APPROVED

River Valley Charter School

Minutes

Executive Committee Committee Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday March 4, 2026 at 7:00 PM

Location
River Valley Charter School
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.

Committee Members Present
C. Whitford, J. Nickerson, T. Murdy

Committee Members Absent
None

Guests Present
C. Getz, K. Kuse

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

T. Murdy called a meeting of the Executive Committee Committee of River Valley Charter School to order on Wednesday Mar 4, 2026 at 7:05 PM.

C. Approve Minutes

T. Murdy made a motion to approve the minutes from Executive Committee Committee Meeting on 02-04-26.
C. Whitford seconded the motion.
The committee **VOTED** to approve the motion.

II. Director Update

A. Director Update

a. DESE / SchoolWorks Interviews – March 12
The Executive Director reported that **SchoolWorks**, acting on behalf of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), will be conducting **interviews with selected Board members on March 12** as part of the school's ongoing accountability and review processes.

- The specific Board members to be interviewed had **not yet been identified** at the time of the meeting.
- Two possible interview windows were discussed, with a preference expressed for a **morning time slot (10:50 AM)** due to scheduling conflicts later in the day.
- The Executive Director committed to following up with SchoolWorks to confirm timing and participants and to relay details to affected Board members once finalized.

b. School Calendar Planning and End-of-Year Implications
The Executive Director provided context on **school calendar planning**, noting several external and regulatory constraints that may impact start and end dates for the upcoming academic year.
Key points discussed included:

- If the school begins **after Labor Day**, accumulated snow days could result in the academic year extending **into late June and potentially July**.
- Massachusetts requirements prioritize **instructional hours** (900 hours for elementary, 990 for secondary) rather than strictly the 180-day count.
- The school **cannot legally operate past June 30**, limiting flexibility.
- Sending districts (notably Newburyport and Amesbury) had not yet finalized calendars, making alignment difficult.

- Starting school the day **after Labor Day** was identified as a potential option to maintain alignment with transportation and sending districts, though no recommendation was finalized.

The Executive Director emphasized the importance of gathering additional data from sending districts and DESE before presenting a formal calendar proposal.

c. Human Resources Support – Transition from BlueLion
The Executive Director informed the Committee that the school is **in the process of parting ways with BlueLion**, the current external HR provider.
Context provided included:

- BlueLion expressed concerns about their ability to function effectively as an **independent HR entity** given current conditions.
- Both parties agreed the arrangement was **no longer meeting the school's needs**, though BlueLion will continue support temporarily to avoid disruption.
- The Executive Director has requested BlueLion's assistance in drafting a **job description for a potential internal HR role** as one possible path forward.

Next steps discussed:

- Exploration of alternative HR service providers, including a firm recommended by legal counsel.
- Consideration of **parallel paths**: posting an internal role while also evaluating external options.
- Recognition that HR capacity is critical and will require **time, clarity, and financial investment**.

d. Board Retreat Planning
The Executive Director confirmed that the **Board Retreat is scheduled for March 28, 2026**.

- Facilitator interviews were nearing completion.
- A synthesis of themes and a draft agenda were expected following the interviews.
- Follow-up was noted to confirm timing for Board review of interview findings.

Summary
The Executive Director's report provided **forward-looking operational awareness** on compliance activities, calendar constraints, and HR capacity challenges. All topics were presented for **context and planning purposes**, with no requests for decisions or votes from the Executive Committee.

III. Executive Committee

A. Executive Committee

Historical Context (Presented by Nat Coughlin)

- The **Complaint Policy** was intentionally created to **replace the Grievance Policy**, which originated as a **union-style grievance process** and was not appropriate for a non-union charter school.
- The Complaint Policy evolved to:
  - Reduce board involvement in day-to-day management
  - Preserve proper governance/management boundaries
  - Provide clarity to complainants about expectations and process
  - Explicitly preserve the right to escalate matters to the state (DESE)

Key Clarifications

- **There is no standing Grievance Committee** and no intent to have one.
- The Complaint Policy **does not envision a permanent committee**; instead, committees may be formed **as needed**, based on:
  - Nature of the complaint
  - Expertise required
  - Conflict-of-interest considerations
- The policy is designed to encourage **bottom-up resolution**:
  1. Teacher or staff level
  2. School Director
  3. Board (only if unresolved)
  4. State escalation (if necessary)

Policy Implications

- Complaint reviews often reveal **policy gaps**, prompting policy refinement rather than personnel action.
- Board input is advisory; final management decisions remain with the Director.

Website Issue Identified

- The **school website currently links to a 2011 Grievance Policy**, which is outdated and incorrect.
- Action is needed to:
  - Remove references to a Grievance Committee
  - Link to the correct **2015 Complaint Policy**

4. Executive Session – Purpose and Best Practices
Guidance Shared

- Executive Session exists to allow boards to **speak candidly**, not to make final decisions.
- Final decisions and votes **must occur in open session**.

- Best practices discussed:
  - Including Executive Session as a **standing agenda item**
  - Holding **special meetings** that begin and remain in Executive Session when appropriate
  - Avoiding perception issues by normalizing Executive Session usage

Open Meeting Law Considerations

- The state does not intend to restrict board deliberation—only to prevent non-public decision-making.
- Properly structured Executive Sessions help boards:
  - Clear the air
  - Resolve internal issues
  - Present a more unified, thoughtful public process

6. Policy Work and Bylaws

- Discussion focused on:
  - **Separating bylaws approval from policy revisions**
  - Avoiding unnecessary coupling of bylaws to policies that are still under review
- Recognition that some policies have not been reviewed since **2015** and require updated attention.

7. External Guidance – Mass Charter

- Feedback received recommending:
  - Tighter, more disciplined board agendas
  - Clearer meeting flow
- **Zoom access**:
  - Not required for public participation
  - Optional through **2027** under current state allowances

8. Board Retreat

- **Date:** March 28, 2026
- Facilitator preparing synthesis of interviews and agenda themes
- Follow-up needed to confirm:
  - Interview review timing
  - Final agenda and logistics

IV. Set Board Agenda

A. Board Agenda Topics

Board retreat in lieu of next board meeting.

V. 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 8:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
T. Murdy

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.