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**Charter Schools Division
Analysis and Recommendation
Sun Mountain Community School
New School Application**

August 2, 2024

Jayita Sahni and Zoe Wilcox applied to open a new charter school, Sun Mountain Community School, within the boundaries of Santa Fe Public Schools to serve grades K-8.

Based on the analysis set forth below, which includes the peer review team's evaluation of the new charter application and capacity interview, as well as a brief summary of the community input hearing and written community input received, the Charter Schools Division (CSD) recommends that the application be:

Recommended for Approval – The application is complete and adequate; and during their Capacity Interview, the applicant(s) demonstrated a clear capacity to implement the academic, organizational and financial management plans as described in the application. Nothing was identified that would indicate the applicant(s) do not have the experience, knowledge, and competence to successfully open and operate a charter school.

Recommended for Approval with conditions – The application is complete and adequate; and during their Capacity Interview, the applicant(s) demonstrated a general capacity to implement the academic, organizational and financial management plans as described in the application. However, the CSD has identified some specific concerns that would need to be addressed during the planning year. The CSD has listed the noted concerns and conditions to address the concerns below. If the PEC determines that there are any additional conditions that need to be addressed, those should be noted during the public hearing and all approved conditions negotiated in the final contract.

X Recommended for Denial – The application is either incomplete or inadequate; or during their capacity interview, the applicant(s) did not sufficiently demonstrate the experience, knowledge, and competence to successfully open and operate a charter school in New Mexico.

The Charter Schools Act, in NMSA 22-8B-6 M states that a chartering authority may deny an application if:

- (1) the application is incomplete or inadequate;
- (2) the application does not propose to offer an educational program consistent with the requirements and purposes of the Charter Schools Act;
- (3) the proposed head administrator or other administrative or fiscal staff was involved with another charter school whose charter was denied or revoked for fiscal mismanagement or the proposed head administrator or other administrative or fiscal staff was discharged from a public school for fiscal mismanagement;
- (4) for a proposed state-chartered charter school, it does not request to have the governing body of the charter school designated as a board of finance or the governing body does not qualify as a board of finance;
- (5) for a proposed charter school on tribal land, it fails to receive approval from the tribal government; or
- (6) the application is otherwise contrary to the best interests of the charter school's projected students, the local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate.

CSD Analysis and Recommendation

Sun Mountain presents a unique and compelling proposal, however, the application and capacity of the founding team suggest the school should be denied. The CSD recommends denial for two main reasons:

- 1) The application is inadequate. The academic framework meets none of the criteria for an acceptable application. Although founders described the school as “Waldorf-inspired”, in multiple places the application fails to align the Waldorf approach to a public school framework. Additionally, the application falls short in the organizational framework, and is significantly weak in the financial framework, with numerous inconsistencies between the budget and the proposal narrative. As presented, plans are unreasonable or not fully informed by the knowledge of what it takes to open and successfully operate a public charter school in New Mexico. CSD concurs with all peer review ratings, with final section ratings below.
- 2) The school is not in the best interest of the community. While the application received favorable input, the vast majority of supporters were family members of formerly enrolled students in the private Waldorf school that closed. Although in response to the peer analysis the founders describe three outreach events, there is no evidence of support for the school

from those events. All things considered there appears to be insufficient support from the larger Santa Fe community, and with inadequate plans to address needs of a public school student population, this application is not in the best interest of the community.

Overall Review Evaluation

APPLICATION	Meets the Criteria		Approaches the Criteria		Does Not Meet the Criteria	
	Peers	CSD	Peers	CSD	Peers	CSD
Academic Framework	0	0	4	4	13	13
Organizational Framework	5	5	16	16	2	2
Financial Framework	1	1	2	2	5	5
Evidence of Support	2	2	0	0	1	1
TOTALS	8	8	22	22	21	21

None of the CSD ratings differed from peer review ratings		
Indicator	Description	Rating
A.(1)	Mission	Does not meet
A.(2)	Vision	Completed
A.(3)	Uniqueness and Innovation	Does not meet
B.	Mission Specific Goals	Does not meet
C.	Curriculum, Educational Program, Student Performance Standards	Does not meet
D.(1)	Bilingual Multicultural Education, Indian Education, Hispanic Education and Black Education	Approaches
D.(2)	Equity Plan	Approaches
E.	Graduation Requirements	Not Applicable
F.(1)	Instruction Philosophy	Approaches
F.(2)	Yearly Calendar and Daily Schedule	Does not meet
F.(3)	Schedule Narrative	Does not meet
G.(1a)	Special Education: Students with IEPs	Does not meet

G.(1b)	Special Education: Progress Monitoring	Approaches ▾
G.(2a)	English Learners: Curriculum & Instruction	Does not meet ▾
G.(2b)	English Learners: Progress Monitoring	Does not meet ▾
G.(3)	ESSA and Special Population Needs	Does not meet ▾
H.(1)	Assessment Plan	Does not meet ▾
H.(2)	Assessment Data Analysis	Does not meet ▾
H.(3)	Achievement Communication Plan	Does not meet ▾
A.(1)	Governance Structure	Approaches ▾
A.(2)	Governing Board Qualifications	Approaches ▾
A.(3)	Governing Board Recruitment	Approaches ▾
B.(1)	Annual Board Training Plan	Approaches ▾
B.(2)	Annual Board Self-Evaluation	Meets ▾
C.(1)	Board Oversight Monitoring Plan	Does not meet ▾
C.(2)	Hiring Head Administrator	Approaches ▾
C.(3)	Governing Board Roles & Responsibilities	Approaches ▾
C.(4)	Annual Head Evaluation	Approaches ▾
D.(1)	Organizational Chart and Narrative	Meets ▾
D.(2)	Job Descriptions	Meets ▾
D.(3)	Staffing Plan	Does not meet ▾
D.(4)	Professional Development Plan	Approaches ▾
E.	Conditions of Employment	Approaches ▾
F.(1)	Meaningful Community Involvement in Governance	Meets ▾
F.(2)	Complaint Process	Approaches ▾
G.(1)	Student Outreach & Recruitment	Approaches ▾
G.(2)	Lottery Process	Approaches ▾
H.	Conflict of Interest Policy	Approaches ▾
I.(1)	Third Party Relationship	Not Applicable ▾

I.(2)	If I.(1) then Appendix D	Not Applicable ▾
J.(1)	Transportation	Approaches ▾
J.(2)	Food Services	Approaches ▾
K.(1)	Facilities Master Plan	Meets ▾
K.(2)	Evidence of Researched Facility	Approaches ▾
A.	Projected Enrollment	Meets ▾
B.(1)	910B5 Appendix F	Does not meet ▾
B.(2)	5 Year Budget Plan Appendix G	Does not meet ▾
B.(3)	Budget Narrative	Does not meet ▾
B.(4)	Budget Adjustments	Does not meet ▾
C.(1)	Internal Control Procedures	Does not meet ▾
C.(2)	Appropriate Financial Staff	Approaches ▾
C.(3)	Governing Board Fiduciary Oversight	Approaches ▾
A.	Evidence of Support/Outreach Activities	Meets ▾
B.	Community Support	Does not meet ▾
C.	Community Relationships	Meets ▾

Summary of Capacity Interview and Community Input Hearing

Capacity interview: 9 AM on June 17th on zoom, representatives from the school in attendance; Jayita Sahni, Zoe Wilcox, Daniel Wendland, Jessica Wireman, and Brianna Bassler. There were 20 questions asked and the applicant team received zero (0) Meets , eight (8) Approaches, and twelve (12) Does Not Meet. All of the school specific questions devised and asked by the peer review team received ratings of Does Not Meet the criteria. Four of the school specific questions (5 of the 20) devised and asked by the peer review team received ratings of Does Not Meet the criteria.

Input Hearing: 9 AM July 10th in Mabry Hall of the Public Education Building in Santa Fe, 65 in attendance, 28 speakers in favor of the applicant school.

Founders

Name	Listed on the Application	Attended the Capacity Interview	Attended the Community Input Hearing
Jayita Sahni	Yes	Yes	Yes
Zoe Wilcox	Yes	Yes	Yes
Daniel Wendland	No	Yes	Yes
Jessica Wireman	No	Yes	Yes
Brianna Bassler	No	Yes	Yes

Summary of Support/Opposition Provided by Email or Google Form

There were 32 letters in total received. 31 of those were in support and 1 letter received was opposed to any new charter school.

Vista data in the proposed community

School	NM Vistas		Proficiencies		
	Score	Designation	ELA	Math	Science
Cesar Chavez Elementary	30.5	Traditional	16.6%	5.7%	12.1%
Acequia Madre Elementary	82.8	Spotlight	70.5%	47.7%	72.2%
El Camino Real Academy Community	31.1	CSI EL	16.5%	7.5%	9.5%
Carlos Gilbert Elementary	84.9	Spotlight	73.2%	58.5%	58.3%
Ramirez Thomas Elementary	32.5	ATSI EL	20.1%	7.9%	6.0%
Atalaya Elementary	86.8	Spotlight	73.6%	56.3%	61.5%
Aspen Community School	31.5	ATSI EL	21.0%	12.4%	8.4%
Gonzales Elementary	52.4	ATSI FRL	44.9%	25.4%	26.3%
Kearny Elementary	38.6	Traditional	23.0%	14.3%	14.9%
E.J. Martinez Elementary	44.0	Traditional	37.6%	14.1%	≤ 20%
Pinon Elementary	56.4	Traditional	48.3%	37.1%	20.0%
Edward Ortiz Middle	34.6	ATSI FRL SWD	21.4%	10.8%	22.5%
R.M. Sweeney Elementary	26.1	CSI Low Performance	10.6%	4.0%	8.9%
El Dorado Community School	85.8	Spotlight	65.5%	53.2%	57.8%
Amy Biehl Community School at Rancho Viejo	49.0	ATSI FRL	34.7%	26.7%	19.4%

Salazar Elementary	37.2	CSI EL	23.9%	10.1%	17.9%
Francis X. Nava Elementary	31.4	Traditional	17.4%	11.5%	≤ 20%
Chaparral Elementary	47.8	Traditional	32.2%	22.9%	35.7%
Tesuque Elementary	58.9	Traditional	39.0%	26.8%	26.7%
Nina Otero Community School	39.3	Traditional	24.7%	15.9%	11.3%
Wood-Gormley Elementary	84.7	Spotlight	81.3%	56.7%	75.0%
Milagro Middle	38.9	Traditional	32.2%	13.3%	16.0%