



School Construction Committee
Maine State Board of Education
Minutes of the May 27, 2026 Meeting

The School Construction Committee met in Room 500, Burton Cross Building, 111 Sewall Street, Augusta and remotely via Zoom.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Fern Desjardins, Chair, Paulette Bonneau (remote), and Edmond Morin

OTHERS PRESENT:

Scott Brown, Director of School Facilities, Department of Education
Ann Pinnette, School Facilities Manager, Department of Education
Paula Gravelle, Director of Public School Finance, Department of Education
Ted Hall, School Facilities Consultant
Lyndon Keck, School Facilities Consultant
Ruey Yehle, School Facilities Consultant
Eric Hanson, Assistant Superintendent, RSU 23
Heather Perry, Superintendent of Schools, Gorham School District (remote)
Heather Manchester, Superintendent of Schools, RSU 17/MSAD 17
Joe Britton, Architect, Lavallee Brensinger Architects
Lance Whitehead, Architect, Lavallee Brensinger Architects
Robbie Feinberg, Director of Communications and Government Relations, MSMA (remote)
Craig Flowers, Office Specialist, State Board of Education

Chair Fern Desjardins called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., welcomed everyone to the eighth meeting of the School Construction Committee's review of Chapter 61: State Board of Education Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects, and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Motioned by Morin, seconded by Bonneau, and voted unanimously by those present to accept the April 23, 2026 meeting minutes as written.

Motioned by Morin, seconded by Bonneau, and voted unanimously by those present to accept the May 1, 2026 special meeting minutes as written.

Motioned by Morin, seconded by Desjardins, and voted two in favor with one abstention (Bonneau) to accept the May 15, 2026 special meeting minutes as written. The motion was adopted.

Desjardins introduced the next item on the agenda, *Public Comments*. Eric Hanson, Assistant Superintendent, RSU 23, thanked the committee for the opportunity to attend and to learn more about the rule for school construction. He later asked questions and provided comments on cost sharing, moveable equipment in project budgets, and Section 6, subsection 1 on “Adequate Education.”

Desjardins shared comments she received at the Rule Chapter 61 presentation she made at the Maine Small Schools Coalition meeting on May 18, 2026 at the University of Maine. Most of the comments were on the proposed cost sharing; Section 6, subsection 1 on “Adequate Education”; and supporting a process that promotes equity in school construction.

Desjardins introduced the next item on the agenda, *Chapter 61: State Board of Education Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects: Tabled Items in Sections 1-12 and Section 6, Team Discussion & Proposed Amendments*.

- Paula Gravelle distributed a copy of FY 2027 “State & Local Share After Minimum Contributor Adjustments” for all SAUs in Maine, which also included the “Base Funding 50% Local Share”, “Consolidation of 2 or more School Buildings 35% Local Share” and the “Reorganization of 2 or more SAUs 25% Local Share.” The information was helpful to the Team in confirming their cost sharing proposal of April 14, 2026.
 - Gravelle explained the process to be used in determining the 25% Local Share when SAUs would reorganize.
- Team members discussed the handout given at the May 15 meeting from the Education Commission of the States (ECS) on the question by Paulette Bonneau about “state policies regarding use of construction funds.” ECS “found that many states do not include moveable equipment as an allowable expense for state funds, but some utilize grants or other programs to make funds available for this purpose.”
 - After discussing whether or not to keep moveable equipment at the current 4% in Section 10, subsection 4-A or to further consider 3% or 2%, the matter was tabled to the next meeting.
- Section 6, Subsection 1
 - In its third meeting of discussing “adequate education program”, the team reached consensus in eliminating all of subsection 1. Subsection 2 will become subsection 1 and remain as “Eligibility for State Funding.” Items that were tabled in previous discussions of that section will be taken up at the next meeting.

That ended the discussion of Chapter 61 and many left the meeting, leaving only School Construction Committee Chair Desjardins, members Bonneau and Morin, Superintendent Heather Manchester, and Joe Britton and Lance Whitehead from Lavallee Brensinger Architects.

Chair Desjardins moved to the next item on the agenda, *RSU 17/MSAD 17 Agnes Gray School Project Update*. Heather Manchester, RSU 17/MSAD 17 Superintendent of Schools, explained that the second piece of land the district had been investigating for viability of the site and negotiating to purchase for the new school was unexpectedly sold to another party. She spoke of the district's need for a consolidated elementary school to open new preschool programs and "enable better access to special education services to all students within the district." The redistribution of students would allow space in the Paris Elementary School for the West Paris students who were displaced due to the abrupt closure of the Agnes Gray School. The architects presented the revised *Pre-Referendum Schedule*, which included the two sites property owners withdrew from consideration (January 2026 and May 2026), plans for State Board Site Approval in January 2027, and Concept Approval in February/March 2027. The district would go to referendum in June 2027.

Motioned by Morin, seconded by Bonneau, and voted unanimously by those present to move forward Superintendent Manchester's request for a 2-4 months extension to the Time Limitation waiver RSU 17/MSAD 17 received on December 1, 2025 and prepare an exhibit for consideration at the June 12, 2026 meeting of the School Construction Committee.

The next School Construction Committee meeting with Chapter 61 team members will be held 9:00-2:00 p.m. on June 12, 2026. The team will revisit items tabled in sections 1-15.

Desjardins adjourned the meeting at 12:11 p.m.