

Maine Learning Innovations

Minutes for a Meeting of the Board of Directors held November 21, 2023

Pursuant to email and public website notices, a virtual meeting of the Board of Maine Learning Innovations was convened on Zoom at 3:00 PM, November 21st, 2023. Board members attending were Donna Pelletier, Stacey Blanchard, Nicholas “Nick” Gannon, Tina Meserve, and Susan Walters. A quorum was present.

Attending from MEVA were Melinda Browne, Donald Fournier, Christina O’Grady, Mehry Mohammadi, Stephanie Emery, Chelsea Osgood, and Jennifer Hight.

Attending from Clark Insurance (Marsh & McLennan Agency LLC) was Chad Cote.

Opening Items.

Approval of Minutes. Nick motioned to approve the minutes of the Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA) Governing Board Business Meetings of October 17th, 2023. Tina seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Finance Report.

Jennifer Hight said the board received a copy of the FY24 Quarter 1 report to review ahead of the board meeting. Jennifer completed the invoicing of MEVA’s grants for the 1st quarter and everything was moving smoothly.

1st Qtr. 2023-2024 Financial Summary: MEVA shows a surplus of \$403,682 for the three months ended September 30, 2023. We have utilized \$121,056 in ESSER III revenue for this quarter. These funds were used mainly to pay salaries for summer school and curriculum development. Salaries and benefits remain our largest expense. At the beginning of this school year, we had 60.5 employees made up of 11 Administrative positions and 49.5 Teachers/Ed-Techs. Our audit performed by Wipfli is almost complete and we expect financial statements before the deadline.

Nick motioned to approve the FY24 Quarter 1 Financials. Susan seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Regarding the FY23 Audit, Jennifer said the auditor had everything, they just needed a few more invoices sent to them. We have a new audit manager assigned to us and she was asking for different things than the prior individual. At this time, they have everything, the allocations have been sent over. They have not brought anything to our attention for adjustments and have not found anything needing to be fixed at this point. We should have a draft by the end of the month.

Donna asked if the auditors will be present at the next meeting. Jennifer reported that the auditors planned to attend the December governing board meeting.

Jennifer reported that MEVA had a meeting with Charter Commission regarding our 3-year financial plan. The MCSC was happy with the plan.

Administration. Dr. Browne presented the Heas of School Report.

SY-2023/2024 Progress:

- The MEVA faculty meets weekly on Monday afternoons to share data and information: <https://www.mainevirtualacademy.org/essaesserlau-elresources/meva-process-improvement-meeting-materials>
- We have had twelve SY-2023/2024 meetings to date since Monday, August 21st, 2023.
- We encourage teachers and other faculty members to make presentations.
- Continuous faculty collaboration is a driver of MEVA’s strong performance.

October 1st, 2023, Count:

Grade	Grand Total
7	26
8	67
9	76
10	76
11	109
12	88
Grand Total	442

Specia/General Education Breakdown:

Grade	General Education	Special Education	Total
7	17	9	26
8	51	16	67
9	51	25	76
10	59	17	76
11	84	25	109
12	67	21	88
Grand Total	329	113	442

Following up from the prior meeting, Dr. Browne shared the special education counts by disability categories (EF-S-05 Part I), which included Autism, Emotional Disturbance, Hearing Impairment, Intellectual Disability, Multiple Disabilities, Other Health Impairment, Specific Learning Disability, and Speech or Language Impairment. MEVA’s largest groups were Other Health Impairment and Specific Learning Disability. Dr. Browne introduced Lena Vitagliano, Special Education Administrator, who was available to answer questions.

Donna asked Lena Vitagliano a question about Special Education numbers, do we need to do a new identification each time students come into MEVA? Lena reported that many of our students who enroll come with expired or past due evaluations. We do about 25+ evaluations per year. Donna asked for clarity, are these new identifications or cleaning up old items? Lena said we are cleaning up and there were a few new referrals. The MTSS and team meeting process allowed us to collect info beforehand to reduce new referrals.

Susan asked, How many students does MEVA discharge, because of the platform suiting them better? Have you done data collection on that? Lena stated annually approximately 6 students were discharged to a 504, and in some cases, these were revocations. Some were also discharged during their triennial evaluations, due to the platform style.

Dr. Browne confirmed that MEVA's Enrollment Increase was granted. In accordance with the Maine Charter School Commission's decision of November 14th, 2023, MEVA was approved to increase our enrollment cap from 390 students to 450 students, keeping the plus/minus ten percent (+/-10%) margin, effective October 1st, 2024.

Governance.

Employee Health Insurance Discussion.

Chad Cote with Clark Insurance/Marsh McLennan presented MEVA's employee health insurance options:

MEVA is transitioning from a small group market to large group market based on employee numbers and claims made by members. MEVA has more than 50 employees which leads to potentially a 50% increase (loss ratio was 214% on the insurance company end). MEVA had some high claims over the past couple years. Chad presented slides that showed the breakdown of tiered plans showing copays and out of pocket costs.

Jennifer stated after reviewing the presentation, this was an additional \$1,000 that employees may need to pay out of pocket per month, which was tough.

Chad stated, If we look at the HMO/HSA options it would soften the impact of the changes. He committed to sending additional information to Jillian with some quotes.

Jillian said, Open Enrollment is on Monday (27th), the board needed to do a vote.

Donna asked, moving forward to next year, how can we get this info earlier in October for example, so that the board can be more informed and not feel pressured to make decisions. This was a lot.

Chad stated, next year will be better. This had been challenging because of the large renewal. We should have the initial renewal form Anthem sooner, about mid-October next year.

Dr. Browne observed the HSA option appeared to be the best financially for the school. Was there a way to blend it with the Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) to make it more appealing to faculty?

Chad answered, yes. It made sense to go with the HSA single option.

Jillian believed that if we dropped to one plan, we would get a lot of complaints from staff, as it would eliminate options to fit their needs.

Jennifer suggested, We could keep the one HMO and PPO, then increase the deductible to \$2,500. For the HSA plan, we could keep the same deductible and put more into the HSA account to attract people to the

HSA plan. Most employees will not be impacted, since MEVA covers 100% of the health benefit for the employee, this really affects the eight dependents.

Jennifer/Jillian touched upon the current HRA info. The health reimbursement is \$3,000 (of qualified expenses), MEVA was willing to reimburse over the deductible however, only certain things are covered under the reimbursement plan. It must be an approved coverage under Anthem. The \$3,000 helped to cover the maximum out-of-pocket expense.

Donna said this was hard to decide, without knowing the final impact.

Chad committed to providing account balance samples.

Jennifer asked Chad, can you do a mock bill, based on the different plans to see what each looks like?

Chad stated, They can do that, but the single premiums would be tough to do though.

Donna stated we do not want to take anything away from the employees, because we value their work and want them to stay at MEVA. Donna said she was concerned about all of this and the need to decide so quickly.

Tina asked, how long does open enrollment last?

Jillian said it was a 2-week period. Jillian reported that she needs to have this finalized before the holiday break. This way she did not have to chase down staff to complete their selections during the break, which was exceptionally difficult. Then Nicole at Clark Insurance, can have time to process the info so the school can review the info in time.

Tina stated it would be good to have a special board meeting to get all the info together and see what the impact would be to the budget and employees. Jennifer said that she agreed.

Tina requested if we could have until December 1st, that would be helpful to make the final choice and get more clarity on the results, to make a proper decision.

Chad said if we can wrap up by 15th then his team can have time to finalize.

Jennifer stated that we need to teach our staff the benefits of the HSA/HRA plan. Dr. Browne asserted it was the most efficient plan.

Jillian expressed uncertainty of staff being on board, they may elect other plans based on their wants/needs.

Donna suggested we take more time and get some numbers. I think it's good to have a set amount of what MEVA will pay and keep the lower deductible option.

Susan agreed it was okay if we came back to the table to discuss further. She worried about the big increase on the budget, making a decision today was concerning.

Discussions continued among board members and school leadership, going through various scenarios and options. Discussions surrounding whether MEVA's budget could support the increase were validated by

Jennifer Hight, who stated that MEVA had a balanced budget, however, any increases would still be able to be covered.

Jennifer stated, if MEVA was willing to pay \$944 per employee for 52 weeks, that was \$49,100 per month. Currently \$38,000 is being paid per month. This would be an \$11,000 per month increase.

Donna stated it was a shock, but MEVA had the money to cover it.

Dr. Browne said she thought the board was headed in the right direction and feels the HSA option was important, but we needed to educate staff on how it could save them money and may present a better and more viable option.

Jennifer stated we have the funds to absorb the loss if needed. We needed to be clear if we are paying towards children/spouses etc.

Donna asked for a motion to approve MEVA to pay \$944 per individual for health insurance with any additional funding/monies to be applied to the employee, spouse, dependent, or HSA contribution. Tina made the motion. Nick seconded, all in favor, so moved.

The Board realized a discrepancy in the motion. They moved to amend the amount to match what Clark Insurance has listed in the presentation to \$944.07.

Tina motioned to amend/change the amount to \$944.07 of what MEVA will pay. Nick seconded, all in favor, so moved.

Donna motioned (for clarity purposes), to the renewal of plan-1, an alternate plan-2, and renewal of HSA plan-3. Nick seconded, all in favor, so moved.

Donna/Jennifer agreed that Jennifer will give a presentation at a future date with the breakdown of numbers.

Updated Employee Handbook was sent to the board ahead of time for review by Dr. Browne. Donna said that there were some questions regarding items on pages 25 & 26, vacation time, PTO, and sick time off. Employees get 40 hours of vacation and sick time. The other piece in question was that they could carry over their vacation year-over-year for up to 360 hours. We were not sure where that was a policy and in writing.

Dr. Browne was researching this, and Jillian remembered it was always that way at MEVA. Donna stated she was looking for more information.

Tina asked if we should table this while we have more conversations? It makes more sense for sickness to roll over for health recovery reasons. Vacation time stated in the handbook supported health and wellness. However, do we want staff to take a 9-week vacation in one calendar year if they build it up to the maximum amount? We wouldn't want that all at once. We should focus our conversation on vacation time and how much was considered reasonable to carry over.

Donna said we needed a small committee to work on that. We needed a policy around the topic.

Donna said we should make a motion to table this policy until the committee can work on this further.

Tina motioned to table the updated handbook vote until more time was allotted. Susan seconded, all in favor, so moved.

Jillian reported for clarity that teachers got PTO days, and administration got vacation days.

Donna asked if there were volunteers to research this plan. Tina said she was willing. Dr. Browne committed to scheduling a workshop.

MEVA reviewed the ESSER/ARP Continuity of Education and Use of Funds Plan, which Dr. Browne shared. Dr. Browne reminded the board that the grant required the review every six months, and the MEVA website would be updated to suit. There were no changes to the current plans.

Maine Alliance of Public Charter Schools Discussion: Dr. Browne reported she has attended these meetings virtually via Teams. Dr. Browne reported that tragically Shelley Reed had passed away unexpectedly. Shelley was the person who was running this program. Joe Mattos had now taken over and was directing this organization. They are still finding their direction since Shelley's passing. However, Joe was finding constructive things to work on. We may consider joining next year, taking this possible membership into account within the FY25 budgeting process.

Donna expressed appreciation for Dr. Browne's attendance. Donna asserted that if it fits into what we want to achieve then we could consider it.

Public Discussion. Dr. Browne said the next board meeting was December 19th.

Tina wanted to recognize and congratulate MEVA for being published as a top ten school in Maine rankings, under the middle school category. MEVA ranked lower in the high school category. Tina planned to share the link with board members.

Donna reminded members that board training was coming up in December and encouraged members to attend. She committed to emailing members with the info.

Adjournment. Nick motioned to adjourn. Donna seconded. All in favor, so moved. The meeting was adjourned at 4:59 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Emery and Dr. Melinda Browne
Secretary pro tempore