

STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS COMMISSION MEETING

August 26, 2015, 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. Chairman Rippner verified that a quorum existed. Commissioners Paul Williams and Tom Lewis participated via telephone. Commissioner Suzanne Werner was not present.
2. Also present were Commission staff members Gregg Stevens—Deputy Director and General Counsel, Terence Washington – Finance and Operational Accountability Manager, Morgan Felts – Deputy Counsel and Petitions Manager, Lauren Holcomb – Director of Organizational and Resource Development, and Katie Manthey – Business and Operations Manager.
3. Approximately 50 members of the public also attended the meeting including charter school staff and representatives, charter school business representatives, and charter school petitioners. Representatives from the Georgia Charter Schools Association were also present.
4. After calling the meeting to order, Chairman Rippner called for approval of the meeting minutes from the July 29th SCSC meeting. Commissioner Perez made a motion to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Lowden provided a second. There was no discussion, and the minutes were unanimously approved by those present.
5. Chairman Rippner then asked Director Stevens to review the portion of the agenda pertaining to agency-wide updates. Director Stevens noted upcoming quarterly visits to state charter schools in 2015:
 - 3rd Quarter Visit: August 27, 2015, Ivy Prep Young Men’s Leadership Academy in Atlanta
 - 4th Quarter Visit: November 16, 2015, Utopian Academy for the Arts in Riverdale
6. Director Stevens next provided an update on school openings. SCSC staff and Commissioners were invited and have attended some new school openings, including ICS Atlanta, Foothills, and Scintilla. The SCSC now has authorized 20 schools that are operating in the 2015-2016 school year. 11 of those schools are in Metro Atlanta, 3 are statewide virtual schools, and the remaining 6 are across all corners of the state – Mountain Ed and Foothills in North Georgia, Georgia School for Innovation and the Classics in East Georgia, Pataula in the Southwest, CCAT in the Southeast, and Scintilla in Valdosta.
7. Chairman Rippner then asked Lauren Holcomb for an update on organizational development. Ms. Holcomb noted that two TKES/LKES credentialing trainings have taken place in August. Ms. Holcomb also noted that the SCSC will host two governance training sessions in the 2015-16 year. The first session is November 5-6 at Little Ocmulgee State Park and the second is February 10-11 at the Atlanta Evergreen Marriott Stone Mountain. Ms. Holcomb reminded attendees that governing board members and administrators are required to receive annual governance training.

For FY16, the SCSC is piloting a program to allow governing board members to attend trainings from providers approved by the SBOE to provide governance training to charter schools if that training is consistent with the time and topics of training provided by the SCSC. Specific guidance is available on the SCSC website.

8. Chairman Rippner then asked for an update on academic accountability. Director Stevens shared that SCSC staff held an in-person training session on the Comprehensive Performance Framework for schools on July 29th. The overview, Performance Framework, and FAQs are posted on the SCSC website. The proposed timeline for adoption is the September meeting.
9. Next, Terence Washington provided an update on financial and operational accountability. Mr. Washington noted the SCSC hosted the first in a series of web meetings to facilitate the dissemination of fiscal best practices among charter schools. Mr. Washington also shared that the SCSC was able to closeout FY15 after satisfying its remaining obligations from the close of the year. Because of its financial efficiencies and dedication to returning as much funding as possible to schools for use in the classroom, the SCSC returned \$ 1,414,642 to schools. Together with the reduction of its administrative withhold at the beginning of the fiscal year from the authorized 3% to 2% and the return of the midterm adjustment to state charter schools, the SCSC provided a total of \$2,936,693 in additional funding to state charter schools.
10. Chairman Rippner then asked Morgan Felts to explain the first SCSC Process Item on the agenda, the Provost Academy request to change the name of the school to Graduation Achievement Center High School. Ms. Felts explained that Provost recently terminated its relationship with its educational service provider, Edison Learning, which has trademarked the Provost Academy name, therefore the school has requested to change its name to Graduation Achievement Center High School. SCSC staff recommends approval of the amendment. Chairman Rippner called for a motion and Commissioner Hogg provided a motion to approve the amendment with Commissioner Williams providing a second. Commissioners approved the motion with Commissioner Lowden abstaining.
11. Chairman Rippner then asked Ms. Felts to discuss the staff recommendations for approval or denial of new schools that applied to the SCSC during the 2015 petition cycle. Ms. Felts began and explained that the first petition for consideration, Bloomfield Preparatory Academy formally withdrew its petition. Therefore, the SCSC does not need to take action on this petition.
12. Next, Ms. Felts discussed the staff recommendation to approve the petition for Brookhaven Innovation Academy. The Brookhaven Innovation Academy Board Chair, Bates Mattison, provided a comment on behalf of the school. Commissioner Perez made a motion to approve the staff recommendation and Commissioner Lowden provided a second. The motion was unanimously approved.
13. Ms. Felts next discussed the staff recommendation to deny Challenge Preparatory Academy. Dr. Mayreather Willis, the school founder, provided a comment on behalf of the school and addressed questions from commissioners. Commissioner Hogg made a motion to approve the

staff recommendation and Commissioner Lowden provided a second. The motion was unanimously approved.

14. Then, Ms. Felts summarized the staff recommendation to deny Columbia County School for the Arts. Rob Fortson, legal counsel for the school, provided a comment on behalf of the school. Commissioner Lowden made a motion to approve the staff recommendation and Commissioner Hogg provided a second. The motion was unanimously approved.
15. Ms. Felts explained that the Georgia Family Academy Multimedia Charter School of Filmmaking and Journalism, the IFE Academy for Teaching and Technology, and LEAD Academy petitioners all withdrew their petitions from consideration and, therefore, the SCSC does not need to take action on these petitions.
16. Next, Ms. Felts summarized the staff recommendation to approve Liberty Tech Charter School. Christi McCully provided comments on behalf of the school. Commissioner Lowden made a motion to approve the staff recommendation and Commissioner Perez provided a second. The motion was unanimously approved.
17. Ms. Felts then discussed the staff recommendation to deny Lula Lake Academy. The school representatives were not present to provide comment. Commissioner Hogg provided a motion to approve the staff recommendation and Commissioner Lowden provided a second. The motion was unanimously approved.
18. Ms. Felts next explained that Sims-Fayola International Academy Atlanta withdrew their petition from consideration and, therefore, the SCSC does not need to take action on this petition.
19. Lastly, Ms. Felts summarized the staff recommendation to approve Southwest Georgia STEM. Joyce Blanton, school leader, provided comments on behalf of the school. Commissioner Lowden provided a motion to approve the staff recommendation and Commissioner Perez provided a second. The motion was unanimously approved.
20. Chairman Rippner then asked that Director Stevens explain the next item on the agenda, the Declaratory Ruling regarding a request for an off-cycle petition review. Director Stevens explained that Columbia County School for the Arts requested an off-cycle petition review and that SCSC staff recommends denial of this request. Rob Fortson, legal counsel for the school, provided comments. Commissioner Lewis made a motion to approve the staff recommendation to deny the request and Commissioner Hogg provided a second. The motion was unanimously approved.

21. Chairman Rippner then called for public comment. Sheldon Hart, Board Chair for Cirrus Academy, provided updates on the school's progress toward opening in the 2016-17 school year and introduced the school's newly hired leader, Melody Graham.
22. Chairman Rippner asked for additional items from commissioners. Chairman Rippner recognized Commissioner Lewis for receiving the "Superintendent's Hero Award" from Dr. Howard Hinsley with the Cartersville City Board of Education.
23. There being no further business before the SCSC, Chairman Rippner asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Lowden offered a motion, and Commissioner Perez provided a second. The motion was unanimously approved by those present, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:35 a.m.