

# Maine Charter School Commission Meeting - September 2, 2014

## Minutes

The Maine Charter School Commission held a meeting on September 22014, at the Burton Cross Office Building, 111 Sewall Street, Augusta, ME.

### I. CALLED TO ORDER:

Chair, Shelley Reed, called the meeting to order at 9:44 a.m.

### II. ROLL CALL:

The following members were present: John Bird, Nichi Farnham, Jana Lapoint, Laurie Pendleton, Ande Smith, Michael Wilhelm and Shelley Reed. Bob Kautz, Executive Director, and Deanne Lavalley, Administrative Assistant, were also in attendance.

### III. ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA:

Set tentative dates for In-Person Interviews and Public Hearings for the applicants.  
Biennial Budget.  
Correspondence from Baxter.

### IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. Moved by John Bird; seconded by Jana Lapoint and voted unanimously to accept the August 5, 2014, Minutes with the correction of "508 to 504" – MCA Compliance in Section VI.  
Unfinished Business A. 2.

### V. OFFICERS' REPORTS:

A. Chair

Announced Acadia Academy (formerly All of ME Academy), Inspire ME Academy and Maine Virtual Academy have submitted applications. Review teams collected their copy of the application assigned to them.

August 20, 2014, notification from Baxter of two meetings held outside of the boundaries of the Freedom of Access Law will revamp their policy at their September Meeting.

Baxter developed alternative plans for opening of school since their building construction will not be complete September 2, their opening day. Staff did some creative planning for opportunities for students for those first days to dive them into the mission and vision of the school. Doing it because of the construction, but we think this is a good model for how we want to begin every year.

#### B. Vice Chair

Pre-opening work with MCA both on site and conference calls.  
Media on the Portland School offering of on-line learning.

#### C. Executive Director

Working with MCA on Pre-opening.

Assisting chairs of review teams putting together their end-of-the year reports

Biennium Budget 2016-2017 (2016 to 2018 years) – no increase in General Fund Budget. Level funded on basis of expense experience. Will send out Budget presented. MCSC will have to defend this budget during the budget process.

FY 2015 Adjustments of fund allotments needs to be done – salaries encumbered for full year during first quarter leaving a deficit for regular General Fund expenditures. Consequently, Special Revenue funds are being used for these expenses. Will make an appointment to discuss with Elaine Babb and MCSC new account specialist, Karen Knyff when she comes on board.

Baxter, Carl Stasio, reported a formal complaint. Discussed with employee, all matters are resolved, situation is closed.

Further discussions with Deb Friedman and Suzan Beaudoin regarding the Role of Authorizer to determine the percentage per-pupil allocation for transportation; holding for charter schools to submit financial data to the Department to provide comparisons.

#### **VI: UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

Moved by Jana Lapoint; seconded by Ande Smith and unanimously voted to approve [Baxter Academy for Technology and Sciences End-of-Year Report](#) as written by the Review Team - Chair Jana Lapoint, John Bird, Ande Smith.

Moved by Ande Smith; seconded by John Bird and unanimously voted to approve the [Cornville Regional Charter School Monitoring Report 2013-2014](#) as written by the Review Team - Chair Mike Wilhelm, Jana Lapoint, Shelley Reed.

Moved by Jana Lapoint; seconded by Nichi Farnham and unanimously voted to approve the [Fiddlehead School of Arts and Science Monitoring Report 2013-2014](#) as written by the Review Team – Chair Shelley Reed, Nichi Farnham, Jana Lapoint.

Moved by John Bird; seconded by Mike Wilhelm and unanimously voted to approve the [Harpwell Coastal Academy Monitoring Report 2013-2014](#) as written by the Review Team – Chair Laurie Pendleton, John Bird, Shelley Reed.

Moved by Jana Lapoint; seconded by Nichi Farnham and unanimously voted to approve the [Maine Academy of Natural Sciences Monitoring Report 2013-2014](#) as written by the Review Team – Chair John Bird, Nichi Farnham, Jana Lapoint.

#### NOTES:

Performance Indicators – develop realistic targets for school and MCSC that are actually measureable.

Smarter Balance integration.

Charter Schools share their “proficiency” (i.e. Baxter: Project-based; Cornville: Data)

Charter Public Schools – District Public Schools.

Jana Lapoint: As Shelley already said, Bob has done herculean work to put the reports together.

John Bird: Collaborating on these reports with Bob is integral and a pleasure.

Bob Kautz: The number of hours each of you has spent on these end-of-year visits and reports is an outstanding example of volunteerism on your part. A quality job done by a Commission. Sarah Forster has reminded me often, this Commission is about the only one in state government that is as involved and engaged with the business of the Commission’s responsibility. I want to thank you all for your contributions. You are making charter schools move ahead and make Maine proud.

Laurie Pendleton: It is important to point out that listening to all these reports; they are very different schools from each other and from the typical public district that is available. Promise of the charter schools is doing things differently and giving choice to families and students.

Jana Lapoint: All of the schools are in the position of needing to refine the performance indicators; now that we all understand more.

John Bird: Highlights the strength of Maine’s Law – the idea of an authorizing Commission – we have to be responsible because of the way the law was written and the way this Commission was established. It is the way it ought to be in all 50 states.

Shelley Reed: The law anchors us back to what it is our full responsibility and the people who crafted the law had that vision. It is working; it is a lot of work to make it work; but it does seem to be working. The thoroughness that we have to do.

John Bird: The one weakness in the law is the funding mechanism. That needs to be dealt with.

Shelley Reed: How do we move forward with improving the performance measures for all the public charter schools. Up to the Review Teams / Chairs to do it with Laurie’s expertise and the schools experience. Move forward now so the schools can begin to be collecting the data right away now in the Fall for their baseline.

Moved by Jana Lapoint; seconded by Mike Wilhelm and unanimously voted to accept [Cornville’s Amended Bylaws](#) approved unanimously on August 6, 2014, by the CRCS Directors.

Re-visit MCSC – OIT usage for email addresses.

Discussions as to reasonable options and procedures are continuing with OIT staff.

Moved by Ande Smith; seconded by John Bird and unanimously voted to approve [Harpwell Coastal Academy's Revised Performance Measures](#) adopted by the HCA Board August 20, 2014.

## **VII: NEW BUSINESS:**

Review of process for Review Teams and Chairs and dates.

Receipt of application – Acadia Academy, Inspire ME Academy, Maine Virtual Academy.

You have the:

Request for Proposal, which gives you the original application.

Reviewer's Evaluation Regular or Virtual.

Reading of the application – 1st reading: what is this all about and then 2nd reading: looking for the details.

Four different sections – Academic, Governing, Financial and Organizational.

Reflected in each of the sections should be the mission and vision of the school. Is it consistent throughout the document; how are they going to deliver the services; applicable laws; etc.

Other Resources:

Peg Armstrong, DOE Special Services, will review the Special Services section in each of the applications.

Suzan Beaudoin, DOE School Finance Director, reviews the budgets in each of the applications.

Reviewers use Narrative and Rubric Scoring to analyze the application.

Overall assessment points:

Inadequate = 0

Minimally Compliant = 1-3

Fully Compliant = 4-7

Excellent = 8-10

Do not score each criteria – Score overall for each section.

For the score you assessed: what section and what page did you find the evidence.

Add Narratives on Strengths and then Questions or Concerns.

Your notes will be collected and become part of the public record of the application.

Different views from different Team Members – record your thinking.

Your notes will foster discussion on the evaluation of criteria.

“I saw it this way and you saw it that way.”

Numbers are a way to build discussion, when the review team comes together to talk about what we each saw.

Numbers provide a way to show “I must have missed something;” or “I thought they did a poor job or I thought they did a great job.”

Rubric objective is not to drive consensus.

The review team will make an overall recommendation.

“We think it passed muster and it should go forward – the review team thought they did a good job on the education plans, but One didn’t.”

Gives the team member the platform to say where it might be lacking.

As you go through think about:

“Did they answer the mail in this area?”

What were the requirements in statute and in the RFP?

Keep asking: Did they answer the question or do they just write well?

The more you document, the easier to formulate questions for the interviews.

As you go through the application, jot down any clarifying questions you have for the interview with the applicant.

We are not debating the merits of their proposal; we are asking them to make us fully understand their intentions.

Reviewers formulate clarifying questions to be asked at Interview; Teams coordinate prior to the interview.

Applicants cannot provide “new” information to the team.

Review Team Interview:

Instructions for the Applicants,

Guidance for the Review Team.

Prior to October 15 Meeting:

Review teams will have read all information.

Team will have had an interview with the applicant.

October 15: Each Team will give a description of the process used, what they found out and start the discussion about: Is this a potential applicant to move forward into the next phase, which is the public in-person interview and public hearing.

This is the date to cut off ill-formed applications. When you come as a group and you say: We have reviewed it and for this reason(s) we don’t think it should go forward. The Commission will vote and will rely on what you have reviewed and that application will stop.

Or the application has all the moving parts; we may still have questions or concerns, but it should go forward for everyone to think about with the In-Person Interview and Public Hearing.

Review Team Interviews: Cross State Office Building  
111 Sewall Street Augusta

	Acadia Academy	Friday	September 26	9:30 a.m.	RM 600
Please note changed 9/9/14	Inspire ME Academy	Wednesday	October 1	10:00 a.m.	RM 541
	Maine Virtual Academy	Friday	October 3	9:30 a.m.	RM 103 AB

You have access to each of the applications to read each of them – online or a hard copy can be provided.

Pending the 10/15/14 Vote - TENTATIVE IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS AND PUBLIC HEARINGS

Chronological Order by date/time:

Applicant	Day/Date	In-Person Interview	Public Hearing	Place
Maine Virtual Academy	Monday, October 27	10:00 – 11:15 a.m.	11:45 - 1:00 p.m.	CMCC Auburn
Acadia Academy	Monday, October 27	1:30 p.m. – 2:45p.m.	3:15 p.m.- 4:30 p.m.	CMCC Auburn
Inspire ME Academy	Tuesday, October 28	10:00 – 11:15 a.m.	11:45 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.	YCCC Wells

Applications, substantively, did they answer or demonstrate what is necessary to give us comfort as a Commission that they should have a charter in this area?

Thursday, November 13, 2014, Final Vote and Contract Negotiation Phase.

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B. Maine Connections Academy  
Pre-opening Review  
August 20, 2014

September 2, 2014, Commission Meeting

Maine Connections Academy has substantively met all the pre-opening requirements. This was confirmed in the Review Team’s on-site evaluation, conducted August 20, 2014 at their office on 75 Robert’s Road, South Portland. A subsequent telephone conference was held on Friday, August 22, 2014 to address a handful of administrative items, at which time the Review Team was satisfied that all issues had been addressed.

Enrollment

On opening day of school, September 2, 2014, enrollment numbers met the minimum threshold, with 281 fully-enrolled students. The Review Team noted that due to late enrollments, there were 41 students that did not have their full complement of equipment on opening day, but the school indicated that shipments were in process and they would work with students on a case-by-case basis to mitigate the lack of physical text books, which were available on-line. Other student materials, such as lab gear, would not be needed in the first few weeks of school.

#### Teacher

The school had a full complement of teachers, who were in training on the day of the Review Team's visit. In the case of one science teacher, the school was unable to find a suitable candidate that lived in the greater Portland area, which was effectively a requirement in order that they perform their teaching from the school's office. The school hired a temporary science teacher who lived in Fort Kent for a two-month period while the search continued. That teacher trained at the school before opening and her presence in northern Maine had the salutary benefit of providing an on-the-ground resource for parents and students in the region. The Review Team was satisfied that the temporary accommodation did not violate the teaching model of the school and indeed might be of positive benefit overall.

#### Budget

The school budget was approved by the MCA Board on August 22nd. Those changes reflected a refinement of the budget numbers from its application. The budget appeared sustainable, though the school indicated that during its first year, it would work to maintain some cash reserve and did not budget to make progress on repayment of its debt to Connections Academy, which is required to be liquidated by the end of the third year of operation.

#### Grants

The approval process for a variety of grants remained in process, though the school reported receiving "substantial" approval pending several admin items. The Review Team deemed that status sufficient for satisfaction of its pre-opening requirements.

#### Review Team Members

Ande Smith, Chair  
Laurie Pendleton  
J. Michael Wilhelm

#### C. Human Resource Strategies:

Creation of Director of Program Management position:

Commission vote to create the position or the service.  
Position needs to be pushed forward with the application process.

Position filled by the first of January to have us (MCSC) in a better position for the end-of-the-year reports.

Bob continues to solicit potential individuals or services.

Discussion:

Contract with individual or group who provides these services.

Three parts to (Draft) Job Description:

Research/analysis,

Administrative - Monitoring,

Political – report writing – defensible and understandable.

Sole Sourcing can be done; contracting with no advertising with clear justification for sole source.

No state government position.

NH outsources all of their monitoring and the end-of-year evaluations (Seacoast Collaborative) has contracts with the service and an individual.

Temp Agency – advertise, receives, applications, MCSC reviews applications; who best fits the position.

This position may not be necessarily full-time and not political.

The RFP has clearly defined deliverables.

Need a person, who is going to get their hands dirty – crank out the paper and do the mechanical pieces that are difficult for us to do as volunteers.

Close textual analysis of data.

No political or research sides needed in this position.

The Data collection will be for the whole sector of public charter schools.

After 4 years, the Commissioner has to issue a report to the Legislature and the Governor in regard to the progress of public charter schools, which, as stated in the law, is largely based on the MCSC reports.

Job Description

Shelley and Laurie will draft a specific job description for a person or a service.

Something to vote on October 15 with materials in advance.

Adjustment to other job descriptions

Shelley will redraft Executive Director's and Administrative Assistant's job descriptions.

For further discussion:

Hiring Process

Evaluation Process



Request for MACS to report on the “Boards-man-ship” Workshop:  
Roger Brainerd:

Friday, November 14, 2014. 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. with lunch.

Michael Klahr Center at UMA; 46 University Drive, Augusta 621-3530.

Maine Association of Non-profits will work with us to do a workshop. MANP’s have a “Board Boot Camp.”

Other participants will include:

Catherine Hunt – Starbird Leadership Consultants and Board Member of MeANS.

Marci Cornell-Feist, Andover, Massachusetts has agreed to participate at no cost. Marcie presents at all the national charter school conferences on governance. She has some software for charters to monitor their own performance.

Coming soon: Invite to schools, Agenda.

John Bird, Jana Lapoint, Bob Kautz will attend.

### **VIII: OTHER:**

None.

### **IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- A. Turn in Expense Account Vouchers at the end of the meeting
- B. Next regularly scheduled meeting: October 15, 2014, 9:30 a.m.
- C. Upcoming Applicant Schedule:
  - September 26 – October 3, 2014, - Review Team Interview(s).
  - October 15, 2014, MCSC Business Meeting - review of applications and Vote on moving to the In-Person Interview and Public Hearing phase.
  - October 27 – October 31, 2014, In-Person Interview(s) and Public Hearing(s).
  - November 13, 2014, - MCSC Business Meeting - review of applications and Vote on Applicant(s) to negotiate a contract.

### **X. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Vicki Wallack: Breakdown on MCA numbers; provided by Ande Smith.

What districts is MCA drawing from? I have not been able to get it.  
Bob has it and will get a copy to Vicki.

Meeting Materials available to the public with agenda on the website or printed copies at the meeting – minimum 7 days prior to meeting date.

For the website, meeting materials submitted a minimum of 9 days prior to the meeting.

If materials are not submitted 9 days prior, those materials will need to be copied for the public – 5 copies of each.

Not a legal requirement to have the materials with the agenda.

**XI. Adjourn**

Moved by Jana Lapoint; seconded by Ande Smith and unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 1:25 p.m.