

STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS COMMISSION MEETING

April 27, 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 at approximately 10:00 am. Chairman Rippner verified that a quorum existed.
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. Chairman Rippner then called for approval of the meeting minutes from the March 30th SCSC meeting. Commissioner Lowden 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.
5. Chairmen Rippner asked Director Holliday to discuss the SCSC’s scheduled site visits. Director Holliday noted that the site visit scheduled for DuBois Integrity Academy on April 16th had to be rescheduled due to an unavoidable Commissioner conflict. The visit will be rescheduled for the Fall.
6. Chairman Rippner then asked Director Holliday to provide an Accountability update. Director Holliday explained that the release of the Georgia Department of Education’s 2015 CCRPI results have been delayed until May. As a result, SCSC staff are unable to complete the Academic portion of the Comprehensive Performance Framework at this time. Director Holliday stated that the staff hopes to provide Comprehensive Framework Performance results for each state charter school at the May 2016 meeting.
7. Chairmen Rippner continued the meeting by requesting that Ms. Katie Manthey provide an update regarding organizational development. Ms. Manthey detailed the completion of 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. Ms. Manthey also highlighted upcoming trainings, including the CVIOG Financial Management Program: Writing Financial Policies for Charter Schools training scheduled for May 3rd and the TKES and LKES Trainings scheduled for July 18-20 or July 24-26. Director Holliday reminded the Commissioners that beginning in FY 17 all

charter schools will be required to obtain charter school financial management training due to the passage of HB 895 during the legislative session.

8. 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 1st, but the audits for Ivy Preparatory Academy at Gwinnett, Ivy Preparatory Academy at Kirkwood, and Ivy Preparatory Young Men's Leadership Academy remain outstanding. Mr. Washington stated that the accounting errors that have caused the delay in completing the audits have now been corrected and the audit will be completed with all due haste. Mr. Washington also provided a brief overview of the schools participating in the SCSC Approved Auditor Program. Mr. Washington noted that all but one state charter school will participate in the program.
9. Next, Gregg Stevens provided an update regarding state charter schools scheduled to open Fall 2016. Mr. Stevens stated that five state charter schools are authorized to open this fall. Three schools were approved last fall, Brookhaven Innovation Academy, Liberty Tech Charter School, and Southwest Georgia STEM Charter, and two schools were approved in 2014 but were unable to open in 2015 – Cirrus Academy Charter School and Byron-Peach Charter High School. Mr. Stevens informed the Commissioners that SCSC staff is working closely with the schools to assess how they are progressing towards operations in the fall. Three schools are expected to be ready to open by their planned start dates this fall. SCSC staff is gathering additional data from the two additional schools to better assess their ability to open this year. Mr. Stevens stated that the Commissioners will be provided further updates at the May 2016 meeting.
10. 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 three application webinars to assist petitioners with the process. All 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. Ms. Felts also announced that petitioner capacity interviews are tentatively scheduled for the weeks of July 11th and July 18th. Ms. Felts informed the Commissioners that those dates would be further refined following the submission of petitions. Ms. Felts also requested that Commissioners provide their personal availability for those dates in the coming weeks.
11. Chairman Rippner continued the meeting by asking Gregg Stevens to present the SCSC staff recommendation regarding the initiation of rulemaking procedures in accordance with the Georgia Administrative Procedure Act to amend rule 691-2-.03 State Charter School Monitoring and to create rule 691-2-.06 State Charter School Sites and Facilities. Rulemaking procedures require a public comment period of at least 30 days prior to adoption of the rule changes. Mr. Stevens explained that this initiating action would allow SCSC staff to begin the administrative process of initiating that public comment period for subsequent rule adoption at the SCSC meeting in June.

The amendment to rule 691-2-.03 State Charter School Monitoring will clarify that the SCSC Comprehensive Performance Framework will be the measure of academic, financial, and operational accountability for state charter schools authorized or renewed in 2015 or later. Additionally, proposed new provisions of this rule require state charter schools to post certain existing information on their website in an effort to promote transparency.

Mr. Stevens explained that the new rule 691-2-.06 State Charter School Sites and Facilities describes the responsibility for state charter schools to adhere to applicable rules and laws to receive appropriate approval from the Georgia Department of Education for the use of a facility for educational purposes and to abide by all rules and law related to student safety and security. The proposed new rule would also require state charter schools to provide the SCSC copies of their lease, rental agreement, or evidence of title to the SCSC and to receive prior approval from the SCSC Executive Director prior to adding or changing a facility. Dr. Holliday confirmed that this action would comply with the intent of the Legislature with regard to the formation of charter school networks.

Commissioner Lowden made a motion to approve the staff recommendation and Commissioner Lewis provided a second. Chairman Rippner called for a vote and the recommendation was unanimously approved by those present.

12. Chairman Rippner then asked Mr. Stevens to present the SCSC staff recommendation the amendment of measures in the Comprehensive Performance Framework. SCSC staff have identified three minor amendments that require SCSC approval before being implemented. To ensure fairness and transparency, schools will be held harmless for any changes to the framework. As a result, changes will only impact scoring in future years unless said changes would increase a school's score from a previous year. Mr. Stevens explained that the first amendment was to adjust a measure in the financial compliance section to ensure that all schools would receive a score with regard to their working capital, the second amendment would make meeting mission specific goals bonus points in the operational section of the framework, and the third amendment will change the source of data utilized to measure student retention. Commissioner Williams expressed concern that the changes would be too punitive for schools. Upon further clarification from SCSC staff, Commissioner Williams indicated that he was comfortable with the proposed changes with the understanding that SCSC is constantly reviewing the performance framework to ensure that it is accurately measuring school performance. Commissioner Lewis made a motion to approve the staff recommendation and Commissioner Perez provided a second. Chairman Rippner called for a vote and the recommendation was unanimously approved by those present.
13. Chairman Rippner asked for additional items from commissioners, but no commissioners offered additional items.
14. Chairman Rippner next called for public comment, but no individuals offered comment.
15. There being no further business before the SCSC, Chairman Rippner adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:01 am.