



March 2, 2022, Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes
APPROVED 4/6/22

Directors Present: Maggie Allen (Zoom), Richard Durost, Sherry Gilbert, Andrew Landry, Timothy Rector, Janna Townsend (Zoom), Linda Warner

Directors Absent: None

Staff: Heather King, Head of School; Rachel Merrill, Assistant Head of School; Jill Alves, Business Manager (Zoom)

Public: None

1. Call to Order/Declaration of a Quorum – Chair Gilbert called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. A quorum was declared.
2. Public Comment – None.
3. Approval of Minutes
February 2, 2022
Motion: Rector/Warner – The minutes of the February 2, 2022, Board meeting be approved as written. Motion carried unanimously.

February 6, 2022, Special Board Meeting
Motion: Landry/Rector - The minutes of the February 6, 2022, special Board meeting be approved as written. Motion carried unanimously.
4. Administrative Report
Ms. King reviewed activities for the month of February, which included two informal recitals, most recently the jazz recital. Students participated in the Kennebec Valley Honors Festival, with participation organized by John Neal, Music Director.

The mid-year check-in with the Charter Commission was held on February 28, 2022. Data that was reported to the Commission included NWEA scores, attendance, finances, graduation rates, student recruitment, staffing, Board members, and attendance for college courses. Special thanks were given to Rachel Merrill, Assistant Head of School, and Jasen Richardson, English/Film Studies teacher for administering the NWEA to students. Director Durost noted that it was pleasing to see those students in grades 9, 10 and 11 are all on track

for graduation, with 97.3% of seniors expected to graduate on time in 2022. Ms. King noted that this active drop is due to the prevention program that Tina Spencer, Special Education Director, is spearheading, which is going very well.

Students in studio art classes worked on self-portraits this past month. This was a sensitive topic, and many students were emotional while creating these drawings. Included were samples from Russ Cox's, creative media students. Director Warner noted that the self-portraits were incredible and gorgeous. Other projects which the students are working on include color theory, and they will do a three-part gouache painting. Graphic design and theater students are working in teams to design scenery for two of Jeri Pitcher's original play manuscripts. In illustration class, students are creating a book, working on character design and now will begin writing a manuscript based on their story synopsis. In the Business and Professional Artist class, students are developing their communication skills, doing a mock phone chat and interview. In World Literature class, students were assigned themes in Brave New World. The students made inferences about drug use in society today, relating the book back to our own concept of utopia/dystopia and whether this book was so far-fetched.

Jasen Richardson is currently mentoring a student teacher from the University of Maine. Dr. Chris Maloney, science teacher, is the recipient of the STEM Research Grant from the Society for Science out of Washington, D.C. The money will be used to purchase STEM kits for students and pay for mentors from the science community.

The Chamber Choir will be performing the National Anthem at the Seadogs game on May 4, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. The entire school will be attending the game.

MeAA will be taking two college tours this year, one to the University of Maine at Orono and Husson University, and another to the University of Southern Maine and the University of New England. Acadia Chartier, guidance administrative assistant, planned the tours.

5. Committee Reports

a. Finance Committee

Director Rector provided a report of the February 17, 2022, Finance Committee meeting. Jill Alves provided summary documents in terms of assets, liabilities, cash on hand, and debt ratio. MeAA is over budget in some areas; however, total expenditures are at about 66%, which is in line with the year. There was discussion about grants getting drawn down this month, and gross revenue is currently at about two-thirds of the annual amount, with five months remaining in the fiscal year. MeAA remains in a good, sound financial position, and is on track with respect to budget activity vs. actual.

The reconciliation report was reviewed, and the financial position and cash flow are stable. Work continues on the 2022-2023 budget, with Board review and adoption by the May meeting.

Ms. Alves was thanked for providing the percentage spent to date of the full budget. Ms. King noted that things are going smoothly with transition with the Community Regional Charter School in Cornville, with the team having weekly meetings.

b. Academic Excellence Committee

Director Durost provided a report of the February 15, 2022, Academic Excellence Committee meeting. Discussion included the perception that the Charter Commission might be holding charter schools to a different level of expectations than the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) regarding collection of data, particularly graduation rates, attendance, and drop-out rates. It was noted that Ms. King and Ms. Merrill are doing an excellent job with attendance and follow-up with students and parents regarding changing behavior.

Also discussed was the NWEA test, with some students requesting to retake the test, resulting in substantially increased scores. Ms. King noted that with SATs and MEAS, students leave everything at the door. With NWEAs it is more of a different process, allowing the use of calculators, and retaking of the exam. It provides instant feedback which can be used to instruct teaching and learning.

It was great to hear from Nick Archibald, history teacher, and how he structures his classroom regarding block classes, giving him more time, as opposed to 45-minute classes.

Director Durost noted that as an administrative team and staff MeAA is staying on top of things, making the School look better to the Charter Commission.

c. Governance Committee

Director Landry provided a report of the December 27, 2021, and January 18, 2022, Governance Committee meetings. Ms. King presented an analysis of student participation in various programs offered by MeAA over a multi-year period to use for budgeting and academic planning. The Committee is interested in the analysis and discussed how to use and possibly enhance MeAA's curriculum based on interest and gaps in certain areas.

Discussion occurred in both meetings on how to recognize employees for longevity, with good ideas suggested. MeAA has begun the process of updating a number of the School's policies, with commitment to review policies with ideas for clarification.

Chair Gilbert informed the Committee that she had identified another school bussing company that could be considered as an alternative the next time the School's bus contract is up for renewal. The vendor will be added to the list when MeAA goes out for contract amendment.

d. Development Committee

Director Allen provided a report of the January 24, 2022, Development Committee meeting. The Committee discussed winter fundraising, the wish list update, and a date for the fall concert.

6. Additions/Adjustments by Chair/Directors

Chair Gilbert added discussions regarding not-for-profit status, the fine arts enrichment fund, and a review of Board goals.

7. Old Business - None

8. New Business

a. Update on Mid-year Check-in

Ms. King reported that members of the MeAA staff met with the Charter Commission to review data in the mid-year report. The Commission members asked for additional data, including the professional development calendar; the September Finance Committee meeting notes, with budget adjustment; and grading rubrics for teachers aligned with state standards. Joe Drago also attended. He noted that MeAA spends about 11.5% of the budget on rent, which is the maximum for commercial rental. He noted that data shows that when charter schools pay over 11% for facilities, they end up failing. Director Landry asked if Ms. King could obtain copies of those studies, as well as the appropriate amount for rent for charter schools.

Director Rector reported he met with John Wiggin, Executive Director of the Snow Pond Center for the Arts, and explained the tightness of funding. Mr. Wiggin is looking for \$300,000.00 per year for rent; MeAA is at \$270,000.00 and is hopeful for additional funding from the Legislature, with some of the additional funding going towards rent. Director Durost noted there is a pending lawsuit in the Supreme Court relating to religious schools, parochial and otherwise, that they cannot have access to state money for tuition. The Supreme Court is likely to find in favor of the suit. This may open the

door for students with school choice. If this is the case, the State would be more likely to fund the same amount of money for parochial school students as they do for schools such as Kents Hill. Director Durost noted that school districts are funded by the State based on State averages. If schools do not get the amount needed from the State, they can request additional funds from local taxpayers through referendum. Currently, MeAA does not have that option.

Ms. King noted that MeAA pays \$34,000.00 per month over 12 months for rent, which is more than \$300,000.00 per year. Director Rector noted that if it helps with Snow Pond's cash flow, MeAA could pay rent over 10 months, rather than 12 months and not pay in the summertime.

Ms. Merrill noted that this was the best back and forth meeting with the Charter Commission since she has been part of administrative team.

b. Charter Commission Health Insurance Update

Joe Drago presented at the meeting. If high claims are filed, insurance goes up. The next steps would be to increase enrollment, grow/stabilize employee count, requote insurance every two years, be a better-informed consumer, compare costs with other schools, and take initiatives and explore policies. MeAA currently does all of this.

c. Board Training with Charter Commission

Chair Gilbert reported that she signed into the epicenter. She completed tutorials, but they are not educational toward policy or school law. She spoke with Gina Post, Chief Program Officer of the Charter Commission, who noted that information is not yet loaded, which will occur at the end of March.

d. Brief Update – Head of School Contract

Chair Gilbert reported that the Committee is still working on the contract, and once completed, it will be reviewed with the Board in executive session.

Chair Gilbert reviewed with the Board the not-for-profit status. MeAA is a non-profit organization. Maine has ten charter districts, eight brick and mortar and two virtual. All ten charter schools are not-for-profit. Director Landry noted that MeAA's primary funding source is state educational tax dollars, with no alumni base, as the School has only been in existence for a few years. Director Durost asked Ms. King if she could take some time to share this information with the staff due to misconceptions. She stated that the information will be reviewed at the staff meeting on Friday.

Chair Gilbert reviewed with the Board the possibility of having a fine arts enrichment fund to bring in artists to speak with students, as well as have funding for enrichment trips for students.

Motion: Warner/Allen – Moved that a budget line be created entitled, “Fine Arts Enrichment Fund,” to be used by staff to bring in guest artists for MeAA students and to take MeAA students to Fine Arts programs within and outside of the State.

A discussion ensued. Director Durost asked about assurances that the intent of the Fund be overseen by the administrative staff. Chair Gilbert said she would ask the Board to contribute to that Fund. Ms. King stated that MeAA received \$500.00 for the School’s participation in tobacco survey, which would be deposited in that line to start the Fund. Jeri Pitcher, Arts Faculty Chair, said that if MeAA can get \$2,500.00 in that fund, from another budget line, she could write a grant that will match that \$2,500.00. Director Townsend noted that this is a simple target, and MeAA should advertise and let people know there is a match.

The original motion, made by Warner and seconded by Allen, that a budget line be created entitled, “Fine Arts Enrichment Fund,” to be used by staff to bring in guest artists for MeAA students and to take MeAA students to Fine Arts programs within and outside of the State, carried unanimously.

Chair Gilbert reviewed the Board goals.

Goal #2: Overview of Budget by January 2022 – completed and moving forward well

Goal #3 – Maine School Management Association membership – waiting on Director Durost for go-ahead

Goal #4 – Committee on Head of School contract – completed

Goal #7 – Policies to Human Resources – review has started

Goal #8 – Donor Connections and Wish List – good job being done here

Goal #9 – Bringing Grit to Elevate School – completed

Goal #1 – Address Long-term Facility Needs – trying hard to move forward

Goal #5 – Marketing Feeder Programs – Many schools are not taking visitors because of COVID.

Goal #6 – Data on What We Do Well with Parent Involvement – This will be answered when MeAA does a panorama survey, within the next year.

Goal #10 – Mission and Vision – MeAA is doing a good job with this goal.

Chair Gilbert reported that MeAA has accomplished more and is moving forward.

9. Announcements & Upcoming Events/Meetings

a. Governance Committee Meeting – Monday, March 21, 2022, 4:00 p.m.

<https://networkmaine.zoom.us/j/83622141642?pwd=S0NwaIN4Q1I2K0FiMGdMcXdWU3pvQT09>

b. Development Committee Meeting – Monday, March 28, 2022, 4:00 p.m.

<https://networkmaine.zoom.us/j/84724239552?pwd=dThZYnRiUXpodVISN2I0R0oxbD BMQT09>

c. Academic Excellence Committee Meeting – Tuesday, March 22, 2022, 4:00 p.m.

<https://networkmaine.zoom.us/j/85720621395?pwd=RVliSFN0YlJVOGNMRjNycG9zak Indz09>

d. Finance Committee Meeting - Wednesday, March 23, 2022, 4:00 p.m.

<https://networkmaine.zoom.us/j/88384678668?pwd=Q1FUZmdGd1FyZTRmbk91Ujl4ZUQ4QT09>

10. Next Board Meeting – April 6, 2022

Ms. King noted that there is a dance recital at 10:15 on Friday, March 4, and that MeAA will continue to have mini recitals on Fridays.

Director Durost asked about a message the Governor is proclaiming that as of next Wednesday, March 9, it is local option, and that the State is no longer recommending masks for schools as a requirement; masks would be optional for individual schools. Several school systems have already lifted their mask requirements this week. Ms. King will review all options and will produce the best way to roll out this recommendation.

11. Adjournment

Motion: Durost – The meeting be adjourned. Time: 5:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Monique Gilbert