APPROVED

Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday October 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

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

Directors Absent
Brian Langley

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

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

James joined at 1:05

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 Oct 14, 2025 at 1:01 PM.
Tom read the Commission's Mission and Vision Statements.

C. To Consider the Approval of the 9/9/25 Commission Meeting Minutes

Tori Kornfield made a motion to approve the minutes from the Monthly Commission Meeting on 09-09-25.
Jim Handy seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda

A. Additions/Adjustments

None

III. Committee Reports

A. School Performance Committee

Tori reported the School Performance Committee reviewed staff developed reports and discussed the following:

- Maine Arts Academy's Charter Renewal - The Committee recommends renewing with one recommendation.
- ACADIA Academy's Charter Renewal - The Committee recommends renewing with two recommendations.
- Community Regional Charter School's Request to Incur Debt - The Committee does not recommend approval.

B. Finance Committee

Lana reported the Finance Committee discussed the following:

- Maine Arts Academy's Charter Renewal
- ACADIA Academy's Charter Renewal
- Community Regional Charter School's Request to Incur Debt
- The Commission's Public Instrumentality Structure Status
- Moxie Public Charter School Grant Funding

C. Executive Committee

Leigh reported the Committee discussed the following:

- Maine Arts Academy's Charter Renewal
- ACADIA Academy's Charter Renewal
- Community Regional Charter School's Request to Incur Debt
- The Commission's Public Instrumentality Structure Status
- Moxie Public Charter School Grant Funding

IV. Public Comment*

A. Public Comment

None

V. Presentation(s)

A. Maine Arts Acadamy and ACADIA Academy

Maine Arts Academy - Heather King thanked the Commission members, Lana and Amy for their support during the renewal process. She thanked the Maine Arts Board members along with the school's families. She pledged to foster continual improvement by listening to constructive criticism. Tori and Leigh provided positive feedback. Jim

noted the impressive Community engagement exhibited by the school. Heather noted that they are delving into the results of Panorama for students.

ACADIA Academy - Heather Bucklin noted the school's strong family connections and small school feel. She noted the goal to create a more diverse student population. Meredith Morrison, Board Chair thanked Lana and Amy for their support during the renewal process. She thanked the ACADIA staff, teachers and families for the commitment to collaboration. The school has worked to strengthen the financial viability recently and now looks toward improving instructional leadership and fostering an environment of feedback and support where both students and teachers thrive. There has been a transition in board leadership this year with the last founding board member terming out. The current board is energized to define the new era of leadership.

VI. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

A. School Updates

Lana provided the following school updates:

Baxter Academy - Flex Friday kicks off this Friday morning. Students will pitch their projects that deepen their STEM discipline and emphasize real world impact. The projects include an EMT internship, an educational sci-fi book project, algae cultivation experiments, and search & rescue drone development.

MeANS - Seasonal intensives with activities surrounding a chosen theme are on-going. This fall the themes are:

- 9th grade - farming.
- 10th grade - apples.
- 11th grade - rivers.
- 12th grade - ocean.

MeArts Academy - A youth drug and alcohol awareness night was held on October 6. The school executed an extended learning grant of $76,000 and partnered with the local business including the Maine Crime Lab, NBC News, Drummond & Woodsum Law Firm, a hair salon and a local restaurant to provide hands-on job experiences.

MCA - The school held an in person social day with many activities at Fort Williams Park.

MeVA - The school continues to develop their virtual help desk which offers twice a day on-line tutoring.

Moxie Public Schools has secured $1.25M in funding so far from national and local funders.

Tom mentioned that Houlton and Bangor are exploring distance learning and suggested the two virtual schools could offer expertise and collaborate with the public schools on their experiences.

B. Organizational Updates

Lana will be attending the NACSA conference this month.

Board on Track's Mike Mizzoni held a Professional Development session for school boards. More opportunities will be available during the year. The next session will be held on October 28.

Staff activity has focused on the Renewals, Annual Reports and the Change to a Public Instrumentality Structure.

- Lana thanked the schools for meeting renewal deadlines, etc.
- Annual Reports - drafts are complete and will come before the Commission in November.
- Implementation of Public Instrumentality - The Commission has received a check for funds including carryover and is working to set up bank accounts.

C. Media Updates

VII. Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report

A. SY2024-25 Year End Unenrollment/Enrollment

Amy reviewed the Unenrollment / Enrollment Report for SY24-25

2003 students enrolled during the year which is 113 more students than the previous year. The report shows that the charter schools enroll students every month throughout the year.
504 students left schools, a slight increase from last year, but in proportion to the increase in enrollees.

Amy noted that the data shows students enrolling each month of the school year. She is working on further analysis to compare enrollment / unenrollment trends with traditional public schools to inform the discussion about using 10/1 enrollments for the state subsidy calculation.

Leigh noted that the 10th grade has the highest number of unenrolling students and wondered where they might be going and how does the data aligns with traditional public schools. She suggested a year over year analysis will be helpful.

VIII. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A. To Consider the Approval of ACADIA Academy's Renewal Application

Tom Keller made a motion to approve ACADIA Academy's Renewal Application.
Jim Handy seconded the motion.
Lana provided a summary of the school's renewal application. She pointed out that the Performance Framework provides the lens for the Commission's evaluation. The Staff recommends approval based on the following results:

- Performance - ACADIA has maintained strong results in reading, attendance, and student persistence. Small group instruction is a strength.
- Achievement - The reading results have consistently met expectations on state and NWEA assessments. Math results are improving with a new math curriculum and targeted professional development is underway this year.
- Attendance and Persistence - Attendance rates exceed local and state averages and persistence year to year is high. The Commission makes a recommendation that the school improve equitable access to diversify their student population.
- Governance & Leadership - The Board is engaged and connected to the school community.
- Organizational & Financial Stability - Accounting practices have stabilized and recent audits are clean.
- Stakeholder Engagement - Panorama results show need of improvement although the Focus group meetings reflected stronger satisfaction. The Commission recommends building leadership capacity to provide consistent staff support to strengthen Panorama survey results.

Jim commented the leadership team is small and recommends the addition of a Dean of Students position for extra support. He also pointed out the school's ethnicities do not match community.
Tom suggested that professional development for math should be on-going.
Leigh appreciated the school board's recognition of the need to focus on finances, its current stability and the need to advance diversity.

Joe Drago noted the strength of the board's finance committee and its decision not to take on more debt was wise.

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

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

B. To Consider the Approval of Maine Arts Academy's Renewal Application

Jim Handy made a motion to approve Maine Arts Academy's Renewal Application.
Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.
Lana provided a summary. She pointed out that the Performance Framework provides the lens for the evaluation. The Staff recommends renewal based on the following results:

Strong Academic and Arts outcomes - The school exceeds expectations in reading, subgroup performance, graduation rates, and college readiness. Reading results surpass the state average by more than 30 percentage points. Math achievement is improving and is a focus area for the school.
Engagement and Persistence - The school meets or exceeds expectations for both measures. Chronic absenteeism is well below the state and county averages. The Commission recommends the school balances gender representation in its enrollment.
Arts Integration and Community Impact - Students engage in frequent community performances and showcases and enrollment demand outpaces capacity.
Governance & Operational Sustainability - The board is active and effective, supporting strategic growth and oversight.
Financial Sustainability - The school's financial management is strong. They have received clean audits and maintain a stable cash flow. Their investment in a permanent facility has marked a major milestone in long term sustainability.

Tori commented the Commission is pleased with the performance of the school and the community integration. She noted the gender difference is high. Heather relayed the middle school has increased the number of boys

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

Roll Call

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

C. To Consider the Approval of Community Regional Charter School's Request to Incur Debt

Tori Kornfield made a motion to Consider the Approval of Community Regional Charter School's Request to Incur Debt.
Jim Handy seconded the motion.
Lana summarized that CRCS is requesting to incur $187,500 in debt to purchase land for a consolidated school.
The school recently withdrew from a proposed Waterville property purchase with no loss of funds as the Commission and the Waterville City Council did not support the move.
CRCS has continued express interest in consolidating its campus into a single facility in the future and the school has agreed to Commission recommended conditions as they consider land.

- The land must be within 10 miles of current location.
- No major new debt can be incurred or construction begun until after its renewal next year.

CRCS has identified a parcel of land within 10 miles of its current campuses, and they are interested in purchasing it. Financing would include $187,500 of debt for a $287,500 purchase with $100,000 down payment. The land could be liquidated if circumstances change.

The School Performance Committee recommends not to approve.
Tori noted the Committee recommends the school put attention on performance rather financing at this time.

Norm commented the Finance committee looked at the request from a financial perspective and decided since the monies could be recouped if needed by a sale of the purchased land, the Committee supported the request.

Leigh stated she wants to support the school in the renewal process before the school takes on debt to support a new facility.
The motion did not carry.

Roll Call

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

D. To Consider Approval Allowing Lana Ewing and Amy Allen to Receive and Manage Funds and sign checks on behalf of the Maine Charter School Commission

Jim Handy made a motion to allow Lana Ewing and Amy Allen to receive and manage funds and sign checks on behalf of the Maine Charter School Commission.
Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

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

A. New Governing Board Members

Leigh recognized new Governing Board Members:

- Margaret Micolichek at Ecology Learning Center
- Scott Richardson at Maine Virtual Academy

B. Board Member Resignations/Left the Board

Leigh noted that Nicole Peluso of Maine Connections Academy has left the Board.

C. Board Member Term Outs

None

X. Future Topics

A. Future Topics

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

December

- No meeting

XI. Announcements

A. Important Dates

Upcoming Professional Development

- 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

Other

- **May 2, 2026 (11:00am-1:00pm)**
  - **Maine Arts Academy 10-Year Anniversary Gala**

B. Upcoming Business Meeting(s)

- *November 12 (Room #103, Cross Office Building, Augusta or Zoom)*
- *December - No Meeting*

XII. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

Jim Handy made a motion to Adjourn the Meeting.
Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Leigh Albert

Documents used during the meeting

- SY2024-25 Unenrollment-Enrollment Data .pdf
- ACADIA Academy Renewal Consideration Documents 10-9-25.pdf
- Maine Arts Academy Renewal Consideration Documents 10-9-25.pdf
- CRCS Amendment Request to Incur Debt.pdf
- CRCS Three Year Budget Projections FY26-FY28.pdf
- ELC - New Governing Board Member (Margaret Micolichek).pdf
- MeVA - New Governing Board Member (Scott Richardson).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.