

# STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS COMMISSION

## MEETING MINUTES

June 24, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

Teleconference: GoToMeeting



**Attendees:** Commissioners: Tom Lewis-Chairman; Paul Williams-Vice Chairman; Carmen Dill; Jose Perez; Buzz Brockway; Hunter Hill; and, Dr. Lina Millan. SCSC Staff members: Lauren Holcomb – Executive Director; Morgan Felts – Chief Operations Officer; Cerrone Lockett – General Counsel; Kristen Easterbrook – Charter Development Manager; Katie Manthey – Director of Research and Evaluation; Rennie Laryea – Associate General Counsel; Sarah Beck – Associate General Counsel and Operational Accountability Manager; Terence Washington – Financial Accountability Manager; Darcy Callaway – Business Manager; and Danielle Williams – Communications and Outreach Coordinator. Approximately 30 members of the public were also present.

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### I. **Call to Order** (Chairman Lewis)

- **Welcome:** The meeting was called to order at 10:08 a.m.
- **Roll call:** All commissioners were present.
- **Public Health Emergency:** In accordance with the most recent public health guidance and the Governor’s Executive Order limiting public gatherings to 50 people, the SCSC permitted some commissioners and staff members to gather in person for this meeting. Social distancing and facial covering protocols were observed. The meeting was accessible virtually to the public and all meeting materials were available on the SCSC’s website.
- **Public Comment:** The SCSC Executive Director announced public comment procedures.

### II. **Approval of SCSC Meeting Minutes** (Chairman Lewis)

- Chairman Lewis called for the approval of the April 29, 2020 meeting minutes. Commissioner Perez motioned. Commissioner Dill seconded. The April 29, 2020 meeting minutes were approved by unanimous vote.
- Chairman Lewis called for the approval of the May 21, 2020 called meeting minutes. Commissioner Williams motioned. Commissioner Perez seconded. The May 21, 2020 called meeting minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

### III. **Officer Elections** (Chairman Lewis)

- Chairman Lewis called for a motion for an individual to serve as chair of the SCSC. Commissioner Dill nominated Commissioner Williams. Commissioner Perez seconded. The SCSC approved Commissioner Williams as its Chairman by unanimous vote.
- Chairman Lewis called for a motion for an individual to serve as vice-chair of the SCSC. Commissioner Hill nominated Commissioner Brockway. Commissioner Perez seconded. The SCSC approved Commissioner Brockway as its Vice-Chairman by unanimous vote.

Chairman Lewis congratulated the new chair and vice chair of the SCSC and thanked all SCSC commissioners for their dedication. Commissioner Williams thanked Chairman Lewis for his service to the SCSC and presented him with a gift on behalf of the SCSC.

#### IV. **School Re-Start Update** (SCSC Executive Director)

- The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and Georgia Department of Public Health (GaDPH) have released *Georgia's Path to Recovery for K12 Schools*. This joint guidance document provides a tiered approach for re-opening schools in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recommendations are based on levels of community spread as determined by local boards of public health. The document contains guidance not mandates and each state charter school, as its own LEA, has the autonomy to develop a reopening plan that best fits the needs of the community.
- SCSC Schools will be required to submit a pandemic plan to SCSC Staff in late July. SCSC staff will email school leaders and board chairs with more information. SCSC staff will review plans to ensure compliance with state and federal requirements and support schools as they plan.
- Governor Brian Kemp and GaDOE Superintendent Richard Woods have created The Governor's K-12 Restart Working Groups. The six working groups are: School Meals, Distance Learning/Professional Learning, Connectivity & Devices, Mental Health and Wellness, Supplemental Learning and Facilities, Transportation & Equipment. The SCSC Executive Director serves on the Supplemental Learning committee which will continue to meet through October 2020. In response to an inquiry by Commissioner Brockway concerning student assessment alternatives and the testing waiver requested by the GaDOE Superintendent and the Governor, the SCSC Executive Director explained that schools would continue with benchmark testing throughout school year and SCSC Staff would know more about plans to address learning gaps with schools submitting pandemic plans in July. There was additional discussion regarding Georgia's testing waiver and pandemic plans for state charter schools.

#### V. **Legislative Update** (SCSC Executive Director)

- **HB 957** – HB 957, an SCSC agency legislation, sponsored by Rep. Jan Jones, is awaiting the Governor's signature. The bill clarifies state charter school State Health Benefit Plan eligibility, allows charter schools flexibility in managing school lottery eligibility (i.e. option of requiring proof of residency at the time of application OR at the time of enrollment based on community needs), and extends state charter school board member terms from two to four years (for appointments after July 1, 2020). The bill also provides two clarifications to student records requirements: (1) that records are the property of the school, even if created through an agreement with a third-party vendor and; (2) in the event of state charter school closure, the school will maintain records for one year and facilitate record transfers, after which the SCSC will take any unclaimed records. Additionally, the bill shifts the deadline for the virtual school performance audit from Dec. 1st to April 1st to include academic performance data.
- **HB 755** – HB 755, sponsored by Rep. Dave Belton, passed the Senate Education Committee. The bill requires that local school systems provide annual allotment sheets to locally approved charter schools itemizing state, local, and federal funds. This action will improve transparency between local charters and local boards of education and allow local charters to better project funding for budgetary purposes.

#### VI. **2020 Petition Cycle** (SCSC Executive Director)

- The 2020 petition cycle was suspended by the SCSC on May 21, 2020. The state faces a \$2B revenue shortfall leading to significant education funding cuts. State charter schools are entirely reliant on state funding. Pending state revenue adjustments, the SCSC will resume the petition

cycle this fall or in spring 2021. The SCSC staff will make an announcement at the August 26th board meeting. Additional information is available on the SCSC website.

**School Openings** (SCSC Charter Development Manager)

VII.

- Six new state charter schools will open during the 2020-21 school year. Those schools are: Atlanta Unbound Academy (Fulton); Delta STEAM Academy (Douglas); Furlow Charter School (Sumter); Georgia Fugees Academy Charter School (DeKalb); Harriet Tubman School of Science and Tech (APS); and Yi Hwang Academy of Language Excellence (Gwinnett). Five schools have deferred their 2021-22 school year openings due to facility and COVID-related challenges.

VIII. **Organizational Development** (SCSC Charter Development Manager)

- Upcoming SCSC trainings include:
  - Georgia Center for Assessment Webinar Series – July 9th and 14th;
  - LEA Reporting Training – July 15<sup>th</sup>; and
  - Assessment Coordinator Training – July 23rd.
- The governance training deadline was extended to Sep. 30, 2020.

IX. **Action Items**

- **Charter Term Extensions** (Director of Research and Evaluation)  
Due to COVID-related school closures and subsequent statewide assessment cancellation in the 2019-20 school year, state charter schools will not have academic performance data for the 2019-20 school year. SCSC staff recommend extending charter contract terms (for eligible schools) by one year to provide for a full academic performance assessment prior to charter renewal.

**Recommendation:** The SCSC recommends that the State Charter Schools Commission approve the staff proposal to extend charter terms for eligible schools to provide for adequate academic performance data prior to renewal decisions.

**SCSC Action:** Chairman Lewis called for a motion to approve the SCSC staff recommendation. Commissioner Williams motioned. Commissioner Brockway seconded. By unanimous vote, the SCSC adopted the SCSC staff recommendation to extend charter terms for eligible schools to provide for adequate academic performance data prior to renewal decisions.

Commissioner Williams left the meeting at 11: 23 a.m. Commissioner Williams rejoined the meeting at 11:25 a.m. Commissioner Perez left the meeting at 11:29 a.m. Commissioner Perez rejoined the meeting at 11:31 a.m.

- **FY21 Budget** (Chief Operations Officer)

The SCSC agency budget reflects the 11 percent funding reduction required of all agencies and the SCSC will take steps to maximize the flow of funds to state charters in FY21. Per the SCSC Executive Director, this year’s budget presentation is an anomaly since the General Assembly typically passes the fiscal year budget in March/April resulting in accurate projections of school and agency revenues. Nevertheless, SCSC staff presented the agency budget and revenue based on the best available information.

**Recommendation:** The SCSC recommends that the State Charter Schools Commission adopt the FY21 SCSC agency budget as presented by SCSC staff.

**SCSC Action:** Chairman Lewis called for a motion to approve the SCSC staff recommendation. Commissioner Brockway motioned. Commissioner Hill seconded. By unanimous vote, the SCSC adopted the FY21 SCSC agency budget as presented by SCSC staff.

X. **Additional Items from Commissioners**

- There were no additional items from commissioners.

XI. **Public Comment**

- Beth McCamy spoke about the importance of virtual school choice options during public comment.

XII. **Executive Session**

- Chairman Lewis called for a motion to close the meeting to conduct annual staff evaluations. Commissioner Williams motioned. Commissioner Brockway seconded. By unanimous vote, the SCSC closed the meeting for executive session to conduct annual staff evaluations.

XIII. **Adjourn**

- The Chairman announced that no action was taken during executive session and adjourned the meeting.