Heather Brodie Perry, Ph.D.
Founder and Applicant Group Organizer
Ashby Evergreen Charter School Initiative
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June 2026

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign
135 Santilli Highway
Everett, MA 02149

Dear Members of the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign:

On behalf of our founding group, I am pleased to submit this Letter of Intent to apply for a Commonwealth Charter School to be known as **Ashby Evergreen Charter School**, proposed to open during the 2027–2028 school year.

Proposed School Information

- **School Name:** Ashby Evergreen Charter School
- **School Type:** Commonwealth Charter School
- **Proposed Service Area:** Ashby, Townsend, Pepperell, and Fitchburg
- **Proposed Grades:** Kindergarten through Grade 8
- **Maximum Enrollment:** 250 students
- **Proposed Opening:** 2027–2028 School Year

Educational Vision

Ashby Evergreen Charter School seeks to expand access to high-quality public educational opportunities for families in North Central Massachusetts through a distinctive educational model that combines rigorous academics, individualized instruction, project-based learning, and nature-based education informed by internationally recognized best practices, including successful elements of Finnish educational approaches.

Our vision is to cultivate curious, capable, and resilient learners who are prepared to thrive in an increasingly complex world. The school's educational philosophy emphasizes perseverance, self-direction, and resilience—qualities reflected in the Finnish concept of *sisu*, which inspired the school's original development. Grounded in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and state accountability standards, the school will combine strong academic expectations with experiential learning, interdisciplinary projects, and meaningful engagement with the natural environment. Through this approach, students will develop the academic knowledge, critical-thinking skills, creativity, and social-emotional competencies necessary for lifelong success.

Ashby Evergreen Charter School will educate the whole child—intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically, and ethically—while preparing students for success in high school, higher education, careers, and active citizenship.

Community Need and Demand

The founding group believes there is a significant opportunity to expand public school choice for families in the proposed service area. The closure of Ashby Elementary School in 2023 significantly altered the educational landscape of the community and highlighted the need for additional high-quality educational options for local families.

The proposed region includes communities with diverse educational needs and family preferences. Through community meetings, surveys, outreach efforts, and ongoing conversations with parents, educators, and local leaders, more than 100

families have expressed interest in the proposed school and its educational approach. The region also includes an active homeschool community, reflecting sustained interest among families in educational models that offer greater personalization, flexibility, experiential learning, and stronger connections to the natural world.

Ashby Evergreen Charter School is being designed to complement existing educational offerings while expanding public school choice for families throughout the region. The school will seek to become a regional educational asset through partnerships with families, community organizations, local businesses, and cultural institutions that enrich student learning and strengthen community connections.

Commitment to Equity and Excellence

Ashby Evergreen Charter School is committed to serving a diverse student population and ensuring equitable access, support, and academic success for all students, including students with disabilities, English learners, students experiencing economic hardship, and students who have been historically underserved. The school will foster an inclusive environment where every student is challenged, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.

Organizational Capacity

Our applicant group includes experienced professionals with expertise in public education, school leadership, law, governance, finance, nonprofit management, facilities, and community engagement. Together, we share a commitment to educational excellence, strong governance, fiscal responsibility, and expanding opportunities for students and families throughout the region.

The founding group is actively engaging educational experts, charter school leaders, and community stakeholders as we continue to develop the proposal and prepare a comprehensive application.

Proven Provider Considerations

The founding group is currently evaluating all requirements associated with the establishment of the charter school, including whether the proven provider requirement will apply based on the final proposed region, enrollment projections, and applicable statutory thresholds.

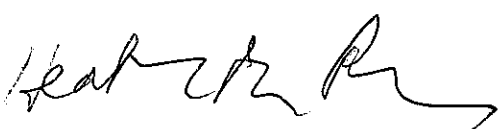
Should a proven provider be required, the founding group intends to identify and engage an eligible proven provider with a demonstrated record of academic success, strong organizational management, and effective service to student populations similar to those anticipated for the proposed school. While the specific approach and potential partners remain under development, we are committed to working closely with the Department to ensure full compliance with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. At this stage, no final determination has been made regarding the need for or selection of a proven provider.

Conclusion

As we prepare our application, we remain focused on developing a school that reflects the Commonwealth's high expectations for academic achievement, organizational viability, equity, accountability, and responsible stewardship of public resources. We believe Ashby Evergreen Charter School can provide a valuable new educational option for students and families while contributing positively to the educational landscape of North Central Massachusetts.

Thank you for your consideration. We respectfully submit this Letter of Intent and look forward to the opportunity to continue working with the Department throughout the charter application process.

Sincerely,



Heather Brodie Perry, Ph.D.
Founder and Applicant Group Organizer

On behalf of the Ashby Evergreen Charter School Founding Group

Applicant Information Sheet

This information is included with all submissions. Applicants are advised that the primary contact person may be contacted by the public and/or media with questions about the proposed school. Please answer each question below and complete tables using the blank cells.

Name of Proposed Charter School Ashby Evergreen Charter School

School Address (911 Main Street

School Location Ashby Massachusetts 01431

Primary Contact Person: Heather Brodie Perry, PhD

Role or relationship of contact person to proposal: Founding Board Coordinator

Address [Street, City/Town, State, and Zip Code]: [redacted]

Daytime Tel: 508 345-7585

Secondary Tel: [redacted] 386 5377

Email: hperry314@gmail.com

1. The proposed school will open in the fall of school year:
X☐ 2027-2028

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	K-4	150
Second Year	K-5	180
Third Year	K-6	2100
Fourth Year	K-7	240
Fifth Year	K-8	270
Add additional rows as needed to show planned growth to reach full proposed grade span and maximum enrollment.		

2. Grade span at full enrollment: k-8

3. Total student enrollment when fully expanded: 270

4. Age at entry for kindergarten, if applicable: 5

5. If applicable, the proposed Horace Mann charter school is: ☐ New or ☐ Conversion

6. If applicable, the proposed type of Horace Mann charter school is:

☐ Horace Mann I ☐ Horace Mann II ☐ Horace Mann III

Questions #7-9 are for applications for a Commonwealth charter school ONLY.

7. Will this proposed Commonwealth charter school be a regional charter school?
YES

If yes, list the school districts (including regional school districts) in the proposed region. Please only list districts that are included in Enrollment Projections by District for New Applications and Expansion Amendments.
North Middlesex
Fitchburg

If no, please specify the district's population as reported in the most recent United States census estimate for the community the school intends to serve: _____.
The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education shall not approve a new Commonwealth charter school in any community with a population of less than 30,000 as determined by the most recent United States census estimate, unless it is a regional charter school. (MGL c. 71, § 89(i)(1).

8. Will the proposed Commonwealth charter school serve a district where overall student performance on MCAS is in the lowest 10 percent, as designated in District Information on Enrollment Projections for New Applications and Expansion Amendments or in any updated analysis performed by the Department?
YES

9. Will the proposed Commonwealth charter school serve a district or districts in which the 9 percent net school spending cap is, or could be, exceeded by applications during the upcoming cycle? ☐ Yes ☐ No
NO

10. Have members of the applicant group previously submitted an initial application or final application that did not result in a charter? ☐ Yes ☐ No
NO

If yes, is the present submission related to the previous application? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, please indicate the name of the previous proposal and the year submitted.

School Name used in Previous Proposal	Proposed School Location	Year Submitted

Add rows as needed.

11. Is the applicant group currently the board of trustees of an existing charter school?
☐ Yes ☐ No
NO

If answered yes, please explain why the group is not using the charter application designed for use by a current board of trustees.

12. Do members of the applicant group currently operate or are they employed by a private or parochial school? ☐ Yes ☐ No
NO

If yes, please indicate the person's name, the school name and school location, and dates of employment or affiliation. Add rows as needed.

Name	School Name	School Location	Dates of Employment or Affiliation

13. Are any members of the applicant group present or past members of a charter school board of trustees, school committee, or other type of public governing body?
☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please indicate the person's name; the charter school name and school location, or school committee district; and dates of membership. Add rows as needed.

Name	Charter School Name	School Location/School Committee District	Dates of Membership
June McNeil		**North Middlesex Regional School Committee,** **Ashby Elementary Building Committee,**	**May 2019-May 2025, Vice Chair** **August 2022-May 2025, Chair**

Executive Summary

Mission and School Design

The Ashby Evergreen Charter School proposes to offer a distinctive public education model that combines the proven strengths of Finnish educational practices, Forest School pedagogy, research best practices, and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks to prepare students for success in college, advanced vocational pathways, careers, and civic life. Our mission is to cultivate resilient, curious, knowledgeable, and compassionate learners who possess *sisu* the Finnish concept of perseverance, courage, and determination in the face of challenges.
The founding board believes that children learn best when they are actively engaged, connected to their communities, challenged appropriately, and supported socially and emotionally. We believe that academic excellence and student well-being are inseparable. Students who feel confident, connected, capable, and valued are better prepared to achieve high levels of academic success.

Ashby Evergreen Charter School will be an intentional adaptation of the Finnish educational model rather than a direct replication. The school will integrate the most effective elements of Finnish education including student-centered learning, outdoor education, interdisciplinary instruction, movement throughout the day, social-emotional development, and a focus on student agency with rigorous alignment to Massachusetts academic standards.
Students will engage in project-based and inquiry-driven learning experiences that emphasize critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication, and problem-solving. Regular outdoor learning opportunities will serve as both a teaching methodology and a means of developing resilience, independence, environmental stewardship, and physical well-being. The curriculum will be grounded in strong content knowledge while allowing students to apply what they learn to authentic, real-world challenges.

The school's instructional model recognizes that learning often occurs through productive struggle. Students will be encouraged to take intellectual risks, solve complex problems, learn from mistakes, and develop the confidence needed to navigate an increasingly complex world. Social-emotional learning will be embedded throughout the school culture and curriculum, helping students develop self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and perseverance.

Faculty and staff will be selected not only for their content expertise and instructional skills but also for their commitment to the school's mission and educational philosophy. Through ongoing professional development and collaboration, educators will create a learning environment that fosters both academic achievement and the development of character.

Ashby Evergreen Charter School is committed to creating an inclusive learning community that welcomes students of all abilities, backgrounds, and learning profiles, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities. While foreign language instruction is not part of our initial implementation plan, the Finnish educational philosophy that inspires our model places a high value on multilingualism, cultural awareness, and recognizing the strengths that diverse learners bring to the classroom. We view English Language Learners as valuable contributors to our school community whose experiences and perspectives enrich learning for all students. The school's multi-age classrooms, individualized learning plans, flexible pacing, and

emphasis on hands-on, experiential learning are particularly well suited to many students with learning differences. Regular movement, outdoor education, and project-based learning are embedded throughout the school day, creating multiple pathways for engagement and reducing barriers that some students experience in traditional classroom settings. We recognize that no single educational model is the right fit for every child, and some students may require additional supports or accommodations. Consistent with both Finnish educational practices and federal and state special education requirements, Ashby Evergreen Charter School will work collaboratively with families to provide appropriate services, accommodations, and individualized supports so that students with disabilities can access the curriculum, participate fully in school life, and achieve their highest potential. Our goal is to create a school where every child is known, valued, challenged, and supported.

By combining evidence-based educational practices with a strong emphasis on resilience, engagement, and whole-child development, Ashby Evergreen Charter School will provide a unique public school option designed to prepare students for the opportunities and challenges of the twenty-first century.

Communities to Be Served

Ashby Evergreen Charter School proposes to serve students and families from Ashby, Fitchburg, Townsend, and Pepperell. These communities were selected because they share geographic proximity, existing educational connections, and a demonstrated interest in expanded public school options.

The need for additional high-quality educational choices is particularly evident in Fitchburg, a Gateway City that has experienced persistent academic challenges and declining student outcomes on state assessments. While families seeking alternatives currently have access to some private and parochial schools, these options are often financially out of reach for many residents, creating significant equity concerns. At present, there is no elementary-level charter school option available to Fitchburg families. The founding board believes that all families, regardless of income, should have access to innovative, high-quality public educational opportunities. To promote equitable access, the board is committed to providing transportation for students residing in Fitchburg. This commitment reflects the school's belief that innovative educational opportunities should be accessible to all students, not only those with the means to provide their own transportation.

The proposal emerged from extensive community conversations following the closure of Ashby Elementary School by the North Middlesex Regional School District. The closure created both a practical challenge and an opportunity for community members to reimagine what public education could look like in the region. Over many years, increasing numbers of families in Ashby and neighboring communities have sought educational alternatives, including homeschooling, school choice, private schools, and charter schools, reflecting growing dissatisfaction with existing options.

The founding group conducted community surveys, public forums, listening sessions, and informal outreach efforts to gather input from families, educators, local leaders, and community organizations. These conversations consistently revealed a desire for a public school that

prioritizes student well-being, meaningful learning experiences, strong academic preparation, outdoor education, and the development of resilience and life skills.

Community engagement has shaped every aspect of the proposal, from the school's educational philosophy to its grade configuration and transportation planning. Families repeatedly expressed interest in a school that balances academic rigor with hands-on learning, social-emotional development, and opportunities for children to spend meaningful time outdoors.

The school also benefits from strong community partnerships and relationships developed through the founding board's extensive involvement in local civic, educational, and nonprofit organizations. These partnerships are expected to support student learning, community engagement, and successful implementation.

Current evidence of demand includes community survey responses, attendance at public information sessions, active participation in planning meetings, expressions of support from community stakeholders, and a growing list of families interested in enrollment once the school is approved.

Ashby Evergreen Charter School is proposed to open in the fall of 2027, initially serving grades K–4 with an enrollment of approximately 150 students. The school will grow gradually by adding one grade level per year until reaching grades K–8. At full enrollment, the school will serve approximately 270 students.

Through its innovative educational model, commitment to equity and access, and strong community support, Ashby Evergreen Charter School seeks to expand high-quality public educational opportunities for families throughout North Central Massachusetts while preparing students to thrive as resilient learners, engaged citizens, and future leaders.
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Commonwealth and Horace Mann Charter School
Certification Statement

Please Note: Applicant group must submit an updated certification statement with the final application, if invited to submit.

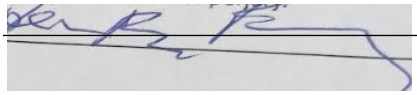
Proposed Charter School Name: Asbhy Evergreen Charter School

Proposed School Location (City/Town): Ashby Massachusetts

I hereby certify that the information submitted in this initial application/final application is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

This initial application/final application has been or is being sent to the superintendent of each district from which we expect to draw students. Further, I understand that, if awarded a charter, the proposed school shall be open to all eligible students on a space available basis, and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or academic achievement.

This is a true statement, made under the penalties of perjury.

Signature of Authorized Person: 

Date: 6/26/2026

Print/Type Name: Heather Brodie Perry

Address: [redacted] Ma[redacted]

Daytime Phone: 508 345 7585