



Maine Charter School Commission

Monthly Commission Meeting

Published on May 16, 2024 at 10:20 AM EDT

Date and Time

Tuesday May 14, 2024 at 1:00 PM EDT

Location

Room #103, Cross Office Building, 111 Sewall Street, Augusta

The **Vision** of the Maine Charter School Commission is that ***"All of Maine's children will have access to a vibrant ecosystem of diverse schools so that all of them can become happy, healthy and thriving citizens."***

The **Mission** of the Maine Charter School Commission is ***"To authorize, monitor and develop unique public charter schools that provide a dynamic, superlative education for every student."***

Reminders:

- This meeting is being recorded via Zoom.
- We ask members of the public to hold comments until public comments are heard.

Any person seeking special accommodation for the public meeting should contact Sue Whipkey at (207)816-2187 or susan.whipkey@maine.gov.

Agenda

	Purpose	Presenter
I. Opening Items		
A. Record Attendance		Susan Whipkey
B. Call the Meeting to Order		Norm Higgins
C. To Consider the Approval of the 3/12/24 Commission Meeting Minutes	Approve Minutes	Norm Higgins
D. To Consider the Approval of the 4/9/24 Commission Meeting Minutes	Approve Minutes	Norm Higgins
II. Comments from Commission Chair		
A. Comments	Discuss	Norm Higgins
III. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda		
A. Additions/Adjustments	Discuss	Norm Higgins
IV. Committee Reports		
A. School Performance Committee	FYI	Tori Kornfield
B. Finance Committee	FYI	Leigh Albert
C. Executive Committee	FYI	Norm Higgins
V. Public Comment*		
A. Public Comment	Discuss	Norm Higgins
VI. Presentations		
<i>None</i>		
VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report		
A. School Updates	Discuss	Lana Ewing

	Purpose	Presenter
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B.	Organizational Updates	Discuss	Lana Ewing
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C.	Media Updates	FYI	Lana Ewing
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D.	New Charter School	FYI	Lana Ewing
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VIII. Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report

None

IX. Unfinished Business

None

X. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A.	To Consider the Approval of the Commission's FY25 Operating Budget	Vote	Norm Higgins
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XI. New Business Requiring Notification to the Commission (No formal action to be taken by Commission)

A.	New Governing Board Members	FYI	Norm Higgins
	<i>None</i>		

B.	Board Member Resignations	FYI	Norm Higgins
	<i>None</i>		

C.	Board Member Term Outs	FYI	Norm Higgins
	<i>None</i>		

XII. Next Month's Topics

A.	Next Month's Topics	FYI	Norm Higgins
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- *Ad-Hoc Nominating Reports Slate of Officers for Consideration at August Commission Meeting*
- *Executive Session for the Purpose of Annual Executive Director Evaluation*
- *To Consider Canceling July Committee and Commission Meetings*
- *Maine Alliance for Public Charter Schools Presentation - Joe Mattos*

Purpose Presenter

XIII. Announcements

A. Important Dates FYI Norm Higgins

- New School Application Release Date - July 1st
- Letters of Intent due - July 15th

Graduation Ceremonies:

- **ACADIA Academy**
 - End of Year Exhibition of Work - June 5th from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
 - “Pre-Cademy” Awards - June 7th from 1 p.m. to 2.p.m.
 - Sixth Grade Promotion - June 7th at 6 p.m.
- **Baxter Academy** – Graduation - June 1st at 11 a.m., Merrill Auditorium
- **Community Regional Charter School** – Graduation - June 14th at 6 p.m.
- **Ecology Learning Center** – Graduation - June 4th at a time TBD, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardiners Assn. (‘MOFGA’).
- **Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences**
 - Graduation - June 7th at 4 p.m. at the Norumbega Cidery in New Gloucester
 - Music recitals will be held at the New Gloucester Congregational Church on May 13th for 2nd and 3rd grades; on May 14th for 4th and 5th grades; and on May 15th for 6th through 8th grades. All are at 12:30 p.m.
- **Maine Academy of Natural Sciences**
 - Threshold Graduation - July 19th.
 - Campus Graduation - July 26th.
- **Maine Arts Academy** – Graduation - June 1st at 12:00 p.m., Augusta Civic Center
- **Maine Connections Academy** – Graduation - June 7th at 2 p.m., Merrill Auditorium
- **Maine Virtual Academy** – Graduation - June 7th at 2 p.m. via a Live Zoom Ceremony.

B. Next Regular Business Meeting FYI Norm Higgins

June 11, 2024 (Ecology Learning Center, Unity)
or Zoom

XIV. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting Vote Norm Higgins

* The Charter School Commission does not allow airing of complaints in public meetings regarding Commission and charter school employees or school employment matters, in order to protect employee privacy, to comply with Maine law and pursuant to our contractual relation with the schools. To the extent that the Commission

receives complaints and concerns relating to school employees in writing, those concerns will be reviewed and addressed by the Commission and its staff outside of a public meeting. This meeting is not the appropriate forum for such comments. You are free to direct your concerns in writing to the Commission's Executive Director, if you have not done so already.

Coversheet

To Consider the Approval of the 3/12/24 Commission Meeting Minutes

Section: I. Opening Items
Item: C. To Consider the Approval of the 3/12/24 Commission Meeting Minutes
Purpose: Approve Minutes
Submitted by:
Related Material: Minutes for Monthly Commission Meeting on March 12, 2024

APPROVED



Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday March 12, 2024 at 1:00 PM

Location

Baxter Academy for Technology and Science, 185 Lancaster Street, Portland OR [Zoom](#)

The **Vision** of the Maine Charter School Commission is that "***All of Maine's children will have access to a vibrant ecosystem of diverse schools so that all of them can become happy, healthy and thriving citizens.***"

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Reminders:

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Directors Present

Brian Langley (remote), James Ford (remote), Jim Handy, Leigh Albert, Norm Higgins, Tom Keller, Tori Kornfield

Directors Absent

None

Guests Present

Amy Allen, Lana Ewing (remote), Susan Whipkey (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Norm Higgins called a meeting of the board of directors of Maine Charter School Commission to order on Tuesday Mar 12, 2024 at 1:03 PM.

C. To Consider the Approval of the 2/13/24 Commission Meeting

Jim Handy made a motion to approve the minutes from Monthly Commission Meeting on 02-13-24.

Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.

Tori noted a correction to spelling on page 8. "Know" should be changed to "No"

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

Tori Kornfield Aye

Jim Handy Aye

James Ford Aye

Brian Langley Absent

Norm Higgins Aye

Leigh Albert Aye

Tom Keller Aye

II. Comments from Commission Chair

A. Comments

Norm reported the following:

- Thanked Baxter for hosting and asked Thorn Dickinson, Baxter Board Chair, and Ruth Dean, Baxter Board Vice-Chair to introduce themselves.
- Attended Ecology Learning Center's recent Open House for its new performance arts facility. Jim Handy and Lana Ewing were also in attendance.

- He and Lana have begun to have meetings with educational and business leaders across the state to share the mission of the Maine Charter School Commission and to discuss any needs that public charter schools might be able to address.
- There is some thought about canceling the Commission's July meeting. The one order of business that would be affected by that decision would be the Election of Commission Officers. Lana will discuss further later in the agenda.

Tom asked if the Education & Cultural Affairs Committee has rescheduled the Commission's presentation of the SY2022-23 Annual Report to the Commissioner. Norm shared that there is nothing currently scheduled.

III. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda

A. Additions/Adjustments

None

IV. Committee Reports

A. School Performance Committee

Tori Kornfield - Chair, School Performance Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee.

B. Finance Committee

Leigh Weisenburger Albert - Chair, Finance Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee.

C. Executive Committee

Norm Higgins - Chair, Executive Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee.

V. Public Comment*

A. Public Comment

Ruth Dean - Vice Chair, Baxter Academy Governing Board - introduced the Baxter Charter Alliance student group who shared the following:

- Their purpose is to clarify misinformation and promote charter schools.
- Met with students from Maine Arts Academy last Friday.

- Would like to see the 10th public charter school in an area not currently populated with a school.

Travis Works - Executive Director, Community Regional Charter School:

- A memorial scholarship fund for a 2021 graduate who recently passed away has been established. Travis shared that this student "embodied what dual enrollment meant".
- The board is currently looking at enrollment and facilities needs. They currently operate in three separate buildings (campuses) and are in the early stages of thinking through what a single building would like like and have conversations with both Highmark and Raymond James. They will continue to report progress to the Commission.

Sherry Gilbert - Board President, Maine Arts Academy:

- Reported that their reading scores on the Through-Year Assessment are higher than other high schools in their catchment area.
- They recognize that their math scores need to improve and have hired another math teacher that will begin work soon.

VI. Presentations

A. Baxter Academy for Technology and Science (Anna Klein-Christie)

Anna Klein-Christie - Executive Director, Baxter Academy for Technology and Science

- Baxter enrolls students from across a 25-mile catchment area.
- They administer IXL Math for all incoming freshmen to get a sense of their academic needs and to determine what supports might be needed.
- This years freshman class has 110 students and the senior class has 85 students. The goal is 390 total students for SY2024-25 keeping the freshman class closer to 100 as "110 is getting too large".
- Space is an issue and the school is currently looking at creative solutions to the problem. One idea is to increase students learning opportunities by getting them out of the building.
- Transportation is a barrier to educational opportunities as well as enrollment.
- GPA has improved to 3.37.
- College acceptance as of March 9th is 86%.
- Multi-language students have a 100% success rate and are passing their classes with a current GPA of 3.3.
- The Chess Team are the Maine Scholastic Champions for 2024. The school is offering a chess class this year and there are 16 students enrolled.
- Historically, the Robotics Team has been extremely successful and the banners around the school speak to the tie-in this has with the school's engineering program.

- Zak Cyr, a Baxter student, won a Congressional Art Award. His work will be showcased in Washington, DC.
- The Maine Scholastic Art Show was held last week and Baxter Academy students won 20 awards.
- The number of "partner organizations" who provide internships and mentorships to Baxter students speaks to the value the community places on the education provided at Baxter.
- The funding received through state allocations is insufficient and the school is constantly looking for ways to expand its funding.

B. CountMeIn! (Jess Anderson)

CountMeIn! is an organization that is looking at absenteeism trends in Maine schools and provides professional development to help schools reduce chronic absenteeism. Jess Anderson, Executive Director, shared the following:

- A student is chronically absent when they miss 10% or more of enrolled school days for any reason. If a student misses 2 days a month, this corresponds to missing 1 month of school.
- During the 2022-2023 school year, 25.5% of all students in Maine were chronically absent.
- A statute was recently passed that requires a school with a chronic absenteeism rate greater than 10% to have an attendance review team in place. Only 17 Maine schools reported chronic absentee rates less than 10%.
- Students who are chronically absent have lower NWEA scores than students that aren't.
- The first strategy to address chronic absenteeism is to implement an early warning system.
 - Understand your data.
 - Set a threshold for flagging students who are in danger of becoming chronically absent. For example, students who miss 2-4 days in September are likely to be chronically absent for the remainder of the school year.
 - Review data consistently.
 - Develop interventions to address barriers.
- Students most likely to be impacted by chronic absenteeism are youth:
 - from low-income backgrounds;
 - of color;
 - who have experienced trauma;
 - with disabilities;
 - who have experienced homelessness;
 - who have been in contact with the juvenile justice system.
- Strategy two is to dig into the data and think about ways to promote attendance.
- CountMEIn! has supported over 100 schools in Maine and encourages each of them to work collaboratively with families and to form positive partnerships within their communities to overcome attendance barriers.

- Schools using CountMeIn! last year reported improvements three times the state average.
- Jess shared the following resource - www.attendanceworks.com.

Commission Member questions:

Tori asked if there are specific things or a compilation of things to work on to change chronic absenteeism. Jess noted she uses a rubric of 15 items and the items to work on are never just one thing. Tori asked if absenteeism expands as grades go up. Jess noted the graph looks like a Nike "swoosh" across grade levels. Grades K-3 rates are high and 10-12 rates are high.

Norm asked about Jess's capacity to coach additional schools next year. Jess responded she could take on 6-7 schools but is working to pilot a different cohort model of coaching that would have more continuity across schools. She has connected with some charter schools already who have had free consultations.

After Jess's presentation, Norm discussed the cost of this service and impacts on the budget. The Commission is keeping its attention on absenteeism, and he wondered how the Commission can support the schools in their work to address the problems. He suggested the Commission should think about what resources can be brought to the schools. If there are additional funds, this might be an opportunity. Tori commented that the School Performance Committee cares about this issue because it impacts math performance tied to sequential, building block instruction. Norm asked Lana to explore opportunities for the Commission to support schools in their work on chronic absenteeism before the budget is finalized. Leigh further suggested it may be helpful to partner with public schools in the area too.

VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

A. School Updates

Lana reported the following:

- On March 10th, she attended the Grand Opening of Ecology Learning Center's new facility. Norm and Jim were also in attendance.
- Maine Arts Academy has received an outdoor learning initiatives grant from the Maine DOE in the amount of \$54,524. The grant combines biking with photography and is specifically targeted for students who would not normally get outdoors. The program will run for 6 weeks during the summer.
- Maine Academy of Natural Sciences is entering their spring intensives. 350 gallons of sap has been collected for a maple sugaring event scheduled for March 24th from 12:00-3:00pm. They have also received an outdoor learning initiative grant in the amount of \$121,000.
- Community Regional Charter School recently held a "Rockapella Concert" that showcased the talents of many of its students. These artistic opportunities are

made available through introductory electives and the school encourages students interested in the arts to consider transferring to Maine Arts Academy.

B. Organizational Updates

Lana reported on the following:

- We have hired a full-time Administrative Assistant. Her name is Sue Whipkey and her first official day will be on Wednesday, March 12th.
- The Maine DOE recently released results from the Spring 2023 Through-Year Assessment and those results are included in the board packet. The data is challenging and the takeaways are:
 - State results for 2023 are lower than 2022.
 - ACADIA is above average state expectations in both ELA and Math.
 - The ELA results are better than Math and are more similar to comparisons in 2022.
 - 5 charter schools are above and 3 are below the state average in ELA similar to 2022
 - MeANS improved from 2022 to 2023 in ELA.
 - Math is an area of concern as all charters, except ACADIA, are below state averages.
 - The two virtual schools are data outliers with their Math scores. There is a real decline in scores which are not consistent with results from other assessments they're giving, NWEA MAP, for example.
 - Blueprint for math assessment was changed for 8th graders. There is a catch-up in instruction and aligning the curriculum.
 - Subgroup trends are comparative to the all student results. FSAS is a bright spot in the data results because they have a free and reduced lunch program that helps produce comparatively stronger results.
 - Growth data - For the two schools with growth data, both are below in proficiency in Math and ELA. But they have strong growth data meeting and exceeding growth in all categories.
 - Commission member questions -
 - Tori requested a copy of Lana's overall summary.
 - Leigh asked if there has been an analysis done between chronic absenteeism and assessment results and are the assessment results in the performance framework. Lana reported that some of the schools have done this analysis, but not all and that assessment results are in the performance framework.
- Strategic Planning
 - The Commission is in its final year of the current 3-Year Strategic Plan so it's the right time to be looking at revisions.
 - A copy of the current plan along with a tracker of the progress on each of the goals is included in the board packet.
 - A summary of the progress made on the current plan is as follows:

- Strategic Priority #1: Increase student achievement and social-emotional well-being: achieved or partially achieved those goals;
- Strategic Priority #2: Create the conditions for sustained excellence: achieved or partially achieved those goals;
- Strategic Priority #3: Develop effective governing boards: achieved goals related to professional development and stalled goals related to providing materials for recruitment strategies and orientation of new board members;
- Strategic Priority #4: Foster collaborative innovation: achieved or partially achieved those goals;
- Strategic Priority #5: Engage and activate stakeholders: achieved or partially achieved those goals except website design.
- Lana proposed a PD session on the morning of April 9th (before the monthly Commission Meeting) to review the categories and goals in the plan.
- July Commission Meeting - We are considering canceling the July Commission Meeting. If we do this, the Election of Commission Officers will be moved to the August Meeting. An ad-hoc nominating committee needs to be formed in May or June. Will continue to discuss internally, but will ask for Commission approval to cancel the July meeting in June.
- Internal Policy Review - Staff will tackle this project during the summer.
- Mid-Year Meetings have all been completed. Reports will be shared with the School Performance Committee and the full Commission in April.
- Panorama Surveys will launch on 3/25 and run through the end of the school year. Amy is working with school leaders to get the teacher and student rosters ready. Norm would like this information included in the presentation to the EDU Committee.
- Monthly School Leaders Meetings - The next 3 scheduled meetings will have an element of PD incorporated as follows:
 - FundEd provides fundraising support to schools and has raised approximately \$100 million for charter schools across the country in the 6 years they've been in business.
 - BuyQ is an organization that operates group purchasing for charter schools and has found areas where the charter schools may be able to save money.
 - Mike Mizzoni from BoardOnTrack will give an overview of the platform.
- To continue to raise awareness of charter schools in Maine and nationally, Lana will:
 - Attend the National Charter School Institute's A-GAME Convening in Chicago in May and has submitted a proposal for a "fireside chat" about balancing authorizer support and accountability for charter schools.
 - Attend the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools annual conference in Boston in late June/early July.
 - Be interviewed by the President of BuyQ who hosts a podcast - "The Charter School ...". Lana will send it out next week.

C.

Media Updates

One article related to chronic absenteeism was shared in the board packet.

D. New Charter School

- The first DRAFT New School Application Information Session was held last week and was attended by four (4) entities who may be interested in opening a public charter school:
 - A foreign language school.
 - A Career and Technical Education (CTE) school that may be interested in converting to a charter school.
 - A former applicant interested in reapplying.
 - A representative from BES, an organization that supports developing school leaders and helps through the application process.
- There were questions about start-up funding. Lana is asking Joe Drago for input.
- Met with a representative yesterday who is interested in opening a Wabanaki school.
- There will be an information session every month until interest is done.

VIII. Unfinished Business

A. Unfinished Business

None

IX. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A. To Consider the Approval of Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences' Request for Funds for Revisioning Project

- Leigh Albert made a motion to Approve Fiddlehead's Request for Funds for Revisioning Project
- Brian Langley seconded the motion
- Discussion followed:
- Tori is not happy that only one school is receiving 1/2 the funds that are set aside in the budget for innovation. She is also concerned that the request doesn't go directly to students.

Jim "has some anxiety" over giving additional funds to one school and believes the fund should be directed towards short-term activities rather than on-going expenses. He doesn't think revisioning fits within the innovation fund. Lana commented that there is some precedence for the Commission funding this type of expense, so this particular request is not out of bounds. Jim may support a smaller amount of funding to leave room for other requests.

- Tori would rather see workshops from CountMEIn
- History of supporting board development and strategic planning
- Norm views the fund as one being used for the initial costs of a program that directly benefits students. He doesn't question how former Commission members used the funds, but believes this is an opportunity for the current Board to redefine how to use the funds. If more time is needed to define this, that is okay.
- Tom asked how this might help the other schools. Can they send a person or get materials? He stated it's a lot of money for just one school and the Board should develop criteria on how these funds are used. He suggested tabling the motion until the next meeting.
- Jim asked if tabling would give time to establish criteria for use of the funds for this round? Lana suggested because this is late in the year, this change would be appropriate for the new fiscal year, starting in August. New criteria for can be developed, funding levels can be reviewed as part of the FY25 budget, and a communication strategy for schools can be developed.
- James - is there a process for the money? Maybe there's an opportunity for schools to collaborate?
- \$6,000 requested is 1/2 of the proposal
- Leigh - There is little time left in the fiscal year. We have an opportunity to establish criteria.
- Norm - We have an obligation to give Fiddlehead a "yes" or "no" from this meeting. We need to provide general guidance - how much money, etc. Let the school know we'll vote next month.

Tom Keller made a motion to table the request and consider at the next Board meeting. Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.

Would the tabling provide time to establish criteria for the grants? Lana informed the board that we have 3 more months left in the year and 3 opportunities for schools to present proposals for these funds and suggested that criteria be established for next year along with the funding level and communication to schools about the funds. Lana also reminded the Board that there is a time crunch for Fiddlehead on this proposal and that \$6000 request is half of the amount available.

Norm reminded the Board that we need to give an answer to Fiddl

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

Leigh Albert Aye
Tom Keller Aye
Jim Handy Aye
Tori Kornfield Aye
Norm Higgins Aye
James Ford Aye
Brian Langley Aye

X. New Business Requiring Notification to the Commission (No formal action to be taken by Commission)

A. New Governing Board Members

- *Baxter Academy for Technology and Science (Kathleen DeSilva)*
- *Baxter Academy for Technology and Science (April Theberge)*

B. Board Member Resignations

None

C. Board Member Term Outs

None

XI. Next Month's Topics

A. Next Month's Topics

- Mid-Year Meeting Reports
- Joe Drago will Present on School Funding and ED279s

XII. Announcements

A. Important Dates

Graduation Ceremonies:

- Sunday, June 2nd (Maine Arts Academy, Augusta Civic Center)
- Friday, June 7th (2:00pm-Maine Virtual Academy, Zoom)

B. Next Regular Business Meeting

April 9, 2024 - Cross Office Building, Room #103, Augusta

XIII. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 4:02 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Norm Higgins

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Coversheet

To Consider the Approval of the 4/9/24 Commission Meeting Minutes

Section: I. Opening Items
Item: D. To Consider the Approval of the 4/9/24 Commission Meeting Minutes
Purpose: Approve Minutes
Submitted by:
Related Material: Minutes for Monthly Commission Meeting on April 9, 2024

APPROVED



Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday April 9, 2024 at 1:00 PM

Location

Room #103, Cross Office Building, 111 Sewall Street, Augusta or [ZOOM](#)

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Directors Present

James Ford, Jim Handy (remote), Leigh Albert, Norm Higgins, Tom Keller, Tori Kornfield

Directors Absent

Brian Langley

Guests Present

Amy Allen (remote), Lana Ewing, Susan Whipkey

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Norm Higgins called a meeting of the board of directors of Maine Charter School Commission to order on Tuesday Apr 9, 2024 at 1:03 PM.

II. Comments from Commission Chair

A. Comments

- Norm asked Commission member, Tom Keller, to read the Commission's mission and vision statements.

III. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda

A. Additions/Adjustments

None

IV. Committee Reports

A. School Performance Committee

Tori Kornfield - Chair, School Performance Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee.

B. Finance Committee

Leigh Weisenburger Albert - Chair, Finance Committee - reported that due to scheduling challenges the Committee was unable to meet in April.

C. Executive Committee

Norm Higgins - Chair, Executive Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee.

V. Public Comment*

A. Public Comment

Bill Doughty - Board Chair, Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences - spoke to the challenges of interpreting both NWEA outcomes and Panorama survey results as the "norms" are pre-pandemic.

VI. Presentations

A. Joe Drago - 279s

Joe shared his presentation "ED279 Refresher" - Highlights are:

- The ED279 is the report that shows how Maine schools are funded. It is based on equitable opportunity and adequacy, is cost driven and relies on audited data gleaned from high performing, cost effective charters and school units.
- Joe noted that if the schools have questions about their funding, Paula Gravelle at the Maine DOE will be happy to discuss.
- Current stressors on school funding include inflation, facilities at limits, competition for teachers, political climate shifts, weather extremes and scarcity of non-govt funders.
- **Current strengths of fiscal management include the** capture of leading indicators, financial performance reporting and multi-year planning, competitive teacher offers, an active search for non-gov't funders, experienced Commission.
- Types of funding for schools are 1) Basic Counts (per student EPS based on home district); 2) Weighted Counts (additional funding for certain characteristics such as disadvantaged and multilingual students; 3) Targeted Funds for Assessments and Technology; 4) Spec Ed Allocation based on State Rules; and 5) Transportation Allocation (annual rate per student)
- ACADIA Academy Funding Calculation example.
- The expected EPS Avg for FY25 Charter Schools is \$8,186 about \$100 less than in FY24.
- Paula Gravelle at the Maine DOE has a draft PowerPoint for Maine Charter School funding calculations which includes the applicable Maine law.
- The funding program is reviewed every three years. Charter schools get about 2% or \$33M of the state budget.

Discussion / Questions / Comments

- Fundraising - Leigh asked if the scarcity of non-governmental funders is unique to Maine? Joe responded no, but there is philanthropy in larger cities for charter schools that is absent in Maine. Lana noted that Maine has an enrollment cap that other state's do not. Leigh commented that in Lewiston fundraising efforts may be impacted by the efforts related to the Lewiston shooting tragedy. Norm questioned whether the commission could assist with fundraising activities like grant writing, management, etc. and asked whether there are National Charter School resources available to schools. Lana relayed the May School Leader's Meeting will be devoted to a Fund Ed presentation. This organization has raised over \$100M for Charter Schools in the past 6 years and is offering a pro-bono hour on best practices.
- Student Counts - Tori raised the issue of the timing of student counts and its impacts on the EPS amounts.
- Transportation - Norm asked if charter schools are eligible for any state funding of bus purchases. Joe stated the only state funding for transportation is the \$900 per student. Joe explained this is a management issue for school. The schools need to find some other funding.
- Facilities - Norm asked if charter schools are eligible for construction funding or the revolving fund. Joe says no because although not expressly prohibited, it is not written into law that it is available to them.
- Charter School Funding is all state funding (100% of EPS model amount); no local funding goes to charter schools.
- Federal Funds - Tom asked if the schools receive Federal funds. Joe answered yes, the schools get them on their own. The amounts are added to the Basic EPS amounts.

VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

A. School Updates

Lana provided the following updates:

- Maine Connections Academy was awarded an Outdoor Learning Initiative Grant (MOLI) for summer student opportunities. They have 4 options ranging from a 1 day ropes course/team building time to a 5-day overnight summer camp experience. This is part of the social engagement goal that is part of the Performance Framework. Tori expressed her concern it's a small % of kids who take advantage of this. Her concern is the social isolation they experience. Lana noted that we will get the % of kids participating.
- Maine Arts Academy, Healthy Communities of the Capital Area, and Downtown Augusta all co-sponsored an Art Walk on Saturday to highlight mental health through Downtown Augusta and Maine Arts Rock Music Ensemble performed. They also invited other area public schools to submit art so this is a collaboration

between Maine Arts as a charter and 3 other public districts in Kennebec County. The art work will be displayed in about 15 businesses downtown.

- Baxter Academy for Technology and Science students won a robotics competition at the Maine Math State Math Competition. Received a Maine Outdoor Learning (MOLI) grant for 4 weeks of stem programming for new Americans/under-represented populations. Programming will be STEM focused through Ocean Sustainability/AI in the Sky/Photography in our community/Hiking expeditions. Environmental Immersion program travelled up to see the Eclipse. A rotating group of @60 students are now taking regular trips into nature -hiking ranges from Mackworth Island to much more ambitious efforts. It is our work taking a leadership role in making a practical connection between our student's curriculum and the needs of the planet.

B. Organizational Updates

Lana provided the following updates:

- The Finance Committee and staff, with Joe's support, are working on the FY25 budget to be presented and voted on at the May meeting. The Executive Committee has been briefed and provided feedback. A highlight of the budget is a proposed increase in the Innovation Funds from \$20K in the current budget to \$40K. The Performance Committee has noted areas of growth that schools could have on chronic absenteeism, math or early literacy. Rather than direct programming at the Board Level, the use of these funds can encourage the schools to create their own programming to impact growth in these areas. Leigh commented that in a future way of looking at the innovation fund, the fiddlehead request for strategic planning would be forecasted in a three-year operating budget.
- Mid-Year Reports - From January through March, the Staff met with each school for trends and had candid conversations with the schools.
 - Summary
 - ELA - 5 of 9 schools are outperforming the state average for at or above expectations.
 - Math is subject of concern; Only 1 of 9 schools is outperforming state averages (Acadia).
 - Chronic absenteeism is improving in every school, but still not meeting the performance framework expectations. Tori noted the relationship between chronic absenteeism and math scores because of the building block nature of math unit instruction.
 - Graduation rate - All schools are expected to meet or exceed the graduation rate expectation of the framework. This is improved from past years.

- The financials look good. Two schools are waiting on audit results, but the others show no material deficiencies.
- Enrollment is good. High re-enrollment and larger enrollment than last year in all schools except Acadia which is capped because of the facility limitations.
- Facilities space - All the schools need for more space.
- State Board of Education Committee - Rescheduled meeting later this spring for the MCSC presentation.
- Panorama Surveys - The window has been launched and runs from March 25 to June 13. Lana extended thanks to Amy.
- Strategic Planning Session - The session will be held after the shortened May Board Meeting. The Board will meet with Naomi from NCSI from 2:30 to 4:30. The Mission and Vision statements will be reviewed. School boards can convene on May 14 with Naomi as well.
- June Board Meeting - The meeting will be held at the Ecology Learning Center on June 11 as they are going into renewal next year.
- 5 minute break at 2:44
- Count Me In - Lana thanked Jess Anderson for her Commission presentation on chronic absenteeism last month and James who made the introduction. Jess is able to offer training for schools next year where they would meet for an hour of PD monthly to discuss their chronic absenteeism and solve the problems together. Jess would provide best practices from her work experience. The funds for this expense are in the proposed budget and the cost is reasonable.

C. Media Updates

D. New Charter School

Norm and Lana have had a series of meetings with parties who may be interested in submitting a new school application. Lana expects a "robust and competitive application process" and reminded the Commission that the application will open on July 1st and due in February 2025.

Norm stated that the role of the Commission Chair is "to open doors" while the role of the Executive Director "is to manage the portfolio".

Leigh asked if there is a rubric for assessing completed applications. Lana responded that there is one available that needs a few revisions to match the application itself. She also shared that a review team will be formed to evaluate the applications and that training on how to evaluate will likely be provided by David Hartman.

VIII. Unfinished Business

A.

To Consider the Approval of Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences' Request for Funds for Revisioning Project

Tori Kornfield made a motion to Approve Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences' Request for Funds for Revisioning Project.

Leigh Albert seconded the motion.

Jim Handy does not find the proposal innovative and believes the expense should be part of the school's operating budget.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

James Ford Aye

Jim Handy No

Norm Higgins Aye

Tom Keller Aye

Tori Kornfield Aye

Leigh Albert Aye

Brian Langley Absent

IX. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A. To Consider the Approval of Ecology Learning Center's Fund Request for Student-Led Arts Initiatives

Tori Kornfield made a motion to accept the Ecology Learning Center's fund request for student-led arts initiatives.

Leigh Albert seconded the motion.

Jim Handy opposes the motion for the same reason he opposed the Fiddlehead request.

This is an operational expense.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

Norm Higgins Aye

Tom Keller Aye

Jim Handy No

Brian Langley Absent

Tori Kornfield Aye

James Ford Aye

B. To Consider Changing the Independent Third Party Evaluation Annual Requirement from Every Year to Twice in 5 Years (Year 2 and Year 4 of a Charter Term)

Jim Handy made a motion to approve changing the independent third-party evaluation annual requirement from every year to twice in five years (Year 2 and Year 4 of the Charter Term).

Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

Norm Higgins Aye
Brian Langley Absent
Jim Handy Aye
Tori Kornfield Aye
James Ford Aye
Leigh Albert Aye
Tom Keller Aye

X. New Business Requiring Notification to the Commission (No formal action to be taken by Commission)

A. New Governing Board Members

None

B. Board Member Resignations

None

C. Board Member Term Outs

None

XI. Next Month's Topics

A. Next Month's Topics

- Consideration of the Commission's FY25 Budget
- Ad-Hoc Nominating Committee for Election of Officers

B. June Meeting Topics

- The June meeting will be held at the Ecology Learning Center.
- Executive Session for Annual Executive Director Evaluation
- Consider the Cancellation of the July Commission Meeting

XII. Announcements

A. Important Dates

Graduation Ceremonies:

- *Sunday, June 2nd (Maine Arts Academy, Augusta Civic Center)*
- *Friday, June 7th (2:00pm-Maine Virtual Academy, Zoom)*

Norm shared that attendance at graduation ceremonies is encouraged and that travel expenses and per diem will be paid.

B. Next Regular Business Meeting

May 14, 2024 at 1pm via Zoom or in person at 111 Sewall Street, Augusta, ME. Room 103.

XIII. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 3:03 PM.

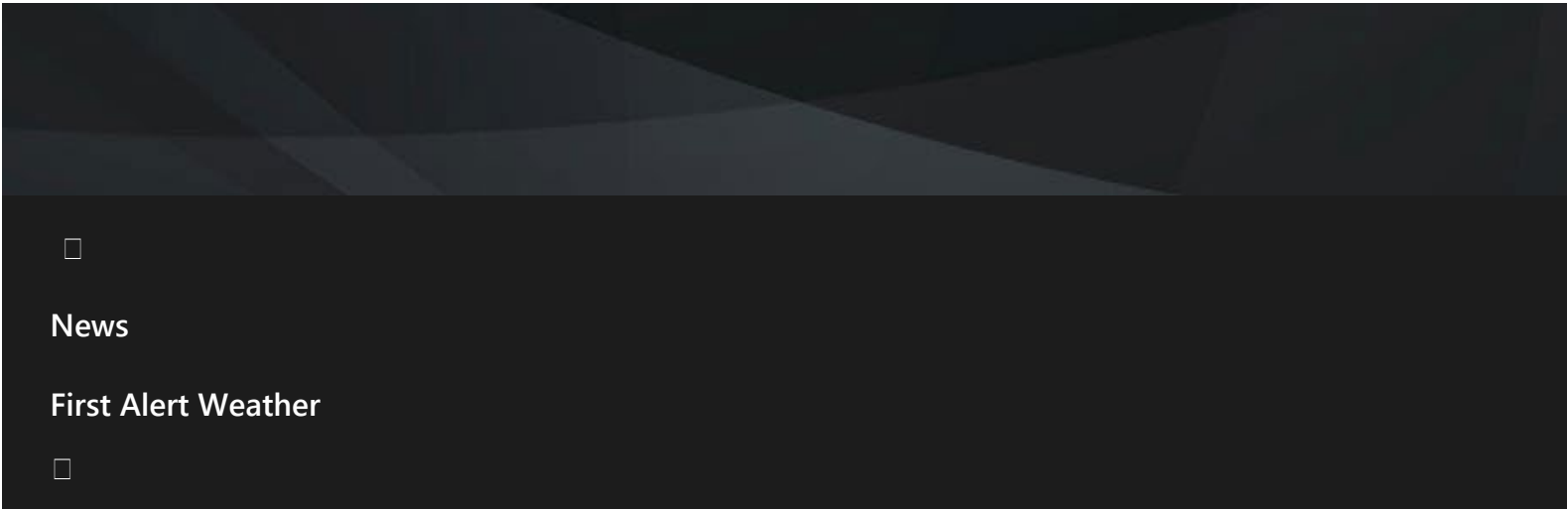
Respectfully Submitted,
Norm Higgins

* The Charter School Commission does not allow airing of complaints in public meetings regarding Commission and charter school employees or school employment matters, in order to protect employee privacy, to comply with Maine law and pursuant to our contractual relation with the schools. To the extent that the Commission receives complaints and concerns relating to school employees in writing, those concerns will be reviewed and addressed by the Commission and its staff outside of a public meeting. This meeting is not the appropriate forum for such comments. You are free to direct your concerns in writing to the Commission's Executive Director, if you have not done so already.

Coversheet

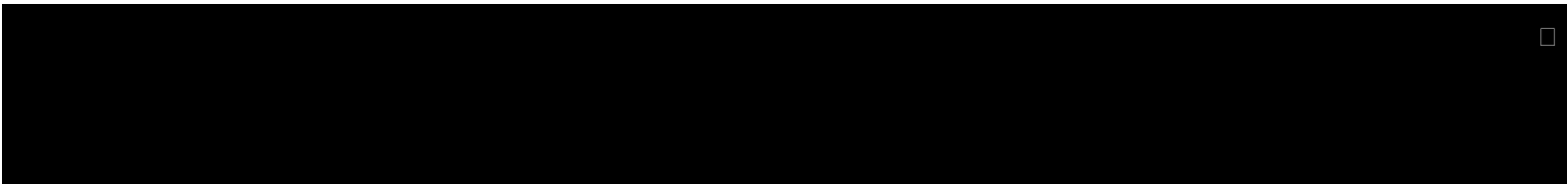
Media Updates

Section: VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report
Item: C. Media Updates
Purpose: FYI
Submitted by:
Related Material: Over 100 Maine Public High Schools Rank Among Best in Country .pdf



ADVERTISEMENT

New report shows over 100 public high schools in Maine are some of the best in the country



By WMTW

Published: Apr. 24, 2024 at 1:23 PM EDT

Email This Link Share on Facebook Share on X (formerly Twitter) Share on Pinterest Share on LinkedIn

(WMTW) - A new report from U.S. News & World Reports ranks the best public high schools across the country. The report ranked more than 17,000 schools, and 126 from Maine made the list.

The organization used six indicators of school quality to come up with the list. These include College Readiness, State Assessment Proficiency, State Assessment Performance, Underserved Student Performance, College Curriculum Breadth, and Graduation Rate.

Here are the top 10 high schools in Maine that made the list.

1. Greely High School

2. Kennebunk High School

3. Katahdin Middle/High School

4. Rangeley Lakes Regional School

5. Casco Bay High School

6. Gray-New Gloucester High School

7. Maine Connections Academy

8. Freeport High School

9. Ashland District School

10. Maine Virtual Academy

To see the full list, click [here](#).

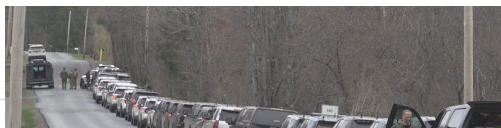
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Most Read

More ground beef sold at 58 Maine supermarkets added to recall



Man arrested for a domestic violence assault in Levant



UPDATE: Arrest made in Bangor fatal shooting



Brawl breaks out in



Coversheet

To Consider the Approval of the Commission's FY25 Operating Budget

Section: X. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance
Item: A. To Consider the Approval of the Commission's FY25 Operating Budget
Purpose: Vote
Submitted by:
Related Material: DRAFT FY25 Commission Budget 05012024.pdf

DRAFT

	Budget FY24	Projected/Actual FY24	Budget FY25	Budget FY26	Budget FY27	
Carover Available - Beginning of the Year	442,473	442,473	349,540	311,256	260,653	
Carryover (Used to Balance Budget)/From Budgeted Surplus	(123,417)	(111,491)	(38,285)	(50,603)	(34,181)	
Carryover Available - End of the Year	319,056	349,540	311,256	260,653	226,472	
4000 Revenue from State Subsidy	715,957	715,957	805,412	863,435	924,214	Assumes 3% increase in FY26 State Funding
	Subsidy Rate					
	2.35%	2.35%	2.45%	2.55%	2.65%	
Total Revenue - Subsidy and Use of Carryover	839,374	827,448	843,697	914,038	958,395	
Total Budgeted Expenditures	839,374	808,890	843,697	914,038	958,395	
5000 Personnel Services	449,880	436,162	433,448	485,121	509,377	
5005 Staff Salaries	285,000	274,569	302,779	317,918	333,814	
5006 Service Fee	104,880	101,593	67,669	71,052	74,605	FY25-FY27 Service Fee based on Atlantic Staffing
5007 Benefits	60,000	60,000	63,000	96,150	100,958	
5100 Contracted Services	149,275	149,275	121,739	127,826	134,217	
5101 Finance Consultant	49,275	49,275	51,739	54,326	57,042	Joseph Drago Consulting
5103 Public Relations/Engagement	35,000	35,000	25,000	26,250	27,563	
5104 Project-Based Support	65,000	65,000	45,000	47,250	49,613	NACSA, NCSI, Venn Education, Etc.
5200 Personal Services (Per Diem/Commission Members)	15,400	15,400	15,400	15,400	15,400	
5252 Per Diem						
5500 Travel	20,423	20,423	21,400	22,470	23,594	
Commission Members	12,782	12,782	8,400	8,820	9,261	Assumes 1 Commission Member Attending an Annual Conference; Mileage to and from Meetings
Staff	7,641	7,641	13,000	13,650	14,333	Assumes Executive Director Attending Annual Conferences; Mileage to and from School Visits & Other Meetings
5600 General Operations	32,711	32,180	35,157	36,416	38,236	
5601 Insurance/Risk Management	1,776	850	893	937	984	Required by State of Maine
5603 Printing/Photocopying	500	550	1000	551	579	
5604 Dues and Subscriptions	6,860	6,860	7,203	7,563	7,941	
5605 Meeting Room Rental/Security	1,000	0	1,050	1,103	1,158	
5606 Postage	500	300	315	331	347	
5607 Advertising	500	500	525	551	579	
5608 Food	500	500	420	441	463	
5609 General Government Service Center	7,529	11,262	11,825	12,416	13,037	Required by State of Maine
5610 Legal and Professional Services	12,546	10,858	11,401	11,971	12,569	Required by State of Maine
5611 Office and Other Supplies	1,000	500	525	551	579	
5700 Technology - For Schools	90,065	90,125	130,684	136,643	142,900	
5701 NWEA MAP Test	13,039	13,039	14,400	15,120	15,876	
5702 Panorama Education	10,625	10,625	11,500	11,500	11,500	Will sign a 3-year Agreement with a discounted rate of \$11,500 annually thru 2/1/28
5703 Infinite Campus	20,751	20,751	21,789	22,878	24,022	
5705 Lotterease	3,750	2,500	2,625	2,756	2,894	
5704 Epicenter	37,900	38,710	40,646	42,678	44,812	
5707 College-Readiness Diagnostics	4,000	4,500	4,725	4,961	5,209	
5708 BoardOnTrack	0	0	35,000	36,750	38,587.5	
5800 Technology - MCSC Operations	26,845	14,450	11,405	11,975	12,574	
5801 Office of Information Technology	8,845	3,500	3,675	3,859	4,052	
5802 Cellular Service	2,000	2,600	2,730	2,867	3,010	
5808 Remote CART Captioning Service	5,000	2,350	0	0	0	
5806 Website	5,000	500	5,000	5,250	5,513	
5807 BoardOnTrack	6,000	5,500	5,775	6,064	6,367	
6000 Charter School Innovation/Collaboration	25,000	21,100	43,200	45,360	47,628	
6001 Innovation Fund/Professional Development	20,000	20,000	40,000	42,000	44,100	
6003 Board Chair Collaboration	5,000	1,100	1,700	1,785	1,874	
6004 CountMEIn	0	0	1,500	1,575	1,654	
6100 Contingency	20,000	20,000	21,000	22,050	23,153	
6200 STACAP	9,775	9,775	10,264	10,777	11,316	
	1.18%	0.0123228931				
Unused portion of 3% authorized Subsidy	(198,031)	(198,031)	(180,807)	(152,371)	(122,066)	