

August 2, 2016 Business Meeting Minutes Accepted as Written by Commission Vote September 6, 2016

Business Meeting Minutes – Maine Charter School Commission Business Meeting, August 2, 2016

I. Call to Order

Vice Chair Dr. Mike Wilhelm called the meeting to order at 9:35am.

II. Roll Call

Commission members present: Mike Wilhelm, Jana Lapoint, Shelley Reed, Nichi Farnham, John Bird. Staff present: Bob Kautz, Gina Post. Also present: Jim Rier, Roger Brainerd, Judith Jones, Melinda Browne, Carrie Branson, Vicki Wallack, Amy Linscott, Dottie Foote, Late arrival: Peter Mills (9:42am)

III. Adjustments to the Agenda

Addition of:

- New Business, item J: Budget vs Actual
- Announcements, item B: Acadia Academy Grand Opening Celebration

IV. Acceptance of Minutes

Motion by John Bird to accept the July 5, 2016 Business Meeting Minutes, Seconded by Shelley Reed.

Vote: 4 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstain

V. Officers' Reports

- A. Chair- Not present
- B. Vice Chair- Nothing to report

VI. Staff Reports

A. Executive Director

1. Finance Administrator position – Job description

Executive Director Bob Kautz reported that the State is working on a master list of staffing agencies. The Commission will use that, once it is approved, rather than putting out for bids. Shelly Reed asked if Governor LePage's hiring freeze will affect the MCSC. Bob responded that he did not believe it did, but he would double check. Jana LaPoint asked why the MCSC hasn't been able to hire independently of the State and offer benefits, as the MCSC is a quasi-state agency. Bob responded that had not been possible in the past. Jana would like to know where in the law it says this cannot happen. Bob said he would look into it.

Shelley Reed reported she likes that the duties of the Finance Administrator include assisting the Director of Program Management.

No action on this item; First reading.

2. Use of vans information

Bob reported that he has been in touch with Pat Hinckley (DOE Transportation and Security). Federal government prevents the sale of new 12-15 passenger vans. Up to a 10 passenger van is legal, but Pat suggests school strongly consider options. Shelley asked if any charter schools are currently using a 12-15 passenger van. Bob stated that HCA has a Multi-Function School Activity Bus (MFSAB), which Pat also has concerns about. Pat will work with the schools on an as-needed basis.

3. Revolving Renovation funds

Bob reported that the DOE looked into the Revolving Renovation funds again recently after the MCSC received a question regarding charter school participation. The Revolving Renovation funds are still not available to charter schools. Jim Rier explained that parts of the law around bonding and forgiveness requirements are not in the law for charter schools. Access to this fund for charter schools would require a change in law.

4. Administrative Assistant Position Vacancy

Bob shared that MCSC's Administrative assistant's last day was last Friday (July 29, 2016). He has spoken with TriState Staffing to begin the process for hiring a new Administrative Assistant. A candidate will be interviewed on Wed., Aug. 3 at 1:00. This candidate has worked with TriState for 5 years and has experience in state government and its various systems. The position is posted on the MCSC website.

B. Program Manager

1. Charter School leader training – August 23, 2016
Room 600
8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Director of Program Management Gina Post reviewed the draft agenda. She shared that the items selected for training were a result of requests and questions from the charter schools.

2. Renewal update

Gina reported the two schools that are currently in the renewal process (Maine Academy of Natural Sciences and Cornville Regional Charter School) received their Performance Report, Renewal Guidance, and Renewal Application. They had some corrections and additions to the performance reports. The Cornville Regional Charter School report is complete and is on the Commission's website. The Maine Academy of Natural Science report will not be complete until after its school year ends (August 5, 2016).

3. Monitoring Report updates

Gina reported that Monitoring reports are in the process of being drafted. She asked Commission members to send her items for the report as well as commendations and recommendations.

VII. Unfinished Business

A. Strategic Plan Activity

Bob stated that not much has been done yet for the strategic planning subcommittees. He suggested that he get in touch with each subcommittee via conference call to make plans to carry out work after the Commission's Sept. 5, 2016 meeting.

Shelley Reed agreed that after creating the initial teams a conversation is needed to plan for work after the September and subsequent meetings.

Plan for Future: John Bird reported that he and Jim are going to meet with Roger and Judith of MACS on Aug. 19 to talk about future plans. They will update the Commission in September.

Create a Finance Committee: Dr. Mike Wilhelm reported that he, Jim, and Bob have met a few times to discuss the 5 year budget plan.

VIII. New Business

A. Snow Pond Arts Academy

Bob Kautz reported that Shelley Reed was told last weekend (July 30-31) that enrollment is up to 61 students and that 5 more are in process. The last time the review team met with Snow Pond Arts Academy representatives the review team asked for weekly updates and approved the school to open with 75 students, then approved the school opening with 65 students after the school provided evidence that it would be able to offer the program as outlined in its application with 65 students. The school recently did a large mailing and had another open house. Bob stated that the board, and its chair in particular, have been very involved.

B. ACADIA Academy

The Commission received notification of Acadia Academy hiring Julie Colello as Director.

Motion made by John Bird to accept Julie Colello as Director of Acadia Academy. Motion seconded by Shelley Reed.

Discussion: Shelley stated she likes that Ms. Colello is actively pursuing a Masters in Educational Leadership. Jana pointed out Ms. Colello's undergraduate work was done at Univ. Maine in Farmington, which has a good reputation for teacher training.

Vote: 5 in favor, 0 opposed

C. MeVA – New K12 Program Manager – Fadia Afaneh

The Commission received notification of Fadia Afaneh as the new K12 Program Manager at Maine Virtual Academy. Ms. Afaneh's resume was also provided.

Dr. Melinda Browne (Head of School at Maine Virtual Academy) spoke of Ms. Afaneh's qualifications stating she is experienced with data driven education and is a technical person. Ms. Afaneh will be doing professional development with teachers around individualized programs. Shelley asked for specifics on the trainings. Melinda said Ms. Afaneh is very data focused. She will be working on targeted training on aspects of the school's improvement plan. Shelley asked if MeVA hired any new teachers. Melinda reported that 4 new teachers had been hired. Jana asked if the Program manager is paid for by MeVA. Melinda explained that the Program Director is through MeVA as part of the package. Bob explained that Ms. Afaneh is replacing the previous Program Manager who recently took another position. Jana asked if Ms. Afaneh would be full time at the school. Melinda said Ms. Afaneh is a full time on site employee. Dr. Mike Wilhelm asked if K-12

moves its employees around every year. Peter Mills doesn't believe that is the case and shared that the program manager who just left was with her previous assignment for 4 years.

Motion made by John Bird to accept Fadia Afaneh as the new K12 Program Manager at Maine Virtual Academy. Motion seconded by Shelley Reed.

Vote: 5 in favor, 0 opposed

Dr. Mike Wilhelm suggested taking related agenda items D, G, and H together.

D. Consideration of MeVA Teacher Office Attendance Policy

G. MCA – Teachers to work from home – Consideration

H. Consideration of Commission position – “Guidance for Developing a Policy for Flexible Teaching Schedule”

Dr. Mike Wilhelm shared that both of the virtual charter schools (Maine Connections Academy and Maine Virtual Academy) have submitted plans for flexibility for teachers to work at home. MCA teachers have been working on site, and MCA is requesting teachers be allowed to work at home one day per week. MeVA teachers have been working at home 2 days per week and are requesting that those two days be allowed by the Commission.

Dr. Melinda Browne of MeVA went over the plan submitted to the Review Team, which was also in the meeting packet.

Amy Linscott of the MCA board reviewed the plan submitted to the Review Team, which was also in the meeting packet.

Peter Mills of MeVA's board explained that current literature states that virtual school teachers are most effective when they work on site together and that the board feels that will still happen 3 days per week, particularly with careful scheduling of teachers, so those teachers who share students are working a similar schedule. He shared that some teachers travel a long distance and that MeVA is able to monitor teachers virtually.

Dr. Mike Wilhelm explained that the review team for both schools worked together to draft a document *Guidance for developing a policy for Flexible Teaching Schedules or Work from Home*, which the Commission reviewed.

Shelley Reed said that she feels strongly that the teachers need to be together. She wouldn't want a teacher in his/her first year at the school being at home. There should be proven teacher ability.

Jana Lapoint expressed concerns that she doesn't know enough about virtual education to be comfortable with the teachers working at home. She said she certainly wouldn't feel comfortable with a teacher in her/his first year at the school, and maybe not the second. Perhaps the 3rd year.

Amy Linscott explained that teachers are asking for one day to work at home to do grading and paperwork.

Nichi Farnham explained that she and the other 2 review team members worked on the guidance document to include minimums.

John Bird shared that he has the same concerns as Jana. The Commission felt that teachers being together is very important from the beginning.

Nichi Farnham said that working at home was seen as a benefit to attract and retain teachers.

Jana Lapoint asked if the teachers at MeVA and MCA were being paid less than teachers at other schools.

Peter Mills indicated that giving teachers the ability to work at home had been a negotiating piece.

John Bird pointed out that MCA has been in operation for 2 years and is requesting one day at home and MeVA has 1 year completed and is asking for 2 days at home.

Jana Lapoint said that the Commission wanted to have teachers together and wanted to do it differently in Maine than what other states had done.

John Bird said that Maine's virtual charter schools were modeled based on best practices.

Shelley Reed said that every year the charter schools have tweaked their programs and that for a school with only a couple of years it doesn't make sense to disperse teachers this way.

Dr. Mike Wilhelm said the review team wasn't fully comfortable with it or how the teachers would be monitored from home.

Bob Kautz pointed out the confusion with MeVA not seeing it in the contract and thought because it wasn't prohibited thought it was an option and was already doing it, though the Commission made it clear early on. He reminded the Commission that Maine's virtual schools are small schools similar in student population to brick and mortar charter schools. These schools do not have to hire so many teachers that the teachers will be far away. This was what the Commission had wanted from early on.

Shelley stated that the Commission has been clear with the expectations of the virtual schools being required to have a site and work together. She'd like to see the Commission carry this out at least in the early years.

Dr. Mike Wilhelm asked if there was a motion.

Nichi Farnham asked for more information on how the teachers are evaluated when working at home.

Amy Linscott added that the teachers are logged in to systems when working at home and phone calls and emails are logged in.

John Bird said that when MCA started it had difficulty finding a science teacher and was able to find a teacher up north and the Commission allowed it. It was a high quality person and they needed the teacher as an exception. That teacher has worked out and has done field trips for MCA up north.

Motion made by Nichi Farnham to approve the MeVA teacher attendance policy. Motion seconded by Shelley Reed.

Vote: 0 in favor, 5 opposed

Motion made by Nichi Farnham to approve the MCA teacher attendance policy. Motion seconded by Shelley Reed.

Vote: 1 in favor, 4 opposed

This was the **first reading of the *Guidance for Developing a Policy for a Flexible Teaching Schedule***.

Shelley would like to see requirements evidence and criteria included in a next draft.

Dr. Melinda Browne asked if this policy would apply to MeVA's part time teachers. The Commission answered that any teachers hired by MeVA must be on site.

D. Consideration of MeVA Virtual Proctor or NWEA protocol

Dr. Melinda Browne explained that MeVA hopes virtual proctoring will increase student participation on NWEA. MeVA consulted with NWEA and meets their criteria. She said MeVA has had trouble getting students to test sites. Peter Mills added that students are going out for testing 4 times. He hopes that if NWEA is done virtually and students only have to come out for MEAs participation will increase on both MEA and NWEA. Shelley Reed asked if there was any cost to students. Melinda said there is no cost and it makes doing make up testing easier. The winter 2016 NEWA was done virtually and MeVA had slightly better completion rates. Shelley asked if MEAs are still done in person. Melinda said they will be done at sites across the state as they have been.

Motion made by John Bird to approve MeVA's virtual proctor policy. Motion seconded by Shelley Reed.

Vote: 5 members in favor, 0 opposed

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VII. Unfinished Business

B. Report on Federal grants and access by Charter schools by Rachel Tome, DOE Chief Academic Officer

F. MCSC Review Team Assignments

Some assignments were adjusted after Ande Smith left the Commission. When Jim Rier officially becomes part of the Commission the teams will be reviewed. No action taken.

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VIII. New Business

I. Acceptance of Resignation – Administrative Assistant

Motion made by John Bird to accept with regret the Resignation of Administrative Assistant.

Motion seconded by Jana Lapoint.

Vote: 5 in favor, 0 opposed

J. FY17 Budget vs Actual August 1, 2017 Report

Reviewed by Commission, no action taken.

IX. Other

Amy Linscott of MCA reported that Karl Francis has left MCA for a new position and that MCA is searching for a new principal and has an MCA teacher in acting capacity until a principal is hired.

X. Announcements

A. Turn in Expense Account Vouchers at the end of the meeting

B. Acadia Academy Grand Opening Celebration, August 18 4:30-6:30

XI. Public Comment

- A. Vicki Wallack wanted to know when Snow Pond Arts Academy had the approval for 75 and 65 students. She was unable to find it in writing anywhere and believed it is a change to the contract. Bob explained that the school had to show that it could provide the programming outlined in the application. The review team determined that this option was better than waiting a year to open. Vicki as if there would be a vote and Bob said there would be a vote.

- B. Judith Jones shared that she looks forward to working with the strategic planning subcommittee.

XII. Adjourn

Motion made by Jana Lapoint to adjourn at 12:28pm. Motion seconded by Nichi Farnham.

Vote: 5 members in favor, 0 opposed