

# EMPIRE SPRINGS CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

27740 JEFFERSON AVE • TEMECULA, CA 92590

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

May 8, 2025

**9:00 a.m.**

**27740 Jefferson Ave. Temecula, CA**

**and**

**Rancho Cucamonga Student Center**

**8969 Archibald Ave.**

**Rancho Cucamonga, CA**

*Our mission is to empower students by fostering their innate curiosity, engaging their parents, and promoting optimum learning by collaboratively developing a personalized learning program for each student.*

### Present:

Stephanie Vargas, Chair Marlene Darrow, Vice Chair Jennifer Araiza, Secretary (arrived at 9:14) Chuck Vela, Treasurer Ivo Caouette, Director	Dr. Kathleen Hermsmeyer, Superintendent Dr. Vivian Price, Asst. Superintendent, Education Virginia Smith, Asst. Superintendent, Human Resources Michelle Sapanara, Asst. Superintendent, Student Services Amy Podratz, Asst. Superintendent, Admin. Ops. Natali South, Senior Director of Charter Relations Katherine Van Leeuwen, Senior Director of Admin. Ops. Trevor Johnson, Senior Director of Business Courtney Cook, Senior Director of Special Education Jacki York, Senior Director of Online Learning Laura Banda, Director of Assessment & Accountability Karen Arnett, Director of Teacher & Student Support Cheryl Smallman, Director of Enrollment Erin Chafin, Credential Analyst Monica Lopez, Principal Shirley Jones, Principal Jacki Dee, Principal Renee Albright, Charter Relations Coordinator
--	--

### 1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

- Ms. Vargas called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

- Mr. Caouette moved to approve the agenda.
- Ms. Darrow seconded.
- Vote: 4 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Vargas, Vela;  
3 Absent: Araiza, Mendez, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

**3. Action: Approval of Board Minutes from March 6, 2025**

- Mr. Vela moved to approve the Board Minutes from March 6, 2025.
- Mr. Caouette seconded.
- Vote: 4 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Vargas, Vela;  
3 Absent: Araiza, Mendez, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

**4. Action: Approval of Consent Agenda**

- Mr. Caouette moved to approve the Consent Agenda consisting of: Warrants, Personnel Action Report, and Contract Ratifications As Posted: WriteScore, ParentSquare, and Liminex, Inc. dba GoGuardian.
- Mr. Vela seconded.
- Vote: 4 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Vargas, Vela;  
3 Absent: Araiza, Mendez, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

**5. Public Comments**

- None

**6. Information: Student Spotlight: Venture - Esther**

- The Board enjoyed a video presentation of Esther, a Venture High School graduating senior.

**7. Information: Teacher Spotlight - Kimberly Matthews: 2025 Hart Vision Teacher of the Year**

- The Board enjoyed a video presentation created by the California Charter Schools Association featuring Kimberly Matthews, the CCSA 2025 Hart Vision Teacher of the Year.

**8. Information: Presentation of the Seal of Civic Engagement Fundraising Project**

- Shirley Jones, Journey Homeschool Principal, presented a video of Anais Park's California Seal of Civic Engagement Project. Anais is a River Springs Charter School Journey senior who completed her civic-minded project to raise money for the Summit Springs (network-wide) scholarship program.

9. **Information: Superintendent's Report**
  - Dr. Kathleen Hermsmeyer reviewed the Superintendent's Report and provided network-wide updates, including important legislative updates.
10. **Information: First Reading of Board Policy 5037.1 Dyslexia Universal Screening and Intervention**
  - Laura Banda and Karen Arnett presented this policy for First Reading. It will be brought back at a future meeting for Second Reading and Approval.
11. **Information: First Reading of Revised Board Policy 5023.1 - Kindergarten and Transitional Kindergarten**
  - Amy Podratz reviewed the requirements for Kindergarten and Transitional Kindergarten enrollment. The policy will return for Second Reading and Approval at the next meeting.
12. **Public Hearing - Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)**
  - Natali South opened the LCAP Public Hearing at 9:56 a.m. and welcomed community comments and feedback. Kat Van Leeuwen reviewed the LCAP report and answered Board members' questions. The hearing was closed at 10:02 a.m. The LCAP will be brought back for approval at the June meeting.
13. **Action: Approval of the SB740 Grant**
  - Mr. Caoutte moved to approve the SB740 Grant.
  - Ms. Darrow seconded.
  - Discussion: Trevor Johnson explained that SB740 allows for up to 70% facility reimbursement. Due to the opening of Inland Empire Springs, IESCS will be the entity seeking the reimbursement.
  - Vote: 5 Ayes: Araiza, Caouette, Darrow, Vargas, Vela;  
2 Absent: Mendez, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted
14. **Action: Approval of the 2025-26 Consolidated Application for Funding**
  - Mr. Caouette moved to approve the 2025-26 Consolidated Application for Funding.
  - Mr. Vela seconded.
  - Discussion: Trevor Johnson explained that this application allows the school to apply for multiple federal grants.
  - Vote: 5 Ayes: Araiza, Caouette, Darrow, Vargas, Vela;  
2 Absent: Mendez, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted
15. **Action: Approval of Special Education Contract Addition to Budget**
  - Mr. Vela moved to approve the Special Education Contract Addition to Budget.
  - Mr. Caouette seconded.

- Discussion: Trevor Johnson clarified that this request involves reallocating funds from the salary section of the budget to the contracted services category to ensure continued support for our students during periods of understaffing.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Araiza, Caouette, Darrow, Vargas, Vela;  
2 Absent: Mendez, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

**16. Action: Waive the First Reading and Approve Revised Board Policy 4001.1 - Contracts**

- Mr. Vela moved to waive the First Reading and Approve Revised Board Policy 4001.1 - Contracts.
- Mr. Caouette seconded.
- Discussion: Kathleen Hermsmeyer explained that the policy has been revised to include updated titles for those individuals authorized to sign contracts on behalf of the school.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Araiza, Caouette, Darrow, Vargas, Vela;  
2 Absent: Mendez, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

**17. Action: Approval of Long-Distance Travel - Annual Ignite! Conference**

- Mr. Vela moved to approve the Long-Distance Travel - Annual Ignite! Conference.
- Ms. Darrow seconded.
- Discussion: Jacki Dee explained this approval will allow out-of-state staff to attend our annual Ignite! conference.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Araiza, Caouette, Darrow, Vargas, Vela;  
2 Absent: Mendez, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

**18. Action: Approval of Long-Distance Travel - Springs Charter Schools High School Graduation**

- Mr. Caouette moved to approve the Long-Distance Travel - Springs Charter Schools High School Graduation.
- Mr. Vela seconded.
- Discussion: Jacki Dee explained this approval will allow Robin Davis to attend our graduation.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Araiza, Caouette, Darrow, Vargas, Vela;  
2 Absent: Mendez, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

**19. Action: Approval of Title I, Part A School-Parent Compact 2026**

- Ms. Darrow moved to approve the Title I, Part A School-Parent Compact 2026.
- Mr. Vela seconded.

- Discussion: Laura Banda explained that the Compact has been revised to include revised language. This compact is a requirement under Title I.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Araiza, Caouette, Darrow, Vargas, Vela;  
2 Absent: Mendez, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

**20. Action: Approval of the CL-500 Declaration of Need for Fully Qualified Educators**

- Mr. Vela moved to approve the CL-500 Declaration of Need for Fully Qualified Educators.
- Mr. Caouette seconded.
- Discussion: Erin Chafin explained that this document is submitted annually to project the number of emergency permits that may be required for teachers who have not yet obtained their credentials.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Araiza, Caouette, Darrow, Vargas, Vela;  
2 Absent: Mendez, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

**21. Closed Session - in Accordance with Gov Code Section GC54954.5/54956.9: Entered into at 10:36 a.m.**

- 54956.9: Approval of Special Education Settlement for Student ID: 5320

**Open Session - Entered into at 10:55 a.m.**

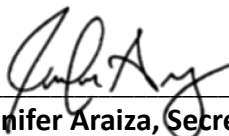
- Report of Action Taken in Closed Session
  - The board approved the settlement agreement

**22. Board Comments**

- Ms. Darrow: I'm looking forward to graduation!
- Ms. Vargas requested that staff look into the status of the play pod at the Rancho Cucamonga campus which has been unusable by students for a length of time. Staff committed to look into and report back.

**23. Action: Motion to Adjourn the Meeting**

- Mr. Caouette moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:57 a.m.
- Mr. Vela seconded.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Araiza, Caouette, Darrow, Vargas, Vela;  
2 Absent: Mendez, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Jennifer Araiza, Secretary

June 12, 2025

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date