



ANGEL R. SABLAN
Chair

GUAM EDUCATION BOARD

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MARY A.Y. OKADA, Ed.D.
Vice Chair

GUAM EDUCATION BOARD
CONTINUATION OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Tuesday, July 15, 2025
4 pm
Gallery, GDOE Building B
MINUTES

VOTING MEMBERS

Angel R. Sablan, Chair
Mary A.Y. Okada, EdD, Vice-Chair
Peter Alecxis D. Ada
Felicitas B. Angel
Christine W. Baleto
Judith Guthertz, Dr. PA
Maria A. Gutierrez
Ron L. McNinch, PhD

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Vacant
IBOGS Representative

Timothy Fedenko
GFT Representative

Mayor Peter Benavente
MCOG Representative

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

K. Erik Swanson, Ph.D.
GDOE Superintendent

I. MEETING CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Angel Sablan, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Dr. K. Erik Swanson, Superintendent and Executive Secretary, took the roll call. The following members were **present** for the meeting:

Voting Members:

Sablan, Angel R. – Chair
Okada, Dr. Mary A.Y. – Vice-Chair (via Zoom)
Ada, Peter Alecxis D.
Angel, Felicitas B.
Guthertz, Dr. Judith
Gutierrez, Maria A. (via Zoom)
McNinch, Dr. Ron L.

Non-Voting Members:

Fedenko, Timothy – GFT Representative

Legal Counsel:

Jesse Nasis

Absent:

Baleto, Christine W. (Excused)

Non-Voting Members:

Benavente, Peter – MCOG Representative
IBOGS Representative

The Superintendent announced that five (5) members of the Board were present in person and two (2) present via Zoom, constituting a quorum.

Mr. Sablan shared that he wasn't feeling well due to health issues that began the previous night. He shared that he had an interview this morning on the Wave 105.1 about Liberation, and he wasn't sure he could make it to a 2-3 hour Board meeting. He noted that Dr. Okada was attending via Zoom and asked Dr. Guthertz to take over the meeting when he leaves, emphasizing that important matters still needed to be discussed.

II. CELEBRATE SUCCESS – The following retirees were recognized: CLTaitano Elementary School, Liza J. Sahagon; FB Leon Guerrero Middle School, Lali Thundiyil; and Jose Rios Middle School, Roy Leon Guerrero.

III. CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Minutes of June 17, 2025 Regular Meeting
2. Superintendent's Report June 17, 2025

Dr. Guthertz motioned, seconded by Mrs. Angel, to approve the items listed under the consent calendar. The Board voted by voice with a vote of 7-0. The motion passed.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Dr. Judith Won Pat – Dr. Won Pat addressed the Board as a mother, educator, and lifelong advocate for Guam's children, urging them to prioritize students over politics and bureaucracy. She highlighted that over 400 displaced students are weeks away from the new school year without a school to attend. She emphasized the urgent need to provide these children with stability, classrooms, and structure — not in theory, but in reality. She pointed to Chief Brodie Memorial Elementary School (CBMES), a vacant, ready facility that could serve as a solution. She argued this issue is not about capacity but about honoring families' choice for a unique, inquiry-based educational environment. She warned of the consequences of leaving CBMES unused — citing vandalism, theft, and decay, as already seen in another abandoned school. She said the building is already showing signs of deterioration and could become a financial liability if left idle. She urged the Board to act with compassion and courage, not just talk about putting children first, but demonstrate it through action by reopening CBMES immediately. She called it a chance to show real leadership — responsible, child-centered, and rooted in community values.

Mr. Sablan said that they can ask questions when they come to the portion of the agenda, Chief Brodie Elementary School Status and Proposal.

Dr. McNinch said that it might be more helpful since speaker Won Pat and others were in the audience, it might be more helpful to discuss it.

Mr. Sablan said that others wanted to present.

Phil Leon Guerrero, on behalf of Senator Tina Rose Muna-Barnes – Mr. Leon Guerrero read Senator Muna-Barnes' letter into the record.

Frea Vidallon (SIFA Executive Office Liaison) – Ms. Vidallon shared a letter from SIFA CEO Dr. Anthon Jay Sunga, urging the Board to approve SIFA's temporary use of the Chief Brodie Memorial Elementary School (CBMES) facility for one to two years. SIFA chose CBMES because it's ready to serve its growing student population, who need a learning space without delay. The letter emphasized that SIFA offers more than just a building - they offer a partnership that saves government costs while providing culturally relevant education. They commit to maintaining the

facility at no extra cost and collaborating with GDOE and the community to honor the school's legacy. Approving their request would show Guam's commitment to all students, ensuring the CBMES facility continues as a vibrant place of learning rather than sitting unused.

Maria Wood (SIFA Administrator of Student Affairs) – Ms. Wood thanked the Board for their work serving thousands of students island-wide and acknowledged that while SIFA serves fewer students, they still contribute meaningfully to the overall educational mission. She emphasized that SIFA offers a unique, STEAM-based learning environment with a strong focus on social and behavioral development, setting them apart from other schools. Speaking from her role at the school, she shared that students, parents, and staff are anxious for clarity about their future, but reassured them that SIFA has an academic plan in place even if a facility isn't secured. However, she stressed that having a stable physical location like CBMES is critical to providing the security and consistency that the school community needs. She closed by thanking the Board for considering SIFA's request and expressed hope for a collaborative solution that would allow them to continue nurturing future innovators and leaders.

Ron Ravela (SIFA Director for Planning, Compliance, and Research) – Mr. Ravela highlighted SIFA's ongoing commitment to education, proposing that if CBMES becomes a public middle school in Tamunig, SIFA can retrofit the facility at no cost to GDOE. He noted that SIFA has partnered with the First LEGO League since 2016, introducing LEGO robotics competitions to all public middle schools and funding their participation. He urged the Board to support continued STEM programs, including competitions, summer programs, science camps, and outreach. He also mentioned SIFA's CEO, Mr. Anthony Sunga, has been actively training GDOE teachers from the Head Start Program last year and, most recently, with GDOE science teachers on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). He emphasized SIFA's willingness to collaborate and asked for approval to use the CBMES facility to continue these efforts.

Attorney Michael F. Phillips - Attorney Phillips clarified that SIFA has never owed back rent, despite circulating rumors. He said legal cases support this, noting one was dismissed on a technicality, and in the other case, the landlord never even requested back rent. He explained that confusion arose from improper invoicing, but once it was clear that no rent was owed, they couldn't legally pay it. He emphasized that SIFA may have even overpaid and that it remains a responsible and credible organization.

Nick Shoemake – Mr. Shoemake shared his perspective as a parent, praising SIFA as more than just a school - it's a strong, supportive community. He said his son, like many middle schoolers, was trying to find his identity and found his footing at SIFA through friendships and extracurriculars. Now, with uncertainty about SIFA's future, students are worried about being split up and sent to different schools. As a Tamunig resident, he urged the Board to allow SIFA to move to CBMES, emphasizing how beneficial the school has been for his son and others. He stressed that time is critical, as he needs to make a decision soon for his son's schooling. He urged the Board to support SIFA's move to CBMES to keep the school community together.

Mr. Sablan asked Ex-Officio members to move to the meeting agenda item 1g concerning the status and proposal for CBMES. He called forward Senator Borja, Senator Won Pat, Ron Ravela, and Attorney Phillips for the discussion. He clarified that while many believe the Board has the authority to decide on CBMES, there are legal hurdles that must be addressed first before any decision can be made.

Ron McNinch – Dr. McNinch stated that the Board is committed to students and parents but must determine whether they have the authority to act on the issue, and if so, how to proceed

legally. He noted that political red tape and legislative bureaucracy complicate matters for both charter and public schools. He emphasized the importance of teacher stability and proper management across the education system and expressed concern about the legal and procedural questions the Board must carefully navigate.

Mr. Ada asked about the payment issue, expressed gladness that the issue was resolved, and inquired why SIFA left their previous site.

Attorney Phillips explained that since January 2024, the landlord has stopped invoicing SIFA. He said he couldn't speak for the landlord's reasoning, but noted that their legal counsel told the judge it was a strategic decision. He clarified that SIFA cannot legally pay rent without receiving an invoice, as that is the only way they can request and receive funds from the Department of Administration.

Mr. Ada noted that Attorney Phillips had previously stated SIFA doesn't owe any money, but now there appears to be a different version of the story.

Attorney Phillips stated there is no other side of the story - SIFA's contract clearly outlined a total of \$2.5 million for the entire term, not annually. He said the landlord misinterpreted it as \$2.4/\$2.5 million per year, and if SIFA pays that, it would go to jail. SIFA has already paid roughly two terms' worth, and the contract language is simple and unambiguous.

Mr. Ada asked if he was saying that SIFA doesn't owe the landlord any money at all for rent.

Attorney Phillips said that was correct.

Mr. Ada asked why SIFA was leaving.

Attorney Phillips explained that the rent dispute led to a lawsuit, prompting a review that confirmed SIFA didn't owe any money - in fact, the landlord may owe them. He noted that the landlord clearly doesn't want SIFA, and SIFA doesn't want to stay where they're unwelcome. The contract has since expired and was never renewed.

Mr. Ada acknowledged the discussion and addressed Mr. Ravela, pointing out that 180 students from Tamuning currently attend JRMS. He supported turning CBMES into a middle school to better serve these students. He added that over 100 students from TAMES would also feed into a new middle school, totaling around 300 students. Mr. Ada then asked if SIFA could comfortably accommodate that number of students if parents chose to send their children to a school closer to Tamuning, emphasizing the goal of bringing schools closer to students, not farther away.

Mr. Ravela responded that, according to his discussion with Dr. Carla Aguon, about 78 students had indicated they would be going to JRMS. He said the 100 students might be an overflow resulting from the possibility that CBMES will be available.

Mr. Ada asked if SIFA was able to accommodate 300 additional students.

Mr. Ravela responded that they are confident they can accommodate 300 additional students as the CBMES facility currently has the capacity to support that number.

Mr. Ada explained that he asked about the move because he heard discussions about potentially closing JRMS to convert it into an elementary school. He then asked if SIFA can transfer its collateral equipment to the CBMES facility within 21 days, by August 7th.

Mr. Ravela replied that their school calendar differs from GDOE's and that their school year is set to begin on August 15.

Mr. Ada asked if they could complete transferring collateral equipment to the new site from the previous site.

Mr. Ravela affirmed that they could move into the CBMES facility within a week, noting they previously transferred all materials from their Tiyan campus to their current interim site in under four days. He added that he has a capable team ready to support the move.

Mr. Ada shared that he had spoken with the mayor of Tamuning and emphasized, as Dr. Won Pat did, the importance of putting politics aside to prioritize the children's education. He said it would be unfortunate to see the CBMES facility go to waste. He also mentioned that another school, LBJES, is in a similar situation but hasn't received as much attention. He then asked whether SIFA plans to change the name of CBMES if they use the facility.

Mr. Ravela replied that they would like to use the CBMES facility to house the SIFA charter school.

Mr. Ada asked if SIFA would remove the school's name.

Mr. Ravela responded that they would not remove the name, stating that it's a legacy they will not touch.

Mr. Ada said most of his questions were answered and expressed trust in Attorney Phillips. He acknowledged that they are approaching a point where a decision needs to be made.

Mr. Ravela shared the origins of SIFA, which began as Dr. Sunga's dream to bring STEAM education to Guam. As a biologist with a doctorate, Dr. Sunga turned down lucrative global offers to return to Guam and give back through education. He emphasized Dr. Sunga's passion for teaching and reaching students early, especially in science. Though not administrators by profession, they built the school from the ground up, and with support from people like Attorney Michael Phillips and Board member Criz Ortiz, they've worked to correct past missteps. He acknowledged it's been challenging, but they are committed to doing things the right way. He highlighted their ongoing efforts to train teachers in NGSS and their desire to continue serving the community through education, asking only for the opportunity to keep doing so.

Mr. Ada asked if they can make the first year payment, continuous without any abeyance.

Mr. Ravela replied that they can make a one-year payment, continuously, if Mr. Birns from DOA receives the notice, and with the approval from their counsel chair.

Mr. Ada said he probably wasn't expecting that question.

Mr. Ravela said they were ready to make that payment.

Mr. Ada asked if they are able to accommodate 300 additional students and if he could reassure the Board that priority enrollment would be given to the Tamuning students currently attending Jose Rios Middle School.

Mr. Ravela stated that SIFA will prioritize incoming students from Tamuning for enrollment at CBMES. He added that as long as it doesn't involve discrimination against other applicants, they are willing to take the necessary steps to make it happen.

Mr. Sablan asked GDOE Legal Counsel Attorney Jesse Nasis to come up.

Dr. Guthertz recapped public interest and developments surrounding the future of the CBMES campus since early July. She presented a timeline beginning with a Guam Daily Post article in which Attorney Phillips disclosed that negotiations were taking place to allow SIFA to use the CBMES campus, though he did not name those involved. She stressed that the GEB was not consulted or part of those negotiations and clarified that the proposal did not come from the Board. She also cited a July 11th article noting SIFA's move-out from its Tiyan campus and highlighted a quote from Attorney Phillips stating, "SIFA school is neither a non-profit organization nor an organization" and "SIFA is not there anymore." She asked him to clarify those statements and whether they indicated some kind of legal strategy.

Attorney Philipps clarified that his earlier statement wasn't a strategic maneuver but a partial quote that may have caused confusion. He explained that while non-profits originally petitioned to form charter schools like SIFA, they are no longer recognized entities - legally, governance now lies with the Board of Trustees. Although the non-profit may have appointed the initial board members, the non-profit and the school's governing board members are distinct. He noted that the landlord mistakenly sued the non-profit, which no longer operates the school or occupies the campus, instead of suing the school or its Board of Trustees.

Dr. Guthertz asked who would be responsible for paying any owed money if the second case against SIFA is not dismissed and it is determined that SIFA owes funds.

Attorney Phillips stated he can't speak for the non-profit directly, but noted that few non-profits could afford the amount in question. Regarding the school, he clarified it's not part of any current court case. In the latest lawsuit, there was no request for back rent - only for the non-profit to vacate. He emphasized that there is no court action seeking back rent at this time.

Dr. Guthertz asked if that could change.

Attorney Philips said yes, and they can't stop people from suing.

Dr. Guthertz voiced concern that legal liabilities tied to the new campus could disrupt operations and pose financial risks to the legislature if they are expected to cover costs. She stressed the importance of addressing these legal issues and thanked Attorney Phillips for his insights. She mentioned that Eagle Land Holdings LLC has sued SIFA twice, though one case was dismissed due to failure to prove proper service and removal of the school from its Tiyan property. Citing a news report, she noted that SIFA still plans to operate in the 2025-2026 school year but is unsure when it will start as it seeks a new facility. She questioned whether SIFA has considered other available properties, noting there is currently a lot of vacant real estate on Guam.

Mr. Ravela explained that SIFA has explored multiple options for a new location, including commercial properties and LBJES. However, the council chair prefers to keep the school intact in one location. He noted that while they could technically split grade levels across different locations or use asynchronous learning setups, most parents strongly prefer a traditional, single-campus brick-and-mortar school. This makes their situation difficult as they have thoroughly searched both public

and private options and have not found a location that would provide a safe and suitable learning environment for students.

Dr. Guthertz shared how the Board became aware of the SIFA proposal, stating that it began in early July when she read Attorney Phillips' comments, which caught her attention. She explained that the Board later learned about ongoing negotiations -likely involving Adelup-and received draft agreements and accompanying letters. A revised version of the proposal was shared just days before the meeting, and a separate proposal from Senator Tina Muna Barnes also emerged around the same time. She emphasized that while the proposals are valuable, they were unsolicited by the GEB. The Board had already decided to issue an RFP to the community, which had expressed a desire for the campus to become a GDOE public middle school- a priority established before SIFA's situation arose. She stressed the importance of following proper legal procedures, including not acting on unsolicited proposals, and reiterated that proposals like those from Dr. Won Pat and Senator Muna-Barnes should be submitted formally once the RFP is released. She acknowledged the financial challenges facing the school system and said the Board has a duty to explore options that could generate funding without relying heavily on the Legislature. She also highlighted the need to re-engage the Tamuning community, noting that no recent village meetings had been held to gather current input on whether they support a charter school or still prefer a GDOE middle school. Finally, she raised a question about the difference between the first and second proposals from SIFA, noting that the first mentioned no rent but value through renovations, while the second appeared to differ, and she requested clarification.

Attorney Phillips clarified that neither he nor SIFA initiated the broader efforts to help and had no involvement in the various proposals being discussed. From a legal standpoint, he explained that when a private school converts to a charter school - like SIFA did- it is required by law to ask the GDOE Superintendent if any facilities are available. He noted the irony that for nearly a century, superintendents have responded that no facilities were available, allowing charter schools to leave privately, as SIFA previously did. However, this time, the Superintendent does have available facilities. He wrote the required letter on behalf of SIFA to GDOE, and now the decision lies with GDOE. He emphasized that SIFA followed the legal process and cannot be held responsible for any other proposals or actions taken outside of that. He also stated that while the law requires a charter to ask for available facilities, it doesn't clearly require GDOE to say yes, though he questioned the logic of such a setup.

Dr. Guthertz noted that there are now three versions of the proposal regarding SIFA's use of the CBMES campus: two from SIFA and Dr. Won Pat, and one from Senator Muna-Barnes. She pointed out that the first version from SIFA proposed no rent in exchange for in-kind renovations.

Attorney Phillips clarified that they have not created, sent, or approved any version of the proposal and do not endorse any of the versions being discussed. He expressed appreciation for the support, but stressed that those versions are not theirs.

Dr. Guthertz noted that there was a version of the proposal from Dr. Won Pat and asked Attorney Phillips to confirm if that was correct.

Dr. Won Pat said she would follow Dr. Guthertz's lead and explain the events chronologically from the beginning.

Dr. Guthertz encouraged her to go ahead because they wanted to know.

Dr. Won Pat explained that she was asked by Speaker Frank Blas Jr. and the Acting Governor (Lt. Governor) to help address concerns about 400+ children potentially being displaced and to draft an

MOA. She used language based on existing agreements, such as the one with Guahan Academy Charter School, which uses a government facility rent-free. She worked with attorneys from the Governor's office to review and revise the MOA. The initial draft included signatures from the executive branch, similar to past agreements, but it was later recommended that it be removed. A revised version was then issued with only GDOE and SIFA as the signatories.

Dr. Guthertz asked for the reason behind that.

Dr. Won Pat explained that Legal Counsel advised that GDOE can handle this independently, without needing the executive branch's involvement.

Guthertz's main concern is the legality and proper procedures of the Board's actions, especially since the Board lacks its own attorney after previously having one (Mike Phillips). She highlighted unresolved issues like the rent problem and emphasized the Board's responsibility to seek funding to support schools without overburdening the Guam Legislature, which is already struggling due to funding losses caused by Washington policies. She expressed uncertainty about the financial stability of GDOE amid ongoing changes and challenges, including support losses for various public sectors. She stressed the Board's duty to explore resources for schools like CBMES and LBJES, noting the importance of the RFP process to ensure fairness and transparency to the community. She questioned whether the law mandates solicitation and expressed concern about whom to consult since the Board lacks legal counsel, leaving the Attorney General's office as an option. Finally, she raised practical concerns about how SIFA would fund necessary renovations at CBMES before reopening.

Mr. Ravela said they saved some money by tightening their operations. He noted that most needed repairs at CBMES are about 80% cosmetic, such as a few toilets needing retrofitting and replacing the awning rafters and tin, while the steel pipes and concrete structure remain sound. The floors and interior are clean, though the exteriors are weathered and could use paint. Based on an initial inspection and recent public health clearance, he doesn't expect many major issues inside, but they need a thorough internal assessment before planning any significant renovations.

Dr. Guthertz asked if he was saying SIFA could afford to do the renovations in-house.

Mr. Ravela said yes.

Dr. Guthertz asked if they were looking for Business sponsors to do it.

Mr. Ravela said they are permitted to request volunteer help and donations of materials like paint. He shared that they have a strong support network of staff and parents who are willing to volunteer their time and effort to assist as needed.

Dr. Guthertz asked if they would need the help of Mr. Borja.

Mr. Ravela said they won't need his help.

Dr. Guthertz explained that the department has no funds to assist and clarified that she asked questions to help Senator Borja and ensure all legal matters are addressed. She emphasized that if the Government of Guam owns the property, it could take control without the Board's approval, but she's uncertain if an RFP would be required. She stressed the importance of following the law to avoid personal or institutional liability. She urged consulting government attorneys before any action and highlighted that mistakes can't be afforded given the past challenges. She noted that the

legislature has the power to change laws quickly, but the Board hasn't yet engaged with legislators on this. Ultimately, she insisted that any steps taken must comply fully with legal procedures, whether by the executive branch, legislature, or the GEB.

Mr. Sablan said that's why GDOE legal counsel was here. He informed Senator Borja about the proposal from Senator Muna-Barnes and asked if he knew how many signatories it had.

Senator Borja said he had just seen the letter on the same day it was sent.

Mr. Sablan asked if it was not yet in Bill form.

Senator Borja clarified that there is currently no bill in place regarding the issue. He emphasized that the Legislature is willing to support the process but acknowledges the bureaucratic challenges involved. He noted that the Speaker had asked the executive branch to draft an MOA, but there was no bill yet. He attempted to contact Guam Academy Charter Schools Council Chair Evangeline Cepeda, who was off-island, and met with the executive branch to better understand the situation. He said the committee is still receiving new information and is trying to sort through the various proposals. He also raised questions about legal authority - specifically, whether the executive branch can act if the property belongs to GDOE, given GDOE's status as an autonomous agency. He concluded that there is still no clear answer on who has the authority or responsibility to move forward with the SIFA proposal.

Mr. Sablan emphasized the urgency of finding a home for over 400 students and asked Attorney Nasis if he had researched who owns CBMES and the land it occupies, highlighting the importance of clarifying ownership.

Attorney Nasis stated that while he hasn't reviewed the documents himself, he was informed that the CBMES property is supposed to belong to GDOE. However, verification is still pending based on the actual documentation.

Mrs. Gutierrez recalled that when she was on the Board, the Tamuning Municipal Council and local stakeholders-including herself as a resident-had requested that the CBMES campus be converted into a middle school, based on a promise made by former Governor Joe Ada. She emphasized that Tamuning students, like those at JRMS, are strong performers and also participate in programs like robotics. She supported Dr. Guthertz's call to engage with the Tamuning community, noting that the Board has not yet done so regarding the current SIFA proposal. She stressed that the community should not be forced into accepting SIFA and that parents and students deserve to be heard. She also expressed discomfort with the idea of allowing SIFA to use the facility rent-free when GDOE is facing funding struggles. She warned this could set a precedent, citing other communities like Santa Rita that are already requesting school facilities. She questioned what would happen if more groups started asking to use GDOE properties without paying rent. She noted confusion over whether Dr. Swanson supports the MOA or Senator Muna-Barnes' proposal and reiterated that the Board had directed him to issue an RFP. She concluded by urging the Board to refer the matter to the appropriate committee and hold a town hall meeting with the Tamuning community to hear their input before proceeding.

Senator Borja explained that Bill 70, sponsored by Senator Joe San Agustin, is expected to be reported out of committee and should be in the next session. This bill aims to allow GDOE to lease underutilized facilities.

Mr. Sablan discussed several key points regarding SIFA's potential move to the CBMES facility. He noted that Attorney Phillips had sent a letter to Dr. Swanson referencing a law that allows the Superintendent to repurpose unused facilities. He mentioned that the Tamuning Municipal Planning Council had twice passed resolutions to convert CBMES into a middle school, with the Board supporting the idea, but lacking funding to make the transition. He highlighted that SIFA has offered to retrofit the campus at no cost, which could eventually benefit the community once SIFA moves out. He raised concerns about legal procedures, saying that if Board approval is required, they may need to go through a formal RFP process and legislative testimony. He emphasized that the laws are unclear and it's important to proceed in a way that avoids legal challenges from other entities or the Attorney General. He reiterated that while the Board wants to support what's best for students, the process must be done correctly from the start. He pointed out that going through the legislature could be the fastest route - if a law names SIFA and designates CBMES as a charter school, the Board would have to comply. Lastly, he noted concern over the timing, referencing Dr. McNinch's question about why the request came so late in the process.

Dr. Guthertz emphasized that everyone is genuinely trying to do what's best for the students and proposed a creative solution: SIFA could consider converting into a public school at CBMES. This would bypass legal hurdles like the RFP process and expedite the transition. She suggested that SIFA could use its saved funds for renovations, retain its specialized focus, and integrate staff into the GDOE system, with HR support to meet the requirements. This approach would achieve both SIFA's and the Board's goals while ensuring transparency. She noted that legislative support would be needed, but encouraged thinking outside the box to make it happen.

Dr. Won Pat explained that charter schools are public schools by law and receive public funding, intentionally designed to offer specialized programs accessible to all students, especially those who can't afford private education. She clarified that school lands and buildings are government property, confirmed by the Department of Land Management. She discussed the urgency of finding a temporary campus for SIFA, noting that while an RFP process would be ideal, it takes too long, and school is about to start. She proposed using CBMES as an interim campus and working with the legislature to authorize an RFP and create a legal mechanism for SIFA's funds to be transferred to GDOE. One idea, supported by Senator Muna-Barnes, is to have the legislature appropriate SIFA's annual payment directly to GDOE for CIP, rather than handling monthly rent. She stressed that the immediate priority is getting children into a school - not maximizing profits from prime real estate - and pointed to past decisions like rebuilding JFKHS as precedent. She believes procedural hurdles shouldn't prevent action and urged the Board to support an interim solution while the legislature handles the necessary legal steps. She praised the creativity behind the idea and emphasized that political and legal issues can be managed if the focus remains on what's best for the students.

Dr. Guthertz assured Dr. Won Pat that if there are delays, children can temporarily attend GDOE schools, emphasizing that they never turn any child away. She reaffirmed GDOE's commitment to support until other issues are resolved. She also suggested to Senator Borja that SIFA consider becoming a public school, as this could potentially resolve many challenges more quickly and easily. She noted it's just a suggestion, but one worth discussing with stakeholders.

Dr. McNinch expressed concern about systemic issues in the charter school oversight process. He highlighted the lack of a unified command due to two competing boards - the charter school council and the school board - creating confusion and inefficiency. He believes problems should be reported and addressed immediately, but feels the process is broken. He warned against repeating the same issues with other schools annually. Noting the law governing charter schools is 16 years old, he urged Senator Borja to review it and consider better alternatives, as variances have often been allowed without clear direction.

Mr. Ada asked if his staff could address special needs students.

Mr. Ravela said they have students who are in the 504 IEP.

Mr. Ada asked if they had teacher aides.

Mr. Ravela explained that they had provided a 1:1 aide for the student, but once the student transferred to GDOE, the aide was no longer needed.

Mr. Ada advised them to be prepared in case they take over the facility, noting that some students from JRMS who may transfer would require special needs.

Mr. Sablan acknowledged that the issue would not be resolved that night and emphasized the need to address the other items on the agenda, and he wanted the members joining via Zoom to be present for the executive session. He mentioned that the board will reconvene on July 29, noting that the school starts on August 7. He stated that Dr. Won Pat's proposed interim campus was a workable option. He suggested the proposal be reviewed by both SIFA and GDOE attorneys to ensure it meets legal requirements. The interim campus could operate for one year while legislation is pursued to solidify SIFA's charter status, with Tamuning also getting its middle school. He noted SIFA's start date is August 15 and told Mr. Ravela that it could be potentially delayed.

Mr. Ravela said yes.

Mr. Sablan stated that if an interim campus proposal is ready by the July 29 meeting, the Board can review it and potentially approve it. He emphasized that this would be a temporary solution to support SIFA while involving the legislature to find a long-term resolution. He expressed concern about the possibility of other charter schools facing similar displacement issues in the future. His proposed compromise is to allow SIFA to use the CBMES campus temporarily, preventing it from deteriorating and avoiding financial waste. He noted Mr. Ravela's willingness to invest in the site if the interim plan is approved and instructed Attorneys Phillips and Nasis to draft a legally sound agreement.

Mr. Ada clarified that it wasn't necessarily an interim agreement, but rather a proposal for the Board to consider.

Mr. Sablan said it's the same thing - an interim agreement to approve.

Mr. Ada said yes, for consideration.

Mr. Sablan said all they can do is consider.

Guthertz requested that Dr. Swanson draft an RFP if they need to do that in order to make sure they're covering all the bases.

Mr. Ada emphasized that he clearly heard Mr. Ravela confirm that SIFA has funds to pay the first year's rent. He joked about his hearing aid but made it clear he was paying close attention. He stressed that since SIFA has the money, they are expected to make the payment on time, and no excuses for payment extensions will be accepted.

Dr. Guthertz motioned, seconded by Mrs. Angel, to approve an interim agreement for SIFA's one-year use of the Chief Brodie Memorial Elementary School, pending a written proposal and first reviewed by the Policy Committee. The Board voted by voice with a vote of 7-0. The motion passed.

Dr. Guthertz said the lease will be for one year, with payment terms to be negotiated. After that, if a Request for Proposal is required, SIFA can participate.

Mr. Sablan clarified that the proposal for SIFA to use the campus is only an interim, one-year arrangement. He said it still needs to be discussed at the July 29 meeting and emphasized that SIFA must address legal matters on its end. He told them that once they move in, they should immediately begin searching for a long-term location, as the current Board may not be in place later. He stressed the need to involve the Charter School Council and noted that the GEB is stepping in to help, but the responsibility shouldn't fall solely on the Board.

Mrs. Gutierrez recommended referring the matter back to the committee for further discussion before reviewing any new proposals.

Dr. Guthertz amended her motion to also defer the matter to the committee.

Mr. Ada asked which committee it would fall under.

Mr. Sablan clarified that the matter would go to the executive committee. He noted that Dr. Guthertz amended her motion to include bringing it back to the executive committee for review.

Mrs. Gutierrez added that it should also be referred to the finance committee.

Mr. Sablan agreed it could be sent to any committee she chooses.

Mrs. Gutierrez emphasized the need for a thorough discussion, noting that there are two proposals under consideration. She stated she is not prepared to decide until she has all the necessary information.

Mr. Sablan stated that the issue will be brought to the Board on July 29th. He called for a vote on Dr. Guthertz's motion to have all involved parties develop a viable interim plan that would allow SIFA to use the CBMES campus temporarily for at least a year, ensuring students don't miss out on their education. He described it as a compromise everyone could support and noted that any additional proposals from the legislature, executive, or finance committee could be incorporated into the plan.

V. COMMUNICATIONS – Not discussed.

VI. EX-OFFICIO MEMBER REPORTS – Not discussed

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - Not discussed

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS & ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Ada motioned, seconded by Mrs. Angel, to go into recess until July 29, 2025. The Board voted by voice with a vote of 7-0. The motion passed.

He emphasized the urgency, stating they can't waste time and have a lot to discuss on the 29th, including the school openings.

The Board recessed at 6:06 p.m.

MINUTES SUBMITTED BY:

KATHLEEN LAMORENA
Administrative Officer

Date: August 1, 2025

MINUTES OF JULY 15, 2025 REGULAR MEETING:

- ☒ Approved as submitted
☐ Approved subject to corrections
☐ Other: _____



ANGEL R. SABLAN
GEB Chair

Date: 8/19/25



K. ERIK SWANSON, Ph.D.
Executive Secretary/GDOE Superintendent

Date: 8/19/25