

RIISING TIDE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

July 20, 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 calls the meeting to order at 7:03

Introduction & Welcome to guests - Zahra introduced Kristen Anderson, the new Principle/Head of school. The board welcomed Kristen to the meeting.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes - June 15, 2026 Meeting Minutes - with Board vote Ralph motioned to approve the minutes, John seconded and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment - no public present; no public comment

School Report - 2026-2027 Enrollment Update -Zahra updated the Board on current enrollment projections, with approximately 626 students expected across grades 5–12. She noted that there are some possible withdrawals, so the lower-end estimate could be closer to 605 students. The school has exhausted the waitlist for 5th grade, but still plans to reopen enrollment specifically for 5th grade, with 17 applicants currently in the pool. Laura noted that the enrollment numbers are somewhat higher than they were at this point last year. Laura asked Zahra to discuss a new initiative through the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association. The association is looking to run a pilot program from the fall into the winter, bringing together charter school leaders to work on the ongoing challenges around enrollment and student retention. Zahra noted that homeschooling has become increasingly popular and that charter schools are facing broader challenges related to enrollment and retention. Dr. Lewis has been reaching out to schools to gauge interest, and Rising Tide responded positively to participating in the workshops. Zahra said the timing feels particularly appropriate given that the Board and school leadership have been discussing enrollment and retention challenges for the past year or two. Zahra will update the Board once the school knows whether it has been accepted to participate in the pilot.

New Business - none

Old Business -Zahra reminded the Board that enrollment will be one of the key topics for the upcoming in-person Board and school leadership retreat. The retreat will be held at the school on Friday, August 21, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. While not everyone will be able to attend, most Board members and school leaders are expected to participate. Zahra also noted that school program leaders will be participating in a two-day retreat in the coming days. Those leaders will also attend the August 21 Board retreat, providing an opportunity to continue the work and conversations across both groups.

Financial mattersReview of June 2026 Financials with Board Vote -

Eric provided the year-end financial update and reported that the school ended the fiscal year in a very strong position. Final tuition payments are not known until the end of June, but the school had originally projected a 4% increase over the prior year based on an enrollment projection of 595 students. The final DESE per-pupil rate was higher than expected, resulting in approximately 7.7% more per student than the prior year. Transportation revenue was also stronger than projected. The budget had assumed the school would receive 80% reimbursement, but the school ultimately received approximately 90% of transportation costs. Overall, income came in over budget and revenue was very strong. Expenses were also below budget, in part because of savings on health and dental insurance. Special transportation costs were lower than anticipated, and school lunch expenses were also lower. Administration was over budget due to consulting and legal expenses related to the Head of School search. Eric noted that the school's cash balance remains very strong and that, overall, it was a very good fiscal year. The annual audit begins tomorrow, and there will be some adjustments as part of that process. Looking ahead, Eric noted that the school has a stronger financial floor going into the new fiscal year. Zahra and Eric will review the budget for opportunities to reward returning staff and consider the cost-of-living increase. They will also look at whether there is an opportunity to fill a current staff vacancy. The school will continue to monitor enrollment through the fall and keep a close eye on the first quarter. Additional projections from DESE will also help inform budget decisions. Sean asked whether the school was considering bonuses or increases to base salaries. Eric noted that the school has provided approximately 3% increases over the past three years and that there is interest in increasing salaries, particularly for staff who have been at Rising Tide for a number of years. Increasing base salaries would permanently establish the additional expense in the budget. The Board also discussed setting aside funds for capital improvements and potentially restoring some IT improvements. Maintaining a cushion while making targeted investments would provide a solid financial base for the coming year. Chris thanked Eric and the finance committee for their work and noted that the school's conservative approach to budgeting has served it well. Ralph moved to approve the June 2026 financials. Erin seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Board Subcommittee Reports

Nominating and Governance - scheduled for 7/23 for final review of Michael's goals as Head of School and to begin conversations with Zahra about her goals for the upcoming year.

Communications and Advocacy -

Finance and Audit

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

Adjourn - Sean made the motion to adjourn, Erin seconded, and the vote to adjourn was unanimous.