

Valley Inquiry Charter School

March Special Session Board Meeting Minutes

March 2, 2026 | In-Person Meeting, 6:00 PM

Board Members

Board President & Chair	Cammi Carriere
Vice Chair	Terry Rohse
Treasurer	Stephen Staten
Secretary	BJ Foster
At-Large	Ed Austin
At-Large	Carol Kruse (virtual)
At-Large	Garrick Williams (absent)
At-Large	Vacant
At-Large	Vacant
Non-Voting Member	Lacey McNay

Meeting Agenda Minutes

6:06pm Call to Order

Cammi called the meeting to order.

6:06pm Items to Vote On: Central GeoTech Change Order

Cammi: Starting with continuing discussion about change order. Blake unable to make it, Craig here to discuss change order regarding soil samples.

Craig Ware: Transporting soil offsite would have been major unnecessary economic burden. Decided to berm. Engaged with DEQ in December, working with Bruce in Salem office. Brought in toxicologist, gave him everything we had. They reviewed documents and came up with what they need to write their action letter. Feel boxes have been checked, no unacceptable risks now or in expected future. Need to get DEQ comfortable that low-level contamination and construction in current condition doesn't create unacceptable risk to staff and students going forward. DEQ likes to ask for a lot of things, engaged in negotiation meetings. They were concerned about organic chlorine, no analysis on organic phosphorus pesticides or chlorinated herbicides. Take many samples to get aggregate risk over a large area. Prior work was ten samples within decision units which was not as many as DEQ wants. Agreed that if no organic phosphorus pesticides or chlorinated herbicides found, then well testing already

performed would be sufficient. Wanting to look at decision unit 4 where classrooms are, sample the berm, and are feeling confident it will result in a “no further action” decision. Had to do a work plan, absorbed most of that cost in prior allocation. Will have four composite samples submitted to the lab (around \$3500 for that lab work). Then will update board and do “action complete” or “summary” report for DEQ. Tried to predict work plan, field work, analytical, reporting and interactions with DEQ. Costs can be much larger for projects. VICS inherited a lightly contaminated site. Without going through DEQ process would have “action pending” case.

Cammi: How long will process take?

Craig: Submit next week, approval in a few weeks, submit report in April, have NFA in late second quarter. Not expecting any other requirements.

BJ: Did you say we would have an action pending case against us if we didn't engage DEQ?

Craig: Would have been left unresolved. Now will stay on cleanup database. DEQ rarely forces the hand. VICS would have an open regulatory database file that at some point would need to be resolved.

Steve: one concern was cost of sampling activities. Sounds like prior company had a smaller 10 vs. 36 sample rate. Appreciate you bringing that forward. Didn't realize we hadn't tested our water for everything. Given that students drink that, is that something we should be testing for?

Craig: Dieldren level was exceeding concern, a few other minor things existed but Dieldren was consistent. Since that was the prevalent contaminant, and wasn't found leeching into well, reduces concerns for anything else. Don't want to sample well for contaminants we don't believe we're going to find. Work in Phase 2 was good work, our rates are higher but incremental sampling. Would be happy to deliver under budget if they're able to get work done in a day and a half, but don't want to have to come back another time.

Cammi: Thanks Craig for coming and explaining better than I could.

Craig: Thankfully ag site at VICS didn't exceed allowable biopersistent chemicals levels.

Cammi: I would like to make a motion on this and get it crossed off.

Steve motions to approve change order for Central Geotech. Terry seconds motion. Vote: 6 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain. Motion passes.

6:30pm

Items to Vote On: Plumbing Change Order

Cammi: We have plumbing change order. Plumbing underneath had been cut flush to where we cannot tie back in and have to run new pipes entirely.

Carol: Is this additional cost or replacement cost?

Cammi: Was going to be included in original cost of portable 2 wet work. New work for \$24k is for additional work.

Carol: \$24k? One sent at 4:30pm today looked like less. Sent two attachments, correct? Arc Plumbing and Mechanical, is that what you're talking about?

Cammi: I might have sent out the wrong thing.

Steve: This is dated March 4 of last year.

Cammi: \$20k was amount for entire bid.

BJ: So this is an additional \$24k.

Cammi: Andy Metcalf's bid was based on what plumber had said.

Steve: This is prevailing wage so we can't get a home plumber to do it.

Lacey: Substantial work needs to be done.

BJ: I've seen replumbing a house run \$40k.

Cammi: This plumber is a small operation in high demand, has a short window so that we can be in our buildings, and this is necessary work. Twelve days seems excessive, got them to agree to "not to exceed" and T&M provisions.

BJ: Not to exceed is the combined \$44k?

Cammi: Yes, the original \$20k for conversion plus this additional \$24k.

Terry: I don't think \$24k is unreasonable.

Terry: Motions to approve the change order. Ed seconds motion. Vote: 6 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain. Motion passes.

6:41pm

Construction: Additional Work Needed

Cammi: Construction is wrapping up, and more change orders are coming through the pipeline. Next one to discuss is flooring. There will be others.

BJ: Cosmetic or structural?

Cammi: Both. HVAC systems had issues. Electrical found some meters and boxes needed repaired. Some old and outdated things. Shouldn't be more than \$5k based on what they said on the phone. HVAC will be another, found some piping/venting issues, likely under \$10k. Mini-splits will not be hooked up until power is connected, and those might need some help if not replaced. Mini-splits are around 8k, and we would need ten of them (two per unit). We have three quotes, need one more. Portable 3 roof needs some patch repairs, possibly new roof. Lots of moss on that building. Roofline is shallow and they don't vent well, perhaps a metal roof will be needed. Number 5 also has a lot of moss growth but

doesn't look as bad. Asked what it would cost to get moss treated and cleaned up. Number 3 is on the field side, 5 is on the far back.

Terry: Nice full moon tonight to see them.

Cammi: Flooring is next big one Andy Metcalf is talking about. Bathroom flooring already included in bid, but there is some subfloor repairs needed and carpet needs to come out and vinyl put in. Closer to \$19k for that work. We don't have final change order in hand, but in a week we can vote on that.

Terry: Doesn't sound like our free portables are free.

Cammi: Flooring company recommended replacing number 1 portable floor, said it likely wouldn't patch well with tiles popping up, bid came in around \$15,723. Portables 3, 4 and 5 look decent for floors. Those are coming in from \$7,200 to \$9k each.

Carol: How old are these portables?

Cammi: Don't quote me, but I oldest is 2003 and youngest is 2018 I believe.

BJ: I think typical life expectancy is max 50 years.

Cammi: If full replacement is \$15k, would we want to toy with replacing all flooring to match?

Steve: Would all wear out around the same time if we do.

Terry: Patches tend to turn into more patches.

Steve: Need to work through expected expenses, we need to cut things off at some point as our bond is limited.

Cammi: Not at an "oh no" moment, but haven't started technology expenses, and we needed bond money for that.

Steve: That is an unlocking factor for the pass through percentage with SKSD.

Cammi: I had well looked at due to sediment concerns. Just came in today. He is suggesting inline filtration system and is going to dial back VCP which is a pressure system which appears to be set way too high. Around \$8700. A surge tank was recommended as well. Filters are easy to repair and replace, and if we hired a maintenance person they could do the servicing. Want to go over that report a bit more with Blake and Gill. Sounds like we don't have a bigger well problem, just need to dial things in.

Steve: We need to look at a comprehensive list of what we want so we can prioritize and triage rather than just getting to the end of the money.

Cammi: They're saying we should be in the buildings by mid-April at the latest, so change orders are coming to an end.

Steve: Do we have the furnishings we need?

Lacey: Desks and tables will be delivered this week and next, will be stored in a storage box until ready to move it. Chairs covered, teacher desks covered. We'll need a little bit more, got a good amount of free furniture from the capitol. Big pieces purchased, just a few smaller things remaining. They have whiteboards, projectors, still have 5 TVs that can be mounted.

Cammi: From bond reporting, numbers are still good, but getting a list together for what we want to spend remaining money on is important. Thankful for Gill to go over this, but need to vote on things Monday, March 9 or it will hold things up.

Steve: So we will need to decide whether we want to patch or redo all floors?

Cammi: Yes, either new flooring on two and patches on the other three, or new flooring on all five. Any other questions?

(No additional questions.)

6:59pm

Break

Cammi: Switching to board work session now, guests welcome to observe but we won't be answering questions. Next meeting Monday, March 9 at 6:30pm, virtual only.

[Break for tea]

7:03pm

Vision-Directed Strategic Planning

Cammi: We can decide whether we want to split this into two sessions or get through as much as we can.

Terry: Would prefer to split it. I teach a command class for Civil Air Patrol, can only go through 14 principles.

Beth: Will try to not make it feel super-rushed. Wanted to do an inclusive welcome. If you were around, share a moment within the last month where you saw the school's Vision or Mission in action. What did it look like, sound like, feel like?

Terry: Looks like staff is working together, feels like I've been here 200 years, how long has it been?

BJ: Almost six years for us. [Note: later corrected to almost nine years.]

Terry: Board is now doing what it should. When I first came on, board was very micromanaging.

BJ: To some extent, the board had to keep tight control of finances to assert any direction over the school, due to how the school staffing and administration was structured.

Beth: Helpful to see some of the journey.

Lacey: Last Wednesday had shared governance, each group does an update and does problem solving. We have several new people, they had come and asked if we could build community with teachers as many things had happened in Fall. Trained on restorative circles, start with low-level questions, work your way up to real problems. Asked about how they felt about SPED at Valley this year. People frequently said, "Before I felt this, but now with this new team I feel that." Staff gave feedback it was such a good meeting that they want to continue these community circles. We have amazing staff.

Terry: Yes we do.

Carol: Through board lens appreciate that everyone listens to each other without feeling intimidated. Have been in uncomfortable meetings, but this board has been very welcoming. Felt very cohesive.

Lacey: Even through the screen was a really good feeling.

Cammi: Have been in the school quite a bit due to the construction project. I see students and teachers interacting walking the hallways. Mr. Ponce deserves a shout-out, does a really good job incorporating IB into a PE curriculum in ways I wouldn't have thought possible. Kids are giving it their all in the cold, not complaining and whining. I'm sure some other schools might ask these questions, but hearing "let's dive deeper into that" or "what do you think?" and giving them ownership makes me feel good I'm sending my kids here. Recently had some personal interactions with teachers even without my kids, and it gave me more understanding. IB is definitely at the core of learning this year.

Lacey: Brynn is doing an amazing job.

Cammi: Now that middle school is in person, have gotten to see the program and am very excited to have my kids go into that program. Very engaging, and at the middle school level the elementary groundwork really starts to go much deeper with a very international lens.

Lacey: Board members are always welcome to observe, just send me a message.

Carol: Can board members volunteer?

Lacey: As long as you pass background check.

BJ: All board members have to pass the district background check to be on board.

Lacey: Then yes, would be happy to have you do that.

Steve: Area that is shining brightest is new problems with creativity and actively engaged in community. Seeing it with students, teachers and parents, PTC engaged. We've had years when teachers and PTC didn't get along, and are in a

better place now. We have a lot of new challenges we're having to be creative and thoughtful about, kids are demonstrating flexibility and resilience. We had prior transitions that weren't quite as smooth. Very encouraged to see that piece shining.

BJ: I see more of the board dynamics as I do not have a student here, and I see the small, tight-knit family dynamic at play mirroring our smaller, more family feeling school environment.

Ed: Wanted to see the spring performance.

Beth: Wanted to ground us in mission and vision for the school. Added "Expect and Accept Non-Closure" to board community agreements.

Katherine: K-8 Spanish and music have done a great job including IB attributes and including students. Play was a great example of how every student could have a part and shine. Fifth graders have been getting into take action projects, got to mentor those overseas and excited to see what that looks like at Valley. Discussing fundraising with Lacey from perspective of involving IB mindset. Found a company where kids are collecting money, and have to do an act of kindness in return. The second one which might be cool for April is collecting used shoes for \$7 a pair.

Beth: Work session objectives. Want to discuss vision alignment, the "why" behind our actions. Then priority selection, the "where". Goal architecture, the "how". And lastly recruitment of non-board members. Strategic roadmap. What is your personal commitment to supporting the school? Does the vision still reflect our highest aspirations for students? Need to identify pillars to focus on and align resources with. KPIs vs. OKRs and growth targets. Data validation, what evidence do we need to measure progress? Where do we want to invest resources to move the strategic goals forward? Adopting and communicating the commitments. Monitor, learn and repeat. Dashboard reviews monthly and quarterly, strategy adjustments, and annual refreshes.

Have worked with boards, committees and advisories. Want to share video, "Know Your Why" by Michael Jr. where key concept is difference that comes when you know what you are doing versus when you actually understand why you are doing it.

Questions for reflection:

Why is VICS Vision & Mission important to you? How does the Vision and Mission align with your values and beliefs about students, learning and education? What are VICS' Values? What has VICS' community said is important to them? Does the Vision & Mission still align with where the school is heading?

[Time given to think and respond silently]

7:45pm

Vision-Directed Strategic Planning (continued)

Beth: Sometimes we don't spend the time discussing these things, and it's important to come back to these core concepts to center the discussion.

Terry: Being quiet, bashful and shy, when I first came on the thing I liked about what I saw was the IB portion. It felt like the mission of the school was to teach how to think not what to think. Not to force any doctrines on anyone, but looking into cultural things. Discussion classes are more useful than a lecture. I can give a background, but why do you think they did things that way, what was their motivation, how did they figure out how? Then turn them loose. Saw more discussion in young primary years than in many college classes, which is why I wanted to get on the board.

BJ: My values are based on what I would want done to prepare me. I want the foundational skills like reading to be solid to unlock all other learning. But beyond that, I want to foster a love of learning, and this goes well with the lifelong learner portion of our vision. I see alignment with the international aspects of our vision and mission and how I feel we should be preparing children not just for a career, but for good lives where they can interact with and understand others of diverse perspectives without reverting to the tribalism which plagues our society. We're helping prepare citizens, not just a workforce.

Steve: Wrote a novel online, but very much connects with what both of you said, want to see VICS build lifelong learners. I didn't go to an IB school, and saw many others learn what but not why. They are good if they know all the steps, but if there are any shades of gray they struggle to flourish. During my time at the Sheriff's office I've watched a perspective shift happen, and today's approach to parole and probation is now behavior therapy and teaching critical thinking skills of what the next step or outcome will be. Many don't have the skills to make those connections, and so this involves teaching adults things they didn't learn as a child. Kids get one childhood, one chance to learn before adulthood. We're preparing kids to be critical thinkers and impact the world.

Ed: Respect is very important to me. Tried to deal with students respectfully and expected it in return. Believe in learning by doing. Looking for student interest and giving opportunity to explore. Challenge them. Have a quiver full of resources and aim students in a positive direction.

Cammi: I went to an IB high school and took IB classes. That is intrinsic to me now, as high school is when you're figuring out who you are. When I got into teaching and realized my love for teaching kids with special needs, they often are not given the opportunity to learn the why or how, only the "this is the way, these are the steps, these are the decisions if you don't want to end up in trouble." This was disheartening to me, as they have the ability to learn and think. I fought systems way more than I should have, until I couldn't teach anymore because it was too disheartening. I often think, if only I stayed in it,

maybe I could have changed the system. That's why I wanted to be on the board. I believe in this and it's been a part of me for so long, and I was excited to find it in Salem instead of having to go to a bigger city.

Lacey: We attract a lot of students that don't match the mold of excelling in a traditional school environment, so we have a lot of students with varied abilities. We have such a unique bunch of kids here. I love coming in and getting to know the kids. I like words that start with the same letter. Community, connection, challenge, creativity, compassion (a lot of our behavior management is based on compassion). All of this aligns well with our mission.

Beth: Do we feel our vision and mission statement still reflect our values and the direction the school is going?

Steve: Might need some wordsmithing and updates but largely does still align.

Terry: Want to see more STEM/STEAM in school.

Cammi: I find our mission statement to be solid.

Steve: I want to go through with a fine comb to wordsmith at some point in the nearish future.

Beth: Is there interest in involving community input?

Terry: I think there needs to be that aspect. We changed the bylaws to require more community board member involvement. Should bring them in and do an ask.

Lacey: You can involve people without physically bringing them in, and get an idea of what concepts are rising to the top. Involving staff and students, especially middle school students.

Steve: Where I see it is priority selection and resource mapping, as well as adopt and communicate and monitor, learn and repeat. For the vision, future state needs to be the north star. Data validation, not sure, and the how is board and staff.

Beth: Listening sessions can be a source of data.

BJ: We are stewards of the original charter of the school. We built a middle school not because it was convenient or easy, but because it was the original intent to be a K-8 IB school. We aren't a community school where people are stuck going here and we need the school to reflect their interests, but rather we're a school with a set charter that people elect to join themselves to because they see something they want in that, and we shouldn't betray that charter by trying to get too many other ideas of what the vision for this school is.

Lacey: IB is non-negotiable.

Beth: Do we want to pause the “meat” of goal setting for next time, and start discussion about non-parental board members, or save that for next time?

Lacey: Is there any meaty stuff that can be done in preparation for the next meeting?

Beth: I think so. If we look at the pre-assessment, and what is surfacing under certain big objectives. Any interest in discussing recruitment?

BJ: Sure, let's start this.

Board Recruitment

Lacey: So Terry, you were recruited through a friend?

Terry: Yes, I was still teaching at the time. They said they understood that VICS was looking for board members, applied and was accepted. I've loved every minute of it.

BJ: I can't say I've loved every minute of it, but it's been worthwhile.

Steve: People want to attach themselves to a rising start, so PR matters. Young professional resume builders might be an easy option.

Beth; Rotary, Junior League, local service clubs. Universities or alumni associations, Chemeketa, tech hubs, hospitals or banks, anything that aligns on what your vision is.

Steve: Leadership Salem does field trips to different businesses. Maybe have them come see what running a nonprofit is like, give us a chance to network with them?

Beth: How many board members are you looking to replace?

Cammi: Minimum two, but Mary's spot is also open.

Terry: Could have up to ten plus principal.

Steve: Would be cool to do an article with Salem Reporter talking about expansion and board needs.

Lacey: Teachers planning talent show out back in field, wanting to do night market with food and crafts, making it internationally minded. Our 20th anniversary celebration may coincide.

Beth: Spoke with past reporter with Statesman Journal for promoting ribbon cutting. Also mentioned seeing if construction people could speak with reporters about process.

Cammi: Go as slow as possible... (laughing)

Lacey: Good to be careful when making board member selections, consider diversity.

Terry: Have to leave now. (Terry departs 8:35pm)

Beth: Next time, if you're okay I'd like to do another two hours and give some time to dive into goal-setting part. Would be good to look at other data sources between now and next work session.

8:38pm

Meeting Adjourn