



School Construction Committee
Maine State Board of Education
Minutes of the August 28, 2026 Meeting

The School Construction Committee met remotely via Zoom.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Fern Desjardins, Chair; Edmond Morin; and Michael Thurston (all remote)

OTHERS PRESENT:

Scott Brown, Director of School Facilities, Department of Education (remote)

Valerie Chiang, Senior Construction Coordinator, Department of Education (remote)

Heather Manchester, Former Superintendent of Schools, RSU 17/MSAD 17 (remote)

Jonathan Ross, Interim Superintendent of Schools, RSU 17/MSAD 17 (remote)

Joe Britton, Architect, Lavallee Brensinger Architects (remote)

Lance Whitehead, Architect, Lavallee Brensinger Architects (remote)

Craig Flowers, Office Specialist, State Board of Education

Chair Fern Desjardins called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. She welcomed everyone and announced that State Board Chair Paulette Bonneau appointed Michael Thurston to replace her on the School Construction Committee. Desjardins then asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Motioned by Morin, seconded by Desjardins, and voted two in favor with one abstention (Thurston) to approve the July 1, 2026 meeting minutes as written. The motion was adopted.

Motioned by Morin, seconded by Desjardins, and voted two in favor with one abstention (Thurston) to approve the July 2, 2026 special meeting minutes as written. The motion was adopted.

Desjardins introduced the next item on the agenda, *Public Comments*. There were no public comments from attendees.

Chair Desjardins moved to the next item on the agenda, *RSU 17/MSAD 17 – Agnes Gray School Construction Project Update*. Heather Manchester, Former Superintendent of RSU 17/MSAD 17, and architects Britton and Whitehead provided an update on the progress made in selecting a site

for the construction of an elementary school. The site under consideration has been surveyed, the wetland analysis results were good, two appraisals are in process, and other required tests have been scheduled (e.g., soil sampling, well test, and underground geotechnical testing). The site is halfway between all three schools being considered for new construction. Plans are on target for the two straw votes to take place this winter, seeking Site Selection from the State Board in January, Concept Approval in March, and going for a referendum vote in June 2027. By consensus, the School Construction Committee agreed to receive the next update at the October 30, 2026 meeting.

Desjardins introduced the next item on the agenda, *Updates on Chapter 61: State Board of Education Rules for Major Capital School Construction*.

- Desjardins, Morin, Bonneau and Brown attended the August 19, 2026 meeting with MSSA and MDOE to discuss proposed amendments to Chapter 61. Paula Gravelle, Director of Public School Finance, Department of Education, attended to explain the cost sharing proposal in the rule.
- Dr. Laura Cyr filed the Rulemaking Proposal and Fact Sheet with the Secretary of State on August 19, 2026.
- The Public Comment Period has been scheduled for August 31 to October 2, 2026.
- The Public Hearing is scheduled for September 15, 2026 11:00-1:00 pm at the Deering Office Building, 233 Blossom Lane, Augusta, Maine 04333, Room 101. Chair Desjardins, Morin, and Thurston will represent the State Board at the hearing.
- The Committee began sharing ideas on moving forward with a bill in January 2027. The discussion will continue in future meetings.

The next School Construction Committee meeting will be held at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, September 25 at the Department of Health and Human Services Building, Room A/B, 109 Capitol Street, Augusta and remotely via Zoom.

Desjardins adjourned the meeting at 10:19 a.m.