

**Rock Valley College Board of Trustees  
Illinois Community College District No. 511  
3301 Mulford Road, Rockford, IL, 61114  
Educational Resource Center, Performing Arts Room, Room 0214  
Regular Meeting  
December 16, 2025, 5:15 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

**Call to Order**

The Regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Community College District No. 511, Winnebago, Boone, DeKalb, McHenry, Ogle, and Stephenson Counties, Illinois convened in the Performing Arts Room (PAR), Room 0214, in the Educational Resource Center (ERC) on the main campus on Tuesday, December 16, 2025. Board Chair Paul Gorski called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

**Roll Call**

Mr. Paul Gorski  
Ms. Kristen Simpson (by phone)  
Ms. Gloria Cardenas Cudia

Mr. Robert (Bob) Trojan  
Mr. John Nelson arrived at 5:17 p.m.  
Dr. Jenna Goldsmith

The following trustees were absent at roll call: Trustee Crystal Soltow and Student Trustee Isiah Blake. Trustee John Nelson arrived at 5:17 p.m.

Also in Attendance: Dr. Howard Spearman, President; Dr. Amanda Smith, Vice President of Academic Affairs/Chief Academic Officer; Heather Snider, Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and Communications; Dr. Terrica Huntley, Vice President of Human Resources; Dr. Patrick Peyer, Vice President of Student Affairs; Mr. Rick Jenks, Vice President of Operations; Dr. Keith Barnes, Vice President of Cultural Excellence; Ms. Ann Kerwitz, Assistant to the President; Ms. Carly Huotari, Assistant to the President; Ms. Tracy Luethje, Executive Assistant to the Chief Operations Officer; Attorney Joe Perkoski, Robbins Schwartz.

**Board Members Attendance by Means Other Than Physical Presence**

Board Chair Gorski announced that Trustee Kristen Simpson would like to attend the meeting by phone. The request was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

**Communications and Petitions (Public Comment)**

There were no communications, petitions, or public comments.

**Recognition of Visitors**

Dr. Howard Spearman announced that Mr. David Martindale, President of Ballard Engineering, and Mr. Steve Mischak, Senior Business Development Manager of Constellation, will be making a general presentation during the meeting.

### **Recess to Truth-In-Taxation Hearing**

Board Chair Gorski announced that they would recess for the Truth-in-Taxation Hearing. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

### **Truth-In-Taxation Hearing**

#### **1. Open Hearing**

#### **2. Presentation by Vice President of Finance/Chief Financial Officer – Mrs. Ellen Olson:**

- The Tax Levy is one of the three primary sources of funding for Rock Valley College, the other two being Student Tuition & Fees and the State of Illinois. For Fiscal Year 2026, Rock Valley College has the sixth lowest tuition rate in the State of Illinois at \$125.00 per credit hour, where, by statute, the tuition could be as high as \$220.93, based on the Certification of Per Capita Costs for Fiscal Year 2025.
- The Tax Levy total has not changed since the Board approved the preliminary Tax Levy at the October 28, 2025 Board meeting.
- In transparency to the taxpayers in the College's district, Notice of Proposed Property Tax Levy for the Rock Valley College District was published on Wednesday, December 3, 2025, with the *Rock River Times* and Thursday, December 4, 2025, in the *Belvidere Republican* with Rock Valley Publishing. It was also available on PublicnoticeIllinois.com. In addition, notice has been posted on the doors of Building E, the Support Services Building on campus, and on the College's website.
- The levy request is based on an assumed 9.54 percent increase in EAV.
- The Educational and Operations and Maintenance Levy is maintaining the same levy rate as in previous years. The College is asking for a levy of \$22,245,069 for Education and \$3,868,708 for Operations and Maintenance.
- The Tax Levy request under Tort is as follows:
  - Insurance & Tort/Risk Management is \$1,510,000
  - Social Security is \$490,000
- The Tax Levy request for the Audit Fund is \$60,000.
- The Tax Levy request for Protection, Health & Safety is \$1,500,000.
- The total proposed and special purpose property taxes levied for 2025 is \$29,673,777, an increase of \$2,694,923.
- The Bond and Interest Levy request is for the bond and interest payment schedule, which has been previously submitted to the district's six counties for \$14,495,501.
- The overall tax rate is projected to decrease by .0088, from .4655 to .4567.
- Total levy amount is \$44,169,278, an increase of \$2,694,107 from levy year 2024 or an increase of 6.50%.

Discussion ensued: Trustee Trojan asked if the public has had any input since the proposed Tax Levy was posted, and VP Ellen Olson responded no. VP Ellen Olson also said that the extra money brought in by the Tax Levy will be applied to salaries and insurance.

#### **3. Receive Oral Testimony from the Public, if any- none**

#### **4. Close Hearing-** Trustee Nelson made a motion, seconded by Trustee Cudia, to adjourn the Truth-in-Taxation Hearing. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

## Reconvene Regular Meeting

### General Presentation

**Power Plant/Generator Expansion** – Rick Jenks, Vice President of Operations; Mr. David Martindale, President, Ballard Engineering; and Mr. Steve Mischak, Senior Business Development Manager, Constellation (RVC's energy partner)

- Vice President Rick Jenks explained that Rock Valley College (RVC) currently has two generators that were installed in 1999. These generators run less than 200 hours a year.
- The boiler house has room for another generator, which gives RVC the opportunity to run the whole main campus if there is a power outage. Some benefits to adding a generator would be that, as electrical prices increase annually, ComEd would pay RVC to use its own power plant rather than using the grid. Our Return on Investment (ROI) would decrease over time, which will provide future savings. In addition, the third generator would add to RVC's overall emergency response plan.
- Mr. David Martindale, President of Ballard Engineering, conducted a study to evaluate the current power plant system. He recommended expanding RVC's power plant to include a new 1,500 kW engine generator, an upgraded transformer, a 2,000-amp breaker, and upgraded controls. The projected cost of the upgrades is \$3.5 million and will take 12 months to complete.
- Mr. Steve Mischak, Senior Business Development Manager Constellation, discussed projected savings from displacing power taken from the grid, which could amount to a yearly savings of \$474,000, with a simple pay back of 7.4 years.
- The Power Plant Generator and Expansion will be reviewed again at the January 13, 2026 Committee of the Whole meeting along with the Fund Transfer Request.
- With the addition of the third generator, RVC will be prepared for future expansion on the main campus.

### Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Trustee Trojan, to approve the minutes of the November 4, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting and the November 18, 2025, Regular meeting. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

### Action Items

#### **1. BR8334 – Claims Sheet (Check Register – November 2025)**

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the claims sheet from the Ellucian check register for the period from November 1, 2025 to November 30, 2025. The total is \$6,296,445.24.

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Cudia, to approve BR8334. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

#### **2a. BR8335-A – Purchase Report A – FY2026 Amendments**

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the items marked with an asterisk on Purchase Report A – FY2026 Amendments.

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Cudia, to approve Board Report 8335-A.

Trustee Trojan asked if there were any changes to Purchase Report A since the December 2, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting. VP Ellen Olson confirmed that no changes were made. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

#### **2b. BR8335B – Purchase Report B – FY2026 Purchases**

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the items marked with an asterisk on Purchase Report B – FY2026 Purchases.

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Cudia, to approve Board Report 8335-B.

Discussion ensued. Trustee Trojan asked if any changes were made to Purchase Report B since the December 2, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting. VP Ellen Olson said that Item B has changed. It has been confirmed that the 2024 Ford Mach-E will be purchased from Hamblock Ford in Belvidere, for a not to exceed amount of \$34,557.00. In Item D, detail has been added to the description explaining that the second phase of the fire alarm upgrade is for the integration of voice notification devices at the Woodward Technology Center (WTC) on the main campus.

The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

#### **3. BR8336 – Resolution Abating the Working Cash Fund of the District for Reimbursement for Classroom Building II and the Health Sciences Center Capital Projects**

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the resolution to abate the Working Cash Fund and reimburse the Operating Funds for \$1,635,484.83, a portion of the capital expenditures associated with altering, remodeling, and equipping of the Health Science Center.

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Trustee Trojan, to approve Board Report 8336.

Discussion ensued. Board Chair Paul Gorski asked for a recap and what was being abated. VP Ellen Olson stated that the working cash bonds from November 2024 are being abated, or reimbursed, for the Health Sciences Center (HSC) third floor renovation and elevator. Trustee Trojan asked if the funds will be transferred from the bonds to the operations fund, and VP Ellen Olson confirmed that was true because the expenses were paid out of the operations funds.

The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

#### **4. BR8337—Summary of Fiscal Year 2026 Estimated Revenues by Source for Community College District No. 511 Winnebago, Boone, DeKalb, McHenry, Stephenson, and Ogle Counties, Illinois (Rock Valley College)**

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the Summary of Fiscal Year 2026 Estimated Revenues by Source for Rock Valley College and request that Ellen K. Olson, the Treasurer for the College, sign the attached report.

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Cudia, to approve Board Report 8337.

Discussion ensued. Board Chair Paul Gorski asked if we need to do this every year, and VP Ellen Olson confirmed that it is part of the annual tax levy process.

##### **5. BR8338—Levy Year 2025 Estimated Taxes Required and Certificate of Compliance for Truth-In-Taxation Hearing**

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the following estimates for the amount of taxes necessary to be raised by taxation for the year 2025 as follows:

Educational Purposes – Fund 01 (\$.2300)	\$22,245,069
Operation and Maintenance Purposes – Fund 02 (\$.400)	\$3,868,708
Protection, Health, Life or Safety – Fund 03 (\$.0155)	\$1,500,000
Financial Audit Purposes – Fund 11	\$ 60,000
Liability Protection Settlement Fund – Fund 12	
Liability Insurance/Tort & Risk Management	\$1,510,000
Social Security and Medical Insurance	<u>\$ 490,000</u>
<b>Total Tax Levy</b>	<b>\$29,673,777</b>

A motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Trustee Cudia, to approve Board Report 8338. No discussion ensued. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

#### **Other Business**

##### **1. Unfinished Business**

- Board Chair Paul Gorski asked Attorney Joe Perkoski if he had the opportunity or could remember the legality of accepting payments back from the energy company tax-free. Response was inaudible.
- The Board of Trustees Retreat will be held on Saturday, January 31, 2026. A discussion ensued about whether the meeting would be live-streamed. The public is invited to attend in person but the meeting will not be live-streamed to avoid hindering team-building efforts.
- President Howard Spearman reminded the trustees about the Legislative Breakfast to be held on Wednesday, December 17, at 8:00 a.m. in the Health Sciences Center Lobby (HSC). The agenda includes thanking the legislators for supporting RVC programs, and asking for their continued partnership in the Downtown campus, fire science training program, police cohorts, and the baccalaureate programs.

##### **2. New Business**

- Board Chair Paul Gorski commented that the January 13, 2026 Committee of the Whole meeting will be busy due to at least two presentations and a substantial closed session.

#### **Updates/Reports**

##### **1. President Update**

Dr. Spearman updated trustees on various topics:

- Dr. Spearman presented a book talk titled, “Communicate for Alignment” to professionals through a Studer Education Online forum.

- The Legislative Luncheon was held on Tuesday, December 9, 2025. All of the legislators spoke highly of their partnership with Rock Valley College.
- The 2025 year at RVC has been one to remember, including the groundbreaking of the Downtown campus; creation of the Human Services program in partnership with the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC); partnership with the Rockford Police Department and Winnebago County Sheriff's Office to move forward with the Criminal Justice cohorts; development of the Salesforce dashboards for advising and retention; winning championships in Athletics; meeting annual enrollment goals; creating a positive place to work; and winning awards across all the campus departments.

## 2. Leadership Update

- Dr. Keith Barnes announced that a Kwanzaa celebration was held on December 16, 2025, in the SSC Atrium; RVC's Center for Cultural Excellence and Belonging was awarded the Healing Illinois Grant, which will support the 2026 Summer Symposium, focusing on community resilience and human interconnection.
- Dr. Patrick Peyer reported that the RVC Mental Health Early Action Grant was received, which will aid in the hiring of counseling staff and training.
- Dr. Terrica Huntley talked about the Cookie Walk event that was hosted at the Support Services Building (SSB) on December 10, 2025, which allowed for fellowship among the staff and faculty. On December 12, 2025, RVC hosted an Employee Celebration Luncheon.
- Vice President Heather Snider gave the enrollment update. As of Monday, December 15, 2025, enrollment is flat compared to last year, 26% above budget, and 18% above the stretch goal. Spring enrollment is 7% ahead of last year, 90% to budget, and 86% to the stretch goal, with about four weeks of registration time remaining. FY26 year-to-date credit-hour enrollment is 6% ahead of last year, 99% to budget, and 95% to stretch goal. In other news, Governor Pritzker signed Senate Bill 0243 into law. The key changes to the Open Meetings Act (OMA) and Freedom of Information Act, will take effect on January 1, 2026.
- Vice President Ellen Olson confirmed that there will be a presentation by the auditors at the January 13, 2026 Committee of the Whole meeting.
- Vice President Rick Jenks did not have a report.
- Dr. Amanda Smith announced that the many completion ceremonies have taken place over the past two weeks, which have included: CNC, Collision Repair, Nurse pinning, and Phlebotomy pinning; RVC's student newspaper, the *Valley Forge*, won 2<sup>nd</sup> Place overall in the General Excellence category and 3<sup>rd</sup> Place overall in the state for Best Student Media.

## 3. Illinois Community College Trustee Association (ICCTA) Report

Trustee John Nelson did not have an ICCTA Report since they did not meet this month. Their next meeting will be at the February Legislative Summit in Washington, D.C.

#### 4. Trustee Comments

- Trustee Cudia commented that the International Showcase at RVC was amazing; at the legislative luncheon, the legislators were complimentary toward RVC; she appreciates the written leadership updates and asked if trustees could be invited to the next Coffee with Cabinet.
- Trustee Goldsmith shared congratulations to the *Valley Forge*, adding that it is an incredible student newspaper that wins awards every year.
- Trustee Trojan stated that he attended an Artificial Intelligence (AI) program for Manufacturers on December 4, 2025, hosted by Peter Held, Dean of Workforce Development; Trustee Trojan was impressed that the training laid out the process for manufacturing companies to use AI tools; this provides a good starting point for the AI Innovation Center that RVC has been discussing.
- Trustee Nelson stated that a large number of people he has met in the medical community have been trained by Rock Valley College.
- Board Chair Gorski praised RVC for providing mental health supports and encouraged Cabinet to continue on that endeavor.

#### 5. RVC Foundation Liaison Report

Trustee Trojan provided an update on the RVC Foundation. The Foundation Board meeting was held on December 16, 2025. The clean Audit Report was given by Sikich; there was a lot of discussion about adding a staff member for fund development, which will be brought to the January 13, 2026 Committee of the Whole meeting; The Foundation has surpassed its downtown fundraising goal; the CEO Challenge will be held April 30, 2026, with a goal of raising \$100,000.

#### 6. Personnel Report (BR8339):

The Personnel Report- Trustee Goldsmith asked why there were two English positions listed, and Dr. Amanda Smith said that after looking at the historical data, they determined the department needed two English professors, not one.

#### 7. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Report-

The FOIA report was accepted as presented with no questions.

#### Next Meeting

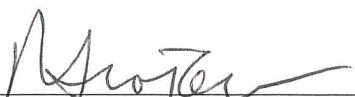
The next Committee of the Whole meeting will be held on January 13, 2026, 5:15 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) located in the Educational Resources Center (ERC) on the main campus.

The next Regular Meeting will be held on January 27, 2026, 5:15 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) located in the Educational Resources Center (ERC) on the main campus.

**Adjournment**

At 6:56 p.m., a motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Trustee Cudia, to adjourn the Regular meeting. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Submitted by Carly Huotari



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Dr. Jenna Goldsmith, Secretary  
Bob Trojan, Secretary Pro Tempore



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Paul Gorski, Board Chair