

STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS COMMISSION MEETING

November 16, 2016, 10:00 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 at approximately 10:00 a.m. Chairman Rippner verified that a quorum was present. Commissioners Suzanne Werner and Jimmy Hogg were absent.
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—Finance 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 30 members of the public also attended the meeting including representatives of charter schools, businesses, and the Georgia Charter Schools Association.
4. Chairman Rippner called for approval of the meeting minutes from the September 28th SCSC meeting. Commissioner Lowden made a motion to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Perez provided a second. There was no discussion, and the minutes were unanimously approved by those present.
5. Director Holiday reported to the commission that 2nd quarter visits will begin on November 17, 2016. Commissioners Perez and Lewis will be attending this visit to Georgia School for Innovation and the Classics, located in Hephzibah, Georgia.
6. Chairman Rippner asked Ms. Lauren Holcomb to provide an update on organizational development. Ms. Holcomb reported that the Carl Vinson Institute of Governmental Financial Management Certification Program: Payroll and Purchasing was currently being held. The training was completely filled. Upcoming trainings are the Governance Training being held on November 29 – 30 and Petitioner Boot Camp being held on December 15.
7. Chairman Rippner asked Ms. Katie Manthey to provide and update on research. Ms. Manthey first gave an update on the Economic Impact Study the SCSC commissioned from Georgia State University. Ms. Manthey also reported that Georgia AWARDS will be used in an upcoming study on the racial integration of Georgia charter schools that SCSC has commissioned Kennesaw State University to complete. Director Holiday addressed the fact that there is criticism of charter schools for supporting segregation of students by race and class. The SCSC plans to use the results of this study to better inform charter school authorization. Additionally, Ms. Manthey reported that the new Value-Added Model report is expected in January 2017.
8. Chairman Rippner asked Mr. Washington to provide financial updates regarding the FY16 audit deadline and school headcounts. Mr. Washington reported that Ivy Preparatory Academy – Gwinnett and Ivy Preparatory Academy – Kirkwood still have outstanding FY15 and FY16 audits.

Commissioner Williams suggested a December SCSC called meeting for the auditor, Mauldin and Jenkins, to discuss preliminary findings from the audit with SCSC commissioners. Chairman Rippner asked a representative from Ivy Preparatory Academies to address the commission.

9. Mr. Jason Allen, a board member for Ivy Preparatory Academy, addressed the commission regarding the situation including new leadership, a new finance team, and specific changes that have been made and are planned. Mr. Allen answered questions from the commission regarding the recovery of missing funds, how the school and board are moving forward, the audits, and the auditors. Mr. Washington reported that the last audit received from Ivy Prep was for FY14.
10. With support from the commission and SCSC staff, Chairman Rippner announced the intention to have a called meeting in December to address the outstanding audits of Ivy Preparatory Academies.
11. Mr. Washington shared results from a recent headcount conducted by SCSC staff in new schools and in schools that added a new grade level. Mr. Washington reported that the purpose of these headcounts is to ensure that schools are meeting their student projection numbers. The findings from the headcounts show that many SCSC schools are not meeting their enrollment projections. Lastly, he reported that there are 30,390 students enrolled in state charter schools, up from about 27,000 last year—approximately 20% growth from the 2015-2016 school year to the 2016-2017 school year.
12. Chairman Rippner then asked Mr. Gregg Stevens to provide an update on new schools. Mr. Stevens reported on the pre-opening checklist that newly approved schools must complete or they could be forced to defer opening by a year. Additionally, the SCSC's newest cohort of approved schools have the opportunity to work with an implementation specialist to assist the school in meeting the deadlines and milestones in the pre-opening checklist. Four out of the five new schools opted to have an implementation specialist. Director Holiday stated that the commission should know by January 2017 if there will be any deferment in openings for the new five schools.
13. Chairman Rippner asked Mr. Gregg Stevens to report on annual compliance monitoring. Mr. Stevens shared that unannounced site visits have started. If schools need additional information, documents are available on the SCSC webpage.
14. Chairman Rippner then asked Gregg Stevens to report on SCSC process items. The first process item was to initiate rule making. Mr. Stevens explained that the new rule brings clarification to the SCSC's monitoring practices and changes the deadline for audits. Commissioner Lewis made a motion to approve the rule making, and Commissioner Lowden provided the second. There was no discussion and Chairman Rippner stated that the motion passed.
15. The second process item was to approve the 2017 SCSC meeting calendar. Mr. Stevens noted that the December 27, 2017 meeting would be canceled.
16. Chairman Rippner asked if there are any additional items from commissioners. Commissioner Lowden suggested that the Commission send out holiday thank you emails to our schools. Commissioner Williams suggested that there is a need for more on virtual schools at NACSA and other conferences. Commissioner Perez suggested a press release that there are now 30,000

attending state charter schools. Chairman Rippner congratulated Utopian on their opening performance for the NACSA conference, and discussed details of the conference.

17. Chairman Rippner next called for public comment. Kamaria Finch asked the commission to clarify their definition of diversity to help guide her as a potential petitioner. Director Holiday provided insight and examples of diversity. She recommended the webpage as a reference for accountability specifics and made recommendations in order to establish the need for the charter and areas of recruitment. Commissioner Perez also suggested the VAM report as a reference for any initial petitioners. Sharon Daniels from Utopian Academy for the Arts invited the commission and staff to celebrate the conferring of Dr. Artesius Miller doctoral degree from the University of Georgia on December 16, 2016 at 6 pm on the campus of Morehouse University.
18. There being no further business before the SCSC, Chairman Rippner adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:19 a.m.