APPROVED

Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday December 12, 2023 at 1:00 PM

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.

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

Directors Absent
None

Guests Present
Amy Allen (remote), Lana Ewing, Rachel Spell

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 Dec 12, 2023 at 1:07 PM.

C. To Consider the Approval of the 11/14/23 Commission Meeting

Jim Handy made a motion to approve the minutes from Monthly Commission Meeting on 11-14-23.
Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Comments from Commission Chair

A. Comments

- Norm gave praise for performance development session with the school board members yesterday as held by Naomi.
- Marshall Communication Op-Ed by Lana and Norm. Not issuing any.
- Lana meeting with commissioner, positive step. And looking at tentative dates to report to committee in January.

III. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda

A. Additions/Adjustments

B. Acadia Academy - Requesting Short Term Loan

Norm Higgins made a motion to Add Acadia Academy Requesting Short Term Loan to Agenda.
Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

IV. Committee Reports

A. School Performance Committee

Tori presented as head of committee.
Went over topics discussed during the committee:

- US News and World Report School Ranking Article - MCA #1 middle school.
- Chronic Absenteeism information released from State. Four schools above state average, three below state average on this for charters.
- MCA wanting to alter contract including no longer have Scarborough office building. Concern due to them having just won an award. But doing so could bring in more staff from different areas of state.
- Brainstormed about new charter school application ideas/partnerships.

B. Finance Committee

Leigh presented as head of committee.
Went over topics discussed during the committee:

- Acadia requesting short term loan approval through independent loaner.
- MCA's contract for the next five years and considering changing location of school or getting rid of location. From a finance perspective, curious that the money saved from this could maybe be used to go into more for the students.
- Financial audit update from Joe Drago, will be getting more audits soon.
- CRCS considering moving to a new location.
- Amy confirmed that all year end financials have been reconciled.

C. Executive Committee

Norm presented as head of committee.
Went over topics discussed during the committee meeting:

- Brainstorming and going over 10th charter school ideas for upcoming new school application.
- Marshall Communications Op-Ed, press release about the top schools.

V. Public Comment*

A. Public Comment

No Public Comment.

VI. Presentations

A. Maine Connections Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation

Mandy Cyr via The Children's Collaborative presented reports of evaluation.

- Evaluation is to consider state of school and gauge progress on recommendations from last year's TPE.
- Pearson is a large provider of services that school utilizes.
- TPE is an audit to help feel the school is getting its money's worth out of Pearson.
- School is making progress toward its goals.
- Students were asked about interest in Pearson models.
- Five findings stand out: Positive school culture and climate that has been improving, enrollment is up. Relationships matter. Satisfaction with Pearson and overall work environment is up since previous years. Parents choose MCA to avoid poor services elsewhere, not as a last resort. Past parent concerns no longer exist.
- MCA took recommendations to heart with academics.
- Social/emotional health of student body, plus mental health needs of students should continue to be prioritized as it is.
- Gather more reliable data.
- Anxiety and major bullying from other schools were large reasons for students attending MCA.

B. Maine Virtual Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation

Dr. Madden presented Maine Virtual Academy's Third Party Evaluation.

- Limited participation from students.

- New enrollment process, number of steps that had to be done to complete enrollment process.
- Re-enrollment was consolidated from a two part to a one part process.
- Changes overall that staff made to enrollment process worked well; no negative comments, all positive.
- Mental health challenges are top reason for MeVA enrollment, or were bullied for middle schoolers.
- For high schoolers, top reasons were them having trouble with in person learning environments or social anxiety.
- Parents and students were invited to participate in the case studies. Almost all of the students had a level of special needs which encouraged them to join virtual environments. Case studies made up most of evaluation.
- Participation for in person for in person events for student requirements be looked at more?

VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

A. School Updates

- Lana recognized and congratulated the three charter school for ranking in top 10 school in Maine in MeVA, MCA top 10 for middle schools. MCA was #1. And Baxter was top 10 for high schools.
- Destiny Shepherd is an ELC student who was recognized by Waldo County Tech Center for her work in graphic design.
- Tessier Wing and alumni being created at
- MeAA students performed at Colby College dance concert and Augusta Adult Education event and Holiday Tree Center.
- Mid-Maine Technical Center released honor roll which included students from Means, MCA, and MeVA.
- MCA Student Shoutouts: Cara Dutton of Fryeburg who is an 8th grader into competitive cattle showing and competes in fairs. Excells academically. Isaac Sheen 8th grader from Brunswick recognized for youth program with sea cadet program and is the highest ranking cadet and youth leader.
- Confirmed graduation space from Heather King's school.

B. Organizational Updates

- Annual report to commissioner was submitted.
- Commissioner is hoping to attend a commission meeting early next year to discuss findings of annual report.
- Lana and Norm will be attending a commission meeting in January, date TBD.
- Charter schools continuing getting enrollment past 10/1 count throughout year data was discussed with commissioner.

- Board on Track update - all documents and files in the software. Hoping to roll out BoardonTrack for all commission members to have access soon.
- Goals to redesign website.
- Plans to analyze data of engagement levels with schools.
- Thursday - MeANS and ELC attending "Can We" Project in Augusta. Goal is for students to discuss controversial issues and a thoughtful and respective manner and to find common ground.

C. Media Updates

None.

VIII. Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report

A. 10/1/23 Student Enrollment Breakdowns

Amy presented.

- Report was certified and DOE accepted.
- 8 of 9 schools are significantly up in enrollment.
- With a school closure, still lost only 40 students since last school year.
- Higher than state average for both special education and economically disadvantaged students across charter schools.
- Demographic data breakdowns - grade, gender, race, language, IEPs, economically disadvantaged, district/location.

IX. Unfinished Business

A. Unfinished Business

None.

X. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A. To Consider the Approval of the Southern Maine Administrative Collaborative's Contract to Conduct Maine Connections Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation

Tom Keller made a motion to Approve Southern Maine Administrative Collaborative's Contract to Conduct Maine Connections Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation.
Jim Handy seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

Brian Langley	Aye
James Ford	Absent
Norm Higgins	Aye

Roll Call

Jim Handy	Aye
Leigh Albert	Aye
Tom Keller	Aye
Tori Kornfield	Aye

B. To Consider Approval of Acadia Academy

Leigh Albert made a motion to Approve Amendment to Charter at Acadia Academy in Support of $75,000 Debt by Personal Lender.
Jim Handy seconded the motion.

- In lieu of not being able to make payments, lender would take over facility.

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

Roll Call

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

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

A. New Governing Board Members

- New member of board at Maine Arts Academy - Mitchell Thomas.

B. Board Member Resignations

None.

C. Board Member Term Outs

None.

XII. Announcements

A. Important Dates

B. Next Regular Business Meeting

January 9, 2024 at 1pm via Zoom and in the Cross Building at 111 Sewall Street, 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 2:49 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Norm Higgins

Documents used during the meeting

None

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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.