APPROVED

Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday January 14, 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."***

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 (remote), 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

James joined at 1:15
Leigh joined at 2:15

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 Jan 14, 2025 at 1:01 PM.

C. To Consider the Approval of the 12/10/24 Commission Meeting Minutes

Tom Keller made a motion to approve the minutes from the Monthly Commission Meeting on 12-10-24.
Brian Langley seconded the motion.
Tom reminded that we agreed to send a note to Kennebec Savings Bank with new MCSC stationary. New stationary was ordered and is now available.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Comments from Commission Chair

A. Comments

Norm reported that Leigh and Brian have agreed to serve on the New School Application Review Team.

Norm provided an update on legislation the Commission will be monitoring:

- Senator Joe Rafferty will sponsor the bill for DFAS administrative changes pertaining to MCSC.
- Senator James Libby will sponsor the bill proposing to increase enrollment limits on virtual schools by 20%.
- Representative Sheila Lyman will sponsor the bill addressing an extension of the insured value factor to charter schools.

Lana and Norm will attend hearings.

Amy will monitor these and other bills that may impact charter schools and will provide periodic updates to the Commission.

Norm will work to reserve a spot at the Hall of Flags during National Charter School Week.

Norm will visit the Governer's office to discuss the expiration of current Commissioner's terms and reappointments.

III. Committee Reports

A. School Performance Committee

Tori reported the Committee discussed the following:

- The upcoming Mid-Year Meetings.
- Baxter's Innovation Fund Application.
- The Strategic Plan - The Committee reviewed and suggested an amendment to the draft stating the Commission will share its knowledge with other partners.

B. Finance Committee

In Leigh's absence, Lana reported the Committe discussed the following:

- The Strategic Plan - The Committe reviewed and suggested an amendment to incorporate the addition of financial training in the Board training section.
- The Annual Boards and Commission Report filed in December.
- Baxter's Innovation Fund Application
- School Finances - FY24 audits have come in for some schools. Others have approved extensions. Joe Drago provided a reminder to schools holding debt to be clear on compliance items related to the debt.

- Baxter' Shark Tank event when students present their Flex Friday projects will be held in the morning on February 7th.

C. Executive Committee

Norm noted that all Executive Committee items have been discussed in the other Committee meeting reports.

IV. Public Comment*

A. Public Comment

Susan Muzzy building principal at Dimensions Academy, Community Regional Charter School reported on several activities and events at CRCS.

- CRCS will be participating in WinterKids, a State of Maine elementary school competition lasting four weeks. They are representing Somerset County and can win up to $5,000 for their school. As part of this, on January 29th at 6am, the students will be on Channel 8 news doing the morning weather report. Travis Works has forwarded information on the event schedule to the Commission and to Lana.
- For school choice week, they will host a school wide ice fishing event, working on parent and board involvement. They are also holding a contest asking students to write about what school choice means to them and why does CRCS matter.
- To raise awareness of their multiple locations, they will be holding a district wide school dance in Skowhegan.

V. Presentation(s)

A. SY2023-24 Annual Report Review and Discussion with Commissioner Makin ***Commissioner Makin will join at 2:30***

Lana informed the Commission that she and Commissioner Makin met to go over the report in detail prior to the meeting.

Lana summarized the report highlights as follows:

Demographics:

- This year there were 2,717 students enrolled in the Charter School portfolio which is an increase from last year but is less than 2% of all Maine students. Schools are meeting their contracted enrollments and have wait lists.
- The Charter School students come from 143 districts and 300 cities, towns and unorganized territories.
- 23% of the students have an IEP and overall, 44% are from economically challenged families while there is variation among schools on this statistic.

Charter School Strengths:

- Student retention and persistence is high which is an improvement from past years.
- Students in 8 of 9 charter schools are meeting expectations for proficiency in reading on the State assessment and are either at or above the state average.
- 6 of 7 schools meet or exceed the State High School Graduation rate goal.
- Seniors in 6 of 7 schools meet or exceed the Community College benchmarks for readiness in math and reading on either the Accuplacer or SAT exams.
- In the annual Panorama survey, family satisfaction is high, scoring in the 90-99% positivity range nationally.

Charter School Areas to Grow

- Math - Half the schools are either approaching or not meeting expectations in math, so this is an area of focus for the schools.
- Attendance - Half the schools are above the State average for chronic absenteeism, so the schools are also focused on improving this metric.

VI. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

A. School Updates

Harpswell Coastal Academy has officially dissolved as a 503(c).

B. Organizational Updates

Lana reported the staff is on track with activities as presented in the workflow calendar. Tom inquired about the review of differences between public and public charter school requirements for teacher certifications. Lana confirmed this project is on the work plan.

Lana reviewed the detailed timeline for the New School Application Review Process.

Mid-Year Meetings with school administrators and board members have started. The focus of the meetings is on (1) areas where schools are not meeting expectations on the performance framework and (2) progress on the short-term goals discussed in the fall professional development sessions. Reports will be provided in detail to the School Performance Committee and in summary form to the whole Commission in March.

The November Commission meeting conflicts with Veteran's Day on the 11th, so Lana proposed holding the meeting on November 18th. This will be a future agenda item for official action in addition to a vote on whether to hold a July meeting.

C. Media Updates

VII. Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report

A. 2024 Annual Boards and Commissions Report

Amy presented the Annual Boards and Commissions Report which is a summary of all Commission activity for the calendar year due by December 31st each year.

VIII. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A. To Consider the Approval of the Commission's 2025-2028 Strategic Plan

Brian Langley made a motion to approve the Commission's 2025-2028 Strategic Plan.
Jim Handy seconded the motion.
Norm commented the plan should be a living document to be continually reviewed. It's a baseline and adjustments can be expected over time.
Tom appreciated the professional development opportunity and noted the collaboration to create this document.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

Roll Call

Leigh Albert	Aye

B. To Consider the Approval of Baxter Academy for Technology and Sciences' Request of Innovation Funds for its Wheelchair Prototype Project

Tori Kornfield made a motion to approve Baxter Academy's request of $10,000 from the Innovation Fund for its Wheelchair Protype project.
James Ford seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

IX. Future Topics

A. Future Topics

Lana reviewed the following future topics:

February

- Preview Enrollment Map Update

March

- Performance Framework Minor Clarifications
- Mid-Year Meetings Review
- Summary of New School Applications Received
- 2025 Renewal Timeline

X. Announcements

A. Important Dates

The New School Application deadline is February 13th.

B. Upcoming Business Meetings

- **February 11, 2025** *(Cross Office Building, Room #103, Augusta) or Zoom*
- **March 11, 2025** *(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 3:19 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Norm Higgins

Documents used during the meeting

- Dashboard for FY25 12_20_24.pdf
- Annual_Report_to_the_Commissioner_2023-24.pdf
- SY 2024-2025 Quarter 2_Mid Year Progress Report.pdf
- 2024 Annual Boards and Commissions Report.pdf
- Strategic Plan DRAFT 2025-2028.docx (3).pdf
- Baxter Academy Application for Innovation Fund 12-18-24.pdf

---

* 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.