***April 12, 2022 Business Meeting Minutes Approved by Commission Vote on May 10, 2022***

**The Maine Charter School Commission held a Regular Meeting on**

**Tuesday, April 12, 2022**

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| **Item Number** | **Agenda Item** |
| **1** | **Call to Order and Declare a Quorum** |
|  | The meeting, held in person and via Zoom in accordance with the Commission’s remote meeting policy, was called to order by Commission Chair, Wilson Hess, at 1:03pm and a quorum was declared.  Commission members present were Wilson Hess, Nichi Farnham, Shelley Reed, Victoria Kornfield, Dr. Fern Desjardins, and Jim Rier *(via Zoom*)*.*  Also present were Jeremy Jones, Gina Post, Lana Ewing, and Amy Allen *(via Zoom)*.  *Commission member, Shelley Reed read the Commission’s Vision Statement.* |
| **2** | **Reminders** |
| 2a | This meeting is being recorded via Zoom. |
| 2b | We ask members of the public to hold comments until public comments are being heard. |
| 2c | When speaking, state your name and speak slowly and clearly and loudly enough for the captioner to pick up your comments. Gina will interrupt if the captioner is having a difficult time hearing what is being said. |
| **3** | **Comments from Commission Chair and Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda** |
| 3a | **Comments from Commission Chair**   * Chair Hess thanked NACSA for conducting the recent Renewal Training and Commission members who were able to attend. |
| 3b | **Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda**  *None* |
| 4 | **Meeting Minutes Approval** |
| 4a | To Consider the Minutes from the March 8, 2022 Business Meeting  A copy of the minutes was distributed for review and consideration.  **Moved by Dr. Fern Desjardins; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present** to approve the minutes from the March 8, 2022 Business Meeting. |
| **5** | **Public Comment\*** |
|  | Jana Lapoint, current member of both the Baxter Academy for Technology and Science and Maine Connections Academy boards and former member of the Maine Charter School Commission, spoke against staff recommendations for Harpswell Coastal Academy’s amendment requests and defined “defer” as to put off (an action or event) to a later time. She indicated that the school should remain open and that that Commissions “needs to be clear about any recommendations”.  Conrad Davis, Lisbon resident and grandfather of student at Harpswell Coastal Academy, spoke in support of HCA. He shared that after negative experiences at his previous school, his grandson is “thriving” at HCA. He asked the Commission to consider what the school has done for not only his grandson, but many other students.  Kathy Wilson, Brunswick resident and current Harpswell Coastal Academy Board member, spoke in support of HCA and shared successes she’s seen with students attending HCA stating, “these students need this and won’t make it anywhere else” and “you need to keep this going”.  Bob Kautz, former Executive Director of the Maine Charter School Commission, spoke in support of Harpswell Coastal Academy and stated, “don’t close them by default”. He shared that the school is dealing with the whole child and not just academic credits. He acknowledged that fundraising is difficult and that there is not a great deal of statistical success, but the school has never failed to have appropriate leadership and should be given a chance to remain open.  Mae Applegate, Dean of Studies and Students at Harpswell Coastal Academy and parent of two students attending HCA, stated that her children are “happy, healthy and thriving” at the school and that “HCA is more than its quantitative parts”. She shared that closing in June offers no time to transition and fears that students will drop out of school completely if they have to return to their district public school.  Dan Stockford, attorney for Community Regional Charter School, spoke regarding the school’s timeline for completion of renewal conditions. He shared that progress has been stalled as of late due to “significant personal reasons”, but that work has begun again, and they are committed to meet benchmarks on time.  Heather King, Head of School at Maine Arts Academy, shared details about the school’s request for funds and stated that the school has enrolled between 200-214 students over the past three years with a targeted enrollment of 220. The firm (Lincoln Barretta) will help the school “look branded” and she hopes the Commission will support the request.  Cheryl Bulmer, Board Chair at Maine Academy of Natural Sciences, spoke regarding the school’s timeline for completion of renewal conditions and assured that “both the board and the school have worked diligently to satisfy stipulations” and that the work has “poised them well for the future.”  Danielle Denis, Board Chair at Community Regional Charter School, shared that the CRCS board voted to pass revised bylaws at its 4/11/22 meeting and that these will be passed along to the Commission for consideration.  Juliana Martin, 11th grade student at Harpswell Coastal Academy, spoke in support of HCA. She has “attended HCA for 6 years and hopes it will be 7”. She shared that in other schools she “just felt different” and at HCA she has “never felt so included”.  Ainsley Albert, 12th grade student at Harpswell Coastal Academy, spoke in support of HCA sharing that she has attended the school for 7 years and that “the teachers really care”.  Todd French, 3rd year teacher at Harpswell Coastal Academy, spoke in support of HCA and shared that the school has increased its academic rigor and as a result has seen student engagement improve.  Laurel Wishman, 12th grade student at Harpswell Coastal Academy, spoke in support of HCA and shared that she has attended the school since 6th grade. Because of the school’s dual enrollment opportunities, she will be graduating high school with an EMT Certification.  Karli Jo Clark, former student, and current teacher at Harpswell Coastal Academy, spoke in support of HCA sharing that when she initially transferred to the school as a student, she “expected the worst and was just waiting to drop out at age 16”. At HCA she did internships abroad, took college courses, and her experiences helped her receive an accelerated bachelor’s degree. She urged the Commission to look at where students were before enrolling at HCA and shared that if the school must close that there’s a “humane transition”.  Chelsea Baker, 7th grade student at Harpswell Coastal Academy, spoke in support of HCA and shared that “HCA is my safe space and I have a voice that people hear”.  Xander Rabii, 2020 graduate of Harpswell Coastal Academy student, spoke in support of HCA and shared that before finding HCA he “tried homeschooling and had no plans to graduate”. He found the HCA staff to be “caring and supportive” and because of his time spent at the school is now doing well as a sophomore at Lesley University in Cambridge.  Ian Ballard, 6th grade student at Harpswell Coastal Academy, spoke in support of HCA and shared that “he felt rejection at his old school, but does really well at HCA”.  Sam Mathis, parent of 11th grade student at Harpswell Coastal Academy, spoke in support of HCA and shared that there were “limitations” in the local public school system which led her daughter to HCA and that “students are going to need a soft landing without the school”. |
| **6** | **Presentations** |
|  | *None* |
| **7** | **Unfinished Business** |
| 7a | Update on Committee Structure Implementation  Chair Hess shared the following Commission Committee appointments:  **Executive Committee**  Wilson Hess, Committee Chair  Nichi Farnham  Shelley Reed  **School Performance Committee**  Shelley Reed, Committee Chair  Dr. Fern Desjardins  Victoria Kornfield  **Finance Committee**  Nichi Farnham, Committee Chair  Jim Rier  Wilson Hess  All Committees have met at least once. Future meeting information can be found on the Commission’s website. |
| 7b | To Consider and Accept FY22 Budget vs. Actual YTD - March Report *(Previously Tabled)*  A copy of the report was distributed for review.  **Moved by Nichi Farnham; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present** to accept notification of the FY22 Budget vs. Actual YTD – March Report |
| **8** | **New Business Requiring Approval** |
| 8a | To Consider a Grant Funds Request for Student Recruitment and Marketing Services for Maine Arts Academy  A copy of the funding request was distributed for review and consideration. Maine Arts Academy is requesting $6,000 to support its partnership with Lincoln Barretta Marketing for the “Complete Recruitment Plan”. Staff recommends approval of the request funding $1,000 for the remainder of this fiscal year ($500 in May and $500 in June) and $5,000 for FY23.  **Moved by Dr. Fern Desjardins; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present** to approve the request to contribute to funding Maine Academy’s Recruitment and Marketing contract. |
| 8b | To Consider the 2021-22 Mid-Year Monitoring Reports  Copies of the following reports were distributed for review and consideration:   * ACADIA Academy * Ecology Learning Center * Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences * Harpswell Coastal Academy * Maine Academy of Natural Sciences * Maine Arts Academy * Maine Connections Academy * Maine Virtual Academy   **Moved by Jim Rier; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present** to approve the Mid-Year Meeting Reports as presented. |
| 8c | To Consider Ecology Learning Center’s Request to Amend Bylaws  A copy of the request to amend the board’s bylaws was distributed for review and consideration.  Staff, having discussed the request and consulted with the AAGs office, recommends the approval of the Ecology Learning Center’s changes to its bylaws.  **Moved by Shelley Reed; seconded by Jim Rier and voted unanimously by those present** to approve Ecology Learning Center’s request to amend bylaws. |
| 8d | To Consider ACADIA Academy’s Request to Amend School Schedule  A copy of the request to amend the school schedule was distributed for review and consideration.  The leaders at ACADIA Academy are requesting a change to their current summer programming schedule that would reduce the summer program from six weeks to five weeks. Each “week” consists of three days: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. This proposal would eliminate one week of summer programming; specifically, it extends the July 4th holiday throughout the full week of July 4th. Commission staff encourages the school to consider these factors prior to finalizing next year’s school calendar as changes to the master calendar can disrupt family routines but recommends the approval of the proposal.  **Moved by Jim Rier; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present** to approve ACADIA Academy’s request to amend school schedule. |
| 8e | To Consider Harpswell Coastal Academy’s Request to Change School Facilities  Copies of the request were distributed for review and consideration. Scott Barksdale, Head of School at Harpswell Coastal Academy, was present to share thoughts and field Commission questions.  After a great deal of discussion and debate, the consensus was that the school’s proposal needs more work before the Commission would feel comfortable approving the request. Some of the comments shared by Commission members were as follows:   * Shelley Reed “doesn’t want to be a barrier to charter schools solving their own problems” * Dr. Fern Desjardins says that deferring “doesn’t give the school enough time and they’ll lose staff” * Nichi Farnham says she’s “not ready to vote without more information” and “isn’t going to be rushed into making a decision”.   **Moved by Shelley Reed; seconded by Nichi Farnham and voted as follows – Fern (no), Shelley (yes), Tori (no), Jim (yes), Wilson (yes), Nichi (yes) -** to defer Harpswell Coastal Academy’s request to consolidate facilities until the next meeting. |
| 8f | To Consider Harpswell Coastal Academy’s Request to Incur Additional Debt to Finance Reduction  Copies of the request were distributed for review and consideration. Scott Barksdale, Head of School at Harpswell Coastal Academy, was present to share thoughts and field Commission questions.  Scott shared that the Commission’s decision to defer the school’s request to consolidate its two campuses to a later date will have “unintended consequences” and that “enrollment goals just took a hit and we’re going to lose staff and students”. He also feels strongly that the school could move forward without the need for financing.  After a great deal of discussion and debate, the consensus was that the school needs a commitment letter from a reputable lender before the Commission can comfortably consider the request. Joe Drago, the Commission’s Financial Consultant, cautioned that the Commission’s final decision shouldn’t be left in the hands of a bank indicating that the risk for the bank is much less than the risk for the school and the Commission and reminded that enrollment is a big piece of the whole conversation.  **Moved by Nichi Farnham; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted as follows – Fern (no), Shelley (yes), Tori (no), Jim (yes), Nichi (yes), and Wilson (yes) –** upon receipt of a commitment letter from a credible lender from Harpswell Coastal Academy, Commission will deliberate at is next regularly scheduled meeting or convene a special meeting to consider. |
| **9** | **New Business Requiring Notification and Acceptance** |
| 9a | New Governing Board Members:   * Ecology Learning Center - Beth Alma   Resignations: *None*  Term Outs: *None*  ***Did not discuss; this item will be placed on the agenda for the Commission’s next Business Meeting.*** |
| 9b | To Consider and Accept FY22 Budget vs. Actual YTD – April Report  ***Did not discuss; this item will be placed on the agenda for the Commission’s next Business Meeting.*** |
| **10** | **Executive Director/Commission Staff Report** |
| 10a | Progress on MeANS Charter Renewal  ***Did not discuss; this item will be placed on the agenda for the Commission’s next Business Meeting.*** |
| 10b | Progress on CRCS Charter Renewal  ***Did not discuss; this item will be placed on the agenda for the Commission’s next Business Meeting.*** |
| 10c | Update on Changes to Performance Framework for FY23  ***Did not discuss; this item will be placed on the agenda for the Commission’s next Business Meeting.*** |
| 10d | Strategic Plan Update   * 10d.1 Charter School Board Development Project Spring 2022 * 10d.2 Q3 2022 Board President’s Meeting * 10d.3 Modern Classrooms Project   ***Did not discuss; this item will be placed on the agenda for the Commission’s next Business Meeting.*** |
| 10e | Media Update   * [Maine Teams Shine at the First Regional Robotics Event in Two Years](https://www.einnews.com/pr_news/566125781/maine-teams-shine-at-the-first-regional-robotics-event-in-two-years) * [Harpswell Charter Schools says it may have to close if plan is not approved (MPR)](https://www.mainepublic.org/news/2022-04-04/a-harpswell-charter-school-says-it-may-have-to-close-if-its-consolidation-plan-isnt-approved) |
| 10f | Legislative Update   * [10f.1 April 2022 Legislative Update - Fate of the Charter School Program (CSP)](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XmuuauUh1iM310xkJzmVnWiU4W82x6lk5B333V8FPGE/edit?usp=sharing) * 10f.2 Resolve, To Establish a Pilot Program To Encourage Climate Education in Maine Public Schools * [Climate Education Policy - Nature Based Education Consortium - Maine](https://www.nbeconsortium.com/climate-change-education)   ***Did not discuss; this item will be placed on the agenda for the Commission’s next Business Meeting.*** |
| **11** | **Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report** |
|  | *None* |
| **12** | **Future Topics** |
| 12a | May:   * First Reading of Performance Framework * Epicenter Scorecard and Renewal Application Update * FY23 Budget Approval * WestEd Presentation * “Authorizing for All” Presentation by Dr. Joseph Escobedo * School Spotlight - Community Regional Charter School |
| **13** | **Announcements** |
| 13a | This Month’s Celebrations |
| 13b | Portfolio Calendar Items:   * Maine Arts Academy 10 Minute Play Festival |
| 13c | Next Regular Business Meeting – May 10, 2022 *(Room #103A – Cross Office Building and Zoom)* |
| **14** | **Adjourn** |
|  | The meeting was adjourned at 5:32pm.  **Moved by Dr. Fern Desjardins; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted as follows – Fern (yes), Shelley (yes), Tori (yes), Jim (yes), Nichi (no), and Wilson (yes) –** to adjourn. |

**\*** *The Charter School Commission does not allow airing of complaints in public meetings regarding Commission and charter school employees or school employment matters, in order to protect employee privacy, to comply with Maine law and pursuant to our contractual relation with the schools. To the extent that the Commission receives complaints and concerns relating to school employees in writing, those concerns will be reviewed and addressed by the Commission and its staff outside of a public meeting. This meeting is not the appropriate forum for such comments. You are free to direct your concerns in writing to the Commission’s Executive Director if you have not done so already.*