

Charter School's Approval To Force Budget Cuts

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Board must find \$1.4M to cover tuition

By **CHRISTINA KAUFFMAN**
The York Dispatch

A new York City charter school will open this fall for seventh- and eighth-graders.

The York City School Board unenthusiastically voted 6-3 last night during a special meeting to approve a five-year charter for the New Hope Academy Charter School, to be opened at 459 W. King St.

The city school board members must now find a way to pay about \$1.4 million

in tuition for city students who want to attend the school.

The city school district's 2007-2008 budget looked as if it would be the first budget in several years that didn't call for cutting programs and jobs.

But the school board must find places to cut \$1.4 million because that budget didn't account for the tuition payments.

The approved charter is good news for Isiah Anderson, the former William Penn Senior High School basketball coach who proposed the school, and stu-

dents who want to attend the school.

But the new school will likely make conditions worse for the students who are left behind in York City's traditional public schools, school board members said.

"These (charter) schools become a financial drain and burden on the existing system, further deteriorating the ability of established districts to provide ... quality education," said school board president Jeffrey Kirkland.

'Gonna get cut': School board vice president Tom Foust said paying the tuition will cause the school district to

make cuts that will affect its students.

"Somebody's gonna get cut," he said. "Somebody's going to lose their job, and programs are gonna be cut."

Foust said the school board will have to look at the budget to see what areas could be cut. Foust voted to approve the charter, saying that he didn't have a choice because Anderson's application met the criteria set forth in the state's Charter School Law.

Also voting in favor of the school were board members Barbara Krier, Michael

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Anderson ...
will run the New Hope Academy Charter School

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■ SCHOOL

Charter approved

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Breeland, Renee Nelson, John Moroney and Jeanette Torres.

Though Breeland voted to allow the school to open, he said he is "highly skeptical" that the school can live up to the promises made in Anderson's application.

"And I still consider it pilfering from an already economically challenged school district," he said.

Kirkland and board members Barry Freeland and Beverly Atwater voted against approving the charter.

Kirkland issued a strongly worded statement blaming the state for failing students. Because it provides for charter schools but doesn't provide the city school district enough funding to overcome its problems, he said, stu-

dents are lured to the "pseudo-private education system that is doing no more than making money off of their problems."

After the meeting, Anderson said Kirkland was right about the concerns that he expressed.

"Why should kids suffer until they (the state) figures it out?" he said.

Anderson, whose charter application shows an estimated profit of \$250,000 for the school its first year, said he will work with state legislators to make the funding stream more equitable.

The cost: Anderson estimated that about 160 city students would attend the school during its first year of operation. That number increases to about 500 over three years, after the school expands to include students through grade 12.

Under charter school law, the home school district must pay tuition to charter schools. The tuition rate is set by the district's per-pupil

cost, or the amount of money the school district would have spent to educate the child per year.

In York City, the per-pupil cost per year is \$6,332 for regular students and \$14,158 for special-education students. Anderson estimated that 48 special-education students would attend the school in its first year.

York City resident Judi Bryant was one of several parents who turned out last night to speak in favor of Anderson's proposal.

Her son previously attended traditional city schools, but now attends Anderson's alternative school, Challenge Academy. For the first time, he is having all of his emotional and academic needs met, she said.

Students like her son need to be in a smaller, more specialized environment, she said.

Smaller classes etc.: Anderson would run the school out of the 70,000-square-foot building that has previously

served as York Catholic High School and St. Rose of Lima School, where Anderson currently runs the Challenge Academy.

In his charter application, Anderson said his charter school would be different from the city's other public schools because it would use personalized, project-based learning environments and technology.

Class sizes would be smaller than at other schools, with about 20 students per instructor, and the school day would be about 45 minutes longer, Anderson said. The school would be almost paper-free, using computers and electronic media for learning.

New Hope will be the only charter school in the city that is available to all of York City's seventh- and eighth-grade students.

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