Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes **DRAFT for acceptance at February 3, 2015, Commission Meeting.**

The Maine Charter School Commission held a meeting on **Tuesday, December 2, 2014**, at the Burton Cross Office Building, 111 Sewall Street, Augusta ME.

I. Call to Order

Chair, Shelley Reed, called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.

II. Roll Call

The following members were present: John Bird, Nichi Farnham, Jana Lapoint, Laurie Pendleton, Mike Wilhelm and Shelley Reed, Chair. Ande Smith excused for Reserves. Also in attendance were Bob Kautz, Executive Director, and Deanne Lavallee, Administrative Assistant.

III. Adjustments to the Agenda

VII. F. Roger Brainerd Report on MACS Charter School Governance Workshop will be moved up on the agenda to accommodate their schedule.

IV. Acceptance of Minutes

A. Moved by Jana Lapoint; seconded by Mike Wilhelm and voted unanimously to accept the November 13, 2014, Business Meeting Minutes as written.

V. Officers' Reports

A. Chair

I was on a wonderful cruise to the Western Caribbean and home in time to have a wonderful Thanksgiving dinners with several family members on different days.
Then catching up on Commission emails and meeting prep.

B. Vice Chair

C. Executive Director

Working on the FOAA Report; thank you for your cooperation in getting your emails to me.
Over 1,000 emails; go through them one-by-one to remove duplicates.
Eric Stout, OIT, has been a great help.
In The Public Interest is a Washington, DC based group that collects all of emails that are dealing with non-profit corporations and makes sure the public knows what the government has and the actions that the government has taken.

1. Update on receipt of Audit info required as of November 1.
See below.

2. Update on per pupil transportation allocation.
This has not yet been computed because the audits have not yet been received. Final Audits aren't due until December 31st.

3. Proficiency-based Diplomas and Public Charter Schools.
Corresponding and meeting with Diana Doiron, who is one of the lead people in the Department on Proficiency-based Diplomas to set up information that will go to each one of the schools and to arrange, hopefully in January, a meeting with Diana for they (charter school reps) can come in and she can answer questions.
Then ask them (charter schools) to send me a calendar of how they are going to meet that proficiency requirement that you as a Commission have for each one of them; for your review and acceptance of each one of them. Similar to what the Department has; but they are not necessarily under that; it is only what you create as the guideline. If we use basically what the department is using with everyone else, it is basically the fairest way to go.

4. Requests for reports on charter schools' enrollment with a categorical breakdown of students.
Sent out a reminder to all the charter schools reminding them they need to look at the State Website for all the reports, etc. that they are responsible for filling and to check to see what ones they had not filled. Receiving positive responses from them; there is a place on the website that shows missing reports.

VI. Unfinished Business

A. Director of Program Management Temporary Position

1. Status of RFP Timeline and Request for Proposals and Award Schedule.

RFP still has not gone out or approved by Purchasing – waiting on a decision regarding the reimbursement for travel for Contractors.

VII. New Business

A. Update on Contract Negotiations with Maine Virtual Academy (MVA).
Sarah has worked up a draft contract; sent to Mike, John, Ande and I have reviewed. With the holidays, have not yet finished that review; hoping when we leave here today, we can set up a telephone conference call for the review team to agree on the contract with their thoughts, stipulations and return to Sarah. Sarah will then send it to their attorney, Dan Stockford; followed by a meeting between all parties.

B. Discussion and acceptance of Staff Evaluations using the sample *Executive Director Performance Evaluation Form* and next steps.

Outlining dates to move forward on this process.
Specific goals interested in.
How do we do evaluate for this year and how we go forward in following years.
Commission negotiating goals for the year by whole Commission with the Executive Director sharing his views.
Sub group to think through a timeframe.
Goals for Com.
Goals for Exe Dir.
Goals for all.

Time frame – Start in January or wait until Spring.
Small group provide information for the entire Commission:
Points to look at relative to the categories that Shelley has on the evaluation.
All kinds of models available and examples of those.
Bob will know exactly what the Commission is looking for (in goals).

MCSC in conjunction with the Executive Director:

- Establishes performance objectives based on the job description with consideration of immediate challenges and opportunities.
- Regularly conducts review.
- Performs a formal performance review.

MCSC selects an evaluation committee consisting of chair, vice chair and member; Jana has volunteered, as well as Mike.

The evaluation committee in the formal review:

- solicits input from relevant stakeholders, including self-evaluation by ED;
- considers input and drafts evaluation;
- sends draft to the Executive Director;
- makes any changes and submits evaluation to the full MCSC for discussion.

MCSC votes to approve or modify the evaluation.

Evaluation discussion focused on whether the goals should be set immediately or wait until a regular year rotation of developing goals to last the entire year from June until the next July. June was decided on.

It was decided to formulate a subcommittee to formulate questions to be asked of stakeholders and prepare them for the April Meeting for full Commission review. Questions should go out in April to give time for the boards to review them at their May meetings.

The small committee needs to sit down and set some questions up for the charter schools and their boards – its relationship with the Commission, relationship with Director and what they want/need for themselves. Shelley Jana and Laurie will be developing the questions.

Feedback will be returned for the May Meeting. Stakeholder input on performance of the Commission and Executive Director and what they need, want or would benefit from – the Commission / Executive Director.

Data will be collected for the June meeting. The evaluation committee will be Shelley, Ande, Mike and Jana. Evaluation committee would solicit information from everyone. Writing a draft; Executive Director review (of draft) and then (the review) to the Commission.

Then process to develop new goals for the following year.

Summer Commission Retreat –
Feedback from charter schools, feedback from Exec. Director Evaluation, and looking ahead at what we need to pay attention to, opportunities. Come to agreement at July Meeting.

July 7 – do regular meeting and then do the evaluation/goals workshop in the afternoon.
Set priorities.
At July meeting, we should have all this information and we will have the end-of-year reports to add to the "goals."

Evaluation form to reflect us … NASCA probably has samples.

C. Upcoming 127th Legislature First Session.

1. Review of Education-related bills.

We know we will start seeing some bills being proposed that will have something to do with charter schools. Prior years, the process has been:

1. Jana and I reviewed the bills as they come in.
2. Determine the position, if any, of the Commission.
3. Drafted testimony and
4. Tried to get it to the Commission in time for your comments and edits; many times we were not able to do that because of the scheduling.

2. Education and Cultural Affairs Committee – Meetings with members and Committee.

We don't know the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee Members as yet.

MCSC Booklet for their information; John will edit.

Send two booklets to each charter school; provides information for them to share with their local legislators; along with guidance on engaging with their legislators.

Chair and Executive Director representing us is a good model for the Commission. Spokes persons for the Commission should be the Chair and the Executive Director with the Vice Chair as alternate.

It is a good idea to invite to the leadership to meet with Shelley, Ande, Bob in December; try to get an appointment.

MACS does work hard on legislation.

Role of the Commission –

- Help people understand the implications of that legislation on the charter schools.
- To inform the authors of the legislation of that impact of what those implications are.
- We can react to legislation.
- We advocate for legislation that is in the best interest of charter schools. Commission, as a group, advocate both informally and formally.

General the position is neither for nor against, but presents the strengths of it.
We did take positions on some of the bills when we felt it was clear that this was a great idea or this really was not a great idea.

Our job is not to champion charter schools; it is our job to authorize and monitor.

Role of Commission is being informative with the pluses and minuses of proposed legislation. Legally, can we as the Commission take a position?
We usually passed our position through Sarah.

3. Meeting with Legislative Leadership.

Carol Weston – very effective for a school to find a family who is closest to a legislator and invite him to visit … connect the dots between the Commission, the School and that Student and the Family. Once they know that story, they will react differently.
You can sit down with them, leadership is going to have 100's of people through their office; booklets from floor to ceiling and not read any of them. A visit with a direct connection to a family is what they remember. Nichi Farnham agreed.

D. Review of proposed timeline for Fall 2016 School Opening

Moved by John Bird; seconded by Jana Lapoint, all present voted unanimously to accept the Charter School RFP timeline issue date being Wednesday, June 10, 2015 and the final decision date being November 17, 2015.

1. Brick and Mortar RFP only.
Yes, per Jana, Mike and John. We need to follow the two approved for a time.
This should be part of the whole decision regarding differentiation.

2. Create differentiation in the event of more applicants than openings for approved charter schools.

THE FOLLOWING IDEAS WERE DISCUSSED ON THIS TOPIC OF DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN APPLICANTS:

If we have successful applicants in excess of openings, the Commission will give preference to: geography, type of school, degree of readiness, number of students served, different from current charter schools, public input.
Find research in others who have experience with differentiation.
The more objective criteria the safer the outcome will be.
Strict evaluation of the applications based on the current rubric – no differentiation; provides good rationale for approval or denial.
The threshold is a high probability of a successful charter school.
Committees for reading: Academic, Governance, Finance.
Business model: Businesses are opening where they can be successful.
First seven did not have to meet a location requirement.
High Quality / Regional need is part of the application. / Innovative
All "pass," pull a name out of the hat.

E. Criteria in monitoring plan for second-year visit to school with MCSC Chair or Public Charter School's Review Team.

A Discussion of adding a mini 90-day visit with the parents, students, staff, board.

If the first year is dicey, then future years will be more closely monitored.
I don't think we need to calendar it; do it if deems necessary.

We are going to be held accountable by the State in the way those schools function and I would rather be in a position to be on top of what they are doing. School could look super good in first year and something starts to go wrong in Year Two or Three.

If school is doubling its size in Year Two, then it would be a good idea to see how things are going. Putting it in that we will visit every school mid-year may not be necessary.

The Executive Director is on paper to go in at mid-year; but has been very informal and more often has not happened.
The purpose is for a positive visit rather than the Commission only visiting when something is wrong. This would be the function of the Executive Director visiting at mid-year.
Executive Director scheduled visit could be opened to any and all Commission Members to attend.

Invitation to the schools' social events – this is not our job. We have a good set up for visits. I don't want the schools to think we are not doing our job if we don't go. Some occasions it is nice if people can drop in on events

December 9, 2014, Representative(s) from all charter schools are meeting at Baxter to talk about reporting.

F. Report on MACS Charter School Governance Workshop; presented by Roger Brainerd.

Bob participated in the day and relays that it was one of the finest workshop he has ever participated in and every one of the charter schools were represented and some others who have had interest in applying for charters.
Roger provided a copy of the booklets "Excellence in Charter School Governance" by Marci Cornell-Feist and her book "Board Structure." Marci also has a software package to support boards available for purchase; would be willing to work with us on cost if a number of the schools are interested in purchasing.
Carol Weston added that Marci was willing to take all questions from the participants; everyone was able to take advantage of this for their particular questions.
Charter Board Partners of Washington D.C. is another resource on governance.

MACS has a new website and they will be conducting a survey with the charter schools to see what workshop subject they would like next.

VIII. Other

December 12, 2014, FOAA Training at DOE.

Smarter Balance proctor training was in November.

IX. Announcements

A. Turn in Expense Account Vouchers at the end of the meeting.

B. Next regularly scheduled meeting: **January 6, 2015,** Time: 9:30 a.m.

X. Public Comment

Carol Weston: Message from Karl Francis – regarding Proficiency-based Diploma.
Connections is working through the DOE. They plan to have their expected completion dates for the outline by the beginning of 2015-2016; well within the five-year window.

Wall Street Journal – I will send Bob the article on Charter schools and their situation with great data in New York. Part of the city where they are charter school rich has not hurt other public schools; has helped.

Laurie Pendleton: A charter school in the lowest congressional district in the Bronx, are out performing their peer schools in the new Common Core Assessment even though they had underperformed the same schools on the prior assessment.

Judith Jones: The federal USDOE Charter School Program (CSP) would probably initiate a competitive grant program for State Education Agencies (SEA's) for the first time in 3 years. This program provides state departments of education with funds for (a) their own charter school office (5% of total grant) and (b) sub-grants to chartered schools for planning and start-up costs (95%). Applications are likely due in February or March 2015.

These grants differ from the "non-SEA" grants that individual charter schools can apply for, usually in June, in states that have an eligible law (Maine is eligible), but not an SEA level grant. Those are the two grants awarded last year to Cornville and MEANS, so Maine schools received 2 of only 17 grants awarded nationally.

Also, the USDOE CSP office staff may visit Maine this spring to monitor those two grants. Stefan Huh, the director of the program, hopes to join that visit, and MACS plans to host him and see if we can set up meetings for him with the Commission, our Ed Commissioner and staff and others.

XI. Adjourn

Motion by Nichi Farnham; seconded by John Bird and voted unanimously by those present to adjourn at 12:17 p.m.