

APPROVED



Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School

Minutes

January Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday January 11, 2022 at 6:00 PM

Location

<https://zoom.us/j/98158607236?pwd=cG1OQkd2TTEvT2RWYTl4RXN4TzdBZz09>

Meeting ID: 981 5860 7236

Passcode: PVPA2022

Trustees Present

David Potter, LATRINA DENSON, Marty Espinola (remote), Mindi Winter, Neil Hede (remote), Shino Pichette (remote), Tonya Ward (remote)

Trustees Absent

Andrea Nathanson

Trustees who arrived after the meeting opened

LATRINA DENSON

Ex Officio Members Present

Brent Nielsen

Non Voting Members Present

Brent Nielsen

Guests Present

Jacob Rosenblum (remote), Jenna Sardella, Marcy Conner, Shannon Materka, Sofia Getoff-Scanlon

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 Jan 11, 2022 at 6:05 PM.

C. Read the Mission Statement

Jenna Sardella

D. Approve Minutes

Marty Espinola made a motion to Approve the minutes from December 14th, 2021.

Shino Pichette seconded the motion.

Some membership issues have been raised, including the issue that Jacob Rosenblum was never submitted for DESE approval.

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

LATRINA DENSON arrived at 6:11 PM.

E. Public Comment

As of now, PVPA has an outside company performing many of the technical theater tasks that students are generally asked to do. If students could be more involved, that would be valuable.

Brent: Increasing technical theater programming is a major administrative concern that is being addressed.

II. Executive Director Report

A. Social Media Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Hourly Pay Increase

School is canceled tomorrow due to a shortage of substitute teachers. We are fortunate that this is the first time this has had to be done. Commissioner Riley recommends that schools use their snow days when staffing shortages arise; minimum school day policies will be revisited if inclement weather results in a significant number of snow days.

Coming back from December break, there has been an increase in COVID cases at PVPA. Overall, things are going very well and staff are making the difference with their

increased efforts. The administration was able to hand out about 70 testing kits to staff members, which were helpful in preventing a positive staff member from entering the building.

Student and staff vaccination rates are 86% and 95%, respectively. Many students have received boosters.

Students have been understanding of additional COVID prevention measures.

The school received 3,000 KN95 masks from DESE, a six-week supply. The CDC tested these masks and found that they were less than 50% effective. The school has made masks available and placed an additional order to ensure that staff are wearing effective face coverings.

Social Media and Anti-bullying Policies

We are seeing a significant increase in cyberbullying behavior. The administration feels strongly that a policy would be important to implement right now.

Both the anti-bullying and social media policies were created and vetted by the Massachusetts Charter School Association. They have been revised for our needs and reviewed by our attorneys.

Hourly Pay Increase

It is very difficult to recruit substitutes and others for minimum-wage positions.

Mindi Winter made a motion to Approve both the Social Media and Anti-bullying Policy. Marty Espinola seconded the motion.

Question: In the Social Media Policy, it says that the school cannot request that a student disclose the password to a social media account and cannot be punished for failing to do so. What is our leverage?

Response: If there is enough evidence that a student has engaged in cyberbullying, they can face disciplinary action.

Question: Is there a plan for educating or advertising these two policies?

Response: We are planning on rolling out a new website soon. This website will include an accessible location to access these policies, and the administration plans to announce the policies to the community once they are approved. There is no plan to present these policies to the students directly, but there is some social media education in the works along.

Question: The language in these policies is gendered.

Response: The administration plans to go through the entire handbook and include edits to increase gender inclusivity.

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

Shino Pichette made a motion to Authorize the president of the Board of Trustees to sign a Memorandum of Agreement with the Union agreeing to the proposed starting hourly pay increase.

Marty Espinola seconded the motion.

Question: Is this an increase only for the starting rate for staff? Or does it apply to others as well?

Response: This is a retroactive policy that will both raise the starting rate and apply to those who began at the beginning of the year. The groups that will be impacted by this bump are outlined in the policy.

Staff members who have already submitted their resignation will not receive a pay increase.

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

III. Board Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee Report

Marcy will deliver the Finance report in Andrea's absence.

The Finance Committee met recently and reviewed a report on our financial progress during this fiscal year. Committee members asked questions about accounts that seem to be above expected rates; these are mostly due to new contracts that include beneficial financial kickbacks.

DESE releases quarterly tuition projections based on a number of factors. What we are looking at in the second-quarter projection is a large change in enrollment demographics. Overall, we are seeing a projected \$300,000+ increase in contrast to what was previously expected. The one thing that was of concern is the fact that many of our sending districts have not adjusted their above-foundation rates. This information is outdated and should be updated in the near future. The final note was that both first and second quarter projections would trigger staff increases as agreed upon in the Union contract.

The last thing that was discussed was the Board's request for funding for the head-of-school search. The Finance Committee will consider expected search committee costs as they arise.

Question: When our revenue is higher than projected, where does that money go? Can it be applied to needed improvements for the school?

Response: As we continue to receive updates, the Finance Committee will work in conjunction with relevant bodies to decide where that money should be directed. If not used, it will end up in reserves, which can be used for capital projects.

B. Governance Committee Report

The Governance Committee has been largely focused on assessing candidates for Board Membership. The Committee is prepared to present four candidates this evening.

Rick Pouliot

- A white and Native American man with a kid in 7th grade.
- Finance, education, business, and community advocacy background
- Co-founded a Native American non-profit with annual budget of over \$500,000 and currently provides consultation and advising to tribal non-profit organizations.
- He is a grant evaluator for the New England Grassroots Environmental Justice Fund and he has developed community-based and regional initiatives focusing on domestic & sexual violence prevention and intervention.
- Served in the Louisiana Army National Guard and the US Army
- And he worked at Thetford Academy and other schools.
- Too much experience to share here, check out his resume!

Maggie Solis

- White woman with a student in 8th grade.
- Law and education background.
- Career law clerk at the US District Court in Springfield.
- Served as Treasurer for the Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School Family Association, and as a board member of Friends of Children in Hadley, and was the Chair of Easthampton Zoning Board of Appeals.
- Was the Operations Manager at the Kaplan Education Center.

Jesse Pompei

- White woman with a student in 8th grade
- Education background. Worked in Northampton and West Springfield public schools and at a Montessori Charter School as a Teacher and Reading Specialist.
- Served on the school council in Leeds where they did anti-bias work and curriculum advisory.

Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola

- [Hispanic woman and] former PVPA alumni, staff member, and board member.
- Background in Education, Restorative Justice, and transformative social justice and is now working closely with DESE in her work.

Marty Espinola made a motion to Move Rick Pouliot forward in the nomination process as a new Board Trustee.

David Potter seconded the motion.

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

Shino Pichette made a motion to Move Maggie Solis forward in the nomination process as a new Board Trustee.

Tonya Ward seconded the motion.

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

Shino Pichette made a motion to Move Jesse Pompei forward in the nomination process as a new Board Trustee.

David Potter seconded the motion.

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

Shino Pichette made a motion to Move Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola forward in the nomination process as a new Board Trustee.

Marty Espinola seconded the motion.

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

C. Long Range Infrastructure Planning Committee Report

The Committee has developed an organizational tool to assess our needs for the next five years. These goals have been awarded priority levels and will continue to be considered.

D. Executive Search Committee Report

The Executive Search Committee has been functioning with a skeletal group of people because of a need to move forward.

Last month, the Committee agreed on a set of questions to gather meaningful feedback from the PVPA community. This survey will hopefully be sent out soon.

The Committee has agreed that the job should be posted this month at a national level. Final review of documents is the only step left in the process.

The Committee has decided to use a consulting firm to vet potential candidates and may seek out consultant assistance in advertising the position.

David will share a final list of Committee members with the community once candidates have confirmed their participation.

E. Executive Evaluation Committee

The Executive Evaluation Committee is plowing forward with the production of pertinent questions with regard to the goals outlined in the Strategic Action Plan.

IV. Internal Stakeholders

A. Staff Reports

Teachers have appreciated COVID responses and the clarity of policy recently.

Teachers have raised an issue with tardiness and wonder if there are policies in place that can be clarified when students are missing large portions of class due to tardiness in the mornings. The staff is looking for a solution to this issue.

Overall, behavior in the classroom seems to be improving. There is an issue in consideration of consequences and how those are decided upon and distributed among students.

B. Student Reports

The town hall meeting was effective and gave an opportunity for students to provide feedback.

Middle schoolers would appreciate trigger warnings on sensitive topics in schoolwide emails.

Keeping the community updated on positive COVID cases among staff and students would be helpful. Publicizing DESE's dashboard that presents these numbers could be a way to address this issue.

Students would appreciate an opportunity to be more involved in technical theater work that is being outsourced currently. Putting students in positions like these will save money and provide an opportunity for arts experience.

Question: Should we expect continuation of closures due to staffing shortages?

Response (Brent): As we increase substitute staffing, we hope to remain open as things progress.

High School students would appreciate increased opportunities for interaction with students in Middle School.

Students would appreciate an anonymous forum for questions and feedback.

V. President's Business

A. Committee Minutes

Committee minutes must be shared with DESE once they are approved.

B. Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Anti-racism training is an important consideration for the Board as we move into the future; we must keep this in mind as we recruit and onboard new members.

C. Strategic Action Plan

We talked about the collection of academic data in our strategic action plan. As we move into the future, developing a report on this data would be helpful.

D. Teacher Appreciation Donations

VI. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

David Potter made a motion to Move into executive session to discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual.

Marty Espinola seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

Andrea Nathanson	Absent
Tonya Ward	Aye
Neil Hede	Aye
Mindi Winter	Aye
David Potter	Aye
Marty Espinola	Aye
Shino Pichette	Aye
LATRINA DENSON	Aye

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:58 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jacob Rosenblum