

EMPIRE SPRINGS CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

27740 JEFFERSON AVE • TEMECULA, CA 92590

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

December 11, 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:

| | |
|--|--|
| Marlene Darrow, Chair Jennifer Araiza, Vice Chair Chuck Vela, Secretary Jason Rodriguez, Treasurer JP Dauber, Director Stephanie Vargas, 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. Tanya Rogers, Asst. Superintendent, Business Natali South, Senior Director of Charter Relations Courtney Cook, Senior Director of Special Education Ruth Newsome, Senior Director of Human Resources Monica Lopez, Senior Director of Instructional Support Renee Albright, Charter Relations Coordinator |
|--|--|

- 1. Establish a Quorum, Call to Order, and Pledge of Allegiance**
 - Ms.Darrow called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Natali South established a quorum.
- 2. Action: Approval of Agenda**
 - Mr. Vela moved to approve the agenda.
 - Mr. Rodriguez seconded.
 - Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela;
1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

3. **Action: Approval of Minutes from September 11, 2025**
 - Mr. Rodriguez moved to approve the minutes from September 11, 2025.
 - Mr. Vela seconded.
 - Vote: 5 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vela; 1 Absent: Schneider; 1 Abstention: Vargas; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

4. **Action: Approval of Consent Agenda**
 - Mr. Rodriguez moved to approve the Consent Agenda consisting of Warrants, Personnel Action Report, and Contract Ratifications As Posted: Diamond Air Services at Rancho Cucamonga Student Center and Kolibrien Corp./DMA&E Inc. at Rancho Cucamonga Student Center.
 - Mr. Vela seconded.
 - Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela; 1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

5. **Public Comments**
 - None

6. **Information: Student Spotlight - Spelling Bee 2025**
 - The Board enjoyed a video presentation featuring our Springs Charter School's Spelling Bee Competition 2025.

7. **Information: Superintendent's Report**
 - Dr. Kathleen Hermsmeyer presented the Superintendent's Report and provided network-wide updates, including i-Ready testing, upcoming professional development for staff, and current student initiatives. Dr. Hermsmeyer indicated that there is a new principal at the Rancho Cucamonga Student Center, and she provided an update regarding campus improvements. Amy Podratz indicated that enrollment is healthy and strong for this charter.

8. **Information: Review of 2025-26 Mid-year Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and WASC Priorities Implementation Update**
 - Katherine Van Leeuwen reviewed the mid-year LCAP plan and WASC priorities update.

9. **Information: Comprehensive School Safety Plan**
 - Tony Hager reviewed the CSSP and explained that the plan was developed in collaboration with the appropriate agencies to ensure the safety of students and staff in the event of an emergency.

- 10. Information: First Reading of Revised Board Policy 5000 Updates**

 - Michelle Sapanara explained that minor changes have been made to policies in the 5000 section of our policies. The policies will return for a second reading and approval at a future meeting.

- 11. Information: Review Updated Work Permit Authorization List for Secondary District Plan**

 - Maureen Roye presented the list of individuals who are authorized to approve work permits.

- 12. Action: Approval of the Amended Sublease Agreement Between Empire Springs and Inland Empire Springs**

 - Mr. Rodriguez moved to approve the amended sublease agreement between Empire Springs and Inland Empire Springs.
 - Mr. Vela seconded.
 - Discussion: Trevor Johnson explained the terms of the sublease agreement. This allows Inland Empire Springs to pay a proportional amount for their usage of the campus.
 - Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela;
1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

- 13. Action: Approval of Acceptance of Annual Audit for Fiscal Year 2024-25**

 - Ms. Araiza moved to approve the Acceptance of the Annual Audit for Fiscal Year 2024-25.
 - Mr. Rodriguez seconded.
 - Discussion: Trevor Johnson indicated that ESCS received a clean audit with zero findings.
 - Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela;
1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

- 14. Action: Approval of 1st Interim Budget 25-26 School Year**

 - Mr. Vela moved to approve the 1st Interim Budget for the 25-26 School Year.
 - Mr. Rodriguez seconded.
 - Discussion: Trevor Johnson reviewed the budget, including a comparison to the preliminary budget, current snapshot, and projections. He indicated that ESCS is in a healthy budget position.
 - Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela;
1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

- 15. Action: Approval of the Annual Prop 28 Report**

 - Mr. Rodriguez moved to approve the Annual Prop 28 Report.
 - Ms. Araiza seconded.

- Discussion: Trevor Johnson reported that Prop 28 provides dedicated funding for arts and music. Ongoing funds support teacher salaries, while one-time funds have been used to purchase equipment and supplies for these programs.
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela;
1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

16. Action: Approval of Stipend Agreement Form (SAF) Schedule for 2025-26

- Ms. Araiza moved to approve the Stipend Agreement Form (SAF) Schedule for 2025-26.
- Mr. Vela seconded.
- Discussion: Trevor Johnson reviewed the various stipends that the school provides, including the amounts paid and the source of funding.
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela;
1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

17. Action: Approval of Staff Retention Bonuses 2025

- Mr. Rodriguez moved to approve the 2025 Staff Retention Bonuses.
- Mr. Vela seconded.
- Discussion: Trevor Johnson explained that we have received one-time funding for the purpose of staff retention. We will provide a \$1500 bonus for all full-time staff, and prorate the amount based on the percentage of employment for part-time staff.
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela;
1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

18. Action: Approval of 2026-27 Attendance & 185/187/188 Staff Calendar

- Mr. Rodriguez moved to approve the 2026-27 Attendance & 185/187/188 Staff Calendar.
- Mr. Vela seconded.
- Discussion: Amy Podratz reviewed the staff and attendance calendars for the 2026-27 school year, noting days designated for staff development, holidays, testing, and other important dates.
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela;
1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

19. Action: Second Reading and Approval of Revised Board Policy 6002.1 - Cell Phones and Cell Phone Reimbursement

- Mr. Rodriguez moved to approve the Second Reading and Approval of Revised Board Policy 6002.1 - Cell Phones and Cell Phone Reimbursement.
- Ms. Araiza seconded.

- Discussion: Ruth Newsome reminded the board that the revisions were reviewed at the September meeting. No changes had been requested, and the policy was presented for second reading and approval.
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela;
1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

20. Action: Second Reading and Approval of Board Policy 6005. 1 - Remote Internet Access Policy

- Ms. Araiza moved to approve the Second Reading and Approval of Board Policy 6005. 1 - Remote Internet Access Policy.
- Mr. Rodriguez seconded.
- Discussion: Ruth Newsome reminded the board that the revisions were reviewed at the September meeting. No changes had been requested, and the policy was presented for second reading and approval.
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela;
1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

21. Action: Rescission of Home and Hospital Instruction Board Policy 5019.1

- Ms. Araiza moved to approve the rescission of Home and Hospital Instruction Board Policy 5019.1.
- Ms. Darrow seconded.
- Discussion: Michelle Sapanara clarified that this policy will be rescinded from the list of approved board policies because charter schools are exempt from the funding model referenced in the standard Home and Hospital program. She noted that Springs continues to provide instruction to students receiving home or hospital care through our regular instructional model.
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela;
1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

22. Action: Approval of Contract with JB Roofing & Weatherproofing at Rancho Cucamonga Learning Center

- Mr. Rodriguez moved to approve the contract with JB Roofing & Weatherproofing at Rancho Cucamonga Learning Center.
- Mr. Vela seconded.
- Discussion: Tony Santistevan explained that the roof on the Rancho Cucamonga building needs repairs.
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela;
1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

- 23. Action: Approval of Long Distance Travel - Annual Mid-Year Event**
- Mr. Rodriguez moved to approve the Long Distance Travel - Annual Mid-Year Event.
 - Ms. Darrow seconded.
 - Discussion: Vivian Price explained that our out-of-state Venture employees will travel to California for the purpose of staff development and to host in-person meetings with families.
 - Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela;
1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted
- 24. Action: Approval of Long Distance Travel - Professional Development/Leadership Conference**
- Mr. Rodriguez moved to approve the Long Distance Travel - Professional Development/Leadership Conference.
 - Ms. Araiza seconded.
 - Discussion: Vivian Price explained that our Connections principal will travel to attend the Pearson conference.
 - Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela;
1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted
- 25. Closed Session - in Accordance with Gov Code Section 54954.5/54957(b)(1): Entered into at 10:15 a.m.**
- 54957(b)(1): Evaluation of Superintendent - Dr. Kathleen Hermsmeyer
- 26. Open Session: Report of Action Taken in Closed Session**
- Evaluation of the Superintendent
 - The Board provided a favorable evaluation of the superintendent.
- 27. Board Comments and Future Agenda Requests**
- Ms. Vargas: Are we doing anything regarding AB 495 which goes into effect in 2026? The law does provide security measures and waivers that families can enact, and I am wondering what Springs' response is.
 - Dr. Hermsmeyer indicated that we are aware of the bill and will provide an update at the next meeting.
 - Ms. Darrow: I want to wish everyone a restful and happy holiday season!
- 28. Action: Motion to Adjourn the Meeting**
- Mr. Vela moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:47 a.m.
 - Mr. Rodriguez seconded.

- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela;
1 Absent: Schneider; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

Chuck Vela

Chuck Vela, Secretary

02/12/26

Date