

## STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS COMMISSION MEETING

March 29, 2017, 10:00 a.m.  
Oak Board Room  
East Twin Tower, Room, Atlanta, GA 30334

### Meeting Minutes

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jennifer Rippner at 10:00 a.m. Commissioners Clara Keith and Tony Lowden were absent. Chairman Rippner verified that a quorum was present.
2. Also present were Commission staff members Bonnie Holliday—Executive Director, Gregg Stevens—Deputy Director and General Counsel, Lauren Holcomb – Director of Organizational and Resource Development, Terence Washington—Financial and Operational Accountability Manager, Morgan Felts—Associate General Counsel and Petitions Manager, Katie Manthey—Academic Accountability Manager, and Sarah Beck—Business Operations Manager.
3. Approximately 20 members of the public also attended the meeting including charter school staff and representatives, charter school business representatives, and Georgia Charter Schools Association representatives.
4. Chairman Rippner called for an approval of the meeting minutes from the February 22<sup>nd</sup> SCSC meeting. Commissioner Perez made a motion to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Lewis provided a second. The minutes were unanimously approved by those present.
5. Chairman Rippner asked Mr. Gregg Stevens to discuss the Commission’s first action item. Mr. Stevens explained that SCSC staff recommended minor updates to the Comprehensive Performance Framework (CPF). Mr. Stevens explained that after receiving feedback from schools, the SCSC staff updated and adjusted the language in the CPF, which resulted in a total of eight amendments. Seven of the amendments were to the academic section and the remaining amendment is to the operations section. The first amendment clarified that a school is eligible for “approaches standards” points if it performs the same as or higher than their comparison district(s) in at least one—but not all—grade bands served. The second amendment clarified that a school may satisfy academic expectations on the CPF by outperforming the district through a combination of CCRPI Achievement and CCRPI Progress (Growth) in all grade bands served. The third amendment eliminated the Achievement Gap Closure CCRPI measure from the CPF. The fourth amendment eliminated bonus points from the academic section of the CPF since as they were rarely earned by schools. The fifth amendment ensured that all schools meeting academic standards were eligible to receive the same number of points (96) —regardless of whether they meet standards through a “first look” indicator or a “second look” indicator. The sixth amendment added the Georgia Department of Education’s Beating the Odd’s metric as a second look indicator, and the seventh amendment explained a school that does not serve all three grade bands, its CCRPI single score is compared to a recalculated weighted district CCRPI single score that only considers the grade bands served by the state charter school. The eighth amendment, the only amendment to the operational section, clarified that the mission-specific goals section

to allow schools who have chosen to amend their charter contracts over the course of the last year to incorporate mission-specific goals to become eligible for 5 bonus points beginning.

6. Chairman Rippner called for a motion to discuss the proposed amendments by the Commissioners. Commissioner Lewis made a motion and Commissioner Hogg provided a second. Commissioners remarked that these amendments would provide fairness and help foster charter school growth. Chairman Rippner called for a motion to approve the eight amendments. Commissioner Lewis made a motion to approve the amendments, and Commissioner Hogg provided a second. The amendments were unanimously approved by those present.
7. Chairman Rippner then requested that Mr. Stevens discuss the staff recommendation regarding the SCSC Administrative Withholds for FY2017 Midterm Adjustment, Return of Funds to Schools and FY2018 Administrative Withhold. Mr. Stevens explained that these recommendations would continue the SCSC's current practice of a 1% administrative withhold from first-year operating schools and a 2% withhold from second year and beyond operating schools. Chairman Rippner called for a motion to approve the staff recommendation. Commissioner Williams made a motion to approve the Administrative Withhold Recommendations, and Commissioner Perez provided a second. The Administrative Withhold Recommendations were unanimously approved by those present.
8. Chairman Rippner then asked Director Holliday to provide an update from the SCSC's 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Site Visit at Liberty Tech Charter School. Director Holliday stated that Chairman Rippner and Commissioner Lewis also attended the visit with her to Liberty Tech, located in Brooks, Georgia. Director Holliday stated that Liberty Tech Charter School leased its facility from the local district and was proactive in ensuring that the leadership of the school acted in the best interest of the students. Commissioner Lewis added that he was very impressed with the facility and staff at Liberty Tech. Chairman Rippner added that the school is very impressive and is in a facility that has served public education in Brooks, Georgia for the past 100 years.
9. Director Holliday then explained that the 4th quarter informal site visit would be to Brookhaven Innovation Academy in May. Director Holliday will send out dates to Commissioners to upon coordination with the school.
10. Next, Chairman Rippner asked Director Holliday to give an update on the legislative session. Director Holliday explained that there are three primary bills that the SCSC tracked: HB 139, HB 338, and HB 430. HB 139 was a fiscal transparency bill aimed to require the disclosure of school district and charter school financial information and data. HB 139 passed the House and Senate and was sent to the Governor for to be enacted into law or vetoed. HB 338 targeted improving chronically low performing schools by outlining a variety of intervention measures through the State Board of Education. Director Holliday indicated that while state charter schools are included in the bill as a possible intervention, it is unlikely that converting a traditional school to a state charter school would be used in practice given the logistical difficulties of transferring school property and reduced funding. Lastly, HB 430 revised several provisions of law related to charter schools, such as including standards for charter school authorizer accountability and improving access to facility funding for charter schools.

11. Chairman Rippner then directed Ms. Lauren Holcomb to provide an update on organizational development. Ms. Holcomb reported that the next Carl Vinson Institute of Government training on Internal Controls will be on May 9<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, the SCSC concluded its two free governance training opportunities for governing board members and will send out an email to inform board members if they need to seek alternate training. Ms. Holcomb reminded Commissioners and the audience that all SCSC school governing board members are required to receive governance training each year by state law.
12. Next, Chairman Rippner asked Director Holliday to present the 2015-2016 Comprehensive Performance Framework (CPF) Standings and Academic Accountability Briefing. Director Holliday began her presentation by explaining SCSC school performance is not where it should be and is not meeting SCSC expectations. More schools are compliant this year versus last year, but more progress needs to be made. Director Holliday explained that the CPF measures schools in three areas: academics, finances, and operations. Director Holliday also explained that there are five ways schools could meet academic standards in the CPF: 1) CCRPI Achievement; 2) CCRPI Progress (Growth); 3) Weighted CCRPI Score (Single Score); 4) Value-Added Impact Model (VAM); or 5) earning a Beating the Odds designation from the Georgia Department of Education.
13. Ms. Katie Manthey then explained academic findings and trends from the CPF results. Ms. Manthey reported that 37% of schools met academic standards and that 54% of schools outperformed in middle schools, but are overall weak in the high school grade band. Ms. Manthey stated that one possibility for schools that performed well in some grade bands but not others might be to only serve the grade bands in which they are successful upon renewal.
14. Director Holliday then asked Mr. Terence Washington to discuss the financial results from the CPF. Mr. Washington reported that 47% of schools met their financial standards, which is an increase from last year. Mr. Washington highlighted that schools continue to struggle to manage short-term debt, accurately project enrollment, and manage long-term debt in a manner consistent with their assets.
15. Director Holliday then asked Mr. Stevens to discuss the operational results from the CPF. Mr. Stevens stated that 53% of schools met operational performance standards. Mr. Stevens stated schools improved with providing legal notice and having more well written financial policies, but continue to struggle in implementing financial policies, adequately drafting policies for students with disabilities, and attending governance training.
16. Following the presentations on SCSC school performance, Director Holliday discussed intended improvements to SCSC training and school supports and the charter renewal cycle. Director Holliday explained that schools that did not meet in any area must complete a performance review at the May or June SCSC meetings as requested by the Commissioners. Ms. Holcomb discussed new supports that the SCSC will put in place in the future to assist schools in meeting performance standards. The supports will include additional data analysis and more required trainings. Director Holliday concluded the discussion by reminding Commissioners that nine schools' charters will be up for renewal next year.
17. Chairman Rippner then asked Mr. Washington to give a financial update. Mr. Washington explained that the Commission concluded the request for proposal process for its approved

auditor program and received two applications from audit firms with experience working with state charter schools. Mr. Washington stated that SCSC staff will evaluate the proposals and provide details regarding the approved auditor program as soon as possible. Mr. Washington then updated Commissioners on the status of the Ivy Preparatory Academies FY 2016 by detailing that the audits are ongoing but that the school does not have an estimated timeline for completion.

18. Chairman Rippner then asked Ms. Morgan Felts to provide an update regarding the 2017 Application Cycle. Ms. Felts informed Commissioners that there were 47 active applications, and that applications must be submitted by April 17, 2017.
19. Chairman Rippner then asked Mr. Stevens to provide an update on schools that were approved in 2016. Mr. Stevens stated that all schools in their planning phase are proceeding well towards operation. Mr. Stevens noted that Genesis Academy for Boys and Genesis Academy for Girls closed on their facility and are increasing student enrollment. Additionally, Mr. Stevens remarked that Resurgence Hall Charter School conducted its lottery and has a waiting list in all grade levels and is almost fully staffed. Finally, Mr. Stevens stated that the School for Arts-Infused Learning (SAIL) had to restructure the financing for its facility and while the school does not expect the refinancing would impact its construction timeline, SCSC staff discussed with the school the need for it to prepare contingencies to ensure it opened in a timeframe consistent with the surrounding school district.
20. Mr. Stevens next provided an update on schools in their first operational year that are receiving governance assistance. Mr. Stevens stated that Cirrus Charter Academy is improving its governance structure and that the progress of the school will be evaluated in the near future. Mr. Stevens then explained that Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School made a leadership change and is dedicated to working with the implementation specialist contracted through the SCSC.
21. Chairman Rippner then asked Mr. Stevens to provide an update on annual compliance monitoring. Mr. Stevens noted that staff had completed on-site monitoring for all state charter schools. Mr. Stevens stated that many schools made significant progress in compliance and while more schools had no findings than in previous years, some schools will need to undertake complete actions to maintain compliance.
22. Chairman Rippner next called for additional items from Commissioners, but no Commissioners offered additional items.
23. Chairman Rippner then called for public comment. Alisha Morgan, Executive Director of the Ivy Preparatory Academies, addressed the Commissioners and encouraged them to speak with school leaders in an effort to determine how schools can be more successful. Additionally, Ms. Morgan spoke about how the delay of QBE funding prevents schools in demand from dramatically increasing student enrollment. Following Ms. Morgan's public comment, Chairman Rippner left the meeting, and Vice Chairman Williams presided over the remainder of the meeting.
24. Vice Chairman Williams adjourned the meeting at 11:58AM.