Rooted School South Carolina

Minutes

The Rooted School South Carolina- Founding Committee Meeting

Post Submission Charter Application Oversight and Readiness

Date and Time
Thursday May 7, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Location
Virtual via Zoom (see URL below)

This meeting is held in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act (§30-4). The agenda was posted in accordance with applicable law.

Directors Present
A. Black Evans (remote), C. Davis (remote), F. McDavid (remote), M. Neal (remote), R. Jackson (remote), T. Delloue (remote)

Directors Absent
A. Peters, C. Eide, D. Gray, M. Fitzpatrick

Guests Present
L. Radney (remote), S. Carney (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B.

Call the Meeting to Order

R. Jackson called a meeting of the board of directors of Rooted School South Carolina to order on Thursday May 7, 2026 at 6:00 PM.

C. Approve Minutes

T. Delloue made a motion to approve the minutes from The Rooted School South Carolina- Founding Committee Meeting on 03-05-26.
F. McDavid seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

II. CEO Report

A. Post-Authorization Gratitude and Communication Plan

L. Radney opened her report by expressing heartfelt gratitude to the founding committee for their volunteer commitment throughout the charter application process. Radney stated that she looks forward to telling the story of how this team came together to create a historical moment.
Radney introduced the Board Brief, a standing communication tool that will be sent to board members prior to each meeting. The Board Brief will provide concise updates on three critical priorities: enrollment, facilities, and the authorizer contract. Board members will receive it in advance so they can arrive to meetings with informed questions.
A three-question survey was also distributed to board members, asking: (1) what they are most excited about post-authorization; (2) their expectations of leadership over the coming months; and (3) summer dates when they are unavailable for events. Radney asked members to complete the survey.

B. Enrollment Update

L. Radney provided the following enrollment summary, noting this data will be shared as a monthly tracker:

- Enrollment goal: 260 students, 130 per grade (6th and 9th grade); 450 applications needed to achieve enrollment targets.
- Total digital leads to date: 1,033
- Target-demographic leads (current 4th and 7th graders): 339
- Post-authorization leads (generated without an active push): 27
- Notable spike: approximately 17 leads in a single day during the week of April 27 – May 3, 2025.

Radney outlined three audience segments being engaged:

- Existing interest: families who expressed interest prior to authorization. Outreach confirmed authorization and directed them toward the school website.

- Newly engaged families: individuals who have recently connected through social media, word of mouth, or direct contact.
- Future community: families with younger children being engaged now to build long-term awareness.

The current call to action for all prospective families is to set a reminder for October 26th, when student applications will open. The school's website is being finalized, and a new website launch is expected imminently.
Radney outlined the enrollment outreach strategy for the summer, including:

- Partnership with Banco, a local PR and marketing firm with a strong community landscape lens, to identify priority events and family audiences.
- Tabling at community events, including the NAACP back-to-school event and Columbia Urban League back-to-school event. Steven Carney and Radney identified at least 30 public community events this summer where the school could table.
- Information sessions beginning in August at the C.R. Neal Dream Center, along with virtual sessions and drop-in office hours.
- Monthly newsletter for families and board members with themed content as the school approaches opening day.
- Planning underway for a signature annual application event each October when enrollment opens.

Board members were reminded that they serve as enrollment ambassadors and were encouraged to share school information on social media (including LinkedIn), place flyers in local businesses, and flag community events and gathering places where the school should have a presence.
S. Carney underscored that enrollment is the most important form of fundraising in Year 1, as each enrolled student generates per-pupil funding that covers the school's operating base.
In response to a question from M. Neal regarding the hiring timeline: Radney confirmed the first hire will be a Director of Operations, with a job posting planned for no later than end of June 2026. The DOO would ideally begin in fall 2026. Faculty hiring is planned for approximately March 2027, aligned with state norms. M. Neal also raised the need for a fundraising committee. Radney confirmed this is needed and will be included in the upcoming committee structure, noting that Marcus flagged a potential conflict of interest he will discuss separately.

III. Development

A. C.R. Neal Academy Development

R. Jackson opened this section by congratulating the full committee and expressing gratitude for their commitment throughout the application process. Jackson noted that the committee's work resulted in receiving authorization from Voorhees, a historic

achievement. Jackson also recognized L. Radney for serving as keynote speaker at a Teachers Appreciation Week event hosted at his church, where she addressed over 100 educators.
S. Carney formally announced that C.R. Neal Academy is now the first HBCU-authorized charter school in the country, calling it a historic moment for the board, the organization, and the community. Carney emphasized the gravity of the board’s responsibility to match the moment and praised the relationship forming between C.R. Neal Academy, Voorhees University Charter Institute of Learning, and Rooted School Foundation.
No formal Board action was required.

B. Pre-Opening Conditions and Authorizer Contract

Voorhees University Charter Institute of Learning (VCIL) will issue a draft authorizer contract with pre-opening conditions in June or July 2026. Key milestones in the timeline include:

- June 2026: Half-day working session with Voorhees; board and staff to review draft contract and provide feedback.
- July 2026: Final contract issued with pre-opening conditions and performance gates.

Pre-opening gates will include benchmarks such as: minimum number of policies adopted by specified dates, family and student handbook completion, staff handbook completion, and enrollment milestones. A go/no-go checkpoint is anticipated approximately May 2027, typically based on enrollment projections. S. Carney expressed confidence the school will reach a “go” determination.
In response to a question from R. Jackson, S. Carney clarified that Voorhees will not approve or impose content on handbooks, but will review them for legal compliance and confirm completion by required dates.

IV. ESMA Development Committee

A. ESMA Committee Update

C. Eide was not present. L. Radney confirmed there are no formal ESMA updates to report at this meeting. S. Carney noted that RSF will begin moving the ESMA process forward and will ensure that work is progressed ahead of the next board meeting.
No formal motion was taken; update was received.

V. Facility

A. Facilities Team School Visit

L. Radney reported that the facilities team met with Horse Creek Academy, a South Carolina charter school with a 1,300-student waitlist, to learn from their building design experience, particularly around CTE classrooms, sports medicine facilities, and industry credential programming. This information will inform design decisions for C.R. Neal Academy's facility. Radney noted the team continues to conduct learning visits with peer charter schools in South Carolina.
No formal Board action was required.

VI. Governance

A. Governance Training and Board Operations

Board training will be provided monthly by S. Carney, supplemented by training facilitated by Voorhees (state-required) and BoardOnTrack. Training will cover best practices for highly effective school boards grounded in evidence-based governance. S. Carney referenced his prior work training public school boards through the National School Board Association.
Training sessions will be conducted virtually. S. Carney noted the possibility of attending some sessions in person.

Financial Planning

Beginning in late winter 2026–2027, the committee will begin working through a detailed budget based on updated per-student funding figures and enrollment projections. A budget vote is anticipated by May or June 2027 prior to school opening.

Background Checks and Governance Documentation

S. Carney reminded board members that SLED background checks are required prior to school opening. He noted that a SLED catch form was previously sent via email and asked members to submit completed forms. Several members (F. McDavid, M. Neal) reported difficulty accessing the conflict of interest disclosure form; S. Carney committed to resending both forms in a corrected format.

Committees

S. Carney announced that board committees will be formed and communicated prior to the next board meeting. Members will be asked to join at least one committee. A facilities committee will be among the first established, tasked with providing community input on building design and programming, in coordination with L. Radney and Green Channel Development Corp (GCDC).

Board Retreat

R. Jackson raised the possibility of a board retreat and asked if it remains feasible. S. Carney confirmed it is and invited R. Jackson to coordinate potential dates with L. Radney, noting he is unavailable the last two weeks of July and first two weeks of August 2026. The retreat could occur in the fall. L. Radney confirmed this would be added to a standing agenda item for planning.

Enrollment Ambassadorship

S. Carney reminded board members that they now serve as enrollment ambassadors. The school needs 260 students (130 per grade) for Year 1, requiring approximately 450 applications to meet enrollment targets. Board members were encouraged to refer

interested families to L. Radney and the school website, and to participate in community tabling events this summer.
In response to a question from M. Neal, S. Carney clarified that sibling priority in the lottery applies only when one sibling is already enrolled; in Year 1, both siblings would receive equal weight in the lottery, though an enrolled sibling would bump a waitlisted sibling upon acceptance.
No formal Board action was required.
S. Carney presented a comprehensive overview of the next 16 months, characterizing this stretch as the most demanding phase of the school-opening process. Key areas covered included:

The board will be responsible for reviewing, questioning, and adopting a full suite of policies prior to opening. Leadership will draft all policies; the board's role is to review and vote. The anticipated schedule calls for approximately six policies per month beginning in July 2026. Policy categories and approximate counts include:

- Board governance: approximately 6 policies
- Administration and leadership: approximately 4 policies
- Business and financial management: approximately 12 policies
- Human resources and personnel: approximately 10 policies
- Student affairs: grading, behavior, drug and alcohol, and other student-related policies
- Curriculum and instruction: grading policy, curriculum adoption, and instructional standards
- Facilities and operations: approximately 8 policies
- Family and community engagement policies

Policies will be sourced from model policies provided by NACSA (National Association of Charter School Authorizers), the South Carolina Charter School Association, and state-mandated frameworks. Policies grounded in the Rooted School model will incorporate equity-based practices (e.g., no-zero grading policy).
In response to a question from T. Delloue, the committee discussed the importance of engaging a charter school legal counsel with South Carolina-specific expertise. C. Davis confirmed he would serve as a client in this process rather than as legal counsel, and would help select independent counsel. S. Carney noted that exemplary state-vetted policies may minimize the need for extensive legal review.
F. McDavid noted that South Carolina recently overturned the minimum grading floor policy (pending the governor's signature), which may have implications for the school's equity-based grading framework. S. Carney expressed interest in reviewing that legislation and asked F. McDavid to send the relevant information to the committee.
M. Neal raised the importance of grounding student affairs and curriculum policies in the school's educational philosophy, particularly around grading. S. Carney confirmed that grading practices are equity-based, rooted in evidence, and will be explained in context when brought to the board for adoption.

VII. Other Business

A. Policy Development

Following Radney's report, S. Carney requested that F. McDavid send him the link or reference to the recently passed South Carolina legislation regarding the minimum grading policy. F. McDavid agreed to send the information issued the prior day. L. Radney asked to be copied; R. Jackson also requested to receive it. Radney confirmed she would distribute it along with the board update communications.

B. National Charter School Week

L. Radney noted that National Charter School Week is approaching. A "journey video" documenting the founding of C.R. Neal Academy is in production and will be published to the school website. Board members were encouraged to share social media posts from the school's accounts and to repost content on LinkedIn. Radney offered to send physical flyers and promotional materials to board members' offices or homes upon request.

C. Transportation Update

A. COMET Partnership Exploration

C. Davis provided a transportation update. Davis reported that he has been in contact with Pamela Byno, a senior-level executive with COMET (the City of Columbia's public bus transit system), who is a long-time family friend with significant experience navigating government programs.

Key highlights of the update:

- COMET is preparing to launch a "modified Uber"-style van program, which may accommodate C.R. Neal Academy students as a pilot.
- The program would allow vans to pick students up at central locations, bring them to school, and return them after school.
- Davis is also in early discussions regarding home-to-school pickup for students with disabilities (Part B of the transportation plan), leveraging COMET's public transit obligation to accommodate individuals with disabilities.
- Pamela Byno is currently traveling internationally; Davis will schedule a meeting upon her return, likely the following week, and will invite all board members via Zoom.

S. Carney commended the connection and noted that transportation for students with disabilities is one of the costlier obligations for a school of this size. He referenced Rooted School Vancouver's model of using the transit system for specialized student transportation. C. Davis confirmed this was already part of his discussion with Byno.

R. Jackson expressed strong appreciation for the update and noted that he looks forward to connecting Byno with other community contacts in the transportation space.

No formal Board action was required.

VIII. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

A. Next Meeting
The next regular meeting will be held on Thursday, June 4, 2026 at 6:00 PM via Zoom — the first Thursday of each month at the standing time.

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
M. Neal
M. Neal made a motion to Adjourn the meeting.
C. Davis seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Rooted School South Carolina
C.R. Neal Academy

Pursuant to the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act (§30-4-90), the minutes of this meeting are public records. Approved minutes will be posted to the school's public website and made available for public inspection within a reasonable time.