



May 2022 Business Meeting of the Maine Charter School Commission

**May 10, 2022 Business Meeting Minutes Approved by Commission Vote on June 23, 2022**

The Maine Charter School Commission held a Regular Meeting on  
Tuesday, May 10, 2022

Item Number	Agenda Item
1	<p><b>Call to Order and Declare a Quorum</b></p> <p>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 1:01pm and a quorum was declared.</p> <p>Commission members present were Wilson Hess, Nichi Farnham, Shelley Reed, Victoria Kornfield and Dr. Fern Desjardins</p> <p>Commission members absent were Jim Rier.</p> <p>Also present were Jeremy Jones, Gina Post, Lana Ewing, and Amy Allen (<i>via Zoom</i>).</p> <p><i>Commission member, Dr. Fern Desjardins read the Commission's Vision Statement.</i></p>
2	<p><b>Reminders</b></p>
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. Gina will interrupt if the captioner is having a difficult time hearing what is being said.
3	<p><b>Comments from Commission Chair and Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda</b></p>
3a	<p><u>Comments from Commission Chair</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Committee Reports<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Shelley Reed - Chair, School Performance Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee.</li><li>○ Nichi Farnham- Chair, Finance Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee.</li><li>○ Wilson Hess - Chair, Executive Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee.</li></ul></li><li>● Ad Hoc Committee for Election of Commission Officers</li></ul>

	<p>Shelley Reed and Dr. Fern Desjardins will serve as the members of the Nominating Committee. The Committee will bring forth a proposed slate of officers at the June Commission Meeting, with the vote on new officers taking place during the July meeting. Any proposed changes to the existing policy will be addressed at the August meeting.</p>
3b	<p><u>Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda</u></p> <p>1. On Sunday, May 8th, Cynthia Shelmerdine sent formal notification to the Commission withdrawing Harpswell Coastal Academy's request to incur additional debt to finance its reduction.</p> <p>Motion recognizing the withdrawal of the request.</p> <p>Moved by Nichi Farnham; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present to recognize the withdrawal of the request.</p> <p>2. The Fiddlehead School of Arts &amp; Sciences has submitted a formal amendment request to change its school calendar for the 2021-22 school year.</p> <p>Motion to add this request to the agenda (Item #8b)</p> <p>Moved by Nichi Farnham; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present to add Fiddlehead's amendment request to the agenda.</p>
4	<p><u>Meeting Minutes Approval</u></p>
4a	<p>To Consider the Minutes from the April 12, 2022 Business Meeting</p> <p>A copy of the minutes was distributed for review and consideration.</p> <p>Moved by Dr. Fern Desjardins; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present to approve the minutes from the April 12, 2022 Business Meeting.</p>
5	<p><u>Public Comment*</u></p> <p>Dan Stockford, attorney for Community Regional Charter School, acknowledged the Conflict of Interest document included on the agenda and shared that he's available to address any questions that the Commission may have.</p> <p>Rebecca Dennison, Dean of the MeANS Threshold Program, shared that 78% of students have completed the Accuplacer. She stated that learning a new system took some time but students have expressed positive feedback. She also shared that she is looking at ways to capture graduation rates of Threshold students versus Campus students.</p> <p>Evan Coleman, Curriculum Coordinator at MeANS, shared that he has met with each student to set goals and expectations around attendance. Letters have been sent home to families outlining these goals and expectations. The school has also revised its attendance policy.</p> <p>Sherry Gilbert, Maine Arts Academy Governing Board President, shared that the MeAA Governing Board has approved a new leadership structure for the school beginning with</p>

	<p>the 2022-23 school year. The structure will have a full-time Head of School, full-time Principal and a half-time Student Support Specialist who will primarily handle behavior issues.</p> <p>Caleb Christensen-Fletcher, Harpswell Coastal Academy math teacher, shared that he is optimistic about the proposed changes at HCA and excited to see the community support and enthusiasm. He looks forward to working with everyone involved "to develop a better HCA".</p>
6	<h3>Presentations</h3> <p>6a WestEd Presentation "Indicators of Distress" by Aimee Evan, Senior Research Associate &amp; School Improvement Specialist</p> <p>What are indicators of distress?</p> <p><u>Leadership and Governance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of systemic leadership development</li> <li>● Inadequate board capacity to govern</li> <li>● Inability to sustain leadership</li> <li>● Mismatched leadership competencies to context</li> <li>● Boards' inability to hold school leaders accountable</li> <li>● Boards' deteriorating relationship with authorizers</li> <li>● Lack of leadership</li> <li>● Inability to convene the board</li> </ul> <p><u>Operations and Finance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Breakdown in compliance and reporting functions</li> <li>● Failure to align to market needs</li> <li>● Failure to properly manage finances</li> <li>● Misappropriation of funds</li> </ul>
6b	<p>School Spotlight - Community Regional Charter School</p> <p>Elizabeth Firnkes, Principal at Overman Academy, shared a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the school focusing on what CRCS is (1) proficiency based, (2) integrated learning, (3) multi-age &amp; customized, and (4) academic, social, and emotional instruction. She described the various academic blocks and demonstrated how both staff and students use EmPower to gauge proficiency.</p>
7	<h3>Unfinished Business</h3> <p>7a To Consider Harpswell Coastal Academy's Request to Change School Facilities</p> <p>This agenda item was deferred from the April 12, 2022 meeting to allow time for the Board and the school to firm up its consolidation plan.</p> <p>Jeremy Jones, MCSC Executive Director, reviewed actions taken since the last Commission meeting and shared that he is impressed with the collaboration that has gone into the plan.</p> <p>Shelley Reed, Chair of the School Performance Committee, shared that the Committee spent a great deal of time focusing on the plan and the areas that HCA was asked to address and indicated that the conversations were rigorous and detailed sharing that</p>

	<p>concerns were around past performance and capacity. She also indicated that withdrawal of the request to incur debt was instrumental to the Committee focusing solely on the plan by itself. Ultimately the Committee voted 2-1 recommending that the Commission approve the reduction to 9 Ash Point Road in Harpswell.</p> <p>Cynthia Shelmerdine, HCA Board Chair, was present to answer questions and thanked the Commission staff for its guidance and commended the school's leadership on the development of the plan.</p> <p>Some of the comments shared by Commission members were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tori Kornfield stated that "the plans are wonderful, but past performance shows us it can't happen." She also expressed concern with the safety of the yurts citing their "vulnerability".</li> <li>• Dr. Fern Desjardins stated that "Mel you'll make a difference" and looks forward to seeing the progress a year from now. She also congratulated the fundraising efforts that have raised \$160,000 in the past several weeks.</li> <li>• Nichi Farnham shared that she's "putting today's decision in a box" and reminded the school that they are "on the cusp of renewal" and that "it either did work or it didn't work" and regardless of the outcome "you have to own it."</li> <li>• Wilson Hess stated "financing request was a huge concern and removing it was an important measure." He further shared that the school is "still fragile", encouraged continued fundraising and reminded that today's decision "is not an indicator of renewal."</li> <li>• Shelley Reed shared the "first plan had holes, but with push from Commission staff you've developed a solid plan". She encouraged the school to "use the plan" and shared that "I have hope and faith you can succeed".</li> </ul> <p>Moved by Shelley Reed; seconded by Dr. Fern Desjardins and voted as follows by those present – Wilson Hess (yes), Nichi Farnham (yes), Dr. Fern Desjardins (yes), Shelley Reed (yes), and Victoria Kornfield (no) – to approve Harpswell Coastal Academy's request to consolidate from 2 facilities to 1 at 9 Ash Point Road, Harpswell.</p>
7b	To Consider Harpswell Coastal Academy's Request to Incur Additional Debt to Finance Reduction  <i>Request Withdrawn</i>
8	<b>New Business Requiring Approval</b>
8a	To Consider the 2021-22 Mid-Year Monitoring Reports  Copies of the following reports were distributed for review and consideration ( <i>a reminder that these reports were held back from consideration at the last meeting to update factual statements</i> ):  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baxter Academy for Technology and Science</li> <li>• Community Regional Charter School</li> </ul> <p>Moved by Shelley Reed; seconded by Dr. Fern Desjardins and voted unanimously by those present to approve the 2021-22 mid-year monitoring reports as presented.</p>

8b	<p>To Consider the Approval of Fiddlehead School of Arts &amp; Sciences' Request to Amend the 2021-22 School Calendar</p> <p>Jeremy shared that the school shared a copy of a letter sent to the Department of Education requesting a waiver of instructional days for the current school year. They hope to reduce from 175 to 173 by eliminating June 13 and 14 as student days and using them as PD for staff instead.</p> <p>He further stated that the request itself didn't follow the required process and should have been received for consideration several weeks ago. He reminded the Commission that this is the second year in a row that the school submitted such a request and that a special Commission meeting was scheduled last year to consider.</p> <p>Gina Post, Chief Program Officer, shared that the school will not be offering any type of summer schooling and that there hasn't been a formal decision made by the MDOE at this point and recommends that a formal Corrective Action Plan be issued to the school.</p> <p>Moved by Nichi Farnham; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present to deny Fiddlehead School of Arts &amp; Sciences' request to amend the 2021-22 school calendar.</p>
9	New Business Requiring Notification and Acceptance
9a	<p>The following new governing board member appointments were announced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beth Alma to the Ecology Learning Center Governing Board</li> </ul> <p>The following resignations were announced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amy Linscott from the Maine Connections Academy Governing Board</li> <li>• Jamie Francomano from the Ecology Learning Center Governing Board</li> </ul> <p>Moved by Nichi Farnham; seconded by Victoria Kornfield and voted unanimously by those present to accept notifications as presented.</p>
9b	<p>New School Administrator - Casey Baugher, ACADIA Academy</p> <p>A copy of Mr. Baugher's resume was distributed for review and discussion.</p> <p>Moved by Shelley Reed; seconded by Nichi Farnham and voted unanimously by those present to accept notification that Casey Baugher has been hired as the new school leader at ACADIA Academy.</p>
9c	<p>To Consider and Accept FY22 Budget vs. Actual YTD – April Report</p> <p>A copy of the budget report was distributed for review and discussion.</p> <p>Moved by Nichi Farnham; seconded by Wilson Hess and voted unanimously by those present to accept the FY22 Budget vs. Actual YTD - April Report.</p>
9d	<p>To Consider and Accept FY22 Budget vs. Actual YTD - May Report</p> <p>A copy of the budget report was distributed for review and discussion.</p> <p>Moved by Nichi Farnham; seconded by Wilson Hess and voted unanimously by those present to accept the FY22 Budget vs. Actual YTD - May Report.</p>

10	<b>Executive Director/Commission Staff Report</b>
10a	<p>Progress on MeANS Charter Renewal</p> <p>The renewal timeline was reviewed and staff shared that the school has satisfied its conditions for renewal and that a copy of the <u>draft</u> charter contract has been sent to the Board for review. The current charter expires on August 31, 2022 and the plan is to have the renewal contract presented to the Commission for approval at its July 12th meeting. It is important to note that the MeANS Board will have a new chair at the time of the signing.</p> <p>Matt Newberg, Head of School, was present to share thoughts and field Commission questions.</p>
10b	<p>Progress on CRCS Charter Renewal</p> <p>The renewal timeline was reviewed and staff shared that progress is being made but there will be a lot to consider at the June Commission Meeting. The current charter expires on June 30, 2022 and it's possible that a special meeting will need to be held to meet the tight timeline. It is important to note that if the current charter expires without the renewal charter being signed, the school will cease to exist.</p>
10c	<p>Update on Changes to Performance Framework for FY23</p> <p>A copy of the timeline was shared. Staff reports that feedback is being solicited by external partners as well as from Board chairs and school personnel. The goal is to have a final draft for Commission approval at the June Commission Meeting.</p>
10d	<p>Strategic Plan Update</p> <p>Staff shared a document updating progress in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strategic Priority #1: Increase student Achievement and social-emotional well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mid-Year Reporting Process</li> <li>○ Creating a Culture of Data PD for Schools</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Strategic Priority #2: Create the conditions for sustained excellence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Epicenter Scorecard and Renewal Update</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Strategic Priority #3: Develop effective governing boards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Governing Board Training</li> <li>○ Q3 Board President's Summit</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Strategic Priority #4: Foster collaborative innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Modern Classrooms Project</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Strategic Priority #5: Engage and activate stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lotterease</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
10e	<p>Budget Process Approval Document</p> <p>Staff is currently analyzing past spending and creating a "wishlist" for the future. With this information a 3-year projected budget will be drafted and submitted to the Finance Committee for review, discussion, and consideration. The new fiscal year begins on July 1st so the hope is to have a budget presented for Commission approval at the June Commission Meeting.</p>

10f	Media Update ( <i>None</i> )
10g	<p>Legislative Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10g.1 April 2022 Legislative Update - Fate of the Charter School Program (CSP)</li> <li>• 10g.2 Resolve, To Establish a Pilot Program To Encourage Climate Education in Maine Public Schools</li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Climate Education Policy - Nature Based Education Consortium - Maine</u></a></li> </ul>
11	Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report
	<i>None</i>
12	Executive Session
	<p>Motion to go into Executive Session at 4:11pm</p> <p>Moved by Shelley Reed; seconded by Nichi Farnham and voted unanimously by those present to enter into Executive Session.</p> <p>Returned from Executive Session at 4:32pm with no announcements.</p>
13	Future Topics
13a	<p>June:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CRCS Renewal Charter Conditions Completion and Proceed to Contract Negotiation Phase</li> <li>• MeANS Renewal Charter Conditions Completion and Proceed to Contract Negotiation Phase</li> <li>• Approval of Revised Performance Framework for FY23</li> <li>• Election of Commission Officers</li> <li>• School Spotlight - Maine Connections Academy</li> <li>• Approval of FY23 Commission budget</li> </ul>
14	Announcements
14a	<p>This Month's Celebrations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congratulations to Shelley on the birth of her grandchild, Mio!</li> <li>• Congratulations to Jeremy for being selected to speak at the 2022 graduation ceremony of the James E. Rogers College of Law at the University of Arizona!</li> </ul>
14b	Portfolio Calendar Items ( <i>None</i> )
14c	Next Regular Business Meeting – June 14, 2022 ( <i>Room #103A – Cross Office Building and Zoom</i> )
15	Adjourn
	<p>The meeting was adjourned at 4:36pm.</p> <p>Chair Hess declared adjournment at 4:36pm with no objections.</p>

\* *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.*