APPROVED

River Valley Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday February 25, 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, C. Whitford, D. Herrera, D. Mitchell (remote), E. Bradley, E. Rankin, J. Nickerson, M. Connerton, T. Murdy

Trustees Absent
G. LeFave

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 Feb 25, 2026 at 7:02 PM.

C. Review Trustee Code of Conduct

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.

D. Public Comment

The Board received public comment from teachers and a parent regarding school culture, leadership, and staff experience.

- **Ali Fields (Teacher)** expressed concerns regarding the current culture of the school and stated that trust has been broken.
- **John (Teacher)** shared concerns about staff retention, noting a perception that teachers are considering leaving the school and that staff do not feel heard despite having submitted grievances.
- **Lizzy (Teacher and Alumna)** spoke to the importance of working collaboratively and contributing positively to the school community.
- **Zach (Teacher)** stated that he believes the current state of the school is unhealthy, citing erosion of trust and a sense that staff voices are minimized. He encouraged

the Board to be more curious and to ask how staff are experiencing current conditions.

- **Laura (Teacher)** referenced a letter previously sent to the Board, reaffirmed her commitment to the school's mission, and expressed a desire for a culture of empowered teachers and trust. She shared disappointment with what she characterized as a lack of Board action and noted that if a response is not provided within 45 days, concerns may be raised to the state level.
- **Lauren Dufner (Parent)** spoke in support of teachers' dedication to students and expressed concern about leadership challenges. She noted teacher departures and raised concern that additional departures could impact continuity of learning. She recommended that the Board prioritize teacher retention.

II. Approve Previous Board Minutes

A. Approve Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 01-21-26.
B. MacQuade seconded the motion.

- Need to add the public attendees
- Change the submitter from Elizabeth (check her permissions)

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

Roll Call

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

III. Consent Agenda

A. Accountability Committee

Incorrect committee meeting minutes were attached so will vote on this in the next meeting.

B. Development Committee

Update document as Erin is not shows as in attendance in the meeting

C. Executive Committee

D. Committee on Trustees

E. Finance Committee

F. Vote on Consent Agenda

D. Herrera made a motion to approve the minutes from Committee on Trustees Meeting on 02-04-26.
C. Whitford seconded the motion.
See individual committee comments.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

IV. Board Business

A. Vote to Accept Resignation of Board Chair

D. Herrera made a motion to Accept the resignation of the Denise Herrara as Board Chair.
C. Getz seconded the motion.

- Denise work does not allow her the time to commit the necessary time to the board
- Great appreciation for Denise's support

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

Roll Call

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

B. Vote on New Board Chair

C. Whitford made a motion to Motion to elect Tanya Murdy as Board Chair through end of the current term.
C. Getz seconded the motion.
No discussion
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

C. Vote to Elect Vice Chair (if applicable)

T. Murdy made a motion to Motion to elect Jonathan Nickerson as the Vice Chair for the remainder of the term.
E. Rankin seconded the motion.
No discussion
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

D. Vote to Elect Secretary (if applicable)

T. Murdy made a motion to Motion to elect Chris Getz as secretary for remainder of the term.
C. Getz seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

E. DESE Virtual Visit

- The **DESE Virtual Visit** is scheduled for **March 12**

F. Massachusetts Conflict of Interest Law Training

- Reminder to take training if you received the email

V. Committee on Trustees

A.

Update

- Retreat planning is underway; Kate Scott almost complete with interview to support discussions
- Need to review and vote on policies and bylaws

B. Updated Policy Vote

J. Nickerson made a motion to Motion to approve the Document Retention Policy.

- Check wording on Family Handbook reference
- Recommendation that policies review be done bi-annually
- Glossary of definitions need to be updated
- Recommend updating document and call special meeting

The motion did not carry.
J. Nickerson made a motion to Motion to approve the updated Complaint Policy.
The Board discussed revisions to the school's complaint and grievance processes to improve clarity, alignment, and proportional response. Key points raised included:

- **Definition clarity:** Update the definition of "complaint" to remove the inclusion of "grievance," and ensure that complaints and grievances are clearly distinguished.
- **Process structure:** Consider reverting to the prior version of the complaint process to provide greater granularity and clarity around procedural steps.
- **School-level handling:** Assess whether a complaint committee should be established at the school level, as needed, before escalation to the Board.
- **Mediation language:** Remove references to mediation as a required or default step.
- **Policy placement:** Discussed whether the complaint process should be included in the school handbook rather than maintained as a standalone Board policy.
- **Grievance definition:** Ensure that "grievance" is clearly defined within the handbook and aligned with appropriate escalation thresholds.
- **Proportional response:** Noted the need for an off-ramp between later procedural steps to allow for resolution before initiating more serious or formal action.
- **External escalation:** Observed that language referencing the Commissioner of Education appears more applicable to grievances than complaints and should be reviewed accordingly.
- **Recusal:** Add an explicit option for recusal where conflicts of interest may exist.
- **Glossary:** Develop a glossary of terms to support consistent understanding and application of the process.

The motion did not carry.
J. Nickerson made a motion to Motion to approve the Public Access to Records Policy.
The Board reviewed the Public Access to Records policy and discussed updates to improve clarity, feasibility, and alignment with related policies. Key points raised included:

- **Policy alignment:** Noted the need to ensure alignment between the Public Access to Records policy and the CORI policy.
- **Denial language:** Suggested adding explicit language clarifying that records requests may be denied when permitted under applicable law.
- **Response timeline:** Discussed revising the response period to **10 days** to align with legal requirements and operational feasibility.
- **Public information:** Identified the need to update contact information for records requests on the school website (assigned to the Executive Director).
- **Search standards:** Raised the need to define what constitutes a “reasonable search” for records to ensure consistency and manage expectations.

The Board agreed that these items require further refinement and that proposed updates will be brought back for review.

The motion did not carry.
J. Nickerson made a motion to Motion to approve the Whistleblower Policy.
The Board reviewed the Whistleblower policy and discussed revisions to ensure clarity, appropriate scope, and effective handling of reports. Key points raised included:

- **Process clarity:** Confirm the policy clearly outlines how whistleblower reports are received, triaged, and addressed.
- **HR involvement:** Noted the need to clarify when and how Human Resources is involved in whistleblower matters.
- **Acknowledgment timing:** Suggested that initial acknowledgment of a whistleblower report should occur more quickly than the current 10-day timeframe.
- **Scope alignment:** Reviewed the scope of the policy, including references to “caregivers,” and emphasized the need for consistent terminology across all related policies.
- **Policy placement:** Discussed aligning the Whistleblower process with the school handbook rather than maintaining it solely as a standalone policy, consistent with pre-COVID practice.
- **Trend data:** Raised concern that references to trend analysis may not be appropriate given the size of the school and suggested removing this language.
- **Complaint committee:** Discussed clarifying whether and when a complaint committee is involved in whistleblower matters.
- **Definitions:** Identified the need to clearly define and distinguish **complaint**, **grievance**, and **whistleblower** within the policy framework.
- **Decision framework:** Recommended developing a decision tree to clarify how complaints, grievances, and whistleblower reports are routed and addressed.
- **Third-party review:** Suggested that substantiated whistleblower reports may require initial review or adjudication by an independent third party.
- **Anonymity:** Confirmed the importance of allowing whistleblower reports to be submitted anonymously.

- **Misrouted reports:** Emphasized that if a concern is submitted through the incorrect process, it should be redirected to the appropriate pathway rather than dismissed.

The Board agreed that revisions are needed and that proposed updates will be brought back for further review.

The motion did not carry.

C. Updated Bylaws Vote

J. Nickerson made a motion to Approve the updated bylaws and pass along for review by DESE.

- Must update policies before we can vote

The motion did not carry.

VI. Executive Committee

A. Update

The Board received an update from the Executive Committee and discussed the following items:

- **Legal Counsel:** The Board noted that school counsel, Marc Terry, has moved to a new firm. A vote is required to determine whether to continue retaining Mr. Terry under his new firm affiliation.
- **Grant Funding:** The school did not qualify for grant funding to support services from Human Power Solutions.
- **Human Power Solutions:** The Executive Committee reported that a meeting is scheduled with the company to explore the potential for individual services.

B. Vote on Legal Transition

E. Rankin made a motion to Motion to continue to retain Marc Terry as school lawyer.
D. Herrera seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

VII. Finance Committee

A. Update

The Board received a financial update and discussed the current financial position of the school. No actions were taken at this time.

VIII. Accountability Committee

A.

Update

The Board discussed accountability and monitoring efforts related to program delivery and data review. Key updates included:

- **Criterion 6 – Program Delivery:** The Board noted that efforts have begun to address Criterion 6 related to program delivery.
- **Assessment Data:** Fall screener data was reviewed, and the Board discussed the need for improved screening data to better understand trends and inform analysis.
- **Caregiver Survey:** The caregiver survey closed the previous day with approximately 100 responses, exceeding last year's participation.
- **Board Review:** Survey results will be shared with non-parent Board members for review.
- **Family Communication:** Following Board review, survey results will be shared with families.

IX. Development Committee

A. Update

The Board received an update on development activities and future planning. Key points included:

- **Read-A-Thon:**
  - The Read-A-Thon raised approximately **$23,000**, an increase from **$19,000** the prior year.
  - Participation included **169 readers** (up from 152) and approximately **44,000 minutes of reading** (up from 30,000).
  - A comprehensive Read-A-Thon report and spreadsheet will be provided at the next meeting, as donations remain open through **February 26, 2026**.
- **Development Focus:**
  - The Development Committee will refocus efforts on the **Annual Fund** and strategies to engage additional families, including alumni.
- **Annual Report:**
  - Work is underway to compile and design a year-end wrap-up highlighting community engagement and celebrating successes, to serve as the school's annual report.
- **Succession Planning:**
  - The Board Chair reported ongoing efforts to recruit new Board members, including for the Development Committee, in anticipation of term completions in June.
  - Parent interest has been identified to support development work in the coming year as Board terms conclude.

    - Broader succession planning for the Development Committee is under consideration.
- **Community Engagement:**
    - The Board discussed the potential return of the **Maritime Mixer** as a community-building event for incoming Kinderhaus families and outgoing Middle School families.

X. Director's Update

A. Director's Report

Director’s Report

The Executive Director presented the Director’s Report (attached), including updates on staffing, enrollment, facilities, and regulatory oversight.

- **Staffing:** Laine Ives will not return from sabbatical; Josh Cagle will continue in the role of engineer teacher.
- **Enrollment:** RVCS received **225 applications** for the 2026–2027 school year; **32 Kinderhaus seats** were offered (17 sibling applicants and 15 new applicants).
- **Facilities:** The fourth iteration of the easement was submitted to the City of Newburyport. The City indicated that initial review appears positive. Remaining grounds work will be completed following ground thaw.
- **DESE Oversight:**
    - RVCS is undergoing its **6-Year Integrated Monitoring Review (IMR)** and is in **Group A**, with review week scheduled for **March 16, 2026**.
    - An **English Learner Education (ELE)** review is underway, including required policy development, staffing, and training.
    - The **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** review is due **February 27, 2026**.
- **Discussion:** A question was raised regarding whether developing an entirely new curriculum is the appropriate approach, noting concern that it could further separate students.
- The Executive Director reported that she will look into the potential impact of not meeting requirements under any of the applicable reviews.

Additional details are included in the attached Director’s Report.

90-Day Plan

The Executive Director reported that a **draft 30–60–90+ Day Plan** has been developed and shared.

- The plan focuses on **stabilizing systems, re-centering Montessori practice, strengthening communication, and clarifying roles and decision-making**.
- Priority areas include **staffing and compensation systems, instructional coherence, special education integration, communication rhythms, and DESE readiness**.
- The plan outlines **phased milestones**, **indicators for monitoring progress**, and a **shared accountability framework** between the Board and school leadership.
- The Executive Director noted that the plan is a **living document** and will be refined in collaboration with the Board and staff, with progress reviewed through established check-ins and Board meetings.

The full 30–60–90+ Day Plan is attached to the minutes.

Board Comments on the 90-Day Plan

Board members provided feedback and suggestions on the draft plan, including:

- A suggestion to hold a **brainstorming session with faculty**.
- A recommendation to establish **benchmark expectations** for each 30/60/90-day phase and to ensure benchmarks are **specific and measurable**.
- A recommendation to more explicitly **align the plan to the school's mission** and reflect this alignment in the plan's language.
- Emphasis that **relationships should be central** to the plan.
- A suggestion that **faculty trust** be included as a metric for monitoring progress.

XI. Closing Items

A. Board Meeting Survey

B. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 9:58 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
T. Murdy

Documents used during the meeting

- 2026_01_21_board_meeting_minutes (1).pdf
- 2026_02_03_development_committee_meeting_minutes.pdf
- 2026_02_04_executive_committee_committee_meeting_minutes.pdf
- 2026_02_04_committee_on_trustees_meeting_minutes.pdf
- Letter of Resignation.pdf
- RVCS_Document Retention & Destruction Policy.pdf
- RVCS_Complaint_Policy.pdf
- RVCS_Public_Access_to_Records_Policy.pdf
- RVCS_Whistleblower_Policy.pdf
- RVCS_By-Laws_v7 Final.pdf
- 2.25.2026 Director's Report.pdf
- RVCS 90 Day Plan.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.