



# City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
53202

## Meeting Minutes CHARTER SCHOOL REVIEW COMMITTEE

**KEVIN INGRAM, CHAIR**

*Glenn Steinbrecher, Melinda Scott Krei, Gayle Peay, and  
Desiree Pointer-Mace*

**CSRC Clerk: Jarett Fields (414) 288-1540**

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Thursday, September 10, 2015

5:30 PM

City Hall, Room 301-B

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### 1. Roll call.

*Meeting convened: 5:39 P.M..*

*Members present: Glenn Steinbrecher, Melinda Scott Krei, Desiree Pointer-Mace and  
Kevin Ingram*

*Member excused: Gayle Peay*

### 2. Review and approval of the minutes of the August 13, 2015 meeting.

*Ms. Pointer-Mace moved, seconded by Ms. Scott Krei, for approval of the minutes.  
There were no objections.*

### 3. [150541](#)

Communication relating to the 2015/16 activities of King's Academy.

**Sponsors:** THE CHAIR

*Ms. Sue Gramling, Children's Research Center, provided an overview of the report. King's Academy is an elementary school located on N. 60th Street on the far northwest side and this report covers the fifth year of operation. At the end of last year there were 175 students enrolled, with 96.6% of those students being African American and most of the students were eligible for a free lunch. The school met all but one of the contract requirements - it did not meet the requirement that all instructional staff meet Dept. of Public Instruction (DPI) license requirements and it was placed on probation last year. The school was required to meet six conditions as a result of being on probation - it met three of those. The three requirements it did not meet were: meeting local measures (they actually decreased from the previous school year, did not have all instructors licensed or certified by the DPI and first graders meeting the corresponding benchmark in second grade -- this could not be ascertained as there were only 10 students that continued from grade one to grade two. For the fifth year in a row, it was in the "D+" category.*

*There were recommendations created by the Center for the school to work on this summer to achieve during the 2015/16 school year. The overall recommendation from the Children's Research Center was that this school continue on a probationary status until all the contractual and probationary conditions are met and the Committee consider rescinding the school's status after its sixth year of operation (although King's Academy is now moving to a choice school, rather than a charter school). Ms. Pointer-Mace is concerned that the children in this school may not be getting the education they need this year or if King's Academy is merely spinning its wheels for a*

year. Jennie Dorsey, the new leader at the school, said that the school has all certified teachers, except for one, who has applied for it. The school currently has 214 students. The administration has done professional development, data analysis, established a learning team, and is working on staff morale. Ms. Spriggs, also present, is the new Dean of Students. They will do a MAP test in September to get base-line data and will work with teachers how to work with these students.

Ms. Scott Krei asked about the experience of the teachers Ms. Dorsey has hired, since the former teachers and administrators at this school did not have a great depth of experience. Per Ms. Dorsey, it was difficult to find experienced teachers, although they do have some and Ms. Dorsey feels everyone has to start somewhere. There are 10 total teachers and there are two teachers for whom this is the first year of teaching. Marilyn McVicker, board member for 15 years, said the board has committed to providing the financial resources for the school. Ms. Spriggs feel that the school and its staff are on the right path and will meet its goal of 70%.

The Chair asked how many current students plan on staying with the school as it transitions from a charter school to a choice school. Ms. Dorsey said she hasn't gotten any negative response from parents relating to the change.

Ms. Pointer-Mace asked specifically about special-needs students as they transition to a choice school. Ms. Dorsey said support services are provided for these students and they are integrated into the student population.

Ms. Scott Krie moved, seconded by Ms. Pointer-Mace, to accept the report.

4. [150630](#) Communication relating to the 2015/16 activities of Milwaukee Math and Science Academy.

Sponsors: THE CHAIR

Ms. Sue Gramling, Children's Research Center, said that the school is now in its second year of offering k4-8 grades (before it had been adding years 5-8 one grade each per year). The school is located at 1st and Burleigh and 95% of the students are African American. This school year the school accepted 40 Somalian students. All children are eligible for free lunch. The school has met all provisions of the city contract and CSRC requirements and all the recommendations were thoroughly addressed. Ms. Gramling also noted that the school met every condition of its probation. Mr. David Chief, Director of the school, has been at the school since 2013 and is still there and the school return rate is pretty good, although it has decreased. Twelve of the 13 kids, who met benchmarks as first graders, did so again as second graders. The school got a "C-", but is placed in the "promising" or "good" category because it is beginning to make gains after starting with a poor performance. The recommendations are continue to improve in terms of student performance and work on teacher and staff retention rates. Ms. Gramling recommends removing the probationary period and continuing with regular, annual monitoring. This is the fifth year of the school and next year will be deadline to renew the charter. She would recommend renewal of the charter when it comes up.

Mr. Steinbrecher would not recommend lifting the probationary status and he would support only a three-year contract renewal rather than the recommended five-year contract renewal. Ms. Pointer-Mace likes to see upward trends, but thinks those trends must continue.

Ms. Scott Krei is particularly concerned about the low writing scores. Ms. Crystal Bielneier, the new Dean of Students, noted that she was disappointed with the writing scores. The school is focusing on training the teachers on how to teach writing, as well as working with the students.

Mr. Chief noted that the Somalian students currently have a language problem, although the school did hire individuals who speak Somalian and they support the students with English as a Second Language instructors and pairing these students with current students.

*The Chair was concerned about the 154 suspended students that had been out of school for 4 days and how they were transitioned back to school. Tutoring was provided if needed and the teachers were encouraged to let the students know what work had been missed. The school will be working on addressing these students' issues so hopefully it won't rise to the level of suspensions.*

*The Chair also asked about what support was provided to the students who didn't meet the benchmarks. The school intends to identify where the problems are and then problem-solve to address them.*

*Emily Vertola, a first grade teacher, and Kendra Stigler, an instructional coordinator, were also present at the table.*

*Mr. Steinbrecher moved, seconded by Ms. Pointer-Mace, to keep the school on probation. There were no objections.*

*Mr. Steinbrecher moved, seconded by Ms. Scott Krei, to review renewal of the contract another time.*

*The report was accepted, with the probation still retained, although it may be lifted in February, following the mid-year report.*

5. [150670](#)

Communication relating to the 2015/16 activities of Central City Cyberschool.

Sponsors: THE CHAIR

*Ms. Sue Gramling, Children's Research Center, said this school is located on Capitol by Lincoln Creek and has 389 students, with 100% African American. All of the kids receive free or reduced lunch. This school is in its second year of operation as a charter school and it met all of the contract provision and CSRC requirements.*

*Technology is becoming more a focus of the school and they are using Google Docs. Writing is once again a weakness with this school, so that should be emphasized this year. The school got a rating of "A-" and is in the "High Performance" status. The relative weakness was teacher retention, but this year 100% of the teachers returned (in the first year it had been 84%) Student re-enrollment is also relative high. Overall, Ms. Gramling recommends that the school continue its regular, annual reporting.*

*Christine Boze, director of the school, said that the Board is doing strategic planning because she will be retiring in three years. The Board hired Mike Soika to get community, staff and Board feedback to create a succession plan and to tell the story of the school to the community.*

*Ms. Pointer-Mace questioned attendance if the students aren't on-site -- a small percentage of students are able to access the cloud from home, while many cannot.*

*Ms. Pointer-Mace encouraged the school to pursue "my fi's" that kids could use if they knew they could not attend. The vast majority of kids live in Parklawn or in a 5-block radius of the school. Ms. Boze noted that students who are suspended are sent home with schoolwork and there is a required meeting with the students' parents. Teachers were trained on student behavior which has resulted in fewer suspensions and the basic culture has been changed.*

*Jessica Shemanski, reading specialist, said that most of the students are reading independent books at their level. Students work with words a lot and the teachers get data based on the assessments and address specific student needs.*

*Ms. Boze attributes the school's success by focusing on students' needs and also has staff that has been there long-term, such as 17 or 15 years. How to teach writing was the focus the past year and that has really made a difference.*

*Ms. Pointer-Mace commended this school for focusing on autonomous, continuous learning among the staff as well as among the students.*

*Ms Gramling noted that this school was on probation at one time, so change is possible.*

*Ms. Pointer-Mace moved to accept the recommendation, seconded by Ms. Scott Krei. There were no objections.*

**PLEASE NOTE: Public testimony on the above items will be limited to 3 minutes per person and must be limited to the above items only.**

*Speakers from the public:*

*Travis Rice - first year teacher at King's Academy - he feels the students are in awesome hands*

*Debbie Taft-Wheeler -- teacher for 30 and currently at King's Academy, she is not a quitter and will make her students succeed.*

*Lewis Hill - grandfather of three children who either attended or are attending King's Academy. He supports the school and his grandchildren have blossomed there.*

*Anita Peterson - former financial manager for King's Academy and currently the financial consultant. She provided a short history of the school and feels very passionate about it.*

*Miranda - student at Milwaukee Math and Science Academy and she thinks it's a pretty good school and has helped her public speaking.*

*Meeting adjourned: 7:15 P.M.*

*Linda M. Elmer*

*Staff Assistant*

*This meeting can be viewed in its entirety through the City's Legislative Research Center at <http://milwaukee.legistar.com/calendar>.*