

EMPIRE SPRINGS CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

27740 JEFFERSON AVE • TEMECULA, CA 92590

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

June 12, 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:

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| Stephanie Vargas, Chair Marlene Darrow, Vice Chair Chuck Vela, Treasurer Ivo Caouette, Director Dianne Mendez, Director | Dr. Vivian Price, Asst. Superintendent, Education Virginia Smith, Asst. Superintendent, Human Resources Michelle Sapanara, Asst. Superintendent, Student Services Amy Podratz, Asst. Superintendent, Admin. Ops. Tanya Rogers, Asst. Superintendent, Business Natali South, Senior Director of Charter Relations Trevor Johnson, Senior Director of Business Katherine Van Leeuwen, Senior Director of Admin. Ops Courtney Cook, Senior Director of Special Education Ruth Newsome, Senior Director of Human Resources Karen Arnett, Director of Teacher & Student Support Cheryl Smallman, Director of Enrollment Bre Julian, Director of Admin. Ops. & CIF Athletics Brianna Diaz, Director of Nutrition Services Erin Chafin, Credential Analyst Monica Lopez, Principal Renee Albright, Charter Relations Coordinator |
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1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

- Ms. Vargas called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Agenda

- Mr. Caouette moved to approve the agenda.
- Ms. Darrow seconded.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

3. Action: Approval of Board Minutes from May 8, 2025

- Mr. Vela moved to approve the Board Minutes from May 8, 2025.
- Mr. Caouette seconded.
- Vote: 4 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 1 Abstain: Mendez; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

Information: Reappointment of Board of Directors: Stephanie Vargas

- Natali South announced that Springs, Inc. reappointed Stephanie Vargas for a second three-year term, which will end on June 30, 2028.

4. Action: Approval of Consent Agenda

- Mr. Caouette moved to approve the Consent Agenda consisting of: Warrants, Personnel Action Report, and Contract Ratifications: Scoot Education, Kolibri Corp./DMA&E Inc. at Rancho Cucamonga Learning Center, Victory Paving at Rancho Cucamonga Learning Center, and Bright Thinker.
- Ms. Darrow seconded.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

5. Public Comments

- None

6. Information: Student Center Spotlight: Rancho Cucamonga Personalized Learning Center

- The Board watched Rancho Cucamonga's 2025 enrollment video.

7. Information: Student Spotlight - Junior/Senior Prom

- The Board enjoyed a video presentation of our 2025 Junior/Senior Prom held at Hawk Ranch in Murrieta.

8. Information: 2025 Commencement Ceremony Presentation

- The Board enjoyed a video of our 2025 Commencement Ceremony held at Pechanga Resort. We had over 3,000 families and friends in attendance to celebrate our graduating class.

9. Information: Superintendent's Report

- Dr. Hermesmeyer reviewed the Superintendent's Report and highlighted year-end events and provided network-wide updates. She indicated that 98% of our CAASSP scores are in and early results are reflecting academic growth. Additionally, Leiliani Weiss informed the board that negotiations are underway for two properties in hopes of opening two additional sites under Inland Empire Springs.

10. Information: Visual Arts, Music, & Performing Arts Education (VAPA) Presentation

- Karen Arnett reviewed a presentation about our new VAPA program that offers visual, music and performing arts opportunities for our students. This program is funded by Prop 28 grant funds.

11. Information: Information Regarding Our Spring into Teaching Spotlight

- Karen Arnett announced that we just completed our 5th year of having a Teacher Residency program. We have a 98% retention rate. Karen explained the benefits of having the opportunity to provide training for student teachers to learn how to teach the Springs Way!

12. Information: Reporting of State Priority Local Indicators to CDE Dashboard

- Katherine Van Leeuwen reviewed the local indicators and explained that data related to our school will be publicly posted on the California Department of Education website.

13. Action: Approval of 2025-26 Budget

- Mr. Caouette moved to approve the 2025-26 Budget.
- Mr. Vela seconded.
- Discussion: Tanya Rogers reviewed the 25-26 Budget. She indicated that the budget reflects a step increase of approximately 3% for all staff. Other features of the budget were highlighted including academic priorities and adjustments based on new funding models.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

14. Action: Approval of EPA Education Protection Account Actuals as of 6/30/25 Current Estimates

- Mr. Caouette moved to approve the Education Protection Account Actuals as of 6/30/25 current estimates.
- Ms. Darrow seconded.
- Trevor Johnson explained that the EPA Protection Account covered 5.54 teachers' salaries for the 24-25 school year.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

15. **Action: Approval of 2025-26 EPA Multi-Year Plan**
- Mr. Vela moved to approve the 2025-26 EPA Multi-Year Plan.
 - Ms. Darrow seconded.
 - Discussion: Trevor Johnson explained that the EPA Protection Account is projected to cover 4.90 teachers' salaries for the 25-26 school year.
 - Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted
16. **Action: Approval of Superintendent's Contract 2025-26**
- Mr. Caouette moved to approve the Superintendent's contract 2025-26.
 - Mr. Vela seconded.
 - Discussion: Trevor Johnson reviewed the Superintendent's contract for the upcoming school year. She indicated that Kathleen will receive the standard 3% salary increase offered to all staff.
 - Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted
17. **Action: Approval of Longevity Payments to 15, 20, and 25-year Employees**
- Mr. Caouette moved to approve the longevity payments for 15, 20, and 25-year employees.
 - Ms. Vargas seconded.
 - Discussion: Trevor Johnson explained that we will offer a longevity payment to employees who reach their 15th, 20th and 25th anniversary with Springs, as outlined in the report.
 - Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted
18. **Action: Approval Sublease from Empire to River for Hemet Quest**
- Ms. Darrow moved to approve the sublease from Empire to River for Hemet Quest.
 - Mr. Vela seconded.
 - Discussion: Trevor Johnson explained that this sublease allows River Springs to sublease the Hemet Student Center from the leaseholder, Empire Springs.
 - Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted
19. **Action: Approval of Orange Springs Sublease from Empire Springs**
- Mr. Caouette moved to approve the Orange Springs sublease from Empire Springs.
 - Ms. Darrow seconded.

- Discussion: Trevor Johnson explained the lease for the Santa Ana Student Center is held in Empire Springs' name. Now that Orange Springs will be operating out of the Santa Ana Student Center, they must sublease from Empire Springs.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

20. Action: Approval of Cancellation of Sublease Between Citrus and Empire

- Mr. Caouette moved to approve the cancellation of the sublease between Citrus Springs and Empire Springs.
- Mr. Vela seconded.
- Discussion: Trevor Johnson explained that Citrus Springs will no longer sublease the Santa Ana Student Center since Orange Springs will be the charter occupying the building.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

21. Action: Approval of Contract with TopNCatering LLC 2025-26

- Mr. Vela moved to approve the contract with TopNCatering LLC 2025-26
- Ms. Darrow seconded.
- Discussion: Brianna Diaz explained that TopNCatering provides meals for our Rancho Cucamonga Student Center.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

22. Action: Approval of Contract with Hatch & Cesario 2025

- Mr. Vela moved to approve the contract with Hatch & Cesario 2025.
- Ms. Darrow seconded.
- Discussion: Trevor Johnson explained that this contract will engage the services with Hatch and Cesario for Special Education legal counsel.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

23. Action: Approval for IESCS Material Revision to Open the Fontana Location in 2026-27 and Add the Two Addresses of the Proposed Facilities

- Mr. Caouette moved to approve the IESCS Material Revision to open the Fontana location in 2026-27 and add the two addresses of the proposed facilities.
- Ms. Vargas seconded.
- Discussion: Amy Podratz explained that we have revised the IESCS petition to reflect the two proposed addresses for additional student centers.

- Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

24. Action: Approval of the Revised LCAP Federal Addendum

- Mr. Vela moved to approve the revised LCAP Federal Addendum.
- Ms. Darrow seconded.
- Discussion: Katherine Van Leeuwen explained that the federal addendum allows our schools to collect federal funds granted through title offices.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

25. Action: Approval of the 2025-26 Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)

- Mr. Caouette moved to approve the 2025-26 Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).
- Mr. Vela seconded.
- Discussion: Katherine Van Leeuwen reviewed the LCAP report, noting that it will be posted online and serve as a tool to communicate the school's overarching priorities.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

26. Action: Waive the First Reading and Approve Revised Board Policy 5032.1 - Residency Requirements and Investigation

- Mr. Vela moved to waive the First Reading and Approve revised Board Policy 5032.1 - Residency Requirements and Investigation.
- Mr. Caouette seconded.
- Discussion: Katherine Van Leeuwen explained that the policy updates the residency verification process for families to ensure compliance with legal requirements for collecting ADA within the counties we serve.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

27. Action: Second Reading and Approval of Revised Board Policy 5023.1 - Kindergarten and Transitional Kindergarten

- Mr. Caouette moved to approve Board Policy 5023.1 - Kindergarten and Transitional Kindergarten upon second reading.
- Mr. Vela seconded.
- Discussion: Amy Podratz explained that this policy was presented at the last meeting and is presented for second reading and approval.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

- 28. Action: Approval of 2025-26 CIF Application for Renewal of Multi-school Agreement**
- Mr. Caouette moved to approve the 2025-26 CIF application for renewal of the multi-school agreement.
 - Mr. Vela seconded.
 - Discussion: Amy Podratz explained that this agreement allows students in the network to participate in CIF sports, regardless of the Springs program they attend.
 - Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted
- 29. Action: Second Reading of Board Policy 5037.1 Dyslexia Universal Screening and Intervention**
- Mr. Vela moved to approve Board Policy 5037.1 - Dyslexia Universal Screening and Intervention upon second reading.
 - Mr. Vela seconded.
 - Discussion: Karen Arnett presented this policy and reminded the board that no changes had been requested when it was presented for first reading.
 - Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted
- 30. Action: Approval of SAVVAS Envision Contract**
- Ms. Darrow moved to approve the SAVVAS Envision Contract.
 - Mr. Vela seconded.
 - Discussion: Beverly Voechting explained that the school is partnering with SAVVAS to provide math curriculum.
 - Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted
- 31. Action: Approval of Special Education Contracts for Providers for 2025-26**
- Mr. Vela moved to approve the Special Education contracts for providers for 2025-26.
 - Mr. Caouette seconded.
 - Discussion: Courtney Cook explained that we use service providers for certain Special Education services, and she reviewed the anticipated expenditure for the upcoming school year.
 - Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted


- 32. Action: Waive the First Reading and Approve Board Policy 8009.1 - Local Assignment Options (LAOs)**
- Mr. Vela moved to waive the First Reading and Approve Board Policy 8009.1 - Local Assignment Options (LAOs).
 - Ms. Darrow seconded.
 - Discussion: Erin Chafin explained that this policy allows the school's credential analyst to assign credentialed teachers to positions outside their credential area when appropriate.
 - Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted
- 33. Action: Waive First Reading and Approve Revised Board Policy 8006.1 - Certification**
- Mr. Caouette moved to waive the First Reading and Approve revised Board Policy 8006.1 - Certification.
 - Ms. Darrow seconded.
 - Discussion: Erin Chafin explained that legal counsel suggested adding additional language to this policy regarding the timeframe and minimum compensation allowed for a teacher if their credential has expired.
 - Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted
- 34. Action: Approval of Position Control System (PCS) and Salary Schedules 2025-2026**
- Mr. Caouette moved to approve the Position Control System (PCS) and Salary Schedules 2025-2026.
 - Mr. Vela seconded.
 - Discussion: Ruth Newsome presented the Position Control and Salary Schedules for the upcoming school year.
 - Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted
- 35. Action: Approval of Board calendar 2025-26**
- Mr. Vela moved to approve the Board calendar 2025-26.
 - Ms. Darrow seconded.
 - Discussion: Natali South reviewed the board calendar.
 - Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

36. Board Comments

- Mr. Caouette: Thanks to everyone on the Board and at Springs for allowing me to serve on this Board for the last six years. It has been wonderful.
- Ms. Mendez: I will also miss serving on this Board; it's been an absolute pleasure, and I will miss you all.
- Dr. Hermsmeyer: I want to thank Stephanie Vargas for speaking on our behalf at a recent San Bernardino County meeting.
- Ms. Vargas: I am glad that my comments were beneficial. I was just sharing my family's wonderful experience at Springs.

37. Action: Motion to Adjourn the Meeting

- Mr. Caouette moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:06 a.m.
- Mr. Vela seconded.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Caouette, Darrow, Mendez, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Araiza, Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted



Jennifer Araiza, Secretary

August 1, 2025

Date