

**BEFORE THE TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**2014 CHARTER SCHOOL APPEAL**

**Exalt Academy of Springfield**

**FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION**

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-13-108, sponsors proposing to open new charter schools may appeal the denial of their amended applications by a local board of education to the State Board of Education (State Board).

On Wednesday, September 24, 2014, a hearing was held at the Robertson County Board of Education in Springfield, Tennessee to consider Exalt Academy of Springfield's appeal of the denial of its amended application by Robertson County Schools.

Based on the following procedural history and findings of fact, I believe that the decision to deny Exalt Academy of Springfield's (Exalt Academy) application was not "contrary to the best interests of the pupils, the school district, and the community." Therefore, I recommend that the Board affirm the decision of the Robertson County Board of Education.

**PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

1. On June 24, 2014, the Robertson County Board of Education unanimously denied Exalt Academy's initial application, following the unanimous recommendation of the Robertson County Schools charter school application review committee.
2. Exalt Academy amended and resubmitted its application on July 25, 2014.
3. On August 25, 2014, the Robertson County Schools charter school application review committee recommended denial of Exalt Academy's amended application. Subsequently, the Robertson County Board of Education voted to deny the amended application of Exalt Academy.
4. Exalt Academy then appealed the denial in writing to the State Board, received September 4, 2014.
5. On September 29, 2014, the State Board Charter Application Review Committee interviewed the sponsor, rated its application, and provided the attached recommendation report. [See Exhibit 1]

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. The Robertson County Schools charter school application review committee team evaluating the Exalt Academy application included the following individuals:
  - a. Linda Cash, Assistant Director of Schools, Robertson County Schools
  - b. Melanie Dickerson, Elementary Supervisor, Robertson County Schools
  - c. James R. Highsmith, Special Education Supervisor, Robertson County Schools
  - d. Jennifer Darden, Special Education Supervisor, Robertson County Schools
  - e. Chris Causey, Accountability Supervisor, Robertson County Schools
  - f. Donna Dorris, Student Services Supervisor, Robertson County Schools
  - g. Terri Simmons, Human Resource Supervisor, Robertson County Schools
  - h. James Marshall, Technology Supervisor, Robertson County Schools
  - i. William Locke, Secondary Supervisor, Robertson County Schools
  - j. Mark Gregory, CTE Supervisor, Robertson County Schools
  - k. Patsi Gregory, Food & Nutrition Supervisor, Robertson County Schools
  - l. Warren Corbin, Parent & Business Representative
  - m. Stephanie Mason, Federal Programs Supervisor, Robertson County Schools
  - n. Mike Davis, Director of Schools, received copies of the initial and amended application for independent review and comment.
  - o. Robertson County Schools contracted with David Huss to review the financial aspect of the application, but he did not score the application using the rubric.
2. On June 23, 2014, the Robertson County Schools charter school application review committee held a capacity interview with the sponsor and proposed governing board.
3. Using the Tennessee Department of Education’s (TDOE) scoring rubric as a guide for evaluating the application, the review committee scored the application into three main domains: Academic Plan Design and Capacity, Operations Plan and Capacity, and Financial Plan and Capacity.
4. On the initial application, Exalt Academy’s application was labeled according to the scoring criteria developed and promulgated by the TDOE. Exalt Academy’s initial application scored as follows:

Academic Plan Design and Capacity	<i>Partially Meets</i>
Operations Plan and Capacity	<i>Partially Meets</i>
Financial Plan and Capacity	<i>Does Not Meet</i>
5. After the Robertson County Board of Education voted to deny Exalt Academy’s initial application, Robertson County Schools sent Exalt Academy the overall reasons for denying the application.
6. Exalt Academy’s amended application scored as follows:

Academic Plan Design and Capacity	<i>Partially Meets</i>
Operations Plan and Capacity	<i>Partially Meets</i>
Financial Plan and Capacity	<i>Does Not Meet</i>

7. After review of the application, the committee unanimously recommended denying the amended application. Ultimately, the Board determined that the authorization of the charter would be contrary to the best interests of the students of Robertson County Schools. The committee had the following specific concerns, copied in its entirety from the review committee's report to the Robertson County Board of Education:
  - a. Academic Plan Focus and Capacity
    - i. The application includes a definition of categories of disability served under IDEA. However, evaluation procedures/criteria and participants needed for a thorough evaluation are not included for any of the 14 categories. Further, staff members listed as participating in the process for identifying students with learning disabilities are not present in the budget or staffing charts. (TAT Coordinator, TAT Secretary, Director of Learning Supports)
    - ii. Beyond a full time special education teacher, there are no details on the provisions made in the budget to hire needed personnel for identifying and serving students with disabilities. Minimally, provisions are needed for a speech language pathologist and a licensed school psychologist. For a full continuum, plans for retaining multiple service providers (e.g. vision specialist, interpreter, nurse, physical therapist, occupational therapist) along with a realistic budget are necessary.
    - iii. Hiring of an ELL teacher is not listed in the staffing charts. Direct service from an endorsed ELL teacher is required for any student qualifying under the ELDA/WIDA assessment.
    - iv. The response notes four local resources – Springfield Storytellers, Gorham MacBane Public Library, Willow Oak Center for Arts and Learning, and the Robertson County Historical Museum – for possible partnerships. However, there is no evidence that partnerships with local organizations have been formed. The description of the nature, purposes, terms, and scope of services remains vague. This information is necessary as at least two of these agencies have a fee associated with services.
    - v. The response restated the application is supported by letters of endorsement and signed petitions. A well thought out, long term plan for engaging community partners is not present. Letters of support consist of one form letter that does not outline the specific and unique contributions of each partner.
    - vi. The response expands the information on recruitment boundaries. Given the specifics, the district was able to determine that approximately 240 kindergarten through second grade students reside in this area. Roughly 75% of the students in this area would have to enroll in the charter school for it to reach its student capacity. We believe that with a new building

and a new school structure to serve the Springfield area, the likelihood of only 25% of students choosing to enroll with Robertson County schools is slim.

b. Operations Plan and Capacity

- i. The response provides a starting day for training and a first day of school (August 17, 2015). No additional information regarding a new timeline or the individual who will lead the start-up plan is provided.
- ii. In the response, additional information is noted regarding the professional development topics to be provided. With the identification of topics, it should be mentioned that no training is listed for implementation of IEPs and communication with ELL families.
- iii. Presenters and providers are not identified, making it impossible to determine if the proposed professional development budget is appropriate.
- iv. The response remains vague on transition from founding board to governing board. A clear delineation of duties and responsibilities is not outlined. Additionally, the response contradicts original indications that the local steering committee will transfer to the governing board stating those who wish to transition will be vetted. Board size is not determined and a list of committed/proposed members is not included.
- v. The response outlines the rationale and process for selecting Exalt. However, no written agreement between Exalt Education and the Springfield Charter School Steering Committee exists, leaving no delineation of responsibilities and no identified board.
- vi. The response indicates that at this early stage of development, Exalt Academy of Springfield cannot name vendors for a supply chain.
- vii. No changes were made in the original salary and benefit package presented leaving teacher salaries below Robertson County's first year/Bachelor degree salary and school leader salaries are substantially below the district's pay scale.

c. Financial Plan and Capacity

- i. Per pupil amounts were adjusted to reflect more accurate funding; however, a complete and realistic start-up plan is not presented, and the five year operating budget is not balanced.
- ii. The response presents a budget that is heavily reliant on philanthropic sources that are not identified/secured.
- iii. The contingency plan is limited to addressing issues on a case by case basis and fundraising. Expenses exceed revenue beginning in Year 1. These expenses will require the use of a fund balance that is contingent on grant money and philanthropic funds – again, both from unidentified sources.

iv. A more thorough explanation of staffing plans, contractual services, revenue sources and facility options was not provided in the response. With limited information, it is impossible to determine if the budget is reasonable. Further, inconsistencies exist with the staffing needs presented in narratives and staff positions funded in the budget.

d. Other Areas – Facility

i. A facility is not identified in the response and no additional information is provided about the four potential options. Without a specific location, it is impossible to evaluate the suitability and safety of the site. It is also impossible to determine if an accurate estimate of renovation/leasing costs has been presented.

ii. Although no additional information is presented regarding location, estimated costs used in the budget did change (costs below are per sq. ft.)

<u>Application</u>	<u>Resubmission</u>
Lease Rate \$8	Lease Rate \$5
Custodial \$3	Custodial \$2
Utilities \$2	Utilities \$2

Changes would indicate a \$52,000 decrease in one year lease expenses.

e. Other Deficit Areas

i. Lack of attention to detail

ii. Lack of consistency and specificity throughout the plan

iii. A complete, solid plan for Exalt Academy of Springfield was not presented. Some documents were presented in draft form or still contained the Little Rock Prep heading.

8. At the public hearing on September 24, 2014, Robertson County Director of Schools, Mike Davis, read a letter into the record from Chuck Cagle, attorney for the Robertson County Board of Education, stating the attorneys representing Robertson County Schools in the pending desegregation resolution alerted him to the fact that any charter school that proposes to open in Robertson County must meet the terms of the desegregation agreement. According to Mr. Cagle, this means that the charter school must enroll a student body that reflects the demographics of the district as a whole. Additionally, the Department of Justice would retain jurisdiction to review demographic enrollment data during the life of the agreement and would possess the power to disapprove or close any school, including a charter school, which does not meet the criteria set forth in the agreement.

9. The State Board Charter Application Review Committee evaluating the Exalt Academy application included the following individuals:

a. Harry Allen, Senior Vice President, Senior Commercial Relationship Manager, Avenue Bank

b. Rich Haglund, General Counsel and COO, Achievement School District

- c. Dr. Ally Hauptman, Assistant Professor, Lipscomb University
  - d. Dr. Kimberly King-Jupiter, Dean of the College of Education, Tennessee State University
  - e. David Mansouri, Executive Vice President, SCORE
  - f. Dr. Alice Patterson, Director of the Doctor of Education Program, Trevecca University
  - g. Hillary Sims, School Director, STEM Preparatory Academy
  - h. Tess Stovall, Coordinator of Charter School Accountability and Policy, State Board of Education
10. At the time of appeal to the State Board, Exalt Academy did not submit additional amendments as allowed under T.C.A. §49-13-108(a)(4)(C).
11. The State Board Charter Application Review Committee\* scored Exalt Academy’s amended application as follows:
- a. Academic Plan Design and Capacity *Partially Meets*
  - b. Operations Plan and Capacity *Partially Meets*
  - c. Financial Plan and Capacity *Partially Meets*
  - d. Additional Attachments: Facilities, Transportation Plan, Food Service, Insurance, Waivers, etc. *Partially Meets*
- \*A copy of the State Board Charter Application Review Committee’s recommendation and committee composition is attached.*

### CONCLUSION

State law requires the State Board of Education to review the decision of the local board of education and determine whether the denial of the charter school was in the “best interests of the students, school district, and the community.”<sup>1</sup> The State Board is also empowered with the authority to become the authorizer for applicants denied by an LEA that contains at least one (1) priority school on the current or last preceding priority school list.<sup>2</sup> Approval of a public charter school must be “in the form of a written agreement signed by the sponsor and the chartering authority, which shall be binding upon the governing body of the public charter school.”<sup>3</sup> This means that when the authorizer votes to approve a charter school, it must be ready to sign that binding document at the same time, just as it would any other contract it approves.<sup>4</sup> Because of the important nature of such a contract, the charter sponsor must take care to include details with enough specificity that an authorizer can measure, with confidence, the school’s likelihood of success upon approval.

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<sup>1</sup> T.C.A. § 49-13-108(a)(3).

<sup>2</sup> T.C.A. § 49-13-108(a)(4).

<sup>3</sup> T.C.A. § 49-13-110(a).

<sup>4</sup> The Tennessee Attorney General recently confirmed that this is what the statutory language means. See Op. No. 10-45, available at <http://www.tn.gov/attorneygeneral/op/2010/op/op10-45.pdf> (last viewed Sept. 25, 2013).

Public Chapter 850 (2014) required the State Board of Education to adopt national standards of authorizing. One such standard is to maintain high standards for approving charter applications. To that end, the State Board employed a team of qualified individuals to independently score the application using the Tennessee Department of Education's scoring rubric. The team also conducted capacity interviews of the sponsor to determine whether the school and its leadership would be likely to succeed upon opening. The application review and interview process were rigorous. I would like to thank the review committee for lending their expertise in helping us meet the challenge of becoming a quality authorizer. To that end, I recommend that you adopt the findings of the review committee.

For these reasons, I do not believe that the decision to deny Exalt Academy of Springfield's application was contrary to the best interests of the students, the school district, and the community. Therefore, I recommend that the State Board of Education affirm the decision of the Robertson County Board of Education.



Dr. Gary L. Nixon, Executive Director  
State Board of Education

10-13-14

Date

## Exhibit 1

### Exalt Academy of Springfield

#### Charter Application Review Committee - Summary Report and Scoring

The State Board of Education's Charter Application Review Committee is made up of experts in the fields of curriculum, instruction, special populations, operations, finance, and charter schools. Members of the 2014 Charter Application Review Committee are:

1. Harry Allen, Senior Vice President, Senior Commercial Relationship Manager, Avenue Bank
2. Rich Haglund, General Counsel and COO, Achievement School District
3. Dr. Ally Hauptman, Assistant Professor, Lipscomb University
4. Dr. Kimberly King-Jupiter, Dean of the College of Education, Tennessee State University
5. David Mansouri, Executive Vice President, SCORE
6. Dr. Alice Patterson, Director of the Doctor of Education Program, Trevecca University
7. Hillary Sims, School Director, STEM Preparatory Academy
8. Tess Stovall, Coordinator of Charter School Accountability and Policy, State Board of Education

The committee completed an initial review and scoring of the application based on the scoring rubric developed and promulgated by the Tennessee Department of Education and, as a committee, discussed strengths, weaknesses, and concerns of the application prior to the capacity interview with the applicant. The committee drafted questions based on these concerns and weaknesses to be addressed with the sponsor at the capacity interview. At the conclusion of the capacity interview, the committee submitted revised scoring rubrics and developed a consensus report on the overall ratings of the application.

The evaluators used the following criteria and guidance from the TDOE's scoring rubric<sup>1</sup> to rate applications:

Rating	Characteristics
Meets or Exceeds the Standard	The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It clearly aligns with mission and goals of the school. The response includes specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation.
Partially Meets Standard	The response meets the criteria in some aspects, but lacks sufficient detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.
Does Not Meet Standard	The response is significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; is unsuited to the mission and vision of the district or other raises significant concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out.

<sup>1</sup> Tennessee Department of Education, "Tennessee Charter School Application Evaluation – Ratings and Sample Scoring Criteria," September 2013, available at [http://www.state.tn.us/education/schools/charter\\_school\\_application.shtml](http://www.state.tn.us/education/schools/charter_school_application.shtml), pg. 1.



## Summary Analysis

The committee is recommending that the application from Exalt Academy of Springfield be denied because the application needs additional details and information in all of the sections in order to meet or exceed standards. The sponsor and steering committee demonstrated that they are a very engaged committee of individuals interested in starting a charter school in Springfield, Tennessee and the application sufficiently lays out the need for a school in their area of Robertson County. However, throughout the application and the capacity interview, there was no clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities between the steering committee of Exalt Academy of Springfield and Exalt Education. The committee did not find a demonstrated capacity within the proposed governing board to hold Exalt Education accountable from an academic, operational, and financial perspective as outlined in the scoring rubric. Additionally, the application failed to fully tailor the Exalt Education model to the needs, obligations, laws, and standards of both Robertson County and the State of Tennessee. The lack of substantive details in all of the sections led to the committee's overall recommendation of denial.

Based on the review of the written application and the capacity interview, the committee rated the Exalt Academy of Springfield's application as the following:

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|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| A. Academic Plan Design and Capacity | <i>Partially Meets</i> |
| B. Operations Plan and Capacity      | <i>Partially Meets</i> |
| C. Financial Plan and Capacity       | <i>Partially Meets</i> |
| D. Additional Attachments            | <i>Partially Meets</i> |

The committee has summarized the evidence used to determine these ratings based on the scoring rubric below.

### Academic Plan Design and Capacity – Partially Meets

The academic plan design and capacity section contains some areas that meet or exceed the standards outlined in the scoring rubric. The section contains extensive research and context on the Springfield community in which it proposes to locate and the explanation of the need for the school. The application has a thoughtful and extensive assessment plan based on nationally-normed assessments as well as plans for data-driven instruction. The school calendar and daily schedule meet all state requirements, match the academic plan, and provide students with additional learning time. However, the committee found deficiencies in the following areas:

- 1) Special Populations and At-Risk Students: The rubric states that the application should contain a "sound explanation of evidence from which the projection of anticipated special populations was derived."<sup>2</sup> The application contains a chart on page 13 with student demographic data from area elementary and middle schools as well as Robertson County, but the application does not contain the enrollment projections that Exalt Academy used to ensure they had the staffing and budgetary capacity to meet the needs of English Language Learners. The application projects approximately 15.3% of the student population to be students with disabilities, which would equal 46 students in Year 3

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pg. 3.

based on the enrollment projections from page 12. Currently, the school is only projected to have one special education teacher through Year 3 (pg. 53), and the committee did not find information to ensure that this individual would have sufficient capacity to handle the increasing caseload from Year 1 through Year 3.

Based on data presented on page 13 of the application, the elementary schools in the targeted area of enrollment have 25% or more of students as active English Language Learners. However, the application did not contain a “demonstrated understanding of—and capacity to fulfill—State and federal obligations” around serving English Language Learners and a “realistic plan for hiring licensed and highly qualified personnel.”<sup>3</sup> The application contains a co-teaching model, and the sponsor stated in the capacity interview that they will use an inclusive and push-in model for serving English Language Learners. However, the sponsor did not thoroughly explain exactly how students would receive the required services or the staffing needs required to adequately deliver these services (pp. 34-35). When asked about the hiring of highly qualified personnel to serve these students, the sponsor stated that they would utilize the strategies they use in other states to work with these students, specifically the hiring of ESOL-certified teachers as well as the hiring of bilingual teachers to communicate with students. However, this plan does not align with Tennessee-specific standards for serving English Language Learners in the areas of the required teacher certifications, the use of the specific state assessments, and a demonstrated understanding of state obligations around serving these students.

- 2) School Discipline: The scoring rubric states that the policy should provide “for appropriate and effective strategies” to promote a safe school climate and to meet the educational goals as well as an “appropriate plan to disseminate the plan to teachers, parents, and students.”<sup>4</sup> Although the discipline plan presented in the application is thorough and comprehensive, it is the discipline plan used at one of Exalt Education’s other schools, which is clear from the multiple references to Little Rock Preparatory Academy or LRPA in the discipline policy (pp. 118-131). It is not clearly articulated how this plan will be tailored to the specific needs of the students in Exalt Academy of Springfield or how the plan will be explained to teachers, parents and students, specifically English Language Learners.

#### Operations Plan and Capacity – Partially Meets

The Operations Plan contains some areas that meet or exceed the standards in the rubric. The application contains a professional development plan that aligned with the proposed curriculum in the application, and in the capacity interview, the sponsor expanded upon the professional development opportunities that will be offered. The steering committee was able to articulate the process and reasoning that led the group to selecting Exalt Education. However, the committee found deficiencies in the following areas of this section:

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.pg. 5.

- 1) School Management Contracts: The committee found deficiencies in the section of school management contracts as there is no clear delineation between the roles and responsibilities of Exalt Academy of Springfield and Exalt Education. The rubric states that the application should contain “a clear delineation of responsibilities between the board and the Education Service provider” and “methods of contract oversight and enforcement.”<sup>5</sup> Based on the responses from the capacity interview, Exalt Education will be paid 15% of the overall budget, but the sponsors specifically stated that no formal agreement existed between the two parties. The steering committee has hired an attorney to work out the details of an agreement pending approval of the charter application. Additionally, the application did not contain an articulated plan to evaluate or have significant oversight over Exalt Education, and the committee found that the proposed governing board did not demonstrate the capacity for academic, financial, and operational oversight of Exalt Education that is necessary for this arrangement.
  
- 2) Governing Board: The committee found that the application and sponsors did not have a thorough and thoughtful plan for a governing board nor did the steering committee demonstrate that they have the “capacity...to govern the school effectively.”<sup>6</sup> The steering committee is very passionate and committed to opening a charter school, but during the capacity interview, members of the proposed governing board of the school did not demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the academic, operational, or financial plan of the school. All of the questions about the day to day operations of the proposed school were answered by representatives from Exalt Education. Additionally, the application did not contain a clear plan for transition from the steering committee to a governing board. When asked about the plan in the capacity interview, the answers were unclear and vague as to the involvement of Exalt Education in the recruitment and screening of board members as well as the clear separation of the governing board of Exalt Academy of Springfield and Exalt Education.
  
- 3) Personnel/Human Capital: The committee did not find the application’s compensation plan likely to attract the teachers the school desires to implement their plan successfully, such as bilingual teachers and teachers with English Learner (EL) certification. The scoring rubric states that the application should contain “compensation packages, system, and strategies in place that are likely to attract and retain strong staff.”<sup>7</sup> According to the application, Exalt Academy of Springfield is proposing to pay their teaching staff all at the same level at \$30,000 a year (Attachment 5). This is approximately \$4,000 less than the starting salary of a first-year teacher in Robertson County,<sup>8</sup> but Exalt Academy of Springfield proposes to run a longer school year of 200 instructional days (pg. 25). When asked in the capacity interview about the recruitment plan for teachers, the sponsors

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pg. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pg. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, pg. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Tennessee Education Association, “Robertson County Salary Schedule, 2013-2014,” available at <http://www.teachers.org/robertson-county-salary-schedule>.

stated that they would heavily recruit from the Nashville area since it is only 30 minutes away, and they would look for mission and goal driven teachers in which the salary was not the biggest draw to the school. The committee did not find a compelling and realistic recruitment plan in place to bring in high quality teachers to work for a salary significantly less than Robertson County Schools or Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools,<sup>9</sup> a key area of recruitment.

The application proposes that the principal and director of finance be employees of Exalt Education, and their salaries are a part of the 15% of the budget paid to Exalt Education. The rubric states that the application should contain a “plan for supporting, developing, and annually evaluating school leadership.”<sup>10</sup> During the capacity interview, the sponsors stated that both Exalt Education and the governing board would be responsible for performance management of these two individuals. However, the committee did not find a compelling plan in place for managing this process between the two separate entities.

#### Financial Plan and Capacity – Partially Meets

The financial plan and capacity contains some sections that meet or exceed the standards outlined in the rubric. It contains a budget narrative that outlines expected revenues and expenses, and the application contains a plan to conduct annual audits. Additionally, the school plans to employ a Director of Finance to manage the day to day financial operations. However, the committee found deficiencies in the following areas of the section.

- 1) Lack of a “complete, realistic, and viable start-up and five year operating budgets.”<sup>11</sup> The application contains an extremely tight budget, and the school has an annual operating deficit in Years 1, 2, 4, and 5. The ending fund balance decreases annually starting in Year 1 through Year 5, and the ending fund balance in Year 5 is only \$6,484. Based on the average operating deficit over Years 1-5, the school is projected to have a negative ending fund balance starting in Year 6. Although the steering committee and sponsors have experience in fundraising, the budget counts on approximately \$300,000 in start-up funds from grants and fundraising in order to maintain the current fund balances outlined above. If the fundraising and grants do not meet the \$300,000 goal, the school will most likely see a negative ending fund balance prior to Year 6. When asked in the interview about the decreasing fund balance, representatives from Exalt Education stated that they know that it is a tight budget, but they have dealt with a lot of different tight budget situations so they will manage the funds closely.
- 2) Lack of a “sound contingency plan to meet financial needs if anticipated revenues are not received.”<sup>12</sup> The application does not contain a thorough contingency plan for unanticipated costs or revenues not received. The budget narrative in Attachment 5 states

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<sup>9</sup> Tennessee Education Association, “Davidson County Salary Schedule, 2013-2014,” available at <http://www.teateachers.org/davidson-county-salary-schedule>.

<sup>10</sup> “Tennessee Charter School Application Evaluation – Ratings and Sample Scoring Criteria,” pg. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, pg. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

that the proposed school will address the unexpected expenses on a case by case basis and will raise the necessary funding to address the expenses. The decreasing ending fund balance and annual operating deficits in four out of the five first years of the school's operation do not give the school much room in its budget for any additional expenses such as an unexpected high needs student. The committee did not find a contingency plan based on private fundraising to meet the standards outlined in the rubric.

- 3) Lack of "individual and collective qualifications for implementing the financial plan successfully."<sup>13</sup> Members of the proposed governing board did not demonstrate thorough knowledge of the financial plan. During the capacity interview, all budget questions were answered by representatives from Exalt Education. The governing board will be ultimately responsible for the implementation of the financial plan and ensuring the financial viability of the school. However, capacity for the financial management of the school by the governing board was not found by the committee.

Additional Attachments - Facilities, Transportation Plan, Food Service, Insurance, Waivers, etc.  
– Partially Meets

The application contains parts of this section that meet or exceed the standards outlined in the rubric. The application contains a plan for the facility, and based on the capacity interview, the sponsor stated that they have contingency plans in place regarding the facility and have begun to work with a commercial real estate agent in the area. The application contains waiver requests along with sufficient explanations around those requested waivers. The school currently does not plan to provide transportation. The committee did find deficiencies in two of the areas of this section:

- 1) Insurance: The application contains a letter from an insurance agency (pg. 137) that states Exalt Education has contacted the agency about gaining insurance for the school, but the letter does not outline a "plan to secure comprehensive and adequate insurance coverage, including worker's compensation, liability, property, indemnity, directors and officers, automobile, sexual abuse and any other required coverage."<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the committee cannot ascertain whether the Exalt Academy of Springfield has a plan to meet all of the required coverage outlined in the rubric.
- 2) Food Service: The application states that the proposed school will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Food Vendors and that food vendors will be expected to meet all required federal and state guidelines for nutrition (pg. 136). However, the application does not contain the RFP that the school proposes to use so the school has not demonstrated a "clear description of how the school will offer food service to all students."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, pg. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, pg. 13.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Summary of Recommendation

Since the Exalt Academy of Springfield's application did not receive "Meets or Exceeds" ratings in all sections, the Charter Application Review Committee is recommending the application be denied.