

Charter School Boards

The following information is drawn from an excellent primer on Charter School Boards prepared by the N.C. Department of Instruction's (DPI) Office of Charter Schools. The nomination committee (appointed by the board chair) will consider these principles when identifying board candidates for Hawbridge School board elections.

1. Boards of Directors for Charter Schools are not actually “school boards” in the sense of a body of popularly-elected officials within a particular political jurisdiction. Rather, the board is the governing body of a non-profit organization whose sole purpose is the governance and operation of a public charter school.
2. A national expert on charter schools has said “No other singular variable is more important for the health and vitality of a school than the way it is governed.” The DPI report further underscores that “every failure of a charter school can be traced back, in some form or fashion, to the board that governs the school.” As of 2012 (when the report was published), *thirty-six* charter schools in North Carolina had been shut down, almost all due to financial deficiencies. *Fiduciary stewardship* is one of the most important duties of charter school boards.
3. The DPI report also talked about the composition of the board and what attributes boards should look for in recruiting new members:

“Recruiting highly engaged board members with specific skill-sets and professional backgrounds are vital to the success of the public charter school. To build a highly functioning and sustainable organization, charter school board members must be effective in communicating the school’s mission and vision; planning for the future; setting sound policy; modeling professionalism; overseeing finances, program evaluation, building sustainable relationships with the community; amongst other key operational aspects.”

“Diversity is the hallmark of an effective charter school board. Effective boards benefit from having members with varied expertise in areas such as education, human resource management, personnel management, finance, law, facility management, marketing, strategic planning, or fundraising. The board should also demonstrate diversity in the members’ age, perspective, ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic background. An additional benefit is the recruitment of individuals with connections to the community, local businesses, and political leaders.”

Additionally, board members must share a strong commitment to truly serving the School. “The amount of time it takes to be an effective charter school board member is often underestimated. Typically a charter school board member needs to be able to devote eight to ten hours a month to the school...”

4. “...high functioning charter school boards speak with one voice or not at all... No single board member has the authority to speak for the full board.”