

Maine Learning Innovations

Minutes for a Meeting of the Board of Directors held December 17, 2024

Pursuant to email and public website notices, a virtual meeting of the Board of Maine Learning Innovations was convened on Zoom at 4:00 PM, December 17th, 2024. Board members attending were Donna Pelletier, Stacey Blanchard, Cherieann Harrison, Tina Meserve, and Susan Walters. A quorum was present.

Attending from Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA) were Melinda Browne, Don Fournier, Christina O’Grady, Lena Vitagliano, Chelsea Osgood, Jillian Dearborn, Jennifer Hight, and Stephanie Emery.

Attending from Stride were Todd McIntire, and Tom Travia.

Attending from Wiplfli LLP was Patrick “Pat” Nicholas, CPA.

Opening Items.

Approval of Minutes. Tina motioned to approve the minutes of the Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA) Governing Board Business Meeting of November 19th, 2024. Susan seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Finance Report.

Pat Nicholas, CPA, presented the FY24 Audit Report (draft Maine Learning Innovations d/b/a Maine Virtual Academy Financial Statements and Supplementary Information, and Single Audit Report, Years Ended June 30, 2024, and 2023, by Wiplfli LLP). The audit report displayed clean records overall. No key issues were flagged. Under MEVA’s internal controls, MEVA did not demonstrate any weaknesses in this area. Auditors did not find any issues within the financial statements, which was all good news. There were increased revenues and expenses this year. Pat further mentioned that MEVA had consistent footnotes year after year.

Jennifer stated that the ESSER III (ARP) grant was now over, the initial award was \$857K and \$806K was built out. ESSER funds closed with only \$50K remaining. The funds were no longer available.

Regarding the FY24 Audit Report, Jennifer said that we needed to make minor adjustments with the statement of functional expenses. Salaries/taxes and general admin. Calculations needed to be reviewed before finalization.

Donna questioned, even if minor adjustments are needed, will the bottom total still stay the same? Jennifer and Pat responded with, correct, just some lines may be adjusted without impact to the final total.

Board members were comfortable approving the FY24 Audit Report knowing minor adjustments would be made but totals would be unaffected.

Cherieann motioned to approve the FY24 Audit Report with the addition of Jennifer’s corrections and updates as being known to the board with approval. Stacey seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Tina expressed a thank you to everyone for a clean audit.

In support of the FY24 Audit process, Dr. Browne sent the governance letter (dated December 12, 2024, from Wipfli LLP) to the board and shared it for awareness and documentation purposes.

Administration. Dr. Melinda Browne presented the Head of School Report.

- Strategic Planning Workshop - Monday, Dec. 9th: The purpose was to review the Maine Charter School Commission's proposed (MCSC) strategic plan and to size up progress towards meeting MEVA's two short-term strategic goals (i.e., reading growth and math proficiency).
- Mid-Year Check-In Meeting - Thursday, Jan. 9th: The purpose is to update the MCSC about MEVA's current progress towards meeting performance framework goals, based on the SY-2023/2024 Annual Monitoring Report.
- We will share Mid-Year results at the upcoming January 28th governing board meeting.

Dr. Browne introduced Dr. O'Grady, Curriculum Coordinator, who presented MEVA's progress on the curriculum mapping project.

Since the beginning of the new year a curriculum advisory committee was established with several teachers represented in various grade bands. The committee is utilizing a rubric to evaluate each map. Current work is being done within the 7th-8th grade maps. These will be sent to the board ahead of the January meeting for review. There is a schedule for the initial review. Teachers are aware of their deadlines and are currently working on their maps.

Dr. Browne observed that this project is highly collaborative, we have the board involved and we are leveraging that expertise across members. This project also involves the teachers, it is a group effort which is wonderful.

Donna expressed her appreciation for all the work going into it and the willingness to accept feedback.

Dr. Browne thanked the board and stated that the faculty deserved much of the credit.

MEVA Enrollment:

- MEVA's post-10/1 retention is approximately 97%, which exceeds expectations.
- Mid-year enrollments begin on Monday, Jan. 13th and will participate in onboarding sessions and Winter NWEA MAP Growth and i-Ready algebra assessments (Jan. 14th – 16th) to establish performance baselines.

Dr. Browne reported that currently MEVA has retained 97% of students this year. Any result over 90% is exceeding. We are well above the threshold and have been exceeding this measure for the past 5 years.

Mid-year enrollments start on January 13th. All students including the new incoming will be taking the Winter NWEA MAP Growth during the week of January 13th. Semester 2 starts January 17th.

Tina asked Dr. Browne if she saw any trends with people who do not stay.

Dr. Browne reported that we currently have strong retention in the middle-school grade levels. This year we experienced 10th – 11th graders who left the school. For some, MEVA was just not a good fit for them due to structured expectations.

Governance.

Susan motioned to approve the SY-2025/2026 Parent Student Handbook. Tina seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Tina asked if there were any changes to the Program of Studies?

Dr. Browne reported that we adjusted contact information and made some other minor adjustments including removing language courses. We want to make sure we inform new students about our baseline offerings. No new classes are being offered or added. The school does not want to make more promises than we can keep, some removals of courses are related to budgetary and low course-enrollment concerns.

Tina asked if we should have a discussion surrounding removing classes?

Donna mentioned that she and Dr. Browne had discussed possibilities surrounding budgets and class offerings.

Stacey and Tina asked related questions surrounding if the faculty impacted by the course removals are still with MEVA? Dr. Browne stated yes, no changes to staffing right now. Dr. Browne said that low enrollment in some courses was a concern. Donna reminded members that we could always adjust the program of studies later. Dr. Browne confirmed that we intended to present accurately to families what we are offering.

Tina motioned to approve the 2025-2026 Program of Studies. Susan seconded. All in favor, so moved.

The board acknowledged MEVA Approved Governing Board Policies and LAU Plan posted on the school's websites.

Donna asked if the board had to approve the LAU plan? Dr. Browne said annual approval was not required if there was no change since last year's plan.

Cherieann asked if there was a process on reviewing board policies? Donna responded that we have not established a schedule, though all policies were recently reviewed. Donna suggested restarting the board's review of policies next school year. Tina made the point that there was value in setting up a schedule; we can start having a plan to review this as a goal for next year.

Public Discussion.

Dr. Browne shared the board goals on the slide deck. Donna was considering reviewing board goals at the January meeting. Tina offered to assist Cherieann with navigating the Maine Charter School Commission's training platform if she needed it. Stacey said that she had issues getting into the platform as well. Susan agreed the board training platform was not as intuitive as it should have been. She observed that you also did not know if you had answered the questions or not. It was a bit tricky. Donna asked board members to let her know what they needed.

Donna would like to meet with the finance committee soon to discuss employee health insurance, and if we will make changes for next year and factor in any adjustments into the budget. Budgetary meetings were planned for February in preparation for the May vote.

Dr. Browne asked Donna if she wanted to schedule a workshop. Donna confirmed, yes, to set up a workshop to do committee work. Donna stated it could take a couple of meetings, but we did need to start that progress. Donna did not like how we were doing things with health insurance, and we needed to change that.

Cherieann said she is wondering what the timeline is for the renewal of superintendent. Cherieann just wanted to make sure the board was not missing any deadlines.

Dr. Browne reported that there was no contract for the Head of School, we were all 'at will' employees. She stated that she and the board participate in an evaluation. Tina observed that the regular school districts had a different process. Donna explained that the Head of School did a self-assessment, and the board evaluated the Head of School around May/June. The board also did a self-assessment.

Adjournment.

Donna adjourned the meeting at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Emery and Dr. Melinda Browne
Secretary pro tempore