

STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS COMMISSION MEETING

October 30, 2013, 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 Jennifer Rippner, and Tony Lowden. Commissioners Rippner arrived at 10:05 AM, and Commissioner Lowden arrived at approximately 10:15 AM.
2. Also present were Commission staff members Bonnie Holliday—Executive Director, Gregg Stevens--General Counsel, Daniela Belton—Business and Operations Manager, Lauren Wright—Director of Organizational and Resource Development, Terence Washington—Accountability Manager. Louis Erste from the Georgia Department of Education’s Charter School Division was also present.
3. Approximately 50 members of the public also attended the meeting including charter school staff and representatives and charter school business representatives. Representatives from GCSA, GSBA, and PAGE were also present as were reporters from several local media outlets.
4. A motion was made by Commissioner Lewis and seconded by Commissioner Hogg that the Commission approve the meeting minutes from the September 25th SCSC meeting. The minutes were unanimously approved.
5. A motion was made by Commissioner Williams and seconded by Commissioner Lewis that the Commission approve the meeting minutes from the October 9th and 10th SCSC Board Governance and Policy retreat. The minutes were unanimously approved.
6. Chairman Knapp then expressed a desire to amend the agenda to allow for a petitioner comment period prior to commissioners’ votes to approve or deny recommendations for new schools. Commissioner Perez made a motion to amend that was seconded by Commissioner Hogg and unanimously approved.
7. Chairman Knapp next requested that Bonnie Holliday address the items listed under Section III of the agenda. Director Holliday provided an update on recent state charter school site visits. On October 1st, Director Holliday, Mr. Stevens, and Commissioner Lowden visited Coweta Charter Academy in Coweta County. Director Holliday noted the school’s large new facility and thanked the school’s leadership for allowing SCSC staff and commissioners to attend the Grand Opening Ceremony. On October 23rd, Director Holliday, Mr. Stevens, and Commissioners Lewis and Hogg visited Heritage Preparatory Academy in Atlanta. Commissioner Hogg commented that the debate and discourse prioritized by the school as well as the unique “crew” program implemented to enable a sense of safety and stability for students as they progress through

middle school were unique aspects of Heritage Prep's model. Commissioner Lewis commended the passion of the leaders to overcome obstacles—both past and present.

8. Director Holliday then reminded Commissioners that the following state charter school site visits had been scheduled: Charter Conservatory for Liberal Arts and Technology (CCAT)/ Statesboro, GA (November 5th, 11am-1pm), and Connections Academy/ Atlanta, GA (November 13th, 10am-12pm). Director Holliday will coordinate with commissioners who are able to attend.
9. Director Holliday then reported on the governance and policy retreat scheduled for October 9th and 10th in Athens, GA. She walked through the three policy issues covered on Day 2 of the retreat: charter networks and governance, open enrollment, and school accountability. She also noted that staff had developed some action steps based on the discussion that took place at the retreat, and those steps will be shared with commissioners soon.
10. Next, Lauren Wright provided an overview of the SCSC's October newsletter, and she highlighted the following upcoming training opportunities:
 - Governance Training—December 9th & 10th, Emory University Conference Center
 - Accounting Training—January 14th & 15th, Floyd Veterans Building (West tower; GA Dept. of Ed. Training Room)
 - Boot Camp for New Petitioners —January 2014 (Date TBD)
11. Director Holliday next announced commission staff's work on developing a comprehensive Financial Monitoring Plan for State Charters. Terence Washington provided details of the criteria that will be used to identify financial "risk levels" of individual schools, and he discussed the implications of a high-risk designation as well as the additional reporting and monitoring required of a "high risk" school.
12. Chairman Knapp then requested Mr. Stevens discuss the recent recommendations for approval and denial of new schools that applied to the SCSC during the 2013 petition cycle. Mr. Stevens discussed the staff recommendations for each petitioner and addressed questions from commissioners.
13. Next, petitioners were allowed to address the SCSC prior to commissioners' votes on recommendation. Representatives from the International Charter School of Atlanta (Tara Newton), Cobb Preparatory Academy (Kimberly Cochran), Hephzibah Charter Academy (Lyn Carden), Byron-Peach Charter High School (Roy Lewis), and Utopian Charter Academy (Artesius Miller) spoke in support of their respective charter petitions.
14. Chairman Knapp allowed Director Holliday and Mr. Stevens to respond to questions of fact presented by petitioners and the Commissioners. Upon conclusion of discussion, Chairman Knapp announced that votes would be taken individually by school.
15. Commissioner Williams made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Rippner to approve the recommendation of denial for Byron-Peach Charter High School. Prior to voting, Chairman Knapp called for discussion, and Commissioner Rippner inquired as to why the school had not provided the requested budget information to SCSC staff by the established deadline. Chairman Knapp allowed Roy Lewis to respond on behalf of the school. Mr. Lewis emphasized the complexity of the budget construction process, and noted that a portion of the SCSC's request

for supplemental information was overlooked by the school. At that point, Chairman Knapp called for votes on the motion to approve the recommendation for denial, and the motion was approved unanimously.

16. Commissioner Lewis made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Lowden to approve the recommendation for denial of Cirrus Academy Charter School. There was no discussion, and this motion was approved unanimously.
17. Commissioner Hogg made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Lewis to approve the recommendation for denial of Cobb Preparatory Academy. There was no discussion, and this motion was approved unanimously.
18. Commissioner Rippner made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Lowden to approve the recommendation for denial of Georgia Fugees Academy. There was no discussion, and this motion was approved unanimously.
19. Commissioner Lewis made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Rippner to approve the recommendation for denial of Hephzibah Charter Academy. There was no discussion, and this motion was approved unanimously.
20. Commissioner Hogg made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Lowden to approve the recommendation for denial of International Charter School of Atlanta. There was no discussion, and this motion was approved unanimously.
21. Commissioner Lowden made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Lewis to approve the recommendation for denial of Sports Leadership and Management (SLAM) Middle School. There was no discussion, and this motion was approved unanimously.
22. Commissioner Rippner made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Lowden to approve the recommendation for approval of Utopian Academy for the Arts. There was no discussion, and this motion was approved unanimously.
23. At this point, Chairman Knapp emphasized that adherence to the petition review process created by staff and approved by the SCSC was necessary to ensure fairness and equity for all petitioners.
24. Chairman Knapp then asked Director Holliday to review the policy adoption items listed under section IV(B) of the agenda. Director Holliday reviewed the draft communications policy that had been posted on the SCSC website for commissioner review. Following discussion, Commissioner Lewis made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Lowden to adopt the communications policy as drafted. The motion was unanimously approved.
25. Next, Director Holliday reviewed the travel reimbursement grant request that required SCSC approval. This grant would allow SCSC staff to grant money to state charters to cover any travel expenses incurred by governing board members and administrators when attending the mandatory governance training scheduled for November 2013. Commissioner Rippner made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Perez to approve the travel reimbursement grant. The motion was unanimously approved.

26. Prior to adjourning the meeting, Chairman Knapp invited members of the audience to speak during the public comment period. Mike Gilstrap, BJ Walker, and Larry Collins spoke in favor of the Byron-Peach Charter High School petition.
27. There being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Lewis and seconded by Commissioner Lowden. The motion was unanimously approved, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:50am.