

Montana Community Choice Schools Commission
Meeting Minutes
June 17, 2025
Reeder's Alley Conference Center, Helena MT

Call to Order – 09:01:32

Chair Schreiber called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. The Chair led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance, Cathy Kincheloe took Roll Call, and the Chair read the Statement of Public Participation and welcomed guests.

Commission members present: Trish Schreiber, Chair; Katy Wright (arrived 9:03AM), Vice Chair; Jon Rutt, Treasurer; Katy Franklin; Mark Hufstetler; Dee Brown (on-line); Commission Director of Planning, Cathy Kincheloe; Board of Public Education (Board) staff present: McCall Flynn, Executive Director; and Kris Stockton, Administrative Specialist (on-line).

Presenters: Mark Weinberg, National Charter School Institute; Heather Ohs, Montana Community Foundation.

Guests: Katie Bloodgood, Office of Public Instruction; Heather Irving; Chip Lindenlaub.

Guests online: none

Public Comment – 09:03:35

No public comment was provided.

Item 1 Approve Consent Agenda – 09:04:02

Member Rutt moved to approve the Consent Agenda containing the March 4, 2025 Minutes. Motion seconded by Member Hufstetler.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Approve Agenda – 9:04:31

Member Brown moved to adopt the agenda. Motion seconded by Member Wright.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Item Placed on Table – 9:05:05

Chair Schreiber moved to take the motion related to combining subcommittees off the table for reconsideration. Motion seconded by Member Wright.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Rescind a Motion from the Table – 9:05:51

Chair Schreiber moved to rescind the motion to combine the Policy Making Subcommittee and the Special Education Consideration subcommittee. Motion seconded by Member Hufstetler.

Discussion:

- ***Chair Schreiber acknowledged the unpopularity of the motion.***

Motion passed unanimously.

Item 2 Chairperson Welcome Statement - 09:07:02

Chair Schreiber opened the meeting thanking Members and Guests for their participation in the meeting then proceeded with an overview of the presentations pertaining to the Commission's role as the sole statewide authorizer of Community Choice Schools.

Item 3 Reports – 09:08:01

Member Rutt presented the Treasurer report and noted the balance to date which includes the revenue expenditure by fund noting new payments for the salary and benefits of the Director of Planning and for a contract with the National Charter Schools Institute. Member Rutt answered questions from Commission members. Member Schreiber questioned the accuracy of funds reported spent in the general fund. Director of Planning clarified the amount to be corrected in the report.

Motion Made – 9:10:29

Member Schreiber made a motion to accept a correction to the financial report. Motion seconded by Member Hufstetler.

Executive Director Flynn stated BPE staff would provide a corrected statement.

Discussion:

- ***Member Hufstetler asked for clarification as to how the remaining funds will be used. Member Rutt detailed work needed to implement the law that may require consultants.***

Motion passed unanimously.

Member Rutt gave the Fundraising Committee Report, detailing passing of an amendment to the CCS Law in the 2025 session, allowing the Commission to seek and receive donations from private individuals as well as sources from public funds. Member Brown questioned if a form is available on the Commission's website for individuals to use in making donations. Executive Director Flynn confirmed the form is on the website and asked the Commission

to further consider a policy for accepting donations. Chair Schreiber agreed with Executive Director Flynn. Member Brown inquired about posting directions on the website for how to make a donation.

Motion Made – 09:18:29

Member Brown made a motion to provide information on the Commission's website for individuals wishing to make a donation to the Commission to contact the Director of Planning as point person.

Discussion

- ***Member Rutt sought clarification as to which website. Chair Schreiber clarified the Commission's official webpage is on the Board of Public Education's website and to follow up with the Office of Public Instruction to make a note on their Community Choice Schools tab to direct any potential donors to the Commission's page on the BPE site.***
- ***Member Wright questioned the donation form contents as well as the details of the amendment. Member Wright also asked for input from Executive Director Flynn as to the logistics. Executive Director Flynn stated the BPE would work with the Director of Planning to establish a clear policy for accepting donations.***
- ***Member Franklin recommended forming policy to accept donations. Executive Director Flynn recommended revisiting and editing the existing policy now that the Director of Planning position is in place and the sources of funds are expanded.***

Motion passed 5-1, with Member Franklin dissenting.

In the Chairperson Report, Chair Schreiber announced new members of the subcommittees and introduced Cathy Kincheloe as the new Director of Planning.

Cathy Kincheloe provided the first Director of Planning Report by detailing work completed under the direction of the state procurement team to contract with the National Charter Schools Institute for consulting services to support best practice in charter policy development. Director Kincheloe shared take-a-ways from the NCSI Authorizer Convening with the Commission. In addition, she listed the key responsibilities of the position as to provide administrative management for the Commission, engage in public relations on behalf of the Commission, and to lead fundraising efforts.

Chair Schrieber inquired if the NCSI convening discussed the use of AI in the application process; Member Franklin offered additional comments on the topic of AI. Member Hufstetler asked for elaboration on community alignment at the NCSI conference. Member Brown appreciated the investment in attending the NCSI conference and sharing learning with the Commission. Chair Schreiber highlighted the opportunity for Members to attend future conferences.

Break – 09:40:58

Item 4 Open Discussion/Presentation: Making the Mission Matter with Mark Weinberg, NCSI – 09:46:13

Mark Weinberg, VP for Leadership and Learning with the National Charter Schools Institute, presented to the Commission for consideration the idea of incorporating mission specific measures into CCS Performance Frameworks for the purpose of ensuring Choice Schools maintain focus on delivering on their mission.

Item 5 Lunch Break

Item 6 Open Discussion/Presentation: Philanthropic Giving Opportunities with Heather Ohs, Montana Community Foundation – 12:00:15

Heather Ohs, Gift and Estate Planning Officer with the Montana Community Foundation presented options for CCS and governing boards to build their philanthropic entities.

Note: The Commission took recess from 12:21:59 to 12:29:02 to correct technical difficulties.

Item 7 Break – 13:01:47

Item 8 Discussion: Background Check Policy – 13:16:08

As follow-up to a previous meeting, members reviewed a proposed Background Check Policy and asked questions related to the logistics of the policy such as managing fees, storing background check information, timing, and third party verification of results. Executive Director Flynn highlighted the need to ensure the results are handled securely. The Director of Planning will consult a lawyer about the commission members' questions and make changes to the proposed policy.

Item 9 Discussion: Bylaws – 14:38:31

Commission Members asked questions and provided feedback to the Director of Planning to make revisions to the newly developed policies required per the Bylaws: Conflict of Interest Policy, Professional Development Approval Form, and Reimbursement Other than Travel Form. Changes will be made accordingly.

Item 10 Open Discussion – 14:49:22

Chair Schreiber opened the floor for comments and questions from Members. Member Wright sought clarification as to Community Choice Schools law pertaining to the Commission's role in oversight of content standards.

Member Brown inquired about any updates to the district judge's pending ruling.

Members provided ideas for future meeting trainings. Suggestions provided included:

- A legal presentation explaining the court's findings once a ruling has been made

- A legal lecture about the First Amendment, specifically in examining the establishment clause vs. the free exercise clause as they pertain to charter schools
- A Q&A with another authorizer and/or charter leader about the application process

Chair Schreiber asked Members to hold July 30th in case a special meeting is needed, and she sought feedback for the location for the December Commission meeting while the Capitol Building is under construction. The Commission decided Helena is a good destination spot.

Public Comment – 15:12:10

Chip Lindenlaub read language from the Montana State Constitution, Article V, Section 11 and Article X, Section 6 (1) pertaining to the unconstitutionality of religious instruction in public schools.

Executive Director Flynn provided corrections of the financial report.

Chair Schreiber thanked the Commission Members, the Director of Planning, and the Board of Public Education staff for their work and support.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at - 15:16:35