

**Orange County Public Schools
Audit Advisory Committee
Minutes of Meeting March 21, 2013**

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chairman Jim Ingersoll. Committee member Charles Puckett was present. Also present were Linda Lindsey, Senior Director, Internal Audit, and Chris Bernier, Kim Sweeny-Scott and Gina Dole of the district's School Choice Office and John Palmerini of the General Counsel's office.

North Star Charter School

The Committee had received extensive materials in advance of the meeting dealing with North Star. Among those materials were the annual audits for 2010, 2011 and 2012, a timeline of key events over the past 2-3 years of OCPS' relationship with North Star, minutes of North Star's board of directors meetings, a copy of North Star's charter contract as well as the school's report to the FDOE and other items.

The Committee had also received a copy of the pertinent Florida Statutes related to charter schools.

A discussion ensued regarding the charter school statutes when North Star was first approved in 2001 and in 2006 when the school's charter was renewed. Principal Young's contract was also discussed.

There was extensive discussion of the contents of North Star's contract and the current model contract used by OCPS.

Consensus of the committee was that there was not anything more that OCPS could have done regarding North Star. Florida Statutes provide a lot of flexibility to charter schools and little ability for school districts to control actions of charter school administration or boards of directors in operating their schools.

The committee recommended that OCPS's standard charter school contract prohibit a charter school from entering into employment contracts with its employees that extend beyond the end date of the school's charter contract with the district.

The committee further recommended that OCPS obtain and review copies of all staff employment contracts at charter schools as a matter of routine procedure.

Standard Operating Procedures for School Choice Office

The rest of the meeting involved a discussion of the standard operating procedures (SOP's) currently in use by the district's School Choice Office.

Dr. Bernier explained that the SOP's have evolved (and are still evolving) over time based upon district experiences with its charter schools and based on best practices used by other districts in overseeing charter schools as learned through FACSA and NACSA.

Mr. Ingersoll made a few suggestions regarding terminology and definitions in some of the district's communications with charter schools. Dr. Bernier made note of these items.

The "Leads" process currently used was discussed and praised as an effective tool to ensure key OCPS personnel are kept informed of charter school operations.

The committee recommended that the School Choice office establish a standard date when a letter of closure would be sent to a charter school for noncompliance with its charter. The committee felt that consistency of practice would be maintained if the district always used the same time interval from when noncompliance occurs.

The committee commended staff for the charter school opening procedures as outlined in the SOP's. Another commendation was made regarding the recent addition of a financial person (located in the OMB department) who is obtaining and reviewing all financial reports and statements received by the district from charter schools. Dr. Bernier reported that this person's function has already provided valuable insights into the financial condition of the schools.

The committee recommended that the district develop a standard template format for the monthly financial reports submitted by charter schools to make them easier to read and compare from period to period or school to school.

The committee expressed its consensus opinion that the SOP's are well designed and thorough and commended staff.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for April 9 at 9:00 a.m.