



York City School Board approves one charter, denies another (video)

ANDREW SHAW - *The York Dispatch*

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Andrew Shaw video

The York City School Board Monday night unanimously approved the charter school application for the York Academy Regional Charter School, while voting down an application by HOPE for All charter school.

That makes a total of five charter schools in the city school district: Lincoln Elementary, Helen Thackston, New Hope Academy, Crispus Attucks YouthBuild and now York Academy.

That places the city schools third in the state behind Philadelphia and Pittsburgh school districts in terms of charter schools. About 25 percent of York City students, or about 1,400 students, attend a charter school. Charter schools are independently operated but are funded by the districts that approve the charters.

The York Academy will have an International Baccalaureate program, which emphasizes foreign language learning and global awareness.

The application was made by YorkCounts, a

nonprofit, quality-of-life group. Board member Tom Foust said the application was thorough and had "as strong of support as I've ever seen" by the community. YorkCounts officials want to convert the Smyser-Royer complex, part of the Northwest Triangle redevelopment on West North Street, into a school.

Initially, the school would have grades K-2, with plans to expand to all grades. The school is scheduled to open in the fall of 2011.

Central York and York Suburban school boards had already approved the application and will also be able to send students to the school.

Dennis Baughman, who helped spearhead the application for YorkCounts, said the group intends to work heavily with the city school board and those at Central and York Suburban to make it a community school.

Lost HOPE: The proposed HOPE for All charter school would have been a high school with an entrepreneurial emphasis. A student-run cafe and internships would be used to teach business skills, with students having less class time and more internship time as they progress through the program.

The proposed location was for 2010 Pennsylvania Ave., near the HACC-York campus. HOPE stands for Help, Opportunities, Practicality, and Empowerment.

A district can deny a charter application for a

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variety of factors, such as on a lack of a unique program or adequate facilities; cost, however, is not allowed to be a factor.

Board members who voted against the program agreed the group didn't appear to have enough community support, specific details on how the program would work, or examples of how it is different than what is already offered by city schools.

Board members Samuel Beard, Beverly Atwater and Gary Calhoun voted in favor of it.

HOPE for All officials declined to comment afterward. They will have the option to appeal the decision with the state.

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

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