

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of**  
**STATEWIDE CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD**  
**OKLAHOMA HISTORY CENTER**  
**800 NAZIH ZUHDI DR.**  
**OKLAHOMA CITY, OK**  
**March 9, 2026**

The Statewide Charter School Board met in regular session at 1:03 p.m. on Monday, March 9, 2026, at the Oklahoma History Center at 800 Nazih Zuhdi Dr., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Members of the Statewide Charter School Board Present:

Brian Shellem  
Amber Wise  
Bill Pearson  
Damon Gardenhire  
Jared Buswell  
Britni Tomcho  
Kitty Campbell, designee for State Auditor and Inspector, Cindy Byrd  
Courtney Anderson, designee for State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Lindel Fields

Others in Attendance:

Rebecca Wilkinson, Executive Director  
Skyler Lusnia, Director of School Performance  
Merin Gracey, Interim Secretary to the Board  
Lecrecia Schmidt, Operations Officer  
Jaycie Smith, Academic Compliance Officer  
Ellie Rivas, Financial Compliance Officer  
Lisa Daniels, Director of Horizon: Digitally Enhanced Campus  
Shelly Hickman, Communications Director  
Thomas Schneider, Deputy General Counsel  
John Hadden, Assistant Attorney General

Other general public in attendance are shown as an attachment.

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Brian Shellem – Present  
Bill Pearson – Present  
Jared Buswell – Present  
Britni Tomcho – Present  
Amber Wise - Present  
David Rutkauskas – Absent  
Damon Gardenhire – Present  
Courtney Anderson – Present, designee for State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Lindel Fields  
Kitty Campbell - Present, designee for State Auditor and Inspector, Cindy Byrd

2. **Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance, Salute to the Oklahoma State Flag, and Moment of Silence**
3. **(Action) Discussion and possible action regarding the minutes of the February 9, 2026, Regular Board Meeting**

Bill Pearson moved to approve the minutes of February 9, 2026, regular board meeting. Dr. Kitty Campbell seconded the motion. The motion carried with the following votes:

Kitty Campbell – Yes  
Bill Pearson – Yes  
Courtney Anderson – Yes  
Damon Gardenhire – Yes  
Amber Wise - Yes  
Brian Shellem – Yes  
Britni Tomcho – Yes  
Jared Buswell – Yes  
David Rutkauskas – Absent

4. **Chairman’s Opening Comments**

Mr. Shellem reflected on his recent visit to Washington, D.C., including the Korean War Veterans Memorial, noting it as a reminder of the sacrifices made for the nation’s freedoms. He emphasized the importance of supporting freedom through education and thanked the Board for its hard work.

5. **Public Comment**

*The Statewide Charter School Board shall hear public comment on any action item listed on the current board meeting agenda. Public comments will be limited to only those subject matters covered in the current meeting agenda. Public comment will not be taken on issues relating to: (1) pending litigation against SCSB or agency employees; (2) a pending grievance; (3) an employee complaint; (4) complaints against SCSB employees; (5) disciplinary action, suspension, or termination of an SCSB employee; or (6) any administrative proceeding initiated by the Board pursuant to the provisions of the Administrative Procedures Act. A sign-up sheet will be posted at least fifteen (15) minutes prior to the scheduled start time of the Board Meeting. Sign up must be completed prior to the scheduled start time of the meeting. Only individuals who have signed up to speak will be recognized during the Public Comment period and will be recognized in the order in which they have signed in. Each speaker will be allocated three (3) minutes for presentation. The Board Chairperson may interrupt and/or terminate any presentation during public comment which does not conform to the procedures outlined under this Section. The Board Chairperson reserves and retains the right to interrupt, terminate, or postpone public comment as necessary to effectuate the management of the public meeting.*

There were no public comments.

**6. Board Spotlight – 2026 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Finalist Tracie Grunewald of Oklahoma Virtual Charter Academy**

Audra Plummer, Superintendent of Oklahoma Virtual Charter Academy (OVCA) introduced an OVCA teacher, Tracie Grunewald, named a Top 10 finalist for Oklahoma Teacher of the Year, believed to be the first virtual charter school teacher to receive the distinction. Grunewald addressed the Board regarding her teaching approach, the virtual learning model, and the impact of charter schools in serving diverse student populations.

**7. Presentation and possible discussion regarding the Statewide Charter School Board Working Group reports: Budget, Communications, Governance, and Horizon: Digitally Enhanced Campus**

Jared Buswell, Chair of the Budget Working Group, had no updates. Damon Gardenhire, Chair of the Communications Committee, had no updates. In the absence of David Rutkauskas, Chair of the Governance Committee, Dr. Rebecca Wilkinson reported that meetings and discussions are taking place with legislators during the legislative session. Britni Tomcho, Chair of the Horizon: Digitally Enhanced Campus Working Group, reported the inaugural Horizon Connect Conference will be held March 25, 2026, at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center in Norman, and provided a reminder that advanced registration is required.

**8. Administration**

- a. Presentation and possible discussion regarding the School Year 2024-2025 Annual Performance Framework Report for Le Monde International Charter School

Skyler Lusnia presented Le Monde International School's 2024–2025 performance framework report, noting an overall score of 74.24%, just below the 75% threshold, requiring submission of a charter renewal application. The school received good ratings in organizational (90%) and financial (83.75%) performance; however, its academic score of 56% on Oklahoma State Testing Program academic proficiency results lowered the threshold score. Student growth on nationally normed assessments was identified as a strength.

- b. (Action) Presentation, discussion, and possible action regarding approval or rejection of the National Ben Gamla Jewish Charter School Foundation, Inc. Revised Application for Initial Authorization.

Mr. Lusnia reported that the National Ben Gamla Jewish Charter School Foundation had addressed nine of the ten previously identified deficiencies in its revised application, including board residency, Open Meeting Act compliance, and updated statements of assurances. While the applicant resolved nine of the ten concerns previously identified, the application continued to include religious components, which conflict with the requirement under Oklahoma law that charter schools be nonsectarian.

Mr. Schneider raised concerns about the material discrepancy in projected enrollment—from the initial Letter of Intent estimate of 40 students to a potential 400 in the revised application. Mr. Shellem questioned whether this difference warranted rejection, but members reached consensus that it was not a sufficient basis for denial, with the sectarian religious component remaining the decisive factor. Mr. Gardenhire stressed that the Oklahoma Supreme Court's

Writ of Mandamus was the controlling bottom line. Mr. Buswell agreed, adding that while the revised application had addressed most prior concerns, his perceived weakest response regarding organizational overlap was still not grounds for denial.

Before the final motion, an initial motion was made by Mr. Pearson and seconded by Mr. Gardenhire; however, Mr. Gardenhire withdrew his second. Mr. Pearson amended his motion to deny the revised application for initial authorization for the National Ben Gamla Jewish Charter School Foundation, based on the reasons stated on the record by board staff, the mandamus order from the courts, and the secular clause contained within Title 70, state law for schools. Mr. Gardenhire seconded the amended motion. The amended motion carried with the following votes:

Kitty Campbell – Yes  
Jared Buswell – Yes  
Bill Pearson – Yes  
Courtney Anderson – Yes  
Damon Gardenhire – Yes  
Brian Shellem – Yes  
Amber Wise - Yes  
Britni Tomcho – Yes  
David Rutkauskas – Absent

- c. (Action) Review, discussion, and possible action regarding the procurement of outside legal counsel in accordance with 74 O.S. § 20i for potential or anticipated litigation

Mr. Shellem discussed procuring outside legal counsel under 74 O.S. § 20i for anticipated litigation from the rejected Ben Gamla Jewish Charter School Foundation application. Mr. Shellem invited Mr. Buswell, Mr. Pearson, and Mr. Gardenhire to join him in conference calls with two law firms: Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) and First Liberty Institute (FLI) — both highly qualified, pro bono religious-freedom nonprofits—weighing pros and cons. ADF’s prior Supreme Court successes and familiarity were strengths, but concerns arose over perception (reusing the firm that opposed the state), ongoing Tennessee litigation, and potential divided interests if cases consolidated. FLI offered three Oklahoma-resident attorneys with strong constitutional expertise, dedicated sole representation without conflicts, and similar pro bono terms.

Bill Pearson made a motion to select First Liberty to represent the board in any potential legal action brought about by the rejection of Ben Gamla Jewish Charter School Foundation application. Jared Buswell seconded the motion. The motion carried with the following votes:

Bill Pearson – Yes  
Kitty Campbell – Yes  
Courtney Anderson – Yes  
Jared Buswell – Yes  
Brian Shellem – Yes

Britni Tomcho – Yes  
David Rutkauskas – Absent  
Amber Wise – Yes  
Damon Gardenhire – Yes

**9. New Business**

*Discussion and possible action of any item that could not have been known or reasonably foreseen prior to time of posting agenda (As defined in Oklahoma Statutes Title 25, Section 311 (A)(9)).*

There was no new business.

**10. Adjournment**

Jared Buswell made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Damon Gardenhire seconded the motion. The motion carried with the following votes:

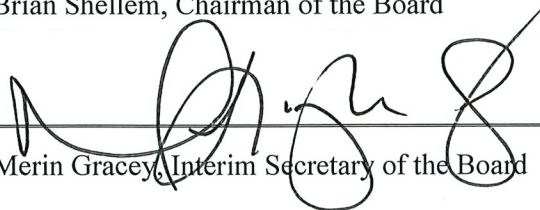
Amber Wise– Yes  
Britni Tomcho – Yes  
Bill Pearson – Yes  
Courtney Anderson– Yes  
Damon Gardenhire – Yes  
Brian Shellem – Yes  
Kitty Campbell – Yes  
Jared Buswell – Yes  
David Rutkauskas – Absent

**The meeting was adjourned at 2:17 p.m.**



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Brian Shellem, Chairman of the Board



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Merin Gracey, Interim Secretary of the Board

**ATTACHMENT:**

**OTHER GENERAL PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE**

**STATEWIDE VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD  
 REGULAR MEETING - MARCH 9, 2026**

**Meeting Sign-In**

Please <b>PRINT</b> Name	Business - School - Agency	Address
Audra Plummel	OVCA	MWC
Barbie Sloan	OVCA	MWC
BARRY <del>Wise</del> Wise		
Tan Shephard	ESOCA	Guthrie
Tracie Grunewald	OVCA	Woodward
Gaylene Stupic	Self	Edmont
Emily Winters	SCSB	Norman
BRIAN FARLEY	BANK OF AMERICA	Inmond
Kendra Cope	OYACS	OKC
A.J. FERAZI	SPENCER FANE	OKC
BARRY SCHMELZGRACH	OPCSA	OKC