MCCA

Andre Cushing, President
Penobscot County

Robert Sezak, Vice President
Somerset County

Kevin Kelley, 2nd Vice President
Waldo County

David Levesque, Secretary-Treasurer
Lincoln County

Steve Gorden, Past President
Cumberland County

Lauren Haven
Administrator

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MAINE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
October 14th, 2026 10:00 am
via Zoom conference

1. Call to Order

President Andre Cushing called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00 am with the list of directors and other participants below in attendance.

DIRECTORS PRESENT:

Androscoggin – Comm. Jane Pentheny
Aroostook – Comm. William Dobbins
Cumberland – Comm. Tom Tyler
Franklin – Comm. Bob Carlton
Kennebec – Comm. George Jabar
Knox – Comm. Ed Glaser
Lincoln – Comm. David Levesque
Oxford – Comm. Sawin Millett proxy for Comm. Lisa Keim
Penobscot – Comm. Andre Cushing
Piscataquis – Comm. Paul Davis
Sagadahoc – Comm. Todd McPhee
Somerset – Comm. Robert Sezak

DIRECTORS ABSENT:

Oxford – Comm. Lisa Keim
Hancock – Comm. Samuel DiBella
Waldo – Comm. Kevin Kelley
Washington – Comm. David Burns
York - Comm. Justin Chenette

OTHERS PRESENT:

Androscoggin – Admin. Jeff Chute
Aroostook – Admin. Justin Tibbetts
Cumberland – Comm. Steve Gorden
Hancock – Admin. Mike Crooker
Kennebec – Comm. Joe Pietroski and Admin. Scott Ferguson
Lincoln County – Admin. Carrie Kipfer
MCCA Risk Pool - Manager Malcolm Ulmer
MCCA - Admin. Lauren Haven
Piscataquis – Admin. Mike Williams
Somerset – Admin Tim Curtis
Unorganized Territories – Fiscal Admin Chip Jones
Verrill Dana – Lobbyist Sam Hamilton

2. Consent Agenda:
    2.1. Approval of the Agenda
    2.2. Approval of the Minutes
    2.3. Financial Reports: Lauren Haven

Comm. Cushing requested a motion to move the consent agenda. *Comm. Carlton made the **motion seconded** by Comm. Jabar and the motion **passed**.*

3. Legislative Policy Committee (LPC): Jean-Marie Caterina and Kevin Kelley, Co-Chairs
    3.1. James Cohen, Verrill Dana
        3.1.1. Legislative Update
        3.1.2. Next Steps

Lobbyist Sam Hamilton provided an update on the candidates and current polling statistics for the upcoming elections.

The lobbying team at Verrill has been asked to prepare a proposal for the next contract by November. Certain provisions of the proposed contract will depend on the Board of Directors' decision regarding the potential hiring of an Executive Director.

The Jail Standards Advisory Council was identified as a possible avenue for introducing jail funding legislation, given its responsibility for developing recommendations on jail-related matters.

Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) meetings are expected to resume following the elections. The Committee will prioritize establishing relationships with newly elected legislators early in their terms to educate them about county government and the issues affecting Maine's counties. LPC meetings are generally held on Mondays.

Educational sessions for newly elected county commissioners are being planned in conjunction with the Annual General Membership Meeting in January. The meeting date has not yet been determined but is expected to fall during the third or fourth week of the month. This timing will allow new commissioners to be sworn into office and attend their first county commission meeting before participating in the MCCA meeting.

4. Consideration of Hiring an Executive Director

President Cushing introduced a discussion regarding the potential establishment of an Executive Director position for MCCA. He reviewed materials provided to the Board, including a proposed job description, preliminary funding considerations, and salary comparisons with other statewide associations. He also outlined the possibility of expanding MCCA's organizational structure to serve as an umbrella association for other county-related professional organizations while allowing those groups to maintain their autonomy.

Board members discussed the potential benefits of an Executive Director, including providing a consistent point of contact for the Association, strengthening relationships with legislators and state agencies, improving long-term strategic planning, maintaining institutional knowledge through changes in Association leadership, and coordinating efforts among Maine's counties. Several commissioners emphasized that an Executive Director could provide continuity and help advance priorities established by the Board, while commissioners would retain responsibility for setting policy, establishing goals, and actively participating in legislative advocacy.

Considerable discussion focused on the financial implications of creating the position. Concerns included the availability of reliable, recurring revenue; the potential impact on county dues; the cost of a competitive salary and benefits package; and the uncertainty of relying on convention sponsorship revenue to support an ongoing position. Members of the Budget and Finance Committee reiterated their concern about increasing county dues and emphasized the importance of identifying a sustainable funding source before proceeding.

The Board also discussed the Association's existing relationship with its professional lobbying firm, Verrill. Several members expressed concern that reducing contracted legislative services to fund an Executive Director could diminish MCCA's effectiveness at the Legislature. Others suggested that an Executive Director and professional lobbyists could work collaboratively, with complementary responsibilities.

Additional concerns included the need to clarify the respective roles of the President, Board of Directors, Executive Director, and Administrator; the potential duplication of duties already performed by the Administrator; and the importance of maintaining a commissioner-led organization. Members also noted that expanding the Association's membership or organizational scope would require careful consideration and possible amendments to the bylaws.

The Association's history with previous Executive Directors was reviewed, including the benefits those individuals brought to MCCA and the challenges experienced under earlier organizational arrangements. Several participants emphasized that any future Executive Director position would require clearly defined responsibilities, adequate funding, and broad support from member counties to be successful.

Opinions varied regarding the Association's readiness to establish the position. Some commissioners supported pursuing the concept as an opportunity to strengthen MCCA's effectiveness and long-term stability. Others expressed reservations about moving forward without a more comprehensive plan. The formation of a subcommittee was suggested to further evaluate the proposed position, organizational structure, financial requirements, and potential impact on existing services.

President Cushing indicated that the discussion was intended to identify the advantages and disadvantages of establishing the position and provide commissioners with information to discuss with their respective county boards. He proposed revisiting the matter at the November Board meeting, with each county expressing its position to provide direction for preparation of the 2027 budget.

No formal action was taken regarding the establishment of an Executive Director position.

5. Officer Reports

- 5.1. President Report, Andre Cushing
  - 5.1.1. Upcoming MCCA Board Meetings
- 5.2. Vice President, Robert Sezak
- 5.3. 2nd Vice President, Kevin Kelley
- 5.3. Secretary/Treasurer, David Levesque

Nominating Committee: President Cushing presented the proposed 2027 Nominating Committee, consisting of Commissioner George Jabar (Chair), Commissioner David Marshall (Penobscot County), and Commissioner Robert Carlton (Franklin County). *President Andre Cushing invited a **motion** to approve the committee members. Comm. Carlton made the **motion**, seconded by Comm. McPhee, and the **motion** to approve the Nominating Committee Members **passed**.* The Committee will proceed with distributing its letter inviting nominations for the 2027 MCCA leadership positions.

5.1.1 Upcoming Meetings:

President Cushing reviewed the schedule for upcoming Board meetings and outlined the next steps regarding the proposed Executive Director position. A summary of the Board's discussion will be prepared for commissioners to share with their respective county boards. The Board will continue its discussion and vote on the proposal at the November meeting to provide direction to the Budget and Finance Committee in preparing the proposed 2027 budget for presentation in December. The budget is expected to be considered for approval at the January Annual General Membership Meeting.

Because the regularly scheduled November Board meeting falls on Veterans Day, the Board agreed to move the meeting to Monday, November 9, with the following schedule:

- 9:00 a.m. – Self-Funded Risk Pool Meeting - Tentatively scheduled, pending confirmation from Risk Pool Director Malcolm Ulmer and Risk Pool Chair, Commissioner George Jabar.
- 10:00 a.m. – MCCA Board of Directors Meeting which will include further discussion and a vote regarding the proposed Executive Director position.
- 1:00 p.m. – Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) Meeting to discuss legislative priorities following the November elections.

December In-Person Board Meeting:

Hancock County has offered to host the December Board meeting at its newly constructed Emergency Operations Center. The meeting is expected to be held in person, although the date remains tentative due to a possible scheduling conflict on December 9th. Additional details will be provided once arrangements are confirmed.

January 2027 – Annual General Membership Meeting: The date of the January meeting has not yet been finalized. Additional information will be provided as plans are developed.

5.2. Vice President's Report

Vice President Robert Sezak expressed his intention to continue rotating in-person Board meetings among Maine's counties during his upcoming presidency. He emphasized the value of visiting different counties to better understand their individual operations, challenges, and priorities. Knox County has expressed interest in hosting a future meeting.

6. Consideration of UMaine as the 2027 Convention Venue in Penobscot County

President Cushing presented a proposal to hold the 2027 Convention of Maine Counties at the University of Maine in Orono, with tentative dates of September 22–24, 2027. The proposal included estimated costs based on attendance and expenses from the 2026 convention.

The University offers a 95-room hotel located in three buildings on campus, within walking distance of Wells Commons, which would accommodate educational sessions, meals, exhibits, and other convention activities. Additional facilities, including the Alumni House, could be utilized for receptions and special events. The campus also offers opportunities for educational tours and recreational activities. The proposed hotel rate is approximately $160 per night.

Board members discussed hotel capacity, accessibility, and scheduling considerations. President Cushing noted that recent conventions have required approximately 55 rooms or fewer on any given

night, and the University has indicated its willingness to reserve a room block for MCCA. Additional hotel accommodations are available in the surrounding area. The campus facilities were also described as accessible to attendees with mobility needs.

The Board discussed the potential benefits of negotiating multiyear venue agreements to secure favorable rates and provide greater advance notice to exhibitors and sponsors. President Cushing indicated that this option could be explored by the Events Planning Committee.

The proposed convention dates are September 22–24, with September 21 also included in the proposal as a possible golf tournament date. The Events Planning Committee will further consider the golf tournament schedule, including the possibility of moving it to the final day of the convention to reduce the time commitment for participants.

*President Cushing conducted a **vote** by consent to **approve** the University of Maine as the venue for the 2027 Convention of Maine Counties. With no objections, the **motion** carried.*

7. Committee Reports:
    3.1. NACo Update: George Jabar and Robert Sezak
    3.2. Events Committee - Lauren Haven

Administrator Lauren Haven provided an update on the 2026 Convention of Maine Counties. The final invoice from Sunday River Resort remains outstanding despite follow-up requests. As a result, a final financial report cannot be completed until all outstanding income and expenses have been reconciled and the resort's final charges have been reviewed.

Convention evaluations are still being received, and an additional reminder will be sent to attendees encouraging them to provide feedback. The evaluation results will be reviewed to help guide planning for future conventions.

With the University of Maine approved as the 2027 convention venue, outreach will begin to thank this year's exhibitors and sponsors for their participation, announce next year's location and dates, and encourage their continued involvement.

The Events Planning Committee is scheduled to meet on Friday, October 16 to review the 2026 convention, discuss attendee feedback, and begin planning for the 2027 convention.

8. Association Reports - MACCAM, MARP, MRODA, MSA, others

9. Adjournment

President Cushing asked if there were any other comments for the good of the association. Seeing none, *President Andre Cushing invited a **motion** to adjourn at approximately 11:50 a.m. Comm. Carlton made the **motion, seconded** by Comm. McPhee, and the motion to adjourn was **passed**.*

Respectfully submitted,

MCCA Administrator, Lauren Haven