

# EMPIRE SPRINGS CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

27740 JEFFERSON AVE • TEMECULA, CA 92590

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

September 10, 2026

9:00 a.m.

27740 Jefferson Ave. Temecula, CA 92595

Rancho Cucamonga Student Center

8968 Archibald Ave Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730

Springs Explorer Student Center

9460 Sierra Ave Fontana, CA 92335

*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:

Dr. Jennifer Araiza, Chair  
Chuck Vela, Vice Chair  
Marlene Darrow, Treasurer  
Jason Rodriguez, Secretary  
JP Dauber, Director  
Stephanie Vargas, Director

Dr. Vivian Price, Asst. Supt. of Education  
Dr. Virginia Smith, Asst. Supt. of HR  
Amy Podratz, Asst. Supt. of Admin. Operations  
Michelle Sheane, Asst. Supt. Student Services  
Natali South, Senior Director of Charter Relations  
Trevor Johnson, Senior Director of Business  
Aaron Lorenz, Senior Director of IT  
Courtney Cook, Senior Director of Special Education  
Ruth Newsome, Senior Director of HR  
Renee Albright, Charter Relations Coordinator

1. **Establish a Quorum, Call to Order, and Pledge of Allegiance.**
  - Natali South called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.
2. **Action: Approval of Agenda**
  - Ms. Darrow moved to approve the Agenda.
  - Ms. Araiza seconded.
  - Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas Vela;  
0 Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; Motion Adopted

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3. | <p><b>Action: Approval of Minutes - July 21, 2026</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mr. Vela moved to approve the Minutes from July 21, 2026.</li> <li>● Ms. Darrow seconded.</li> <li>● Vote: 4 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Vela; 0 Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; 2 Abstain: Rodriguez, Vargas; Motion Adopted</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 4. | <p><b>Action: Approval of Minutes - August 4, 2026</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ms. Araiza moved to approve the Minutes from August 4, 2026.</li> <li>● Mr. Vela seconded.</li> <li>● Vote: 5 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vela; 0 Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; 1 Abstain: Vargas; Motion Adopted</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 5. | <p><b>Action: Approval of Consent Agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ms. Darrow moved to approve the Consent Agenda consisting of: Warrants, Personnel Action Report, and Contract Ratifications as posted: ParentSquare Contract, Flylock Security Solutions at Explorer Student Center, Intercity Security Systems at Explorer Student Center, Kolibrien Corp./DMA &amp; E Inc. at Rancho Cucamonga Student Center, LTT Partners at Explorer Student Center, Modcore Solutions Inc at Rancho Cucamonga Student Center, SOS Playgrounds Inc at Rancho Cucamonga Student Center, Stewart Electric at Rancho Cucamonga Student Center, and Terra Network Solutions at Explorer Student Center.</li> <li>● Mr. Rodriguez seconded.</li> <li>● Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas, Vela; 0 Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; Motion Adopted</li> </ul> |
| 4. | <p><b>Public Comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● None</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 6. | <p><b>Information: Springs Nation-IGNITE! 2026</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Renee Albright presented the Springs Nation - IGNITE! 2026 video.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 7. | <p><b>Information: Student Spotlight - 2026 8th Grade Leadership Camp Video Presentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Renee Albright presented the 2026 8th Grade Leadership Camp Student Spotlight video.</li> </ul> <p><b>Information: Student Spotlight - Rancho Cucamonga Student Center Presentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Principal Amanda Deniston presented Rancho Cucamonga summer happenings!</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

**8. Information: Superintendent's Report**

- Michelle Shaene reviewed the Superintendent's Report. She reviewed highlights from each department, and reminded the Board that this year's theme is LEGO — Learning that Empowers Goals and Ownership and shared how the theme is being implemented to engage and empower both staff and students.

**9. Action: Approval of Superintendent Goals 2026-2027**

- Ms. Darrow moved to approve the Superintendent Goals 2026-2027.
- Mr. Rodriguez seconded.
- Discussion: Dr. Vivian Price and Amy Podratz reviewed the Superintendent's goals for the upcoming school year, which address several key areas of focus for the school, including academic achievement, enrollment, LEGO-themed initiatives, and high school graduation rates and college and career readiness.
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas Vela;  
0 Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; Motion Adopted

**10. Action: Waive the First Reading and Approval of Revised Board Policy - 7001.1 - Board Stipends**

- Mr. Rodriguez moved to waive the first reading and approve revised Board Policy - 7001.1 - Board Stipends.
- Ms. Darrow seconded.
- Discussion: Natali South explained that the policy would change the Board member stipend from \$500 to \$650 per month and responded to the Board's questions. She further explained that waiving the first reading would allow the policy to take effect immediately.
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas Vela;  
0 Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; Motion Adopted

**11. Action: Waive the First Reading and Approval of Board Policy - 6006.1 - AI Use and Governance**

- Ms. Darrow moved to waive the first reading of Board Policy - 6006.1 - AI Use and Governance.
- Ms. Araiza seconded.
- Discussion: Aaron Lorenz explained that recent legislation has taken effect establishing requirements and responsibilities for the school related to the use of artificial intelligence (AI).
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas Vela;  
0 Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; Motion Adopted

- 12. Action:Approval of Special Education Contract with Harbottle Law Group**
- Ms. Darrow moved to approve the Special Education Contract with Harbottle Law Group.
  - Mr. Rodriguez seconded.
  - Discussion: Courtney Cook explained that, following the retirement of Debbie Cesario, Hatch & Cesario has transitioned the school's casework to Harbottle Law Group. She noted that there will be no change to the school's legal team.
  - Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas Vela;  
0 Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; Motion Adopted
- 13. Action:Approval of i-Ready Contract**
- Ms. Araiza moved to approve the i-Ready contract.
  - Mr. Rodriguez seconded.
  - Discussion: Jared McLeod explained that we utilize i-Ready as a tool to measure student academic achievement.
  - Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas Vela;  
0 Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; Motion Adopted
- 14. Action:Approval of Revised 188 Salary Schedule**
- Ms. Darrow moved to approve the revised 188 Salary Schedule.
  - Mr. Rodriguez seconded.
  - Discussion: Dr. Virginia Smith explained that an error was identified in the recently approved Salary Schedule. She noted that the revised schedules contain the correct information and confirmed that all employees were paid correctly.
  - Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas Vela;  
0 Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; Motion Adopted
- 15. Action:Approval of Unaudited Actuals**
- Mr. Rodriguez moved to approve the Unaudited Actuals.
  - Ms. Darrow seconded.
  - Discussion: Trevor Johnson reviewed the Unaudited Actuals and explained any differences between projections and actual revenues and expenditures.
  - Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas Vela;  
0 Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; Motion Adopted
- 16. Action:Approval of the Annual Prop 28 Report**
- Ms. Vargas moved to approve the Annual Prop 28 Report.
  - Mr. Rodriguez seconded.

- Discussion: Trevor Johnson reviewed the annual Proposition 28 report, which details the use of funding provided for arts and music education.
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas Vela;  
0 Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; Motion Adopted

**17. Action:Approval of Supplemental Pay Agreement Form Schedule for 2026-27**

- Mr. Rodriguez moved to approve the Supplemental Pay Agreement Form Schedule for 2026-27.
- Ms. Darrow seconded.
- Discussion: Trevor Johnson reviewed the positions and projects that are paid via the Supplemental Pay Agreement.
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas Vela;  
0 Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; Motion Adopted

**18. Action:Approval to Piggyback Hemet Unified School District Bid # PUR2026-01**

- Ms. Vargas moved to approve the Piggyback agreement with Hemet Unified School District Bid # PUR2026-01.
- Ms. Darrow seconded.
- Discussion: Trevor Johnson explained that the agreement will allow the school to receive the same pricing as Hemet Unified School District through a recent competitive bidding process for school furniture and supplies.
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas Vela;  
0Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; Motion Adopted

**19. Action:Approval to Piggyback Kern County Superintendent of Schools / PEPPM ContractBid #546422**

- Ms. Vargas moved to approve the Piggyback agreement with Kern County Superintendent of Schools / PEPPM Contract Bid #546422.
- Ms. Darrow seconded.
- Discussion: Trevor Johnson explained that the agreement will allow the school to receive the same pricing as Kern County Superintendent of Schools through a recent competitive bidding process for school furniture and supplies.
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas Vela;  
0 Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; Motion Adopted

**20. Action:Approval of Longevity Bonuses presented at Ignite!**

- Ms. Darrow moved to approve the Longevity Bonuses presented at Ignite!
- Ms. Vargas seconded.
- Discussion: Trevor Johnson explained that longevity bonuses are paid to individuals who reach longevity milestones.

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

21.

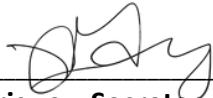
**BoardComments**

- Ms. Darrow: I am interested in the school tours and look forward

22.

**Action: Motion to Adjourn the Meeting**

- Ms. Vargas moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:06 a.m.
- Ms. Darrow seconded.
- Vote: 6 Ayes: Araiza, Darrow, Dauber, Rodriguez, Vargas Vela;  
0 Noes; 1 Absent: Schneider; Motion Adopted



---

Jason Rodriguez, Secretary

09/10/2026

---

Date