River Valley Charter School

Board Meeting

Published on June 26, 2026 at 5:34 PM EDT

Date and Time

Tuesday June 30, 2026 at 6:00 PM EDT

Location

Middle School Great Room

River Valley Charter School welcomes your participation at Board meetings. The purpose of a public meeting of the Board of Trustees (“Board”) is to conduct the affairs of the organization in public. Your participation assures us of continuing community interest in our school and assists the Board in making the best decisions for our school. To assist you in the ease of speaking/participating in our meetings, guidelines are provided at the bottom of this agenda. All materials for all board and committee meetings, are available on our Board on track public portal found at rivervalleycharter.org.

Agenda

		Purpose	Presenter	Time
I.	**Opening Items**			**6:00 PM**
	A. Record Attendance		Jonathan Nickerson	1 m
	B. Call the Meeting to Order		Tanya Murdy	

		Purpose	Presenter	Time
C.	Public Comment	Discuss	Tanya Murdy	15 m

• 3 minutes each
• 5 speakers

D.	Review Trustee Code of Conduct		Tanya Murdy	1 m

II. Approve Previous Board Minutes — 6:17 PM

A.	Approve Minutes	Approve Minutes	Tanya Murdy	1 m

Approve minutes for Board Meeting on June 17, 2026

III. Director's Update — 6:18 PM

A.	Director's Report-Joey Gustafson	Discuss	Joey Gustafson	20 m

• Updates
• Summer goals

IV. Interim Executive Director — 6:38 PM

A.	Interim Executive Director vote	Vote	Tanya Murdy	5 m

Formally vote on Joey Gustafson as Interim Executive Director for the 2026-2027 school year.
Contract remains the same.

V. Executive Director Search — 6:43 PM

A.	Executive Director Search	Discuss	Tanya Murdy	10 m

Discuss process and committee.

VI. Board of Trustee 2026-2027 Planning — 6:53 PM

A.	Planning	Discuss	Tanya Murdy	15 m

	Purpose	Presenter	Time

- Committee Selection
- Committee meeting dates
  - COT/Exec: Wednesdays
  - Development: Tuesdays
  - Finance: Monthly Zoom and Quarterly in person
  - Accountability:
- Discuss Board of Trustees meeting date: 4th Wednesday of the month.

VII. Exectuive Committee — 7:08 PM

A. DESE Complaint — FYI — Tanya Murdy — 5 m

DESE complaint stating lack of board oversight in regard to PBE.

The Department has carefully reviewed your concerns. However, the alleged changes in
the PBE program do not affect the Charter School's ability to carry out its mission to "provide a rigorous academic program based on the Montessori philosophy and rooted
in the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley" and provide students
with the key design elements of the charter, which include "educational program based
on the Montessori philosophy; elements of the curriculum rooted in the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley; and critical thinking and problem solving." As
you have not alleged that the Charter School has failed to implement a material term of
its charter, you have not alleged a violation of M.G.L. c. 71 §89(w) or its implementing regulations under 603 CMR 1.00 that the Department has the authority to investigate. The Department appreciates your outreach on behalf of your student and all other students at the Charter School. To address your concerns, you may wish to consider contacting the Charter School Office at charterschools@mass.gov.As of the date of this letter, this complaint is closed, and the Department will not take
further action on this complaint.

B. Year In Review — Discuss — Tanya Murdy — 5 m

		Purpose	Presenter	Time

- Transitioned board leadership
- Transitioned executive director leadership
- External board audit: focus on systems and structures. More focus on managing through process and data.

C. DESE Letter to Board — Discuss — Tanya Murdy — 5 m

Board to focus on upholding the charter and governance process.
"...act in the best interests of the school rather than in the interests of any individual, group, or outside organization."

Use DESE's Criterion 9 as a roadmap to guide us moving forward.
Effective governance is not optional—it is a condition of maintaining the school's charter.

Action Items:

- Leadership training at Alnoba-8/28/26 (time TBD ~9am-3pm)
- OML training with legal (TBD this summer)
- Onboarding with Kate Scott (tentatively 9/12/26)-all current trustees welcome for a refresher
- Maintain a clear distinction between governance and management

VIII. Accountability — 7:23 PM

A. Year in Review — Discuss — Albert Ting — 5 m

IX. Development — 7:28 PM

A. Year in Review — Discuss — Elizabeth Rankin — 5 m

X. Committee on Trustees — 7:33 PM

A. THANK YOU! — Discuss — Jonathan Nickerson — 10 m

We extend our sincere gratitude for their dedication, time, expertise, and commitment to the mission of River Valley Charter School.

		Purpose	Presenter	Time

- Albert Ting
- Chris Whitford
- Denise Herrera
- Elizabeth Rankin
- Erin Bradley
- Patti Ganley

B. New Trustees — FYI — Tanya Murdy — 5 m

Onboarded in DESE BMMS system--should be approved by 7/1/26

- Alex Tsonas
- Alison Salerno
- Beth Friedman
- Daniel Candelario
- Farrell Boghos
- Jon Ellen (faculty rep)
- Meredith Makin
- Tyler Chaisson

C. Thank you, Trustees! — FYI — Tanya Murdy — 2 m

As we close out 2025-2026, we have navigated unchartered territory, rough seas, made tough decisions but remained the course--unwavering focus on our mission. Thank you for the countless hours, meetings, committee work and dedication to RVCS.

XI. Closing Items — 7:50 PM

A. Board Meeting Survey — FYI — Tanya Murdy — 1 m

https://app2.boardontrack.com/surveyForm/show/1163

B. Adjourn Meeting — Vote

THE ORDER OF BUSINESS MAY BE CHANGED WITHOUT NOTICE Notice is hereby given that the order of consideration of matters on this agenda may be changed without prior notice.

REASONABLE LIMITATIONS MAY BE PLACED ON PUBLIC TESTIMONY The Board Chair reserves the right to impose reasonable time limits on public testimony to ensure that the agenda is completed.

Coversheet

Review Trustee Code of Conduct

Section: I. Opening Items
Item: D. Review Trustee Code of Conduct
Purpose: FYI
Submitted by:
Related Material: BoT_Expectations_2_7_23__1_ (7).pdf

RVCS Board of Trustees
Member Expectations

The River Valley Charter School Board of Trustees is committed to promoting a culture of accountability, integrity, and transparency. We expect our board members to demonstrate the highest level of ethical conduct and integrity in all aspects of their service. Board members must:

1. Act in the best interest of River Valley Charter School and its mission.
2. Attend board meetings prepared and on time.
3. Maintain an open mind and recognize the value of each board member's input.
4. Contribute to meaningful discussions and decision-making processes.
5. Respect the opinions of other board members and show support for the majority's decisions.
6. Set a positive example of behavior.
7. Actively participate in fundraising activities and events.
8. Remain current on financial information and legal documents pertaining to the organization.
9. Respect the roles and responsibilities of other board members and staff.
10. Respect the confidentiality of board meetings and information shared by board members, as appropriate.
11. Avoid any form of discrimination or harassment.
12. Act with integrity and professionalism in all dealings with the school, its staff, and members of the community.

February 2023

Coversheet

Approve Minutes

Section: II. Approve Previous Board Minutes
Item: A. Approve Minutes
Purpose: Approve Minutes
Submitted by:
Related Material: Minutes for Board Meeting on June 17, 2026

DRAFT

River Valley Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday June 17, 2026 at 7:00 PM

Location
Zoom

River Valley Charter School welcomes your participation at Board meetings. The purpose of a public meeting of the Board of Trustees (“Board”) is to conduct the affairs of the organization in public. Your participation assures us of continuing community interest in our school and assists the Board in making the best decisions for our school. To assist you in the ease of speaking/participating in our meetings, guidelines are provided at the bottom of this agenda. All materials for all board and committee meetings, are available on our Board on track public portal found at rivervalleycharter.org.

Zoom link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8516508581?pwd=8roWrPp5aJXvEAFctC4bxo69QnaDfv.1

Trustees Present
A. Godino (remote), A. Ting (remote), B. MacQuade (remote), C. Getz (remote), D. Herrera (remote), D. Mitchell (remote), E. Bradley (remote), E. Rankin (remote), G. LeFave (remote), J. Nickerson (remote), M. Connerton (remote), T. Murdy (remote)

Trustees Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present

J. Gustafson (remote)

Non Voting Members Present
J. Gustafson (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

T. Murdy called a meeting of the board of trustees of River Valley Charter School to order on Wednesday Jun 17, 2026 at 7:01 PM.

C. Public Comment

Five public speakers

- Amy Cameron
- Renee Ward
- Aly Ward
- Amanda Weber
- Shelby Lee

D. Review Trustee Code of Conduct

Trustee code of conduct posted for board and public to review

II. Approve Previous Board Minutes

A. Approve Minutes

T. Murdy made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 04-29-26.
G. LeFave seconded the motion.
Add location of meeting - Middle School Great Room (in person)
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call	
A. Ting	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye

Roll Call

E. Bradley	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye

B. Approve Board Meeting Minutes

J. Nickerson made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 06-09-26.
G. LeFave seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

T. Murdy	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
E. Bradley	Abstain
M. Connerton	Abstain
E. Rankin	Aye
D. Mitchell	Abstain
A. Ting	Aye
D. Herrera	Abstain
C. Getz	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye

C. Approve Board Meeting Minutes

E. Bradley made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 06-02-26.
G. LeFave seconded the motion.
Update Karen's name in two places
Add Tatiana's last name - Dutra Perez
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

D. Herrera	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
A. Godino	Aye

Roll Call

T. Murdy	Aye

D. Approve Board Meeting Minutes

G. LeFave made a motion to approve the minutes from Special Board Meeting on 05-27-26.
E. Rankin seconded the motion.

- Should include purpose for meeting beyond template purposes - at the request of the community, note hosted by board member, and rules of engagement, number of remote and in person participants

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

M. Connerton	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
D. Herrera	Abstain
C. Getz	Abstain
A. Ting	Abstain
B. MacQuade	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
E. Bradley	No
D. Mitchell	Abstain
J. Nickerson	Aye

E. Approve Board Meeting Minutes

G. LeFave made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 05-20-26.
C. Getz seconded the motion.

- In part 4, board business by-laws - discussion request from Meg Connerton - suggest repeat purpose in the minutes
- Section 5, CoT - minutes reflect a pause to consider for passing - note that the mission was shortened and missing opportunity to pass best practices - show best practices for showing duty of care.
- Section C on CoT - section blank on board committee nominations - transition information from the documents for completeness - note where the file is stored for ease of finding
- Bylaws A - Erin Bradley made a motion to vote on, not pass bylaws

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

A. Ting	Aye

Roll Call

E. Bradley	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
A. Godino	Aye

F. Approve Board Meeting Minutes

G. LeFave made a motion to approve the minutes from Special Board Meeting on 04-09-26.
C. Getz seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

B. MacQuade	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
E. Bradley	Abstain
D. Mitchell	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye

G. Approve Board Meeting Minutes

G. LeFave made a motion to approve the minutes from Special Meeting on 03-12-26.
C. Getz seconded the motion.

- Section A - Complaint Committee - complaint committee clarified terminology - add the language in the write up to close the loop
    - Attach document from Complaint Committee that summarizes

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

E. Bradley	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye

Roll Call

G. LeFave	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye

H. Approve Board Meeting Minutes

E. Rankin made a motion to approve the minutes from Emergency Board Meeting on 05-17-26.
G. LeFave seconded the motion.

- Location should read "Zoom"

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

D. Herrera	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye

I. Approve Board Meeting Minutes

E. Rankin made a motion to approve the minutes from EMERGENCY MEETING on 05-28-26.
G. LeFave seconded the motion.

- Location - "Zoom"
- Section A - write out purpose 1

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

J. Nickerson	Aye

Roll Call

A. Ting	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye

III. Consent Agenda

A. Accountability Committee

B. Development Committee

C. Executive Committee

D. Committee on Trustees

E. Finance Committee

F. Vote on Consent Agenda

C. Getz made a motion to Approve consent agenda.
G. LeFave seconded the motion.
Board members engaged in a **brief discussion focused primarily on prior meeting minutes included in the consent agenda**, rather than the full set of consent items.

Key points discussed:

- **Consistency in minutes authorship and formatting:**
  Board members noted inconsistencies in how minutes are attributed (e.g., who is listed as the author) and emphasized the importance of maintaining a consistent approach across meetings.
- **Clarity and alignment between related meeting records:**
  A concern was raised that descriptions of executive session purposes should be **aligned and consistent across different meeting minutes (e.g., Committee on Trustees vs. Board minutes)** to avoid discrepancies.
- **Improving documentation of executive session rationale:**
  It was suggested that standardized language (e.g., listing allowable executive session reasons) be made easily accessible so that future minutes can reflect the correct statutory wording consistently.

- **Minor corrections and accuracy updates:**
  Board members identified small corrections (e.g., spelling of names) that should be incorporated into finalized minutes.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

E. Rankin	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
B. MacQuade	Abstain
A. Godino	Abstain
M. Connerton	Abstain
C. Getz	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
D. Mitchell	Abstain
D. Herrera	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye

IV. Director's Update

A. Director's Report

The Interim Executive Director, Joey Gustafson, provided an update on her first approximately ten days in the role.

She shared that she has:

- Conducted **extensive stakeholder engagement**, including meetings with approximately 30 staff members and multiple families
- Participated in key school activities and events, including student presentations, graduation, and faculty meetings
- Initiated operational and compliance work, including **IEP-related processes, a fire drill, and internal coordination meetings**
- Engaged with external stakeholders, including the Massachusetts Charter School Association and media engagement efforts resulting in a positive news article

The Director noted both:

- **Challenges experienced by the community over the past year**, and
- **Positive observations**, including strong student engagement, dedicated faculty, and a committed caregiver community

The report emphasized a forward-looking focus on maintaining **stability, continuity of operations, and support for students and staff** during the current transition period.

V. Policy

A. Approve Policy

E. Rankin made a motion to Approve Attendance Policy.
D. Mitchell seconded the motion.
The Board engaged in a detailed review of the proposed attendance policy, focusing on clarity, consistency, and alignment with both state requirements and the school's values.

Key discussion points included:

- **Tone and overall framing of the policy**
  Board members expressed concern that portions of the policy—particularly regarding chronic absenteeism—felt overly rigid or punitive. It was suggested that the language be softened to better reflect a collaborative, family-centered approach while still addressing compliance expectations.
- **Clarity of intent and internal consistency**
  Members noted that the policy appeared to shift between different purposes (legal compliance vs. student support), creating confusion. There was a strong recommendation to clearly define the intent of the policy and ensure consistent language throughout, particularly given that content had been pulled from multiple external sources.
- **Use of terminology and alignment with governing frameworks**
  Discussion highlighted the need to select and consistently apply a single framework for terminology (e.g., legal terms such as "habitually truant" vs. educational or health-oriented language such as "chronic absenteeism" or "chronic illness"). Mixing terminology was identified as a source of confusion.
- **Inconsistencies within the policy; s**everal discrepancies were identified, including:
  - Conflicting thresholds for absences (e.g., references to both five and ten absences prior to midyear)
  - Misalignment in expectations or definitions across sections

Relevance and appropriateness of included content; The Board recommended removing or revising content that was not directly relevant to attendance, including:

- References to medication or health office procedures that are better suited for other policies
- District-specific language (e.g., references to a "school committee") that does not apply to the charter school governance structure
- Embedded links, recommending instead citing applicable laws or guidance without relying on links that may become outdated over time

Operational alignment and practical implementation; Members raised concerns about gaps between policy and current practice, including:

- Requirements that are not consistently implemented (e.g., sign-in procedures)
- Removal of key operational details (such as call-in expectations or timing), with a need to clarify where this information will live (e.g., family handbook)
- Questions around how absence reporting and communication expectations will be conveyed to families
- **Excused vs. unexcused absences -** The Board discussed whether distinguishing between excused and unexcused absences is meaningful under state guidelines, noting that while all absences may count toward totals, the distinction can still inform how the school supports students and families.
- **Equity, student support, and intent of enforcement -** Members emphasized the importance of ensuring the policy functions as a **support mechanism rather than a punitive tool**, particularly in cases involving medical or personal circumstances. There was concern that overly rigid language could unintentionally penalize families managing legitimate challenges.
- **Process and next steps -** There was a recommendation that the policy author be present for future discussion to clarify intent and respond to questions directly.

The motion did not carry.

Roll Call

E. Bradley	Abstain
A. Ting	No
D. Mitchell	No
G. LeFave	No
M. Connerton	No
A. Godino	Abstain
J. Nickerson	No
D. Herrera	No
T. Murdy	No
E. Rankin	No
B. MacQuade	No
C. Getz	No

E. Rankin made a motion to Approve Animal Policy.
G. LeFave seconded the motion.
The Board reviewed the proposed animal policy and engaged in discussion focused on equity, practicality, and clarity of both the policy content and development process.

Key discussion points included:

- **Equity and access considerations -** Board members raised concerns about ensuring the policy is equitable for all students, particularly in relation to classroom access, student needs, and potential unintended barriers created by the presence of animals in the school environment.

- **Health and safety implications -** The discussion highlighted the need to carefully consider health-related factors, including allergies and sensitivities, and to ensure the policy clearly defines how these situations will be managed in practice.
- **Clarity of purpose and scope -** Members emphasized the importance of clearly articulating the intent of the policy, including what types of animals are permitted, under what conditions, and for what purposes (e.g., classroom use vs. other contexts). There was a need to ensure the policy is specific enough to guide consistent decision-making.
- **Consistency and completeness of the policy -** Similar to other policies discussed, there was concern that the current draft lacked cohesion and may have been developed from multiple sources. Board members recommended ensuring consistent language and a complete, well-structured framework.
- **Operational feasibility and implementation -** Questions were raised about how the policy would be implemented in practice, including:
    - Who is responsible for decision-making and approvals
    - How consistency will be ensured across classrooms
    - How exceptions or special circumstances will be handled
- **Policy development process -** Members noted the importance of having clear ownership and involvement from appropriate staff in drafting the policy, with a recommendation that leadership (including the Interim Executive Director) be closely involved in refining the policy.

The motion did not carry.

Roll Call

A. Godino	Abstain
M. Connerton	No
B. MacQuade	No
E. Bradley	Abstain
D. Mitchell	No
D. Herrera	No
E. Rankin	No
A. Ting	No
C. Getz	No
J. Nickerson	No
T. Murdy	No
G. LeFave	No

VI. Interim Executive Director Search

A. Search Questions Overview

- **Discussion Summary** - The Board engaged in an in-depth discussion regarding the process for identifying and selecting an interim and longer-term executive director, with a focus on balancing urgency, transparency, and community engagement.

- **Balancing speed with inclusivity** - Board members acknowledged the need to move quickly to ensure leadership continuity, while emphasizing the importance of incorporating meaningful input from staff, families, and the broader community. There was recognition that prior accelerated timelines may have limited stakeholder engagement and the size of the candidate pool.
- **Community engagement approach** - The Board discussed methods for gathering stakeholder input, including surveys and smaller focus group sessions, noting that structured engagement may be more effective than large open forums.
- **Transparency throughout the process** - Members emphasized the importance of clear communication with the community while acknowledging the need to maintain confidentiality in certain aspects of the hiring process.
- **Board ownership and decision-making** - The discussion reinforced that the Board retains responsibility for final hiring decisions and oversight of executive leadership, even while incorporating community feedback.
- **Shift toward maintaining current interim leadership** - Through discussion, there was a notable shift away from pursuing a broader interim search process, with multiple members expressing support for maintaining Joey Gustafson in the interim role. The Board acknowledged the need for stability during the transition period and the benefits of continuity in leadership.
- **Timeline considerations and trust** - Members discussed the importance of balancing a thorough and inclusive search process with the need for timely decision-making and rebuilding trust within the community through a clear and transparent approach.

VII. Finance Committee

A. Update

- **Finance Committee Report – Discussion Summary** - The Finance Committee presented an overview of current financials and the proposed budget, highlighting key revenue assumptions, expense pressures, and items requiring Board approval.
- **Current financial position and revenue assumptions** - The Committee noted that tuition remains the primary revenue source and is inherently variable due to enrollment mix and state funding guidance. The current fiscal year benefited from higher-than-anticipated tuition increases, which helped offset transition-related costs.
- **Foundation funding and year-end outlook** - The Board discussed the role of foundation support in supplementing operating revenue, including partial drawdown of planned funds and the potential for additional requests. The school is currently projecting a modest positive position heading into year-end.
- **Future revenue outlook and financial pressures** - The Committee highlighted an expected decline in tuition growth compared to prior years, alongside increasing expenses. This shift is expected to create tighter operating conditions and will require more careful financial management going forward.

- **Expense pressures and cost management** - Rising fringe benefit costs were identified as a significant pressure point, along with efforts to increase staff compensation. The Committee emphasized the importance of closely managing costs as revenue growth moderates.
- **Fundraising and development needs** - The Board discussed the increasing importance of fundraising as a supplemental revenue source. There was acknowledgment that current fundraising levels do not fully offset planned withdrawals and that expanded development efforts will be necessary.
- **Capital and facilities considerations** - Potential future expenses related to facilities and maintenance were noted, reinforcing the need for sustained fundraising and long-term financial planning.

B. FY 25-26 Budget Surplus Vote

D. Mitchell made a motion to Approve stipends for 25-26 stipend of $90K.
T. Murdy seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

A. Godino	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye

C. Vote to Approve FY 26-27 Budget

D. Mitchell made a motion to Approve FY26-27 Budget.
T. Murdy seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

M. Connerton	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye

Roll Call

E. Bradley	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye

D. Daniel Dennis

D. Mitchell made a motion to Approval of Daniel Dennis as FY26-27 auditor.
T. Murdy seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

J. Nickerson	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye

VIII. Committee on Trustees

A. Board Leadership: Vote for Slate of Officers for FY '26

J. Nickerson made a motion to Elect Tanya Murdy as Board Chair for 26-27 School Year.
E. Rankin seconded the motion.

- **Discussion Summary** - The Board engaged in an extended discussion prior to the vote on Board Chair, including multiple prepared statements and remarks outlining perspectives on leadership, governance priorities, and the direction of the Board moving forward.
- **Prepared statements and member remarks** - Several members delivered structured, pre-prepared statements reflecting on the current state of the Board and school community, as well as the leadership qualities needed at this time. These remarks emphasized personal perspectives on governance, experience, and vision for Board leadership, and provided a more formal framing to the discussion than typical deliberations.
- **Leadership priorities and expectations** - Members highlighted the importance of strong, steady leadership during a period of transition, with emphasis on rebuilding trust, improving communication, and ensuring effective governance practices.

There was a shared focus on the need for clarity in roles, accountability, and alignment among Board members.

- **Governance structure and officer responsibilities** - The Board reviewed the defined responsibilities of officer roles, including Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer, noting the expectation that these positions provide leadership across committees and support overall Board functioning. Discussion also included consideration of how roles are structured and named to ensure clarity and avoid confusion.
- **Alignment on direction and stability** - The discussion reflected a broader desire for stability and cohesion within the Board, with members emphasizing the importance of working collaboratively and maintaining a unified approach following the vote.
- **Tone and dynamic of discussion** - The conversation was more formal and reflective than procedural, with extended remarks rather than rapid back-and-forth dialogue. The use of prepared statements contributed to a structured and deliberate tone leading into the vote.
- **Transition to vote** - Following completion of member remarks and discussion, the Board confirmed readiness to proceed and moved into formal voting on Board leadership positions.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

A. Ting	Aye
B. MacQuade	Abstain
D. Mitchell	No
E. Bradley	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
A. Godino	Abstain
E. Rankin	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
M. Connerton	No
D. Herrera	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye

T. Murdy made a motion to Elect Jonathan Nickerson for Vice Chair for FY26-27 School Year.

C. Getz seconded the motion.

- **Discussion Summary** - The Board engaged in discussion prior to the vote for Vice Chair, focusing on leadership structure, role clarity, and the expectations associated with Board officer positions.
- **Clarification of Vice Chair responsibilities** - Members reviewed the defined responsibilities of the Vice Chair role, including supporting the Chair, assuming responsibilities in the Chair's absence, and providing leadership across key committees and Board functions.

- **Alignment with committee leadership structure** - The discussion highlighted how officer roles, including the Vice Chair, align with committee oversight responsibilities. Members emphasized the importance of ensuring that leadership roles are structured to support effective coordination and overall Board health.
- **Role definition and naming considerations** - The Board discussed how leadership roles are defined and titled, including considerations around introducing or refining positions with specific functional responsibilities. There was a focus on ensuring clarity in expectations and avoiding confusion or overlap between roles.
- **Balancing structure with practical implementation** - Members noted the importance of maintaining clear role definitions while allowing flexibility in how responsibilities are carried out in practice, particularly given the evolving needs of the Board.
- **Focus on governance effectiveness** - The discussion emphasized that the Vice Chair role should support strong governance practices, including clear communication, coordination across committees, and continuity of leadership.
- **Tone and readiness for vote** - The discussion was largely procedural, with an emphasis on confirming shared understanding of the role and its responsibilities prior to moving to a formal vote.

The motion did not carry.

Roll Call

A. Ting	Aye
M. Connerton	No
G. LeFave	Abstain
D. Mitchell	No
T. Murdy	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
B. MacQuade	Abstain
C. Getz	Aye
D. Herrera	No
E. Rankin	Aye
A. Godino	Abstain
E. Bradley	Aye

A. Godino made a motion to Elect Meg Connerton as Board Vice Chair for FY26-27 School Year.

E. Rankin seconded the motion.

- **Discussion Summary** - The Board engaged in discussion prior to the vote for Vice Chair, continuing themes of leadership structure, role clarity, and alignment on governance needs.
- **Prepared remarks and member perspectives** - Similar to the preceding leadership discussion, members offered structured remarks reflecting on leadership priorities, Board dynamics, and the qualities needed in Vice Chair support of the broader leadership team. The discussion included multiple viewpoints intended to frame decision-making rather than extended debate.

- **Role of Vice Chair in supporting board leadership** - Members emphasized the importance of the Vice Chair role in supporting the Chair, providing continuity in leadership, and ensuring effective coordination across Board committees and responsibilities.
- **Alignment with governance priorities** - The discussion reinforced the expectation that the Vice Chair role should support key governance priorities, including improving communication, strengthening collaboration, and maintaining focus on Board effectiveness during a period of transition.
- **Consistency in leadership structure** - The Board revisited the importance of clearly defined roles and responsibilities across officers, ensuring that the Vice Chair position complements the Chair and Treasurer roles without creating overlap or confusion.
- **Tone and dynamic of discussion** - The discussion remained structured and measured, with an emphasis on shared understanding of responsibilities and leadership expectations rather than open-ended deliberation.
- **Transition to vote** - Following discussion and confirmation of role expectations, the Board proceeded to a formal vote on the Vice Chair position.

The motion did not carry.

Roll Call

A. Ting	No
E. Bradley	Abstain
T. Murdy	No
A. Godino	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
E. Rankin	No
B. MacQuade	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
J. Nickerson	No
C. Getz	No

D. Mitchell made a motion to Create a new officer level position - Special Projects Officer - for the FY26-27 School Year.
A. Godino seconded the motion.

- **Discussion Summary** - Following Board leadership voting, the Board identified a split result in one of the officer roles, resulting in a lack of clear majority and prompting discussion on next steps.
- **Tie vote and lack of majority** - The Board acknowledged that the vote resulted in an even split, preventing a decision from being finalized under the existing structure. Members recognized the need to resolve the deadlock in a way that maintained continuity of leadership and governance effectiveness.
- **Need for a path forward** - Discussion focused on ensuring that the Board could move forward productively rather than delaying leadership decisions. Members

emphasized the importance of being decisive and avoiding extended uncertainty following the tie outcome.

- **Consideration of structural adjustment** - The Board discussed modifying the leadership structure as a practical solution to the impasse, including creating an additional or redefined role to accommodate differing perspectives while maintaining overall Board functionality.
- **Creation of a new role** - The Board reached alignment on establishing an additional officer role, broadly framed around project management or special projects, as a way to incorporate leadership contributions while resolving the split outcome.
- **Role definition and next steps** - It was acknowledged that the responsibilities and scope of the new role would need to be further defined, with the expectation that details would be clarified and formalized in the coming weeks.
- **Maintaining governance effectiveness and cohesion** - The discussion reflected a broader intent to maintain cohesion within the Board and move forward collaboratively while respecting differing viewpoints expressed in the vote.
- **Transition to formal action** - Following discussion, the Board proceeded to formalize the updated leadership structure and continue with officer selections under the revised framework.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

B. MacQuade	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
E. Rankin	Abstain
G. LeFave	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye

Motion to Elect to the Special Projects Officer for the FY26-27 School Year.

A. Godino seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

E. Rankin	Abstain
B. MacQuade	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye

Roll Call

C. Getz	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye

T. Murdy made a motion to Elect Jonathan Nickerson to Vice Chair for FY26-27 School Year.

C. Getz seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

A. Godino	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye

T. Murdy made a motion to Elect Gary LeFave to Treasurer for FY26-27 School Year.

C. Getz seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

T. Murdy	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye

J. Nickerson made a motion to Elect Achala Godino to Secretary for the FY26-27 School Year.

C. Getz seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

T. Murdy	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
A. Ting	Aye

B. Board Trustee Nominees

J. Nickerson made a motion to Elect Beth Friedman to a 3 year term on the RVCS Board of Trustees.

B. MacQuade seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

D. Herrera	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye

J. Nickerson made a motion to Elect Alex Tsonas to a 3 year term on the RVCS Board of Trustees.

T. Murdy seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

C. Getz	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye

Roll Call

J. Nickerson	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye

J. Nickerson made a motion to Elect Tyler Chiasson to a 3 year term on the RVCS Board of Trustees.

C. Getz seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

B. MacQuade	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
A. Ting	Aye

J. Nickerson made a motion to Elect Alison Salerno to a 3 year term on the RVCS Board of Trustees.

C. Getz seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

T. Murdy	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
C. Getz	Aye

J. Nickerson made a motion to Elect Meredith Makin to a 3 year term on the RVCS Board of Trustees.

D. Herrera seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

J. Nickerson	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye

J. Nickerson made a motion to Elect Farrell Boghos-Maryniak to a 3 year term on the RVCS Board of Trustees.

E. Rankin seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

T. Murdy	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye

J. Nickerson made a motion to Elect Daniel Candelario to a 3 year term on the RVCS Board of Trustees.

D. Herrera seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

C. Getz	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye

Roll Call

A. Godino	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye

J. Nickerson made a motion to Elect John Ellen to a 1 year term as Faculty Representative to the RVCS Board of Trustees for the FY26-27 School Year.
D. Mitchell seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

D. Herrera	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
D. Mitchell	Aye
E. Bradley	Aye
T. Murdy	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
B. MacQuade	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye

- **Discussion Summary** - Erin Bradley brought forward a nomination for an additional board member, with the Board engaging in brief discussion focused on the rationale for the nomination, candidate fit, and alignment with Board needs.
- **Context for nomination** - The nomination was presented in the context of strengthening Board composition through added expertise and perspective. Members noted the value of continuing to build a balanced Board with diverse skill sets and backgrounds to support governance and school priorities.
- **Candidate qualifications and contribution** - The Board discussed Martha Rettig's background and potential contributions, noting alignment with current Board needs and areas where additional expertise would be beneficial. Commentary was supportive and focused on how the nominee could add value to Board deliberations and decision-making.
- **Alignment with Board needs and priorities** - Members considered how the nomination supports broader Board goals, including strengthening governance capability, expanding representation, and ensuring the Board is well-positioned to address ongoing organizational priorities.
- **Process and compliance considerations** - It was noted that the Board would review the appropriateness and legitimacy of bringing forward the nomination outside of the standard cycle and would revisit the decision within approximately 30 days, consistent with expectations for review and follow-up.

IX. Closing Items

A.

Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 12:06 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
T. Murdy

Documents used during the meeting

- BoT_Expectations_2_7_23__1_ (7).pdf
- 2026_06_04_executive_committee_committee_meeting_minutes.pdf
- 2026_05_15_committee_on_trustees_meeting_minutes.pdf
- 2026_05_15_executive_session__-committee_on_trustees_minutes.pdf
- Karen Kuse BoT Updates.pdf
- River Valley Charter School proposed Animal Policy (1) (1).pdf
- New attendance policy 2026.pdf
- IMG_5784.jpeg
- Executive Director Hiring Stakeholder Input Gathering.pdf
- May_Financials.xlsx
- FY27_Budget_V5.xlsx
- Leadership Slate Voting Procedures (2).pdf
- 6.9.26 PRS 16227 River Valley Charter NFA Final.pdf
- AC_2025-26.pdf

THE ORDER OF BUSINESS MAY BE CHANGED WITHOUT NOTICE Notice is hereby given that the order of consideration of matters on this agenda may be changed without prior notice.

REASONABLE LIMITATIONS MAY BE PLACED ON PUBLIC TESTIMONY The Board Chair reserves the right to impose reasonable time limits on public testimony to ensure that the agenda is completed.

Coversheet

DESE Complaint

Section: VII. Exectuive Committee
Item: A. DESE Complaint
Purpose: FYI
Submitted by:
Related Material: 6.9.26 PRS 16227 River Valley Charter NFA Final.pdf

MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Pedro Martinez | Commissioner

June 9, 2026

Jared Hubbard
49 Boardman Street
Newburyport, MA 01950

PRS Intake #16227
No Further Action Letter

Dear Jared Hubbard,

On June 2, 2026, you filed a complaint with the Problem Resolution System Office ("PRS") of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (the "Department") related to the River Valley Charter School (the "Charter School"). Briefly, you alleged the following:

- On April 13, 2026, you submitted a complaint to the Charter School's Board of Trustees (the "Board") "regarding the Board's lack of oversight regarding significant changes to the [Charter Schools'] curriculum." Specifically, on January 13, 2026, the Executive Director notified parents that "[d]ue to temporary staffing change…the [Place-Based Education ("PBE")] program will be on hiatus for now." On February 24, 2026, the Executive Director notified the parents that "After careful consideration, we have decided to pause PBE for the remainder of the school year."
- You reported that the Board has not responded to your complaint within the required timeframe for resolution of complaints made pursuant to 603 CMR 1.09(1) and you have requested the Department review the Charter School's approach to making a "significant change to the school's curriculum."

The Department has carefully reviewed your concerns. However, the alleged changes in the PBE program do not affect the Charter School's ability to carry out its mission to "provide a rigorous academic program based on the Montessori philosophy and rooted in the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley" and provide students with the key design elements of the charter, which include "educational program based on the Montessori philosophy; elements of the curriculum rooted in the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley; and critical thinking and problem solving." As you have not alleged that the Charter School has failed to implement a material term of its charter, you have not alleged a violation of M.G.L. c. 71 §89(w) or its implementing regulations under 603 CMR 1.00 that the Department has the authority to investigate.

The Department appreciates your outreach on behalf of your student and all other students at the Charter School. To address your concerns, you may wish to consider contacting the Charter School Office at charterschools@mass.gov.

As of the date of this letter, this complaint is closed, and the Department will not take further action on this complaint.

Recipients:

Karen Kuse, Executive Director, River Valley Charter School
Charter School Office, DESE

Coversheet

DESE Letter to Board

Section: VII. Exectuive Committee
Item: C. DESE Letter to Board
Purpose: Discuss
Submitted by:
Related Material: DESE Letter to RVCS BOT June 26 2026.pdf

MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Pedro Martinez | Commissioner

135 Santilli Hwy, Everett, MA 02149 Voice: (781) 388-3000 TTY: 1-800-439-2370 www.doe.mass.edu

June 26, 2026

Tayna Murdy, Chair, Board of Trustees
River Valley Charter School
2 Perry Way
Newburyport, MA 01950

Via electronic mail: bot.tanya.murdy@rivervalleycharter.org

Dear Board Chair:

Over the past three months, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) has been the recipient of multiple communications from members of the River Valley Charter School (River Valley) community who have expressed concerns about the governance, charter commitments, and climate of the school. Additionally, at the invitation of the chair of the board of trustees, Department staff attended a River Valley board of trustees retreat on March 28, 2026, and virtually observed a River Valley board meeting on April 29, 2026, and June 17, 2026.

Taken together, the communications received and the Department's observations indicate confusion regarding charter governance responsibilities and raise concerns regarding board oversight and compliance. This letter seeks to clarify the role of the charter authorizer in Massachusetts and what constitutes the material terms of River Valley's charter. The letter also reminds board members of their obligations under law and regulations to provide competent and appropriate governance that ensures the success and sustainability of the school.

Charter School Authorizer

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) and the Commissioner are the sole charter school authorizers in Massachusetts with the abilities to grant, amend,

sanction, and revoke charters.[1] Department staff conduct authorizing work on behalf of the Board and Commissioner that includes collecting and analyzing evidence of a charter school's performance against expectations (statute, regulations, and other guidance), conducting accountability processes to ensure charter schools are achieving results, collecting and reviewing required submissions, overseeing processes to amend a school's charter, and providing answers to members of the public as well as charter school staff regarding requirements. In its authorizing capacity, the Department does not provide consulting services, give advice, collaborate with, or direct a charter school to take specific programmatic actions that would infringe upon a charter school's autonomy.

Department staff also engage in communication with specific members of charter school leadership, as needed. Designated representatives of charter schools, defined as the board chair and charter school leader, are obligated by regulation to report to the Department, in its authorizing capacity, all significant matters and changes in circumstances that may impact the school's ability to fulfil its goals or threaten its viability.[2]

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[1] 603 CMR 1.12 **Conditions, Probation, Suspension, Revocation, and Non-Renewal**
(1) **Conditions:** The Board or Commissioner may impose conditions on a school's charter for violations of law or failure to make progress with student achievement, failure to adhere to and enhance its recruitment and retention plan, failure to comply with the terms of its charter, or failure to remain viable.
(2) **Probation:** The Board may place a charter school on probation if in its judgment the imposition of a condition alone would be insufficient to remediate the problem. The Board may impose conditions on the school's charter that require the school to address specific areas of concern. Placing a school on probation signals concern about the school's viability and permits the Board to suspend a school's charter immediately if the school fails to remedy the causes of its probation. The Department may require a charter school on probation to establish an escrow account in an amount determined by the Department in consultation with the charter school to pay for closing, legal, and audit expenses associated with closure should that occur
(3) **Suspension or Revocation:** The Board may suspend or revoke a charter for cause including, but not limited to: (a) lack of evidence of academic success; (b) failure to comply substantially with the terms of the charter, with any of the applicable provisions of M.G.L. c. 71, § 89, or with any other applicable law or regulation; (c) a material misrepresentation in the application for approval or renewal of the charter; (d) financial insolvency; (e) misappropriation, conversion, mismanagement, or illegal withholding of funds or refusal to pay any funds that belong to any person otherwise entitled thereto and that have been entrusted to the charter school or its administrators in their fiduciary capacities; (f) fraud or gross mismanagement on the part of charter school administrators or board of trustees, including but not limited to, mismanagement of the educational program and failure to provide a healthy and safe environment for students; (g) criminal convictions on the part of the charter school administration or members of its board of trustees; or (h) failure to fulfill any conditions imposed by the Board in connection with the grant or renewal of a charter.

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[2] 603 CMR 1.08 (10) **Investigations:** Every charter school shall notify the Department in writing of all significant matters within two business days. Significant matters include, but are not limited to, all

Material Terms of a Charter

Under the charter school regulations, 603 CMR 1.06: “The board of trustees of a charter school holds the charter of the school and governs the school…. Boards of trustees must ensure that schools operate in accordance with their charter, including any approved amendments.” Based on observations and communications received, there is a lack of clarity within the River Valley community about what constitutes the material terms of the school’s charter and the extent to which programmatic changes can be implemented.

A school’s original charter application becomes the school’s charter and the basis for the whole-school design, educational program, and curriculum model. Material terms of a school’s charter are defined by regulation and include, but are not limited to: maximum enrollment, the school’s name, its mission, and grades served. For a complete list of material terms of a charter, see 603 CMR 1.10: Amendments of Charters. If a charter school contemplates changes to operations that are inconsistent with the school’s approved charter, the board of trustees must submit a request for a charter amendment. Requests to amend the material terms of a school's charter must be voted on by the board of trustees and approved by the Commissioner or the Board before a change is implemented.

River Valley’s mission is a material term of the charter and establishes the purpose of the school to “provide a rigorous academic program based on the Montessori philosophy and rooted in the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley.” The Department, in its authorizing capacity, holds the board of trustees accountable for ensuring the school operates in accordance with its mission and the approved material terms of the charter.

Obligations and Responsibilities of Boards of Trustees

Under charter school regulations, members of a charter school board of trustees (board) are public agents authorized by the state to hold the charter for the school. In this role, board members first and foremost have the responsibility to ensure that the school meets statutory and regulatory requirements and is an academic success, a viable

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communications made or received by or on behalf of the school with any government audit, investigative, or law enforcement agency.

603 CMR 1.08 (11) **Notification of New Circumstances:** The charter school shall notify the Department in writing immediately of any change in circumstances that may have a significant impact on a charter school's ability to fulfill its goals or mission as stated in its charter.

organization, and faithful to the terms of its charter. Additionally, under the charter school regulations, a board

> must fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities, including but not limited to, the duty of loyalty and duty of care, as well as the obligation to oversee the school's budget. Boards of trustees shall not exercise managerial powers over the day-to-day operations of the school. Boards of trustees must ensure that schools operate in accordance with their charter, including any approved amendments. Boards of trustees must ensure that schools operate in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws. 603 CMR 1.06.

Finally, the board itself must operate in accordance with Massachusetts laws and regulations.

The Department has concerns about the current ability of the River Valley board to effectively govern the school and meet its responsibilities and obligations. The Department's concerns arise from observations related to board governance practices, understanding of board responsibilities, and compliance with applicable legal requirements. Not only is effective and competent governance a precondition for charter school success, but a board's inability to govern is a potential cause for revocation or suspension of the charter.[3]

Each member of a charter school board of trustees has a legal requirement to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities, including the duty of loyalty and care. The duties listed below reflect an individual board member's paramount responsibilities and should guide every decision a board member makes. Following these legal requirements increases the likelihood that the state will renew a school's charter and leads to more effective management by the board.

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[3] (3) **Suspension or Revocation:** The Board may suspend or revoke a charter for cause including, but not limited to:…(b) failure to comply substantially with the terms of the charter, with any of the applicable provisions of M.G.L. c. 71, § 89, or with any other applicable law or regulation;…. (e) misappropriation, conversion, mismanagement, or illegal withholding of funds or refusal to pay any funds that belong to any person otherwise entitled thereto and that have been entrusted to the charter school or its administrators in their fiduciary capacities; (f) fraud or gross mismanagement on the part of charter school administrators or board of trustees, including but not limited to, mismanagement of the educational program and failure to provide a healthy and safe environment for students; (g) criminal convictions on the part of the charter school administration or members of its board of trustees; or (h) failure to fulfill any conditions imposed by the Board in connection with the grant or renewal of a charter.

The duty of care is a legal principle designed to hold individual board members responsible for the management of the organization they serve. In legal terms, it means that each trustee must act with such care as any ordinarily prudent person would in the trustee's position. In practical terms, board members should follow the principles listed below.

- Always act in the best interests of the school and its students.
- Attend meetings regularly and participate actively in board deliberations and decisions.
- Exercise informed and independent judgment when voting on matters before the board.
- Review and understand information necessary to oversee the school's academic program, finances, operations, and compliance obligations.
- Provide effective oversight of school leadership while refraining from involvement in day-to-day management.
- Raise questions, seek clarification, and address concerns when information is incomplete or issues of compliance, performance, or governance arise.
- Ensure the school and the board operate in compliance with the law.

Like the duty of care, the duty of loyalty is a legal principle that governs the actions of individual board members. Specifically, it prohibits them from doing anything that would allow them to benefit personally because of their position. To comply with the duty of loyalty, board members must:

- act in the best interests of the school rather than in the interests of any individual, group, or outside organization;
- avoid actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest whenever possible;
- disclose conflicts of interest promptly and fully;
- refrain from participating in discussions or votes when a conflict of interest exists; and
- not use their position as a board member for personal, professional, political, or financial gain.

As noted above, the board of trustees must operate in accordance with Massachusetts laws and regulations, including the Open Meeting Law (OML). While the Attorney General's Division of Open Government provides guidance, training, and is the enforcement agency for OML violations, the Department monitors evidence of compliance. Currently, River Valley has two OML pending complaints filed on April 2 and May 5, 2026. While these complaints remain pending and no determination has been made, their existence reinforces the importance of board compliance with OML requirements.

The Department's Charter School Performance Criteria (Criteria) set expectations for charter schools in the three areas of charter school accountability: faithfulness to charter, academic program success, and organizational viability. Criterion 9: Governance articulates the baseline expectations of an effective governing board, which include the duty of loyalty and care, compliance with law, and other markers of competent governance. I recommend the River Valley board of trustees review and determine a path toward meeting the expectations contained within the Criteria.

The River Valley board of trustees may seek additional guidance related to competent and compliant governance practices from its legal counsel. As a member of the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association, River Valley may access additional guidance and support from that organization. Should River Valley board members have questions regarding this letter, please communicate them through the board chair, as the designated representative of the school's governing body.

Sincerely,



Alison Bagg
Associate Commissioner
Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign

C: Jonathan Nickerson, Vice Chair bot.jonathan.nickerson@rivervalleycharter.org
Gary LeFave, Treasurer, bot.gary.lefave@rivervalleycharter.org
Erin Bradley, bot.erin.bradley@rivervalleycharter.org
Beth MacQuade, bmacquade@rivervalleycharter.org
Denise Herrera, bot.denise.herrera@rivervalleycharter.org
Elizabeth Rankin, bot.elizabeth.rankin@rivervalleycharter.org
Albert Ting, bot.albert.ting@rivervalleycharter.org
Achala Matthew Godino, bot.achala.godino@rivervalleycharter.org
Derek Mitchell, bot.derek.mitchell@rivervalleycharter.org
Meg Connerton, bot.meg.connerton@rivervalleycharter.org
Christie Getz, bot.chris.getz@rivervalleycharter.org
Joey Gustafson, Interim Executive Director, jgustafson@rivervalleycharter.org
Bot@rivervalleycharter.org

Coversheet

Year in Review

Section: VIII. Accountability
Item: A. Year in Review
Purpose: Discuss
Submitted by:
Related Material: AC_2025-26.pdf

RVCS Accountability Committee
2025–2026 School Year

The work of the RVCS Accountability Committee this year centered on strengthening a culture of thoughtful reflection, continuous improvement, and mission alignment. Accountability at RVCS is more than a process of measuring outcomes or fulfilling state requirements; it is a commitment to understanding the full experience of our students, supporting strong educational practices, and ensuring that the school continues to thrive while remaining grounded in its Montessori philosophy and charter mission.

A central theme throughout the year was developing a broader understanding of accountability. We endeavored to exemplify strong governance through looking beyond individual data points and asking deeper questions about the systems, practices, and experiences that shape our school community. Are students receiving consistent opportunities to thrive? Are our systems supporting teachers and learners effectively? Are our decisions aligned with the values and long-term vision of RVCS?

Highlights

During the 2025–2026 school year, the Accountability Committee focused on several important areas that strengthened oversight, reflection, and improvement at RVCS:

Committee Purpose and Governance
-The committee began the year by revisiting its role and responsibilities within the larger governance structure of RVCS. Discussions focused on how the committee could best support the Board through thoughtful review of academic progress, organizational health, charter commitments, and mission alignment. This foundation reinforced the importance of accountability as an ongoing responsibility rather than a periodic review process.

Student Growth, Academic Outcomes, and Equity of Experience
-Review of MCAS results, internal assessments, student screeners, and disaggregated data when appropriate provided opportunities to better understand both areas of strength and opportunities for growth. Discussions focused on looking beyond school-wide outcomes to identify patterns over time, understand the experiences of different groups of students, and ensure all learners have access to the support they need to thrive. The committee recognized the importance of reviewing disaggregated data thoughtfully, balancing the need for deeper understanding with care and respect for student privacy.

Assessment Practices and Data-Informed Decision Making
-The committee explored how RVCS collects, interprets, and acts upon student data. Emphasis was placed on consistent assessment practices, historical comparisons, and creating clearer connections between data, classroom instruction, student interventions, and follow-up. The goal of data review is to ensure that information leads to reflection, action, and improved student outcomes.

Accountability Plan Implementation and Progress Monitoring
-As RVCS entered the first year of its 2024–2029 Accountability Plan, the committee discussed the importance of creating systems to monitor progress throughout the charter cycle. Regular placement on the monthly agenda allowed for mindful and timely updates.

Montessori Fidelity Audit
-The Essential Elements Review created an opportunity to reflect on how RVCS continues to live its Montessori mission. The process highlighted many strengths of the school community,

including student engagement and family partnerships, while identifying opportunities to increase consistency, collaboration, communication, and alignment across classrooms and programs.

Caregiver Feedback
-The caregiver survey provided an important opportunity to listen to the RVCS community. Feedback demonstrated strong support for the school while also identifying areas where improved communication, transparency, and consistency could strengthen the experience for students and families. The committee recognized that caregiver perspectives are an essential part of understanding how the school's mission is experienced in practice.

Institutional Memory and Sustainable Systems
-A recurring theme was the importance of preserving knowledge and context as RVCS continues to mature. Schools, like all organizations, are vulnerable to "organizational amnesia", losing the reasoning, lessons, and experiences behind previous decisions as time passes and individuals transition out of the committee. Strengthening documentation, tracking decisions, and understanding the history behind past choices helps ensure future Accountability Committee members can build upon prior learning and minimize repeating mistakes.

Reflection
This year reinforced that meaningful accountability requires creating a clear connection between reflection and action. Data, surveys, audits, and conversations are valuable because they help RVCS better understand where the school is succeeding, where opportunities exist, and what systems are needed to support continued growth.

Building sustainable systems remains essential to the long-term strength of RVCS. Clear processes for collecting data, monitoring progress, evaluating interventions, and communicating outcomes create shared understanding across leadership, staff, families, and the Board. These systems help ensure accountability becomes embedded in the culture of the school rather than dependent on any single person, initiative, or moment in time.

Equally important is protecting the qualities that make RVCS unique. Maintaining an authentic Montessori environment requires continued reflection, investment, and collaboration. As the school matures, deliberations in the Accountability Committee should always be grounded in and connected to the values and educational philosophy at the heart of RVCS.

Looking ahead, the Accountability Committee will continue supporting RVCS by helping transform information into insight and insight into meaningful action. Continued focus will include monitoring progress toward the Accountability Plan, strengthening systems for long-term improvement, preserving institutional knowledge, and supporting alignment between daily practices and the mission of the school.