

# Rock Valley College

Community College District No. 511  
3301 North Mulford Road, Rockford, IL 61114

Educational Resource Center, Performing Arts Room, Room 0214

REGULAR MEETING

March 24, 2026, 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, March 24, 2026. Board Chair Paul Gorski called the meeting to order at 5:16 p.m.

### Roll Call

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

Mr. Paul Gorski	Mr. Robert (Bob) Trojan
Ms. Gloria Cardenas Cudia	Mr. John Nelson
Dr. Jenna Goldsmith	Ms. Crystal Soltow - absent
Ms. Kristen Simpson	Mr. Isiah Blake, Student Trustee

The following trustee was absent at roll call: Ms. Crystal Soltow

Also in Attendance: Dr. Howard Spearman, President; Ellen Olson, Vice President of Finance; Heather Snider, Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and Communications; Dr. Terrica Huntley, Vice President of Human Resources; Dr. Hansen Stewart, Vice President of Career Technical Education and Workforce Development; Dr. Patrick Peyer, Vice President of Student Affairs; Ms. Ann Kerwitz, Assistant to the President; Ms. Carly Diciolla, Assistant to the President; Ms. Tracy Luethje, Executive Assistant to the Vice President of Operations; Attorney Joe Perkoski, Robbins Schwartz.

### Board Member Attendance by Means Other Than Physical Presence

There were no trustees attending by means other than physical presence.

### Communications and Petitions (Public Comment)

There were no communications, petitions, or public comments.

### Recognition of Visitors

Members of the Rock Valley College (RVC) Men's 2026 National Champion Bowling Team and their coach, Tony Hall, were recognized by the Board of Trustees.

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## Recess to Bond Issue Notification Act (BINA) Hearing

### **BOND ISSUE NOTIFICATION ACT (BINA) HEARING**

#### **CONDUCT OF PUBLIC HEARING CONCERNING THE INTENT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES TO SELL NOT TO EXCEED \$7,900,000 FUNDING BONDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE WORKING CASH FUND**

- A. Board Chair Gorski stated that this hearing is being held to receive public comments on the proposal to sell bonds of the District in an amount not to exceed \$7,900,000 for the purpose of increasing the working cash fund of the District. Vice President Ellen Olson explained that the purpose of this BINA hearing is for the increased scope of the Classroom Building II (CLII) Project.
- B. Board Chair Gorski asked the Board of Trustees for any further comments about the proposed bonds. Trustee Nelson commented that this option will provide the addition of a black box theater, and he will support this endeavor.
- C. Board Chair Gorski asked the public for any written or oral testimony about the proposed bonds. There was no written or oral testimony.
- D. Board Chair Gorski asked for a motion and a second to adjourn the Hearing. Trustee Nelson moved and Trustee Trojan seconded the motion that said resolution, as presented and read by title, be adopted. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.
- E. Adjourn BINA Hearing

### **Reconvene Regular Meeting**

#### **General Presentations**

1. **Sabbatical Report**– Assistant Professor Moria Nagy reported on her sabbatical research called “The Lived Experiences of LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual) Science Students in Community College Regarding Their Science Identity and Sense of Belonging.” Professor Nagy commented that this community typically has a low sense of science identity and sense of belonging. During her study, she recruited 11 participants across three community colleges and collected qualitative research. Four themes emerged from Professor Nagy’s research: a diverse sense of self; motivation to take science courses; a sense of belonging and representation; and non-representation in the curriculum and among people. Professor Nagy aligned her research with the RVC Strategic Plan Pillars II and IV. She also announced the next steps that will result from her research. Discussion ensued. Trustee Trojan asked if these emerging themes could be applied to all students, not just this community. Professor Nagy agreed, but said that this community has been understudied. Trustee Cudia wondered whether the small group of participants might be due to students being afraid to self-identify as part of this group, and Professor Nagy confirmed that this was true.

2. **2025 RVC Economic Impact Analysis**- Region 1 Planning Council compiled this summary report for RVC. This report categorizes programs into groups to enable comparison with other community colleges. This report supports the RVC Strategic Plan Pillars II and III, exceptional education and training. After Vice President Heather Snider presented the report, Trustee Cudia asked whether RVC provides financial literacy courses. The leadership team confirmed that Dr. Barnes wrote a grant to provide this type of training, but it was short-lived. Trustee Trojan commented about the estimate for housing and food, even if RVC students are commuters. Trustee Simpson discussed how RVC does provide some savings in obtaining a 4-year degree, and will voice her support regarding the Baccalaureate degree offered by community colleges at the Trustee Lobby Day on May 6.

### Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Trustee Trojan, to approve the minutes of the February 10, 2026, Committee of the Whole meeting and the February 24, 2026, Regular Board of Trustees meeting. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

### Action Items

#### **1. BR8360 – Claims Sheet (Check Register – February 2026)**

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 February 1, 2026, to February 28, 2026. The total is \$5,591,804.63.

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Student Trustee Blake, to approve BR8360. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

#### **2a. BR8361-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 Cudia, seconded by Student Trustee Blake, to approve Board Report 8361-A. There was a change from the March 10, 2026, Committee of the Whole meeting. It is for Demonica Kemper Architects (DKA) and their additional review of the sheet metal documents for the Downtown campus. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

#### **2b. BR8361-B – 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 Nelson, to approve Board Report 8361-B. Discussion ensued. Trustee Nelson inquired about amending the Downtown West Technology bid letter A. Board Chair Gorski stated

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that the amendment is out of order because Government Goods, Inc. is the lowest responsible bidder. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

### **3. BR8362 – Revised Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Rock Valley College Foundation**

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees renew approval of the Memorandum of Understanding between Rock Valley College and the Rock Valley College Foundation. **Attorney Reviewed.**

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to approve Board Report 8362. Discussion ensued. Dr. Spearman pointed out that there was a scrivener's error regarding the date on Board Report 8362 in the 5th paragraph. Originally, the year was written as 2025, but it should have been 2026, as reflected in the Board Report to be signed by the Secretary of the Board of Trustees and President Spearman. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

### **4. BR8363 – Board Policy Manual Update: Article 3: Human Resources / First Reading**

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the revisions to Article 3 - Human Resources of the Board Policy Manual, as reviewed and revised by Robbins Schwartz attorneys and the College Administration. **Attorney Reviewed.**

No vote was taken as this is the first reading. The second reading will take place in April 2026.

### **5. BR8364 – Authorization to Proceed with Architectural Design and Estimation for Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality Centers**

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves employing the services of OPN Architects and Demonica Kemper Architects (DKA) to provide basic schematic design and cost estimates for the College facilities at the Downtown West location (DKA) and at the Advanced Technology Center (OPN).

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Student Trustee Blake, to approve Board Report 8364. Discussion ensued. This Board Report gives RVC permission to hire OPN Architects and DKA to prepare drawings for the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) grant application process. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

## **Other Business**

### **1. New Business**

- A.** Vice President Ellen Olson talked about the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Plan offered by the City of Rockford regarding the possible data center that will be built. A public hearing will be held on May 11, 2026. An email was sent to trustees regarding this TIF proposal. It will freeze the Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) for 23 years, so no tax dollars will be lost. The Administration wanted the Board to review and consider this TIF. The Joint Board of Review meeting will be held on March 31, 2026, and is open to public taxing bodies. Vice President Ellen Olson will

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attend this meeting on behalf of RVC. The Board does not take a vote on a TIF; RVC is part of the TIF district.

- B. Trustee Trojan voiced a concern with calling into meetings through phone conference. The Board should consider creating Zoom links ahead of time instead of using the telephone for Board Member attendance, other than in person. Attorney Joe Perkoski reminded Board members that there must be a valid reason for trustees to be absent from a meeting, as specified in the Open Meetings Act.

## 2. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

### Updates/Reports

#### 1. **President's Update**

- Dr. Spearman updated trustees on various topics, including the Workforce Collaborative, which was held on RVC's main campus on March 19, 2026. Participants discussed ideas about Artificial Intelligence (AI), Customized Training and Development, and Career Technical Education (CTE). Dr. Spearman will provide a more detailed report at a later date.
- The Illinois Council of Community College Presidents (ICCCP) has asked Dr. Spearman to be in Springfield, IL, on March 2, 2026, to testify at the meeting of the Illinois House Higher Education Executive Committee regarding the importance of the Community College Baccalaureate Degree. Dr. Brian Durham, executive director of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), has invited Dr. Spearman to represent community college presidents during the Illinois Senate Appropriations Committee on March 31, 2026, in Springfield, IL, to speak on the importance of funding community colleges.
- Trustees Lobby Day will be held on May 6, 2026, in Springfield, IL. Trustees are encouraged to notify the President's Office if they plan to attend.

#### 2. **Leadership Team Update**

- Dr. Patrick Peyer announced that the Sister-to-Sister GLOW conference will take place this Friday, March 27; RVC is currently hosting the Juried High School Art Exhibit in the Educational Resource Center (ERC) until April 2.
- Dr. Terrica Huntley reminded trustees about the following topics: 1) submit comments or questions regarding the Board Policy Update, Article 3, to the President's Office; 2) fill out the Winnebago County Statement of Economic Interest by May 1, 2026; 3) Rock Valley College will celebrate its retirees on May 20, from 2-4 p.m., in the Stenstrom Student Center.
- Vice President Heather Snider provided the enrollment update. Summer I enrollment is 34% behind last year, 54% to budget, and 52% to the stretch goal. FY26 year-to-date credit hour enrollment is 3%

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ahead of last year, 6% ahead of budget, and 1% ahead of the stretch goal. Summer II enrollment is 2% behind last year, 65% to budget, and 63% to the stretch goal. Fall enrollment is 7% ahead of last year, 31% to budget, and 30% to the stretch goal.

Dr. Litesa Wallace from LITE Strategies sent a legislative update on March 13, 2026, regarding two bills that are relevant to community colleges: 1) the Illinois Preventing Sexual Violence in Higher Education Act, and 2) increasing transparency regarding faculty teaching loads and instructional staffing patterns across Illinois. ICCCP hopes the Community College Baccalaureate will go to committee this session.

RVC hosted Next Rockford, a group of next-generation leaders who advocate for educational improvement, on March 12, 2026, at the Health Sciences Center (HSC). During this event, participants learned more about the College, including updates on Classroom II (CLII) and the Downtown West project.

On March 13, 2026, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Office of Small Business Development's State Network Director, Ericka White, visited the RVC campus. Ms. White reviewed RVC's FY26 application for the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and approved the full request of \$160,000.

RVC's Marketing Department had three projects that placed in the 41st Annual Educational Advertising Awards and received recognition with a Bronze Paragon at the March National Council for Marketing and Public Relations Paragon Awards dinner.

- Dr. Spearman spoke on Dr. Amanda Smith's behalf about the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) site visit, which went very well. We will not receive the final report for several months.

- 3. ICCTA Report-** no report submitted
- 4. Trustee Comments-** no comments submitted
- 5. Student Trustee Report-** the Student Trustee Report was accepted as presented with no questions.
- 6. RVC Liaison Report-** no report submitted
- 7. Personnel Report (BR8365)-** Information only; the Personnel Report was accepted as presented with no questions.
- 8. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Report-** The FOIA Report was accepted as presented with no questions.

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## Next Meetings

The next Committee of the Whole meeting will be held on April 14, 2026, at 5:15 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) located in the Educational Resource Center (ERC) on the main campus.

The next Regular and Reorganization meeting will be held on April 28, 2026, at 5:15 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) located in the Educational Resource Center (ERC) on the main campus.

## Adjourn to Closed Session

At 6:38 p.m., Student Trustee Blake made a motion, seconded by Trustee Nelson, 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) Security procedures and the use of personnel and equipment to respond to an actual, a threatened, or a reasonably potential danger to the safety of employees, students, staff, the public, or public property per Section 2 (c) (8), all in accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act.

## Reconvene Open Session

At 7:43 p.m., a motion was made by Trustee Simpson, 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.

## Adjourn

At 7:47 p.m., a motion was made by Student Trustee Blake, seconded by Trustee Trojan, to adjourn the Regular meeting. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Submitted by Carly A. Diciolla

  
Dr. Jenna Goldsmith, Secretary

  
Paul Gorski, Board Chair