

Governor's Commission on School Construction – Meeting Summary

Date: October 10, 2025

Location: via Zoom

Time: 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Attending:

Commission Members. Valerie Landry (Chair), Pender Makin (Maine DOE Commissioner), Jenny Boyden, Elaine Clark, Fern Desjardins, Art Dudley, Roy Gott, Chris Howell, Anthony Jaccarino, Justin Poirier, Rhonda Sperrey

Maine DOE Staff. Scott Brown, Abigail Cram, Glenn Cummings, Laura Cyr, Paula Gravelle, Chloe Teboe

Guests. Donald Bresnahan, Building Infrastructure Management Solutions; Matt Marks, Cornerstone Government Affairs

Key Topics

- Updates
- Organizational Model for Essential Roles, Responsibilities, and Elements

Actions

- Commission members should communicate with their respective constituency groups regarding commission activities and share feedback. Please suggest other stakeholder groups or individuals who should be contacted.
- The quasi-independent hybrid model will continue to be developed for commission review.
- The October 24 commission meeting will focus on revenue.
- It is important to read and review materials, as the commission moves toward conclusion.
- The suggestion was made for a presentation on revisions to the 21-Step Process.

Updates

- The Draft Working Paper (dated October 8, 2025) sent with the October 10 agenda outlines how new essential functions contribute to the overarching goal.
- Concept papers summarizing commission discussions on various topics will be sent for commission review, comment, and approval.
- A small group discussion was held on October 6 to prepare for upcoming commission meeting pertaining to revenue.

Organizational Model for Essential Roles, Responsibilities, and Elements

At the September 26 commission meeting, it was agreed that at the October 10 meeting, 1) The Maine DOE would report back on the feasibility of locating new essential functions at the Maine DOE, and 2) Elaine Clark would present additional information regarding how a quasi-independent entity could be organized, building on the July 8 presentation on the same topic.

At the October 10 meeting, the Maine DOE reported that it is not feasible for the new essential functions to be located at the Maine DOE, in part because some functions (such as fundraising) would not be appropriate for a state agency. Elaine Clark provided information about a quasi-independent entity.

Most commission members commented favorably about establishing a streamlined quasi-independent entity to implement the new essential functions without duplicating existing resources in order to achieve safe, healthy schools. One member stated opposition to the concept, indicating that the only solution is additional funding. One member abstained from signaling a determination either way.

Comments:

- We need to look beyond immediate circumstances and chart a path to make progress over the long-term.
- The executive order requires the commission to go beyond the issue of funding, including examining models in other states and determining if an Authority would be of benefit.
- We need more funding; structural changes are unnecessary; we have the Maine DOE.
- We need a streamlined version of executing and maintaining the essential functions.
- The extent of health and safety issues reported by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute was alarming; we need to take action to address these issues across the state. The status quo will not get us there.
- We have lots of data in various pockets but little predictive analytics easily accessed by both state and local decision-makers.
- A quasi-independent entity could be established, similar to the Maine Office of Community Affairs or the Maine State Housing Authority.
- We need an entity that is more intergovernmental in focus, given that school buildings are both a state and local responsibility.
- We should start slow.
- We should set in motion the full range of steps that will make progress. Delaying will only mean that the problem is worsening. If not this group of experts, who will do it?
- A quasi-independent entity will be able to independently report on the state of school buildings in Maine and not be required to solely go through the executive branch.
- We do not have an entity at this level that operates as a champion for school facilities. The Maine DOE does a good job, but this goes beyond what the department can do.
- No amount of improvement happens by accident.