

Governor's Commission on School Construction – Superintendent Focus Group – Meeting Summary

Date: January 10, 2025
Location: Remote via Zoom
Time: 11:00 AM –12:30 PM

Key Topics

School superintendents to provide input to the Governor's Commission on School Construction

Moderator

Pender Makin (Maine DOE Commissioner)

Participants

Commission Members. Pender Makin (Maine DOE Commissioner), Fern Desjardins, Roy Gott, Christopher Howell, Anthony Jaccarino, Jane McCall, and Rhonda Sperrey

DOE Staff. Abigail Cram, Laura Cyr, Chelsey Fortin-Trimble, Chloe Teboe

Superintendents/Assistant Superintendents (RSVPs).

Rick Amero (Kennebec Intra-District Schools/RSU 2), Nikki Chan (Ellsworth School Department), Jay Charette (RSU 38), Matthew Cyr (RSU 34), Pamela Doyen (RSU 56), Christian Elkington (RSU 9), Bob England (RSU 71), Joe Fagnant (RSU 29), Clay Gleason (MSAD 6), Richard Green (Lisbon School Department), Angela Hardy (MSAD 11), Amy Hediger (RSU 16), Meredith Higgins (RSU 26), Kevin Jordan (AOS 94), Chad Kempton (Richmond School Department), Shelley Lane (Millinocket School Department), Jake Langlais (Lewiston Public Schools), Maria Libby (MSAD 28), Heather Manchester (MSAD 17), Patrick Manuel (RSU 1), Jane McCall (RSU 39), Cari Medd (MSAD 52), Jonathan Moody (MSAD 54), Diane Nadeau (Scarborough Public Schools), Steve Nolan (RSU 40), Heather Perry (Gorham School District), Ryan Scallon (Portland Public Schools), Stacy Shorey (RSU 68), Benjamin Sirois (MSAD 27), Al Smith (MSAD 61), Mary Anne Spearin (Calais School Department), Rhonda Sperrey (RSU 64), Jeremy Ray (Biddeford/Dayton School Departments), Christopher Record (Cape Elizabeth School Department), Melissa Tenney (Cherryfield School District), Howard Tuttle (RSU 12), Travis Wood (Waldo County Technical Center), Larry Worcester (MSAD 45), Travis Works (Community Regional Charter School), Michael Zboray (Mt. Desert Island Regional School System)

Action Items

Begin to think of potential modifications or changes to Maine's funding model for school construction, for the purposes of the Governor's Commission, in two phases:

- **Phase One** would include priorities, changes, or strategies that could be adopted and/or implemented within the next two years. These topics would be priority areas for the Commission and its subcommittees in January to mid-February.
- **Phase Two** would include priorities, changes, or strategies that hold substantial promise, but which require additional examination or analysis for the Commission to make final recommendations. To the extent possible, the Commission would begin to organize information in these areas now, with more substantial discussion on whether/how to proceed in these areas in late February to March.

Discussion

Commissioner Makin opened the discussion with Superintendents by reiterating that the primary goal of the focus group is to gain an understanding of what the Superintendents believe should be the greatest areas of focus regarding funding, and proposed alternative funding models, for school construction, renovation, and maintenance for the Governor's Commission Report.

Attendees were provided a series of prompts by Commissioner Makin from which a discussion ensued:

- Related to how school construction and renovation are planned and funded, what are your highest priorities to be solved in the next two years?
- What are your highest priorities for resolution within 3-5 years? (In other words, what needs to be substantially different within 3-5 years for Maine to achieve an effective, forward-looking, and sustainable system of safe, modern, efficient, and accessible public schools?)
- Are there funding models in other states or other strategies that would you like the Commission to consider in its work?
- What are your thoughts on a separate Independent Building Authority?

General Comments/Concerns - All

(Note: Comments do not necessarily reflect agreement among Superintendents in attendance, but rather topics or questions raised by one or more members or staff for future discussion, clarification, or analysis.)

Superintendents expressed interest in the Commission addressing the following topics regarding the funding of school construction:

- Independent Building Authority
- Local Appropriations: 80/20, 70/30, or similar sliding scale
- Direct Tax
- School Consolidation:
 - Can this be incentivized?
 - Can this be utilized to increase the building utilization efficiency?
 - Special Education is currently one of the greatest drivers of the need for school construction, renovation or new construction.
 - How can this be considered in a new funding model?
 - Does consolidation provide a potential strategy to respond to the growing demand for services and GSF/student for Special Education?
- Projects in the range of \$8-12 million:
 - Shared Funding Distribution across Districts
 - Modifications to the existing Revolving Renovation Fund
 - Should there be a fund for projects whose costs fall between the two existing programs?
- Operations + Maintenance (O+M):
 - Could O+M be incentivized?
 - Could a Capital Plan for funding O+M plan be a requirement for receiving funding?
 - Can systems be standardized, perhaps with pre-approved vendors, across the State to streamline workforce, training, and O+M?
- Public-Private Partnership (P3)
- Consider re-examining the 21-step process to create greater efficiency to tighten the timeline.

– End of Meeting Notes –