***January 10, 2023 Commission Meeting Minutes Approved by Commission Vote on***

***February 14, 2023***

**The Maine Charter School Commission held a Regular Meeting on**

**Tuesday, January 10, 2023**

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| **Item Number** | **Agenda Item** |
| **1** | **Call to Order and Declare a Quorum** |
|  | The meeting, held in person and via Zoom in accordance with the Commission’s remote meeting policy, was called to order by Commission Chair, Wilson Hess, at 1:02pm and a quorum was declared.  Commission members present were Wilson Hess (via Zoom), Norm Higgins, Tom Keller, Tori Kornfield, Jim Handy, Nichi Farnham, and Leigh Weisenburger Albert.  Also present were Lana Ewing, David Hartman (*via Zoom*), Amy Allen (*via Zoom*), and Dania Heard.  *Commission member, Nichi Farnham, read the Commission’s Vision Statement.* |
| **2** | **Reminders** |
| 2a | This meeting is being recorded via Zoom. |
| 2b | We ask members of the public to hold comments until public comments are being heard. |
| 2c | When speaking, state your name and speak slowly and clearly and loudly enough for the captioner to pick up your comments. Lana will interrupt if the captioner is having a difficult time hearing what is being said. |
| **3** | **Comments from Commission Chair, Committee Reports and Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda** |
| 3a | **Comments from Commission Chair**  *None* |
| 3b | **Committee Reports**   * Tori Kornfield - Member, School Performance Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee * Nichi Farnham - Chair, Finance Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee * Norm Higgins - Chair, Ad-Hoc Search Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee * Wilson Hess - Chair, Executive Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee. |
| 3c | **Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda**  *None* |
| 4 | **Meeting Minutes Approval** |
| 4a | To Consider the Minutes from the December 13, 2022 Business Meeting  A copy of the draft minutes was distributed for review and consideration.  **Moved by Jim Handy; seconded by Nichi Farm and voted by roll call vote as follows** - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes), Nichi Farnham (yes), Jim Handy (yes), Wilson Hess (yes), Norm Higgins (yes), Tom Keller (yes), and Tori Kornfield (yes) --to approve the minutes from the December 13, 2022 Business Meeting. |
| **5** | **Public Comment\*** |
|  | Tonya Arnold - Maine resident, grandparent, 26 year educator, and current local public school superintendent - shared the following comments in response to the Commission’s recent authorizing workshop:   * Both public charters and local public schools have complaint procedures and/or policies that advise complainants about next steps; * Local school board seats are a “popularity contest” where candidates often have hidden or personal agendas. Public charter board members are approved by the existing charter board and renewed by vote of their peers. |
| **6** | **Presentations** |
| 6a | Heather King, Head of School, and Rachel Roberge, Assistant Head of School at Maine Arts Academy gave an overview of the programs offered at the school and shared a quick update on the progress of the new building. |
| **7** | **Executive Director/Commission Staff Report** |
| 7a | Update on HCA  David shared that the team at HCA continues to be a strong partner through the closure process and that work over the next few months will include inventory updates and finalizing financial status to ensure that all fiduciary obligations can be fulfilled. |
| 7b | 2022 Annual Boards and Commissions Report  Amy shared a copy of the 2022 Annual Boards and Commissions Report and reminded Commission members that the report is an annual report required by the Secretary of State’s Office and includes all Commission member activity for a calendar year. |
| 7c | 2021-22 Annual Report to the Commissioner  Lana shared that work on the 2021-22 Annual Boards and Commissions Report is underway. Certified data from the MDOE – i.e., chronic absenteeism and graduation rates – are not yet available but staff is hopeful that the information will be available when the report is finalized. The report must be submitted to Commissioner Makin no later than Friday, February 17th and will be presented to the full Commission for consideration and approval at its February 14th meeting. |
| 7d | Media Update   * Maine Arts Academy Acquires Former Maine Veterans’ Homes Property in Augusta |
| **8** | **Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report** |
| 8a | *None* |
| **9** | **Unfinished Business** |
| 9a | To Consider the Approval of the Commission’s Staff Retirement Benefit *(Tabled Until Recalled)*  Motion to refer back to the Finance Committee for further discussion.  **Moved by Tori Kornfield; seconded by Leigh Weisenburger Albert and voted by roll call vote as follows** - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes), Nichi Farnham (yes), Jim Handy (yes), Wilson Hess (yes), Norm Higgins (yes), Tom Keller (yes), and Tori Kornfield (yes) --to approve the motion referring this item back to the Finance Committee for further review. |
| 9b | To Consider the Approval of Ecology Learning Center’s Request to Add an Additional Facility  At last month’s Commission Meeting, the Commission voted unanimously to grant authority to the Executive Committee to consider the approval of ELCs request to add an additional facility pending the inspection by the state fire marshal’s office.  That inspection yielded four (4) minor items that needed attention before the school could pass inspection. This item was placed back on the agenda so the Commission could consider extending the authority granted to the Executive Committee at last month’s meeting for an additional 30 days.  **Moved by Wilson Hess; seconded by Tom Keller and voted by roll call vote as follows** - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes), Nichi Farnham (yes), Jim Handy (yes), Wilson Hess (yes), Norm Higgins (yes), Tom Keller (yes), and Tori Kornfield (yes) --to extend the authority granted to the Executive Committee at the December Commission Meeting for an additional 30 days. |
| **10** | **New Business Requiring Approval** |
|  | *Prior to any discussion about the 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Reports, the School Performance Committee wanted to state for the record their concerns with chronic absenteeism and growth in both ELA and math.*  *Commission members were also reminded that these reports are based on the old Performance Framework.* |
| 10a | To Consider the Approval of Baxter Academy for Technology and Science’s 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Report  A copy of the report was distributed for review and consideration.  The following discussion points were made for the record:   * Tori is concerned about math scores, particularly where this is a STEM school and “was supposed to be a model for other schools”. * Tom is concerned about gender equity as the student population is 60% male and 40% female. * Leigh commented that the school population is not representative of the schools in the surrounding area. * Nichi noted that the attendance is positive.   **Moved by Tori Kornfield; seconded by Jim Handy and voted by roll call vote as follows** - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes), Nichi Farnham (yes), Jim Handy (yes), Wilson Hess (yes), Norm Higgins (yes), Tom Keller (yes), and Tori Kornfield (yes) --to receive the report and place it on file. |
| 10b | To Consider the Approval of Community Regional Charter School’s 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Report  A copy of the report was distributed for review and consideration.  Tori noted that the school’s overall performance in the early years is strong, but growth decreases as student’s progress through grade levels. She would like to see cohort tracking for students that have been with the school for a period of time.  **Moved by Tori Kornfield; seconded by Tom Keller and voted by roll call vote as follows** - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes), Nichi Farnham (yes), Jim Handy (yes), Wilson Hess (yes), Norm Higgins (yes), Tom Keller (yes), and Tori Kornfield (yes) --to receive the report and place it on file. |
| 10c | To Consider the Approval of Ecology Learning Center’s 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Report  A copy of the report was distributed for review and consideration.  Nichi noted that this school is the least timely of all of the charter schools in the portfolio in getting required reports into Epicenter.  **Moved by Tori Kornfield; seconded by Leigh Weisenburger Albert and voted by roll call vote as follows** - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes), Nichi Farnham (yes), Jim Handy (yes), Wilson Hess (yes), Norm Higgins (yes), Tom Keller (yes), and Tori Kornfield (yes) --to receive the report and place it on file. |
| 10d | To Consider the Approval of Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences’ 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Report  A copy of the report was distributed for review and consideration.  **Moved by Tori Kornfield; seconded by Tom Keller and voted by roll call vote as follows** - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes), Nichi Farnham (yes), Jim Handy (yes), Wilson Hess (yes), Norm Higgins (yes), Tom Keller (yes), and Tori Kornfield (yes) --to receive the report and place it on file. |
| 10e | To Consider the Approval of Harpswell Coastal Academy’s 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Report  A copy of the report was distributed for review and consideration.  **Moved by Tori Kornfield; seconded by Jim Handy and voted by roll call vote as follows** - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes), Nichi Farnham (yes), Jim Handy (yes), Wilson Hess (yes), Norm Higgins (yes), Tom Keller (yes), and Tori Kornfield (yes) --to receive the report and place it on file. |
| 10f | To Consider the Approval of Maine Academy of Natural Sciences’ 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Report  A copy of the report was distributed for review and consideration.  The following discussion points were made for the record:   * Tori wants to see more growth. She recognizes that there are increases over time, but the starting points were very low to begin with. * Nichi noted that the school has made a real effort to be a part of its community.   **Moved by Tori Kornfield; seconded by Tom Keller and voted by roll call vote as follows** - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes), Nichi Farnham (yes), Jim Handy (yes), Wilson Hess (yes), Norm Higgins (yes), Tom Keller (yes), and Tori Kornfield (yes) --to receive the report and place it on file. |
| 10g | To Consider the Approval of Maine Arts Academy’s 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Report  A copy of the report was distributed for review and consideration.  Note that the number of male students and female students was incorrect in the draft report. This will be fixed prior to the report being distributed and posted.  **Moved by Tori Kornfield; seconded by Tom Keller and voted by roll call vote as follows** - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes), Nichi Farnham (yes), Jim Handy (yes), Wilson Hess (yes), Norm Higgins (yes), Tom Keller (yes), and Tori Kornfield (yes) --to receive the report and place it on file. |
| 10h | To Consider the Approval of Maine Connections Academy’s 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Report  A copy of the report was distributed for review and consideration.  The following discussion points were made for the record:   * Compared to MeVA, MeVA is stronger academically and Commission members feel that both virtual schools should be performing the same. * Jim noted that the school is coming up against renewal and needs to “begin taking this more seriously” and “has very little time to turn this around”. * Jim also noted that the school’s attendance is a highlight of the report, but feels that attendance should be good as the school operates virtually.   **Moved by Tori Kornfield; seconded by Tom Keller and voted by roll call vote as follows** - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes), Nichi Farnham (yes), Jim Handy (yes), Wilson Hess (yes), Norm Higgins (yes), Tom Keller (yes), and Tori Kornfield (yes) --to receive the report and place it on file. |
|  | *Final comments for the record were as follows:*   * *“The job description for the Executive Director references ‘high performing schools’. That’s what we want.”* * *Academic performance is extremely important to the School Performance Committee and members shared that they “are unhappy with academic performance” and noted that it is the “weakest part of the portfolio”.* * *Tori would not support a 10th school until all schools in the portfolio are showing growth.* * *Jim likes the transparency of reviewing the reports individually.* * *Norm asked, “Are our charter schools successful? If they are, how do we communicate that?”* * *Leigh is curious how we compare to other states and to sending districts.* |
| 10i | To Consider the Approval of Executive Director Transition Modification   * 10i.1 DRAFT Executive Director Job Description * 10i.2 DRAFT Overview/Timeline of Selection Process   A copy of the proposed job description and overview/timeline of the selection process was distributed for review and consideration. Comments/recommendations from Commission members were:   * Adding the Commission’s vision statement to the job description. * Including wording about diversity and/or inclusion. * Thinking about onboarding and how the Commission will orient the new Executive Director. * “ The stronger document we have, the better.”   The original timeline shows the position being posted during the week of January 23rd. The Search Committee will meet on January 12th to discuss and incorporate suggested changes to the job posting. In order to meet the original timeline, the Executive Committee will hold a special meeting to review and approve the final recommendation from the Search Committee.  **Moved by Wilson Hess; seconded by Jim Handy and voted by roll call vote as follows** - Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes), Nichi Farnham (yes), Jim Handy (yes), Wilson Hess (yes), Norm Higgins (yes), Tom Keller (yes), and Tori Kornfield (yes) --to authorize the Executive Committee to hold a special meeting to consider the approval of the Search Committee’s proposed job description for posting in a timely manner. |
| **11** | **New Business Requiring Notification and Acceptance** |
| 11a | New Governing Board Members:   * 11a.1 Beth Alma (Ecology Learning Center) * 11a.2 Erin Brown (Maine Academy of Natural Sciences)   Resignations:   * Sean Bushway (ACADIA Academy) * Victoria Stanton (ACADIA Academy) * Peter Montano (Baxter Academy for Technology and Science)   Term Outs: *None*  No formal action required by the Commission. |
| 11b | FY23 Budget vs. Actual Report  A copy of the dashboard report was presented for review.  No formal action required by the Commission. |
| **12** | **Future Topics** |
| 12a | February   * To Consider the Approval of the 2021-22 Annual Report to the Commissioner |
| **13** | **Announcements** |
| 13a | This Month’s Celebrations *(None)* |
| 13b | Important Dates *(None)* |
| 13c | Portfolio Calendar Items  *(None Reported)* |
| 13d | Next Regular Business Meeting – February 14, 2023 *(Room #103, Cross Office Building, Augusta)* |
| **14** | **Adjourn** |
|  | Chair Hess declared adjournment at 3:15pm with no objections. |

**\*** *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.*