

**RIVER CITY SCIENCE ACADEMY
GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
Minutes**

Thursday, December 12, 2024
5:30 pm

Board members present: Mr. Emre Mese, Dr. Sakhavat Mammadov, Mr. Fatih Kurt, Mr. Serkan Dogan

Staff members present: Dr. Dogan Tozoglu, Executive Director; Jason Kurt, Business Manager; Sel Buyuksarac, Parent Representative; Alisher Kuvatov, Director of Academics; Ahmet Temel, Director of Operations and Compliance

Michelle Martinez, Auditor, King&Walker CPA

1. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Mese at 5:40 pm.

2. Public Remarks

There were no public remarks

3. Approval of agenda items

Motion to approve agenda items by Mr. Mese and seconded by Mr. Dogan. Approved unanimously.

4. Approval of last board meeting minutes

Mr. Mese informed the Board that the minutes from the previous meeting had been shared in advance and invited members to provide any corrections or amendments.

Motion to approve the last board meeting minutes by Mr. Mese and seconded by Mr. Kurt. Approved unanimously.

5. Approval of 2023-24 SY single audit

Mrs. Martinez, the auditor, presented the highlights of the 2023-24 Single Audit. She explained that while individual audits for each school had been reported previously, this audit consolidates those results and includes LLC data, as well as reports on bond requirement ratios. She confirmed it was a clean audit with no findings, reflecting strong financial performance across all schools. She highlighted the two reports included at the end of each school's audit:

Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting and Compliance – This report would note any material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in internal controls, if present. Mrs. Martinez confirmed there were no issues to report for any school. Management Letter – Required by the Auditor General, this letter would include any additional findings, suggestions, or comments. Mrs. Martinez confirmed that there were no items to report in this section for any school. Additionally, Mrs. Martinez reported that the debt service coverage ratio stands at 1.56:1.00, and the cash on hand is at 112 days. Both figures exceed the bond threshold criteria. Mr. Mese inquired about how secure the organization is in meeting the bond ratios, especially if revenue were to decrease. Mrs. Martinez assured the Board that the ratios remain strong and that revenue has increased compared to the previous year, driven by higher enrollment with the opening of the new school.

Motion to approve 2023-24 SY single audit by Mr. Mese and seconded by Mr. Kurt. Approved unanimously.

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6. Approval of financials-Midyear budgets

Dr. T. presented the mid-year budgets for each school, based on October survey numbers and updated revenue and expense data. The presentation included the year-to-date budget, the initial budget, and the mid-year budget.

He noted that there were no significant differences between the initial and mid-year budgets. There were some adjustments on the revenue and expense items based on actual midyear numbers. Dr. T. informed the Board that all revenue and expenses are within the expected range of 40% to 50%. However, he explained that some items exceeding 50% were due to upfront payments made during the initial months.

Motion to approve mid-year budgets for each campus and LLC by Mr. Mese and seconded by Mr. Dogan. Approved unanimously.

7. Approval of school improvement plans

Dr. T. reminded the Board that the school performance goals were approved during the previous meeting. He explained that School Improvement Plans (SIPs) are more detailed and comprehensive documents that address each school's most critical needs, based on their needs assessment data. He noted that the plans are developed using the SIMS website, which pre-populates much of the necessary data. Schools then collaborate with their teachers and administrators to establish their SIP goals.

Mr. K., RCSA's Director of Academics, provided a detailed summary of each school's improvement plans and identified goals.

Motion to approve School Improvement Plans by Mr. Mese and seconded by Mr. Kurt. Approved unanimously. Approval of out-of-field teachers

8. Approval of school recognition fund distribution plan

Dr. T. informed the Board that, as an A-rated school, RCSA schools are eligible for the School Recognition Fund. The plan is to use these funds for faculty and staff bonuses, which will be distributed evenly among eligible employees at each of our six campuses, as was done last year.

To qualify for the bonus, an employee must: Have been hired on or before January 8, 2024 (more than half of the school year); Have worked full-time during the 2023-2024 school year; Have worked at one of the six awarded campuses, and Return on a full-time or part-time basis (excluding on-call positions) to one of the six campuses for the 2024-2025 school year.

The bonus amount for eligible faculty and staff members at each school is determined by dividing the total award amount by the total number of eligible employees.

Motion to approve school recognition fund distribution plan by Mr. Mese and seconded by Mr. Kurt. Approved unanimously.

9. Approval of holiday gift card for staff

Mr. Mese informed the Board that, as part of RCSA's tradition, teachers receive a \$100 Amazon gift card during the holiday season. He also encouraged school leadership to explore opportunities to increase this amount in future school years.

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Motion to approve \$100 Amazon gift cards by Mr. Mese and seconded by Mr. Kurt.
Approved unanimously.

10. Approval of parent representative updates

Dr. T. presented an updated parent representative list as there were some staff changes and transitions among campuses.

Motion to approve parent representative updates by Mr. Mese and seconded by Mr. Kurt.
Approved unanimously.

11. Approval of asset disposal

Dr. T. shared the list of asset disposal items, primarily from the Mandarin campus, which consisted mainly of broken student desks, chairs, and tables.

Motion to approve asset disposal by Mr. Mese and seconded by Mr. Dogan. Approved unanimously.

12. Academic updates

Mr. K. delivered a comprehensive presentation to the Board on the academic standings of each RCSA campus, including PM1 and i-Ready data. The presentation highlighted current school performances by grade and school level, as well as comparisons to district and state averages. While the data reflected results from initial assessments, RCSA campuses' performance appeared promising. Mr. K. informed the Board that PM2 and mid-year data would be available soon after the break, and he plans to present a comparison of these results at upcoming meetings. Notably, test scores across RCSA schools were significantly higher than both district and state averages.

13. School updates

Dr. T. provided the board with the following updates:

School Updates and Highlights

The re-enrollment season is about to conclude, and I am pleased to share that we are on track to achieve our usual 95% re-enrollment rate. Additionally, schools have been actively promoting enrollment through open houses and marketing efforts, and the enrollment season for the upcoming school year is already underway.

Our high school recently hosted a High School Shadowing Day for current 8th graders from other campuses. This event was well-received and provided students with valuable insights into the high school experience.

We have also received two notable media coverages: one highlighting our food drive and another featuring our cancer awareness fundraising efforts.

I am truly honored to be featured in Capital Analytics' latest "Spotlight On" article, which reflects not only our collective achievements but also the strength, dedication, and passion that each of you brings to our mission every day.

On December 10th, 2024, RCSA Middle-High was the lucky recipient of 40 fruit trees, generously donated by the Fruit Tree Planting Foundation. The event, attended by many distinguished guests, kicked off the foundation's Florida initiative with us.

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I am thrilled to share that all RCSA campuses have achieved high rankings, earning eligibility to be recognized on the U.S. News & World Report Best Elementary, Middle, and High Schools lists and receiving award badges. As a non-selective school, we stand proudly among the very top in every category. This is a remarkable achievement and a true testament to the hard work, dedication, and commitment of our staff, students, and families.

We are incredibly grateful to the Jacksonville Icemen for hosting over 700 RCSA students, families, and staff for a night that truly showcased the spirit of our community! The evening's highlights included the recognition of our RCSA Teachers of the Year, a stunning performance of God Bless America by our students, thrilling Zamboni rides, meet-and-greet moments, and more. I was honored to drop the puck and kick off this unforgettable event!

The RCSA International Festival was a tremendous success! I extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to this remarkable event, with special thanks to Mrs. Jackson and the RCSA Intracoastal team for hosting. The festival was a shining example of what makes RCSA exceptional, providing our students and families an opportunity to embark on a global journey and emphasizing the importance of cultural awareness within our community.

I'm excited to share that the Impact Talk and Charter Conversation videos are now live on YouTube! As you may recall, RCSA was awarded Model Charter School at the Building Hope Impact Summit. It's a privilege to share our success stories and showcase the meaningful work you're all doing.

Our three school principals, along with Mr. K., attended the FLDOE Chancellor's Leadership Academy, a distinguished accomplishment. This experience will provide valuable networks and insights that will further strengthen our organization.

Several of our leaders also attended the Florida Charter Conference, where we received several recognition during various sessions.

We were honored to host leaders from Leadership Jacksonville class to showcase our schools. They were highly impressed with our programs and the quality of education we provide.

Additionally, our annual Toy Drive is currently underway across campuses for the holiday season.

Finally, we are excited to celebrate the season together with a staff and family holiday party during the last week of school across all campuses.

14. Title I updates

Dr. T. informed the Board about Title-I updates

School Events and Activities

Efforts to engage parents and students have been enhanced with a range of events and activities:

Transition Nights for 9th, 10th, and 11th Grades: Designed to guide students and families through the critical steps of academic planning and progression.

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Parent Academy (Including Virtual Options): Offering workshops and resources for parents to support their children's academic success.

FAFSA Night (in Collaboration with FSCJ): Assisting families in understanding and completing the financial aid process.

Back-to-School Orientation/Curriculum Night: Providing insights into the curriculum and expectations for the academic year.

Welcome Picnic: A community-building event to foster connections between families, students, and staff.

Academic Teams Parent Presentations: Highlighting the achievements and goals of various academic teams, encouraging parental involvement.

Digital Uploads and Parent Communication

School Messenger, Web, email, Newsletter: Strengthened communication with parents through regular updates and notifications.

Parent Right-to-Know Letters: Distributed to inform parents of their rights under Title I, ensuring transparency and compliance.

Parent and Family Engagement Plan (PFEP): Made accessible to families in multiple languages to promote inclusivity.

School Improvement Plan (SIP): Uploaded and translated into several languages to meet the needs of the diverse school community.

Staff Development

Professional Development: Staff training sessions focused on strategies for fostering positive and effective parent communication, aligning with Title I objectives.

Compliance Update

Title I compliance is proceeding smoothly, with all requirements met and processes in place to maintain adherence to regulations.

The RCSA Middle High campus has submitted its Title I school plans and is currently awaiting final approval. Parent activities and school-wide initiatives have already begun to be implemented.

15. High school project update

General Updates

- The appraisal has been shared with the college, and no rebuttal to the value has been received.
- The lease agreement has been finalized from both the attorney's and Summit's perspectives, incorporating feedback from RSCA. Feedback from the college on the lease is still pending, but given the document originated with the college, it is expected to be in an advanced stage.
- Summit has authorized additional due diligence efforts, including further surveying, geotechnical studies, and environmental assessments.

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- Progress has been made on the site and floor plan concepts in collaboration with the School. While some refinements remain, such as adding more restrooms and enhancing the lobby design, the majority of the building layout is complete. Updated concepts will be provided before the next meeting.

Milestones on the Forecast

- Finalizing the lease with the college remains a priority, with efforts ongoing to secure execution.
- A zoning issue related to legacy regulations has been identified. The current zoning requires a special exception for buildings exceeding 40,000 square feet. While this requirement has been overlooked in the past, the land use attorneys at Roger Towers recommend completing the process as a precaution. This process, expected to take 120 days, will begin soon and can proceed concurrently with other tasks.
- Kasper has been engaged to produce the construction documents. A meeting held today resulted in commitments to expedite the drawing timeline. Once the concept plans are finalized and approved, they will be handed over to Kasper for completion.
- Summit will develop a more detailed interim agreement to formalize the kickoff of the construction document phase.

16. Charter School Growth Fund update

The Board has been kept fully informed of the progress with the Charter School Growth Fund, ensuring transparency and alignment with organizational growth goals. Updates include milestones achieved and the positive outcomes from ongoing discussions.

- **Site Visit Success:** A successful site visit was conducted, providing valuable insights into the project's feasibility and reinforcing confidence in its potential. Feedback from the visit was positive, underscoring the readiness and alignment of the project with expectations.
- **Due Diligence Progress:** All due diligence activities are advancing smoothly and in the right direction. Key components such as academics, facilities, community involvement, school culture, talent, organizational/board structure, operational items have been covered to date. Financial model and projections have been submitted.
- **Engagement with the Growth Fund:** Several productive meetings and in-depth conversations have been held with representatives from the Charter School Growth Fund. These discussions have focused on financial strategy, operational sustainability, and alignment with the fund's criteria. Thus far, the feedback from the Growth Fund team has been very helpful, reflecting positively on the project's viability.
- **Upcoming Presentation:** if everything goes well, a presentation from the RCSA team is scheduled for the second week of February in Denver. This presentation will serve as a critical opportunity to showcase progress, address any remaining questions, and solidify support from the Growth Fund for the next stages of the project. Preparations for the presentation are well underway to ensure a successful and impactful experience for all stakeholders.

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17. Closure of the Meeting

Mr. Mese moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Kurt seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Fatih Kurt, Board Secretary