

Charter Institute at Erskine Meeting Minutes

March 16, 2022 | time 11:00 a.m. | Meeting location *Via Zoom conference call*

Chair Dr. Tom Hellams, Outgoing
Dr. Steven Adamson, Incoming

Members in Attendance Mr. Stu Rodman
Mr. Martin O'Connor
Dr. Gordon Query
Dr. Noel Brownlee
Mr. Todd Carnes

Members Absent Dr. Tony Foster

Attendees from Charter Institute at Erskine

Mr. Cameron Runyan (Superintendent)
Mr. Vamshi Rudrapati (Director)
Ms. Sarah Timmons (Counsel)
Ms. Christy Junkins (Chief of Authorization and Accountability)
Ms. Celina Patton (Chief of Student Services)
Mr. John Li (Director of Finance)
Ms. Ashley Epperson (Asst. Director of Communications)
Mr. Joe Bowers (Coordinator of Authorization)

*Chairman Hellams called the meeting to order at 11:01 AM.

Mr. Joe Bowers announced that in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act, notice of this meeting and the agenda were posted and distributed to persons requesting notification.

The invocation was delivered by Dr. Query.

Mr. Joe Bowers called the roll, and a quorum of the board was present.

Board Chair Transition

Chairman Hellams announced his retirement as chairman and turned over the chairmanship to Dr. Adamson.

Adoption of the Agenda for the March 16, 2022, Meeting

The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

Executive Session

Mr. O'Connor moved to enter executive session to receive legal advice relating to matters covered by attorney-client privilege and incident to contractual relationships.

Dr. Query seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.

The board entered executive session at 11:10 AM.

The board resumed open session at 11:46 AM.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the January 9, 2022, meeting were approved by unanimous consent.

Presentations & Recognitions

Special Recognition	Presenter: Supt. Cameron Runyan
<p>Superintendent Runyan recognized to Dr. Hellams for his service on the board since the Institute's inception and as chairman of the board over the past year.</p> <p>Dr. Hellams thanked Superintendent Runyan for his kindness and for exceeding expectations.</p> <p>Chairman Adamson also thanked Dr. Hellams for his service.</p>	
School Leaders Meeting Video	Presenter: Supt. Cameron Runyan
<p>Superintendent Runyan presented the video of the Institute's School Leaders Meeting which was held on the Erskine College Campus in February. Before the video was played, he noted that there were over 100 in attendance at the event for team building and professional development.</p>	

Action Items

Audit Proposal	Presenter: Mr. John Li
<p>Mr. Li presented on the Audit Proposal. The Institute posted a Request for Proposals which closed at the end of February. Only two proposals were submitted, and staff recommendation was for the board to retain McGregor & Company for auditing services for the Institute.</p> <p>Mr. O'Connor made a motion to retain McGregor and Company for auditing service for the Institute. The motion was seconded by Dr. Query and passed unanimously by a roll call vote.</p>	
Schools' Letters Regarding Unilateral Dissolution of Charters	Presenter: Ms. Sarah Timmons
<p>Ms. Timmons presented on the Schools' Letters Regarding Unilateral Dissolution of Charters, giving a background on the letters received from the five schools requesting transfers shortly after they were notified that the Transfer Policy Deadline would be waived by the board. She then went over the implications that would follow should the board vote to accept the requests, including that by law the Institute would assume all assets and school bonds would default. She also noted that dissolution of a charter and formation of a new charter under a new authorizer would be an unprecedented occurrence and contrary to the South Carolina Department of Education's stance against fast-tracked openings. After stating concerns, a staff recommendation to deny the dissolution requests for all five schools was given to the board.</p> <p>Mr. O'Connor made a motion to deny all five schools request to terminate their contract and dissolve their charters. The motion was seconded by Mr. Carnes and passed unanimously by a roll call vote.</p>	
Issuance of Notice of Revocation for Gates School	Presenters: Ms. C. Patton & Ms. S. Timmons
<p>Ms. Patton presented the background and evidence of the school's consistent history of noncompliance, violations of its charter, charter contract, and applicable state and federal laws.</p> <p>Superintendent Runyan stated that staff came to this decision with a heavy heart, that this would be the first time the Institute initiated a charter revocation.</p> <p>Ms. Timmons gave the staff recommendation to issue a Notice of Revocation for Gates School to be revoked effective June 30, 2022.</p> <p>Mr. Rodman made a motion to issue a Notice of Revocation and revoke the charter of Gates School, effective June 30, 2022, at the end of the 2021-2022 school year. The motion was seconded by Dr. Query and passed unanimously by a roll call vote.</p>	

Coastal Leadership Academy Request to Transfer Charter	Presenter: Ms. C. Junkins & Ms. S. Timmons
<p>Ms. Timmons presented on the Coastal Leadership Academy Request to Transfer. She also gave an overview of the background of the transfer policy and how it was a direct response to the Legislative Audit Council's Report on the South Carolina Public Charter School District.</p> <p>Ms. Junkins then gave an overview of the schools background and a snapshot of its status.</p> <p>Ms. Timmons said that the Institute was concerned with the school's history of noncompliance but that it is currently in good standing. She then gave staff recommendation that Coastal Leadership Academy be approved to transfer.</p> <p>Following a few questions from the board, Mr. Carnes made a motion to approve the transfer request for Coastal Leadership Academy and authorize the Institute to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement to accomplish the transfer. The motion was seconded by Dr. Query and carried unanimously by a roll call vote. (Mr. Rodman was absent for this vote.)</p>	
Gates School Request to Transfer Charter	Presenter: Ms. Sarah Timmons
<p>Ms. Timmons presented the Gates School Request to Transfer. After an overview of the school's history of the schools consistent history of noncompliance, she gave the staff recommendation that Gates School be denied to transfer.</p> <p>Dr. Query made a motion to deny the transfer request for Gates School. The motion was seconded by Mr. O'Conner and carried unanimously by a roll call vote. (Mr. Rodman was absent for this vote.)</p>	
Horse Creek Academy Request to Transfer Charter	Presenter: Ms. C. Junkins & Ms. S. Timmons
<p>Ms. Timmons presented the Horse Creek Academy Request to Transfer.</p> <p>Ms. Junkins presented a snapshot of the school's current standing, noting that no academic gains are being made and they are performing below the Aiken County School District.</p> <p>Ms. Timmons noted that there were concerns of possible grade inflation, but the staff recommendation was to approve Horse Creek Academy's request to transfer.</p> <p>Mr. O'Connor made a motion to approve the transfer request for Horse Creek Academy and authorize the Institute to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement to accomplish the transfer. The motion was seconded by Mr. Carnes and carried unanimously by a roll call vote. (Mr. Rodman was absent for this vote.)</p>	
Legion Collegiate Academy Request to Transfer Charter	Presenter: Ms. C. Junkins & Ms. S. Timmons
<p>Ms. Timmons presented the Legion Collegiate Academy Request to Transfer.</p> <p>Ms. Junkins presented a snapshot of the school's current standing, noting strong academics and a strong school leader.</p> <p>Ms. Timmons noted that due to the school being placed on Fiscal Watch and failing to turn in their FY 2020-2021 Audit the staff recommendation was to deny the request, subject to reconsideration if the missing audit was turned in within thirty days.</p> <p>Following a few questions from the board, Dr. Query made a motion to deny the transfer request for Legion Collegiate Academy. Upon submission of School's 2020-2021 Audit within 30 days, the Institute will reconsider the transfer request from the school. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rodman and carried unanimously by a roll call vote.</p>	
Oceanside Collegiate Academy Request to Transfer Charter	Presenter: Ms. C. Junkins & Ms. S. Timmons
<p>Ms. Timmons presented the Oceanside Collegiate Academy Request to Transfer.</p> <p>Ms. Junkins presented a snapshot of the school's current standing, noting strong academics and the permanent hiring of a strong school leader, who has been serving as interim.</p> <p>Ms. Timmons noted that there due to the school placed on Fiscal Watch and failing to turn in their FY 2019-2020 and FY 2020-2020 audits the staff recommendation was to deny the request, subject to reconsideration if the missing audits was turned in within thirty days.</p>	

Following a few questions from the board, Mr. Carnes made a motion to deny the transfer request for Oceanside Collegiate Academy. Upon submission of School's 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 audits within 30 days, the Institute will reconsider the transfer request from the school. The motion was seconded by Mr. O'Connor and carried unanimously by a roll call vote. (Mr. Rodman was absent for this vote.)

Public Comments

Ms. Epperson called each member of the public that signed up to give comments and timed them each for two minutes.

Lt. Col. Christopher Ott & Ms. Marleen Ott, Gates School Parents – Commented against the revocation of the Gates School Charter.

Eric Bentson, Gates School Board Member and Parent - Commented against the revocation of the Gates School Charter.

Bridget Fowler, Coastal Leadership Academy Board Chair – Cancelled.

Stephen Tullock, Coastal Leadership Academy – Thanked the board for granting Coastal Leadership Academy's request to transfer.

Adjournment

Being that there was no further business, Chairman Adamson entertained a motion to adjourn.

Mr. O' Connor made the motion to adjourn.

Mr. Carnes seconded the motion, which passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.