Merit Preparatory Academy
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
March 19, 2026

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at approximately 6:36 p.m. by Jeri Mellor.

Board Members Present

- Rachel Jay (Online, Chair)
- Aaron Cook
- Jeri Mellor
- David Jensen (Online)
- Ashley Watts
- Mary Howell
- Heidi Bingham

Staff / Guests Present

- Mike (Academy Director)
- Casey Holmes (Red Apple, Finance)
- Stephanie (Marketing)
- Riley L (Spend Plan)
- Meritorious award recipients: Ashley Clawson (Teacher of the Month) and Brad Mosteller (Support Staff of the Month)

Pledge of Allegiance
The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Meritorious Night Awards (February)
Mike presented the awards:

- **Teacher of the Month**: Ashley Clawson (English Team Lead) – recognized for rapport with students, high rigor, team leadership, and mentoring student teachers.
- **Support Staff of the Month**: Brad Mosteller (ALC / Alternative Learning Center) – recognized for calming demeanor with struggling students, ACT test coordination, stepping into SPED paraprofessional role, and overall versatility.

Finance Report – Casey Holmes (Red Apple)

- Fiscal year is 66.7% complete; budget is on track to break even.
- Current forecast shows a negative net income of approximately $11,000, but expected to close at zero with identified savings.
- Debt service ratio explained (current 0.99; audited statements expected >1.1).
- Legislative session ended; state funding estimates for next year due March 25, 2026.
- Next year's budget planning begins next week with preliminary salary and program figures targeted for April board meeting.

Security Upgrade Proposal (discussed during finance report)
Proposal to install Rhombus cloud-based security hardware and software on all remaining exterior doors (front door already upgraded). Cost: $20,000–$23,000, fully covered by remaining safety grant funds ($27,000 left). No impact on current-year budget. Multiple bids were obtained previously; this extends the existing system. Board approval required because expenditure exceeds $20,000.

Questions asked:

- Request for itemized proposal / line items.
- Confirmation that RFP / competitive bidding was already completed in prior year.
- Clarification that this is hardware/software only (not door/frame replacement).

Marketing Report – Stephanie H

- Social media campaign ("Our Students Say It Best") and open-house ads running; some leads generated.
- Feeder-school tours scheduled (Treeside Elementary – 50 students; Franklin – 20 students).
- Current tour-to-enrollment conversion: ~33% for 2025-26 school year.
- Current enrollment: 413 students (355 full-time).
- Open House scheduled for March 26, 2026, 5:00–7:00 p.m.; board members requested to assist at welcome and admin tables (shifts encouraged).

Merit Online Report
Report submitted by David Wiseman via email; reviewed independently by board members. No discussion required.

Quest Time Review
Report submitted by David Wiseman via email. Jeri Mellor added that feedback from teachers and students will be collected over the next two months to inform possible adjustments for the 2026-27 school year.

Director's Report – Mike

- PowerSchool transition nearly complete; course-request survey for 2026-27 school year to launch next week.
- Professional staffing: Fully staffed for next year. Two English teachers departing (master's programs); replacements already hired. Bios to be shared at next board meeting.
- New Athletic Director has cleared background check and is transitioning.
- Coaching positions for 2026-27 still under evaluation; new Athletic Director will assist.

Spend Plan Review – Riley Lazaga
Updated spend plan presented. Core academic classes (English, science, health, social studies, math, etc.) will no longer be charged per state requirements. Detailed breakdowns (with hyperlinks) added for music, athletics, art, etc., showing per-class fees and rationale. Plan is posted on the school website under the Parents tab.

Public Comment
None.

Action Items and Votes

1. **Approval of February 19, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes**
    - Motion: Heidi Bingham
    - Second: Jeri Mellor
    - Vote (by name):
        - Aaron Cook: Yes
        - Jeri Mellor: Yes
        - Rachel Jay: Yes
        - Heidi Bingham: Yes
        - David Jensen: Yes
        - Ashley Watts: Yes
        - Mary Howell: Yes

          Outcome: Approved unanimously (contingent upon any minor corrections Jeri Mellor may submit within 24 hours). No corrections were submitted.

2. **Approval of March 5, 2026 Off-Cycle Board Meeting Minutes**
    - Motion: Heidi Bingham
    - Second: Jeri Mellor
    - Vote (by name):
    - Aaron Cook: Yes
    - Jeri Mellor: Yes
    - Rachel Jay: Yes
    - Heidi Bingham: Yes
    - David Jensen: Yes
    - Ashley Watts: Yes
    - Mary Howell: Yes

      All members listed above voted Yes.

      Outcome: Approved unanimously.

3. **Approval of Updated Spend Plan**
    - Motion: Heidi Bingham
    - Second: Jeri Mellor
    - Vote (by name):
    - Aaron Cook: Yes
    - Jeri Mellor: Yes
    - Rachel Jay: Yes
    - Heidi Bingham: Yes
    - David Jensen: Yes
    - Ashley Watts: Yes
    - Mary Howell: Yes

      All members listed above voted Yes.

      Outcome: Approved unanimously.

4. **Approval of Security Upgrade Expenditure ($20,000–$23,000 from safety grant)**
    - Motion: Heidi Bingham
    - Second: Jeri Mellor
    - Vote (by name):
    - Aaron Cook: Yes
    - Jeri Mellor: Yes
    - Rachel Jay: Yes
    - Heidi Bingham: Yes
    - David Jensen: Yes
    - Ashley Watts: Yes
    - Mary Howell: Yes

      All members listed above voted Yes.

      Outcome: Approved unanimously.

Board Business

Bylaws Review (Page 3, Sections 5.8–5.13)
Board reviewed quorum rules, proxy voting prohibition, required majority votes for major decisions, compensation rules, and duties of the board. Discussion focused on Section 5.12(H) ("approve full-time personnel selection"). Consensus to revise to: approve full-time administrative hires and review (but not individually approve) all full-time personnel selections, with bios provided to the board.

Strategic Plan Review
Board continued section-by-section review:

- **Student Performance**: Discussion on PLCs, professional development, curriculum alignment with Exhibit A, individualized student plans, and differentiation. Action: Chair and Heidi Bingham to meet with Jessica (assessment) for refined language.
- **Governance**: Increase awareness of policies/procedures among admin, staff, students, and board. Board will regularly review/update policies. Ashley Watts (Policy Chair) will begin monthly policy highlights for staff newsletter and potential admin communications.
- **Culture**: Revised draft presented by Aaron Cook emphasizing alignment between administration, parents, staff, charter, board vision, and academic goals. Further refinement planned (include student culture element).

Executive Session
Motion to enter executive session (to discuss the character, professional competence, or physical/mental health of an individual) made by Heidi Bingham, seconded by Jeri Mellor.
By-name vote: All seven board members (Aaron Cook, Jeri Mellor, Rachel Jay, Heidi Bingham, David Jensen, Ashley Watts, Mary Howell) voted **Yes**.
Executive session held; recording stopped and meeting locked.
Returned to open session at 9:18 p.m. No action taken from executive session.

Adjournment
The meeting adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: David Jensen, Board Secretary
Next Regular Meeting: April 16, 2026

Approved by board vote in the April 16, 2026 board meeting.