



Form of Bylaws

California Public Charter Schools

About This Form: Public Counsel’s Community Development Project in collaboration with the California Charter Schools Association (“CCSA”) has designed these form bylaws for a charter school that is organized as a non-membership California nonprofit public benefit corporation. The form bylaws reflect state law changes, effective January 1, 2020, that require charter schools to comply with certain state laws and district policies related to the Ralph M. Brown Act (Government Code Sections 54950 through 54963) and conflict of interest rules (California Government Code Sections 1090 and 81000 et seq.). These form bylaws serve as a drafting tool for nonprofit charter schools that have chosen to incorporate in California, existing California nonprofit charter schools engaged in a bylaws review, and the *pro bono* attorneys who represent them.

The adoption of bylaws is a necessary step to organize a nonprofit public benefit corporation, and is a task typically undertaken by the initial board of directors early in the corporate formation process. When initial directors have not been named by the incorporator in the articles of incorporation, the incorporator may, until directors are elected, do whatever is necessary to perfect the organization of the corporation, including adopt bylaws. Section 5134 of the California Nonprofit Corporation Law.

In addition to being compliant with California corporate law, nonprofit charter school bylaws must satisfy specific language requirements of Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) and of the charter authorizer, and must be consistent with the charter petition, the Charter Schools Act, and any implementing regulations. Typically, a nonprofit seeking to operate a charter school will be required to submit a copy of its adopted bylaws along with its petition, and is required to notify the chartering authorizer of any bylaw amendments once the petition is granted.

The form is annotated with explanatory endnotes, including citations to applicable laws. For further instructions on how to use this form, please see the first endnote. Public Counsel will update this form periodically for changes in law, recommended practices and available resources.

All charter schools must also make sure their bylaws are aligned with the relevant provisions describing bylaws and governance issues in their charter school petitions, and must incorporate any specific bylaw requirements of the charter authorizer. We have

included in the endnotes references to required language of the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Important Notes: This form contains alternative language suggestions that may be applicable based on the charter school’s activities. It is important that anyone creating bylaws for a nonprofit charter school carefully consider the explanations in the endnotes so that they will fully understand the ramifications of their drafting choices. We encourage you to seek input from legal counsel who can provide advice specific to the school’s particular needs and goals. Once the founding board adopts the bylaws, its officers and directors will be required to follow the procedures described in the bylaws. Please see the first endnote for more information.

This form should not be construed as legal advice. Please contact an attorney for legal advice about your organization’s specific situation. This form should not be used “as is” but should be modified after careful consideration of the explanations and alternative wording choices in the text of the bylaws and endnotes. Some nonprofit charter schools may need to include additional provisions not discussed in this form to qualify for certain grants or government funding.

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Public Counsel’s Community Development Project provides free legal assistance (including bylaws review) to qualifying nonprofit organizations that share our mission of serving low-income communities and addressing issues of poverty within Los Angeles County. If your organization needs legal assistance, or to provide comments on this form, visit www.publiccounsel.org/practice_areas/community_development or call (213) 385-2977, extension 200.

CCSA is a nonprofit, membership organization which advances the charter school movement through state and local advocacy, leadership on accountability, and resources for member schools. CCSA is a trusted source of data and information on California’s charter schools for parents, authorizers, legislators, the press and other interested groups. Learn more about CCSA at www.ccsa.org. Please note the CCSA Knowledge Briefs referenced in this document are available to CCSA members only. For more information about becoming a CCSA member, please visit <http://www.ccsa.org/services/membership/>.

Bylaws¹ of

[Name of Charter School]

A California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARTICLE 1 NAME1

 SECTION 1.1 CORPORATE NAME 1

ARTICLE 2 OFFICES1

 SECTION 2.1 PRINCIPAL OFFICE 1

 SECTION 2.2 OTHER OFFICES 1

ARTICLE 3 PURPOSES1

 SECTION 3.1 GENERAL PURPOSE 1

 SECTION 3.2 SPECIFIC PURPOSE 1

ARTICLE 4 LIMITATIONS1

 SECTION 4.1 POLITICAL ACTIVITIES 1

 SECTION 4.2 PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES 1

ARTICLE 5 DEDICATION OF ASSETS.....2

 SECTION 5.1 PROPERTY DEDICATED TO NONPROFIT PURPOSES 2

 SECTION 5.2 DISTRIBUTION OF ASSETS UPON DISSOLUTION..... 2

ARTICLE 6 MEMBERSHIPS.....2

 SECTION 6.1 MEMBERS 2

ARTICLE 7 DIRECTORS.....2

 SECTION 7.1 NUMBER AND QUALIFICATIONS 2

 7.1.1 Number 2

 7.1.2 Qualifications..... 2

 7.1.3 Restriction on Interested Directors 2

 7.1.4 Charter Authorizer Appointment 3

 SECTION 7.2 POWERS 3

 7.2.1 Corporate Powers Exercised by Board 3

 7.2.2 Additional Powers 3

 SECTION 7.3 TERMS; ELECTION OF SUCCESSORS..... 3

 SECTION 7.4 VACANCIES 4

 7.4.1 Events Causing Vacancy 4

 7.4.2 Removal..... 4

 7.4.3 No Removal on Reduction of Number of Directors 4

 7.4.4 Resignations 4

 7.4.5 Election to Fill Vacancies 5

 SECTION 7.5 BROWN ACT..... 5

 SECTION 7.6 REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE BOARD 5

 SECTION 7.7 SPECIAL MEETINGS 5

 SECTION 7.8 ITEMS NOT RELATED TO OPERATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL..... 5

 SECTION 7.9 NOTICE OF MEETINGS 5

 7.9.1 Notice of Annual and Regular Meetings 5

 7.9.2 Notice of Special Meetings..... 6

 7.9.3 Emergency Meetings 7

 SECTION 7.10 PLACE OF BOARD MEETINGS 7

 7.10.1 Teleconference Connections 7

 7.10.2 Meetings by Telephone or Similar Communication Equipment..... 7

 SECTION 7.11 QUORUM AND ACTION OF THE BOARD..... 8

 7.11.1 Quorum 8

 7.11.2 Minimum Vote Requirements for Valid Board Action 8

7.11.3	When a Greater Vote Is Required for Valid Board Action.....	8
SECTION 7.12	WAIVER OF NOTICE	8
SECTION 7.13	ADJOURNMENT	8
SECTION 7.14	NOTICE OF ADJOURNMENT	8
SECTION 7.15	CONDUCT OF MEETINGS	9
SECTION 7.16	FEES AND COMPENSATION OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS	9
SECTION 7.17	NON-LIABILITY OF DIRECTORS.....	9
ARTICLE 8	COMMITTEES.....	9
SECTION 8.1	COMMITTEES OF DIRECTORS.....	9
SECTION 8.2	MEETINGS AND ACTION OF BOARD COMMITTEES.....	10
SECTION 8.3	QUORUM RULES FOR BOARD COMMITTEES	10
SECTION 8.4	REVOCAION OF DELEGATED AUTHORITY	10
SECTION 8.5	NONPROFIT INTEGRITY ACT/AUDIT COMMITTEE.....	10
SECTION 8.6	ADVISORY COMMITTEES.....	11
ARTICLE 9	OFFICERS.....	11
SECTION 9.1	OFFICERS	11
SECTION 9.2	ELECTION OF OFFICERS.....	11
SECTION 9.3	REMOVAL OF OFFICERS	11
SECTION 9.4	RESIGNATION OF OFFICERS.....	11
SECTION 9.5	VACANCIES IN OFFICES.....	11
SECTION 9.6	RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICERS	12
9.6.1	Chairperson of the Board.....	12
9.6.2	President	12
9.6.3	Vice President.....	12
9.6.4	Secretary	12
9.6.5	Treasurer.....	12
9.6.6	Additional Officers	13
SECTION 9.7	CHIEF EXECUTIVE.....	13
SECTION 9.8	COMPENSATION OF OFFICERS	13
9.8.1	Salaries Fixed by Board.....	13
9.8.2	Fairness of Compensation.....	14
ARTICLE 10	TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN CORPORATION AND DIRECTORS OR OFFICERS..	14
SECTION 10.1	TRANSACTIONS WITH DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS	14
10.1.1	Interested Party Transactions.....	14
10.1.2	Requirements to Authorize Transactions with Employees Serving as Directors.....	14
SECTION 10.2	LOANS TO DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS.....	15
SECTION 10.3	DUTY OF LOYALTY; CONSTRUCTION WITH ARTICLE 11; POLITICAL REFORM ACT.....	15
ARTICLE 11	INDEMNIFICATION OF DIRECTORS, OFFICERS, EMPLOYEES AND AGENTS...15	
SECTION 11.1	DEFINITIONS	15
11.1.1	“Agent”	15
11.1.2	“Proceeding”	15
11.1.3	“Expenses”	15
SECTION 11.2	APPLICABILITY OF INDEMNIFICATION PROVISIONS	15
11.2.1	Successful Defense by Agent	15
11.2.2	Settlement or Unsuccessful Defense by Agent	16
SECTION 11.3	ACTIONS BROUGHT BY PERSONS OTHER THAN THE CORPORATION.....	16
11.3.1	Scope of Indemnification in Third Party Proceedings	16
11.3.2	Required Standard of Conduct for Indemnification in Third Party Proceedings	16
SECTION 11.4	ACTION BROUGHT BY OR ON BEHALF OF THE CORPORATION.....	16
11.4.1	Scope of Indemnification in Proceeding By or On Behalf Of the Corporation	16
11.4.2	Required Standard of Conduct for Indemnification in Proceeding By or On Behalf Of the Corporation.....	16

11.4.3	Claims Settled Out of Court	16
11.4.4	Claims and Suits Awarded Against Agent.....	17
SECTION 11.5	DETERMINATION OF AGENT’S GOOD FAITH CONDUCT	17
SECTION 11.6	LIMITATIONS.....	17
SECTION 11.7	ADVANCE OF EXPENSES.....	17
SECTION 11.8	CONTRACTUAL RIGHTS OF NON-DIRECTORS AND NON-OFFICERS	17
SECTION 11.9	INSURANCE	18
SECTION 11.10	NON-APPLICABILITY OF FIDUCIARIES OF EMPLOYEE BENEFIT PLANS.....	18
ARTICLE 12	CORPORATE RECORDS, REPORTS AND SEAL	18
SECTION 12.1	MINUTE BOOK	18
SECTION 12.2	BOOKS AND RECORDS OF ACCOUNT	18
SECTION 12.3	ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION AND BYLAWS.....	18
SECTION 12.4	MAINTENANCE AND INSPECTION OF FEDERAL TAX EXEMPTION APPLICATION AND ANNUAL INFORMATION RETURNS	18
SECTION 12.5	ANNUAL REPORT; STATEMENT OF CERTAIN TRANSACTIONS.....	18
SECTION 12.6	RIGHTS OF INSPECTION	19
SECTION 12.7	CORPORATE SEAL	19
ARTICLE 13	EXECUTION OF INSTRUMENTS, DEPOSITS AND FUNDS.....	19
SECTION 13.1	EXECUTION OF INSTRUMENTS.....	19
SECTION 13.2	CHECKS AND NOTES	19
SECTION 13.3	DEPOSITS	20
SECTION 13.4	GIFTS	20
SECTION 13.5	FISCAL YEAR	20
ARTICLE 14	CONSTRUCTION AND DEFINITIONS	20
ARTICLE 15	EFFECTIVE DATE AND AMENDMENTS	20
SECTION 15.1	EFFECTIVE DATE.....	20
SECTION 15.2	AMENDMENT BY DIRECTORS	20
CERTIFICATE OF SECRETARY		21

DEFINED TERMS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

“Agent”- Section 11.1.1
“annual meeting” – Section 7.6
“Articles of Incorporation” – Section 7.2
“Attorney General” – Section 7.4.4
“Board” – Section 7.2.1
“Brown Act”- Section 7.5
“California Nonprofit Corporation Law” – Section 3.1
“Chairperson” – Section 9.6.1
“Chartering Authority Director” – Section 7.1.4
“Code” –Section 4.2
“Committees” – Section 8.1
“Corporation” – Section 1.1
“CPA”- Section 8.5
“Directors” – Section 7.1.1
“e-mail” – Section 7.9.2.1
“expenses” – Section 11.1.3
“Officers” – Section 9.1

“Political Reform Act” – Section 10.1

“President” – Section 9.6.2

“proceeding”- Section 11.1.2

“Secretary” – Section 9.6.4

“Treasurer” – Section 9.6.5

“Vice President” – Section 9.6.3

ARTICLE 1 NAME

Section 1.1 [Corporate Name](#)²

The name of this corporation is [**Name of Corporation**] (the “Corporation”).

ARTICLE 2 OFFICES

Section 2.1 [Principal Office](#)³

The principal office for the transaction of the business of the Corporation may be established at any place or places within or without the State of California by resolution of the Board, provided that as long as this Corporation has a valid charter petition to operate a charter school and the petition so v, Corporation shall maintain an office in the geographic boundaries of the charter authorizer.

Section 2.2 [Other Offices](#)⁴

The Board may at any time establish branch or subordinate offices at any place or places where the Corporation is qualified to transact business.

ARTICLE 3 PURPOSES

Section 3.1 [General Purpose](#)⁵

The Corporation is a nonprofit public benefit corporation and is not organized for the private gain of any person. It is organized under the Nonprofit Corporation Law of California (“California Nonprofit Corporation Law”) for [*public OR charitable OR public and charitable*] purposes.

Section 3.2 [Specific Purpose](#)⁶

The specific purpose of the Corporation shall include without limitation, [**insert description**].

ARTICLE 4 LIMITATIONS

Section 4.1 [Political Activities](#)⁷

The Corporation has been formed under California Nonprofit Corporation Law for the charitable purposes described in Article 3, and it shall be nonprofit and nonpartisan. No substantial part of the activities of the Corporation shall consist of carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the Corporation shall not participate in or intervene in any political campaign (including the publishing or distribution of statements) on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office.

Section 4.2 [Prohibited Activities](#)⁸

The Corporation shall not, except in any insubstantial degree, engage in any activities or exercise any powers that are not in furtherance of the purposes described in Article 3. The Corporation may not carry on any activity for the profit of its Officers, Directors or other persons or distribute any gains, profits or dividends to its Officers, Directors or other persons as such. Furthermore, nothing in Article 3 shall be construed as allowing the Corporation to engage in any activity not permitted to be carried on (i) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the “Code”) or (ii) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Code.

ARTICLE 5 DEDICATION OF ASSETS

Section 5.1 [Property Dedicated to Nonprofit Purposes](#)⁹

The property of the Corporation is irrevocably dedicated to **[insert exempt purpose(s) stated in Articles of Incorporation (e.g., “charitable,” “educational,” or “public”)]** purposes. No part of the net income or assets of the Corporation shall ever inure to the benefit of any of its Directors or Officers, or to the benefit of any private person, except that the Corporation is authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article 3 hereof.

Section 5.2 [Distribution of Assets Upon Dissolution](#)¹⁰

Upon the dissolution or winding up of the Corporation, its assets remaining after payment, or provision for payment, of all debts and liabilities of the Corporation shall be distributed to a nonprofit fund, foundation, or corporation which is organized and operated exclusively for **[insert exempt purpose(s) stated in Articles of Incorporation (e.g., “charitable,” “educational,” or “public”)]** purposes and which has established its tax exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Code.

ARTICLE 6 MEMBERSHIPS

Section 6.1 [Members](#)¹¹

The Corporation shall have no members within the meaning of section 5056 of the California Nonprofit Corporation Law.

ARTICLE 7 DIRECTORS¹²

Section 7.1 [Number and Qualifications](#)¹³

7.1.1 [Number](#)

[The authorized number of directors of the Corporation (“Directors”) shall be not less than [_____] or more than [_____]; the exact authorized number to be fixed, within these limits, by resolution of the Board.]

OR

[The authorized number of directors of the Corporation (“Directors”) shall be [_____].]

OR

[The authorized number of directors of the Corporation (“Directors”) shall be determined by the following method: [_____].]

7.1.2 [Qualifications](#)¹⁴

*[Insert any specific qualifications for serving on the Board]*¹⁵

7.1.3 [Restriction on Interested Directors](#)¹⁶

Only 49 % of the Board of Directors may be “interested.” An interested person is (i) any person compensated by the Corporation for services rendered to it within the previous 12 months, whether as a full or part-time officer or other employee, independent contractor, or otherwise, or (ii) any brother, sister, ancestor, descendant, spouse, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, or father-in-law of any such person. Any violation of this paragraph shall not affect the validity or enforceability of transactions entered into by the Corporation.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, at all times that the Corporation has a valid charter petition to operate a charter school, none of the Directors may have a prohibited financial interest as defined by California Government Code Section 1090 *et seq.*, except that an employee of the charter school may serve as a Director of the Corporation so long as he or she abstains from voting on, or influencing or attempting to influence another Director regarding, all matters uniquely affecting that Director's employment, as allowed by Education Code Section 47604.1.

7.1.4 [Charter Authorizer Appointment](#)¹⁷

Pursuant to California Education Code Section 47604(b), as long as the Corporation has a valid charter petition to operate a charter school, the governing board of the charter authorizer shall have the right, at any time and from time to time, to appoint one director (the "Charter Authorizer Director") to the board of Directors, upon request and in accordance with the Corporation's election process. All references in these Bylaws to "Director" shall include any Charter Authorizer Director unless otherwise specifically stated.

Section 7.2 [Powers](#)

7.2.1 [Corporate Powers Exercised by Board](#)¹⁸

Subject to the provisions of the Articles of Incorporation of the Corporation (the "Articles of Incorporation"), California Nonprofit Corporation Law and any other applicable laws, the business and affairs of the Corporation shall be managed, and all corporate powers shall be exercised, by or under the direction of the Board of Directors (the "Board"). The Board may delegate the management of the activities of the Corporation to any person or persons, management company or committee however composed, provided that the activities and affairs of the Corporation shall be managed and all corporate powers shall be exercised under the ultimate direction of the Board.

7.2.2 [Additional Powers](#)

Without prejudice to its general powers, but subject to the same limitations set forth above, the Board shall have the following powers in addition to any other powers enumerated in these Bylaws and permitted by law:

- (a) To select and remove all of the officers, agents and employees of the Corporation; to prescribe powers and duties for them which are not inconsistent with law, the Corporation's Articles of Incorporation or these Bylaws; to fix their compensation; and to require security from them for faithful service.
- (b) To conduct, manage and control the affairs and activities of the Corporation and to make such rules and regulations therefor which are not inconsistent with law, the Corporation's Articles of Incorporation or these Bylaws;
- (c) To adopt, make and use a corporate seal and to alter the form of the seal from time to time;
- (d) To borrow money and incur indebtedness for the purposes of the Corporation, and to cause to be executed and delivered therefor, in the corporate name, promissory notes, bonds, debentures, deeds of trust, mortgages, pledges, hypothecations and other evidences of debt and securities therefor; and
- (e) To carry out such other duties as are described in any approved charter petition and the Charter Schools Act of 1992 (Education Code Section 47600 *et seq.*).

Section 7.3 [Terms; Election of Successors](#)¹⁹

[Alternative 1: Directors shall be elected at each annual meeting of the Board for [_____] year terms by the affirmative vote of a majority of the Directors then in office and in attendance at the meeting, assuming a quorum is present. Each Director, including a Director elected to fill a vacancy, shall hold office until the expiration of the term for which he or she was elected and until the [election and qualification of a successor](#), or until that Director's earlier resignation or

removal in accordance with these Bylaws and California Nonprofit Corporation Law.²⁰ By resolution, the Board may arrange for terms to be staggered.]

OR

[Alternative 2 ([Staggered Terms](#)):²¹ Directors shall be elected at the annual meeting of the Board by the affirmative vote of a majority of the Directors then in office and in attendance at the meeting, assuming quorum is present. At the first annual meeting, the Directors shall be divided into [three] approximately equal groups and designated by the Board to serve one, two, or three year terms. Thereafter, the term of office of each Director shall be [three] years. Each Director, including a Director elected to fill a vacancy, shall hold office until the expiration of the term for which he or she was elected and until the election and qualification of a successor, or until that Director's earlier resignation or removal in accordance with these Bylaws and California Nonprofit Corporation Law.]

Section 7.4 Vacancies

7.4.1 Events Causing Vacancy²²

A vacancy or vacancies on the Board shall be deemed to exist on the occurrence of the following: (i) the death, resignation, or removal of any Director; (ii) whenever the number of authorized Directors is increased; or (iii) the failure of the Board, at any meeting at which any Director or Directors are to be elected, to elect the full authorized number of Directors.

7.4.2 Removal²³

The Board may by resolution declare vacant the office of a Director who has been declared of unsound mind by an order of court, or convicted of a felony, or found by final order or judgment of any court to have breached a duty under California Nonprofit Corporation Law.

[The Board may by resolution declare vacant the office of a Director who fails to attend (#) [consecutive] Board meetings [during any calendar year] unless the absences are due to mitigating factors that have been previously disclosed to and approved by the Board.]

[The Board may, by a majority vote of the Directors who meet all of the required qualifications to be a Director set forth in Section 7.1.2, declare vacant the office of any Director who fails or ceases to meet any required qualification that was in effect at the beginning of that Director's current term of office.]

Directors, other than Charter Authorizer Director, may be removed without cause by a majority of Directors then in office. If a Charter Authorizer Director is appointed pursuant to Section 7.1.4, then the governing board of the charter authorizer may remove that Director at any time, with or without cause.

7.4.3 No Removal on Reduction of Number of Directors²⁴

No reduction of the authorized number of Directors shall have the effect of removing any Director before that Director's term of office expires unless the reduction also provides for the removal of that specified Director in accordance with these Bylaws and California Nonprofit Corporation Law.

7.4.4 Resignations²⁵

Except as provided in this Section 7.4.4, any Director may resign by giving written notice to the Chairperson, the President, the Secretary, or the Board. The resignation shall be effective when the notice is given unless the notice specifies a later time for the resignation to become effective. No Director may resign if the Corporation would then be left without a duly elected Director or Directors in charge of its affairs, except upon notice to the California Attorney General (the "Attorney General").

7.4.5 [Election to Fill Vacancies](#)²⁶

If there is a vacancy on the Board, including a vacancy created by the removal of a Director, the Board may fill such vacancy by electing an additional Director as soon as practicable after the vacancy occurs. If the number of Directors then in office is less than a quorum, additional directors may be elected to fill such vacancies by (i) the affirmative vote of a majority of the Directors in office at a meeting held according to notice or waivers complying with section 5211 of the California Nonprofit Corporation Law, or (ii) a sole remaining Director. Furthermore, if the Director whose office is vacant was the Charter Authorizer Director, then the charter authorizer may appoint a Charter Authorizer Director to fill the vacancy.

Each Director elected to fill a vacancy shall hold office until the expiration of the term of the replaced Director, and until the election and qualification of a successor, or until that Director's earlier resignation or removal in accordance with these Bylaws and California Nonprofit Corporation Law.

Section 7.5 [Brown Act](#)²⁷

Notwithstanding anything in these Bylaws to the contrary, at all times that the Corporation has a valid charter petition to operate a charter school, all meetings of the Board and its standing committees shall be called, noticed and held in accordance with the Brown Act, as said Act may be amended from time to time (the "Brown Act").

Section 7.6 [Regular Meetings of the Board](#)²⁸

Each year, the Board shall hold at least one meeting, at a time and place fixed by the Board, for the purposes of election of Directors, appointment of Officers, review and approval of the corporate budget and transaction of other business. This meeting is sometimes referred to in these Bylaws as the "annual meeting." [*Can insert date and time of annual meetings here: e.g., "The annual meetings shall be held on the third Wednesday of May at 4 p.m."*]. Other regular meetings of the Board may be held at such time and place as the Board may fix from time to time by resolution.

Section 7.7 [Special Meetings](#)²⁹

[Alternative 1: A Special meeting of the Board for any lawful purpose or purposes may be called at any time by the Chairperson, or the President, or the Vice President (if any), or the Secretary, or any two Directors.]

OR

[Alternative 2: Special meetings of the Board for any lawful purpose or purposes may be called at any time by the President or a majority of Directors.]

OR

[Alternative 3: Insert separate method of calling meetings]

Section 7.8 [Items Not Related to Operation of Charter School](#)³⁰

At all times that the Corporation has a valid charter petition to operate a charter school, a Regular or Special meeting of the board to discuss items related to the operation of the charter school shall not include the discussion of any item regarding an activity of the Board that is unrelated to the operation of the charter school.

Section 7.9 [Notice of Meetings](#)

7.9.1 [Notice of Annual and Regular Meetings](#)³¹

At least seventy-two (72) hours before an annual meeting or a regular meeting, the Board, or its designee, shall post an agenda containing a brief general description of each item of business to be

transacted or discussed at the meeting, including items to be discussed in closed session. A brief general description of an item generally need not exceed twenty (20) words. The agenda shall specify the time and location of the meeting and shall be posted in a location that is freely accessible to members of the public, as well as on either the Corporation's or the charter school's website, if any. The posting of the agenda and the contents of the agenda shall be in accordance with Section 54954.2 of the Brown Act. No action or discussion shall be undertaken at any annual or regular meeting on any item not appearing on the posted agenda, except as set forth in Section 54954.2 of the Brown Act.

7.9.2 [Notice of Special Meetings](#)³²

7.9.2.1 [Manner of Giving Notice](#)³³

Notice of the time and place of all regular and special meetings shall be given to each Director by one of the following methods:

- (a) Personal Delivery of written notice;
- (b) First-class mail, postage paid;
- (c) Telephone, including a voice messaging system or other system or technology designed to record and communicate messages; or
- (d) Facsimile, electronic mail ("e-mail") or other means of electronic transmission if the recipient has consented to accept notices in this manner.

All such notices shall be given or sent to the Director's address, phone number, facsimile number or e-mail address as shown on the records of the Corporation.

Notice of the time and place of all regular and special meetings shall be [given to members of the public in the following ways](#):

- (a) Posting on the charter school's website, if any;
- (b) Written notice to each local newspaper of general circulation and radio or television station requesting notice;
- (c) Posting in a location freely accessible to members of the public.³⁴

7.9.2.2 [Time Requirements](#)³⁵

Notices of special meetings of the Board of Directors sent by first-class mail shall be deposited in the United States mail at least three (3) days before the time set for the meeting. Notices given by personal delivery, telephone, or electronic transmission shall be delivered, telephoned, or transmitted at least twenty four (24) hours before the time set for the meeting. In addition to the foregoing, notice of the meeting shall comply with Section 54956 of the Brown Act, and the call of the meeting and notice shall also be posted at least twenty four (24) hours prior to the special meeting in a location that is freely accessible to members of the public.

7.9.2.3 [Notice Contents](#)³⁶

The call and notice of a special meeting of the Board shall state the time and place of the special meeting and the business to be transacted or discussed. No other business shall be considered at the special meeting. The notice of a special meeting shall comply with the requirements for special meetings set forth in the Brown Act.

7.9.3 [Emergency Meetings](#)³⁷

If there is an “emergency situation,” as defined in Section 54956.5 of the Brown Act, involving matters upon which prompt action is necessary due to the disruption or threatened disruption of public facilities, the Board may hold an emergency meeting without complying with either the 24 hour posting requirement of Section 54956 of the Brown Act or both of the notice and posting requirements. The emergency meeting must be noticed and held in compliance with Section 54956.5 of the Brown Act.

Section 7.10 [Place of Board Meetings](#)³⁸

Regular and special meetings of the Board may be held at any place that has been designated in the notice of the meeting, or, if not stated in the notice or, if there is no notice, designated by resolution of the Board. If the place of a regular or special meeting is not designated in the notice or fixed by a resolution of the Board, it shall be held at the principal office of the Corporation. Notwithstanding the foregoing, at all times that the Corporation has a valid charter petition to operate a charter school all meetings of the Board shall be held at any place within the geographic boundaries of the county in which the school is located, unless a location outside the county is authorized by Section 54954 of the Government Code and the meeting complies with Section 54961 of the Government Code.. *[Optional: If the Corporation has a valid charter petition to operate two or more charter schools in different counties or to operate a nonclassroom-based charter school that does not have a facility, all meetings of the Board shall be held at any place within the geographic boundaries of the county in which the greatest number of pupils who are enrolled in the charter schools or charter school resides, unless authorized by Section 5954 of the Government Code and the meeting complies with Section 54961 of the Government Code.]*

7.10.1 [Teleconference Connections](#)³⁹

A two-way teleconference location shall be established at each schoolsite *[Optional: and each resource center]*. *[Optional: If the Corporation has a valid charter petition to operate two or more charter schools in different counties, the Board of Directors shall audio record, video record, or both, all the governing board meetings and post the recordings on each charter school’s internet website.]*

7.10.2 [Meetings by Telephone or Similar Communication Equipment](#)⁴⁰

A teleconference meeting is a meeting in which one or more Directors attend the meeting from a remote location via telephone or other electronic means, transmitting audio or audio/video. Any meeting may be held by conference telephone or other communications equipment permitted by California Nonprofit Corporation Law, and all Directors shall be deemed to be present in person at such meeting as long as all Directors participating in the meeting can communicate with one another and all other requirements of California Nonprofit Corporation Law are satisfied. Such meeting must also be noticed and conducted in compliance with Section 54953(b) of the Brown Act, including without limitation the following:

- (a) At a minimum, a quorum of the Board shall participate in the teleconference meeting from locations within the school’s jurisdiction;
- (b) All votes taken during a teleconference meeting shall be by roll call;
- (c) The Board shall post agendas at all teleconference locations with each such location being identified in the notice and agenda of the meeting;
- (d) All locations where a Director participates in a teleconference meeting [must be fully accessible to members of the public and shall be listed on the agenda](#);⁴¹
- (e) Members of the public must be able to hear what is said during the meeting and shall be provided with an opportunity to address the Board directly at each teleconference location; and

- (f) The agenda shall indicate that members of the public attending a meeting conducted via teleconference [need not give their name when entering the conference call](#).⁴²

Section 7.11 Quorum and Action of the Board

7.11.1 Quorum⁴³

A majority of Directors then in office (but no fewer than two Directors or one-fifth of the authorized number in Section 7.1.1, whichever is greater) shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, except to adjourn as provided in Section 7.12.

7.11.2 Minimum Vote Requirements for Valid Board Action⁴⁴

Every act taken or decision made by a vote of the majority of the Directors present at a meeting duly held at which a quorum is present is the act of the Board, unless a greater number is expressly required by California Nonprofit Corporation Law, the Articles of Incorporation or these Bylaws. A meeting at which a quorum is initially present but due to the withdrawal of Directors, is no longer present, may not transact business; those Directors present may either (a) elect to continue as a committee or (b) adjourn to a future date. Directors may not vote by proxy.

7.11.3 When a Greater Vote Is Required for Valid Board Action⁴⁵

The following actions shall require a vote by a majority of all Directors then in office in order to be effective:

- (a) Creation of, and appointment to, Committees (but not advisory committees) as described in Section 8.1;
- (b) Removal of a Director without cause as described in Section 7.4.2; and
- (c) Indemnification of Directors as described in Article 11.
- (d) Approving a Transaction with an Employee Serving as Director described in Article 10.1.2.

Section 7.12 Waiver of Notice⁴⁶

Notice of a meeting need not be given to any Director who, either before or after the meeting, signs a written waiver of notice, a consent to holding the meeting, or an approval of the minutes of the meeting. The waiver of notice or consent does not need to specify the purpose of the meeting. All waivers, consents, and approvals shall be filed with the corporate records or made a part of the minutes of the meeting. Also, notice of a meeting is not required to be given to any Director who attends the meeting without protesting before or at its commencement about the lack of adequate notice. Directors can protest the lack of notice only by presenting a written protest to the Secretary either in person, by first-class mail addressed to the Secretary at the principal office of the Corporation as contained on the records of the Corporation as of the date of the protest, or by facsimile addressed to the facsimile number of the Corporation as contained on the records of the Corporation as of the date of the protest. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the public notice of a meeting required by these Bylaws can never be waived.

Section 7.13 Adjournment⁴⁷

A majority of the Directors present, whether or not constituting a quorum, may adjourn any meeting to another time and place.

Section 7.14 Notice of Adjournment⁴⁸

Notice of the time and place of holding an adjourned meeting need not be given, unless the meeting is adjourned for more than 24 hours, in which case personal notice of the time and place shall be given before the time of the adjourned meeting to the Directors who were not present at the time of the adjournment. Notice of any adjournment shall be given in accordance with Section 54955 of the Brown Act.

Section 7.15 [Conduct of Meetings](#)⁴⁹
Meetings of the Board shall be presided over by the Chairperson, or, if there is no Chairperson or the Chairperson is absent, the President or, if the President and Chairperson are both absent, by the Vice President (if any) or, in the absence of each of these persons, by a chairperson of the meeting, chosen by a majority of the Directors present at the meeting. The Secretary shall act as secretary of all meetings of the Board, provided that, if the Secretary is absent, the presiding officer shall appoint another person to act as secretary of the meeting. Meetings shall be governed by rules of procedure as may be determined by the Board from time to time, insofar as such rules are not inconsistent with or in conflict with these Bylaws, with the Articles, or with any provisions of law applicable to the Corporation.

Per the Brown Act, the Board must publicly report any action taken and the vote or abstention on that action of each member present for the action and this information should also be noted in the minutes of each meeting.

Section 7.16 [Fees and Compensation of Directors and Committee Members](#)⁵⁰
The Corporation shall not pay any compensation to Directors and committee members for services rendered to the Corporation as Directors and committee members, except that Directors and committee members may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties to the Corporation, in reasonable amounts as approved by the Board.

Section 7.17 [Non-Liability of Directors](#)⁵¹
The Directors shall not be personally liable for the debts, liabilities, or other obligations of the Corporation.

ARTICLE 8 COMMITTEES

Section 8.1 [Committees of Directors](#)⁵²
The Board may, by resolution adopted by a majority of the Directors then in office, create one or more Board Committees (“Committees”), including an executive committee, each consisting of two or more Directors, and no persons who are not Directors, to serve at the discretion of the Board. Any Committee, to the extent provided in the resolution of the Board and allowed by law, may be given the authority of the Board except that no Committee may:

- (a) approve any action for which the California Nonprofit Corporation Law also requires approval of the members or approval of a majority of all members;
- (b) fill vacancies on the Board or in any Committee which has the authority of the Board;
- (c) fix compensation of the Directors for serving on the Board or on any Committee;
- (d) amend or repeal Bylaws or adopt new Bylaws;
- (e) amend or repeal any resolution of the Board which by its express terms is not so amendable or repealable;
- (f) appoint any other Committees or the members of these Committees;
- (g) expend corporate funds to support a nominee for Director after more persons have been nominated than can be elected; or
- (h) approve any transaction (i) between the Corporation and one or more of its Directors or (ii) between the Corporation and any entity in which one or more of its Directors have a material financial interest.

In addition to the Committees described above, the Board may also from time to time appoint one or more ad hoc committees, each consisting of two or more Directors and may also include nonvoting advisors, to serve at the pleasure of the Board. Unlike a standing committee, an ad hoc committee shall have a specific task to accomplish and shall be disbanded upon accomplishment of that task.

Section 8.2 [Meetings and Action of Board Committees](#)⁵³

Meetings and action of Committees shall be governed by, and held and taken in accordance with, the provisions of Article 7 concerning meetings of Directors, with such changes in the context of Article 7 as are necessary to substitute the Committee and its members for the Board and its members, except that the time for regular meetings of Committees may be determined by resolution of the Board, and special meetings of Committees may also be called by resolution of the Board. Provided that if less than a quorum of the Board is in attendance at a meeting of an ad hoc committee, meetings of an ad hoc committee shall not be subject to the rules set forth in these Bylaws for notice and posting of the agenda in compliance with the Brown Act. Minutes shall be kept of each meeting of any Committee and shall be filed with the corporate records. The Committee shall report to the Board from time to time as the Board may require. The Board may adopt rules for the governance of any Committee not inconsistent with the provisions of these Bylaws. In the absence of rules adopted by the Board, the Committee may adopt such rules.

Section 8.3 [Quorum Rules for Board Committees](#)⁵⁴

A majority of the Committee members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of Committee business, except to adjourn. A majority of the Committee members present, whether or not constituting a quorum, may adjourn any meeting to another time and place. Every act taken or decision made by a majority of the Committee members present at a meeting duly held at which a quorum is present shall be regarded as an act of the Committee, subject to the provisions of the California Nonprofit Corporation Law relating to actions that require a majority vote of the entire Board.

Section 8.4 [Revocation of Delegated Authority](#)⁵⁵

The Board may, at any time, revoke or modify any or all of the authority that the Board has delegated to a Committee, increase or decrease (but not below two) the number of members of a Committee, and fill vacancies in a Committee from the members of the Board.

Section 8.5 [Nonprofit Integrity Act/Audit Committee](#)⁵⁶

In any fiscal year in which the Corporation receives or accrues gross revenues of two million dollars or more (excluding grants from, and contracts for services with, governmental entities for which the governmental entity requires an accounting of the funds received), the Board shall (i) prepare annual financial statements using generally accepted accounting principles that are audited by an independent certified public accountant (“CPA”) in conformity with generally accepted auditing standards; (ii) make the audit available to the Attorney General and to the public on the same basis that the [Internal Revenue Service Form 990 is required to be made available](#); and (iii) appoint an Audit Committee.⁵⁷

The Audit Committee shall not include paid or unpaid staff or employees of the Corporation, including, if staff members or employees, the President or chief executive officer or the Treasurer or chief financial officer (if any). If there is a finance committee, members of the finance committee shall constitute less than 50% of the membership of the Audit Committee and the chairperson of the Audit Committee shall not be a member of the finance committee. Subject to the supervision of the Board, the Audit Committee shall:

- (a) make recommendations to the Board on the hiring and firing of the CPA;
- (b) confer with the CPA to satisfy Audit Committee members that the financial affairs of the Corporation are in order;

- (c) approve non-audit services by the CPA and ensure such services conform to standards in the Yellow Book issued by the United States Comptroller General; and
- (d) if requested by the Board, negotiate the CPA's compensation on behalf of the Board.

Section 8.6 Advisory Committees⁵⁸

The Board may create one or more advisory committees to serve at the pleasure of the Board (the action to create such advisory committees must be made pursuant to Brown Act requirements, meaning at a publicly noticed meeting with the item on the agenda). Appointments to such advisory committees need not, but may, be Directors. The Board shall appoint and discharge advisory committee members. All actions and recommendations of an advisory committee shall require ratification by the Board before being given effect. These advisory committee meetings are not subject to the notice and posting requirements of the Brown Act so long as the committee is comprised solely of board members; consists of less than the number of board members who, if present at a meeting, would be able to make a decision; has a defined purpose and a time frame to accomplish that purpose; and is advisory.

ARTICLE 9 OFFICERS⁵⁹

Section 9.1 Officers⁶⁰

The officers of the Corporation ("Officers") shall be either a President or a Chairperson, or both, a Secretary, and a Treasurer or chief financial officer, or both. Other than the Chairperson, these persons may, but need not be, selected from among the Directors.⁶¹ The Board shall have the power to designate additional Officers, including a Vice President, who also need not be Directors, with such duties, powers, titles and privileges as the Board may fix, including such Officers as may be appointed in accordance with Section 9.6.6. Any number of offices may be held by the same person, except that the Secretary, the Treasurer and the chief financial officer (if any) may not serve concurrently as either the President or the Chairperson.

Section 9.2 Election of Officers⁶²

The Officers, except those appointed in accordance with Section 9.6.6, shall be elected by the Board at the annual meeting of the Corporation for a term of one year, and each shall serve at the discretion of the Board until his or her successor shall be elected, or his or her earlier resignation or removal. Officers may be elected for [] consecutive terms.

Section 9.3 Removal of Officers⁶³

Subject to the rights, if any, of an Officer under any contract of employment, any Officer may be removed, with or without cause, (i) by the Board, at any regular or special meeting of the Board, or at the annual meeting of the Corporation, or (ii) by an Officer on whom such power of removal may be conferred by the Board.

Section 9.4 Resignation of Officers

Any Officer may resign at any time by giving written notice to the Corporation. Any resignation shall take effect at the date of the receipt of that notice or at any later time specified in that notice; and, unless otherwise specified in that notice, the acceptance of the resignation shall not be necessary to make it effective. Any resignation is without prejudice to the rights, if any, of the Corporation under any contract to which the Officer is a party.

Section 9.5 Vacancies in Offices

A vacancy in any office because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification, or any other cause shall be filled in the manner prescribed in these Bylaws for regular appointments to that office, provided that such vacancies shall be filled as they occur and not on an annual basis. In the event of a vacancy in any office other than the President or one appointed in accordance with

Section 9.6.6, such vacancy shall be filled temporarily by appointment by the President, or if none, by the Chairperson, and the appointee shall remain in office for 60 days, or until the next regular meeting of the Board, whichever comes first. Thereafter, the position can be filled only by action of the Board.

Section 9.6 Responsibilities of Officers

9.6.1 Chairperson of the Board⁶⁴

The chairperson of the Board (the “Chairperson”), if any, shall be a Director and shall preside at meetings of the Board and exercise and perform such other powers and duties as may from time to time be assigned to him by the Board or prescribed by these Bylaws. If the Board designates both a Chairperson and a President, the Board shall, by resolution, establish the specific duties carried by each position.

9.6.2 President⁶⁵

The president of the Corporation (the “President”) shall, if there is no Chairperson, or in the Chairperson’s absence, preside at meetings of the Board and exercise and perform such other powers and duties as may from time to time be assigned to him by the Board or prescribed by these Bylaws. If no other person is designated as the chief executive, the President shall, in addition, be the chief executive and shall have the powers and duties prescribed in Section 9.7.

9.6.3 Vice President⁶⁶

The vice president of the Corporation (the “Vice President”) shall, in the absence or disability of the President, perform all the duties of the President and, when so acting, have all the powers of and be subject to all the restrictions upon, the President. The Vice President shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Board.

9.6.4 Secretary

The secretary of the Corporation (the “Secretary”) shall attend to the following:

9.6.4.1 Bylaws

The Secretary shall certify and keep or cause to be kept at the principal office of the Corporation the original or a copy of these Bylaws as amended to date.

9.6.4.2 Minute Book⁶⁷

The Secretary shall keep or cause to be kept a minute book as described in Section 12.1.

9.6.4.3 Notices

The Secretary shall give, or cause to be given, notice of all meetings of the Board in accordance with these Bylaws.

9.6.4.4 Corporate Records

Upon request, the Secretary shall exhibit or cause to be exhibited at all reasonable times to any Director, or to his or her agent or attorney, these Bylaws and the minute book.

9.6.4.5 Corporate Seal and Other Duties

The Secretary shall keep or cause to be kept the seal of the Corporation, if any, in safe custody, and shall have such other powers and perform such other duties incident to the office of Secretary as may be prescribed by the Board or these Bylaws.

9.6.5 Treasurer⁶⁸

The treasurer of the Corporation (the “Treasurer”) shall attend to the following:

9.6.5.1 Books of Account

The Treasurer shall keep and maintain, or cause to be kept and maintained, adequate and correct books and records of accounts of the properties and transactions of the Corporation, including accounts of its assets, liabilities, receipts, disbursements, gains, losses, capital, retained earnings, and other matters customarily included in financial statements. The books of account shall be open to inspection by any Director at all reasonable times.

9.6.5.2 Financial Reports

The Treasurer shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, and certify, or cause to be certified, the financial statements to be included in any required reports.

9.6.5.3 Deposit and Disbursement of Money and Valuables

The Treasurer shall deposit, or cause to be deposited, all money and other valuables in the name and to the credit of the Corporation with such depositories as may be designated by the Board; shall disburse, or cause to be disbursed, the funds of the Corporation as may be ordered by the Board; shall render, or cause to be rendered to the President and Directors, whenever they request it, an account of all of his or her transactions as Treasurer and of the financial condition of the Corporation; and shall have other powers and perform such other duties incident to the office of Treasurer as may be prescribed by the Board or these Bylaws.

9.6.5.4 Bond

If required by the Board, the Treasurer shall give the Corporation a bond in the amount and with the surety or sureties specified by the Board for faithful performance of the duties of his office and for restoration to the Corporation of all its books, papers, vouchers, money, and other property of every kind in his possession or under his control on his death, resignation, retirement, or removal from office.

9.6.6 Additional Officers⁶⁹

The Board may empower the Chairperson, President, or chief executive, to appoint or remove such other Officers as the business of the Corporation may require, each of whom shall hold office for such period, have such authority, and perform such duties as are provided in these Bylaws or as the Board from time to time may determine.

Section 9.7 Chief Executive⁷⁰

Subject to such supervisory powers as may be given by the Board to the Chairperson or President, the Board may hire **[insert desired titles such as Executive Director/Head/Principal/Instructional Director/Operations Director]** who will serve as the chief executives and administrators of the Corporation. Subject to the control of the Board, such persons shall **[insert job description/duties]**. They shall have such other powers and duties as may be prescribed by the Board or these Bylaws.

Section 9.8 Compensation of Officers

9.8.1 Salaries Fixed by Board

The salaries of Officers, if any, shall be fixed from time to time by resolution of the Board or by the person or Committee to whom the Board has delegated this function. In all cases, any salaries received by Officers shall be reasonable and given in return for services actually rendered for the Corporation which relate to the performance of the public benefit purposes of the Corporation. No salaried Officer serving as a Director shall be permitted to vote on his or her own compensation as an employee or influence or attempt to influence another Director regarding his or her own compensation.⁷¹

9.8.2 [Fairness of Compensation](#)⁷²

The Board shall periodically review the fairness of compensation, including benefits, paid to every person, regardless of title, with powers, duties, or responsibilities comparable to the president, chief executive officer, treasurer, or chief financial officer (i) once such person is hired, (ii) upon any extension or renewal of such person's term of employment, and (iii) when such person's compensation is modified (unless all employees are subject to the same general modification of compensation).

ARTICLE 10 TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN CORPORATION AND DIRECTORS OR OFFICERS

Section 10.1 [Transactions with Directors and Officers](#)⁷³

10.1.1 [Interested Party Transactions](#)

At all times that the Corporation has a valid charter petition to operate a charter school, members of the Corporation's Board and the Officers, managers and employees and any committees of the Corporation shall comply with Government Code Sections 1090 and 81000 *et seq.* ("Political Reform Act"), federal and state laws, nonprofit integrity standards and any applicable charter authorizer policies and regulations regarding ethics and conflict of interest.

Therefore, the Corporation shall not be a party to any transaction:

- (a) in which one or more of its Directors or Officers has a material financial interest, or
- (b) with any corporation, firm, association, or other entity in which one or more Directors or Officers has a material financial interest.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, an employee of the charter school may serve as a Director of the Corporation so long as (1) he or she abstains from voting on, or influencing or attempting to influence another Director regarding, all matters uniquely affecting that Directors' employment with the charter school; and (2) in all such matters affecting that Directors' employment with the charter school, the Board follows the procedure described in Section 10.1.2.

10.1.2 [Requirements to Authorize Transactions with Employees Serving as Directors](#)

The Corporation shall not be a party to a transaction affecting the employment of an employee serving as a Director unless:

- (a) the Corporation enters into the transaction for its own benefit;
- (b) the transaction is fair and reasonable to the Corporation at the time the transaction is entered into;
- (c) prior to consummating the transaction or any part thereof, the Board authorizes or approves the transaction in good faith, by a vote of a majority of Directors then in office (without counting the vote of the interested Directors), and with knowledge of the material facts concerning the transaction and the interested Director's or Officer's financial interest in the transaction;
- (d) prior to authorizing or approving the transaction, the Board considers and in good faith determines after reasonable investigation that the Corporation could not obtain a more advantageous arrangement with reasonable effort under the circumstances; and

- (e) the minutes of the Board meeting at which such action was taken reflect that the Board considered and made the findings described in paragraphs (a) through (d) of this Section 10.1.2.

Section 10.2 Loans to Directors and Officers⁷⁴

The Corporation shall not make any loan of money or property to or guarantee the obligation of any Director or Officer, unless approved by the Attorney General; except that, however, the Corporation may advance money to a Director or Officer for expenses reasonably anticipated to be incurred in the performance of duties of such Director or Officer, if in the absence of such advance, such Director or Officer would be entitled to be reimbursed for such expenses by the Corporation.

Section 10.3 Duty of Loyalty; Construction with Article 11; Political Reform Act⁷⁵

Notwithstanding the foregoing Sections, nothing in this Article shall be construed to derogate in any way from the absolute duty of loyalty that every Director and Officer owes to the Corporation. Furthermore, nothing in this Article shall be construed to override or amend the provisions of Article 11. All conflicts between the two articles shall be resolved in favor of Article 11. Finally, as long as the Corporation has a valid charter petition to operate a charter school, the Corporation and its directors, officers and employees shall be subject to the applicable sections of the Political Reform Act, as amended from time to time.

ARTICLE 11 INDEMNIFICATION OF DIRECTORS, OFFICERS, EMPLOYEES AND AGENTS⁷⁶

Section 11.1 Definitions⁷⁷

For purpose of this Article 11,

11.1.1 “Agent”

means any person who is or was a Director, Officer, employee, or other agent of the Corporation, or is or was serving at the request of the Corporation as a Director, Officer, employee, or agent of another foreign or domestic corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise, or was a Director, Officer, employee, or agent of a foreign or domestic corporation that was a predecessor corporation of the Corporation or of another enterprise at the request of the predecessor corporation;

11.1.2 “Proceeding”

means any threatened, pending, or completed action or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative; and

11.1.3 “Expenses”

includes, without limitation, all attorneys’ fees, costs, and any other expenses reasonably incurred in the defense of any claims or proceedings against an Agent by reason of his or her position or relationship as Agent and all attorneys’ fees, costs, and other expenses reasonably incurred in establishing a right to indemnification under this Article 11.

Section 11.2 Applicability of Indemnification Provisions

11.2.1 Successful Defense by Agent

To the extent that an Agent has been successful on the merits in the defense of any proceeding referred to in this Article 11, or in the defense of any claim, issue, or matter therein, the Agent shall be indemnified against expenses actually and reasonably incurred by the Agent in connection with the claim.

- 11.2.2 Settlement or Unsuccessful Defense by Agent
If an Agent either settles any proceeding referred to in this Article 11, or any claim, issue, or matter therein, or sustains a judgment rendered against him, then the provisions of Section 11.3 through Section 11.6 shall determine whether the Agent is entitled to indemnification.
- Section 11.3 Actions Brought by Persons Other than the Corporation
This Section 11.3 applies to any proceeding other than an action “by or on behalf of the corporation” as defined in Section 11.4. Such proceedings that are not brought by or on behalf of the Corporation are referred to in this Section 11.3 as “Third Party proceedings.”
- 11.3.1 Scope of Indemnification in Third Party Proceedings⁷⁸
Subject to the required findings to be made pursuant to Section 11.3.2, the Corporation [*may OR shall*] indemnify any person who was or is a party, or is threatened to be made a party, to any Third Party proceeding, by reason of the fact that such person is or was an Agent, for all expenses, judgments, fines, settlements, and other amounts actually and reasonably incurred in connection with the proceeding.
- 11.3.2 Required Standard of Conduct for Indemnification in Third Party Proceedings⁷⁹
Any indemnification granted to an Agent in Section 11.3.1 above is conditioned on the following. The Board must determine, in the manner provided in Section 11.5, that the Agent seeking reimbursement acted in good faith, in a manner he or she reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the Corporation, and, in the case of a criminal proceeding, he or she must have had no reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful. The termination of any proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, or on a plea of *nolo contendere* or its equivalent shall not, of itself, create a presumption that the person did not act in good faith or in a manner he or she reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the Corporation or that he or she had reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful.
- Section 11.4 Action Brought By or On Behalf Of the Corporation⁸⁰
This Section 11.4 applies to any proceeding brought (i) by or in the right of the Corporation, or (ii) by an Officer, Director or person granted relator status by the Attorney General, or by the Attorney General, on the ground that the defendant Director was or is engaging in self-dealing within the meaning of section 5233 of the California Nonprofit Corporation Law, or (iii) by the Attorney General or person granted relator status by the Attorney General for any breach of duty relating to assets held in charitable trust (any such proceeding is referred to in these Bylaws as a proceeding “by or on behalf of the Corporation”).
- 11.4.1 Scope of Indemnification in Proceeding By or On Behalf Of the Corporation⁸¹
Subject to the required findings to be made pursuant to Section 11.4.2, and except as provided in Sections 11.4.3 and 11.4.4, the Corporation may indemnify any person who was or is a party, or is threatened to be made a party, to any proceeding by or on behalf of the Corporation, by reason of the fact that such person is or was an Agent, for all expenses actually and reasonably incurred in connection with the defense or settlement of such action.
- 11.4.2 Required Standard of Conduct for Indemnification in Proceeding By or On Behalf Of the Corporation⁸²
Any indemnification granted to an Agent in Section 11.4.1 is conditioned on the following. The Board must determine, in the manner provided in Section 11.5, that the Agent seeking reimbursement acted in good faith, in a manner he or she believed to be in the best interest of the Corporation and with such care, including reasonable inquiry, as an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would use under similar circumstances.
- 11.4.3 Claims Settled Out of Court
If any Agent settles or otherwise disposes of a threatened or pending action brought by or on behalf of the Corporation, with or without court approval, the Agent shall receive no indemnification for amounts paid pursuant to the terms of the settlement or other disposition.

Also, in cases settled or otherwise disposed of without court approval, the Agent shall receive no indemnification for expenses reasonably incurred in defending against the proceeding, unless the proceeding is settled with the approval of the Attorney General.

11.4.4 Claims and Suits Awarded Against Agent

If any Agent is adjudged to be liable to the Corporation in the performance of the Agent's duty to the Corporation, the Agent shall receive no indemnification for amounts paid pursuant to the judgment, and any indemnification of such Agent under Section 11.4.1 for expenses actually and reasonably incurred in connection with the defense of that action shall be made only if both of the following conditions are met:

- (a) The determination of good faith conduct required by Section 11.4.2 must be made in the manner provided for in Section 11.5; and
- (b) Upon application, the court in which the action was brought must determine that, in view of all of the circumstances of the case, the Agent is fairly and reasonably entitled to indemnity for the expenses incurred. If the Agent is found to be so entitled, the court shall determine the appropriate amount of expenses to be reimbursed.

Section 11.5 Determination of Agent's Good Faith Conduct⁸³

The indemnification granted to an Agent in Section 11.3 and Section 11.4 is conditioned on the findings required by those Sections being made by:

- (a) the Board by a majority vote of a quorum consisting of Directors who are not parties to the proceeding; or
- (b) the court in which the proceeding is or was pending. Such determination may be made on application brought by the Corporation or the Agent or the attorney or other person rendering a defense to the Agent, whether or not the application by the Agent, attorney, or other person is opposed by the Corporation.

Section 11.6 Limitations⁸⁴

No indemnification or advance shall be made under this Article 11, except as provided in Section 11.2.1 or Section 11.5(b), in any circumstances when it appears:

- (a) that the indemnification or advance would be inconsistent with a provision of the Articles of Incorporation, as amended, or an agreement in effect at the time of the accrual of the alleged cause of action asserted in the proceeding in which the expenses were incurred or other amounts were paid, which prohibits or otherwise limits indemnification; or
- (b) that the indemnification would be inconsistent with any condition expressly imposed by a court in approving a settlement.

Section 11.7 Advance of Expenses⁸⁵

Expenses incurred in defending any proceeding may be advanced by the Corporation before the final disposition of the proceeding on receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the Agent to repay the amount of the advance unless it is determined ultimately that the Agent is entitled to be indemnified as authorized in this Article 11.

Section 11.8 Contractual Rights of Non-Directors and Non-Officers⁸⁶

Nothing contained in this Article 11 shall affect any right to indemnification to which persons other than Directors and Officers of the Corporation, or any of its subsidiaries, may be entitled by contract or otherwise.

Section 11.9 [Insurance](#)⁸⁷
The Board may adopt a resolution authorizing the purchase and maintenance of insurance on behalf of any Agent, as defined in this Article 11, against any liability asserted against or incurred by any Agent in such capacity or arising out of the Agent's status as such, whether or not the Corporation would have the power to indemnify the Agent against the liability under the provisions of this Article 11.

Section 11.10 [Non-applicability of Fiduciaries of Employee Benefit Plans](#)
This Article does not apply to any proceeding against any trustee, investment manager or other fiduciary of an employee benefit plan in such person's capacity as such, even though such person may also be an agent of the corporation as defined in Section 11.1 of this Article. The Corporation shall have power to indemnify such trustee, investment manager or other fiduciary to the extent permitted by subdivision (f) of Section 207 of the California General Corporation Law.

ARTICLE 12 CORPORATE RECORDS, REPORTS AND SEAL

Section 12.1 [Minute Book](#)⁸⁸
The Corporation shall keep a minute book in written form which shall contain a record of all actions by the Board or any committee including (i) the time, date and place of each meeting; (ii) whether a meeting is regular or special and, if special, how called; (iii) the manner of giving notice of each meeting and a copy thereof; (iv) the names of those present at each meeting of the Board or any Committee thereof; (v) the minutes of all meetings; and (vi) formal dissents from Board Actions.

Section 12.2 [Books and Records of Account](#)
The Corporation shall keep adequate and correct books and records of account. "Correct books and records" includes, but is not necessarily limited to: accounts of properties and transactions, its assets, liabilities, receipts, disbursements, gains, and losses.

Section 12.3 [Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws](#)
The Corporation shall keep at its principal office, the original or a copy of the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws as amended to date.

Section 12.4 [Maintenance and Inspection of Federal Tax Exemption Application and Annual Information Returns](#)⁸⁹
The Corporation shall at all times keep at its principal office a copy of its federal tax exemption application and, for three years from their date of filing, its annual information returns. These documents shall be open to public inspection and copying to the extent required by the Code.

Section 12.5 [Annual Report; Statement of Certain Transactions](#)⁹⁰
The Board shall cause an annual report to be sent to each Director within 120 days after the close of the Corporation's fiscal year containing the following information:

- (a) The assets and liabilities of the Corporation as of the end of the fiscal year;
- (b) The principal changes in assets and liabilities, including trust funds, during the fiscal year;
- (c) The revenue or receipts of the Corporation, both unrestricted and restricted to particular purposes, for this fiscal year;
- (d) The expenses or disbursements of the Corporation for both general and restricted purposes during the fiscal year;
- (e) A statement of any transaction (i) to which the Corporation, its parent, or its subsidiary was a party, (ii) which involved more than \$50,000 or which was one of a number of such transactions with the same person involving, in the aggregate, more than \$50,000, and

(iii) in which either of the following interested persons had a direct or indirect material financial interest (a mere common directorship is not a financial interest):

- (1) Any Director or Officer of the Corporation, its parent, or its subsidiary;
- (2) Any holder of more than 10% of the voting power of the Corporation, its parent, or its subsidiary.

The statement shall include: (i) a brief description of the transaction; (ii) the names of interested persons involved; (iii) their relationship to the Corporation; (iv) the nature of their interest in the transaction, and; (v) when practicable, the amount of that interest, provided that, in the case of a partnership in which such person is a partner, only the interest of the partnership need be stated.

- (f) A brief description of the amounts and circumstances of any loans, guaranties, indemnifications, or advances aggregating more than \$10,000 paid during the fiscal year to any Officer or Director under Article 10 or Article 11.

Section 12.6 [Rights of Inspection](#)⁹¹

Every Director shall have the absolute right at any reasonable time to inspect the books, records, documents of every kind, and physical properties of the Corporation and each of its subsidiaries. The inspection may be made in person or by the Director's agent or attorney. The right of inspection includes the right to copy and make extracts of documents. If the Corporation has a valid charter petition, the public shall have the rights to inspection of public records as set forth in Government Code section 6250 ("Public Records Act").

Section 12.7 [Corporate Seal](#)⁹²

The corporate seal, if any, shall be in such form as may be approved from time to time by the Board. Failure to affix the seal to corporate instruments, however, shall not affect the validity of any such instrument.

ARTICLE 13 EXECUTION OF INSTRUMENTS, DEPOSITS AND FUNDS

Section 13.1 [Execution of Instruments](#)⁹³

The Board, except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws, may by resolution authorize any Officer or agent of the Corporation to enter into any contract or execute and deliver any instrument in the name of and on behalf of the Corporation, and such authority may be general or confined to specific instances. Unless so authorized, no Officer, agent, or employee shall have any power or authority to bind the Corporation by any contract or engagement or to pledge its credit or to render it liable monetarily for any purpose or in any amount.

Section 13.2 [Checks and Notes](#)⁹⁴

Except as otherwise specifically determined by resolution of the Board, or as otherwise required by law, checks, drafts, promissory notes, orders for the payment of money, and other evidence of indebtedness of the Corporation shall be signed by the Treasurer and countersigned by the President.

[Alternative: Option to tailor this provision to something more specific to the Corporation's policies: Ex. The Board will by resolution establish a list of authorized signers and signing procedures for checks, drafts, promissory notes, orders for the payment of money, and other evidence of indebtedness of the Corporation. The Board will adopt financial internal controls as outlined in the Fiscal Policies and Procedures Handbook as adopted by the Board and to be renewed and revised on an on-going basis.]

Section 13.3 [Deposits](#)⁹⁵
All funds of the Corporation shall be deposited from time to time to the credit of the Corporation in such banks, trust companies, or other depositories as the Board may select.

Section 13.4 [Gifts](#)
The Board may accept on behalf of the Corporation any contribution, gift, bequest, or devise for the charitable or public purposes of the Corporation.

Section 13.5 [Fiscal Year](#)⁹⁶
The fiscal year of the Corporation shall begin July 1 and end June 30 of each year.

ARTICLE 14 CONSTRUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

Unless the context requires otherwise, the general provisions, rules of construction, and definitions of California Nonprofit Corporation Law shall govern the construction of these Bylaws. Without limiting the generality of the above, the masculine gender includes the feminine and neuter, the singular number includes the plural, the plural number includes the singular, and the term “person” includes both the Corporation and a natural person. All references to statutes, regulations and laws shall include any future statutes, regulations and laws that replace those referenced.

ARTICLE 15 EFFECTIVE DATE AND AMENDMENTS

Section 15.1 [Effective Date](#)
These bylaws and any subsequent amendments to them shall become effective immediately upon their adoption, unless the Board in adopting them, provides that they are to become effective at a later date.

Section 15.2 [Amendment by Directors](#)⁹⁷
The Board may adopt, amend or repeal bylaws. Such power is subject to the following limitations:

- (a) Where any provision of these Bylaws requires the vote of a larger proportion of the Directors than otherwise is required by law, such provision may not be altered, amended or repealed except by the vote of such greater number.
- (b) No amendment may extend the term of a Director beyond that for which such Director was elected.
- (c) If bylaws are adopted, amended or repealed at a meeting of the Board, such action is authorized only at a duly called and held meeting for which written notice of such meeting, setting forth the proposed bylaw revisions with explanations therefor, is given in accordance with these Bylaws, unless such notice is waived in accordance with these Bylaws.

CERTIFICATE OF SECRETARY

I certify that I am the duly elected and acting Secretary of **[Name of Corporation]**, a California nonprofit public benefit corporation; that these Bylaws, consisting of **[##]** pages, are the Bylaws of this Corporation as adopted by the Board of Directors on _____; and that these Bylaws have not been amended or modified since that date.

Executed on _____ at _____, California.

[NAME]
Secretary

¹ **HOW TO USE THIS FORM:** For each section of the form bylaws, the endnote discusses the applicable law and indicates if the provision is required to be included in the bylaws. If the provision recites a default rule in the law that may be changed by putting a different rule into the bylaws, the endnote explains the parameters within which the bylaws may vary from the default rule.

Some of the provisions included in the bylaws are not required by law to be stated in a corporation's bylaws, but rather recite law that is applicable to all nonprofit public benefit corporations whether or not so stated. These provisions have been included so that the directors and officers of the corporation can look at the bylaws to find the laws that govern the corporation, instead of remembering where to look within the California Corporations Code for each rule. The endnotes explain why these provisions are included in the form, so that a user can decide whether to include these in the corporation's bylaws.

Where the bylaws contain [bracketed] text, this indicates where the user is required to insert language (explained in the endnotes) to replace the bracketed terms. Other provisions contain italicized text that shows alternative language choices based on a nonprofit corporation's expected activities. In such cases, the endnotes explain under what circumstances a corporation would use these alternatives.

Important Note: In order for a charter school operating as or by a nonprofit corporation to make a truly informed choice about the provisions that will govern its corporate operations, this form should not be used "as is." Rather, it should be modified after consideration of the explanations and alternative wording choices in the text and the endnotes. It is very important that anyone creating bylaws for a charter school fully understand the ramifications of each bylaw, and choose provisions that apply to the charter school's specific situation.

All directors and officers should have a copy of the bylaws, and should understand their respective rights and responsibilities. Directors and officers of a corporation are legally obligated to follow its bylaws. Failure to do so can provide an adverse party challenging a corporate decision or transaction with grounds to overturn the decision or invalidate a contract. In certain circumstances, harsher consequences subjecting the directors and officers to individual liability may follow. Therefore, it is important to thoughtfully select bylaw provisions that the corporation will be able to follow on an ongoing basis. Also, before drafting the bylaws, it is important to research whether the potential sources of funding for the nonprofit's proposed activities may require any particular features to be included in the bylaws.

All charter schools must make sure their bylaws are aligned with the relevant provisions in their charter school petitions. The charter school should be familiar with any charter school requirements that a particular charter authorizer imposes. For example, and as mentioned below, Los Angeles Unified School District ("LAUSD") annually publishes "District Required Language" setting forth certain requirements that it deems to be minimum requirements for authorization.

The endnotes discuss relevant provisions of law, in effect as January 2020, and delineate whether the stated legal authority comes from Corporate Law, Charter School Law, or LAUSD specific policies/regulations. The primary sources of law and authority described in these endnotes are (a) the California Nonprofit Corporation Law (California Corporations Code sections 5000 *et seq.*), which is referred to in the form bylaws as the "California Nonprofit Corporation Law" and in these endnotes as "Corporate Law" and "the law"; (b) the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (U.S. Code Title 26), which is referred to in the form bylaws and these endnotes as the "Code"; (c) California Revenue and Taxation Code Section 23701d; (d) the Ralph M. Brown Act (California Government Code sections 54950 *et seq.*), which is referred to in the form bylaws and these endnotes as the "Brown Act"; (e) the "Charter Schools Act" (California Education Code sections 47600 *et seq.*), California Government Code section 1090, "Public Records Act" (California Government Code section 6250), and the "Political Reform Act" (California Government Code sections 81000 *et seq.*), which are referred to collectively in these endnotes as "Charter School Law"; (f) LAUSD District Required Language for Independent Charter School Petitions (New and Revisions) and Material Revisions (November 3, 2017), which is referred to in these endnotes as "DRL"; and (g) LAUSD New Independent Charter School Petition Application Guide for 2019-2020 which is referred to in these endnotes as "Application Guide." Please note that the DRL and Application Guide may be updated by LAUSD every year and any statements made in reference to the DRL and Application Guide in these endnotes are only current as of 2019-2020.

Occasionally the endnotes refer to annotated articles of incorporation. This resource can be found on the Public Counsel website at <http://www.publiccounsel.org/tools/assets/files/0739.pdf>.

² **Corporate Law:** The name of the corporation as stated in the bylaws should exactly match the name (including punctuation) stated in the articles of incorporation (referred to in these endnotes as the "articles"). The only way to legally change the name of the corporation is to amend the articles and file the amendment with the Secretary of State. Changing the name solely in the bylaws has no legal effect. See the annotations to the form articles accompanying these form bylaws for more information.

³ **Corporate Law:** The law does not require a corporation to state its principal office in the bylaws. However, the corporation is required to designate a principal office and list the street address in the biannual statement of information filed with the Secretary of State. [*Cal. Corp. Code §6210(a)*].

LAUSD Specific: If the corporation has a charter to operate a school granted by LAUSD, the district will require the principal office to be in the district’s geographic boundaries.

Recommended Practice: To avoid having to amend the bylaws each time the corporation moves, the corporation should not designate an exact address in the bylaws. The bylaws should instead permit the board to set the exact address by board resolution.

⁴ **Corporate Law:** The law does not prohibit satellite offices, whether or not this provision is contained in the bylaws.

⁵ **Corporate Law:** The general purpose statement and the limitation relating to private gain of any person, are required by law to be in the corporation’s articles, but are not required to be in the bylaws. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5130*] **If also stated in the bylaws, the general purpose(s) and private gain language should be exactly as stated in the articles.** For a more detailed explanation of the “private gain” language in Section 3.1, please see Note 8.

If an amendment is made to the purpose statement contained in the articles, the same amendment should be made to the bylaws to ensure consistency. In addition, the corporation must notify the Internal Revenue Service (the “IRS”) and other agencies of the amendments (see Note 6). Likewise, if an amendment is made to the purpose statement in the bylaws, the board must confirm it is consistent with the articles.

Recommended Practice: These provisions regarding the general purpose should be repeated in the bylaws exactly as written in the articles to remind the officers and directors of the legal limitations on the corporation’s activities. **The purpose(s) listed in this section should be exactly as stated in the articles.**

⁶ **Corporate Law:** No law requires the corporation to state a specific purpose in its bylaws. If a nonprofit public benefit corporation states in its articles that its purposes include “public” purposes rather than just “charitable” purposes, the corporation is required to provide a further description of those public purposes in the articles. [*Cal. Corp. Code §§ 5130, 5131*] **If so stated in the bylaws, the specific purposes can be no broader than the specific purposes contained in the articles. A corporation is not permitted to engage in broader purposes than are stated in the articles, regardless of what is stated in the bylaws.** A corporation may, but is not required to, include a more specific or narrower purpose in its bylaws than what is stated in its articles. In such case, the corporation would be bound to conduct activities that are consistent with the narrower purposes stated in the bylaws until such time as the board amends the bylaws.

If the corporation wants to change its activities and the new activities are no longer consistent with the statement of specific purposes in its articles, the corporation must amend the articles and bylaws to reflect that change before it starts the new activities. Note that any material changes in activities must be reported to the IRS. Amendment of the articles to expand the charitable purpose may require the approval of the Attorney General, who will monitor the use of the charitable funds raised before such amendment to ensure they are used for the earlier purpose.

Charter School Specific: An example of specific purpose language for nonprofit charter schools is: *to manage, operate, guide, direct and promote one or more California public benefit charter schools, and to perform and undertake any and all activities and functions, including soliciting contributions of money and property from the general public, as may be proper in connection with the Corporation’s general and specific purposes.*

Recommended Practice: If a specific purpose is stated in the articles, the corporation must operate to further those purposes, so it is good to restate it in the bylaws to remind the directors and officers of the purposes and mission of the corporation. If there is no specific purpose stated in the articles, the board should consider whether to include a specific purpose in the bylaws to serve as a mission statement and remind new directors and officers why the corporation was formed. This may serve to keep future leaders of the corporation on the same track envisioned by the founders. Keep in mind, however, that if either the articles or the bylaws contain a specific purpose, the corporation should not engage in (or raise money to fund) other activities that do not fall within the specific purpose, until after amending the purpose statement.

⁷ **Corporate Law:** These limitation provisions are required by law to be in the articles if a corporation wants to qualify for exemption under section 501(c)(3) of the Code. A section 501(c)(3) corporation may not spend any time on political campaign activities for or opposing a candidate for any elected office (whether or not it is a nonpartisan office). In contrast, a section 501(c)(3) corporation is permitted to attempt to influence legislation through lobbying, as long as lobbying does not constitute a

“substantial part” of its activities. Corporations that expect to conduct some lobbying activities should consult counsel about the potential benefit of making an election under 501(h) of the Code. This election provides a clear test of what constitutes a “substantial part” of its activities.

Recommended Practice: These provisions should be restated in the bylaws, using identical language as is found in the articles, to remind directors and officers of the legal limitations on the corporation’s political activities.

Further Reading:

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) – <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/exemption-requirements-501c3-organizations>

8 Corporate Law: To qualify as tax-exempt, a corporation must be organized and operated primarily in furtherance of exempt purposes. Only an insubstantial amount of the corporation’s activities may be unrelated to its exempt purpose. Any such unrelated activities may be subject to unrelated business income tax (UBIT), and if a substantial part of a corporation’s activities are in furtherance of non-exempt purposes, it may lose its tax exemption. This provision recites this section 501(c)(3) restriction on activities that are not in furtherance of the corporation’s purposes.

The limitations on carrying on activities that are not permitted under sections 501(c)(3) or 170(c)(2) of the Code are required by law to be in the articles in order for the corporation to qualify for tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Code. [*Cal. Corp. Code §§ 5130, 5131; Code § 501(c)(3)*] **If also stated in the bylaws, the limitations language should be exactly as stated in the articles.**

A Note on Private Benefit and Private Inurement: The text in Section 5.1 (and similar language in Section 3.1) that prohibits the distribution of profits or gains to officers, directors or any other persons relates to the important requirement that the activities of a section 501(c)(3) corporation cannot operate in a way that creates a substantial benefit to private individuals or for-profit entities. This is called the “private benefit” doctrine. Second, no part of the profits or assets of a section 501(c)(3) corporation may be used to create a benefit for an insider. This doctrine is called the prohibition on “private inurement.”

Private Benefit Explained: Under section 501(c)(3) of the Code, the corporation must not conduct activities that provide a substantial benefit to the private interest of any individual or for-profit entity (except for a benefit that is merely incidental to the corporation’s tax exempt purpose). This means, for example, that a section 501(c)(3) corporation could not make a distribution of its assets to a private individual, or give its assets to a private company, or use its assets in a way that creates a benefit to a private person. This does not mean that the corporation cannot pay reasonable salaries to its officers, employees and other agents, or pay reasonable prices for goods or services purchased from other entities. These transactions create no private benefit because they are an exchange of fair value. The tax-exempt corporation cannot create a substantial benefit for a private person in which the private person receives something of value and the exempt corporation is not compensated for that value. A simple example is when a nonprofit corporation gives a gift to a private person who is not a member of the charitable class that the corporation is supposed to serve. For this reason, the IRS may deny tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Code if the corporation’s proposed programs will benefit a group that is not a charitable class, or a small group of private individuals. It is also possible for a corporation to create a private benefit indirectly, by conducting its charitable activities in a way that causes a private entity to benefit substantially. For example, if a nonprofit corporation were set up to educate students for the purpose of enabling them to work for a particular company, this might be a substantial private benefit to that company. See American Campaign Academy v. Commissioner, 92 T.C. 1053 (1989).

Private Inurement Explained: The term “private inurement” is used to describe a private benefit to a person who is an “insider” to the corporation. Section 501(c)(3) of the Code states that no part of a corporation’s net earnings may inure to (be used for the advantage of) the benefit of a private shareholder or individual. Unlike private benefits to unrelated persons, which may occur to an incidental degree, providing a private benefit to insiders is absolutely prohibited. An “insider” is a person who has a personal and private interest in the activities of the corporation (e.g., directors, officers and key employees and independent contractors, and persons who have substantial influence on the organization, such as donors). For example, the corporation may not pay dividends or unreasonable compensation (compensation in excess of the fair value of services rendered) to officers, key employees, and other insiders, and cannot transfer property to insiders for less than fair market value.

The prohibition of inurement to insiders under section 501(c)(3) of the Code is absolute. The IRS may revoke an organization’s tax-exempt status if any amount of private inurement occurs. However, unless cases of private inurement are egregious and ongoing it is likely that the IRS will not revoke tax exempt status, and will instead impose the “intermediate sanction” of excise taxes. Under section 4958 of the Code, if a section 501(c)(3) corporation provides an excess benefit to certain defined insiders, **the insider who receives the excess benefit is subject to excise taxes, as are any corporate managers who approved the excess benefit.** As with the concept of private benefit, prohibited inurement does not include reasonable payments

for services, other payments that further tax-exempt purposes, or payments for the fair market value of real or personal property. However, any compensation in excess of a reasonable fair market amount can give rise to these excise taxes. As a result, it is extremely important that any salaries, benefits and other compensation paid to anyone who is an officer, or other insider, must be reasonable based on what a similarly situated employer would pay to a similar employee for similar services. [*Treas. Reg. § 53-4958*]

Charter School Law: The IRS has taken the position that adoption of a conflict of interest policy is an indication of good governance practices and correlates positively with the likelihood that a §501(c)(3) organization will comply with the requirements necessary to maintain tax exempt status. Thus, the IRS strongly recommends and encourages the adoption of a conflict of interest policy. For a sample conflict of interest policy visit <http://www.publiccounsel.org/publications?id=0061>. Additionally, under recent amendments to the Charter Schools Act, charter schools and entities managing a charter school, including nonprofits, are subject to the Political Reform Act (Gov. Code § 81000 *et seq.*). For purposes of the Political Reform Act, a charter school and an entity managing a charter school are considered an “agency” and must adopt their own Conflict of Interest Codes prohibiting school officials from participating in certain decisions when a conflict of interest is identified. [*Cal. Educ. Code § 47604.1(b)(4)*] See CCSA’s Knowledge Brief “Charter School Governance; Conflicts of Interest” at <http://www.ccsa.org/2010/05/charter-school-governance.html>.

Recommended Practice: Directors should periodically review the corporation’s activities to ensure the activities are consistent with the purposes stated in the articles and bylaws, and are in furtherance of a purpose that the IRS considers to be an exempt purpose under section 501(c)(3) of the Code. To the extent that any activities are not in furtherance of these purposes, directors should ensure that those activities are not substantial, or if such activities are becoming a substantial percentage of the corporation’s overall activities, should consider whether to separate these activities into a different legal entity, such as a for-profit subsidiary.

Furthermore, these provisions regarding prohibited activities should be repeated in the bylaws exactly as written in the articles to remind the officers and directors of the legal limitations on the corporation’s activities.

Further Reading: IRS Publication on UBIT (Publication 598) – <http://www.irs.gov/publications/p598/ch04.html>

⁹ **Corporate Law:** These provisions are required to be in the articles if the corporation wants to qualify for exemption under section 501(c)(3) of the Code. Section 501(c)(3) of the Code requires a dedication of all assets of an exempt corporation to its exempt purposes and prohibits the distribution of assets to insiders or provision of private benefit to any person. This does not prevent a corporation from payment of reasonable compensation for goods or services, except see Charter School Law below regarding compensating directors for their services. **The exempt purpose(s) in each of Section 5.1 and Section 5.2 should be identical to the exempt purpose(s) listed in the articles.**

Recommended Practice: This language must be included in the articles. **The bylaws language should be identical to the irrevocable dedication clause in the articles.**

Charter School Law: A charter school must comply with the Political Reform Act (Gov. Code § 81000 *et seq.*), which requires public agencies to adopt a Conflict of Interest Code, and Gov. Code § 1090. [*Cal. Educ. Code § 47604.1(b)*] Additionally, if the charter school plans to participate in a public employees’ retirement program such as CalSTRS or CalPERS as allowed under Cal. Ed. Code § 47611, the language in the corporation’s articles of incorporation and bylaws must meet those programs’ requirements for the disposition of assets as well. For the most current information on this issue, please contact CCSA’s Legal Team at legal@ccsa.org

Further Reading: See generally Note 8 for a description of private benefit and inurement. See also the IRS good governance practices relating to reasonable compensation at http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-tege/governance_practices.pdf, but charter schools should keep in mind the Charter School Law regarding compensating directors and complying with the various conflict of interest laws and policies stated above.

¹⁰ **Corporate Law:** See Note 9.

Charter School Law: According to Cal. Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(P), the charter petition should include a description of the procedures to be used if the charter school closes. The procedures shall ensure a final audit of the school to determine the disposition of all assets and liabilities of the charter school, including plans for disposing of any net assets. Charter authorizers may have different rules regarding distribution of assets upon dissolution so the dissolution clause of the bylaws should be reviewed in light of the “Disposition of Liabilities and Assets” requirements (in Charter School Closure Procedures) of the chartering authority. Additionally, if the charter school plans to participate in a public employees’ retirement program such as

CalSTRS or CalPERS as allowed under Cal. Ed. Code § 47611, the language in the corporation’s articles of incorporation and bylaws must meet those programs’ requirements for the disposition of assets as well. For the most current information on this issue, please contact CCSA’s Legal Team at legal@ccsa.org.

LAUSD Specific: The DRL indicates that charter school closure procedures must ensure appropriate disposal, in accordance with DRL provisions in Element 11 of the charter, charter school’s governing board bylaws, fiscal procedures, and any other applicable laws and regulations, of any net assets remaining after all liabilities of the charter school have been paid or otherwise addressed.

Recommended Practice: The language used here should be identical to the dissolution clause in the articles. The exempt purpose(s) listed in Section 5.2 should mirror the exempt purpose(s) listed in Section 5.1.

¹¹ **Corporate Law:** A legal member of the corporation is any person with governance rights, including the right to vote on (i) the election of directors, (ii) dissolution, (iii) merger, and (iv) the disposition of all or substantially all the corporate assets. California nonprofit corporations are not required by law to have legal members. If the articles and bylaws do not make specific provision for members, the corporation is presumed to have no members. [*Cal. Corp. Code §§ 5310, 5056*]

Charter School Law: The Charter Schools Act requires the charter petition to describe the “governance structure of the school, including but not limited to the process to be followed by the school to ensure parental involvement.” [*Cal. Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(D)*]. Additionally, the charter school is required to consult with their parents, guardians, and teachers regarding the school’s educational program on a “regular basis.” [*Cal. Ed. Code § 47605(c)(2)*] LAUSD’s Application Guide requires charter schools to develop a stakeholder involvement plan and process (to include the role of parents and staff in the governance of the school, the process by which the school will consult with parents and teachers regarding the school’s educational program, and the composition, selection, and operating procedures for parent organization or committee, if any).

Despite these requirements to engage parents and teachers, we do not recommend achieving engagement by establishing legal corporate members for the reasons explained briefly below.

Recommended Practice: To avoid confusion, state clearly in the articles and/or bylaws (as in these form bylaws) whether or not the corporation will have legal members.

There are valid reasons to have legal members in some nonprofit corporations. For example, a community revitalization group might want to give voting control to those residing within the area. A residents’ advisory council in a public housing development might be required to grant membership to all residents of the development. A group of nonprofit organizations forming a corporation to collaborate on a common goal might want to give the founding nonprofits voting control. In fact, CCSA is aware that some charter school groups in California are incorporated with a central nonprofit corporation as the legal member of the charter schools the group operates.

However, members add an additional layer of bureaucracy that may be difficult to manage for a smaller corporation. For example, if a corporation has members who are specific named individuals, and the corporation can no longer locate them, corporate action may be prevented or delayed because no membership vote can occur. Additionally, some charter granting agencies are confused by the concept of legal membership and see it as an unnecessary or hidden layer of the school’s governance structure. **Therefore, in the absence of a specific reason to do so, we do not recommend that new independent charter schools establish legal memberships.**

Also note that because California previously required all corporations to have legal members, some nonprofits formed under prior law without members typically appointed their directors as the sole members. This legal fiction is no longer required and is not advisable.

NOTE: This form of bylaws is designed for a non-member nonprofit corporation only and does not contain language that would be required for a membership corporation. If the corporation intends to have statutory members, please contact legal counsel for appropriate bylaw language.

¹² **Corporate Law:** Each nonprofit corporation must have a board of directors (referred to in these endnotes as “the board”). The board of a nonprofit corporation has the authority and the legal obligation to govern the corporation, oversee its operations and safeguard its assets. An individual referred to as a director of a corporation must have authority to act as a member of the governing board of the corporation, including through voting rights, in order to be a “director” as that term is understood by the law and in these endnotes. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5047*] The board acts as a group, voting in accordance with the procedures set in

Article 7. The board may delegate the day-to-day operations of the corporation to a staff or volunteers, but are ultimately responsible for the actions they delegate to others. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5210]

Though directors as a group may delegate authority, an individual director may not appoint a substitute or alternate to act in his or her place (in other words, no “proxies”). Also, each director present and voting at a meeting shall have one vote on each matter presented to the board for action at that meeting, and directors may not vote by proxy [Cal. Corp. Code § 5211(c)] or by mailing in ballots. In order to validly act for the corporation, directors must vote either in person or through permissible electronic means at a properly noticed board meeting (see Note 40).

Directors must act in the best interests of the corporation, and have a duty of loyalty and due care when overseeing its operations. The bylaws may, but are not required to, include any qualifications required to serve as a director. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5151(c)(3)]

Right to Vote: Each director, whether elected, designated, appointed or serving *ex officio* (see paragraph below), must have the same rights and obligations, including voting rights, as the other directors. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5047] Thus, a nonprofit corporation’s board may not have “non-voting directors.” It is possible, however, that an individual director’s vote should not be counted on some matters, such as in a case where he or she may have a conflict of interest or may benefit financially as the result of a transaction with the corporation that is coming before the board for approval. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5233(d)(2)(C)] **Moreover, in some circumstances, directors are prohibited not only from voting but from participating in, or influencing, the decision-making process.**

Ex Officio Directors: Some nonprofit corporations choose to fill one or more of the director positions “*ex officio*,” which means by reason of office. For example, it is not uncommon for a nonprofit’s chief executive to serve as a member of the board by reason of office, rather than through election. Other examples of *ex officio* board members could be government officials who are named to the board of a corporation to fulfill a major grant provision, or church officials required to represent their denomination in a faith based social service agency. These directors are appointed solely because of the position they hold, and cannot continue to serve as directors *ex officio* if no longer holding that position.

Ex officio directors have all the same rights and duties as other members of the board, including the right to vote. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5047] Following is a sample of language which can be added to the end of Section 7.1 to authorize the chief executive officer to serve as an *ex officio* director. The suggested limitation on the chief executive officer’s right to vote on employment status and compensation is consistent with good governance principles related to the setting of executive compensation and the general authority of the board to hire and fire its chief executive. However, please note that if the school’s charter petition requires compliance with Gov. Code § 1090, the chief executive—and any employees or contractors—would be prohibited from serving as directors.

“One of the authorized director positions shall be filled ex officio by the Chief Executive Officer, who shall be entitled to vote on all matters except those related to his or her employment status and compensation. The remaining directors shall be elected pursuant to the procedures set forth in Section 7.3.”

Duty of Care Explained: The duty of care requires a director to act in a reasonable and informed manner when participating in the board’s decisions and its oversight of the corporation’s management. The duty of care requires first, a director be informed; and second, a director discharge his duties in good faith, with the care that an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would reasonably believe appropriate under similar circumstances.

To meet the duty of care, a director should: (i) regularly attend meetings; (ii) exercise independent and informed judgment on all corporate decisions; (iii) judge what is in the corporation’s best interest, irrespective of other entities with which the director is affiliated or sympathetic, or to which the director owes his board appointment; (iv) have adequate information and assure the adequacy and clarity of information.

Duty of Loyalty Explained: The duty of loyalty requires a director to act in the interest of the corporation, rather than in the personal interest of the director or some other person or organization. In particular, the duty of loyalty requires a director to avoid conflicts of interest that are detrimental to the corporation. The IRS recommends that corporations adopt a written conflict of interest policy to address potential conflicts of interest involving their directors, officers and other employees (see Notes 8 and 73).

Charter School Law: Under the Political Reform Act (Gov. Code § 81000 *et seq.*), a charter school’s chief executive (and any other officers) would be prohibited from participating in any decisions affecting his or her employment compensation. While the Education Code permits employees of a charter to school to serve as a director as an exception to Gov. Code § 1090, such

director must abstain from voting on, or influencing or attempting to influence another director regarding, all matters related to that director's employment. [*Cal. Educ. Code § 47604.1(d)*] See CCSA Knowledge Brief "Charter School Governance: Conflicts of Interest" at <http://www.ccsa.org/2010/05/charter-school-governance.html>. See Note 16 for further details.

LAUSD Specific: Schools chartered by LAUSD should make sure that their bylaw provisions regarding length/rotation of service terms, process and potential considerations for determining a need to select/add board members, board member qualifications, selection criteria and process, quorum requirements, board action (voting) requirements, abstention and teleconference participation match any such language in the school's charter petition application submitted to LAUSD.

Recommended Practice: It is in the best interests of the corporation to recruit a diverse, qualified and committed board that can properly manage the affairs of the corporation. Because directors have legal obligations to exercise loyalty and due care, and to act in the best interests of the corporation, no person should be elected as a director if that person is not willing to attend meetings and play an active role in oversight of the nonprofit's activities. Corporations should provide a copy of guidelines and governing documents to new board members to make sure they understand their obligation to the corporation.

Directors also should play an important role in fundraising, and some directors are elected primarily because of their fundraising skill or connections. However, nonprofit corporations generally should not elect major donors, celebrities, or any other persons as directors unless such persons are prepared to accept all the legal rights of a fully franchised director, including the right of inspection provided in Section 12.6. If a corporation wants to honor its supporters who do not want to take an active role, it can appoint these persons to an advisory council/board or other group or give them another honorary title that does not carry legal obligations. Such an advisory council can be created whether or not it is described in the bylaws. The board can receive suggestions from such an advisory council, but the ultimate decisionmaking responsibility rests with the board. See Article 8 and Note 57 for more information about delegating functions to a committee that does not have the power to act on behalf of the board.

¹³ **Corporate Law:** The corporation must have at least one director, but the law does not place a limit on the maximum number of directors. The law requires that unless already provided in the corporation's articles, the bylaws shall state either the number of directors or a range establishing a minimum and maximum number of directors, or a method for determining the number of directors. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5151(a)*] If a range is given, the exact authorized number must be set from time to time by board resolution.

Recommended Practice: Number of Directors. Although a corporation where no board members are "interested" may legally have as few as one director, other factors exist to compel the decision to recruit more board members. The IRS has indicated that a very small board is problematic because it may demonstrate that it does not represent a sufficiently broad public interest and that it lacks the required skills and other resources to effectively govern the corporation. As a result, the IRS may question whether a corporation with fewer than three board members will qualify for tax exemption under section 501(c)(3) of the Code. Also, some governmental funding sources may require a corporation to have a specified number of community-based board members. [*Cal. Corp. Code §§ 5151(a), 5151, 5227*] Independent Sector's best practices recommend that a board consist of at least five directors who are committed to work with the corporation. For a discussion on principles for good governance, see <https://independentsector.org/programs/principles-for-good-governance-and-ethical-practice/>.

Recommended Practice: Range of Authorized Directors. Rather than set the exact number of authorized directors in the bylaws, establishing a range allows for flexibility and eliminates the need to amend the bylaws each time there is a change in the exact number. The corporation should set a reasonable range within which the exact number of authorized directors can later be set by board resolution. Start-up corporations may find a range between five and fifteen to be manageable. At the first meeting, the board may decide to set the exact number of authorized directors at the minimum, or five, because it has not yet recruited many directors. The range may be amended in accordance with the provisions for amending the bylaws in Article 15. If the bylaws specify a range, it is important that the board adopt a resolution setting a specific number of authorized directors. The board must also adopt a resolution increasing or decreasing the number of authorized directors within the specified range every time it wishes to change the specific number of authorized directors.

¹⁴ **Corporate Law:** The articles or bylaws may establish the qualifications of directors. [*Cal. Corp. Code 5151(c)(3)*] If at the beginning of a director's term the bylaws contain qualifications for board service, and then the director stops meeting those requirements, the majority of the directors who do meet the qualifications can remove that director who does not (see section 7.4.2 and Note 24). [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5221*]

¹⁵ **LAUSD Specific:** Per the Application Guide, in a charter petition the school is asked to "describe the composition of the school's governing board. Explain how this composition will contribute to effective school governance." Therefore, a LAUSD charter school's bylaws should outline the criteria and process for selecting governing board members. Specifically, the charter

school should address the length and rotation of service terms, the process and potential considerations for determining the need to select and add more board members, board member qualifications, selection criteria and process. The bylaws should use identical language from the petition application. The bylaws should also restate any provisions that were included in the charter about the board composition and governance structure. Please note that a charter school's stakeholders (parents, teachers, administrators, staff and community leaders) are often represented on the board of directors.

Recommended Practice: In order to comply with LAUSD's request for information regarding board member qualifications (please note that other chartering authorizers may have similar requests) and maintain flexibility, a corporation submitting a charter petition to LAUSD should use language that provides for broad guidelines that are not strictly required. In this way, the corporation has flexibility in appointing and removing directors while also providing general board member qualifications. For example, a charter school working with diverse populations throughout the school district might use the following language:

"The Board shall make reasonable efforts to include Directors who represent the diversity of the School District, including, but not limited to, factors such as race, age, ethnicity, gender, or geography. Directors shall support the goals, philosophies and objectives of the Corporation and the laws and regulations under which it is founded."

If a corporation does wish to establish strict qualifications, in conjunction with the removal of directors who fail or cease to meet the qualifications, it may want to use the following language:

"A director shall not:

- (a) Engage in any activity that is directly contrary to the interests of the Corporation;*
- (b) Engage in the misrepresentation of the Corporation and its policies to outside third parties, either willfully, or on a repeated basis; or*
- (c) Be disruptive or unprofessional during [#] or more board meetings or exhibit behavior that is deemed to be detrimental to the function of the board meeting."*

The provisions may be modified to suit the needs and circumstances of the corporation, and other qualifications can be added to this list. If the founders wish to provide for some flexibility to adopt additional qualifications for board service in the future, this list could end with the following language:

- (d) Violate any other qualification or requirement for board service that has been adopted by resolution of the Board of Directors prior to the commencement of that director's term of office, if that director was notified of such qualification or requirement at the commencement of his or her term of office.*

¹⁶ **Corporate Law:** The law requires that the board be composed of not more than 49% "interested" directors. An "interested" director for this purpose is (i) any person currently being compensated by the corporation for services rendered to it within the previous 12 months... excluding any reasonable compensation paid to a director as director and (ii) any close relative of any person currently being compensated. [Cal. Corp. Code §§ 5227(a) & (b)]

Charter School Law: Effective January 1, 2020, charter schools and entities managing charter schools are subject to Gov. Code § 1090 and the Political Reform Act. Gov. Code § 1090 restricts public officials from being financially interested in any contract made by them in their official capacity, or by any board of which they are members. [Cal. Gov. Code § 1090] However, the Legislature has carved out an exception to Gov. Code § 1090 with regard to charter schools. Specifically, an employee of a charter school is allowed to serve as a director of the corporation operating the school so long as the employee abstains from voting on, or influencing or attempting to influence another director regarding, any matter uniquely affecting his or her employment. [Cal. Educ. Code § 47604.1(d)] No director may use his or her official position to influence any public charter school decision that he or she knows or has reason to know will have a foreseeable material financial effect on the person or a member of his or her immediate family. The Political Reform Act requires that public officials, board members in the case of charter schools, perform their duties in an impartial manner, free from bias caused by their own financial interests or those of persons who have supported them. [Cal. Gov. Code § 81001(b)]

"Interested Person" should also be defined by the charter school's Conflict of Interest policy.

¹⁷ **Charter School Law:** The law states that the governing board of a school district that grants a charter for the establishment of a charter school shall be entitled to a single representative on the charter school's board of directors. [Cal. Educ. Code § 47604(b)]

¹⁸ **Corporate Law:** Although the statements in Section 7.2.1 are not required to be in the bylaws, this clause reminds directors of their fiduciary duties and that they are responsible under the law for conducting the activities and affairs of the corporation. Even if the board properly delegates management activities, all corporate powers are required to be exercised under the ultimate supervision and direction of the board, meaning that all directors will still have liability if they were not reasonable in delegating the activity or in overseeing the people to whom they assign those tasks (see Note 51). [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5210*]

Charter School Law: Charter schools must note that any material change to the school’s governance structure as presented in its charter petition needs to be presented to its charter authorizing body through that agency’s charter amendment process.

¹⁹ **Corporate Law:** If the articles or bylaws do not designate a term length, the law provides that the term is one year. Thus, if the corporation wants to elect directors for terms longer than one year, the term length must be stated in the bylaws. However, the term length in the bylaws must be within the limits specified by law. For a non-membership corporation, terms cannot exceed six years. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5220*] There is no legal limit on the number of consecutive terms a director can serve.

Recommended Practice: This bylaw provides two alternatives. Alternative 1 is explained in Note 21 and Alternative 2, which provides for staggered terms, is explained in Note 22. Many corporations provide a board membership term length of two years, with no limit on the number of consecutive terms a member may serve. A two year term length is long enough that a director may have a meaningful impact, but not so long as to promote stagnancy. The decision not to limit the number of consecutive terms will permit qualified members to remain on the board as long as they are re-elected. However, term length and limit considerations will vary based upon the corporation’s specific situation. Smaller corporations may want longer board terms if they depend on the active involvement of the initial board. Larger corporations that do not have difficulty recruiting qualified board members may establish limits on the amount of time a director can serve, by, for instance, designing shorter term lengths (e.g., one year), or instituting a limit on the number of consecutive terms a director may serve, especially if the term length is long. Corporations that need directors with technical or specialized knowledge (e.g., financial planning, legal issues, etc.), corporations under specific regulation, and corporations with highly complex activities may also want to provide for longer terms.

Term limits can prevent board stagnancy and ensure that new ideas and leadership will come in to the corporation from time to time. However, this must be weighed against the risk of losing qualified and experienced board members due to an artificial limit. Corporations can balance these risks by instituting short term lengths and limits on the number of consecutive terms a director can serve. If a corporation imposes term limits on its directors, then to ensure that all experienced board members’ terms do not expire at the same time, the corporation should consider adding a provision to allow for a staggered board (see Note 21).

Sample Term Limits Language Providing for a Break After a Specified Number of Consecutive Terms:

“Directors shall not serve for more than [#] consecutive terms. A Director who has served [#] consecutive terms may be eligible to serve as a Director after [##] year(s) have passed since that person was last a Director.”

²⁰ **Corporate Law:** The law and these bylaws state that a director shall serve “until a successor has been elected and qualified” unless the articles or bylaws state otherwise (see Section 7.4.4 and Note 26). Thus, a director continues to serve even if his or her term has expired and no election has taken place. This language can protect a corporation that fails to conduct prompt elections at the end of expiring terms because it ensures that the existing directors’ terms will not expire until the election of the new directors. This provision is also useful if the corporation needs additional time to find a new director at the end of an expiring term, especially if the current director is willing to stay involved until a successor is found.

Recommended Practice: It is recommended to keep this protection, but corporations should make a practice of having annual board meetings to re-elect board members and officers, and, if original terms have expired or a director resigns or is removed, should act diligently to promptly hold elections.

²¹ **Corporate Law:** The law permits a corporation to provide for staggered terms for directors in its articles or bylaws. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5220(a)*]

Recommended Practice: If the corporation is concerned that there will be too many vacancies on the board or too little continuity because all terms expire at the same time, the corporation might permit staggered boards, as in Alternative 2. The board, at a meeting, would be divided into as many groups as there are years in the term and randomly assigned so that each group had a different term expiry date. For instance, on a board with three-year terms, nine directors could be divided into three groups of three people each. The board would resolve that group A’s term would expire in one year, group B’s in two years, and group C’s in three years. After the initial terms, each director would be elected for the same term length (e.g., three years), but the terms would expire at different times so that at all times the board would include at least some directors who had experience with

the board and its operations. If a vacancy occurs, a successor director would be elected, but the successor director would finish out the term he or she was elected for. The successor director would not be elected for an entirely new term. Thus, it is important for the corporation to keep clear records of each director and the specific term he or she is serving.

If the board is not ready to establish a staggered board at the outset (perhaps because the board is still at the lower end of the permitted range in size), but wants to have the flexibility to do so in the future without amending the bylaws, use the language in Alternative 1. When a staggered board is established by board resolution, it will be important to retain the resolution establishing the staggered board together with the bylaws so that future boards will be aware of this change. If the board is ready to establish a staggered board at the outset, use the language in Alternative 2.

²² Corporate Law: A vacancy on the board is created when there are fewer directors on the board than the authorized number of directors. A vacancy occurs upon the death of a director, the resignation of a director, the removal of a director, and when the board votes to increase the authorized board size within the range contained in Section 7.1. As described in Section 7.4.2, the law also permits the board to declare a vacancy when a director is found to be of unsound mind. This is one example of the removal of a director for “cause” (see Note 23).

²³ Corporate Law: Removal of a director for “cause” requires only the regular vote of a majority of directors present at a meeting where there is a quorum, which is the same vote required for other board actions (see Section 7.10.2). Removals without “cause” require a greater vote—the majority of all directors then in office. For instance, if a corporation with ten directors in office (and a quorum of six directors) has six directors attend a meeting, at least four of the six directors (a majority of those present) would have to vote in favor of removing a director for “cause” for that action to be valid. However, all six directors (a majority of all directors then in office) would have to vote in favor of removing a director without “cause” in order for that action to be valid. [See discussion on quorum in note 42 and Section 7.10.1; Cal. Corp. Code § 5222]

The law limits the items that can constitute “cause” and give the board a reason to remove a director with a regular board vote. Some conditions can constitute “cause” only if those conditions are stated in the bylaws at the time the director joins the board. For example, if at the time the director is elected the bylaws state that missing a certain number of board meetings will be cause for removal, then a director may be removed for “cause” if that director misses the specified number of meetings. If the bylaws do not contain such a provision, the director could be removed for missing those meetings only by the higher level of vote required for removal without cause. Similarly, if at the beginning of a director’s term the bylaws contain qualifications for board service (as discussed in Notes 14 and 15 and Section 7.1.2), and then the director stops meeting those requirements, the majority of the directors who do meet the qualifications can remove that director who does not. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5221]

Recommended Practice: As described above, a corporation may include language in the bylaws that would create a vacancy for absentee directors, as provided by the bracketed meeting attendance language in Section 7.4.2. The number of meetings specified should be adjusted to reflect a reasonable number of meetings based on the total number held by the corporation each year. This language provides flexibility to allow the board to decide whether or not to remove a director for this “cause.” To further ensure that directors attend board meetings, a corporation should also consider including a separate requirement in board member guidelines, mandating attendance at a certain number of board meetings. Board member guidelines should then be reviewed when re-electing directors.

To remove a director without cause, the corporation may in its bylaws require an even greater vote than what is required by law. This provision does not institute such a greater vote requirement. Going beyond minimum defaults under the law will make it more difficult to remove a non-contributing or dissident board member and may contribute to stagnancy.

If a corporation dislikes the idea of allowing removal of directors without “cause,” it should consider establishing qualifications for board service (see Section 7.1.2 and Notes 14 and 15). In this way, if a director no longer meets the qualifications, the board may declare his or her office vacant, as provided for in the bracketed qualifications language in Section 7.4.2. However, this type of removal is permitted only if the qualifications are established before the director’s term begins, and the vote to declare that director’s office vacant must be made by the majority of directors who do meet the qualifications.

Further Reading: For a sample board attendance policy, see www.managementhelp.org/boards/brdatnd.htm.

²⁴ Corporate Law: The law prohibits a board from removing a director before his or her term ends merely by eliminating a board position through a reduction of the number of authorized directors. This provision is in place to make sure that a board will not be able to avoid the higher voting requirement to remove a director without “cause” (see Note 23 regarding voting standards for removal of a director from office). A bylaw amendment or board resolution to authorize reduction of the number of authorized directors would not normally require this higher vote unless otherwise specifically stated in the bylaws. However, a bylaw amendment or board resolution to reduce the number of director seats which also provides for the contemporaneous

removal of one or more specified directors can result in the removal of a director provided that the board has followed the procedures for removal contained in the bylaws. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5222] Assuming that the board lacked cause to remove the director whose board position is to be eliminated, then such a compound resolution or amendment would require approval of a majority of directors then in office.

Recommended Practice: This provision restates the law and should not be altered or deleted. It is important for the corporation to be clear on who is a director at any time to ensure that board votes are valid. The bylaw provisions that restate the law about election and removal of directors will serve as a handy reference for these laws so that the board can clearly determine how to elect and remove a director.

²⁵ **Corporate Law:** The law permits a director to resign at any time, even mid-term, upon giving written notice in accordance with this provision, as long as the director's resignation does not leave the corporation without any directors (in which case the Attorney General must first be notified). As in the case of director removal, if a director resigns, a vacancy is created and must be filled pursuant to Section 7.4.5. [Cal. Corp. Code §§ 5224(c), 5226]

Recommended Practice: A director's right to resign as described in this provision is granted by law and cannot be taken away regardless of what is written in the bylaws. Therefore, the provision should remain in the bylaws to remind directors of these rights.

²⁶ **Corporate Law:** The law permits a vacancy to be filled in the standard manner (i.e., majority vote of board at meeting where a quorum is present), but also provides alternate processes for vacancies to be filled where there are not enough remaining board members to meet the minimum quorum requirements. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5224] Alternatively, the remaining directors may simply reduce the authorized number of directors when there are vacancies.

²⁷ **Charter School Law:** The Education Code requires charter schools and entities managing charter schools to comply with the Brown Act. [Cal. Educ. Code § 47604.1(b)(1)] The California legislature passed the Brown Act to ensure that actions and deliberations of public agencies are conducted openly. The Brown Act establishes specific requirements for board meetings of public agencies that differ from the standard requirements for ordinary nonprofit public benefit corporation meetings. [Cal. Gov. Code § 54950 et. seq.] See CCSA's Knowledge Brief "Understanding the Brown Act" at <http://www.ccsa.org/2010/05/understanding-the-brown-act.html>.

²⁸ **Corporate Law:** The law does not specify a minimum number of times a board must meet per year. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5211(a)(2)] The law also has no specific requirement that directors must attend any specified number or percentage of the corporation's board meetings. However, a director's fiduciary responsibilities to properly oversee the corporation's activities can be interpreted to require reasonable attendance (see Note 18). [Cal. Corp. Code § 5231]

Charter School Specific: A charter school should make sure its bylaw provision on regular meetings of the board is consistent with any statements in its charter petition indicating that the charter school board will hold a specific number of regular meetings each year.

LAUSD Specific: The Application Guide says that a charter petition should "describe the meeting requirements and procedures of the governing board and its committees, if any." A charter petition should include the location and frequency of governing board and committee meetings, the process and timeline for setting the annual calendar of governing board and committee meetings, the location(s) for posting governing board and committee meeting agendas, and the specific procedures that will ensure compliance with key Brown Act requirements.

Recommended Practice: Directors' fiduciary duties require in most cases that the board meet at minimum once a year to elect directors, approve the budget and discuss the overall activities of the corporation. Depending on the activity level of the corporation, the board may need to meet a number of times per year to satisfy its fiduciary obligations. This bylaw requires only one meeting per year to give the board the flexibility to determine how often it needs to meet to satisfy its fiduciary obligations. In most cases, it is good practice to meet at least quarterly so that the board can exercise some oversight over the corporation's activities (see Note 18).

²⁹ **Corporate Law:** Under the law, a board meeting can be called at any time as described in this provision, unless the bylaws say otherwise. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5211(a)(1); Cal. Gov. Code § 54956] The form bylaws refer to these as "special meetings" because they are meetings called in addition to the regular meetings required by the form bylaws.

Charter School Law: The Brown Act restricts a public agency from calling a special meeting to discuss the salaries, salary schedules, or compensation paid in the form of fringe benefits of a “local agency” executive, except in the context of a special meeting called to discuss the charter school’s budget. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 54956*]

The board must follow the formal notice requirements contained in Section 7.9.2 for all special meetings.

³⁰ **Charter School Law:** Under recent amendments to the Education Code, effective January 1, 2020, if a nonprofit corporation operating a charter school engages in activities unrelated to the charter school, board meetings discussing charter school items may not include the discussion of any item unrelated to the operation of the charter school. [*Cal. Educ. Code § 47604.1(f)*]

³¹ **Charter School Law:** The Brown Act requires that an agenda be posted at least 72 hours before a regular meeting in a location that is freely accessible to the public and on the charter school’s website. The description of an item on the agenda need not be more than 20 words, but all items to be discussed in the meeting, including items to be discussed in a “closed” session, must be included on the agenda. In addition, if requested, the agenda must be made available in appropriate alternative formats for persons with disabilities, in compliance with Section 202 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 [*42. U.S.C. § 12132*]

LAUSD Specific: Charter schools shall send to the LAUSD Charter Schools Division copies of all governing board meeting agendas at the same time that they are posted in accordance with the Brown Act. Charter schools shall also send to the Charter Schools Division copies of all board meeting minutes within one week of governing board approval of the minutes. Timely posting of agendas and minutes on the school website will satisfy this requirement.

³² **Charter School Law:** The Brown Act requires notice of special meetings to be given personally to individual directors and generally to members of the public. While individual directors may waive their notice requirements, no such waiver is available for the general public.

LAUSD Specific: Charter schools shall send to the LAUSD Charter Schools Division copies of all governing board meeting agendas at the same time that they are posted in accordance with the Brown Act. Charter schools shall also send to the Charter Schools Division copies of all board meeting minutes within one week of governing board approval of the minutes. Timely posting of agendas and minutes on the school website will satisfy this requirement

³³ **Charter School Law:** The Brown Act requires notice of a special meeting to be personally delivered or by any other means, e.g., telephone, and be received at least 24 hours in advance. Notice to the public need not be personally given (unless a member of the public has requested personal notice of meetings) but must be posted on the charter school’s website and in a location that is publicly accessible.

³⁴ **Charter School Law:** The Brown Act requires notice for special meetings to be given in each of the three ways listed in Section 7.8.2.1. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 54956(a)*] However, notice to a local newspaper of general circulation, radio or television station need only be given upon request.

³⁵ **Charter School Law:** The Brown Act requires notice of a special meeting be given to directors and to the public at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting. These bylaws recommend placing notice in the mail 72 hours before a special meeting to ensure the notice is received within the requisite time period.

Recommended Practice: It is good practice to send notices of the meetings far enough in advance so that it is practical for the directors to attend, even where the law and the bylaws require as little as 72 hours’ notice. If the bylaws are revised to contain a provision requiring more notice than what would be required by law, the corporation must follow the stricter provisions in the bylaws to avoid a potential challenge to a board action by an absent director.

³⁶ **Charter School Law:** Per the Brown Act, the contents of notice of a special meeting must include (i) the time and place of the meeting and (ii) the business to be transacted or discussed. As these bylaws indicate, no other business may be discussed at a special meeting. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 54956*]

³⁷ **Charter School Law:** This provision is consistent with the legal default requirements for holding an emergency meeting under the Brown Act. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 54956.5*] An emergency situation is defined as an activity that severely impairs public health, safety, or both; or a dire emergency, which is defined as a crippling disaster, mass destruction, terrorist act, or threatened terrorist activity. In an emergency as prescribed by law, the Board may hold an emergency meeting without complying with the 24 hour notice requirement. All other requirements of a special meeting are applicable to emergency meetings. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 54956.5*]

³⁸ **Charter School Law:** The Education Code requires the board of directors of a single charter school or multiple charter schools in one county to meet within the physical boundaries in which the charter school or schools is located. If a nonprofit corporation operates two or more charter schools in different counties or a nonclassroom-based charter school without a facility, board meetings must be held within the physical boundaries of the county in which the greatest number of pupils enrolled in the charter school or schools reside. [*Cal. Educ. Code § 47604.1(c)*] If a nonprofit corporation anticipates that it will operate charter schools in more than one county or serve students in a nonclassroom-based school in several counties, it may wish to include the optional language in the bylaws. Note that the law provides an exception to these requirements in special circumstances, including the need to comply with a legal order, attend a judicial or administrative procedure, meet with other agencies, etc. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 54954(b)*] As a practical point, it is important to conduct business in a location that is accessible to the families that the charter school serves.

LAUSD Specific: At all times a Corporation has a charter to operate a school granted by LAUSD, all meetings of the Board shall be held at any place within the geographic boundaries of such school district (note this is narrower than the county), unless the meeting falls under one of the exceptions listed in *Cal. Gov. Code § 54954(b)*.

³⁹ **Charter School Law:** Effective January 1, 2020, in order to facilitate participation if a board meeting is not held at the school site, all charter schools need to establish a two-way teleconference at each schoolsite and resource center. *Cal. Educ. Code § 47604.1(c)* If the corporation operates two or more charter schools in different counties, the board must audio and/or video record all meetings and post the recordings on each charter school's website. [*Cal. Educ. Code § 47604.1(c)(4)(C)*] Regardless of legal requirements, charter schools should take steps to enable attendance and participation at board meetings.

⁴⁰ **Charter School Law:** This provision is consistent with the legal default requirements under the Brown Act for holding a meeting via teleconference. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 54953(b)*].

⁴¹ **Important Note:** Directors should be aware that this provision, as required by law, means that directors who choose to utilize their homes or offices as teleconference locations must open these locations to the public and accommodate any members of the public who wish to participate in the meeting at that location. Moreover, these locations must be ADA compliant.

⁴² **Charter School Law:** The Brown Act prohibits requiring members of the public to provide their names as a condition of attendance at the meeting. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 54953.3*]

⁴³ **Corporate Law:** The law provides that a quorum cannot be less than one-fifth of the number of authorized directors or fewer than two directors, whichever is larger. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5211(a)(7)*] For this reason, when Section 7.1 sets a range, it is important that the board officially vote to set the actual number of authorized directors.

Charter School Law: A quorum is the minimum number of directors required to be present at a meeting for a valid action to be taken. The Brown Act defines a quorum as a majority of the members of the legislative body, in this case the Board. [*Cal. Gov. Code §§ 54952.2(a), 54952.6*]

⁴⁴ **Corporate Law:** In most cases, the law requires a vote of a majority of directors present at a meeting where a quorum is present in order for a board action to be valid. If a quorum is not present, no action or vote taken by the board is valid. As an example, if a corporation with ten directors in office has six directors attend a meeting (thereby meeting the quorum requirement), at least four of the six directors (a majority of those present) would have to vote in favor of a particular action in order for that action to be valid. The law states that the articles and bylaws cannot reduce the vote requirement for valid action to less than the majority of directors present at a meeting. Thus, in the previously stated example, where a quorum of the board is six directors, if nine directors actually attend the meeting, at least five of the nine directors (a majority of those present) would have to vote in favor of a particular action in order for that action to be valid. [*Cal. Corp. Code §§ 5211(a)(7), 5211(a)(8)*] See Section 7.10.3 and Note 44 for when a greater vote is required for valid board action.

⁴⁵ **Corporate Law:** Certain actions under the law are required to be approved by a majority vote of directors in office, as distinguished from a majority vote of a quorum. For example, in order for a corporation with ten directors in office to remove a director without cause, six directors would have to vote in favor of such action, even if the quorum requirement was six or less than six. These actions requiring a greater approval under the law are set forth in Section 7.10.3.

Recommended Practice: Section 7.10.3 (listing actions that require greater approval than a majority of directors present at a meeting) restates the law, and should not be removed because it is important for directors to remember that these actions may not be valid if approved only by a majority of those present at a meeting. If the corporation wishes to impose this greater approval requirement on other actions, it should add them to the list in this provision.

⁴⁶ **Corporate Law:** Directors can waive the right to receive the required notice by signing a written waiver of notice, a written consent to holding the meeting, or an approval of the minutes of the meeting; or by attending the meeting and not protesting the lack of notice before or at the start of the meeting. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5211(a)(3); Cal. Gov. Code §54956(a)*] A waiver can be given by telegram. Directors who waive notice cannot later challenge actions taken at the meeting solely because they did not receive proper notice.

Charter School Law: While notice to directors can be waived if the above corporate law requirements are met, per the Brown Act, there is no such waiver of notice for members of the public. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 54954 et seq.*]

Recommended Practice: It is recommended that a corporation follow the notice requirements of Section 7.8 in all respects. However, if an emergency arises or such practice will be too impractical, written waiver or consent forms can be used as an alternative to formal notice of board meetings, especially if the board is not large. Waivers, consents and approvals of the minutes should be made a part of the minutes of the meetings or otherwise filed with the corporate records. If all of the directors attend a meeting without protesting the lack of notice, formal waiver will not be necessary, but their presence and failure to protest should be reflected in the minutes.

⁴⁷ **Corporate Law:** This provision is consistent with the default rules in the law, which allows meetings to be adjourned (i.e., postponed or suspended) to another time or place if no quorum exists. This is necessary because no valid action can be taken at a meeting where a quorum is not present (see Note 43). [*Cal. Corp. Code §5211(a)(4)*] Because technically an adjournment is a corporate action, the provision here and in the law clarifies that the adjournment can be accomplished without a quorum. For example, if the meeting being adjourned is a required annual meeting at which the board is required to elect directors and officers, the board can adjourn the meeting until such time as a quorum can be convened, so that it can hold the required elections that could not take place without a quorum present.

⁴⁸ **Corporate Law:** The law permits any adjourned meeting to reconvene within 24 hours without providing additional notices to the other directors, unless the bylaws state otherwise. Also, unless the bylaws state otherwise, if a meeting is adjourned for more than 24 hours, notice must be given to the directors and public who were not present at the time the meeting was adjourned. This provision does not change the default rule in the law. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5211(a)(4)*]

Charter School Law: In addition to the above corporate law requirements, a copy of the notice of adjournment shall be conspicuously posted on or near the door of the place where the adjourned meeting was held within 24 hours after the time of the adjournment. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 54955*]

Recommended Practice: In general, these provisions would allow a board to determine that it needed to continue to discuss certain corporate business, and to reconvene to continue the discussion without formally calling another meeting and sending another notice. This can be helpful in providing flexibility to a board to complete its deliberations and not rush to take action. It is always good practice to give absent directors notice of meetings when possible, and it may be necessary in case of adjournment for lack of quorum, but this provision will permit a board to give less than 72 hours that is usually required if reconvening within 24 hours of the original meeting time.

⁴⁹ **Corporate Law:** A corporation is not required to include in its bylaws any particular procedures for the conduct of meetings. Also, a corporation is not required by law to use a parliamentary procedure such as “Robert’s Rules of Order” to conduct meetings. However, if such procedures are specified in the bylaws, the corporation must follow them. This means that before formally adopting any system for the conduct of the board meetings, the incorporators or others who are drafting the bylaws should understand what those rules are and assess whether the corporation’s board will be able to follow them.

Regardless of the procedures used, minutes of all board meetings should be taken and retained in corporate record books, and the minutes should include the names of the directors attending the meeting, what votes were taken, and to the extent there are any objections or abstentions, how each director voted. In addition, when the board or a committee acts on any matters for which there are specialized voting rules, such as where there is or may be a conflict of interest, the minutes should clearly explain what information or documents the directors relied on when making their decision. In the case of section 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporations, such minutes and documentation (such as comparable salary information when determining how to compensate an officer) will be necessary if the corporation wants to qualify under the “rebuttable presumption of reasonableness” safe-harbor for transactions covered by the IRS’s private inurement rules (see Note 8).

Charter School Law: The board must publicly report any action taken and the vote or abstention on that action of each member present for the action. [*Cal. Gov. Code §54953(c)(2)*]

Recommended Practice: It is best practice not to require a procedure in the bylaws. This provision allows the board to establish a procedure by resolution if it later determines it is necessary.

In general, there are two methods of conducting board meetings that are commonly used by nonprofit boards: (1) a formal parliamentary system, such as Robert's Rules of Order; or (2) a more informal method called a consensus method. Regardless of the method used, all decisions made should ultimately be voted upon by formal resolution or motion set down in minutes, so that the corporation will have proof of the validity of corporate actions taken.

If a board uses a formal parliamentary system, it will have rules determining how a subject may be introduced for discussion and vote, who may speak, what may be discussed at any time, and when debate can be cut off so that the board can take a binding vote. This system requires the chairperson of the meeting to recognize each speaker, and requires motions to be made before discussion or a vote can be taken on any corporate matter. Having strict procedural rules can be advantageous in situations where boards are very large or when meetings are expected to be contentious, because all members, even those in the minority opinion on the question, may have a chance to speak if they follow proper procedures, and the debate can be cut off when a majority believes it is necessary to stop discussion and act.

If a board uses a consensus method, board action is reached by vote after a discussion that is designed to bring the entire group to consensus. No formal methods of determining order of speaking or motions are required. In general, this method is useful for smaller boards who generally expect to act only when the board as a whole agrees on a course of action, and where formalized rules of debate are not needed to control a large crowd or to ensure due process to those who disagree with the majority. Although by law the board may still take actions by a majority vote of attendees (assuming a quorum is present), boards that use the consensus method generally attempt to get all directors present to agree. This may mean that the group will more often act by coming to a compromise position, rather than an all-or-nothing vote.

If the corporation decides to use a specific set of rules, it should modify the last sentence of Section 7.14, or simply authorize the use of the rules by resolution.

If a corporation is required by its bylaws or by resolution to use a formal parliamentary system, the chairperson must be sure to understand the detailed rules, and each board member should be given a copy of the rules when joining the board.

For most boards of small to moderate size it is probably best to utilize a consensus method. However, if meetings are expected to be unruly, formal parliamentary debate can be an effective way of maintaining order and control. Regardless of the method chosen, at the end of discussion, a vote should be taken and recorded in the minutes. The minutes should also reflect that a discussion took place and that every board member had the chance to speak.

Further Reading: For a discussion on whether to adopt a formal procedure, see *Guidebook for Directors of Nonprofit Corporations*, Committee on Nonprofit Corporations, 2nd Edition, Ch. 2, p. 28.

⁵⁰ **Charter School Law:** Gov. Code § 1090, which applies to charter schools under state law effective January 1, 2020, restricts public officials from being financially interested in any contract made by them in their official capacity, or by any board of which they are members. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 1090*] No director may use his or her official position to influence any public charter school decision that he or she knows or has reason to know will have a foreseeable material financial effect on the person or a member of his or her immediate family. The Political Reform Act requires that public officials, board members in the case of charter schools, perform their duties in an impartial manner, free from bias caused by their own financial interests or those of persons who have supported them. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 81001(b)*]

⁵¹ **Corporate Law:** The limitation on personal liability for corporate directors is not absolute under the law. Directors can still be held personally responsible for certain actions of the corporation, such as tort claims, if the directors do not exercise due care when carrying out their duties. Also, under the tax laws, a director can be held personally liable for unpaid payroll taxes of the corporation if the director was a person responsible for paying or controlling the payment of those taxes and failed to do so. See Note 76 for further information about indemnification, insurance and legal protections for volunteer directors and officers.

Recommended Practice: To better understand their responsibilities and help avoid personal liability, all directors should receive periodic training on their corporate duties and responsibilities.

Further Reading: Publications and resources related to board training and responsibilities:

The Nonprofit's Insurance Alliance of California - www.niac.org
Board Source - www.boardsource.org

⁵² **Corporate Law:** The law permits a board to appoint committees made up of two or more directors, which can be delegated the authority to act on behalf of the board as allowed by law, by a resolution by a majority of the directors in office. [Cal. Corp. Code §§ 5210, 5212] This voting requirement cannot be lowered and committees exercising the authority of the board are expressly prohibited from having members that are not directors (see Note 58 for more information on “advisory committees”). [Cal. Corp. Code § 5212(b)] While it is not uncommon for committees of the board to invite non-director officers or others to attend their meetings in an advisory capacity, such persons cannot be voting committee members if the intention is for the committee to be able to exercise the authority of the board rather than to act in merely an advisory capacity. As allowed by law, a duly authorized and appointed committee can act with the same authority as the board to handle functions that the board delegates to it, that would otherwise be left to the entire board. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5212] However, these committees are prohibited from taking certain actions, which must be approved by a vote of the board. The limitations in Section 8.1 as to what may be delegated to committees are consistent with the limitations found in the law. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5212(a)(1)-(8)]

Recommended Practice: Charter school boards may find that committees dedicated to a specific purpose help them accomplish their board governance responsibilities, but there is no requirement that the school have board committees. Many times the need for any particular committee depends upon the size of the board, the capacity of the sitting board members, and the current needs of the school. For example, if you are looking for board members, you may want to establish a Nominating Committee. If you are in need of a new facility, you may want to establish a Facilities Committee. As explained below, if your board creates the committee, those committees must also comply with the Brown Act unless they meet some specific requirements. New schools may want to consider committees only after they have been in operation for some time in order to determine which committees may be needed. Often, charter schools handle operational matters with informal task groups or committees created by the chief executive comprised of staff or parents to accomplish certain goals, such as planning a fundraising event. Those types of stakeholder groups that are not formally created by the board are generally not required to adhere to the Brown Act.

Some corporations may want to have standing, or permanent, committees. In that case, the function and makeup of such committees may be described in the bylaws. One common standing committee in a larger corporation is an executive committee, which is a small committee meeting more frequently than the full board, commonly used when the full board is large and cannot meet frequently, so that the corporation can take actions between the times of full board meetings. Other common standing committees include: a nominating committee, an audit committee, a budget committee, a compensation committee, a development committee, and (where a corporation has assets held in reserve that need to be invested) an investment committee. Some corporations describe committees in their bylaws but this provision permits a corporation to create a standing committee by board resolution. This is done to avoid having to amend the bylaws every time the board decides to create, dissolve, or alter a committee. If a committee is not created in the bylaws, then in order to create such a committee the board should adopt a resolution by a majority vote of directors in office setting forth the composition and duties of the committee. The only committee established in these form bylaws is the audit committee, described in Section 8.5, a special committee required by law for certain corporations with revenues of two million dollars or more which may, but does not, require all members to also be directors (see Note 56). To create standing committees in the bylaws, the following example language can be inserted in Article 8 and revised to reflect the specific needs of the corporation. Please note that all of these examples assume that the named officers are also directors of the corporation.

Sample Executive Committee Provision

“The Executive Committee shall consist of the Officers, and the immediate past President, if he or she still is a Director. It shall meet as necessary to carry out its duties. All actions of the executive committee shall be reported to and ratified by the full Board at the next duly scheduled Board meeting. When a decision can be deferred until the next Board meeting, the Executive Committee will not act on the matter. No Executive Committee meeting shall be held in lieu of a regular Board meeting, unless agreed to by a majority of the Directors. The Executive Committee may also initiate new issues for recommendation to the Board on its own volition.”

Sample Finance Committee Provision

“The Finance Committee shall act as financial advisor to the Board in all financial affairs of the Corporation, including, but not limited to: overseeing the preparation of the annual operating budget, considering and making recommendations on matters of financial interest with respect to which the Board may request its consideration and action, recommending the adoption of policies for financial management practices, and long-range financial planning. The Treasurer shall be a member of the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee may include members of the Audit Committee, subject to the requirements set forth in Section 8.5, and assuming that each is also a director of the corporation.”

Sample Nominating Committee Provision

“The Nominating Committee shall have responsibility for locating qualified candidates to serve as Directors and for recommending the same to the Board whenever a vacancy in the position of Director occurs.”

Further Reading: For more detailed information on committees within a nonprofit entity see *Nonprofit Governance and Management*, Ch. 11, and also *Guidebook for Directors of Nonprofit Corporations*, Ch. 3.

⁵³ **Corporate Law:** The law requires that the members of a committee receive notice of committee meetings consistent with the manner of giving, time, and notice content requirements applicable to full board meetings. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5211(d)*]

Charter School Law: Ad hoc committees composed of less than a quorum of the Board are not subject to the notice requirements of the Brown Act if they are comprised solely of members of the board, have a defined and limited purpose and are only advisory. However, standing committees which have continuing subject matter jurisdiction, regardless of their number and composition, are still required to comply with the notice requirements presented in Section 7.8. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 54952*] For example, if the Board created a standing Finance Committee composed of less than a quorum of the Board, the standing committee would nonetheless be subject to the Brown Act because it is a standing committee with continuing subject matter jurisdiction.

Practical Tip: Ad hoc committees which are normally created when the board wants to charge specific individuals with information-gathering, researching, planning, and making recommendations to the board are not subject to the notice requirements of the Brown Act.

⁵⁴ **Corporate Law:** A quorum for a committee meeting refers to the minimum number of committee members who must be present for the committee to validly conduct its business. This provision maintains the default statutory quorum requirement of a majority of committee members. A committee may also require the presence of one or more specified committee members to meet quorum. [*Cal. Corp. Code §§ 5211(a)(7), 5211(d)*]

Recommended Practice: Although a quorum for a committee can be as low as 1/5th of the committee members (but not less than two), the best practice is to have the quorum set at a simple majority of the committee members as in this example. This will ensure that at least a majority of the committee members actively participate in committee activities.

Further Reading: *Nonprofit Governance and Management*, Ch. 11, and also *Guidebook for Directors of Nonprofit Corporations*, Ch. 3.

⁵⁵ **Corporate Law:** This section ensures that after creating a committee, the board may dissolve it at any time, and that thereafter, such committee will have no authority to act on behalf of the board.

⁵⁶ **Corporate Law:** This section restates the provisions of the Nonprofit Integrity Act of 2004 that require corporations with gross revenues of two million dollars or more (excluding government payments as described in the form bylaws text) to conduct an audit and have an audit committee. The audit committee may consist of board members and non-board members, but may not include any staff members, including the president, CEO, treasurer or CFO. The term “staff” includes any employee (or independent contractor) of the corporation and any person, whether paid or not, who has the day to day role of president, CEO, treasurer or CFO. The term “staff” does not include the other directors or officers, acting solely in their capacity as directors or officers of the board. The term “staff” also does not include directors who have the title of president, CEO, treasurer or CFO if those persons are acting merely as officers of the board and do not have a day to day operational role. Persons who are barred from being members of the audit committee may be invited to attend committee meetings and are permitted to provide reports to the committee.

Members of a separate finance committee of the board may also serve on the audit committee. However, finance committee members must constitute less than half of the audit committee membership. Additionally, the chairperson of the audit committee may not be a member of the finance committee.

This provision does not give the audit committee the authority to act with the authority of the board, even if it is composed solely of directors. Furthermore, the Attorney General takes the position that the powers of the audit committee are always subject to the supervision of the board of directors. [<https://oag.ca.gov/charities/laws#integrityact>] Thus, the audit committee’s actions will need to be ratified by the full board to be valid and the minutes should reflect this process.

An audit committee member cannot receive any compensation from the corporation in excess of the compensation, if any, received by members of the board for service on the board. Since board members of charter schools complying with Gov. Code § 1090 are not compensated, audit committee members of such organizations would not receive any compensation either. An audit committee member cannot have a material financial interest in any entity doing business with the corporation. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 12586(e)(2)*]

Note that the act does not provide for an extension of time, thus the extension for filing IRS Form 990 does not also apply to the completion of the audit.

Charter School Law: Charter schools are subject to annual audit requirements and must describe in their charter petition the manner in which annual, independent financial audits will be conducted and the manner in which audit exceptions and deficiencies will be resolved to the satisfaction of the chartering authority in their charter petitions. [*Cal. Ed. Code §47605(b)(5)(I)*].

LAUSD Specific: Per the DRL, the following reports must be submitted to LAUSD, in the required format and within timelines to be specified by LAUSD, each year:

- a. Provisional Budget – Spring prior to operating fiscal year
- b. Final Budget – July of the budget fiscal year
- c. First Interim Projections – November of operating fiscal year
- d. Second Interim Projections – February of operating fiscal year
- e. Unaudited Actuals – July following the end of the fiscal year
- f. Audited Actuals – December 15 following the end of the fiscal year
- g. Classification Report – monthly according to school’s Calendar
- h. Statistical Report – monthly according to school’s Calendar of Reports
In addition:
 - P1, first week of January
 - P2, first week of April
- i. Instructional Calendar- annually five weeks prior to first day of instruction
- j. Other reports as requested by the District

Also, per the Application Guide: a “reasonably comprehensive” petition will include, in addition to the District Required Language, the following:

Annual Audit Procedures

1. Specify what person or position at the charter school is responsible for contracting with an accountant to conduct the required annual financial audit.
2. Specify what person or position at the charter school is responsible for working with the auditor to complete the audit.
3. Describe how the school will ensure that the selected auditor is on the State Controller’s list of approved auditors to conduct charter school audits.
4. Describe the process that the charter school will employ to address and resolve any deficiencies, findings, material weaknesses, or audit exceptions.
5. Specify what person or position at the charter school is responsible for ensuring that the auditor sends the completed audit to the required agencies by the statutory deadline.

Recommended Practice: Given the restrictions on which directors can serve on the audit committee, some corporations recruit non-directors to serve.

Further Reading: Attorney General’s FAQ’s – Nonprofit Integrity Act of 2004 - <https://oag.ca.gov/charities/laws#integrityact>

⁵⁷ **Further Reading:** For more information regarding the public disclosure requirements for making the Form 990 available, visit the IRS website at <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/exempt-organization-public-disclosure-and-availability-requirements>

⁵⁸ **Corporate Law:** This section makes clear that the board can create committees that do not have the authority to bind the corporation or act on behalf of the board. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5212(b)*] These “advisory committees” are normally created when the board wants to charge specific individuals with information-gathering, researching, planning, and making recommendations to the board. Whether or not this provision is included in the bylaws, the board may appoint committees that do not have the authority to act on behalf of the board, under its general power to delegate certain tasks subject to ultimate board supervision.

Charter School Law: Advisory committee meetings of charter schools are not subject to the notice and posting requirements of the Brown Act so long as the committee is comprised solely of members of the charter school's board; consists of less than the number of board members who, if present at a meeting, would be able to make a decision; has a defined purpose and a time frame to accomplish that purpose; and is advisory. However, if the advisory committee has members other than the charter school board, then the committee may have to operate under the notice and posting requirements of the Brown Act. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 54952(b)*] Please note that staff committees or committees created by the school's chief executive officer, for example, are not subject to the Brown Act. Further, stakeholders may also separately, and on their own initiative, form advisory groups and report the results, findings or recommendations to the charter school board.

Recommended Practice: This provision is recommended because it reminds the board that if non-directors are included on a committee, the committee does not have authorization to bind the corporation without further approval from the full board.

Some sources suggest using advisory committees for purposes of recruiting directors. These committees can be used to ensure that prospective directors share the corporation's commitment to its purpose and to introduce them to the corporation before asking them to join the board. Appointments to advisory committees are also a great way to recognize a person's contributions to the corporation without having to increase the size of the board or impose on the person the legal obligations of a board member.

Further Reading: See *Guidebook for Directors of Nonprofit Corporations*, Ch. 3, p. 57

⁵⁹ **Corporate Law:** The law requires each corporation to have both (i) a board, which acts as a group as described in Note 12, and (ii) at least three officers who have responsibilities to fulfill a variety of corporate compliance tasks, including the execution of contracts and other documents. Because the president cannot be the same person as the secretary, treasurer and chief financial officer, at least two separate individuals will have to serve as officers of the corporation. People chosen to serve as officers are not required by law to be directors (except that these bylaws require that the chairperson must be a director), but officers may be, and frequently are, selected from among the directors. Even if an officer is also serving as a director, the two roles are distinct. An individual serving in both capacities should always keep in mind in which role he or she is acting. Like directors, officers owe fiduciary duties to the corporation and therefore should not be appointed merely for honorary reasons

⁶⁰ **Corporate Law:** The law specifies that the required officers are (i) a chairperson of the board or a president, or both; (ii) a secretary; and (iii) a treasurer or a chief financial officer, or both. Nonprofit corporations may choose to identify any of these statutory officers by a title not used in the law, such as "executive director" instead of president. If such is the corporation's preference, then these form bylaws should be modified accordingly. With respect to statutory officers, the best practice would be to maintain the statutory title in these form bylaws, but include a reference to the title used by the corporation (see Section 9.7 for sample language). Effective January 1, 2016, the law permits a wider range of titles for nonprofit corporation officers. Nonprofit public benefit corporations are now authorized to use additional straightforward chair of the board alternative titles to match common usage in the nonprofit community. These nonprofits will be authorized to use the officer titles of chair, chairperson, chairman and chairwoman without an "of the Board" modifier. [*Cal. Corp. Code §§ 156.6 and 312*] These form bylaws also permit a vice president, though such office is not required by law. However, many nonprofit corporations view the office of vice president as an opportunity for the holder to be groomed and evaluated for eventual succession to president. If the corporation wants to require a vice president it may do so by modifying Section 9.1.

The law also specifies that unless the bylaws state otherwise, the president (or if there is none, then the chairperson) is the general manager of the corporation. The law gives the secretary the responsibility to certify corporate documents, and provides that a third party can rely on a certification from a duly elected secretary. The law also states that if any corporate document is signed by both (i) the president or chairperson or any vice president, and (ii) the secretary, the treasurer or chief financial officer or any assistant secretary or assistant treasurer, then a third party can rely on the document as being validly signed by the corporation. For that reason, the law does not allow the president or chairperson to serve concurrently as the secretary, the treasurer or the chief financial officer.

⁶¹ **Corporate Law:** This provision makes clear that officers are not required to be chosen from among the board, and the default language in this form does not impose qualifications or requirements as to who can serve as officers other than that the chairperson of the board be a director. [But note that the executive committee, which is often comprised of officers, will not be able to exercise the authority of the board unless all of its members are directors (see Note 52).] Corporations may wish to establish qualifications for president or chairperson, in order to guarantee that the officeholder has sufficient knowledge of the corporation and its history to effectively serve in these functions. A corporation can address this concern in its bylaws by including a requirement that the president or chairperson have previously served on the board for a period of time. Bylaws can also be used to establish a succession plan such as by requiring a vice president (see Section 9.6.3 and Note 66) and designating the vice president as a president-elect. Language to effectuate these alternative are as follows:

(1) Requirement that president or chairperson have previous experience serving the corporation. Add to the end of Section 9.1 the following:

“It shall be a requirement that any person serving as either the Chairperson or President shall have previously served for at least one year as either an Officer or a Director.”

OR

(2) Formal succession mechanism from vice president to president. Add to end of Section 9.6.3 the following:

“The Vice President shall serve as the president-elect and shall prepare to assume the office of President following completion of the President’s current term of office and any renewals thereof.”

⁶² **Recommended Practice:** These form bylaws provide that each officer will be elected for a one year term, which may be renewed for the number of successive terms to be inserted in the blank. Term limits are not required by law, but many corporations choose to establish term limits in order to encourage new leadership and prevent stagnation. On the other hand, a corporation may suffer if a highly effective officer is forced to resign due to term limits. Corporations should weigh these merits when deciding whether to institute term limits. Larger corporations with large boards and many committed individuals are most likely to benefit from officer term limits.

It should be noted, however, that even while limiting the total number of times that a term can be renewed, many corporations choose to elect officers, particularly the president, for terms of two years rather than single year duration in order to maintain leadership stability and give the officer more time to develop expertise in office. The corporation should take note to coordinate the terms, so that an individual’s term as director does not expire before their term as officer expires.

⁶³ **Corporate Law:** Under the law, officers are selected by the board and may be removed by the board at any time, unless the bylaws provide otherwise or the board has altered this by contract with the individual officer. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5213(b)*] These bylaws provide that the board may delegate this right with respect to removal of officers appointed under Section 9.6.6 to the chairperson, the president or the chief executive.

Recommended Practice: In general, if the officers are not also employees of the corporation, the board should have the sole right to select and remove them. In some corporations, the board may find it convenient to grant to one or more employees the legal duties and rights of a corporate officer. For example, in many corporations, the president (sometimes also called the “chief executive officer”) may be a staff person hired by the board to run the day to day operations of the corporation. [*See discussion at Note 70 as to the issues the board should consider when determining whether the manager of the corporation should be appointed as a statutory officer.*] In such case, the board may wish to delegate to the chief executive officer the right to hire and select other officers (such as the chief financial officer) and the right to remove the same officers. Once the board has delegated this power, it should generally not interfere in the hiring and firing decisions made by the chief executive officer. However, it is recommended that the board retain the right to remove any officer from the position as a statutory corporate officer (with the resulting ability to bind the corporation to contracts) so that the board can exercise its duties to safeguard the corporation’s assets, even if the board then leaves to the discretion of the chief executive officer whether to terminate that individual’s employment with the corporation.

⁶⁴ **Corporate Law:** The law requires a corporation to have a chair of its board or a president or both. The chair may be given the title of “chair of the board,” “chairperson of the board” (as this form does), “chairman of the board,” or “chairwoman of the board.” [*Cal. Corp. Code §§ 5039.5 and 5213(a)*].

⁶⁵ In some corporations, the board appoints as the statutory officer of “president” the same individual who is hired by the board to be the chief executive or executive director of the corporation’s day to day operations. See the discussion at Note 70 as to the issues the board should consider when determining whether the statutory officer role of president should be given to the employee hired to manage the corporation’s day to day business or retained by a volunteer board member.

⁶⁶ **Corporate Law:** A corporation is not required to have a vice president. Section 9.1 makes the position of vice president optional. See Note 61 for a discussion on having the vice president serve as president-elect.

⁶⁷ **Corporate Law:** See discussion on the minute book in Note 88.

LAUSD Specific: Charter schools chartered by LAUSD shall also send to the LAUSD Charter Schools Division copies of all board meeting minutes within one week of governing board approval of the minutes. Timely posting of agendas and minutes on the school website will satisfy this requirement

⁶⁸ **Corporate Law:** The law requires that each nonprofit public benefit corporation have a treasurer or a chief financial officer, or both. Unless otherwise specified, if there is no chief financial officer, the treasurer is the chief financial officer of the corporation. Often nonprofit corporations choose to have a treasurer that serves on the board and conducts the legally required oversight function, and a chief financial officer who is an employee and operates the day-to-day financial activities of the corporation. Such a structure is permitted by these bylaws, and if the board determines to establish this structure, the board resolution should clearly describe the division of duties of these persons and whether or not the chief financial officer is also a statutory officer. See Note 70 for a discussion on the issues the corporation should consider when determining whether a statutory officer role should be given to an employee. In this structure, it is common for the board member who serves as treasurer to be involved in overseeing compliance with internal financial controls by the corporation's staff (including the chief financial officer).

⁶⁹ See Note 63 for when the board might delegate to the chief executive the power to hire and fire all employees.

⁷⁰ **Charter School Specific:** Generally, in order to make sure that a nonprofit charter school's day-to-day activities run smoothly, the board of a charter school will need to appoint one chief executive to oversee the corporation, under the ultimate supervision of the board, or subcategories of chief executives such as the Executive Director/Head/Principal/Instructional Director/Operations Director. A description of the duties and powers of each of these positions may be provided in Section 9.7—for example, *to share in the responsibility to supervise, direct and control the Corporation's day-to-day activities, business and affairs. Pursuant to their respective job descriptions, such persons shall be empowered to hire, supervise and fire all of the employees of the Corporation and may delegate their responsibilities and powers subject to the control of the Board. They shall have such other powers and duties as may be prescribed by the Board or these Bylaws.* These persons may serve as a volunteer, or a paid staff member, depending on the funds available to the corporation. In a small or start-up corporation in which the board is running the day-to-day activities of the corporation, the president may originally serve as the corporation's chief executive. When the corporation has grown to the point that a volunteer board can no longer operate the corporation's activities, a board will generally appoint a chief executive who is not on the board and who serves at the pleasure of the board (or under an employment contract). Such person is generally given the title of "executive director," if the board does not wish to grant this individual the legal rights and duties of a corporate officer, or "chief executive officer" if the board wishes that this person have the legal duties of a corporate officer. Issues to be considered in deciding whether to entrust this person with statutory officer responsibilities include whether the board wants to give the person the actual authority to sign contracts that bind the corporation, and whether the board wants to entrust the legal responsibility for oversight in the same individual who is running the day-to-day activities, or keep these roles separate. In best practices, the executive director or chief executive officer is typically the one employee who is hired directly by the board. The board then can give this chief executive the authority to select and supervise all other employees. [See Note 63 for when the board might delegate to the chief executive the power to hire and fire all employees.] This type of structure helps to establish clear lines to ensure that all other employees understand that they must report to the chief executive, and not directly to the board.

⁷¹ **Charter School Law:** While Gov. Code § 1090 restricts public officials from being financially interested in any contract made by them in their official capacity, or by any board of which they are members, the Legislature has carved out an exception for charter schools (effective January 1, 2020), allowing an employee of a charter school to serve as a director of the corporation operating the school so long as the employee abstains from voting on, or influencing or attempting to influence another director regarding, any matter uniquely affecting his or her employment. [Cal. Educ. Code § 47604.1(d)] See Note 16. Therefore, Section 9.8.2. specifically prohibits from a paid officer who also serves on the board from participating in or influencing any decisions regarding his or her salary.

No director may use his or her official position to influence any public charter school decision that he or she knows or has reason to know will have a foreseeable material financial effect on the person or a member of his or her immediate family. The Political Reform Act requires that public officials, board members in the case of charter schools, perform their duties in an impartial manner, free from bias caused by their own financial interests or those of persons who have supported them. [Cal. Gov. Code § 81001(b)]

Further, while Corporate law allows officers of the corporation to be paid, compensating persons who are not true employees of the corporation for their services as officers, whether or not they are also board members, is not recommended for charter schools.

⁷² **Corporate Law:** Charitable corporations and unincorporated associations must have their board (or an authorized board committee) review and approve the compensation of the chief executive officer or president, and the compensation of the chief financial officer or treasurer, to ensure that the payment is “just and reasonable” (see Note 8). [*Cal. Gov. Code § 12586(g)*]

As described in Note 63, if a board hires a chief executive to manage the day-to-day operations of the corporation, the board will often delegate to that chief executive the authority to hire and fire subordinate employees, including the chief financial officer. In such case, in order to comply with this legal requirement to review the chief financial officer’s compensation while not undermining the chief executive’s supervisory role, the board may want to put in place a policy that the CEO can negotiate and establish compensation within an approved range, and then bring the recommended salary to the board for final approval. The language of 9.8.2 does not require the Board to review the compensation of any officers other than those specifically required by California law, but see below regarding requirements to maintain tax exemption under section 501(c)(3) of the Code.

Charter School Specific: With respect to charter schools, it is typically the case that the Board of Directors will hire a chief executive (e.g., executive director, head, principal) and will set that person’s salary. The chief executive will in turn develop a salary schedule for the other employees of the school in consultation with the Board of Directors. To maintain its tax exemption under section 501(c)(3) of the Code, a charter school must ensure that all compensation paid to any person, especially officers and other insiders, is reasonable and does not constitute a private benefit. Thus, as a best practice the board should establish procedures to ensure that all salaries paid are reasonable, such as setting salary ranges, or requiring the chief executive to set salaries based on comparable salaries paid by other schools and share those comparables with the board.

Further Reading: See the Attorney General’s FAQs (17 and 18) on the Nonprofit Integrity Act, at <https://oag.ca.gov/charities/laws#integrityact>

⁷³ **Charter School Law:** Gov. Code § 1090 restricts public officials from being financially interested in any contract made by them in their official capacity, or by any board of which they are members. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 1090*] No director may use his or her official position to influence any public charter school decision that he or she knows or has reason to know will have a foreseeable material financial effect on the person or a member of his or her immediate family. The Political Reform Act requires that public officials, board members in the case of charter schools, perform their duties in an impartial manner, free from bias caused by their own financial interests or those of persons who have supported them. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 81001(b)*] However, as discussed above in Notes 16 and 71, the Legislature has carved out an exception for charter schools (effective January 1, 2020), allowing an employee of a charter school to serve as a director of the corporation operating the school so long as the employee abstains from voting on, or influencing or attempting to influence another director regarding, any matter uniquely affecting his or her employment. [*Cal. Educ. Code § 47604.1(d)*] Therefore, in the limited circumstances in which an employee of the school is also a director of the corporation, then the corporation must follow the Corporate law rules on self-dealing transactions described below, as well as the restrictions in the Education Code and Political Reform Act.

Corporate Law: The law governs transactions to which the corporation is a party and any director (volunteer or paid) has a material financial interest (self-dealing transactions). Self-dealing transactions are allowed only if the following Corporate law principles are followed: (i) full disclosure to the board of the director’s financial interest, (ii) a determination in good faith by the board that the corporation could not obtain a more advantageous arrangement elsewhere, (iii) that the corporation enters into the transaction for its own benefit; (iv) that the transaction is fair and reasonable to the corporation and (v) that the transaction is approved in good faith by a majority vote of all directors who have no financial interest in the transaction. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5233*] As discussed above, since Cal. Gov. Code § 1090 generally prohibits individuals who have any financial interest in a charter school transaction from sitting on the board, the self-dealing rules will rarely apply. However, in the event that an employee of the charter school also serves as a director, as allowed by Educ. Code § 47604.1(d), the directors must make sure that approval of any transactions regarding his or her employment (e.g., approval of a salary or employment transaction) follow the requirements of Gov. Code § 5233. Notably, this means that any such transactions could only be approved by a majority vote of directors who have no financial interest in the transaction, and not simply a majority of a quorum.

Certain transactions are excluded from the definition of self-dealing transactions under the law. These transactions do not have to be approved by a disinterested board in the manner stated above. A decision to set the compensation of a director falls within this exclusion, as do any transactions that are part of the corporation’s charitable activities if the benefit to a director from these activities is as a result of that director being part of the charitable class the corporation generally serves. Finally, if the interested director has no actual knowledge of the transaction and it is of a relatively small monetary value, the transaction is also excluded from this rule. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5233(b)*]

⁷⁴ **Corporate Law:** The law prohibits loans to directors and officers unless approved by the Attorney General. There are a few limited exceptions to this rule. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5236(a)*]

Recommended Practice: If a corporation intends to lend money to an officer or director under any circumstances other than advancement of expenses being incurred for legitimate corporate business, the corporation should consult with counsel before doing so.

⁷⁵ **Corporate Law:** See Note 12 for a discussion of the duty of loyalty imposed on every director and officer of the corporation. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5231]

Charter School Law: The Political Reform Act, which is applicable to charter schools, requires all public officials, including the directors of the charter school, to perform their duties in an impartial manner, free from bias caused by their own financial interests. [Cal. Gov. Code § 81001]

⁷⁶ **Corporate Law:** This section of the bylaws describes the circumstances when the corporation can “indemnify,” or pay the expenses (including legal fees and judgments) of, its directors and officers, employees and other agents acting on behalf of the corporation, if they are sued in connection with actions they took when serving their role as agent of the corporation. Under the law, a nonprofit public benefit corporation is generally permitted to indemnify its directors and officers and other agents for costs of threatened, pending or completed legal actions or proceedings (whether civil, criminal, administrative or investigative) if the agent acted in good faith, in a manner that the agent believed to be in the best interest of the corporation. As further described below, in some cases, the law requires the corporation to indemnify an agent, and in other cases, the law will not permit the corporation to indemnify an agent.

Generally, if an agent wins a lawsuit brought against him due to his or her acts on behalf of the corporation, the corporation must indemnify the agent. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5238(d)] In cases where the agent does not win the lawsuit, the determination of whether the corporation may indemnify the agent depends in part on whether the lawsuit was brought against the agent by or on behalf of the corporation (such as if the corporation sues a director for breaching a duty to the corporation, as described in Note 12), or by a third party (such as when the agent is sued because an unrelated person was harmed by the corporation). In cases where the lawsuit is by or on behalf of the corporation, the corporation is not permitted to indemnify the agent if the agent loses the lawsuit (unless the Court determines that the agent is entitled to indemnification), or for amounts paid to settle the lawsuit, or for amounts paid in defense of a lawsuit that is settled without Court or Attorney General approval. In cases other than those described in this paragraph, a corporation generally may indemnify an agent if the agent’s conduct meets the requirements described in Section 11.3 and Section 11.4.

See also Note 85 in connection with Section 11.7 for more information about advancement of expenses incurred in defending any proceeding.

See also Note 87 in connection with Section 11.9 for more information about insurance that the corporation can purchase to protect against some of these costs.

A Note about Legal Protections for Volunteer Directors and Officers: Federal law provides a defense to volunteers serving in any capacity (e.g., officers, directors, etc.) who receive no compensation, if they meet certain requirements. [Volunteer Protection Act of 1997, 11 Stat. 218] Federal law also permits the states to provide additional liability protection to volunteers or impose additional conditions. California law provides the following protections, which are not changed by what is stated in a corporation’s bylaws. A volunteer director or executive officer of a nonprofit public benefit corporation is not personally liable to a third party for monetary damages caused by his or her negligent act in the performance of his or her duties as a director or officer. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5239] However, this general protection applies only if (i) the damages are covered under the corporation’s general liability insurance, a D&O insurance policy or a personal insurance policy of that director or officer, or (ii) the damages are not covered by insurance, but the board of directors and the volunteer made all reasonable efforts in good faith to obtain available insurance. [Cal. Corp. Code § 5239(a)(4)] Special rules for what constitutes “reasonable efforts” to obtain insurance apply to tax-exempt nonprofit corporations with annual budgets of \$25,000 or less. Also, for this protection to apply, the act must have been within the scope of the person’s duties, performed in good faith, and not reckless, wanton, intentional, or grossly negligent. The liability of a director or officer is not eliminated or limited for self-dealing transactions, illegal distributions, loans, and guaranties, or in any action brought by the Attorney General. This statute does not limit the liability of the corporation itself to these third parties, just the liability of individual volunteer directors and officers.

Another California law provides that no lawsuit may be brought against uncompensated directors or officers of nonprofit corporations for alleged negligent acts, if the act was performed (i) within the scope of the director's or officer's duties, (ii) in good faith, (iii) in a manner believed to be in the best interests of the corporation, and (iv) in the exercise of policymaking judgment. This immunity applies only if the claim made against the director or officer can also be made directly against the corporation, and if the corporation maintains a liability insurance policy that covers the alleged damages. The policy must provide for coverage of at least of \$500,000 if the nonprofit corporation’s annual budget is less than \$50,000, and at least

\$1,000,000 if the nonprofit corporation's annual budget equals or exceeds \$50,000. Again, the liability of a director or officer is not eliminated or limited for self-dealing transactions, any action brought by the Attorney General, or damages arising from intentional, wanton, or reckless acts, gross negligence, fraud, oppression, or malice by the director or officer. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5047.5*]

These protections in the law for volunteer officers and directors may ultimately mean that a director or officer would win a lawsuit by a third party for negligence. However, the statutory liability protections contain exceptions, exclusions and qualifications so that the protections do not apply in all cases. Also, as a practical matter, in cases where these protections do apply, directors and officers may face months or even years of litigation before showing that they are entitled to these protections. Therefore, as a practical matter, nonprofit corporations should maintain adequate liability insurance, not only to qualify for the protection offered under California law, but also to provide a fund for the defense of directors named in liability suits.

Recommended Practice: Potential directors are often interested in confirming, before agreeing to serve on the board, that the corporation has policies in place that will allow it to indemnify them. Potential directors also often want to see that the corporation has purchased directors & officers liability insurance or otherwise has the financial ability to indemnify them. These form bylaws can be modified to require indemnification. Instances where the form bylaws could be changed to require indemnification when the law permits but does not require it are indicated in the relevant endnotes.

Further Reading: “Directors & Officers: Key Facts About Insurance and Legal Liability” – <https://secure.insurancefor nonprofits.org/Nonprofit-Resources-Nonprofit-Directors-and-Officers-Key-Facts-About-Insurance-and-Legal-Liability.cfm>

⁷⁷ **Corporate Law:** These definitions are the same as included in the law, and should not be changed.

⁷⁸ **Corporate Law:** Section 11.3 applies to lawsuits or other “proceedings” (as defined in the bylaws) brought against a director, officer or other agent by any person other than the corporation or someone acting on its behalf (as described in the second sentence of Note 80). When an agent is sued by such a third party, the law permits (but does not require) the corporation to indemnify the agent upon finding that the agent has met the required standards of good faith conduct described in Section 11.3, even if the agent loses the lawsuit. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5238(b)*] However, no indemnification is permitted if the agent is found to have breached his or her fiduciary duties to the corporation.

Recommended Practice: Although the law merely permits the corporation to indemnify an agent in cases where the agent does not successfully defend an action brought by a third party, this provision is written to allow the corporation to decide whether or not to require indemnification in such cases if the board determines that the good faith standard of conduct described in Section 11.3.2 is met. If the corporation does not want to mandate indemnification in these types of proceedings, use the permissive language in Section 11.3.1.

Requiring indemnification is sometimes recommended because some nonprofits find it harder to recruit a quality board of directors without a strong indemnification policy. Also, some insurance policies will not cover expenses unless the indemnification is required, rather than permissive. However, the corporation should consider whether it can afford indemnification and insurance premiums before making this important decision. If the corporation ultimately chooses to require indemnification, it is strongly recommended the corporation purchase insurance

⁷⁹ **Corporate Law:** Different standards of conduct are imposed for agents named in suits brought by third parties, on one hand, and for agents named in suits brought by or on behalf of the charitable corporation, suits challenging a self-dealing transaction, and suits brought by the Attorney General, on the other hand. Where an agent breaches a fiduciary duty, both standards of conduct prohibit indemnification.

For actions brought by a third-party plaintiff, which are dealt with in Section 11.3, a corporation may authorize indemnification for an agent only if it finds that the agent (i) acted in good faith and in a manner the agent *reasonably* believed to be in the best interests of the corporation; and (ii) in the case of a criminal proceeding, the agent had no reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful. The termination of a proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, or a plea of nolo contendere or its equivalent does not, in itself, create a presumption that the agent did not act in good faith and in the best interests of the corporation, or that the agent had reasonable cause to believe that the conduct was unlawful. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5238(b)*] This means that even in a case where an agent settles, pleads no contest, or is even found guilty, if the agent did not have reasonable cause to believe his conduct was unlawful, the corporation may still indemnify the agent for the expenses of the proceeding. As noted below, the standard for actions brought by or on behalf of the corporation, dealt with in Section 11.4, are stricter and allow indemnification in more limited circumstances.

Recommended Practice: This provision restates the standards of conduct set forth in the law and should not be altered or deleted. [*Cal. Corp. Code §5238(b)*]

⁸⁰ Corporate Law: Section 11.4 deals with actions brought “by or on behalf of the corporation.” This means a suit brought by any of the following (i) the corporation, (ii) someone acting under a legal right to represent the corporation and pursue a judgment on behalf of the corporation, (iii) the Attorney General or (iv) a person that the Attorney General grants “relator” status to sue the corporation on behalf of the public. In such actions, the law authorizes indemnification for an agent only if the corporation finds that the agent has met a certain standard of conduct as described in Section 11.4.2 and Note 82. Also, unlike in the case of proceedings by third parties as described in Section 11.3, the law prohibits indemnification in this type of lawsuit for any costs if the agent loses the lawsuit (unless the Court determines that the agent is entitled to indemnification despite the loss), for the cost of any amounts paid to settle the lawsuit, or for the cost of defending the lawsuit if it is settled without Court or Attorney General approval. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5238(c)*] No indemnification is permitted if the agent breaches his or her fiduciary duties to the corporation.

⁸¹ Recommended Practice: This provision follows the law by merely permitting indemnification in actions brought by or on behalf of the corporation. Similarly to indemnification in actions brought by third parties (explained in Note 78), the corporation has the option of requiring indemnification, by changing the text of Section 11.4.1 to read “*shall*” instead of “*may*”, in actions brought by or on behalf of the corporation. However, requiring indemnification in these circumstances is not recommended in this form because these actions include cases where the corporation is suing a director.

⁸² Corporate Law: This provision deals with actions brought by or on behalf of the corporation. A higher standard of conduct is required if the action against the agent is brought by or on behalf of the corporation, as compared to the standard for indemnification when an action is brought by a third party, as explained in Note 79. In these cases, the corporation has the power to indemnify an agent only if it finds that the agent acted in good faith, in a manner believed to be in the best interests of the corporation, and with the care, including reasonable inquiry that an ordinary prudent person in a like position would use. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5238(c)*]

Recommended Practice: This provision restates the standards of conduct set forth in the law and should not be altered or deleted. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5238(c)*]

⁸³ Corporate Law: The corporation must find that the agent has met the appropriate standard of care in order for the agent to qualify for indemnification. Once such a finding is made, indemnification shall only be made under the following circumstances: (i) if approved by a majority vote of a quorum consisting of directors who are not parties to the proceeding; or (ii) if approved by the court in which the proceeding is or was pending, on application by the corporation, the agent, or the attorney providing the defense. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5238(e)*]

Recommended Practice: The manner of determination in these bylaws restates the law and should not be altered or deleted. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5238(e)*]

⁸⁴ Corporate Law: The law that permits a corporation to indemnify its agents is subject to limitation or restriction by any contract provisions that apply to the relationship between the agent and the corporation, and to any limits in the articles and bylaws. Regardless of what the law would otherwise permit, the corporation cannot indemnify its agent (or advance defense expenses for that agent) if the indemnification or advance is prohibited or limited by (i) the articles or bylaws, (ii) an agreement that was in effect at the time when the alleged cause of action accrued (that is, when the action that is the subject of the claim against the corporate agent happened), or (iii) an express condition of a court-approved settlement. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5238(h)*]

Recommended Practice: Because language written into the bylaws and articles can limit the indemnification otherwise permitted by law, it is recommended that the corporation maintain the language in Section 11.3 and Section 11.4 as is (other than making the appropriate choice between mandatory and permissive indemnification, see Note 78). The language in Section 11.6 recites the law, which will apply to the corporation whether or not it is included in the bylaws. As a result, any indemnification provisions in the articles will control, regardless of what the bylaws specify. In order to avoid this potential confusion and conflict, the corporation should not include indemnification provisions in its articles (see Public Counsel’s annotated articles of incorporation at <http://www.publiccounsel.org/tools/assets/files/0739.pdf>).

⁸⁵ Corporate Law: The law permits, but does not require, the corporation to pay, in advance, legal fees and other expenses incurred by a director, an officer, or other corporate agent in defending an action, before final disposition of such action and without having to make a final determination on whether indemnification will be authorized. However, the agent must first agree to repay amounts advanced if it is ultimately found that indemnification is not permitted. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5238(f)*]

Recommended Practice: The corporation should have the option to advance expenses to help its agents present an adequate defense that might otherwise not be possible due to high costs, especially if the board believes the agent to be innocent. However, if it is ultimately found that the agent is not entitled to indemnification, the corporation must pursue appropriate legal remedies to enforce the agent’s commitment to reimburse the corporation.

Permissive vs. Required Advancement: Indemnification rights and rights to advancement are distinct types of legal rights. Even if a bylaw requires the corporation to indemnify an agent after finding that a certain standard of conduct is met, as the corporation may provide for in Section 11.3 and Section 11.4, it does not also require advancement of expenses. Under the law, the board still has the discretion to decide whether an advance should be made. It is recommended that the bylaws retain the discretion of the board to approve advancement of expenses on a case-by-case basis, as in Section 11.7, rather than making advancement of expenses mandatory. If the bylaws mandate advancement, the corporation will be required to advance costs until it is “ultimately determined” that the agent is ineligible for indemnification, which might lead to advancement of expenses in cases where it is reasonably likely that indemnification will not be available. In *Bergonzi v. Rite Aid Corp.* (2003), a Delaware court, operating under a similar statute, held that an admission of guilt by an officer was not enough for the corporation to escape its obligation to advance expenses, even though the admission clearly disqualified him from ultimate indemnification.

In making the case-by-case decision as to whether to advance expenses to an agent, the board should consider whether the promise to repay is sufficient to protect the corporation’s interest in repayment and whether, ultimately, advancement of expenses would be likely to promote the corporation’s interests. Although not required by law, the board may wish to impose further requirements upon the agent, such as a written affirmation of his or her good-faith belief that he or she has met the standard of conduct necessary for indemnification, or a security agreement for the advance. These added requirements could be inserted in the bylaws so that they would always apply to such advances, or they could be imposed on a case by case basis by the board depending on the circumstances in which the advances are requested. Also, the board may impose upon itself a requirement that before advancing expenses it must determine that the facts then known do not preclude indemnification. Such methods can help to protect the corporation from making advances that would not be in its best interest.

⁸⁶ **Corporate Law:** A corporation may not provide greater indemnification rights to directors and officers by contract than what is permitted by law and in the corporation’s bylaws. However, contractual rights to indemnification for non-directors and non-officers are not affected by any provision in the bylaws and/or any section of the law. Thus, if a corporation agrees by contract to indemnify a non-director/non-officer, such as an employee, volunteer or a third party that has contracted with the corporation, nothing in these bylaws or the law takes away their rights under that contract. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5238(g)*]

Recommended Practice: This provision follows the language set forth in the law and should not be altered or deleted.

⁸⁷ **Corporate Law:** The corporation may purchase and maintain insurance on behalf of any agent against any liability asserted against or incurred by the agent in that capacity, whether or not the corporation is legally permitted to indemnify the agent under the standards described in Notes 78 through 84. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5238(i)*] The insurance policy may provide more indemnification and greater protection for agents than the corporation could pay directly. However, a public benefit corporation is not permitted to insure an agent against liability for self-dealing violations, which are transactions to which the corporation is a party and any director has a material financial interest.

Charter School Law: Charter schools should also check whether their charter authorizer has any specific insurance requirements.

LAUSD Specific: According to the DRL, schools chartered by LAUSD are required to have the following types of insurance: commercial general liability, workers’ compensation, commercial auto liability, crime insurance or fidelity bond coverage, professional educators errors and omissions liability coverage, sexual molestation and abuse coverage, employment practices legal liability coverage, and excess/umbrella insurance.

Recommended Practice: The form bylaws restate the law in permitting the nonprofit corporation to purchase insurance. The law and the form bylaws do not require that a nonprofit corporation obtain such insurance, but we recommend that a nonprofit corporation purchase insurance if financially feasible, both to protect the directors and officers and to protect the corporation. Most directors expect nonprofit corporations to indemnify them against claims relating to their service as a director. Because the ability to pay indemnification depends on the financial strength of the corporation, qualified board members may be deterred from serving on a board of a corporation that has inadequate financial reserves to pay such claims, unless the corporation purchases liability insurance policies for directors and officers (“D&O” insurance) to provide additional protection. Note that if the corporation decides to alter the language in Section 11.3 and Section 11.4 to require the corporation to indemnify agents in certain circumstances, it is then even more important for the corporation to ensure that it has sufficient insurance to pay its

indemnification obligations so that they do not jeopardize the corporation's ability to conduct its nonprofit activities. Given that adequate insurance can often be purchased at a reasonable cost, there is little reason not to obtain such insurance.

D&O Insurance: D&O insurance generally works by reimbursing the nonprofit corporation for its indemnity payments to directors and officers and paying such persons directly for personal loss. Most of the time, legal defense costs associated with a claim are also covered by D&O insurance. Often, D&O insurance also covers the direct liability of the nonprofit corporation itself and not merely its directors and officers (if it does not, the corporation should also obtain general liability insurance to cover such claims). As stated above, the law allows D&O insurance to provide greater coverage than what is permitted under the indemnification provisions (e.g. settlements in lawsuits brought by or on behalf of the corporation), subject to a few exceptions (e.g. self-dealing violations). Because forms of D&O insurance policies vary widely in coverage and price, the corporation should find a knowledgeable insurance broker. A review of any D&O insurance policy should consider the types of claims and persons covered, the timing of the coverage, the advance of expenses, settlement issues, and any exclusions.

Further Reading:

"Nonprofit Directors and Officers Insurance: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" - <https://trust.guidestar.org/nonprofit-directors-and-officers-insurance-the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly>

"Directors & Officers: Key Facts About Insurance and Legal Liability" - <https://secure.insurancefornonprofits.org/Nonprofit-Resources-Nonprofit-Directors-and-Officers-Key-Facts-About-Insurance-and-Legal-Liability.cfm>

"A Board Member's Guide to Nonprofit Insurance" - <http://www.blueavocado.org/content/board-members-guide-nonprofit-insurance>

⁸⁸ **Corporate Law:** Every corporation is required to maintain minutes of its board meetings, and copies of board minutes that are certified by the corporate secretary as being correct can serve as proof of corporate actions. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 5215*] It is therefore important for the corporation to keep a minute book in which all minutes are retained in the corporation's permanent records. See discussion of minutes in Note 49. Minutes and other books and records must be kept in written form or any form that can be converted into "clearly legible tangible form" (e.g., in computer data form). [*Cal. Corp. Code § 6320(b)*]

Under the Brown Act, the minute book shall also contain a record of any written waivers of notice, consents to the holding of a meeting or approvals of the minutes thereof; all written consents for action without a meeting; and all protests concerning lack of notice.

LAUSD Specific: Charter schools chartered by LAUSD shall also send to the LAUSD Charter Schools Division copies of all board meeting minutes within one week of governing board approval of the minutes. Timely posting of agendas and minutes on the school website will satisfy this requirement

Recommended Practice: This provision follows the law and should not be altered or deleted. In addition to being required by law, corporate records must be properly maintained to ensure the limited liability status of the corporation and serve as evidence that directors faithfully discharged their various fiduciary duties.

There is no legal requirement for the form or design of a minute book. Leather-bound and gold-embossed minute books are available for purchase from some corporate compliance companies, but the corporation is not required to spend its funds purchasing these items. A simple three-ring binder will suffice. If the minutes are kept on the computer, make sure to have a backup copy in a safe location.

⁸⁹ **Public Inspection:** The documents described in Section 12.4 must be available for public inspection and copying, without charge, during regular business hours at the corporation's principal office. Although the corporation may have an employee present in the room during an inspection, it must allow the individual conducting the inspection to take notes freely and photocopy the documents. The documents must also be available for inspection at any regularly maintained regional or district office of the corporation having three or more employees. [*Code § 6104(d)(1)(A)*] A site is not considered a regional or district office if (i) the only services provided there further the corporation's exempt purposes and (ii) the site does not serve as an office for management staff. [*Treas. Reg. § 310.6104(d)-1(b)(5)(ii)*] If the corporation does not maintain a permanent office, it may make the documents available for inspection at a reasonable location of its choice. [*Treas. Reg. § 301.6104(d)-1(c)(2)*]

If an individual makes a written request, the corporation generally must provide a copy within 30 days, without charge other than a reasonable fee for copying and mailing costs. If the request is made in person, the copy must be provided immediately. [*Code § 6104(d)(1)(B)*] However, a corporation is not required to comply with a request for copies of its documents if it makes the documents "widely available" by posting them on the internet, either on its own website or on a website maintained by another entity (e.g., Guidestar). Even if the documents are "widely available," the corporation must still maintain them for public

inspection and must make them available for copying if they are not accessible on the Internet for any reason. [*Treas. Reg. § 301.6104(d)-2(a)-(b)*]

Charter School Law: Under the Public Records Act, a charter school should be prepared to allow inspection on demand and if a request for copies is made, it must respond in writing within 10 days providing information on the availability of the records and the cost of copies. [*Cal. Gov. Code § 6253*] For more information on how to respond to a request under the Public Records Act, please see CCSA’s Knowledge Brief at <http://www.ccsa.org/2013/09/responding-to-a-public-records-request.html>.

Recommended Practice: The public availability and inspection of the corporation’s tax exemption application and its last three information tax returns as described in Section 12.4 is required by law for all corporations that are tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Code. It is recited in these form bylaws to remind the corporation’s management to maintain these documents. It is now common practice to find the tax returns of tax exempt corporations on Guidestar (www.guidestar.org). Such posting would meet the requirement of making the tax returns “widely available” so that the corporation would not be required to bear the cost of photocopying them.

⁹⁰ **Corporate Law:** The law requires a report with the information listed in Section 12.5 to be sent to directors each year (the “annual report”). Unless prohibited by the articles or bylaws, the annual report may be sent electronically. The report must include either (i) the report of an independent accountant or (ii) a certificate of an authorized corporate officer that the report was prepared without an audit. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 6321*]

⁹¹ **Corporate Law:** Every director has the absolute right, at any reasonable time, to inspect and copy all books, records, and documents of every kind that are maintained by the corporation and to inspect the physical property of the corporation. [*Cal. Corp. Code § 6334*]

The ability to inspect the corporation’s books and records is important to enable a director to comply with his or her duties of care. However, a director’s obligations to perform his or her duties in good faith and in a manner that the director believes to be in the best interests of the corporation are a constraint on directors to avoid the exercise of inspection rights for personal gain or to further interests that are contrary to the best interests of the corporation as a whole.

Charter School Law: The Public Records Act states that public records of a public agency are open to inspection at all times during the office hours of the agency and every person has a right to inspect any public record, subject to some exceptions listed in *Cal. Gov. Code § 6253*. In addition, while charter schools must comply with the Public Records Act they must keep in mind pupil privacy rights as well. Charter schools must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records.

Recommended Practice: The corporation must comply with this right of directors to inspect books and records. However, a corporation must keep in mind privacy rights and conflicts of interest issues. When inspection by a director involves clear conflicts of interest, the likely disclosure of information in violation of the director’s fiduciary duties to the corporation, or disclosure of privileged information relating to litigation, the board should seek the advice of its legal counsel on whether the director should be given access.

⁹² **Corporate Law:** A corporation in California is not legally required to have a corporate seal. This provision permits the board to adopt a seal at some later time if needed. Even if the corporation adopts a seal, this provision does not require that a document be sealed in order to be valid. Corporations are never required by law to purchase expensive “incorporation kits.”

Recommended Practice: A corporate seal generally is used to show that a document has been validly signed on behalf of the corporation. A new corporation should not need to adopt a seal except on the rare occasion that the corporation is working with a bank that requires documents to be stamped with a seal. In the event that the corporation is required to adopt a seal, the board should be aware that corporate seals can be ordered relatively inexpensively (e.g., under \$50) from many corporate supply companies.

⁹³ **Recommended Practice:** The corporation may modify its bylaws to require the signature of two officers to enter into valid contracts or transactions. The board should consider adopting a resolution requiring board approval for transactions over a certain dollar amount. The board can later amend the threshold amount as the corporation grows.

⁹⁴ **LAUSD Specific:** Per the DRL, LAUSD chartered schools must develop and maintain sound internal fiscal control policies governing all financial activities.

Schools chartered by charter authorizers other than LAUSD should check their authorizer’s guidelines on this issue.

⁹⁵ Banks will require the board to approve certain resolutions and authorize signatures before opening an account for the corporation.

⁹⁶ **Charter School Law:** *Cal. Educ. Code § 47605.33* requires a preliminary budget to be presented on or before July 1.

⁹⁷ **LAUSD Specific:** For LAUSD charter schools, in the event that the Directors amend the bylaws, a copy of the amended bylaws shall be provided to the Charter Schools Division within thirty (30) days of adoption. This is a requirement per the DRL.

Schools chartered by charter authorizers other than LAUSD should check their authorizer’s guidelines on this issue.