 2 interact with your fellow members in this community 3 as adults to build this adult confidence so that the 4 environment of these children is a collaboration? 5 And I appreciate what you're doing, 6 Mr. Wallace. I was unclear. And you are working 7 with the South Valley Prep. 8 MS. AMBER MACIAS-MAYO: Ms. Johnston, 9 thank you for the question. I -- one of the points 10 that I addressed in my opening was that of community 11 involvement. I didn't get to get as far into it as 12 I hoped, because you don't let me talk forever, and 13 people cut me off. But now I have the mic. 14 THE CHAIR: And she's a lawyer. 15 MS. AMBER MACIAS-MAYO: The first thing 16 I'd like to address, before we get into that, is the 17 very term "opposition." It just makes us think 18 contention; right? But opposition is really an 19 opportunity to discuss what the concerns are. And 20 we just don't know what those concerns are until 21 people stepped forward today to say, "These are our 22 concerns." 23 We want to know them. That's part of 24 community involvement. We don't just partner up 25 with and talk to the people who are going to support</p>

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1 us. We're so happy we have them. But we also have  
 2 to be involved with the people who have questions  
 3 and have concerns. And right now, they feel like  
 4 they're opposed; but if we get a chance to open up  
 5 dialogue, maybe not.  
 6 So in law, there's alternative dispute  
 7 resolution, because, inherently, there's the person  
 8 versus another person. But alternative dispute  
 9 resolution is a big deal now. We sit down and talk  
 10 about where can we find commonality and what can we  
 11 do on both sides to address concerns.  
 12 The reason I'm bringing that up, it really  
 13 does relate to your question, because that is part  
 14 of community involvement.  
 15 Now, my experience on boards varies.  
 16 Every board has a different agenda, and every board  
 17 has a different quality and participation level.  
 18 My experience on the New Mexico Hispanic  
 19 Bar Association -- I just finished my  
 20 vice-presidency term, which I served with Veronica  
 21 Gonzales-Zamora -- was there is a perception that  
 22 Albuquerque and Santa Fe was where everything was  
 23 happening, and the other communities wanted to be  
 24 involved in NMHBA but didn't feel included. And  
 25 when we would go to these different communities and

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1 hold meet-and-greets or, you know, little CLEs and  
 2 such, there would be a few people who would speak up  
 3 and say, "I really don't want to be part of NMHBA  
 4 because you guys focus everything in Albuquerque."  
 5 Okay. That's okay. We needed to hear  
 6 that, because then we said, "Hey, there's people who  
 7 want to be involved and are telling us they want to  
 8 be involved but don't know how to be involved."  
 9 A little bit of that is us right now. We  
 10 have community support. Rachael has spent a lot of  
 11 time talking to members of the community. She's  
 12 been given advice how to approach other members.  
 13 She's doing her best to be politically correct and  
 14 be appropriate, to be respectful. But those  
 15 conversations still need to be had.  
 16 And now that we know that there are people  
 17 who are in groups who are concerned, those are the  
 18 people that we need to sit down and speak with.  
 19 Are we going to agree on everything? No,  
 20 probably not.  
 21 But I want to go back to my third point,  
 22 which was that everybody in this room, even somebody  
 23 who was our opposition, the teacher. Sir, I heard  
 24 you say everybody in here wants what's best for the  
 25 kids. And I agree with you, and you're my

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1 opposition. So we just found something that we have  
 2 in common.  
 3 Now, how we're going to do this community  
 4 involvement, there was -- Mr. Ivey-Soto said earlier  
 5 that the parents are integral in the education of  
 6 their children. I think that might be something  
 7 else we all agree on. And so while we're doing the  
 8 best we can to create a curriculum and a program for  
 9 children, their parents have to see the value in it,  
 10 too. Their parents have to know that we want to  
 11 support them.  
 12 The parents have to let us know as well,  
 13 "These are some concerns that I have for my kid,"  
 14 because you know the reality is we see things  
 15 differently when we're talking about a group of  
 16 everybody else's children. But when it's your kid,  
 17 it matters more.  
 18 And when I sat here earlier and said I was  
 19 opposed to charter schools, didn't want my kid going  
 20 to a subpar school, my mind was changed when I saw  
 21 that my child needed a different path.  
 22 Now, on both sides of the aisle, on  
 23 opposition and support today, we heard people talk  
 24 about choices for our children and choices for the  
 25 parents. The community outreach and the community

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1 involvement is educational. We just need to let  
 2 people know what their choices are.  
 3 Some children -- I'm one of them; I'm the  
 4 oldest -- thrives in a traditional school  
 5 environment. They understand where those bumper  
 6 rails are, and they can get in line. But the  
 7 reality is some children don't, and some of their  
 8 families don't. Some families don't operate well  
 9 within those bumpers. And they need to be told  
 10 there's a choice.  
 11 So how are we going to do that? Well, our  
 12 board -- there are members of the board who grew up  
 13 in the South Valley and have connections and are  
 14 reaching out to them, and those are the people who  
 15 support us. But the board is also making an effort  
 16 to be entrenched in the South Valley. We meet -- we  
 17 meet in a local South Valley restaurant. We like to  
 18 talk to the owners, tell them we're the board  
 19 member, that we've had a great experience at their  
 20 restaurant.  
 21 When somebody says, "Oh, we can meet at  
 22 Starbucks," people cringe. No, let's find a local  
 23 coffee house.  
 24 It's probably going to take some door  
 25 knocking. I cannot hate that more. I hate knocking



1 on doors, and I hate people knocking on doors,  
2 because there are people who aren't going to come  
3 out even if we host community events and say, "Come  
4 on out, tell us your concerns, let's talk."

5 There are people -- you know what? This  
6 isn't an excuse; this is reality. They're busy.  
7 They're working two jobs. They're trying to get  
8 their kids up in the morning to school. They're  
9 trying to get dinner on the table. Their immediate  
10 concern is what's happening in their family, and I  
11 don't blame them. So we have to go to them. We do.

12 Some people are going to close their door  
13 in our face. That's all right. We have to go to  
14 them and say, "This is what we're offering. Can I  
15 have a few minutes?"

16 It won't be me because, I don't do a few  
17 minutes.

18 "Can we have a few minutes to give you an  
19 option? You know what your family needs better than  
20 I do. And you know what your kids need better than  
21 I do. So you tell me some of the things your kids  
22 are lacking and let me see if I can help. If it  
23 doesn't have to do with the school that we're trying  
24 to establish, because you know that this goes  
25 further than school, then let me talk to people and

1 can do community involvement.

2 But we've done little things. And little  
3 things are still progress. And as long as we can  
4 get the ball rolling, the community outreach -- the  
5 board is dedicated to community outreach. This  
6 board is dedicated to, as Ms. Armbruster said,  
7 giving back to the community.

8 MR. IVEY-SOTO: And, Madam Chair, if I  
9 could just ask Camille very briefly to address the  
10 question? Very briefly.

11 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: I think she felt it  
12 was addressed.

13 MS. CAMILLE VASQUEZ: So I think Amber did  
14 a really good job, you know, in describing how we  
15 intend to progress in getting out in the community.  
16 I mean, I'm new to all this type of stuff. I -- I  
17 mean, I'm not new to knowing what the community  
18 needs, because I'm a community member. But I'm  
19 definitely new to all the politics that goes  
20 hand-in-hand with it. So -- and working with  
21 different organizations.

22 But I will say that -- I mean, it's just  
23 as simple as saying hello and asking, "What is it  
24 that you want to do here," and really trying to get  
25 that discussion going.

1 see what I can do to help you with that issue that  
2 the school isn't going to address."

3 So I think if you -- if you had the time  
4 to hear everybody on the board today, everybody has  
5 ideas. And particularly Camille, I think, is going  
6 to speak in a second on how to connect to the  
7 community.

8 But the point that I want to make here is  
9 people want to help. They just don't really know  
10 where to get started sometimes. And in order to get  
11 started, they have to feel like they're being  
12 included and they're being embraced. Because if  
13 right away, if -- "I don't want your help. I didn't  
14 ask you. I oppose you" -- there's our word -- then  
15 it builds walls. And we're trying to break down  
16 walls.

17 And I've learned that people want to help.  
18 So we need -- we're hoping that the community will  
19 embrace us, so that we can say, "We want to help.  
20 Tell us what we can do."

21 Even if they think that right now they  
22 don't agree, that's okay, because not agreeing with  
23 us is an opportunity to discuss something. And I  
24 think that the board, like I said, if you spoke to  
25 everybody, each person has their own idea on how we

1 And the way we intend to do that, with  
2 organization. Because I think Amber did a very good  
3 job in describing how we're going to be doing it  
4 with families. But, I mean, whether it's tabling  
5 events -- tabling at [unintelligible], at Tower  
6 Parks, at Dolores Huerta Park, anywhere; CNM in the  
7 South Valley, you know, or it's going out to  
8 community events that are being held there at these  
9 places. Organizational-wise, I mean, like I said,  
10 it's just starting the discussion.

11 And, I mean, I'm trying my best, like I  
12 said, I'm still very new, to sending an intro e-mail  
13 between people. But, you know, it can be as simple  
14 as that. I just think communicating and asking the  
15 question of, "Why do you want to be here," or, "Tell  
16 me more," is the way that we're going to do that.

17 And this whole board is very open to that.  
18 Rachael is very, very open to that. And we welcome  
19 it. So, I mean, even if it is today, and you're  
20 here, we want to invite you to come up to us after  
21 this and say, "Can we set up a time to meet, can we  
22 exchange e-mails so we could talk about this more?"  
23 And that's how we're going to get it started.

24 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Appreciate it.

25 MR. PETER LORENZ: I'll make it very

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 98</p> <p>1 brief, if you don't mind. 30 seconds. I just want 2 to say that I think what is so important as I look 3 at me and I wear nice fancy clothes, nice suit for 4 you today. But what you don't see behind is 5 somebody who runs a manufacturing company, where 6 low-capability manufacturing jobs are paid at \$50 or 7 \$60 or more an hour because I believe it's right. 8 What you don't see behind this nice fancy 9 suit is I actually marched with my kids for your 10 organization, because I want them to be exposed to 11 all the challenges we have in the community. 12 The point I want to make is this: You 13 have a team here that is humble enough and has 14 humility to be open and to learn. We know this is a 15 journey. We know we don't have all the answers. I 16 hear you clearly, and I think you can help us become 17 a great school. So give us a chance. 18 Thank you. 19 THE CHAIR: I have one more question. 20 So -- and I swear this is going to be brief. I 21 appreciate the fact that you're doing the 22 transportation. I just question, do you really 23 think you can do it in one run? That one bus that 24 can do it? That's my only question. 25 MS. KATIE RARICK: Yes. So -- yes. So</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 100</p> <p>1 They do the training. That is included in 2 everything. 3 THE CHAIR: I read it like they were going 4 to be getting additional training for the culture of 5 your school. That's what it -- 6 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: In that case, we 7 would provide that person with a stipend for their 8 time, because we know that it is additional. 9 I also wanted to add that we estimated one 10 bus in Year One based on the percentage of students 11 who utilize the bus at Mission Achievement and 12 Success. 13 THE CHAIR: Okay. Okay. Thanks. So once 14 again -- oh, I'm sorry. I didn't see your hand 15 before. 16 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Not a question. Just 17 a couple of comments. 18 First of all, thank you for the time that 19 you've obviously put into the application, and I 20 also wanted to commend you on the impact that you've 21 had on students' lives, as witnessed by the young 22 man that so eloquently spoke on your behalf. 23 I will tell you that I am still an active 24 employee. I'm not retired. So just a few things 25 that I had noted that had been brought up.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 99</p> <p>1 Katie Rarick. Do you want me to stand up? Okay. 2 So the way it has worked in the other 3 charter schools that we've worked with, the quote 4 which we received, which is in the application, 5 which is \$50,000. That actually has five to six 6 pickups included in that price, to pick them up in 7 the morning and drop them off. 8 So what we will do is we will have key -- 9 central spots within the community to where the 10 children will come, pick up the bus, and then be 11 brought to school. And after Year One, we will then 12 get reimbursed for the transportation, which will 13 then continue to fund it. 14 THE CHAIR: Right. Along with that, there 15 was the inclusion that the bus driver would be 16 trained? 17 MS. KATIE RARICK: Yes. 18 THE CHAIR: So that is the training 19 incorporated into that \$50,000? 20 MS. KATIE RARICK: Yes. 21 THE CHAIR: Or will they be paid above and 22 beyond? 23 MS. KATIE RARICK: So the \$50,000 is for 24 the transportation contractor price. And that is -- 25 the one we've been talking to is Herrera Coaches.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 101</p> <p>1 I am in a traditional public school -- 2 because I understand that the charter school is a 3 public school. I am in a traditional public high 4 school, and I'm also an NEA Board of Director 5 member. And I will tell you that I think what -- 6 you know, your program is wonderful; your 7 application is wonderful. 8 I'm still not really sure, though, how you 9 separate that you're offering something different 10 than what the traditional school is offering. 11 Because I know I'm still on the front lines. I'm a 12 counselor and a test coordinator. And everything 13 that you have said that you're, you know, wanting to 14 offer your kids doesn't vary from what I'm -- you 15 know, I meet with parents. Because we have to meet 16 one-on-one with our parents. 17 And when I meet with them, I mean, I'm 18 telling them the same thing, you know. And we do 19 have the course. We're going to tell them, you 20 know, "We're trying to prep your child for, whether 21 it's the college that you're wanting to go to or 22 whatever." But we also have, of course, the choice 23 of career tech. 24 So I really want you to explain to me a 25 little more, really, what your -- again, kind of the</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 102</p> <p>1 uniqueness. I'm still on the front lines, and I  2 don't feel you're really offering a whole lot  3 different.  4 I understand the language immersion, that  5 whole piece for the South Valley as doing the  6 Spanish language. But we have schools within the  7 traditional public schools that do that very same  8 thing. And so I kind of wanted a little bit more on  9 that.  10 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: I'll preface that by  11 saying my last two years were in the public schools,  12 the Bernalillo Public Schools, probably my favorite  13 experience, because of my amazing students. But --  14 so I have had the experience of both charter and  15 district schools.  16 As far as the innovative component goes,  17 we've talked specifically about the programming. I  18 do think that beginning in fifth grade is  19 innovative. It allows us to do course  20 specialization beginning in fifth grade.  21 I don't have substantial proof of this;  22 but I highly suspect we will be the only fifth grade  23 in New Mexico where our students are having science  24 five days a week, social studies five days a week,  25 dedicated labs every single week for science. That</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 104</p> <p>1 very few of those small school options.  2 South Valley Academy has a wait list  3 double the amount of students they can actually  4 enroll. There is that need there with a smaller  5 school option with that intense focus.  6 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Yeah. I want --  7 as I said originally, as your mission statement, of  8 course, it's pretty much standard. I do see  9 differences in what you're doing. I see that  10 instead of having, in middle school, you can go to  11 art, or you can go to shop or something, you know  12 you can't do everything. There's only so many  13 minutes in a day.  14 So what I'm seeing is maybe not for me or  15 maybe not for my child, but for your -- for people  16 to have that choice, which, trust me, as a  17 traditional public schoolteacher, that's -- I'm --  18 that's a long leap for me.  19 But what I've come to realize is a number  20 of things. I started teaching in 1970, when I was  21 12. But, anyway -- but I -- children are not the  22 same. Life is not the same. We were talking  23 about -- Chair Gipson said about safety. I never  24 thought about safety in schools.  25 So I feel that I had to make a change on</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 103</p> <p>1 is something that -- the course specialization for  2 fifth grade is something that is unique and  3 transitioning more to that middle-school mindset.  4 So that -- structurally, that's a  5 component I feel that makes us unique.  6 We are intentionally designed to be  7 smaller class sizes than you see at many middle  8 schools, of 26 students. As a middle-school  9 teacher, I've had classes that are too small,  10 classes that are too large. I feel that's really  11 the sweet spot for you to be able to do authentic  12 small-group interaction as well as being able to do  13 full-group instruction in a way that's advantageous  14 for everybody involved; so having a little bit  15 smaller.  16 Also, I think that small school design is  17 something -- we don't necessarily write to it here  18 specifically; but it is a concern from families.  19 The idea of sending a child -- a little baby  20 sixth-grader to a school with 1,500 students is  21 overwhelming. As a parent, I'm really terrified of  22 imagining my little guy going to a big school -- a  23 school that large. So that is something that is  24 really appealing to parents. It gives families a  25 smaller school option, where there currently are</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 105</p> <p>1 what I was seeing and what I was able to support.  2 Absolutely, I support unions. I do. There's no  3 question in my mind. But I'm looking at charter  4 schools as seeing exactly -- Camille, right? -- it  5 isn't okay for all people.  6 I can tell you it's a totally different  7 experience living in Los Alamos, as you can imagine.  8 It is highest concentrations of Ph.D.'s per  9 community in the world. So you can imagine the  10 children we get.  11 But I want to tell you that it still has  12 the same bell curve. And I will also tell you that  13 they started looking into a charter school there,  14 not because our schools are not "A" schools. That  15 is not the reason. It was because there were kids  16 much like you were describing: "My child went right  17 down to that school, never had a problem, complained  18 about the homework, but did fine. And then my other  19 child -- it's, like, Who are your parents? Maybe we  20 shouldn't have locked you in the closet."  21 It's just the way kids are now. And it's  22 just a whole other -- it's just a different world.  23 And so I've had to personally say, "Okay, maybe we  24 need some different choices of how we're going to  25 educate them."</p>

1 But the bottom line is, which is why all  
2 of our performance frameworks and the contracts and  
3 everything, is going to judge you on can your kids  
4 read, can they write, and can they do math? I don't  
5 care how you get them there. But they have to be  
6 able to do that, and it has to be your goal, which  
7 it obviously is from everything that you've written  
8 in there.

9 So I'll just end with this kind of this  
10 other comment, is that my husband was -- is a  
11 counselor, therapist -- was -- is retired. And so  
12 he had a family. Mother has a Ph.D., scientist.  
13 Father has a Ph.D., is a scientist.

14 Kid says, "No, I'm not doing that. I'm  
15 fixing cars." So that's why they went to see him.  
16 And different strokes for different folks. So, in  
17 fact, this young man does work on sports cars. And  
18 we took our car to be fixed in Denver by him because  
19 he's very good at what he does. He loves what he  
20 does.

21 Everyone doesn't have to be a scientist or  
22 a teacher or a lawyer or a congressman, whatever.  
23 You need to make your life. And people are unhappy,  
24 regardless. It's not -- when you look at the  
25 suicides of people -- by the way, quite high in

1 able to do what you hope to do up to our standards,  
2 I think it's important that both pro/con people  
3 realize we will close you. It's a little more  
4 difficult on the traditional public schools.

5 So in my -- it's more difficult, probably.  
6 But this is an application that's been gone over,  
7 not by CSD, but by all of the different areas in  
8 PED. It wasn't just CSD who did this.

9 So I have a lot of confidence in these  
10 people. They've been right before. I know  
11 Mr. [inaudible] has been through this last year.  
12 This application is relatively new. And we know  
13 that if schools do well on these applications, that  
14 the probability is higher that they will do well in  
15 what they do.

16 But you always live with that.

17 THE CHAIR: Yesterday, it was so easy.

18 MS. RACHAEL SEWARDS: One of our first  
19 group meetings, probably our second or third one, I  
20 asked the team, "When -- if you choose to hire me,  
21 when would you fire me?"

22 We talked about that, as part of the  
23 governing board, when is it the responsibility of  
24 the governing board to get rid of the person who  
25 isn't effective?

1 Los Alamos -- it's not worth it. It's just not  
2 worth it.

3 You look at rich and famous people. And  
4 we can name a number of them, just recently, adults,  
5 I'm talking about, who had everything. You would  
6 say they're famous, they're rich, they had  
7 everything they want, and they took their lives.

8 So I think as a culture and as a community  
9 and as the state and the world, we have to change  
10 what we thought was okay in 1980 or '90. It's  
11 just -- it's a hard thing. It's very hard for me to  
12 do. I've had to do some soul-searching. I had to  
13 really say, "You know what? The world is leaving  
14 you behind if you don't go along with that."

15 So I've had to change my -- my focuses.

16 And everyone knows, or probably gets, that  
17 this Commission closes charter schools. If you  
18 aren't up to snuff and you're not doing better or as  
19 well as the traditional public schools, then there  
20 really isn't a reason for us to take more money out  
21 of that fund, which we all know there's only so much  
22 money, to fund you. I think that's the reality.  
23 And as you know, we have closed schools. You know  
24 that. And that will continue to be.

25 So the burden is on you. If you are not

1 I was a very strong educator in the State  
2 of New Mexico. I don't necessarily believe that  
3 being a really great teacher translates to being a  
4 really great leader. I'm working on it this past  
5 year, into this next year, making sure I am prepared  
6 to be a leader. But we have to hold me accountable  
7 in the same way we hold teachers accountable.

8 That is something we talked about  
9 intentionally, ensuring that we are holding high  
10 standards for our governing board, as well as the  
11 leadership, as well as our students.

12 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Once again, I  
13 thank everyone who spoke both for and against,  
14 because I think we did it in a respectful manner.  
15 So I appreciate that.

16 I hope that everyone feels like they've  
17 been heard, because that's what we're here for. And  
18 we will spend -- we certainly will spend --

19 FROM THE FLOOR: I just have a point of  
20 clarification to make is that it's been said a few  
21 times that the Center for Civic Policy is leading  
22 this charge for opposition.

23 THE CHAIR: I'm sorry. Public comment is  
24 over.

25 FROM THE FLOOR: I know. But the rest of

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<p>1 the public on the opposing side --</p> <p>2 THE CHAIR: I understand that. But the</p> <p>3 time for the public to speak and to sign up is over.</p> <p>4 FROM THE FLOOR: Right. But --</p> <p>5 THE CHAIR: I'm sorry. But I'm going to</p> <p>6 have to ask you to please -- ladies and gentlemen, I</p> <p>7 appreciate the time that you've put in here. We are</p> <p>8 trying to be respectful for everyone's time, so</p> <p>9 that -- and I appreciate the fact that we went over</p> <p>10 with ourselves, and we indulged ourselves that way.</p> <p>11 So I thank you for that. I thank you for</p> <p>12 your thoughtful comments. I think there are many of</p> <p>13 us that have spent significant amounts of time up</p> <p>14 here involved in education in a variety of ways. So</p> <p>15 we understand the challenges, and we applaud those</p> <p>16 that are willing to -- to dig in, especially in</p> <p>17 these challenging times.</p> <p>18 And I'll also identify that I have the</p> <p>19 dubious distinction of having been arrested</p> <p>20 alongside Al Shanker on the picket line. So I'm</p> <p>21 well aware of AFT's -- we'll leave it at that.</p> <p>22 So any member of the public, including the</p> <p>23 applicants, may submit written input following this</p> <p>24 hearing. Written comments can be sent to the</p> <p>25 Commission via charter.schools@state.nm.us.</p>	<p>1 your time.</p> <p>2 MR. IVEY-SOTO: Thank you, Madam Chair,</p> <p>3 members.</p> <p>4 (Proceedings concluded at 11:19 a.m.)</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p> <p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p>
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<p>1 They can also be mailed or hand-delivered.</p> <p>2 The details and addresses are listed on the handout</p> <p>3 at the back of the room.</p> <p>4 Make sure you identify the school you are</p> <p>5 commenting on in the drop-down menu.</p> <p>6 That doesn't make any sense. Sorry.</p> <p>7 Okay. I need an asterisk on that.</p> <p>8 Please identify the school you're</p> <p>9 commenting on. It should just be a period. But it</p> <p>10 says -- okay.</p> <p>11 Please note that any written input be</p> <p>12 received by no later than 5:00 p.m. on the third</p> <p>13 business day following the hearing on the</p> <p>14 application in which you wish to comment. For</p> <p>15 Solare, that would be July 24th, 2018, by 5:00 p.m.</p> <p>16 Thank you all for your presentations</p> <p>17 today. The Public Education Commission will meet in</p> <p>18 Santa Fe on August 23rd and 24th. And I believe</p> <p>19 we've already established that they're going to be</p> <p>20 on the 24th; correct?</p> <p>21 Yeah. So you will be the 24th.</p> <p>22 And we will render our decision on</p> <p>23 approval or denial of this and the other charter</p> <p>24 school application.</p> <p>25 So, once again, thank you very much for</p>	<p>1 BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION</p> <p>2 STATE OF NEW MEXICO</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE</p> <p>6 I, Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR, CCR #219, Certified</p> <p>7 Court Reporter in the State of New Mexico, do hereby</p> <p>8 certify that the foregoing pages constitute a true</p> <p>9 transcript of proceedings had before the said NEW</p> <p>10 MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION, held in the State</p> <p>11 of New Mexico, County of Bernalillo, in the matter</p> <p>12 therein stated.</p> <p>13 In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my</p> <p>14 hand on July 30, 2018.</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25 Job No.: 596N</p>

1 RECEIPT  
2 JOB NUMBER: 596N CC Date: 7/19/18  
3 PROCEEDINGS: Community Input Hearing Proceedings  
4 CASE CAPTION: In Re: Solare Collegiate Charter  
5 School  
6 \*\*\*\*\*  
7 ATTORNEY: MS. BEVERLY FRIEDMAN, NMPED  
8 DOCUMENT: Transcript / Exhibits / Disks / Other \_\_\_\_  
9 DATE DELIVERED: \_\_\_\_\_ DEL'D BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
10 REC'D BY: \_\_\_\_\_ TIME: \_\_\_\_\_  
11 \*\*\*\*\*  
12 ATTORNEY:  
13 DOCUMENT: Transcript / Exhibits / Disks / Other \_\_\_\_  
14 DATE DELIVERED: \_\_\_\_\_ DEL'D BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
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22 ATTORNEY:  
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25 REC'D BY: \_\_\_\_\_ TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

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