School Construction Committee
Special Meeting
Maine State Board of Education
Minutes of the October 5, 2026 Meeting

The School Construction Committee met remotely via Zoom.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Fern Desjardins, Chair; and Edmond Morin (both remote)

OTHERS PRESENT:
Paulette Bonneau, Chair, Maine State Board of Education (remote)
Scott Brown, Director of School Facilities, Department of Education (remote)
Paula Gravelle, Director of Public School Finance, Department of Education (remote)
Valerie Chiang, Senior Construction Coordinator, Department of Education (remote)
Ann Pinnette, School Facilities Manager, Department of Education (remote)
Ted Hall, School Facilities Consultant (remote)
Laura M. Cyr, Federal and State Legislative Specialist, Department of Education (remote)
Robbie Feinberg, Director of Communications and Government Relations, MSMA (remote)
Craig Flowers, Office Specialist, State Board of Education, Burton Cross Building, Augusta

Chair Fern Desjardins called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., welcomed everyone, and thanked them for their attendance.

Desjardins introduced the *Public Comments* item on the agenda. There were no public comments from attendees.

Desjardins moved to the next item on the agenda*, Consider Action on Comments Received During the August 31 - October 2, 2026 Public Comment Period on Proposed Changes to Chapter 61: State Board of Education Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects: Consideration of Cost-Sharing Plans A, B, and C.* The State Board received their fifth and last public comment on Chapter 61 on October 2, 2026 from John Suttie, Superintendent of Schools, RSU 23. Superintendent Suttie expressed concerns on the cost-sharing proposal in Section 11(4).

With the public comment period closed, the Committee proceeded to consider action based on comments received to date.

Gravelle went over the spreadsheets that she prepared following the request from the School Construction Committee at their September 25th meeting and other spreadsheet calculations that Chair Desjardins and Director Brown requested after the meeting. Altogether, that included the introduction of a 25% and a 50% poverty metric in the State Board's cost sharing proposal; and moving the cost sharing percentages in Section 11(4) of Chapter 61 from 50%, 35%, and 25% (Option A) respectively to 40%, 20% and 0% (Option B); and to 20%, 10%, and 0% (Option C). At the meeting, two other cost-sharing options were added to the spreadsheets: 30%, 15%, and 0% (Option BB) and 15%, 10%, and 0% (Option D). All options were considered by using 16 examples of current school construction projects and analyzing how each of the options would impact each SAU's project.

After much discussion and a diligent review of the data from the 16 SAUs for all of the options given, and looking ahead to FY 28 when the EPS required local contribution utilizes a new 10% poverty metric such that SAUs with higher poverty percentages will receive a lower required mill rate and those with lower poverty will receive a higher mill rate, the team determined that introducing a poverty metric of 25% or 50% into school construction was not a good idea. Since the Legislature decided to include a 10% poverty metric in the school funding formula in FY 28, making it bigger in school construction than what the Legislature decided upon would be very questionable. The idea of including a poverty metric of 25% or 50% in cost sharing was dropped.

Considering the cost-sharing comments received from the State Board's Rulemaking Proposal during the August 31 to October 2 Public Comment Period and how some communities would not have the ability to meet their cost-sharing requirement in school construction, the team decided to also drop Option A.

Digging more deeply into the implications of introducing cost sharing in Chapter 61 by examining the financial data of the 16 SAUs in the spreadsheets for the four remaining options, the team determined that Option C best met the desired outcomes for introducing cost sharing in the rule.

Motioned by Desjardins, seconded by Morin, and voted unanimously by the School Construction Committee members that pursuant to MRS Title 20-A §15905(4) the State Board of Education approve the updated proposal of amendments in Section 11(4) on Cost Sharing of Rule, Chapter 61, State Board of Education Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects and move the proposal forward for a second comment period and public hearing in the Major Substantive Rules process for obtaining rule adoption of the amendments.

The next School Construction Committee meeting will be held on Friday, October 23 at 11:00 a.m. at the Department of Health and Human Services Building, Room A/B, 109 Capitol Street, Augusta and remotely via Zoom.

Desjardins adjourned the meeting at 10:41 a.m.