APPROVED

Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday January 14, 2026 at 1:00 PM

Location
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 (remote), Leigh Albert (remote), Tom Keller (remote), Tori Kornfield (remote)

Directors Absent
Norm Higgins

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

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

Leigh arrived at 2:00 pm

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Tom Keller called a meeting of the board of directors of Maine Charter School Commission to order on Wednesday Jan 14, 2026 at 1:03 PM.
Tom read the Maine Charter Commission's Vision and Mission Statements

C. To Consider the Approval of the 11/12/25 Commission Meeting Minutes

Brian Langley made a motion to approve the minutes from Monthly Commission Meeting on 11-12-25.
Jim Handy seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda

A. Additions/Adjustments

None

III. Committee Reports

A. School Performance Committee

Lana reported the Committee discussed draft updates to the Performance Framework. The updates include language clarification and adjustments to a few metrics. These changes are scheduled to be voted on by the Commission in February.

Tom noted the school customized goal is a great opportunity for the schools to highlight the work they are doing.

B. Finance Committee

Brian reported the Committee discussed the following:

- The finance portion of Fiddlehead's Intervention Plan.
- Out of district placement financial pressures on schools.
- Public Instrumentality Transition - Banking is settled with carryover funds in interest bearing accounts.
- School Financial Health and Audit updates.
- Commission Budget - The Committee requested that carryover funds are reported separately.

C. Executive Committee

Lana reported the Executive Committee discussed the following:

- School Performance and Finance Committee Reports
- Fiddlehead's Intervention Plan
- Public Instrumentality Transition
- Presentation to Commissioner Makin
- Communications Strategies with PLT Strategies (Victori Criado)

IV. Public Comment*

A. Public Comment

On the subject of a collaboration with district public schools on remote learning options, Judith Jones suggested a proposal that the Charter School Commission work with the Maine Department of Education to introduce a bill to state legislature removing the enrollment cap of 500 on each of the virtual charter schools and to encourage partnerships between charter public schools and district public schools for remote learning.

Ryan Anthony, Head of School at Maine Academy of Natural Sciences shared that the school is reducing their rate of chronic absenteeism. He attributed the decline to their advisory model, engaging classes and intensives program for each grade.

V. Presentation(s)

A. Presentation to Commissioner Makin

Lana provided a summary of the Maine Charter School's Annual Report provided to Commissioner Makin.

Demographic highlights are:

- Currently there are 2,834 students in the portfolio less than 2% of Maine's total student population. 46% of students are economically disadvantaged and 23% of students are on IEPs.
- Enrollment is up about 4% this year mainly due to Maine Arts Academy's addition of a middle school. There is a 40% increase in wait lists primarily driven by demand for the two virtual schools that have a legislative cap of 1000 students.
- Students from 144 districts or 304 cities, towns and unorganized territories are represented at charter schools. Ethnic and gender make ups trend at the state average, and 16 languages are spoken this year.

Public Charter School highlights are:

- In the spring, the Commission approved Moxie Public School as the 10th allowed charter school which will open in the fall of 2026. The school will begin with grades 6 and 9 and grow by two grades each year to form a complete grade 6-12 program. Their mission is to provide rigorous academics with personalized learning models using whole child supports.
- Maine Arts Academy successfully opened their middle school this fall.
- Fiddlehead School has doubled its Pre-k enrollment this year.
- Maine Academy of Natural Sciences won 1st place in the State Envirothon held last year.

Strengths across the portfolio are:

- Reading proficiency and growth.
- Math growth.
- Graduation rates and post-secondary readiness are strong. A large percentage of students participate in post-secondary activities. Amy will provide the overall graduation rate for Commissioner Makin.
- Surveyed satisfaction rates for family and teachers and staff are strong.

- Student persistence, students who stay in the schools, is strong. 7% of the incoming class last year were home schooled and 2% were from private schools.

Growth areas across the portfolio are:

- Math proficiency.
- Chronic absenteeism rates in half of schools are higher than desired.

Lana noted the Commission will host a Hall of Flags event again this year in May and she invited Commissioner Makin and her team to attend.

Questions from the Commissioner were:
How many campuses exist in the portfolio?
Community Regional Charter School has 3 campuses currently but would like to consolidate. The other 9 schools each have one campus. Moxie will open one school in the fall and in its application proposed multiple sites in the future. The Commission will approve an additional site depending on the success of the initial school.
How many Pre-K students have IEPs?
Lana noted that Fiddlehead School, ACADIA Academy and Community Regional Charter Schools have a Pre-K program. She will reach out to these schools to find out how many have IEPs and will report back.

Commissioner Makin offered thanks for work of the Commission and for the report.

VI. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

A. School Updates

Lana reported the following school updates:

Maine Connections Academy has a student nominated to the US Naval Academy.

Moxie Public Schools has secured its facility at 123 Darling Avenue, South Portland and is in the midst of renovating the building for school needs. They are holding an open house on January 27th from 4:30 to 6:30. A parent zoom call is available on January 20th from 7 to 8:15.
They are actively accepting students and are working with a consultant to support community mapping and engagement.

CRCS held two events in December to support families in the holiday season. A Giving Room event allowed families to shop at no cost for donated gifts. The Gift of Giving, a

virtual angel tree, was also held. (Newspaper article - Lana will send). The school will also represent Somerset County in WinterKids again this year.

Maine Arts students have been working with Michel Cyr a local artist on still life drawings. Art students were able to display and sell their art at his Hallowell gallery. The school also held their winter recital for music and dance with overflowing attendance.

B. Organizational Updates

Lana provided the following updates:

- Lana will present to the Kennebec Valley Superintendents Association on Thursday, January 14th.
- Staff has been engaging in the Mid-Year Meetings with all the schools this week and next week.
- Staff has been clarifying language in the Performance Framework. The goal is to hold a Commission vote on the revisions during the February meeting.
- A mid-year progress report on the Commission's four strategic priority goals.

Tom noted that the Framework provides a mirror to the schools, but the Commission does not dictate the methods/materials. He wondered if there is a way to bring this to a wider audience to support education at large.

C. Media Updates

The County Newspaper - Aroostook Huskies Captain named Maine Connections Academy STAR Student of the Month

VII. Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report

A. 2025 Boards and Commissions Report

Amy described the 2025 Boards and Commissions Report. It is required to be filed by December 31 each year and contains a report for each meeting held during the year and details attendees and costs for each meeting. This report will continue to be required even with the change in organization.

B. SY2025-26 Student Demographic Data Breakdowns

Amy reviewed the student demographic data for SY2025-26 and shared the following highlights:

- 2,834 students are enrolled in Maine Charter Public Schools, an increase of 117 from last year.
- 714 students are on a wait list, an increase of 218 from last year.
- 22.76 % of students are on an Individualized Education Program ("IEP"). This is slightly above the state average.
- 45.69% are economically disadvantaged which is on par with state average. This includes 80% of Maine Academy of Natural Sciences students and 70% of Community Regional Charter School students.
- Students come from 144 districts and 304 Maine towns, cities and organized territories.

Amy is working on a listing of lawmakers representing the towns where students reside. The listing will include contact information for the lawmakers so that schools connect with them. An updated Heat Map is also being planned.

Leigh inquired about the drop in enrollment from 11th grade to 12th grade for several schools and the comparison of the attrition rate to district public schools. Amy noted this will be a discussion point at the upcoming mid-year meetings with schools and that she will follow up with the Maine Department of Education ("MDOE") team to determine if there is comparison data available.

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

A. New Governing Board Members

- Baxter Academy for Technology and Science (Linda Chauldron)
- Ecology Learning Center (Beth Arnold)
- Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences (Joanne D'Arcangelo)
- Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences (Bruce Woodard)

B. Board Member Resignations/Left the Board

- ACADIA Academy (Aaron Landry)
- ACADIA Academy (Jon Mercier)

• Ecology Learning Center (Kenneth Hahn)
• Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences (Kaiti Lewis)
• Maine Academy of Natural Sciences (Kristen Case)
• Maine Academy of Natural Sciences (Lee Karter)

C. Board Member Term Outs

• *None*

IX. Future Topics

A. Future Topics

February
• Performance Framework Revisions
• Mid-Year Meetings Update
• Maine Arts Academy Enrollment Amendment Request

X. Announcements

A. Important Dates

• *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*

B. Upcoming Business Meeting(s)

• February - Room #500/Cross Office Building, Augusta

XI. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

Tori informed the Commission members that she will be running for a seat in the Maine House of Representatives and so will be resigning from the State Board of Education and the Maine Charter School Commission.
She stated she has enjoyed her tenure on the Commission and praised the Staff. She has also enjoyed here participation on the School Performance Committee and appreciates the oversight on schools and the high bar that has been set.
Jim, Tom, Lana, and Leigh expressed their appreciation for her efforts on the Commission.
Thanks Tori - You will be missed !!!!

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 2:36 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Leigh Albert
Tom Keller made a motion to Adjourn.
Jim Handy seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

Documents used during the meeting

- Aroostook Huskies captain named MCA STAR Student of Month.pdf
- 2025 Boards and Commissions Report.pdf
- 2025-26 School Enrollment Statistics.pdf
- School Year 2025-26 Demographic Data Breakdowns.pdf
- 2025-26 Resident District Breakdown.pdf
- 2025-26 Resident Town Breakdown.pdf
- Baxter - New Governing Board Member (Linda Chauldron).pdf
- ELC - New Governing Board Member (Beth Arnold).pdf
- FSAS - New Governing Board Member (Joanne D'Arcangelo).pdf
- FSAS - New Governing Board Member (Bruce Woodard).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.