

South Carolina Real Estate Commission
Finance Taskforce Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 9, 2023 at 10 a.m., Room 202-02

Public notice of this meeting was properly posted at the S.C. Real Estate Commission Office, Synergy Business Park, Kingstree Building, Commission website, and provided to all requesting persons, organizations, and news media in compliance with Section 30-4-80 of the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act. The telephone number and access code were provided on the posted agenda for members of the public wishing to join.

Taskforce Members Present:

Gary A. Pickren, Esq.– Commissioner, Taskforce Chair
David Burnett – Commissioner
Carol Pyfrom
Cindy Creamer
Nick Kremydas, SCR

SCLLR STAFF PRESENT:

Kyle Tennis, Esq., Office of Advice Counsel
Meredith Buttler, Administrator
Ashlynn Kirk, Administrative Coordinator
Chip Sharpe, Department of Technology

PRESENT:

Cathy Boone, Court Reporter
Chip Sharpe, LLR
Shawn Callahan, Thentia
Jared McArthur, Thentia

CALLED TO ORDER: Mr. Pickren, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

INTRODUCTION OF TASKFORCE MEMBERS AND STAFF

Taskforce members and staff introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: To approve the agenda.

Moved by Mr. Burnett and seconded by Ms. Creamer, the motion carried by unanimous vote.

FUND ALLOTMENT DISCUSSIONS

Mr. Pickren recapped that at the last meeting, the Taskforce had agreed to spend funds on research for wholesaling, broker-in-charge supervision, and licensing examination issues. The Commission approved the Taskforces recommendation to allocate \$10.00 of each annual renewal fee to the Education and Research Fund, in accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 40-57-70(C), beginning 2023 and continuing for future renewals. The purpose and

intent of today's Taskforce meeting is to discuss funding for IT development and Communication.

a. Thentia Presentation

Mr. Callahan and Mr. McArthur presented an overview of Thentia services, a software database company specializing in the licensure and regulatory compliance industry. Mr. McArthur provided a brief overview of the system integration capabilities and discussed the ability to integrate with CE Broker to assist with renewal compliance requirements. Taskforce members were able to view the Oklahoma Real Estate Commission website, a current Thentia client, to better understand the licensee service portal and broker-in-charge dashboard. Mr. Pickren inquired as to the estimated cost of the system. Thentia representatives reported pricing is customized based upon total licensee numbers with a rough estimate of \$1.00-\$2.00 per licensee per month. The Taskforce further inquired as to Thentia's ability to provide real time reporting of licensure status for the purpose of updating MLS listings.

Following the presentation, Mrs. Buttler explained to the Taskforce as LLR is an umbrella agency, any database would need to serve the needs of not just the Commission but the remaining 40 licensing board and commissions. Mr. Tennis clarified the agency is currently under contract with ReLAES which offers nearly all the integrated processes presented today. Mr. Boland stated that due to state procurement laws, transitioning to another database management company would necessary go through the procurement process, to include the contract bid process.

All members agreed that there should be work done on the current website to make more user friendly, No motions were made.

b. Licensee Portal Enhancement

Mr. Burnett shared with the Taskforce that the Commission approved for work to move forward on creation of reporting system from the Commission to MLS system. Ms. Buttler will begin discussion with IT shortly. The Taskforce discussed the difficulties in navigating the Commission webpages and advocated for visual enhancements and functionality. Additionally, Task Force members cited the "File a Complaint" portal is not easy to navigate. Mr. Boland suggested a subcommittee for the website suggestions may be helpful.

Mr. Sharpe encouraged the Taskforce and Commission review the website and provide LLR staff with feedback to provide guidance to the IT team in how to best revise the website. Mrs. Buttler stated that updating the website is a high priority but in order to do this, the application forms and instructions must first be updated. Commission staff is dedicated to making the site more user friendly.

To assist the IT department and expedite enhancements to the Commission webpages, Mr. Burnett suggested the Commission could appropriate funds to contract an individual or a company to perform the website and communication enhancements voiced by taskforce members if approved by the Commission. Mr. Boland stated that contracting would be a discussion with LLR IT and the Director.

Motion: To allocate funds for enhancement of customer experience and relations for web based experience and any other technology related to that experience.

Moved by Mr. Burnett and seconded by Ms. Creamer, the motion carried by unanimous vote.

c. **Resource Pages: Class Materials, Commission Orders and Additional Commission Information**

This topic falls under the previous motion. No further discussion needed.

d. **Development of Communication Position**

Mr. Tennis stated a communication position dedicated to the Commission would result in needing approval of an FTE (Full Time Employee) through the budget process. However, the use of a contract employee might be possible and might not result in as many hurdles as FTE. He provided he would look into this further.

e. **Communication Enhancement: Video Messaging, Newsletters, Email Templates and Social Media**

This topic falls under the previous motion. No further discussion needed.

f. **Increased Travel for Administrator and Commissioners**

Mr. Burnett stated that real estate associations hold events in which Commissioners are invited to present. Mr. Smallwood emphasized Mr. Burnett's comment, noting that sessions with Commissioners are often the most popular. Mr. Pickren agreed that having Commissioner presenters at association events would be beneficial and handled best through the associations. Mr. Tennis recommended Commissioners be provided with a brief legal training by advice prior to presenting. Mr. Pickren requested this topic to be put on the meeting agenda for the Administration day meeting in March. Mr. Pickren stated Commissioners should make a priority to visit the associations and provide accurate information such as what the Commission is currently discussing. This would mean a lot to licensees for the Commission to reach out to the associations and offer to present. Mrs. Buttler suggested she be included on presentations with each commissioner as she has done this for other boards and is able to field questions Commissioners may not be able to, especially from the administrative side. Mrs. Buttler can create a standard Power Point presentation for the Commissioners to utilize thus ensuring consistent information is shared. Mr. Pickren believed these presentations would assist in the Commission's mission to protect the public by educating licensees. Mr. Tennis suggested LLR discuss developing a policy for this type of travel at the upcoming administrative day in March.

g. **Commission Meetings Held Around the State**

Mr. Pickren stated that there was a proposal for the Commission meetings to be held in other parts of the state in attempt to make the meetings easier for public attendance. With this proposal there are costs associated such as mileage, hotel rooms, etc. Though there is a large licensee population in the Columbia area, Mr. Pickren noted the public does not attend Commission meetings at present and doubts holding meetings in other areas of the state would enhance licensee attendance.

Mr. Tennis stated that there is a budget proviso which prohibits the reimbursement for Commission meetings outside of Richland and Lexington counties. In light of this reimbursement restraint, the Taskforce did not recommend further action be taken.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Creamer stated that it would be beneficial to hire more investigators to investigate real estate complaints. Mrs. Buttler stated this would be an FTE process through legislation. Mr. Burnett highlighted the Commission's concerns regarding follow-ups to investigations to ensure compliance. Mr. Boland agreed that a request can be sent for hiring of investigators and also suggested that following investigations, the cases can be passed on to inspections for follow-ups to ensure compliance. Mr. Tennis stated that this topic can be placed on the agenda for the administrative day in March.

In preparation for the Taskforce's final meeting, Mrs. Buttler will update the Finance Taskforce's proposal, reflecting today's discussion and will send it out to members. She recommends that the taskforce members review the document and be prepared to discuss distribution of funds totaling \$4 million. This will leave \$3 million in the Commission's account with additional funds being added to the Education and Research Fund with each future renewal. Mr. Pickren requested Taskforce members to email Mrs. Buttler with any ideas and suggestions not previously discussed. These will be added to the proposal document and discussed at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved by Mr. Burnett and seconded by Ms. Creamer, the motion carried by unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 11:19 a.m.