

## **STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS COMMISSION MEETING**

**May 31, 2017, 9:30 a.m.**

**Oak Board Room, Department of Early Care and Learning Conference Room, Suite  
East Twin Tower, Room, Atlanta, GA 30334**

### **Meeting Minutes**

1. The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman Paul Williams at 9:29 AM. Chairman Jennifer Rippner was present via teleconference and Commissioner Tom Lewis was absent. Vice Chairman Williams verified 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 50 members of the public also attended the meeting including charter school staff and representatives, families of students attending state charter schools, charter school business representatives, and Georgia Charter Schools Association representatives.
4. Vice Chairman Williams called for approval of the meeting minutes from April 26<sup>th</sup> and the two called meetings on May 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Jose Perez made a motion to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Tony Lowden provided a second. There was no discussion, and the minutes were unanimously approved by those present.
5. Vice Chairman Williams then asked Mr. Gregg Stevens to present the action items. Mr. Stevens stated that the first action item was to vote on an amended rule to clarify that the SCSC conducts a comprehensive review of a state charter school's performance in meeting the terms of its charter contract every five years. The public comment period required by the Georgia Administrative Procedure Act passed without public comment. Vice Chairman Williams called for approval of adopting the amended rule. Commissioner Jimmy Hogg made a motion to approve the rule, and Commissioner Lowden provided a second. There was no discussion, and the rule was unanimously approved by those present.
6. Mr. Stevens then presented a Charter Amendment for Brookhaven Innovation Academy. Brookhaven Innovation Academy's petition and accompanying charter contract contemplated a specific software for the provision of a blended learning curriculum. The school requested an amendment to change software packages to better meet the needs of their students. Commissioner Hogg made a motion to pass the amendment, and Commissioner Lowden provided a second. There was no discussion, and the amendment was unanimously approved by those present.
7. Next, Mr. Stevens presented a Charter Amendment for Cirrus Academy Charter School to allow the school to remain serving only grades K-8. Cirrus Academy Charter School originally planned to

add a 9th grade in Year 2 of its charter. However, given the efforts of implementing a K-8 program in its first year, Cirrus was unable to plan appropriately for the planned expansion to 9th grade. Chairman Hogg made a motion to pass amendment and Commissioner Lowden provided a second. There was no discussion, and the amendment was unanimously approved by those present. Mr. Stevens noted that neither of the schools associated with the aforementioned amendments is in the final year of a contract term. Thus, the newly imposed moratorium on charter amendments does not apply to these schools.

8. Vice Chairman Williams then introduced the state charter school performance review portion of the meeting. Director Bonnie Holliday explained the purpose of the state charter performance reviews and school presentation portion of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for schools to outline plans to improve performance in all areas of deficiency and respond to questions related to governance and practice.. Vice Chairman Williams reminded the room that there will be 5 minutes for presentations and then a 15-minute discussion between commissioners and the school.
9. Director Holliday introduced Fulton Leadership Academy. The school addressed the additional measures the school is taking from its performance presentation last year. In particular, the school is focusing instruction on literacy, and it will be introducing a school wide literacy plan in addition to new formative assessments.
10. Director Holliday introduced Georgia Connections Academy. The school addressed how they have demonstrated operational and financial progress as well as their relationship with its educational service provider. The school expects to improve academically because of their new strategic intervention plan.
11. Director Holliday then introduced Statesboro STEAM. The school stated that it was addressing financial deficiencies and explained that it might continue to have problematic financial scores because of their recent land purchase. Dr. Holliday explained that they were renewed the prior year because the school outperformed in its comparison district through student growth at every grade band. School leadership stated the academic interventions and progress implemented since Statesboro STEAM's approval should increase academic performance.
12. Director Holliday introduced Georgia School for Innovation and the Classics (GSIC). School leadership addressed failure to meet operational standards and its effort to improve compliance. The school stated that it believes it addressed academic deficiencies by making a change in leadership. The new principal emphasized her plan to use formative assessments.
13. Next, Director Holliday introduced Scintilla Charter Academy. Vice Chairman Williams recused himself from this portion of the evaluation. Commissioner Hogg served chair during this interview. The school addressed its financial and academic deficiencies. By late fall of 2015, the school leadership made the decision to discontinue using a back-office provider and conduct its finances in house. Scintilla then hired a financial controller who has extensive experience in school finance and has already demonstrated improvements for the school. The school leadership also went

through a shift in early 2016 and began a new strategic academic plan that they hope will have a positive impact on their school's academic score.

14. Vice Chairman Williams called for a lunch recess at approximately 11:45 p.m.
15. At 12:45 p.m. Vice Chairman Williams reconvened the meeting and explained that Coweta Charter Academy and Cherokee Charter Academy will present together because both schools share the same governing board.
16. Director Holliday introduced Cherokee Charter Academy. Cherokee Charter Academy explained the new academic programs, new personnel hires, and professional development that they are implementing to address deficiencies.
17. Director Holliday introduced Coweta Charter Academy. School leadership explained how they have high performance scores in operations and academics, but fell short in finances. The board treasurer explained that its poor financial performance is due to its bond deal for its building and that the school is working to improve financial measures to compensate for the debt associated with its building.
18. Vice Chairman Williams next called for additional items from Commissioners, but no Commissioners offered additional items.
19. There being no further business before the SCSC, Vice Chairman Williams adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:20 p.m.