

APPROVED



# Explorations Charter School

## Minutes

### Governing Board Regular Meeting

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#### **Date and Time**

Tuesday March 17, 2026 at 5:00 PM

#### **Location**

Virtual

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#### **Directors Present**

Bryan Raydenbow (remote), Ginni Block (remote), Hilary Paden (remote), Kali Blakeslee (remote), Lori Noto (remote), Sarah Annis Haynes (remote)

#### **Directors Absent**

Greg Skinner, Julie Luby, Marc Pruchnicki, Robert Peterson

#### **Guests Present**

Christopher King (remote), Jill Johnson (remote), Joe White (remote)

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### **I. Opening Items**

#### **A. Record Attendance**

#### **B. Call the Meeting to Order**

Sarah Annis Haynes called a meeting of the board of directors of Explorations Charter School to order on Tuesday Mar 17, 2026 at 5:03 PM.

#### **C. Approve Minutes - 02/24/2026**

Ginni Block made a motion to approve the minutes from Governing Board Meeting on 02-24-26.

Bryan Raydenbow seconded the motion.

Correction: Ginni Block was PRESENT at the 02-24-2026 meeting.

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

## **II. Financial**

### **A. Presentation from Chris King - King CPAs of 2024-2025 Audit**

Chris King shared presented Explorations 2025 Audit.

- Overview
- Annual Financial Report
- Filed in December (earlier than last year), a good indicator
- Local Capital Improvement Project (LoCIP)
- District Repair and Improvement Project (DRIP) Program

### **B. February Monthly Report**

Finances:

- Jill delivered Susan's report.
- Finance committee will meet and finalize the reports after April 15.
- February and March monthly report to be combined and presented at the April meeting.

## **III. Action Items**

### **A. Review & Discuss 1998 Letter - Brian O'Neil**

- Brian O'Neil, founding chairman of the Governing Council.
- Letter written the second year the school was open.
- Reviewed by our attorney.
- Some elements of the letter may be useful.
- To be reviewed by the Administrative team.
- Draft letter presented to Board for approval at future meeting.

### **B. Healthy Food Certification**

Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Explorations Charter School Governing Board certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school

cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

Bryan Raydenbow made a motion to Approve the Healthy Food Certification.

Lori Noto seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

Bryan Raydenbow	Aye
Hilary Paden	Aye
Sarah Annis Haynes	Aye
Robert Peterson	Absent
Lori Noto	Aye
Kali Blakeslee	Aye
Greg Skinner	Absent
Julie Luby	Absent
Ginni Block	Aye
Marc Pruchnicki	Absent

**C. Food Exemptions**

The Explorations Charter School Governing Board will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food sales.

Hilary Paden made a motion to Approve the Food Exemptions.

Ginni Block seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

Ginni Block	Aye
Greg Skinner	Absent
Hilary Paden	Aye
Kali Blakeslee	Aye
Sarah Annis Haynes	Aye
Bryan Raydenbow	Aye
Marc Pruchnicki	Absent
Robert Peterson	Absent
Lori Noto	Aye
Julie Luby	Absent

**D.**

## **Revised School Calendar**

- The 180th day of school is currently June 18.
- The last day of school is currently scheduled for June 19 (1/2 day).
- (This will require educational activities honoring Juneteenth).
- Graduation planned for June 18, pending location approval and confirmation.

Ginni Block made a motion to Approve the Revised Calendar.

Bryan Raydenbow seconded the motion.

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

## **IV. Committe Reports**

### **A. Policy Committee**

### **B. CEO Support & Evaluation Committee**

Evaluation to be sent out in the coming week.

Parent and teacher surveys to be sent.

Planned due date end of April.

### **C. Personnel Committee**

### **D. Finance Committee**

- Committee met to discuss budget process.
- 2026-2027 budget to be presented at the May meeting.
- DRIP grant funding allocated for repairs to HVAC, driveway repair projects, and a new sign to replace the damage sign in the front of the building.
- Jill working on getting multiple quotes for projects.
- USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) funding for Title I projects.
- Full enrollment for 2026-2027 a priority.

### **E. Staff Appreciation**

- Plan to bring back staff appreciation events.
- Board would like to plan an event for March or April.
- March 25 is Parent-Teacher Conferences.
- Sarah to coordinate with Colleen.
- Teacher appreciation week is May 4 - 8.
- Coffee Cart.
- Snack Shack.
- Appreciation signs.

## **V. School News**

### **A. General Updates**

#### Enrollment:

- 75 students.
- Active recruitment in full swing.
- Open House/Student Showcase scheduled for April 8, 5:00 - 7:00.
- Advertising active and ongoing.

#### Attendance:

- February showed an increase in CA;
- Year to date: 50.7% (up from 48% at the end of January)
- 3 students currently receiving home-board instruction; they are considered absent per statute.

#### Grant updates:

- Invitation to apply for money from the Draper Fund; Jill to send a letter of intent this week.
- Adventure Education and enhancement of Maker Space.

#### Renewal and Corrective Action:

- April 1 we will receive our renewal notice.
- Review of IEPs with CTSDE personnel; compliance issues resolved.
- Jill made the case with the CTSDE for a 3+ year renewal.

### **B. Teacher Report**

- Annual pasta dinner held March 12, 2026 - students worked very hard and did an excellent job!
- March 13 second school social well attended - students celebrated our community with St. Patrick's Day themed fun with a Blender Bike they used to make smoothies.
- Sunshine Team (Erika, JJ, Joe, John, Jordan, Kali) are working collaboratively with support from ECS faculty and staff to improve school culture and teacher morale.
- Internship programs up and running with a planned Peer Tutoring program in the near future.
- Student leaders to meet with CT State Northwestern CT Community College to help with marketing and teaching our students.
- Community Service Learning and School Social events planned for April 20 - 25 and May 15-16.

- Prom tentatively scheduled for June 5 at Whiting Mills.

## VI. Closing Items

### A. Adjourn Meeting

Lori Noto made a motion to Adjourn.

Bryan Raydenbow seconded the motion.

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

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 6:31 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kali Blakeslee

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### Documents used during the meeting

- Explorations Audit Report - June 2025.pdf
- Monthly Report February 2026.pdf
- ONeil Letter - 1998.JPEG
- 2025-2026 School Calendar with snow days.pdf