

RIISING TIDE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

April 27, 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 7:03pm. In attendance were: Laura Stearns Flynn, Chris Talamo, John Polvere, Erin Koh, Ralph Andre, Tess Goldmann, Jane Moskowitz. Amy Norris and Sean Kelly were not present. Also in attendance were Michael O'Keefe, Zahra Williams, and Eric Mello.

Introduction and Welcome to Guests: There were no additional guests.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes: John made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from March 23, 2026; Chirs seconded the motion and the minutes were approved unanimously. Ralph also made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from the Head of School hybrid formal interview on Friday, March 27. Tess seconded the motion and the motion to approve those meeting minutes was approved unanimously.

Public Comment - No public comment.

School Report - Michael O'Keefe reported on enrollment projections for the 2026–2027 school year. The school continues to maintain a sizable waitlist for grades 5–8. Current projections are slightly higher than anticipated, but those numbers are expected to level out. Middle school enrollment is projected at an average of 94 students per grade level, for a total of 376 students. Upper school enrollment remains more difficult to predict. Projections for the incoming 9th grade class range from as high as 80 students to as low as 50. At present, 24 eighth grade students have confirmed they will not return, though additional families may still notify the school of their plans. Current projections estimate 55 students in 9th grade, 55 in 10th grade, 60 in 11th grade, and 50 in 12th grade, for a total projected upper school enrollment of 220 students. Overall projected enrollment for 2027 is 596 students. Although this is a strong number for the start of the year, Michael recommended using a more conservative figure of 585 students for budget planning purposes. The upper school remains in an active enrollment period, with 20 new applicants currently in process. Based on past experience, the school anticipates that approximately half of those applicants may ultimately enroll. Additional enrollment periods are also planned over the summer months. Laura asked whether the school is actively communicating with the 20 current applicants. Michael confirmed that the school is being proactive before the enrollment period closes, including hosting a virtual information event the following evening and reminding prospective families about opportunities to schedule shadow

days and tours. He recognized the importance of reinforcing to prospective students and families that they are welcomed and valued by the school community.

New Business - Eric Mello presented the proposed preliminary FY27 budget. The budget assumes a projected per-pupil reimbursement increase of approximately 4% over the current fiscal year, noting that DESE has in the past, provided higher reimbursement rates than initially projected. Eric also noted that the school historically receives approximately 80% reimbursement, though final figures are not confirmed until the end of the fiscal year when reimbursements are issued. State and federal grants are projected to remain level funded overall; however, the school has been advised to reduce anticipated Title I funding by approximately 10%, or \$10,000–\$11,000, due to state-level reductions. The proposed budget includes: a 3% cost-of-living increase for all staff, a 3% increase in instructional services, a reduction in certain instructional and operational supply expenses compared to the prior year with an Increased operations and maintenance costs. Eric reported that he, Zahra, and Michael reviewed the budget line by line to identify savings opportunities. The school continues to receive favorable interest rates from its banking institution and has begun preliminary discussions with Webster Bank regarding refinancing the school's loan in November. Administration plans to involve John and Sean in those discussions, along with the school's bond attorney. The cash flow projections include approximately \$20,000 allocated for capital purchases, with plans to defer the video camera replacement project in order to limit spending this year. During discussion, Laura asked about reductions reflected in per-pupil services. Mr. Mello explained that the school is working to reduce expenditures on certain health and safety supplies, including disinfectants and wipes. He also noted a \$1,000 increase in art and production expenses and increases to coaching stipends. The school hopes to increase the number of full-time staff members serving as coaches, reducing reliance on outside coaches. The budget also projects approximately \$19,000 in savings in athletic transportation costs. The proposed budget presented a balanced budget with a modest cushion while maintaining positive cash flow projections and meeting bank covenant requirements. Eric noted that approval of the preliminary budget would allow staff contracts to be issued. An updated budget will be presented in October after enrollment and staffing levels for the new school year are finalized. Laura commented that the budget appeared balanced. Ralph moved to approve the preliminary FY27 budget, and John seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business: Under the New Head of School Update, the Board formally congratulated Zahra Williams on signing her contract to serve as the school's new Head of School beginning in July. The board looks forward to working with Ms. Williams.

Financial Matters: Eric Mello presented the March 2026 financial report for Board review. Year-to-date enrollment is projected to end at 595 students, with a projected per-pupil reimbursement rate of \$20,258, anticipating a 5% increase over the previous year. Eric felt confident about the reimbursement projections provided by DESE. Although enrollment is slightly lower than originally projected, the higher per-pupil reimbursement rate is expected to offset the decline. Eric noted that expenses remain under budget and are expected to continue trending favorably through the remainder of the fiscal year. Net income remains positive, and

the school's cash position is healthy. He stated that the school is on track to close another positive fiscal year, helping position the school well financially for the upcoming year. He also discussed a proposed increase in the facilities reimbursement rate, which is incorporated into the tuition calculation. The proposal would increase the facilities rate by \$100 per student and could generate approximately \$60,000 in additional revenue if approved by the state. John moved to approve the March 2026 financial report, and Ralph seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Board SubCommittee reports:

Nominating and Governance: Thanks to Chris Talamo, the chairperson of the Head of School Search Committee. That task is now complete.

Communications and Advocacy: No report.

Finance and Audit - Will be meeting soon and is looking forward to the upcoming refinance of the Webster bank loan.

Executive Session: Erin moved to enter Executive Session to discuss a complaint about a staff member, and Chris seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Zahra Williams, Eric Mello, and Michael O'Keefe remained present for the discussion.

Other business not anticipated by the chair 24 hours in advance - None.

Adjourn - John made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Ralph seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.