Salem charter school gets green light

BY STEPHANIE JADRNICEK
THE JOURNAL

SALEM — It's full steam ahead for a proposed charter school in the town of Salem.

NEXT High School's board of directors has given the green light to move forward and will make a formal proposal to the South Carolina Public Charter School District in a few weeks.

Now it's time to crunch the numbers, and Joe Greenberg, development director of NEXT High School in Greenville, is spending a lot of time in Salem.

"We are hurrying to put enrollment numbers together — there seems to be overwhelming support in this community," he said. "We are looking at putting together another community event in Salem next Wednesday to formally get some enrollment confirmation from families."

The proposal will also involve a few amendments to the school's charter. NEXT High School serves grades 9-12, but the charter school proposed in Salem would expand to include middle school students as well.

Greenberg is working at least three days per week in Salem to prepare for the upcoming proposal. He said he wants to get to know the town and the people. Several parents have already stopped in to introduce themselves and express support about the possibility of the charter school.

A group of Salem residents are heading to the main campus of NEXT High School in Greenville

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today to learn more about the charter's program.

"I'm really impressed with the vitality and the candid spirit of the community," Greenberg said.

NEXT High School will soon set up an enrollment portal through its website so Salem students can begin enrollment. Greenberg is also looking at coordinating an ice cream social after school next Wednesday so parents can enroll their students.

He said Salem's willingness to embrace the innovation and impact-based approach at NEXT High School struck a chord with the leadership at the charter school. He believes what they are proposing resonates well with the Salem community.

There are many steps ahead, but presenting the proposal to the South Carolina Public Charter School District is by far the biggest. The district has been supportive so far and has done its due diligence in the process. The district's board just wants to ensure that there's a viable plan in place to execute.

"Everyone understands it's an ambitious timetable from May until August to build a school," Greenberg said. "So it's going to take all hands on deck."

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