



## Community Regional Charter School

Creative Children's Academy • Dimensions Academy • Overman Academy

*"Community-Centered, Uncompromisingly Learner Focused"*

Jun 4, 2025

To: The Maine Charter School Commission

From: Nicki Reinholt, CRCS Board Chair

We, the CRCS Board of Directors, are aware that the Commission has raised concerns and questions regarding the plan to consolidate our three buildings to a single location in Waterville. We will address the concerns that have been brought to our attention in the following memo.

We have organized our thoughts into three categories:

### **Enrollment:**

The CRCS Board has asked the administration about enrollment strategy for the future. The Board and administration are in agreement and are recommending that when CRCS is in a single building that CRCS will be a PreK-12 school but we will not enroll learners in grades 9-12 to fill spaces left by learners who have either unenrolled or graduated (backfilling). Essentially, enrollment will be open only to children in grades PreK-8. When CRCS submits the request for two amendments in August, one for a new facility and the other for acquiring new debt, it will also include an analysis of the anticipated impact on enrollment in Grades 9-12 by not backfilling openings.

Moving to Waterville would locate CRCS between MEANS and MEAA, which affords it the opportunity to be a feeder program for these other Maine Charter Schools. We are not concerned about competition because the programming focus at CRCS is not offered at other schools. However, other schools offer robust and in depth specific themes that could potentially attract CRCS learners to their schools.

CRCS has kept true to its original mission and vision since 2012, which is unique among the rest of Maine's Charter Schools. Having a customized learning environment that is truly proficiency based and not time based is a niche that is not offered at any other schools in our area. We routinely guide and support learners to look at other models based on their goals, aspirations and plans (off ramping). Customizing for learners and letting them follow their passions and plans is very important, which is why we have had several learners enroll in Maine

Arts, MEANS, MEVA, and MCA. We have sent more learners to other Charter Schools than we have received from other Charter Schools.

### **Transportation and Current Catchment Area:**

As a board, we had concerns about disenfranchising our current enrolled learners by relocating. We have concluded that our current catchment area will not be affected. We have asked the administration to develop what the future bus stops will look like and how these will affect bus ride duration changes for current families. Proposed future bus stop plans will not cause the elimination of current bus stops. Some new stops will be added due to the new location and new transportation routes but the primary focus is providing transportation to towns that we currently serve. The administration is currently surveying current learners' families, and at this time, 100% are planning on still attending when the school moves to Waterville. Over the next couple of months we will continue to ask the administration to provide us with more data, but preliminary and anecdotal data shows no significant drop in enrollment with a move to Waterville.

### **Site Location:**

When the idea to build a new school was brought to the Board. At our business meeting on May 13, 2024, the Board approved the following list of site criteria:

- 25+ acres - ideally 50+ acres
- Access to Public water
- Access to Public Sewer
- Access to an enrollment pool
- Access to a talent pool for employees
- Access to Higher Ed opportunities
- Access to community projects
- Expandable on property
- Access to internships
- Walkable greenspace
- Streamlined transportation - Access for current enrollments
- Access to service providers
- Closer distance to emergency services

In Somerset County, access to public utilities is a major barrier for a new school building. It is critical to have public water for fire suppression and domestic water. Avoiding problems with contaminants was emphasized as a critical need. Finding a site that wasn't designated wetlands or located in an industrial park, was a significant challenge. After working with a broker for well over a year, 4 potential sites were evaluated.

- A site in First Park in Oakland, but they were concerned about our tax exempt status and the mission of the park to bring in a tax base.
- A site in Waterville that had very little buildable land and wetland mitigation was cost prohibitive.

- A site in Skowhegan that was too small and had limited green space.
- A site in Waterville that met all the criteria off the Trafton Road Exit.

The parcel of property off the Trafton Road Exit is 41 acres and reduces the transportation times for the majority of our current families that ride the bus. It provides a large area of green space, access to public utilities, is closer to Higher Ed opportunities, etc.

Please accept this memo on behalf of the CRCS Board.

Any further adjustments by the CRCS Board around the topics will be passed along to the Commission. If the Commission has any further questions or would like clarifying information, please let us know.