

September 17, 2004

COMMISSION APPROVES FIRST CHARTER

BOISE - The new-seven member Idaho Charter School Commission unanimously approved Rolling Hills Public Charter School to open in the fall of 2005 with some specific conditions.

According to Idaho statute, no more than six charter schools in the state can be approved either by the State Charter School Commission or local districts. Rolling Hills is the first charter school approved by the Commission for the 2005-2006 school year. The school would serve the northwest area of Boise.

"The goal of the Charter School Commission is to approve schools that will be successful," said Chairman Jim Hammond. "Charter schools throughout our state are showing tremendous results in student achievement and breathing fresh ideas into our education system. The Charter School Commission wants to be a partner in creating strong, public charter schools. The Commission believes that Rolling Hills has the potential to join the ranks of our other great charter schools."

Rolling Hills originally approached the Boise School District for approval, but were denied. Rolling Hills later appealed to the State Board of Education, who forwarded the school to the Charter School Commission.

The approval included instructions for the petitioners to: update the school's special education and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) plans, provide the Commission copies of all contracts and proof of insurance, and clarify issues included in the State Department of Education's legal sufficiency review including special education and free-and reduced lunch programs.

The Commission considered the Compass Public Charter School petition and voted to take the issue under advisement until the Commission's next meeting on October 28, 2004. The Commission also offered the Compass petitioners several issues to be addressed at that meeting.

Falcon Ridge Public Charter School was referred to the Commission by the Kuna School District. While the district expressed its support for the school, it referred to it to the Charter School Commission because of liability issues. Because the Commission would prefer charter schools to be chartered under their local school district, the Commission asked the State Board of Education to research the district's liability to see if the issues could be resolved. The Commission will take the school under advisement until the October meeting and the liability issue can be further explored.

Under the state statute, virtual charter schools may be placed under the jurisdiction of the Commission. Of the two virtual schools that petitioned the Commission for this designation, the Idaho Virtual School/Richard McKenna Charter School was approved and the Idaho Virtual Academy's request was tabled until the Commission's October meeting.