

New charter school to open in the fall

BY TERI VANCE

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The Nevada Performance Academy, a new state-sponsored charter school that will work both online and in a school building in Carson City, will begin enrolling students in May.

"The community has been waiting and hoping for this school to arrive," said Denise Gillot, elected treasurer of the school's governing board at its inaugural meeting earlier this month. "Not a day goes by that I'm not stopped by someone asking about the school and its progress. I'm so happy to be able to say it's finally here."

The school, which will open in the fall for grades 7-12 was spearheaded by former state superintendent Eugene Paslov and has been in the works for about two years.

As strictly a performance arts school, its charter was turned down by the Nevada Department of Education last year. However, the school's concept was expanded and approved by the department in October.

"The new application was well-researched and comprehensive, and the members of the Committee to Form demonstrated the ability to successfully refine and implement the education program, oversee the effective and responsible management of public funds, and oversee and be responsible for the school's compliance with its legal obligations," wrote Steve Canavero, director of the education department's Public Charter School Authority.

The school will be the third charter school in Carson City. Silver State Charter Schools, serving grades 7-12, is also sponsored by the Nevada Department of Education. Carson Montessori School, serving grades 1-6, is sponsored by the Carson City School District.

Charter schools are public schools, funded through the same per-pupil allotment from state coffers.

David Papke, named the Nevada Performance Academy's executive director, said the school's mission evolved from

strictly performance arts to a more well-rounded approach.

Rather than focus on theater, all curriculum will be informed by the arts, he said.

Natalie Berger, appointed secretary of the board, said infusing art into all subjects will be a key to the school's success.

"Making art a part of the entire curriculum is showing positive results in schools all over the nation," she said. "It's an elegant way to bring the four Cs of 21st Century skills, creativity, communication, critical-thinking and collaboration, into the core subjects," Berger said.

It won't just be arts in the traditional sense, Papke clarified.

He said students who compete in snowboarding, motocross, rodeo and with other interests will be not only welcomed at the school but encouraged in their pursuits.

"We want to provide them the means to implement that into their schooling, not just with time and flexibility, but academically

"That's been an under served population in traditional schooling."

The school will offer classes both over the Internet as well as in a traditional school setting. Students will be able to join in courses offered at the school via Internet chat services as well.

"We're going to offer flexibility with our blended-format, which means web-based classes combined with all kinds of face-to-face teaching and support," said Molly Walt, board member. "And, our performance model is custom-made for students who have a real passion for something, no matter what that something might be."

The school is still in negotiations to secure a building. A website to enroll will be in operation by the May 1 deadline, Papke said.

Paslov was named president of the school's governing board.

"A school informed by the arts will not only enrich the lives of students, it can serve as a catalyst for development and as a model for educational advancement," he said.

Old Citibank property purchase had Neighbors sweating over 'tight' deal

BY JOHN BARRETTE

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The man who pulled the trigger on buying the old Citibank property in downtown Carson City said it's in terrible shape, and it could take at least a year to put it in marketable condition.

Despite that assessment of Steve Neighbors — he manages the Hop and Mae Adams Foundation, which made the \$900,000 purchase — Mayor Robert Crowell and others embraced the news.

"The acquisition of that building will be a great help in enhancing our downtown," Crowell said. "It will be another empty building filled."

"Is that a plus?" Supervisor Karen Abowd asked rhetorically. "Absolutely, because they won't sit on it."

She expressed hope it could evolve into space for a planned charter high school for the performing arts.

Neighbors, meanwhile, said it wasn't a pure business decision, wasn't an easy deal to reach and will require additional funds because of the building's condition.

"I sweat bullets over that purchase," said Neighbors, who is with Strategic & Operational Solutions in Meridian, Idaho.

Neighbors would have de-

clined paying a dollar more, he said, and believes the seller would have declined an offer of a dollar less.

"That's how tight and questionable it was," he said.

The seller was listed at the recorder's office as Citibank, N.A.

The asking price for the nearly 25,000-square-foot building and associated land, with parking, at one point was \$1.5 million, and perhaps considerably more when it first was vacated.

The bank building at 308 N. Curry St. is on the southwest corner of Telegraph Square.

Property investors prefer faster-growing communities than Carson City, Neighbors said. That's why the purchase wasn't purely a business decision.

But his objectives are different, he said, including the hope that "we can stabilize the market and bring value above and beyond what we can return to the pocket of the foundation."

Eugene Paslov, a longtime educator spearheading efforts to open a charter high school for the performing arts, has expressed interest in the space but says it wouldn't be available when school starts in August.

"We're going to open this year, so we have to find some space," he said. Earlier he characterized talks with the foundation about

leasing the space, should it wind up being purchased, as "very iffy."

Paslov is chairman of the city's Cultural Commission, and Abowd serves on it as the Board of Supervisors' representative. Abowd views a performing arts school downtown as helpful in revitalizing that area.

Tuesday, Paslov said he hasn't talked with foundation representatives since his "very iffy" comment, so whether something could be worked out in later years remains iffy at best.

Neighbors said he has had a couple of prospective tenants express interest, but what might come next awaits an architect's study and subsequent decisions about what to do with the building.

"We've been noncommittal until we see what we need to do," he said.

Bob Fredlund of Coldwell Banker Select and Bruce Robertson of Sperry Van Ness/Gold Dust Commercial were Neighbors' real estate agents for the deal. Both praised him for helping Carson City.

They say contrasting the price on a square-foot basis with all other recent commercial property sales here would be comparing apples to oranges because the 1960s structure was vacant for several years.