APPROVED

El Camino Real Charter High School

Minutes

Special Board Meeting

9-10-26 Special Board Meeting

Date and Time
Thursday September 10, 2026 at 5:30 PM

Location
El Camino Real Charter High School - Grieb Theater

5440 Valley Circle Woodland Hills CA 91367

Meeting can also be seen and heard at:

North Campus - 7401 Shoup Ave. West Hills CA 91307

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

For meeting materials, please go to the school's main office, or call (818) 595-7500. Some board meeting materials are also posted in the school's website (https://ecrchs.net - click the ECR Board tab).

ATTENTION:

WE HAVE RETURNED TO "IN-PERSON" REGULAR AND SPECIAL BOARD MEETINGS AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRESENTATIONS TO THE BOARD BY PARENTS AND OTHER MEETING ATTENDEES:

El Camino Real Alliance ("ECRA") welcomes your participation at ECRA's Board meetings. The purpose of a public meeting of the Board of Directors ("Board") is to conduct the affairs of ECRA in public.

Your participation assures us of continuing community interest in our charter school. To assist you in the ease of speaking/ participating in our meetings, the following guidelines are provided:

1. Agendas are available to all audience members at the door to the meeting.

2. "Request to Speak" forms are available to all audience members who wish to speak on any agenda items of the Special Baord Meeting.

"Public Comments" is set aside for members of the audience to raise issues that are on the agenda.

However, due to public meeting laws, the Board can only listen to your issue, not respond or take action.
These presentations are limited to ***two (2) minutes*** and and total time allotted is only for the topics in the agenda items and will not exceed fifteen (15) minutes. A member of the public who requires the use of a translator, in order to receive the same opportunity as others to directly address the Board, shall be permitted twice the allotted time to speak, and the total allocated time shall be appropriately increased as well.

The Board may give direction to staff to respond to your concern or you may be offered the option of returning with a citizen-requested item.

3. When addressing the Board, speakers are requested to state their name and adhere to the time limits set forth. In order to maintain allotted time limits, the Board Chair may modify speaker time allocations or the total amount of allotted time for an item.

4. Any public records relating to an agenda item for an Open Session of the Board which are distributed to all, or a majority of all, of the Board members shall be available for public inspection at 5440 Valley Circle Blvd., Woodland Hills, California, 91367.

IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Effective September 2022, public comments presentations at all ECRA Regular and Special Board Meetings and at Committee Meetings must be made in person.

There is no obligation on the part of the school to have a school official read public comments during in-person Board Meetings.

A member of the public is welcome to appear at the Board meeting to make a public comment or make arrangements with another person in attendance to speak on the person's behalf.

Consent Agenda: All matters listed under the consent agenda are considered by the Board to be routine and will be approved/enacted by the Board in one motion or more motions in the form listed below. Unless specifically requested by a Board member for further discussion or removed from the agenda, there will be no discussion of these items prior to the Board vote(s) on the Consent Agenda item(s). The Executive Director recommends approval of all consent agenda items.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and upon request, El Camino Real Alliance may furnish reasonable auxiliary aids and services to qualified individuals with disabilities. Requests for disability related modifications or accommodations shall be made 24 hours prior to the meeting to David Hussey, in person, by email at comment@ecrchs.net, or by calling (818) 595-7500.

Directors Present
Beth Corbett, Mandy Rogers, Mariellen Webster

Directors Absent
Joe Kolkowitz, Steven Kofahl

Guests Present
Christopher Valencia, Emilie Larew, Vania Rodriguez

I. Opening Items

A. Call the Meeting to Order

B. Record Attendance and Guests

C. Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America (USA)

Ms. Webster led the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America (USA)

D. Public Comments

Public Comment
Public Comment Time Limit
Mandy Rogers clarified that the usual two-minute time limit will not be strictly followed.

She noted that people cannot be understood or fully heard in such a short amount of time.
The emphasis is on allowing enough time for people to explain themselves clearly.
1. Speaker – Netflix Filming on Campus

Netflix Filming on Campus

Netflix reportedly took over the entire school over the summer.
The speaker said many members of the campus community are likely wondering about the financial details.

Financial Transparency

The speaker asked how much Netflix paid the school for using the campus.
The speaker also asked who else received payments/checks related to the filming, including facility coverage.

Use of the Funds

The speaker asked how the money received from Netflix will be spent to benefit students.
2. Jodie Borenstein

PE Department Concerns

Jodie spoke on behalf of the PE Department.
Managing 65 high school students in one class is challenging for safety and organization.
The department said they need their teachers back.

Concern About Removing Coaches

Josh, Jason, and Eric were reportedly escorted off campus and placed on leave (PAL) due to safety concerns.
Jodie argued that the coaching investigation could have been handled separately from removing the teachers from campus.
She believes the situation could have been resolved through face-to-face communication.

Teachers' Safety Experience

Josh previously handled a student who experienced multiple seizures, immediately contacting appropriate personnel, calling 911, and staying with the student.
Jason has extensive personal experience managing seizures because his daughter has them regularly.
Jodie described Josh, Jason, and Eric as experienced educators who understand student safety.

Concerns About Substitutes

Jodie questioned whether substitute teachers would be as prepared to respond to medical or safety emergencies as the experienced PE teachers.

Policy Concerns

Jodie said the current PAL process is harmful and potentially dangerous for staff and students.
She suggested having different levels of PAL, similar to different levels of campus lockdowns.
She gave examples of:
Hard PAL: More serious situations requiring removal.
Soft PAL: Situations that could be addressed through conversations, meetings, or training updates.

Request to the Board

The PE Department asked the Board to quickly reinstate Josh Leinhardt, Jason Grider, and Eric Choi to their teaching positions.

3. Heidi Hutson

Theater Program

Head of the El Camino theater program, shared concerns about BAPA/arts programs, especially theater.

Theater Program Success

Serves 100+ students.

Students have earned major recognition in high school theater.

The program placed 3rd in a major national musical theater competition last year.

Funding Concerns

$175,000 in approved arts block grant funding was reportedly redirected to other purposes without the department being notified.

The theater program has been waiting since May for access to Prop 28 funds.

She hopes the department will finally be able to budget the Prop 28 funds next week.

Competition Trip Concerns

The theater competition trip was finally approved after four weeks of effort.

Heidi was then told it also needs Travel Committee approval, which she said conflicts with the handbook.

She is concerned the committee may not meet before the payment deadline, potentially causing students to lose their competition spot.

Leadership and Policy Concerns

Heidi said changing requirements and unclear expectations are creating obstacles for the program.

She asked for consistent application of policies, rather than rules changing depending on the situation.

Requests to the Board

Make Prop 28 funds accessible to departments.

Ensure approved arts funding is used for its intended purpose.

Include arts educators in the budgeting process.

Apply policies consistently and transparently.

Invest in students rather than creating additional barriers to their opportunities.

4. Katie Rico

Importance of the Theater Program

Katie Rico, a theater student for three years, spoke about funding issues affecting the theater program.

The program feels like a home and family to many students.

Competitions, plays, and trips are important parts of the students' theater experience.

Funding Concerns

Katie said the issue is not just about funding a trip to New York.

She wants all performing arts programs to have fair access to their funding.

She believes performing arts should receive support comparable to programs such as robotics and computer programs.

Additional Requests
Pay and properly represent theater/technical teachers.
Allow the theater program to retain ticket revenue from its productions.
Provide students with stable support so they do not feel their program could be taken away.
Message to the Board
Students need the Board's support and access to their funds.
Katie said the lack of support from the school is becoming the biggest obstacle to the program's success.
She asked the Board to provide the resources needed for students to prosper and continue creating and enjoying theater.
Travel Payment Deadline
The trip must be paid by Monday/Tuesday.
The question was raised to clarify the exact deadline for the travel payment.
5. Jennifer Sellz
Security Concerns
Jennifer said the security company is unacceptable.
She reported concerns that some security staff may not speak or understand English well.
She also raised concerns about the behavior and professionalism of security at the school's front entrance.
Concerns About School Leadership
Jennifer strongly criticized Ms. Larew's handling of the situation.
She questioned her experience with sports and athletics and said her decisions are negatively affecting student-athletes.
Concerns About the Coaches
Jennifer argued that head coaches should conduct their own tryouts.
She said the three coaches involved have no prior formal complaints or disciplinary issues at the school.
Athletic Director Concerns
Jennifer criticized Richard Russell, the Athletic Director, for alleged communication and paperwork issues.
She argued that the Athletic Director is responsible for keeping coach and player paperwork accurate and current.
She questioned why the administration relied on the Athletic Director's handling of the paperwork when there were alleged compliance concerns.
Request to the Board
Jennifer called for the three coaches to be returned to their positions immediately.
She asked the Board to address the leadership and athletic-program concerns and restore the school to what she viewed as its previous direction.
Overall Message
The speaker expressed strong frustration with school leadership, security, and the handling of the coaches.
She urged the Board to take action on behalf of student-athletes and the coaching staff.

6. Haley Smith

Support for the Coaches

Haley Smith, a teacher at El Camino for 12 years, spoke in support of the three coaches.

Coaches Are Also Teachers

She emphasized that the coaches are not only coaches but also teachers, colleagues, and friends.

Their absence has been felt by students, athletes, and staff.

Impact of Their Removal

Their removal from classrooms has caused:

Confusion.

Frustration.

A sense of vulnerability among staff.

Their families are also experiencing uncertainty and anxiety.

Request for Their Return

Haley said the three teachers should be back in their classrooms.

Their return would help:

Support students who depend on them.

Allow departments to function effectively.

Reduce the impact on their families.

Concerns About the Process

Haley acknowledged the importance of accountability and compliance.

However, she expressed disappointment that the process has raised questions about the coaches' integrity and commitment to student safety.

Jason Grider's Experience

She highlighted that Coach Grider has a daughter with a severe disability and recurring seizures.

His experience caring for his daughter has required him to act as a first responder during medical emergencies.

Haley said he takes CPR and safety responsibilities seriously.

Message to Leadership

Haley urged school leadership and the Board to consider the broader impact of their decisions.

She asked them to consider the students, staff, coaches, and families affected.

She called on leadership to "do better" and provide a transparent path toward resolution.

7. Speaker – Follow-Up on Previous Emails

Follow-Up on Previous Emails

The speaker said this was a follow-up to two emails sent over the previous two weeks to Mrs. Larew and the Board.

A response was received on September 3, stating that families would receive an update about upcoming plans and the timeline for tryouts.

Lack of Communication

More than three weeks had passed without a clear plan or timeline for the baseball program.

Families still did not know:
Who the point of contact was.
When tryouts would occur.
What the plan was for the upcoming season.
The speaker emphasized that families were not asking for confidential investigation details, only communication and guidance.

Impact on Baseball Players

The uncertainty is affecting players who have worked hard and committed to the program.
Players need opportunities to:
Practice.
Develop their skills.
Build team chemistry.
Prepare for competition.

Coaching Staff

The speaker said families would prefer the coaching staff to return.
If the investigation continues, they want the school to create a clear interim plan so the baseball program can continue.

Questions About the Investigation and CPR

The speaker questioned why Coach Russell was not placed on paid leave if the issue was related to safety and CPR certification.
They questioned why the three coaches were treated differently.
The speaker also raised concerns about Coach Russell obtaining certification shortly afterward and traveling with the football team.

Campus Security Concerns

The speaker referenced previous concerns about campus safety and security.
They asked:
Whether the school has a new security company.
How the school plans to improve safety for students and staff.
What the next steps are for campus security.

Request for Action

Families feel they have been patient long enough.
They are asking leadership to provide clear answers, communication, and a concrete plan for the baseball program and campus safety.
The speaker concluded by saying that students and families deserve answers and stronger communication from school leadership.

8. Audra Herrera– UTLA Chapter Chair and English Teacher

Opening

Welcomed and congratulated the new Board and expressed support for their leadership.

Concern About Parent Representative Elections

Referenced Interim Executive Director Ms. Larew’s statement about the election investigation.

The statement says the Board engaged an independent professional forensic investigator.
The speaker noted that the investigation was initiated by the previous Board, not the current Board.

Request for Information

Asked the current Board to receive all documents and information necessary to make an informed decision about the elections.

Concerns About the Investigation

The stated purpose is to determine:
What happened.
Whether action is warranted.
Whether additional safeguards are needed for future elections.
The speaker believes the statement focuses on the technical aspects of the election without adequately addressing the circumstances that allowed the alleged irregularities to occur.

Transparency and Consistency Concerns

The speaker expressed disagreement with what they described as a lack of response and transparency.
They noted that teachers and members were previously removed from campus while allegations were pending, before the investigation was fully resolved.
They questioned why the current election matter is being handled differently and whether the same investigation and accountability standards are being applied.

Board Matter vs. School Matter

The speaker questioned the characterization of the election issue as solely a Board matter.
Because the individuals involved are school employees, the speaker argued that the matter also involves the school and its administration.
They asked that the situation be considered with the same standards of investigation and accountability applied in other cases.

9. Emma Fishman

Background

Emma Fishman, an El Camino senior and theater student, spoke about the importance of the theater program.
She has been involved in Thespian leadership since sophomore year and is now the Thespian President.

Impact of the Theater Program

The program has given her many meaningful memories and friendships.
Her experience at the MTCA musical theater competition in Anaheim was one of the highlights of her year.
She said the program helped her find her community and passion for theater.
She also valued the improv workshops and performances.

Personal Growth

Emma said the program helped her become:

More confident.
A stronger public speaker.
More comfortable speaking her mind.
She credited the theater teachers and staff for helping shape who she is today.

Concerns About the Future

She is worried that students may lose the opportunities and experiences that made the program meaningful.
She especially wants to experience these opportunities again during her senior year.
She wants younger students to have the chance to participate in trips and theater experiences in the future.

Request to Leadership

Emma asked for clear explanations about why rules and decisions affecting the theater program are changing.
She urged leadership to provide the answers and transparency students have been requesting.

10. Speaker – Alumnus/Alumna, Parent, and Teacher

Speaker's Perspective

Thanked the Board for their service.
Spoke as an alumnus/alumna, parent of a junior, and teacher.

Concern About Coaches and Teachers Being Placed on Leave

Questioned the decision to place experienced coaches and educators on leave while students wait on the sidelines.
Said the absence of their teachers and coaches is having a significant impact on student development and potentially future opportunities.

Student Support for the Coaches

Said there were no claims presented that the coaches had harmed or violated students' rights.
Pointed out that students have publicly supported the coaches and described their positive impact.
Students have expressed a desire for the coaches to return immediately.

Focus on Students

Argued that leadership should prioritize proactive solutions and student needs.
Said the current approach is taking attention away from the lives and experiences of students.

Connection to the School's Mission

Said removing teachers and coaches who positively influence students conflicts with the school's stated mission of:
Creating a sense of belonging.
Supporting students' academic and personal development.
Building skills and character.
The speaker believes the coaches and teachers directly contribute to these goals.

Importance of Athletics

Emphasized that sports are more than games for many students.

Sports provide:
Identity.
Belonging.
An outlet.
A safe place.
Canceled/rescheduled games and missed practices or tryouts therefore have a meaningful impact on students.

Request to Leadership

Asked the Board and administration to work together and prioritize students.
Called for the teachers and coaches to be returned to their students and mentoring roles.
Encouraged the Board to show students that their concerns are being heard.

11. Speaker – Campus Security

Background

Thanked the new Board for serving during a difficult time for the school.
Shared a strong personal connection to the school as an alumnus and through multiple family members who attended.

Main Concern: Campus Security

Continued concerns previously raised about the school's security.
Believes the current security setup is not as effective as it was previously.
Worried that security personnel may not be adequately prepared to respond to emergencies.

Student Safety Concerns

Said students have told him they do not feel as safe as they used to.
Reported concerns about bathroom supervision, with students gathering in bathrooms because monitoring has decreased.
Described the current environment as increasingly chaotic.

Previous Security Leadership

Specifically praised Mr. Jones for effectively managing security and directing the team.
Said staff members miss his leadership and experience.

Concerns About Preparedness

The speaker has worked in the Dean's Office for about 20 years.
Said this is the first time he has felt the school was so unprepared from a security standpoint.

Request to the New Board

Asked the Board to closely oversee the selection of the next security company.
Requested that the new company and its personnel be properly vetted.
Emphasized that the school cannot afford to compromise or improvise when it comes to student safety.

12. Tamia

Main Message

Tamia urged the new Board to learn from past leadership decisions and avoid repeating previous mistakes.

She emphasized that students ultimately experience the consequences of decisions made by adults.

Concerns About Coaches

Said the ongoing investigation is already affecting students, regardless of its eventual outcome.

Described coaches as mentors, role models, and trusted adults, not simply sports staff.

Shared her positive experiences with Josh Leinhard and said he has had a meaningful impact on students and athletes.

Said students should not be left in limbo or have their seasons disrupted while the investigation continues.

Asked leadership to remember that students are directly affected by the coaches' absence.

Campus Security Concerns

Raised concerns about recent security changes intended to improve safety.

Said some students have instead experienced situations that made them feel less safe.

Reported allegations from teachers, students, and parents regarding the conduct of a front-of-school security guard, particularly toward female students.

Asked the Board to investigate these reports and concerns.

Mental Health Resources

Raised concerns about cuts to mental health support.

Said the school needs more therapists, not fewer.

Shared that mental health support was personally important to her during a difficult period in her life.

Emphasized that other students may also need access to that support.

Message to the Board

Asked the Board to:

Protect coaches and teachers.

Maintain mental health resources.

Address campus safety concerns.

Listen to students and families.

Hold leadership accountable.

Put students first when making decisions.

II. Governance

A. Elect 2026-2027 Interim Board Chair

Motion to Elect Mariellen Webster as the Interim Board Chair.

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

Roll Call	
Mariellen Webster	Aye
Steven Kofahl	Absent
Mandy Rogers	Aye
Beth Corbett	Aye

Roll Call

Joe Kolkowitz Absent

B. Appointment of Board Nominating Committee

Agenda Item: Reopening II. Governance B – Appointment of Board Nominating Committee

The board previously voted to form the nominating committee.

Nominate: Ms. Beth Corbett

A motion to vote on appointment of board nominating committee, Mariellen Webster as the second person in the committee.

Policy Reference: Article VII, Section 6 Purpose:
Address the two newly vacant Community seats. Board Action:
• Discuss the appointment of a nominating committee.
• Vote on the committee's appointment.
• The committee will handle the nomination process for the two vacant Community seats.
Entered closed session at 6:13 pm
Motion to vote on appointment of board nominating committee, Ms. Beth Corbett.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
Motion to vote on appointment of board nominating committee, Mariellen Webster as the second person in the committee.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

III. Reconvene to Open Session

A. Report on Actions Taken in Closed Session, If Any

Reconvene to open session at 7:58 pm

Ms. Rogers reported that there were no actions taken during the closed session and therefore nothing to report.

Ms. Rogers reported that there were no actions taken during the closed session and therefore nothing to report.

IV. 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 8:01 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Vania Rodriguez
Mariellen Webster made a motion to Adjourn the meeting.
Mandy Rogers seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.