

APPROVED



Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School

Minutes

April Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday April 5, 2022 at 6:00 PM

Location

PVPA 3rd Floor Conference Room

Join Online:

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

Meeting ID: 981 5860 7236

Passcode: PVPA2022

Trustees Present

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

Trustees Absent

LATRINA DENSON, Marty Espinola

Trustees who arrived after the meeting opened

Andrea Nathanson

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 Apr 5, 2022 at 6:08 PM.

C. Approve Minutes

Maggie Solis made a motion to approve the minutes from March Board of Trustees Meeting on 03-17-22.

Sofia Getoff-Scanlon seconded the motion.

The minutes from the February meeting were not approved at the March meeting due to an issue with the minutes. This issue will be discussed in the interim, and the unapproved minutes will be up for approval as soon as possible.

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

Roll Call

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

Andrea Nathanson arrived at 6:12 PM.

D. Public Comment

Parent of a current student and accepted student

Parent wants to thank the school community for their work on keeping students safe. This parent asks the Board to extend the mask mandate until April 17th—the beginning of Spring break. Spring break will likely result in an increase of cases, so the Board should give the administration authority to reinstate the mask mandate.

Parent of two high school students

Parent asks for the immediate removal of the mask mandate and a move to a mask optional model. PVPA is the last school in Western Massachusetts that is forcing masks upon students.

PVPA Student

This student will have to go remote if the mask mandate is lifted. The health issues they face would force them to leave the building and attend classes remotely.

Speech Language Pathologist

Face-to-face interaction makes us human. A mask-optional system will improve the lives of students given the data.

PVPA Student

This student favors keeping the mask mandate, citing the omicron sub-variant across Europe (which will likely extend to the United States). This student got COVID at the close of 2021 and experienced symptoms for months following their infection. Prevention is key, and mask-wearing is easy.

PVPA Alum and Parent

This person is a nutritionist and acupuncture specialist, so they are familiar with the interpretation of data. The data says that masks are absolutely ineffective. Individuals look foolish wearing masks.

Parent of a PVPA Student

This parent is immunocompromised and on chemo. They were seriously ill when they were infected with COVID, but they are supportive of lifting the mask mandate. Other efforts are more effective, the practices of which should continue into the future. COVID-19 is a new reality.

PVPA Staff Member

This staff member requests that the mask mandate be lifted. This staff member believes that staff and students should not be told that they must wear masks. There will always be COVID cases

PVPA Teacher

This teacher is speaking in favor of maintaining the mask mandate. Student mental health is a major concern here. Making masks optional would likely increase anxiety felt by a number of students. Teaching staff dealing with student mental health challenges are put under a lot of pressure.

PVPA Parent

This parent is a mental health worker who is immunocompromised and speaking in favor of maintaining the mask mandate. Masks do work—we can see this in the data. We need to protect our most vulnerable students and avoid dismissing their worries.

PVPA Parent

PVPA should follow the data that has caused many schools in the area to switch to a mask optional system. Many scientists and physicians are recommending one-way masking, which would still be possible under a mask-optional system. Masking can be harmful for students.

PVPA Parent

Rates of COVID are rising in the area, and it looks like the state as a whole is rising. Our COVID rates have been low *because* of our current masking system. Students and staff will be traveling during Spring break, and masking is necessary for safety.

II. Executive Director Report

A. Brent Nielson

All of the science tells us that masks, testing, quarantine, vaccinations, and hand-washing are important to reduce the spread.

Brent reviews the data shared with the board, [linked here](#).

PVPA is a fairly small school in terms of classroom sizes and space capacities. Our students are generally closer to each other than 3 feet.

Neil Hede made a motion to Move to a mask optional system on May second, at which point the administration will have full authority over reinstating a mandate as well as managing all other COVID-related safety measures.

Shino Pichette seconded the motion.

Shannon

Many teachers will continue to wear masks if the mandate is lifting. Some teachers are very anxious, and some teachers feel that masks limit communication with students. Teachers want to watch the science.

Students

Safety is the most important component. We need to protect our most vulnerable student populations. COVID cases are on the rise, and the experts say that masks work. Mask mandates can be looked at like peanut allergies—not every school is peanut free, but PVPA is because giving up something simple is worth it for to keep students safe.

It is not time to remove the mandate, nor is it the time to make a decision about the date for mandate removal. Cases are up, and the new variant is prevalent among those cases. Removing the mask mandate at some point this year may make sense, but we should not set a date to remove the mandate before we are aware of the environment at the time of the removal.

The sample data that Brent shared shows that cases are rising. We need to maintain the mask mandate until the data suggests that we are in the clear to do so.

Andrea

In my time on this Board, it has always been important for us to listen to the community. The question is of our culture and what we value. It is important to listen to the voices of the community. We need to keep in mind that it is okay for PVPA to have a culture that is different from those around us.

Jesse

Thank you to the school community for everything that they have done to ensure safety.

Neil

The numbers that stood out to me most were the number of students, staff, and parents who did not respond. It seems that much of the community is somewhere in the middle on the issue.

Shino

When the survey was shared, the largest group indicated that a removal date by May first would be reasonable. Keeping the mandate after the break is necessary to ensure that we are looking at the progression of the data.

David

Thank you to everybody who has shared. My thought is that dictating a date right now feels unwise. Instead, I propose that we put the decision entirely within the hands of the administration.

Maggie

I appreciate the perspectives of everybody who has made a comment and recognize that PVPA is a unique community. My question for Brent is, are you comfortable with having this decision rest in your hands?

Brent

I think that the administration has done a good job making decisions so far. Making these decisions comes with a lot of feelings from the school community, and I am expecting to receive a lot of communication if I am forced to make an unpopular decision. I believe that, at this point in time, it will be clear when a decision should be made and not particularly onerous to myself or the administration. Removing masks too soon may cause students to stray from other guidelines that have been keeping the community safe.

Neil

My motion was for, beginning on the second of May, the administration to have full authority to make a decision about masking. The administration would not *have* to move to optional if conditions do not allow for a safe return to a mask-optional school.

Andrea

Proposes an amendment to keep the mask mandate until May second, at which point the administration has the authority to determine whether PVPA remains mask required or moves to mask optional.

The motion did not carry.

Roll Call

Jesse Pompei	No
Richard Pouliot	No
Sofia Getoff-Scanlon	No
Shino Pichette	Aye
Mindi Winter	Aye
Neil Hede	Aye
Marty Espinola	Absent
Jenna Sardella	No
Tonya Ward	No
Shannon Materka	Aye
Maggie Solis	No
Jacob Rosenblum	No
LATRINA DENSON	Absent
Andrea Nathanson	No
David Potter	No

David Potter made a motion to Maintain all current COVID-related health and safety protocols until at least May Second, upon which date the school administration will have authority to make any further decisions regarding these protocols.

Neil Hede seconded the motion.

Jesse

I am confused about this motion. Is this saying that the administration may take any action to maintain or change COVID safety protocols after May second?

Brent

Yes, all safety protocols including mask mandates.

Sofia

Maintaining continuity in decision making is important. Keeping this decision with the Board is a good way to ensure that all members of the community are giving feedback in real time. The school administration is more than capable of making good decisions for students, but this decision should remain within this body.

Maggie

How have policies progressed so far? Have they been in the hands of the administration or the Board?

Brent

All COVID health and safety protocols have been decided upon by the administration. Most were also all federally mandates, and those that were not were based on recommendations from public health bodies.

RECESS (5 minutes) - 7:55 - 8:00

The motion did not carry.

Roll Call

Sofia Getoff-Scanlon	No
Andrea Nathanson	Aye
LATRINA DENSON	Absent
Richard Pouliot	No
David Potter	No
Jesse Pompei	No
Shannon Materka	Aye
Maggie Solis	No
Tonya Ward	No
Neil Hede	Aye
Jacob Rosenblum	No
Shino Pichette	Abstain
Marty Espinola	Absent
Mindi Winter	Abstain
Jenna Sardella	Aye

Jacob Rosenblum made a motion to Leave all current COVID safety protocols in place until the May Board meeting, at which point the Board will reconsider the protocols.

Sofia Getoff-Scanlon seconded the motion.

Shannon

If this motion carries and we do consider the motion in May, we should bring specific data to support whatever decision will be made at the May meeting.

Maggie

My position on this issue is not particularly driven by data about what is safe at a population level. I am not making a decision as a public health individual. I am making a decision based on what students have shared during the past two meetings. These students want to prioritize keeping students safe, and I find that very compelling.

Andrea

I agree with what Maggie is saying. I am also in favor of handing this decision to the administration so that they can consider the data and make decisions in real time. Considering these issues on a monthly schedule seems like a slow process. These decisions, from my perspectives, should be made at an administrative level.

Mindi

We need to keep in mind that, when we are dealing with PVPA, we are dealing with a non-traditional system. Student safety should be our number one priority—if our students are telling us that they feel safer with masks, we should realize that we are hearing this because of the nature of our school district.

Firas

We should approve this motion to avoid a continuation of our undecided monthly meetings.

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

Roll Call

Richard Pouliot	Aye
Jacob Rosenblum	Aye
Jesse Pompei	Aye
Marty Espinola	Absent
LATRINA DENSON	Absent
Mindi Winter	Aye
Sofia Getoff-Scanlon	Aye
Neil Hede	Abstain
David Potter	Aye
Andrea Nathanson	Aye
Tonya Ward	Aye
Shannon Materka	Aye
Maggie Solis	No
Jenna Sardella	Aye
Shino Pichette	Aye

We have an opportunity to name one of our teachers as a recipient of a teaching award. PVPA has chosen to name Jenna Sardella as that recipient.

Jenna

I am honored and want to say that it is an privilege to interact with students every day.

III. Finance Committee Report

A. Andrea

N/a

IV. Infrastructure/Facilities Committee Report

A. David

N/a

V. Executive Search Committee Report

A. Mindi

The community interviews for the three finalist candidates is because we are awaiting confirmation from those nominated. The interviews for these finalists are April 11th, 12th,

and 13th. All three will be brought in for full-day interviews, and there will be time for all constituency groups to meet with the candidates.

All Trustees should plan to attend the final sessions for candidates. Trustees will also be asked to deliberate and make a final determination as to the hiring process.

Jake

Please offer an online option for Trustees so that they have an opportunity to provide input.

Rick

Will the Board receive documents like Curricula Vitae?

David

Yes, once decisions are finalized

VI. President's Business

A. Board on Track contract renewal

If we can make a decision about this in May, that would be immensely helpful. We *need* to make a decision by June.

B. Summer Meetings & Retreat

There will be a retreat this year, but the Board does not plan to meet over the summer at this point. A doodle poll for retreat dates will likely be sent out in the near future.

VII. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

Mindi Winter made a motion to Adjourn the meeting at 8:25.

Jenna Sardella 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 8:25 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jacob Rosenblum