

STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS COMMISSION MEETING

June 27, 2018, 10:00 a.m.

Georgia Department of Education Board Room
East Twin Tower, Room 854, Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Meeting Minutes

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Tom Lewis at approximately 10:10 am. Commissioners Jose Perez, Carmen Dill, Tony Lowden, Clara Keith, and Paul Williams were all present.
2. Also present were Commission staff members Bonnie Holliday-- Executive Director, Gregg Stevens—Deputy Director and General Counsel, Terence Washington—Finance Accountability Manager, Morgan Felts—Associate General Counsel and Petitions Manager, Katie Manthey—Academic Accountability Manager, Sarah Beck—Operational Accountability Manager, and Kristen Easterbrook – Business Manager.
3. Approximately 40 members of the public also attended the meeting including charter school staff and representatives, families, charter school business representatives, and Georgia Charter Schools Association representatives.
4. The first item on the agenda was to elect the Commission Chair and Vice-Chair. Commissioner Keith made a motion to re-elect Tom Lewis as Chairman and Commissioner Lowden seconded. The motion passes. Chairman Lewis motions to make Commissioner Williams Vice-Chair. Commissioner Perez seconds, and the motion passes.
5. Chairman Lewis asked for an approval of the meeting minutes from the June 6, 12, 13, and 14 SCSC meetings. Commissioner Williams made a motion to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Keith provided a second. The minutes were unanimously approved.
6. Chairman Lewis then asked Sarah Beck to give an update regarding the schools slated to open in August 2018. Ms. Beck told the commissioners that International Charter Academy of Georgia was scheduled to open on time but that DREAM Academy had chosen to defer for another year and SLAM was considering deferring as well due to low enrollment projections.
7. Chairman Lewis then asked Terence Washington to give an update on the progress of Graduation Achievement Charter High School in winding-up its affairs. Mr. Washington told commissioners that the school was on track as it related to the closure process.

8. Chairman Lewis called for a petition cycle update from Morgan Felts. Ms. Felts stated that the staff were compiling recommendations from the petition interviews, which will be shared with the Commissioners shortly. She also stated that she anticipates receiving several applications for replication, and there may be a need for a day of petitioner interviews regarding replication.
9. Chairman Lewis then proceeded to the state charter school performance review portion of the meeting. Mr. Stevens gave an overview of the performance review process. Mr. Stevens stated that performance reviews allow state charter schools to illustrate the actions they are taking to improve student outcomes and performance. Mr. Stevens explained that each school will have five minutes to present its plan for improvement to be followed by fifteen minutes of discussion with the Commission.
10. The leadership from Georgia Cyber Academy (GCA) discussed their plan for academic improvement. The school discussed how they are in the process of reducing class sizes, requiring mandatory summer school for about 900 students, hiring more instructional staff, requiring synchronistic instruction, and changing their hiring to being board-driven instead of being education management organization-driven. Commissioners asked about the change in enrollment policies and the impact of a new school leader. The Commissioners also asked GCA to discuss the changes to the agreement with the management company and how that will benefit the academic performance of the school.
11. Ivy Preparatory Academy then presented its plan for improvement. The school implemented a summer program and a math and science Saturday academy. They have completed their financial audits and hired an in-house finance person. In addition, they have implemented stronger governance policies. The Commission discussed strengthening the board and the school network in light of the turnover the school experienced. The Commission also asked about the plans to separate the boards of the two schools to ensure there is an adequate separation between the two schools.
12. Utopian Academy for the Arts presented their plan for improvement. The school discussed the increase in enrollment and strong staff retention rate. The school has hired a new school leader with a proven track record and they have begun to offer transportation. Utopian discussed the steps they are taking to improve academics, including changes which will focus on foundational skills and more writing. The Commission asked about leadership changes and how that impacts the school. The Commission discussed the location in Clayton County and the possibility of being a locally-authorized charter.
13. Next, Cirrus Charter Academy discussed its plan for improvement. The school discussed their strategy, including that they are approaching the curriculum in a systematic way, and they had a June retreat to discuss opportunities for improvement, including launching a library. They are also planning a professional development session for their teachers. The Commission discussed

the academic performance of the school and asked about plans for improvement. The Commission discussed board governance and training.

14. Chairman Lewis adjourned the meeting for lunch at approximately 12:30 pm.
15. Chairman Lewis reconvened the meeting at approximately 1:15 pm with one public comment from Damacia Howard who is a student at Georgia Cyber Academy. She talked about her experience with the school.
16. Georgia School for the Innovation and the Classics (GSIC) presented their plan for operational improvement. The school discussed their increased board training and their new Special Education manual. The school is adding 9th grade this year, and they discussed their preparation for that addition. The Commission asked about a board committee dedicated to improving operational compliance, as well as strategies for ensuring the school meets those standards.
17. Southwest Georgia STEM presented its plan for improvement. The school leader described a 300% increase in enrollment, a robotics system, a school nutrition program, and transportation. The Commission discussed the lack of attendance by any board members. The Commission then asked about the academic structures in place to monitor performance, including benchmarking.
18. The leaders of Brookhaven Innovation Academy present on their plan for improvement. The school has a new school leader, and they are implementing a gifted program. They are implementing a coding curriculum, and the school has added a guidance counselor. Changes at the board level resulted in a clear strategic plan and they are tracking CPF results more consistently. The Commission asked about the school culture and the plan for moving forward with the changes.
19. Liberty Tech Charter School presented their plan for operational improvement, including a comprehensive policy manual. They have updated some policies and some language in their student handbook. The school is also revamping their website to make it more user-friendly. At the board level, they have streamlined the committees. The Commission asked how the board can support the school leader, and the Commission also asked about the recent milestones.
20. Chairman Lewis concluded the performance review portion of the meeting and asked if there were any additional items from Commissioners or individuals signed up for public comment. There was a list for public comment. Beth McCamy and her son Reece McCamy both spoke about their experience with Georgia Cyber Academy. Susan and Liberty Edwards also spoke about their experiences with Georgia Cyber Academy. Stephanie Grant spoke about her concerns with Georgia School for Innovation and the Classics.
21. After public comments Chairman Lewis adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:05 pm.