



## ROLL CALL

**Board Members present:** Herbert Drayton III, Chris Harvey, Brian Itzkowitz, Kelley Jarrett, Amy Mims, Dr. Fran Welch, Kellye Whitaker

**Staff & Consultants present:** John Brisini, Katie Bustamante, Jeremy Easley, Megan Friedman, Mary Ann Gilmer, Stacey Lindbergh

## Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:00PM by Amy Mims to review school program process, approve financials, and discuss Palmetto Goodwill Excel legislative and funding updates.

## Key Takeaways

- **Voluntary Charter Relinquishment Approved:** The board voted to voluntarily relinquish its charter with the SC Public Charter School District (PCSD) by June 30, 2026. This preempts a forced revocation, which would permanently bar the entity from operating another charter school in SC.
- **New Strategy: Contract School Model:** The primary alternative is operating as a contract school directly with the SC Department of Education (SCDOE). Legislators Gilda Cobb-Hunter, Senator Tedder, and Representative Waters will meet with SCDOE's Alan Weaver tomorrow to explore this path.
- **Strong Academic Performance:** The school is exceeding its 150-student enrollment goal and projects 25–30 graduates this spring. This performance is critical for addressing legislative concerns about cost-per-graduate.
- **Voorhees Application Submitted:** The application to Voorhees College was submitted on time. Voorhees will evaluate it and provide a decision within 90 days (by April 2026), offering a potential alternative authorizer.

## Topics

### Charter & Authorizer Strategy

- **Problem:** The SC Public Charter School District (PCSD) has stated its intent to revoke the school's charter.



- **Solution:** The board approved a resolution to voluntarily relinquish the charter by June 30, 2026.
  - **Rationale:** A voluntary relinquishment preserves the entity's ability to operate another charter school in the future, while a revocation would permanently block it.
  - **Communication Plan:** If the media reports on the resolution, the message will be positive, focusing on pursuing "better opportunities" for the school's operation.
- **Primary Alternative: Contract School Model**
  - **Concept:** Operate as a contract school directly with the SC Department of Education (SCDOE).
  - **Action:** Legislators will meet with SCDOE's Alan Weaver tomorrow to explore this path.
  - **Significance:** This model was suggested by Chris Neely, implying potential support from the SCDOE.
- **Secondary Alternative: Voorhees College Application**
  - The application was submitted on time.
  - Voorhees will provide a "curing period" for minor omissions and engage in a dialogue before making a decision within 90 days (by April 2026).

### Legislative Advocacy

- **State House Visit:** Dr. E. Lisa Beasley and students visited the State House, where they were recognized by the Senate and House.
- **Lobbyist Meeting (John Prasini):** A meeting with Senator Bennett yielded "10% progress."
  - **Outcome:** Senator Bennett will not champion funding but also indicated he will not actively oppose it.
  - **Condition:** He wants to see a sustained trend of decreasing cost-per-graduate, making the school's current performance and projections critical.



## Palmetto Excel Performance

- **Enrollment:** Exceeding the 150-student goal, currently at 159.
- **Graduation Projections:**
  - **Completed:** 9 graduates.
  - **Spring Candidates:** 21 students on track to graduate.
  - **Best-Case Total:** 30 graduates for the year.
  - **Target:** 25 graduates.
- **Intervention Strategy:**
  - The school uses a tiered support system (MTSS) to monitor at-risk students.
  - Unpredictable external factors (e.g., medical issues, legal problems) remain the biggest challenge to graduation rates.
- **Diploma Ordering Process:**
  - **Change:** The State Department now requires schools to order diplomas directly, bypassing Jostens.
  - **Impact:** This adds a 4–6 week lead time, requiring the school to submit spring graduate lists immediately after the term ends on Feb 23.

## Financials & Governance

- **Finance (December):**
  - **Status:** Tracking to budget.
  - **Variance:** Higher-than-budgeted legal fees are offset by payroll savings from an open teacher position that will not be filled this year.
- **Governance:**
  - **Next Meeting:** A working lunch is scheduled for February 23 at Palmetto Goodwill.
  - **Agenda:** Review bylaws, develop a board member transition plan, and identify new recruits.



## Next Steps

- **Amy Mims:**
  - Share the Voorhees College application with the board.
  - Circulate the invitation for the March Columbia networking dinner.
- **Mary Ann Gilmer:**
  - Provide the formal charter relinquishment resolution to PCSD at their Feb 9 board meeting.
- **Jeremy Easley:**
  - Submit spring graduate lists to the State Department immediately after the term ends on Feb 23.
- **Governance Committee:**
  - Meet on Feb 23 to review bylaws, plan board transitions, and discuss recruitment.

## Action Items

- Email Voorhees application to board
- Update resolution: pluralize charters; confirm 'approved charter application' vs 'approved charter' w/ attorney
- Email Table 96 Columbia dinner invite to board; collect RSVPs; book 2 seats

## Adjournment

Meeting adjourned by Amy Mims at 5PM following motion and approval.

[VIEW RECORDING](#) of the meeting