

APPROVED



Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School

Minutes

October Board Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday October 12, 2021 at 6:00 PM

Location

This meeting will be remotely accessible to the public.

Zoom Account is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: PVPa Board of Trustees October Meeting

Time: Oct 12, 2021 06:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82777554683?pwd=NVNXcHdjZtcWI0M29ZdnILbk5SZz09>

Meeting ID: 827 7755 4683

Passcode: 1qfLhj

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Meeting ID: 827 7755 4683

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Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kR23oqpfR>

Trustees Present

Andrea Nathanson (remote), David Potter, Jacob Rosenblum (remote), Jenna Sardella, Marty Espinola, Neil Hede (remote), Shannon Materka, Shino Pichette (remote), Tonya Ward (remote)

Trustees Absent

LATRINA DENSON, Mindi Winter

Ex Officio Members Present

Brent Nielsen

Non Voting Members Present

Brent Nielsen

Guests Present

Fiona Yates, Firas Hashmi (remote), Marcy Conner

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

David Potter called a meeting of the board of trustees of Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School to order on Tuesday Oct 12, 2021 at 6:06 PM.

C. Read the Mission Statement

"PVPA offers its students intensive exposure to the arts within the context of an excellent college preparatory curriculum"

Andrea Nathanson

D. D. Approve Minutes

Marty Espinola made a motion to Approve the minutes from 9/14/2021, changing the language of the School Leader Evaluation Ad Hoc Committee section to state "with David Chairing and Mindi and Shannon participating as members, the School Leader Evaluation Ad Hoc Committee met for the first time. The minutes of this meeting will be available in the meeting archive once they are approved." September Meeting on 09-14-21.

Shino Pichette seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

David requests that Committee Chairs send him minutes once they are approved.

E. Public Comment

Question: The public is not aware of how to access BoardOnTrack; how can we find minutes there?

Answer: BoardOnTrack is mostly reserved for members of the Board at this point. The meeting minutes are available in the PVPA archive.

II. Executive Director Report

A. New Employee Manual

Things are moving along well. Our enrollment is sitting strong at 400.

We have a new Enrollment and Communications Coordinator who started today. Her name is Sandra Courtney, and she is beginning to start working on the lottery process.

Two things that have been impacted by COVID are lunch and transportation. Thankfully, we have federal funding to increase staffing and for free lunch, but it does make placing the orders more difficult with such a high volume of students.

We have at least double the number of students who are accessing transportation from the school this year. There are currently 115 people riding the busses. Because of the nationwide shortage of bus drivers, we are unable to get another bus contract and now have a waitlist for students who want access to bus rides.

Management is still working on an MOA to clarify some differences in working conditions due to the pandemic. The administration is preparing for a discussion with the labor-management committee for a staggered lunch to address issues that arise related to lunches that cannot be held outdoors. The new system would include 4, 20-minute lunches with passing periods in between. The MOA does include language requiring the first of two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine by October 29th. Staff may apply for a religious or medical exemption, and, if their exemption is approved, unvaccinated individuals will be required to wear KN-95 masks indoors and submit to testing three times per week.

Today was a curriculum day. Staff received training from the school psychologist on the topic of trauma-informed practices. The staff also participated in a workshop on

SMARTIE goals—similar to conventional SMART goals but including an I and E, which stand for inclusion and equity, respectively.

The school has been working with HR knowledge. One of the things that they have done for us is create a new employee manual (linked below).

[PVPA Proposed Employee Manual](#)

Marty Espinola made a motion to Approve the new employee manual.

Shino Pichette seconded the motion.

Question: is there a previous version of the manual that we can look at?

Answer: We did have an employee manual that was dated 2017-2018. This new document incorporates the collectively bargained changes that were made, as well as changes in state and federal law. This document does not change PVPA policy; it is just presented in a more concise manner.

HR Knowledge does a lot of work with charter schools. Being one of the few charter schools in the state with a union, HR Knowledge paid close attention to our Collective Bargaining Agreement in the creation of the handbook.

This looks really great, and I wonder if this might be a place in the future where we could add a breakdown of administrative responsibilities (in the form of a flowchart or something similar).

Question: does this require Union negotiation?

Answer: There are no changes in our agreement, and the agreement is based on the CBA, so we have not consulted in the Union.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

III. Board Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee

Our 2021 audit (linked below) revealed no issues, so we received a clean audit. They praised Marcy for her work on PVPA's finances.

[2021 audit](#)

The Committee voted to accept the audit, and we have decided to recommend that the Board vote to approve the audit.

Question: can some of the additional money above what is expected to be used to continue to employ staff who we have brought on using COVID funding?

Answer: there are a number of things on which we can choose to spend the money. Further discussion is required before funds are appropriated. For now, this money will go into the reserves and be spent on capital needs when those arise.

Marty Espinola made a motion to Accept the FY2021 audit.

Shannon Materka seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

The Committee also discussed the July DESE projection for tuition (linked below). This projection is based on our enrollment demographics from last year, but it looks favorable at this point. Our second projection enrollment in December should be more accurate data. The critical projection is the third quarter projection, which will account for changes in above-foundation-rate spending that is likely going to increase due to COVID aid packages.

[FY2022 DESE tuition projection](#)

Committee meeting time was raised as a concern at the last Board meeting. We are attempting to work on that issue via email because there were not enough members at the last Finance meeting to do so.

B. Governance Committee

We need to know just what Board on Track is willing to do to help the Head of School Search Committee in its work. Marty has contacted Mike about this.

We agreed that a small committee of dedicated individuals is needed with representation from diverse groups. We believe those groups should be:

- 4 Board members with Marty as chair and Mindi as vice-chair
- 2 parents who have younger children in the school.
- 1 (required) union representative
- 1 administrator (not Brent in the event he applies for the job)
- 1 staff member representing the arts teachers (dept. head?)
- 1 teacher representing the academic teachers (dept. head?)
- Possibly a staff person who works in Special Education

The Governance Committee members want to provide guidance to the Search Committee. We agreed that there should be a description of the role of the members of the search committee, especially the time required for this important job. I spoke with Mindi who was on the previous PVPA search committee, and she will let prospective members of the committee know what to expect. Mindi is vice-chair of the search committee.

Shino agreed to research the companies that assist search committees as consultants and what costs are involved.

We agreed that we should seek input from the Board members and the school community about the kind of leader they'd like to have. Possibly a survey of some kind should be developed. Marty has done some research and developed a list of the personal and professional qualities of an effective school leader. Something like this could be the source of a survey.

As soon as we have a few people ready to serve on the search committee, we will schedule a meeting and begin our work. Of course, we will keep the Board informed on our progress.

C. Development Committee

This Committee still does not quite exist yet. This is the liaison Committee for a Board member to represent the Board in front of the Friends of PVPA.

D. School Leader Evaluation Committee

The next meeting for the School Leader Evaluation Committee will meet again on October 18th. Interested potential members are encouraged to reach out.

E. Long Range Infrastructure Planning Committee

The LRIPC is made up of David, John, and Brent. The next meeting will take place on November 2nd, and the Committee is looking for new membership. Please reach out if you are interested in becoming a member.

IV. Internal Stakeholders

A. Staff

Shannon:

Looking at the SAP, we took on the idea of diversity and decided to evaluate how the school is doing with diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The staff representatives sent out a survey to staff members about the inclusion of DEI in all aspects of PVPA life. Of the few staff members who responded, most know about the DEI work going on within the school community, some would like to see more work, and some believe that we are effective in what we are doing now.

Staff representatives have been trying to make connections with new teachers. They seem happy and eager for more opportunities to meet and get used to PVPA culture.

Staff would like to see the administration be cognizant of the lack of paraprofessionals, and the obstacles that poses, when they are conducting evaluations.

We have a new gym program!

B. Students

Student council has three student representatives per grade. Elections were just conducted.

Within grades, students discuss who is interested in acting as Board representative and who can make the time commitment. Our new Board representatives are Fiona Yates, Oscar Cloutier-Potter, Firas Hashmi, and Danyelle Joujoute.

New student representatives should be communicated to David so that he can be in touch about participation and student report content.

The Strategic Action Plan incorporated on the PVPA website is the 2016-2021 plan. That should be updated.

The idea of staggered lunch is not popular among students. Having lunch as an opportunity for club meetings and socializing is important, and 20 minutes does not feel nearly long enough to accomplish this. Students understand why this has to be done, but it feels unfair.

Brent: COVID makes things really difficult, and the administration sympathizes with student concerns. But, we also need to make decisions with safety and staff working conditions in mind. We are certainly doing our best to keep in mind student concerns.

Question: Will an 85% vaccination rate change things?

Answer: Potentially, but there are many students who will still feel anxious about possibly contracting COVID, which will still necessitate these safety measures.

Question: Is this the first the administration is hearing of student concerns?

Answer: We have heard some of these concerns up to this point. The general form for bringing student concerns to administration to do so through the Student Council.

A breakdown of the administrative structure would be helpful for students as well as staff. We should know who we can go to in different situations.

Prepared statement from Firas:

Hello, members of the board;

My name is Firas Hashmi, and I am the representative for the 11th grade. I am at a meeting of my scout troop, which is why I must speak to you by proxy today. I would like to bring to your attention a few issues.

Right now, our school offers four semesters of US History, double the amount that most schools require. But, it offers no comprehensive World History or European history courses. A background in global history is required by most colleges, and it is a little strange that PVPA, a college preparatory school, has this large gap in its curriculum. I would like to bring this issue to the attention of the board and would propose that we consider replacing some of our US History offerings with World History.

On a similar subject, our school does not offer any AP Classes, something that decreases the appeal of our school compared to a traditional public school. A lot of students would like to see AP Classes offered because these rigorous classes are excellent preparation for college academics. They also allow students to earn college credit while in high school, which can be helpful financially. So, I think that the school should explore the possibility of bringing one or two AP classes to PVPA in the near future.

That is all I have to say, for today. Thank you for your time, and thank you, Fiona, for reading this.

V. Other Business

A. President's Business

Brent and David are discussing a possible time for staff/Board collaboration.

Leadership support has been discussed as a complement to leadership evaluation. Marty and David are working on establishing regular meetings to support Brent in his position.

Educational excellence and the development of a data dashboard have also been discussed. We will continue to consider specifics and hope to share this data on a quarterly basis. One thing that came up in our board survey was sharing of data with the Board. We hope that creating a data dashboard will address this issue.

Tonya has volunteered to join a committee. The most significant need right now is the Head of School (or equivalent) Search Committee. Tonya will join this Committee.

The Diversity Plan and language of the Student Opportunity Act need to be made more accessible to the public via the PVPA website.

Given that two people have raised issues about document accessibility, it seems that it might be wise to put these documents in multiple places on the website.

VI. Other business not reasonably anticipated within 48 hours of meeting

A. Other Business

David and Brent met with Chris Fournier and Bob Brick to discuss the event planning for the 25th-anniversary event. One of David's primary goals is to use this event as a vehicle for fundraising. A representative from the Friends will be present at the next meeting. One idea that came up was to try to make some room in the budget for money that can be spent on developing this event.

As a point of clarification, Chris Fournier's job does not include the responsibility of fundraising. We have not recently discussed the addition of an official fundraising position, and this discussion will require additional assessment of the need for this role. We should also keep in mind the divide between PVPA and the Friends in fundraising.

If the Alumni and Outreach Coordinator position were to be potentially expanded to include fundraising, the position would need to be posted and should be discussed with the Friends.

There are talks about scheduling events for this year. These events will need to be established through smaller groups, so Trustees should keep this in mind and try to participate if possible.

Board members are encouraged to make personal contributions to the school—whether financial or otherwise.

VII. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

Marty Espinola made a motion to Adjourn the meeting at 20:01.

Jacob Rosenblum seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:01 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jacob Rosenblum