

## Governor's Commission on School Construction – Meeting Summary

Date: June 6, 2025  
Location: via Zoom  
Time: 10:00 a.m. – noon

### Key Topics

1. Maintenance
2. Local Contribution

### Desired Outcome

Commission determines next steps on above topics. Options include identifying additional information or analysis needed for decision-making/recommendations and/or endorsing a recommendation in concept for the commission's review and decision.

### Attending

*Commission members.* Valerie Landry (Chair), Elaine Clark, Fern Desjardins, Chris Howell, Anthony Jaccarino, Justin Poirier, Rhonda Sperrey

*Maine DOE staff members.* Scott Brown, Abigail Cram, Paula Gravelle, Chloe Teboe

*Guests.* Donald Bresnahan (Building Infrastructure Management Solutions)

### Action Steps and Follow-Up

- The commission meeting schedule will change to accommodate members' schedules over the summer. Commission meetings will be held on Thursday mornings, rather than on Fridays. No regular meetings will be scheduled in July, although one or two breakout sessions are likely. In late September, commission meetings will return to the original Friday afternoon time slot. **Dates forthcoming by June 9.**
- Elaine Clark will provide industry data on the cost of deferred maintenance.
- Elaine Clark and other interested members will provide information on master agreements and technical assistance strategies that would be feasible for the state to provide, assuming sufficient funding.
- Paula Gravelle will provide information on the use of Title 20-A, §15918 (state contribution to maintenance).
- Scott Brown will provide information on the Maine DOE-sponsored summer maintenance training. Members of the commission will explore other options and report back.
- Develop options on how a local contribution approach could be structured.

### Discussion

#### 1. Maintenance

*Note: Unless explicitly stated, the comments below do not necessarily reflect agreement among commission members but rather questions or statements offered by one or more commission or staff members.*

Discussed maintenance and funding, with the following considerations:

- Title 20-A, §15918 states the department, within existing resources, shall support facility maintenance and capital planning training for school administrative units (SAUs). Need information on if/how this occurs.
- The absence of maintenance results in “exponential damage.” Need industry data on the correlation between maintenance delayed versus accelerating cost of need.
- Need to change the narrative and shift the thinking around maintenance.
- Total Cost of Ownership is really important.
- Example provided of replacing boilers in five of six schools in a district, resulting in energy savings.
- Funding for maintenance isn’t there. The money is an issue, and rising costs make this even more difficult. Example offered of a single-door crash bar that formerly cost \$700 and now costs \$2,500.
- District capital reserve accounts vary. The state does not collect data on these accounts.
- Placing construction funds into a separate interest bearing account is a requirement, but a contingency account is not.

Discussed maintenance plans, with the following considerations:

- Need to be prioritized. At one point, the state required maintenance plans and provided training. This resulted in comprehensive plans that were not fully implemented, due to lack of resources.
- Importance of technical assistance.
- Districts would benefit from assistance (e.g., bundling major mechanical systems or capital planning). Need to understand specifically what is needed and in what time frame.
- The Maine Division of Procurement Services holds master agreements for trades. Could this be adapted for use by districts? Could it include planning services?
- Could a requirement be inserted requiring a maintenance account? The industry standard is 4%. The state also has a 4% standard, but it is not funded sufficiently, so it remains an aspiration rather than a requirement.
- Should there be an incentive in the Essential Programs and Services formula for maintenance that is tied to funding?
- When new schools are being considered, are enrollment trends and financial capacity of the district to maintain the facility part of the equation?
- If a district is unable to show a means of maintaining a new facility—or if the enrollment trend does not support a new facility—should other options such as consolidation be explored where possible?
- Schools must be properly insured. Could a partnership be possible/beneficial with the Maine Municipal Association’s risk pool?

Discussed staffing factors, with the following considerations:

- Facility and system maintenance consumes a great deal of superintendent time.
- The level of maintenance staff training varies from district to district.
- Recruiting and retaining qualified staff to manage the increasing complex mechanical and other systems is a challenge. Superintendents also typically “turn over” within three to five

years. This makes it difficult to implement long-term planning and to be proactive and preventative rather than reactive.

- Districts need facilities director-level (as opposed to custodial) positions to maintain complex facilities.
- Need to increase the supply of skilled technicians. Examine the Maine DOE summer program and other options.

## 2. Local Contribution

*Note: Unless explicitly stated, the comments below do not necessarily reflect agreement among commission members but rather questions or statements offered by one or more commission or staff members.*

Following considerations raised:

- Should a percentage of local contribution be expected?
- Should a percentage of local contribution be expected unless other desired characteristics are involved, such as consolidation or bigger regional or integrated projects?
- Should the state incentivize consolidation through higher subsidy?
- What happens in districts where these other characteristics are not possible? Could the contribution be capped at 70/30 or 50/50, with some forgiven due to consolidation or other factors?
- In some instances, districts with declining enrollment are pursuing new facilities rather than consolidating with nearby schools or districts. This is made easier when no local contribution is required. At the moment, an enrollment threshold exists for high schools but not elementary schools.
- The substantial district effort necessary to achieve consolidation should be seen as a contribution and a value.
- What would the impact of local contribution be on referendums and withdrawals?