APPROVED

Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday May 13, 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, Leigh Albert, Norm Higgins, Tom Keller, Tori Kornfield

Directors Absent
None

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

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

Leigh arrived at 1:08
James joined at 1:10
Brian joined 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 May 13, 2025 at 1:00 PM.

C. To Consider the Approval of the 4/8/25 Commission Meeting Minutes

Jim Handy made a motion to approve the minutes from Monthly Commission Meeting on 04-08-25.
Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

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

II. Comments from Commission Chair

A. Comments

Norm asked Tom to read the Maine Charter School Vision and Mission Statements and gave the following updates:

- Legislative Activity - Norm thanked the Alliance and Bill Doughty for organizing testimony at the legislature. He reported that he and Lana attended public hearings and work sessions. The bill for a structural change of the commission was approved unanimously by the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. Lana continues to coordinate with Senator Rafferty on other pending bills.
- The Hall of Flags is coming up on May 29th.
- Norm nominated Tori as the senior member of the Ad-hoc nominating committee and reported that officer candidates will be nominated during the June Commission meeting with the confirmation vote taking place in the next monthly meeting, July or August if the July meeting is cancelled.

III. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda

A. Additions/Adjustments

Jim Handy made a motion to add a presentation from representatives of the Moxie Public School to the agenda.
Tom Keller seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

IV. Committee Reports

A. School Performance Committee

Tori reported the following:

- The Committee discussed the Moxie Public School application. Tom added the Committee recommended conditions to add to the application which will be reviewed later in the agenda.
- Lana provided a definition for a school / campus for consideration. Tori noted that if a school wants to expand in the future, it will be required to come before the Commission for approval.

B. Finance Committee

Lana reported the following:

- CRCS shared progress on the acquisition of their new school building site and informed they plan to come before the Commission in August with an amendment request to incur debt.
- The Committee discussed the Moxie Public School application and the final recommendation from the review team.
- The Committee discussed FY26 Commission Budget which will come for a vote in today's agenda.

Norm thanked Amy for leading the project to convert the Commission to a new organizational structure.

C. Executive Committee

Norm reported the Committee discussed the following:

- Moxie Public School application.
- Commission leadership next year.

Norm suggested a review of the Executive Committee role and meeting frequency going forward.

D. Ad-Hoc New School Application Review Committee

Lana reported since last month's update, the Commission interview with Moxie Public School representatives took place and the public hearing was held. The rigorous application review process has been completed, and Lana thanked the applicant team, Commission and staff for their work. She also thanked community members who provided support and input.
Leigh also thanked David Hartman for providing training for the assessment of the applications.
Norm expressed his thanks to the Committee as well.

V. Public Comment*

A. Public Comment

Jana Lapoint urged that the Commission inform The Education and Cultural Affairs Committee on the role of charter schools in Maine as they are making decisions on issues that come before them.

Norm responded that the Commission provides a comprehensive report to the Committee annually. He has reached out to set up a meeting and is still waiting for a date and time confirmation.

VI. Presentation(s)

A. Moxie Public School

Dr. Beth Rabbitt on behalf of the Moxie Public School application team, provided a brief overview of their vision for the school. The team desires an innovative 6th to 12th grade school environment that will provide a diverse student population an education that is personal, purposeful and connected to their community.

VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

A. School Updates

Lana shared the following:

- Graduation dates are in the packet. Congratulations to all the graduates.
- Maine Virtual Academy is offering its summer 2025 enrichment program featuring project- based learning and work study options.
- Maine Academy of Natural Sciences held their first AP exam this year and the Board has been interviewing candidates for its school leader. They now have 3 finalists out of 20 applications reviewed.
- Maine Arts Academy has been conducting college tours and holding open houses for the middle school expansion which has an enrollment waiting list. They held a spring theater performance, music and dance recitals, and a family Easter event. They were also approved for project-based summer school funding.

Tom suggested collecting data on scholarships received by charter school students as they graduate.

Jim asked about progress on the Panorama surveys. Amy reported the completion window closes on June 12 and that participation rates are up this year.

B. Organizational Updates

Lana reported the following:

- LD1718 - The bill seeking to establish the organizational structure of the Commission as a Public Instrumentality of the State passed the Educational and Cultural Affairs Committee on May 1. The next step is a vote in the Maine House and Senate to become law. The staff is in early stages of planning implementation and Amy will manage this project provided there is a favorable vote.
- Norm complimented Lana on her clearly stated testimony on the benefits of the reorganization.
- School Renewals - Maine Arts Academy and ACADIA are up for renewal in October and preparations are beginning. The schools will submit self-assessments and preliminary performance framework data for the year in late May and staff will meet with both schools in early June to review and discuss performance trends for the last four years of the charter term. The Year 4 reports are due on June 30th.
- Thank you to the Maine DOE Esca team who provided training to Charter School leadership on Federal grants, program applications and management.
- Professional Development on strategic planning for School Boards and Leaders will be held on May 22nd with Naomi Ruben-Deveaux facilitating.

Amy gave an update on the Hall of Flags Event. Highlights are as follows:

- **7 of 9 schools will attend**
- **Honorary pages - CRCS, MeANS, and Maine Arts students will serve in the Senate Chamber.**
- **Performances - Maine Arts string ensemble will perform, and chorus will sing the National Anthem in the Senate.**
- **State House tours will be available for students.**
- **Light refreshments for all will be served.**
- **Bag lunches will be available for the participating students.**
- **One page informational handouts will be available to give to Legislators as they pass through.**

C. Media Updates

VIII. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A. To Consider the Approval to Move MOXIE Public Schools to Contract/Charter Negotiations

Brian Langley made a motion to Advance the Moxie Schools to Contract/Charter Negotiations.
Leigh Albert seconded the motion.

Prior to the motion Lana provided a brief summary of the Moxie Public School's application and noted the school plans to open in the fall of 2026 in Greater Portland with an initial enrollment of 120 students, 60 in 6th grade and 60 in 9th grade. They will expand by 2 grade levels every year until full enrollment. Lana also reminded that the Review Team recommendation is based on a strong collection of evidence showing the school meets expectations on the new school rubric. She referenced the detailed recommendation supplied to the Commission members and highlighted strengths in program design, operational detail, team capacity and fundraising.
She reported the Review Team recommends that Moxie Public Schools advance to charter contract negotiations and that the school's launch is contingent upon a successful completion of the pre-opening plan, which is included. The pre-opening plan includes specific conditions to address areas in the application which can be strengthened before the school opens as follows:

- Meeting enrollment targets within specified ranges and dates.
- Achieving staff hiring goals with an emphasis on personnel equipped to support students with disabilities.
- Conducting effective outreach to enroll students identified in the application.
- Retaining all four founding team members in a formal role in the school or board at least through the opening in the fall of 2026.
- Establishing graduation criteria to reflect high academic rigor.
- Expanding in the future will be based on a proven success of the existing site including measures of enrollment, stability, academic performance, etc.

Leigh gave appreciation of Moxie's ambitious approach and thoughtful response to the Committee's questions.
Brian commented that the target student population and programs outlined aligns with Maine's educational and economic development goals with a scalable, sustainable vision to grow.

After the motion, Jim outlined his concerns about moving forward with the application. His findings include financial projections with insufficient detail and reliance on out of state funding; an academic strategy without measurable outcomes and steps for executing a rigorous curriculum and hiring qualified educators; insufficient plans for engaging local stakeholders; lack of detailed plans for serving students with disabilities; and a current shortage of special education teachers may strain community resources.

Tom noted the need to monitor the curriculum design and the challenges to meet standards with an individualized instructional model.

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

Roll Call	
Brian Langley	Aye
Jim Handy	No
James Ford	No
Norm Higgins	Aye
Tori Kornfield	Aye
Leigh Albert	Aye
Tom Keller	Aye

B. To Consider the Approval of the Commission's FY26 Operating Budget

Jim Handy made a motion to adopt the Commission's FY26 Operating Budget.
Leigh Albert seconded the motion.
Lana noted there were two versions of a FY26 budget presented due to the potential reorganization of the Commision's structure. One budget reflected a proposal under the current structure while the other, most likely, proposal reflected a budget under a body politic structure with net cost savings of $41,000. Fees to schools remain at 2.45% and carryover funds will be used to balance the budget. Increases in expenses include the extension of benefits to one staff member and the establishment of a legal contingency fund.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

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

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

A. New Governing Board Members

Baxter Academy has a new board member.

B. Board Member Resignations

C. Board Member Term Outs

X. Future Topics

A. Future Topics

June

- To Consider the Need to Hold a Commission Meeting in July
- To Consider Maine Arts Academy's Bylaw Amendment Request

July/August

- To Consider Community Regional Charter School's Request to Consolidate Into One Building and to Incur the Debt Required to Build the Building
- Election of Officers

XI. Announcements

A. Important Dates

- 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

- **June 10, 2025** *(Cross Office Building, Room #103, Augusta) or Zoom*

C. 2025 Graduation Dates

2025 Graduation Dates

- Baxter Academy for Technology and Science (May 31st at 11:00am/Merrill Auditorium-Portland)
- Community Regional Charter School (June 13th at 6:00pm/Skowhegan Municipal Building, Opera House-Skowhegan)
- Ecology Learning Center (June 5th at 5:00pm/MOFGA)
- Maine Academy of Natural Sciences - Campus Program (July 18th at 6:00pm/MeANS Campus-Hinckley)
- Maine Academy of Natural Sciences - Threshold Program (July 11th at 6:00pm/MeANS Campus-Hinckley)
- Maine Arts Academy (June 1st at 12:00pm/Augusta Civic Center)
- Maine Connections Academy (June 6th at 2:00pm/Merrill Auditorium-Portland)
- Maine Virtual Academy (June 6th ay 2:00pm/ZOOM)

Norm encouraged attendance and reminded the members these are stipend days. Please reach out to Lana if attending. ACADIA and Fiddlehead end of year celebration dates will be provided.

XII. 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 2:12 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Norm Higgins

Documents used during the meeting

- MCA Hosts Academic Summit.pdf
- FY26 Budget Draft 05_02_2025.pdf
- Baxter - New Governing Board Member (Vincent Giuseppe Aliquo).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.