

The Ranches Academy
School Board Meeting Minutes -DRAFT

Date	9/14/26
Board Members Present	Josh Marsh, Preston Griffin, Michelle Bennett, Parker Hatt
Board Members Absent	Amy Harrison, Morgan Call
Others Present	Stephanie Colson, Executive Director Levi Anderson, Academic Director Haydn Stender, Red Apple Business Manager Jeff Biesinger
Guests	None
Start time	6:37 PM
End time	8:10 PM
Location	The Ranches Academy

Agenda Topic	Discussion	Motions/Actions
Roll Call & Pledge of Allegiance	Roll call was administered. Present: Josh Marsh (Board President), Parker Hatt (Board Member), Preston Griffin (Vice President), Michelle Bennett (Treasurer). Also present: Stephanie Colson (Executive Director) and Levi Anderson (Academic Director). Absent: Amy Harrison and Morgan Call. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.	
Agenda and Previous Meeting Minutes	The Board reviewed the minutes of the August 24, 2026 meeting. No questions were raised.	MOTION: A motion by Preston Griffin and a second by Parker Hatt to approve the minutes of the August 24, 2026 meeting as distributed. The motion passed unanimously.

		FOR: Josh Marsh Preston Griffin Michelle Bennett Parker Hatt AGAINST: None ABSENT: Morgan Call Amy Harrison
Update on School Expansion		
Budget Review	Haydn Stender, Red Apple Business Manager, presented the financial report posted as of August 31, 2026 (two months into the fiscal year; benchmark comparison 16.7%). Revenue: Year-to-date actual revenue of \$761,028 against a forecasted budget of \$4,326,887, or 17.6% – ahead of benchmark. Federal revenue is posted at \$0 because IDEA funds are drawn as quarterly reimbursements; a reimbursement request covering July 1 through September 30 will be submitted after 9/30. Expenses – total year-to-date expenses of \$625,487, or 14.5%, approximately two percentage points below the 16.7% benchmark. By category: 100s/200s Salaries and benefits – both at 12.9%, tracking well. 300s Professional and technical services – on track, with room remaining for the audit invoice from Squire. 400s Purchased property services (utilities, repairs and maintenance, custodial, lawn care, snow removal) – 15%, on trend.	

	500s Other purchased services – \$21,702 against a \$64,750 budget (33.5%), highlighted red because the annual Utah Risk Management property and liability premiums are paid in full at the front of the year. Expected to normalize within one to two months. 600s Supplies and materials – 10.6%, under budget; expected to increase when the school play begins. 700s Property and equipment – \$120,478 against a \$170,000 budget (70.9%), highlighted red due to furniture, fixtures and hardware for the new classrooms and the early-August ETS purchase of the classroom audio/video and hallway zone (PA) system. These are capital expenditures and will be recorded as such in the FY27 audit; this line is expected to remain over benchmark for approximately six months. 800s Debt service and miscellaneous – \$3,865 against \$263,000, which is forecasted high because bank loan payments will begin during the year. Net income from operations is currently positive \$135,541. Ratios and cash position: Days cash on hand of 236 (target range 90) and debt service coverage of 1.46 (lenders typically look for 1.25). The school is exceeding both measures. PTIF: Beginning-of-year balance \$1,787,125; balance as of August 31, 2026 of \$1,799,074; forecasted balance at June 30, 2027 of approximately \$1,853,125. Mr. Stender noted the school remains in a healthy position notwithstanding the \$1.5M fronted for the school expansion. Enrollment: Currently 364 students, with movement of about four students in and out and a new first grader recently	
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started. The FY27 budget was built on 361 students. The official enrollment count occurs October 1 and determines funding.

Discussion:

The new walk-in freezer (just under \$11,000) will be recorded in the 700s as a capital expenditure. No budget amendment is required, as the State evaluates compliance against the aggregate budget total rather than individual line items. The Board will vote to adopt final budget numbers in the April/May timeframe.

The ETS purchase will also fulfill the State Safety and Security Grant, which is a state-reimbursable program.

Stephanie Colson reported that additional special education staff have been hired to meet student needs that arose after the start of the year, and that she has been coordinating with Mr. Stender. Mr. Stender noted that SPED funds are restricted and that unspent funds can be clawed back by the State, so fully spending them is preferred.

Mr. Stender reviewed the revenue detail: program 3010 Regular School K-12 is forecasted at \$1,487,795 and Charter School Local Replacement at \$1,369,273. Together these enrollment-driven programs represent approximately \$2.8M of the roughly \$4M budget and about 70% of state revenue. The Board discussed the importance of maintaining enrollment, noting that schools experiencing financial difficulty are generally those that budgeted for enrollment they did not achieve.

Josh Marsh noted that if additional capital needs arise from the expansion, drawing from the PTIF could be appropriate, and that the school is currently within budget; any such action would be brought to the Board.

	The financial report was accepted and filed for record.	
Discuss on IT Services Company	The Board discussed options for IT services and agreed that more information is needed before a decision. Background: The school has had significant service difficulties with its current network provider (Onward). The provider supplied loaner equipment at no charge to bring the expansion online (the conference room is still not connected) and has submitted a bid for replacement hardware. ETS has also submitted a bid of a little over \$14,000 for hardware. The overall decision is expected to be a \$10,000–\$15,000 item depending on the vendor. Considerations raised: the phone system and PA system, previously separate, are now IT-dependent, so the choice affects the whole school; using two vendors (one for network, one for phone/PA) risks finger-pointing and refusal to support one another's equipment; hardware brand preferences differ between vendors, and it is not clear whether a future vendor would support equipment installed by the other; Onward has raised after-hours hourly rates. Stephanie Colson reported she has not signed, and has told the owner she will not sign, the addendum submitted by the current provider. The owner has returned to active involvement in the company in the last month, has been responsive, and service has improved materially since then. Status: Phone number porting and PA system installation are targeted for September 18, subject to Direct Communications. ETS has offered an IT	

	audit of the school, which has not yet been performed. ETS is not contracted for the network; it handled the phones and the camera installation, with the school purchasing the hardware. [VERIFY – the recording references an \$88,000 government grant in connection with the camera/security purchase; please confirm the figure and which purchase it applied to.]	
Vote on Emergency Purchase of Freezer	The Board revisited the emergency replacement of the kitchen walk-in freezer, which failed shortly before the start of the school year. The Board President authorized the purchase so the kitchen could operate, with ratification to follow at a Board meeting. (The item was discussed at the prior meeting but not voted on because the agenda item did not include the word “vote.”) The purchase amount was \$10,084.95, which includes \$681.73 of sales tax that will be refunded to the school as a tax-exempt entity. The unit arrived with a gash in the aluminum skin caused by a forklift. Because a replacement would have taken several additional weeks, the vendor will reskin the damaged side under warranty, and the warranty remains intact.	MOTION: A motion by Parker Hatt and a second by Michelle Bennett to approve the emergency purchase of the kitchen freezer in the amount of \$10,084.95, less \$681.73 in refundable sales tax. The motion passed unanimously. FOR: Josh Marsh Preston Griffin Michelle Bennett Parker Hatt AGAINST: None ABSENT: Morgan Call Amy Harrison
Discuss Vendor Service Committee	Stephanie Colson reported she has begun compiling a list of all vendors and service providers used by the school. The Board clarified that the vendor service committee is intended to be board-run rather than parent-run.	Tabled pending completion of the vendor list.
Update SLT Membership Form and SLT Training	The SLT (School LAND Trust) membership form is maintained online and is believed to be current, including	ACTION: Stephanie Colson to verify the SLT membership form online.

	the newest members. Stephanie Colson will verify that the form is up to date. The annual SLT training was postponed because the site could not be reached on the meeting Wi-Fi and no display was available in the conference room. The Board discussed adding a television to the conference room, which would also support staff meetings.	ACTION: Josh Marsh to present SLT training at the October meeting. ACTION: Confirm network/display availability in the conference room prior to the next meeting.
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Review Charter Goal #3	Charter Goal #3: Students in grades 1–3 demonstrating growth according to beginning-of-year and end-of-year composite scores on the state standardized reading assessment (Acadience). The goal threshold is 90%. The Board had asked at the prior meeting whether the goal was met. It was: the school achieved 91.14%, or 167 of 183 students tested demonstrating growth in reading. Discussion: Levi Anderson explained that students who did not show growth either had limited room to progress (already reading well above grade level) or declined for individual reasons, and that the first grade assessment tests additional and harder material from middle of year to end of year, which can produce drops. The Board noted the goal is ambitious relative to the state, that growth rather than proficiency is the measure, and that the school's emphasis on growth for every student is appropriate given a changing demographic with more students requiring special services.	

Annual Curriculum Overview and Update for Board	Levi Anderson presented the annual curriculum overview; the supporting document was attached to the agenda. Curriculum is essentially unchanged from last year. All materials are state-aligned and state-approved, and teachers are provided the core curriculum they request. The one change is in math: some upper-grade teachers asked to return to a prior version of Eureka; the school remains on Eureka. The sixth grade teacher has asked the school to look at different ELA materials, since much of the current curriculum is K–5 and sixth grade is served less well. Administration is working with her this year to evaluate options. Teachers supplement the core curriculum as they see fit; the attached document reflects the core curriculum the school provides.	
School Safety Update	Fire drill: The school completed its first fire drill in the new building. Required evacuation/egress maps have been produced for every room. Start-to-finish, the drill was faster than last year's, despite the larger building. A few items were identified for update or adjustment. Lockdown drill: The first lockdown drill is scheduled for Friday, September 18. A drill is required every month by law. Staff are notified in advance; parents receive a text the day of the drill so they can discuss it with their children. Drill dates appear on the internal school calendar only and are not published on the public calendar, for safety reasons. Panic buttons: The State is requiring staff to wear panic buttons and is paying	Keep on the Agenda.

	for them. The State has approved two vendors; the school selected the same vendor used by the majority of area charter schools and districts, including Alpine and Nebo, which simplifies response for law enforcement. The buttons alert the front office and, at a higher activation level, local first responders. Activation requires a deliberate press-and-hold or repeated presses, which the Utah County Sheriff does not expect to produce a high rate of accidental calls, though other districts have seen inadvertent activations. Staff sentiment is generally unfavorable, but the requirement is a state mandate. The State contracts directly with the vendor, so there is no budgetary impact to the school. Lockdown at the end of this week. Panic buttons The Executive Director, Stephanie Colson, provided the Board with an update on the school's safety initiatives and the status of the safety grant. The Board was informed that the final purchase made using grant funds was the installation of a PA System, which fully exhausted the available safety grant funding. The Executive Director reported that a school safety walkthrough was completed prior to the start of the new school year. In addition, the school's expansion building received the necessary safety approval. The Board was also informed that Ranches Academy submitted a request for an exception regarding the Safety Specialist requirement due to limited staffing resources and has applied for additional safety grant funding.	
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	The Executive Director reported that the school is currently in compliance with all applicable safety guidelines and requirements. The Board reviewed the updates and acknowledged the school's continued efforts to maintain a safe learning environment and compliance with state safety requirements.	
Vote on TSSA Plan	Stephanie Colson and Levi Anderson presented the TSSA (Teacher and Student Success Act) plan, which the Board adopts annually. Goal: Within this school year, The Ranches Academy students will show an average of at least 4% growth from beginning of year to end of year in English language arts and math, based on Acadience assessment scores, across all grades. The goal was raised from 3% last year, when the school achieved approximately 7% growth. Administration noted that because the school is small, results can swing significantly on a small number of students. Use of funds (approximately \$106,000 budgeted for the year): stipends or increased hours for teachers carrying additional responsibilities (literacy coach, teacher leader, assessment director, math curriculum director), professional learning and professional development, and before- and after-school programs.	MOTION: A motion by Preston Griffin and a second by Michelle Bennett to approve the TSSA plan for the 2026–27 school year. The motion passed unanimously. FOR: Josh Marsh Preston Griffin Michelle Bennett Parker Hatt AGAINST: None ABSENT: Morgan Call Amy Harrison
Motion to Enter Into Closed Session for the Purchase, Exchange, or Lease of Property; Pending or	The Board President stated there was reason to enter into a closed session to discuss pending or reasonably imminent	MOTION: A motion by Parker Hatt and a second by Preston Griffin to enter into closed session to discuss

Reasonably Imminent Litigation; the Character, Professional Competence, or the Physical or Mental Health of an Individual; or the Deployment of Security or Security Personnel, Devices, or Systems	litigation. The recording was paused for the duration of the closed session.	pending or reasonably imminent litigation. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. FOR (roll call): Parker Hatt – Aye Preston Griffin – Aye Michelle Bennett – Aye Josh Marsh – Aye AGAINST: None ABSENT: Morgan Call Amy Harrison
Motion to leave the Closed Session for the Purchase, Exchange, or Lease of Property; Pending or Reasonably Imminent Litigation; the Character, Professional Competence, or the Physical or Mental Health of an Individual; or the Deployment of Security or Security Personnel, Devices, or Systems	The Board returned to open session and the recording was resumed. No action was taken in the closed session.	MOTION: A motion by Preston Griffin and a second by Parker Hatt to leave the closed session. The motion passed unanimously. FOR: Josh Marsh Preston Griffin Michelle Bennett Parker Hatt AGAINST: None ABSENT: Morgan Call Amy Harrison
New Business	Next meeting date: October 19 was initially proposed but falls during fall break. The Board selected Monday, October 12, 2026, which is a parent-teacher conference day; the date works for all members present.	

	Board president term and board positions: Josh Marsh noted that he has completed his two-year term as Board President. He is not resigning and is willing to continue serving in the role, but believes the position should be opened so that any interested board member or candidate has the opportunity to come forward, rather than the role defaulting to the incumbent. The Board discussed that the President is an appointed position filled by soliciting candidates, that board terms are staggered but have become difficult to track because several members left mid-term, and that the terms spreadsheet needs to be updated and current vacancies reflected. The bylaws are believed to call for this to occur in October. Josh Marsh will research the bylaws regarding terms, vacancies and the nomination/appointment process and report back. Items tabled to the October meeting: IT service company decision, and the SLT membership form update and SLT training.	
Adjourn	There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM	MOTION: A motion by Parker Hatt and a second by Michelle Bennett to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously. FOR: Josh Marsh Preston Griffin Michelle Bennett Parker Hatt AGAINST: None ABSENT:

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