***May 9, 2023, Commission Meeting Minutes Approved by Commission Vote on***

***June 13, 2023***

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

**Tuesday, May 9, 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, Norm Higgins, at 1:03pm and a quorum was declared.  Commission member(s) present were Norm Higgins, Tori Kornfield, Brian Langley (via Zoom), Tom Keller, Jim Handy, and Leigh Weisenburger Albert.  Also present were Lana Ewing, Amy Allen, and Dania Heard.  *Commission member, Norm Higgins, read the Commission’s Vision S*t*atement.* |
| **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 or Amy 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**  Chair Higgins recognized Teacher Appreciation Week and National Charter School Week noting that charter schools in Maine have approximately 230 teachers and 2,800 students in the portfolio. He also thanked Shelley Reed, President of the Maine Alliance for Charter Schools, for being a true advocate for kids in Maine and welcomed Brian Langley as the newest member of the Commission.  He also reported out on the following:   * Ad-Hoc Nomination Committee for Commission’s Chair and Vice Chair   + The current policy/procedure for nominating the Commission’s Chair and Vice Chair states that the committee will be comprised of at least one (1) past MCSC Chair and one other Commission member. As there is no past Chair currently on the Commission, Chair Higgins will appoint a few people to the Ad-Hoc Nomination Committee so that the process of selecting the next Commission Chair and Vice Chair can begin. The current policy will be revised and brought forth to the full Commission for consideration at a future meeting. * Legislative Updates   + The Public Hearing for LD 1741 - “An Act to Promote Educational Opportunity Through the Educational Choice Tax Credit Program, Eliminating Certain Restrictions on Charter Schools and Virtual Public Charter Schools, Allowing More Entities to Authorize Charter Schools and Clarifying Educational Policy on Immunization Requirements” was held on May 8th. Both the Maine Education Association and Maine School Management Association testified in opposition to the bill. Chair Higgins was present but did not testify. The Work Session, not yet scheduled, might be an opportunity for the Commission to share information about the public virtual charter schools in the portfolio.   + The Work Session for LD 1089 - “An Act to Require Presentation of the Maine Charter School Commission’s Annual Report” - has not yet been scheduled, but Chair Higgins plans to be in attendance once it is. |
| 3b | **Committee Reports**   * Tori Kornfield - Chair, School Performance Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee. * Leigh Weisenburger Albert - Chair, Finance Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee. * Norm Higgins - Chair, Executive Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee. |
| 3c | **Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda**  Item #10a - To Consider the Approval of the 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Reports Addendum - will be tabled as there have been some discrepancies in the data discovered. Staff will continue to work with the data and present for consideration at the June meeting. |
| 4 | **Meeting Minutes Approval** |
| 4a | To Consider the Minutes from the April 11, 2023, Commission Meeting  A copy of the draft minutes was distributed for review and consideration.  **Moved by Jim Handy; seconded by Tom Keller and voted as follows by roll call vote as follows -** Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes); Jim Handy (yes); Tom Keller (yes); Tori Kornfield (yes); Brian Langley (yes); and Norm Higgins (yes) -to approve the minutes from the April 11, 2023, Commission Meeting. |
| **5** | **Public Comment\*** |
|  | Heather King - Head of School at Maine Arts Academy - shared that they will be moving to their new facility during the first week of June. She also shared that the school continues to work on building new relationships within the community. Some recent activities that the students have participated in are the United Way Day of Caring where they planted trees at the Viles Arboretum, a performance for the residents of the new Maine Veterans Home and are working closely with the theater in downtown Augusta.  Jana Lapoint - member of both the Baxter Academy for Technology and Science’s Board and the Maine Connections Academy’s Board - indicated that she hadn’t seen a copy of the press release that Marshall Communications issued relative to the new Executive Director and would like to get a copy. She also inquired about the possibility of members of the Commission participating in site visits at the charter schools. Finally, she expressed concerns about the rating of the financial stability of Maine Connections Academy on the 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Reports Addendum that will be considered. |
| **6** | **Presentations** |
| 6a | Baxter Academy for Technology and Science’s Robotic Team was the focus of this month’s School Spotlight. Some highlights from the presentation:   * The team won four championships this season. * There are a total of 24 students involved in the program. * 95% of the parts for each module of the robot are custom-made in the Fab Lab and with 3D printers. * There are 10 active mentors – half of which are Baxter Academy alumni - that contribute a wide range of design, programming, mechanical, problem solving, and management guidance. * The team relies on fundraising to attend the World Championships and have realized they need to begin their fundraising efforts sooner. Fundraising events will begin in the summer off-season. * The prior years’ robot will remain fully intact to allow younger students time to learn. * The World Championships were held in Houston, Texas where the team was able to tour the Johnson Space Center and meet with Jessica Meir, astronaut from Maine. * The team has shared - and will continue to share - at various events including the Maine Technology User Group Summit and Trade Show and the Maine Manufacturing Show. They will demonstrate in the State House’s Hall of Flags and speak directly to the Department of Education’s Student Cabinet. |
| **7** | **Executive Director/Commission Staff Report** |
| 7a | School Updates  Baxter Academy for Technology and Science   * 20% of the school week is devoted to Flex Friday - a unique program requiring initiative, perseverance, and collaboration, as well as reflection on the work and its impact in the community * Presentations will be held on May 21 and 22 and all are invited to attend. Projects that won first place at the Science Fair and the Math Fair will be on display. * The school recently won 1st place at the science fair and math fair, which the projects will be on display during the Flex Friday presentations.   Maine Arts Academy   * Students have been involved in several events including the Lincoln Center’s “Freedom of Swing” (jazz band); and the 7th Annual 10-Minute Play Festival - featuring plays written and directed by students (theater, visual arts and photography students)   Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences   * As a nature-based school, students continue to interact with members of the community by going to apple orchards, forests, and state parks. Some examples:   + 3rd grade students have been researching birds and studying raptors at Bradbury Mountain State Park and listening to speakers from Maine Wild Bird Supply who have been doing hawk watches for 16 years. They have been enjoying the binoculars that they received through a grant that was recently received.   + 4th grade students went to the Libby Family Foundation and practiced their mapping skills by making maps of the Thompson’s Apple Orchard.   Ecology Learning Center   * Two students recently participated in the Model UN, receiving second honorable mention. * Four students competed in the Thomas Cup at Thomas College.   Harpswell Coastal Academy   * Narwhal Fest - an annual festival celebrating the school - was held on May 6th. * Staff visited the school recently as part of the closure process looking at assets such as the generator and greenhouse and did a walk-through of classrooms to ensure that the educational program is being maintained. * Students are taking the Maine State Assessment and staff are focused on the distribution of student records, selling their assets, and supporting students and families with planning for the next school year.   Chair Higgins recently joined a group called the “Third Thought Group” as an advisor. It is an opportunity for students to explore different perspectives politically and culturally. Originated at Waynflete, the group is giving grants to bring schools to the table and the Ecology Learning Center has been recommended as a viable candidate and will be the first charter school to join the group. |
| 7b | Organizational Updates  Per Diem and Travel Policy   * A draft copy of the proposed policy was distributed for review. Commission members are entitled to receive the legislative per diem of $55 per day for participation in Commission activity. The policy is an attempt to clarify when per diem is appropriate and when it’s not. Staff will continue to refine the policy and bring it back for consideration at the June meeting.   Performance Framework   * Staff are preparing framework documents that include the recalibration of the NWEA targets as well as the custom targets identified by each school. Schools and Boards will have some time to review for accuracy and will then be sent for signature. These revisions will be the official criteria used to evaluate 2022-23 school year performance.   NWEA Waivers   * At last month’s meeting, the Commission voted to allow schools to apply for a waiver to not administer the NWEA MAP Assessment in the spring in favor of administering only the MDOE Through Year Assessment. Four schools applied for and have been granted a waiver - Maine Connections Academy, Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences, Harpswell Coastal Academy, and ACADIA Academy.   Data Reconciliation Conversation   * Work continues to assist school leaders with data inconsistencies. Time was spent during the last Leaders’ Meeting discussing challenges with attendance, graduation, and state assessment data. * Member(s) of the state Data Team have been invited to attend the next Leaders’ Meeting to hear these challenges with the hope that the dialogue will be the beginning of everyone having reliable data to work with.   PD Update   * Work with the Performance Framework that began with the National Charter Schools Institute in March will continue with two upcoming trainings – one focusing on the financial metrics in the Framework, and the other taking a deeper dive into the three-year financial plan which is a new component of the Framework this year. * Professional Development at the Commission level will continue, but the Executive Committee has asked for that work to be paused and picked up during the next school year. There has been discussion regarding the Commission doing a self-assessment and when the right time is to do such an assessment.   FOAA Request from the Portland Press Herald   * The Commission received a request from the education reporter at the Portland Press Herald asking to review all communication regarding the closure of Harpswell Coastal Academy between members of the Commission and members of the Governing Board of HCA. * Staff are currently working with the state technology folks to generate a large file that will encompass all HCA communication. Once received, staff will determine which communications are pertinent to the request and Sara Forster, Assistant Attorney General, will review the file to ensure that no private information is being released publicly. * Staff will continue to provide updates to the Commission as needed. |
| 7c | Media Update   * [The Enchanting Charter Schools Series, Volume 853: Remembering the Maine Idea at Baxter Academy for Technology and Science](https://www.charterfolk.org/the-enchanting-charter-schools-series-volume-853-remembering-the-maine-idea-at-baxter-academy-of-technology-and-science/)  [Maine climate change protections for ocean and beaches rank top in US, study finds](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJoLTBWfE8E) |
| **8** | **Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report** |
|  | *None* |
| **9** | **Unfinished Business** |
|  | *None* |
| **10** | **New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance** |
| 10a | A motion was made by **Jim Handy and seconded by Tori Kornfield** to table the consideration of the 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Reports Addendum to allow time for staff to work through discrepancies with the data. Roll call vote to table this item was as follows – Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes); Jim Handy (yes); Tom Keller (yes); Tori Kornfield (yes); Brian Langley (yes); and Norm Higgins (yes). |
| 10b | To Consider the Approval of the Revisions to the Commission’s Site Visit Manual  A copy of the revised manual was distributed for review and consideration.  **Moved by Tori Kornfield; seconded by Jim Handy and voted as follows by roll call vote as follows -** Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes); Jim Handy (yes); Tom Keller (yes); Tori Kornfield (yes); Brian Langley (yes); and Norm Higgins (yes) -to approve the proposed revisions to the Commission’s Site Visit Manual. |
| 10c | To Consider the Approval of the Commission’s FY24 Budget  Copies of the Commission’s current spending report, the proposed FY24 Commission Budget, and budget notes were distributed for review and consideration.  **Moved by Jim Handy; seconded by** **Leigh Weisenburger Albert and voted by roll call vote as follows** -Leigh Weisenburger Albert (yes); Jim Handy (yes); Tom Keller (yes); Tori Kornfield (yes); Brian Langley (yes); and Norm Higgins (yes) - to approve the Commission’s FY24 Budget. |
| **11** | **New Business Requiring Notification to the Commission *(No formal action to be taken by the Commission)*** |
| 11a | New Governing Board Members: *None*  Resignations:   * Baxter Academy for Technology and Science - Simon McGurk * Ecology Learning Center - Robin Huntley * Ecology Learning Center - Mark Ostroff   Term Outs: *None*  ***No formal action required by the Commission.*** |
| **12** | **Future Topics** |
| 12a | June   * Slate of Officers Introduced   July   * Election of Officers * Panorama Survey Results |
| **13** | **Announcements** |
| 13a | Important Dates (*None*) |
| 13b | 2023 Graduation Dates   * **Maine Arts Academy**/Thursday, June 1 @ 5:30pm/Augusta Civic Center/*No RSVP Required* * **Maine Connections Academy**/Friday, June 2 @ 2:00pm/Merrill Auditorium/*RSVP Required* * **Maine Virtual Academy**/Friday, June 2 @ 2:00pm/Zoom/*RSVP Required* * **Harpswell Coastal Academy**/Friday, June 2 @ 5:00pm/Mitchell Field, Harpswell * **Baxter Academy for Technology and Science**/Saturday, June 3 @11:00am/Merrill Auditorium/*RSVP Required* * **Ecology Learning Center**/Thursday, June 8 @ 4:00pm/Maine Organic Farmers and Grocers Association/[*RSVP*](https://www.ecologylearningcenter.org/event-details/graduation) *Required* * **Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences**/Friday, June 9th at 4:00pm/Norumbega Yurts, New Gloucester * **ACADIA Academy**/Monday, June 12 @ 6:30pm/ACADIA Academy Gymnasium/*No RSVP Required* * **Community Regional Charter School**/Friday, June 16 * **Maine Academy of Natural Sciences - Threshold Program**/Friday, July 21st * **Maine Academy of Natural Sciences - Campus Program**/Friday, July 28th |
| 13c | Next Regular Business Meeting – June 13, 2023(***Room #103A/B, Cross Office Building, 111 Sewall Street, Augusta***) |
| **14** | **Adjourn** |
|  | Chair Higgins declared adjournment at 2:52pm 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.*