LOCAL NEWS

Charter school supporters optimistic after meeting

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Last Updated: Thursday, Jan 15 2009 8:39 AM

Supporters of a proposed charter school are hopeful they will get approval after the Kern County Board of Education postponed a decision Tuesday night.

PHOTOS:

Photo by John Harte / The Californian

Brent Malicote outside the old Bakersfield College Delano campus, which is slated to be the new Paramount Bard Academy, a charter school currently in a battle for approval. Malicote is scheduled to be the principal.

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After nearly five hours of discussion, the board delayed a decision on the Delano project until Feb. 10. Board staff had drafted a resolution of denial, which had proponents uneasy about the vote.

"At the end of the night I felt they were very intrigued," said Paramount Bard Principal Brent Malicote.

The board had questions about the charter's expulsion process, the planned lottery to determine enrollment, the methods the school will use to determine student progress, and the makeup of the charter's board and to whom it would be accountable, among others.

Supported by Paramount Citrus owners and philanthropists Lynda and Stewart Resnick, the charter school has proposed to open in Delano in 2009 and serve 200 sixth- and ninth-graders, then expand until reaching full K-12 capacity in 2019.

Bard College would run a master of arts in teaching program on site to improve valley education

long-term.

In November, the Delano Union School District board voted to deny the charter, citing myriad concerns about how it would affect the public schools.

California education code directs a county to review a charter application if a local school district denies the first petition. The third and final application for a charter school takes place at the state level. Representatives from both Delano school districts were present, as were parents and community members who spoke out for and against the school.

Romeo Agbalog, one of two DUSD board members who voted for the charter Nov. 17, said Paramount's presentation went smoother Tuesday than it did in Delano, but the basic facts about the charter remained the same.

Agbalog still favors the charter school.

"I would like to see the charter come to Delano to provide competition, to challenge us to do an even better job to build on the successes in the past," said Agbalog.

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