

## MINUTES OF THE UTAH STATE CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

Thursday, February 12, 2026

10008 Creek Run Way, Sandy, UT 84070

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### Members Present:

- Chair Stephanie Speicher
- Vice Chair Erik Olson
- Member Susan Pulsipher
- Member Krystle Bassett
- Member Stacey Hutchings
- Member Nate Marshall
- Member Clint Biesinger

### Staff Present:

- Marie Steffensen
- Amber Hellstrom
- Lisa Cooper
- Smriti Dhakal
- Brendan McGinn
- Betty Jimenez
- Amy Pace
- Jenna Magnett

### Others Present:

- AAG Darin Goff

Meeting Begins: 9:06am

### Public Comment (0)

### Consent Calendar:

Member Bassett: "I make that motion that we approve the consent calendar."

Member Marshall: "I'll second."

All members present say "Aye." Motion passes unanimously.

Board Member Thought: Member Clint Biesinger

**Information Item: Executive Director Report**

Interim Executive Director Marie Steffensen reported that staff remain focused on stewardship, stability, and continuity during the leadership transition. Rather than launching new initiatives, the team is maintaining operations aligned to the board's strategic priorities, including internal IT transitions, data migration, evaluation of systems, and close coordination with USBE to ensure seamless operations and communication. These efforts are intended to support organizational capacity and provide the board with clear, decision-ready information.

Staff continue to support schools across the authorizing lifecycle, including preparation of newly approved schools, readiness-to-open meetings, guidance for applicants, and feedback for denied proposals. Oversight activities are proceeding as planned, with 2025 Comprehensive Review drafts completed, preparation underway for Spring 2026 reviews, ongoing compliance and financial monitoring, and refinement of internal tracking systems. Items in research and review and active Notices of Concern are being managed, with future board discussion anticipated regarding oversight processes.

Overall, the organization is operating well, with core work advancing, partnerships strengthening, and systems improving. Despite staffing transitions, responsibilities have been adjusted to ensure continuity, positioning the board and the incoming Executive Director for a stable and well-prepared transition while continuing to support public charter schools as an essential part of Utah's public education system.

**New Satellite Schools and Large Expansion Proposals**

**Information Item:** Interim Executive Director Marie Steffensen made a presentation about potential impacts on startup funds. The board will need to consider these funds as allocations are made to schools. Following the end of the legislative session, the finance committee can evaluate the new schools, expansions, and satellites and make a recommendation for how to distribute the funds.

**Discussion and Action Item: Spectrum Academy**

Spectrum Academy was invited to make introductions and discuss what they were asking for. Joe Dixon, Amy Loertscher, and Courtney England made a short presentation and answered questions from the board. The satellite location will be in Washington County serving students in grades K-6. After some discussion, it was suggested to project the enrollment ask for 5 years with 413 students.

Member Hutchings: “I will make the motion that we approve the Spectrum Academy St. George satellite for K-8 up to 413 students over 5 years.”

Member Bassett: “I will second that.”

Member Biesinger: I would like to amend the motion to give the school more flexibility and allow up to 500 students.

Member Hutchings: I accept that amendment.

Board Chair Speicher: “All those in favor?”

Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

### **Discussion and Action Item: Utah Military Academy**

Representatives from Utah Military Academy included Chuck Williams, Bill Orris, and Andreas Wesemann. The school has been established for about 10 years with campuses in Lehi and Riverdale. After a presentation and discussion about the current financial metrics of the school, it was decided to move forward with a small expansion at this time with a reevaluation of the large expansion in future years.

Member Marshall: “I move we provide UMA the opportunity to come back next year and reapply, given the conditions that are outlined.” Conditions include improved financial metrics and academic improvement. This motion is not to approve the satellite location.

Member Pulsipher: “I can second that.”

Motion passes unanimously by roll call vote.

Member Biesinger: “I would like to make the motion to approve Utah Military Academy for a small school expansion of 100 students.”

Vice Chair Olson: “I second that.”

Motion passes unanimously by roll call vote.

### **Discussion and Action Item: Wasatch Peak Academy**

Marlowe Wolferstan, Amy Pilkington, and Brad Wyatt from the school, along with Brad Taylor from Academica West, presented a short update on the status of the school. Wasatch Peak was approved for a satellite location 3 years ago but was unable to see that to completion due to financial complications. They are asking for 525 new K-6 students at a new location in Weber County. With a high demand for their dual language immersion program, they are confident in their enrollment and plan for opening.

Vice Chair Olson: “I would like to move that we approve Wasatch Peak Academy’s new satellite school application for 525 students.”

Member Hutchings: “I will second.”

Motion passes unanimously by roll call vote.

### **Discussion and Action Item: Canyon Grove Academy**

Director Kim Goates was in person to present the growth and changes of the Canyon Grove Academy’s hybrid K-12 program. She was later joined by Josh Daniels who is a board member and parent. They shared the growth of the hybrid model and the microschool model they use.

Member Biesinger: “Hearing the discussion, I am comfortable making a motion that we approve the satellite application for Canyon Grove Academy with a cap of 2402 students.”

Member Marshall: “I’ll second that.”

Concerns were raised about the number of students and the impact of this on the startup funds. After some further discussion, it was decided to revise the original motion.

Member Biesinger: “I will amend the motion to a cap of 2000 students.”

Member Marshall: “I will second again.”

Motion passes unanimously by roll call vote.

### **Discussion and Action Item: Esperanza Academy**

Esperanza Elementary was represented by Ivonne Medina, Homar Gosain, and Indiana Macias. They shared the highly successful dual language immersion program they are running at their school. They are asking to add 8<sup>th</sup> grade to their model.

Member Pulsipher: “I will make a motion that we approve the 8<sup>th</sup> grade expansion as requested.” This is a large expansion as per code.

Member Hutchings: “I second.”

Motion passes unanimously by roll call vote.

### **Discussion and Action Item: Paradigm Charter High School**

The school was represented by Brenda Petru, Fernando Seminario, Seth Velasco, Noreen Gibbons, and Scott Clawson. Paradigm has been around for 20 years and was founded by Utah homeschool families. The school is requesting a 2000 enrollment increase to add a hybrid program component to the charter. After much discussion by the board, it was

decided to reduce the number to 200 new students as a starting for the hybrid program with the option to return to ask for more students.

Vice Chair Olson: “I would move that we approve the Paradigm Charter High School large expansion, but with a cap of an additional 200 students, which would put them at 830 maximum enrolled.”

Member Biesinger: “And I will second that, since I said I would.”

Motion passes unanimously by roll call vote.

**Note:** Vice Chair Olson asked to abstain from discussing or voting on the next two satellite applications from American Preparatory Academy.

### **Discussion and Action Item: American Preparatory Academy, Ephraim**

Matt Howard, Thomas Young, Ruth Kellersberger, Tom Hortin, and Carolyn Sharette were in person to talk about this satellite. They were accompanied by Mike Ballard from Ephraim Crossing, a new community in the Ephraim area. Growth in the area was discussed and the need for educational opportunities in the area. Concern by the local school was raised, but the greater online viewing community was reminded that state statute prohibits considering harm to surrounding schools.

Member Biesinger: “I would like to make the motion to approve American Preparatory Academy’s Ephraim satellite application to include grades K-6 and a cap of 420 students.”

Member Marshall: “I’ll second that.”

Motion passes by roll call vote, with Vice Chair Olson abstaining and Member Bassett voting No.

### **Discussion and Action Item: American Preparatory Academy, Eagle Mountain**

The same group of APA board and staff represented the Eagle Mountain satellite application. This request is for a K-6 school with 630 students.

Member Marshall: “I will make a motion to approve the new satellite school for the APA location in Eagle Mountain; K-6 with 630 students.”

Member Bassett: “I will second that.”

Motion passes unanimously by roll call vote, with Vice Chair Olson abstaining.

### **Discussion and Action Item: North Davis Preparatory Academy**

Monty Paul, Ryan Robinson, Jessica Bryant, Misty Meacham, with support from Brad Taylor from Academica West, attended to represent the school. They discussed the dual language immersion program and academic success.

Member Hutchings: "I'll make the motion that we approve the North Davis Preparatory Academy satellite application for K-6 with 772 students."

Vice Chair Olson: "I'll second."

Motion passes unanimously by roll call vote.

#### **Discussion and Action Item: Cambridge Preparatory Academy waiver request**

Members of the Cambridge Preparatory Academy leadership team presented a request for a waiver recommendation to the Utah State Board of Education. The waiver is to open in the fall of 2026, a full year early.

Member Biesinger: "I make the motion that we recommend Cambridge Preparatory Academy to waive their opening year to open fall of 26."

Member Hutchings: "I second that."

Motion passes unanimously by roll call vote.

#### **Discussion and Action Item: Online or Hybrid Learning Amendment Application**

The board discussed the proposed Online or Hybrid Learning Amendment Application that was presented by staff. After outlining a few minor changes, the board voted to approve the draft and post it for the required 30-day public comment period.

Vice Chair Olson: "I will move that we approved the Online or Hybrid Application draft that has been circulated, subject to the changes that have been suggested by Members Marshall and Hutchings."

Member Marshall: "Second."

All members say "Aye." Motion passes unanimously.

#### **Report to the Board: Legislative Updates from UAPCS**

Royce Van Tassell reported to the board about several of the bills that may impact public charter schools. With a handout and slides, Mr. Van Tassell talked about potential changes to the base budget, the WPU and the LRF. Other bills address changes to procurement of buildings, oath of office for governing boards, the stabilization account, early literacy, school devices, student information systems, reporting obligations, and retention in elementary school grades.

### **Report to the Board: Legislative Committee work by Member Pulsipher**

The legislative and executive committees have been hard at work, meeting with legislators and other stakeholders during the current legislative session. It is challenging to keep abreast of the rapidly changing legislative landscape and the bills affecting public charter schools. It was suggested that for the upcoming legislative interim sessions and next year, the board be more proactive in their efforts. All agreed this was important. It is also important for board members to be educated on the work the staff are doing to support schools so they can answer questions. A continued effort will be made to build relationships with all stakeholders.

**Scheduling:** An additional board meeting was set for February 24, 2026, at 8:00am. The meeting will be held online, with the SCSB office serving as the anchor location.

Meeting Adjourned: 5:06pm