

APPROVED

Desert Sands Charter High School

Minutes

Regular Board Meeting

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

Date and Time

Tuesday March 4, 2025 at 3:30 PM

Location

Meeting Location: 177 Holston Drive, Lancaster, CA 93535

Microsoft Teams

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 217 574 635 672

Passcode: s2rp3an2

Dial in by phone

[+1 657-207-0015,,161243313#](#)

Phone conference ID: 161 243 313#

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. 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.

Directors Present

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

Directors Absent

None

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 Tuesday Mar 4, 2025 at 3:30 PM.

B. Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum

Board President Adams performed a board member roll call, and a quorum was established.

Board President Adams then introduced Jillian Rojas, 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 Member Smith led the pledge of allegiance.

D. Staff Introductions

Jeff Brown, CEO

Jeri Vincent, Corporate Secretary

Shellie Hanes, Superintendent

Darin Bower, COO

Victor Nardiello, Area Superintendent

Jenny Bonilla, Principal

Julee Dudley, Learning Center Coordinator

Alex Morris, Federal and State Programs Coordinator

Bill Thompson, Legal Counsel

Guita Sharifi, CFO, LLAC

E. Approve Agenda for the March 4, 2024, Regular Public Meeting of the Board of Directors

The date on the agenda was inadvertently written as 2024. The board approved the agenda for March 4, 2025.

Marvin D. Smith made a motion to approve Agenda for the March 4, 2025, Regular Public Meeting of the Board of Directors.

James Lott seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

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

F. Approve Minutes of the December 5, 2024, Regular Public Meeting of the Board of Directors

Ruth Escarcega Newell made a motion to approve the minutes from Regular Board Meeting on 12-05-24.

Dana Clark seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

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

II. Consent Agenda

A. Consent Agenda Items

Board President announced the following consent agenda items:

1. The Board will be asked to review and approve the School Accountability Report Card The E-Rate
2. The Board will be asked to approve the 2025-2026 School Calendar
3. The Board will be asked to approve the 2025-2026 Employee Handbook

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

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

Ruth Escarcega Newell seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

Michael R Adams	Aye
James Lott	Aye
Ruth Escarcega Newell	Aye

Roll Call

Dana Clark	Aye
Marvin D. Smith	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. Finance Update

Guita Sharifi directed the board to the Hanmi Bank Revolving Line of Credit (RLOC) financial update included in the board packet and reviewed the school's credit amount including the current interest rate of 8.0%, which is lower than the previous RLOC update provided to the board. Ms. Sharifi then reviewed the expiration date, the current RLOC withdrawal amount, and the RLOC covenants ratios.

Ms. Sharifi also provided the board with an update on the school's line of credit with LLAC, including the current interest rate of 6% and the current balance.

Mr. Sharifi then discussed the State's budget, potential federal budget cuts, and anticipated impacts on the school's budget.

Board President Adams thanked Ms. Sharifi for her update.

B. Area Superintendent Update

Victor Nardiello greeted the board and discussed the school's learning period 7 data, including Average Daily Attendance (ADA), enrollment, overall credit completion, core credit completion, and the one-year graduation cohort.

Board President Adams thanked Mr. Nardiello for his update.

C.

Principal Update

Jenny Bonilla greeted the board and discussed student academic progress, specifically in the areas of credit completion and mathematics.

Next, Julee Dudley shared about recent learning center events and opportunities, including the school's CARE Team, awards night, open house, Paint with Me event, senior week, parent meetings, spirit week, bingo night, family financial literacy night, and upcoming experiential learning opportunities.

Board President Adams thanked Ms. Bonilla and Ms. Dudley for their presentations.

D. California Dashboard Report

Alex Morris greeted the board and 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 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).

Mr. Morris then provided a detailed summary of the school's academic performance, as well as the graduation and suspension rates included in the Dashboard report.

Board President Adams thanked Mr. Morris for his report.

V. Action Items

A. The Board will be asked to approve the amended Conflict of Interest Policy

Bill Thompson informed the board the Conflict of Interest Policy has been revised to better align with state preferences. He shared key updates that were made to the policy.

Board President Adams thanked Mr. Thompson and asked for a motion.

Ruth Escarcega Newell made a motion to approve the amended Conflict of Interest Policy.

James Lott seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

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

B. The Board will be asked to approve the Second Interim Report and the Revised Budget for the 2024-2025 school year

Guita Sharifi directed the board to the Second Interim Report and revised budget for the 2024-2025 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, 2024 through January 31, 2025 actuals, and projected budget to June 2025 year-end. The report categories include the original budget, revised budget, actuals to date, projected year-end totals, projected year-end reserves, and ADA.

Ms. Sharifi then reviewed the ADA, expenditures, revenue, and projected reserves, and highlighted the following areas:

- The school budgeted a P2 ADA of 2,046, and the school is currently projecting a funding P2 ADA of 1,841, showing a decrease of 205 ADA.
- The school is projecting total revenue of \$34.2M, which is lower than the school's original budget, but slightly higher than the prior budget revision.
- LCFF projected revenue is \$30.3M, similar level compared to the original budget.
- Federal Revenue shows an increase of \$40K, from \$282K to \$322K.
- Other State revenue shows a decrease from \$3M to \$2.8M.
- Other local revenue is projected at \$730K, coming from E-Rate reimbursements, vendor refunds, property tax refunds, and collection of State unclaimed funds.
- Projected total expenditures of \$33.8M, which is a decrease of \$2.7M compared to the original budget.

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

Board President Adams thanked Ms. Sharifi and asked for a motion.

Dana Clark made a motion to approve the Second Interim Report and the Revised Budget for the 2024-2025 school year.

Ruth Escarcega Newell seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

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

C. 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. She then reviewed the proposed changes and recommended the board approve the revised Accounting Manual.

Board President thanked Ms. Sharifi and asked for 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

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

D. The Board will be asked to approve using the auditing firm Wilkinson, Hadley & King & Co., LLP for the 2024-2025 audit

Guita Sharifi directed the board to the proposal presented by Wilkinson Hadley King & Co. to prepare the school's June 30, 2025 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 a very reputable company. She then reviewed their fee and recommended the board approve the engagement letter with Wilkinson Hadley King & Co.

Board President Adams thanked Ms. Sharifi and asked for a motion.

Dana Clark made a motion to approve using the auditing firm Wilkinson, Hadley & King & Co., LLP for the 2024-2025 audit.

James Lott seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

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

E. The Board will be asked to approve the revised Committed Funds Plan for the school

Victor Nardiello directed the board to the Committed Funds Plan located in their packet and discussed the school's current reserve amount in excess of the recommended maximum 20% reserve amount. Mr. Nardiello explained the establishment and funding of financial reserves is important to the long-term health and stability of the school, the ability to manage cash flow, and protect the school from unforeseen revenue shortfalls, unexpected costs, and economic uncertainties. Financial reserves also help a charter school save for large purchases and reduce the cost of borrowing money. Mr. Nardiello then explained that in order to demonstrate that we are good stewards of public funds, the Committed Funds Plan has been updated to reflect the school's current needs for projects, programs, and/or resources that directly benefit the students. Mr. Nardiello then reviewed the updated Committed Funds Plan for the amount of reserves in excess of the recommended 20% reserve amount.

Board President Adams thanked Mr. Nardiello and asked for a motion.

Marvin D. Smith made a motion to approve the revised Committed Funds Plan for the school.

Ruth Escarcega Newell 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

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

A. Observations and Comments

Jeff Brown thanked the staff for their hard work and dedication.

The board and staff engaged in a discussion about scholarships, specifically to Antelope Valley College.

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
(Government Code section 54957(b)(1).)

Title: Superintendent

Ruth Escarcega Newell made a motion to adjourn open public Board meeting to go into closed session.

Dana Clark seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

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

Marvin D. Smith seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

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

(Government Code section 54957(b)(1).)

Title: Superintendent

VIII. Closing Items

A. Next Regular Board Meeting Date: April 10, 2025, 3:30pm

B. Adjourn Meeting

Dana Clark made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

James Lott seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

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

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 4:29 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ruth Escarcega Newell

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. Documents are also available for public inspection at the Meeting Location noted on this agenda.