

Maine Charter School Commission

**January 5, 2016 Business Meeting minutes accepted as written by a Commission vote
2-2-16**

Business Meeting Minutes – Maine Charter School Commission, January 5, 2016

I. Call to Order

Chair, Shelley Reed, called the meeting to order at 9:38 a.m.

II. Roll Call

The following members were present: Shelley Reed, Chair, Nichi Farnham, Laurie Pendleton, Jana Lapoint, Ande Smith, John Bird, and Mike Wilhelm. Staff present was: Bob Kautz, Executive Director; Gina Post, Program Manager and Heather Fuller, Administrative Assistant. Also in attendance were Roger Brainerd, Judith Jones, Vicki Wallack, Sally Mackenzie and Noel Gallagher.

III. Adjustments to the Agenda

- A. Items added for discussion reflected under Bob and Gina

IV. Acceptance of Minutes

- A. Moved by John Bird; seconded by Jana Lapoint and voted unanimously by those present to accept the November 17, 2015, Minutes as written.
- B. Moved by John Bird; seconded by Jana Lapoint and voted unanimously by those present to accept the December 1, 2015, Minutes as written.

V. Officers' Reports

- A. Chair

As we approach 2016, we have two schools that will be starting their renewal process; Cornville and MeANS. There are two new schools; Acadia and Snow Pond coming on board. MCSC is able to authorize one more school that will complete our ten, which will be a whole new application process.

- B. Vice Chair

Participated in the Maine Virtual Academy-90 day visit, details under VIII, New Business.

VI. Staff Reports

A. Executive Director

1. Cornville update

Justin Belanger has resigned as the Director of CRCS; the board is in the process of finding a replacement. Due to the concussion injury that occurred on the playground, they have reviewed their concussion policy and are making changes to their procedures.

2. HCA meetings with Board members visit to review special education staffing and programs

Harpwell Coastal Academy discovered that there were errors in the delivery of Special Education services that were occurring. They are endeavoring to give the compensatory services that are needed to correct all of that as well as seeing that all appropriate certification of staff are met. Having become aware of this, there were two meetings set up, which Roberta Lucas, Gina Post and Bob Kautz were present. The first meeting was with HCA Board Chair Sally, the second meeting included two other members of the education sub-committee. Details and reports were given as to how they are moving ahead with all the issues that were identified. Sally shared that they have found someone to be a Director of Special Ed. Additionally they have contracted with an individual who will ensure that all certifications are in order.

3. Education Weekly subscription

We have two subscriptions to the publication, Education Weekly which gives us access to all their archives. Commission members declined subscribing to Education Weekly, opting, rather, to receive pertinent articles via email from Bob or Gina.

4. Report on proposed LDs

There were none that were specifically addressing Charter Schools; however there are four that may be of interest. LD #1459; an act to delay any new State wide assessment tests for a year. LD #1464; an act to revise the educational personnel certification statute and to direct the Department of Education to review department rules regarding educational personnel certification. LD #1475; an act to facilitate the use of State education subsidiaries, this allows, if there is an increase in State aid or an amount that is different than what was anticipated, the school districts or school board can determine how to use the money. LD#1492; an act to amend the laws governing education standards in Maine, saying no common core, have a committee take a look at our education standards and come up with a report that may result in a change in the education standard.

5. Report on Charter School and Charter Commission funding for FY 16

The process of the funding of the Charter schools changed and is going directly from the state to the charter schools, there is no money coming from local districts, it would be coming from general purpose aid. The amount of general purpose aid is calculated based on who the students are, what school district they came from, whether they are entitled to a subsidy due to low income, special education services, English Language learner, or early childhood. The DOE has to budget showing how they break down general purpose aid and how much is allotted to the Charter school. This was the first year of the implementation and an anticipated amount was budgeted, because they were issuing the money before all the children were identified, and was the October 1st count estimate based on the enrollment figures that we had in the charter school contracts. The estimate budgeted was less than the actual, resulting in a shortfall of over \$600,000. This was more than the DOE could make-up from other funds and might have required a reduction in charter school GPA funding. DOE suggested that it be addressed by using the 3% for this year to cover \$440,000 of the unanticipated funds.

Since the Commission has a surplus from prior year's 3% funds that had been received, the DOE is withholding those funds. This does not impact this year's Charter Commission's budget and there would not be a need to reduce the Charter schools' anticipated GPA. Shelley; what is enough funding for us? The 3 percent figure is what comes back up. What do we need to be a Commission? The Commission discussed that action.

6. Maine Connections Academy Request for Increased Commission Enrollment for 2016-2017

Maine Connections Academy, Karl Francis, would like to present to the Commission a request that they add 150 students so they have the resources to be able to address the areas of improvement that they are contemplating for their school. These include a focus on Mathematics, the quality of instruction, and the home school connection. They are not requesting an expansion in grade levels; they would still be focused on grades 7-12. They do have a substantial number of students on their waiting list, and feel these students could be served and want to be served. The review team; Ande Smith, Chair, Laurie Pendleton, Mike Wilhelm, will discuss and bring their recommendation to the February 2, 2016 Business Meeting.

B. Director of Program Management

1. Charter Contract

Two items have been added to the new contracts; the background check for Governing Board members, and the requirement that the Annual Monitoring report by the Commission be posted to the Charter school website. Additionally, there will be a Probationary letter going to the homes of the students if the school has been put on a Corrective Action Plan. This would not be in the Contract but rather a part of a Corrective Action requirement. As the schools come up for renewal this will be changes implemented in the new contracts.

2. Acadia Academy visit with Board – status review

Bob and Gina met with the Board of Acadia Academy. Discussion was centered on concerns that had been brought up in a letter from Dr. Webster. One of the concerns was the location of this school. The Board shared the difficulty they have had in looking for a location that was affordable, has parking, adequate space in the right facility. There was an emphasis placed on making sure they are attentive to and proactive in providing or helping to facilitate all parents' participation in school activities and necessary meetings. They reviewed how they have been reaching out to the community. They would like to add another Board member; they have been actively seeking community members that have different cultural backgrounds. We had a discussion regarding contract requirements and how they would be able to show they can meet the needs of students in 4th-6th grade. Additionally, we discussed the requirement that at the end of the third year, the school would owe no debt to the ESP, other than ordinary trade credit. The questions that came out were how they can achieve that, and how they are going to present to do that.

3. Fiddlehead – Performance Measures/Assessment revisions

Fiddlehead is working on the revision for the assessment portion of their performance measures. Gina will be receiving a rough draft over the course of the next few weeks, and will get it to the review team.

4. Renewal process progress

Gina is working on the Performance report to be sure that it has everything included that should be and reviewed the layout and content.

5. Survey-proposed uniform survey of students, staff, parent for all charter schools

Gina has started researching different companies for survey purposes; Neilson and another is Panorama. There have been conference calls with both companies including screen sharing demo. Neilson; does not measure the areas that we were looking to measure. Panorama does have what we are looking to have and they have grit type questions. This is a one year commitment. Each school would see their own data; Gina would be able to see the school information and can make comparisons. There are districts in Maine that are currently using this company and their products. This company/product allows for adding and customizing questions at a later time. Commission members will be sent the links for both Neilson and Panorama so they are able to review in more detail.

6. How to Make Decisions with Different Kinds of Student Assessment Data

The book was ordered and after a review found that it could be a helpful tool for the schools. Copies of sections that Gina found prevalent are going to be shared with the Heads of the schools. If Charter School Heads felt this would be something good, we would buy them the book; have a workshop and talk together about how best to use it to increase the use of assessment.

7. MeANS Governing Board Change

Gordon Donaldson is the new Board Chair as Bill Brown has stepped down.

8. Section 504 Coordinator Training for Charter School

Susan Parks, coordinator that oversees the section on 504 had received a request from one of the coordinators at one of the Charter schools, looking to get more information. All of the coordinators from the schools will be invited for training.

VII. Unfinished Business

A. Strategic Plan Activity: December 2, 2015 Meeting Updates from;

1. Monitoring – Laurie Pendleton reviewed the revised documents. Each template or report contains Commendations; noteworthy successes. Recommendations; the school may want to consider, and Corrective Action - items that the school is required to do. Pre-Opening Template Visit Guidance; includes recommendations for each of the visits, highlighted is what will take place during the visit. Guidance for School Self-Assessment; includes a guideline for schools self-assessment, how they may look at themselves and develop a report. Performance Measures Guidance; will assist with the development of the indicators, the measures, explanations, and the documentation to be provided by the school. Monitoring Visit Matrix; this encompasses the Pre-Opening, 90 day, End of year visits and includes, the Commission's responsibility, as well as that of the schools.
2. Contract – Nothing to report
3. Public Documents – full report will be ready for February 2, 2016 meeting
4. Budget – Discussion and approval for 2016-17; Jana; expressed concern regarding total budget and personnel expenses. Bob provided an explanation that with the proposal of additional staff, the expense of a cell phone, laptop etc., that is where the cost is coming from. Additionally there are costs reflective as discussion had taken place regarding our own logo and making the website more conducive to the Charter School Commission. Shelley; expressed concern regarding the current salary of the Program Director. Proposed that there be an increase reflective of more than what is currently being proposed, as the work load supports that. Due to not having a quorum, a vote will be taken at the February 2, 2016 meeting.

VIII. New Business

A. MeVA 90-day visit Report- Mike Wilhelm

Their 90 day review took place on December 2, 2015, the administrators and board members were all present. They have had a few challenges, which include the facility not being completed in time, working on their relationships with K-12, and technical issues that they have since worked through. They have been pleased with the way the staff has blended, everyone was problem solving, making sure that issues were taking care of quickly. Their budget was adequate. They have started to look at field trips and are pleased with the way that is going. They have seen a number of students withdraw and there are issues with truancy. They have instituted a four tier approach relative to meeting the academic concerns.

The board of directors felt they were highly engaged with the school. They feel as though they need to extend and make a bigger effort in their outreach to parents and the public.

Two things that were contract requirements were; protocol for parent engagement and protocol for their assessments. Assessments; there was an issue with the NWEA because they couldn't get the number of students that were required for a legitimate baseline. Parent engagement; they realize that they need to be more engaged with parents, as expressed previously. They will be spending more time with parent conferences, as well as open houses, etc.

Conclusion; we felt that they were on their way; everyone seemed to work well together and are reflective and have a purposeful mode and wanting to get those issues resolved.

IX. Other

X. Announcements

- A. Turn in Expense Account Vouchers at the end of the meeting
- B. Reminder of important dates for your calendar:

Next MCSC Business meeting February 2, 2016

XI. Public Comment

Roger Brainerd; press conference at 2 p.m., January 25, 2016, that is being organized by the National School Choice folks.

Judith Jones; thanked Bob for the work on the Legislative bills, MACS will also be following them. Any indications from the DOE of their introducing a bill as we talked about over the last year, there were a couple of tweaks to the Charter School Legislation, that we might be interested in seeing. Expressed concerned regarding the Funding formula. MACS and other groups have worked hard on the original formula, and it had an adjustment mid-year for enrollment count. A suggestion was to work together on this and see what other States are evolving in terms of a onetime count versus small adjustments.

XII. Adjourn

Motion by John Bird seconded by Jana Lapoint and voted unanimously by those present to adjourn at 1:04 p.m.