

STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

January 27, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

SCSC Board Room West Twin Tower, 5th Floor, Atlanta Georgia 30334

Virtual Access: <https://www.gotomeet.me/SCSCGA/january-board-meeting>

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Attendees: Commissioners: Buzz Brockway – Acting Chairman; Jose Perez; Tom Lewis; Carmen Dill; Dr. Lina Millan; and Tony Lowden¹. SCSC Staff: Lauren Holcomb – Executive Director; Morgan Felts – Chief Operations Officer; Cerrone Lockett – General Counsel; Sarah Beck – Associate General Counsel and Operational Accountability Manager; Darcy Callaway – Business Manager; Katie Manthey – Director of Research and Evaluation; Mu’min Islam – Associate General Counsel; Erica Acha-Morfaw – Administrative and Communications Coordinator; and Kiara Thompson and Jackson Caruso – SCSC Interns

I. **Call to Order (Acting Chairman Buzz Brockway)**

- The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m.

II. **Approval of SCSC Meeting Minutes (Acting Chairman Buzz Brockway)**

- The SCSC Acting Chairman called for the approval of the November 28, 2020 meeting minutes. Commissioner Lewis motioned. Commissioner Milan seconded. The November 28, 2020 meeting minutes were approved by unanimous vote. Commissioner Lowden was not present for this vote.

III. **School Openings (SCSC Executive Director)**

- Excluding the two fully virtual state charter schools, 24 state charter schools operating in-person. Thirteen state charter schools are operating virtually. The schools operating virtually have plans to resume in-person instruction in the near future.
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s guidance advises schools can and should open based upon complying with recommendations of (1) social distancing and (2) wearing masks.
- SCSC schools were sent information on applying for SOLVE scholarships for parents to obtain childcare costs if their child is attending school more than 50% virtually.
- The Acting Chairman discussed Governor Kemp’s \$10M allocation of GEERS Act funding for special needs children.

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

- There are currently a limited number of proposed legislative bills impacting SCSC schools. The State legislature’s passed state budget has 4% austerity cuts, reduced from 10% in the proposed July 2020 budget.
- The Commissioners welcomed Commissioner Tony Lowden to the board who previously served as a Commissioner.

V. **Organizational Development (SCSC Executive Director)**

- The SCSC will hold a Governance Training on February 2, 2021 for SCSC Schools. A third Governance Training session will be held in April. State charter schools are eligible to receive an SCSC scholarship to attend financial management training courses offered through the Georgia Charter Schools Association and the University of Georgia’s Carl Vinson Institute of Government.

¹ Arrived at 10:22am;

VI. **Petitions (SCSC General Counsel)**

- The SCSC received a total of twelve FY20 petitions by the November 20, 2020 deadline. Of the twelve, one petition was disqualified for budget submission deficiencies and one was disqualified for substantive deficiencies. Interviews for petitioners will occur the week of February 15-19, 2021. SCSC staff will plan to make formal recommendations on these petitions during the March 31, 2021 SCSC meeting.
- FY21 petitions are due April 9, 2021. Based on the timeline approved by the SCSC, petitions that meet legal and substantive requirements will be scheduled for interviews the week of June 14-18, 2021. SCSC staff will begin making formal recommendations to the SCSC at its July 28, 2021 SCSC meeting.

VII. **Financial Accountability Update (SCSC Chief Operations Officer)**

- An update was given on school audits, which were due on November 2, 2020. All schools have provided an audit except Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School.

VIII. **Accountability Update (SCSC Director of Research & Evaluation)**

- The SCSC 2019 – 2020 Comprehensive Performance Framework (CPF) was shared with schools in January 2021. Schools have until February 8, 2021 to provide feedback. The final CPF will be shared with the schools on February 17, 2021. The final CPF will be posted to the SCSC's website by February 24, 2021.
- The State Board of Education adopted a rule amendment to change the Georgia Milestones End of Course (EOC) assessment weight to .01%.
- There was a discussion regarding State Charter Schools having representation on the State Board of Education. There was previously a Charter Committee under the State Board of Education, however, this was folded into the State Rules Committee.

IX. **Authorizer Standards (SCSC Executive Director and SCSC Director of Research & Evaluation)**

- An update was provided on SCSC's collaboration with the Georgia Department of Education in developing Charter School Authorizer Standards. It is important to develop the authorizer standards to create consistency with the local charter authorizers and state authorizers. The authorizer standards are predicated upon five core principles: (1) authorizer commitment & capacity; (2) the petition process; (3) performance based contracts; (4) oversight & evaluation; and (5) renewal and termination.
- The SCSC staff plan to produce an initial draft by March 2021 and to adopt a final set of standards by April 2021. By summer 2021, the SCSC hopes to have the State Board of Education ratify and approve the standards.

X. **Action Items**

- **Collegiate Academy of Albany (SCSC General Counsel)**
 - On January 21, 2021, the governing board for the Collegiate Academy of Albany (CAA) surrendered its charter contract. SCSC staff recommended that the board vote in favor of accepting the charter surrender. The SCSC Acting Chairman called for a motion to accept the CAA charter surrender. Commissioner Perez motioned to accept the CAA charter surrender. Commissioner Lewis seconded the motion. The SCSC voted unanimously to approve the recommendation to accept the charter surrender for CAA. Commissioner Lowden was not present for this vote.

- **Recommendation: Liberty Tech Charter School Renewal**
 - Due to the pandemic, SCSC offered its schools the deferral of one year before the expiration of their Charter Contract. Liberty Tech Charter School (Liberty) chose to move forward with renewal of their Charter scheduled to expire in June 2021. Liberty met the academic standards in all three years of available data; met the financial standards in all 4 years under the Charter; and met the operational standards three out of the 4 years under the Charter. This is Liberty's first renewal and SCSC recommended a 5-year renewal.
 - The SCSC Acting Chairman called for a motion to approve a 5-year renewal of Liberty Tech Charter School's Charter. Commissioner Perez motioned approve Liberty Tech Charter School's 5-year Charter renewal. Commissioner Lewis seconded it. Liberty Tech Charter School's 5-year renewal was approved by unanimous vote.

XI. **Public Comment**

- Approximately 15 people attended the meeting virtually.
- Principal Kain and Ken Hamner spoke on behalf of Liberty Tech Charter School. They each thanked the SCSC for its partnership and support over the past 4 years and expressed excitement about continuing the partnership.

XII. **Adjourn**

- Commissioner Lewis made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Lowden seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion to adjourn was approved by unanimous vote at 11:22 a.m.