APPROVED

# Maine Charter School Commission

# Minutes

## Business Meeting

**Date and Time**
Tuesday August 11, 2026 at 10:00 AM

**Location**
Maine Arts Academy, 310 Cony Road, Augusta OR 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 Amy Allen at (207)592-6364 or amy@mainecharterschoolcommission.org*

**Directors Present**

Brian Langley, James Ford, Jeremy Ray (remote), Jim Handy, Leigh Albert (remote), Tom Keller, Victoria Cohen

**Directors Absent**
*None*

**Directors who arrived after the meeting opened**
James Ford

**Directors who left before the meeting adjourned**
Jeremy Ray, Leigh Albert

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

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## 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 Aug 11, 2026 at 10:00 AM.

### C. To Consider the Approval of the 6/10/26 Commission Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes from Monthly Commission Meeting on 06-10-26.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

| | |
|---|---|
| Leigh Albert | Aye |
| Brian Langley | Aye |
| Jim Handy | Aye |
| Victoria Cohen | Aye |
| Jeremy Ray | Aye |
| Tom Keller | Aye |
| James Ford | Absent |

### D. To Consider the Appointment of Brian Langley as Chair of the Maine Charter School Commission

Motion to appoint Brian Langley as Chair of the Maine Charter School Commission.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

| | |
|---|---|
| Brian Langley | Aye |
| Jim Handy | Aye |

**Roll Call**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jeremy Ray | Aye |
| Tom Keller | Aye |
| James Ford | Absent |
| Victoria Cohen | Aye |
| Leigh Albert | Aye |

### E. To Consider the Re-Appointment of Tom Keller as Vice Chair of the Maine Charter School Commission

Motion to re-appoint Tom Keller as Vice Chair of the Maine Charter School Commission. The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jim Handy | Aye |
| Leigh Albert | Aye |
| Jeremy Ray | Aye |
| Tom Keller | Aye |
| Brian Langley | Aye |
| Victoria Cohen | Aye |
| James Ford | Absent |

## II. Comments From Commission Chair

### A. Comments

*Leigh Weisenburger Albert offered closing remarks in her final meeting with the Commission.*

*Brian Langley, newly appointed Chair, offered brief remarks.*

## III. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda

### A. Additions/Adjustments

*None were proposed.*

## IV. Committee Reports

### A. School Performance Committee

James Ford arrived at 10:19 AM.
The School Performance Committee met on August 4.

*MOXIE Public Charter School's proposed Year One Performance Framework was reviewed, which establishes baseline and enrollment metrics. Members noted its potential usefulness as a model for future schools.*

*Discussion also covered Baxter Academy's proposed Center for Innovation and Technology and its Baxter Bound pilot program, enrollment retention, and Panorama survey results.*

*An overview of the charter renewal process for Maine Academy of Natural Sciences and Community Regional Charter School was reviewed.*

*The October meeting will be moved from October 6 to October 5.*

**B. Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee met on August 4.

*The Committee reviewed and approved the final FY26 financial packet in advance of the audit, including a net surplus for the year, prepayments, and accruals. Brian, as Finance Committee Chair, will sign the packet before it is submitted to the auditors.*

*The Committee discussed placement of surplus and carryover funds, comparing proposals from Bangor Savings Bank and Kennebec Savings Bank. Discussion favored continuing with Bangor Savings and structuring the funds as staggered-maturity certificates of deposit while retaining a portion for liquidity. No action was taken.*

*Lana updated the Committee on the charter renewal process for Community Regional Charter School and Maine Academy of Natural Sciences, both undergoing full review this cycle. The Committee also reviewed minor revisions to the travel and expense reimbursement policy and the payment and signatory policy, both of which are before the full Commission for a vote.*

**C. Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee met on August 6.

*The Committee discussed MOXIE Public Charter School's performance framework and the charter renewals scheduled for October 13. David Hartman of Venn Education will join Lana on the associated site visits.*

*The Committee reviewed minor revisions to the travel and expense reimbursement policy. Staff reported that they are working with a broker to secure full insurance coverage reflecting the Commission's status as a public instrumentality of the State.*

*The Committee also discussed the 2026 year in review and future planning.*

## V. Public Comment*

**A. Public Comment**

*The Chair opened the floor for public comment. No comments were made.*

## VI. Presentation(s)

### A. Welcome from Maine Arts Academy

Heather King, Maine Arts Academy's Head of School, presented the following:

*Enrollment and transportation.* MeAA draws students from 13 counties and more than 80 towns. Enrollment stands at 347 students against an authorized cap of 325, with a waiting list at every grade level. The school operates nine bus routes covering more than 500,000 miles annually and recently acquired two additional buses.

*Student support.* Heather described the school's approach to non-academic student support, which includes a resource room offering clothing, toiletries, and shower facilities; open access to food and discreet distribution of food packages to families; emergency financial assistance to prevent utility shutoff and eviction; and transportation assistance outside regular bus routes. She noted that the school provides wraparound re-entry support for students returning from expulsion, and described staff and bus drivers as contributing to student wellbeing beyond their formal duties. Heather offered several examples of individual students who had benefited from these supports.

*Special education.* The special education program received a Level 1 rating, the highest available, in its most recent state audit.

*Academic program.* MeAA operates on a college-style schedule with 75-minute periods, including a required Learning Support Period. Course offerings include Advanced Placement and college-level English. Arts programming includes dance, film, digital art, and theater.

### B. Baxter Academy for Technology and Science's "Center for Innovation and Technology"

Anna Klein-Christie, Baxter Academy for Technology and Science's Executive Director, presented on the following:

*Enrollment.* Baxter reported a decline of approximately 15 students, which the school attributed to nearby construction.

*Baxter Bound.* The school described Baxter Bound, a pilot program supporting the transition of incoming freshmen through a hybrid model. Students attend remotely Monday through Thursday and in person on Friday for project-based learning, working with the same teachers and curriculum throughout.

*Center for Innovation and Technology.* Baxter is in the planning stages of a 10,400-square-foot expansion. Planned components include:

- A Marine Research Lab with tanks simulating past, present, and projected future conditions in Casco Bay, supporting student projects on kelp and water acidification
- An Applied Engineering and Fabrication Space with robotics, prototyping, and a glass-enclosed 3D printing chamber
- A Computer and AI Studio
- A Media Studio
- A Learning Commons
- A Coffee House space with a stage and recording booth, intended to host Flex Friday presentations in a TED-talk format

Architectural plans are complete and will be submitted to the city. The school expects the space to become available by spring, and anticipates the expansion will support grant applications, summer programming, and community partnerships. Baxter also noted nearby development of approximately 800 housing units and associated restaurants, which the school expects will benefit enrollment.
*Outcomes.* Baxter has operated for 13 years and tracks post-graduation outcomes for its graduates. Institutions named included Worcester Polytechnic Institute, the University of Maine, Kenyon College, and Southern Maine Community College. All students take the Accuplacer exam as a measure of college readiness, and the school reported that students perform above state averages on math assessments.

## VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

### A. School Updates

**Charter Renewals**
Community Regional Charter School and Maine Academy of Natural Sciences are undergoing charter renewal. Both are in their third renewal cycle, representing 15 years of operation.

*Timeline.*

- Renewal applications are due September 4.
- Site visits will be conducted the week of September 7.
- Public hearings are scheduled for the week of September 21.
- The Commission will vote on both renewals on October 13.

*Materials for Commission consideration.* Commission members will receive Year 4 performance reports, the renewal applications, site visit summaries, public testimony, and review team recommendations. For Community Regional Charter School, members will also receive the conclusion of the school's intervention plan and a report prepared by Dr. Jody Ernst covering three years of NWEA MAP data.

*Possible decisions.* The Commission may renew a charter for a term of five to fifteen years, renew with conditions, or decline to renew.

*Voting requirement.* Renewal requires five affirmative votes with seven members seated, or a two-thirds majority if membership is below seven.

### B. Organizational Updates

All four Commission priorities from the prior year were completed.

- *Launch a New School.* MOXIE Public Schools will open this fall with 115 students and 11 staff, having raised $1.17 million. Facility renovation is ongoing.
- *Communications.* Professional development sessions were delivered by PLT Strategies, with seven of nine boards participating. Social media training was added.
- *Public Instrumentality Status.* The Commission became a public instrumentality of the State through legislative action, enabling direct hiring and independent finances. Banking is with Bangor Savings Bank, payroll is administered through Bangor Payroll, and information technology services are provided by TechResolv. Insurance coverage is pending.
- *Charter School Board Development.* Six professional development sessions were held, with eight of nine boards participating. Staff reported that monthly sessions were more effective than the previous quarterly schedule.

*New Commission Website.* The Commission's new website was introduced, developed in collaboration with Ezra Smith of Ezra Smith Designs. The site replaces the Commission's previous Maine.gov pages and reflects its status as a public instrumentality of the State.

### C. Media Updates

*An article on Community Regional Charter School, 'Innovation Inside and Out,' was included in the packet for informational purposes. No discussion was held.*

## VIII. Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report

### A. Spring 2026 Panorama School Climate Results

Results from the Spring 2026 administration of the Panorama School Climate Survey were discussed.

The purpose and structure of the survey were reviewed. The survey is administered annually to families, students, teachers, and staff, and measures domains including school climate, safety, and relationships. Results are benchmarked against national norms for comparable schools. The Commission's expectation is that schools score at or

above the 50th percentile; a score at the 80th percentile indicates a school outperformed 80 percent of comparable schools nationally.

For the first time since the survey became a requirement, all schools met participation thresholds across all stakeholder groups. Thresholds are 35 percent for families and 75 percent for students, teachers, and staff.

Six of the nine schools met or exceeded framework expectations for all stakeholder groups. Of the three schools that did not, two showed improvement over the prior year.

Schools are required to submit a Panorama Action Plan in October identifying goals for the next administration.
Leigh Albert left at 12:00 PM.
Jeremy Ray left at 12:00 PM.

### B. SY2025-26 Year End Enrollment/Unenrollment

*The report on SY2025-26 Year End Enrollment/Unenrollment was postponed to the September meeting.*

## IX. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

### A. To Consider the Approval of the Commission's SY2026-27 Priorities

Motion to approve the proposed SY2026-27 Commission priorities.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

| **Roll Call** | |
|---|---|
| Leigh Albert | Absent |
| Brian Langley | Aye |
| Jim Handy | Aye |
| Victoria Cohen | Aye |
| James Ford | Aye |
| Jeremy Ray | Absent |
| Tom Keller | Aye |

Four draft priorities for the 2026-27 school year were presented for Commission review and consideration. The first three are new or newly sharpened; the fourth sustains multi-year work carried forward from SY2025-26.

- *School Leader Development.* Build instructional leadership capacity across authorized schools through the Accelerate partnership, with targeted support for schools that need it. Draft outcomes include participation by all leaders in the inaugural cohort, defined attendance targets, documented support plans with milestones and a mid-year checkpoint for any school identified as needing targeted support, and growth by all schools on an identified instructional leadership goal.

- *Policymaker Engagement.* Establish a clear policy agenda and a strategy for policymaker education and outreach. Draft outcomes include a prioritized legislative agenda vetted with counsel and approved by the Commission, an engagement strategy with a target list and school-visit calendar, at least one policymaker visit hosted by each school, and a defined approach to the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee.
- *MOXIE Year One.* Support MOXIE Public Schools through its first operational year while holding the school to Performance Framework expectations from the outset. Draft outcomes include meeting a majority of applicable Year 1 targets, financial metrics at low to moderate risk, enrollment remaining within the range set in the charter contract, and a documented first-year oversight cadence for use with future new schools.
- *Ongoing Priorities.* Sustain board development, communications, and public instrumentality work. Draft outcomes include continued near-monthly board training advancing beyond foundational governance, all boards meeting their Performance Framework professional development requirement, delivery of the revised PLT Strategies scope, schools maintaining communications independently, completion of the first independent audit, adoption of a fund investment approach, and finalized insurance coverage.

**B. To Consider the Approval of MOXIE's Performance Framework Requirements for Year 1 (SY2026-27)**

Jim Handy made a motion to approve the Performance Framework outlined for MOXIE Public Schools in their first year of operation.
James Ford seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

| | |
|---|---|
| Victoria Cohen | Aye |
| Brian Langley | Aye |
| Tom Keller | Aye |
| Jeremy Ray | Absent |
| Leigh Albert | Absent |
| Jim Handy | Aye |
| James Ford | Aye |

A copy of proposed Year One Performance Framework indicators for MOXIE Public Schools was presented for review and consideration.

Most criteria apply in full from the first year. All School Climate criteria, all Organizational Sustainability criteria, and all near-term financial measures are rated in Year 1, as are academic growth on NWEA MAP (or Maine Through Year), chronic absenteeism, mission implementation, and within-year student persistence. The criteria treated differently in Year 1 are as follows.

*Reported as baseline, with ratings beginning SY2027-28:*

- 1.1a and 1.1b — Student academic proficiency, Maine Through-Year Assessment, reading and math
- 1.1c and 1.1d — Subgroup academic proficiency, Maine Through-Year Assessment, reading and math

*Measurement begins in a later year:*

- 1.5 — 4-year graduation rate (begins SY2029-30, when MOXIE's first cohort reaches graduation)
- 1.5a — 5-year graduation rate (begins SY2030-31)
- 1.5b — 6-year graduation rate (begins SY2031-32)
- 1.6a — College and career readiness (begins SY2029-30)
- 1.6b — College and career readiness, subgroups (begins SY2029-30)
- 1.6c — College and career readiness activity (begins SY2029-30)
- 1.6d — FAFSA completion support (begins SY2029-30)
- 4.3 — Year-to-year student persistence (first data point October 1, 2027; measurement begins with SY2027-28 reporting)
- 5.2a — 3-year total margin (begins SY2028-29; current-year margin reported in the interim)
- 5.2c — 2-year cash flow (begins SY2027-28; current-year cash flow reported in the interim)

*Not applicable:*

- 1.2 — Third-grade reading on grade level. MOXIE does not serve grade 3. The criterion number is retained for alignment with the approved framework.

*Optional in Year 1:*

- 6.1 — Customized criteria. MOXIE may establish these in Year 1 or defer to SY2027-28. Ratings apply once criteria are established.

**C. To Consider the Revisions to the Commission's Payment and Signatory Policy**

James Ford made a motion to approve the proposed revisions to the Commission's Payment and Signatory policy.
Jim Handy seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

| **Roll Call** | |
|---|---|
| Victoria Cohen | Aye |
| Brian Langley | Aye |
| Jeremy Ray | Absent |
| Tom Keller | Aye |
| Leigh Albert | Absent |

**Roll Call**

Jim Handy Aye

James Ford Aye

There were four proposed changes to the Commission's payment and Signatory Policy as follows:

- This policy applies to all disbursements of MCSC funds, including staff payroll, vendor and contractor payments, Commission member per diem, and other expenses, whether paid by check, ~~direct deposit~~ electric funds transfers including ACH or wires, or credit card.
- For credit card payments: cardholders must have prior approval from the Executive Director for payments over $200. The Director of Operations will approve credit card purchases over $200 made by the Executive Director.
- Bank statements, canceled checks, credit card statements, and direct ACH payment reports shall be reviewed monthly by ~~someone not involved in initiating or approving payments, likely a member of~~ the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee will designate a representative to review monthly financial statements and approve items via email. ~~or the full Committee will vote to approve monthly financial statements via monthly Finance Committee vote.~~
- Blank checks will be secured in a locked cabinet and credit card holders must maintain physical security of cards issued to them.

**D. To Consider Revision to the Travel and Expense Reimbursement Policy**

Jim Handy made a motion to approve the proposed revisions to the Commission's Travel and Expense Reimbursement policy.
James Ford seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
There was one proposed change to the Commission's Travel and Expense Reimbursement Policy as follows:

- Rental cars may be used if justified (e.g., necessity at destination). Prior authorization required. Costs should align with mid-sized standard vehicle ~~and insurance coverage limitations~~. Gasoline ~~Mileage~~/toll reimbursement is permitted for rental cars.

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

**A. New Governing Board Members**

*None reported.*

**B.**

**Board Member Resignations/Left the Board**

*Donyse Babin resigned from the Ecology Learning Center governing board.*

### C. Board Member Term Outs

*Roger Preston and Bill Doughty completed their terms on the Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences governing board. The Commission acknowledged Mr. Doughty's service as a founding member of the board, including several terms as Chair.*

## XI. Future Topics

### A. Future Topics

The following future topics were included in the agenda for reference. No discussion was held.

- September
  - Review Annual Calendar
  - SY2024-25 Financial Metrics Addendum
- October
  - To Consider the Approval of Community Regional Charter School's Renewal Application
  - To Consider the Approval of Maine Academy of Natural Sciences' Renewal Application
- November
  - To Receive and Place on File SY2025-26 Annual Monitoring Reports
  - To Receive and Place on File SY2025-26 Annual Charter School Report

## XII. Announcements

### A. Important Dates

The following professional development opportunities were included in the agenda for reference. No discusstion was held.

- Tuesday, September 8th (12:30-2:30pm)/Commission PD - "Launching The Year - Authorizing, Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan"/In Person (Location TBD)
- Wednesday, September 23rd (10:00am-12:00pm)/Panorama PD - "Launching the Year Right"/Zoom
- Thursday, October 22nd (10:00-11:30am)/BoardOnTrack PD - "Governance and Fiduciary Duties"/Zoom
- Thursday, November 5th (10:00-11:30am)/PLT Strategies - "Communications and Advocacy 101"/Zoom

### B.

### Upcoming Business Meeting(s)

The following upcoming Business Meeting dates were included in the agenda for reference. No discussion was held.

- Tuesday, September 8th (10:00am-12:00pm) - Location TBD
- Tuesday, October 13th (10:00am-12:00pm) - Location TBD
- Tuesday, November 10th (10:00am-12:00pm) - Location TBD

## 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 12:36 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Allen

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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.

*As of September 24, 2025, state law reclassified the Maine Charter School Commission as "a public body corporate and politic and an incorporated public instrumentality of the State." This means the Commission is now its own legal entity within state government. It can act in its own name — entering into contracts, managing state, federal, and private funds, and employing its own staff — while remaining a public body that performs essential government functions and stays accountable to the State.*