

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

Tuesday March 3, 2026 at 3:30 PM

#### Location

**Meeting Location:** 177 Holston Drive, Lancaster, CA 93535

#### Microsoft Teams

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 288 220 470 788 1

Passcode: xi36m4U7

#### Dial in by phone

[+1 657-207-0015,,974672734#](#)

Phone conference ID: 974 672 734#

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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

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

**Directors Absent**

Michael Adams

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**I. Opening Items**

**A. Call the Meeting to Order**

Board Secretary Newell read aloud the notices regarding meeting logistics, accommodations and audio recording.

Ruth Escarcega Newell called a meeting of the board of directors of Desert Sands Charter High School to order on Tuesday Mar 3, 2026 at 3:30 PM.

**B. Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum**

Board Secretary Newell performed a board member roll call, and a quorum was established.

Board President Adams attended the meeting remotely but did not participate or vote.

Board Secretary Newell then 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

Shellie Hanes, Superintendent

Victor Nardiello, Area Superintendent

Alex Morris, Federal and State Programs Coordinator

Bill Thompson, Legal Counsel

Guita Sharifi, CFO, LLAC

**E. Approve Agenda for the March 3, 2026, Regular Public Meeting of the Board of Directors**

Dana Clark made a motion to approve Agenda for the March 3, 2026, Regular Public Meeting of the Board of Directors.

James Lott seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

Michael Adams            Absent

Marvin D. Smith         Aye

**Roll Call**

Dana Clark                   Aye  
James Lott                   Aye  
Ruth Escarcega Newell Aye

**F. Approve Minutes of the December 9, 2025, Regular Public Meeting of the Board of Directors**

James Lott made a motion to approve the minutes from Regular Board Meeting on 12-09-25.

Marvin D. Smith seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

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

**II. Consent Agenda**

**A. Consent Agenda Items**

Board Secretary Newell announced the following consent agenda items:

1. The 2026-2027 School Calendar
2. The School Accountability Report Card
3. The Student AI Use, Ethics, and Security Policy
4. The revised Uniform Complaint Policy and Procedures

Board Secretary Newell then asked if any member would like to discuss any of the agenda items for action separately. Hearing none, Ms. Newell asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda items.

Dana Clark made a motion to approve the consent agenda items.

James Lott seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

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

**III. Public Comment**

**A.**

## **Public Comment**

Board Secretary Newell 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 Secretary Newell 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 7.5%, 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.

Lastly, Ms. Sharifi provided the board with an update on the governor's 26/27 budget and any potential impact on the school's budget.

Board Secretary Newell thanked Ms. Sharifi for her update.

### **B. Area Superintendent Update**

Victor Nardiello greeted the board and discussed the school's Average Daily Attendance (ADA), enrollment, overall credit completion, core credit completion, and the one-year graduation cohort. Mr. Nardiello then provided a presentation on recent learning center events, including senior events and a student awards ceremony.

Board Secretary Newell thanked Mr. Nardiello.

The board and staff discussed changes in enrollment.

### **C. California Dashboard Report**

Alex Morris explained that the California School Dashboard is one part of California's comprehensive accountability system for schools, districts, and county offices of education that reports performance, highlighting achievements, programs, and areas for improvement. 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 then provided a detailed summary of the school's academic performance included in the Dashboard report.

Board Secretary Newell thanked Mr. Morris for his report.

#### **D. Graduation Date**

Board Secretary Newell directed the board to the graduation invitation in their board packet and announced the upcoming graduation date, time, and location.

### **V. Action Items**

#### **A. The Board will be asked to approve the Second Interim Report and the Revised Budget for the 2025-2026 school year**

Guita Sharifi directed the board to the Second Interim Report and revised budget for the 2025-2026 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, 2025 through January 31, 2026 actuals, and projected budget to June 2026 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 1,833, and the school is currently projecting a funding P2 ADA of 1,707.
- The school is projecting total revenue of \$33M, which is lower than the school's original budget.
- LCFF projected revenue is \$29.1M, showing a decrease compared to the original budget.
- Federal Revenue is \$105K, coming from Federal Special Education and shows a slight increase compared to the original budget.
- Other State revenue shows an increase from \$2.9M to \$3.5M, coming from a combination of factors, including an increase in the Arts and Music funding, the addition of the Learning Recovery Block Grant funding, as well as the Student Support and Professional Development Discretionary Block Grant funding.
- Other local revenue shows a projection of \$205K, coming primarily from vendor credits and E-rate refunds.

- Projected total expenditures of \$32.8M, which is a decrease of \$1.4M compared to the original budget. This decrease comes from a reduction in spending on salaries and benefits.

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

Board Secretary Newell thanked Ms. Sharifi. Hearing no additional comments or questions, Secretary Newell asked for a motion.

James Lott made a motion to approve the Second Interim Report and the Revised Budget for the 2025-2026 school year.

Dana Clark seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

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

**B. The Board will be asked to approve using the auditing firm Wilkinson, Hadley & King & Co., LLP for the 2025-2026 audit**

Guita Sharifi directed the board to the proposal presented by Wilkinson Hadley King & Co. to prepare the school's June 30, 2026 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 Secretary Newell thanked Ms. Sharifi. Hearing no additional comments or questions, Secretary Newell asked for a motion.

Marvin D. Smith made a motion to approve using the auditing firm Wilkinson, Hadley & King & Co., LLP for the 2025-2026 audit.

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
Michael Adams	Absent
Dana Clark	Aye

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

**A. Observations and Comments**

Jeff Brown thanked Mr. Nardiello and Mr. Morris for their reports.

Mr. Nardiello expressed his appreciation for the staff's great work.

Board Secretary Newell congratulated the staff on credit completion and graduation.

## VII. Closed Session

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

#### 1. PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

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

Title: Superintendent

Marvin D. Smith made a motion to adjourn open public Board meeting to go into closed session.

James Lott seconded the motion.

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

#### Roll Call

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

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

Dana Clark 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

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

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

Board Secretary Newell stated no action was taken in closed session for the following:

#### 1. PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

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

Title: Superintendent

## VIII. Closing Items

### A.

**Next Regular Board Meeting Date: April 21, 2026, 3:30pm**

**B. Adjourn Meeting**

Dana Clark made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Marvin D. Smith seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

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

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 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.