APPROVED

River Valley Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday April 29, 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 (remote), C. Getz, C. Whitford, D. Herrera, D. Mitchell, E. Bradley, E. Rankin, G. LeFave, J. Nickerson, M. Connerton, T. Murdy

Trustees Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present
K. Kuse (remote)

Non Voting Members Present

K. Kuse (remote)

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 Apr 29, 2026 at 7:07 PM.

C. Review Trustee Code of Conduct

- The Board Chair opened the meeting, acknowledged the unusually high attendance, and noted the heightened emotions within the school community due to recent events.
- The Board Chair addressed safety concerns, noting that additional precautions were in place for the Executive Director due to threats received, and emphasized the seriousness of maintaining appropriate conduct.
- Expectations for meeting behavior were clearly stated. The Board Chair explained that disruptive behavior could result in a recess or adjournment of the meeting.
- The Board reiterated that public comment was not open at this time and that this portion of the meeting was reserved for Board remarks and dialogue only.
- The Board Chair raised concerns about inappropriate conduct surrounding student protests earlier in the day, including filming of students.
- Examples of hostile and inflammatory communications directed toward school leadership were referenced to underscore the negative tone affecting the school community and the Board's concern about how conflict is being expressed.
- The Board emphasized that trustees are volunteers serving in support of the school, students, staff, and families, and noted the personal toll the current situation has had on Board members and their families.
- It was clarified that personnel decisions are made through established processes involving legal counsel, state agencies, and external professional advisors, and not by unilateral action of any one individual.
- The Board stated that both internal and external reviews related to allegations against the Executive Director had been conducted and reported no findings.
- The Board Chair shared that the school had been advised by state authorities that failure to adhere to proper governance processes and restore stability could place the school at risk of closure.

- The Board reiterated its commitment to following required processes, maintaining confidentiality where legally required, and acting in the best interests of the school community.

D. Public Comment

Public comment provided by:

- Melissa Tremor
- Alison Solerno
- Dan Buchard
- **Desenya**
- Dave Draper
- Jon Ellen
- Milda

Public comments:

- Multiple community members expressed concern regarding recent personnel actions and their impact on staff morale and school culture.
- Several speakers raised questions about leadership decision-making, transparency, and the handling of complaints.
- Comments emphasized the importance of maintaining the school's Montessori mission, staff stability, and community trust.
- Concerns were raised about the effect of adult conflict on students and the broader school environment.
- Some speakers expressed appreciation for the dedication of teachers and Board members while urging improved communication and reconciliation.

II. Approve Previous Board Minutes

A. Approve Minutes

E. Rankin made a motion to approve the minutes from Special Board Meeting on 03-13-26.
A. Godino seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

D. Mitchell	Aye
E. Rankin	Aye
A. Ting	Aye
D. Herrera	Aye
M. Connerton	Aye
A. Godino	Aye
C. Whitford	Aye

Roll Call

T. Murdy	Aye
G. LeFave	Aye
J. Nickerson	Aye
C. Getz	Aye
B. MacQuade	Absent
E. Bradley	Aye

III. Consent Agenda

A. Accountability Committee

No discussion

B. Development Committee

No discussion

C. Executive Committee

No discussion

D. Committee on Trustees

No discussion

E. Finance Committee

No discussion

F. Vote on Consent Agenda

E. Bradley made a motion to Approve consent agenda.
E. Rankin seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

IV. Board Business

A. Montessori Moment

- Achala presented the Montessori Moment, focusing on Montessori principles of peace, democracy, and education.
- The presentation emphasized how Montessori education supports democratic values through student agency, community responsibility, conflict resolution, and respect for diverse perspectives.
- Achala highlighted the role of freedom within limits and individual responsibility as foundational elements of Montessori practice and civic development.
- Connections were drawn between Montessori philosophy, classroom practice, and broader school culture, particularly during times of heightened community stress.
- The Montessori Moment concluded with a reminder of the shared commitment among families, educators, administrators, and trustees to the school's mission and the well-being of students.

B. Board Audit Review

- Kate Scott, an external governance consultant, presented the results of the Board audit, including an overview of the scope of her work, which involved document review, Board member interviews, committee observations, and facilitation of a Board retreat.
- The audit identified significant strengths, including strong trustee commitment to the school, a wide range of professional expertise on the Board, improved governance practices over recent years, and solid financial oversight.
- Key governance challenges were highlighted, including reduced trust and cohesion, blurred boundaries between governance and management, and inconsistent communication within the Board and with the broader community.
- The audit noted structural gaps at the leadership level, including clarity of roles and responsibilities and the need for a more robust and fully supported senior leadership structure.
- The importance of data-informed decision-making and consistent alignment among trustees was emphasized, particularly during periods of disagreement or heightened community pressure.
- The Board was advised that the current grievance committee structure is atypical for Massachusetts charter schools and should be reconsidered in favor of clearer policies and procedures for handling complaints.
- High-priority recommendations included:
  - Implementing a consistent, documented evaluation process for the Executive Director
  - Establishing leadership succession and transition planning

    - Ensuring all Board members are appropriately informed of key committee work
    - Strengthening Board alignment and communication norms
- Kate Scott emphasized that none of the findings negated the Board's dedication to the school and framed the recommendations as necessary steps to strengthen governance, restore trust, and support long-term stability.
- The Board engaged in discussion following the presentation and acknowledged the findings and recommendations.

C. Timeline/PBE discussion

- The Board engaged in a high-level discussion regarding the history and evolution of Place-Based Education (PBE) at the school to provide context for current community questions.
- It was noted that PBE originated during the COVID period as an outdoor learning model, enabling continued in-person education when indoor instruction was restricted.
- As pandemic conditions evolved, the program transitioned from an "outdoor school" model to Place-Based Education, with the intent of integrating experiential learning more formally into the school's instructional approach.
- The Board discussed that the development and continuation of PBE were influenced by temporary pandemic-related funding, including ESSER funds, which later expired and affected the program's sustainability.
- Trustees acknowledged that, over time, questions arose regarding alignment with Montessori principles, including concerns about uninterrupted work cycles, equitable access across levels, instructional coherence, and long-term feasibility.
- The Board emphasized that programmatic decisions, including instructional models such as PBE, fall within the responsibility of school administration rather than the Board, while the Board's role is oversight and alignment with mission and charter.
- The discussion reflected differing perspectives within the community and underscored the importance of understanding the historical context in which PBE was introduced and modified.
- The Board reiterated that its intent in discussing PBE was informational and contextual, and not to evaluate or decide upon specific instructional practices during this meeting.

D. Policy Vote

E. Rankin made a motion to Approve the Professional Code of Conduct.
E. Bradley seconded the motion.

- The Board discussed a proposed Professional Code of Conduct drafted by the external human resources firm, Blue Lion.

- During the discussion, several Board members noted initial confusion regarding the origin and authorship of the document, with clarification made that the policy was produced externally rather than authored by the Board.
- Trustees raised concerns about the scope, structure, and language of the proposed document, including whether certain provisions were overly broad, subjective, or open to inconsistent interpretation.
- Discussion focused on whether the proposed policy appropriately reflected the school's mission, values, and collaborative Montessori culture.
- Board members expressed concern that the document did not sufficiently address staff protections, including the absence of a clearly defined whistleblower policy and clarity around progressive discipline and due process.
- The potential impact of the proposed language on staff morale, trust, and psychological safety was discussed, particularly in the context of existing community tensions.
- Trustees emphasized the importance of clearly distinguishing between professional expectations and language that might discourage constructive dialogue, feedback, or dissent.
- The Board acknowledged the role of external advisors but emphasized that policy adoption and accountability rest solely with the Board.
- The discussion concluded with consensus that, in its current form, the proposed Professional Code of Conduct required substantial revision and additional context before it could be considered for adoption.

The motion did not carry.

Roll Call

E. Bradley	No
D. Mitchell	No
M. Connerton	No
B. MacQuade	No
A. Ting	No
J. Nickerson	No
T. Murdy	No
E. Rankin	No
D. Herrera	No
C. Getz	No
A. Godino	No
G. LeFave	No
C. Whitford	No

V. Committee on Trustees

A. Update

- Trustee Recruitment
- Trustee interest in leadership positions for 2026-2027

- Bylaws update

VI. Executive Committee

A. Update

- Executive Director Review/Tool
- Succession Planning: ED & BOT
- BoT RVCS emails

VII. Finance Committee

A. Update

- The Finance Committee provided an update on the school's financial position, noting that tuition revenue is tracking above projections while benefit costs are expected to increase in the upcoming year.
- The Committee reviewed preliminary budget assumptions for the next fiscal year and discussed financial risks and uncertainties, including personnel-related and legal expenses.
- The Finance Committee recommended approval of a 3.5% increase to the salary line for the upcoming school year, emphasizing fiscal sustainability while supporting staff compensation.
- The Committee confirmed that allocation of the approved salary increase would be determined by the Executive Director.

C. Whitford made a motion to To approve a 3.5% increase in the salary line item of the budget for dispensing by ED as appropriate.
C. Getz seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

VIII. Accountability Committee

A. Update

- The Accountability Committee presented an overview of assessment data and instructional monitoring, including the use of literacy and math screeners to track student progress.
- Committee members discussed the importance of **consistent assessment administration**, data transparency, and progress monitoring to support instructional decision-making.
- Data were reviewed across multiple dimensions, including grade level, gender, and special education status, to better understand trends and identify areas for targeted intervention.
- The Committee emphasized that the work is ongoing and that additional data collection and review would continue later in the academic year.

IX. Development Committee

A. Update

- The Development Committee provided an update on fundraising and community engagement efforts, including planning for upcoming events and initiatives.
- Discussion highlighted the importance of development activities in supporting school programs and supplementing public funding.
- Trustees encouraged continued participation and volunteer involvement to strengthen development capacity and community connections.
- A suggestion was raised to consider moving development activities under the School's Foundation to improve alignment, flexibility, and coordination of fundraising efforts. The discussion noted potential benefits, including clearer separation from governance functions, increased operational flexibility, and enhanced donor privacy, while also acknowledging the need for further review before any structural changes are considered.

X. Director's Update

A. Director's Report

- The Executive Director provided an overview of key operational and instructional priorities across the school.
- An update was shared on academic monitoring and student progress, including the use of literacy and math screeners to identify areas of strength and need, and to guide instructional supports and interventions.
- The importance of data-informed decision-making was emphasized, including ongoing review by the Accountability Committee and school leadership.

- Staffing and instructional supports were discussed, including efforts to ensure appropriate services for students requiring additional academic or special education support.
- The Executive Director addressed instructional alignment, including the need for uninterrupted instructional time, adequate classroom materials, and consistency across grade levels.
- An overview of professional development priorities was provided, including collaboration, instructional alignment, and strengthening Montessori practice.
- Operational updates included ongoing attention to school safety, staffing coverage, and continuity of day-to-day school functions.
- The Director acknowledged current community challenges and reaffirmed a commitment to maintaining a stable learning environment focused on student well-being and academic growth.

XI. Executive Session

A. Vote to Move to Exec Session

D. Mitchell made a motion to Go to executive session under purpose 2.
D. Herrera seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

XII. 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 10:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
T. Murdy

Documents used during the meeting

- 2026_02_10_rvcs_accountability_committee_meeting_minutes.pdf
- 2026_03_03_development_committee_meeting_minutes.pdf
- 2026_04_08_executive_committee_committee_meeting_minutes.pdf
- 2026_04_08_committee_on_trustees_meeting_minutes.pdf
- 2026_04_16_finance_committee_meeting_minutes.pdf
- Professional Code of Conduct.docx
- Board Audit Report for RVCS.pdf
- 4.29.2026 Director's Report - Google Docs.pdf
- River_Valley_Charter_School_FY26_Internal_Audit.pdf
- RVCS__Fall_Data_Overview_from_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.