APPROVED

River Valley Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday January 21, 2026 at 7:00 PM

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.

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

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

Trustees Absent
C. Whitford

Ex Officio Members Present
K. Kuse

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

D. Herrera called a meeting of the board of trustees of River Valley Charter School to order on Wednesday Jan 21, 2026 at 7:03 PM.

C. Review Trustee Code of Conduct

- Board Code of Conduct reviewed and discussed

D. Public Comment

- The public comment period was noted as a **listening session only**, with no active discussion or dialogue between speakers and the Board.
- Several comments referenced **Board members Derek and Meg**:
  - Community members noted that **their spouses signed the recent public letter**.
  - Derek and Meg **confirmed** that their spouses signed independently, in their roles as parents/community members.
  - They clarified that they **did not participate in drafting, reviewing, advising on, or distributing** the letter, emphasizing appropriate separation between personal family actions and Board governance responsibilities.
- Written versions of all public comments were submitted and are **saved in the meeting's supporting documents**.
- Speakers included:
  - **Sarah Reynolds** (parent)
  - **Amy Cameron** (parent)
  - **Jed Washburn** (parent)
  - **Martha Burke** (parent)
  - **Michael Clough** (parent)
  - **Laura Hunt** (teacher)
- **Primary themes across public comments**:
  - Strong concern and curiosity regarding the **direction, implementation, and communication of Place-Based Education (PBE)**.
  - Broader reflections on **school culture and environment**, including clarity of expectations and alignment with Montessori principles.
  - Desire for improved **transparency**, communication, and community engagement regarding changes or instructional priorities.

II. Approve Previous Board Minutes

A.

Approve Minutes

Minutes approved in prior special board meeting - no action required

III. Consent Agenda

A. Accountability Committee

B. Development Committee

C. Executive Committee

D. Committee on Trustees

E. Finance Committee

F. Vote on Consent Agenda

T. Murdy made a motion to approve the consent agenda.
E. Bradley seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

IV. Director's Update

A. Director's Report

Full written Director’s Report is saved in the meeting documents.

Staffing Updates

- The school posted a **Communications role**, aligned to work currently supported part-time by **Amy Moore**.

    - The posting received **153 views and 1 applicant**; an interview is scheduled.
- Staffing changes and additions continue to be developed collaboratively, with a focus on **near-term needs over the next three months**, particularly given the uncertain timeline for **Jane's absence**.
- The **Finance Committee** previously approved funding (December meeting) to support additional staffing capacity.

Facilities, Easement & Grounds Project

- The **easement** is now on **iteration #4** for submission to the City to ensure required public access.
- The school received **permitting approval for the full grounds project**, though only Phase 1 will proceed initially.
- Easement questions from the Town focus on public access requirements.
- A meeting is being arranged with **all involved stakeholders** to ensure alignment and resolution of outstanding questions.
- The primary concern remains the hold up in release of **$150,000** in funding contingent on final easement approval.
- The school has submitted a **Community Preservation Act (CPA)** request for **$450,000** toward a project estimated at **$1M+**.
    - Last year's CPA pool was approximately **$1.2M**; this year's available amount is unknown, with requests already exceeding **$6.5M**.
- **Board representation** is requested at the CPA meeting on **March 5**.

Enrollment

- The annual **lottery** will take place on **February 12**, with **170+ applications** received to date.

HR Process

- **BlueLion** is continuing **bi-weekly HR support meetings**.
- A recent joint meeting was held with **Denise** and the leadership team; further details will be covered in the **Executive Committee update**.

Place-Based Education (PBE)

- The Director thanked the community for the public comments regarding PBE.
- The school is exploring support from an **external facilitator** to guide next steps.
- Additional clarity is expected within the next week following conversations with **HPS**.

V. Board Business

A. DESE Virtual Visit

- The **DESE Virtual Visit** is scheduled for **March 12**.
- Board members are asked to **reserve availability in the morning** to participate.
- The goal is to have **at least six Board members** present for the visit to ensure a strong representation of governance.

B. Massachusetts Conflict of Interest Law Training

- Board members were reminded of the requirement to complete the **Massachusetts Conflict of Interest Law** training.
- Annual certification is required for all public officials, including charter school board members.
- Members should ensure they:
  - Complete the **online training module**; and
  - Submit the **receipt of completion** to the school for record-keeping.
- Administrative staff will track compliance and follow up with any outstanding certifications.

VI. Finance Committee

A. Update

- Based on Nov finance statement, running to budget with slight surplus
- No information on tuition adjustments at this time

VII. Accountability Committee

A. Update

- The committee **met last night**; minutes from that meeting were not included in the agenda.
- Reviewed and discussed **Fall Screener data**; additional analysis will continue over the coming weeks.
- Discussed **Accountability Criterion #7** (Caregiver Survey).
  - The survey will be **released on Monday**.
  - It will remain open for **three weeks**.
  - Results will be **analyzed** and then **shared back with the community**.

VIII. Committee on Trustees

A. Update

- The committee reviewed the **Board self-assessment surveys** and noted strong participation and thoughtful feedback.

    - Because the surveys are **anonymous**, Board members who wish to engage in follow-up or more personalized discussion should **identify themselves directly** to the committee.
- The annual **Board Retreat** is scheduled for **March 28**.
    - **Kate Scott** will again serve as facilitator; she previously led last year's retreat with positive results.
    - Kate was originally identified through support from the **Massachusetts Charter Public School Association**.
- Kate plans to conduct **individual interviews with Board members** to help shape the retreat agenda, goals, and structure.

B. Updated Bylaws Vote

- Proposed revisions include:
    - Updating the **Foundation footnote** to remove any reference to fundraising.
    - Reviewing and validating the **Parents Alliance footnote** to ensure it is not overly or inappropriately aligned with the Board's **Development Committee**.
    - Confirming that the bylaws clearly articulate both a **Whistleblower Policy** and a **Complaint Process**, as required.
- The **updated bylaws and related policies** have been sent to **Karen** for review and feedback. Once finalized, they will be brought to the Board for approval.
- The Board discussed the need for a **thoughtful, recurring review process** to ensure bylaws remain current and compliant.
- **Jon** will make the next set of edits and **circulate the updated draft** ahead of a formal vote at the **February Board meeting**.
- Following Board approval, the updated bylaws will be **submitted to DESE**.
    - The Board should anticipate that DESE may return **comments or requested modifications** prior to final acceptance.

IX. Executive Committee

A. Update

- The Executive Committee **met with BlueLion on January 13**.
    - Scheduling conflicts had delayed prior meetings.
    - BlueLion shared initial inputs gathered from their **on-site interviews**.
    - BlueLion also stated that related communications had been shared back with faculty; however, **Beth clarified this was not accurate**.
- BlueLion referred the school to **Human Power Solutions (HPS)**, which specializes in organizational support for schools.
    - RVCS reached out, and a meeting with HPS was held on **January 21**.
    - There is potential access to a **grant of up to $125,000** that could cover much of the cost of this organizational work.

    - The committee emphasized that addressing these issues is essential for ensuring a **sustainable leadership model**.
- The work ahead is framed as a **collaborative, community-involved effort**, not solely a Board initiative.
    - The evolving partnership is a **three-way collaboration** between **RVCS, BlueLion (BL), and HPS**, informed by community input.
- HPS outlined a potential **three-phase approach**:
    1. **Phase 1 – Current State Assessment**
    2. **Phase 2 – Gap Analysis**
    3. **Phase 3 – Execution / Implementation**

- A formal proposal is expected on **Monday, January 26**, including timeline and scope details.
- There is also potential for **HPS to facilitate upcoming PBE-related conversations**, providing needed neutrality.
    - An **unbiased third-party facilitator** is seen as essential for this work.
- **Next Steps & Alignment**
    - Denise has a scheduled call with BlueLion **tomorrow** to address concerns, clarify roles, and better align on communication and collaboration expectations.
    - The committee acknowledged concerns around the **optics** of shifting focus toward HPS and wants transparency and clarity in the transition.
    - Tanya had previously been asked to sit in on selected meetings to ensure alignment. Moving forward, the Board plans to have a member present in relevant **BlueLion and Karen meetings** to maintain visibility and engagement.

X. Development Committee

A. Update

- The Annual Fund is **midway through the campaign**, with **$6,200 raised to date**, which is **double the amount raised at this time last year**.
- The **Readathon** is the next major initiative and remains the school's **largest annual fundraiser**.
    - Designed as a **non-competitive, inclusive event** that encourages broad participation.
    - A significant portion of donations historically comes from **outside the RVCS community**.
- This year, the committee emphasized improving **alignment with faculty and staff**, ensuring the event supports, rather than burdens, classroom efforts.

    - Tanya and Karen met with **level coordinators** to discuss integration opportunities.
    - The central focus of the event continues to be **literacy and participation**, not fundraising competition.
- **Sponsorships**
    - Outreach is underway via **phone and email**.
    - **Two verbal commitments** have already been received.
    - Connections have been re-established with **previous sponsors**.
- **Promotion & Engagement**
    - Active promotion on **Facebook and Instagram**.
    - Exploring options for an **event celebration**, including allergy-safe treats.
    - Looking into coordination with **Triton schools** to support food service and transportation needs.
    - Considering a return to a **March timeline** in future years (as done last year).
    - Seeking opportunities for **student collaboration** at both kickoff and closing events.
- **Event Planning**
    - **Proposed launch date:** February 2.
    - Proposed closing day activity: **Dress Like a Literary Character**.
    - Additional ideas include engaging **RVCS alumni authors** or **local writers** for virtual or in-person involvement (e.g., notable local figures such as John Cena).
- The committee's **next meeting** will focus on broader **development strategy and long-term planning**.

XI. Closing Items

A. Public Comments

- **Amy Moore** (Instructional Assistant) offered her **time and support** to help strengthen school-wide communications, referencing her past experience working in this area.
- Several parents voiced **concerns related to teacher testimony** shared earlier in the meeting, including the comments provided by **Laura Hunt**.
    - Speakers asked for clarity about how the Board and leadership are addressing the issues raised by staff.

Board members reiterated that:

- These concerns were a **key factor in engaging BlueLion** for HR and organizational support.
- Additional external support will continue to be brought in to help guide **positive, sustainable change**.

- Some discussions necessarily occur in **Executive Session** due to personnel and confidentiality requirements.

Commentary referenced the **natural challenges and growing pains** that accompany leadership transitions in any organization.
Several commenters expressed a desire for **greater community involvement** in school governance.

- The Board encouraged community members to **participate in committees** where appropriate and feasible.

Comments were also made regarding **Place-Based Education (PBE)**:

- Speakers noted that PBE began as an initiative during **COVID**, supported by supplemental federal funding at that time.
- It was noted that outdoor learning and community-based experiences have long been part of the school's practice, even before the formal PBE framework.
- Some families described **positive experiences** with PBE, while others noted **challenges in balancing PBE with core academic requirements**.

B. Board Meeting Survey

- Please remember to fill out survey and provide feedback for your dashboard

C. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Herrera

Documents used during the meeting

- 2026_01_06_development_committee_meeting_minutes (1).pdf
- 2026_01_07_executive_committee_committee_meeting_minutes (1).pdf
- 2026_01_14_committee_on_trustees_meeting_minutes.pdf
- 2025_12_10_committee_on_trustees_meeting_minutes.pdf
- 2025_12_10_finance_committee_meeting_minutes.pdf
- Director's Report 1.21.2026.docx
- RVCS_By-Laws v7.docx

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.