

EMPIRE SPRINGS CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

27740 JEFFERSON AVE • TEMECULA, CA 92590

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

March 12, 2026

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:

Jennifer Araiza, Vice Chair Chuck Vela, Secretary JP Dauber, Director Craig Schneider, Director Stephanie Vargas, Director (arrived at 9:29)	Dr. Kathleen Hermsmeyer, Superintendent 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 Trevor Johnson, Senior Director of Business Ruth Newsome, Senior Director of HR Courtney Cook, Senior Director of Special Education Jared McLeod, Senior Director of Assessment & Account. Laura Banda, Director of Assessment Kenley Nakao, Director of VAPA Amanda Deniston, Principal Renee Albright, Charter Relations Coordinator
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- 1. Establish a Quorum and Call to Order**
 - Natali South called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. Natali South established a quorum.
- 2. Information/Presentation: Student Spotlight - Star-Spangled Banner**
 - Kaitlyn of Cherry Valley Student Center performed the Star-Spangled Banner for the Board.

- 3. Action: Approval of Agenda**
 - Ms. Araiza moved to approve the agenda.
 - Mr. Schneider seconded.
 - Vote: 4 Ayes: Araiza, Dauber, Schneider, Vela;
3 Absent: Darrow, Vargas, Rodriquez; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

- 3. Action: Approval of Minutes from February 12, 2026**
 - Mr. Vela moved to approve the minutes from February 12, 2026.
 - Mr. Schneider seconded.
 - Vote: 4 Ayes: Araiza, Dauber, Schneider, Vela; 3 Absent: Darrow, Vargas, Rodriquez; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

- 4. Action: Approval of Consent Agenda**
 - Mr. Vela moved to approve the Consent Agenda consisting of Warrants, Personnel Action Report, and Contract Ratifications as Posted: Bertrand's Music Purchase Order: Temecula VAPA Hub/HQ, Musician's Friend Purchase Order: Temecula VAPA Hub/HQ, Kolibrien Corp./DMA&E Inc. at 9460, 9432, and 9420 Sierra Avenue Fontana, and Kolibrien Corp./DMA&E Inc. at Rancho Cucamonga Student Center.
 - Ms. Araiza seconded.
 - Vote: 4 Ayes: Araiza, Dauber, Schneider, Vela; 3 Absent: Darrow, Vargas, Rodriquez; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

- 5. Public Comments**
 - None

- 6. Information: Student CAASPP/CAA Growth and Achievement Award Presentations**
 - Laura Banda and Amanda Deniston presented students with their Achievement Awards for growth in the CAASPP.

- 7. Information: Student Spotlight - Rancho Cucamonga Student Center - Mindfulness Garden**
 - Rancho Cucamonga students showcased their mindfulness garden and why they love having the area to explore their creativity.

- 8. Information: Superintendent's Report**
 - Dr. Kathleen Hermsmeyer reviewed the Superintendent's Report and provided charter and network-wide updates.

9. **Information: Presentation of Special Education Program 2025-26**
 - Courtney Cook presented the 2025-26 Special Education yearly highlights. She provided an overview of our various Special Education programs and services and the progress we've made with these students.

10. **Information: First Reading of Revised Board Policy 8001.1 - 8001.3 - Hiring: Recruitment and Selection, Nondiscrimination in Employment, Nepotism**
 - Ruth Newsome presented this policy and explained the proposed revisions. The policy will be brought back for a second reading and approval at a future meeting.

11. **Information: First Reading of Revised Board Policy 8003.1 - 8003.3 - Termination: At-Will Employment, Discipline, Resignation, Dismissal**
 - Ruth Newsome presented this policy and explained the proposed revisions. The policy will be brought back for a second reading and approval at a future meeting.

12. **Action: Approval of Bertrand's Music Purchase Order: Temecula VAPA Hub/HQ**
 - Mr. Vela moved to approve the Bertrand's Music purchase order: Temecula VAPA Hub/HQ.
 - Ms. Araiza seconded.
 - Discussion: Kenley Nakao explained that instruments and musical materials are being purchased through our Visual and Performing Arts funds.
 - Vote: 5 Ayes: Araiza, Dauber, Schneider, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Darrow, Rodriquez; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

13. **Action: Approval of Second Interim Budget 2025-26**
 - Ms. Araiza moved to approve the Second Interim Budget for the 2025-26 school year.
 - Ms. Vargas seconded.
 - Discussion: Trevor Johnson presented the Second Interim Budget and reviewed the status of the charter's financial position at this point of the year.
 - Vote: 5 Ayes: Araiza, Dauber, Schneider, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Darrow, Rodriquez; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

14. **Action: Approval of Auditor Selection for the 2025-26 School Year**
 - Mr. Vela moved to approve the Auditor Selection for the 2025-26 school year.
 - Ms. Araiza seconded.
 - Discussion: Trevor Johnson explained that after an extensive review process, CLA was selected to be our audit firm.

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

15. Action: Approval of UKG Contract for Human Resource Information System (HRIS)

- Ms. Araiza moved to approve the UKG contract for the Human Resource Information System (HRIS).
- Ms. Varga seconded.
- Discussion: Virginia Smith explained that Springs will be partnering with HRIS to implement a comprehensive employee information management system. The firm was selected following a thorough review of multiple vendors and meetings with various Springs departments to ensure alignment with existing systems.
- Vote: 5 Ayes: Araiza, Dauber, Schneider, Vargas, Vela; 2 Absent: Darrow, Rodriquez; 0 Noes; Motion Adopted

16. Board Comments and Future Agenda Requests

- Ms. Vargas: I attended the CCSA conference, and it was very informative as a board member, parent and advocate. Springs does a phenomenal job.

17. Action: Motion to Adjourn the Meeting

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

Chuck Vela

Chuck Vela, Secretary

05/14/26

Date