APPROVED

Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday November 12, 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, James Ford, Jim Handy, Leigh Albert, 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 Wednesday Nov 12, 2025 at 1:05 PM.
Jim Handy read the Commission's Vision and Mission Statements.

C. To Consider the Approval of the 10/14/25 Commission Meeting Minutes

Jim Handy made a motion to approve the minutes from Monthly Commission Meeting on 10-14-25.
Brian Langley seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda

A. Additions/Adjustments

- None

III. Committee Reports

A. School Performance Committee

Tori reported the School Performance Committee discussed the following:

- The Annual Performance Framework Reports for all Schools.
- The use of a tiered system to rank school performance for greater transparency to the schools.
- Maine Arts Academy's request to increase enrollment.
- The use of the Innovation Fund for Social Emotional Learning ("SEL") curriculum. The Committee does not believe this use meets the criteria for the Innovation Fund, but suggested that if a school demonstrates a need for SEL resources, the Commission should provide resources to pay for it.

B. Finance Committee

Brian and Lana reported the Finance Committee discussed the following:

- School financial performance in SY2024-25. Nothing overly concerning was reported. The staff and Joe Drago will monitor and work with schools on any red flag areas that arise.
- Public Instrumentality transition - Bank accounts have been opened.
- Commission oversight fee - The Committee determined that the fee will remain the same as last year.
- Maine Arts Academy's request to increase enrollment.

C. Executive Committee

Leigh reported the Executive Committee discussed the following:

- The Annual Performance Framework Reports for all Schools.
- Public Instrumentality transition.
- Maine Arts Academy's request to increase enrollment.

Tom asked if the Executive Committee has considered a public relations campaign. Leigh and Lana agreed this would be worthy of future conversation.

IV. Public Comment*

A. Public Comment

Susan Muzzy shared CRCS held a free Farm to Table Family Garden Meal on October 23rd. The menu items were planted, cultivated, and harvested by learners. In addition, 30 lbs. of produce from the farm were provided to families.
Casey Frederick noted that a CRCS outing club has been formed and is available to all Overman Academy learners. The school partnered with Skowhegan Outdoors a local non-profit promoting free programming of outdoor activities. Some of the activities they have participated in are geocaching, trail maintenance, visits to natural museums, hiking, canoeing, fly tying, overnight camping, etc. Many more activities are being planned.

The next Community related project is Gift of Giving which is a free store for CRCS Community's holiday season.

V. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

A. School Updates

Lana provided the following school updates:

Maine Arts - Students will have an art opening and receptionist on Friday, November 28th through New Years at the Michael Paul Gallery in Hallowell; The Dance Company will perform Break, Burn Build at Colby College on November 14th and 15th; The school is going to donate Thanksgiving dinners to families in need and hold a food drive.

ELC - Biology & College Statistics students engaged in a service-learning project by planting native shrubs.

MCA's Student of Month is Marie Metcalf, a talented gymnast who devotes 9-11 hours each week to training. MCA allows her to successfully pursue both school and gymnastics.

Moxie Public Schools is in its pre-operational year with a primary goal of finding a facility. They are currently focused on a facility in South Portland. The school has received a $60K enrollment support grant and has formed a student advisory group to help design the school. Their website went live with enrollment interest forms, and they have begun to receive them.

B. Organizational Updates

Lana provided the following organizational updates:

The Annual Performance Framework Reports will be received and placed on file later in the meeting. The staff has been put together the documentation over the last few months. Lana thanked the school leaders and boards for providing information, Amy Allen as the primary data collector and author of the reports, Sue and Joe for the financial

portions of the reports. Tori noted the volume of information in the reports and that they provide a clear view of school performance.

Lana attended the National Association for Charter School Authorizers ("NACSA") Conference in Houston, TX. She came away with ideas about making reporting to the public more transparent.
Tom asked Lana for a follow-up on her attendance at an Edunomics seminar. She reported that she receives useful newsletters, and their website is well maintained. She will send on a link.

Professional Development focused on finding, recruiting and retaining board members with Mike Mizzoni from BoardOnTrack was provided for charter school board members & leaders. Representatives from seven of ten schools participated. Victoria Criado of PLT Strategies will be meeting with school leaders for communications training on November 13th at Maine Virtual Academy's offices.

The Finance Committee agreed to keep the school fee that funds Commission activities at 2.45% for FY27. The Committee acknowledged the financial challenges at the schools and agreed to use savings related to the new Commission structure and increased revenue from the addition of a 10th school, to maintain the fee at the current level. Leigh suggested to communicate to the schools that maintaining the fee at current levels does not happen automatically. It is an annual evaluation.

Tom asked about updates to the MCSC website including Commissioner biographies and the informational one-pagers handed out at the Hall of Flags event. Lana reported that the staff is looking at developing a new website but will make updates to the existing site in the meantime.

C. Media Updates

Lana was quoted on Maine Public Radio on the subject of charter school enrollment.

VI. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A. To Receive and Place on File the SY2024-25 Annual Monitoring Reports

Tori Kornfield made a motion to receive and place on file the SY2024-25 Annual Monitoring Reports.
James Ford seconded the motion.
Lana explained that Annual Monitoring Reports are written for each school based on their performance on the Commission's framework. The reports for SY24-25 include end of year results, a self-evaluation, and notes form mid-year and end-of-year meetings with staff.

Lana provided a brief summary of results.
Generally, the portfolio is in a strong position. Family interest is strong, and enrollment is up by 115 to 2,382 students with wait list of 714.
Portfolio strengths include:

- Reading proficiency
- Growth in reading & math performance
- Academic subgroup growth
- Graduation rates and Accuplacer results are strong
- Satisfaction rates with teachers and families are up
- Student persistence is good
- Finances are stable even though the funding model is complicated and schools operate on less than public schools
- Boards are engaged

Lana noted that for some schools, while growth is good, it has not been enough to bring students up to grade level proficiency. This is a complex issue to explore along with survey results for some schools indicating poor school climate and academic rigor. Also, growth is still needed in math performance and attendance for about half of the schools.

The School Performance Committee discussed each school in detail. They noted strong academic scores at Baxter Academy and Ecology Learning Center and reading scores at Maine Arts Academy along with Maine Arts Academy's integration with their community. They placed Maine Connections Academy, Maine Virtual Academy and ACADIA Academy in the middle of the performance pack with some areas of strength and some areas of needed growth. They identified Community Regional Charter School and Fiddlehead School as schools with the most room for improvement.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

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

B. To Receive and Place on File the SY2024-25 Annual Charter School Report

Jim Handy made a motion to receive and place on file the SY2024-25 Annual Charter School Report.
Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.
Lana noted that the Commission is statutorily required to submit an annual report to Commissioner Makin on November 30th. The report which is also presented to the

Education Committee in January summarizes the performance of the charter school portfolio.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

C. To Consider Approval of Maine Academy of Natural Science's Request to Amend Bylaws

Tori Kornfield made a motion to approve Maine Academy of Natural Science's Request to Amend Bylaws.
Jim Handy seconded the motion.
Leigh reported the Executive Committee is in favor of approval.
Lana informed the request would officially put in place amendments made when the school separated from Good Will Hinkley in 2022.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

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

A. New Governing Board Members

- *ACADIA Academy (Mary Morrisey Torsch)*

B. Board Member Resignations/Left the Board

- *Ecology Learning Center (Justin MacDonald)*
- *Maine Academy of Natural Sciences (Sally Beaulieu)*

C. Board Member Term Outs

- *ACADIA Academy (Amy Dieterich)* - Lana noted Amy is a founding member and long-time chair and thanked her for her dedication.
- *Maine Academy of Natural Sciences (Erin Brown)*
- *Maine Academy of Natural Sciences (Robert Dodge)*
- *Maine Academy of Natural Sciences (Kimberly Patnode)*

VIII. Future Topics

A. Future Topics

December

- No meeting

January (Zoom meeting only)

- 10/1 Enrollments
- Annual Boards and Commissions Report
- Mid-Year Annual Calendar Progress Checks
- Education Committee meeting possible
- Lana will meet with the Kennebec Valley Superintendent's Association

IX. Announcements

A. Important Dates

Upcoming Professional Development

- *November 13, 2025 (9:30am to 12:00pm) for School Leaders*
  - *Why Communications and Advocacy Matters*
- *January 26, 2026 (9:00-10:30am) for School Leaders*
  - *How to Host a Successful Policy Maker Visit and Engage Your Board*
- *February 10, 2026 (10:00am-12:00pm) for Board Members and School Leaders*
  - *Strategic Planning: Mid-Year Update*
- *February 11, 2026 (10:00am-12:00pm) for Commission Members*
  - *Revisit MCSC Strategic Plan, Mission, Vision, and Performance Framework*

Other

- *May 2, 2026 (11:00am-1:00pm)*

Maine Arts Academy 10-Year Anniversary Gala

B. Upcoming Business Meeting(s)

- *December - No Meeting*
- *January - ZOOM Only*
- *February - Room #103/Cross Office Building, Augusta*

X. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

Jim Handy made a motion to adjourn.
Brian Langley seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Leigh Albert

Documents used during the meeting

- SY2024-25 Annual Monitoring Reports Portfolio Summary (1).pdf
- SY2024-25 Annual Monitoring Report Financial Summary.pdf
- DRAFT SY2024-25 Annual Monitoring Report - ACADIA Academy.docx (1).pdf
- DRAFT SY2024-25 Annual Monitoring Report - Baxter Academy for Technology and Science (1).pdf
- DRAFT SY2024-25 Annual Monitoring Report - Community Regional Charter School (1).pdf
- DRAFT SY2024-25 Annual Monitoring Report - Ecology Learning Center (1).pdf
- DRAFT SY2024-25 Annual Monitoring Report - Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences (1).pdf
- DRAFT SY2024-25 Annual Monitoring Report - Maine Academy of Natural Sciences (1).pdf
- DRAFT SY2024-25 Annual Monitoring Report - Maine Arts Academy (1).pdf

- DRAFT SY2024-25 Annual Monitoring Report - Maine Connections Academy (1).pdf
- DRAFT SY2024-25 Annual Monitoring Report - Maine Virtual Academy (1).pdf
- SY2024-25 Annual Charter School Report.docx.pdf
- MeANS Request to Amend Bylaws - October 2025.pdf
- ACADIA New Governing Board Member (Mary Torsch).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.