

STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS COMMISSION MEETING

April 24, 2013, 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 Commission Chair Charles B. Knapp. Chairman Knapp verified that a quorum existed and that all members of the commission were present except Paul Williams. Commissioner Williams arrived at 10:05 a.m.
2. Also present were Commission staff members Bonnie Holliday, Executive Director and Gregg Stevens, General Counsel and Petitions Manager.
3. Approximately 70 members of the public also attended the meeting including charter school staff and representatives, Georgia Charter Schools Association staff, charter school business representatives, and members of the media.
4. A motion was made by Commissioner Rippner and seconded by Commissioner Perez that the Commission approve the meeting minutes from the March 27th Commission meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.
5. Chairman Knapp next requested that Bonnie Holliday provide progress updates on Commission work to date. Director Holliday explained that office space renovations were complete, and new content was posted to the SCSC website (scsc.georgia.gov). This content includes a funding overview of FY2014 projections for State Charter Schools and a new SCSC charter school application for petitioners seeking authorization in the upcoming application cycle. Director Holliday also announced that the SCSC staff was planning to hire summer interns, and interested applicants should visit the website for more information on how to submit resumes. Finally, Director Holliday provided the new emails for SCSC staff that were recently established by GTA. These email addresses are bonnie.holliday@scsc.georgia.gov and gregg.stevens@scsc.georgia.gov.
6. Chairman Knapp then asked Commissioner Jennifer Rippner for an update on the development of communication protocols for Commissioners. Commissioner Rippner explained that she, Commissioner Tony Lowden, and Commissioner Jose Perez were collaborating to develop communication guidelines for the Commission. Those guidelines will be presented to the Commission for consideration at the May 29th meeting.
7. An explanation of State Charter funding deductions was then provided by Director Holliday. In FY2014, State Charters will receive 1) the austerity reduction that all public schools receive (14.1% of the Statewide "State Funds"), 2) the Local Five Mill Share deduction, and 3) the Commission withholding. On average in FY2014, "brick and mortar" State Charter Schools will receive approximately \$7,103 per FTE (student), and virtual State Charters will receive approximately \$4,334.05 per FTE (student).

8. After summarizing projected expenses of the SCSC staff in FY2014, Director Holliday recommended that the Commissioners vote to decrease the percentage of school-level withholding from 3% to 2%. Commissioners Rippner, Perez, Lewis, and Williams spoke in favor of this recommendation. Commissioner Rippner made a motion to approve this recommendation and decrease the withhold percentage from 3% to 2% in FY2014, and Commissioner Lewis seconded the motion. The motion was then unanimously approved.
9. SCSC General Counsel, Gregg Stevens, then updated the Commissioners on issues related to the pursuit of 501(c)(3) status for the Commission. Because the SCSC does not have statutory authority to establish a foundation, we will need a legislative change to allow for the creation of a dedicated 501(c)(3). In the absence of such authority, the SCSC may receive donations made directly to the agency or it may leverage the foundations of other state agencies
10. Chairman Knapp reminded Commissioners to review the draft bylaws and the draft Conflict of Interest policy and submit suggested revisions or amendments to Director Holliday or Mr. Stevens. These policies will be adopted at the May 29th meeting.
11. Mr. Stevens next provided an overview of the draft Rules and Regulations that are currently posted to the SCSC website. Mr. Stevens explained that the draft SCSC rules consist of two rules relating to the organization and operation of the SCSC and substantive rules relating to the state charter school authorization process and monitoring. The rules will be initiated for public comment under the Georgia Administrative Procedure Act until the May 29th meeting. If the SCSC does not receive public comment that requires revising the rules, the SCSC can adopt the rules at the May meeting. If revisions to the proposed rules need to be made as a result of public comment, the SCSC will revise the proposed rules and initiate a second public comment period under the Georgia Administrative Procedure Act.
12. Director Holliday then informed the Commissioners that the State Board of Education (SBOE) had notified DOE and SCSC staff of their intention to support the transition of the nine (9) State Charters approved by the Commission at the March 27th meeting. SBOE also released Georgia Cyber Academy (GCA) from the contractual obligations of the SBOE approved charter so the contingent approval of their charter granted the Commission in March is now an official approval.
13. A general overview of recent developments in state charter authorization was then provided by Director Holliday. She explained that following the March 27th meeting, the General Assembly passed a budget bill that contained language clarifying the intent for all State Charters to be authorized by the SCSC. In practical terms, this clarification of intent means that only SCSC approved charters will be eligible for the State Charter Supplement that is allocated to partially offset the lack of local dollars in a state charter's budget. Director Holliday explained that this clarification necessitated a second round of expedited review so that the six (6) state-chartered special schools that did not apply to the SCSC in March, 2013 could seek Commission authorization in April. The second expedited review process mirrored the first, and the same performance goal adjustments were made to new SCSC charter contracts to enable alignment with the State's NCLB waiver requirements. Additionally, SCSC staff developed and submitted recommendations containing information on each school seeking authorization to the Commissioners for review prior to the April meeting. The following schools were recommended

for approval: 1) Scholars Academy Charter School, 2) Ivy Preparatory Academy at Kirkwood, 3) Ivy Preparatory Academy at Gwinnett, 4) Ivy Preparatory Young Men's Leadership Academy, 5) Fulton Leadership Academy, and 6) the Charter Conservatory for Liberal Arts and Technology (CCAT). It was noted that three schools were recommended for abbreviated charter terms based on performance that was below the district average in several grades and subject areas: CCAT and Ivy Preparatory Young Men's Leadership Academy (both recommended for three-year terms) and Scholars Academy (recommended for a one-year charter term).

14. Prior to voting on the recommendations, Chairman Knapp invited representatives from each school recommended for approval to address the Commissioners. Craig Cason spoke on behalf of Scholars Academy, and Nina Gilbert spoke on behalf of Ivy Preparatory Young Men's Leadership Academy.
15. Mr. Cason said that Scholars Academy is working towards increasing student achievement and is under new governance and leadership that, together with community partnerships, will provide a positive environment for its students to succeed. Mr. Cason stated that though a charter term shorter than five years will present certain difficulties for the school and its growth, Scholars Academy is dedicated to its student and school's future and understands the need to demonstrate improvement.
16. Ms. Gilbert said that the process for expedited review for authorization by the SCSC was inconsistent with the best practices of charter school authorizing and the process utilized by the State Board of Education. Ms. Gilbert stated that the recent renewal process utilized by the State Board of Education was thorough and comprehensive and resulted in the decision to grant each of the three Ivy Preparatory charter schools, including Ivy Preparatory Young Men's Leadership Academy, five-year charter terms. Ms. Gilbert stated that the SCSC staff's decision to recommend only a three-year charter term for Ivy Preparatory Young Men's Leadership Academy illustrates that the expedited review process was flawed and did not allow full opportunity for input and discussion.
17. Chairman Knapp allowed Director Holliday to respond to questions of fact presented by Ms. Gilbert and the Commissioners to ask questions of Ms. Gilbert and Director Holliday. The Commissioners asked Ms. Gilbert about the specific harm a three-year charter would have as opposed to a five-year charter and the school's plan for increasing student achievement. The Commissioners asked Director Holliday about the process she and her staff used in arriving at the recommendation and the policy of the State Board of Education only to issue five-year charter renewals.
18. Upon conclusion of discussion, Chairman Knapp announced that votes would be taken individually by school.
19. Commissioner Lewis made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Rippner to approve the recommendation for the Charter Conservatory for Liberal Arts and Technology (CCAT). This motion was approved unanimously.
20. Commissioner Rippner made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Lowden to approve the recommendation for Fulton Leadership Academy. This motion was approved unanimously.

21. Commissioner Perez made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Lowden to approve the recommendation for Ivy Preparatory Academy. This motion was approved unanimously.
22. Commissioner Lewis made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Lowden to approve the recommendation for Ivy Preparatory Academy at Kirkwood. This motion was approved unanimously.
23. Commissioner Williams made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Rippner to approve the recommendation for Ivy Preparatory Young Men's Leadership Academy. This motion was approved unanimously.
24. Commissioner Rippner made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Lewis to approve the recommendation for Scholars Academy. This motion was approved unanimously.
25. Commissioner Lowden encouraged the schools recommended for abbreviated terms to move forward with the SCSC with positive attitudes.
26. There being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Lewis and seconded by Commissioner Williams. The motion was unanimously approved, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:40am.