

ILLINOIS STATE CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

Commission Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 1, 2016

The March 2016 Commission meeting of the Illinois State Charter School Commission was held at Sherman Park located at 1301 W. 52nd Street in Chicago, IL.

Commission Chair, DeRonda Williams called the meeting to order at 3:19 pm.

I. Roll Call/Pledge of Allegiance

Commission Chair, DeRonda Williams conducted Roll Call. Commissioner(s) Troy Ratliff, Catherine Rich, Dr. Kathy Robbins, Bill Farmer, Richard Van Evera, Aneesh Sohoni and Chair DeRonda Williams were in attendance.

Also in attendance: Commission staff: Interim Executive Director – Hosanna Mahaley-Jones, Deputy Director – Shenita Johnson, Commission Office & Appeals Coordinator – Treyana Burris, School Monitoring & Compliance Coordinator – Bertha Rios, and General Counsel, Lisa Scruggs.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

II. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Williams asked for a motion to accept and approve the February 9, 2016 Commission Meeting Minutes. A motion was made by Commissioner Ratliff seconded by Commissioner Robbins; a voted was called, 7 ayes, 0 opposed. The motion to accept and approve the February 9, 2016 minutes passed.

III. Public Participation

Tanjane Munson (*BSI - BASA Student, 8th grader*) – Indicated that she was upset when she found out that her school was closing. Although she is about to graduate, she has 3 other siblings that currently attends BASA. She further indicated that teachers have helped her improve academically throughout her time at BASA. She stated that if the school is closed down, future students won't have the chance to be excellent.

Kahmyra Morgan (*BSI - BASA Student, 7th grader*) – Asked questions about the District's reasoning to close down the school. She further stated that she thinks BASA should stay open because she has younger siblings and she wants her siblings to be safe.

David Ireland (*BSICS CEO*) – Expressed the need for the Commission to exist. He also expressed that no other school in the area has the environment that BASA provides. He further mentioned the school's efforts to evaluate the needs of each of the proposed locations and fitting it into their budget. He stated that he is honored to serve as BASA's CEO and further credited his staff. Lastly, he implored Commissioners to accept the Commission staff's recommendation to grant Appeal SCSC 16-002.

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Danielle Robinson (*BASA Principal*) – Expressed the nationally recognized qualities of the Sizemore campus. She mentioned that it has been overlooked that CPS changed student test scores and she further urged the Commission to look at this discrepancy.

Linda Johnson (*Amandla Supporter*) – Indicated that she is a community activist. She also stated that it is rewarding to work with children. She further mentioned that students are still coming to school despite CPS trying to close them down. She stated that she believes that students will have nowhere to go if Amandla is closed down. She urged that administrators should not give up on students, because they have not given up on us. She concluded by stating that students are our future.

Janice Steen (*Amandla Parent*) – Stated that she wants the Commission to provide a great atmosphere and environment for students in underprivileged communities. Amandla has helped students tremendously. She also mentioned that her son was turned down from a variety of schools due to behavioral issues. She further indicated that, one day, she noticed a card from Amandla Charter School on her doorstep one day, and upon her decision to enroll, she has not been disappointed since. She stated that she believes that the staff truly cares about students at Amandla.

Phyllis Goodson (*Lighthouse Regional VP*) – Indicated that she is here from Bronzeville as one team, one vision, one BZLCS. She further expressed that she wants due process for the students at BZLCS. She also referred to school's actions upon the recommendation for nonrenewal. She further indicated that the school had no opportunity to do anything prior to the District's vote and came before the Commissioners to ask them to renew the school. She stated that as a former CPS Administrator of Schools and supervisor, she indicated that she knows when a school should be closed; however, she stated that she does not believe that BZLCS should be closed but also acknowledged the need for recovery. She further mentioned that BZLCS is a school that teaches the whole child, and is a school that does what it is supposed to do.

Ruchi Verma (*Chicago Board of Education Deputy General Counsel*) – Mentioned that her colleague Mary Bradley will address CPS's position as to why the Commission should not grant the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-002. She further mentioned that the Commission does not have the authority to grant the entire charter according to the Illinois Charter School Law. She stated that the Chicago Board of Education has not agreed to give the charter to the Commission and respectfully urged the Commission to decline the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-002.

Shiree McGee (*BZLCS Parent*) – Indicated that she is frustrated with CPS's decision to close her children's school. She further mentioned her children's academic improvement at the school. She also stated that despite the closing, BZLCS staff remains "in it to win it." She stated that she does not want her children to attend "just any" school in the neighborhood due to the closing of another school. She stated that BZLCS can continue to excel if they are given the chance to do so.

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Lina Fritz (*Founding member of BZLCS*) – Thanked the Commission for giving BZLCS a fair process. She further urged the Commissioners to vote yes on the appeal. She also stated that BZLCS is a pivotal stone for young African-Americans and also urged the Commissioners to not take away this opportunity from students. She also acknowledged student growth throughout their time BZLCS. She further indicated that the parents trust the staff and teachers with their students as well as their ability to excel and receive quality learning at BZLCS.

Priscilla Horton (*BZLCS Director of Teacher Leadership*) – Explained her role to effectively plan with teachers as they are planning lessons that fit the needs of students at BZLCS. She further indicated that the teachers are the front line of the school and mentioned the school's hiring of a dedicated coach that is consistently working towards improvement.

Makita Kheperu (*CIO of Shabazz Network*) – Explained the steps that BASA has taken toward standing on its own and being independent of CPS.

Jackie Lindsey (*BZLCS Diverse Learning Specialist*) - Mentioned the thriving of diverse learning students at BZLCS. LaKisha Thigpen also spoke on behalf of diverse learning students who have grown tremendously at BZLCS. She further mentioned that they teach students not only to do well on tests but, also, to do well in life.

Kewanna Jackson (*BZLCS Parent*) – Indicated that she does not want her child to attend another school. She further mentioned the high quality learning and social environment that BZLCS provides its students.

Christian Davis (*Amandla Parent*) – Indicated that Amandla is her choice because her child has improved during her time at Amandla. She stated that Amandla students deserve to have a chance because they are worth it. She further mentioned that teachers are committed to quality education for students and that no child is left behind or turned away at Amandla Charter School.

D'Antoine Bland (*Amandla Student, 11th grader*) – Has attended Amandla since the 5th grade. He indicated that one of his teachers at Amandla changed his life and has helped him persevere through tough times that he did not think he would get through. He further mentioned that he scored well on the ISAT and stated that he is a part of the “one goal” program that further prepares him for college. He stated that if this school closes, he will not have another school to go to that provides the same experience as Amandla.

Brianna Lewis (*Amandla Student*) – Mentioned that Amandla is too strong to be closed down and is a family. She also referred to a variety of teachers that have helped her and other students during their time at Amandla. She further encouraged Commissioners to give them a chance to stay open.

John

(*Amandla Parent*) - Thanked Amandla staff for standing up for the students and not throwing in the towel. He further mentioned that Amandla inspired him to return to school himself. He also mentioned how his children's grades have improved since his students have attended Amandla. He stated that Amandla has demonstrated its value to the community and that the District

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would be taking that value away. He also referred to CPS not offering transportation, a decision which does not keep students safe. He stated that he hopes the Commission votes to keep Amandla alive.

Mary Bryant (*Founding Board Member of Amandla*) – Indicated that she is not here to speak for herself or Amandla Board of Directors but on behalf of her education committee members who could not be here today. She made a statement on behalf of Dr. Barron, who has extensive experience in school leadership. In her statement, Dr. Barron mentioned that the education committee has worked together effectively to present CEO Jennifer Kirmes with clear goals and metrics. She further stated that she wants to continue to work with the Commission to ensure Amandla's continued academic gains.

Laquan Mims (*BZLCS Student, 8th grader*) – Indicated that he had trouble at the previous school that he attended before Bronzeville. However, when he transferred to BZLCS in the 5th grade, he changed. He further indicated the quality environment of the school is what helped him change. He referred to his academic achievement at BZLCS and stated that his teachers taught him to be a leader. He further expressed that he wants future students to have the same experience as he did at BZLCS.

Ryann Lollar (*BZLCS Student*) - Has attended BZLCS since 1st grade and has had a positive experience. She further mentioned that BZLCS offers something that other schools do not, arts and power. She ultimately expressed that the staff at BZLCS believe in her as a student.

Devona Fisher (*BZLCS Student, 8th grader*) – Indicated that she is an honor roll scholar at BZLCS. She further mentioned that the teachers at BZLCS care for their students and that no scholars are left behind; furthermore, she stated that CPS would not know this because they are looking from the outside in. She also indicated that the teachers at BZLCS have high expectations and stay in contact with parents on a daily basis. She expressed that the school is a safe environment and mentioned that the students are learning, and as a result, the school should not be closed. She ultimately encouraged the Commissioners to support saving BZLCS.

Justin Tabor (*BZLCS Student*) – Indicated that he has attended BZLCS for 8 years. He also mentioned that the school has had “specials” such as karate a few times throughout the quarter, but now has them every other day. He further stated that if it was not for BZLCS, he would be attending his neighborhood school which is filled with gangs and violence. Lastly, he mentioned that his brothers graduated from BZLCS and have gone on to attend universities to further pursue their success.

Dana Lucas (*BZLCS Assistant Principal*) – Mentioned that in the 2013-2014 school year, BZLCS was a “Level 2” school and worked to make the necessary changes. She also referred to student test score improvements. She further mentioned that CPS never worked with the school to address proposed deficits. She ultimately encouraged the Commission to take a holistic look at the school and recognize the flaws in CPS's decision to close the school.

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Chantrell Tate (*BZCLS Student*) – Indicated that she is a first year student at BZLCS and also that her teachers worked with her step by step to ensure that she understood the material. She further indicated that she feels safe at BZLCS and recognizes the care for students within the school.

Tiffany Henderson (*BZLCS Parent*) – Indicated that she is a single mother and stated that she envisions the best for her children in every aspect. She further mentioned that BZLCS has accepted her children for who they are and have molded and aided them to who they will become in the future. She ultimately encouraged the Commission to vote “yes.”

Falin Johnson (*BZLCS Teacher*) – Recited the Ralph Waldo Emerson poem “What is Success?” She also referred to a number of letters that she received from students to exemplify the care her students have for her.

Sylesha Brewer (*BZLCS Teacher*) – Hopes to keep BZLCS open upon recognizing that BZLCS has overcome several strides. She indicated that she has taught at BZLCS for 3 years. She further expressed that BZLCS continues to model excellence and asked the Commissioners to keep the door so that they can “shine on.”

Alesia Patterson (*BASA Parent*) - Mentioned the idea that if a student does not go to school, the student will not succeed. She further suggested that this particular idea is fear-based. She expressed that students are afraid that they cannot trust people that tell them that they have to go to school and that it is important to restore the trust and reduce the fear. She stated that the children are begging for mercy.

Jocelyn Mills (*BASA Teacher*) – Expressed that from the bottom of her heart, she feels that the children and families deserve better than what they have been given so far. She stated that she still firmly believes that her children and families have not been treated fairly during the process. She further stated that she asked her 7th grade class how many of them have been affected by a school closing and 20 out of 30 students raised their hand. She expressed that she hopes the Commission makes a decision knowing that they have not done harm to a child.

Janice Mathus (*BASA Staff*) – Wanted to point out to the Commissioners the composure of students who know that their faith and future will be taken away from them. She indicated that the leaders are removing students from their home if they decide to close the school down. She also referred to CPS not keeping their word, as they promised to send their students to a better school; furthermore, she stated that she does not believe that there is a better school. She also stated that safety is something CPS cannot guarantee at other schools.

Paula Butler (*Amandla Grandparent*) – Indicated that her granddaughter who attends Amandla has special needs and further thanked Amandla for how they are helping with her family. She also indicated that her granddaughter has improved socially and academically during her time at Amandla. She stated that if you cannot control the students, you cannot teach them and commended Amandla in their success of ensuring this sort-of environment for its students.

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Shunda McCarthy (*Amandla Parent*) – Indicated that her daughter who attends Amandla has special needs. She stated that she is asking to keep the school open because her daughter had a negative experience at a Chicago public school. She further expressed that her child's previous school did not allow her to be safe, feel comfortable, or increase her self-esteem like Amandla has. She also stated that she wants the school to stay open, not only for her student, but for other students that share the same experience as her child.

Charles Moss (*BSICS Parent*) – Stated that there should be no debate of whether or not these schools should stay open. He further stated this process messes with students physically, mentally, and financially. He also expressed that the students are safe within their community if BASA is kept open and further stated that the children of the community need that school.

Dr. David Steines (*BSICS Volunteer*) – Stated that he studied education and got his doctorate. He further stated that during his time as a volunteer, he has been making a film with students throughout the year. He also expressed that the District is bullying the schools and is not exemplifying the kind of education that is needed for students. He mentioned that BASA is not bankrupt nor does it have a corrupt CEO, as does CPS.

Phillip Jackson (*Betty Shabazz/Sizemore Supporter*) – Indicated that he has been in 600-700 schools; however, he notices that BSI-BASA is different. He mentioned that students call their teachers and staff "Baba" and "Mama", and actually mean it. He further stated that the BASA staff will go above and beyond for their students, as if they are their own. He also asked that after all the analysis, does the school still deserve to be open and will these students be best served in this particular school environment? He also stated that the success of BASA is not accidental but intentional and scientific. He expressed that BASA parents are sending their students to the best school in the city of Chicago, as they are competing and out-performing other students.

Henry English (*BASA Community Support*) – Indicated that he knows a lot about education. He further stated that BASA should not be here because it has done everything that the Board has recommended them to do. He mentioned the changing of test scores by CPS, which he stated is wrong. He expressed that if you make an error, there is nothing wrong with saying that you made a mistake; however, if you don't, you will continue to make the same mistake.

Tiffany Sanders (*BZLCS Parent*) – Indicated that when her son started attending BZLCS, he was unable to speak. She further indicated that he had improved in comparison to his performance at the school he previously attended before BZLCS. She also stated that she has consistently communicated with BZLCS staff regarding her son. She stated that she believes that CPS schools do not have the means to accommodate her son and does not wish to have transition him into another school. She further expressed that change is difficult for autistic children and does not want to have to send her children to different schools again, if BZLCS is closed down.

IV. Reports

Report of the Chair

Commission Chair Williams announced that given the number of items on the agenda, she has chosen to defer her time for reports to that of the Committees.

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Report of the Nominating Committee

Commissioner Robbins reported that the Nominating committee met and proposed a slate of candidates and recommends the Commission to approve the nominated officer(s) Commissioner Van Evera as Vice Chair of the Commission and to re-elect for Commissioner Farmer as Secretary of the Commission.

Report of the Commission Staff

Interim Executive Director, Hosanna Mahaley-Jones, announced that it has been a very busy year for the Commission. Jones reported that the Commission is currently processing three appeals, simultaneously.

Hosanna Mahaley-Jones reported that LEARN Charter Network was denied the opening of a campus in North Chicago. As a result, the Commission is anticipating a fifth appeal that will be submitted Monday, March 7, 2016. She further reported that the Commission staff will meet with the Operations Committee to adjust the budget regarding anticipated appeals.

Jones noted an amendment to the 2016 Commission meeting calendar. The May meeting will be moved to accommodate the anticipated appeal due on Monday, March 7, 2016.

Report of the General Counsel

General Counsel, Lisa Scruggs reported a known conflict of interest between Commissioner Aneesh Sohoni and the three (3) pending appeals scheduled for a vote today. Scruggs stated that Commissioner Sohoni recused himself as it relates to any actions on these appeals and will not participate in the vote to grant the appeals.

Commission Chair Williams made a motion to go into closed session regarding pending and anticipated. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Van Evera. A vote was called; 7 ayes, 0 opposed. The motion was passed to go into closed session.

V. Action Items

A. Nominate and Elect the Commission Officers

Commission Chair Williams made motion to elect the slate of candidates recommended by the Nominating Committee: Commissioner Van Evera as Vice Chair of the Commission and Commissioner Farmer as Secretary of the Commission.

The motion was seconded. A vote was called; 7 ayes, 0 opposed. The motion was passed to elect Commissioner Van Evera as Vice Chair of the Commission and Commissioner Rich as Secretary of the Commission.

B. Approve Amended Illinois State Charter School Commission 2016 Meeting Schedule

Commission Chair Williams announced that the Staff has proposed an amended 2016 Meeting Schedule. She reported that the proposed amendment cancels the April meeting and moves up

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the May meeting by one week. Such an amendment will allow for Committee meeting in April and a scheduled meeting that will coincide with the timeline for an appeal that is anticipated to be filed next week.

Commission Chair Williams made a motion to approve the proposed amended 2016 Commission Meeting Schedule. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ratliff. A vote was called; 7 ayes, 0 opposed. The motion was passed to approve the proposed amended 2016 Commission Meeting Schedule.

C. Accept Staff Recommendation to Approve The Material Modification Request for Horizon Science Academy – Belmont Campus

Commissioner Farmer made a motion to accept the staff's recommendation to approve material modification for Horizon Science Academy – Belmont Campus. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Robbins.

Commission Chair Williams called for questions and/or discussions on the motion to approve material modification for Horizon Science Academy – Belmont Campus. There were no questions and/or discussions. A vote was called; 7 ayes, 0 opposed. The motion was passed to accept staff's recommendation to approve material modification request for Concept Schools' Horizon Science Academy – Belmont Campus to increase enrollment capacity to 580 students and move to a new facility located at 2456 N. Mango Avenue.

D. Accept Staff Recommendation to Approve The Material Modification Request for Southland College Preparatory Charter Agreement

Commissioner Farmer made a motion to accept the staff's recommendation to approve material modification for Southland College Preparatory Academy. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rich.

Commission Chair Williams called for questions and/or discussions on the motion to approve material modification for Southland College Preparatory Academy. There were no questions and/or discussions. A vote was called; 7 ayes, 0 opposed. The motion was passed to approve the Southland College Preparatory Charter School's request for a material modification of the charter school contract between the Commission and Southland Preparatory Charter School for the purpose of increasing its enrollment capacity to 530 students.

E. Adopt Staff Recommendation to Grant Appeal SCSC 16-002: Betty Shabazz International Charter School – Barbara A. Sizemore Academy v. Chicago Public Schools District #299

Interim Executive Director, Hosanna Mahaley-Jones, came before the Commissioners to present the Commission staff recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-002.

She began by giving a brief overview of the ISCS's vision and mission. She further explained the current Appeal process, procedural history, and due diligence conducted for all three appeals.

As a basis for the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-002, Commission staff agreed with the District's concerns regarding academic performance; however, the District's noncompliance remains a key factor in the lack of due process given to

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Betty Shabazz International Charter School – Barbara A. Sizemore Academy. As a result, it is the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-002 through its existing term of June 30, 2018; subject to the execution of a Performance Agreement to include the following conditions: 1) submission of plans to refine academic program and organizational capacity; 2) submission of a viable facility plan with executed lease or reasonable alternative proof of facility for the 2016-2017 school year, including updated budget projections; 3) submission of a minimum of 80% or 300 intent-to-enroll forms for students in grades K-8 by July 1, 2016.

Dr. Carole Lee, BSICS Founder, provided a presentation to the Commissioners that presented evidence against the District's decision to close the Sizemore campus. She began with the procedural history of the appeal. She further presented an analysis of Sizemore's demographics, strengths, and test scores. She also addressed CPS's claim to transfer students to higher performing schools, Sizemore's performance in comparison to other schools, and the ability of the Betty Shabazz Network to operate independently of CPS.

Mary Bradley, Executive Director of CPS Office of Innovation and Incubation, gave a statement regarding the District's decision to revoke Barbara A. Sizemore Academy. She stated that the Commissioners should not grant the staff's recommendation to grant Appeal SCSC 16-002. She indicated that CPS has worked to strengthen charter school accountability and should the Commission grant this appeal, it would hinder CPS in its effort to hold charter schools in Illinois accountable. She further referred to the SQRP Policy used to evaluate the school's quality and further stated its need to be placed on a remediation plan meant to ensure reasonable progress of the school. She indicated that upon failed implementation of the remediation plan, Barbara A. Sizemore Academy failed to reach five (5) out of ten (10) goals contained in the plan. As a result, the District voted to close the Sizemore campus at the end of the 2015-2016 school year. She ultimately referred to Sizemore's Level 3 rating for five (5) consecutive years and expressed CPS's responsibility to ensure that students receive the education that they deserve. She stated that CPS's transition plan for each school will be further developed and the District will continue to work with INCS (Illinois Network of Charter Schools) and other community organizations to hold school fairs this spring.

Commission Chair Williams made a motion to approve the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-002. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ratliff.

Commission Chair Williams called for questions and/or discussions on the motion to approve the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-002.

Commissioner Ratliff does not think the Sizemore campus was given due process and stated that it is a critical point in the Appeal. He further stated that there is a procedural issue in CPS's efforts to revoke the charter.

Commission Chair Williams asked about the building lease and CPS's future plans concerning the facility, should the Commission vote to deny the appeal.

Mary Bradley indicated that the lease is tied to the Charter agreement. She stated that the lease will terminate if the school is closed and is unable to answer further questions regarding future plans of the facility.

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Dr. Carole Lee responded that an interim offer was made by CPS and city officials that would allow for Sizemore to take children, combine them with Betty Shabazz International Charter School, and place them into the Shabazz building. She stated it was indicated that there were no future plans for the building and that the building will be available for use under the Shabazz name.

Commission Chair Williams commented that the performance of Barbara A. Sizemore Academy does not meet the standards of the Commission; however, this evaluation was based on CPS' policy. The schools will be evaluated in the future under the Commission's policy should the Commission vote to grant the appeal. She further asked if CPS believes that its' policy is fair and transparent.

Mary Bradley stated that she believes that CPS can do better; however, the District voted to close Barbara A. Sizemore based on performance.

Commissioner Rich referred to the District's requirement of a remediation plan, upon being labeled a "Level 3", in order to track reasonable progress of the school. Rich further questioned the timeline in which the District voted to close the school.

Commissioner Van Evera expressed that the exit criteria for the remediation plan is not being a labeled a "Level 3", and the school was a "Level 2", further suggesting that CPS is not in compliance with its own policy.

Commissioner Robbins indicated that she has been in education for her entire career and is shocked at the lack of due process. She stated that CPS can do better and should do better. She expressed her concern about the lack of transparency, notice, and warning from CPS and further wondered what CPS has done since the public hearing. She further stated that test scores are not the only indication of school success and she also knows that one of the biggest keys to success is strong leadership along with committed parents and staff. She stated that should the Commission grant the appeal, she is confident that the school will do better.

Commissioner Farmer indicated that he has been an educator for 13 years. He expressed that he appreciates the need for accountability within CPS schools. He stated that he has concerns regarding student's academic performance and wants the Commission to promote schools that are upholding the Commission's mission. He posed a question for CPS regarding the school's "Level 3" rating for the past 5 years and wants to know why CPS waited until 2014 to intervene. He stated that since CPS tried to hold schools accountable, he stated that he believes that the District should have intervened sooner.

Commission Chair Williams called for a roll call vote on the motion to approve the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-002; 7 ayes, 0 opposed. The motion is passed to approve the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-002.

F. Adopt Staff Recommendation to Grant Appeal SCSC 16-003: Amandla Charter School v. Chicago Public Schools District #299.

Interim Executive Director, Hosanna Mahaley-Jones, came before the Commissioners to present the Commission staff recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-003. The recommendation is based on standard of compliance and best interest analysis.

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As a basis for the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-003, Commission staff agreed with the District's concerns regarding academic performance; However, the District's noncompliance remains a key factor in the lack of due process given to Amandla Charter School. As a result, it is the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-003 through its existing term of June 30, 2018; subject to the execution of a Performance Agreement to include the following conditions: 1) submission of plans to refine academic program and organizational capacity; 2) submission of a viable facility plan with executed lease or reasonable alternative proof of facility for the 2016-2017 school year, including updated budget projections; 3) submission of a minimum of 80% or 300 intent to enroll forms for students by July 1, 2016.

Jennifer Kirmes, CEO of Amandla Charter School, provided a presentation to the Commissioners that presented its rationale for approving the appeal against the District's decision to close Amandla Charter School. She began by giving a brief history of Amandla and further discussed their belief in the right to public education. She discussed the highly qualified Senior Staff and Board of Directors at Amandla Charter School and their extensive experience in education. She also mentioned the flawed revocation procedures conducted by the District that led to a violation of their charter agreement. She also discussed the academic improvements at Amandla and the successful implementation of the school's remediation plan. She further indicated that Amandla is a unique value to their community and has a promising future. She also addressed the District's effort to submit a new transition plan only after they were informed of the Commission staff's recommendation.

Mary Bradley gave a statement regarding the District's decision to revoke Amandla Charter School. She stated that CPS is responsible for maintaining high expectations and standards for schools within the district. She also stated the Commissioners should not accept the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-003, as it does not meet the standards of CPS or the Commission. She further indicated that CPS is prepared to ensure that Amandla students are able to transition to higher performing options. She referred to the school's poor performance over the past five (5) years and further stated that the school is an example of low expectations and even lower performance. She further indicated that Amandla has not demonstrated that it can provide quality options for their students, and as a result, the District voted to place the school in revocation. She stated that Amandla failed to meet ten (10) out of the fifteen (15) goals established and failed to successfully implement the remediation plan. Bradley also acknowledged that Amandla did receive a "Level 2" rating; however, there had been a decline in school performance for several consecutive years.

Commission Chair Williams made a motion to approve the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-003. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Van Evera.

Commission Chair Williams called for questions and/or discussions on the motion to approve the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-003.

Commissioner Farmer indicated that he attended the public hearing for Appeal SCSC 16-003. He stated that he believes that in this particular case, there is, indeed, a concern about academic performance and enrollment. He asked Amandla about their recruitment plans in order to sustain enrollment targets that are financially viable and asked what they will do to turn it around, should the Commission grant their appeal.

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Jennifer Kirmes responded that the original charter was approved for 600 students; however, the facility in which they are placed is unable to fit the approved number of students. She further stated that CPS gave a false enrollment cap. She also mentioned that Amandla hired a Chief Brand Officer two weeks before the revocation notice and is confident they will be able to meet recruitment target. She ultimately expressed that the school is preparing for worst-case outcome; however, they have maintained detailed plans should the Commission grant the appeal.

Commissioner Robbins stated that the parents and teachers have to be proud of how supportive their students have been.

Commissioner Van Evera stated that the passion of the faculty, parents, and students is obvious and is impressionable to him. He further commented that CPS has fallen short, procedurally, as it relates to the District's revocation decision.

Commissioner Rich indicated that she was also able to attend the public hearing for Appeal SCSC 16-003. She stated that she is concerned about the academic performance of the school, as it does not meet the Commission's standards. She noted the high academic performance of the high school students at Amandla but is concerned about the strategies to improve performance within the middle school grades.

Commission Chair Williams asked the District, should the Commission vote to grant the appeal, would the school be able to remain in the CPS-owned facility and if not, what will be done with facility?

Mary Bradley responded that the lease is tied to the Charter agreement and that there are currently no future plans for the facility.

Commissioner Ratliff stated that he had the same concerns from the previous motion.

Commission Chair Williams called for a roll call vote on the motion to approve the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-003; 7 ayes, 0 opposed. The motion is passed to approve the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-003.

G. Adopt Staff's Recommendation to Grant Appeal SCSC 16-004: Chicago Lighthouse Charter – Bronzeville Lighthouse Charter School v. Chicago Public Schools District #299

Interim Executive Director, Hosanna Mahaley-Jones, came before the Commissioners to present the Commission staff recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-004. The recommendation is based on standard of compliance and best interest analysis.

As basis for the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-004, Commission staff agreed with the District's concerns regarding academic performance; however, the District's noncompliance remains a key factor in the lack of due process given to Bronzeville Lighthouse Charter more than several instances in process where CPS has applied a new policy. As a result, it is the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-004 through its existing term of June 30, 2019; subject to the execution of a Performance Agreement to include the following conditions:

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1) submission of plans to refine academic program and organizational capacity; 2) submission of a viable facility plan with executed lease or reasonable alternative proof of facility for the 2016-2017 school year, including updated budget projections; 3) submission of a minimum of 80% intent to enroll forms for students by July 1, 2016.

Phyllis Goodson, Lighthouse Regional Vice President, provided a presentation to the Commissioners that presented evidence against the District's non-renewal decision of Bronzeville Lighthouse Charter School. Goodson stated that she is here to ensure due process. She further discussed the background of the current appeal process for the school. She stated the Bronzeville made necessary adjustments to the common core standards, but was still held accountable by the District with inconsistent policies. Goodson also indicated that she believes that the school was judged unfairly. She referred to the lack of efforts by the District to intervene and work with the school to ensure reasonable progress. Moreover, she discussed the school's declining performance as a result of an unfit leader. Goodson further mentioned the school's efforts to improve through selective administration and teacher retention.

A Board Member from the Lighthouse Academies Board of Directors further mentioned that he came to Bronzeville because he believes in charter schools. He also indicated that the Board is not solely an advisory board, but also an active Board. He explained that the Board is currently in the process of implementing a policy in which board members are not allowed to miss three (3) consecutive board meetings; furthermore, if a Board Member misses more than 3 consecutive Board meetings, he/she will be removed from the Board. He also mentioned that Bronzeville Lighthouse Charter School has \$155,000 in surplus and \$1,000,000 in reserves, further indicating that the school is financially stable. Lastly, he stated that the Board currently consists of seven (7) dedicated members and is pleased to have a diverse board.

Sue Jamback, a representative from Lighthouse Academies, stated that, as a charter school, Bronzeville is expected to do better and will do better. She referred to the school's academic performance and indicated that the school has proven growth; however, she acknowledged the deficits within the school and stated that additional improvement is necessary. She indicated that Bronzeville is the higher performing option amongst comparison schools. Lastly, she questioned CPS's last minute proposal to provide transportation to students.

Corry Whitaker, CEO of Bronzeville Lighthouse Charter School, indicated that they are ready, willing, and prepared, should the Commission vote to grant the appeal.

Mary Bradley gave a statement regarding the District's non-renewal decision of Bronzeville Lighthouse Charter School. She indicated that CPS does not open charter schools to provide poor or mediocre performance for students, Bradley, again, referred to CPS's effort to implement accountability within Illinois charter schools. She indicated that the District's decision was based on the lack of quality education. She stated that the school has consistently failed the students and families that it serves. She further referred to prior "Level 3" ratings and the appeal process timeline. Bradley indicated that the District does not believe that it is in the best interest of students to keep Bronzeville Lighthouse Charter School open. She further stated that the school will not meet the Commission's expectations, should the Commissioners vote to grant the appeal; as a result, she encouraged the Commission to support the District's decision to deny the appeal.

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Commission Chair Williams made a motion to approve the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-004. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Robbins.

Commission Chair Williams called for questions and/or discussions on the motion to approve the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-004.

Commissioner Rich indicated that she has the same concerns regarding the school's academic performance and wonders what it will take for school to perform at "Level 2+" or higher.

Commissioner Van Evera asked what steps have Bronzeville Lighthouse Charter School taken towards academic improvement.

Christina Page, Bronzeville Lighthouse Charter School Principal, responded that she has been at Bronzeville for one (1) year. She indicated that the Commission has heard a lot about the new leadership and the school's "Level 3" rating due to an unfit leader that led to high levels of staff turnover. She further responded by referring to the increase in teacher retention rating under new school leadership. Prior to new leadership, she indicated that the school suffered a decrease in stability; however, under new leadership, Bronzeville has shown above average growth. She stated that having highly qualified teachers is vital to student performance. She also mentioned that the school also suffered a loss of curriculum; however, they are currently implementing proven research-based curriculum. Lastly, Page referred to the success of the upper class and the declining performance of the lower class. She further explained the school's efforts to improve this deficiency.

Commission Chair Williams asked the District, should the Commission vote to grant the appeal, whether the school would be able to remain in the CPS-owned facility and if not, what will be done with facility.

Mary Bradley responded that the lease is tied to the Charter agreement and that the District currently has no future plans for the facility.

Commissioner Ratliff indicated that the lack of due process mandates his vote on motion to approve the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-004.

Commissioner Robbins indicated that she is concerned about families being able to stay together if the school were to close at the end of the 2015-2016 school year.

Mary Bradley responded that the District will try to ensure that families are able to stay together and are provided with higher quality options for their students.

Commissioner Farmer stated that it is unfair that access to high quality education depends on a student's zip code. He further expressed that he believes administrators should be more "hands-on" and should intervene earlier when a problem arises within a school. He indicated that had he seen a fair remediation plan, there would be no doubt. He further stated that the Commission has to set the standard. He expressed that in order for a remediation plan to be fair, there needs to be timeliness and early intervention.

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Commissioner Williams referred to the Commission's primary role to provide high quality education to at-risk students and further stated that CPS violated state policy and the trust of the schools.

Commission Chair Williams called for a roll call vote on the motion to approve the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-004; 7 ayes, 0 opposed. The motion is passed to approve the staff's recommendation to grant with conditions Appeal SCSC 16-004.

Commission Chair Williams made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Farmer. The motion to adjourn the meeting was passed.

Meeting adjourned at 7:59pm.