

## **STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS COMMISSION MEETING**

**March 30 2016, 10 a.m.**

**Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning Conference Room  
East Twin Tower, Room 854, Atlanta, Georgia 30334**

### Meeting Minutes

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jennifer Rippner. Chairman Rippner verified that a quorum existed. Commissioner Lowden attended the meeting via teleconference. Commissioner Suzanne Werner was not present.
2. Also present were Commission staff members Bonnie Holliday-Executive Director, Gregg Stevens—Deputy Director and General Counsel, Terence Washington – Finance and Operational Accountability Manager, Morgan Felts – Associate General Counsel and Petitions Manager, and Katie Manthey – Academic Accountability Manager.
3. Approximately 30 members of the public also attended the meeting including charter school staff and representatives, charter school business representatives, and Georgia Charter Schools Association representatives were also present.
4. After calling the meeting to order, Chairman Rippner announced an amendment to the agenda. Chairman Rippner stated that she would add two process items to the end of the meeting to allow the commission to address matters related to its administrative withhold. These items were expected to be handled at the commission’s April meeting, but finalizing the midterm budget occurred earlier than expected, allowing the commission to likewise act before it intended.
5. Chairman Rippner then called for approval of the meeting minutes from the February 24<sup>th</sup> SCSC meeting. Commissioner Hogg made a motion to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Perez provided a second. There was no discussion, and the minutes were unanimously approved by those present.
6. Chairmen Rippner asked Director Holliday to discuss the SCSC’s scheduled site visits. Director Holliday noted that she and Commissioners Hogg and Lowden visited the International Charter School of Atlanta on Monday, February 29<sup>th</sup>. Director Holliday also noted that International Charter School of Atlanta also had a visit from First Lady Sandra Deal the week following the SCSC visit. Commissioner Hogg noted that the school was very diverse and seemed to have a strong governing board that was committed to the school. Director Holliday then noted that the site visit for DuBois Integrity Academy has been scheduled for April 16<sup>th</sup>.
7. Chairman Rippner then asked Director Holliday to provide an update regarding the recently-concluded legislative session. Director Holliday provided a brief overview of legislation that directly impacted state charter schools. Director Holliday discussed HB 65 that requires two public hearings before charter schools can adopt their annual budgets, HB 659 that requires school districts, including state charter schools, to publically post financial reporting data, and HB 895 that contains new requirements related to charter school financial management training.

Director Holliday also summarized SB 367 that clarified existing law to confirm a state charter school's ability to partner with the Department of Juvenile Justice or Department of Corrections to provide services.

8. Chairmen Rippner continued the meeting by requesting that Director Holliday provide an update regarding organizational development. Director Holliday discussed the SCSC's new petitioner webinar series designed to convey information about the petition process and financial requirements of operating a state charter school to interested petitioners who were unable to attend the SCSC's Petitioner Boot Camps. Director Holliday also noted that a training that is part of the SCSC's Financial Management Program will occur in early May.
9. Chairman Rippner then asked Mr. Terence Washington for an update on the receipt of annual audits from state charter schools. Mr. Washington stated that the contractual deadline for submitting audits to the SCSC was October 1<sup>st</sup>, but there are four schools that did not meet that deadline. Utopian Academy for the Arts completed its audit on March 15<sup>th</sup>, but the audits for Ivy Preparatory Academy at Gwinnett, Ivy Preparatory Academy at Kirkwood, and Ivy Preparatory Young Men's Leadership Academy remain outstanding. Chairman Rippner invited Alisha Morgan, Executive Director for the Ivy Preparatory Academies, to discuss the status of the schools' audits. Ms. Morgan stated that she and the schools are working diligently to correct the accounting errors that have caused the delay in completing the audits. Ms. Morgan stated that the schools hired two vendors to assist in that process, and the work to do so will soon be complete. Ms. Morgan noted that the financial state causing delayed audits predated her tenure as Executive Director as well as the service of the majority of the current membership of the schools' governing board. Vice Chairman Williams responded that he respects the work Ms. Morgan and the new governing board are doing as well as the progress they have made, but that the schools, as institutions, need to demonstrate compliance and financial viability. Commissioner Lewis emphasized that the audit process is important to fully understanding the position of a charter school and voiced his belief in Ms. Morgan and the new governing board to establish sound financial practices in the future.
10. Next, Katie Manthey provided an update regarding the SCSC's research programs. Ms. Manthey presented the preliminary outcomes of the SCSC Value-Add and Beating the Odds Alignment Study. Ms. Manthey gave a brief overview of the SCSC Value-Add measure and the Beating the Odds measure and discussed the methodology the researchers used to analyze and compare each of the measures. Ms. Manthey noted that the researchers found the SCSC Value-Add measure was likely to be a more consistent indicator of school performance given its use of student-level data. The Beating the Odds measure benefits some schools as it utilizes a multi-variable dependent variable, but that benefit is likely outweighed by the Beating the Odds' lack of control for prior test scores Ms. Manthey noted that, while the two measures vary, it is more likely than not that the results of each will align when measuring school performance. Commissioner Perez inquired as to the effect the relative small size of state charter schools could have on the validity of the results of these measures. Director Holliday stated that SCSC staff will confer with the researchers to identify that issue and consequences, but noted that the method by which the measures control for student populations may mitigate problems related to sample size. Ms. Manthey continued to provide updates regarding the SCSC's research program by noting that the results of the annual SCSC Value-Add analysis will be complete by May, that the SCSC economic

impact study is underway, and that the SCSC recently contracted with researchers at Kennesaw State University to understand the effects charter schools may have on student integration.

11. Chairman Rippner then asked Morgan Felts to inform the commissioners regarding the 2016 SCSC Petition Application. Ms. Felts stated that the 2016 application has been available on the SCSC website since it was approved at the February meeting, and that SCSC staff publicized the application through a variety of methods including emails, the SCSC newsletter, and the SCSC Twitter account. SCSC staff has also completed two of our three application webinars to assist petitioners with the process. Both webinars were well-attended and are also available online for those that were unable to attend or for anyone that may want to review the information. SCSC staff are receiving and responding to questions regarding the application process and the application itself.
12. Chairman Rippner requested that Ms. Felts present the SCSC staff recommendation regarding the renewal application for Ivy Preparatory Young Men's Leadership Academy (IPYMLA). Ms. Felts noted that IPYMLA failed to meet academic, financial or operational expectations in accordance with its charter contract or the comprehensive Performance Framework. Evaluation of the school's academic data revealed that the school did not provide students a better educational opportunity than that which is provided by DeKalb County, the school's comparison district. Accordingly, SCSC staff recommended that the renewal application for IPYMLA be denied so as to nonrenew the charter contract for the state charter school. Chairman Rippner called for a motion to approve the SCSC staff recommendation and noted that there were no individuals signed up for public comment. Commissioner Williams made the motion and Commissioner Perez provided a second. There was no discussion, and the recommendation was unanimously approved by those present.
13. Chairman Rippner then asked Ms. Felts to provide the SCSC staff recommendation regarding the renewal application for the Charter Conservatory for Liberal Arts and Technology (CCAT). Ms. Felts noted that CCAT met academic, financial or operational expectations in accordance with the comprehensive Performance Framework, which they adopted in October 2015. Evaluation of the school's academic data reveals that the school outperformed Bulloch County, its comparison district in terms of student growth in 2014-15. Accordingly, SCSC staff recommended that the renewal application for CCAAT be approved to renew the charter contract for CCAT to serve grades 6-12 with an attendance zone of Bulloch County. Chairman Rippner called for a motion to approve the SCSC staff recommendation and noted that there were no individuals signed up for public comment. Commissioner Lewis made the motion and Commissioner Williams provided a second. Commissioner Lewis noted that CCAT has struggled in the past, but that its current leadership is taking the school in a positive direction. Chairman Rippner called for a vote and the recommendation was unanimously approved by those present.
14. Chairman Rippner continued the meeting by asking Gregg Stevens to present the SCSC staff recommendation regarding the midterm adjustment to the SCSC administrative withhold. Mr. Stevens explained that the General Assembly adjusts school funding during the midterm budget adjustment to account for additional students enrolling in schools between October and March. Because of that budget adjustment, some state charter schools receive additional funding, which,

in turn, increases the amount that is withheld for the administrative operation of the SCSC. As the SCSC is able to perform its duties utilizing its original budget, SCSC staff recommend that the SCSC direct the Georgia Department of Education to return the portion of the SCSC FY15 2% administrative withhold to state charter schools in an amount equal to the additional funding the SCSC would have received as a result of funding increases for state charter schools provided by the Amended Fiscal Year 2016 school allotments. Commissioner Williams made a motion to approve the staff recommendation and Commissioner Lowden provided a second. Chairman Rippner called for a vote and the recommendation was unanimously approved by those present.

15. Chairman Rippner then asked Mr. Stevens to present the SCSC staff recommendation regarding setting the SCSC administrative withhold for the 2017 fiscal year. Mr. Stevens discussed the continued ability of the SCSC to operate on a reduced administrative withhold of 2% for existing schools and 1% for new schools. Mr. Stevens explained that the administrative withhold for new schools should be less than that for existing schools because the first year of a charter school is often financially tumultuous. As such, SCSC staff recommended that the SCSC direct the Georgia Department of Education to withhold 2% of state funding allocated to state charter schools as authorized by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2089(b) for the administrative expenses of the SCSC except that the withhold for state charter schools in the first year of operation shall only be 1% of allocated state funding. Commissioner Lewis made a motion to approve the staff recommendation and Commissioner Hogg provided a second. Chairman Rippner called for a vote and the recommendation was unanimously approved by those present.
16. Chairman Rippner asked for additional items from commissioners, but no commissioners offered additional items.
17. Chairman Rippner next called for public comment, but no individuals offered comment.
18. There being no further business before the SCSC, Chairman Rippner adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:05 am.