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## Council seeks clarification on charter schools enrollment

John O'Connor | The Guam Daily Post Sep 27, 2017 Updated Sep 27, 2017



CLARIFICATION: Guahan Academy Charter School had to delay the reopening of its high school and middle school facility, and plans to seek legal clarification on whether it can keep its enrollment above 740 students this year. David Castro/The Guam Daily Post

The Guam Academy Charter Schools Council is seeking a legal opinion from the Office of the Attorney General on whether a charter school is allowed to keep its enrollment numbers or will have to limit the number of students to match its budgetary cap in the 2018 budget law.

Guahan Academy Charter School had anticipated about 1,015 students for school year 2017-2018, but the Guam Legislature passed and later enacted into law a budget allowing for only 740 students, the school's cap for the prior fiscal year.

Amanda Blas, chairwoman for the council, said members motioned to request an opinion from the attorney general to clarify the law, "if the enrollment is limited to the budget law, or can they enroll more with the understanding that they have to finance those additional students?"

A letter to the attorney general is expected to be submitted this week.

The council also issued a letter to Guahan Academy and iLearn Academy Charter School, the second charter school on Guam, requesting the schools' spending plans for fiscal 2018.

Guahan Academy is in the process of turning a parcel of Tiyan property into a temporary campus.

The property holds the old Department of Motor Vehicles building and currently houses middle and high school students. It is intended to hold elementary school students from a nearby Guahan Academy campus as well, once work is completed.

### **Enrollment cap**

Guahan Academy had requested in its budget to the council an increase in its student cap.

The budget request was signed by the board in January of this year.

The council noted that the middle and high school facilities at the time were overcrowded and inadequate.

Guahan Academy sought more than \$6.59 million as its budget for fiscal 2018.

This is based on the assumption that it would enroll 1,015 students. Its funding is taken from the budget of the Guam Department of Education and is based on the number of students enrolled at Guahan Academy.

The school's budget request included about \$1.32 million for paying interest and principal for its facilities expansion plan.

The Legislature, however, capped Guahan Academy's enrollment at 740 students for fiscal 2018, which capped funding to be taken from GDOE at about \$4.8 million.

The school has already enrolled about 1,000 students, however.

Guahan Academy also exceeded its student cap last fiscal year.

GDOE has offered to assist should students want to transfer back into GDOE schools.

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### **John O'Connor**

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