*August 9, 2022 Business Meeting Minutes Approved by Commission Vote on*

*September 13, 2022*

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

**Tuesday, August 9, 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 1:09pm and a quorum was declared. Commission members present were Wilson Hess, Jim Rier, Tori Kornfield, Tom Keller, Nichi Farnham, and Shelley Reed.Also present were Gina Post, Lana Ewing, and Amy Allen *(via Zoom).**Commission member, Wilson Hess, 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, Committee Reports and Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda** |
| 3a | **Comments from Commission Chair**Chair Hess welcomed Gina Post in her new role as Interim Executive Director and reiterated the Commission’s Vision Statement. He reflected on his desire for the Commission and Commission staff to work collaboratively as we move into the new school year. |
| 3b | **Committee Reports*** Shelley Reed - Member, Ad-Hoc Nomination Committee - reported on the work done by the Committee
* Shelley Reed - Chair, School Performance Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee
* Nichi Farnham, Chair, Finance Committee - No report as Committee did not meet
* Wilson Hess - Chair, Executive Committee - reported on the work being done by the Committee
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| 3c | **Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda***None* |
| 4 | **Meeting Minutes Approval** |
| 4a | To Consider the Minutes from the July 21, 2022 Business MeetingA copy of the draft minutes was distributed for review and consideration.**Moved by Shelley Reed; seconded by Jim Rier and voted unanimously by those present** to approve the minutes from the July 21, 2022 Business Meeting. |
| **5** | **Public Comment\*** |
|  | Sherry Gilbert and Dick Durost, Chair and Vice Chair of the Maine Arts Academy Governing Board, shared that the board is exploring options for moving the school to a new facility in a new location. Several reasons were cited including growing enrollment, campus security and not gaining any equity in a building that they do not own. They plan to move forward “in a thoughtful manner” and will keep the Commission informed of progress made.Mel Christensen-Fletcher, Interim Head of School at Harpswell Coastal Academy, thanked Commission staff and members of the School Performance Committee for visiting the school. She also gave an update on the progress of the yurt installation and shared that the school has contingency plans in place for classroom space to begin the school year if the yurts aren’t ready. Heather King, Head of School at Maine Arts Academy, thanked Commission staff for the in-person site visit, sharing that “she feels really positive about the meeting”.Tonya Arnold - Community Regional Charter School board member, Monhegan Island School superintendent, and Education Action Forum of Maine volunteer - shared her appreciation for the Commission’s Vision Statement, but shared concerns about the standards/targets on the newly adopted Performance Framework indicating that “we’re pushing to set the bar higher than those of traditional public schools”. She reminded the Commission that “each school has been designed to meet the needs of students that weren’t being met elsewhere” and “if performance is set too high, these students won’t have a place to go”. |
| **6** | **Presentations** |
|  | Nick Murray, Director of Policy, and Libby Palanza, Intern, for the Maine Policy Institute presented on “Charter Reform: The Case for Charter Reform in Maine” and shared the following:* Traditional Public Schools Are Falling Short
* 13% of parents want to enroll their children in charter schools; 6% actually do
* Remove the statewide caps on total charter schools and virtual enrollment and expand the list of eligible authorizing institutions
* Every Maine student deserves the best education for them
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| **7** | **Unfinished Business** |
|  | *None* |
| **8** | **New Business Requiring Approval** |
| 8a | To Consider the Approval of the Commission’s Remote Commission Meeting PolicyA copy of the policy was distributed for review and consideration.This policy is essentially the same as the one passed for remote committee meetings in June:* It allows any Commission member to attend meetings remotely;
* It is no longer necessary to meet the criteria established in the Commission’s previous remote meeting policy
* It allows for the Commission to vote to hold a meeting requiring in person attendance; and
* A public location will still be required even if all Commission members choose to participate remotely.

The Executive Committee reviewed and recommended adoption/approval.**Moved by Nichi Farnham; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present** to approve the Commission’s Remote Commission Meeting Policy effective August 9, 2022. |
| 8b | To Consider the Approval of the Commission’s Staff Retirement Benefit PolicyThe Executive Committee shared that all potentially available options are being explored and recommended tabling until the next meeting to allow more time for a policy to be fully developed.Motion to table until the next Commission Meeting.**Moved by Jim Rier; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present** to table further discussion until the next Commission Meeting. |
| 8c | To Consider the Approval of the Commission’s Paid Parental Leave PolicyA copy of the draft policy was presented for review and consideration. Gina gave an overview of the policy:* Allows up to 80 days (16 weeks) paid parental leave for the birth of an employee’s child or the placement of a child with an employee in connection with adoption or foster care;
* Employee must have been with the organization for at least 6 months;
* time can be taken in one continuous 16-week (or 80 day) block or in 2 separate blocks;
* Paid parental leave helps to retain valuable employees and can improve employee morale.

Commission members asked for some clarity around certain parts of the policy including the adoption of a 17-year old, part-time versus full-time employee eligibility, and whether the policy is consistent with other similar policies across state agencies. Gina will reach out to the Attorney General’s Office for guidance.Wilson shared that the Executive Committee reviewed the policy and gave the following options for approval - (1) to allow the Executive Committee to approve with minor changes after review by the AG’s Office, or (2) to wait until the next Commission meeting to allow all Commission members to review and discuss minor changes before taking a vote on whether or not to approve.**Moved by Tom Keller** to put the policy before the Assistant Attorney General to ensure compliance with other policies and if no issues emerge, the Executive Committee can approve as soon as possible or bring back to the Commission if there are any issues; **seconded by Jim Rier and voted unanimously by those present.** |
| 8d | To Consider the Approval of Changes to the Commission’s Election of Officers Policy/ProcedureShelley gave an overview of the process and proposed the following timeline:* May: Announce the opening of the process and appoint an Ad-Hoc Nominating Committee
* June: Committee meets and polls members regarding availability and a slate of officers is considered
* July: Committee moves the slate of officers to be considered and invites additional nominations from the floor; candidates can speak and votes are taken for each officer position
* August: Committee gives a final report and suggests possible changes to the policy/procedure

**Moved by Shelley Reed; seconded by Jim Rier and voted unanimously by those present** to adopt a formal timeline for the election of Charter School Commission officers. |
| **9** | **New Business Requiring Notification and Acceptance** |
| 9a | New Governing Board Members:* 9a.1 Maine Academy of Natural Sciences - Mary Callan
* 9a.2 Maine Academy of Natural Sciences - Dianna Gram
* 9a.3 Maine Academy of Natural Sciences - Stacy Stevens

Resignations: * 9a.4 Ecology Learning Center - Beth Alma
* Ecology Learning Center - Josh Snyder

Term Outs: * Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences - Sally Morris
* Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences - Carolyn Beem

**Moved by Jim Rier; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present** to accept notifications of new board members as presented. |
| **10** | **Executive Director/Commission Staff Report** |
| 10a | Update on Pre-Opening Visit and Progress on HCA Charter Renewal Gina shared that staff have been receiving weekly updates from HCA regarding progress toward opening its one campus to students in early September. Gina and members of the School Performance Committee conducted a Pre-Opening Visit at the school earlier in the day and indicated the following:* Enrollment is currently at 160 (the August 1st target was 190)
* Yurt completion is delayed; possibly ready in 3 weeks
* Nearly fully staffed (2 offers out for the 2 vacant teaching positions)
* Still exploring business office options

The School Performance Committee shared a recommendation to approve opening with the following conditions: * Conducting an additional site visit primarily to see the yurts
* Request document showing how students’ IEP needs will be met with the space and staff available (i.e., is there a cooldown space)
* Request documents that show course selections and standards completion and how standards are being met with current space and equipment
* Outline where teacher workspace for collaboration will be
* Outline where the foreign language space is
* Description of how college courses are done in the computer lab

**Moved by Shelley Reed; seconded by Tori Kornfield and voted unanimously by those present** to approve opening the school with the conditions outlined above.  |
| 10b | Update on End of Year Monitoring VisitsGina shared that four schools were on cycle for a visit with Board and Administration – ACADIA Academy, Ecology Learning Center, Maine Arts Academy and Maine Connections Academy. Given renewal conditions, visits were also scheduled with Community Regional Charter School and Maine Academy of Natural Sciences.* 5 of the visits are complete, with the remaining one being held this week
* Meetings that were held in June were on Zoom, but the ones held most recently have been held in a hybrid fashion with both remote and in-person participation
* Site Visit Reports for the June visits are complete with the reports from the most recent meetings still in progress
* Site Visit Reports become part of the Annual Monitoring Reports
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| 10c | Executive Director CommentsGina gave an update on her first two weeks in her new role as Interim Executive Director:* Team is still sorting out routines and making adjustments (not afraid of things not getting done, just of all of us trying to do it )
* As a smaller team, looking at ways to maximize efficiency and considering outside partners to help with projects as needed
* Focusing on communication and relationship building (sent invitations to board chairs and school leaders to meet one on one to discuss what is important to them, their near and long-term goals and what they hope she brings to the role). So far, she has met with 6 individuals, with 6 more scheduled.
* Created a 3-4 page document for new governing board members that will be sent along with a welcome letter as we receive notification of appointments
* Scheduled two performance framework workshops which will be held in August. These are open to board chairs, school leaders and anyone else the school thinks should attend. These will be recorded for anyone who is unable to attend.
* Accuplacer trainings are coming up (the postsecondary readiness assessment that was added to the Performance Framework for high schools after being piloted by half of the high schools last year)
* Spent time with the Strategic Plan thinking about what we want to accomplish in year 2. One area in particular is developing a new tool for the Commission to evaluate itself.
* Regular contact with Wilson to ensure that communication with him as well as the full Commission is both enough and on point
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| 10d | Media Update* [EHS soccer player named All-American](https://www.ellsworthamerican.com/sports/ehs-soccer-player-named-all-american/)
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| **11** | **Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report** |
| 11a | SY2022-23 Funding Based on EnrollmentA copy of the spreadsheet was presented for review and discussion. The spreadsheet showed:* enrollment numbers from the 2021-22 school year which determine the funding for the current school year
* enrollment over time and how it impacted funding

Staff have been talking with boards and school leaders about enrollment as several have seen a decline in recent years. Schools rely on stable enrollment in order to be financially viable and the Commission’s funding relies on the enrollment and funding received by each school. |
| 11b | Charter Public School Enrollment/Unenrollment *(Tabled from Last Month)* The MDOE extended the deadline for schools to submit data to 8/15/22. The hope is to share final 2021-22 data in September. |
| **12** | **Future Topics** |
| 12a | September:* HCA Progress Toward Renewal (Renewal Application Due on 9/2/22)
* CRCS Request to Incur Debt

October:* Commission Vote on HCA Renewal
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| **13** | **Announcements** |
| 13a | This Month’s Celebrations* Start of the 2022-23 School Year
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| 13b | Important Dates* Public Hearing for Renewal, Harpswell Coastal Academy/9 Ash Point Road, Harpswell and via Zoom/September 29th (4:30-6:00pm)
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| 13c | Portfolio Calendar ItemsStaff will be creating a calendar of events happening at the charter schools. It will be linked in this section of the agenda and (hopefully) added to the upgraded website that is currently under construction.  |
| 13d | Next Regular Business Meeting – September 13, 2022 *(Snow Pond Center for the Arts and Zoom)* |
| **14** | **Adjourn**  |
|  | Chair Hess declared adjournment at 3:23pm with no objections. |

**\*** *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.*