

In The Matter Of:
Department of Education
In re: Odyssey Chrter School

Hearing
June 11, 2019

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STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

IN RE: ODYSSEY CHARTER :
SCHOOL :

Hearing taken pursuant to
notice at the State of Delaware, Department
of Education, Townsend Building, Cabinet
Room, Second Floor, Dover, Delaware,
beginning at 5:00 p.m., on Tuesday, June 11,
2019, before Gloria M. D'Amore, Registered
Professional Reporter and Notary Public.

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APPEARANCES:

On behalf of the
Department of Education:
LEROY TRAVERS

On behalf of the Delaware State
Board of Education:
VINCENT LOFINK

On behalf of the State of Delaware
Delaware Department of Justice:
JENNIFER L. SINGH, ESQUIRE

- - - - -

1 MR. TRAVERS: Good evening. I
2 declare this public hearing to be open.

3 My name is Leroy Travers. I am
4 the Lead Education Associate, and I have been
5 appointed by the Secretary of Education to
6 conduct this public hearing.

7 At this time, I ask that the
8 other people up here with me introduce
9 themselves for the record.

10 MR. LOFINK: Vincent Lofink.
11 State Board of Education.

12 MS. SINGH: Jennifer Singh,
13 Deputy Attorney General assigned to represent
14 the Department of Education.

15 MR. TRAVERS: The charter of
16 Odyssey Charter School was placed on formal
17 review by the Department of Education.

18 As required by law, the matter
19 was referred to the Charter School
20 Accountability Committee for investigation
21 and report.

22 This joint public hearing is
23 being held by the Department of Education and
24 the State Board of Education to assist in the



1 decision of whether the criteria set forth
2 for remedial action in the Delaware Code has
3 been satisfied.

4 This hearing provides the CSAC,
5 the Secretary of Education and the State
6 Board an opportunity to receive public
7 comments about this formal review.

8 I would like the record to
9 reflect that the notice of the time, date and
10 place of today's public hearing was posted at
11 the Charter School Accountability Committee's
12 official place of business, on the Department
13 of Education's official website, and on the
14 State Board Public Meeting Calendar on the
15 State's official website on May 17, 2019.

16 Further, the school was
17 personally notified of the time, date and
18 place of today's public hearing on May 16,
19 2019.

20 A court reporter is present so
21 that a record of this hearing can be made.
22 It will be necessary for each speaker to
23 clearly identify him or herself before
24 beginning to speak so that the court reporter



1 will be able to note who you are.

2 If you are reading a prepared
3 statement, we ask that you provide that to
4 the court reporter so that she can make it
5 part of her public record.

6 The record of this hearing will
7 be provided to the Secretary of Education,
8 the Charter School Accountability Committee
9 and the Members of the State Board of
10 Education, together with any written or
11 electronic comments received during the
12 course of the formal review process.

13 To date, comments received on
14 this formal review are listed on the Charter
15 School Office's official website.

16 We will proceed in the
17 following manner.

18 First, we will hear from any
19 representatives of the Charter School who
20 wish to comment on the formal review process.

21 Then we will take comments from
22 anyone else who desires to speak.

23 There are sign-up sheets at the
24 back of the room on the table. If you desire



1 to speak and have not signed up, please do so
2 now. Those that have not signed up will not
3 be permitted to speak and instead will be
4 asked to submit written comment.

5 We will now pause for a moment
6 to ensure that anyone that wishes to sign up
7 can do that.

8 We do reserve the right to
9 limit comment if it is purely repetitive or
10 cumulative. So we do reserve the right to
11 limit time.

12 This is a time to collect
13 public comment. Questions of the Department
14 of Education or the State Board of Education
15 are not permitted and will not be
16 acknowledged.

17 At this point, we will accept
18 comments from any representatives of the
19 school.

20 MR. WOLCOTT: Josiah Wolcott.
21 I'm here for Odyssey Charter School.

22 I just want to thank everybody
23 for coming out on a beautiful night -- the
24 last day of school. So I thank everybody for



1 taking time out of your busy schedules to
2 come down here and speak. It is good to see
3 a lot of people here.

4 And thank you, again, for
5 coming out.

6 MR. TRAVERS: Any other
7 representatives from the school that would
8 like to speak?

9 At this point, we will accept
10 comments from those that have signed up to
11 speak. Please remember to identify yourself
12 before you begin your comments.

13 First we have Michael Roussos.

14 MR. ROUSSOS: Michael Roussos.
15 R-O-U-S-S-O-S.

16 Well, I'm here to speak as a
17 parent in support of AHEPA and want the DOE
18 to accept the proposal in leadership changes
19 proposed by the Board.

20 So this country is truly the
21 land of opportunity. And many souls before
22 us gave their blood, sweat and tears and even
23 their lives to make it so.

24 I am going to tell a story



1 about a Delawarean that I spoke to yesterday
2 who is in his mid-'70s and is still running
3 his own business. This gentleman told me a
4 story of how his ancestors came to Delaware
5 in the mid-1600's as indentured servants.
6 They worked in Lower Delaware for seven
7 years, earned their freedom and became
8 industrious farmers. They expanded their
9 holdings into land wealth as they expanded
10 their family. Their family interests
11 divided, and one side moved into the State's
12 famous poultry business. The other side
13 continued to grow crops.

14 In the early 1900's, the
15 farming side had two years of bad crops and
16 lost the farm in foreclosure. The
17 descendants of the foreclosed farm have since
18 developed their own initiatives and are all
19 doing well and have some sort of business on
20 their own.

21 The point of this story is to
22 show that those who are true do-ers possess
23 the ability to become something from very
24 little or nothing at all. All it takes is



1 perseverance, sacrifice and commitment.

2 The story of this ancient
3 Delaware family similarly parallels the
4 struggles of the Hellenic culture as they
5 left their homelands for reasons related to
6 foreign occupation and slavery in order to go
7 to other lands and reestablish themselves.

8 The origin of AHEPA represents
9 a common element of organization to help
10 struggling Greeks assimilate, educate,
11 rebuild and generally fit into society.

12 Today, that Greek culture is
13 well established outside of Greece.

14 AHEPA has morphed into a
15 philanthropic organization that is committed
16 to helping people with needs of all cultures.

17 The Odyssey School is an apex
18 example of that here and now before you.

19 Any decision by the DOE to take
20 the leadership role away from AHEPA is a
21 decision to indirectly attack the Greek
22 culture and disregard the sacrifices made by
23 the OCS founders and their ancestors who
24 matriculated into this society.



1 The OCS Board has sent a letter
2 answering all of your concerns and have
3 agreed to address and correct any of the
4 perceived shortcomings regarding the
5 management of the school. They have also
6 offered a solution for the Board composition
7 that would horizontally spread additional
8 representation for all stakeholders. Their
9 offer is reasonable.

10 And I request that you strongly
11 consider accepting the proposal that's on the
12 table.

13 Thank you.

14 MR. TRAVERS: Sir, do you mind
15 if we have your written statement?

16 MR. ROUSSOS: Yes.

17 MR. TRAVERS: John Nicholson.

18 MR. NICHOLSON: John Nicholson.
19 J-O-H-N. N-I-C-H-O-L-S-O-N.

20 Members of the Charter School
21 Accountability Committee.

22 Thank you for the chance to
23 speak to you today in support of Odyssey
24 Charter School and retaining the AHEPA



1 majority on the Board.

2 My wife, Estelle and I, are the
3 parents of rising second and fourth graders
4 at Odyssey. We are not Greek and have no
5 knowledge of AHEPA before coming to Odyssey.

6 When the time came for our
7 daughter to go to kindergarten, we were
8 excited about the idea of a Charter School
9 where she would learn a second language and
10 have extra emphasis on math.

11 When it was our son's turn, we
12 had the luxury of choosing between the gifted
13 program and Odyssey.

14 Given our wonderful experience
15 in the first two years, we applied to have
16 him to be in the first class of the immersion
17 program and we could not be happier with the
18 results.

19 We owe that success both to the
20 outstanding teachers that our children have
21 had, as well as the Greek framework created
22 by AHEPA to start the school.

23 While I believe that the
24 decisions documented by the Public Integrity



1 Commission in their letter were made in good
2 faith by the Members of the Board, having
3 solicited the advice of counsel and other
4 consultants, the PIC's conclusions are what
5 they are.

6 I'm not here to litigate the
7 findings of the PIC.

8 The current Board has accepted
9 the PIC's recommendations and proposed steps
10 to address every item of the PIC report with
11 one exception. Removing the AHEPA majority
12 from the Board.

13 As a parent and donor to the
14 school, I am here to ask that you accept the
15 Board's proposal.

16 Odyssey was created based on
17 Greek language and cultural traditions that
18 have given so much to Western civilization
19 and the foundations of American government,
20 culture and language.

21 With the appointment of Denise
22 Parks and Riccardo Stoeckicht, as co-heads of
23 the school, in whom I have tremendous
24 confidence, the only Greek leadership of the



1 school is the Board.

2 Several years ago, there was a
3 proposal to make Greek language an option in
4 both middle and high school, rather than a
5 requirement. It was not adopted. And having
6 AHEPA majority on the Board ensures that the
7 school remains focused on its founding
8 principles and mission.

9 AHEPA is responsible for
10 leading the way to creation of the very
11 successful immersion program under Dr. Marina
12 Mattheoudakis.

13 AHEPA is responsible for the
14 relationship with the Greek Ministry of
15 Education that provides native-speaking Greek
16 teachers to Odyssey at the Greek government's
17 cost. Not only do the students benefit from
18 learning from native speakers, the entire
19 Odyssey community benefits from knowing
20 people from another country.

21 The AHEPA majority on the Board
22 provides the assurances to the Greek
23 government that those teachers will be
24 supported and well taken care of.



1 I submitted a letter signed by
2 over 145 members of the Odyssey community,
3 family, teachers and staff, who support the
4 maintenance of the current Board structure
5 and lists the significant contributions made
6 by the AHEPA to Odyssey, contributions that
7 outweigh by orders of magnitude any purported
8 benefit to AHEPA or individual AHEPANS.

9 Given all of those
10 contributions, I would ask that you accept
11 the proposal of the Odyssey Board with regard
12 to the PIC recommendations and give the Board
13 a chance to implement them.

14 The issues raised by the PIC
15 are not a funding or educational crisis that
16 threatens the immediate operation of the
17 school.

18 I have confidence that you will
19 see, when implemented, those recommendations
20 will address your concerns. But if they
21 don't, you have a second bite at that
22 particular apple.

23 Since the school is up for
24 renewal of this charter, you can allow the



1 Board to implement the mitigations they've
2 proposed and you can evaluate them as part of
3 the renewal process.

4 If the Board has not lived up
5 to its proposal, then you have the option to
6 require a change in the Board's structure at
7 that time.

8 Thank you for your time and
9 attention.

10 MR. TRAVERS: Sir, do you mind
11 if we have your written statement for the
12 transcriber?

13 Marina Mattheoudakis.

14 MS. MATTHEOUDAKIS: Marina
15 Mattheoudakis. M-A-R-I-N-A.
16 M-A-T-T-H-E-O-U-D-A-K-I-S.

17 Members of the Charter School
18 Accountability.

19 Thank you for the opportunity
20 to speak to you today in support of Odyssey
21 Charter School.

22 My name is Marina
23 Mattheoudakis, and I have been working as the
24 Dean of the Greek program at Odyssey Charter



1 School for the last two years.

2 COURT REPORTER: Ma'am, could
3 you slow down, please?

4 MS. MATTHEOUDAKIS: I am a
5 university professor in Greece, and I came
6 here after an invitation of the former
7 president of the OCS Board.

8 As we all know, the Greek
9 program is the distinguishing characteristic
10 of this Charter School. And as an academic,
11 myself, being responsible for this program, I
12 would like to present my own perception of
13 how they should be contextualized and
14 developed.

15 Based on my academic knowledge,
16 I can assure you that the Greek program, as
17 this is currently implemented at OCS, makes
18 this school a unique educational model. It
19 is not only the language itself that makes it
20 stand out, it is the implementation of the
21 program itself, the robust curriculum, the
22 immersion program, which was launched last
23 year, the educational background and
24 continuous professional development of the



1 Greek faculty, the educational materials that
2 we are designing and choosing, the networks
3 we have developed with educational
4 institutions in Greece and here in the US.
5 The academic results and achievements of our
6 students, and the list goes on.

7 This is a robust academic
8 program founded on research and particular
9 models of language and position of teaching.
10 Everyone at school is very proud of it.
11 Greeks and Americans alike.

12 I am afraid that none of the
13 above would have been possible without the
14 support and initiatives of the Board.

15 I would not have been here if I
16 had not been invited by the former president
17 of the OCS Board.

18 The heads of the school, Ms.
19 Denise Parks and Mr. Riccardo Stoeckicht, are
20 very supportive of the program and of its
21 needs, and I thank them both.

22 However, this is a
23 Greek-American School, and apart from the
24 AHEPAN Members on the Board, there are no



1 Greeks in its leadership. Unfortunately, for
2 the time being, at least I am on loan from
3 Greece. And at some time, I will need to
4 return to Greece.

5 The Greek program needs to
6 continue to growing as the school grows and
7 as global citizenship is promoted by the
8 Department of Education in Delaware.
9 Multilingualism and multicultural identity go
10 hand in hand. The Greek-American identity of
11 the school does not need only to be supported
12 by the leadership. It needs to be reflected
13 on its leadership.

14 The composition of the OCS
15 Board needs to retain its bilingual and
16 bicultural identity in order not only to
17 safeguard the development of its Greek
18 program, but in order to be consistent with a
19 bicultural identity and ideas of global
20 citizenship the school wishes to promote.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. TRAVERS: Eva Jannelli.

23 MS. JANNELLI: My name is Eva
24 Jannelli. J-A-N-N-E-L-L-I. And I'm a



1 teacher at Odyssey Charter School.

2 I started working at Odyssey
3 about ten-years-ago, nine- or ten-years-ago.
4 But my involvement with the school is way
5 before that, ever since somebody very near
6 and dear to my heart brought an idea from
7 Florida, where the initial school had
8 started, something that was like our model.
9 And then a group of people with a vision
10 embraced that idea and made it their mission,
11 and that group was AHEPA.

12 I have witnessed the school
13 starting from a rental unit in the back of
14 the parking lot, next to a grocery store and
15 car dealership to the multibuilding complex
16 we have now. We used to have a couple of
17 hundred students. The school, nobody had
18 heard about. In the beginning, we had to
19 convince people to enroll their kids. And
20 now, we have a thousand students on a waiting
21 list and 1,800 students currently enrolled.

22 While the immense success of
23 our school is due to many factors, I feel
24 AHEPA, the founding organization, is the



1 cornerstone from which it is all based.

2 Their vision has attracted and
3 inspired talented teachers, who are
4 tirelessly committed and passionate about our
5 students' highest achievements. Those of us
6 who have been with our school for a while
7 know very well that none of what OCS has
8 achieved would have been possible without the
9 continuous and tireless support of the AHEPA.

10 The contributions from the
11 AHEPA are numerous and they influence every
12 aspect of the school; from the money they
13 provide to start up the school, to the
14 ongoing commitment of those who serve on the
15 Board and gave their time and their efforts,
16 to the acquisition of the facilities,
17 including extra buildings that act as a
18 rental unit and provide income, to the
19 ongoing fundraising and networking that aids
20 the school and creates unique opportunities
21 for the students.

22 With any kind of growth comes
23 growing pain. And there are some
24 disagreements and there are some mistakes



1 probably that have been made.

2 I just feel that getting rid of
3 the AHEPA majority on the Board of OCS will
4 not solve this issue.

5 I feel that AHEPA majority is
6 necessary in order to ensure that the mission
7 and vision of the school continues and that
8 the Greek programs remain a vital part of our
9 school.

10 I kindly ask you to take my
11 point of view into consideration because not
12 only have I been here for a while, but I am
13 one of the oldest teachers here. So I feel
14 that AHEPA'S vision is what makes us unique.
15 It is what attracts donors, investors, parents
16 and students alike. Implementing the vision,
17 this vision is what ensures student success.

18 And I would like to ask Josiah
19 to support us on continuing on this path of
20 success.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. TRAVERS: Maria

23 Paraponiari.

24 MS. PARAPONIARI: Hello. My



1 name is Maria Paraponiari.

2 P-A-R-A-P-O-N-I-A-R-I.

3 As a new Greek language
4 teacher, there were many times that I
5 experienced AHEPA situation in support of
6 Odyssey Charter School.

7 First, I cannot ignore the fact
8 that I was hired --

9 COURT REPORTER: Maria, could
10 you slow down, please?

11 MS. PARAPONIARI: As a new
12 Greek language teacher, there were many times
13 that I experienced AHEPA situation in support
14 of Odyssey Charter School.

15 First, I cannot ignore the fact
16 that I was hired by (inaudible) and teaching
17 -- (inaudible) which was implemented later in
18 my job.

19 In the last three years, AHEPA
20 gave us all many opportunities to thrive and
21 succeed. One of the great opportunities was
22 for me to work in an (inaudible) program and
23 also another great opportunity was for the
24 participation of the Greek (inaudible) such



1 at the Phillies game, which helped me be more
2 competent and gain many performing skills.

3 MS. SINGH: Ma'am, she has to
4 keep track of everything that you're saying.
5 So it is much easier for her to do if you
6 speak more slowly, please.

7 MS. PARAPONIARI: Many AHEPA
8 played a major role since they organized many
9 events and sports families, even financially
10 to participate in such a theme.

11 Also, thanks to the AHEPA, the
12 Greek department had the opportunity to
13 collaborate with many academic teachers from
14 all over the world who gave us many
15 opportunities to address as teachers and as a
16 result get better at doing their jobs.

17 For all of those reasons, I
18 believe that AHEPA is a very important
19 element of Odyssey. With AHEPA, all the work
20 is better. And without their help, the Greek
21 department is not going to be the same.

22 We are all a big family. This
23 is a message I receive everyday from our
24 school. And AHEPA wants us to continue.



1 Thank you.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mr.
3 Travers, she can send that to you as well.

4 MR. TRAVERS: Yes. That would
5 be wonderful.

6 Can you send your notes? Would
7 you be able to E-mail those?

8 MS. PARAPONIARI: I can send it
9 to you via E-mail.

10 MR. TRAVERS: Thank you.
11 Zafeirios Ntouvis.

12 MR. NTOUVIS: Zafeirios
13 Ntouvis. Z-A-F-E-I-R-I-O-S. N-T-O-U-V-I-S.

14 I'm a one of the Greek teachers
15 working at OCS. I've been with the school
16 for one year. I would like to read some
17 excerpts from a letter that was written by
18 Vicky Goulis, who is another Greek teacher,
19 but was not able to be here today.

20 Odyssey Charter School was
21 founded because of the collective belief in
22 creating a rich cultural education for
23 students, with a focus on academics, Greek
24 culture and mathematics.



1 We believe AHEPA'S dedication
2 and vision have kept this mission alive for
3 the past 12 years since the inception of the
4 school.

5 When I, along with other
6 teachers and the administration were hired by
7 Odyssey Charter School, we were all aware of
8 AHEPA'S mission and goals. And we made our
9 decision to commit to their vision.

10 We believe there is absolutely
11 no reason why this should be cast out now.

12 If we all truly have the
13 students' best interest at heart, there
14 should be a significant effort by everyone to
15 improve and move our community forward,
16 instead of the needless power struggles.

17 AHEPA has been and should
18 remain at the heart of Odyssey. It is a
19 unique school, like no other. And without
20 AHEPA, Odyssey would not have been and be the
21 exceptional school we have all come to know
22 and love.

23 It is my sincere hope that you
24 would consider accepting AHEPA'S proposal and



1 keep our school the number one school in
2 Delaware.

3 Thank you.

4 MR. TRAVERS: Sir, do you mind
5 if we have the remarks?

6 Paul Brooks.

7 MR. BROOKS: I have a
8 relatively easy name.

9 Honorable Members of the
10 Charter School Accountability Commission.

11 I am an Odyssey parent and
12 Chairman of the CBOC. My family has been at
13 Odyssey for seven years now and we are very
14 happy with the school.

15 The dual language program is
16 why we picked Odyssey, but we are sticking
17 with Odyssey because of the excellent, well
18 rounded education that our children are
19 receiving. And we fully intend to see our
20 children graduate from Odyssey.

21 I operate a small business. So
22 I understand how budgets work. In the past
23 four-and-a-half years that I have been on the
24 CBOC, I have never seen anything improper in



1 financials. I have seen some numbers that
2 are higher than what I would have expected,
3 like the line item for legal expenses. But I
4 understand in any business that is growing,
5 expenses are growing as well.

6 I do believe that improved
7 communication could have mitigated some of
8 the mistrust that developed over the
9 leadership. I firmly believe that Odyssey is
10 a great school because of the partnership
11 between the Board, the administration,
12 teachers, parents, students and AHEPA.

13 In closing, I just hope that we
14 can put all of the divisiveness behind us and
15 start working together again to keep Odyssey
16 great and give our children a bright future.

17 Thank you.

18 MR. TRAVERS: Maryann Yaram.

19 MS. YARAM: First name is
20 Maryann, M-A-R-Y-A-N-N. Last name is
21 Y-A-R-A-M.

22 MS. YARAM: Respected Members
23 of the Charter School Accountability
24 Committee. My name is Maryanne Yaram. I am



1 a parent of a child at Odyssey. And I work
2 there as a Staff and Student Development
3 Specialist.

4 I have been a part of the
5 Odyssey community for ten years now, first as
6 a parent, then as a staff member. I am also
7 a member of the union. And I would like to
8 express my support for the Board. Not just
9 as a first generation immigrant, but also as
10 someone who has given a lot of time and
11 dedication to explore the fields of
12 education. I do know the value of cultural
13 intelligence.

14 As our world becomes smaller
15 and smaller into a global village and
16 perspective clash, it's here that cultural
17 intelligence becomes a vital part of the
18 fabric of our world. It develops tolerance,
19 understanding, mutual respect, and most of
20 all, empathy. All critical traits to live in
21 a world of differing perspectives.

22 I gave to Odyssey what was most
23 precious to me, my children, because I knew
24 that Odyssey valued cultural intelligence and



1 global citizenship.

2 There are very few schools that
3 prioritize these values that AHEPA infused
4 into the school.

5 So I am not saying that the
6 organization is perfect, or that they didn't
7 make mistakes.

8 The Board could have done
9 better with keeping track of finances and
10 being more sensitive to balancing the public
11 image of AHEPA at Odyssey.

12 However, the decisions, I
13 believe, were made not for anyone's personal
14 benefit, but for the collective benefit of
15 providing the best education to as many
16 families as possible.

17 Their ambition to make it
18 possible to provide a high quality education
19 makes for a more equitable society and it
20 should be something that is encouraged and
21 not deterred with a conflict of interest.

22 It is AHEPA'S passion and
23 ambition that took the school from its humble
24 beginnings to what it is now with 1,800



1 students and a vision of a global campus.

2 You, the Members of the Charter
3 School Accountability Committee, now have the
4 power to safeguard the unique nature of the
5 school by allowing the Board to keep its
6 AHEPA majority or contribute to making
7 Odyssey just like any other school.

8 As you make your decision,
9 please consider two other factors. Question
10 the news that you come across. The very same
11 people who built this school with a vision
12 for the past 12 years are now being accused
13 of misogynistic. But if they were, why is it
14 44 percent of our Board Members are women.
15 While Newark Charter has only 36 percent and
16 DMA has only 14 percent? Why did they vote
17 to have a woman as the head of school? Why
18 are they okay with two out of the three deans
19 being women?

20 The other factor I would like
21 you to consider is the authenticity of the
22 vote of no confidence.

23 As a member of the union, it
24 caught me off guard when the vote of no



1 confidence was sent. No official discussion
2 made about it.

3 In the absence of an open
4 discussion, I would question the validity of
5 the vote. Conclusion were arrived at without
6 an open discussion.

7 In conclusion, I request you to
8 weigh the various angle cautiously while
9 making your final decisions.

10 Thank you for your time.

11 Can I leave the letter that I
12 sent? Some of the E-mails bounced back.

13 MR. TRAVERS: Certainly.

14 Tami Soltow.

15 MS. SOLTOW: My name is Tami
16 Soltow. T-A-M-I. S-O-L-T-O-W.

17 First of all, I just want to
18 say that this meeting today is not about
19 AHEPA. It is about a school, Odyssey Charter
20 School. And we should be talking more about
21 the school than about an outside
22 organization.

23 Not only am I a parent to two
24 children, but I am also a teacher at Odyssey



1 and Member of the School Board for the past
2 three years.

3 And during these past three
4 years, I have been appalled by the behavior
5 and continued actions of this Board and their
6 blatant disregard of the law, the regulations
7 and facts.

8 And I want to make note that
9 besides our Board President, I'm the only
10 Board Member here tonight.

11 I do not come here lightly.
12 Because in the past three years, not only
13 have I missed, and I'm going to be personal,
14 events and time with my family for the
15 voluminous amount of hours with the Board
16 only to discuss AHEPA and Ithaka and not
17 Odyssey Charter School, but I've been yelled
18 out. I've been cursed at. I've been
19 demeaned by Board Members, both personally
20 and under their breath in recorded Board
21 Meetings. And I've had my job threatened.

22 I've been looked at negatively
23 and told that I'm out to destroy the school.
24 No. I'm here to talk about the truth and the



1 facts.

2 The funny thing about facts, my
3 friends, is that despite the attempts of the
4 Board, they cannot be interpreted. They
5 cannot be changed, and they cannot be
6 maligned for they are facts.

7 And the facts are that this
8 Board violated state laws, DOE rules and
9 regulations and maybe even criminal code
10 laws.

11 To break it down, let's talk
12 about three different things.

13 Let's talk about the five.
14 Their failure to abide by fiduciary duty and
15 financial impropriety.

16 In my three years on the Board,
17 five AHEPA Members vote together. In fact,
18 they have only voted against one another two
19 times. The first was with the supermajority.
20 The next month after that vote, one of them
21 resigned and the other reversed his decision,
22 his vote.

23 In a May 2, 2018, four-hour
24 long Executive Session Meeting, when Members



1 of the five went against one another and
2 voted to hire Ms. Denise Parks, yes, she is a
3 woman, but she is a qualified woman. We were
4 told within days that AHEPA had a change of
5 heart, and they were going to go with the
6 dual headed model.

7 Riccardo, who made over \$70,000
8 of Odyssey money working for AHEPA, was then
9 hired.

10 I was told in a telephone
11 conversation as a Member of the Hiring
12 Committee that we have the five. You must
13 compromise.

14 And I implore you to listen to
15 the Board Meeting minutes of Spring 2018.
16 You can hear the frustration of the teachers
17 to the failure to appoint Denise Parks as
18 head of school. They would not even entitle
19 her as a title of head of school.

20 Now, that led to the union.
21 And the union is a good union. The main
22 reason the union was cultivated was because
23 of the Board. How do I know? Because I
24 started the union.



1 Now, there is this ridiculous
2 notion about AHEPA choosing the Board
3 Members. And look at where it has taken us
4 today. It has taken us to secret meetings
5 with the Governor and arranged meetings with
6 a certain few who agree with the five so that
7 they could have access to our investor
8 consultant and financial records.

9 I'm not a member of the five.
10 I'm not a member of AHEPA. And I'm a woman.
11 So I don't get to know the Board Members who
12 are voted in until the monthly meeting. Nor,
13 did I get to know that Joe was appointed as
14 the President, even as a Board Member, until
15 the regular Board Meeting. I didn't even
16 know about the meeting with the Governor
17 until I read about it.

18 Where in this country is it
19 permitted that I can't go in and vote for a
20 Board Member, or even be allowed in a room as
21 a woman and not a member of a certain
22 organization? You see, it has always been
23 about the five, and it will always be about
24 the five until you stop it. It should always



1 be instead about Odyssey Charter School.

2 The second point I want to say
3 is their failure to abide by fiduciary duty.

4 Members of a public school
5 board have a fiduciary duty to act in and for
6 the best interest of the school. And this
7 duty has been breached by most of our Board
8 Members. They have given money to
9 AHEPA-sponsored Ithaca, rather than to our
10 school. They've given money to a gala that
11 has been coded under local funds until I
12 talked about it in a January meeting where I
13 was yelled at and the next day it was then
14 changed.

15 Their unilateral decision to
16 meet with the Governor due to governance
17 issues. And putting a letter together to
18 you, CSAC, without a vote because the
19 president, and I will quote, Believes
20 submitting it is within the scope of
21 authority, and that has already been given to
22 him.

23 This Board has looked for
24 outside interests rather than the school.



1 They have chosen to advertise their
2 involvement, and look on our website, please,
3 rather than actually be involved.

4 It is the teachers reason. The
5 teachers are the reason for the school's
6 success.

7 To say allowed that AHEPA was
8 the reason why 30 students went to Greece,
9 this past spring break is false.

10 The reason is, it's because
11 those students paid \$3,000 through EF Tours
12 to go.

13 These Board Members have little
14 to no ideas about the program. Yet, they
15 show up once a month for a meeting and feel
16 entitled. Their cavalier dismissal of the
17 PIC Opinion as political.

18 Using the phrase that laws and
19 regulations are just guidelines and can be
20 interpreted. And dare to say that OCS is an
21 incorporation and subject to corporate law,
22 rather than a public school, is wrong.

23 The third thing is the breach
24 of the fiduciary duty causing the financial



1 impropriety.

2 Why, why did a public school
3 give money to AHEPA-sponsored program? And
4 then dare to rework it to say, Prove it, that
5 these were no longer public funds. Creating
6 a preschool is against Odyssey's charter. It
7 was coded to local funds. To say, so what,
8 we may have made mistakes. So what, we may
9 have spent funds in the glean of millions.
10 You cannot just simply defy the law and
11 rules.

12 AHEPA Members have repeatedly
13 stated on the record in our meetings that
14 this is AHEPA School Board. And to
15 cavalierly really say that is a slip of the
16 tongue is wrong because it wasn't. It was
17 with purpose. And so is my presence here.
18 You cannot argue with invoices and the facts.

19 The fact is that the PIC
20 Opinion is powerful and it is correct. It
21 shows the extreme that others will go to
22 maintain control.

23 And I want you to Google a
24 video. Google AHEPAN Odyssey Charter School.



1 It is a 14-minute long video. And I
2 encourage you to watch it. It will clear up
3 a lot of your questions.

4 And as I close, the mission and
5 vision argument is quite emphatically
6 nonsense. Who better to carry out the
7 mission and vision of the school than the
8 trained and dedicated and qualified teachers
9 who are at OCS, Odyssey Charter School, every
10 moment of the day and don't use it as a
11 showpiece.

12 To argue that we're going
13 change the charter is to simply say that DOE
14 can't tell us what to do with our school.
15 And again, it is wrong. Never once has the
16 union or teachers or the public said that
17 AHEPANS have to go. It's all about control.

18 And if not, they are not happy
19 with the four being a minority, then they are
20 telling us, and they are telling you how
21 little they value that for a minority.

22 I am the minority. They
23 literally devalue me by refusing to become
24 me.



1 The reach of the Board further
2 goes beyond the mission and vision of the
3 school. They make every single decision
4 relating to that school. Not the mission and
5 vision.

6 The facts are that this group
7 of five and others have breached their
8 fiduciary duty and conducted financial
9 improprieties. And they have failed to look
10 out for the best interest of our school.

11 I implore you to help out our
12 school to make the right change. We are on
13 the precipice -- we are on the precipice of
14 something that has gone terribly wrong. We
15 are going to lose our teachers. We are going
16 to lose our students. And we are going to
17 lose our school, not AHEPA school.

18 Thank you.

19 MR. TRAVERS: I noticed someone
20 came in and signed in.

21 MS. BALLAS: Jennifer Ballas.
22 B-A-L-L-A-S, which is, by the way, Greek.

23 Excuse me for being late. I
24 was transporting children in traffic.



1 I did send an E-mail on Friday
2 to the Department of Education. And so, I'm
3 not going to reread that. I'm going to
4 actually respond a little bit to what I heard
5 today.

6 First off, just to give a
7 history. I've been with Odyssey since year
8 two. I have 12 years of tenure there with
9 four children. I was on the School Board for
10 seven, possibly eight years. I can't
11 remember because it was quite a long time.

12 And I'm up here to tell you
13 that what Tami has said is true. And what
14 I've heard with other people, yes, that AHEPA
15 is wonderful and AHEPA has helped, but they
16 haven't seen it. They were not in Board
17 Meetings when there were no tape recordings.
18 So I kind of want to go through a little bit
19 of my notes.

20 First off, AHEPA, you do not
21 have to be Greek to be AHEPA. You just have
22 to be a man. Therefore, the argument that
23 AHEPA leads, the mission and the culture goes
24 away is untrue because you don't have to be



1 Greek to be in the AHEPA organization.

2 If Odyssey wants to remain a
3 Greek school and work with the Greek
4 ministry, we can do that with or without
5 AHEPA.

6 Additionally, Greek leadership,
7 someone spoke about Greek leadership. Greek
8 leadership was written into the Bible to be
9 at the headmaster level. And there was a
10 requirement that the headmaster had to be
11 Greek.

12 And I remember when Mr.
13 "Schotel" (phonetic) passed away, there were
14 lots and lots of arguments about whether we
15 had to retain that and we did with Dr. Nick.

16 I was absolutely stunned and
17 happy when they hired Denise. As Tami said,
18 not more than a month or two later here comes
19 Riccardo at the same salary to do directions
20 in the parking lot is what I saw two days
21 ago.

22 So that Greek leadership
23 doesn't have to be at the Board. It needs to
24 be at the headmaster level.



1 I requested that the DOE make
2 AHEPA an equal, a minority or an ex officio
3 amount in the Board. And equal meaning,
4 three AHEPA, three teachers, three parents,
5 not four and four or a minority. And if they
6 don't like that, let them leave.

7 AHEPA touts that they've given
8 us money. Well, yes, we get donations. But
9 I have not seen a gymnasium that they have
10 promised us for years. I have not seen
11 \$100,000 check or received an E-mail from
12 Denise or Riccardo that AHEPA has given us
13 \$100,000 check from AHEPA Gala.

14 So while where they say they do
15 things, where is the proof? I just see the
16 bills where they are getting Odyssey to pay
17 for their things, to pay for their endeavors
18 and pay for everything.

19 I also recommended at one point
20 in my tenure on the Board that the Odyssey
21 mission not change unless all Board Members
22 vote to change it.

23 So if you were to minimize the
24 AHEPA majority, ensuring that you would need



1 a unanimous vote to change the mission, once
2 again, keeps Odyssey at its core the Greek
3 language which makes us special.

4 Okay. Nobody wants to see
5 AHEPA leave. We want them to not be in
6 control and power, which they have been since
7 day one.

8 The five -- I grew up with the
9 five. The first two years on the School
10 Board, I don't think I said anything because
11 I was terrified of the five.

12 And then, I grew in my strength
13 to realize that they can't kick my children
14 out of the school. They cannot do anything
15 to me. They threatened me. They stated I
16 had too many children in the school. They
17 called me crazy. They said that I was also
18 out on a mission to destroy the school. They
19 called me hysterical.

20 In meetings where I behaved
21 just as the AHEPA five and I yelled back when
22 they screamed at me, I was told I was out of
23 line. Yet, the AHEPA Member that was yelling
24 at me was not.



1 If AHEPA is allowed to
2 continue, what will not happen is, our
3 teachers will not get the pay raise that they
4 deserve to make the Red Clay pay scale.

5 Everyone talks about what AHEPA has done.
6 Well, let me tell you what AHEPA did not do.

7 AHEPA did not fight and create
8 a pay scale for these teachers. I fought
9 with Katie Clemmons and Mary Lou Strauss to
10 get our teachers on a pay scale. Do you want
11 to know how they were paid? There were paid
12 on an Excel spreadsheet. And let me tell
13 you, when I analyzed that spreadsheet, men
14 who had less years were paid more.

15 Women, who made George Chambers
16 angry in the face-to-face negotiations they
17 would have, got paid less. If you were a
18 favorite, you got more. If you pissed any of
19 the Greek five off, you got paid less and you
20 are not allowed to get promoted. You were
21 not allowed to get bigger raises.

22 And I spent a better part of a
23 year fighting with the AHEPA five to get the
24 PT teachers on a pay scale that was ten



1 percent under Red Clay. They are still there
2 five or six years later.

3 I continuously fought in my
4 tenure to get that raised up so that they
5 were equal to the Red Clay pay scale because
6 we're going to lose our teachers, and we
7 already lost a whole bunch of good ones. And
8 my fear is we are going to lose a whole bunch
9 more.

10 I will tell you this. The
11 gentleman that spoke about the CBOC, I, as
12 well, was on the CBOC Committee for two
13 years. And just so you know, CBOC Committee
14 sees budget lines. They do not see the
15 details behind the budget line.

16 So, yes, our books are
17 pristine. Every dollar is accounted for.
18 The problem is the dollars and where they
19 went. Where they buried those invoices under
20 what budget lines. Because it's there. And
21 if the state auditor would do her job, we
22 could actually find that out.

23 At one point AHEPA hired a
24 Greek -- it wasn't a teacher -- a Greek staff



1 member behind closed doors. It was a friend.
2 They were not paid on the pay scale. There
3 were issues with background checks. These
4 were things that we brought up over and over
5 again in non-recorded Board Meetings and we
6 were told to back off and stay out.

7 So I just want you to make sure
8 you understand that Tami is not crazy. What
9 happened to her is true. It happened to
10 myself. It happened to Kate Clemmons. AHEPA
11 had 12 years to change its behavior. This
12 behavior is not new. It has happened
13 forever, since I have been there. And like I
14 said, I think I'm the longest term person
15 here with Odyssey.

16 And I beg you, beg you to
17 please change the Board makeup. Take their
18 majority he away. Make them an equal or a
19 minority or ex officio. And let the people
20 that care about this school and the teachers
21 do what is right by the school and the
22 teachers. Keep the money in the school.
23 Stop asking parents to raise \$85,000 or more
24 for things that we would had dollars for had



1 we not hired an extra head of the school that
2 we don't need. Give money away to Ithaca
3 that we don't need. We don't need a feeder
4 into Odyssey. We have a wait list over 500
5 kids. We have enough kids that want to come.

6 So please do what needs to be
7 done. Disband the AHEPA five and allow the
8 school to grow the way it needed to over the
9 last 12 years.

10 Thank you.

11 MR. TRAVERS: Does the school
12 wish to provide any closing remarks?

13 MR. WOLCOTT: Not at this time.

14 Again, I would like to thank
15 everyone for coming out on a beautiful
16 Tuesday night in June.

17 So thank you, everybody, for
18 everything you said, and we look forward to
19 continuing the process.

20 Thank you.

21 MR. TRAVERS: I want to thank
22 all of you for participating today.

23 The Secretary and Charter
24 School Accountability Committee will consider



1 your comments in making their decision at the
2 conclusion of the formal review process.

3 This hearing is now closed.

4 (The hearing was concluded at,
5 approximately, 6:00 p.m.)

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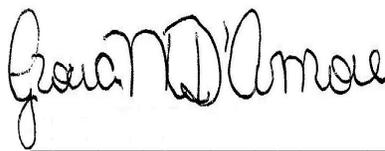
1 State of Delaware:

2 New Castle County:

3
4 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

5
6 I, Gloria M. D'Amore, Registered
7 Professional Reporter and Notary Public, do
8 hereby certify that the foregoing record,
9 Pages 1 to 50 inclusive, is a true and
10 accurate transcript of my stenographic notes
11 taken on Tuesday, June 11, 2019, in the
12 above-captioned matter.

13 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set
14 my hand and seal this 13th day of June, 2019,
15 at Wilmington, Delaware.

16
17
18 
19 _____

20 GLORIA M. D'AMORE, RPR

21
22
23
24



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