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Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday September 10, 2024 at 1:00 PM

Location
Maine Arts Academy, 310 Cony Road, 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.

Directors Present

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

Directors Absent
None

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

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

Brian Langley arrived at 1:30

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 Sep 10, 2024 at 1:07 PM.

C. To Consider the Approval of the 8/13/24 Commission Meeting Minutes

Jim Handy made a motion to approve the minutes from Monthly Commission Meeting on 08-13-24.
Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Comments from Commission Chair

A. Comments

Norm thanked Heather King, Head of School for the Maine Arts Academy for hosting the meeting this month.

Norm will visit ACADIA Academy and Fiddlehead School. Lana will coordinate the meeting.

There are two public hearings coming up.

III. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda

A. Additions/Adjustments

None

IV. Committee Reports

A. School Performance Committee

Tori reported the Committe reviewed the following:

- Revisions for the Innovation Fund application. They suggested a few updates including an emphasis on Commission priorities for the awards.
- Renewal reports for the Ecology Learning Center and for Maine Virtual Academy.
- Maine Arts Academy request for its middle school addition.

B. Finance Committee

Leigh reported the Committee reviewed the following:

- The FY22-23 monitoring report addendum for financial indicators based on school's audited results.
- The Commission FY25 YTD Budget vs Actual Report.
- The school's FY24 Financial results based on 4th quarter reporting.

Lana thanked Joe Drago for his work presenting the quarterly risk data in a clear, easy to interpret way.

C. Executive Committee

Norm reported on the following:

- Progress is being made on the DFAS recommendation to decouple the operations of the MCSC from state.
- The composition of MCSC going forward. A number of Commissioners (Tom, Norm, Leigh, Brian and Jim) have terms to expire on June 30, 2025. Recommendations will be needed to continue, renominate, etc. Tom suggested it

would be helpful to contact Missy O'Neal-Low, the Commission's liaison to the DOE for guidance.

V. Public Comment*

A. Public Comment

None

VI. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

A. School Updates

- Lana wished a happy start to the school year to all schools.
- Lana reminded the group that ACADIA Academy has hired Heather Bucklin as the new Executive Director for the school upon Casey Baugher's resignation. Heather introduced herself and discussed the role change for the Executive Director's position. Her role will be focused on academics while the business, finance and HR functions will be separated. The school is in the process of hiring a business manager.

B. Organizational Updates

Lana reviewed the annual calendar of the MCSC staff work. The priorities for the year include:

- New Charter School Vote - The applications are due in February. A committee of two Commission members and Lana will be formed to review the schools' applications using a rubric for judging. The committee will recommend finalists to the full Commission who will in turn decide which school applications move forward into the final round. The final round includes a Commission interview and a public hearing prior to a May vote. The committee review team will work with David Hartman from Zenn Education. Currently, there is no priority concerning the type of school to be chosen (rural, urban, pre-k, elementary, etc.).
- Finalize and implement the strategic plan - The Commission will meet December 10th to formalize the final draft of the 3-year strategic plan to go into effect in January 2025. Feedback for the draft will be provided by School boards and leaders on December 9th.

- Commission Staff organizational structure - Possible legislative changes may give the MCSC more autonomy and clarification in terms of how the Charter school works with the State.
- Lana finished the annual calendar review by providing highpoints for Commission monthly activity.

Lana provided an update of the ELC and MeVA renewal process. Both submitted their applications for a five-year charter renewal on time. Focus groups and classroom observations have been completed for both schools and both are on track for next month's vote. The School Performance Committee has reviewed the Year 4 Performance report. The report along with summaries of public hearings and the staff's renewal recommendation for both schools will be available to the full Commission prior to the October vote.

Innovation Fund - Commission includes $40k in budget for the innovation fund. Lana will forward criteria to schools and encourage them to apply. The Commission priorities include a demonstration of rigorous learning and high student engagement to increase achievement. Other priorities include a program to run for the school year; a program that impacts many students; collaboration with other schools; a program to provide new experiences for students; a program for a school not funded in the previous year. These priorities are the things the Commission is the most interested in, but they are not hard and fast rules.

C. Media Updates

D. New Charter School

VII. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A. To Receive and Place on File SY 2022-23 Annual Monitoring Reports Addendum

Jim Handy made a motion to receive and place on file SY2022-23 Annual Monitoring Reports Addendum.
Tom Keller seconded the motion.
Lana reported this is the financial categories portion of the Performance Framework based on the audited financial results for SY23.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call	
Brian Langley	Aye
Norm Higgins	Aye
Jim Handy	Aye
Tom Keller	Aye
James Ford	Aye
Leigh Albert	Aye

Roll Call

Tori Kornfield	Aye

B. To Consider the Approval of Maine Arts Academy's Request to Expand Grade Levels to Include Grade 7 and Grade 8

Tori Kornfield made a motion to approve the Maine Arts Academy's request to expand grade levels to include grade 7 and grade 8.
Jim Handy seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

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

A. New Governing Board Members

- ACADIA Academy (Alicia Laroche)

B. Board Member Resignations

C. Board Member Term Outs

IX. Future Topics

A. Future Topics

October

- To Consider the Approval of Ecology Learning Center's Renewal Application
- To Consider the Approval of Maine Virtual Academy's Renewal Application
- SY2023-24 Unenrollment Data

November

- To Receive and Place on File SY2023-24 Annual Monitoring Reports
- To Consider the Approval of the SY2023-24 Annual Report to the Commissioner

December

- 10/1/24 Student Enrollment Data Breakdowns

Maine Virtual Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation Presentation

X. Announcements

A. Important Dates

- 9/17/24 Public Hearing for Renewal - Ecology Learning Center (2:30-4:00pm/42 Depot Street, Unity)
- 9/26/24 Public Hearing for Renewal - Maine Virtual Academy (1:00-2:30pm/ZOOM)
- 12/9/24 Governing Board Strategic Planning PD Session (10:00-12:00pm)
- 12/10/24 Commission Strategic Planning PD Session (10:00-12:00pm)

B. Upcoming Business Meetings

- **October 8, 2024** *(Cross Office Building, Room #103, Augusta) or Zoom*
- **November 12, 2024** *(Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences, 25 Shaker Road, Gray) or Zoom*
- **December 10, 2024** *(Cross Office Building, Room #103, Augusta) or Zoom*

XI. 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 1:59 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
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.