

ILLINOIS STATE CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

Commission Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 23, 2018

The January 23, 2018 Commission Meeting of the Illinois State Charter School Commission was held at the Michael A. Bilandic Building, 160 North LaSalle Street in Chicago, Illinois.

Commission Chair, DeRonda Williams, called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm.

I. Roll Call/Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Williams conducted roll call. Commissioners Catherine Burns, Melissa Connelly, Bill Farmer, Carlos Perez, Troy Ratliff, and Lisa Schuchart were in attendance, and Commissioners David Feinberg and Richard Van Evera participated by phone.

Commissioner Williams stated that prior to today's meeting, Commissioners Feinberg and Van Evera gave notice that due to business reasons, they would be unable to attend today's meeting. Given that there is a quorum of physically present Commissioners in attendance, Commissioner Williams moved that Commissioners Feinberg and Van Evera, be permitted to participate in all aspects of today's meeting telephonically. Commissioner Perez seconded. A vote was called and with a unanimous vote, the motion was passed to allow Commissioners Feinberg and Van Evera to participate in the meeting telephonically.

Also in attendance were Commission staff Hosanna Mahaley-Jones, Shenita Johnson, Teresa Diaz and Jennifer Thomas.

The pledge of allegiance was recited by all.

II. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Williams asked for a motion to approve the November 14, 2017 Commission Meeting minutes. Commissioner Ratliff moved to approve and Commissioner Farmer seconded. A vote was called and with a unanimous vote, the motion was passed to approve the November 14, 2017 Commission Meeting minutes.

III. Public Participation

Jennifer Durst (Teacher, Horizon Science Academy - Belmont) attended in support of the renewal for Horizon Science Academy Belmont, specifically highlighted the strong and personal relationships between teachers and students.

Katrina Salaam (Teacher, Betty Shabazz International Charter School) attended in support of the renewal for Betty Shabazz International Charter School drawing attention to the progress that has been made in moving students to meeting and exceeding state standards.

Victoria Kuzma (Teacher, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) in support of the renewal for Horizon Science Academy McKinley Park however, requested that the Commission approve the request for additional seats as an increase would positively affect their kindergarten programs.

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Zoraida Jones (Teacher, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) in support of the renewal of Horizon Science Academy McKinley Park and requested the approval of the additional seats that would benefit students, economically, socially and emotionally.

Michelle Wintrich (Special Education Coordinator, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) in support of the renewal and requested the approval of the increase on their enrollment, specifically since the school is in high demand in that community.

David Ireland (Chief Financial Officer, Betty Shabazz International Charter School) provided four letters of support of the renewal of Betty Shabazz. Letters were from State Senator Donne Trotter, State Representative Sonya Harper, Retired Superintendent Kathleen Hickey and Retired Superintendent Dr. James Cunneen.

Elma Hadzic (Community Outreach Coordinator, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission grant the request for additional seats as parents are hoping and praying that their children get selected via the lottery to enroll at the school.

Michael Zamudio (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested the approval of additional seats so that other students have the opportunity to experience the great programs that the school has to offer.

Christina Herrera Perez (Parent, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) in support of the renewal of the school, but requested the approval of additional seats so that other parents have the opportunity to send their children to the school.

Maria Benitez (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) highlighted that she has been a student at the school for the last 5 years and the experience has been amazing. She added that because of the school, she will be attending Georgetown University in the Fall.

Merlin Mondragon (Parent, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) in support of the renewal of the school, but urged the Commission to grant the request for additional seats so that programs can be continued to be funded.

Billy Pack (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) stated that although he has been a student at the school for one year, is grateful of his experience and highlighted the dedication of the teachers.

Biviana Benitez (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) in support of the renewal of the school, but requested the approval of additional seats so that other students can experience the great things that she has.

Edward Flores (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) stated that he applied to the school when he heard about the Robotics and Engineering programs that the school

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offered. He urged the Commissioners to grant the request for additional seats so that other students can benefit from the extracurricular programs.

Salia Metheny (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested to grant the request for additional seats so that other students can experience the Robotics program; as she has.

Isabel Abarca (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission grant the request for additional seats so that other students can attend the school and participate in the programs that the school offers.

Valeria Gonzales (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission grant the request for additional seats so that other students can experience the supportive learning environment and the many programs that the school offers.

Cynthia Nations (Parent, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) stated that the school has made a positive impact on her children because the school is awesome with slow learners and their Special Education program. She added that she is requesting that the Commission approve the request for additional seats because the added resources would be beneficial to current and future students.

Deborah Rosa (Parent, Horizon Science Academy – Belmont) provided comment in support of the renewal of the school. She added that she hopes that someday the school can grow to a high school.

Alex Connell (Administrator, Horizon Science Academy – Belmont) provided comment in support of the renewal of the school.

Dakari Thomas (Student, Horizon Science Academy – Belmont) stated that she is in support of the school because of the support and love from teachers.

Jeslyene Vargas Gomez (Student, Horizon Science Academy) was present at the meeting in support of the school because she considers the school her home.

Vicky Estrada (Parent, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission approve the requested enrollment increase in order for the school to expand for the betterment of children and the community.

Armand Luciano (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission approve the requested enrollment increase so that other children can have the same opportunities that he has due to him attending the school.

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Natalie Casarrubias (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) was present to advocate for the approval of an enrollment increase. Due to her attending the school, she has discovered her passion for STEM and wants to pursue a career in chemical engineering.

Alexander Soto (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requests that the Commission approve the request for an enrollment increase so that all the programs that the school offers don't disappear. His concern is that without proper funding, the school will not be able to offer the programs that they do now.

David Gillett (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) thanked the Commission in advance of the approval of the renewal of the school.

Jessica Cervantes (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) in support of the renewal of the school but is requesting that the Commission approve the enrollment increase because as a transfer from a CPS school, this school has been a benefit to her.

Anaiz Aguilera (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission approve the enrollment increase so that the school can have the resources to grow.

Samara Garcia (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission approve the enrollment increase because the school needs more students so that they can continue to have programs such as the Concept Young Scholars Program, Robotics and more.

Victoria Medrano (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission approve the enrollment increase so that the programs that she is involved in will continue.

Hailey Rabideaux (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission approve the enrollment increase so that other children can attend the school.

Wendy Koziarski (Teacher, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) thanked the Commission staff for the recommendation of a 5 year renewal; however, if the Commission approves the enrollment increase, the school would have an opportunity and the resources to build a cafeteria and classrooms within their modular building.

Bahar Kuran (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) thanked the Commission staff for the recommendation of a 5 year renewal, however is concerned that if the enrollment increase is not approved, they may lose some of the programs that the school currently offers.

Liva Ozturk (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) thanked the Commission staff for the 5 year renewal recommendation, however, is concerned that without the approval for

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an enrollment increase, the school is at risk at losing the programs that the school currently offers.

Rachel Graham (Social Worker, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission approve the request for the enrollment increase because they need access to the tools and resources for their Social and Emotional Program.

Karen Labra (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) thanked the Commission staff for the 5 year renewal recommendation, however requested that the enrollment increase be approved as well because if not, the school will lose resources and have a negative impact on the Law and AP classes.

Carlos Perez (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) thanked the Commission for considering the renewal recommendation but requested for the approval of the enrollment increase so that programs, such as Robotics, may continue.

Gustavo Perez (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) thanked the Commission staff for the 5 year renewal recommendation but is requesting the approval of the enrollment increase so that other students can experience the programs that the school offers.

Leah Urias (Teacher, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) read two statements from current 4th graders requesting that the Commission approve the enrollment increase.

David Garibay (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission approve the enrollment increase so that other students can benefit from the programs that the school offers.

Hannah Makauske (Teacher, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission approve the enrollment increase so that the school can continue offering the Law program that she created and currently manages.

Courtney Tyler (Teacher, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission approve the enrollment increase so that the school can offer a Gifted Program and additional resources to students who are in need.

Lillian Beltran (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested for the approval of an enrollment increase so that the Concept Young Scholars Program may continue.

Valena Cruz (Student, Horizon Science Academy - McKinley Park) thanked the Commission staff for their 5 year renewal but requested that the Commission approve the enrollment increase so that other students can benefit from the school.

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Rebecca Beltran (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission approve the enrollment increase so that other students can love the school as much as she does.

Alexis Munoz (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission approve the enrollment increase so that other students, including her cousin, can attend the school.

Steve Papesh (Grandparent, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) stated that his granddaughter attended St. Andrews, however she transferred to McKinley Park when the school closed. He is in support of the renewal of the school because his granddaughter is doing so well.

Nathan Sisco (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission consider the approval of an enrollment increase so that the programs that the school offers can continue.

Tariq Muhammad (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission consider the approval of the enrollment increases which would allow for more students to enjoy the learning environment that provides exceptional education and a promising future.

Jennifer Lopez (Parent, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) expressed her love for the school and how happy her children are who attend it.

Kamar Khan (Teacher, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) thanked the Commission staff for recommending a 5 year renewal.

Jamie Kovoth (Teacher, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) – is hopeful that the Commission would approve the enrollment increase so that more students have an opportunity and choice to attend the school.

Evelyn Munoz (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) thanked the Commission staff for the 5 year renewal recommendation and requested that the Commission take into consideration the enrollment increase because without an increase, the school will lose resources and it may have a negative impact on the continuous push to inspire technology.

Fernando Ocon (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) thanked the Commission staff for the recommendation of a 5 year renewal and asked the Commission to consider approving the enrollment increase.

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Hollis Patterson (Engineer, Betty Shabazz International Charter School) spoke about how the school and village has impacted his life as he has been involved with the school for the last 15 years, by starting off as a parent and now a grandparent and employee.

Sravan Suryadevara (Teacher, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) thanked the Commission staff for the 5 year renewal recommendation and urged the Commission to reconsider the approval of an enrollment increase.

Jason Shiliga (Teacher, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission approve the enrollment increase so that the school can expand its Entrepreneurship Employee Program.

Gabriel Cerda (Student, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) requested that the Commission consider the enrollment increase so that other students, like himself, be granted the same opportunities.

Alicia Menchaca (Parent, Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park) stated that she has been a part of the school since it first opened. She thanked the staff and stated the both the staff, particularly the Special Education Team, and administration is exceptional. She went on to thank the Commission for recommending the 5-year renewal term for McKinley Park, and requested further that the Commissioners grant the enrollment increase.

Amyra Pearson (Teacher, Barbara Sizemore Academy) stated that she is a former student at Betty Shabazz and had now been teaching at Barbara Sizemore for the past two years. She further stated that Betty Shabazz International Charter School helped students to become well-rounded and to discover their own interests and goals. Further, she said that if the Commissioners allow the school to remain open, it would be highly beneficial for the students and thanked the Commissioners.

Mary Bradley (Executive Director of the Office of Innovation and Incubation at Chicago Public Schools) introduced herself and provided background on the number of charter schools and the transparent authorization process. She further stated that Chicago Public School Board recently voted to approve one new charter school proposal (Art in Motion) and deny a second new proposal (Chicago Classical). Ms. Bradley also stated that the Board recently voted to revoke the charter of ACE Technical Charter High School. She then provided information as to what options families have and the assistance that CPS is providing to families and students of ACE Tech. She closed by stating that CPS has not been formally notified that Amandla Charter High School will be closing at the end of the year, and stated that her office is committed to working together on the transition of the Amandla students into other CPS schools.

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Commissioner Burns thanked the public participants for their input and then stated that there would be a five (5) minute break in proceedings.

Commissioner Williams brought the meeting back to order, and stated that due to the large number of public participation and time, the meeting would commence to the Action Items portion of the agenda as related to the Material Modification Application and Charter Renewals. Commissioners Feinberg and Van Evera excused themselves from the meeting.

IV. Action Items

Accept Jurisdiction of Appeal(s) SCSC18-002 and SCSC18-003

Commissioner Williams made a motion to accept jurisdiction on Appeals SCSC18-002 and SCSC18-003. Burns seconded. A roll call vote was called. The motion passed with seven (7) ayes and zero (0) opposed.

Accept Staff Recommendation to Grant Material Modification Request of Southland College Preparatory Charter School

Commissioner Farmer made a motion to grant the material modification request of Southland College Preparatory Charter High School of an enrolment increase from 530 to 540 students. Commissioner Schuchart seconded. Commissioner Williams asked if there were any questions or discussion. Commissioner Farmer stated that the Schools Committee will be discussing the material modification process going forward, which includes communication with the host district, specifically for enrollment increases. Commissioner Williams called a roll call vote: five (5) ayes; one (1) opposed; one (1) abstention. The motion passed.

Adopt Staff Recommendation to Renew the Charter Agreement for Betty Shabazz International Charter School for a Term of Three (3) Years

Commissioner Farmer made a motion to adopt the staff recommendation to renew the Charter Agreement for Betty Shabazz International Charter School for a term of three (3) years. Commissioner Ratliff seconded. Williams stated that presentations from the staff and school would then be heard.

Executive Director Hosanna Mahaley-Jones provided highlights and an overview of the timeline for the renewal process. She stated that Betty Shabazz International Charter School submitted their application for a five (5) year charter term renewal with an enrollment increase to 650 students. She added that the Commission staff recommendation was for a three (3) year renewal term with an enrollment cap of 600 students.

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General Counsel/ Managing Director Shenita Johnson stated that strengths of both Shabazz campuses are that they outperform the assigned schools that the students would have attended otherwise, and that the campuses both stress social and emotional learning. Johnson further stated that the Shabazz network should clarify the leadership roles, increase sharing across the network, and have measurable goals in place.

Betty Shabazz International Charter School then gave their presentation. The presenters highlighted their goals for the upcoming charter term if renewed and the actions they are currently taking to improve outcomes at their campuses. The presenters also thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity to present before them.

Commissioner Williams then asked if there were any questions or comments to the Commission staff or school presenters. Commissioner Farmer added that he was present at both of the public hearings for the Shabazz campuses and he stated that he was impressed by the comments provided by students and members of the community. Williams then called for a roll call vote. The motion passed with seven (7) ayes; zero (0) opposed.

Adopt Staff Recommendation to Renew the Charter Agreement for Concept Schools: Horizon Science Academy – Belmont for a Term of Five (5) Years

Commissioner Williams then stated that the Commission would hear the presentation regarding the renewal for Horizon Science Academy - Belmont.

Mahaley-Jones provided the staff report, stating that the Commission staff recommendation was to renew the school for a five (5) year term with an enrollment cap of 580 students. She provided highlights about the school and opportunities for growth.

Horizon Science Academy-Belmont then gave their presentation. The school stated their goals for the upcoming charter term and shared their thanks to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Schuchart then made the motion to adopt the staff recommendation to renew Horizon Science Academy - Belmont for a five (5) year charter term with an enrollment cap of 580 students in grades Kindergarten through 8. Commissioner Schuchart then added that she had attended the hearing for Horizon Science Academy - Belmont and that everyone spoke passionately about the school. Commissioner Farmer seconded the motion. A roll call vote was held. The motion passed with seven (7) ayes; zero (0) opposed.

Adopt Staff Recommendation to Renew the Charter Agreement for Concept Schools: Horizon Science Academy – McKinley Park for a Term of Five (5) Years

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Commissioner Williams stated that the Commission would hear the presentations regarding Horizon Science Academy - McKinley Park's renewal. Commissioner Feinberg returned to the meeting.

Mahaley-Jones stated that McKinley Park requested a five (5) year renewal term with an enrollment increase to 891. She then stated that the Commission staff was recommending the five (5) year renewal term with an enrollment cap of 770 students. Mahaley-Jones added that the school had previously received a material modification from their original 725 student enrollment cap. She then explained that the Commission staff was not comfortable raising the enrollment due to the current achievement gaps between white students and Hispanic and African American students and limited space capacity. She also stated that the staff recommends an audit of the English Language Learners program, but is confident that the school can successfully address those issues.

Horizon Science Academy-McKinley Park then gave their presentation. The school highlighted its successes over the past four years and shared their thanks to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Burns then made the motion to adopt the staff recommendation to renew Horizon Science Academy - McKinley Park for a five (5) year charter term with an enrollment cap of 770 students in grades Kindergarten through 12 pending negotiated academic goals and strategic action as recommended by the Commission staff. Commissioners Ratliff, Connelly, Farmer and Executive Director Mahaley-Jones had a short discussion on the request for an enrollment increase. Commissioner Farmer seconded the motion. A roll call vote was held. The motion passed with seven (7) ayes; zero (0) opposed; one (1) abstention.

Elect Commission Officers: Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary

Commissioner Williams stated an action needed to be taken regarding the election of Commission Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Secretary. Commissioner Perez made a motion and nominated the following candidates for Commission officers: DeRonda Williams as Chairperson, Catherine Burns as Vice Chairperson, and Williams Farmer as Secretary. Commissioner Ratliff seconded the motion to elect the nominated officers. A roll call vote was held with seven (7) ayes zero (0) opposed; one (1) abstention.

Adopt Proposed Bylaw Amendments: First Reading

Commissioner Williams stated that this was a first reading of the proposed Bylaw Amendments. She then reminded Commissioners to review the amendments and contact the Commission staff with any comments, questions or suggestions.

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IV. Report of the Chair

Commissioner Williams welcomed newly-appointed Commissioner Melissa Connelly and read a brief background to the Commission. Commissioner Williams stated that the Commission will recognize former Commissioner Dr. Kathryn Robbins for her service at the next Commission meeting. Finally, Commissioner Williams stated that she and Commissioner Feinberg were reappointed to four-year terms. This concluded the report of the Chair.

V. Report of the Operations Committee

Commissioner Ratliff stated that the major takeaway on the report were the bylaws, which were previously taken care of. This concluded the report of the Operations Committee.

VI. Report of the Schools Committee

Commissioner Farmer stated that the Commission had received two appeals and the timeline for the appeals process included site visits and interviews scheduled in February and the March 20th Commission meeting for the appeal decisions. This concluded the report of the Schools Committee.

VII. Adjourn

Commissioner Williams motioned to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Farmer seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:07 pm.