



**MONTANA
COMMUNITY
CHOICE SCHOOLS**

Community Choice Schools Commission

Meeting Minutes

December 9, 2025

Zoom Webinar

Call to Order – (Recording Time Stamp) 00:00:15

Chair Schreiber called the meeting to order at 9:00 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; Jon Rutt, Treasurer; Katy Franklin; Chip Lindenlaub; Taylor Ramos; Barbara Forrester-Frank; Commission Director of Planning, Cathy Kincheloe; Board of Public Education (Board) staff present: McCall Flynn, Executive Director, and Kris Stockton, Administrative Specialist.

Guests: Dr. Tim Tharp, Julia Pattin, Becca Brown, Rain Turcotte, Derrick White, Robyn Mohs, Representative Demming, Connie Filesteel, Moffie Funk.

Public Comment – 00:03:01

Rain Turcotte introduced herself as an enrolled Member of the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes and an NACA Inspired School Network Design Fellow working toward establishing a tribal school on the Fork Peck reservation in Poplar, MT to benefit all children with the opportunity to revitalize tribal language and culture. Rain provided details in her progress with development of the school.

Dr. Tim Tharp, Chair of the Board of Public Education, stated he would be listening and wished the Commission luck with their work.

Item 1 **Approve Consent Agenda** – 00:07:50

Member Rutt moved to approve the Consent Agenda containing the September 9 and October 10 and 11, 2025 Minutes. Motion seconded by Member Franklin.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Approve Agenda – 00:09:02

Member Lindenlaub moved to adopt the agenda for December 9, 2025. Motion seconded by Member Forrester-Frank.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Item 2 **Chairperson Welcome Statement** - 00:09:54

Chair Schreiber opened the meeting thanking Members and Guests for attending the meeting then proceeded to thank Director of Planning Kincheloe and the National Charter Schools Institute for preparing the final drafts the Commission will be considering in today's meeting. She also thanked the subcommittees for their involvement in the development of the draft policies. The public was reminded the Commission encourages public comment while conducting business. Chair Schreiber proceeded to welcome Barbara Forrester-Frank as a new member of the Commission replacing Katy Wright who had to step down. She also thanked Katy Wright for her invaluable work to the Commission. Member

Forrester-Frank will complete the remainder of a three year term as appointed by the House Minority Leader which ends in August 2026.

Member Forrester-Frank introduced herself as a fourth generation Montanan, public school educator currently serving as the Director of Students Services for Missoula County Schools. She shared her enthusiasm for joining the Commission in order to contribute to the work.

Item 3 Officer Elections - 00:13:01

Chair Schreiber turned the meeting over to Director of Planning Kincheloe to facilitate the Officer Elections. Director Kincheloe gave an overview of the process and proceeded to call for nominations.

Director Kincheloe called for nominations for the Chair.

Member Lindenlaub moved to appoint Trish Schreiber as Commission Chair. Motion seconded by Member Rutt.

Director Kincheloe called for other nominations for the Chair. No other nominations made.

Motion passed unanimously.

Director Kincheloe called for nominations for the Vice Chair.

Member Ramos moved to appoint Jon Rutt as Commission Vice Chair. Motion seconded by Member Hufstetler.

Director Kincheloe called for other nominations for the Chair. No other nominations made.

Motion passed unanimously.

Director Kincheloe called for nominations for the Treasurer.

Member Rutt moved to appoint Chip Lindenlaub as Commission Treasurer. Motion seconded by ChairSchreiber.

Director Kincheloe called for other nominations for the Treasurer. No other nominations made.

Motion passed unanimously.

Item 4 Discussion and Business: – 00:16:53

1) Subcommittees

Chair Schreiber called for motions to open discussion to establish subcommittees for 2026.

Chair Schreiber moved to continue the fundraising subcommittee through 2026. Motion seconded by Member Rutt.

Chair Schreiber called for discussion. Chair Schreiber noted the importance of the fundraising subcommittee to ensure the Commission remains financially viable.

Chair Schreiber called for discussion from public comment. No comments offered.

Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Schreiber called for other motions to open discussion to establish subcommittees for 2026.

Member Rutt moved to continue the policymaking subcommittee through 2026. Motion seconded by Member Lindenlaub.

No discussion.

Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Schreiber called for other motions to open discussion to establish subcommittees for 2026.

Member Franklin moved to continue the special education consideration subcommittee through 2026. Motion seconded by Member Schreiber .

Member Franklin contributed to discussion by asking when would be an appropriate time to ask a Member to join the subcommittee. Chair Schreiber noted the bylaws state that the Chair will check in with all Members following creation of the Subcommittees to see who is interested in joining. She noted a recommendation can be made now. Member Franklin recommended Member Forrester-Frank join the special education consideration subcommittee. Chair Schreiber said she will contact Member Forrester-Frank to see if she is interested.

Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Schreiber asked if there are other nominations for subcommittees.

None were offered.

2) 2026 Meeting Dates

Chair Schreiber stated the bylaws state the Commission should meet four times each year. She put the Commission at ease to select dates. The following dates were selected for 2026 Commission meetings:

- February 18 8:00 AM Zoom
- June 15 10:00 AM Helena (in person)
- September 9 8:00 AM Zoom
- December 1 TBD Helena or Zoom

Item 5 Business – 00:37:54

1) Core Values

Chair Schreiber made a motion to accept the Core Values document as the Commission's official guiding principles to fulfill their duties as state-wide authorizer as mandated in Title 20. Motion seconded by Member Rutt.

Chair Schreiber opened discussion. Chair Schreiber shared appreciation of the work of the Commission in creating these values. She then asked Member Forrester-Frank as a new Member if she had any concerns or additions to make to the document. Member Forrester-Frank said it touches on the needs of all stakeholders and that she appreciated the transparency. She also noted she is comfortable with this document. Chair Schreiber reminded Members this document can be reconsidered for revisions as the Commission continues their work.

Chair Schreiber opened public comment. No comment offered.

Motion passed unanimously.

2) Members Affirm Conflict of Interest Statements

Chair Schreiber explained the procedure for each member to publicly affirm on an annual basis, awareness and understanding of and agreement to comply with the Conflict of Interest Statement.

Members individually affirmed their adherence to the Conflict of Interest by stating the following:

I, Trish Schreiber, an acting member of the CCSC, affirm that I have been provided a copy of the Conflict of Interest, I have read and understand the Conflict of Interest, and I agree to comply with the policy.

I, Mark Hufstetler, an acting member of the CCSC, affirm that I have been provided a copy of the Conflict of Interest, I have read and understand the Conflict of Interest, and I agree to comply with the policy.

I, Jon Rutt, an acting member of the CCSC, affirm that I have been provided a copy of the Conflict of Interest, I have read and understand the Conflict of Interest, and I agree to comply with the policy.

I, Chip Lindenlaub, an acting member of the CCSC, affirm that I have been provided a copy of the Conflict of Interest, I have read and understand the Conflict of Interest, and I agree to comply with the policy.

I, Taylor Ramos, an acting member of the CCSC, affirm that I have been provided a copy of the Conflict of Interest, I have read and understand the Conflict of Interest, and I agree to comply with the policy.

I, Katey Franklin, an acting member of the CCSC, affirm that I have been provided a copy of the Conflict of Interest, I have read and understand the Conflict of Interest, and I agree to comply with the policy.

I, Barbara Forrester-Frank, an acting member of the CCSC, affirm that I have been provided a copy of the Conflict of Interest, I have read and understand the Conflict of Interest, and I agree to comply with the policy.

3) Application Proposal Review Policy

Chair Schreiber called for a motion to open up discussion..

Member Hufstetler made a motion to accept the Application Proposal Review Policy.

Motion seconded by Member Lindenlaub.

Chair Schreiber opened discussion. Chair Schreiber shared her opinion that this document is an improvement from the original policy, noting the contributions from national partners and revision of dates. Member Franklin asked if an interested party could enter into the RFP process outside the dates, or if it is an annual process. Chair Schreiber confirmed it is an annual process with dates determined by code. She further elaborated that the Commission is not limited to holding one application cycle per year.

Chair Schreiber opened public comment. Derrick White, Director of the School Design Fellowship with the NACA Inspired Schools Network, asked if the NACSA general guidelines were consulted in

development of the policy. Director of Planning Kincheloe confirmed the policy is largely based on NACSA guidelines.

Motion passed unanimously.

4) Founder Proposed School Application Guidebook

Chair Schreiber called for a motion to open up discussion. .

Member Rutt made a motion to accept the Founder Proposed School Application Guidebook. Motion seconded by Chair Schreiber.

Chair Schreiber opened discussion. Member Rutt commented that this is an outline for applicants, assisting them with understanding the process as best we know at this point. There is potential for revisions as the Commission implements the application review process in the future.

Chair Schreiber opened public comment. No comment offered.

Motion passed unanimously.

5) Commission Member Application Guidebook

Chair Schreiber called for a motion to open discussion. .

Member Lindenlaub made a motion to accept the Commission Member Application Guidebook. Motion seconded by Member Hufstetler.

Chair Schreiber opened discussion. Member Lindenlaub noted on page 51 of the Application Review Criteria, the law is misprinted and needs to be corrected to 20-11-11. Director of Planning Kincheloe made corrections on the document. Member Franklin asked about the special education program and the involvement of the Application Review Subcommittee regarding guidance for proper application review. Chair Schreiber responded that the application review subcommittee will be formed ahead of an application cycle and a member of the special education consideration subcommittee should also be a member of the review subcommittee.

Chair Schreiber opened public comment. No comment offered.

Motion passed unanimously.

6) CCS Annual Report Template

Chair Schreiber called for a motion to open discussion. .

Member Franklin made a motion to accept the CCS Annual Report Template. Motion seconded by Member Rutt.

Chair Schreiber opened discussion. Member Franklin asked about a proper place to note the standardized assessment results in the Annual Report Template. Director of Planning Kincheloe detailed the use of the performance framework in relation to reporting assessment results and stated the standardized assessment name will be added to the report template. Chair Schreiber added detail as to the process for selecting and reviewing the choice school's assessment selection.

Chair Schreiber opened public comment. Derrick White asked about an opportunity for schools to be included in determining performance indicators in the performance framework specifically mission specific goals. He further detailed the importance of mission specific goals for schools to their stories of

success in differentiating themselves from other public schools. Director of Planning Kincheloe noted the Commission's consideration of mission specific goals. Chair Schreiber noted mission specific goals could be developed in the Year Zero program and the report allows for a narrative from the school to go beyond the performance framework. Member Franklin noted the importance of qualitative data in the school review process.

Motion passed unanimously.

7) Authorizer Annual Report Requirements and Template

Chair Schreiber called for a motion to open discussion. .

Member Hufstetler made a motion to accept the Authorizer Annual Report Requirements and Template. Motion seconded by Member Lindenlaub.

Chair Schreiber opened discussion. Chair Schreiber noted the formatting is sometimes hard to read. Director of Planning Kincheloe noted edits will be made. Member Hufstetler commented this document will likely undergo revisions as it is implemented.

Chair Schreiber opened public comment. Derrick White asked about the legislation as it pertains to who may serve as an authorizer. Chair Schreiber clarified the Commission is the state-wide authorizer and that the law allows traditional school boards to apply to the Commission to be authorizers.

Motion passed unanimously.

8) Commission Annual Report Template

Chair Schreiber explained the Commission's Annual report is submitted to the Education Interim Committee, the Board of Public Education, and the public.

Chair Schreiber called for a motion to open discussion.

Member Ramos made a motion to accept the Commission Annual Report Template. Motion seconded by Member Rutt.

Chair Schreiber opened discussion. Member Franklin asked if the BPE was involved in creation of the report template. Director of Planning Kincheloe clarified the report requirements are detailed in statute and the BPE was not consulted in development. BPE Executive Director Flynn stated input could be provided at a later date. Chair Schreiber clarified the intent of the report is to the Education Interim Committee (EIC), the Director of Planning should consult with the EIC for feedback. Member Forrester-Frank noted the need to create ADA compliant copies of the documents. Director of Planning Kincheloe stated she will create ADA compliant copies.

Chair Schreiber opened public comment. No comment offered.

Motion passed unanimously.

9) Member Expense Approval Policy

Chair Schreiber called for a motion to open discussion. .

Member Rutt made a motion to accept the Member Expense Approval Policy. Motion seconded by Member Lindenlaub.

Chair Schreiber opened discussion. Chair Schreiber offered her support of the policy.

Chair Schreiber opened public comment. None stated.

Motion passed unanimously.

Item 6 Break – 01:24:22

Item 7 Reports – 01:34:58

In the Chairperson Report, Chair Schreiber detailed updates to the performance report cycle for the Director of Planning, providing direction, and ensuring priorities according to the phases of work in addition to editing all documents developed with the National Charter School Institute. The next three months' work for the Director of Planning will focus on authorizing authorizers.

01:36:26 Transition of Chair

Chair Schreiber then announced her need to leave the meeting to attend to other scheduled business, turning the meeting over to Jon Rutt to run as Chair. Treasurer Rutt assumed the role of Chair.

Taylor Ramos gave the Fundraising Subcommittee Report reporting the Commission's grant request for \$200,000 from the Bradley Foundation was granted for work to be completed in 2026. The purpose of the grant is to develop a Year Zero program, provisions to support the operations of the volunteer Commission, and to promote CCS via public relations. The funds allow the Commission to retain the Director of Planning position. The Fundraising Subcommittee plans to prepare to apply for a federal Charter School Program grant in 2026.

In the Director of Planning Report Cathy Kincheloe updated the Commission on her work around programs and policy, public relations, and fundraising. Much progress was made in the contract with the NCSI to build out the application cycle and annual reports. Working drafts are in progress for the renewal and closure cycles. Meetings are underway with the Solomon Research Associates to provide recommendations to the Commission regarding selection and use of standardized assessments. They are on track to report out on the project at the Commission's February meeting. Key takeaways pertinent to the work of the Commission from NACSACon sessions attended with Member Lindenlaub including updates to the Application Evaluation Criteria template. The first open webinar for interested parties was held attracting approximately 10 participants, future presentations are planned. Connections continue to be made with potential founders. The Bradley Foundation was thanked for their next round of grant funding in support of the Year Zero support program.

Member Rutt presented the Treasurer Report summarizing the income and expenses to November 5, 2025. All revenue is from donations. Treasurer Rutt detailed major operational expenses. The Commission currently has \$142, 175.07 and is operating within its budget.

The Policy Making Committee Report was delivered by Member Rutt, highlighting past meetings in which the Committee has been providing feedback for the application review policy specifically for thoughtful inclusion of public comment and the responsibility of the Application Subcommittee and Director in making a final recommendation to approve or deny applications.

Member Franklin reported on the progress of the Special Education Consideration Subcommittee noting the Subcommittee's work to launch an RFP in collaboration with the State Procurement Department and BPE staff. The Special Education policy work will support applicants in development of their Special Education models and the Commission in ensuring applicants meet all IDEA requirements. Contracting work is anticipated to begin in February.

Member Lindenlaub gave a Special Report on his participation at the National Association of Charter School Authorizer's Conference. First noted was the importance of engaging experts in building out Special Education programs. He noted a recommendation to test out our application policy prior to opening the first RFP cycle to ensure we've planned a

comprehensive policy. A theme across the conference was balancing a relationship of support and accountability. Facilities, finance and governance are the areas schools need the most support building into the program. Advice from others highlighted the importance of culture and achievement across an authorizer's portfolio where students & teachers want to be in their school everyday. A focus on people vs paperwork in the application cycle is a key lesson learned from other authorizers. He also noted the importance of the Year Zero development program. His final note was as authorizers we need to be bold in promoting innovation with potential schools and be a model for strong culture ourselves. Chair Rutt noted the Commission has funds to support Members attending conferences in the future.

Public Comment – 02:02:16

Derrick White, Director of School Design Fellowship with NACA Inspired Schools Network (NISN), provided background on NISN's work to support school founders in building school models to open a charter school that is community led and responsive to their children to include language and culture for Indigenous students. He meets weekly with Rain Turcotte in support of best practice in developing an intentional school serving the needs of the local community. Their goal is to submit an application as soon as the law permits.

Connie Filesteel from Fort Belknap, asked when the initial application will be posted for potential founders to access. Director of Planning Kincheloe stated the application resources are on the BPE website and Ms. Filesteel is welcome to reach out directly for resources. She also noted the Commission is not permitted to open an application cycle at this time.

Chair Rutt thanked Members for their participation in the meeting. He also thanked Executive Director Flynn and the staff of the BPE for their continued support, especially their technical support during Commission meetings. Chair Rutt offered a final appreciation to Members for their service today and welcomed the newest Member Barbara-Forrester Frank for joining the Commission.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at - 02:10:15