

**DEMING CESAR CHAVEZ CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL  
GOVERNANCE COUNCIL REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

**April 8, 2025**

**6:04 p.m.**

**Regular Board Meeting**

**Deming Cesar Chavez Charter High School Room #14**

The Deming Cesar Chavez Charter High School Governance Council Members met in a Regular Board Meeting on April 8, 2025, at 6:04 p.m. via-zoom. The following Governing Council members attended: Nick Perez (President), *Present*, Britney Valdez (Vice-President), *Absent*, Barbara Reedy (Secretary/Treasurer), *Present*, Crystal Peña (Member), *Present*, and Kerena Vazquez Levario (Member), *Present*. Also present were Noel Nuñez (Director), Chris Masters (Business Manager) *via-zoom* and Viviana Porras (Administrative Assistant). See the sign-in sheet for others who attended.

**I. Call Meeting to Order** – Kerena Vazquez Levario, presiding.

A. Kerena Vazquez Levario, Member, called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

B. Roll Call was conducted, and a quorum was established 4/5.

Nick Perez – *Arrived at 6:29p.m.*

Britney Valdez - *Absent*

C. Reading of the Mission Statement.

D. \*Adoption of the Agenda:

**Motion was made by Barbara Reedy, Secretary/Treasurer, to ADOPT the Agenda as presented; seconded by Crystal Peña, Member. MOTION CARRIED 3-0.**

E. \*Meeting Minutes Review/Approval for March 4, 2025:

**Motion was made by Barbara Reedy, Secretary/Treasurer, to APPROVE the March 4, 2025, meeting minutes with as presented; seconded by Crystal Peña, Member. MOTION CARRIED 3-0.**

**II. Public Comment (Limited Public Forum)**

Time Limit 15 minutes total

No Public Comment.

**III. Staff/Student Spotlight**

Noel Nuñez, Director, introduced Cynthia Benting, Academic Advisor/Social Worker, to the Governing Council Members for the Staff Spotlight.

Cynthia Benting expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity to attend the trip to the state Capitol with her students. She noted how impactful the experience was—both for her as an educator and for the students, many of whom were having their first experiences in such an environment. The students' excitement about basic aspects like hotels and restaurants underlined how meaningful the trip was in expanding their worldviews. Additionally, she mentioned wanting to engage students in advocacy work, specifically around teen dating violence awareness and related legislation.

Crystal Pena, Member, emphasized the value of these trips and voiced support for allocating future resources to ensure more students can participate.

**IV. Committee Reports – Student Report from Legislative Session, Audit, Finance, School Planning/Academic, Equity Council**

- Student Report from Legislative Session: Noel Nunez shared the background of the trip, which took place in February, and was made possible by Charles Turner, a colleague and former student. The visit focused on promoting the Anti-Distracted Driving Bill sponsored by Senator Crystal Brantley, which has now passed into law. Mr. Nunez emphasized that their school had already been ahead of the curve regarding cell phone restrictions, crediting former leadership for implementing strict phone policies.

He then introduced each person in the group photo, sharing personal details and stories about the students, including how some had never traveled outside their hometowns before this trip. One student, for instance, expressed that eating at Yo Mama's in Socorro gave him "the best hamburger" he'd ever had—underscoring the newness of the experience.

Cynthia Benting then facilitated a transition to the students themselves. The students, visibly moved, spoke about:

- Meeting prominent political figures, including Lt. Governor Morales, and how it was inspiring to learn he came from Deming and supports charter schools.
- Feeling seen and represented by someone with similar roots.
- Building relationships with peers outside of school settings, deepening their sense of community and belonging.
- Learning local history and feeling proud to represent their school in what they called a "historic" moment.

The students expressed gratitude and a desire for similar opportunities in the future, making it clear how meaningful and memorable the experience was for them.

- Audit Committee: The Audit Committee did not meet. A Budget Workshop is scheduled for next month.
- Finance Committee: The Finance Committee did not meet. A Budget Workshop is scheduled for next month.
- School Planning/Academic: The School Planning/Academic Committee did not meet. Mr. Nuñez noted that some topics would be addressed in Violeta Bustamante's, Dean of Students, report.
- Equity Council: The Equity Council did not meet. There is no update at this time.

- Council Development: Governing Council Upcoming Conferences:
  - NMSBA School Law Conference /June 5-7, 2025/Albuquerque, NM
  - 2025 Charter Schools Conference/June 10-11, 2025/Albuquerque, NM
  - National Charter School Conference/June 29-July 2, 2025/Orlando, FL

**V. Discussion/Action Items**

**A.** Community Schools Food Distribution Report: *(Please see the attached Food Distribution Update from Mrs. Martinez-Lopez.)*

**B.** Parent Budget Input 2025-26: Chris Masters, Business Manager, reported on parent feedback from the Budget Input Survey.

Top priorities identified by parents were:

- Continuation of Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs
- Increased field trips and student experiences
- Facilities and technology improvements ranked lower in priority.
- Mr. Masters acknowledged that field trips were limited this year and stated this would be addressed in the upcoming budget cycle.
- He also noted that the Santa Fe trip was not included in the survey but will be added in future versions.

**C.** \*Follow-up regarding Election of Officers/Oath of Commitment: The Governing Council Members agreed to table the Follow-up regarding Election of Officers/Oath of Commitment until the next meeting.

**Motion was made by Crystal Peña, Member, to TABLE the Follow-up regarding Election of Officers/Oath of Commitment until the next meeting; seconded by Barbara Reedy, Secretary/Treasurer. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

**D.** \*Fundraising & Marketing Strategy: Chris Masters, Business Manager, introduced Diandra Barnwell, a seasoned marketing executive with experience at Cosmopolitan, Nordstrom, and Dior. Ms. Barnwell shared her background in brand partnerships, fundraising, and her passion for supporting educational causes. She proposed a comprehensive 6-month to 1-year marketing and sponsorship strategy to support the school's goals..

Council members were given the opportunity to ask questions or share comments; no questions were raised.

Nick Perez, President, commended Diandra's background and expressed appreciation for her support and upcoming contributions.

Mr. Masters praised Diandra, describing her as "incredible" and stating that great things are expected from her in the role.

**E.** \*Approval of Contract with Diandra Barnwell: Chris Masters informed the Governing Council Members that the contract document was accidentally left out of the meeting packet. He verbally outlined the contract terms for approval consideration:

- Diandra Barnwell will receive \$1,000 per month for the remainder of the current school year (April, May, and June 2025).
- In addition, she will earn 10% of any donations or sponsorships she secures (e.g., \$10 for every \$100 raised).
- The initiative supports enhanced fundraising, including student gear, marketing efforts, and supplemental needs not covered by existing grants.

Diandra Barnwell added that she will also provide mentorship opportunities to interested students, particularly those interested in social media, marketing, and fashion. She offered to establish weekly meetings with selected students to involve them in content creation and exposure to industry contacts.

Mr. Masters, emphasized the alignment with students in the Cosmetology (Cosmo) program and potential cross-program engagement.

Crystal Peña, Member, asked for clarification on the payment terms and confirmation of a possible contract renewal or revision at the June board meeting. Chris confirmed that a new contract would be considered at that time and that only the current school year's portion was under review for now.

**Motion was made by Crystal Peña, Member, to TABLE the Approval of the Contract with Diandra Barnwell due to the Contract not being included in the meeting packet; seconded by Barbara Reedy, Secretary/Treasurer. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

**F. \*Approval of Lease Agreement for Xerox Machines:** Chris Masters presented a new Lease Agreement for three Xerox Machines: two midsize and one smaller unit. The new lease will replace the current two midsize machines and introduce a smaller one for the front office.

- The lease is with Visual IT, which has acquired the current provider, Benchmark.
- The lease rate is approximately \$30/month lower than the current agreement, with cost-per-copy charges reduced by about 50%.
- The new machines represent an upgrade, and the contract terms are nearly identical to the previous lease signed three and a half years ago.
- The lease was renegotiated ahead of schedule to avoid tariff increases that would impact costs later in the year.
- There is no change to the existing budget, and further vendor evaluations will occur when the larger machine leases expire.

Board members expressed their support for the proposal, agreeing that it was a good idea to approve the lease before the rates increase due to tariffs.

**Motion was made by Crystal Peña, Member, to APPROVE the Lease Agreement for Xerox Machines; seconded by Kerena Vazquez Levario, Member. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

- G. Discussion on Budget Submission Guidance: Chris Masters, Business Manager, outlined the current Budget Submission Process, highlighting a few key unresolved issues, including recent state legislative changes. The minimum wage for teachers has increased, with Level 1 set at \$55,000, Level 2 at \$65,000, and Level 3 at \$75,000. The average salary increase for all staff is 4%, which was confirmed after reviewing the legislation.

Mr. Masters also noted that the upcoming budget will require the addition of one full-time position in the Instructional Assistant Department, and further discussions will take place with Mr. Nuñez before presenting to the Budget Committee later in the month.

The Governing Council Members were invited to provide any feedback or suggest changes before the Official Budget Submission, though no vote was required at this stage. Crystal Peña, Member, asked for clarification on the salary increases, and Chris confirmed that the wage had increased by \$5,000 at each level.

- H. \*Approval of Budget Adjustment Request – SEG Final Adjustment: Chris Masters, Business Manager, recommended tabling the Budget Adjustment Request until more specific numbers were available.

**Motion was made by Barbara Reedy, Secretary/Treasurer, to TABLE the Approval of the Budget Adjustment Request – SEG Final Adjustment; seconded by Kerena Vasquez Levario, Member. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

- I. \*Approval of Salary Schedule: Chris Masters presented the updated Draft Salary Schedule reflecting the new State-Mandated Salary increases. Key adjustments included a base salary of \$55,000 for Level 1 teachers, with incremental raises for additional credentials and experience. Level 3 teachers would start at \$75,000, with further increases based on qualifications.

Mr. Masters confirmed that the proposed schedule includes an average 4% increase for teachers, which aligns with legislative guidance. When asked about budget impact, he acknowledged the school's tight financial situation but expressed cautious optimism due to projected increases in enrollment and funding. He emphasized a conservative approach to growth to protect the school's culture and financial stability.

Barbara Reedy, Secretary/Treasurer, raised concerns about avoiding a repeat of last year's budget crisis, which Masters acknowledged, reiterating the importance of waiting for finalized state numbers and hosting a Budget Workshop to review them in detail.

**Motion was made by Crystal Peña, Member, to APPROVE the Salary Schedule as presented; seconded by Barbara Reedy, Secretary/Treasurer. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

- J. \*Approval of 2025-26 School Calendar: Chris Masters requested that the approval of the 2025–2026 school calendar be tabled until the next board meeting. He explained that the Deming Public Schools calendar and the school’s draft calendar were included in the board packets for review, but more information is needed before finalizing. Specifically, there are upcoming sessions clarifying new state requirements that may impact the calendar.

Mr. Masters noted that the current draft is closely aligned with Deming Public Schools, except for differences in the November schedule, notably around the 3rd and 4th, which Deming Public Schools takes off for elections. He stated that the school cannot currently afford those days off, and further internal discussion is needed.

**Motion was made by Crystal Peña, Member, to TABLE the Approval of 2025-26 School Calendar until the next meeting; seconded by Kerena Vazquez Levario, Member. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

- K. \*Acceptance of FY24 Financial Audit Report Release: Chris Masters, Business Manager, reported that this item was tabled from the previous meeting. He explained that the FY24 Financial Audit Report is available online through the State Auditor’s website, but viewing it now requires account creation. Physical copies are available at the school for all board members and the public.

Mr. Masters noted that while there were a few minor noncompliance issues, which he humorously referred to as “parking tickets,” there were no significant findings such as misdemeanors or felonies. The Audit concluded that the school has a strong financial system, which was explicitly noted in the audit results.

Noel Nunez, Director, added that this assessment was echoed during a recent meeting by Sam Gonzalez and emphasized that many Charter Schools repeat Audit issues year over year, which reflects poor oversight. He commended Mr. Masters for maintaining compliance and protecting the school from more serious infractions.

**Motion was made by Crystal Peña, Member, to APPROVE the Acceptance of FY24 Financial Audit Report Release; seconded by Kerena Vazquez Levario, Member. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

- L. Governing Council Upcoming Conferences: The information regarding upcoming Governing Council Trainings was shared with GC Members. They were recommended to contact Ms. Porras if they are interested in attending any of the training sessions.
- NMSBA School Law Conference/June 5-7, 2025/Albuquerque, NM
  - National Charter School Conference/June 29- July 2, 2025/Orlando, FL

**VI. Director’s Report:**

Violeta Bustamante presented the Dean of Students Report, providing updates on student-related matters. *(Please see the attached Dean of Students Report.)*

Noel Nuñez presented the Director’s Report and asked the Governing Council Members if they had any questions. *(Please see the attached Director’s Report.)*

**VII. Time and Content for the next Governing Council Meeting:**

Regular Meeting – May 13, 2025, 6:00 P.M.

- Follow-up regarding Election of Officers/Oath of Commitment
- Approval of Contract with Diandra Barnwell
- Approval of Budget Adjustment Request – SEG Final Adjustment
- Approval of 2025-26 School Calendar
- Approval of 2025-26 SWREC Contract
- Updates to the Student Handbook, including: Cell phone policy clarification, new Tribal Graduation attire Policy in compliance with State Law.

**VIII. Board Meeting Evaluation:** The Governing Council Members agreed that the meeting was full of valuable and informative discussion.

**IX. Next Scheduled Meeting**

Regular Meeting/May 13, 2025/DCCCHS Room #14/6:00 P.M.

**X. \*Adjournment:**

**Motion was made by Barbara Reedy, Secretary/Treasurer, to ADJOURN the meeting at 7:39 p.m.; seconded by Kerena Vazquez Levario, Member. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**