

STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

July 29, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

SCSC Board Room, 5th Floor, West Tower (Commissioners and Staff)
Virtual Meeting (Public)



Attendees: Commissioners: Paul Williams -Chairman; Buzz Brockway -Vice Chairman; Carmen Dill; Jose Perez; Tom Lewis; Hunter Hill; and Dr. Lina Millan. SCSC Staff members: Lauren Holcomb – Executive Director; Morgan Felts – Chief Operations Officer; Cerrone Lockett – General Counsel; Kristen Easterbrook – Charter Development Manager; Rennie Laryea – Associate General Counsel; Sarah Beck – Associate General Counsel and Operational Accountability Manager; Terence Washington – Financial Accountability Manager; Darcy Callaway – Business Manager; and Danielle Williams – Communications and Outreach Coordinator. Approximately 34 members of the public were also present

- I. **Call to Order** (Chairman Paul Williams)
 - The meeting was called to order at 10:07 a.m.
 - All commissioners were present.

- II. **Approval of SCSC Meeting Minutes** (Chairman Paul Williams)
 - Chairman Williams called for the approval of the June 24, 2020 meeting minutes. Commissioner Perez motioned. Commissioner Brockway seconded. The June 24, 2020 meeting minutes were approved by unanimous vote.
 - Chairman Williams called for the approval of the June 24, 2020 Executive Session meeting minutes. Commissioner Millan motioned. Commissioner Brockway seconded. The June 24, 2020 Executive Session meeting minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

- III. **School Re-Start Update** (SCSC Executive Director)
 - The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and Georgia Department of Public Health (GaDPH) developed the *Path to Recovery for K12 Schools*, which includes re-opening guidance for schools. State charter schools, as an LEAs, have the autonomy to implement reopening plan that respond to the needs of their individual communities.

 - CDC guidance notes the importance of re-opening schools for social, emotional and behavioral health. The guidance cites low transmission rates for younger students and notes that “The lack of in-person educational options disproportionately harms low-income and minority children and those living with disabilities ...[that are] far less likely to have access to private instruction and care and far more likely to rely on key school-supported resources ...to meet basic developmental needs.”

 - The Governor’s K12 Restart Committee published guidance in the following areas: School Meals, Distance Learning/Professional Learning, Connectivity & Devices, Mental Health and Wellness, Supplemental Learning and Facilities, Transportation & Equipment.

 - State charter schools were required to submit pandemic plans for SCSC staff review to ensure compliance with state and federal requirements. Nineteen SCSC schools are offering in-person instruction at the beginning of the school year and majority will offer a remote option. SCSC Schools are required to notify the SCSC of changes to pandemic plans and are encouraged to work with

community partners provide safe places to learn for affected students if opening the building is not an option.

IV. **Legislative Update** (SCSC Executive Director)

- **2021 Fiscal Year (FY 21) Budget-** The Georgia General Assembly adopted and the Governor signed the State's FY21 budget. Due to a \$2.6B deficit caused by COVID-19's economic impact, this version of the budget contemplates 10 percent reductions for state agency budgets and the education funding formula.
- **Charter Facility Grant-** The Charter Facility Grant of \$3.5M was only subject to a \$4,000 reduction. Charter schools can expect to receive the grant in FY21 helping offset other budget reductions.

Charter Legislation: HB 957 – HB 957, sponsored by Rep. Jan Jones, has been signed by the Governor. The bill clarifies State Health Benefit Plan eligibility for state charter school, allows charter schools flexibility in managing school lottery eligibility (i.e. option of requiring proof of residency at the time of application OR at the time of enrollment), and extends state charter school board member terms from two to four years (for appointments after July 1, 2020). The bill also provides two clarifications to student records requirements: (1) that records are the property of the school, even if created through an agreement with a third-party vendor and; (2) in the event of state charter school closure, the school will maintain records for one year and facilitate record transfers, after which the SCSC will take any unclaimed records. Additionally, the bill shifts the deadline for the virtual school performance audit from Dec. 1st to April 1st to include academic performance data.

HB 755 – HB 755, sponsored by Rep. Dave Belton is awaiting the Governor's signature. The bill requires that local school systems provide annual allotment sheets to locally approved charter schools itemizing state, local, and federal funds. This action will improve transparency between local charters and local boards of education and allow local charters to better project funding for budgetary purposes.

V. **School Openings** (SCSC Charter Development Manager)

- Six new state charter schools will open during the 2020-21 school year. Those schools are: Atlanta Unbound Academy (Fulton); Delta STEAM Academy (Douglas); Furlow Charter School (Sumter); Georgia Fugees Academy Charter School (DeKalb); Harriet Tubman School of Science and Tech (APS); and Yi Hwang Academy of Language Excellence (Gwinnett). Five schools have deferred their 2021-22 school year openings due to facility and COVID-related challenges.

VI. **2020 Petition Cycle** (SCSC Associate General Counsel, SCSC General Counsel)

- The SCSC will announce next steps for the 2020 petition cycle (suspended by the SCSC in May) at the August board meeting.

VII. **Organizational Development** (SCSC Charter Development Manager)

- The SCSC held several trainings in July and has several trainings coming up for FY21. Upcoming trainings will be held virtually and additional information is available on the SCSC's website.
- The deadline for completing the annual governance training requirement was extended to Sep. 30, 2020.

VIII. **Research Update** (SCSC Executive Director)

- In fall of 2019, the SCSC and Georgia Charter Schools Association (GCSA) contracted with The Tennessee Charter School Center (TCSC) through the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools and a U.S. Department of Education grant to provide training and resources via the Charter School Facility Center. One of the resulting resources *The Transparency Project: Georgia Charter School Facilities and Financing Study* was presented during the meeting by Cameron Quick, a national facilities expert

who has supported charters across the country for more than a decade. The study gathered information on the facilities challenges faced by Georgia charters seeking long-term facilities solutions.

IX. **Action Items (General Counsel)**

- **SLAM Academy Charter Amendment**

Recommendation: The SCSC staff recommended that the SCSC approve SLAM Academy's request to add South Fulton County to the school's attendance zone.

SCSC Action: Chairman Williams called for a motion to approve the SCSC staff recommendation. Commissioner Lewis motioned. Commissioner Brockway seconded. The SCSC adopted the SCSC staff recommendation to approve SLAM Academy's request to add South Fulton County to the school's attendance zone by unanimous vote.

- **Mountain Education Charter High School Charter Amendment**

Recommendation: The SCSC staff recommended that the SCSC approve Mountain Education Charter High School's request to amend its charter to increase the school's enrollment limit. The amendment incorporates students attending sites that the SCSC **approved** in fall 2019 but that did not **open** until after the automatic enrollment limit went into effect.

SCSC Action: Chairman Williams called for a motion to approve the SCSC staff recommendation. Commissioner Millan motioned. Commissioner Perez seconded. The SCSC adopted the SCSC staff recommendation to approve Mountain Education Charter High School's request to amend its charter to increase the school's enrollment limit by unanimous vote.

X. **Additional Items from Commissioners**

- Commissioners discussed virtual versus in-person school restart plans and their associated concerns.

XI. **Public Comment**

- There was no public comment.

XII. **Adjourn**

- The meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m.