

**School District U-46**  
Elgin, Illinois

March 13, 2017

The Special Meeting of the Board of Education was called to order at 6:32 p.m. at the Educational Services Center, 355 East Chicago Street, Elgin, Illinois. The following Board members answered roll call: Traci O'Neal Ellis, Cody Holt, Sue Kerr, Veronica Noland, Jeanette Ward, and Donna Smith.

A motion was made by Mrs. Ward, second by Ms. Noland to allow Mr. Costello to participate in the March 13, 2017, special meeting via telephone until he can arrive at the meeting due to employment reasons. Upon roll call, yes votes: Mrs. O'Neal Ellis, Mr. Holt, Ms. Kerr, Ms. Noland, Mrs. Ward, and Mrs. Smith. No votes: 0. The motion carried by a vote of 6-0

President Smith requested a motion to move into closed session to discuss information regarding individual student disciplinary matters; pending, probable or imminent litigation; the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance or dismissal of specific employees; the purchase or lease of real property for the use of the School Board; the setting of a price for the sale or lease of real property owned by the School Board; collective negotiating matters between the School Board and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees; review of closed session minutes; and individual student matters. The motion was made at 6:34 p.m. by Ms. Noland, second by Mrs. Ward. Upon roll call, yes votes: Mrs. O'Neal Ellis, Mr. Holt, Ms. Kerr, Ms. Noland, Mrs. Ward, and Mrs. Smith. No votes: 0. The motion carried by a vote of 6-0.

A motion was made at 6:42 p.m. by Ms. Kerr, second by Ms. Noland to reconvene into open session. Upon roll call, yes votes: Mrs. O'Neal Ellis, Mr. Holt, Ms. Kerr, Ms. Noland, Mrs. Ward, and Mrs. Smith. No votes: 0. The motion carried by a vote of 6-0.

A motion was made at 6:44 p.m. by Mrs. Ward, second by Ms. Noland to recess until 7:00 p.m. Upon roll call, yes votes: Mrs. O'Neal Ellis, Mr. Holt, Ms. Kerr, Ms. Noland, Mrs. Ward, and Mrs. Smith. No votes: 0. The motion carried by a vote of 6-0

The business session began at 7:01 p.m. Present for the business session of the meeting were the same Board members listed above, Student Board Member Eric Loera, Chief Executive Officer Tony Sanders, Interim Superintendent Dr. Kenneth Arndt and Chief Legal Officer Miguel Rodriguez. The following administrators were also present: Steve Burger, Dr. Suzanne Johnson, Dr. Jeff King, Dr. Terri Lozier, Melanie Meidel, Dr. Ushma Shah, Dr. Annette Acevedo, Mary Fergus, John Heiderscheidt, Laura Hill, Brian Lindholm, Richard Ramos, and Trisha Shrode. Also present were: media representatives Seth Hancock of the Examiner and Rafael Guerrero of the Courier, as well as other administrators, guests, and visitors. Mr. Loera led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Phil Costello joined the meeting via phone at 7:50 p.m. and arrived in person at 9:19 p.m.

1. Comments from the Audience

There were no comments from the audience.

2. Discussion/Action - Mr. Sanders

A. HR Resolutions

In order to follow state guidelines that allow for staff dismissal up until 45 days before the end of the school year, the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources annually presents personnel categories that are eligible for possible dismissal. Depending on the budget situation and when programs and classes are determined for the next school year, some of these individuals may be rehired providing they have proper licensure. While the Board of Education takes this action very seriously, dismissal consideration is customary at this time of year in order to follow state requirements. Each Resolution must be voted on separately. HR Resolutions will also be presented at the March 20, 2017 Board of Education Meeting.

Teachers (Board Policy 5.206 - Reduction in Certified Staff Work Force)  
Authorizing Non-Renewal of First, Second and Third Year Probationary Teachers (Resolution #1720)

A motion was made by Ms. Noland, second by Ms. Kerr to approve Resolution #1720 – Authorizing Non-Renewal of First, Second, and Third Year Probationary Teachers. Upon roll call, yes votes: Mrs. O’Neal Ellis, Mr. Holt, Ms. Kerr, Ms. Noland, Mrs. Ward, and Mrs. Smith. No votes: 0. The motion carried by a vote of 6-0

Authorizing Honorable Dismissal of Teachers (Resolution #1722)

A motion was made by Ms. Kerr, second by Ms. Noland to approve Resolution #1722 – Authorizing Honorable Dismissal of Teachers. Upon roll call, yes votes: Mrs. O’Neal Ellis, Mr. Holt, Ms. Kerr, Ms. Noland, Mrs. Ward, and Mrs. Smith. No votes: 0. The motion carried by a vote of 6-0

Classified Staff (Board Policy 5.291 - Reduction in Support Staff Work Force)  
Authorizing Honorable Dismissal of Educational Support Personnel – DUEA (Resolution #1725)

A motion was made by Ms. Noland, second by Ms. Kerr to approve Resolution #1725 – Authorizing Honorable Dismissal of Education Support Personnel - DUEA. Upon roll call, yes votes: Mrs. O’Neal Ellis, Mr. Holt, Ms. Kerr, Ms. Noland, Mrs. Ward, and Mrs. Smith. No votes: 0. The motion carried by a vote of 6-0

Authorizing Honorable Dismissal of Educational Support Personnel – SEIU Local 73 (Resolution #1729)

A motion was made by Ms. Noland, second by Ms. Kerr to approve Resolution #1729 – Authorizing Honorable Dismissal of Education Support Personnel - SEIU. Upon roll call, yes votes: Mrs. O’Neal Ellis, Mr. Holt, Ms. Kerr, Ms. Noland, Mrs. Ward, and Mrs. Smith. No votes: 0. The motion carried by a vote of 6-0

Authorizing Honorable Dismissal of Educational Support Personnel - Funded Project Personnel (Resolution #1730)

A motion was made by Ms. Kerr, second by Ms. Noland to approve Resolution #1730 – Authorizing Honorable Dismissal of Education Support Personnel – Funded Project Personnel. Upon roll call, yes votes: Mrs. O’Neal Ellis, Mr. Holt, Ms. Kerr, Ms. Noland, Mrs. Ward, and Mrs. Smith. No votes: 0. The motion carried by a vote of 6-0

3. NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING - The Board of Education of School District U-46, Kane, Cook and DuPage Counties, Illinois, pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/27A-8(c) and (d), will conduct a Public Hearing beginning at 7:20 p.m. in the Educational Services Center, Room 140 to receive public comments and otherwise obtain information to assist the Board of Education in its decision to grant or deny the proposal for a charter school submitted by the Elgin Charter School Initiative to be named the Elgin Math and Science Academy Charter School (EMSA). All parties interested in speaking need to register between 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. in the Educational Services Center, Room 140.

A. Opening of Public Hearing

Mrs. Smith read the following guidelines of the hearing: The Board is here to receive comments regarding the charter school proposal submitted by the Elgin Charter School Initiative regarding the Elgin Math and Science Academy Charter School proposal. The presentations and comments made tonight will assist the Board of Education in making its determination on whether to approve or deny the charter school proposal submitted by the Elgin Charter School Initiative. The Elgin Charter School Initiative will have up to fifteen minutes to present their proposal. After the Elgin Charter School Initiative concludes its presentation Administration will have up to fifteen minutes to present its key findings and recommendations regarding the charter school proposal. After Administration concludes its presentation Board members may ask questions regarding the Elgin Math and Science Academy Charter School proposal to the Elgin Charter School Initiative members and Administration presenters. At this time, Administration and the Elgin Charter School Initiative may also ask clarifying questions regarding the charter school proposal or Administration’s key findings or recommendations. Next, the Board will take comments from members of the public who have signed up to speak on the charter school proposal. The period to sign up to speak was from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. Because there are more than twenty speakers signed up, pursuant to Board of Education procedures, speaking time for all individuals will be two minutes.

B. The Elgin Charter School Initiative Presentation

Members of the Elgin Charter School Initiative presented its proposal. Kerin Kelly, President of the Elgin Charter School Initiative acknowledged members of the EMSA board present. The City of Elgin has offered a lease to the Elgin Math and Science Academy (EMSA) for the former Fox Valley Country Day School (FVCDS) property. Ms. Kelly added there has been increasing interest in EMSA with 248 new supporters since December. Ms. Kelly stated there are 149 families interested in enrolling over 200 students at EMSA.

The Elgin Charter School Initiative presented a video presentation. EMSA will provide:

- Longer school day and school year;
- Smaller class sizes;
- Nature every day through immersive environmental education;
- Extensive teacher professional development;
- Expeditionary Learning (EL) education creating an open source, common core-based curriculum;
- Special education needs will be met by partnering with the District;
- The District's budget can support EMSA—using less than 1% of the budget;
- EMSA will bring in \$1M in federal grants;
- EMSA will utilize a facility that does not need to be maintained by the District.

Students will:

- Learn through genuine challenges;
- Develop a full range of skills, habits, and knowledge;
- Become an explorer with courage and curiosity;
- Practice stewardship with respect and responsibility;
- Establish a growth mindset with craftsmanship and perseverance.

Gary Swick, member of the EMSA Design Team, spoke about the proposed location of EMSA. Mr. Swick stated that the Fox Valley Country Day School (FVCDS) site is the best place in the Elgin area for EMSA and the closest in proximity to EMSA's target population. EMSA will provide students with access to an incredible education in a world class site. The campus provides an immersion experience. Mr. Swick stated that research has shown that environmental education is directly more effective for instruction and has indirect educational benefits such as increased achievement on standardized test scores, improved academic achievement in all core areas, reduced symptoms of learning disabilities, reduced discipline problems, and a more balanced student physical, emotional, and social state. Mr. Swick stated that recent federal legislation has mandated or encouraged environmental education. The proposed site has housed a school for over 100 years because of its unique natural character. The land is described as having some of the most unique wetlands in the United States. Mr. Swick stated that the wetland complex is designated as an Illinois Nature Preserve

and an Illinois Natural History Site. Mr. Swick stated that the property also benefits the District by having partners which include the City of Elgin, the Kane County Forest Preserve District, the State of Illinois, and the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation.

Dr. Jennifer Seydel, member of the EMSA Design Team, spoke on behalf of Expeditionary Learning (EL) education. EL education started as a partnership with Harvard Graduate School of Education and Outward Bound Education and currently works with 140 schools across the country. The EL education credentialing process is a five-year plan developed for schools to meet rigorous achievement standards in three areas: mastery of knowledge and skills, character education and character development, and helping students understand how to create professional quality work through a project-based learning model. Dr. Seydel stated that EL education has created an open-source, common core-based curriculum which will be used at EMSA. Dr. Seydel addressed some concerns the District has raised. Dr. Seydel spoke about their English Language Arts curriculum, supports for English language learners, and supports for special education students. EL's English language arts curriculum is a comprehensive curriculum and literacy fully embedded with social studies and science content. Supports for English language learners are embedded in the curriculum throughout the school day. EL education also works with teachers to help them better understand the needs of English language learners. For special needs students, differentiation is at the core of EL education. EL education schools are identified as schools that are implementing best practices relating to meeting the needs of all students and allowing for specialized learning plans for students.

Dr. Rise' Jones, member of the EMSA Design Team, stated that EMSA will have twenty additional days for teachers, ten days before the school year begins and five retreat days. They will also have intensive collaborative planning to support the educator in supporting students and addressing issues of equity.

- C. Review and Recommendations Relating to the Elgin Charter School Initiative  
Dr. King, Chief Operations Officer/Chief Business Official, Dr. Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, and Mr. Lindholm, Professional Development and Project Manager, shared their key findings and recommendations of the School District U-46 Charter School Evaluation Committee regarding the charter school proposal submitted by the Elgin Charter School Initiative.

Mr. Lindholm reviewed the guidelines for reviewing charter school proposals.

Dr. Johnson reviewed the committee's findings regarding the education plan. The EMSA education plan fails to demonstrate how this charter will serve the diverse strengths and needs of U-46 students, fails to meet District English Language Arts standards, fails to support development of bilingual and biliterate students, fails to support children with special needs, lacks reference to proven results using EL

education model, and fails to provide dedicated science facilities until FY 2021 despite focus on science.

Dr. King reviewed the committee's findings regarding the business plan. The EMSA business plan relies heavily on uncertain grants and loans and cost from U-46 to support the proposed charter school, increases taxpayer burden by proposing a site outside U-46 boundaries that requires millions in renovations, and fails to meet the transportation needs of low-income and at-risk students.

Mr. Lindholm stated that, based upon review, the Charter School Evaluation Committee of School District U-46 respectfully recommended to the U-46 Board of Education that the Elgin Charter School Initiative/Elgin Math and Science Academy application be denied. The Committee, however, is willing to continue working with the Elgin Charter School Initiative to explore alternative models to serve the students of U-46.

D. Board of Education Comments and Questions

Mrs. O'Neal Ellis asked if EMSA is double dipping when it comes to special education students. Dr. King responded that it is the committee's opinion that EMSA would be double dipping in regards to special education and transportation funding and reimbursement.

Mrs. O'Neal Ellis asked if U-46 curriculum is currently written to support special education students. Dr. Johnson responded that curriculum is written with input from teachers including teachers from both the dual language program and specialized student services program. This ensures the District establishes the appropriate standards, formative and summative assessments, appropriate rubrics, differentiation, modifications, and accommodations.

Mrs. O'Neal Ellis asked for more information on problems with EMSA's curriculum. Dr. Johnson responded that the District would want resources that are the same level of rigor with assessments that align with the District's programs; specifically English language learners would not have native language textbooks or classroom libraries.

Mrs. O'Neal Ellis asked how the payment would work; that is, if the District pays EMSA what it gets from the State for each student what would happen if the State does not pay. Would the District still have to pay, or could the District wait to pay EMSA once the State has paid the District. Dr. King responded that would be a legal question and there are other problems he sees in the contract regarding the timing of the payment.

Ms. Kerr stated that she has been looking at other district's charter school contracts and they have stipulations that if the State pro-rates their payments then they would be able to pro-rate their payments to the charter school. Ms. Kerr asked if that could be put in the EMSA contract. Dr. King replied that would need

to be built into the contract. Dr. King stated that as far as he can tell as of now the contract states that the District would have to make the payment regardless of payments from the State.

Mr. Holt asked if EMSA could not pay for the repairs to the proposed school site would those costs fall back on the District. Dr. King responded no, the costs would not fall back on the District. Mr. Holt asked who would be responsible if EMSA could not pay. Dr. King replied that that would be up to the agreements for repairs EMSA enters into. The District would not be a party to those agreements.

Ms. Kerr asked if EMSA fails could the District be sued as a third party to the \$4M loan. Chief Legal Officer Rodriquez responded that he would have to do some research on that and he would get back to the Board with an answer.

Ms. Noland asked about the input that special education and English language learners have in regards to curriculum. Dr. Johnson responded there is no special education curriculum. Students are in general education courses receiving supports for their Individual Education Plan (IEP). They receive the same education, curriculum, and resources that all other students have access to. The only students that might receive a specialized curriculum would be some students in the District's self-contained programs. In the Dual Language program, the only difference in curriculum is the language allocation. Ms. Noland asked how the committee knows that EMSA is not taking into account the same input the District is. Dr. Johnson replied that the committee spent many hours with EMSA and EL representatives discussing curriculum and specialized services. During those discussions, it was identified that EL curriculum is not designed to best meet the needs of special needs students. EMSA continually came back to the expectation that the District would provide professional development for their team on how to best meet the needs of these students.

Ms. Noland asked if the District's expectations are that EMSA would provide a Dual Language program. Dr. Johnson responded yes, if the District were to open a new school Dual Language would be the educational model. Dr. Johnson stated that when the committee asked EMSA about how they would provide services for English language learners they were told it was embedded in the classroom but the committee was never provided with any details or resources. Dr. Johnson and the committee found this to be very concerning for the District.

Mrs. O'Neal Ellis asked about EMSA's proposal regarding school finances and what an acceptable debt load would be. Dr. King replied that he would need to do some research to answer this question. Dr. King stated that U-46's debt load is around 7%.

Ms. Kerr asked if EMSA can provide an example of an EL school that is 20-30% English language learners. Dr. Seydel knows of Frank Elementary School in Kenosha, WI that is 18% English language Learners. Ms. Kelly stated that Mundo

Verde School in Washington DC is an EL school that has a dual language program. Dr. Seydel stated that EL uses the California framework for English language learners.

Ms. Kerr asked about an estimate for repairs to the Neil building and if \$130,000 is enough to cover those repairs. Mr. Scimeca, a member of the EMSA Design Team, replied that the building is relatively new and the repairs are more or less cosmetic and the estimate came from a very experienced contractor.

Ms. Kerr raised concerns that EMSA had not yet spoken to the Kane County Regional Office of Education (ROE). Ms. Kerr stated that there are standards that have to be met for schools and she would really encourage EMSA to contact them and walk through the facility with the ROE.

Ms. Kerr asked how EMSA would serve food to the students. Mr. Scimeca replied that for now the school will be catering food but eventually EMSA will be remodeling the dining hall building.

Ms. Kerr asked if EMSA ran any models using lower numbers such as lower enrollment or a lower amount of grant money. Mr. Adam Gray responded that they ran many different models and the model they shared with the District was a very early model using numbers the District suggested. Mr. Gray feels confident with the proposed enrollment numbers. He agrees that the State not paying the District is a concern and they have started discussions with another funder about a possible credit line as a contingency plan.

Ms. Kerr asked how EMSA can borrow money without any collateral. Mr. Gray replied that EMSA would be offering the lease of the building as collateral.

Mrs. O'Neal Ellis stated that, if EMSA failed, theoretically U-46 would not be on the hook financially for the loans or the lease but the U-46 Board would have to decide whether to save the school. Mrs. O'Neal Ellis asked what EMSA would propose the District do if EMSA were to default on the lease. Ms. Anne Levy Brown stated that she is confident that EMSA will not be in that position but the District will be able to oversee EMSA finances regularly.

Mrs. O'Neal Ellis asked if EMSA had any written loan commitments. Ms. Kelly replied that nothing has been finalized.

Ms. Kerr stated she would like to have a better idea of how transportation will work especially for students with IEP's that require transportation. Ms. Kelly responded that EMSA would collaborate with the District as it is technically the District's responsibility.

Ms. Kerr raised concerns about EMSA receiving the categorical for special education students and the District would be required to pay special education



teachers and supply services as well. Ms. Kerr feels that this is double dipping on EMSA's part. Ms. Kelly responded that charter schools usually rely heavily on Districts for funding special education and this is an area that can be worked out and will need to be spelled out in detail in the contract.

Ms. Kerr asked what exactly will the Board be voting on at the April 10, 2017, meeting. Mr. Sanders responded that this is a proposed contract for a charter school. If the Board approves the contract as submitted, then that is exactly what will be put into place. The Board does have the option to approve the charter school pending negotiations of the contract. Administration and EMSA would need direction from the Board as to what changes they would like to see made to the contract.

Mrs. Ward asked how often student performance will be reported back to the District and what measures will be used. Ms. Kelly replied that is something that will be built into the contract and it can be as often as the District would like. Dr. Seydel replied that each year every EL school goes through an implementation review which includes a full review of student achievement data, measures of student character, as well as high-quality work. These reports are published public documents and EL would expect EMSA to report this information to the District yearly. Ms. Kelly also responded that EMSA would set up a dashboard with attendance goals, financials, and other things the District thinks are important.

Mrs. Ward asked if teachers would have the freedom to branch outside of curriculum if they feel the curriculum is not working for students. Ms. Kelly replied yes, charter school teachers have a lot of room to make changes to the curriculum if it is not working for a student.

Mrs. O'Neal Ellis stated that she has concerns with EMSA's reliance on Paul Tough's Grit approach. Mrs. O'Neal Ellis feels this approach was not intended to be used for low-income at-risk students and she does not agree with the grit philosophy in that context. Dr. Seydel replied that each school can determine their own approach and there are many different schools using different approaches not just Paul Tough's Grit approach.

E. Comments from the Public

A motion was made by Mr. Holt, second by Mrs. Ward to suspend the twenty person comments procedure and allow the public speakers three minutes per speaker instead of two minutes.

Mrs. O'Neal Ellis stated that she could not support this motion. Mrs. O'Neal Ellis feels as though if the rules are suspended for this group other groups that come forward will expect the rules to be suspended for them. Mrs. O'Neal Ellis indicated she would be voting no.

Ms. Noland agreed with Mrs. O'Neal Ellis' statement and indicated that she would also be voting no.

Ms. Kerr feels that this is an important issue. Ms. Kerr indicated that she would be voting yes.

Mrs. Smith stated that the Board put this policy in place. She agrees this is a very important issue but most issues are very important. Mrs. Smith indicated that she would be voting no

Mr. Costello heard the motion and indicated that he would be voting yes.

Upon roll call, yes votes: Mr. Costello, Mr. Holt, Mrs. Kerr, Mrs. Ward. No votes: Mrs. O'Neal Ellis, Ms. Noland, and Mrs. Smith. The motion carried by a vote of 4-3.

Lisa Hopp of Elgin spoke about her concerns with the proposed charter school. Ms. Hopp feels as though there are Board members that have decided to vote yes for any charter school long before this proposal came forward. Ms. Hopp believes it is contradictory for Board members that argued against restructuring the District's debt and worked to ensure the District did not have the opportunity to secure a federally subsidized interest-free bond, would vote yes to pouring millions of dollars into a property that does not belong to the District. Ms. Hopp feels that a yes vote on the EMSA proposal would be hypocritical.

Lennie Jarrett of Lake Villa spoke in support of the charter school proposal speaking of his experience as a child in private and public schools. Mr. Jarrett feels as though children need more choices.

Dan Carlson of South Elgin urged the Board to vote no on the Elgin Math and Science Charter school proposal. Mr. Carlson feels as though the proposed curriculum is either identical to U-46 curriculum or fails to meet standards. Mr. Carlson asked why the District would put money into a charter school that is not going to improve student learning outcomes. Mr. Carlson stated that the proposal relies heavily on grants which are unreliable. Instead, the charter school will rely on categorical grants from the State when the State is currently behind \$26 million. Mr. Carlson stated that EMSA also relies heavily on loans to fund the cost of repairs to the building. He asked why the U-46 taxpayers should be asked to pay interest on loans to rehab a building the District does not own.

Mary Shesgreen of Elgin asked the Board to vote no on the charter proposal. Ms. Shesgreen believes that charter schools, in general, take money away from the public sector and put it into private hands. She believes the biggest problem in U-46 is poverty. The District needs more money for all its students, not just some. Ms. Shesgreen stated that the proposal was very appealing and she is sure that the people that put it together could create a wonderful learning environment but it

would serve just a few at the expense of many. Ms. Shesgreen feels that charter schools increase economic inequality and for that reason, she urges the Board to vote no.

Earl Silbar of Elgin spoke about his concerns with the charter school proposal. Mr. Silbar urged the Board to vote no. Mr. Silbar pays his taxes and does not mind paying for a quality public education. He does not want to see his money spent on programs that do not help special education students or students that do not speak English. Mr. Silbar feels that there are hidden costs especially regarding the renovation of the building.

Melanie Gibb of Elgin and Professor of Art and Design at Judson University spoke in support of the charter school proposal. She believes that the fear of being wrong has stifled students to the point of complacency. Ms. Gibb believes the vision of EMSA will one day produce students that do not fear failure, seek challenges, and take ownership of their education. Ms. Gibb asked the Board to embrace this opportunity for the students.

Rick Newton of Wayne spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Mr. Newton feels as though the U-46 taxpayers are dissatisfied and impatient with the high and disproportionate property taxes they are paying while yielding the same below average results. Mr. Newton believes that a change is needed for this District to achieve the academic improvements required to extricate itself from its substandard academic results. Mr. Newton stated that the District needs to introduce alternative, competitive options such as the proposal from EMSA.

Carole Seid of Elgin spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Ms. Seid dreams of a charter school that would be a model of ethnic and socio-diversity. Ms. Seid believes in the power of nature in working with children. Ms. Seid feels that Elgin is ready for this and the time is right to make Elgin an even better city.

Viviane Bailey of Elgin spoke about her concerns with the proposed charter school. Ms. Bailey spoke about her experiences volunteering in the District at Coleman Elementary School. Ms. Bailey stated that the Charter School Commission described Polaris Charter Academy in Chicago as an example of strong academic achievement using the EL education model and yet Coleman Elementary School and McKinley Elementary School exceeded the Polaris Charter Academy results on the PARCC exam in the 2015/2016 school year. The charter initiative is concerning because it does not provide support for English language learners beyond the basics. Ms. Bailey recommended to the Board that this incomplete proposal be denied.

Dennis Vertis of Elgin spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Mr. Vertis spoke about his experiences in elementary school. Mr. Vertis would have loved to have the opportunity to have an Expeditionary Learning education. Mr. Vertis feels that if this charter school does not pass, he and his family will be forced to

leave Elgin. Mr. Vertis stated that the perception of U-46 is negative and this charter school will improve that perception.

Betty Couture of Elgin spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Ms. Couture spoke about her experiences with her children in District U-46 and in private schools. Ms. Couture urged the Board to support this proposal to allow children in the District to have options.

Kari Goodmay of Elgin spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Ms. Goodmay stated that one of the reasons she supports this proposal is that children learn in many different ways. She stated that U-46 offers many amazing programs that cater to specific learning needs but not one that specifically grows the experiential mind. Ms. Goodmay supports the charter school proposal and the success rate of this curriculum in mixed cultural and troubled schools. Lastly, Ms. Goodmay supports this proposal. The District does not have a good reputation and this charter school will help.

Miranda Green of Elgin spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Ms. Green spoke about her experiences attending the Chicago Junior School at the location of the proposed charter school. Ms. Green feels that the campus provided a living lab and the experiences she gained by having the opportunity to attend classes there fundamentally benefitted her education. Ms. Green is forever grateful to have had the opportunity to learn in this setting. She hopes others in the community can have this experience. Ms. Green hopes the Board will consider giving the students of U-46 the opportunity to attend EMSA. Ms. Green stated that she does not generally support charter schools because she feels that sometimes they can exasperate inequalities in communities but she feels that this particular proposal has tried to accommodate some of those issues and for that reason, she encourages the Board to vote yes.

Cynthia Shebaby of Elgin spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Ms. Shebaby spoke about her experiences in public and private schools. Ms. Shebaby is currently home schooling her daughter. Ms. Shebaby is using a similar curriculum as EMSA and her daughter is doing very well. Ms. Shebaby stated that Elgin is turning around and the charter school could help turn around the U-46 reputation.

Adriana Barriga of Elgin spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Ms. Barriga spoke about her experiences in public and private schools. Ms. Barriga is a teacher in the District in a Dual Language kindergarten classroom. Ms. Barriga believes that the District offers amazing programs and this charter school will just be another unique opportunity for kids in the District. Ms. Barriga believes that EMSA would be open to becoming a dual language school once they get established. Ms. Barriga feels that the expeditionary curriculum, the smaller class sizes, and the longer school day would be beneficial for students.

Petricia Shales of St. Charles spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Ms. Shales stated that EMSA is not disregarding special education students. She stated that EMSA is planning on hiring one full time and one-half time special education teacher to service the students and until they assess the student body and what their needs will be. Ms. Shales also believes that EMSA would use a traditional bilingual method for English language learners which has worked for the District and for other districts for thousands of students. Ms. Shales asked the Board to imagine EMSA's potential. She believes that students will be more engaged with the expeditionary, hands-on, problem-solving based learning model. Ms. Shales believes that students will perform better because they are more engaged. Ms. Shales believes that EMSA can close the achievement gap between the various groups it will serve. Ms. Shales feels that EMSA will become a source of pride for the District.

Richard Wilson of Huntley spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Mr. Wilson worked at the former Chicago Junior School which is the proposed site of the charter school. Mr. Wilson feels that this campus is one of a kind and is an endangered ecosystem. Mr. Wilson feels that EMSA is a wonderful opportunity and a fit for this 100-year-old campus. Mr. Wilson believes that by having EMSA in this site the school will have the opportunity to protect this Elgin natural heritage landmark. He believes that the unique pairing of EMSA and this endangered native environment will create children as lifetime learners.

Doree Haight of Elgin spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Ms. Haight believes that EMSA's approach to learning engages children's natural passion for learning, develops a curiosity, knowledge, and skills to work towards and imagine a better world. Ms. Haight looks forward to being able to offer this as an additional option for the families of U-46 in preparing their kids for a life of success. Ms. Haight stated that when visiting other charter schools, you can see the kinds of transformations being made. Ms. Haight asked the Board not to get caught up in battles about whether charter schools are better or worse than public schools but instead focus on coming together to lead the way for the sake of the students.

Blair Mart of Elgin read a letter from Adam Zeigler in support of the charter school proposal. Mr. Zeigler stated in his letter that he attended the Chicago Junior School for three years in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. He has very fond memories of the school. Mr. Zeigler feels very strongly about the positive impact of introducing kids to nature and the outdoors. EMSA embraces this approach making it part of their mission. Mr. Zeigler supports this project and urged the Board to approve the proposal.

Linda Kuehl of Elgin spoke about her concerns with the proposed charter school. Ms. Kuehl feels that community control will be missing from this charter school. Ms. Kuehl stated that it is very difficult to close a charter school once it is open even if it is not fulfilling its stated purpose. Ms. Kuehl stated that the charter

school in Gurnee District 50 is having a negative impact on the district, however, District 50 has had little success in closing the charter school. Additionally, charter schools have been known to have difficulty accommodating special needs students. Ms. Kuehl stated that a UCLA study showed that charter schools expelled students with disabilities at a 12% higher rate than public schools. She believes this charter will need to rely on the District to provide services for special needs students which will cause a financial burden on the District. Ms. Kuehl believes that charter schools result in schools for the haves and poorly funded public schools for the have nots.

Lois Wilhelm of Elgin spoke about her concerns with the proposed charter school. Ms. Wilhelm believes in public education and inclusion rather than exclusion. She feels that this proposal is creating a private school at public school expense. Ms. Wilhelm does agree that this piece of land is a unique environmental property and, should finances for the District improve, she suggested the property become a U-46 environmental center.

Becky Gillam of West Dundee was not able to attend the meeting. Ms. McGuire read her statement. Ms. Gillam stated that she supports EMSA's proposal. Ms. Gillam feels that the approval of this site will bring the area back to life. Ms. Gillam believes there is potential for the forest preserve to partner with EMSA to explore and learn from the forest preserve areas adjacent to the property. Ms. Gillam asked the Board to please approve the proposal.

Todd Martin of Elgin spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Mr. Martin feels that there is a need for a charter school in his neighborhood. His family lives in the Coleman Elementary attendance area and he is not satisfied with their testing scores. Mr. Martin is very much in favor of EMSA.

Ann Brown of Evanston read a statement from a resident of Bartlett, Larry Niburg that could not attend the meeting. Mr. Niburg wrote that he believes a primary factor in manufacturing positions moving overseas is a growing workforce trained in how to design, build, and operate the machines that produce end products. Mr. Niburg believes that the nation lags behind much of the world in the development of science, technology, engineering, and math. Therefore Mr. Niburg supports the founding of the Elgin Math and Science Academy.

Enoch Essendrop of Elgin spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Mr. Essendrop stated that he finds it ironic that some Board members are highlighting how unreliable state funding is while voting to approve a budget that increases state funding. Mr. Essendrop stated that this is a very volatile subject and many teachers unions are against the prospect of a charter school in the area but he knows that competition is positive and it decreases costs. Mr. Essendrop stated that parental involvement is extremely constructive for a child and school of choice ensures parental involvement. Mr. Essendrop feels that the parents of U-46 want choice and the children of U-46 deserve a chance.

Laura Sterba of Elgin spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Ms. Sterba supports EMSA for many reasons most of all because it provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to change the lives of students and their families. Ms. Sterba urged the Board to vote in favor of EMSA.

Allison Jack of River Forest spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Ms. Jack stated that starting a charter school is not for the faint of heart. Ms. Jack believes the EMSA team has what it takes to make this charter school work. Ms. Jack stated that the EMSA team has grown and evolved and listened to the community. Ms. Jack stated that the team includes two U-46 educators and strong business and operational leaders. Ms. Jack recently visited Polaris Charter School in Chicago, which is the only EL school in Illinois. Ms. Jack stated that Polaris Charter School has received the second highest performance rating in Chicago Public Schools based on NWEA growth and containment. Ms. Jack feels that the community of U-46 is lucky to potentially have one of these schools soon. Ms. Jack hopes the Board will consider this school for the families of the District.

Adrian Riley of Elgin spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Ms. Riley stated that choice is great and she believes that the EMSA Charter School will give parents choices from traditional public school settings.

Gary Swick of Elgin spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Mr. Swick got involved with this project because of the site and the people involved. Mr. Swick feels that this school is the kind of opportunity that can be a character changer for students. Mr. Swick encouraged the Board to accept this gift. Mr. Swick spoke about his experiences as an environmental science teacher. He and his students received several national level recognitions for projects they did which were based on Expeditionary Learning model. Mr. Swick believes those projects gave many underachieving students a drive and they are now leaders of their community. Mr. Swick believes that this charter school will provide those experiences for students. Mr. Swick encouraged the Board to take a risk and give this school a chance.

Martin Nobs of Elgin spoke in support of the charter school proposal. Mr. Nobs stated that he strongly supports this school and he believes that it will provide a choice for people that love Elgin but are hesitant to live in Elgin because they do not have enough school choices. Mr. Nobs has many colleagues that would love to live in Elgin but do not because there is not an alternative to the U-46 schools. Mr. Nobs asked the Board to please give this school a chance.

Ebony Brown of Elgin was not able to remain at the meeting and asked Mr. Essendrop to read her statement. Ms. Brown wrote that she supports the EMSA proposal because she is seeking an option for her children that support their learning as individuals. Ms. Brown feels that as a homeschool parent she needs a place in the District that hones in on her children's learning style.

F. Close of Hearing

Mrs. Smith, on behalf of the Board of Education, thanked all the presenters and members of the public for their comments. The Board will carefully review all documentation presented as well as all the public comments to assist in determining as to whether the Board of Education will grant or deny the Elgin Math and Science Academy Charter school proposal. Pursuant to law the Board of Education has thirty days to make such determinations.

4. Adjournment

Motion by Mrs. O'Neal Ellis, second by Mrs. Ward, to adjourn the Special Board Meeting of March 13, 2017, at 10:06 p.m. Upon roll call, yes votes: Mr. Costello, Mrs. O'Neal Ellis, Mr. Holt, Ms. Kerr, Ms. Noland, Mrs. Ward, and Mrs. Smith. No votes: 0. The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

Approved this 24<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2017.



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President



\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary