



Maine Charter School Commission

Monthly Commission Meeting

Published on April 4, 2025 at 3:04 PM EDT

Date and Time

Tuesday April 8, 2025 at 1:00 PM EDT

Location

Room #103, Cross Office Building, 111 Sewall Street, Augusta or via Zoom

The **Vision** of the Maine Charter School Commission is that ***"Innovative public charter schools will provide Maine students with an equitable opportunity for an excellent education where students are valued, supported and challenged."***

The **Mission** of the Maine Charter School Commission is ***"To authorize, monitor and support innovative public charter schools that provide a dynamic, high-quality 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 3/11/25 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
• <i>FY25 Budget vs Actual Spending Report</i>		
C. Executive Committee	FYI	Norm Higgins
D. Ad-Hoc New School Application Review Committee	FYI	Leigh Albert
V. Public Comment*		
A. Public Comment	Discuss	Norm Higgins
VI. Presentation(s)		
Anna Klein-Christie, Baxter Academy - Trip to Kenya		
VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report		

	Purpose	Presenter
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A. School Updates	Discuss	Lana Ewing
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B. Organizational Updates	Discuss	Lana Ewing
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- New School Application Process - Next Steps

C. Media Updates	FYI	Lana Ewing
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- Maine Academy of Natural Sciences - Maple Sugar Sunday

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 Review Team's Recommendation for the MOXIE Public School to be a Finalist to Open a New Charter School in the State of Maine.	Vote	Lana Ewing
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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
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- *Maine Arts Academy (Rachel White)*

B. Board Member Resignations	FYI	Norm Higgins
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- *Maine Academy of Natural Sciences (Sally Beaulieu)*

C. Board Member Term Outs	FYI	Norm Higgins
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None

	Purpose	Presenter
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XII. Future Topics

A.	Future Topics	FYI	Norm Higgins
	May		

- New School Vote
- Consider the Approval of Commission's FY26 Budget
- Ad-Hoc Nominating Committee (Election of Officers)

June

- To Consider the Need to Hold a Commission Meeting in July

XIII. Announcements

A.	Important Dates	FYI	Norm Higgins
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- 5/29/25 - Maine Charter School Hall of Flags beginning at 9 AM
- 10/22/25 - Maine Arts Academy Ribbon Cutting Ceremony from 5 PM - 7 PM

B.	Upcoming Business Meetings	FYI	Norm Higgins
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- **May 13, 2025** (*Cross Office Building, Room #103, Augusta*) or Zoom
- **June 10, 2025** (*Cross Office Building, Room #103, Augusta*) or Zoom

C.	2025 Graduation Dates	FYI	Norm Higgins
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- Ecology Learning Center (June 5th at 5:00pm/MOFGA)
- Maine Arts Academy (June 1st at 12:00pm/Augusta Civic Center)

XIV. Closing Items

A.	Adjourn Meeting	Vote	Norm Higgins
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* 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 3/11/25 Commission Meeting Minutes

Section:	I. Opening Items
Item:	C. To Consider the Approval of the 3/11/25 Commission Meeting Minutes
Purpose:	Approve Minutes
Submitted by:	
Related Material:	Minutes for Monthly Commission Meeting on March 11, 2025

APPROVED



Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday March 11, 2025 at 1:00 PM

Location

Room #103, Cross Office Building, 111 Sewall Street, Augusta or via Zoom

The **Vision** of the Maine Charter School Commission is that ***"Innovative public charter schools will provide Maine students with an equitable opportunity for an excellent education where students are valued, supported and challenged."***

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Directors Present

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

Directors Absent

Leigh Albert

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 Mar 11, 2025 at 1:00 PM.

Tom read the Maine Charter School Commission Vision and Mission Statements.

C. To Consider the Approval of the 2/11/25 Commission Meeting Minutes

Jim Handy made a motion to approve the minutes from the Monthly Commission Meeting on 02-11-25.

Tom Keller seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

Leigh Albert Absent

Brian Langley Aye

Jim Handy Aye

Norm Higgins Aye

Tom Keller Aye

Tori Kornfield Aye

James Ford Absent

II. Comments from Commission Chair

A. Comments

Norm reported the following:

- He met with the Chairs of the Education Committee to set a meeting for the MCSC to report to them. A date has not yet been set, but in the meantime, Lana has sent a written report to them.

- There is no news from the Governor's office on new Commission member appointments or reappointments as terms are expiring. Norm will follow-up.
- Legislation -
 - Gary Drinkwater's bill to increase the number of charter schools by one has been submitted with testimony on March 12.
 - The DFAS bill for the MCSC reorganization has not been referred to committee yet.
 - Norm will be testifying on a bill to address the academic needs of students enrolled in schools with less than 200 students.
 - Students from The Ecology Learning Center and Maine Academy of Natural Sciences will be testifying on March 13 for a bill before the Agricultural Committee concerning experiential learning.

III. Committee Reports

A. School Performance Committee

Tori reported the majority of the Committee's time was spent on the review of the Mid-Year Reports.

The Committee supported the decision to put the Community Regional Charter School on an improvement plan.

B. Finance Committee

Brian reported the following:

The Committee received an update from Travis Works on the CRCS facility expansion process.

Travis also reviewed their plan to address teacher turnover by raising teacher salaries to be competitive with area public schools.

The Committee discussed the benefits of the proposed MCSC organizational change in the bill sponsored by Senator Rafferty.

The Committee discussed preliminary FY26 Budget projections including strategic investments.

The Committee discussed the upcoming Hall of Flag Event to be held on May 29.

The Committee received the Mid-Year report on the Financial Health of the Schools from Sue and Joe. As a whole, the performance metrics declined year over year with the percentage of high-risk scores increasing.

The FY26 Budget review will be taken up in April with two scenarios. One with the current Commission structure and the second for the proposed new organization. Cost savings will be provided.

Tom asked if the Commission could accept grant funds from external agencies. Lana responded that we can and discussed the possibility of applying for the Charter School Program (CSP) grant for authorizers. This grant is generous but requires significant effort and typically is awarded to authorizers who are growing. Norm suggested exploring other grants that may be available to address issues that impact all of the schools in the portfolio.

C. Executive Committee

Norm reported the Executive Committee discussed current legislation impacting Charter Schools.

D. Ad-Hoc New School Application Review Committee

Lana provided an update on the review process for two applicants. She will post these applications to the public website. The proposals are:

- Wabanaki Hybrid High School - Reza Namin, Superintendent of Maine Indian Education. The school would begin in year one with 25 students in grades 9 and 10 and expand to grades 9 through 12 with 100 total students. The proposal combines a virtual and in-person educational model located in Indian Island, Old Town where traditional knowledge and contemporary skills are blended.
- Moxie School - Beth Rabbitt. This school is for grades 6-12 at full scale, beginning with grades 6-9 and 120 students in the first year and growing to grades 6-12 and 420 students over time. The model is designed to serve a traditionally underserved

student population with a focus on strong academics and partnerships within the tech/ career community for internship opportunities. The school will be in the Westbrook/Greater Portland area to start and expand over time with 2-4 satellite campuses located throughout the State.

Norm noted there were no application completion extensions granted. All applicant revision requests subsequent to the initial filing can be shared in meetings with the review team.

Leigh and Brian of the review committee along with Joe Drago, Norm and Lana participated in a training with David Hartman on completing an unbiased, thorough application review using a rubric. The review process is extensive with approximately 10-15 hours of review time per person for each application. This thorough review respects the work of the application parties. Lana expressed her thanks to the team. This week the team will meet to compare the scores and come to consensus and prepare questions for the capacity interviews with the contenders. After the interviews the team will choose finalists with recommendations to the whole Commission in the April meeting. The Commission will then have the opportunity to interview the applicants and following there will be public hearings.

IV. Public Comment*

A. Public Comment

Travis Works of CRCS reported the school was awarded a \$90K USDA distance learning grant through the Morrow Foundation. The focus is to support mental health and wellness programs for students, families and staff.

V. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

A. School Updates

Lana gave the following school updates:

Maine Arts Academy - Music students performed at a school recital and dance students performed in collaboration with Colby College and the Portland Ballet Company at the Westbrook Performing Arts Center. The dance students and visual arts students presented at the State House on Arts Advocacy Day with a table and live demonstrations.

On October 22 from 5-7, the school will hold a ribbon cutting ceremony for its expansion of the middle school auditorium and new dance studio. Norm will extend an invitation to Governor Mills on behalf of the school.

Baxter Academy is a finalist for the Education Innovation Award from Building Hope.

Maine Academy of Arts and Sciences extends an invitation to their school event on Maine Maple Sunday. It will be held on March 23rd from 9-12.

B. Organizational Updates

Lana provided a summary of the School Mid-Year Meeting Reports which were reviewed in detail by the School Performance Committee. Lana thanked Amy for writing the reports.

The meetings are held to review progress toward end of year goals with a focus on areas of improvement noted in last year's performance framework results. The portfolio is in a strong place and meeting participation was good.

Highlights:

- Demand is up with at least two schools holding a lottery this year for the first time.
- Performance is going in the right direction with higher NWEA & Accuplacer scores reported.
- Increase in students who are dual enrolled, taking college level courses.
- There are plans in place to improve school climate.
- Chronic absenteeism is still a challenge. The schools are working with Count Me In's Jess Anderson to analyze the data and work on lowering the absenteeism rate, but this is a difficult issue.
- Three FY24 audits are still outstanding.

Five Year Renewals - ACADIA and the Maine Arts Academy will be going through their charter renewal processes this spring into next fall. The staff will prepare four-year performance reports, and the school will prepare their renewal applications. In addition, site visits and focus groups with teachers, students and families will be held prior to formulating recommendations that the Commission will consider during its October meeting.

The Panorama survey for staff, teachers, students and families will be launched March 17th. Schools are encouraged to have good participation rates.

Reclassification of Commission structure - no bill language has been drafted and no hearing date has been set yet. The staff has been working with contacts within the state

to prepare for implementation should this pass. The reclassification will allow greater autonomy with operations, savings and flexibility.

CRCS is on a school improvement plan. Lana has worked with the school to set goals. There is improvement and an update will be provided this spring.

MeVA requested to change contract language around their hosting of social events to limit the events to virtual only rather than virtual and in-person as it is now. The school performance committee finds value in in-person meetings and did not recommend the change. The school is now planning live events, and the language will remain the same.

The staff has contracted with PLT Strategies to provide school document creation for the Hall of Flags. A one-page promotional document will be created for each school.

Jim suggested when getting a representative's and senator's consent to distribute the documents, have them stamped in advance before printing.

Tori suggested the schools make their monthly newsletters available.

Tom suggested to allow time for the students to move through the screening station at the Capital.

C. Media Updates

VI. Future Topics

A. Future Topics

A Nominating will need to be appointed for Commission officers.

In June, a decision whether to hold a July meeting will be made. Elections will be held in August.

VII. 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 2:24 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Norm Higgins

Documents used during the meeting

- Dashboard for FY25 02_28_25.pdf
- 2025 Mid-Year Portfolio Summary.pdf
- 2025 Renewal Timeline - ACADIA Academy.pdf
- 2025 Renewal Timeline - Maine Arts Academy.pdf
- BUILDING HOPE ANNOUNCES 2025 IMPACT GRANT FINALISTS.pdf
- ACADIA New Governing Board Member (Aaron Landry).pdf
- ELC New Governing Board Member (Malcolm Campbell).pdf
- ELC New Governing Board Member (Ken Hahn).pdf

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Coversheet

Finance Committee

Section:	IV. Committee Reports
Item:	B. Finance Committee
Purpose:	FYI
Submitted by:	
Related Material:	Dashboard for FY25 03_31_25.pdf



MCSC FY25 Budget vs. Actual (As of March 31, 2025)

<u>Revenue</u>	Projection FY25	Actual FY25	Difference FY25	Actual FY24
Allotment - Legislatively Mandated	\$694,809	\$649,601	(\$45,208)	\$694,809
Additional State Subsidy Available	\$110,603	\$110,932	\$329	\$29,395
Total Allotment - ED279	\$805,412	\$760,533	(\$44,879)	\$724,204
Carryover Funds	\$38,285	\$7,671	(\$30,614)	\$82,096
Grants	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,163
TOTAL Annual Revenue	\$843,697	\$768,203	(\$75,494)	\$808,463

<u>Expenses (1)</u>	Projection FY25	Actual FY25	Difference FY25	Actual FY24
Total Expense Summary	\$849,472	\$541,262	\$308,211	\$715,055

(1) Detail of Expenses

	Projection FY25	Actual FY25	Difference FY25	Actual FY24
<u>Personnel</u>				
Staff Salaries	\$302,779	\$233,430	↑ \$69,349	\$275,491
Atlantic Staffing Service Fee	\$67,669	\$50,745	↑ \$16,924	\$101,932
Benefits	\$63,000	\$47,250	↑ \$15,750	\$60,000
TOTAL Personnel	\$433,448	\$331,425	\$102,023	\$437,423

<u>Contracted Services</u>				
Financial Consultant	\$51,739	\$19,508	↑ \$32,231	\$38,408
Public Relations/ Engagement	\$25,000	\$0	↑ \$25,000	\$20,843
Project-Based Support	\$45,000	\$17,051	↑ \$27,949	\$51,563
Operational/Financial Support	\$0	\$0	→ \$0	\$0
TOTAL Contracted Services	\$121,739	\$36,559	\$85,180	\$110,814

<u>Personal Services - Per Diem / Commission Members</u>				
Per Diem	\$15,400	\$7,700	↑ \$7,700	\$12,729.00
TOTAL Personal Services	\$15,400	\$7,700	\$7,700	\$12,729

<u>Travel</u>				
Commission Members	\$8,400	\$2,513	↑ \$5,888	\$3,958.18
Staff	\$13,000	\$8,971	↑ \$4,029	\$7,771.93
TOTAL Travel	\$21,400	\$11,483	\$9,917	\$11,730

<u>General Operations</u>				
Insurance/Risk Management	\$893	\$27	↑ \$866	\$822
Printing/Photocopying Services	\$1,000	\$911	↑ \$89	\$516
Dues and Subscriptions	\$7,203	\$6,420	↑ \$783	\$6,926
Meeting Room Rental	\$1,050	\$0	↑ \$1,050	\$0
Postage	\$315	\$0	↑ \$315	\$272
Advertising	\$525	\$200	↑ \$325	\$200
Food	\$420	\$565	↓ (\$145)	\$234
General Government Service Center	\$11,825	\$11,458	↑ \$367	\$9,395
Legal and Professional Services	\$11,401	\$500	↑ \$10,901	\$10,858
Office and Other Supplies	\$525	\$109	↑ \$416	\$413
TOTAL General Operations	\$35,157	\$20,191	\$14,966	\$29,636

<u>Technology for Schools</u>				
NWEA MAP Test	\$14,400	\$7,871	↑ \$6,530	\$13,351
Panorama Education	\$11,500	\$0	↑ \$11,500	\$10,625
Infinite Campus	\$21,789	\$22,024	↓ (\$235)	\$19,615
Lotterease	\$2,625	\$4,614	↓ (\$1,989)	\$6,669
Epicerter	\$40,646	\$34,210	↑ \$6,436	\$33,710
College-Readiness Diagnostics	\$4,725	\$2,040	↑ \$2,685	\$4,500
Board on Track	\$35,000	\$27,495	↑ \$7,505	\$0
TOTAL Technology for Schools	\$130,684	\$98,254	\$32,431	\$88,470

<u>Technology for MCSC</u>				
Office of Information Technology	\$3,675	\$3,945	↓ (\$270)	\$8,636
Cell Phone Services	\$2,730	\$1,245	↑ \$1,485	\$2,664
Website	\$5,000	\$0	↑ \$5,000	\$0
Remote CART Captioning Service	\$0	\$0	→ \$0	\$2,350
BoardOnTrack	\$5,775	\$5,495	↑ \$280	\$5,495
TOTAL Technology for MCSC	\$17,180	\$10,685	\$6,495	\$19,145

<u>Charter School Innovation/Collaboration</u>				
Innovation Fund/Professional Development	\$40,000	\$21,042	↑ \$18,958	\$0
Board & Schools Meetings & Events	\$1,700	\$517	↑ \$1,183	\$1,511
CountMe In	\$1,500		↑ \$1,500	\$0
TOTAL Charter School Innovation/C	\$43,200	\$21,559	\$21,641	\$1,511

<u>Sta-Cap</u>				
Sta-Cap	\$10,264	\$3,406	↑ \$6,858	\$3,597
TOTAL Sta-Cap	\$10,264	\$3,406	\$6,858	\$3,597.28

<u>Contingency</u>				
Contingency	\$21,000		↑ \$21,000	\$0
TOTAL Contingency	\$21,000	\$0	\$21,000	\$0

Coversheet

Organizational Updates

Section:	VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report
Item:	B. Organizational Updates
Purpose:	Discuss
Submitted by:	
Related Material:	Commission Interview Training_20250326.pdf



LANA EWING, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Timeline

<input type="checkbox"/>	April 8	Commission Meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the process that the Application Review Committee uses to evaluate applications Review team recommendation (<i>Has the applicant demonstrated the capacity to open a successful school?</i>) Discussion and vote 	Commission
<input type="checkbox"/>	April 17th 9:00-10:30 am	Commission Interviews	Commission
<input type="checkbox"/>	April 30 or May 1	Public Hearing	Public
<input type="checkbox"/>	Before May 13th Commission Meeting	Consensus Meeting: Based on full suite of applicant information (Lana will draft the final team recommendation)	Application Review Committee
<input type="checkbox"/>	May 13	Commission Meeting: Application Approval Vote	Commission



Commission Interview Logistics

- IF A FINALIST IS APPROVED:
 - Thursday, April 17
 - 9:00-10:30 am
 - Cross Office Building, Room 103
 - Zoom access will be provided
 - Open to the public

Commission Interview Best Practices

- Follow the evaluation rubric to guide question generation
- Read the application and all attachments before the Interview
- Review the Consensus Recommendation
- Focus questions on key opportunities noted by the Review Team
- Lana will provide suggested questions
- Ask clarifying questions
- Don't let bias influence your review (the rubric is very helpful)

Reviewer DOs

Do's for Reviewers

- ✓ **Follow the Evaluation Rubric:** Use a standardized evaluation framework to ensure consistency, fairness, and objectivity in scoring applications.
- ✓ **Assess for Mission Alignment:** Ensure the proposed school's mission aligns with the authorizer's goals and priorities, including serving student needs and improving educational outcomes.
- ✓ **Evaluate Feasibility:** Look for a clear, realistic, and financially viable plan for the proposed school, including staffing, facilities, governance, and sustainability.
- ✓ **Check for Data-Driven Decision-Making:** Ensure the applicant uses credible data to justify the need for the school, the proposed educational model, and expected outcomes.
- ✓ **Examine Leadership and Governance Capacity:** Assess the strength of the leadership team and board in overseeing the school, making strategic decisions, and ensuring compliance.
- ✓ **Ensure Financial Soundness:** Verify that the budget is well-developed, realistic, and accounts for key expenses, enrollment projections, and contingency planning.
- ✓ **Review the Academic Plan Critically:** Ensure that the curriculum, instructional approach, and assessment methods are well-defined, evidence-based, and aligned with state standards.
- ✓ **Consider Equity and Access:** Look for a strong plan to recruit, serve, and retain a diverse student population, including students with disabilities and English language learners.
- ✓ **Look for a Strong Community Engagement Plan:** Ensure the applicant has demonstrated authentic engagement with parents, community stakeholders, and local organizations.
- ✓ **Check for Compliance and Legal Requirements:** Ensure the application meets all statutory and regulatory requirements, including governance structures, enrollment policies, and fiscal accountability.
- ✓ **Ask Clarifying Questions:** If something in the application is unclear, seek additional information rather than making assumptions.
- ✓ **Consider Long-Term Viability:** Evaluate whether the applicant has a solid plan for long-term sustainability beyond the initial charter term.



Reviewer DON'Ts

Don'ts for Reviewers

- ✗ **Don't Let Bias Influence Your Review:** Base evaluations on the application's merit, not personal opinions about the school model, applicant group, or location.
- ✗ **Don't Overlook Inconsistencies:** If there are contradictions between sections (e.g., the budget doesn't align with staffing plans), flag them and request clarification.
- ✗ **Don't Ignore Red Flags:** Lack of leadership experience, unrealistic financial projections, vague academic models, or weak governance structures should raise concerns.
- ✗ **Don't Accept Jargon Without Explanation:** If an application uses buzzwords like "innovative," "student-centered," or "transformational" without details, request specifics.
- ✗ **Don't Approve Based on Aspirations Alone:** A strong mission is important, but it must be backed by a concrete and feasible plan for execution.
- ✗ **Don't Dismiss Community Opposition Without Review:** If there's opposition, understand the concerns and evaluate whether the application effectively addresses them.
- ✗ **Don't Skip Over Financials:** A strong academic model means little if the school cannot remain financially solvent.
- ✗ **Don't Assume Replication Guarantees Success:** If an applicant already runs successful schools, ensure they have a clear, scalable plan for quality replication.
- ✗ **Don't Accept Weak Performance Data:** If an existing operator has poor academic or financial track records, they need to show a strong plan for improvement.
- ✗ **Don't Rush the Process:** Take time to thoroughly review, analyze, and discuss the application with other reviewers before making recommendations.



Next Steps - if a finalist is approved

- **Commission Interview:**

- Read the application and all attachments before the Interview.
- Review the Consensus Recommendation
- Review the questions that Lana sends you
- Come prepared with other questions that you want to ask based on your evaluation

- **Public Hearing**

- Date: April 30th or May 1
- Opportunity for members of the public to offer testimony - oral and/or written
- Likely in Greater Portland

Coversheet

Media Updates

Section: VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report
Item: C. Media Updates
Purpose: FYI
Submitted by:
Related Material:
centralmaine.com-Maple sugaring part of education at Maine Academy of Natural Sciences.pdf

Maple sugaring part of education at Maine Academy of Natural Sciences

cm centralmaine.com/2025/03/23/maple-sugaring-part-of-education-at-maine-academy-of-natural-sciences

March 23, 2025

1 of 7











Sean Geary of Albion and his son Henry Geary, 15 months, watch as steam rises above an evaporator while sap is made into maple syrup during MeANS Maple Sunday at Maine Academy of Natural Sciences in Hinckley, on Sunday. Rich Abrahamson/Morning Sentinel
[Buy Image](#)

FAIRFIELD — For ninth graders at the Maine Academy of Natural Sciences, maple sugaring is just one part of the curriculum.

At the school's sugar shack on Green Road in Hinckley, just up the road from its campus off U.S. Route 201, a group of about 25 freshmen learned the process as part of a two-week intensive study, from tapping trees to bottling the final product.

The academy, Maine's first public charter school, welcomed the public to the sugar shack on a windy Sunday morning as part of the 42nd Maine Maple Sunday Weekend. Along with demonstrations and live music, there were plenty of maple goodies for sale, from freshly fried doughnuts to chocolate maple bars.

"There's not too many things that you can do education-wise where you can learn something and there's an end product you can see," Jeff Chase, the school's agricultural specialist, said.

Related

For students at Fairfield charter school, a sweet season as maple sugaring class operation grows

Chase, who also oversees the school's apiary, greenhouses and blacksmithing, said students learned the entire syrup production process.

"We check out other sugarhouses," he said. "We have kids tap trees. They collect the buckets. We learn all the history of maple sugaring. And then they come up and spend some time each day."



Isla Henyan, 3, sips hot chocolate Sunday while sitting with her brother, Finnley Henyan, during the 42nd Maine Maple Sunday Weekend, at the Maine Academy of Natural Sciences in Hinckley. The children are touring the event with their mother, Lizzie Henyan. *Rich Abrahamson/Morning Sentinel*
[Buy Image](#)

The maple sugaring program is one of several two-week intensive programs the school requires students to complete, according to Evan Coleman, co-interim head of the school. Every season, each grade breaks from their regular schedules and does a two-week deep dive into some topic related to the natural sciences.

The Maine Academy of Natural Sciences, known as MeANS, opened as a charter school in 2012, and its curriculum focuses on hands-on projects. It follows a unique schedule: no classes on Mondays, half days on Fridays and a shorter summer break.

It now enrolls 120 to 130 students on campus and another 80 in its hybrid program, Coleman said.

The school has always offered maple sugaring among its varied courses since its inception in 2011. It used to use a sugar shack on the neighboring campus of Kennebec Valley Community College until 2019 when it finished construction on its own nearby on Green Road.

Related

Photos: Maine Academy of Natural Sciences celebrates Maine Maple Friday.

“It’s just a really nice environment to be here,” said 11th grader Kennadi Grivois-Collins of Sidney, who was volunteering at Sunday’s event, selling the bottled maple syrup.



Sean Geary of Albion and his son, Henry, 15 months, watch Sunday as steam rises above an evaporator, top right, while the sap is made into maple syrup during the 42nd Maine Maple Sunday Weekend, at the Maine Academy of Natural Sciences in Hinckley. *Rich Abrahamson/Morning Sentinel*

[Buy Image](#)

Coleman said this was the second year the school was listed on the Maine Maple Producers Association map for Maine Maple Sunday Weekend, an annual tradition that drew curious minds and maple lovers to more than 100 sugarhouses across the state over two days.

Organizers of the event at the Maine Academy of Natural Sciences' sugarhouse said they were seeing some new faces, in addition to several familiar ones, including students and their families.

Chase, the instructor, and Danni Best, the school's retired dean of students, said they were also seeing many alumni return to visit Sunday, a clear sign that learning maple sugaring was a valuable lesson that had stuck with them.

"It is the coolest school in the state of Maine. That's what I tell everybody," Best said. "Where else do you get to make maple syrup, tap trees and boil syrup?"

Related Headlines

- [Photos: Maine Academy of Natural Sciences celebrates Maine Maple Friday](#)
- [For students at Fairfield charter school, a sweet season as maple sugaring class operation grows](#)
- [Maine Maple Weekend turns sweet 42](#)

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Coversheet

New Governing Board Members

Section: XI. New Business Requiring Notification to the Commission (No formal action to be taken by Commission)
Item: A. New Governing Board Members
Purpose: FYI
Submitted by:
Related Material: MeAA New Governing Board Member (Rachel White).pdf

Public Charter School Governing Board Member Information Sheet

Name of Public Charter School __Maine Arts Academy__

Name of Board Member __Rachel White__

Email Address __rachelwhitnequus@gmail.com__

Occupation __Assistant Professor__

Please respond to the following questions:

1. Why do you wish to serve on the governing board?

I am at a point in my life where I feel that I can give time and effort to community service. I would like to contribute my skills and expertise to help the school develop and succeed. As a former educator at MEAA, and as a current public educator with UMaine Cooperative Extension, I feel that my insights might be of value to the operation.

2. What is your understanding of the educational needs of students in the catchment area?

When I was an active teacher at MEAA, I was very aware of the culture and educational needs of the students at the time. I have since moved on from that role and the structure has changed slightly, thus I am less in tune with the needs of the students. This would be a priority area for me to learn about if I were on the MEAA Board of Directors.

3. Please list any previous or present educational involvement; such as board member, budget committee, citizens committees, etc. List school(s) or district(s).
 - *2023- Present* Assistant Professor, Sustainable Agriculture and Livestock Educator, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Orono ME
 - *Spring 2023* Adjunct Instructor of AVS 249 Laboratory & Companion Animal Science, University of Maine, Orono ME
 - *2022-2023* Teaching Assistant for Ecology & Environmental Sciences, EES 100, EES 117, EES 217, EES 390, University of Maine, Orono ME
 - *2019-2020* Teaching Assistant for Chemistry, CHY 112, University of Maine, Orono ME
 - *2016-2019* Math and Science instructor at Maine Arts Academy
 - *2009-2017* Horseback Riding Instructor, Crowninshield Farm, Oakland ME

4. What special qualifications do you have that will help you to be a board member?

I have served on several boards including Friends of Messalonskee, Sebasticook Regional Land Trust, Humane Society of Waterville Area, and the Kennebec Farm Bureau. I have helped with strategic planning, fundraising, grant writing, and development while serving on these boards.

Addendum to Public Charter School Governing Board Member Information Sheet

5. What is your understanding of the role you will play as a public charter school board member?

The role on a school board includes overseeing the management and operation of the school through forming policy, reviewing budgets, strategic planning, and advocacy. All decisions should be made in the best interest of the students.

Sign  Date 2/10/2025

Please submit this form once complete to the MeAA Head of School or Board Chair.

Addendum to Public Charter School Governing Board Member Information Sheet



Home Address: 37 Walker Hill Rd

City: Canaan State: ME Zip: 04924

Cell Phone __ (207) 240-7440 _____

Employer: University of Maine Cooperative Extension Title: Assistant Professor

Education (Degrees): PhD Ecology and Environmental Sciences, University of Maine ,
BS Biology, Unity College

Current Volunteer/Civic Involvement: None at the moment (my job captures most of this)

Awards, Honors, Notable Accomplishments:

References (from other Boards on which you have participated, if possible):

Name: Linda Warner Phone: (407) 951- 3331

Name: Mike Gurino Phone: (207) 557- 9933

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1) Do you have any particular experience or interest in the arts or arts education? Explain.
Yes, I am interested in all arts, though I am partial to the visual arts. Digital creation, specifically creating vectors and videos, are a passion of mine, personally. I also work with acrylic and watercolor paints, as well as needle felt and wet felting.

2) Have you participated in any kind of formal board training? Explain.
I have attended board retreats where consultants trained on communication and ways to improve efficiency. I am familiar with Robert's Rules of Order and general courtesies while in a meeting. Otherwise, I have been involved in several trainings or courses on facilitation and stakeholder engagement, which in some ways, is likely very similar.

3) What skills or expertise can you offer to enhance our mission and vision?
Some of my skills include grant development, public engagement, strategic planning, and business management. These have benefitted organizations in the past and I am confident I can assist MEAA to address the mission and goals for the future.

4) What time and commitment are you willing to make to the board's work ?
I am a full time, early career professional, though my schedule is fairly flexible. I would prefer to spend 3-5 hours per month on board work, including committee activities.