

STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS COMMISSION MEETING

October 31, 2014, 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 Commission Chair Charles B. Knapp. Chairman Knapp verified that a quorum existed and that all members of the commission were present except Commissioners Lowden and Perez who both arrived at approximately 10:05 am.
2. Also present were Commission staff members Bonnie Holliday—Executive Director, Gregg Stevens—General Counsel and Petitions Manager, Lauren Holcomb—Director of Organizational and Resource Development, Daniela Belton—Business and Operations Manager, Terence Washington—Financial and Operational Accountability Manager.
3. Approximately 15 members of the public also attended the meeting including charter school staff and representatives and charter school business representatives. Representatives from GCSA were also present.
4. A motion was made by Commissioner Rippner and seconded by Commissioner Williams to approve the meeting minutes from the September 24th SCSC meeting. The minutes were unanimously approved.
5. Director Holliday then discussed recent and upcoming school site visits. On September 26th, 2014, SCSC Staff and Commissioner Lowden traveled to Utopian Academy in Clayton, County to join Governor Nathan Deal and special guest Christopher Bridges (a.k.a. “Ludacris”) for a tour of the school as well as special student performances. On October 23rd, Mr. Stevens and Mr. Washington traveled to the Charter Conservatory for Liberal Arts and Technology (CCAT) in Bulloch County for the SCSC’s first unannounced monitoring visit of the 2014 school year. Director Holliday noted that she would be attending a ribbon cutting ceremony for Ivy Preparatory Academy at Kirkwood on Saturday, November 1st to celebrate the school’s recent facility purchase. All commissioners were invited to attend.
6. Next, Director Holliday provided an update on the staff’s progress with regard to several topics discussed during the SCSC’s Governance and Policy Retreat that took place on September 4-5, 2014 at Brasstown Valley Resort. She noted that Lauren Holcomb had been in contact with communication firms as well as independent consultants to obtain proposals for SCSC review. Additionally, she announced that the SCSC had received and were currently reviewing a research proposal for a virtual school impact study from Public Impact and NACSA.
7. Next, Lauren Holcomb provided an update on organizational development. She reviewed the monthly newsletter and provided an overview of the SCSC’s recent and upcoming trainings. Recent trainings included a Federal Grant Management Training on October 2nd in the DECAL Conference room of the Floyd Government Building, and an orientation webinar for newly

approved state charter schools on October 15th. Ms. Holcomb also announced the school Governance Training that took place on October 9th -10th at Callaway Gardens, and she reminded all who were present that attendance at the school governance training is statutorily required for all state charter school governing board members. Any board members who did not attend the October training will still be able to fulfill the requirement by attending the second school governance training scheduled for February 2015. Ms. Holcomb also discussed the following upcoming trainings: the first session of the financial management certification program trainings (Nov. 6th) and a Bootcamp for new petitioners (December 11th). Lastly, Ms. Holcomb provided a brief overview of the SCSC's new onboarding program for new state charters schools, and she directed any interested parties to the "new school" section of the SCSC website for additional resources: <http://scsc.georgia.gov/resources-newly-approved-state-charter-schools>

8. Chairman Knapp then asked Terence Washington to provide an update on financial and operational accountability issues. Mr. Washington announced the upcoming deadline for the statewide austerity restoration survey, and he also noted that SCSC staff had conducted the first of its unannounced 2014-2015 monitoring visits at state charter schools. He also noted that the SCSC had begun issuing compliance letters to schools that miss mandatory deadlines and/or experience other compliance issues.
9. At this point, Chairman Knapp inquired as to whether or not there were any sanctions for noncompliance, and SCSC staff explained that incidents would be recorded, compiled, and submitted for consideration at the time of the school's renewal application. Several commissioners suggested that more immediate steps should be considered when dealing with schools that fail to comply with the terms of their charter contracts and/or with state and federal law. SCSC staff agreed to develop recommendations for interventions that might assist schools in the development of capacity and awareness regarding the importance of compliance. Such interventions might impact board member eligibility (i.e. board members who miss the mandatory governance training 2 years in a row become ineligible for further board service) and reporting flexibility (i.e. schools that miss the audit deadline must submit financial statements according to an SCSC established schedule).
10. Next, Chairman Knapp asked Gregg Stevens to discuss the recommendation to adopt the amended SCSC rules. Mr. Stevens explained that commissioners voted at the September 24th SCSC meeting to initiate rulemaking procedures in accordance with the Georgia Administrative Procedure Act. He noted that the amendments impacted four of the SCSC's existing rules. Specifically, the proposed rule amendments are intended to clarify existing SCSC practice and procedure— particularly with regard to the petition review process. Additional proposed amendments include changes in wording and phrasing to improve readability, clarification of trainings required for state charter schools, and outline school enrollment priorities to incorporate applicable law. Mr. Stevens reminded commissioners that the 30 day public comment period required for rule adoption had expired, and the SCSC staff recommends the rules be adopted as amended.

11. At that point, Commissioner Lowden made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Hogg to approve the staff recommendation to adopt the SCSC rules as amended. There was no discussion, and the motion was approved unanimously.
12. Mr. Stevens then discussed a staff recommendation to approve the SCSC bylaws as amended. These amendments require SCSC approval of the Executive Director's proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year as well as other minor changes to streamline SCSC operation.
13. At this point, Commissioner Lewis made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Rippner to approve the staff recommendation to adopt the SCSC bylaws as amended. There was no discussion, and the motion was approved unanimously.
14. Mr. Stevens then discussed the staff's intent to make administrative clarifications to existing state charter school contracts. Specifically, the SCSC staff will soon replace references to old state assessments such as the CRCT and the EOCT with updated language that references the new state assessments (Georgia Milestone Assessments). As this clarification does not represent a material change to the contract, no action is required by the commissioners or by school governing boards.
15. Prior to public comment, Chairman Knapp noted that several commissioners and SCSC staff attended the NACSA conference that took place in Miami, Florida on October 20th-23rd. Chairman Knapp commended SCSC staff members for presenting during plenary and breakout sessions, and he thanked Commissioners Perez, Williams, Lowden, and Lewis for attending the conference on behalf of the SCSC.
16. Next, Chairman Knapp reminded commissioners that the upcoming November SCSC meeting will be held on November 19, 2014, and the SCSC will not meet in December 2014. He also reviewed the SCSC meeting dates for 2015, and he noted that no meetings are currently scheduled during the months of June and December 2015.
17. During the public comment portion of the meeting, Artesius Miller—Executive Director of Utopian Academy for the Arts—introduced the school's student ambassadors for the month of October. Additionally, Andrew Lewis from the Georgia Charter Schools Association updated commissioners on NACSA conference attendance, and he announced Alan Mueller as GCSA's newest staff member. Mr. Mueller will be leading GCSA's charter incubation efforts. Mr. Lewis also announced the upcoming GCSA conference which will be held on Friday, January 30, 2015.
18. There being no further business before the SCSC, Chairman Knapp asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Williams offered a motion and Commissioner Lewis provided a second. The motion was unanimously approved, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:50 a.m.