

# More details wanted on proposed charter school

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For months, YorkCounts officials have been working on getting an application ready to open a regional charter school based in York City.

The nonprofit quality-of-life coalition already received the support of the York Suburban school board, which gave its preliminary support to be one of the chartering members.

But members of the York City school board, the key to the charter cog, said they feel uninformed and unsure what YorkCounts plans to do, and wonder how York Suburban already has signed on.

YorkCounts wants to open an International Baccalaureate elementary school in York City, with the goal of offering seats to children around the county, but in particular to students from two chartering schools. The school would eventually expand to K-12.

The International Baccalaureate program emphasizes learning foreign languages, understanding other cultures and group problem solving.

York City board members said at a meeting last month they were surprised to learn York Suburban already had approved partnering with the still-developing charter school, considering York City hadn't yet seen any documents or a presentation on the charter school.

"Nobody knew who the other school was until it was in the newspaper," York City vice president Tom Foust said by phone this week.

**Attended meetings:** Foust has attended two meetings of the charter school development committee, and said York City has had the superintendent and assistant superintendent attend as well.

But the administrators have only some information on by-laws and the like, Foust said, and don't have the kind of information the board needs to make a decision about partnering with the school.

Partnering doesn't obligate the district to approve the charter, but it helps YorkCounts with fundraising and planning, said Dennis Baughman, a retired superintendent hired by YorkCounts to help direct the application process.

A charter school is funded by the chartering school district, and any district that sends students to the school, but is operated independently.

Baughman said York Suburban had the same amount of information York City has received, so he's unsure why York City would feel out of the loop, or why the board was surprised York Suburban came aboard.

**Surprise at reaction:** "From day one, we've said we want two districts at least," Baughman said.

York City has been involved the entire time, he said.

"They've had the same opportunities York Suburban has had to be in on it," Baughman said.

The charter application needs to be given to possible chartering districts by Nov. 15. Baughman said officials representing the charter school will then make a presentation to interested boards.

York City is critical to the charter school, Baughman said.

The school proposal is the result of the 2002 recommendation by urban policy expert David Rusk to establish a charter school to help improve York City's economic condition.

"It was directly addressing the needs of York City," Baughman said.

West York, Dallastown and Central York are among those that have shown interest in the school as well, he said.

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