



YorkCounts charter school proposal well-received

ANDREW SHAW *The York Dispatch*

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John Pavoncell video

If Monday night's hearings for YorkCounts' proposed charter school are any indication, approval of the application by York Suburban and Central York is well on its way.

YorkCounts, a nonprofit quality-of-life group, had the first two of its three hearings for its proposed K-12 York Academy Regional Charter School, to be based in York City.

A third hearing will be held before the York City school board at 6 p.m. Monday.

Charter schools are independently run but funded by the chartering districts. A district can deny a charter application for a variety of factors, such as lack of a unique program or adequate facilities; cost, however, is not allowed to be a factor.

The York Suburban school board had nary a question for YorkCounts' Sue Krebs after her presentation.

"We're confident we've delivered a solid, complete charter application," Krebs told the board.

Dennis Baughman, who has been leading the charter application with Krebs, said Central's hearing also went smoothly. Baughman answered some enrollment questions at the hearing, responding the school will have about 225 students at the start. About two-thirds of students are expected to come from York City.

Baughman was well-received by parents, and Central York School Board President Eric Wolfgang said he was happy the district could provide its students with additional options in education.

The program: The applications are for a regional charter school with an International Baccalaureate program.

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Subjects are taught in an interdisciplinary fashion, with an emphasis on students asking questions to drive instruction.

Multicultural awareness and learning a foreign language starting at kindergarten are other aspects of the International Baccalaureate program. IB can also be used for college credits.

"It takes it a step further," said parent Gerri Thoman, in her comments to York Suburban board members.

Krebs pointed out Lehigh Valley Academy Regional Charter School has a similar K-12 IB school set-up, one of only a dozen in the country. It has drawn students from all over the region, she said.

York Academy would eventually be K-12, but start with three classes each in K-2.

Location: The school would be located in downtown York City in the Smyser-Royer complex, part of the Northwest Triangle redevelopment. It was revealed at the York Suburban hearing that rent would be about \$18,000 a month, several thousand dollars higher than initial estimates.

Joel Sears, president of York County Taxpayers Council, said he had concerns about the rental agreement, as well as what he thought was a lack of detail in the application on how the school would function.

He said he firmly believes taxpayers will end up footing the bill for the charter school.

"There has got to be a tax increase," Sears said.

The school boards have 75 days to take a vote.

-- Staff correspondent Wendy Garman contributed to this story.

-- Reach Andrew Shaw at 505-5431, ashaw@yorkdispatch.com or twitter.com/ydblogwork.

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