

**Rock Valley College  
Community College District No. 511  
3301 N. Mulford Road, Rockford, IL 61114**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING  
5:15 p.m. Tuesday, January 13, 2026**

**MINUTES**

**Call to Order**

The Rock Valley College (RVC) Board of Trustees Committee of the Whole meeting convened on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) in the Educational Resource Center (ERC). The meeting was called to order at 5:15 p.m. by Board Chair Paul Gorski. Due to the absence of Board Secretary Dr. Goldsmith, Board Chair Gorski appointed Trustee Trojan as Secretary Pro-Tempore.

**Roll Call**

The following members of the Board of Trustees were present at roll call:

Mr. Paul Gorski	Ms. Gloria Cardenas Cudia joined at 5:16 p.m.
Mr. Robert (Bob) Trojan	Ms. Crystal Soltow joined at 5:18 p.m.
Ms. Kristen Simpson	Mr. Isiah Blake, Student Trustee
Mr. John Nelson joined at 6:02 p.m.	

The following Trustees were absent from the roll call: Dr. Jenna Goldsmith; Ms. Gloria Cardenas Cudia, joined the meeting at 5:16 p.m.; Ms. Crystal Soltow joined the meeting at 5:18 p.m.; Mr. John Nelson joined the meeting at 6:02 p.m.

Also present: Dr. Howard J. Spearman, President; Dr. Keith Barnes, Vice President of Cultural Excellence and Belonging; Dr. Patrick Peyer, Vice President of Student Affairs; Dr. Terrica Huntley, Vice President of Human Resources; Ms. Heather Snider, Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and Communications; Dr. Hansen Stewart, Vice President of Career and Technical Education and Workforce Development; Mr. Rick Jenks, Vice President of Operations; Ms. Ellen Olson, Vice President of Finance; Dr. Amanda Smith, Vice President of Academic Affairs; Ms. Ann Kerwitz, Assistant to the President; Ms. Carly Huotari, Assistant to the President; Ms. Tracy Luethje, Executive Assistant to the Vice President of Operations, Attorney Matthew Gardner, Robbins Schwartz.

**Board Member Attendance by Means Other than Physical Presence**

There were no Board Members attending by any other means.

**Communications and Petitions**

Trustee Gorski reported receipt of correspondence from Total Energies and the Winnebago County Board of Assessments, which were forwarded to the President for appropriate distribution. No additional communications or public comments were received.

**Recognition of Visitors**

Dr. Spearman stated that two visitors would be introduced at their General Presentations.

**Review of Minutes**

There were no comments on the minutes from the December 2, 2025, Board of Trustees Committee of the Whole meeting. Trustee Trojan inquired if Trustee Nelson had submitted his questions from the December 2, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting. Mr. Gorski and Dr. Spearman both responded that Trustee Nelson did not submit his questions.

**General Presentations**

## **1. Fiscal Year 2025 Financial Audit Report**

Ms. Ellen Olson, vice president of finance, introduced Ms. Lindsey Fish from Sikich LLP, who gave a synopsis of the FY2025 Financial Audit, including the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report and Single Audit. Vice President Olson sent a video of the FY2025 Audit to all Trustees via email on Friday, January 9, 2026. Trustees asked questions and received clarifications regarding audit findings and financial position.

## **2. DKA Architects / Downtown West Project**

Mr. Rick Jenks, vice president of operations, introduced Mr. Dominick Demonica. Mr. Demonica, an owner and architect at DKA, presented a request to the board for a fee adjustment for the Downtown West project, which has significantly exceeded its original scope. While the initial contract was based on an estimated 80,000-square-foot building costing \$38 million, the final design reached 110,000 square feet and a construction cost of approximately \$44.7 million. Mr. Demonica explained that DKA has already spent more on architectural labor and consultant fees than the original \$3 million contract cap allows. Although contract calculations based on bid averages suggest an increase of \$558,000, DKA proposed a compromised additional fee of \$445,875 to cover all work through the end of the project. The board took the request under advisement, noting the need for further information before making a final decision.

## **Teaching, Learning & Communications Discussion: Board Liaison Trustee Goldsmith**

### **1. 2026-2027 Revised Academic Calendar**

Dr. Amanda Smith, vice president of academic affairs, stated that the 2026-2027 Academic Calendar reflects revisions to the 2026 Summer session. It revises the end date from July 30, 2026, to August 4, 2026.

### **2. 2027-2028 Academic Calendar**

Dr. Smith presented the 2027-2028 Academic Calendar and requested that the Board of Trustees approve the revised 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 Academic Calendars. A question was raised about the 2027-2028 Academic Calendar dates for the 2028 Spring Semester, so Dr. Smith will check.

### **3. RVC and Hononegah Community High School District #207 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

Dr. Hansen Stewart, vice president of career technical education and workforce development, presented the MOU between RVC and Hononegah. Dr. Stewart stated that the provided document outlines a transition from a verbal to a written agreement between Hononegah and Rock Valley College regarding the use of facilities for residential home repair classes. Hononegah has requested a written agreement and the implementation of an hourly facility rental fee per course hour. Typically, such agreements are signed by the college president. However, because Hononegah sought approval from its own board, the agreement was brought before the Rock Valley College board for formal approval.

### **4. Enrollment Update**

Ms. Heather Snider, vice president of institutional effectiveness and communications, said that the Winterim session concluded successfully, finishing 8% ahead of the budget and 1% ahead of the stretch goal. As of the first week of classes (Monday), Spring enrollment was 3% ahead of budget and had reached 99% of the stretch goal. Across all semesters combined to date, enrollment is 5% ahead of budget and 1% ahead of the stretch goal. Ms. Snider stated that the figures remain fluid, and the official enrollment reporting is scheduled for January 27, 2026.

### **5. Lobbyist Update**

Ms. Snider provided an update on RVC's lobbyist, Dr. Litesa Wallace, and the 2026 State-Level Lobbying and Advocacy Strategy. The primary focus for the upcoming year is advancing the community college baccalaureate goals and ensuring RVC's interests are represented in state funding, and specifically advocating for the Downtown West project.

The Legislative Breakfast held on December 17, 2025, was noted as a success. It enabled RVC leadership to engage directly with key officials, including Representatives Sosnowski and West and Senators Stadelman and Syverson.

The administration expressed strong satisfaction with Dr. Wallace. The key feedback from Trustees included that Dr. Wallace has been instrumental in organizing legislative engagements and providing real-time updates from Springfield; she is facilitating high-level meetings, including upcoming engagement activities in February. The administration is seeking to move from a temporary arrangement to a long-term contract to cover the remainder of the calendar year.

**Finance Discussion: Board Liaison Trustee Cardenas Cudia**

**1. Purchase Reports**

Ms. Ellen Olson, vice president of finance, presented the purchase reports.

***Purchase Report A – FY2026 Amendments***

**A. Tuckpointing Turret Repair – (Other Capital Outlay – Bridge Turrets)**

1.	<b>Mike Harris Mason Contractor</b>	<b>Rockford, IL</b>	<b>\$ 40,000.00*(1)</b>
			<b>Not to Exceed</b>

***Purchase Report B – FY2026 Purchases***

**A. Downtown West Workbenches – (Instructional Equipment/Furniture – Downtown West Project)**

1.	<b>Beacon Equipment Resources</b>	<b>Houston, TX</b>	<b>\$ 300,000.00*(1)</b>
			<b>Not to Exceed</b>

**B. Support Services – (Other Contractual Services – General Institution Expense)**

2.	<b>ReUp Education, Inc.</b>	<b>Austin, TX</b>	<b>\$ 60,000.00*(2)</b>
			<b>Not to Exceed</b>

**C. Professional Services – Other Contractual Services – Institutional Research and Planning)**

3.	<b>Region 1 Planning Council</b>	<b>Rockford, IL</b>	<b>\$ 40,000.00*(3)</b>
			<b>Not to Exceed</b>

**D. Wireless Access Point Equipment – (Capital Service Equipment – Equipment Replacement)**

4.	<b>Entre Computer Solutions</b>	<b>Machesney Park, IL</b>	<b>\$ 290,000.00*(4)</b>
			<b>Not to Exceed</b>
	Telesource Service, Inc.	Bolton, MA	\$ 437,411.81

**E. Commencement Regalia – (Other Contractual Services – Graduation and Commencement)**

5.	<b>Herff Jones, LLC</b>	<b>Indianapolis, IN</b>	<b>\$ 28,822.70*(5)</b>
			<b>Not to Exceed</b>
	Jostens	Owatonna, MN	\$ 29,329.30
	Graduation Source	Greenwich, CT	\$ 30,822.00
	Oak Hall Cap and Gown	Salem, VA	\$ 35,909.75

**2. Fiscal Year 2025 Audit – Annual Comprehensive Financial Report**

Vice President Olson explained that the college received an unmodified opinion from auditing firm Sikich, CPA LLC, for the FY2025 financial audit. This is the highest level of assurance, indicating that the financial statements are presented fairly and in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

**3. Fiscal Year 2027 Capital Projects Request**

Rick Jenks, vice president of operations, presented a \$9.9 million capital project request for FY2027. Key highlights include fleet and equipment for replacement of aging vehicles and maintenance equipment (some over 20 years old); infrastructure; the addition of a third generator to the boiler house; and repairs to rusted piping/supports feeding the Stenstrom Student Center and Woodward Technology Center. Other campus improvements include redesigning the Stenstrom Student Center Atrium for Americans with Disabilities Act compliance; reconfiguring Parking Lot 7 to accommodate a more accessible bus stop; and upgrades to classroom technology and replacement of “end-of-life” wireless access points.

#### **4. Fiscal Year 2026 Fund Transfer Request**

Ms. Olson requested \$15 million in transfers from the operating funds to various accounts:

- Fund 03 - \$10 million for operations and maintenance (capital).
- Fund 05 - \$2 million for auxiliary programs (Athletics, Starlight Theatre).
- Fund 18 - \$2 million for employee benefits.
- Fund 19 - \$1 million for OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits).

The college has funded \$13.5 million of the OPEB fund. The College's liability is currently at \$9.5 million. However, this liability varies significantly with discount rates; it was previously as high as \$23.9 million.

#### **5. Cash and Investment Report**

Ms. Olson presented the Cash and Investment Report through December 31, 2025. Total operating cash is \$28,245,093. Total operating cash and investments are \$103,898,449. The operating cash and investments have changed by <\$3,582,428> since November 30, 2025. Total capital funds are \$71,437,423. Since November 30, 2025, the change in capital funds has been <\$13,154,855.> Ms. Olson stated that the total operating cash and investment funds were 96.70% of the FY2026 operating budget.

### **Operations Discussion: Board Liaison Trustee Trojan**

#### **1. Foundation Proposal to Add Position**

Ms. Brittany Frieberg, chief development officer of the Rock Valley College Foundation, presented a proposal to increase the college's annual support for the Foundation by \$100,000 (from \$150,000 to \$250,000). The Foundation has raised nearly \$11 million over the last five years. In the past year alone, they added 44 new scholarships, the same amount added between 1977 and 2012 combined. Ms. Frieberg stated that the funds will support a fifth full-time position (Manager of Fund Development) to manage the increased workload associated with 236 unique scholarships and approximately 500 annual awards. The Trustees expressed strong support and reached consensus to proceed with funding, citing the Foundation's success in securing \$23 million in total assets.

#### **2. Downtown West Update**

Vice President Jenks stated that the downtown campus project is currently under budget but facing significant schedule pressure. While the project is trending at \$57.08 million (against a \$58 million cap), the Downtown Learning Center is three weeks behind schedule. Vice President Jenks has taken a direct "hands-on" role to bridge the gap between the architects and the construction at risk manager (CMR) to ensure an August move-in, which is a non-negotiable deadline due to expiring leases and the logistical complexity of moving the automotive program. Follow-up items include a detailed "catch-up" schedule for the Downtown Learning Center. Since Mr. Jenks is now the acting liaison between the CMR and the architects, the board should receive a regular breakdown of how the three-week delay will be mitigated before the July 2026 "soft" deadline. Mr. Jenks will also develop a contingency plan for the automotive lift transfer. Because moving the lifts relies on a very small window between semesters, any further delay in the Learning Center could jeopardize the start of the Fall semester for those students. Discussion ensued.

#### **3. Classroom Building II Update**

Mr. Jenks and Dr. Amanda Smith updated the board on the Classroom Building II (CLII) project. Unlike the downtown campus, this is a Capital Development Board (CDB) project that involves a state partnership and different constraints. The original 1960s-era building is failing; Mr. Jenks noted he was nearly ready to close it because the mechanical systems are at the end of their life cycle. The building now requires a full renovation down to the studs. Mr. Jenks initially narrowed the discussion to Option 1 and Option 5, though the board expressed strong interest in more expansive versions. The board is currently weighing multiple design options that balance the \$17M in state funding against the college's local investment. Key discussion points included acoustics and ceiling height for the music program, enhanced options, and the funding strategy. The Trustees stated that they would like to hear from the Bailey Edward architectural firm at the next Regular board meeting on January 27, 2026, regarding options 3, 4, and 5, and the reimbursement agreement, to allow the college to fund the CDB account immediately and be repaid upon bond issuance. Discussion ensued.

#### 4. Change Order Update

Vice President Jenks discussed the following change orders:

- **Project Closeouts:** Several projects were completed under budget, resulting in credits returned to the capital fund:
  - **Boiler House:** \$31,022 credit.
  - **Security Upgrades:** \$16,683 credit.
  - **Fire Alarm Phase One:** \$51,700 credit.
- **Health Sciences Center (HSC) Buildout/Elevator:** Project is nearing completion; recent change orders addressed fire sprinkler adjustments.

#### 5. Solar Workstations

ComEd donated four solar-powered charging stations (XL workstations) installed near the creek. The charging stations are fully off-grid and solar-powered. Per ComEd rules, the college will officially "purchase" the donation for \$1.00.

#### 6. Personnel Report

Mr. Jenks discussed the January 2026 Personnel Report. There is an appointment of a new full-time Chemistry instructor effective Jan 8, 2026, and notice of two faculty departures in Biology.

#### 7. RVC Events Calendar

Mr. Jenks discussed the January 2026 RVC Events Calendar. The Faculty Development Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. celebrations, and RVC basketball were highlighted.

#### New Business/Unfinished Business

**Unfinished Business:** Dr. Spearman reminded the Trustees to review the State of the College videos, presented by Vice Presidents Snider and Olson. Feedback or questions should be submitted no later than Monday, January 19th. Dr. Spearman stated that although the college is officially closed on the 19th, the submission deadline remains firm. Once the feedback is collected, the administration will develop an FAQ document to address common points.

**New Business:** There was no new business.

#### Adjourn to Closed Session

At 7:53 p.m., Trustee Nelson made a motion, seconded by Trustee Trojan, to adjourn to closed session to discuss: 1) The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors in a park, recreational, or educational setting per Section 2 (c) (1); and/or 2) Collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees per Section 2 (c) (2); and/or 3) Litigation has been filed, is pending, or probable per Section 2 (c) (11), all in accordance with the Illinois Open meetings Act.

The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

#### Reconvene Open Session

At 8:42 p.m., a motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to adjourn the closed session and return to open session. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote. No action was taken as a result of the closed session.

#### Next Regular Board of Trustees Meeting

The next Regular Board of Trustees Meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 27, 2026, at 5:15 p.m., in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) of the Educational Resource Center (ERC) on the main campus.

#### Board of Trustees Retreat

The Board of Trustees Retreat will be held on Saturday, January 31, 2026, at 8:00 a.m., in the Woodward Technology Center (WTC) Room 1308 on the main campus.

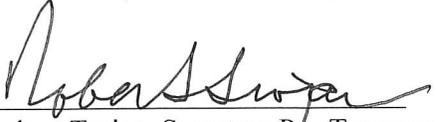
**Next Committee of the Whole Meeting**

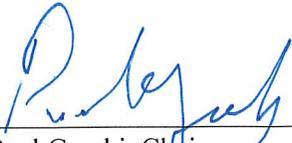
The next Committee of the Whole Meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 5:15 p.m., in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) of the Educational Resource Center (ERC) on the main campus.

**Adjourn**

At 8:44 p.m., a motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Submitted by: Tracy L. Luethje.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Trojan, Secretary Pro-Tempore

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Paul Gorski, Chairman