

**MINUTES**  
**of the meeting of the**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS of SOMERSET ACADEMY OF LAS VEGAS**  
**May 20, 2015**

The Board of Directors of Somerset Academy of Las Vegas held a public meeting on May 20, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. at 4650 Losee Road, Las Vegas, Nevada 89081.

**1. Call to order and roll call.**

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Board Chair Cody Noble called the meeting to order at 5:17 p.m. Present were Board Members Cody Noble, Will Harty, Eric Elison (arrived at 5:45), Amy Malone, Eric Brady (arrived at 6:22), and Carrie Boehlecke. Member Noble welcomed new Board Member Carrie Boehlecke to her first Board Meeting and thanked her for her service.

Also present were Principal Phillips, Principal Kelley, Principal Barlow, Principal Jefferson, Principal Farmer, Principal Mayfield and Principal Pendleton, as well as Academica Nevada Representatives Ryan Reeves, Kim Ballou, and Trevor Goodsell.

**2. Public Comments and Discussion.**

Member Noble noted that each person wishing to make public comment will have three minutes to present.

Stephanie Sakellariov, a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher at Losee and the Athletic Director, addressed the Board and asked to have the Athletic Program added to the budget for next year, noting that this would be for Athletic Director compensation and for the purchase of equipment, uniforms, and end-of-the-year awards. Ms. Sakellariov stated that these are items that were paid for last year by the parents. Member Noble asked if there was an exact amount that would be needed. Ms. Sakellariov stated that there would be a \$600 fee to the league for each team that plays (6 basketball teams and 8 soccer teams), and added that she did not know the exact amount for the other items paid for by the students.

Larry McKnight, the art teacher at Sky Pointe, addressed the Board and thanked the Board for their dedication. Mr. McKnight noted that he represents the teachers and one of his duties was attending the Board Meetings and he expressed concern about the start time of some of the Board Meetings and noted that were early in the day and should be held in the evening, and also that he found telephonic meetings to be impersonal. Mr. McKnight spoke about agenda item #5, the appointment of the Executive Director. Mr. McKnight expressed concern about this position and the fact that funds would be taken out of the classroom to staff this role. Mr. McKnight stated that this step would add another layer of management that mirrors what the school district does—which was not what we want, and he suggested a couple of different options: appoint an additional Board member and assign that person those responsibilities; or appoint a lead principal (noting that Principal Jefferson would be willing to take this on with no additional compensation with the addition of a paid secretary). Mr. McKnight continued to express the fact that this move would bring us closer to the school district model and he reiterated that this would not be the best use of school funding, and stated that one of the reasons Mr. McKnight personally came to Somerset was the promise of autonomy. Mr. McKnight pointed out that this was also an expectation of the principals and that the hiring of an Executive Director would take that away. Mr. McKnight hoped that the Board would take this into consideration when making their decision.

Jennifer Schmidt, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Sky Pointe addressed the Board and also referenced agenda item #5. Ms. Schmidt noted that most of the teachers left the district for Somerset because the district was so top-heavy, and that the bureaucratic money was taken out of kids' hands and taken from teachers' pay and added that

teachers have come to Somerset with less pay, but with autonomy. Ms. Schmidt stated that it was premature to add an Executive Director at this time; especially when Lone Mountain was not yet finished, there was not a high school gym at Sky Pointe, there was no football team or a mature sports program, and Somerset did not have competitive wages for teachers. Ms. Schmidt expressed a concern that Somerset will become a “farm” to train new teachers who will then leave for more money in the district. Ms. Schmidt noted that there were presently only five campuses that all have very competent principals who have autonomy and who can handle anything that this Executive Director would do, and she asked the Board to seriously consider whether or not every single student would benefit before spending money on this position.

Nichole Yoakum, a Sky Pointe parent who has been with Somerset since the beginning addressed the Board and expressed concern about what creating the Executive Director position would mean as far as funds go, and how it would tamper with the Somerset vision. Ms. Yoakum spoke on behalf of many parents who left the district and did not want Somerset to become a mini CCSD. Ms. Yoakum noted that she had noticed changes in the last year and that many families had left Somerset to home school their children because of negative changes. Ms. Yoakum added that she had a son entering high school and there were many things that were promised at the high school level that were not happening because the funds were not there and she further stated that Somerset has wonderful parents who would not continue to come unless the Board keeps the vision solid and makes sure that funds would stay with the students and teachers.

Member Noble asked if Ms. Yoakum could give some specifics about families who had left. Ms. Yoakum stated that parents were also very concerned that the sign was not on the Sky Pointe building and that the facility might not belong to Somerset in the future, and also noted that some of the facilities had not been completed and that fact had left parents feeling unsure about the future. Member Noble stated that he did not know where these rumors are coming from, because to his knowledge there were not any due dates that had been missed. Ryan Reeves addressed the Board and stated that the initial completion date for Sky Pointe was 2016-17 putting us one year ahead for the High School building and two years ahead for the completion of the final building (gym). Mr. Reeves further stated that the funds for the completion of the gym were in the bank from the bond, leaving the bidding and construction left to complete. Ms. Yoakum asked what the completion date would be and Bob Howell addressed the Board stating that construction would be complete by August 2016, putting construction two years ahead of schedule. Mr. Reeves also stated that they had the funds for the sign and that it was in the process of being completed.

Ms. Yoakum went on to say that she felt like the high school teaching staff was lacking because they could not offer a competitive wage, and she also stated that the College Prep mission was not being pushed as they thought it would. Ms. Yoakum stated that she did not want to have to take her son out as he enters high school because Somerset was not living up to its standards. Member Noble stated that they would be speaking at length regarding this during the meeting and thanked Ms. Yoakum for her words.

### **3. Review and Approval of Final Budget for the 2015/2016 School Year.**

Mr. Reeves introduced Trevor Goodsell as the CFO for Academica and provided the Board with Mr. Goodsell’s background information, and also spoke to the experience that Mr. Goodsell will bring to the position, having served on a Charter School Board for the past two years.

Mr. Reeves spoke regarding next years projected student enrollment, noting that with five thousand eight hundred and eighty students, Somerset could be Nevada’s sixth largest school district, if we were a school district. Mr. Reeves further stated that the number of students on the waitlist (ten thousand) was also a huge compliment to the principals and teachers of Somerset.

Mr. Reeves noted that there was budget support material for each individual campus (two budgets for the K-12 campuses), as well as additional documents regarding the end of the year surplus. Mr. Reeves also noted

that the sub items under agenda item #3 were for the Board's review and possible approval. Mr. Reeves added that the Executive Director salary was not included in the presented budget, however, it was included in the surplus budget. Mr. Reeves further stated that a cash days on hand analysis had been provided as well.

Trevor Goodsell addressed the Board, noting the \$35 million in budget revenue and \$36 million in total revenue. Mr. Goodsell provided the Board with specific information for line items contained in the budget, adding that as of right now there was a 3% surplus in the budget, which was in line with what it should be in order to take care of additional expenditures that would come up every year. Member Harty asked about occupancy and Mr. Goodsell stated that the budgets were calculated at 95% enrollment. Discussion ensued regarding what the per-student amount received was, and whether or not that number would fluctuate if Somerset lost students. Member Noble asked for clarification on why the expense line was not exactly in line with the amount we received per student. Mr. Reeves clarified that each campus was different. Member Noble wanted to know what amount was allocated to the principal of each campus to disperse with as they see fit. Mr. Reeves further clarified that there were certain needs that each principal has (teachers, SPED, etc.), but they do have some leeway when it comes to how they spend it. Mr. Goodsell stated that there were several fixed costs that must remain fixed.

Member Noble asked for further clarification on why the expenses were different from school to school. Mr. Reeves answered that it was because costs at the various schools were different (for instance the power bill might be higher at one school versus another). Mr. Reeves also stated that it would be the Board's job in the future to determine whether or not an individual principal was budgeting as they should. Mr. Reeves gave a bit of background on how budgets work when it comes to the State Charter Authority and how there was legislation coming up that would allow them to code items, which would alleviate some of the work that the principals' were responsible for. Mr. Reeves also stated that in this time of growth it would be difficult to make comparisons across campuses. Member Noble asked if it would be more beneficial to blend the budgets of the campuses so that, for example, if one campus pays more in rent than another and that principal has less with which to pay teachers, more can be given to a campus that needs it. Member Elison stated that a few years ago the Board specifically asked Mr. Segrera to separate the budget by campus because it was impossible to tell who was spending what. Member Noble wondered why blending of campuses' budgets could not just apply to those fixed items that the principal had no control over.

Mr. Reeves mentioned that it might not be beneficial to go line by line through the budget as there were so many items that were at a fixed rate. Member Noble asked why they were at those fixed rates when the rates could possibly be more for one campus over another and possibly give that second campus slightly more money for personnel. Mr. Goodsell stated that, for the most part, those differences would not amount to much and it would not affect hiring at all, and the difference would basically end up in the surplus.

Member Harty asked why only two campuses have an Athletic Program budget. Mr. Reeves stated that only the MS/HS campuses had a budget as the elementary schools provide athletics on a voluntary basis, adding that the elementary schools also have the opportunity to sell concessions and require the students to pay a fee which covers the coach's salary, league fees, and a uniform, making them largely self-sufficient. Member Harty asked Principal Kelley how much of a budget she would need in order take care of her athletic program. Principal Elaine Kelley addressed the Board and stated that, in the past, she had asked for about \$2,000.00, noting that it would not completely take care of her situation.

Member Harty also asked if there was a problem in the budget that did not allow the AP classes to have a book for every student. Mr. Reeves explained that there was an initial purchase of curriculum when a school opens or expands under the line item "furniture and fixtures," and that subsequently there would be recurring curriculum expenses on a yearly basis under the line item "consumables" of about \$70.00 per student. Mr. Reeves noted that if there was a problem obtaining the needed materials, he had not been made aware of it. Member Harty asked if Principal Barlow and Principal Phillips if this amount would be sufficient to provide each AP student with a book. Principal Barlow stated that it should be enough and that he was not familiar with that situation.

Member Harty stated that was more concerned that the whether or not the 2015/2016 budget had what it needed and less concerned with this particular situation, and added that he had heard that there was an AP class that did not have enough books for every student. Principal Dan Phillips addressed the Board and stated that, depending on the subject area, there were books that had not yet been adopted for math because it had been very difficult to find a book in line with common core, and that those books were just rolling out. Principal Phillips further stated that he had just ordered geometry and honors algebra II books, but that all the books had not been available and that may be the reason why a student would not have a book. Member Harty requested that the Board be made aware of any situation where students were not getting the books they need so that the Board could allocate funds if necessary.

Member Harty stated that he would like to make some amendments to the current budget by allocating an amount to each elementary school for their athletic programs. Several of the principals spoke up and stated whether or not they could use an athletic program budget. Member Harty stated that maybe the Stephanie Campus would not need one because they were able to sell concessions and rent out their fields and equipment. Principal Kelley amended the needed amount to \$5,000.00. Member Harty stated that maybe it should be an equal amount for each campus. Principal Reggie Farmer addressed the Board and clarified where some of the athletic funds go and emphasized that it can be very pricey. even with the students taking on some of the cost and some money being made by renting out facilities and selling concessions, there was still a chunk of money that the school needed to come up with.

Member Harty stated that he would also like to increase the staffing budget and thereby increase the base salary for the teachers and support staff. Member Harty noted his belief by stating that our enrollment rate would be closer to 99% and that Somerset would be able to afford this increase. Member Harty further stated that he thinks a reasonable number was less than 1% of the budget, and that even .5% would only take \$180,000.00 of the surplus and would be a gesture to the teachers and support staff. Member Harty asked Academica if Somerset would still meet the cash on hand requirements, and restated that the two items he would like added to the budget were an athletic budget and an increase (\$180,000) in teacher and support staff salaries and added that if, for some reason, the funding does not happen, the amount could be taken from next year's retention bonuses. Mr. Reeves asked for some clarification as to how Member Harty came up with his calculations. Member Harty stated that he came up with the number by looking at the surplus and taking a percentage of total revenue. Mr. Reeves asked if this would be an amount per campus based on the number of students, and Member Harty stated that he envisioned it being an equal amount at each campus of \$25,000. Member Noble clarified that whenever there was an increase it was already standard practice to allocate a portion of that to teacher salaries. Mr. Reeves stated that the pay-per-performance plan states that, should funding go up and if salaries were 55% of your budget, 55% of the increase would go toward pay raises. Mr. Reeves stated that, even though Academica does not usually encourage spending, he confirmed that there was a significant amount in the surplus for this year with over 4 million in cash on hand, which was well over the 55 day requirement. Academica proposed that \$250,000.00 go toward retention bonuses leaving \$140,000 left over and could be used for what Member Harty was proposing, totaling \$387,000.00.

Mr. Reeves went over the number of teachers, instructional aides, and office staff returning. Member Harty asked for clarification on whether or not the salaries for 2015-2016 in any way affect the cash on hand amount. Mr. Reeves confirmed that the salaries would not affect that amount, but the retention bonuses do (as of June 30). Mr. Goodsell stated that a 51 day cash on hand was projected for next year without increase. Mr. Goodsell reminded the Board that the decrease was because another campus was being added (Lone Mountain). Member Noble expressed concern about being under the required 55 days. Member Harty stated that he was sure that enrollment would mirror last year and would be over the budgeted 95%, which would give an excess leaving little worry about where additional funding will come from.

Member Noble brought up the fact that the Board tries to do everything they can to compensate the teachers, however, there are constant complaints that Somerset does not measure up to what the district pays.

Member Noble further stated that he does not think the teachers have been taking the retention bonus into consideration, and that it may not be completely beneficial to compensate that way when they do not really consider it as part of their salary. Member Harty stated that, despite any criticism, he feels confident that the Board is doing all they can do. Member Harty further stated that, seeing this excess and trying to use it to increase salaries, is what they should do. Mr. Reeves stated that Academics provide as much information to the teachers as they can, highlighting the benefits Somerset offers. Mr. Reeves also stated that because Somerset is a young system it will take time to get to the point where we are matching the district, however that time will come. Mr. Reeves stated that the younger teachers (1-3 years), were already in line with the district before you add in the other benefits. Mr. Goodsell pointed out that any increase in salary will also require an increase in PERS and other benefits for both teachers and support staff. Member Noble added that the steps taken to purchase the buildings will put Somerset in a better position in the future to further increase teacher salaries.

Member Brady proposed that, with this increase, they give the principals the option of hiring new staff or increasing the pay for existing teachers. Mr. Reeves stated that the needs vary from campus to campus and he would recommend putting it in the personnel fund for the principals to use at their discretion.

Mr. Reeves stated that, when they do entertain a motion, it would be to approve the proposed budget with an additional \$5,000.00 allocated to each campus for the athletic program for a total of \$25,000.00, and another \$175,000.00 to the campuses for personnel. Member Harty asked where the \$25,000 for athletics would come from when not every campus needed that money, as the Losee and North Las Vegas campuses requested. Principal Gayle Jefferson and Principal Farmer addressed the Board and both stated that they could definitely use the funds. Member Malone expressed that she would like to see each campus get those funds equally, even if Principal Farmer is making some amount of money, they were still charging students \$100 each to play sports. Member Noble asked if this cost would go down each year because they already have uniforms, etc. Principal Kelley stated that it may go down, but there would be expenses every year. Member Noble further clarified his question by asking if next year students would pay less than \$100 because some of the cost would be covered. Principal Kelly stated that her students paid \$90 last year but that coaches were not compensated and she guessed that the \$90 might stay the same with that budget because they will have funds to pay coaches, however, she hoped it would go down. Principal Francine Mayfield addressed the Board and stated that it was hard to tell what they will need because they never know how many students want to play sports. Principal Farmer added that every year there may be an increase in teams, which requires more coaches. Member Noble agreed with Member Harty that students should pay some portion, but noted that these proposed funds might lower costs or allow students who cannot afford it to play. Mr. Goodsell brought to the Board's attention the fact that the total revenue will decrease by about 2.2% with the proposed increases in the budget.

**Member Harty Motioned to accept the 2015-2016 budget as presented with the following changes: increase the personnel costs at each of the seven campuses by \$25,000 to be used at the discretion of the principals; and to give the five elementary campuses \$5,000 for their athletic program. Member Brady seconded the Motion and the Board unanimously approved.**

**a. Review and Approval of Retention Bonuses.**

Member Noble stated that they have given these bonuses in the past and he was of the opinion that it has been a way for them to show appreciation to the administrators and teachers and would like to see this continue. Some discussion ensued regarding bonuses given for last year and it was confirmed that this year's proposal will meet last year's bonus. Member Harty asked where the \$137,000 for potential school projects will go. Mr. Reeves stated that it was additional money that could go toward paying for the Executive Director so that it wouldn't have to be taken from the current school budget and instead pay that position from the annual surplus. Member Harty stated that all the money comes from the students anyway, so saying that the salary would come from the surplus does not really mean anything. Mr. Reeves clarified that in the past the principals noted their concern that their budgets

were set with the addition of an Executive Director, even though the budget was still based on the same percentage adding that the expense would now be referenced in a more accurate way so that it would not look like it was coming from the schools' budgets. Member Noble refocused the conversation to retention bonuses, noting that the \$250,000 would give each principal some discretion as to where those bonuses would go (teachers, admin, office staff, support staff). Member Noble wondered if they should come up with a dollar amount for each person, but Member Brady suggested that it be made comparable to last year. Mr. Reeves stated that he can give them four categories and break it down for them. Some discussion ensued regarding teacher salary versus support staff salary, etc. Member Noble stated that he was satisfied with \$250,000 as the amount.

**Member Brady Motioned to approve the retention bonuses in the amount comparable to last year. Member Malone Seconded the Motion and the Board unanimously approved.**

**b. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Salary for Executive Director Position.**

Member Noble stated that this was a matter that the Board considered to be very serious and not something they had taken lightly, noting that, regardless of the differing opinions, each Board member wanted what was best for Somerset. Mr. Reeves stated that in regards to this agenda item they were looking for the Board to take upon themselves the obligation of the Executive Director salary not to exceed a certain amount, adding that candidates will come in with varying degrees of experience and will garner different salaries. Mr. Reeves further stated that the objective of this agenda item was geared toward determining the cost of an Executive Director and determining an amount within which to keep the salary. Mr. Reeves suggested that if they decided on a Lead Principal, it would not be at a net value of zero, he added that they would see the total cost at between \$87,000 and \$170,000. Mr. Reeves added that if a Lead Principal was designated, they were going to need an AP at the minimum cost of \$70,000-\$75,000, and that this would only be if the Executive Director was part time, and there was little chance that it will not eventually be a full time position. Mr. Reeves went on to state that with all seven campuses at capacity there would be a student body of 12,000. Mr. Reeves stated that the maximum of \$170,000 would be for a full time Executive Director with a secretary of some sort to help with communications. Mr. Reeves continued to explain that administration salaries begin at \$90,000 and grow to around \$120,000.

Member Noble stated that it would be beneficial to figure out if the position will be full or part time. Member Harty stated that it was up to the Board to set a cap on the salary and when the decision was made for either a part or full time position, the decision of salary would fall within that cap. Member Harty further stated that the principals work hard and run an entire school and he thought that this position should not make more than a principal. Member Malone agreed. Member Noble also agreed and further stated that this position, as with a principal's position, comes with various levels of experience and they would have to consider what this person brings to the table. Member Harty stated that because the high end of a principal's salary was \$131,000, this salary should not exceed that. Member Noble asked whether or not this cap includes an assistant. Mr. Goodsell indicated that the \$170,000 included an assistant. Member Harty reiterated that this position should not make more than the highest paid principal. Mr. Reeves brought up the fact that each existing principal could expect a performance evaluation which would be the basis for an increase in pay. As a result, Member Harty suggested adding 3% for performance. Member Brady asked if the salary included benefits and Mr. Goodsell stated that it does.

**Member Noble Motioned that \$135,000 will be the cap for the salary for Executive Director. Member Malone Seconded the Motion, and the Board unanimously approved.**

#### 4. Interview of Executive Director Candidates.

Mr. Reeves stated that if they were ready to move forward and interview the Executive Director candidates that it was preferred, though voluntary, for the candidates to leave the room unless he or she is being interviewed. Member Noble noted that because Member Boehlecke was part of the committee to determine the Executive Director candidates, she would abstain from voting. Member Noble asked the candidates to leave the room. Member Harty asked Principal Jefferson if she would like to be considered to which she stated that she would if she could remain at her building to transition. Member Harty suggested that Principal Jefferson be given 3-5 minutes and Member Noble concurred.

**Gayle Jefferson** addressed the Board and asked for clarification on whether this would be a part time or a full time position or if it would evolve over time. Principal Jefferson stated that she had witnessed first-hand how detrimental it can be to have a principal leave, and with Principal Pendleton leaving as well, she could not see leaving her current position. Principal Jefferson wanted to make it clear that if this was a part time position and she could remain at her campus to transition her team she would like to be considered, however, if it will be a full time position, she would prefer to stay in her current position. Principal Jefferson clarified that, in speaking with the other principals, they understood that this position would be more of a support role and not so much a supervisory role.

Principal Jefferson stated that as far as her experience goes, she had 25 years of experience in a K-8 setting, and that she and the other principals already work well as a team on professional development opportunities and teacher recruitment, and she could definitely offer support in those situations, and that she would never want to lose the feeling that Somerset is a family. Member Brady asked if she could determine what percentage of her time she could foresee spending in this role. Principal Jefferson stated that when they got together to determine the tasks that this position might take on, it became clear that these were already tasks that she had taken care of for years, noting that when they were going through accreditation she tasked herself with many things that she took care of for the whole group. Principal Jefferson stated that if she could have an assistant to help, that would definitely be useful, but that it was difficult to say what this position will be or will become, however she added that this position would become what the person doing it wants it to be. Principal Jefferson stated that if she could have more time freed up, she could look into all sorts of leadership programs to train teachers how to become Assistant Principals. Principal Jefferson stated that she had already been doing many of the things she envisioned this person doing.

Member Harty asked about the parents who have shown concern about having more leadership added and money taken out of the classroom. Principal Jefferson agreed to some extent, noting that Principal Farmer would like an additional AP to help with Middle School and to her that would be more important than throwing money at this Executive Director position. Member Noble asked if Principal Jefferson was advocating against this position at all. She stated that she was not completely against it because they need someone who can be a liaison to the State, however she thinks that it should be a position that is created over time with input from the Board, the principals, and the parents. Principal Jefferson stated that she currently does a lot of the State reporting and this would be something that the Executive Director would take over.

**Danielle Connolly** (via telephone): Mr. Reeves introduced the Board to Ms. Connolly. Member Noble asked Ms. Connolly to introduce herself and take a few minutes to let the Board know what she could bring to this position. Ms. Connolly addressed the Board and stated that she was currently working on her doctorate and that she has a degree in educational instruction as well as educational leadership. Ms. Connolly had been a principal and an assistant principal and a director of special education and professional development, and added that she was currently a Regional Director of Academic Services for a chain of private schools in the Northwest. Ms. Connolly noted that, in addition to her educational background, she would also bring a passion for education. Ms. Connolly further stated that she would like to get to know the principals and the Board and become the liaison that would be needed.

Member Noble asked Ms. Connolly where she currently lived, to which Ms. Connolly replied that she had lived in Montana for one year and previously lived in Arizona, however she had never lived in Las Vegas. Ms. Connolly noted that she would like to relocate to Las Vegas because her husband works for a trucking company and spends most of his time in Las Vegas. Member Brady asked Ms. Connolly to explain what she would bring to the position. Ms. Connolly explained that she has had a lot of experience as a teacher, principal, assistant principal (elementary and high school) which makes her capable of providing support to others in those positions. Ms. Connolly stated that she had also worked on a district level and felt capable of working as a team with all the players. Member Noble asked if she was unhappy with her current job. Ms. Connolly replied that she actually loved her current job, however, she would like to be close to family. Member Harty asked about Ms. Connolly's opinion regarding the parents' and teachers' negative view of this position. Ms. Connolly replied that she would have to show the community that the position would be valuable, specifically showing the good that can be accomplished.

**Julie Britt** (via telephone): Mr. Reeves introduced the Board to Ms. Britt. Member Noble asked Ms. Britt to introduce herself and take a few minutes to tell the Board what she could bring to this position. Ms. Britt addressed the Board and stated that she was highly educated, and also had a lot of experience as an educational leader. Ms. Britt added that she was a very up front person and had the courage to do what was right for students—and she will do it. Ms. Britt noted that she also had a long history with standardized testing. Ms. Britt stated that she believed in parent leadership and that she believed in student achievement and integrating technology, and added that she had been looking for something more challenging where she feels like she would be contributing to the greater good.

Member Noble confirmed that she lived in Virginia. Ms. Britt stated that she was at a time in her life when she can go anywhere she liked and she feels like there were a great number of students in Nevada who could benefit from her expertise. Member Harty asked how she would deal with the fact that there had been a lot of opposition from teachers and parents to this position. Ms. Britt stated that you get what you pay for, and it can be well worth the effort to invest in someone who can bring a lot to the table, for instance, she knows how to go after grants and other things that will benefit the schools. Member Noble asked if there was anything Ms. Britt would like to ask. Ms. Britt replied that she would like to know how many candidates were still vying for the position and what the timeline would be for hiring someone and she also asked if this position would have the Board's support. Member Harty answered her questions noting that there were 8 candidates; the Board will probably make a decision tonight; and also that the Board would fully support this position.

**Scott Hammond** (via telephone): Member Noble stated that they did not really need a full introduction, however, they would like to hear what Mr. Hammond felt like he could bring to the position. Mr. Hammond addressed the Board and explained that he would be brief as he was working on a bill for his current job with the Nevada State Senate and also recognized the Board's valuable time. Mr. Hammond noted that his vision for this job would be as a coordinator, not another administrator as there were already several great administrators, and what Somerset needed was a coordinator who could bring them all together and send paperwork where it needs to be. Mr. Hammond stated that people should look at Somerset and say, "that is a Somerset school and I recognize it because it has certain aspects to it," but without the charter school feel. Mr. Hammond stated that there was a certain mentality that charter schools were becoming a "petri dish" where people could experiment with different methods depending on the students that they have, however the Executive Director needs to be someone who could tighten things where they need to be tightened and loosen things where they need to be loosened as well as help the principals do what they do best and enable them to be innovative and create student achievement. Mr. Hammond further stated that teacher development was so important and that we need to train, retain, and motivate our teachers so that they that will remain in our system. Mr. Hammond added that Somerset needed someone in this position who can form relationships with the Charter School Authority and the Nevada Department of Education as well as have a good relationship with the Board. Mr. Hammond stated that he had all of those things right now having been on the Board for four years, and with him in this position, those relationships had already



been established and he wants to be able to use that to get things done. Mr. Hammond stated that charter schools need resources and he had connections in the community and with businesses, not only in the state but outside, that would benefit Somerset. Mr. Hammond emphasized that 90% of what happens in the charter school world comes from the State Statutes, and Somerset needed someone who could navigate that world, and that was what Mr. Hammond could bring. Mr. Hammond stated that Somerset needed someone to be the face of Somerset and who could put a name on the line and he added that, in the past, teachers and parents have reached out for help and he had been able to step up and do that—and that was on a part time basis, and he noted that in a full time situation there would be no limit to what he could accomplish.

Member Noble stated that there was some contention over whether or not this would be a full time position and asked if Mr. Hammond thinks that it was something that could be handled part time. Mr. Hammond stated that he had read the job description and did not see how it could be accomplished on a part time basis, and added that there would be so much needed to get the job done—just facilitating Staff Development days, gathering data, being in constant contact with the Charter School Authority, Board meetings, other meetings, and so much more. Mr. Hammond stated that there is so much to keep up on that could benefit the schools that would require a full time Director. Member Noble asked if Mr. Hammond was currently on the Curriculum Committee to which Mr. Hammond replied that he had stepped down. Member Harty asked Mr. Hammond how he would respond to the fact that some teachers and parents were upset by the fact that money would be taken from the classroom to fund this position. Mr. Hammond responded by stating that one of his responsibilities would be getting out there and finding money for the school and would hopefully bring in thousands and thousands of dollars in grants and he added that he would make sure that he would be profitable for the school. Mr. Hammond provided an example of how he was already helping Principal Pendleton with integrating technology and blended learning in the classroom, adding that he could make a few phone calls, including one to Cox Communications, who had a possible donation depending on whether or not he gets this position. Mr. Hammond stated that these are the kinds of things that he can bring to the position.

**Rebecca Johnson** addressed the Board stating that she is currently the principal for Kirk Adams Elementary in the CCSD and had been the principal for 13 years, and that she had also been a teacher and an assistant principal, giving her a total of 25 years in CCSD. Ms. Johnson added that she had been fortunate in her career to have a lot of experience, largely because she does not know how to say “no” and because she is very open to ideas and suggestions. Ms. Johnson stated that she had been very innovative in piloting many programs from the ground up and going on to train people, and added that her school was one of the first to pilot a Professional Learning Community. Ms. Johnson further stated that she then created a response to interventions program which was not only used on a local level but a state level as well, and she added that, as a result, she wrote a book on RTI and had traveled nationally teaching about this program. Ms. Johnson added that this led to her school piloting another program regarding data, determining how to use data, and how to use the reports so that data can be used for decision making and then trained other schools how to use data. Ms. Johnson further stated that her school was one of four schools selected for the Empowerment program, which gave her autonomy in staffing, calendaring, making decisions, and being able to think on her own and move forward without asking for permission, adding that she also had the autonomy of managing her own budget. Ms. Johnson added that her school was also the first school to roll out Standards Based Grading and they have been doing it for 8-9 years and, as a result, students own their own learning.

Ms. Johnson stated that all of these things make her a great resource to other schools and other principals. Ms. Johnson stated that she was excited about the collaborative idea where everyone is on the same page, yet at the same time there is a small school neighborhood feel with the autonomy where no one would tell you what to do with your building. Ms. Johnson stated that she loved the idea of Somerset having the flexibility to make decisions that are best for the students, and she also loves that the parents are on board. Ms. Johnson further stated that she was on the same page with this organization and would love to work side by side and help, adding that she felt the pain of the teachers who commented earlier as she understood the bureaucracy level and that it is not what kids need. Ms. Johnson stated that she did not want to say anything negative about CCSD, they write her

paycheck and had given her a lot of opportunities that have made her what she is today, however she loved that every Somerset school had the same strategic plan and that we have the opportunity to talk to the schools in Texas or in Florida and pool resources to find the best solutions. Ms. Johnson stated that, if given the opportunity, she would see herself as more of a facilitator who works with the schools and the Board and added that she had never been afraid of trying new things.

Member Noble asked about how Ms. Johnson would respond to the concerns that this position would add another level of bureaucracy. Ms. Johnson stated that it would not necessarily be adding another level, rather a liaison who can help everyone. Ms. Johnson had been in positions where she just taught what she had been told, however, when you empower a principal, sometimes they listen to suggestions and then do whatever they want, noting that principals have people there that help them do their jobs, but do not tell them how to do their job. Ms. Johnson saw this position as an equal to the principals helping to pool resources, and further stated that it would not be one person looking down on the rest, rather everyone focusing on the same vision, and she would be there to help them do their jobs better. Ms. Johnson stated that she has had a lot of teachers tell her that while working with her they had never worked harder and that she pushed them to be the best teacher they could be. Ms. Johnson further stated that you do not have to be above to be the best you can be, rather you can create greatness side-by-side. Member Harty asked how she would deal with concerns of the parents that money would be taken from the classroom to fund this position. Ms. Johnson stated that she understood, especially having had her own budget which primarily went to staffing. Ms. Johnson stated that being a principal is one of the hardest jobs on the planet and if she could help and say, "let me take that off your plate and how can I help you," this would ensure that the principals could spend time in the school and in the classroom and not worry about what she could take care of. Ms. Johnson stated that she would give the best that she could give because kids are our business.

**Stacy Colwell:** Member Noble asked Ms. Colwell to introduce herself and asked her to explain why she would be right for this positions. Ms. Colwell addressed the Board and stated that she had lived in Las Vegas for the past seven years. Ms. Colwell added that she began her career as a teacher and then became a teacher trainer (reading, writing, and classroom management), then an assistant principal, and then a principal at an elementary school in Palm Springs where she attended elementary school. Ms. Colwell further stated that this school had a large ELL population where she introduced technology into the classroom. Ms. Colwell stated that she then had a child and stayed home while she consulted with teachers in an educational setting. Ms. Colwell stated that she then helped open the Davidson Academy of Nevada located in Reno, which is a school for profoundly gifted students, adding that she was tasked with creating the school plan and presenting it to the state for approval. Ms. Colwell further stated that she set up a cooperative learning program with UNR, hired teachers, and helped with the building, etc. Ms. Colwell stated that for the past seven years she has been at Adleson where she is the head of lower and middle school, additionally she consults.

Ms. Colwell stated that, because she had seen different systems in California, Washington, and Las Vegas, she could bring diversity to the job. Ms. Colwell further stated that she had worked in the private sector, a charter-type school, and public schools, and that she has seen the benefits from each system and knows what works and what does not. Ms. Colwell added that she found it interesting to hear the concerns of the teachers and parents regarding this position and she would not want this to turn into a situation like the district. Ms. Colwell stated that she knows that principals are busy from the moment they walk in the school until they leave because she has been in that position, and if she is appointed to this position, she would be a resource and be there to see that the principals and teachers have what they need. Ms. Colwell added that she would be a facilitator and a liaison to provide the schools what they need. Member Harty asked if she had any comments about the concerns that parents and teachers have about spending money outside the classroom to fund this position. Ms. Colwell agreed that every penny should go back to the classroom, however, there are demands associated with running schools and there are pieces that need attention so that everything is in place. Ms. Colwell stated that she would make sure that the Charter School Authority and the teachers and principals were getting what they need. Member Noble asked her opinion on whether or not this position should be part time for full time. Ms. Colwell answered, "Yes

and no,” that it was hard to tell because this template has yet to be created, however, she stated that she does not see this as a job that a principal could take on as it would be too time consuming.

**David Lamb:** Member Noble asked Mr. Lamb to introduce himself and to share any relevant information. Mr. Lamb addressed the Board and stated that his wife used to be a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at the Somerset Sky Pointe campus and noted that, when previously speaking with his wife about Sky Pointe, he would often tell her that just such a position was needed. Mr. Lamb added that he would be perfect for this position because it is his paradigm, as he had worked at Meadows School, which is a private school in Summerlin that is structured with a lower school, middle school and upper school, with each level having a director (or principal), as well as a headmaster over the directors. Mr. Lamb stated that he knows that there is right way and a wrong way for this system to work because he has dealt with it for 20 years. Mr. Lamb added that he understood the concerns that the teachers and parents voiced earlier, and that he had experienced a headmaster who made a lot of money while not doing anything. Mr. Lamb explained that at the time he was teaching middle school and coaching but not making near the money the headmaster made, adding that this particular headmaster did give the teachers a lot of autonomy. Mr. Lamb stated that he had also experienced just the opposite with a headmaster who micromanaged everyone and completely took away any autonomy, and he concluded that there must be a balance, stating that there is nothing more important in an educational relationship than that between a teacher and a students, and it is an administrator’s job to make sure that teacher has everything he or she needs to make that relationship a success. Mr. Lamb commended the Board for making the increase to the personnel portion of the budget (his wife left because of low pay), and added that it would be his hope that this position would be one that could make sure that teachers get paid more.

Member Noble asked Mr. Lamb what his views were on whether or not this position was needed and how it would further the students’ education. Mr. Lamb stated that he would take duties like standardized testing and state reporting away from the principals to give them the time to focus on what is really important. Mr. Lamb further stated that this would be a position that can make connections in the community so that the athletics programs could get more money and so that there could be additional funds for other things. Mr. Lamb added that he would be a liaison between the Board and the principals. Member Harty asked how he would address the concerns of parents that money would be taken out of the classroom for this position. Mr. Lamb agreed that some schools are too top heavy, but if the person in this job is doing it correctly, he should be able to put more money back into the school than he would be paid for this position. Mr. Lamb noted that we are surrounded by wealthy people and businesses who are willing to donate money to causes like education.

**John Barlow:** Member Noble acknowledged that the Board is familiar with Mr. Barlow, however, invited him to state any additional information regarding the Executive Director position. Mr. Barlow addressed the Board by stating that this whole interview process had been a good experience for him. Mr. Barlow stated that it goes back to when he left Del Sol High School for the Office of Government Affairs and was tasked with training school boards, noting that this made him a candidate who could help a school board run more efficiently and anticipate things that might happen. Mr. Barlow further stated that he had a lot of experience, including his involvement as a lead accreditor, where he would evaluate schools and set standards, and that these standards were phenomenal and were based on mission and vision and how they govern a particular system and what the evidence was to back that up. Mr. Barlow added that another piece he would bring to the position is his experience opening, not only Sky Pointe, but Del Sol and Sunrise High Schools as well, adding that, as a result, he would be able to serve as a support and liaison to the new schools that will be opening up and provide the smoothest possible opening. Mr. Barlow stated that you have to have a clear mission to embrace in establishing a new campus. Mr. Barlow further stated that Sky Pointe is a college prep school where students can take AP classes and earn college credit, as well as offering an ACT prep class which increases college entrance and scholarships. Mr. Barlow emphasized that what they had accomplished at Sky Pointe in such a short period of time was phenomenal. Mr. Barlow noted that the creation of this position has been troubling, and he recollected that it was similar to when he was on the board of NASSP and auditing came in and told the board that they were making decisions based

on personality. Mr. Barlow stated that this was not a position that should be based on personalities, but on who can best serve the schools.

Member Harty asked how Mr. Barlow would deal with the concerns coming from the teachers and parents regarding money being taken from the classrooms for this position. Mr. Barlow stated that it is about the mission and branding that go along with Somerset, and the person in this position would need to assist the principals in putting forth that vision. Member Harty then asked Mr. Barlow to speak to fundraising. Mr. Barlow related an experience he had while at Del Sol High School where he was looking to implement an ROTC program that would cost \$60,000. Mr. Barlow stated that he approached a family and asked if they would help and that they up wrote a check for \$80,000 for the program and also some additional incentives for the students. Mr. Barlow added that he has absolutely no problem asking for money as long as there is a clear purpose. Member Noble asked Mr. Barlow what he would see as the main purpose of this position. Mr. Barlow stated that it would be to serve the principals, facilitating and working with them on their campuses as a liaison to the Board and fulfilling the Board's requirements, however, he does not see this as a supervisory role as he would report to the Board and meet needs and make adjustments where necessary. Member Noble asked what Mr. Barlow would do to support the principals. Mr. Barlow explained an experience he had with Principal Pendleton where he was able to help her develop a master schedule. Mr. Barlow further stated that things like this master schedule, being an extra set of eyes, attending activities, evaluations, or traffic flow, or anything to alleviate tasks or stress, anywhere needed, adding that he would be there to support and celebrate. Member Noble asked if Mr. Barlow thought it would be a full time or part time position. Mr. Barlow replied that he had received some criticism for working on other projects while he was principal because people want their principals in the building. Mr. Barlow further stated that this position was needed and would alleviate some of what the principals are doing. Member Noble asked for a straightforward answer: full or part time? Mr. Barlow stated that he doesn't think this is a position that could be done effectively on a part time basis.

## **5. Discussion and Action to Appoint Executive Director.**

Member Noble stated that the Board needed to decide whether this position would be a full or part time position. Member Harty commented that he felt like this should be a full time position and separate from being principal. Member Malone agreed. Member Boehlecke spoke of the concern the parents and teachers have regarding Somerset becoming "CCSDish," and stated that in the interview process the candidates were clear that this would be a support position and not a supervisory position, and she felt like tonight reinforced and clarified that. Member Noble had read and reread the job description and realized that there is so much good that this person could do and that a part time position would not be effective.

**Member Alison Motioned that the Executive Director position be full time. Member Brady Seconded the Motion. The Board approved unanimously. (Member Boehlecke abstained from voting because she was on the search committee.)**

Member Noble opened a discussion about the candidates and invited the Board to bring up anything they would like. Member Harty stated that since this would be a full time position, they should eliminate Principal Jefferson, as much as they love her, further stating that he thought they should eliminate the candidates in Montana and Virginia, not to discriminate, however he thought they should be local and that there were some great local candidates. Member Malone expressed a wish that they could use more than one of the candidates, but that Mr. Hammond was at the top of the list for her because of his connections. Member Boehlecke commented that, while fundraising is great, the support aspect is probably more important and Mr. Hammond does not have any administrative experience. Member Noble stated that he loved Mr. Hammond and appreciates all he has done for Somerset, however, with all his wonderful qualities, he does not have the experience of an administrator. Member Noble further stated that Principal Barlow has experience with both fundraising and support, but that Ms. Johnson would also be great with support, however, she did not mention fundraising. Member Noble further stated that

Principal Barlow seemed to be the more well-rounded candidate of the two, and suggested narrowing it down to those two. Member Brady stated that Ms. Colwell also has a lot of experience and brought a lot to the table, and a lot of that experience was in a charter school setting. Discussion ensued about the candidates and their qualifications. Member Harty interjected and stated that if Principal Barlow was selected, they would need to take immediate action and hire a new principal, and that maybe one of these candidates would like to be considered. Member Harty stated that, among all the candidates, he was most impressed by Mr. Lamb. Member Noble concurred and agreed with Member Brady that Ms. Johnson was a great candidate. Member Noble added that Principal Barlow could also be a great asset because he is familiar with the Somerset vision. Member Elison stated that, despite whom everyone liked, Principal Barlow was at the top of everyone's list. Member Noble agreed but wondered if anyone had any concerns about offering the job to Principal Barlow. Member Boehlecke stated that whomever moved into the position would have to have the support of the principals. Member Harty indicated that there may be a divide between elementary and secondary principals, and that Principal Barlow would have to be reconciled to that fact, even though any accusations that were made against him were unfounded. Member Noble stated that he was concerned about how Principal Barlow would support the Board, but when he was asked about his primary role he stated unequivocally that he would support the principals.

Member Noble asked if it would be inappropriate to ask the opinion of the principals and then thanked the principals adding that he hoped they have understood that this has been in an effort to help the principals, not put them under someone's thumb. He then asked if any of the principals would like to comment. Principal Farmer stated that he had listened for someone who could offer support system-wide—K-12 and who would not just be one dimensional adding that they need a responder and someone who would be accountable. Member Harty stated that he does not know if Principal Barlow brings enough experience at the elementary level. The Board further discussed some of the candidates' qualifications. Principal Phillips stated that there are very few people who were going to have experience across the whole spectrum and he worried more about whether or not Somerset will turn out students who are college ready. Principal Phillips further stated that if we truly want to be a K-12 system, we have to realize we will be judged by how many students are college ready. Member Noble agreed. Principal Mayfield agreed with both viewpoints, however, she had not heard much about a systems approach and about growth and added that those needs should be a piece of the puzzle that also includes Academica in the whole system. Principal Mayfield added that her first choice would be Ms. Colwell and then Ms. Johnson. Member Malone pointed out that Mr. Lamb also has a wide range of experience. Member Boehlecke brought up the fact that the committee used scoring to determine some of the other points that weren't brought to light in the interviews, such as the writing skills of the candidate. Principal Jefferson stated that she thinks that training and experience are much more important than fundraising. Ms. Hadfield, a parent and employee at the Somerset Sky Pointe campus, addressed the Board stating that she was a new employee but that she has had the opportunity to interact with and observe Principal Barlow and she had always been impressed with the way he gave people autonomy and delegated tasks, adding that she had been so impressed with his vision.

Member Noble stated that he thought there were still two people in the running and that he felt most comfortable with Principal Barlow. Member Brady stated that he was leaning more toward Ms. Johnson and Member Malone agreed. Member Noble recognized that Ms. Johnson was a great candidate, but that he felt Principal Barlow would bring a greater knowledge of our school. Member Elison stated that he would like to go with Principal Barlow.

**Member Elison Motioned to extend an offer to John Barlow for the position of Executive Director for Somerset Academy. Member Brady Seconded. The Motion carried with four votes in the affirmative. Member Harty and Member Boehlecke abstained (Member Boehlecke abstained because she was part of the search committee.) (Member Malone originally abstained, but changed her vote to the affirmative when her vote was needed for a full quorum.)**

Member Noble stated that the Board should consider some of the candidates for the principal's position at the Sky Pointe campus. Mr. Goodsell stated that it needed to be added to the June 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting agenda. Member

Noble stated that he would like the Board to actually vote for a candidate at the next meeting rather than just discuss it. Mr. Reeves stated that he understood and that this could be accomplished.

Member Noble announced that there had been a motion to instate John Barlow in the Executive Director position, however, the Board had not discussed the salary. Mr. Goodsell suggested that Principal Barlow's start date be July 1, 2015 and that he would continue in his current position until then. Principal Kelley stated that she hoped Principal Jefferson would have some input on who would be appointed as the new principal at Sky Pointe HS, and Mr. Goodsell stated that he would look into it and see if it should be an action item. Member Brady expressed excitement over what has been accomplished today. Member Harty wondered if they could proceed without determining whether or not the position at the Sky Pointe MS/HS will be a principal or AP position. Mr. Reeves stated that he thinks they can bring forth candidates in the next 12 days to fulfill either requirement, including the principals in the process, of course.

**Member Brady Motioned for a salary of \$135,000 to start for the Executive Director position. Member Elison Seconded the Motion. All Board members voted in the affirmative except Member Harty, who abstained from voting.**

#### **6. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Board Member Search.**

Mr. Goodsell explained that this agenda item was to expand the search for a Board member to include candidates who do not have an educational background. Member Noble further explained that when Member Boehlecke was elected, they required a member with an educational background and now that requirement has been fulfilled. Principal Jefferson noted that there was a parent at North Las Vegas who was disqualified from this last batch of candidates because she did not have an educational background noting that she should now be considered. Member Noble suggested that she reapply.

Principal Farmer asked where Principal Barlow would be housed. Member Noble stated that it might be in one of the new buildings at Lone Mountain or that maybe he will have to figure it out as his first task.

**Member Brady Motioned for the Search Committee to extend the search for a Board member to include non-educators. Member Harty Seconded the Motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve.**

#### **7. Public Comments and Discussion.**


Principal Jefferson wanted to know when the decision would be made for a new principal at the Sky Pointe MS/HS campus. Member Noble stated that he hoped it would be posted as early as tomorrow and that the Board could hopefully make a decision at the next meeting. Principal Jefferson asked if it will be open to anyone who applied, and Member Noble stated that it will be open to any qualified person. Principal Barlow brought up the fact that they might want to restructure, making the position an upper level Assistant Principal, and there was minimal discussion about how to proceed. Principal Mayfield suggested that this might be a time to establish an interviewing format because there is not a formal HR department. Principal Kelley stated that she believed that there is a process in place.

Mr. Reeves brought to the Board's attention a situation involving a Somerset Losee student who included a Bible verse in a class assignment. Mr. Reeves explained that normally this would be allowed unless there is a "captive audience." Mr. Reeves added that, because the class was thought to be a "captive audience," the student was asked not to include the verse in her assignment. Mr. Reeves stated that the student's parents contacted an attorney regarding the incident, and added that they held a press conference. Mr. Reeves further stated that the Associated Press picked up the story and that it could be found in many media outlets. Mr. Reeves stated that Academica attorney Colin Bringhurst sent out a statement and the Board's legal council will respond as needed.

8. Adjournment.

Member Noble Motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:07 p.m. Member Elison seconded the Motion and the Board unanimously approved. The Meeting was adjourned.

Approved on: November 4, 2015

  
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*Wice Chairperson* of the Board of Directors  
Somerset Academy of Las Vegas