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State auditor requested

By Archiebald Browne
August 26, 2019

While Seeworth has now relinquished its building lease, the Oklahoma State Board of Education voted Thursday to ask State Auditor and Inspector Cindy Byrd's office to audit Seeworth's zombified governing entity.

The Seeworth organization's board had previously approved a private audit to be conducted on its "corporate account," but it's unclear if that audit was completed.

"With any closure, there is a process to completing the books and closing that out. So the state board is asking for assistance from the state auditor inspector with this task," Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction Joy Hofmeister said Friday. "So that will go forward now. Then we want to keep our focus on students and making certain that [OKCPS] has what they need to move forward as well."

Since May, Seeworth has been on thin ice dealing with the regulatory bodies to which it reports.

On May 2, OSDE sent a letter to the Seeworth board saying it had found evidence of "multiple artifacts to demonstrate gross neglect and non-compliance with both state and federal laws and regulations," including failing to account for taxpayer dollars and maintain accounting records.

Asked if the department had faced difficulty obtaining records from the Seeworth board, Hofmeister told reporters, "Well, we are where we are."

Asked if OSDE thought Seeworth had participated in criminal behavior with federal funds, Hofmeister said it was not her job or the department's job to speculate.

"We know that we first have to have an accounting of assets and it is something that the auditors office for a special audit is equipped to handle, and that is something beyond what we are able to do," Hofmeister said.

Two of Seeworth's board members are public officials: Sen. Kay Floyd ([D-OKC](#)) and Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals Judge Barbara Swinton.

"We know that they did — we believe — the right thing in closing the charter, and that was a move that they did voluntarily," Hofmeister said of the Seeworth board. "The investigation of whatever lies ahead with those then that are responsible for keeping the records and the expenditures of funds in accordance with state and federal law is something that is a typical part of the closing of a school."

Joy Hofmeister Request Letter – Seeworth Academy – August 27, 2019



JOY HOFMEISTER
STATE SUPERINTENDENT *of* PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT *of* EDUCATION

August 27, 2019

The Honorable Cindy Byrd
Oklahoma State Auditor & Inspector
2300 N. Lincoln Blvd., Rm. 123
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Dear Auditor Byrd,

Pursuant to 74 O.S. § 213, the Oklahoma State Board of Education (the "State Board") respectfully requests an audit of Seeworth Academy, formerly an Oklahoma public charter school. On August 22, 2019, the State Board voted to request this audit. A copy of the August 22 State Board meeting agenda is enclosed for you and, once approved, I will also provide the minutes of this meeting.

The scope of the audit is requested to cover fiscal years 2017-18 through present, but not to exclude prior years if deemed necessary, for compliance with statutes, rules, policies and internal control procedures or other items applicable to the entity. Finally, pursuant to the aforementioned statute the cost of the audit is to be borne by the audited entity.

If you have questions or wish to discuss these matters further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joy Hofmeister".

Joy Hofmeister
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Chair, Oklahoma State Board of Education