

MINUTES OF A **SPECIAL HEARING** OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 205, COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS, HELD ON **WEDNESDAY, April 23, 2014**, IN THE VOCATIONAL BUILDING AT THORNTON HIGH SCHOOL, ROOM T-107, HARVEY, ILLINOIS, BEGINNING AT 6:00 P.M.

The Public Hearing was called to order at 6:30 p.m. On roll call, Members Crayton, Lawrence, Williams, and Robinson answered. Dr. Stacey D. McJunkins, Interim Superintendent; Mr. Brett Fickes, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; Mr. Jerry B. Doss, Director of Public Relations; Mr. Tony Ratliff, Thornton Principal; Mr. Dennis Willis, Thornwood Principal; Mr. James Walton, Thornridge Principal; Ms. Ebonie Williams, Thornton Assistant Principal; Mr. Jim Beckwith, Thornwood Assistant Principal; Mr. Tony Ratliff, Mr. Ken Wendorff, Faculty Association President were also present.

ROLL
CALL

Mr. Fickes opened the Public Hearing and introduced Mrs. Darcell Ross, Founder of Life Academy Charter School. Mrs. Ross presented on behalf of Life Academy Charter School. The mission to provide 21st Century skills to students through an educational experience that promote, a progressive student academic achievement, develop social and emotional character, cultural diversity awareness, college preparation and career readiness. Enrollment not based on any test scores and designed with one common goal to promote student achievement and future success. She presented public records showing District 205 graduation rate, dropout rate and attendance. She stressed the values the school promotes, college readiness, changing demographics and how bringing the Charter School to District 205 would help kids currently not in school.

PUBLIC HEARING
FOR LIFE
ACADEMY
CHARTER
SCHOOL

Mr. Robinson asked: a.) Why make the charter proposal to district 205?

Mrs. Ross answered: b.) district 205 was selected because I am a member of this community. My son attended the elementary as well as the high school.

Mr. Robinson asked: 1.) What other school districts were considered for Life Academy?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) the only one considered was district 205

Mr. Robinson asked: 1.) Other than viewing a day at district 205, how are you familiar with the district and its student's population?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) I'm familiar as a parent and community member

Mr. Robinson asked: 1.) Did you meet with any district 205 representatives to discuss the components of the charter proposal and what aspects would be important to district 205?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we sent information regarding our school design to the superintendent to give a clear picture of life academy. We also sent letters to board members informing them of our interest to bring a charter school to district 205.

Mrs. Lawrence stated: a significant amount of District 205 students/teens have teen pregnancy. 1.) How would you address that issue, teen pregnancy? District 205 also operates an infant care center for the teen parents. 2.) How would you address this? 3.) How many nurses do you plan to have working at your school full time or part-time? Mrs. Ross stated 1.) Life Academy will have a policy in place to address the issue on teen pregnancy, 2.) Will partner with the community and build relationships to help service the teen parents. 3.) For the first year, Life Academy plans to have 1 nurse part-time. As enrollment goes up they plan to add more nurses

Mrs. Lawrence asked: 1.) What is meant by part-time? District 205 has students that have severe asthma, breathing issues, health issues and has a concern about not having a nurse on staff 5 days a week/full-time. 2.) During the first year? 3.) Our District provides services with alternative learning programs, career success programs, GED, and credit recovery. How will your school meet those needs? 4.) Since you have not had a school in the past, we cannot find out your graduation rate or your dropout rate at your school, what model you have to ensure us that your graduation rate will be up to standards? We have nothing based on your past history

to show success or non-success. How do we know it's going to be a success?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) If that is what is needed to meet the needs of the students they will provide that. 2.) Yes 3.) Life Academy answered, they have reviewed the policy that District 205 has in place and will ensure students have all options for credit recovery, early graduation policy, online e-learning programs, and will gain credit for community service. 4.) Life academy has reviewed researched scientifically based programs that promote student graduation, promote students to be enrolled in school, has designed its educational program to allow students multiple options of gaining credit through traditional course work as well as alternative ways to gain excess credit through community service learning, and summer school options

Mrs. Lawrence asked: 1.) If interested in opening in the fall, is there is a location set for Life Academy?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Yes, first site of interest is Queen of Apostle upon approval of the Charter the Archdiocese is willing to move forward with leasing options

Mrs. Williams asked: 1.) What extra curriculum activities will Life Academy provide?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) has designed an extended and segregated programing for activities that will include sports, strategic chess, mentoring programs, e-learning programs and programs including technology. Will address social needs of students, physical needs as well as academic needs

Mrs. Williams stated: charter schools generally pay teachers less than regular public schools; will Life Academy salaries and benefits for teachers will be comparable to those offered by District 205?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we would like for our salaries of our teachers to meet the needs of our students. We want to have a gap where we can pay teachers for their performance. Plan to pay teachers a reasonable salary for many of the schools we compared to in the district and other communities in the south suburban areas

Mrs. Williams asked: 1.) does the charter school anticipate on employing any District 205 staff?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) district 205 has great teachers if there is a teacher in district 205 that would love to come and join Life Academy school we are a part of the district we are working to achieve the same academic achievement. We will welcome any teacher that is qualified to teach any subject.

Mrs. Williams asked: 1.) will you recruit from district 205?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) yes, as we will recruit for Thornton township as well as the city of Chicago. Listed in the proposal is different methods of recruiting teachers as well as students

Mrs. Williams stated and asked: 1.) District 205 has A.P certified teachers that instruct A.P classes will life academy A.P classes be taught by A.P certified teachers?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) yes, in addition la will be charter school which means if we see someone in the business world have unique skills that will be key to teaching particular subjects that require hands on instruction we will also pull from that valuable source as our teaching staff as well. There is an educational requirement for every position

Mrs. Williams asked: 1.) do you believe that the proposed charter is economically viable for district 205 and why?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) believe the proposed charter is viable, economically and academically for district 205. Reviewed district 205 budgets and comparison chart displayed. The financial impact the charter school will have on district 205 is between 2-3 percent. In addition, we plan to pull students who currently live in the district but are no longer attending the district high schools. Anticipate the impact to be far less than 2 percent to district 205

Mrs. Williams asked: 1.) how is the career day offered at Life Academy different than similar programs already offered at District 205?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) life academy plans to incorporate our career day where students are able to job shadow or even go into those particular organizations that provide a certain career field where they can see firsthand. Career day will be incorporated along with the field trips to give the opportunity to visit those organizations and see how they perform

Mrs. Williams asked: 1.) how are the college/workplace visits offered by life academy different then the programs offered at District 205?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Life Academy definitely knows that district 205 has a great relationship with the colleges and different organizations in Thornton township. Life Academy plans to build relationships so we can partner with universities in our area to provide students with more extensive academic programs to prepare them even better for college and for the workforce as well

Mrs. Williams asked: 1.) In your presentation, you mentioned there is a safe passage transportation plan, can you explain that? What is that?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Life Academy has a transportation plan that includes the way we will transport our students to school as well as monitoring the different routes to and from school. It is a passage way where students are ensured to be safe when leaving home, arriving at school as well as in the afternoon for the extended day program.

Mrs. Williams asked: 1.) do you have a bus service already in place for transporting students to the district?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Life Academy looked at the district options and wants to be a part of the district. One option is to partner with the different bus services currently offered to district 205 but down the line we hold the option to purchase our own fleet of buses where we will begin to transport our own students back and forth. We reserve the option to later in the future purchase our own buses

Mrs. Lawrence asked: 1.) how will you choose your students for your school?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Life Academy has in place several options for letting the community know when the opportunity comes for the students to come out door hangers, postcards, all social media, plan to post on website. Having a life academy representative at various township meetings to spread the word

Mrs. Lawrence asked: 1.) if you have more students apply then available, how will you make the determination of which child will be able to attend life academy

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Life Academy has in place a proposal each year will be accepting 100 students, if we receive more than 100 applications then will plan to use lottery process. After the first year, plan to use some preference to siblings already attending life academy

Mrs. Lawrence asked: 1.) will you discriminate against special education students?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) no

Mr. Crayton asked: 1.) district 205 is not a union school district, what will you be doing in the area of articulation working with the feeder schools?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Life Academy plans to build relationships will all of the feeder schools and high schools. Plan to build a relationship to recruit students with a particular interest in our school district and unique instructional approach. As we build relationships with the schools, we plan to partner with them in regards to what unique approaches we are taking, our performance, how we are achieving certain performances and training our teachers. Will follow the same format District 205 use with the feeder schools.

Mr. Crayton asked: 1.) In light of the recent developments on discipline, show me what your discipline model would look like?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Life Academy has a discipline model that is incorporated in our school life culture plan. Life Academy will use the University of Illinois character education using social and emotional skills. Students will also participate in 21st century small group advisory. Will also provide students with discipline policy. The

school culture plan is will be built on incorporating a positive reinforcement plan. The discipline policy will be a last resort.

Mr. Crayton asked: 1.) Speak a little more about your positive reinforcement, what are those tactics

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Life Academy plans to reward students for positive behavior. Will be done in multiple ways through acknowledgement, incentives, programs that promote students to be more positive. Rewarding for performance, providing supportive environment. All detailed in proposal

Mr. Crayton asked: 1.) individual support for students, can you tell me what those models look like?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) that is with our student support team (SST) in special education procedures, lays out how all students are to be supportive from day 1, that would be a blend as co-teaching, general education and special education teachers. Students with IEP's will be supported from day 1 in regards to the structural approach and multi-tier assessment

Mr. Crayton asked: 1.) how would you provide support to the mainstream student that may need additional support, not the special education students?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) RTI program will work with not only academic but Social and emotional standings aligned by the state plan to meet/ talk about the students that may exhibit any type of problems

Mr. Crayton asked: 1.) Speaking academically, what about the after school academic support?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) the extended day program will be an extensive list of clubs and different activates. Want to make this program an extension of the day programs. Have aligned programs that will align common core as well as social and emotional standards for the state of Illinois. Charm approach will target specific students as an early intervention for students with academic or behavior weakness will be aligning with charm coaches, RTI and the extended day program

Mr. Crayton asked: 1.) you used the acronym "CHARM", what is that?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) CHARM stands for C- collecting data from the classroom and initial school wide assessment H- we will hear all sides from the teachers, parents and the students A- is where alternative interventions are used to differentiate instructions for students with low performance with the initial assessment R- for readdress instruction intervention for improved student performance for 4- 6 weeks after initial assessment M- move, move forward to tier 1 of the RTI process. The CHARM approach will be used before a formal referral for specialized education is submitted

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) You keep saying you plan to develop relationships with the elementary schools, community businesses and organizations, if you are planning to do it, do you still plan to open in August 2014?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we plan to open in august but do not want to put families, students and the district in any type of situations. Have begun to build relationships and attached signatures from our petition included in the proposal. Have spoken with residents in various communities and businesses for support.

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) when did you get the signatures on the petitions?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we have been gathering signatures for the past 2 years. They have been ongoing. The petitions have never stopped and we are still gathering signatures as we go along, listed in appendix

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) did you ask people before they signed whether or not they live within district 205 service area?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we have asked people and requested the people that signed the petition be from Thornton township or within the boundaries of where the charter school would be positioned. However, we have a variety of supporters that would still like to support side the district

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) what information are they told about the charter school before they sign the petition?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) they are told about charter schools, given a 1 page flyer along with the appendix which list the mission and vision, what we are trying to do in District 205, how we are trying to assist the district in closing the gap. We also have a website. We are spreading the word about Life Academy and what we are trying to do, listed in appendix

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) Did you previously make a proposal to District 205 for the Life Academy?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) This is the 2nd proposal to District 205. Our first proposal was submitted about 3 years ago and we were pleased to get 2 board members vote at that time. However, if you look at this current proposal our unique instructional approach has improved greatly. The whole charter proposal has shown great improvement. That was our first attempt. We have had assistance in designing our proposal and help from other currently operating charter schools.

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) Did you contact anyone within the District at all following the denial of your previous proposal to help refine your charter proposal so it would be something District 205 would vote for?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we did not meet in regards to strengthening our charter proposal. What we did as a team we assessed the public information from the district as well as the Illinois state board. Were able to gather a variety of information in regards to how District 205 functions, how the programs were set up and the policies that were in place although some information was outdated. We designed a school with the district's current policies and procedures in mind but everything was designed around the needs of today's students

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) who wrote the proposal?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) a team of individuals, listed in appendix

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) you mentioned, you tend to share certain transportations with the district initially, are there other areas of services you plan to ask the district for shared services?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we would be school in partnership with the district but would also like to reserve the right to later on purchasing our own fleet of buses in regards to transporting students.

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) other than transportation, are there other services you plan to ask the district to share their services.

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) yes, in the area of specialized services. Funding for every particular student at the Charter school from District 205

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) that's not something you previously spoke with the district about?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) it is not something we would have to speak with them about at this point. It is laid out in the charter proposal how we plan to gain access to those funds.

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) your speaking about special education, the funding would flow if you take special education student but it's not automatic the district would continue to provide services for that student.

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) my understanding is the services belongs to the student, not the district

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) in your budget, you are not currently hiring a school psychologist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, any other personnel that special education students require, so how will you provide for those services for students with an IEP?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) as we enroll students we will be enrolling students and see the needs of those students. In regards to our staffing, our staffing plans are going to

be readjusted to fit the needs of the student

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) so will you hire individuals to work in your school in those areas or hire contractors?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we plan to hire teachers, however we would like to partner with the district and access those resources as well

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) do you know whether your proposed site is handicap accessible?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) yes

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) what was the proposed site previously used for? Was it an elementary school?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) it was previously used as a high school, PACE.

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) you mentioned you planned to enroll and recruit a lot of students that aren't from District 205? From private schools right?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we plan to enroll students with an interest in life academy charter school

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) do you have a percentage you think would come from students that are not currently attending a District 205 school that may be attending a private school near?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) the enrolled for District 205 students have dropped so those students didn't graduate. Meaning they are somewhere in the boundaries of District 205 and we would love to have them attend the charter school. There are families in the district that kids do not attend the district schools, the charter school can be option to bring those kids back to the community.

Legal Counsel asked 1.) You used those kids as a reason why it would economically viable for district 205, if students coming from private schools the district wouldn't that mean be able to reduce as many expenditures because not that many students would be coming from district 205?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) that is not something we can speak on until we have the enrollment numbers of our students

Legal Counsel asked 1.) you talked about la would close the teaching gap by employing project based literacy, technology , college and career focus, etc, which of those that you're going to offer that district 205 does not already do?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) went through district 205 website and didn't see a universal or targeted instructional approach that would meet the needs of the students.

Legal Counsel asked 1.) You mention this is the first school proposal, have you or your board been a part of or operated any other charter schools?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) yes, 3 members of LA has worked at charter schools as educators. 1 member has a key to several charter schools that are operating

Legal Counsel asked 1.) What was the other charter schools you guys were members of or administrators of?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Betty Shabazz charter school, Lighthouse charter school

Legal Counsel asked 1.) Was the member of your team that was involved in Lighthouse was he involved with the West Gary Lighthouse charter school?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) which member would that be?

Legal Counsel answered: 1.) just looking from the resumes, can't remember the name. You listed the names of the schools your organization has experience. You said Lighthouse but there are many of them, was it the west Gary Lighthouse

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) I was a member of the West Gary Lighthouse charter school

Legal Counsel asked 1.) What did you do with West Gary Lighthouse charter school?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) I wore multiple hats there, however what I'm here for today is regarding Life Academy Charter School

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) you mentioned you're seeking 100% of the per capital for each student but you indicate LA is sustainable at 80% of the per capital tuition, why are you seeking 100%?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we'll be educating 100% of the student, its only proper that the funding goes with that student

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) your budget shows LA will make a profit for \$11 million dollars after 5 years that's only if you get 82 % of the per capitol tuition, how is this inappropriate use of the tax payers funds if you're going to be profiting \$11 million dollars at the end of 5 years?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we will not be profiting it, however LA plans to have a short term lease with the archdiocese, LA plans to build its own facility in the area

Legal counsel asked: 1.) will LA provide free and reduced priced breakfast and lunch for its students?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.)LA will provide those based off the need of the student

Legal counsel asked: 1.) will you be cooking the meals? How will the meals be provided?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we have an option of providing our own kitchen staff however we are also open to partnering with different vendors currently be used by district 205 or other feeder schools

Legal counsel asked: 1.) what about your transportation, your proposal indicates transportation will be provided on a first come basis, what does that mean?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) will provide transportation to every student that is entitled to it

Legal counsel asked: 1.) your program internship program indicates in order for your students to participate in a career program they have to have their own transportation. Aren't those students you currently targeting probably the ones that won't have reliable transportation?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) reliable transportation will also include public transportation

Legal counsel asked: 1.) with what employers do you anticipate having those internships with? What locations?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we don't have locations yet. Plan to build relationships depending on the career field the students pick as they enroll

Legal counsel asked: 1.) what if the students are interested in a location that is not on the public transportation line?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) in regards to transportation, we will either make sure our parent family engagement plan incorporates that. We also have the option; if we choose to purchase vehicles for life academy we are able to transport students as well.

Legal counsel asked: 1.) with regards to discipline, your materials mention long term suspensions, short suspensions, expulsions, the school code shows long term suspensions are prohibited. Why do you feel that LA needs to use long term suspensions?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) long suspensions may be 10 days

Legal counsel asked: 1.) in regards to special education services, you mention in the proposal providing those within the general education setting, what are the programs in place for the special education setting?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) general education will be provided to all special education, meeting their needs and those able to participate.

Legal counsel asked: 1.) so what if the needs of a special education student can't be met with general education classroom

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) then we have pull out, push in shown in the proposal

Legal counsel asked: 1.) district 205 has over 100 homeless students at any one time, what special supports will Life Academy provide for its homeless students?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Life Academy will meet the needs of homeless students by law

Legal counsel asked: 1.) are you planning on hiring a special education director or coordinator?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Life Academy reserves the right. Life Academy will be a charter school so staffing will be based off the needs of the student. In charter schools, we have case managers, that person will handle not only general education but special education also

Legal counsel asked: 1.) what's your understanding of who is responsible for IEP compliance within your school? Is it 205 responsibilities for overseeing that or is your school responsible for overseeing that?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) the student support team

Legal counsel asked: 1.) so if a parent is unhappy with the special education services that your school is providing and they file a due process complaint, who is responsible for funding the defense of that? District 205 or your school?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) district 205 has policy addressing grievances by parents, families or anyone who has concerns. LA will also have a procedure.

Legal counsel asked: 1.) you keep mentioning, district 205 has a policy and you will have a policy. Do you have any policies written already or you going to develop those policies?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) those policies have been written. Simply stating that we wanted to align LA with District 205. Want to work with the district and mirror what district 205 already has and maybe improve on it.

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) did you prepare a copy of LA proposal in Spanish?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we plan to have a diverse population of students; every document coming from LA upon approval will meet the needs of families.

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) have you been recruiting for students in Spanish?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we have not begun recruiting because Life Academy is seeking approval.

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) were any of the petitions you circulated in Spanish?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) no they were not

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) will life academy offer instruction in multiple languages?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) yes

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) district 205 offers numerous certification for its students, cpr, restaurant certificates, will Life Academy be offering certificates for its students?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Yes

Dr. McJunkins asked: 1.) how do you plan to address the needs of those vocational students when you will have such a limited staff?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) our student will not be limited to meet the needs of the students. Life Academy will be a growing school.

Dr. McJunkins asked: 1.) it's already the end of April and you plan to open your doors in august. What teachers and administrators have you hire thus far?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Life Academy has not hired any administrators or teachers. Upon approval Life Academy has a plan of how were going to recruit teachers and students.

Dr. McJunkins asked: 1.) In your materials, they are a little unclear, would like to know what administrators do you intend to hire in first year and which ones in the

second year?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) I believe that information was listed in the staffing plan in the proposal. It list the number of administrators, teachers that we will be seeking to hire.

Dr. McJunkins asked: 1.) It's in the staffing plan, however in the board chart it leaves out the assistant principal, dean and business manager, at what point do you plan to introduce those particular positions in your organization

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) all of the positions will not be listed for year 1. Will be opening with 100 students, so any of the positions we do not see will be needed for 100 students

Dr. McJunkins asked: 1.) have you already prepared your job application process?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Yes

Dr. McJunkins asked: 1.) is it computerized, is it paper?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) currently information is on paper

Dr. McJunkins asked: 1.) if you do not receive at least 100 applicants that you anticipate, what will be the minimum amount of students that you will need in order to open your doors?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Life Academy does not see not meeting 100 needs.

Currently there is a waiting list of students in the city of Chicago that is in 2000 plus families waiting on a spot in a charter school. Because there are no charter schools in the Thornton township, we see ourselves implementing a lottery process a lot sooner then actually having to meet a number of 100

Dr. McJunkins stated: 1.) For clarity, it's in the city of Chicago, we are speaking on students that live in our district, not the city of Chicago

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we foresee the same outcome particularly because of the charter school opened a few years ago, they currently still have a waiting list

Dr. McJunkins asked: 1.) Can you explain what the lottery process will intake?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) the lottery process is listed in the proposal. It will be a random process by an outside source where students will be selected

Dr. McJunkins asked: 1.) so it will not be based on prior academic achievement?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) No, LA is still a public school and that's against the law

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) once they submit their application if they application is chosen from the lottery, are they automatically in your school?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) once we get all applications, if the number exceeds then we want to give every applicant a fair opportunity. That's when the lottery will come into place. Once selected, we will continue to select until the number of slots available is filled

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) your material also talks about registration process and you list a bunch of documents that need to be submitted as part of the registration process. Do you anticipate advising students that against attending the charter school based on the information they may submit as a part of the registration process?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) No

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) the la course book identifies programs such as automotive, cosmetology, which requires expensive, specialized equipment and facilities, how would you provide those programs?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) in our parent family community engagement plans, it lists how we want to build partnerships with the community.

Mr. Robinson called the District Administrators up for questions

Mr. Brett Fickes stated the District administrators had a chance to review the charter proposal in a meeting and a number of them have developed some questions they would like to ask our guest here tonight. Many of those questions were already

addressed here tonight. Would like to call up the rest of the administrators to see if they have any additional questions that need to be asked.

Mr. Brett Fickes asked: 1.) You have not developed partnerships with our partner districts, district 205 has an organization the "Thornton Township Learning Partnership" this organization took years to develop a trust, meet monthly, collaborate, plan, professional development, aligning curriculum K- thru 12. Just want to be clear do you already have those relationships established or is that something you intend to develop?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) Life Academy is working and plans to collaborate in partnership with any organization that will meet the needs of our students. Will plan to build partnership. We plan to hold a community meeting that will address the many concerns from administrators and even community members and this particular setting according to the law our questions are to come from board members. According to charter school law.

Legal Counsel stated: They are a part of the administrator team. There is nothing in the law regarding them not being able to ask questions. So you are not going to answer his question?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) I did answer his question

Legal Counsel asked: 1.) do you not want to answer any further questions from the administrative team?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) No, I plan to answer questions from the Board Members only. We are here to propose in part to the community but really just for the Board Members. Any questions should come from the Board, not the community.

Legal Counsel stated: 1.) the board of education employs these administrators they are a part of the administrative team that runs the school district so they do have some questions. For instance, Mr. Fickes is the Director of Curriculum; he would have more knowledge on the subject of Curriculum than a Board member.

Mr. Fickes asks the Board for clarification if the administrators are able to ask questions.

Legal Counsel stated: Yes

Mrs. Ross stated: the questions can be given to the Board but they will not answer questions from administrators

Mr. Robinson advised Life Academy the Board directed the administrators to ask questions. It's a public hearing and they are able to ask questions to Life Academy

Mr. Fickes asked: 1.) Will Life Academy have a program similar to AVID?

Life Academy answered: 1.) Life Academy will have a program that truly meets all the student that attend

Mr. Fickes asked: 1.) the charter school that you stated you worked at and held many hats, are we able to visit that school to see how its being run and the programs?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) you can visit there but I'm no longer a employee there. I have no idea of the performance there however when I was there we showed progress

Mr. Fickes introduced Mr. Arrington, Director of College and Careers to ask questions

Mr. Arrington asked: 1.) I noticed in your course handbook, you have courses listed but not the course descriptions, I just wanted to know why? A number of them did not have course descriptions such as automotive

Life Academy answered: 1.) I think it stated the curriculum was to be determined and that's because many of the pathway courses may have a blended approach.

Mr. Arrington asked: 1.) are you stating it is not designed yet?

Life Academy answered: 1.) that particular curriculum will be designed but it will be something that is not made up.

Mr. Arrington asked: 1.) you mentioned looking for partnerships with programs such as cosmetology, which is a pretty broad response. A lot of these courses have a level of certification from government agencies and they take sometimes years and millions of dollars to start. Do you have an specifics on some of those courses other than the partnerships you would like to establish?

Life Academy answered: 1.) we will be looking at the needs of the students that enroll

Mr. Arrington asked: 1.) did you have anything more specific in place right now?

Life Academy answered: 1.) we are seeking approval. All of this is based upon approval of our charter

Mr. Fickes calls upon Principal, Mr. Tony Ratliff to ask any question

Mr. Ratliff asked: 1.) What kind of assessment instrument will you be using to assess the career needs of students, their career desires?

Life Academy answered: 1.) That is listed in the proposal. Will be using coming into the door EXPLORE. Will have the whole ACT layout that will give us an idea of the student's college and career ideas.

Mr. Fickes stated: You do know that EXPLORE and PLAN is all changing after next year?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) nods head in agreement

Mr. Fickes introduced Principal, Mr. Dennis Willis to ask any question

Mr. Willis stated all questions and concerns were already answered about special education

Mr. Fickes introduced Principal, Mr. James Walton to ask any questions

Mr. Walton asked: 1.) You list "At-Risk" students in your proposal, the programs you are stating in your charter, what do you find that is not already placed in our district?

Life Academy answered: 1.) District 205 has a variety of programs, however we saw as a team a missing component is the instructional approach to teaching the students how they need to learn

Mr. Walton asked: 1.) that assessment is from the data you reviewed for our district, no in depth or visit to any of the schools or classrooms?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) I live here. I'm in the community

Mr. Walton asked: 1.) can you say more how you feel you can have better results with "At-Risk" students in our district if you have not had the opportunity to do so as an academy?

Life Academy answered: 1.) every charter school has been designed by a teacher. In Chicago we can name multiple charter schools that have teachers and administrators that have helped design them. The teachers see what changes are needed.

Mr. Fickes introduced Mr. Valant, Assistant Principal at Thornridge HS

Mr. Valant asked: 1.) you have mentioned you have alternatives to suspensions, what are some of those programs you plan to implement and who will be in charge of those?

Life Academy answered: 1.) that particular is in the charter proposal. A variety of different options to keep kids in school.

Mr. Valant asked: 1.) if staff is limited and each year you intend to grow, how would having 1 teacher in a foreign language class for example

Life Academy answered 1.) staffing needs will grow as our student enrollment grow

Mr. Fickes asked: 1.) what is your ratio for students to teachers?

Life Academy answered: 1.) plan to have a ratio of 20-25 per 2 teachers as well as a

teacher aide and paraprofessional as needed to meet the students' needs

Mr. Fickes introduced Mr. Thomas Porter, Director of Pupil Personnel

Mr. Porter stated: 1.) you mentioned the IAA as part of the assessment you looked at for the teachers, however the IAA is being replaced next year as well as the indicator for AYP this year is 100% for the state of Illinois, AYP measurements for next year is planning to be changed and District 205 staff has been really well trained and has attended various workshops on various levels. I'm concerned that you mentioned the curriculum is being teacher based however if those teachers have not been trained for those particular topics, I think that's a definite concern.

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) All teachers will be trained and experts in their field. All teachers will participate in a teacher institute 2 weeks prior to receiving any students.

Mr. Porter asked: 1.) For students with IEP's and "I" stands for individual, you make several references to models and program models, I'm a little concerned that you may be providing a one size fits all curriculum for students with special needs. We have 11 different placements, so wondering how are you balancing the need of the individual versus the program model you suggested

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) as we reviewed the District policy in regards to meeting the needs of students that was one thing we could not determine for District 205. However, that is where our unique instructional model our approaches and how we address our students' needs is going to be met. The key to individualizing is how you individualized.

Mr. Porter asked: 1.) how will you make the arrangements for those schools and students to get those IEP's and have things ready for the first day in august?

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) we plan to make sure the student support team is in contact with the families of students with IEP to ensure all their needs, services are going to be met

Mr. Porter asked: 1.) regarding section 504 plan, do you see any potential section 504 plan or any individual with an IEP being rejected from your school for any reason

Mrs. Ross answered: 1.) No

Mr. Fickes states that concludes the questions from the administrative team

Mr. Fickes provided a presentation on the reason Life Academy should not be allowed to open with District 205. Mr. Fickes recapped on all the concerns of the administrative team and the need to dismiss the charter proposal. He stated introducing a new program to District students would abrupt the progress, education and enrollment of District 205 students. District 205 has graduated 1000s of students and is consistently adding/changing programs to ensure the success of District 205 students.

Mr. Rob Grossi presented the financial impact the charter school will have on District 205. Mr. Grossi showed data that Life Academy would benefit greatly at the cost of property taxpayers living within the District. The proposal is not economically sound for District

205. The District would have to pay the Charter school \$6.4 million annually for the loss of 400 students but would only be able to reduce expenses at \$1 million annually so the financial strain on District 205 is that they would lose \$5.4 million annually if Life Academy is granted. Teachers would be cut, staff reduced, activities and programs. Mr. Grossi also referred back to the Charter School opened in Rich Township School District 227 and the financial hardships that occurred due to the charter school opening in Rich Township District.

The hearing was then opened for public participation

PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION

- Synathia Harris: Has a student at Thornton and have concerns about the Charter school and special education. Has sensitive feelings regarding special education and not sure if the charter school would benefit.
- Ken Wendroff: President of District 205 Faculty Association. Wants to voice the faculty association opposition on the charter school proposal. Cannot afford to support separate school systems. Ultimately, the charter school would drain current resources and ruin the financial stability that has been fought hard to protect.

At 8:37 pm, Lawrence moved, Williams seconded, to **Adjourn the Meeting**. On roll call, Members Crayton, Lawrence, Williams, and Robinson voted aye; motion passed.

ADJOURNMENT

President

Secretary

pm (brd.mins. 4-23-14)
Special Board Meeting