

Maine Charter School Commission

**March 1, 2016 Business Meeting minutes accepted as written by a Commission vote
4-5-16**

Business Meeting Minutes – Maine Charter School Commission, March 1, 2016

I. Call to Order

Chair, Shelley Reed, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

II. Roll Call

The following members were present: Shelley Reed, Chair, Nichi Farnham, Laurie Pendleton, Jana Lapoint, Ande Smith, and Mike Wilhelm. John Bird excused. Staff present: Bob Kautz, Executive Director; Gina Post, Director of Program Management and Heather Fuller, Administrative Assistant. Also in attendance; Roger Brainerd, Judith Jones, Travis Work, Jean Walker, Dr. Melinda Browne, Michelle Hathaway, Kelly Cohrot, and Chris Brann.

III. Adjustments to the Agenda

No adjustments to agenda

IV. Acceptance of Minutes

- A. Moved by Jana Lapoint; seconded by Mike Wilhelm; and voted unanimously by those present to accept the February 2, 2016, Minutes as written.

V. Officers' Reports

A. Chair

1. Recorder sensitivity-meeting minutes

The Commission made the decision to have a synopsis of the meeting minutes or action items versus a complete transcription; we still need to maintain a public record of the Commission meeting. Please be aware that everything is captured on the recorder; please take any side conversations out in the hallway to ensure that the information needed for the synopsis is captured accurately.

- 2. LD #1576; an act to amend certain education laws. This bill has several pieces that had to do with Charter schools more in regard to Special Education especially

dealing with student placement due to a Commissioner's placement decision. The Chair reviewed the sections of the bill and highlighted portions dealing with charter schools:

- The bill proposed that when a school's enrollment was below the 5% or 10% minimum for charter enrollment, a charter school could enroll one student
- A concern that we had regarding the annual Commissioner's report that indicated we had 60 days to submit after schools close; we now have until 90 days after schools close.
- If a Charter school were to close, what would happen to the records? In the legislation the school of residence would be the holder of those records. If the child has graduated or is no longer attending the Charter school, the records would be transferred to the last SAU of attendance. This concern has been forwarded to the DOE for further research.
- Public Charter schools subject to the educator effectiveness; we have built this in to our contracts and have outlined our expectations.
- Section 9 spoke directly to exceptions to requirements to attendance, one which happens to be online learning. The law has changed to reflect that online learning is different than a virtual school and the reason is that a student would be attending a virtual school as a full time student, just as others going to a public school.
- Overall, for the Charter schools, the proposed changes were in a positive direction.

B. Vice Chair

1. Ande Smith has been supporting Nichi Farnham and Laurie Pendleton with regards to Acadia Academy which will be discussed further in the Agenda.

VI. Staff Reports

A. Executive Director

1. Feedback on Baxter Academy's Lottery

Baxter Academy's lottery was held on February 4, 2016. It ended up with a waiting list for 9th grade which is 71 students. There were smaller numbers at the 10th and 11th grade that have also been filled. A lot of parent participation. Fiddlehead has its lottery on March 2, 2016 at noontime.

2. Update on LD #1576

Chair Reed addressed this update earlier.

3. ESSA – Grant available to authorizers

The ESSA Federal Educational Program has a portion that allows grants to be made to authorizers and Charter school support organizations. This can also include the DOE. The Commission may want to submit a proposal, once we know what the parameters are.

4. Update on MeANS Threshold Program Proposal

The outline of this program concerns providing services to students who have had a child or are expecting a child, and are out of school, and would work to bring them back in to school for a portion of time. They would be primarily working with them individually at home. MeANS will be considering this program at their March 18, 2016 Governing Board meeting. This would then come to the review team for consideration and then brought to the full Commission.

5. Letter from the Governor

Bob Kautz received a letter from Governor Lepage, regarding any supplemental budgets that might be proposed. Governor Lepage's position is that no agencies, departments or State Government should be putting in supplemental budget; we should all live within our means passed. This has no bearing on us as we do not have a supplemental budget nor do we receive any State funds of the operation of the Commission.

B. Director of Program Management

1. Charter School Special Education Compliance Advisor Subscription

This is a monthly publication that covers special education and section 504. The cost is \$235 per year. For those Commission members that are interested in this information, as well as all the schools, Gina Post can forward this information due to the setup being electronic. This subscription came recommended by Susan Parks and Roberta Lucas.

Motion by Ande Smith; seconded by Laurie Pendleton and voted unanimously by those present to authorize expenditure of \$235.00 for the subscription of Special Education Compliance Advisor.

2. Special Education training update

Follow up from the discussion last month regarding a one day session with Drummond and Woodsum addressing Special Education. Gina Post has received a final agenda from Drummond and Woodsum and invitations have been sent out to Heads of School, Special Education Directors or Coordinators, cc'ing all the Board Chairs. The one day session is scheduled for April 13, 2016, taking place in Portland at the Drummond and Woodsum offices. The cost of this session is \$1,800.00, paid by the Maine Charter School Commission. Not a requirement for schools to attend, but a recommendation.

3. Panorama Survey update

Following the last meeting, Gina Post reached out to the Heads of School gathering feedback from them. We do have a contract with Panorama Education for a Survey for families, students, teachers, and staff to provide to the Charter schools. Bob Kautz and Gina Post are going through the different scales or sections of questions. Time has been spent matching

those up to the performance indicators so that we are measuring things that we would like measured. The next step is to get this information out to the schools so they are able to provide recommendations.

4. Renewal update

Gina Post has sent out rough drafts of the renewal document to each of the review team members for the two schools that are coming up for renewal; MeANS and Cornville. Deadline is June 30, 2016. Self-Assessment phase; Gina will be in touch with the schools to get their Self-Assessments back, once received, information will be gathered which will be part of what the Review team has going in to the visits.

5. MCA Principal, Karl Francis up for National Life Group award

Karl Francis, Principal at MCA is up for a Life Changer of the Year award with the National Life Group.

VII. Unfinished Business

A. Strategic Plan Activity: January 5, 2016 Meeting Updates from;

1. Monitoring – Completed.
2. Contract - Currently in use.
3. Public Documents – suggested changes - Nonsectarian; Collective bargaining; placing in the back with the facts. Page 5 of booklet; adding enrollment to capacity. Page 13 of booklet; why are public charter schools good for Maine? Laurie is going work on a clearer answer. Page 4 of booklet, Myth box; adding that they have a contract with an authorizer. Laurie suggested a myth of accountability and performance measures. A new draft will be ready for next meeting.
4. Budget – Budget was approved at the February 2, 2016 meeting.
5. Application- Since there is only 1 vacancy available, the Subcommittee decided to not change the application process.

VIII. New Business

A. Acadia Academy Contract- Consideration and Action

Review Team; Laurie Pendleton, Chair; Ande Smith and Nichi Farnham

Acadia Academy Board; Chris Brann

Review team met with Acadia Academy led by Chris Brann. The stipulations have been met. Acadia Academy is accepting and opening with students PreK-2. They have entered in to a contract with the ESP, satisfactory with the Commission. They shall owe no debt to the ESP at the end of their third year other than ordinary trade

credit. Explanation by Ande Smith; Appendix 1 of their contract, in the past we have asked that the schools have no debt at the end of the third year with the ESP's. In this case there is startup money to be advanced to help Acadia Academy. The school, in this case recognizing that they are going to buy certain items that have a durable life and asked if they could extend that term to five years. We said that generally this is three years, they made their case by saying that when they buy capitol fixtures, stuff that has a useful life. The language said they would have five years to pay the debt, and as a comfort, any kind of loan that is out there should be paid off in the third year but if you want a separate credit facility for those capitol items that extends for the items, this should be done separately. This reads that at the end of the third year they shall have no debt other than the ordinary trade credit. Provided however the \$250,000.00 five year term loan proposed by the school, to be used for capitol items necessary to open the school, as proposed at the date of the Charter contract, shall be permissible and may not be renewed, replaced with the ESP, or renegotiated in any form that would extend the indebtedness owed the ESP, beyond the term of such loan. Provide plans and schedules that the school would be renovated meeting the deadline of July 15, 2016 to be opened in time, giving enough time for teachers and instructors coming in for the middle of August. Also to provide evidence that they were conducting outreach in the community and reasonable calculated to raise awareness of the school with all social and demographic groups in the catchment area. They had to have language that no owner, Board Director or employee of the ESP may serve as a member of the school board. We present to the Commission a contract that has unanimous approval of the Review team that we approve Acadia Academy to open September 2016, subject to the amendment of Appendix 1 language.

Motion Laurie Pendleton; seconded by Nichi Farnham to approve the Contract for Acadia Academy; Shelley Reed; Ande Smith; Jana Lapoint; Laurie Pendleton; Nichi Farnham; Mike Wilhelm. Vote was Six to zero.

B. Maine Virtual Academy- Receiving notice of Acting Head of School and consideration of approval; Dr. Melinda Browne

Shelley Reed explained that there was notification of a material amendment per the contract. The governing board has asked Dr. Melinda Browne to become the acting Head of School. The review team has met with representatives of the Governing Board.

Action; Chair Reed reading the letter by Amy Carlisle informing the Commission that Beth Lorigan has resigned. We are excited to welcome Dr. Melinda Browne. We will put up a search next spring, however feel that Dr. Browne is qualified and a strong candidate for this position. Dr. Browne; expressed thankfulness to the MVA Board for entrusting this position to her. She will be spending time reaching out to the families and students making connections. Dr. Browne is excited about the possibilities and building on personnel relationships.

Motion by Ande Smith; seconded by Jana Lapoint and voted unanimously by those present to approve Dr. Melinda Browne as Acting Head of School per the remainder of the contract.

C. Cornville Enrollment request- Review team recommendations and action

Cornville made a formal request to add an additional three students. After more thought about this request, they felt they needed to amend their request from 132 to 144 to ensure they had a diverse group of students in terms of a large enough number in each class without exceeding 16 per classroom. Additionally, it was recognized that there is quite a demand at the Cornville Charter School. Shelley Reed, Mike Wilhelm, Jana Lapoint, Travis Works, Jean Walker, Chair of the Board, Gina Post, and Bob Kautz met via phone February 22, 2016. One of the concerns was the budget and that since the school did not have that number submitted to DOE in the fall, then they were not going to get additional financial support for those students. Cornville Regional Charter School felt they could manage nicely and there would not be a problem with their budget. They were asking about sibling enrollment, due to the fact that as soon as you enroll one child, they are faced with the family having other siblings. Asked about staffing needs, there wouldn't be additional staff but reframing of current staff. Asked about special education impact, would they feel comfortable carrying that out and taking on those students? As a review team we do feel they have the capacity to be able to increase their enrollment to 144 without any hardship on the budget. They would be able to continue with positive things in terms of school climate, school character, and being able to carry out their mission and vision. The Review team unanimously recommends support for the Material amendment to increase their enrollment based on the comprehension and appropriate look at factors of class size, social and emotional peer group members, impact on staff and the Charter school budget. Travis Works, Principal at Cornville shared that their catchment area is growing. Jean Walker; Board Chair of Cornville expressed that she feels this plan is acceptable and would avoid overcrowding which has been a concern.

Moved by Shelley Reed; seconded by Mike Wilhelm and voted unanimously by those present to approve Cornville Regional Charter School enrollment expansion from 132 to 144.

D. Cornville Board approved By-Laws-Commission Receipt of Notice

The Commission is acknowledging that they have seen the amended copy of the By-Laws. The Commission had received these at the last meeting, February 2, 2016 however they had not been finalized or voted by Cornville's Board.

Motion by Ande Smith; seconded by Jana Lapoint and voted unanimously by those present that the Commission received and acknowledged Cornville Regional Charter School's revised By-Laws.

E. Fiddlehead Performance Indicators- Commission Consideration for approval

Motion by Ande Smith; seconded by Nichi Farnham and voted unanimously by those present to table Consideration of Fiddlehead Performance Indicators to April 5, 2016.

F. Establish dates for end of year school visits

Cornville- classroom visit tentatively March 20, 2016; MeANS – classroom visit tentatively March 18, 2016. Gina Post will send an email to the remaining schools and coordinate visits with the Commission members.

IX. Other

X. Announcements

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

B. Reminder of important dates for your calendar:

1. Next MCSC Business meeting April 5, 2016

C. Charter School Lottery dates;

1. Cornville Regional Charter School- Monday, March 14, 2016 – 6pm
2. Fiddlehead – Wednesday, March 2, 2016 - Noontime
3. Harpswell Coastal Academy- Friday, March 11, 2016
4. Maine Academy of Natural Sciences- Wednesday, March 30, 2016 – 5pm
5. Maine Connections Academy- Friday, March 18, 2016
6. Maine Virtual Academy- Monday, March 28, 2016 - Noon
7. Snow Pond Arts Academy- Open Enrollment
8. Baxter – Was held February 4, 2016

XI. Public Comment

Judith Jones will be distributing brochures from the Mitchell Institute, as public Charter schools are eligible for the Mitchell Institute Scholarships. According to information that has been shared with Judith, they have only approved MeANS and Baxter students to be eligible. Judith will be conducting further research.

XII. Adjourn

Motion by Jana Lapoint; Ande Smith seconded by and voted unanimously by those present to adjourn at 12:06 p.m.