Golden Valley Charter Schools
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
9601 Lake Natoma Dr.
Orangevale, CA 95662

October 14, 2026

Regular Meeting Minutes

1. **Vice Chair Meredith Willsen called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.**

2. **Roll Call** –
Board Members Present: Meredith Willsen, Jessica Crew, James Stark, Marcus Neal, Julia Koch
Board Members Absent: Katie Gerski-Keller, Ekaterina Khmelniker
Guests: Brittany Galles, Jennifer Hoover, Becky Page (remote), Ryan Sutton, Mindy Kiel, Sarah Chase, Nikki Freitas

3. **Board Member Exigencies and Remote Attendance** –
Action: Shall the board approve any board members to participate in this board meeting from a remote location due to just cause exceptions per SB 707?
Information: Members must publicly disclose at the meeting before any action is taken, whether any other individuals 18 years of age or older are present in the room at the remote location with the member, and if so, the general nature of the member's relationship with any such individuals; and ensure their meeting participation using both visual and audio technology.

TABLED. NO ACTION.

4. **James read the Charity Virtue Card.**

5. **Public Comment** –
Bri D'Agostini made a public comment regarding Human Resources, staffing pertaining to Golden Valley Orchard School (GVOS) and appreciation to new board members.

Vice Chair Meredith Willsen closed public comment at 5:07 p.m.

6. **Minutes Approval –**
It was moved by James Stark and seconded by Jessica Crew that the Board approve the September 9, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes.

(Ayes: 5, Noes: 0, Abstain: 0)

7. **Declaration of Need** –
Nikki Freitas presented the Declaration of Need for Fully Qualified Educators. It was recommended that the Governing Board of Trustees approve the Declaration of Need for Fully Qualified Educators and authorize the submission of an application to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) for an Emergency Cross-cultural, Language, and Academic Development (CLAD) Permit for Alfred Lacoste.

It was moved by Julia Koch and seconded by James Stark that the Board approve the Declaration of Need for an Emergency Cross-cultural, Language, and Academic Development (CLAD)/English Learner Authorization Permit for Alfred (AJ) Lacoste for submission to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC).
(Ayes: 5, Noes: 0, Abstain: 0)

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8. **Employee Benefit Contributions –**
Nikki Freitas presented employee benefit contributions for Golden Valley Charter Schools (GVCS) for the 2026-2027 school year. The 2026 benefits renewal is primarily driven by a 9.9% increase in medical premiums, resulting in an estimated annual cost increase of $39,271 (9.3%) if all current carriers were renewed as presented. GVCS will maintain CaliforniaChoice medical coverage while transitioning dental coverage from Mutual of Omaha to Aflac to help manage costs and streamline benefits administration. Voluntary life insurance will also be added to Aflac's employee-paid voluntary benefits offerings at no additional cost to GVCS. The recommendation is to maintain current employer contributions at $550 for employees, $600 for employees plus dependents, and $650 for employees plus family.

James asked about the cost difference between Mutual of Omaha and Aflac dental coverage. Nikki explained that Aflac offers improved coverage, both in-network and out-of-network, with the overall cost difference largely offset by the increase in medical premiums. Nikki also reviewed the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Accidental Death and Dismemberment (AD&D) benefits, explaining eligibility for employees.

Jessica asked about increasing tier contribution amounts when annual increases occur; Nikki explained that these amounts are unknown until the next year's annual increase amounts become available.

The board would like to inquire about any potential options for hybrid Medicare plans, dependent care, daycare, elder care and eligibility inquiries surrounding age brackets. Nikki advised she will investigate potential options and provide an update in a follow up email to board members. James also offered to connect with Nikki on FSA options for offset plans.

9. **Conflict Resolution Committee –**
Meredith nominated GVCS parent Jamie Larson to the Conflict Resolution Committee.

It was moved by James Stark and seconded by Jessica Crew that the Board approve to appoint Jamie Larson to the Conflict Resolution Committee for the 2026-2027 school year.

(Ayes: 4, Noes: 0, Abstain: 1, M. Willsen)

Meredith nominated GVCS faculty member Brianne Hanley to the Conflict Resolution Committee.

It was moved by James Stark and seconded by Jessica Crew that the Board approve to appoint Brianne Hanley to the Conflict Resolution Committee for the 2026-2027 school year.

(Ayes: 4, Noes: 0, Abstain: 1, M. Willsen)

Meredith Willsen withdrew from serving on the Conflict Resolution Committee for the 2026-2027 school year.

Julia Koch nominated GVCS board member Jessica Crew to the Conflict Resolution Committee.

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It was moved by Julia Koch and seconded by James Stark that the Board approve to appoint Jessica Crew to the Conflict Resolution Committee for the 2026-2027 school year.

(Ayes: 4, Noes: 0, Abstain: 1, J. Crew)

10. **Attendance Policy (First Read) –**
Jennifer Hoover presented the revised Attendance Policy for GVCS. Jennifer highlighted areas within the policy including:
    1. The process for students who are not in attendance at the beginning of the year
    2. An involuntary removal process
    3. Language regarding referral back to the district attorney
    4. Addition of vacation time and not school time
    5. Strengthened language surrounding independent study
    6. Multiple school enrollments
    7. A standard nondiscrimination disclaimer

    The following were recommendations for revisions to the Attendance Policy:
    1. Include the name of the form when referencing specific forms to submit, i.e. an independent study request form when referring to a short-term independent study approval

    Julia made a comment regarding if grammar or spelling errors are noted within the policy while under revision, to notify Jennifer with section and page numbers.

    TABELED. NO ACTION.

11. **Suspension and Expulsion Policy (First Read) –**
Jennifer presented the revised Suspension and Expulsion Policy for GVCS. Jennifer explained the majority of revisions include the following:
    1. Updating special education and 504 students for more clarification
    2. Clarifying members of the administrative panel and steps of the process
    3. Involuntary removal section

    The following were recommendations for revisions to the Suspension and Expulsion Policy:
    1. The board has a responsibility or a designee for the rehabilitation development plan – the designee is going to be the Executive Director (pg. 16, Step 9)
    2. Clarify authority section i.e. teachers, admin – (pg. 2)
    3. Adding 'vapes' to tobacco usage – Jennifer will double check Ed Code to see if this has been updated but believes it is clarified; this section was pulled from Ed Code (pg. 3)

    TABELED. NO ACTION.

12. **Transitional Kindergarten Teachers Policy (First Read) –**
Jennifer presented the Transitional Kindergarten Teachers Policy for GVCS. This has been an administrative regulation prior, but factors have changed and this now needs to be a board

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approved policy. Jennifer reviewed the professional experience equivalency requirements for Transitional Kindergarten (TK) teachers established under Universal TK. The proposed clarification outlines qualifying professional experience that may be used in place of the required early childhood education (ECE) coursework. Specifically, individuals with at least one cumulative year of experience working with preschool-aged children may meet the equivalent of the 24 ECE unit requirement. The experience does not need to be consecutive.

TABELED. NO ACTION.

13. **Volunteer Policy (Frist Read) –**
    Jennifer presented the revised Volunteer Policy for GVCS. Jennifer explained revisions include:
    1. Addition of mandated reporting training
    2. Additional language around registering visitors and guests
    3. Pedagogical reasons for waiting period – open to additional revision suggestions

    The following were recommendations for revisions to the Suspension and Expulsion Policy:
    1. Under definitions for volunteer training – mention vaguely that there's additional screenings or training requirements in addition to the background check
    2. Chaperone agreement being separate of the volunteer agreement – Jennifer will double check the title for the exact language of the form (Chaperone and/or Volunteer agreement)
    3. Youth volunteers – clarify that they must be adult age, clarify if an adult can bring their kids or other younger kids and/or babies. Jennifer will examine the Volunteer Agreement to clarify this piece

    TABELED. NO ACTION.

14. **Faculty Reports –**
    Faculty Chair Report, Orchard: Orchard Faculty Chair, Jordan Watkins was not present at the meeting and her board report stands in the Board packet.

    Faculty Chair Report, River: River Faculty Chair, Sarah Chase, presented items of interest to the board.

15. **Executive Reports** –
    Board Chair Report: Board of Trustees Vice Chair, Meredith Wilsen, presented items of interest to the board.
    Executive Director Report: Executive Director, Jennifer Hoover, presented items of interest to the board.

16. **The Board recited the Motto of the Social Ethic**.

17. **Vice Chair Meredith Willsen adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by Brittany Galles.

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Meredith Willsen, Vice Chair **Date**

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