APPROVED

River Valley Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday June 30, 2026 at 6:00 PM

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.

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

Trustees Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present
J. Gustafson

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 Tuesday Jun 30, 2026 at 6:00 PM.

C. Public Comment

No public comment

D. Review Trustee Code of Conduct

Code of conduct reviewed

II. Approve Previous Board Minutes

A. Approve Minutes

E. Rankin made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 06-17-26.
G. LeFave seconded the motion.

- Add contributions from Mark in terms of context on the decisions
- Add Meg's name to the election of the new role
- Adjust public speakers to include Aly
- Add Achala's statement to the documents
- Add "Daniel Dennis & Company"

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

III. Director's Update

A. Director's Report-Joey Gustafson

Interim Executive Director Joey Gustafson provided an update on her first ten working days in the role. Joey shared that while she has heard concerns about challenges experienced by the school community over the past year, she has also been encouraged by the quality of student work, the dedication of faculty and staff, and the strong commitment of families and caregivers to River Valley. She expressed confidence in the school's future and emphasized the importance of maintaining focus on students, classrooms, and day-to-day school operations.

Highlights and Updates

- Met individually with approximately 30 staff members and contractors to better understand current operations, opportunities, and challenges.
- Attended student presentations, celebrations, and graduation activities, which she described as highlights of her time at the school thus far.
- Participated in leadership meetings, IEP meetings, compliance reviews, and family meetings while supporting ongoing school operations.
- Conducted faculty meetings and staff listening sessions to gather feedback and strengthen communication throughout the school community.
- Engaged with the Massachusetts Charter School Association and supported positive media coverage highlighting student learning and school accomplishments.

Looking Ahead

- Summer work will focus on operational improvements, accountability requirements, and preparation for the upcoming school year.
- Joey will be meeting with DESE and local community leaders to reinforce confidence in the school's leadership and governance.
- Emphasized the importance of leadership and governance stability as River Valley continues through its current charter term.
- Plans to support the Board through improved agenda development, meeting preparation, and stronger committee processes to allow Board meetings to focus on strategic governance matters.

Board Discussion
Board members thanked Joey for her leadership and the significant amount of work completed during her first days in the role. Trustees discussed the importance of providing stability for students, families, faculty, and staff during this period of transition and expressed appreciation for the positive direction established during Joey's initial weeks.

Discussion Topics

- Importance of leadership continuity and organizational stability during the upcoming school year.
- Balancing community input with timely decision-making while maintaining focus on long-term school success.
- The Board's responsibility to demonstrate strong governance and accountability to DESE and other stakeholders.
- Continued efforts to strengthen board governance practices, trustee training, onboarding, and the distinction between governance and management responsibilities.

IV. Interim Executive Director

A. Interim Executive Director vote

E. Bradley made a motion to Elect Joey Gustafson to the role of Interim Executive Director for the 26-27 school year.
G. LeFave seconded the motion.

- Agreement that end of term would be 7/31/27

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

Roll Call

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

V. Executive Director Search

A. Executive Director Search

The Board discussed the timing and approach for the Executive Director search process in the context of the school's recent leadership transitions and the appointment of Interim Executive Director Joey Gustafson. Trustees emphasized the importance of providing stability for students, families, faculty, and staff while also ensuring a thoughtful and deliberate process for identifying long-term leadership.

Discussion Topics

- Concerns regarding the number of leadership transitions experienced by the school and the importance of minimizing further disruption.
- The value of maintaining leadership stability while governance, operational structures, and organizational priorities continue to be strengthened.
- The need to ensure the school has the appropriate leadership structure in place before initiating a permanent Executive Director search.
- Discussion of the organizational chart, leadership roles, and supporting positions needed to effectively support the Executive Director role.

- The importance of a comprehensive and transparent search process that incorporates stakeholder input while remaining focused on the long-term needs of the school.
- Lessons learned from prior leadership transitions and search efforts.

Actions and Next Steps

- Obtain proposals from three executive search firms for consideration by the Board.
- Finalize the organizational chart to clarify reporting relationships and leadership structure.
- Complete and refine job descriptions for key leadership positions.
- Use the finalized organizational structure and position descriptions to inform the Executive Director search process and future hiring decisions.
- Continue gathering input and preparing the Board for a formal Executive Director search at the appropriate time.

Summary
The Board discussed preparations for a future Executive Director search, recognizing that organizational stability remains the immediate priority. Trustees agreed that key foundational work—including evaluation of executive search firms, finalization of the organizational structure, and completion of leadership job descriptions—should be completed to support a successful and sustainable search process.

VI. Board of Trustee 2026-2027 Planning

A. Planning

The Board discussed priorities and planning activities for the 2026–2027 school year, with an emphasis on strengthening governance, supporting new trustees, improving board effectiveness, and reinforcing the distinction between governance and school management. Trustees reflected on lessons learned during the past year and identified opportunities to improve board operations, committee engagement, and overall effectiveness.

Discussion Topics

- Importance of establishing a strong governance foundation for the upcoming school year.
- Plans for board leadership training and Open Meeting Law training.
- Onboarding and orientation activities for newly elected trustees.
- Continued partnership with governance consultants and training resources to support board development.
- Strengthening understanding of governance responsibilities versus operational management responsibilities.
- Improving committee engagement to allow substantive work to occur outside of full board meetings.

- Ensuring board meeting agendas and materials are focused on governance, accountability, and strategic decision-making.
- Building trust, collaboration, and consistency among trustees as the Board enters the new school year.

Actions and Next Steps

- Conduct trustee onboarding and orientation sessions for new board members.
- Schedule and complete Open Meeting Law and governance training for trustees.
- Continue committee development and clarify committee goals, responsibilities, and annual work plans.
- Review board processes and meeting structures to improve effectiveness and efficiency.
- Support Board leadership transition and implementation of priorities for the 2026–2027 school year.

Summary
The Board discussed planning priorities for the 2026–2027 school year, focusing on trustee onboarding, governance training, committee effectiveness, and strengthening board operations. Trustees emphasized the importance of building a collaborative and effective governance structure that supports school leadership, fulfills regulatory responsibilities, and promotes long-term organizational stability.

VII. Executive Committee

A. DESE Complaint

The Board reviewed DESE's response to a parent complaint concerning Board oversight of Place-Based Education (PBE). Board leadership reported that DESE dismissed the complaint and indicated that no further action would be taken. Trustees discussed the significance of the response and the clarification it provided regarding the Board's governance responsibilities.

Discussion Topics

- DESE dismissed the complaint and closed the matter with no further action required.
- The complaint alleged that the Board lacked appropriate oversight of Place-Based Education and related programmatic decisions.
- Trustees discussed DESE's confirmation that curriculum and programmatic decisions are management responsibilities rather than Board responsibilities.
- The Board noted that DESE reaffirmed the distinction between governance oversight and day-to-day operational decision-making.
- Trustees discussed that the school's charter remains in compliance and that a specific PBE model is not required by the charter.

- Board members viewed the response as important guidance regarding the appropriate role of the Board when concerns arise related to curriculum, programming, and educational delivery.

Key Takeaways

- DESE dismissed the complaint without further action.
- DESE reaffirmed that programmatic and curriculum decisions are the responsibility of school leadership and administration.
- The discussion reinforced the Board's responsibility to focus on governance, accountability, and charter oversight rather than operational decision-making.
- Trustees agreed that the response provides helpful clarity for future discussions involving curriculum and educational programming.

Summary
The Board reviewed and discussed DESE's response to a parent complaint regarding oversight of Place-Based Education. DESE dismissed the complaint and reaffirmed that curriculum and programmatic decisions fall within the authority of school leadership rather than the Board of Trustees. Trustees noted that the response provided valuable clarification regarding governance responsibilities and reinforced the Board's role in oversight, accountability, and stewardship of the school's charter.

B. Year In Review

The Executive Committee reflected on a year marked by significant leadership transitions, governance challenges, and organizational change. Trustees acknowledged that the Board experienced turnover within its leadership team, navigated the departure of the Executive Director, and worked through a period of uncertainty while maintaining continuity of school operations. Throughout these challenges, the Committee focused on strengthening governance practices, improving organizational structure, and ensuring the Board remained focused on its fiduciary and oversight responsibilities.

Key Accomplishments

- Managed multiple leadership transitions within both the Board and school administration.
- Supported the recruitment and appointment of Interim Executive Director Joey Gustafson.
- Conducted an external Board governance audit to evaluate Board effectiveness, governance practices, and organizational structure.
- Identified opportunities to strengthen systems, processes, and governance practices.

- Increased focus on the distinction between governance responsibilities and management responsibilities.
- Worked to improve Board procedures, decision-making processes, and organizational accountability.
- Prioritized governance training and professional development opportunities for trustees.

Discussion Topics

- Lessons learned from a year of significant organizational and leadership change.
- The importance of maintaining clear boundaries between Board governance and school management.
- The need for stronger governance structures, processes, and Board development moving forward.
- Continued efforts to improve communication, accountability, and organizational stability.
- Planning for trustee onboarding, governance training, and leadership development for the 2026–2027 school year.

Actions and Next Steps

- Conduct Board leadership training and Open Meeting Law training during the summer.
- Complete onboarding and governance training for incoming trustees.
- Continue implementation of recommendations from the Board governance audit.
- Strengthen governance practices related to oversight, accountability, and strategic planning.
- Maintain focus on board development, organizational stability, and preparation for future charter renewal requirements.

Summary
The Executive Committee reflected on a year of significant transition and challenge while recognizing meaningful progress in governance, leadership, and organizational structure. Trustees highlighted the Board's work in navigating leadership changes, strengthening governance practices, conducting an external board audit, and laying the foundation for a more stable and effective Board. Discussion emphasized continued investment in trustee training, governance best practices, and organizational stability as priorities for the upcoming school year.

C. DESE Letter to Board

The Board reviewed and discussed a letter received from DESE regarding governance and board oversight responsibilities. Trustees viewed the letter as an important opportunity to strengthen governance practices and better understand the distinction between the Board’s role and the role of school administration. The discussion focused

on ensuring that Board activities remain aligned with the responsibilities outlined by DESE and the requirements of the school's charter.

Discussion Topics

- Review of DESE's observations and concerns regarding board governance and oversight.
- The importance of maintaining a clear distinction between governance responsibilities and management responsibilities.
- Recognition that the Board's primary responsibility is stewardship of the charter, oversight of school leadership, and support of the school's long-term success.
- Discussion of how governance decisions should be documented through meeting minutes and board records.
- The importance of avoiding involvement in day-to-day operational and personnel matters that fall within the authority of school leadership.
- The role of Board members in acting objectively and in the best interests of the school as a whole rather than individual stakeholders.
- The need for consistent governance practices and decision-making processes as the school approaches future charter renewal milestones.

Actions and Next Steps

- Conduct governance and leadership training for trustees during the summer.
- Complete Open Meeting Law training for current and incoming Board members.
- Continue onboarding and development activities for newly elected trustees.
- Reinforce governance best practices through committee work, board training, and ongoing board development.
- Review governance processes and board operations to ensure alignment with DESE expectations and charter school best practices.
- Track progress on governance improvement efforts through Committee on Trustees and Accountability Committee oversight.

Summary
The Board reviewed a letter from DESE regarding governance responsibilities and board oversight. Trustees discussed the importance of maintaining clear boundaries between governance and management, strengthening board practices, and ensuring compliance with charter school governance expectations. The Board agreed to continue governance training, trustee onboarding, and implementation of governance improvements to support organizational stability and long-term success.

VIII. Accountability

A. Year in Review

The Accountability Committee reflected on a productive year focused on strengthening the Board's understanding and use of school performance data. Committee members

emphasized a shift from simply reviewing data to examining how data is used to support student outcomes, guide decision-making, and ensure accountability to the school's mission and charter commitments.

Discussion Topics

- Review of the committee's work evaluating academic, operational, and school performance data throughout the year.
- Increased focus on understanding what actions should result from the data being reviewed.
- Consideration of who is responsible for acting on and monitoring key performance measures.
- Continued emphasis on aligning accountability work with the school's mission, Montessori principles, and student success.
- Discussion of the importance of consistency in data collection, analysis, and reporting.
- Recognition that accountability work should focus not only on trends and outcomes but also on ensuring data informs decision-making and continuous improvement.

Accomplishments

- Continued regular review of school performance indicators and accountability measures.
- Increased discussion around ownership and accountability for key metrics and outcomes.
- Strengthened alignment between committee questions, school priorities, and charter expectations.
- Maintained focus on ensuring data collection efforts provide meaningful information for governance and oversight purposes.
- Advanced conversations about how performance data should be used to support students, staff, and overall school improvement.

Looking Ahead

- Continue monitoring key academic and organizational performance indicators.
- Focus on maintaining consistency in data reporting and analysis.
- Strengthen oversight of how data is used to inform decision-making and drive improvement efforts.
- Ensure accountability measures remain aligned with the school's mission, charter obligations, and student outcomes.
- Continue refining governance practices related to performance oversight and evaluation.

Summary

The Accountability Committee reflected on a year of meaningful progress in strengthening the Board's approach to performance oversight. Committee members highlighted a shift from simply reviewing data to understanding how that information can be used to support decision-making, improve outcomes, and advance the school's mission. Looking ahead, the committee will continue focusing on effective use of data, clear accountability, and alignment with charter and governance responsibilities.

IX. Development

A. Year in Review

The Development Committee reflected on a year focused on building long-term fundraising capacity, increasing community engagement, and establishing sustainable development processes. The committee worked closely with school leadership to create a multi-year development strategy designed to strengthen fundraising efforts while supporting the school's mission and future financial needs.

Discussion Topics

- Implementation of a three-year development plan designed to increase fundraising capacity and community engagement.
- Continued efforts to build a culture of philanthropy and fundraising within the River Valley community.
- Strengthening partnerships between the Development Committee, school leadership, the Parents Alliance, and the Foundation.
- Balancing fundraising goals with available volunteer and organizational capacity.
- Building sustainable systems and processes that can be carried forward by future committee members and school leadership.

Key Accomplishments

- Developed and implemented a multi-year development strategy aligned with the school's goals and financial needs.
- Successfully continued annual fundraising efforts and community-based fundraising events.
- Expanded use of DonorPerfect to improve donor management, engagement, and long-term relationship tracking.
- Strengthened coordination between the Development Committee, school administration, and community organizations.
- Built repeatable fundraising processes, communications, calendars, and event plans to support future development efforts.
- Improved communication with the school community regarding fundraising activities and the impact of donated funds.
- Continued growth of annual fundraising initiatives, including successful community-supported campaigns and events.

Looking Ahead

- Continue implementation of the multi-year development strategy.
- Expand donor engagement and alumni outreach efforts.
- Build upon the donor management and stewardship systems established during the year.
- Support future capital improvement projects and long-term fundraising priorities.
- Strengthen fundraising participation throughout the school community.
- Continue collaboration between the Board, school leadership, Foundation, and Parents Alliance to support development goals.

Summary
The Development Committee reflected on a year focused on strengthening fundraising infrastructure, improving community engagement, and creating sustainable development processes. Trustees highlighted the establishment of long-term fundraising systems, stronger donor management capabilities, successful fundraising initiatives, and increased collaboration across the school community. Looking ahead, the committee will continue building fundraising capacity and supporting the financial sustainability of River Valley through strategic development and community engagement efforts.

X. Committee on Trustees

A. THANK YOU!

The Committee on Trustees took time to recognize and thank departing Board members for their dedication, leadership, and service to River Valley Charter School. Trustees reflected on the significant contributions made by departing members, particularly during a period marked by leadership transitions, governance challenges, organizational growth, and increased community engagement.

Recognition and Appreciation

- Trustees expressed gratitude to departing members for their years of service and commitment to the school, students, families, and broader River Valley community.
- Board members were recognized for contributing their time, expertise, and leadership in support of the school's mission and long-term success.
- Several trustees were thanked for helping strengthen governance practices, improving board operations, and supporting organizational stability during periods of significant change.
- Departing members were acknowledged for mentoring newer trustees, serving in leadership positions, and helping guide the Board through complex decisions and challenges.
- Trustees noted the value of the diverse perspectives, professional experience, and commitment that departing members brought to Board discussions and decision-making.

- Appreciation was expressed for the strong relationships, collaboration, and sense of community built among Board members during their terms of service.

Discussion Topics

- Reflection on the Board's accomplishments over recent years.
- Recognition of the substantial volunteer commitment required of trustees.
- Appreciation for the leadership and stability provided during periods of transition.
- Discussion of the lasting impact departing trustees have had on governance, fundraising, accountability, committee work, and school improvement efforts.
- Recognition that the Board is benefitting from systems, processes, and organizational improvements established through the work of departing members.

Summary
The Committee on Trustees recognized and celebrated the contributions of outgoing Board members whose service helped guide River Valley through periods of growth, transition, and change. Trustees expressed deep appreciation for the leadership, expertise, dedication, and commitment demonstrated by departing members and acknowledged the lasting impact their service will have on the school and Board for years to come.

B. New Trustees

The Committee on Trustees provided an update on the onboarding of newly elected trustees. Board leadership reported that the new trustees had been entered into the Board management system and that the required documentation was being submitted to DESE for approval. Trustees discussed the importance of completing the state approval process promptly to ensure new members can fully participate in Board activities and obtain voting privileges as quickly as possible.

Discussion Topics

- New trustees have been onboarded into the Board management system and associated onboarding processes.
- Required documentation is being submitted to DESE for approval.
- Trustees discussed the timing of DESE approval and its impact on voting eligibility.
- New trustees may participate in meetings and discussions while awaiting final state approval.
- Board leadership emphasized the importance of completing all required forms and submissions promptly to avoid delays.
- Onboarding and training activities will continue throughout the summer to prepare new trustees for service.

Summary
The Committee on Trustees provided an update on the onboarding of newly elected trustees and the process of obtaining DESE approval. Board leadership reported that

documentation had been submitted and that onboarding activities were underway. Trustees emphasized the importance of completing the approval process efficiently to ensure new members can fully participate in Board governance activities in the upcoming school year.

C. Thank you, Trustees!

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

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 8:22 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
T. Murdy

Documents used during the meeting

- BoT_Expectations_2_7_23__1_ (7).pdf
- 6.9.26 PRS 16227 River Valley Charter NFA Final.pdf
- DESE Letter to RVCS BOT June 26 2026.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.