

APPROVED

# Desert Sands Charter High School

## Minutes

### Regular Board Meeting

Operated by Desert Sands Public Charter, Inc., A California NonProfit  
Public Benefit Corporation

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**Date and Time**

Wednesday March 8, 2023 at 3:30 PM

**Location**

Meeting Location: 177 Holston Drive, Lancaster, CA 93535

**Or Join Using the Meeting Link:**

[https://teams.microsoft.com/dl/launcher/launcher.html?url=%2F\\_%23%2F%2Fmeetup-join%2F19%3Ameeting\\_MG1zYjBIN2MtNWE1Mi00YmFILWEwMTYtODU4YmNmMjg2NDA0%40thread.v2%2F0%3Fcontext%3D%257b%2522Tid%2522%253a%2522c33f6d28-3425-42a7-8827-d21f10bb2e83%2522%252c%2522Oid%2522%253a%25224e4cd601-0d23-44be-8261-73cdf2e9f610%2522%257d%26anon%3Dtrue&type=meetup-join&deeplinkId=1bee50f2-565f-4528-95d3-f0ca2bf30bdb&directDI=true&msLaunch=true&enableMobilePage=true&suppressPrompt=true](https://teams.microsoft.com/dl/launcher/launcher.html?url=%2F_%23%2F%2Fmeetup-join%2F19%3Ameeting_MG1zYjBIN2MtNWE1Mi00YmFILWEwMTYtODU4YmNmMjg2NDA0%40thread.v2%2F0%3Fcontext%3D%257b%2522Tid%2522%253a%2522c33f6d28-3425-42a7-8827-d21f10bb2e83%2522%252c%2522Oid%2522%253a%25224e4cd601-0d23-44be-8261-73cdf2e9f610%2522%257d%26anon%3Dtrue&type=meetup-join&deeplinkId=1bee50f2-565f-4528-95d3-f0ca2bf30bdb&directDI=true&msLaunch=true&enableMobilePage=true&suppressPrompt=true)

**Or Call in for audio only:**

Conference Line (657) 207-0015 Code: 441 007 61#

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**MEETING LOGISTICS**

The public is encouraged to participate in the meeting in person, or by dialing the conference line or clicking the weblink listed on the posted agenda. The public may submit written comments to the Board by emailing [publiccomments@dschs.org](mailto:publiccomments@dschs.org). The public may also provide comments during the "Public Comment" section of the meeting agenda.

**REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION WILL BE PROVIDED FOR ANY INDIVIDUAL WITH A DISABILITY**

Please see the "Accommodations" notice below.

**REMINDER**

As required by state law (SB 126), this meeting will be audio recorded and posted on the charter school's website.

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**Directors Present**

Dana Clark, James Lott, Marvin D. Smith, Michael R Adams, Ruth Escarcega Newell

**Directors Absent**

*None*

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## I. Opening Items

### A. Call the Meeting to Order

Board President Adams read aloud the notices regarding meeting logistics, accommodations and audio recording.

Michael R Adams called a meeting of the board of directors of Desert Sands Charter High School to order on Wednesday Mar 8, 2023 at 3:30 PM.

### B. Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum

Board President Adams introduced Vanessa Mendoza, who performed a roll call of the learning center locations that joined the meeting via a two-way teleconference line.

### C. Pledge of Allegiance

Board Secretary Newell led the pledge of allegiance.

### D. Staff Introductions

Jeff Brown, CEO

Jeri Vincent, Corporate Secretary

Taera Childers, Area Superintendent

Mary Reagan, Principal

Jenny Bonilla, Principal

Theresa McCafferty, Teacher

Bill Thompson, Legal Counsel

Guita Sharifi, CFO, LLAC

Michelle Lopez, Legal Counsel, LLAC

### E. Approve Agenda for the March 8, 2023, Regular Public Meeting of the Board of Directors

Ruth Escarcega Newell made a motion to approve Agenda for the March 8, 2023, Regular Public Meeting of the Board of Directors.

James Lott seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

#### Roll Call

Ruth Escarcega Newell Aye

Dana Clark Aye

Michael R Adams Aye

James Lott Aye

Marvin D. Smith Aye

### F. Approve Minutes of the February 1, 2023, Regular Public Meeting of the Board of Directors

Dana Clark made a motion to approve the minutes from Regular Board Meeting on 02-01-23.

Marvin D. Smith seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

#### Roll Call

Marvin D. Smith Aye

Michael R Adams Aye

Ruth Escarcega Newell Aye

James Lott Aye

Dana Clark Aye

## **II. Consent Agenda**

### **A. Consent Agenda Items**

1. The Board will be asked to approve the 2023-2024 Parent Student Handbook
2. The Board will be asked to approve the 2023-2024 School Calendar

Board President Adams announced the consent agenda items and asked if any member would like to discuss any of the agenda items for action separately. Hearing none, Board President Adams asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda items.

James Lott made a motion to approve the consent agenda items.

Dana Clark seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

#### **Roll Call**

Marvin D. Smith	Aye
James Lott	Aye
Ruth Escarcega Newell	Aye
Dana Clark	Aye
Michael R Adams	Aye

## **III. Public Comment**

### **A. Public Comment**

Board President Adams read the following announcement for members of the public:

At this time, members of the public may address the Board on any item within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board, whether or not the item is on the agenda. The time allotted per presentation will not exceed three (3) minutes, unless a member of the public utilizes a translator, in which case the time allotted will not exceed six (6) minutes. In accordance with the Brown Act, no action may occur at this time, but it is the Board's prerogative to hold a brief discussion, provide information to the public, provide direction to staff, or schedule the matter for a future meeting.

Board President Adams asked if there were any members of the public who wished to offer public comment. There were no members of the public who offered public comment or submitted written comment.

## **IV. School Reports and Information**

### **A. Area Superintendent Update**

Taera Childers greeted the board and informed them state testing is currently in process at the learning centers. The centers recently administered the Physical Fitness Test to 9th graders and are currently testing English Learner students with the required ELPAC test. Staff and students are also preparing for the CAASPP assessments, which will begin later this month, as well as NWEA assessments to gauge student learning. Ms. Childers thanked the board for their support.

Board President Adams thanked Ms. Childers for her update.

### **B. Principal Update**

Jenny Bonilla greeted the board and presented the following topics:

- Fall Student Program Highlights:
  - Kewanis “Key” Club to provide community service projects. Students made blankets for Project Linus, an organization that provides handmade blankets to children who are ill, traumatized, or who are in need of help.
  - Griffin Gamerz is a group of students that enjoy playing video games, but also come together to learn life skills and receive counselor programming through the gaming experience.
  - Sports Clinics for students actively engaged in sports.
- H.O.P.E. program: The school's H.O.P.E. committee is run by the school's Social Workers and various staff who mentor and plan events and workshops for the students. The committee helps provide resources, community referrals, and supplies such as bus passes, car seats and diapers for students. The school is currently remodeling the H.O.P.E. classroom to create a more safe and comfortable environment for parenting students and their children.
- January 28: Black College Expo at the Los Angeles Convention Center. Six students received admission on the spot.
- January: Experiential learning field trip to explore a career in Crime Scene Investigation held in Las Vegas.
- February: Students attended a college tour in Northern California.
- End of February: Students attended a Black History and Culture trip focused on civil rights, awareness, justice, and embracing the legacy of Black Americans.
- Dual Enrollment Fall Semester Update: 47 students are enrolled for Spring semester.
- FAFSA Workshops: The Counseling Department is providing multiple FAFSA workshops and college and career related workshops for students.
- WASC Update: The school completed a successful mid-cycle WASC Committee visit in February.
- State Testing: The school recently completed the Physical Fitness Test, has begun ELPAC testing and is preparing for the upcoming CAASPP testing.
- Upcoming Events:
  - Antelope Valley College: Senior Success kick-off for students to visit Antelope Valley College.
  - Spring Break recess, Student Awards Ceremony, Parent-Teacher Conferences and Spring Graduation.
- Metrics: Average student utilization year-to-date is 86.34%, average student credit completion is 2.69 credits, current enrollment is 682 students, and the year-to-date one-year graduation cohort rate is 64.71%.
- Academics and Post Secondary:
  - NWEA ELA and Math testing scores showed 49.83% of students tested in the 1st-5th grade math level and 38.96% of students tested in the 6th-8th grade math level with only 11.21% testing in the 9th-12th grade math level. In ELA, 40% of students tested at the 1st-5th grade level, 22.76% tested at the 6th-8th grade levels, and 37.23% tested at the 9th-12th grade levels.
  - Student support: 5 math tutors; additional Math180 and Algebra Intensive Small Group instruction courses; math and English departments are engaging in subject matter content forums; and regional PLCs to review both curriculum and assessment data to inform best practices.
  - College and Career Indicator: All students have access to opportunities to explore their post-secondary goals and interests and the school is noticing an increase in dual enrollment courses; career and technical education pathways workshops are available to all students.
- Highlights: Desert Sands Charter High School has been nominated as AV's Best Public School of the Year!

Ms. Bonilla introduced Ms. McCafferty, Teacher, who shared her background and role at the school. Ms McCafferty then introduced a student speaker who shared that she has been

attending the school to expand her career opportunities and has a dream to become a labor and delivery nurse.

Board Secretary Newell thanked the student and wished her good luck with the rest of the school year.

#### **C. Legislative Update**

Bill Thompson directed the board to the legislative update summary for the 2022-23 school year located in their board packet. Mr. Thompson informed the board LLAC monitors all proposed and approved legislation for the school and works closely with the school leaders on legislative changes. Mr. Thompson then introduced Michelle Lopez, who reviewed several noteworthy and applicable laws including AB 748, AB 185, AB 58, AB 452, SB 906, AB 2158, AB 2449 and SB 1100. Ms. Lopez recommended the board review the legislative summary and to reach out with any questions.

Mr. Thompson then provided the board with an update of the ongoing efforts of the LLAC External Affairs division.

Board President Adams thanked Ms. Lopez and Mr. Thompson for their updates.

#### **D. Finance Update**

Guita Sharifi directed the board to the financial update report for the Hanmi Bank Rotating Line of Credit (RLOC) and LLAC promissory note updates as of January 31, 2023. Ms. Sharifi reviewed the Hanmi RLOC current interest rate of 8.25%, which represents an increase from the previous RLOC of 7.5%, the expiration date, the current RLOC withdrawal amount, and the RLOC covenants ratios. Ms. Sharifi then reviewed the LLAC promissory loan balance, cumulative borrowing, available balance, and current interest rate of 4%.

Board President Adams thanked Ms. Sharifi.

#### **E. California Dashboard Report**

Taera Childers greeted the board and reminded the board the school is currently certified as a Dashboard Alternative Schools Status (DASS) school and provided an accountability update for the school. Ms. Childers explained the California School Dashboard is one part of California's comprehensive accountability system for schools, districts, and county offices of education that reports performance and progress in 13 different areas (six state indicators and seven local indicators). Each area reflects the priorities of California's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and the metrics required by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Ms. Childers informed the board this is the first Dashboard released since the pandemic and then reviewed the status levels for the school. Ms. Childers discussed the graduation rate listed on the Dashboard for the school year 2021-22 compared to the school's internal one-year graduation cohort rate. Ms. Childers explained this percentage includes fourth-year graduates from the Class of 2022 as well as fifth-year graduates from the Class of 2021. On July 27, 2022, the US Department of Education (ED) denied California's waiver request that would allow for the continued use of modified methods for calculating the Academic and Graduation Rate indicators. As a result of this waiver denial, the 2022 Dashboard will be the first Dashboard without any modified methods applied to state indicators and DASS schools will be treated the same as all other schools on the Dashboard. Previously, DASS schools were able to measure their graduation rate using a one-year cohort rather than a 4-year cohort. Ms. Childers stated the school's internal one-year cohort rate is 86.44%.

Board President Adams thanked Ms. Childers for her report.

Board Secretary Newell asked how often the board will see the Dashboard report. Ms. Childers informed the board the Dashboard report is updated once a year.

#### **F.**

### **Current Vendor List**

Taera Childers directed the board to the current vendor list located in their board packet. Ms. Childers explained this is a list of all vendors from July 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022, includes a brief description of services, and includes vendors who provide varying services including professional development, technology, health care benefits, etc. Ms. Childers reminded the board this information is provided bi-annually, and she reviewed the list for accuracy. Ms. Childers then requested the board to review the list for any potential conflicts of interest and to reach out to Ms. Childers or legal counsel for any questions.

Board Member Smith asked why the City of Palmdale is on the list and not the City of Lancaster. Ms. Childers discussed the partnerships with the city and the merge of the city councils.

Board President Adams thanked Ms. Childers.

### **G. 2022-2023 Board Meeting Dates**

Board President Adams directed the board to the updated 2022-2023 regular board meeting calendar located in their board packet and requested the board to review the meeting dates, times, and meeting locations.

## **V. Action Items**

### **A. The Board will be asked to approve the Charter School's renewal application and re-certification for Dashboard Alternative School Status**

Taera Childers directed the board to the letter enclosed in their board packet and explained that as a Dashboard Alternative Schools Status (DASS) program, the school must re-certify its DASS status every three years. To be eligible for DASS, charter schools must have an unduplicated count of at least 70 percent of their total enrollment comprised of high-risk students, obtain approval from the Charter School Board certifying the school meets the DASS criteria, and send notification to the authorizing governing board. Ms. Childers then explained the school has met the threshold for qualifying for DASS recertification with an unduplicated student population of 77.0%. Ms. Childers recommended the board approve the school's renewal application and re-certification for Dashboard Alternative School Status. Board Member Smith inquired about a disparity in the foster youth percentages, as well as a difference in the total student population and the ADA. Ms. Childers explained to the board the differences between the total student population and ADA. Additionally, Ms. Childers acknowledged the disparity in the foster youth percentages and discussed the correction with the board.

Board President Adams thanked Ms. Childers and requested a motion.

Ruth Escarcega Newell made a motion to approve the Charter School's renewal application and re-certification for Dashboard Alternative School Status.

James Lott seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

#### **Roll Call**

James Lott	Aye
Dana Clark	Aye
Ruth Escarcega Newell	Aye
Marvin D. Smith	Aye
Michael R Adams	Aye

### **B. The Board will be asked to approve the revised Charter School Accounting Manual**

Guita Sharifi directed the board to the summary page overview of the recommended changes to the Charter School Accounting Manual included in the board packet. Ms. Sharifi explained the changes include updates to that table of contents, grammatical and spelling corrections, and the following recommended revisions:

- Page 99: Board Member Travel Reimbursement Policy added.
- Page 106: Coronavirus Pandemic addition removed as the pandemic ended March 16. Verbiage adjusted to reflect remote work rather than during a pandemic. Addition of ACH procedure details.
- Pages 106-107: Check signing authority is now always given to three individuals, rather than “at least three individuals.” Additional basic grammar and verbiage corrections.
- Page 115: Pandemic regulations removed from Check Signing processes and replaced with remote work regulations.

Ms. Sharifi then recommended the board approve the revised Charter School Accounting Manual.

Board President Adams thanked Ms. Sharifi and requested a motion.

Dana Clark made a motion to approve the revised Charter School Accounting Manual.

Marvin D. Smith seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

Ruth Escarcega Newell	Aye
Marvin D. Smith	Aye
Dana Clark	Aye
Michael R Adams	Aye
James Lott	Aye

**C. The Board will be asked to approve the Second Interim Report and the Revised Budget for the 2022-2023 school year**

Guita Sharifi directed the board to the Second Interim Report and revised budget for the 2022-23 school year and explained that the purpose of the report is to provide a financial overview of the school after the first 7 months of operations, from July 1, 2022 through January 31, 2023 actuals, and projected budget to June 2023 year-end. The report categories include the original budget, revised budget, actuals to date, projected year-end totals, projected year-end reserves, and Average Daily Attendance (ADA). Ms. Sharifi reviewed the ADA, expenditures, revenue, and projected reserves, and highlighted the following areas:

- The school originally budgeted a P2 ADA of 1,607, and the school is currently projecting a funding P2 ADA of 1,637.
- The school's revenue projections adjustments are primarily from changes in projected ADA and a reduction of approximately 33% in the Arts and Music Block Grant.
- LCFF, federal revenue, other state revenue, and other local revenue projections.
- Projected total expenditures of \$30.6M, which is an increase of \$5.5M compared to the original budget due to an increase in most spending categories due to the implementation of services related to the one-time restricted grants and an expansion of existing instructional spending due to the increase in projected ADA.

Finally, Ms. Sharifi reviewed the school's ending fund balance and restricted reserves and asked the board for input and questions.

Board President Adams thanked Ms. Sharifi and requested a motion.

James Lott made a motion to approve the Second Interim Report and the Revised Budget for the 2022-2023 school year.

Marvin D. Smith seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

Marvin D. Smith	Aye
Dana Clark	Aye
James Lott	Aye
Ruth Escarcega Newell	Aye
Michael R Adams	Aye

**D. The Board will be asked to approve using the auditing firm Wilkinson, Hadley & King & Co., LLP for the 2022-2023 audit**

Guita Sharifi directed the board to the proposal presented by Wilkinson Hadley King & Co. to prepare the school's June 30, 2023 annual audit. Ms. Sharifi reminded the board that the Wilkinson Hadley King & Co. CPA firm is on the state's approved auditor list and is currently preparing the 2021 Form 990 Federal Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax. Ms. Sharifi recommended the board approve the engagement letter with Wilkinson Hadley King & Co.

Board President Adams thanked Ms. Sharifi and requested a motion.

Ruth Escarcega Newell made a motion to approve using the auditing firm Wilkinson, Hadley & King & Co., LLP for the 2022-2023 audit.

Dana Clark seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

James Lott	Aye
Michael R Adams	Aye
Dana Clark	Aye
Marvin D. Smith	Aye
Ruth Escarcega Newell	Aye

**E. The Board will be asked to approve the Board Resolution Approving Board Stipends, increasing the board member stipend from \$450 to \$500 for each board member in attendance at a board meeting**

Bill Thompson directed the board to the board resolution approving an increase in board stipends from \$450 per board meeting to \$500 per board meeting for each board member in attendance. Mr. Thompson explained the reasonable \$50 increase takes into consideration the additional board member responsibilities, time requirements, additional participation required at school events, and the overall cost of living increase. Mr. Thompson recommended the board approve the Board Resolution Approving Board Stipends.

Board President Adams thanked Mr. Thompson and requested a motion.

Ruth Escarcega Newell made a motion to approve the Board Resolution Approving Board Stipends, increasing the board member stipend from \$450 to \$500 for each board member in attendance at a board meeting.

Dana Clark seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

Dana Clark	Aye
Marvin D. Smith	Aye
Ruth Escarcega Newell	Aye
James Lott	Aye
Michael R Adams	Aye

**VI. Additional Corporate Officers and Board Members' Observations and Comments**

**A. Observations and Comments**

Jeff Brown thanked the board and expressed his excitement about being back to meeting in-person. Mr. Brown thanked Ms. Childers for her presentations. He thanked Ms. Bonilla for her report and praised her hard work and dedication to the students. Mr. Brown also thanked the student for sharing her experience. Additionally, Mr. Brown commented on the importance of offering sports and the HOPE program. Lastly, he thanked Ms. McCafferty for her dedication.

Jeri Vincent agreed with Mr. Brown's comprehensive comments. She applauded the six students who were accepted into college at the college fair. She also praised the dual enrollment program, and thanked everyone for serving the students. Lastly, Ms. Vincent thanked the staff for their dedication.

Board Member Smith discussed a commercial regarding grants for employers, and asked if the school had looked into it. Ms. Vincent informed the board she would check with Ms. Sharifi and would look into it further.

## VII. Closed Session

### A. Adjourn open public Board meeting to go into closed session

1. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL— EXISTING LITIGATION (Government Code section 54956.9(d)(1), Name of Case: Selena Villegas vs. Desert Sands Public Charter, Inc. et al., Los Angeles County Superior Court Case No. 22STCV24453
2. PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION, (Gov. Code section 54957(b) (1).) Title: Area Superintendent

James Lott made a motion to adjourn open public Board meeting to go into closed session. Marvin D. Smith seconded the motion.  
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

#### Roll Call

Michael R Adams	Aye
Dana Clark	Aye
James Lott	Aye
Ruth Escarcega Newell	Aye
Marvin D. Smith	Aye

### B. Adjourn closed session and reconvene to open public Board meeting

Ruth Escarcega Newell made a motion to adjourn closed session and reconvene to open public Board meeting.  
James Lott seconded the motion.  
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

#### Roll Call

Michael R Adams	Aye
Marvin D. Smith	Aye
Dana Clark	Aye
James Lott	Aye
Ruth Escarcega Newell	Aye

### C. Report of action taken or recommendations made in closed session, if any

Board President Adams stated no action was taken in closed session for the following:

1. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL— EXISTING LITIGATION (Government Code section 54956.9(d)(1), Name of Case: Selena Villegas vs. Desert Sands Public Charter, Inc. et al., Los Angeles County Superior Court Case No. 22STCV24453
2. PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION, (Gov. Code section 54957(b) (1.) Title: Area Superintendent

### **VIII. Closing Items**

#### **A. Next Regular Board Meeting Date: April 24, 2023, 3:30pm**

#### **B. Adjourn Meeting**

Ruth Escarcega Newell made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Dana Clark seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

#### **Roll Call**

Marvin D. Smith      Aye

Michael R Adams      Aye

James Lott      Aye

Dana Clark      Aye

Ruth Escarcega Newell Aye

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 4:51 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Ruth Escarcega Newell

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**Accommodations.** All meetings of the Board of Directors are held in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Requests for disability-related modifications or accommodations, or translation services, in order to enable all individuals to participate in the Charter School's open and public meetings shall be made by contacting Soliman Villapando at (661) 272-1225 at least twenty four (24) hours before the scheduled meeting.

**Non-Discrimination.** The Charter School prohibits discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying based on the actual or perceived characteristics of disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, national origin, ancestry, race or ethnicity, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, immigration status, potential or actual parental, family or marital status, age, or association with an individual who has any of the aforementioned characteristics, or any other basis protected by federal, state or local law.

**Public Documents.** To request documents provided to a majority of the governing board regarding an open session item on this agenda, please send an email request to [publiccomments@dschs.org](mailto:publiccomments@dschs.org). Documents are also available for public inspection at the Meeting Location noted on this agenda.