CITY OF CENTRAL FALLS SCHOOL BOARD

Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2026

Time: 5:35 p.m.

Location: Raíces Dual Language Academy, 135 Hunt Street, Central Falls, RI 02863

Recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLLaj0m-ymg

Members present at roll call: Chair Dorian Rave, Secretary Thomas Evans, Board Member Zuhanna Medina, Board Member Jordana Ruggeri, Board Member Erika Vallejo, Student Representative Crystal Marie De Jesus Lara

Arrived: Vice Chair Carla Hernandez, 5:42 p.m.

Absent: Board Member Lizsandra Paneto Gullon, Board Member Krystafer Redden

Also present: Superintendent Dr. Stephanie Downey Toledo; City Solicitor Matthew Jerzyk; Sarah Friedman, Chief of Education Strategy for the City of Central Falls; members of the district administration; and members of the public

These minutes summarize the discussion and record the actions taken at the meeting. The complete remarks of each speaker are available in the verbatim record, and the full meeting can be viewed at the recording link above. Items highlighted in yellow need confirmation.

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Rave called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call

Secretary Evans called the roll. Six members were present and a quorum was established. Vice Chair Hernandez arrived at 5:42 p.m.

3. Opening Ceremony: Raíces Dual Language Academy

Principal Elisa Rivera welcomed the Board to Raíces Dual Language Academy and shared the school's history under the district theme “Proud of our past, ready for our future.” Founding teacher Doris Moret described the program's beginning in 2008 as a single strand at Veterans Memorial, and program graduate Melanie Tavares, now a University of Rhode Island engineering graduate, spoke about the value of being bilingual. Parents Daniris Liberato, Carlene Fonseca, Jocelyn, and SELAC President Janet Costa spoke about coffee hours, the PTO, family events, and the school's welcoming culture. Senator Jonathon Acosta, speaking as a Raíces parent, encouraged stronger parent engagement and accountability in school improvement teams and plans, and recommended that the Board ask school leaders and the Superintendent for regular updates on school improvement plans. Teacher Michelle Carvajal described Raíces Upper students' advocacy at the State House for House Bill 7389, and music

teacher Michelle Ouhrabka highlighted the after-school musical theater program, now in its fifth year. Students Ashley Donis, Azaleiah Rivera, Jonathan Ortega, and Yasidiel Velázquez Pagán shared how the dual language program has supported them. Principal Rivera closed by noting the school's planned move into the new PreK-8 building in 2028.

4. Right to Be Heard

Senator Jonathon Acosta, a resident of Illinois Street, raised concerns about the proposed traffic flow for the new PreK-8 building, which would remove street parking on Illinois Street between Summer and Rand Streets and route drop-off traffic through Dexter and Central Streets. He noted that a public hearing is being arranged with the City Solicitor and the School Building Committee, and recommended that the Board appoint a member to the School Building Committee, which currently has no city residents.

5. Consent Agenda

A. Approval of Minutes: August 11, 2026 Meeting

The Board considered the minutes of the August 11, 2026 meeting. There was no discussion.

> **Motion:** To approve the minutes of the August 11, 2026 meeting.
> **Motion by:** Board Member Erika Vallejo **Seconded by:** Vice Chair Carla Hernandez
> **Vote:** Six in favor; one abstention (Secretary Thomas Evans). No opposition.
> **Motion carried.**

B. Salary Warrants

The salary warrants were received for review. No questions were raised.

C. Expense Warrants

The expense warrants were received. No questions were raised.

D. Civic Use of Buildings

The civic use of buildings items were received, including the Panthers car wash held on September 5 and the Central Falls Police Department car seat safety event. No questions were raised.

6. Correspondence

No correspondence was received. Chair Rave asked the Superintendent to ensure that any correspondence addressed to the Board is received and shared.

7. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Downey Toledo reported a strong start to the school year. At a statewide attendance event hosted by the Governor and Commissioner, Central Falls was recognized for its lowest chronic absenteeism rate in over 15 years, now below pre-pandemic levels. She highlighted school opening; an event with Senator Reed celebrating the district's teacher apprentices, with two now student teaching and four more teaching assistants enrolled at Rhode Island College; and construction updates, including the retaining wall at the new high school site and continued abatement of the old high school, with

demolition expected within two weeks. She also reported continued hiring progress, the expansion of the SMART Smile dental clinic at Ella Risk School for students in grades K to 8, and the naming of the new high school theater after the Davis family, with Dr. Grant and Viola Davis in attendance.

8. Personnel Recommendations and Decisions

A. Human Resources Update

The Superintendent summarized the Human Resources memo: continued hiring for all positions, including lunch aides, Warrior Fellows, and personal care attendants; end-of-summer resignations, with exit interviews conducted for each; several internal moves; and no retirements.

B. Special Education Update

Chair Rave raised the Special Education subsection, and Superintendent Downey Toledo invited Dr. Kimberly Merrick to present. The Superintendent thanked Board members for submitting questions in advance and explained that the presentation addressed those questions.

Dr. Merrick thanked the Board and presented information regarding enrollment, staffing, speech-language services, specialized programs, and the district's continuum of special education services. She reported that staffing had improved compared with previous years, with relatively few vacancies remaining.

Enrollment and Speech-Language Services

Board Member Ruggeri requested clarification regarding the special education enrollment figure for Calcutt Middle School. Dr. Merrick indicated that the figure should be 65 students.

Secretary Evans asked about the reported 91 students receiving special education services at Raíces, including 17 identified as receiving speech-only services. He questioned whether one speech-language pathologist was sufficient and whether additional staffing was needed. He also compared the staffing and reported speech-only enrollment figures at Raíces and Captain Hunt.

Superintendent Downey Toledo clarified that the 18 students reported under "speech only" at Captain Hunt represented students whose IEPs provided solely for speech-language services and who therefore did not necessarily work with a special education teacher. She explained that the 72 students referenced as receiving other special education services through their IEPs also received speech-language services. Accordingly, the speech-only figure did not reflect the total number of students receiving speech-language support at the school.

Secretary Evans explained that the figures prompted questions about the distribution of staff. Dr. Merrick responded that the speech-language pathologist at Raíces had the lowest caseload among the district's speech-language providers.

Board Member Ruggeri asked how many speech-language pathologists were bilingual. Dr. Merrick reported that the district had two bilingual speech-language pathologists.

Compliance, Service Delivery, and Family Engagement

Dr. Merrick reported that the district had met RIDE's compliance expectations. She emphasized the importance of strengthening instructional services beyond procedural compliance.

She described an external review and the district's subsequent work to clarify its continuum of services, establish more consistent approaches across schools, and organize services around students' individual needs. This included reviewing how students access inclusion, specialized instruction, and other supports.

In response to a question about family involvement, Dr. Merrick described the establishment of the Special Education Local Advisory Committee, monthly meetings with its leadership, and planned family engagement activities.

Secretary Evans asked how the district ensures that parents are informed about services and that students receive required services, including during the summer. He referenced his family's experience and asked how the district identifies and addresses missed services.

Dr. Merrick explained that, upon joining the district, she identified 101 students with outstanding speech-language services. She developed a compensatory-service list and hired two additional speech therapists to provide those services. She reported that the compensatory services had been completed and discussed the individual summer-service concern raised by Secretary Evans.

Secretary Evans requested clarification regarding how students' services are determined. Dr. Merrick explained that services are determined through the IEP process, with parents participating in meetings to review their child's needs. She referenced annual reviews and three-year reevaluations and explained that the team discusses the services needed based on the student's evaluation and individual needs.

Continuum of Services and Specialized Programming

Dr. Merrick reviewed the district's continuum, including full inclusion, partial inclusion, specialized or substantially separate classrooms, and out-of-district placements when students' needs cannot be met within the district.

She described increased needs among younger students with autism and developmental delays. In response, the district partnered with the New England Center for Children (NECC) to establish six applied behavior analysis (ABA) classrooms serving approximately 40 students.

Dr. Merrick explained that the partnership included specialized educators, board-certified behavior analysts, consultation, training, and instructional resources. She also described developmental programming focused on functional academics, daily living skills, and structured instruction.

Board Member Ruggeri asked why the district was using an outside provider rather than hiring or developing district staff with the necessary expertise. Dr. Merrick explained that the partnership was a one-year agreement and expressed hope that the district could recruit teachers with the required specialization in future years.

Superintendent Downey Toledo stated that the district had offered to fund additional training or certification the previous year but had received no participants. She explained that prolonged vacancies and other staffing challenges had led the district, in consultation with the union, to seek outside expertise.

Dr. Merrick reviewed the supports included in the partnership. Board Member Ruggeri asked how the qualifications of NECC educators differed from those of other special education teachers. Dr. Merrick explained that the educators held special education certification and had backgrounds in ABA.

Board Member Ruggeri asked why the district had not hired additional special education teachers directly. Superintendent Downey Toledo responded that the district had attempted to fill the positions and that some had remained vacant for more than a year. She noted that district employees were also receiving training through NECC, with the long-term goal of strengthening district staffing capacity.

Chair Rave asked why these positions were difficult to fill. Superintendent Downey Toledo, speaking from her experience as a former special education teacher and speech-language pathologist, explained that serving students with complex needs requires specialized skills. She noted that a master's degree in special education does not necessarily provide sufficient preparation to support every student's unique needs, making these positions challenging to fill. The discussion also acknowledged the broader shortage of special education teachers.

IEP Alignment and Communication with Families

Board Member Vallejo asked whether staff worked from students' existing IEPs or conducted assessments to determine needed adjustments. Dr. Merrick explained that staff addressed students' IEP goals and that ongoing assessment was an integral part of ABA programming.

Secretary Evans asked about take-home materials and support for families. He emphasized that resources should be provided proactively, recognizing that parents may hesitate to ask for assistance or have competing demands.

Dr. Merrick explained that parents could contact teachers and that the ABA program included monthly opportunities for families to review student progress and data with staff.

Secretary Evans questioned whether relying on parents to initiate contact was sufficient and requested clarification regarding the district's outreach plan. Dr. Merrick explained that teachers in the ABA and developmental programs provided regular home-school communication logs, generally weekly, with more frequent communication based on family needs.

Developmental and Social-Emotional Programming

Dr. Merrick described developmental classrooms using structured instructional approaches, including visual materials, individualized schedules, physical organization, and work and activity systems.

She also reported the opening of a social-emotional learning classroom at Veterans Memorial Elementary School for students with social-emotional disabilities. The classroom served four students and was staffed by a special education teacher and a registered behavior technician.

Alignment of Middle and High School Programming

Dr. Merrick described work with the middle and high school principals to align the continuum of services and establish consistent program terminology across buildings.

She explained that the middle school model allowed a small group of students to attend inclusion classes with a special education teacher and a teaching assistant accompanying them across content areas. A similar approach was planned for the high school the following school year. Consistent terminology was intended to help families understand the programs and transitions between schools.

Secretary Evans asked about students' access to specialized programs located outside their assigned school. Dr. Merrick explained that a student referred for placement in a particular program would attend the school offering that program.

Superintendent Downey Toledo stated that the district's goal was to provide as broad a continuum of services as possible within each school. She explained that plans for the new Raíces building included opportunities to expand special education programming so that students requiring specialized services could receive them while remaining in the dual-language program.

Class Size, Staffing, and Instructional Model

Board Member Ruggeri requested clarification regarding the slide indicating a maximum of 15 students, asking whether that number represented the total enrollment in each classroom. Dr. Merrick explained that the total would include general education students and a small group of students receiving specialized support. She noted that this particular model was not yet in place at the high school.

Board Member Ruggeri questioned how the proposed class size would be achieved in high school content-area classes. She noted that smaller classes benefit all students and asked how the district would address equity when some general education students would be assigned to a class of 15 while others could be in classes of approximately 25 to 30 students.

Dr. Merrick explained that the model was intended to support a small group of approximately four or five students whose needs required a smaller instructional setting.

Board Member Ruggeri asked how the model would operate with existing staffing. Using an English class as an example, she asked whether assigning a special education teacher to accompany a small group throughout the day would require an additional special educator and how the district would maintain support for students in other inclusion classes occurring at the same time.

Dr. Merrick explained that the small group would receive support from a special education teacher alongside the content-area teacher. She also described other inclusion classes staffed by special education and content-area teachers.

Board Member Ruggeri clarified that her concern was whether a teacher assigned to travel with one group across subjects would be an additional position and how that assignment would affect the availability of special educators elsewhere. She also questioned whether the proposed structure would allow for genuine co-teaching, in which both educators actively share instructional responsibility.

Dr. Merrick distinguished the unified program from other inclusion settings. She explained that the unified model was intended for students with more intensive needs who might otherwise receive instruction in a self-contained classroom.

Concerns Regarding Meaningful Inclusion and Co-Teaching

Board Member Ruggeri described her experience developing the earlier Unified Scholars program at the high school. She explained that its purpose was to expand students' access to peers and allow participation in general education classes based on individual strengths and readiness. She asked how the proposed model differed and expressed concern that students could move from one restrictive setting to another without achieving meaningful inclusion.

Dr. Merrick responded that the proposed approach would allow students who currently traveled as a separate unified group to participate in classes alongside general education peers. When Board Member Ruggeri asked whether the other students in those classrooms would have IEPs, Dr. Merrick responded that they typically would not.

Board Member Ruggeri questioned how one special education teacher could effectively co-plan and co-teach across five different content areas. She emphasized that meaningful instructional support requires familiarity with the curriculum, standards, upcoming units, and individual students' learning needs. She questioned whether a teacher traveling across subjects would have sufficient time and content knowledge to fulfill those responsibilities.

Dr. Merrick explained that the teacher would support students according to their IEP goals and objectives. She clarified that the unified program was a support model within an inclusive setting, rather than a full co-teaching model.

Board Member Ruggeri asked how the model would benefit a group of three to six students if the accompanying special education teacher could not fully participate in planning and teaching across those subjects. She expressed concern that the teacher's role could be reduced to helping students follow the day's activities rather than providing collaboratively planned instruction. She also questioned whether students might remain visibly separated in a small group, making their differences more apparent rather than increasing their inclusion.

Dr. Merrick responded that she had visited the classrooms several times and observed students seated among their general education peers rather than in a separate group. She stated that she could not always distinguish which students were receiving specialized support.

Middle School Implementation and Instructional Planning

Principal Katie Marcotte explained that the middle school model was developed to increase access to general education peers while addressing shortages of appropriately certified special educators. She described the difficulty of recruiting staff with the combination of special education, content-area, and multilingual learner qualifications needed for certain assignments.

Principal Marcotte explained that a special education teacher accompanied students across core subjects and that daily common planning opportunities allowed collaboration with different content-area teams. She acknowledged that the model was not currently a full co-teaching model and identified co-teaching and stronger content specialization as longer-term goals.

Dr. Merrick reported reductions in behavioral concerns and improvements in academic performance, emphasizing the importance of high expectations for all students.

Board Member Ruggeri acknowledged the goal of expanding inclusion but reiterated her concerns from the perspective of a special education teacher. She described the advance planning required to review upcoming standards and lessons, identify necessary adaptations, and develop instruction that addresses students' IEPs and different learning needs.

She questioned how one special educator could perform that level of preparation effectively across five content areas. She also expressed concern that the structure could limit the teacher's ability to apply their professional expertise and function as an instructional partner.

Board Member Ruggeri emphasized that she supported access to general education classrooms. However, she questioned whether the proposed approach was the most effective way to provide that access and stated that a shortage of special education teachers did not, by itself, establish the instructional effectiveness of the model.

Dr. Merrick responded that the district's data showed significant reductions in behavioral concerns and improved academic performance. Board Member Ruggeri requested an opportunity to review the data. Dr. Merrick invited her to visit the classrooms and observe the program.

IEP-Driven Instruction and the Proposed High School Change

Dr. Merrick referenced additional programming, including life skills and transition services. She emphasized the district's goal of connecting evaluations, IEP development, and classroom instruction.

Board Member Ruggeri returned to the question of how IEPs would meaningfully guide classroom instruction when one special education teacher supported students across several different subjects. Dr. Merrick explained that common planning time was essential and acknowledged that the work was challenging.

Board Member Ruggeri questioned whether the available planning structure would be sufficient to coordinate individualized instruction across all of those content areas. She compared the proposed model with the existing high school structure, in which students moved among teachers responsible for individual subjects, and asked how an accompanying special educator would effectively assume responsibilities across multiple subjects.

The discussion acknowledged that the proposed model had not yet been implemented at the high school and that there was time for further review before implementation.

Superintendent Downey Toledo encouraged Board Member Ruggeri to speak with Calcutt Middle School special educators who were using the model. She stated that teachers had described valuing the opportunity to get to know a small group of students well. She acknowledged that educators may have different preferences regarding content specialization, reported positive feedback from students and teachers, and invited Board Member Ruggeri to observe the program and provide additional feedback.

Board Member Ruggeri asked why the shift was needed. She described an approach in which students could attend general education inclusion classes in subjects where they were ready, with support from a content-area teacher and a special educator, while continuing to receive specialized instruction in other subjects. She asked how the proposed change would improve upon those individualized opportunities.

Dr. Merrick stated that individualized opportunities of that kind remained possible. She reiterated that the proposed unified model involved a small group of students participating in an inclusive setting with a special education teacher accompanying them across content areas and that it was not yet in place at the high school.

Requested Follow-Up

During the discussion, Board Member Ruggeri requested access to the data supporting the reported outcomes and raised questions regarding class-size equity, staffing needs, support for other inclusion classes, planning across multiple subjects, meaningful inclusion, and implementation of students' IEPs.

Secretary Evans recommended continuing the discussion at a future meeting or in a separate discussion with teacher participation so that Board members could receive additional information and ask further questions. He thanked Dr. Merrick for her presentation and time.

Goalbook and Conclusion

Dr. Merrick concluded by introducing Goalbook, a platform intended to help teachers develop meaningful IEP goals, monitor student progress, and connect evaluations and IEPs with classroom instruction.

No motion or vote was recorded during the Special Education agenda item.

9. Awarding of Bids

A. Award of General Contractor Contract: New PreK-8 Dual Language Building

Owner's Project Manager Erica Schechter and Project Architect Brian Pont of AI3 presented the project. The district received four bids on August 12, and the lowest qualified bidder, Agastini/Bacon Construction, was recommended for award. City Solicitor Jerzyk explained that state law requires selecting the lowest qualified bidder, that all four bidders were deemed qualified, and that references for the recommended contractor were strong. Ms. Schechter reported that the project is just over $1 million under the $61.7 million in available funds, that bid alternates such as a generator are being evaluated, and that additional RIDE funding is being pursued for security, the generator, and playground scope.

> **Motion:** To approve the award of the general contractor contract for the new PreK-8 dual language building.
> **Motion by:** Secretary Thomas Evans **Seconded by:** Board Member Erika Vallejo
> **Vote:** Voice vote. All in favor; none opposed.
> **Motion carried.**

10. Old Business

A. FY 2027 Budget Book

The Superintendent presented the updated budget book, which addressed budget-to-actuals, shared services with Raíces Upper, and anticipated Title III and Title IV amounts. Board Member Ruggeri asked about a discrepancy in central office staffing: pages 32 and 33 list 31 full-time employees at about $5.97 million, while the attachment sent to the Board lists 54 employees at $5.485 million. Board Member Ruggeri also asked for a breakdown of the approximately $7.627 million identified for MLL services serving 1,116 students (page 15), since the spreadsheet the Board received accounts for $426,000. The Superintendent explained that the larger figure reflects all spending tied to multilingual learners, including general fund dollars, and agreed to have Finance clarify the staffing numbers and provide the MLL breakdown. Chair Rave withdrew an earlier motion to approve the budget contingent on these updates after City Solicitor Jerzyk outlined the Board's options, and the Board voted to continue the item to the next meeting.

> **Motion:** To continue the FY 2027 Budget Book to the next meeting.
> **Motion by:** Board Member Jordana Ruggeri **Seconded by:** Vice Chair Carla Hernandez
> **Vote:** Voice vote. All in favor; no opposition heard.
> **Motion carried.**

B. Second Reading: Superintendent Evaluation Policy

The Board took up the second reading of the Superintendent Evaluation Policy. A motion to approve was made by Secretary Evans and seconded by Board Member Ruggeri, and the Board moved into discussion. Policy consultant Liz Pelletiere explained that she reformatted the policy to match the district's policy format and raised open questions: the weighting of proficiency goals within the overall performance rating, the reason for 360-degree feedback, what the survey should include and whether it changes each year, how minimum expectations are determined, and how and when performance objectives are set. Sarah Friedman suggested forming a Board subcommittee to further develop the policy. Because not all members had the updated document, City Solicitor Jerzyk advised substituting the new document first. The Board voted to substitute the updated document and then voted to table the policy to the next meeting so members can review it. The original motion to approve and its amendment were not voted on.

> **Motion:** To substitute the previous policy draft with the updated document.
> **Motion by:** Board Member Zuhanna Medina **Seconded by:** Board Member Erika Vallejo
> **Vote:** Voice vote. All in favor; no opposition heard.
> **Motion carried.**

> **Motion:** To table the Superintendent Evaluation Policy until the next meeting so the Board can review the updated document.
> **Motion by:** Secretary Thomas Evans **Seconded by:** Board Member Zuhanna Medina
> **Vote:** Voice vote. All in favor; no opposition heard.
> **Motion carried.**

C. Contract with University Orthopedics: Athletic Trainer Services

City Solicitor Jerzyk explained that this annual contract ensures an athletic trainer is on site for all Rhode Island Interscholastic League games, as required by RIIL rules, and that he and the Superintendent are finalizing minor technical changes. In response to a question from Board Member Ruggeri, he noted that the athletic director's long-term goal is a full-time athletic trainer, and that the current contract is about $7,500.

> **Motion:** To approve the contract with University Orthopedics, subject to technical changes.
> **Motion by:** Secretary Thomas Evans **Seconded by:** Vice Chair Carla Hernandez
> **Vote:** Voice vote. All in favor; no opposition heard.
> **Motion carried.**

D. School Board Work Session Frequency and Schedule

Sarah Friedman explained that the joint study commission recommended continued Board development during the transition to local control. Given members' current time commitments, Board leadership asked her to send a survey rather than add more meetings. The survey will ask about priority topics and options such as small-group or one-on-one sessions. Vice Chair Hernandez asked that the survey include a question on how to help every Board member feel comfortable participating.

Motion: To send the Board development survey to Board members.
Motion by: Secretary Thomas Evans **Seconded by:** Vice Chair Carla Hernandez
Vote: Voice vote. All in favor; no opposition heard.
Motion carried.

11. New Business

A. RCWP Carpentry Pre-Apprenticeship Program

The Superintendent presented the Residential Construction Workforce Partnership carpentry pre-apprenticeship program, located behind the Central Falls High School campus. The fall program runs Monday to Thursday for one hour, has space for 15 students (30 are interested), and is co-taught by a Central Falls High School certified math teacher so students can earn geometry credit. The MOU is not to exceed $25,000. Vice Chair Hernandez suggested that students visit the Raíces construction site, and the Superintendent agreed to share the idea with the program lead. City Solicitor Jerzyk noted that this is the first time the Rhode Island Builders Association program will serve Central Falls students. In response to Secretary Evans, the Superintendent noted that the district's CTE director helped form the partnership.

Motion: To approve the RCWP carpentry pre-apprenticeship program.
Motion by: Student Representative Crystal Marie De Jesus Lara **Seconded by:** Board Member Jordana Ruggeri
Vote: Voice vote. All in favor; no opposition heard.
Motion carried.

B. Contract with the Central Falls Police Department: School Resource Officers

The Superintendent shared photos of School Resource Officers Edward and Joe and described the strong relationships they build with students. The district pays the salaries of both officers through the Central Falls Police Department. Chair Rave and Secretary Evans spoke to the officers' professionalism and the benefits of having them in the schools.

Motion: To approve the School Resource Officer contract with the Central Falls Police Department.
Motion by: Student Representative Crystal Marie De Jesus Lara **Seconded by:** Board Member Jordana Ruggeri
Vote: Voice vote. All in favor; no opposition heard.
Motion carried.

C. Appropriation of $200,000 from Fund Balance: 767-771 Lonsdale Avenue

City Solicitor Jerzyk explained that the vacant building across from the new high school could not be redeveloped because of the cost of stormwater management, and that federal cuts eliminated the funds planned for its demolition. The city purchased the property out of receivership. The appropriation will demolish the building, create about 15 teacher parking spaces, and add green infrastructure to capture stormwater and help reduce flooding at Higgins and Lonsdale. The city will match the appropriation, and

the district is exploring whether school construction revolving fund monies can be used instead. He noted that the building is unsafe for pedestrians. Vice Chair Hernandez and Secretary Evans asked about the parking lot exit and the garages included in the demolition.

> **Motion:** To approve the appropriation of $200,000 from the district fund balance for the partnership with the City of Central Falls to demolish and develop 767-771 Lonsdale Avenue for pedestrian safety and parking.
> **Motion by:** Secretary Thomas Evans **Seconded by:** Board Member Erika Vallejo
> **Vote:** Voice vote. Unanimous.
> **Motion carried.**

D. First Reading: Artificial Intelligence Policy

Policy consultant Liz Pelletiere presented the first reading of the AI policy. Secretary Evans asked what other districts are doing and about teacher survey results, including negative feedback; the Superintendent noted that the state has encouraged every district to adopt a policy, and 177 teachers responded to a winter survey, with students surveyed in the spring. The Superintendent clarified that the policy is neither for nor against AI but sets guardrails. Members discussed teacher choice in using AI, the need to define plagiarism and allow students to cite AI as a source, whether consequences should be consistent across the district or left to teacher discretion, how parents will understand the policy, how honestly students report their AI use (about 65.5% of students reported using AI), who will provide training, and whether RIDE offers funding. The Superintendent noted that, without an AI policy, suspected AI misuse currently falls under the grading policy as cheating or plagiarism. No vote was taken. Staff will share detailed survey results, earlier drafts with stronger consequence language, and a definition of plagiarism before the second reading.

12. Community Comment

No additional speakers signed up for community comment.

13. Closing of Meeting and Adjournment

Chair Rave called for a motion to adjourn.

> **Motion:** To adjourn.
> **Motion by:** Board Member Jordana Ruggeri **Seconded by:** Vice Chair Carla Hernandez
> **Vote:** Voice vote. All in favor; no opposition heard.
> **Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:11 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Milly Rivera Torres
Director of Strategic Communications, Office of the Superintendent

Central Falls School District Civil Rights Policy:

Central Falls School District does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal, and provides equal access to designated youth groups. The following employees have been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination: Title IX and Civil Rights/Nondiscrimination Compliance Coordinator: Jackie Parra, (401) 727-7700 ext. 2013 or parraj@cfschools.net ; Section 504/ADA Coordinator: Kimberly Merrick, (401) 727-2021 or merrickk@cfschools.net mailing address for both: 934 Dexter Street-2nd Floor, Central Falls Rhode Island, 02863. The Central Falls School District is also committed to providing a safe and civil educational environment that is free from harassment, intimidation, or bullying.