

Freddie Woodson, Deputy Superintendent
District/School Operations

SUBJECT: REQUEST SCHOOL BOARD DENIAL OF CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION FOR PARAGON ELEMENTARY CHARTER SCHOOL OF MIAMI, INC., ON BEHALF OF PARAGON ELEMENTARY CHARTER SCHOOL OF MIAMI

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LINK TO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: STUDENT, PARENT, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As established in School Board Policy 9800, Charter Schools, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has received charter school applications from individuals and/or organizations in the community.

Proposal

Paragon Elementary Charter School of Miami (Paragon) proposes to serve a maximum of 500 students in grades Kindergarten through five, with a maximum of 300 students in grades Kindergarten through three in its first year of operation. The school proposes to open the 2012-2013 school year.

Applicant

The members of the Founding Board are: Mark H. Gotz, President/CEO, MH Realty Associates, Inc.; Wayman G. Bannerman, Staff Assistant to County Commissioner Dennis Moss; and Brian D. Dewolfe, Developer/Owner, Salfish Landing Fine Wine & Spirits.

Paragon's representatives did not attend the District's charter school application orientation conducted on May 5, 2011. The meeting is not mandatory but is supplementary and it is conducted to make applicants aware of the District's policies and procedures governing the charter school application review process.

Evaluation

Pursuant to School Board Policy 9800, Charter Schools, two reviews of the charter application were conducted using the required Florida Charter School Application Evaluation Instrument which included 19 standards of evaluation and certification and assurances declarations. As allowed by s.1002.33 (6)(a)6., F.S., District specific standards and requirements were also included in the evaluation. The first review was conducted by members of the Technical Review Committee (TRC), which resulted in a number of significant concerns and findings that were provided to the applicant and forwarded to the Applicant Review Committee (ARC).

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The ARC is responsible for a second review of the application as well as conducting an interview to assess the overall capacity of the applicant's ability to establish and implement the charter school plan, clarify any components of the written application for which reviewers had questions or required additional information, and corroborate information provided in the written application. The ARC meeting was held on September 13, 2011. Although an invitation was sent for the members of the Paragon Governing Board to attend, only Mark Gotz, President of the Governing Board, attended. Mr. Gotz indicated that no other individuals were available for this meeting, including the individuals responsible for writing the application as well as the person that could respond to curriculum related questions. It was his impression that applicants would be allowed to amend the application and cure deficiencies. However, the Application Instructions, School Board Policy 9800, and information provided at the Applicant Orientation conducted on May 5, 2011, made very clear that amendments would not be allowed.

After careful review of the application by both the TRC and ARC, substantial concerns remain about the applicant's understanding of the various issues in concept and/or the ability to meet the statutory requirements related to Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18 and 19 in the statutorily prescribed Evaluation Instrument. In other words, the applicant met the requirement standard in only one of the 19 categories.

The ARC found that the application failed to meet the minimum statutory and District requirements and made a unanimous recommendation to the Superintendent for denial.

Specifically, Paragon failed to satisfactorily meet the following statutory requirements:

1. Failure to submit a completed application. Pursuant to state statute, a person or entity wishing to open a charter school must prepare and submit an application on the form prepared by the Department of Education. The applicant failed to use the most recent state approved and required model application form for the 2011 Application Cycle. As a result, crucial information, such as the education plan, curriculum, school operations, student attainment of NGSSS, daily schedule, etc., was omitted. *[Section 1002.33(6)(a), F.S.]*
2. Failure to demonstrate how the school will use the guiding principles and meet the statutorily defined purpose of a charter school. *[Sections 1002.33(6)(a)1., 1002.33(2)(b), 1002.33(2)(c), 1002.33(6)(a)(1), 1002.33(7)(a)(1), Fla. Stat.]*
 - The mission statement was not compelling and did not clearly define the purpose and values of the school. *(Standard 1)*
 - There was no set of meaningful, manageable or measurable priorities that focused on improving student outcomes. *(Standard 1)*
 - Failed to demonstrate an understanding of the students the charter school intends to serve or provide a manageable plan tied to enrollment projections that will allow the school to meet its class size obligations. The Application did not provide a projection of student enrollment by grade and by class, as required by the model application. *[See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(1),*

1002.33(6)(a)(2), 1002.33(10)(e), 1002.33(6)(b)(2), 1002.33(7)(a)(1),
1003.03, Fla. Stat.) (Standard 2)]

3. Failure to provide a detailed curriculum plan that illustrates how student will be provided services to attain state standards. This includes a plan that includes provisions for exceptional students and English language learners. [Section 1002.33(6)(a) 2.-3., Fla. Stat.]
- The Application did not provide a daily schedule as required on the model application. [See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(2), 1002.33(7)(a)(2), Fla. Stat. (Standard 3)]
 - The Application did not provide an educational plan as required by the model application. [See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(2), 1002.33(7)(a)(2), Fla. Stat. (Standard 3)]
 - The Application did not provide a clear alignment between the mission and the school's educational plan. [See, 1002.33(6)(a)(2), 1002.33(7)(a)(2), Fla. Stat. (Standard 3)]
 - The Application did not provide adequate information regarding how the school intends to ensure students attain mastery of the Next Generation Sunshine States Standards. [See, 1002.33(6)(a)(1), 1002.33(6)(a)(2), 1002.33(6)(a)(3), 1002.33(6)(a)(4), 1002.33(7)(a)(2), 1002.33(7)(a)(4), Fla. Stat. (Standard 4)]
 - The Application did not provide a clear and coherent framework for teaching and learning. [See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(1), 1002.33(6)(a)(2), 1002.33(6)(a)(3), 1002.33(6)(a)(4), 1002.33(7)(a)(2), 1002.33(7)(a)(4), Fla. Stat. (Standard 4)]
 - The Application did not demonstrate that the curriculum framework as described is aligned to the Next Generation Sunshine States Standards and the Common Core Standards. [See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(1), 1002.33(6)(a)(2), 1002.33(6)(a)(3), 1002.33(6)(a)(4), 1002.33(7)(a)(2), 1002.33(7)(a)(4), Fla. Stat. (Standard 4)]
 - The Application did not demonstrate that the curriculum as described, will meet the needs of all students and at all levels. [See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(1), 1002.33(6)(a)(2), 1002.33(6)(a)(3), 1002.33(6)(a)(4), 1002.33(7)(a)(2), 1002.33(7)(a)(4), Fla. Stat. (Standard 4)]
 - The Application did not provide details that adequately respond to how the school intends to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum. [See, 1002.33(6)(a)(1), 1002.33(6)(a)(2), 1002.33(6)(a)(3), 1002.33(6)(a)(4), 1002.33(7)(a)(2), 1002.33(7)(a)(4), Fla. Stat. (Standard 4)]
 - The Application failed to demonstrate sound plans for educating exceptional students that reflect the full range of programs and services required to provide all students with a high quality education. [See, Section 1002.33(16)(a)3. Fla. Stat.] In particular, it fails to reflect that a full range of services will be available to students with disabilities or even necessarily that the School will provide sufficient staffing for exceptional students. [See, Section 1002.33(6)(a)(3), Fla. Stat. (Standard 6)]
 - The Application did not include Standard 7, related to ELL; instead limited information regarding ELL students was erroneously included as part of

Standard 6, Exceptional Students. [See, Section 1002.33(6)(a)(3), Fla. Stat. (Standard 7)]

- The Application did not provide a comprehensive plan to provide services to ELL students. Both Statute and the Model Florida Charter School Application require that a charter school comply with all state and federal statutes for serving ELL students. The application failed to demonstrate how the school would serve the full range of needs of the English Language Learners. [See, Section 1002.33(6)(a)(3), Fla. Stat. (Standard 7)]
4. Failure to provide measureable goals and objectives that set high standards for student performance. [See, Section 1002.33(6)(a)3., Fla.Stat.]
- The Application did not provide goals and objectives that meet the state's accountability requirements. It did not indicate how much improvement students would be expected to show, how progress and performance would be evaluated and what would be the specific results to be attained. [See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(3), 1002.33(7)(a)(3), 1002.33(7)(a)(4), 1002.33(7)(a)(5), Fla. Stat. (Standard 5)]
 - The Application did not provide an adequate progression plan. Although it stated that it would "follow the district's plan", it did not demonstrate knowledge or understanding of the District's plan or any details pertaining to its implementation. [See, 1002.33(6)(a)(3), 1002.33(7)(a)(3), 1002.33(7)(a)(4), 1002.33(7)(a)(5), Fla. Stat. (Standard 5)]
 - The Application did not correctly identify federal, and state required assessments and failed to provide the types and frequency of assessments the school would use to measure and monitor student progress. [See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(3), 1002.33(7)(a)(3), 1002.33(7)(a)(4), 1002.33(7)(a)(5), Fla. Stat. (Standard 5)]
5. The Application did not demonstrate that reading would be a primary focus of the school and did not propose a reading curriculum that is consistent with effective teaching strategies that are grounded in scientifically based reading research¹ See, Section 1002.33(6)(a)4., Fla.Stat.
- The Application did not provide adequate information on what Reading Plan the school would implement, and did not even state if would follow the District's Comprehensive Research-based Reading Plan. [See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(1), 1002.33(6)(a)(2), 1002.33(6)(a)(3), 1002.33(6)(a)(4), 1002.33(7)(a)(2), 1002.33(7)(a)(4), Fla. Stat. (Standard 4)]
 - The Application did not provide any information on the statutorily required Response to Intervention Model, how the school would monitor struggling readers or what interventions would be implemented to assist them in making one year's growth. [See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(1), 1002.33(6)(a)(2), 1002.33(6)(a)(3), 1002.33(6)(a)(4), 1002.33(7)(a)(2), 1002.33(7)(a)(4), Fla. Stat. (Standard 4)]

¹ Pursuant to Section 1002.33(6)(a)4., the Sponsor "shall" deny a charter school for the lack of an adequate reading curriculum or proposed reading curriculum.

- The Application did not discuss or provide a curriculum for teaching Writing. [See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(1), 1002.33(6)(a)(2), 1002.33(6)(a)(3), 1002.33(6)(a)(4), 1002.33(7)(a)(2), 1002.33(7)(a)(4), Fla. Stat. (Standard 4)]
 - The Application lacked information on what a Reading block would entail (number of minutes, specific breakdown of the instructional time.) [See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(1), 1002.33(6)(a)(2), 1002.33(6)(a)(3), 1002.33(6)(a)(4), 1002.33(7)(a)(2), 1002.33(7)(a)(4), Fla. Stat. (Standard 4)]
 - The Application lacked specifics of how data would be collected and how it would impact teaching and learning. [See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(1), 1002.33(6)(a)(2), 1002.33(6)(a)(3), 1002.33(6)(a)(4), 1002.33(7)(a)(2), 1002.33(7)(a)(4), Fla. Stat. (Standard 4)]
6. Failure to provide a detailed plan to ensure adequate financial oversight, and controls that will safeguard finances. See, Section 1002.33(6)(a)5., Fla. Stat.
- The Application did not provide a clear plan ensuring that the school will have strong internal controls and policies to safeguard the school's finances. [See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(5), 1002.33(7)(a)(9), and 1002.33(7)(a)(11), Fla. Stat. (Standard 18)]
 - The Application did not provide information ensuring that the school would obtain adequate insurance coverage. [See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(5), 1002.33(7)(a)(9), and 1002.33(7)(a)(11), Fla. Stat. (Standard 18)]
7. Failure to provide evidence that a safe learning environment would be provided and would be conducive to learning. See, Section 1002.33, Fla. Stat.
- The Application indicates that the school's philosophy in handling issues pertaining to behavioral, attendance, tardiness, uniform violations, and parents not completing their volunteer hours is to dismiss the student from the school, which statutorily it cannot do. Only the School Board can expel students from any public school. The application did not indicate how the school would work with families to ensure that the appropriate level of support would be provided to students with behavioral problems. [See, Sections 1002.33(7)(a)(7), 1002.33(7)(a)(11), 1002.33(9)(n), Fla. Stat. (Standard 8)]
 - The Application did not provide the school's approach to classroom management and student discipline. [See, Sections 1002.33(7)(a)(7), 1002.33(7)(a)(11), 1002.33(9)(n), Fla. Stat. (Standard 8)]
 - The Application did not provide policies it would implement regarding discipline, suspension, dismissal and recommendation for expulsion. Although, the application states that the school would adopt the District's plan, it did not demonstrate knowledge or understanding of the District's plan or any details pertaining to implementation. [See, Sections 1002.33(7)(a)(7), 1002.33(7)(a)(11), 1002.33(9)(n), Fla. Stat. (Standard 8)]
8. Failure to provide evidence of an organizational plan which provides a clear understanding of how the school will be governed and managed and plans for meaningful involvement of parents and community.

- The Application did not provide a clear understanding and description of the governing board's responsibilities. [See, Sections 1002.33(7)(a)(15), 1002.33(16)(5)(b), Fla. Stat. (Standard 9)]
- The Application did not provide a clear, sensible delineation of roles and responsibilities in relations to governance and school management. No management company was mentioned; however, a series of contracted vendors were identified with few details as to services to be provided. [See, Sections 1002.33(7)(a)(15), 1002.33(16)(5)(b), Fla. Stat. (Standard 9)]
- The Application did not provide a clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities for administering the day-to-day activities of the school. [See, Sections 1002.33(7)(a)(9), 1002.33(7)(a)(14) Fla. Stat. (Standard 10)]
- The Application did not provide a sound plan for evaluating the school leader. [See, Sections 1002.33(7)(a)(9), 1002.33(7)(a)(14), Fla. Stat. (Standard 10)]
- The Application did not provide a termination policy that is aligned with SB736. [See, Sections 1002.33(7)(a)(14), 1002.33(12), Fla. Stat. (Standard 10, 12)]
- The Application did not provide a comprehensive description of the school's enrollment policy and procedures. [See, Sections 1002.33(7)(a)(7), 1002.33(7)(a)(8), and 1002.33(10), Fla. Stat. (Standard 13)]
- The Application provided a sample Parent Contract that contains an involuntary dismissal policy which is illegal. [See, Sections 1002.33(7)(a)(7), 1002.33(7)(a)(8), and 1002.33(10), Fla. Stat. (Standard 13)]
- The Application did not provide any information regarding how parents would be involved in the governance of the school. The Application failed to provide information on how the school would comply with Section 1002.33(7)(d)(1) , requiring charter schools to appoint a parent representative to provide information and to facilitate parental involvement. [(Standard 13)]

9. Failure to provide a (a) coherent plan for facilities, (b) transportation plan, and (c) completed action plan.

- The Application did not provide a realistic plan for securing a facility, including county requirements, process and timeline to occupy. The start-up budget did not account for costs associated with the construction or the opening of a planned facility. Cost estimates did not demonstrate that the planned facility would be feasible. Space planning described does not consider requirements related to Class Size Amendment restrictions. [See, Sections 1002.33(6)(a)(5), 1002.33(7)(a)(13), and 1002.33(18), Fla. Stat. (Standard 14)]
- The Application did not provide a comprehensive plan for providing transportation to all eligible students. The transportation plan lacked crucial information regarding legal requirements and the school's responsibility to provide transportation. [See, Section 1002.33(20)(a)(1), Fla. Stat. (Standard 15)]
- The Application did not provide a comprehensive plan to ensure food service delivery to students. The application did not provide a viable plan to secure a food service provider, nor did it provide information on how the school would ensure that students who were eligible for free or reduced lunch would be

provided these services and how they would be properly accounted for and monitored. *[See, Section 1002.33(20)(a)(1), Fla. Stat. (Standard 16)]*

- The Application did not provide a clear roadmap of the needed steps and strategies that will ensure that the school will be ready to serve students on the first day of school. *[See, Section 1002.33(7)(a)(16), Fla. Stat. (Standard 19)]*

The Applicant was notified of the Superintendent's intent to recommend denial to the School Board and provided a copy of the final evaluation. Pursuant to Section 1002.33(6)(c), F.S., if the School Board approves this recommendation, the applicant may appeal to the State Board of Education no later than 30 days after receipt of the School Board's decision.

Copies of the application and evaluation, which are incorporated by reference into this Board item, will be transmitted to the School Board Members under separate cover and will be available for inspection by the public in the Office of Board Recording Secretary, Room 924, and in the Citizen Information Center, Room 158, 1450 N.E. Second Avenue, Miami, Florida 33132.

RECOMMENDED: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida deny the charter school application submitted by Paragon Elementary Charter School of Miami, Inc., on behalf of Paragon Elementary Charter School of Miami.

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