

# Maine Charter School Commission

**December 1, 2015 Business Meeting minutes accepted as written by a Commission vote  
1-5-16**

## **Business Meeting Minutes - Maine Charter School Commission, December 1, 2015**

### **I. Call to Order**

Chair, Shelley Reed, called the meeting to order at 9:33 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, Roger Brainerd, and Noelle Gallagher

### **III. Adjustments to the Agenda**

Meeting material preferences was added

### **IV. Acceptance of Minutes**

A. November 17, 2015, Business Meeting Minutes, not available

### **V. Officers' Reports**

#### **A. Chair**

The review team along with Bob, Gina visited Snow Pond on November 30, 2015 to talk about the contract requirements and get clarification.

#### **B. Vice Chair**

Ande reported that he worked with Mike on the Budget. With Nichi, they came to closure on the Contract document.

### **VI. Staff Reports**

#### **A. Executive Director**

1. Reminder to Commission members to turn in all their individual materials from their reviews of applications whether approved or denied.

- a. Members were reminded to turn in all documents relating to the applications, whether approved or denied

2. State Funding information for all Charters

The information given indicated how much money they received and how this is generated. The discussion included an explanation of the change in amount that occurs in December to make the adjustments between estimated, in the first of the year, and the actuals based upon the October 1 count.

3. New Special Education Liaison with the Charter schools

Peg Armstrong is no longer with the Department. The new DOE Special Education Liaison with the Charter Schools is Roberta Lucas.

4. Special Education out of district cost

How they are determined, when a child is placed in and out of district setting. What the Charter schools are exposed to with cost and what they can apply for.

5. Maine Law Books 2015 now available

The books were given to the Commission

6. Snow Pond visit November 30, 2015

This was discussed under the Chair's report

B. Director of Program Management

1. Clarification of Special Education percentages

The numbers given by Harpswell included other identifications so their current Special Education percent is 30. The other identifications that were included were Students in the referral process and 504's. State average is 15 percent.

2. Update on Renewal Process Preparation

- a. Presently working on cumulative report for Cornville, taking their past few years along with the past three annual reports

separating out, doing the sections of the report that was previously discussed. Presently gathering information from just the reports and then will dig through supporting materials and will put in as data.

b. Meeting material preference

- i. Individual preferences regarding distribution of meeting material was discussed. Each member will receive material via email; in addition to email each member will have hard copies of the meeting material available prior to the Business meeting. In regard to the addenda, each item should have a brief explanation of the expected discussion and a reference to any attached exhibit.
- ii. Meeting minutes were also discussed. Summary of discussion results, with brief discussion of the topic, the nature, the outcome and the vote was preferred. The audio would be available, with times referenced, and the minutes are posted on the website.

## VII. Unfinished Business

A. Report on NACSA Conference-

1. Attendees were Jana, Mike, Shelley, Gina, and Bob. Attended activities that related to what the Charter Commission is involved in now as well as what might be coming up for us in the future. Sessions were on closure, renewal, authorizing , the roles, and strengths and weaknesses that NACSA has found in surveys.
2. There is a link on the NACSA's website that allows you to access all the conference materials.
3. Shelley; went to sessions primarily around renewal as this is where we are now. Comfortable in what we are doing when compared with National models. Conversations focused around transportation issues, declining or growing and emerging population rural area, and the capacity of a pay scale in a small community. A lot of States, tier their schools, if the schools seem to be heading in the right direction they don't have such an intense monitoring. All schools have the academic review because pupil achievement is the goal. If there was a school that was not complying, they would send them a notice of concern with specific deadlines indicating that follow up will take place.
4. Mike; rural schools session, what makes them different from urban, is that they are very potentially political.. How do you deal with that? Is it viable? Any conflict of interest issues? Do you have enough supports in place, relative to what the State can provide? Is it possible for the little rural charter schols to cooperate with the local school districts in terms of resources? School closure; what is the authorizer's role, and what are the liabilities for the authorizers for the school closure process? Important for authorizer to get the employment

records from the employees in the Charter schools as well as financial information and an inventory. Virtual schools were also discussed.

5. Jana; recommendations that were learned at the conference for Commission consideration; Authorizer accountability, how should quality authorizing be measured? How should we be looking at what we are doing to be sure we are doing it appropriately? Consider going for unannounced visits to schools to get a complete look at what is going on. Would it be beneficial to create a satisfaction survey for the parents, teachers and students to assist with identifying the status of the school?
6. Gina; issuing an RFP that defines what kind school that is needed or desired by the Commission. Setting a seven member minimum for governing boards. Doing a background check for all the governing board members. Informs schools they are doing an audit for their enrollment process and their special education. Pose as a parent to review their enrollment process. If authorizer puts the school on probation, a letter needs to go home from the school to every student explaining why. Schools are required to have their annual monitoring report from us posted or linked to their website. Management letter that goes out with the audit that is a separate document be requested.

B. MSMA Conference October 23, 2015 presentation-

1. There were two dozen participants. A brief history of the Charter school law, and who the Commission is and how we become Commission members, the history regarding funding legislation and the comparison of what we thought the new funding opportunities would bring for each of the exiting schools was given. The status of each of the charter schools was reviewed. Justin Belanger-Cornville and Karl Francis- Maine Connection shared how their schools look day to day. Positive session, satisfactory and very satisfactory survey results. Karl reflected that there is a shift in the public discussion to a focus on charters as being a quality option for students and as to how charters might meet a need in districts.
2. Strategic Plan Activity: November 17, 2015 Meeting Updates from;
  - a. Monitoring-
    - i. Laurie; there have been some updates and adjustments to the draft and there will be information available at the January meeting.
  - b. Contract-
    - ii. Nichi reviewed the proposed contract changes. It includes steps that the Charter commission might do with non-compliance or compliance. The Commission can request, or if needed impose, a Corrective Action Plan. Public reports of the Commission need to be put on their website as well as their minutes.
  - c. Public Documents

iii. John; the committee will be getting together and will have information available at the January meeting.

d. Budget

iv. Mike; tentative draft budget for FY 2017 reviewed. Now that there are nine Charter schools, there is a 5% increase to the Personnel wages. There are also monies included to support a position of an Analyst. There is also an increase in amount budgeted for Per Diem days for Commission members as a result of the added schools and all the extra time that will entail. Any work that needs to be contracted out has been allocated and reflected on the draft. The travel amount reflects an increase as there are more schools and requires further traveling. Technology reflects a substantial increase due to adding software, making our website more robust to allow better communication, changing our logo, and the Commission report being available online. Additionally, the budget includes compliance software, which is a means of reporting that is automated allowing for consistency and archiving.

## VIII. New Business

A. Charter School Heads request letter to Commission Members- MainePERS, requesting Commission consideration.

1. The overall request from the charter school heads expresses their need that staff be under the Maine Teachers retirement system. Should an experienced teacher take a job in a Charter school, those years don't count in the Maine State Teachers Retirement program for their future retirement. This benefit is available to all other public school teachers, not to Charter school teachers. They would like to put this forward, knowing that it will have to go through the Legislation, but would like the backing and support of the Charter Commission. This is a significant barrier in the hiring process. Often skilled teachers, who meet the qualifications, are interested in our philosophy and want to be a part of us; cannot justify moving out of that system. Commission support would be appreciated at the State level.

The Commission discussed the request and the role of MACS was seen as more appropriate for that type of advocacy.

## 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 January 5, 2016

**XI. Public Comment**

Noelle Gallagher- Do we actually do transcription or summary statements? Every public body produces minutes that are written for summary statements. Minutes are intended to reflect in a reasonable summary what happened. If there is a topic that had a lively discussion, it would be important to include most of that discussion in the minutes.

Roger Brainerd- Hall of Flags reserved on Monday January 25, 2016 for annual Maine Charter School Day . Opportunity for Charter schools to meet local legislators. This is also the beginning of School Choice week.

Maine Retirement and Extracurricular activities- these are issues that need legislation and need to be addressed. We would love to see the Commission stand for equity for every Maine student and teacher.

Karl- I understand that you are in a tough position to balance your role and advocating for Charter schools, You put compliance pieces in place and performance indicators on us having strong schools. You are building strong schools and advocating the rules that are put in place. Any opportunity that you have to advocate for us and with us is truly needed as we are struggling on a daily basis to grow our schools and meet the compliance regulation that you have put on us

**XII. Adjourn**

Motion by John Bird seconded by Mike Wilhelm and voted unanimously by those present to adjourn at 12:51 p.m.