

RIISING TIDE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

August 17, 2026

Virtual meeting

Narrative Mission Statement: What is the purpose of the school? "...The Rising Tide Charter School provides students with community-based education each day, using the Town of Plymouth as a local yet dynamic textbook which will provide fertile ground for the development of higher-order thinking skills."

Leadership and Governance: "In accordance with MA Charter School Law, the Board of Trustees is ultimately accountable for the school's educational mission, performance and adherence to its Charter."

Call to Order: Laura called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm

In attendance were Laura Stearns Flynn, Chris Talamo, John Polvere, Erin Koh, Tess Goldmann, Jane Moskowitz. Zahra Williams, Kristen Anderseon, and Eric Mello were also present.

Introduction/Welcome to Guests - The Board welcomed Kristen Anderson in her new role as Principal and Assistant Head of School

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes - July 20, 2026 Meeting Minutes - with Board vote
Chris made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from July 20, 2026, John seconded the motion and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Public comment - there was no public comment

School Report

Zahra provided an enrollment update for SY2026-2027. The current expected enrollment is 613 students across the school. With some anticipated withdrawals, the lower-end projection is closer to 604 students. In August, several Upper School families changed their minds about attending. In grades 5–8 the numbers of students are generally in the 90s. Current enrollment in the Upper School by grade is 49 students in 9th grade, 63 in 10th grade, 63 in 11th grade, and 51 in 12th grade. Chris asked about the numbers in the rising 12th grade class. Zahra noted that the senior class has historically been smaller and that 12th grade enrollment has been low for the past several years. The goal is to retain the 63 students currently in the next 12th grade class. Zahra also shared that she participated in a Zoom call with the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association about its retention work. The association is looking to identify a group of charter schools to participate in a 10-school pilot cohort focused on enrollment and retention. RT submitted a commitment to participate and would like to be included in the cohort. The working sessions will provide an opportunity for schools to use current data and strategies to address retention. Joretha Lewis, who previously worked at DESE, is involved in leading the effort. Laura expressed enthusiasm about RT being part of the cohort. Zahra also reported on upcoming dates for the staff with new faculty orientation Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Program leaders met this morning in preparation. Zahra reported that there is a strong draft class of new folks coming in this year. Next week starts all staff days with first aid training, evacuation drills, and professional development. The upcoming dates for students and families include additional windows for families to pick up chromebooks at the school, in advance of new student orientation. The first day of school is September 1st with September 15 and September 16 scheduled for back to school nights for students and families. Laura mentioned that Athletics have also started with a meet the coaches last Thursday and next Monday (8/24) is opening day for athletics.

New Business - Annual Succession Plan Update -Zahra reported that she had spoken with Kristen Anderson about a similar situation to the one she and Michael O'Keefe had arranged for succession for Head of School. Kristen agreed to serve as interim Head of School if needed. Kristen started her role as Principal and Assistant Head of School on July 1 and has already settled in well, learning the RT way and becoming acclimated to the school's culture. This has allowed Zahra to focus more fully on her Head of School responsibilities. Zahra said she has every confidence that Kristen could step into the Head of School role if needed.

Old Business - - Zahra shared an agenda for the retreat with the RT Board and School Leaders on August 21, 2026 . Laura and Zahra have been in touch about the broad areas of focus for the retreat, with an emphasis on student recruitment and retention. The group will talk about the school's "glows"—what RT is doing well—as well as reflect on areas where there are needs or opportunities for improvement. There will also be a lunch with program leaders for those who are able to attend. Laura expressed her excitement about the upcoming retreat.

Financial Matters - Review of July 2026 Financials - with Board Vote

Eric reported that the first month of the fiscal year is complete and the annual audit is underway. The auditors will be at the school this week to finish their field work, and everything is going well so far. The school is also preparing for new staff coming in tomorrow, with HR items to cover as the new employees get started. The school is operating under the budget approved by the Board in April, which projected 585 students at a per-pupil rate of \$21,068. Transportation was budgeted at an 80% reimbursement rate. The actual reimbursement last year was closer to 90%, but the school continues to use the more conservative 80% figure for budgeting purposes. Year-to-date net income is positive and cash balances remain strong. Overall, the school is in a strong financial position. Once the audit is complete, the results are expected to show a significant surplus, due to savings in expenses as well as a higher per-pupil rate. The tuition rate increased by close to 7% over the prior year, which is higher than normal. Eric noted that the school will likely begin the year with a higher enrollment number than what was used in the original budget, somewhere between 604 and 613 students. The final number will resolve sometime in October. Eric reviewed the profit and loss statement. The school has been able to move more of its cash balance into savings accounts to earn higher interest income. Expenses are generally in line with the budget now that the school has hired for the new positions. The school will begin updating the budget once the audit is completed, with the audit results expected in October. A revised budget will be presented to the Board at a future meeting shortly afterward. Eric said the school is starting the year in a strong financial position and is beginning

to look at potential capital purchases. Chris made a motion to accept the July financials, and John seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Subcommittee Reports

Nominating and Governance - Outgoing Head of School's Final Review and Bonus - The Nominating and Governance subcommittee met to review Michael's last goals review. Laura reported that he was his own worst critic. The committee voted to grant him his full bonus. Michael has been spending extra time with the team to help with the Head of School transition. It was noted that for the next head of school search, there is a need for more fleshed out practices and support.

Communications and Advocacy - no report

Finance and Audit

Other business not anticipated by the Chair 24 hours in advance - none

Adjourn - John made the motion to adjourn, the vote was seconded by everyone.