

Alabama Public Charter School Commission
September 20, 2023 5:30 P.M.
Via Zoom

MINUTES

The Alabama Public Charter School Commission (APCSC) meeting took place September 20, 2023, at 5:30 P.M. in a Zoom meeting to consider matters relevant to duties of the Alabama Public Charter School Commission outlined in the *Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act* for public charter schools in Alabama.

Welcome, Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Chairman Luis Ferrer welcomed everyone to the meeting. Roll call was taken by Mrs. Logan Searcy. Ten Commission members were present which represented a quorum.

Members of the Commission who participated:

Luis Ferrer	Sharon Porterfield
Shelia Austin	M Javed Khan
Marla Green (absent)	Terri Reynolds
Lakeshia Wheeler	Ryan Kendall
Julie Ann McCulley (absent)	Julie Kornegay
Dorothy Houston	Deborah Alvis

Chairman Ferrer asked for a motion to amend today's agenda to carry over from the work session the presentation by the Alabama State Department of Education's Child Nutrition section so discussion could continue. Commissioner Reynolds made the motion to amend today's agenda to continue the presentation and discussion by the ALSDE's Child Nutrition section from the work session into the commission meeting. Commissioner Porterfield seconded. The vote was unanimous 10 – Yes. The presentation was added to the agenda. Chairman Ferrer then asked for a motion to approve today's amended agenda and the minutes from the September 13, 2023, meeting. Commissioner Austin made a motion to accept today's amended agenda and the minutes. Commissioner Khan seconded. The vote was unanimous 10 - Yes. The minutes and agenda were accepted.

Continuation of Work Session Presentation from ALSDE's Child Nutrition Section

Chairman Ferrer asked the representatives from ALSDE's Child Nutrition section to continue their presentation to the Work Session into the regular Commission Meeting. During the Commission's work session, the representatives from ALSDE's Child Nutrition section had shared an overview of what it is required to run a successful Child Nutrition program in a school system. The presenters included Angelice Lowe Program Director, Sharon Allison, Steven Rylant, and Ms. Julie Autrey. Ms. Allison shared some of the issues that have occurred and created problems. Such as the person responsible for the child nutrition is also in charge of multiple school system programs or the person in charge leaves the school system and are not replaced in a timely manner. Also, they are hiring food service vendors and allowing them to run the program without proper supervision. Child nutrition has lots of rules and regulations to follow from both the state and USDA and there must be someone in charge of the program. COVID waivers are gone, and everyone has to go back to the previous and some systems had forgotten what those are. They are finding that Charter schools are not attending meetings/webinars/training. Every Child Nutrition Director is required to have 12 hours of training annually. The department is working to provide more training opportunities. There are plans to have more monthly meetings. Each charter school is assigned a regional specialist who can help with technical assistance. The schools can

call at any time and ask for help. They have also had problems with Charter Schools not responding to communication from the state department. Mr. Rylant shared some of the problem that have been discovered during Administrative Reviews. Systems participating in the free/reduced/ paid lunch program earn units for each child and must have verified applications from each child in the program. If they don't have a verified application that is a certification of benefits issue. Also ,lack of meal count verification; if there is not proper verification provided money had to be returned. They are finding that the systems are hiring food service vendors to run their nutrition program and assuming they will take care of all of the reporting and not doing appropriate follow up/ monitoring/supervision. There has been some misunderstanding that they have to follow all rules/regulations and Alabama codes. They must follow USDA procurement policies and Alabama bid laws. Also, not posting public notices, or advertising summer feeding programs and locations. Not providing documentation of required training. Mr. Rylan and Ms. Allison both repeated that they are not getting responses from Charter Schools. It's difficult to assist the schools if they can't communicate with them. Chairman Ferrer asked is it lack of training/not attending? If we were to add something to the charter schools' contracts what would that look like? Ms. Allison requiring training and encouraging the person in charge of Child Nutrition program to not have multiple roles. Ms. Lowe stated if we could require that the person in charge to have just this as a dedicated role – not multiple jobs. Ms. Allison said they seem to leave food service until the last minute. They are not checking to see how many meals are ordered and how many are actually being served. Chairman Ferrer asked if they were seeing the same problems with all schools or just Charters? Ms. Allison, Mainly Charters, some smaller systems, but mostly Charters. Chairman Ferrer, is training once a year or can they request training? Ms. Allison: The new directors training is twice a year, and they can ask for technical assistance any time. There are request forms for technical assistance and we try to respond to them within 30 days. The new directors training is a 3 day training. Commissioner Austin asked is that training only for directors or can they bring staff? Ms. Allison: If space allows, sometimes they can bring a couple but usually space is limited. They can come for retraining, and they can ask for help at any time. Commissioner Austin, how many charter haven't attended? Ms. Allison, I don't have that information, but we can get it to you. Commissioner Wheeler asked can the commission get a list of trainings attended by charter schools? Ms. Allison yes but it will take some time to compile that. Commissioner Kornegay noted that it seemed like a lot of what the Child Nutrition Director does requires some financial knowledge and she asked if there are any systems where their CFOs are also Child Nutrition Directors? Ms. Autrey replied that the role of Child Nutrition Director and CFO do blend together and there are some systems that have their CFOs as the Child Nutrition Directors. Ms. Allison stated that some training could be made mandatory. There're 12 hours for the new directors training. Also, she asked for clarification for what the commission would like from CNP. You would like a list of training available for the charter schools, who has attended the training and the commission wants suggestions on how you can help CNP. Ms. Autrey would like to recommend that the charters attend monthly training, new directors training and repeat that training. Commissioner Kornegay asked if we know how much money the charter schools have had to pay back? Ms. Lowe responded not all charters have had to pay back but there was one big problem of \$1.8 million. We are glad to be here discussing these issues and trying to be proactive and not have a problem like this again. Chairman Ferrer thanked the CNP presenters for their presentation and the information shared will be very helpful to the commissioner understanding of how to help the charter schools. Chairman Ferrer said maybe there could be other work sessions with presentations from other ALSDE sections. He asked Mrs. Searcy for suggestions, and she responded with possibly CFOs and Federal Programs. Dates will be set for each section.

Consideration of Dates for Renewal Hearings

Chairman Ferrer turned the floor to Lane Knight to explain the renewal process for the new commissioners. Mr. Knight shared that the renewal applications must be filed by September 30th and the commission has 30 days to rule by final resolution on the renewal application. There is a requirement by law that there be two hearings. The way this typically works is we have a hearing and then we come back at a later date to approve a resolution confirming the decision. Both meetings have to take place in the 30 day period. We have until the end of October to get it done. We need to give the schools adequate notice to they can prepare. Mr. Knight suggested to have the hearing date around October 10th and then come back sometime during the week of October 23rd and have the second hearing for the final resolution based on the vote to approve or deny renewal that takes place at the hearing in early October. Chairman Ferrer opened the floor for discussion/ comments on possible dates and times. There was brief discussion on possible dates and times. October 10th being chosen for the first hearing date with both in person and Zoom options. With two times so the schools can have plenty time for their presentations and discussion. The first time on the 10th would be 10 A.M. and the other time would be 1:00 P.M. the date suggested for the second hearing was October 26th at 4:30 P.M. by Zoom. The second hearing should be short because there will only be confirmation votes on the resolutions of each renewal application. Chairman Ferrer asked for further discussion, comments or a motion on the meeting dates and times options. Commissioner Kendall made a motion to accept October 10th at 10:00 A.M., and 1:00 P.M. in person and via Zoom and October 26th at 4:30 P.M. via Zoom as the dates for the two required hearings on the renewal applications. Commissioner Austin seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous 9 – Yes. The dates of October 10th and 26th were accepted. The next commission meeting will be September 27th at 4:30 via Zoom.

Adjourn

Chairman Ferrer thanked everyone for their participation in today's meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Kendall made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Reynolds seconded. The vote was unanimous. The meeting was adjourned.