APPROVED

Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday February 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."***

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

Directors Absent
Brian Langley

Directors who arrived after the meeting opened
James Ford

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

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

James Ford arrived at 1:10 PM.

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 Feb 11, 2025 at 1:00 PM.

C. To Consider the Approval of the 1/14/25 Commission Meeting Minutes

Jim Handy made a motion to approve the minutes from Monthly Commission Meeting on 01-14-25.
Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Comments from Commission Chair

A. Comments

Norm has reserved the Hall of Flags for the Charter Schools on May 29th from 8 AM - 12 PM.
Informational handouts for legislators will be available.

Norm is working to set a meeting with the Education Committee to share the MCSC Performance Framework. Tori and Lana will attend.

Norm provided the following update on current legislation:

- National level - must be patient and respond as appropriately as possible when more details are available.
- State level - School choice will be a defining issue before the Education Committee.
- Commission level
    - Senator Joe Rafferty introduced the DFAS Administrative change bill.
    - Senator Jim Libby submitted a bill to raise the enrollment cap for virtual schools by 10 % in each of the next two years. Not mandatory, but permissive to give the Commission the ability to amend contracts if needed.
    - Representative Sheila Lyman introduced a bill to address inequities in state funding of school facilities by extending the Insured Value Factor allocation to the Charter schools.
    - Representative Gary Drinkwater introduced a bill to add more than 10 charter schools. The MCSC will monitor.

Amy is monitoring the process regularly and will relay updates as soon as known so the Commission members stay in the information loop.

Tom suggested to review LD81 that gives the MDOE Commissioner latitude to encourage innovation within public schools.

Norm contacted the Governer's office to inform about the expiration of terms for four members at the end of this year. They will reach out individually.

III. Public Comment*

A. Public Comment

CRCS representative shared the following:

- Elizabeth Firnkes from CRCS shared the school held their annual Ravencon overnight event. Over 1/3 of the students participated. This event raises money for the John Shea memorial scholarship.
- Susan Muzzy shared that the school placed in the top three of the Maine WinterKids contest. The school partnered with 7 different organizations who now are working with the school.

- Travis shared that CRCS received Healthy Meals Incentive recognition awards for improving nutritional quality in school meals. A CRCS team will be accepting the award in Las Vegas.

IV. Presentation(s)

A. Heather King - Maine Arts Academy Grants

Heather King, the Head of School at Maine Arts Academy, provided an overview of the grants the school has received.

- Kennebec Catalyst Grant for $30,000 over three years. This will be used for auditorium seating and then a collaborative theater performance with the Augusta Colonial Theater.
- Extended Learning Opportunity Grant from the MDOE for $76,320. This will enable the 11th grade students to explore careers that are part of Maine's history and culture. Some of the possibilities are boat building, lobstering, blueberry farming, whoopie pie production and maple syrup production. The end requirement is an art project like a photography show, a dance show.
- Extended Learning Outdoor Grant from the MDOE for $54,000 allowed the school to hold a6 week summer camp combining biking with photography. This led to the formation of an active mountain bike team.
- Two Full Plate, Full Potential Grants for $3,500 and $5,000. $3,500 was used for kitchen supplies and $5,000 was used to provide a second chance breakfast program.
- Margaret Burnham Charitable Trust for $3,200 used to purchase lighting equipment for the film studies and photography departments.
- Teach with Tech Grant for $30,000 allowed the school to set up an I-Mac computer lab. The lab will be used for graphic design, photoshop, desktop publishing, video editing, digital visual etc. which will elevate the current programming.
- Other - will apply for an Expansion grant for the middle school (CSP Federal Grant)

Heather also highlighted that the students have a window arts display on Water Street in Augusta and an art show at the Monkey Tree Art Gallery in Gardiner among many other activities.

Jim inquired what professional development will be offered over the summer to prepare for the new middle school. Heather explained that three middle school teachers have been hired, and they will be working with the high school staff in March to align the middle school and high school learning standards.

Tom asked if Maine Arts Academy might display their art in the State House on the second floor. He also suggested reaching out to some Maine writers who may have foundations.

Leigh inquired what % of the operating budget comes from grants. Heather will check.

Heather reported that Kennebec Savings Bank appreciated the thank you card sent by the Commission.

B. Joe Mattos - Educational Policy Values

Joe Mattos of the Maine Charter School Alliance presented a framework that may be used to evaluate policies as they are developed by the state, boards and schools. The framework categorizes the policy values of efficiency, equity, excellence, and choice. He pointed out:

- Efficiency is related to accountability. The Performance Framework holds the schools accountable.
- Equity - Students must have equal opportunity. As schools raise excellence, they must be careful to continue to provide equity.
- Excellence - The Performance Framework sets high expectations. Monitoring of school culture in addition to academics is important. Encouraging innovation is also important.
- Choice - Charter schools provide choice and breakdown educational silos.

These can be used to evaluate a policy and determine what the unintended consequences may be.

Joe Drago suggested the book "Equity, What It Is and Why It Matters " which discusses the value of public education.

V. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

A. School Updates

B. Organizational Updates

The Mid-Year meetings with the schools have been completed. Amy has written the reports and sent to the schools for their review. The results will be shared at the March meetings. There was strong representation from administrators and board members at all the schools. The discussion focused on areas where the schools were not meeting expectations at the end of last year.

New School applications are due on February 13. Lana will update the Commission on what is received. The receipt will start the timeline of application review. Lana revised the rubric used to evaluate the applications to match the changes made to the current application. The rubric was sent to all who sent a letter of intent for transparency purposes. The ad hoc committee will have a training opportunity with David Hartman to complete an unbiased review of the applications.

Budget season is coming. Two drafts of Commission spending will be developed: one for the current structure and one for the potential body corporate and politic structure. Norm suggested a review of the carryover balance and encumbering as much of the amount as possible. Leigh suggested reserving funds for specific purposes, summer programming or professional development for example.

Lana has been meeting with the Alliance members monthly and is grateful for the partnership.

Lana has been drafting testimony for the bill to restructure the Commission. Jim suggested to include a chart within the testimony demonstrating the current status compared to the proposed structure to highlight savings and benefits.

C. Media Updates

VI. Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report

A. Enrollment - Senate and House Representation /"Heat Map"/Resident District/Resident Town

Amy provided an overview of the enrollment reports that reflect the October 1 certified enrollments.

There are 2,717 students enrolled in Charter Schools coming from 142 districts and 298 cities, towns and unorganized territories across the state. All 16 counties are represented.

The Senate and House Representation reports are new this year and have been provided to the schools and boards so that they will be able to reach out to their local representation to inform about the good work going on within the schools. Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee are highlight.

Norm stated that he and Lana have discussed employing professional public relations to prepare templates using this data for the schools to use for outreach and relationship building.

VII. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A. To Consider Moving the November Commission Meeting from November 11th (Veterans Day) to November 18th

Jim Handy made a motion to change the November 2025 Commission Meeting from November 11th (Veterans Day) to November 18th.
Tom Keller seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

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

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

A. New Governing Board Members

B. Board Member Resignations

C. Board Member Term Outs

Lana acknowledged Chris Lewis who has been instrumental in the development of the Ecology Learning Center.

IX. 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 2:51 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Norm Higgins

Documents used during the meeting

- Dashboard for FY25 01_31_25.pdf
- Educational Policy Values - MAPCS.pdf
- Breakdown of Senate and House Resident District Representation.pdf
- Heat Map - October 2024 Student HomeTown Data.pdf
- 2024-25 Resident District Breakdown.pdf
- 2024-25 Resident Town Breakdown.pdf
- CRCS New Governing Board Member (James Hodgkin).pdf
- MeANS New Governing Board Member (Greg Bazakas).pdf

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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.