

# Maine Charter School Commission

## ***February 7, 2017 Business Meeting Minutes Accepted as Written by Commission Vote on March 7, 2017***

The Maine Charter School Commission held a regular Business Meeting at the **Burton M. Cross Office Building**, Room #103B, on **Tuesday, February 7, 2017**.

### **1. Call to Order and Declare a Quorum**

The meeting was called to order by Commission Chair, Laurie Pendleton at 10:00 a.m. and a quorum was declared.

Commission Members present were: Laurie Pendleton, Chair; Dr. Mike Wilhelm, Vice Chair; Nichi Farnham; Jana Lapoint; and Shelley Reed.

Commission Members absent were: John Bird (*joined via conference call but unable to vote*)

Also present were Jim Rier, Bob Kautz, and Amy Allen. Gina Post was absent due to illness.

Members of the public present included Bill Nave; Roger Brainerd, MACS; Judith Jones, MACS; and Doug Bourget, Maine Connections Academy.

### **2. Members of the Public Are Asked to Sign In**

Laurie Pendleton reminded those present to sign-in if they had not already done so.

### **3. To Consider Action Relative to Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda**

The following items were added to the agenda:

- Laurie Pendleton will report on MeANS and Cornville Performance Indicators Workshops
- Bob Kautz will share the Budget vs. Actual – February 1 Report
- Bob Kautz will share Biennial Budget figures, notes and additional information

### **4. To Take Action Relative to Accepting as Printed the Minutes of the January 3, 2017 Business Meeting**

No changes to the written minutes.

**Moved by Shelley Reed; seconded by Jana Lapoint and voted unanimously by those present** to accept the January 3, 2017 Business Meeting minutes as written.

### **5. OLD BUSINESS**

5a. Update on Strategic Planning Sub-Committees:

Implement Renewal Process

Bob Kautz shared that this sub-committee needs to come together to reflect on the renewal process. With the first two schools having gone through the renewal process, it's important to reflect on the process and determine if any changes or improvements can be made. There are three schools that will be going through the renewal process this year.

#### Review and Develop Policies and Procedures

Laurie Pendleton reminded the group that the Governing Board Member Form was revised in response to a Governing Board member who requested that their information be removed from the Charter Commission website. This sub-committee came together and created a new form which now has less personally identifiable information and doesn't constrict a potential Governing Board member from living in the catchment area of the school.

Shelley Reed asked if any action needed to be taken by the Commission in order to approve the revised form. Dr. Mike Wilhelm indicated that because the form had been "tucked inside" the RFP, an approval would be needed because it's a change to the RFP as it currently stands.

**Moved by Shelley Reed; seconded by Jana Lapoint and voted unanimously by those present** to approve the revised Governing Board Information Sheet.

The RFP/Application for 2018-2019 school year was discussed.

Bob Kautz shared that any changes to the RFP/Application will need to be made soon as the RFP/Application will be issued in late May. He shared that now is the time to discuss what the Commission might be looking for in an applicant whether geographic, grade level, virtual versus brick and mortar or vice versa as this would be the 10<sup>th</sup> and final public charter school under current law if approved. He also shared that the Governor has proposed to lift the cap on the number of public charter schools, but Commission should make decisions about the RFP/Application as if this were the last school that Maine would have until 2021.

Laurie Pendleton shared that although she would love to see schools spread out around the state, she doesn't feel that the Commission can limit applicants to certain geographic areas. Shelley Reed stated that to do so would complicate the rubric that the Commission currently works with.

Dr. Mike Wilhelm reminded the group that the Commission has had this conversation several times and the answer has always been that we want applications from all sources. He stated that it may be time to think about an actual policy that states that the Maine Charter School Commission is open to any and all applicants who can meet the criteria and will not restrict anyone from applying.

Jana Lapoint expressed that she is not interested in having any more virtual schools at this time and would be supportive of a policy indicating that the Maine Charter School Commission would not be interested in engaging in a third virtual school at this time. She feels that any child in the state of Maine is eligible to apply for the two that already exist and that, for now, that's enough.

Laurie Pendleton asked Roger Brainerd from MACS if he had any insight as to why there are so few applications received in response to an RFP. Roger shared that the knowledge of only one slot being available is a "chilling" one to many groups that may have an interest in applying. Being such a competitive and time consuming process, the feeling is not to spend the time and money necessary due to the potential competition for the last and final spot. Laurie reminded the group that the idea of a concept approval has been discussed in the past.

Jana Lapoint agreed that the application process is cumbersome and asked if the Commission could take a look at the RFP process itself and perhaps reduce it down to 30-40 pages of what is absolutely essential.

Bob Kautz indicated that these are the decisions that need to be made. He also expressed to the group that maybe we delay issuing an RFP and not issue one this year. He indicated that the delay would allow time to do outreach with MACS to other parts of the state.

Judith Jones from MACS shared that outreach is important. She stated that collectively we need to figure out how to inspire the people in Maine to apply for a charter. There has been discussion about bringing in folks from different states that have been successful in opening various types of charters and that perhaps focusing workshops in different geographic areas might inspire school districts to think about becoming the authorizer.

Further discussion regarding the RFP was tabled until the next Business Meeting.

## 6. NEW BUSINESS

### 6a. Notification from Maine Virtual Academy that Bill Nave is Conducting Independent Third Party Evaluation.

Jana Lapoint shared that she was very impressed with the report that Bill Nave presented for Maine Connections Academy and would support him evaluating Maine Virtual Academy.

Bill Nave asked for clarification on the ESP piece. He is finalizing the contract with Maine Virtual and wants to make sure that he includes looking into the relationship with the ESP if that's something that the Commission feels strongly about. Dr. Mike Wilhelm shared that exploring that relationship was important from the very beginning so it should be included in a contract going forward.

There was question as to whether any action needed to be taken on this agenda item. Bob Kautz shared that, once selected by the school the evaluator must be mutually agreed upon between the school and the Commission. Dr. Mike Wilhelm stated that the wording of the agenda item would need to be changed and made a motion to accept that Maine Virtual Academy will hire Bill Nave to conduct the third party evaluation.

**Moved by Dr. Mike Wilhelm; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present** to accept that Maine Virtual Academy will hire Bill Nave to conduct the third party evaluation.

### 6b. To Consider and Accept Maine Connection Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation.

Bob indicated that Dr. Mike Wilhem, Gina Post and himself met with Bill Nave to review the evaluation before the final draft was presented to the Commission. He shared that this review had nothing to do with substance or content but more as a way to be sure that there were no personal hints that would allow the reader to identify any person who answered questions for the report itself. He thanked Bill for his work and cooperation.

Nichi Farnham asked if a third party evaluation has to be done for all schools. Bob Kautz shared that, at this time, the only schools that are required to conduct an independent evaluation are the two virtual schools and that the requirement was put into the virtual charters because of the amount of opposition to virtual charter schools. The Commission felt that in order to have documentation about how Maine's virtual charter schools were performing that it was necessary for an outside evaluator to take an objective look at how things were going and report those findings. Bob then shared that this is the first Independent Third Party Evaluation that has been presented to the Commission and indicated that there will be a second one presented to the Commission next year and then yearly thereafter for each of the virtual charters.

Jana Lapoint questioned why the evaluations would be done yearly. Bob indicated that the Commission could change that requirement but that the Commission had felt early on that bringing in an outside entity yearly to conduct the evaluations brought a level of objectivity and authenticity to the process.

Laurie Pendleton asked Bill Nave to give an overview of his report. Bill shared that he had met with the Board, Doug Bourget, school staff (teachers and administration), students and parents to collect data for his final report. Based on initial conversations, a list of questions was developed. Those questions were:

- How can we make sure that MCA applicants and their families fully understand the motivation required to succeed in a virtual learning environment?
- What factors influence the degree to which MCA teachers are satisfied with their work?
- How do students, parents (learning coaches), and teachers perceive the efficacy of the live lesson format?
- How do MCA students and parents (learning coaches) perceive the curriculum as one that's relevant and appropriate for Maine?
- How do MCA teachers, administrators, staff, and Board perceive the role of the ESP (Connections) in supporting and fulfilling the mission and vision of the local Maine Connections Academy?
- What is the perceived quality of the several sets of relationships among the MCA students, parents (learning coaches), teachers, administrators, staff, Board, and the ESP (Connections)?

Bill shared that he worked with Doug Bourget to select samples of parents and students to interview using several criteria. Samples were drawn from families whose students had been with MCA from the beginning; families with a wide variety of backgrounds including those with students who had been in public schools prior to enrolling at MCA, students who had been home-schooled and students who were either doing well or not so well in their previous schooling; and finally a range of both male and female students in grades 7-12 who were comfortable in engaging in a phone conversation about their experience with MCA. He indicated that his desire was to interview a wide variety of students and families – not just the stars but those that were struggling for whatever reason. In all, Bill indicated that 26 interviews took place (11 teachers, 1 principal, 1 administrative assistant, 5 parents and 9 students).

After the interviews were completed and data compiled, Bill determined that Maine Connections Academy is functioning well and that teachers are caring, dedicated and unwilling to allow any student to fail. There was a real sense that Doug Bourget, Principal, is the person that keeps the school running smoothly in that he runs interference between the school and the Commission, the school and the ESP, and the school and the Governing Board. Bill stated that Doug needs help and that the Board should begin making plans to add an assistant principal to assist Doug with the overall operation of the school. The biggest issue uncovered during the evaluation is that of teacher compensation and benefits. Mr. Nave has not had an opportunity to meet with the Governing Board to discuss his findings and recommendations but has plans to attend their next Board Meeting to discuss items such as teachers' desire to work from home one or two times per week; bringing the salaries and benefits more in line with other public schools in the area; and hiring some help for Doug Bourget.

Jana Lapoint shared that after reviewing the report it was evident that the virtual schools are working well for so many different families and students in ways that hadn't been thought of at the beginning.

Laurie Pendleton asked Bill if he evaluated the effectiveness of the Governing Board and Bill indicated that he didn't because that wasn't something they wanted to know but could certainly be addressed in the second year report. Bob Kautz shared that the Governing Board, as a condition of their charter, is supposed to be evaluating their effectiveness. Laurie then asked if the parents and students interviewed were randomly picked from the lists that were provided by the school. Bill acknowledged that it wasn't a completely random process in that parents and students were selected based on their willingness to participate and those that had a high contact response and Laurie expressed her concern that the evaluation only includes engaged parents and felt that the next evaluation should include outreach to parents who may not be as engaged or are difficult to get in touch with those and those that had students that left to understand why they left. She also expressed that it would be interesting for the school to maintain an alumni database and follow the graduates to see how prepared they felt after graduation whether that be for college or a job.

Dr. Mike Wilhelm commented that it might be valuable in the future to look at conducting exit interviews with the students.

Jana Lapoint pointed out that the report supported the concern that not every family knew what they were signing up for when they enrolled their student in a virtual school setting. She expressed that she likes that recommendation to find ways for a potential student to “test drive” the school before committing. She also pointed to the fact that some students may find success in a virtual school because the problems – like bullying – that exist in a brick and mortar school are eliminated. A real positive finding in the report was that students were communicating that their home communities were extremely receptive about their participation in extracurricular activities.

Laurie Pendleton wanted to address the desire for teachers to work from home for a day or two per week and asked for the background information on that topic. She wondered if the Commission had made the decision not to allow teachers to do this and shared that she has guidance for developing a policy for flexible teaching schedules if this would be of interest going forward.

Bob Kautz shared that the history of work from home was never directly articulated in any specific agreement. He stated that in the early discussion with Maine Connections Academy there was a strong feeling amongst the Commission that if we were requiring them to have a building to house the staff that the staff should work from there. But more importantly the Commission felt that with this being Maine’s first virtual school, and with the outside opposition, that having teachers working under the same roof would allow for greater dialogue about the students. Karl Francis, who was Doug Bourget’s predecessor, was a strong advocate for work from home opportunities and he was told that the school needed time to get established before the request would be considered. The Commission didn’t specifically tell them they couldn’t do it, but asked them to wait before submitting the request so there would be more data to use when making the decision to approve the request or not. In a virtual setting you have distance – the distance between the teacher and the student and allowing teachers to work from home would create a further distance between teacher and teacher as well as teacher and principal. Maine Virtual Academy interpreted the work from home discussion more liberally and hired teachers with the understanding that they would only have to be in Augusta a few days a week. The Review Team advised them that wasn’t the case and asked that they stop the practice after their first year in operation. They did so and lost a number of teachers due to the commute but have since filled those positions and feel that they have a stronger staff than they had previously.

Jana Lapoint asked about the teacher who lives in Fort Kent. Bob explained that that was a special request made by Maine Connections Academy and that it was a one-time situation where they were unable to secure a qualified teacher and she was available. Her husband is a professor at the University of Fort Kent and has been able to take MCA students who are located in her general area to science outings at the University of Maine at Presque Isle so it has worked out well. This was a unique situation that was approved because the types of activities and experiences that she can offer students north of Bangor is unparalleled. It’s important to note that she does travel to Maine Connections when necessary to attend staff meetings and other events where her attendance is required.

In Bill Nave’s report, he uses the “N” to represent the number of interviews conducted. “N” is not defined in the report and Dr. Mike Wilhelm suggested that it be in the next report.

Laurie Pendleton asked Doug Bourget what his thoughts were about the report. He stated that he thought the findings were accurate and that there were no real surprises – good or bad – that stood out. He indicated that he agrees with the recommendations and there has been discussion about what an assistant principal role might look like – that it might be more of a Dean of Students or a part-time Administrative Assistant – depending on what tasks and/or duties would be involved.

Nichi Farnham asked if the final report was what the Commission had envisioned when the requirement was put into the virtual charter contracts. Bob Kautz explained that the Commission didn’t have an specifics as to the content itself

other than to have a report that was objective and could speak to whether the virtual environment was working or not. Laurie Pendleton shared that she felt that the relationship between the school and the ESP was missing in the final report. Doug Bourget shared that he thought the report spoke to the independence of the school and the support that they are being given by the EMO.

Nichi Farnham expressed her concern that the independent third party evaluation is another review that the schools have to prepare for, taking more time out of their day and away from students. She wants the Commission to look at what we're asking of the schools and hopes that as we continue to pump out data that it's not being duplicated. Dr. Mike Wilhelm commented that one way to solve that problem would be to tag team. That the Review Team can go in and look at things like achievement data while the evaluator goes in looking for more qualitative data – these meetings could be scheduled simultaneously.

Laurie Pendleton asked if the final report had gone before the Maine Connections Academy Governing Board because the wording in the charter contract states that the “school shall provide evidence that the Board has reviewed the information”. Because Bill Nave has not shared this with the Governing Board, and the Commission does not yet have evidence that they've reviewed the information a motion was made to indicate that the report itself was received.

**Moved by Dr. Mike Wilhelm; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present** to accept that the Commission received the Maine Connections Academy Third Party Evaluation.

**6c. To Consider and Approve Harpswell Coastal Academy's Request to Amend School Schedule: "Anywhere/Anytime Learning Policy"**

Due to inclement weather the school was closed and no representatives were able to attend.

Bob Kautz explained that essentially Harpswell is emulating what Baxter is doing in terms of snow days. Harpswell is requesting to create three learning packets for its students. These packets wouldn't necessarily pertain to what the students are currently working on but would fit in to things that they are doing and could be done at home so that there's still learning going on when school is canceled for any reason.

Shelley Reed shared that the Review Team had a conversation about the request and that, if approved, would not apply to past snow days but only to those that may occur going forward. She also indicated that, if approved, there would be a stipulation that Harpswell would have to provide a written report at the conclusion of the school year indicating evidence that the policy is working and what type of learning took place. She thinks that a motion should be made to accept the request for the “Anytime/Anywhere Learning” policy but to add to that our expectation that the effectiveness will be monitored and that the Commission will receive a detailed report at the conclusion of the school year.

Jana Lapoint had concerns about how many students each Crew Leader would be responsible for and could they speak to all of them in the morning and then follow up with each of them in the afternoon. She requested to see an example of what a learning packet looks like and it needs to be very clear what we are expecting from them and that they will be held accountable.

Dr. Mike Wilhelm suggested that the agenda item could be tabled until a representative from Harpswell could attend to answer questions. Bob Kautz indicated that if snow days are going to occur they will most likely occur in February not in March so it's important to give them a decision now. Laurie Pendleton shared that she's comfortable accepting the request because it's similar to what Baxter is doing and it's only 3 days. Nichi Farnham shared that the students in upper grades are more apt to be able to provide their productiveness on a snow day more than students in lower grades. Shelley Reed commented that the learning activities will be based on standards and that students will be checking in

with their Crew Leader, detailing their progress on Project Foundry and will have to demonstrate what they did and show evidence of meeting standards or will be marked absent. She thinks it's exciting that the school wants to try it.

**Moved by Shelley Reed; seconded by Dr. Mike Wilhelm and voted unanimously by those present to approve Harpswell Coastal Academy's "Anytime/Anywhere Learning" request.**

#### 6d. To Consider and Approve the Purchase of Epicenter

Bob Kautz explained that Epicenter is a software package that's designed for charter schools and that it's designed to improve the communication between the charter school and the authorizer insofar as making sure that the charter school knows when certain documents need to be submitted, is reminded to submit them, and if they're not submitted on time and once set up sends automatic notices to the charter schools. Due to the online nature of the software notices, reminders, submittals, etc. are easier to manage and there's a true accounting of where the schools are in terms of documentation. It also becomes a method of communication for the Commission with the office.

Amy Allen commented that the streamlined process that Epicenter will create will make things easier for the school and office staff. She shared that a real goal is to cut down on the duplication of what schools are required to end to the DOE and to the Charter Commission. She reminded Commission members that they will have access to real-time data whenever they want it which they don't currently have access to and explained the manual processes are that are currently in place to track required documents.

Shelley Reed echoed that there's a great deal of work to remember everything that has to happen and to remember what has to be checked on, a lot for the schools to go through and that if there's a program that can streamline that process it makes sense. She's supportive of a program that will take unnecessary work from office staff allowing them to spend time on other things. She also shared that Epicenter is the program that is discussed at national conference that she's heard from other charter authorizers and charter schools that Epicenter is making their lives easier.

Laurie Pendleton mentioned that a conversation had taken place previously about the schools having an opportunity to look at the program to see if it would reduce their workload as advertised. She is concerned that the Commission is being asked to take a vote on something without the schools having seen it. Amy Allen shared with the group that a workshop had been scheduled for Tuesday, February 14<sup>th</sup> where school leaders will see the online demonstration and that there will be an opportunity for Q&A at that time.

Dr. Mike Wilhelm asked if Gina Post and Amy Allen had taken the program on a "test run", if Gina was comfortable with what she's seen, if references were checked and if there was adequate tech support once purchased. Amy Allen explained Epicenter's willingness to allow us to "play in their sandbox" which gave us the ability to set up our own reminders to see what it would look like and how it would work. She also shared, and echoed by Bob Kautz, that Gina is completely comfortable with recommending the program, that she had received references from NACSA as well as Epicenter's customer list and had spent a couple of days speaking to the references and documenting those conversations and that Epicenter offers a great deal of support after the sale. They have tech support that is available by phone, online support by way of ticket submission and many videos that can be watched.

Bob Kautz shared that within the last few days that Wendy Betts had reached out to Gina to ask if this decision could be delayed for a few weeks because she has an option that might save the Commission money. Bob shared that there were no other details about the option so has no idea if it's comparable or not to what Epicenter can do, nor any idea about how the price would compare but told the group that a meeting would be scheduled to meet with Wendy to hear what she has to offer.

John Bird shared that his recommendation would be go ahead with the approval and if an alternative presents itself that is better that we can call an emergency meeting if needed to discuss. Dr. Mike Wilhelm asked if a motion could be made to accept the purchase and then further discussion could take place.

Bob Kautz recommended that the Commission approve the motion which would start the process and explained that doesn't mean that any documents would be signed in the next two or three weeks. The approval would be in place and in the meantime, the schools will have an opportunity to review the program and office staff will meet with Wendy Betts. If the schools express a strong opposition and/or Wendy's alternative is a better program then the purchase would be halted.

Dr. Mike Wilhelm asked if the Commission would receive a report on the workshop and the meeting with Wendy before proceeding with the purchase and Bob indicated that they would be kept informed.

**Moved by Dr. Mike Wilhelm; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present** to approve the request to purchase Epicenter with no final commitment until the schools have had an opportunity to look at it and a meeting with Wendy Betts has taken place.

## 7. REPORTS

### 7a. Chair Report – Laurie Pendleton

Laurie shared that she and Gina met with MeANS to clarify and review their Performance Measures for their new team. MeANS had 6 or 7 teachers present along with Tonya Arnold and Emanuel Pariser. They discussed the purpose of the Performance Measures and gave background as to the accountability system and that the Commission isn't asking for them just because it would be helpful. Staff dove into their data and Laurie and Gina took a look at some of the ways they could report their state data and more importantly their NWEA data. The meeting lasted nearly three hours and at the end teachers commented that they thought the meeting was going to be all about numbers and it was nice to realize that the Commission was looking to showcase the data that shows a true picture of the school. The hope is to have the MeANS Performance Measures finalized for presentation at the May Business Meeting.

There was a scheduling conflict with the Cornville Performance Measure workshop and it has been rescheduled and will be done virtually. Information from that workshop will be available at the next Business Meeting.

### 7b. Vice Chair Report – Dr. Mike Wilhelm

Dr. Mike Wilhelm gave an update on the last Blue Ribbon Commission Meeting. Prior to the meeting, a draft list of objectives for the future work of the Commission was sent out. The objectives were as follows:

- To improve classroom instruction at all grade levels.
- To ensure that students graduate high school both proficient and on time expanding access to high quality educational programs.
- All children are kindergarten ready and proficient readers by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
- Greater efficiency is achieved in the use of resources.

Dr. Wilhelm shared that when the list was distributed, there was a subcategory under the second objective that specifically mentioned charter schools which was a surprise to everyone because charter schools had not been discussed as a separate item prior to that list being distributed. Based on feedback from the Commission, Dr. Wilhelm proposed to the Blue Ribbon Commission that they look at equity of educational resources for all state SAU's because the public charter schools are indeed small SAU's who don't currently have access to property tax revenue which puts them at a disadvantage compared to other SAU's. Dr. Wilhelm shared that his proposal generated a great deal of discussion and



that ultimately the Blue Ribbon Commission, as a whole, voted to take charter schools off the list. The sense is that the concept of resources in general, not just related to charter schools but resources as a whole, will be discussed during the next phase.

Jim Rier stated that the Charter Commission really needs to be working on lists of what the funding needs are. He isn't confident that the needs will be addressed by the Blue Ribbon Commission specifically. He stated that he's looking forward to exploring how we better serve students and how they're currently being impacted.

7c. Executive Director – Bob Kautz

#### ESSA Update

Bob explained that an extension on the application submission had been extended by the federal government to the end of March and that the ESSA Advisory Council is getting close to finishing writing the application and that there have been reassurances that the Charter Commission have a chance to review the full application to measure what impact it might have – intended or unintended – on Maine's public charter schools.

#### Legislative Update

Bob stated that he hasn't yet seen any LD's that have come through pertaining to charter schools. Roger Brainerd explained that MACS is currently working on language for a couple of bills pertaining to extracurricular activities and capital expenses but that no LD's had been created at this time.

#### Education & Cultural Affairs Committee Update

Bob shared that both Jim Rier and Dr. Mike Wilhelm finally went before the Committee and furthered the process of their appointment and reappointment to the Maine Charter School Commission. The Committee sent a report to the State Board of Education recommending that they both be approved. The State Board of Education meets on Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup> and a final vote will be taken then.

Bob also shared that the Charter Commission has been invited to schedule an informal get-together with the Committee and asked if the Commission felt this was something they would like to participate in. Much discussion took place about the importance of being able to meet with them informally so it was decided that we would try to schedule something.

On a separate note, Bob Kautz shared that there had been some misunderstanding as to whether Jana Lapoint and Shelley Reed are both eligible to serve another full term on the Commission. Their terms are up on 6/30/17 and in discussing with Sarah Forster it was determined that they are both eligible to serve for another full, three year term. Jana Lapoint shared that Nichi Farnham will present the re-appointments to the State Board of Education at the next meeting. This will allow for time to get through the Education Committee while they are still in session.

#### Finance Analyst Update

Bob shared that we have no candidates. He indicated that there had been two but both had withdrawn their interest in the position. He, Gina and Amy will be looking at this in its entirety and may have some other options to bring forward to consider.

#### Grant Update

Bob stated that this is referencing the grant that MACS is currently putting together. Roger Brainerd shared that he is currently waiting for a draft which he anticipates having shortly and that the final application is due on February 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Bob Kautz added an update on Cornville's PreK building. The Cornville Review Team has met to discuss. The original building that Cornville had proposed in their renewal application was going to be gifted to them. That fell through as a new Board was selected and that Board chose to keep the building; however, there was a second preschool facility in the area. This second facility has become available for purchase It's a building that would come fully equipped and has

already been approved and been in operation as a preschool in the Skowhegan. It's three or four times the size of the other building and they have shown us a budget that says they can afford it. It could exist by the revenue and income that they would make with an afterschool program so that they could exist on their own with no effect on the rest of the budget. Their other available option was to move to the portable classroom that exists on the Cornville campus but they felt that that was not as appropriate as one placed in downtown Skowhegan.

Bob asked Shelley Reed if she'd like to give an update on her participation in the press conference that took place as part of School Choice Week. Shelley explained that she reviewed the data that is in the Charter School Information booklet. Other speakers included Department of Education Acting Commissioner Bob Hasson, Aaron Chadbourne from the Governor's Office and Roger Brainerd with MACS and students.

Finally, Bob shared that he, Jim Rier, Dr. Mike Wilhelm and Laurie Pendleton will be meeting with David Silvernail and Dick Barnes following the Business Meeting regarding a proposal that they submitted regarding the monitoring process. The goal is have the monitoring process reach a higher level of validity and reliability. The study would also look at statistical comparisons among schools to compare charter schools with similar statistical groups in their respective catchment areas.

Bob Kautz gave an update on the budget. The Budget vs Actual Report as of February 1, 2017 was presented to the group and then the Proposed Budget for FY18 and FY19 was discussed. Along with the proposed budget, budget notes were presented that gave further explanation to each of the various line items. Bob indicated that he, Jim Rier and Dr. Mike Wilhelm had met in Topsham to finalize the budget and the he and Elaine Babb worked together to fine tune some of the line items. One of the biggest changes going forward is the salaries for office staff. Up until this point, there had not been any set salary schedules and the decision was made to look at job descriptions/titles for various state government positions, find descriptions that match the tasks that are currently being performed and bring the pay scale in line with the tasks that are being performed. To that end, both the Director of Program Management and the Administrative Assistant will receive a pay increase in the proposed budget. The rationale is the work that is being performed far exceeds any expectations that had been in place prior to hiring.

Jana Lapoint asked if the salaries were going to be presented as hourly rates and if so how would the benefits be calculated as Commission office staff do not receive benefits. Bob explained that the state salary schedules are shown as hourly rates with a separate column for the benefit amount. Jana stated that that should be made clear in the budget notes when appearing before the Appropriations Committee. Shelley Reed echoed that there should be a note that clearly indicates that positions do not receive benefits but that a health insurance allowance is available if needed. Bob explained that the health insurance allowance for all office staff is new with this proposed budget – that Gina Post's position was the only position that had it available. During the finance meeting in Topsham, Dr. Mike Wilhelm and Jim Rier felt strongly that it should be offered to all. Bob shared that currently there are no staff members that need the allowance so moving forward if it is needed it will be taken from the contingency line of the budget.

The budget notes indicate an hourly mark-up percentage of 18.87%. Jana Lapoint asked what was included in that 18.87%. Bob Kautz shared that we've never been given that information and that the chosen temp agencies were selected by state Purchases through the RFP process. Jana shared that the Appropriations Committee could very well ask what's included in that mark-up and Bob indicated that we would find out.

Bob Kautz shared that the Financial Administrator position has been left in the budget and that a part-time Administrative Assistant has been added. That's not to say that we're going to need that, but it's better to ask for it and have it approved rather than ask to have the budget changed at a later date.

When explaining the Per Diem line item, Bob Kautz explained that in the Governor's Biennial Budget there is wording that might assign oversight authority over the Maine School for Marine Science, Technology, Transportation and

Engineering to the Commission. That, plus a new tenth charter, would result in 11 schools being monitored by the Commission.

The remainder of the proposed budget was reviewed.

7d. Program Manager – Gina Post

- Panorama Education
- Update on Test Score Meetings

Laurie Pendleton recommended that this section be tabled until Gina is able to attend.

Bob Kautz briefly touched on the Panorama Workshop that is scheduled for February 14<sup>th</sup>. School leaders in attendance will learn about Insight Reports which is a new tool being offered by Panorama. The surveys are a great tool in gathering evidence about what makes the schools great. It goes beyond test scores and helps paint a broader picture. The hope is that those in attendance will have an appreciation of the value of the survey.

Amy Allen indicated that the Fluid Review demonstration scheduled for this afternoon would be rescheduled because of time constraints.

**8. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

8a. Turn in Expense Account Vouchers at the End of the Meeting

Laurie Pendleton reminded Commission members to turn in the Expense Account Vouchers that are in their packets at the end of the meeting.

8b. 2017 Business Meeting Dates:

- March 7, 2017
- April 4, 2017
- May 2, 2017
- June 6, 2017
- July 11, 2017 (SECOND Tuesday of the Month)
- August 1, 2017
- September 5, 2017
- October 3, 2017
- November 7, 2017 OR November 14, 2017
- December 5, 2017

8c. Lottery Information:

- Baxter School for Technology & Sciences – February 8, 2017
- Fiddlehead School of Arts & Science – March 8, 2017 (12:00 pm)
- Maine Connections Academy – March 13, 2017
- Maine Academy of Natural Sciences – March 29, 2017 (5:00pm – 7:00pm)
- ACADIA Academy – March 29, 2017 (6:00pm)
- Maine Virtual Academy – March 29, 2017

- Harpswell Coastal Academy – March 31, 2017 (10:00am)

## **9. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment.

## **10. ADJOURN**

Meeting was adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

**Moved by Shelley Reed; seconded by Jana Lapoint and voted unanimously by those present to adjourn.**