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York County's Afternoon Paper

Central agrees to consider charter school application

ANDREW SHAW -- *The York Dispatch*

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YorkCounts got another vote of support for its proposed regional charter school, although not yet the one critical to the school's future.

The Central York School Board told YorkCounts officials on Monday they would consider the charter school application, which is due in November.

York Suburban already expressed similar support for the school, which would be a K-12 school with an International Baccalaureate program. The school's proposed name is the York Academy Regional Charter School, and it would be located in York City.

The International Baccalaureate program, a standardized program around the world, emphasizes learning foreign languages, understanding other cultures and group problem solving.

Central York gave its support after a presentation by YorkCounts, a nonprofit quality-of-life coalition hoping to open the charter school in York City to improve the community and education there.

Central York's support gives the York Academy more credibility, said Dennis Baughman, co-

chairman of the YorkCounts' committee overseeing the charter school.

YorkCounts originally figured it would want two chartering districts, York City and one other one, and now they've got Central and York Suburban expressing interest.

"We believe the more support we have for the charter application the better off we'll be," Baughman said.

York Suburban and Central York aren't obligated to approve the charter, only to consider the application.

"It's really an opportunity,

we think, to provide Central families another option when considering their educational opportunities," said Central York Superintendent Michael Snell, who added Central would benefit from the International Baccalaureate program's multicultural focus.

One more piece: The main cog still looms. YorkCounts is giving the same presentation to York City School Board at its Wednesday, Oct. 14, meeting.

York City doesn't have to express interest in seeing the charter application for YorkCounts to submit it to the school board, but it would give a strong indication of how the vote would play out.

York City has several charter schools already, the most recent, Helen Thackston Charter School,

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only getting approved after a failed first application and appeal attempt, and getting the votes on a second application.

Central York's support helps accomplish YorkCounts goal of getting a diverse student body, said Tom Foust, York City vice president.

"The more (districts) that agree to participate and be interested in this makes it a stronger charter," Foust said.

Any vote on the charter application still comes down to whether the York Academy abides by state charter school law, not just on support, Foust said.

A charter school is funded by the chartering school district, and any district that sends students to the school, but is operated independently. To get a charter, the applicant must prove, among other things, the school offers a unique program in an adequate facility.

No other district has requested a presentation at this point, Baughman said.

Baughman added there has not yet been a site selected for the school, which would start out with just a few elementary school grades and later expand to K-12.

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