



School Construction Committee
Maine State Board of Education
Minutes of the June 12, 2026 Special Meeting

The School Construction Committee met at the Department of Health and Human Services Building, Room A/B, 109 Capitol Street, Augusta and remotely via Zoom.

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

Scott Brown, Director of School Facilities, Department of Education
Paula Gravelle, Director of Public School Finance, Department of Education
Ted Hall, School Facilities Consultant
Lyndon Keck, School Facilities Consultant
Eric Hanson, Assistant Superintendent, RSU 23
Christopher Howell, Superintendent of Schools, RSU 14
Heather Manchester, Superintendent of Schools, RSU 17/MSAD 17 (remote)
Joe Britton, Architect, Lavallee Brensinger Architects (remote)
Lance Whitehead, Architect, Lavallee Brensinger Architects (remote)
Robbie Feinberg, Director of Communications and Government Relations, MSMA
Eileen King, Executive Director, Maine School Superintendents Association
Wilson Hess, Region 7, Waldo County Technical Center
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 ninth 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.

Desjardins introduced the next item on the agenda, *Public Comments*. Eileen King, Executive Director for the Maine School Superintendents Association, provided comments on behalf of the Association. Association members have expressed "concerns regarding the current cost sharing provision that is being discussed." They advocate for increasing the debt ceiling, expanding the state's School Revolving Renovation Fund, discussing cost sharing, and looking at consolidation in finding ways "to ensure construction funds reach more districts."

Christopher Howell, Superintendent of Schools in RSU 14, urged the State Board “to carefully consider the cost-share thresholds so they accomplish the goal of broader distribution without inadvertently excluding the districts most in need ... also encourage the Board to consider pairing any new cost-share framework with an increase in the debt ceiling, as recommended by the Governor’s Commission.” Howell also advocated for increasing the funding available in the School Revolving Renovation Fund to “give districts the tools to right-size their facilities, address deferred maintenance, and make targeted investments that improve learning environments without requiring the scale of a full Major Capital project.”

Chair Desjardins moved to the next item on the agenda, *Exhibit: Major Capital School Construction Program; Extension on Waiver Consideration; RSU 17/MSAD 17 – Agnes Gray School Construction Project*. Desjardins referred to the Exhibit and the discussion that took place at the May 27, 2026 meeting. There being no further questions or comments from Committee members Bonneau and Morin, Superintendent Manchester, and architects Britton and Whitehead, Desjardins asked for a motion.

Motioned by Bonneau, seconded by Morin, and voted unanimously by those present that this exhibit be placed on the July 17, 2026 State Board of Education’s meeting agenda and that pursuant to State Board of Education Rule, Chapter 61, Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects, Section 6.2.F(1), the State Board of Education grant an extension on the Time Limitation waiver to RSU 17/MSAD 17 and approve 2027 as their new assigned calendar year for their proposed timetable and plan for obtaining Concept Approval by April 30, 2027. RSU 17/MSAD 17 will provide periodic updates on the project with the first report due at the August 28, 2026 School Construction Committee meeting of the State Board.

Desjardins introduced the next item on the agenda, *Chapter 61: State Board of Education Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects: Team Discussion and Proposed Amendments for Items Tabled in Sections 1-15*.

To date, the review team had discussed all 15 sections and reached consensus on all sections except sections 1, 6, 8, 10 and 11; however, they had requested that Paula Gravelle seek legal feedback on the financial sections. Paula reviewed the recommendations she received for Sections 11 and 12.

Section 11, Subsection 2, second paragraph; 4(A), new 4(D), and last paragraph of subsection 4:

- By consensus, the team agreed with all the recommendations from legal counsel.

Sections 11 and 12:

- The team had concerns about the use of “state/local” in various places of the rule and the legal counsel’s note in Section 12, Subsection 4(D) with bonds sold during the spring. Paula agreed to seek additional clarification from the MDOE’s attorney.

The team then proceeded to items tabled in other sections and reached consensus on the following:

- Section 1, Subsection 14: Deleted “larger” in the second line of “Consolidation of Schools”
- Section 1, Subsection 25: Deleted the entry for “Industry Training Center”
- Section 1, Subsection 36: Changed “at least five” in the second line to “ten or more”
- Section 1, Subsection 39: Deleted the entry for “One Campus”
- Section 6, Subsections 2(A) and 2(D): Left as is. Items 2(B) and 2(H) remained tabled.
- Section 8, Subsection 1: Added “guide of the Maine Department of Education” and changed “are” to “is” between “Specifications” and “to” in the first line. [Note: That completed Section 8.]
- Section 10, Subsection 4(A): Changed 4% to 3%.

Chair Desjardins then moved to a discussion of a summary document she prepared, *Public Comments Received as of June 7, 2026*. The discussion led to the following:

- Bonneau and Feinberg will consider options for bringing together superintendents and the Chapter 61 review team to discuss and answer questions about the cost-sharing proposal.
- Through the Chapter 61 rulemaking process, the State Board will support a grandfather provision for projects on the Approved Projects List.
- The team determined that the *Maine School Construction Funding Formula: A Needs-Based, Incentive-Driven Reform Framework* would work for a new distribution of funding new projects, not the Major Capital School Construction program. Implementation of the framework would require an enormous amount of work from the Public School Finance team at the MDOE. Though well-written and a good alternative to the EPS formula, it’s a little more complicated than anticipated for the task at hand.
- The State Board will support bills that provide additional funding to the Major Capital School Construction program and the School Revolving Renovation Fund in the 133rd Legislative Session.
- The Board supports amending the statutes to ensure the recapturing of all unused debt capacity allocated for school construction to further accelerate the modernization of Maine’s schools.

The next School Construction Committee meeting with Chapter 61 team members will be held 9:00-12:00 p.m. on June 26, 2026 at the Department of Health and Human Services Building, Room A/B, 109 Capitol Street, Augusta and remotely via Zoom. The team will revisit items tabled in sections 1-15.

Desjardins adjourned the meeting at 2:02 p.m.