

APPROVED



Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School

Minutes

May Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday May 10, 2022 at 6:00 PM

Location

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

Meeting ID: 981 5860 7236

Passcode: PVPA2022

Trustees Present

Andrea Nathanson (remote), David Potter, Jacob Rosenblum (remote), Jenna Sardella, Jesse Pompei (remote), LATRINA DENSON, Maggie Solis (remote), Marty Espinola (remote), Mindi Winter, Neil Hede (remote), Richard Pouliot (remote), Shannon Materka, Shino Pichette (remote), Sofia Getoff-Scanlon (remote), Tonya Ward (remote)

Trustees Absent

Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola

Ex Officio Members Present

Brent Nielsen

Non Voting Members Present

Brent Nielsen

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 May 10, 2022 at 6:05 PM.

C. Read the Mission Statement

David Potter

D. Approve Minutes

David Potter made a motion to approve the minutes from February Board of Trustees Meeting on 02-08-22.

Maggie Solis seconded the motion.

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

David Potter made a motion to approve the minutes from April Board of Trustees Meeting on 04-05-22.

Jenna Sardella seconded the motion.

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

E. Public Comment

A video was shared with David, which he was advised not to show to maintain confidentiality for the students involved.

This comment comes from a PVPA parent of an immunodeficient daughter. Her students is therefore at a much higher risk of serious illness if exposed to COVID-19. The efficacy of the vaccine wanes overtime, and there are still many unknowns. Masks help, especially as cases are rising across the state. Hampden and Hampshire are now at medium, and the rest of the state is at high alert. We are not at a point where we should be removing masks.

This next comment also comes from a PVPA parent. Masks should remain mandatory at PVPA, and this parent's students will continue to wear masks if the mandate is lifted. This parent is asking that student production performers be exempt from a mandate.

This comment is from a PVPA student who believes that masks should be optional. Students who want to wear masks can continue to protect themselves. As a person who does their research, the CDC does say that "if you do wear a mask, you are less likely to get COVID from other people."

Another PVPA parent shares support for the continued mask mandate. Rates are going up, and schools are switching back to masks mandatory—illustrated by Northampton Public Schools. Cases spiked when they went optional. In order to keep people safe,

everybody must wear masks—it does not work when only a few people wear them. COVID infections impact students' learning. Let's stick it out through the rest of the year.

This speaker works in the main office. She believes that masks should remain optional and wants to comment that students who believe in making masks optional are afraid to speak up. She asks that the Board makes a decision for the rest of the year. She also comments that a mandate needs to be enforced.

This comment comes from a PVPA student. Being immunocompromised, this student is disabled, and a COVID infection would be life threatening—that is just a fact. She has been watching people talk about how infection is not life threatening, but when the harm to disabled populations is not acknowledged, it is failing to recognize an important community at PVPA. There are students with cancer and other illnesses that make them vulnerable.

II. Executive Director Report

A. Brent Nielson

First, Brent would like to thank the community and the Board for giving him the opportunity to lead the school.

We just had our WOFA show, our first Ultimate tournament in a few years is coming up, we have a middle school dance coming up, and the junior/senior prom is coming up. On Friday night of this week, the ninth and tenth grade semi-formal is taking place.

Next weekend, Hamlet performances will begin and go through Saturday. The 25th anniversary event will also take place on campus next weekend.

Graduation will take place at the Academy of Music.

Unity Day will take place on June 3rd, and our Restorative Practices Coordinator is working on developing workshops.

Our 7/8 production will be going up on June 10th.

Brent shares survey data, [linked here](#).

Northampton has announced a significant increase in positive cases. They have returned to masks mandatory, Leverett has returned to masks mandatory. Many schools in the area have seen spikes. Information [linked here](#).

Brent would make the recommendation, given the numbers, that PVPA remain mask mandatory—there is a lot of activity in the next few weeks, and students will be in the building for longer. Many people have died from COVID; nobody has died from a mask.

III. Board Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee Report

The Finance Committee met on May 5th and decided to make the recommendation that the budget is approved in full.

Andrea shares information from the budget report, [linked here](#).

High-level points:

- Marcy has presented a balanced budget
- Assumptions in the budget are important and can be viewed on page 4 of the report
- Total revenue for the school can be viewed on page 3

Question: Is the student prediction due to our current enrollment? It is slightly below 400.

Answer: Yes. Enrollment has gone down at Charter schools around the nation.

Question: Is there any possibility that we could continue to offer free lunches to students even though the state is not offering funding?

Answer: That is not included in this budget, though it would be interesting to explore.

Question: Are the contributions from the Friends of PVPA from the Friends? What does this have to do with the mortgage?

Answer: That number is just a prediction of fundraising outputs.

Question: What is auxiliary revenue?

Answer: This is revenue from the busses, etc.

Question: For the event coming up on May 21st—is this a fundraising event?

Answer: The Friends hope that contributors will cover the whole cost of the event. There is also a fundraising aspect of the event.

Question: When something says restricted, what does that mean?

Answer: When donations are made, sometimes those donations are restricted to certain activities.

On page 7, you can see the assumptions included in the expense report.

Health insurance was going to be increased approximately 16%, but it has been negotiated down to 5.67%

There is also a plan for an approximately \$38,000 increase in technology expenses. To address equity issues, it is important for students to have personal devices. Our technology coordinator has looked into a plan to provide devices to all students and a replacement plan. The initial funding would come from COVID-related ESSER funding; this increase is in the budget for the replacement plan only.

Question: Is the insurance increase due to a move to a higher deductible plan?

Answer: Yes. This may cost the school a little bit more, but it is the best plan for teachers and the school.

Answer: All of the options that Blue Cross Blue Shield offered included different specifics in terms of coverage, etc. The school made the decision to stick with our previous plan with a higher deductible because it will not have an impact on teachers.

This budget addresses many of the points in our Strategic Action Plan.

Question: What comes from the MCPSA that justifies its membership increase?

Answer: Most of this is in the form of lobbying by the MCPSA to include Charter Schools in funding from the state. The MCPSA also offers a variety of programs to support Board Trustees among others.

The last page of the budget reports illustrates the capital budget. The Finance Committee's ask will be to approve both as a package. Many of our capital plans have been stalled due to COVID, so many of these items are identical to incomplete items from FY20 onward. The PA and CCTV upgrades are both in motion right now. Usually, \$100-120 thousand keeps us comfortable—this budget fits within those parameters.

Question: In last year's audit, there was a \$500,000 surplus. Is that not reflected here?

Answer: That was the consolidated surplus.

David Potter made a motion to Approve the FY23 budget as presented.

Mindi Winter seconded the motion.

Staff will abstain on this vote to ensure no conflict of interest.

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

Roll Call

Neil Hede	Aye
Maggie Solis	Aye
LATRINA DENSON	Aye
Sofia Getoff-Scanlon	Aye
Marty Espinola	Aye
Richard Pouliot	Aye
Tonya Ward	Aye
Mindi Winter	Aye
Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola	Absent
David Potter	Aye

Roll Call

Jesse Pompei	Aye
Shino Pichette	Aye
Andrea Nathanson	Aye
Jacob Rosenblum	Aye
Shannon Materka	Abstain
Jenna Sardella	Abstain

B. Governance Committee Report

The Governance Committee has not met recently because of conflicting schedules and Marty's bout with COVID. The agenda for later this month will include methods for attracting new Trustees with regard for diversity. The Governance Committee will also work on clarifying the bylaws and attracting new members to the committee itself. The agenda can be viewed on BoardOnTrack.

C. Executive Evaluation Committee

The Executive Evaluation Committee has been meeting weekly to work out a new system for assessing the Head of School. This work has been done in conjunction with BoardOnTrack.

The new evaluation tool will build on the Strategic Action Plan. The tool will also include self-set goals and evaluations on those. The Committee would like to present a more worked out plan during the June meeting.

BoardOnTrack has been essential during this process—they are money well spent. The Charter School Association has also been a helpful resource.

The Committee would also like to become a standing committee of the Board of Trustees. David Potter made a motion to designate the Head of School Support and Evaluation Committee as a standing Committee of the Board.

Shino Pichette seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

Maggie Solis	Aye
David Potter	Aye
Richard Pouliot	Aye
Neil Hede	Aye
Mindi Winter	Abstain
Shannon Materka	Aye
Marty Espinola	Aye
Jesse Pompei	Aye
Jacob Rosenblum	Aye
LATRINA DENSON	Aye
Tonya Ward	Aye

Roll Call

Jenna Sardella	Aye
Sofia Getoff-Scanlon	Aye
Andrea Nathanson	Aye
Shino Pichette	Aye
Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola	Absent

IV. Internal Stakeholders

A. Staff Reports

Shannon shares the graphs of staff and student mask mandate data, [linked here](#).

Melissa McClung's Comment: Although masks are a good measure, they have drawbacks. COVID is preventable and manageable. Masks are optional around the state, and the removal of mandates has not caused a spike in cases.

Other staff are also desperate to see their students faces.

Petula's Comment: I will not feel comfortable teaching in the school if the mandate is lifted. Massachusetts is back in the red. We must keep the mandate in place for the remainder of the year and reevaluate prior to the next school year.

Jenna wants to acknowledge that she often speaks with the middle school crowd, which is a different portion of the staff than those with whom Shannon most often confers. Most of the staff Jenna has spoken to either feel strongly about the mandate or want to stand in solidarity with students who want to keep masks in place.

Shannon proposes that we move to an evidence-based process of considering mask mandates going into the future.

B. Student Reports

Seniors: The 25th anniversary event is on May 21st. Firas and Sofia are both on the planning committee, and it will likely be a really exciting event. Everybody should try to make it if possible!

Juniors: The Headgear show was great. It was nice going to see a production again. Students are also planning to establish and operate a technology support desk. The National Honor Society has completed over 180 combined hours of service, illustrating a positive impact on the community.

Sophomores: Fiona is not feeling well and will not speak this evening.

V. President's Business

A.

Mask Mandate

David references the chart Brent shared earlier as well as the county-wide data set, [linked here](#).

Maggie Solis made a motion to Maintain the mask mandate through the end of the year, making masks optional—only for students who are able to provide evidence of a negative COVID test within 24 hours—while they are performing onstage.

LATRINA DENSON seconded the motion.

I agree with the motion—I would like to see an amendment made to ensure that students are required to wear masks backstage.

During the WOFA show, we were mask optional onstage and mask optional backstage.

This motion could also include a provision that maskless students must be tested.

Brent: this is possible but only for students who have opted into the testing program.

Do we want to extend the motion to clarify rapid/PCR?

I do not think that rapids would be an accurate way to ensure that students are actually testing.

It is disappointing that some teachers would favor seeing student's faces over maintaining their safety. We should maintain the mask mandate.

We need to protect our teachers to ensure that the learning process can continue safely and without disruption. To prevent inconsistency, keeping a mandate in place is logical.

The Department of Education has been keeping data on absenteeism among students. The effects of continued absences have major impacts on student outcomes. The threshold for chronic absenteeism will be moved from 18 to 36 days this year, but it does not change the fact that students who miss more than 10% of school days are less likely to have positive outcomes.

In response to the point about testing being unverifiable—I would hope that, within our PVPA community, we trust our students to provide accurate details.

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

Rick Pouliot was appointed to the Finance Committee. Thank you, Rick, for taking on this role.

EJ Lafleur will be appointed to the Governance Committee.

B. May 2, 2022 Open Meeting Law Complaint from Laura Ortiz.

This matter is a legal matter, and we would like the Board to approve the use of our attorneys to manage these issues.

David Potter made a motion to Approve use of attorney Marc Terry to manage and address the OML complaint that was raised by Laura Ortiz.

Shino Pichette seconded the motion.

Question: Will the lawyers provide a recommendation leading to a Board vote?

Answer: I would assume yes. They will not do anything without approval.

Question: Are these lawyers working on retainer?

Answer: They will send us a bill.

Point of clarification: the complaint was sent to us, but it was also issued with the attorney general's office. It is a legal complaint to a state agency which will be answered by the attorney.

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

VI. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:59 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jacob Rosenblum