



VISION

MAINE CHARTER SCHOOL
COMMISSION

All of Maine's children will have access to a vibrant ecosystem of diverse schools so that all of them can become happy, healthy and thriving citizens

June 2023 Business Meeting of the Maine Charter School Commission

June 13, 2023, Commission Meeting Minutes Approved by Commission Vote on

July 11, 2023

Item Number	Agenda Item
1	Call to Order and Declare a Quorum
	<p>The meeting - held in person and via Zoom in accordance with the Commission's remote meeting policy - was called to order by Commission Chair, Norm Higgins, at 1:02pm and a quorum was declared.</p> <p>Commission member(s) present were Norm Higgins, Tori Kornfield, Brian Langley (via Zoom), Tom Keller, Jim Handy, and Leigh Weisenburger Albert.</p> <p>Also present were Lana Ewing, Amy Allen(via Zoom), and Dania Heard.</p> <p><i>Commission member, Norm Higgins, read the Commission's Vision Statement.</i></p>
2	Reminders
2a	This meeting is being recorded via Zoom.
2b	We ask members of the public to hold comments until public comments are being heard.
2c	When speaking, state your name and speak slowly and clearly and loudly enough for the captioner to pick up your comments. Lana or Amy will interrupt if the captioner is having a difficult time hearing what is being said.
3	Comments from Commission Chair, Committee Reports and Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda
3a	<p>Comments from Commission Chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair Higgins announced that the State Board of Education will be appointing a member of its Board to the Charter School Commission at its June 14th meeting. This person will fill the seat that was vacated by Wilson Hess and will round out the Commission at 7 members. • He shared a reminder about the friendly amendment to LD 1089. The amended bill will require that the Charter School Commission presents its Annual Report to the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee annually in person. The amended bill has passed through the

	<p>Committee, the House, and the Senate and is awaiting the Governor's signature.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And gave a brief update on LD 1741 which is the bill about school choice (i.e., expanding the number of charter schools in Maine, expanding enrollment, and increasing the number of entities that can authorize public charter schools). The bill came out of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee "Ought Not to Pass". It's possible that the bill may be debated on the floor because the supporters will want to be heard, but does not have the political support to be amended and passed on the floor.
3b	<p><u>Committee Reports</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tori Kornfield - Chair, Ad-Hoc Nominating Committee - reported that the Committee will put forth the following slate of nominees for Commission Chair and Vice Chair – Norm Higgins as Chair and Leigh Weisenburger Albert as Vice Chair. The Commission will vote on these appointments during the July Commission Meeting. • Tori Kornfield - Chair, School Performance Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee. • Leigh Weisenburger Albert - Chair, Finance Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee. • Norm Higgins - Chair, Executive Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee.
3c	<p>Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda None</p>
4	<p>Meeting Minutes Approval</p>
4a	<p>To Consider the Minutes from the May 9, 2023 Commission Meeting</p> <p>A copy of the draft minutes was distributed for review and consideration.</p> <p>Moved by Jim Handy; seconded by Tori Kornfield and voted by roll call vote as follows - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes); Jim Handy (yes); Tom Keller (yes); Tori Kornfield (yes); Brian Langley (yes); and Norm Higgins (yes) - to approve the minutes from the May 9, 2023 Commission Meeting.</p>
5	<p>Public Comment*</p> <p>Jana Lapoint - member of both the Baxter Academy for Technology and Science and Maine Connections Academy Governing Boards - stated that she was able to attend five of the eight graduations that have taken place so far this month and shared the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the Ecology Learning Center graduates stood together and recited the school's mission statement. • Maine Arts Academy wove several student performances into its graduation ceremony. • A Baxter Academy for Technology and Science graduate performed his song "Upside Down" which he played on an electric guitar he had built as his Flex Friday project. • Harpswell Coastal Academy graduates 19 seniors - six of which had been with the school since the beginning.

	<p>Bill Doughty - member of the Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences' Board - shared that the school recently held its second eighth grade graduation calling it "a very Maine ceremony". There were eighteen students who graduated and four of the boys spoke about friendship and the importance of friendship to each of them while two of the girls wrote sentimental renditions about their experiences while at Fiddlehead.</p>
6	Presentations
6a	<p>Shelly Reed - President, Maine Alliance of Public Charter Schools - introduced the new organization and shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their mission is "to promote and support educational opportunity for all students in the state delivered through public charter schools by promoting greater awareness of charter school benefits, missions, operations, and opportunities." • The Alliance will develop shared resources and use its collective voice to tell the stories of the value of charter schools on the Maine educational landscape and to rise to the challenges of the Legislature and other external factors. • Current officers are - Ande Smith, Secretary and Clerk; Joe Mattos, Treasurer; Jana Lapoint, Vice President; and Shelley Reed, President. Membership is open to charter schools, standard members (i.e., individuals supportive of charter schools), and associate members (i.e., organizations supportive of charter schools). • The Alliance hopes that they can partner with the Charter School Commission to bring the best educational opportunities for Maine students through charter schools.
7	Executive Director/Commission Staff Report
7a	<p>School Updates</p> <p>Lana Ewing, Executive Director, shared the following:</p> <p><u>Ecology Learning Center</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ecology Learning Center graduated its first class on June 8th which is a huge accomplishment in the life of the school. Staff offer congratulations for hitting this milestone. • Centralmaine.com wrote an article highlighting community partnerships and postsecondary outcomes of their graduating seniors. A copy of the article will be shared in the next Board Packet. <p><u>Baxter Academy for Technology and Science</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baxter Academy held its graduation on June 3rd with 85 seniors receiving their diplomas. • During Senior Award Night, there were 7 scholarships awarded to seniors, totaling \$31,000. • The school held a step up day on Tuesday, June 13th, welcoming their 100 incoming freshmen.

Maine Academy of Natural Sciences

- Maine Academy of Natural Sciences is holding a Strategic Planning event on June 15th, 5:00 - 7:00 pm. Stakeholders, parents, staff, and community members are invited to attend.
- A ribbon-cutting ceremony for their new agricultural barn will be held on July 15th.
- Chronic absenteeism has improved 5% since their mid-year meeting.

Maine Virtual Academy

- MeVA will be offering free summer programming from June 20th to August 4th for enrichment skills, credit recovery and advancement. This will be the eighth year in a row that the school has offered summer programming and has sixteen teachers participating.

Maine Arts Academy

- Has officially moved into their new building. Students, teachers, family, staff members, and volunteers all pitched in while their transportation provider, Poland Bus Company, donated two moving trucks, drivers, and several days of labor to assist with the move.

Maine Connections Academy

- MCA is preparing for renewal. Staff are collecting documentation and data that will assist the Commission with the renewal decision in October.
- Staff met with the Head of School, Assistant Principal, CFO, Special Education Director, Board Chair, and an additional Board member to make sure everyone was on the page in terms of the renewal timeline.
- During this meeting, MCA shared anticipated Performance Framework outcomes for SY2022-23. Performance data from the past four years will be combined into a statutorily-required Year 4 Performance Report that will be given to the school no later than June 30th.
- Two MCA staff members - Steve Gallo and Megan Grisham - have recently completed their Master degrees. An accomplishment while managing both school and full-time teaching responsibilities.
- Students have been participating in many in person events recently including a visit to the Maine Wildlife Park in Gray, education day with the Portland Sea Dogs, an exploration at Fort Knox, and a visit to the Penobscot Observatory.

Harpswell Coastal Academy

- Will officially close on June 16th and Commission staff thanked them for their years of service and understands that it has been emotional as they gear up for their last day.
- David Hartman, NACSA Consultant, has been engaged with the HCA Team since November walking them through the closure process and expectations.
- There is a buyer in place for the property itself. The property is the school's biggest asset and the sale of the property will get them closer to finishing out the year "in the black".

7b

Organizational Updates

Lana shared the following:

Revised Performance Framework

- Has been sent out to all Board Chairs for signature. To date, 8 out of the 10 charter schools have signed the document. As a reminder, this is the framework that will shape the 2022-23 Annual Monitoring Reports.

FOAA Request from the Portland Press Herald

- Staff worked with OIT to pull emails pertaining to the request and have given an estimate to the reporter on the hours needed and costs associated with fulfilling the request. The reporter was going to check with her editor to determine how they would proceed with the request. As of this meeting, no decisions have been made but staff will update the Commission as needed.

Team Structure

- Staff is beginning the process of hiring for a full-time Administrative Assistant. The Executive Committee reviewed, and provided feedback on, the job description which will be posted and candidates will be interviewed with the hope of having someone in place by August 1st.

FY24 Contracting

- Staff is putting Delivery Orders and Service Contracts with a July 1st start date in place with state procurement and are continuing to work with both NACSA and NCSI to define what the scope of work will look like for each of these contracts during SY2023-24.

Board Development

- On May 25th, NCSI facilitated a 2-hour session with school leaders, Board members, and school finance team members that walked through the financial metrics on the Performance Framework. Approximately 50 people attended this session with a second session being held on June 14th that will focus on the development of a three-year financial plan.

Charter School Collaboration

- Staff facilitated a meeting with charter school special education administrators and some members of the MDOE special services team. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss highlights, challenges, and collective lessons learned throughout the school year. Participants in the meeting asked for a meeting with a broader audience to discuss RTI and the challenges that schools face. This discussion was held on May 31st.

Progress with MDOE Data Team

- A member of the MDOE Data Team (Alex Cookson) attended the last Monthly Leaders' Meeting and listened to data concerns that the Commission, Commission staff, and schools have with the state-reported data. She was able to offer some immediate solutions and is willing to meet with schools individually to figure out why there are discrepancies with the data. She followed up with several resources which were shared with the schools.

7c	Media Update` <i>None</i>
8	Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report
	<i>None</i>
9	Unfinished Business
	To Consider the Approval of the 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Reports Addendum A copy of the addendum was distributed for review and consideration. Moved by Tori Kornfield; seconded by Jim Handy and voted by roll call vote as follows - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes); Jim Handy (yes); Tom Keller (yes); Tori Kornfield (yes); Brian Langley (yes); and Norm Higgins (yes) - to receive and place on file the 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Reports Addendum.
10	New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance
10a	To Consider the Approval of the Commission's Per Diem and Travel Policy A copy of the draft policy was distributed for review and consideration. Moved by Jim Handy; seconded by Tom Keller and voted by roll call vote as follows - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes); Jim Handy (yes); Tom Keller (yes); Tori Kornfield (yes); Brian Langley (yes); and Norm Higgins (yes) - to approve the Commission's Per Diem and Travel Policy.
10b	To Consider the Approval of Community Regional Charter School's Request for Partial Funding for Continuation of BoardOnTrack A copy of the funding request was distributed for review and consideration. Moved by Leigh Weisenburger Albert; seconded by Jim Handy and voted as follows by roll call vote as follows - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes); Jim Handy (yes); Tom Keller (yes); Tori Kornfield (yes); Brian Langley (yes); and Norm Higgins (yes) - to approve Community Regional Charter School's Request for Partial Funding for Continuation of BoardOnTrack in the amount of \$2,000 with the understanding that this is the last year that the Commission will assist with this funding.
11	New Business Requiring Notification to the Commission (No formal action to be taken by the Commission)
11a	New Governing Board Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11a1. ACADIA Academy - Meredith Morrison Resignations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baxter Academy for Technology and Science - Tristan Oldmixon Term Outs: <i>None</i> No formal action required by the Commission.
11b	FY23 Commission Budget vs. Actual/Spending Report Dashboard No formal action required by the Commission.

12	Future Topics
12a	<p>July</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election of Officers • Panorama Survey Results • MCA Renewal Timeline Update • Committee Assignments <p>August</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of Year Meetings • MCA Renewal Timeline Update <p>September</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOY 2022-23 Unenrollment Data
13	Announcements
13a	Important Dates (<i>None</i>)
13b	<p>2023 Graduation Dates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Regional Charter School/Friday, June 16 • Maine Academy of Natural Sciences - Threshold Program/Friday, July 21st • Maine Academy of Natural Sciences - Campus Program/Friday, July 28th
13c	Next Regular Business Meeting – July 11, 2023 (Room #103A/B, Cross Office Building, 111 Sewall Street, Augusta)
14	Adjourn
	Chair Higgins declared adjournment at 2:49pm with no objections.

** The Charter School Commission does not allow airing of complaints in public meetings regarding Commission and charter school employees or school employment matters, in order to protect employee privacy, to comply with Maine law and pursuant to our contractual relation with the schools. To the extent that the Commission receives complaints and concerns relating to school employees in writing, those concerns will be reviewed and addressed by the Commission and its staff outside of a public meeting. This meeting is not the appropriate forum for such comments. You are free to direct your concerns in writing to the Commission's Executive Director, if you have not done so already.*