APPROVED

Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday September 9, 2025 at 1:00 PM

Location
Dimensions Academy, 1192 West Ridge Road, Cornville 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, Jim Handy (remote), Leigh Albert (remote), Norm Higgins (remote), Tom Keller, Tori Kornfield

Directors Absent
None

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

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Leigh Albert called a meeting of the board of directors of Maine Charter School Commission to order on Tuesday Sep 9, 2025 at 1:04 PM.

C. To Consider the Approval of the 8/12/25 Commission Meeting Minutes

Tori Kornfield made a motion to approve the minutes from Monthly Commission Meeting on 08-12-25.
Tom Keller seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Comments from Commission Chair

A. Comments

Leigh thanked all for attending and the Commission members for their flexibility in serving.

III. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda

A. Additions/Adjustments

None

IV. Committee Reports

A. School Performance Committee

Tori reported the Committee discussed the following:

- SY25-26 Commission Priorities as presented by Lana.
- Panorama Survey Results as presented by Amy. Tori noted the Committee concerns for two schools with poor results.

B. Finance Committee

Brian Langley reported the Committee discussed the following:

- The Commission's Reconciled FY25 Financials.
- School 4th Qtr. Financial Results which showed improvement over FY24. He noted Cash Flow as the most challenging metric.
- SY25-26 Commission Priorities as presented by Lana.
- The MCSC's structure change to a Public Instrumentality. The Commission has chosen Bangor Savings Bank for its banking/payroll needs and expects to receive funds including a carryover of approximately $600K in October.

C. Executive Committee

Leigh reported the Committee discussed the following:

- SY25-26 Commission Priorities as presented by Lana.
- Committee Membership

V. Public Comment*

A. Public Comment

None

VI. Presentation(s)

A. CRCS

Travis Works (Executive Director), Elizabeth Firnkes and Susan Muzzy (Building Principals) addressed the Commission regarding Community Regional Charter School's ("CRCS") new facility search for a combined school.

Travis described CRCS's unique learning model that is designed to meet diverse learning needs in a rural area. The school uses an ungraded, customized, flexible model with competency-based advancement. Student selected seminars integrating multiple subjects are designed to meet learning targets and proficiency is measured on evidence over time. Susan Muzzy noted the customized learning differentiates the school from a traditional graded model and emphasized that the school is not in competition with other schools but seeks to offer a different option to fit diverse student needs.

Travis described the benefits of a new combined school facility and a property found on Trafton Rd. in Waterville that offers public utility access, fire safety compliance and the availability of 3-phase power needed for HVAC systems. He stated the school has not found another property in the Skowhegan / Cornville area that offers these options cost effectively. The school is under contract for this property as of July 2025. Waterville will need to approve zoning for the project.

Travis discussed the transportation challenges for the current locations. There are long bus rides for students which are difficult logistically and long commutes impact staff retention. The Waterville location would improve this. Bus start times would be no earlier than 7 am and students and staff could leave earlier to provide improved work-life balance. He stated the school is committed to servings students across its current geographic area.

Travis noted the school has local lawmaker and community leader support for the move and that the school is the only one with its ungraded model. To address enrollment concerns of area public and charter schools, CRCS is in favor of a cap limiting its high school enrollment and are open to high school students enrolling in other schools which best suit individual needs. He stated that CRCS is committed to being a good community partner.

Susan addressed current academic performance and noted that fragmented programming caused by extra travel between schools and staff recruitment due to the current remote locations are challenges. A new combined location would improve this environment. They will address performance by focusing on staff retention and lowering chronic absenteeism. She also noted that the NWEA time-based testing does not lend itself to the CRCS learning model which is ungraded. This may explain why CRCS Accuplacer results are strong while NWEA scores are lower.

Norm and Jim requested CRCS provide documentation of any public support given.
Tori asked for clarification for caps on enrollments of future high school students.
Tom asked about available retention data for families who prefer a small school environment.

VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

A. School Updates

Lana welcomed all to the new school year and noted Charter School enrollment is up in Maine.

- MCA is launching a college and early career readiness program this year.
- MeArts has successfully opened their Middle School and held a Maine Arts Academy Camp themed orientation to welcome students and focus on relationship building.
- MeVA has been accredited through Cognia. They went through a rigorous external review process which signals that the school is credible and met educational benchmarks. this accreditation allows more scholarship opportunities for students.
- Fiddlehead School doubled their Pre-K program this year.

B. Organizational Updates

Lana provided the following updates:

The SY25-26 Priorities for Commission and Staff are:

- To support Moxie Public School's work to open in the Fall 2026.
- To strengthen Charter School Messaging by offering Professional Development with PLT Strategies.
- To expand Professional Development offerings for School Boards.
- To successfully implement the shift to a Public Instrumentality Commission organization structure.

ACADIA and Maine Arts Academy are in the renewal process. Their applications have been filed and Focus Groups and Public Hearings will be held this month. The Commission vote for renewal will be in October.

School End of Year Meetings were held in August. Staff visited all the schools and reviewed the Performance Framework results. The outcome will be included in the Annual Reports approved by Commission in November.

Professional Development for School Leadership Teams has been scheduled.

C. Media Updates

VIII. Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report

A. Spring Panorama Survey Results

Amy reviewed the summary level results of the Spring Panorama Surveys.

- Participation levels increased since last year.
- 4 of 9 schools are meeting or exceeding expectations.
- 3 schools are not meeting expectations for students in grades 3-5. Amy noted the staff will review in more detail to understand the survey results for this group.
- 2 schools are not meeting expectations across most groups surveyed.

B. SY2024-25 Year End Unenrollment/Enrollment

The review for SY2024-25 Year End Unenrollment/Enrollment will be conducted in the October meeting due to time constraints.

IX. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A. To Receive and Place on File the Commission's FY25 Reconciled Financials

Tom Keller made a motion to receive and place on file the Commission's FY25 Reconciled Financials.
Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

James Ford	Aye
Leigh Albert	Aye
Brian Langley	Absent

Roll Call

Jim Handy	Aye
Tori Kornfield	Aye
Norm Higgins	Aye
Tom Keller	Aye

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

A. New Governing Board Members

Leigh recognized Jessica Dionne joining the CRCS Board and Jonas Maines and John Neal joining the Maine Arts Academy Board.

B. Board Member Resignations

Leigh noted the resignations of James Hodgkin and Nikki Reinholt on the CRCS Board.

C. Board Member Term Outs

Leigh and Lana recognized and thanked the following long term Board members whose terms expired:

Susan Doughty - Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences
Sherry Gilbert - Maine Arts Academy
Janna Townsend - Maine Arts Academy

Lana thanked the long term members who termed out.

XI. Future Topics

A. Future Topics

October

- To Consider the Approval of ACADIA Academy's Renewal Application
- To Consider the Approval of Maine Arts Academy's Renewal Application

November

- To Receive and Place on File SY2024-25 Annual Monitoring Reports
- To Consider the Approval of the SY2024-25 Annual Report to the Commissioner

XII. Announcements

A.

Important Dates

- *September 16, 2025 (9:00am-11:00am) for School Leaders*
  - *Map Growth: Reports for Teachers: Analyze Start Data Virtual post-assessment administration*
- *September 23, 2025 (10:00am-12:00pm) for Board Members and School Leaders*
  - *Board 101 and Introduction to BoardOnTrack*
- *October 28, 2025 (10:00am-11:30am) for Board Members and School Leaders*
  - *Finding, Recruiting, Retaining, and Training Board Members to Meeting Your 3-5 Year Goals*
- *November 12, 2025 (9:30am-12:00pm) for Commission Members*
  - *Message and Media Training*
- *November 13, 2025 (9:30am to 12:00pm) for School Leaders*
  - *Why Communications and Advocacy Matters*
- *May 2, 2026 (11:00am-1:00pm)*
  - *Maine Arts Academy 10-Year Anniversary Gala*

B. Upcoming Business Meeting(s)

- *October 14 (Room #103, Cross Office Building, Augusta or Zoom)*
- *November 12 (Room #103, Cross Office Building, Augusta or Zoom)*

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 3:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Leigh Albert

Documents used during the meeting

- SY 2025-2026 Annual Priorities .pdf
- Spring 2025 Panorama Survey Results.pdf
- FY25 MCSC Budget vs Actual Report-Reconciled.pdf
- CRCS New Governing Board Member (Jessica Dionne).pdf
- MeAA New Governing Board Member (Jonas Maines).pdf
- MeAA New Governing Board Member (John Neal).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.