

Maine Learning Innovations

Minutes for a Meeting of the Board of Directors held July 21, 2020

Pursuant to email and public website notices, a virtual meeting of the Board of Maine Learning Innovations was convened on Zoom at 2:00 PM, July 21, 2020. Board members attending were Amy Carlisle, Ed LeBlanc, Peter Mills, and Kim Whitman.

Also attending were Melinda Browne, Donald Fournier, Jillian Dearborn, Patti Ashley, Mary Markert, Todd McIntire, Jennifer Clark, Danielle Pouzol, Cheryl Brigham, Christina O'Grady, Chelsea Osgood, Stephanie Emery, Nicole Hart, and Lena Vitagliano. Nichi Farnham and Gina Post attended from the Charter Commission.

Minutes. Upon motion by Kim, seconded by Ed, minutes from the meeting of June 16 were approved.

Finance. Upon motion by Kim, seconded by Ed, the financial packet presented by Patti Ashley was approved. Pursuant to Jennifer Hight's earlier suggestion, it was agreed to meet again by Zoom this Thursday at 3 PM to review present finances and prepare a budget plan for FY 20-21.

Head of School. Melinda and the staff have been busy preparing 17 year end reports that are due by July 10, some due to the Commission and others to the Department of Education. Applications for grants from ESEA and IDEA have been submitted. The IDEA grant for FY 21 has been approved. The ESEA application is due August 1.

Summer school is going well and has helped to close credit gaps. Since June 22, students have recovered 25 credits. For high school credit recovery, four corps academic teachers are delivering courses. At the beginning of summer, we had eight seniors who had not finished. Six have now finished and the remaining two should be complete in the next couple of weeks. Middle school tutoring is also going well.

The summer program is the key to our success. We have been doing some summer work for five years but this is the first year we have been able to support a robust credit recovery program, thanks to CARES Act funding.

We are getting the office ready for teachers to return on August 31. We will begin earlier in August with two weeks of remote training. We are developing a reopening protocol for board approval.

Program Manager. Stephanie Emery reported that we have 373 students already enrolled for the coming year. Meghan Reitchel is getting them registered and will try to have our full complement of 390 registered before school begins in order to get them ready for school. We have 223 students on wait list. We have 23 offers out and 40 in the works. The focus is on grades 7 through 9. Eighth grade is now capped at 77. For seventh grade, we offered 7 seats today. We are upgrading the student handbook with minor adjustments.

Staffing. We have hired a new science teacher to replace Jennifer Clark who has taken over as Guidance Director. We are having difficulty in locating anyone to provide training services under one of our individualized education programs.

Building Lease. Peter reported that the landlord's offer to lease the space we would need from Hollowell House is on the order of \$192,000 per year, which is well beyond our present cost of \$110,773 and beyond what our budget can tolerate. Kennebec Savings will hold a foreclosure auction on August 12 and will likely take over Hollowell House at that time.

It is an awkward time to consider another five year lease because our space needs for the near future are so uncertain. Even during our first five years, our space needs doubled. If the demand for virtual education escalates because of the pandemic, there may be a call for additional services from MEVA and Connections, the only institutions in the state with extensive experience in K-12 virtual education.

Brick and mortar schools will be under pressure to reduce the number of students coming in for face to face instruction. If MEVA's waiting list soars and we are permitted to expand, our need for offices will expand as well. On the other hand, if more children are staying home, some of our teachers who are parents may need to teach from home, thus reducing the need for office space.

After discussing these various contingencies with Greg Farris, he has suggested a two year lease on our present space at a rate of \$11,000 per month, or a cost of \$132,000 per year, electricity and maintenance costs included. Although this is an increase of about \$20,000 over our present cost, our rent this year for the C-Wing at only \$3000 per month was well below market.

Staying with the Ballard Center has several advantages:

1. The opportunity to expand (or contract) as needed.
2. Avoidance of moving costs.
3. The availability of emergency power.

Third Party Evaluation. Lisa Plimpton will provide a proposal to continue advising us and to provide another third party evaluation for the coming year.

Enrollment Expansion Request. Melinda has prepared an application to the Commission to allow MEVA to expand its enrollment. Upon motion by Amy, seconded by Peter, the application was approved.

The meeting was then adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Mills, Secretary