

APPROVED



Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time

Monday April 11, 2022 at 5:00 PM

Location

PVPA 3rd Floor Conference Room

Zoom Account is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Board of Trustees HoS Interview 1

Time: Apr 11, 2022 05:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81730175160?pwd=K0hQeVVIIdIF5UVozWFVBWEhOYUUtMUT09>

Meeting ID: 817 3017 5160

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Trustees Present

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, Sofia Getoff-Scanlon (remote), Tonya Ward (remote)

Trustees Absent

Andrea Nathanson, LATRINA DENSON, Marty Espinola

Guests Present

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 Monday Apr 11, 2022 at 5:04 PM.

II. Head of School Finalist Interview 1

A. Candidate: Erica Manville

Communication between a school's administration and students, staff, and parents, plays an important role in shaping the school community. Tell us about how you would approach communication as the Head of School, ideally with some examples that have informed your views.

- Establishing an open communication style between teachers, students, administrators, the Board, etc. would be a great step. Erica would like to send out a weekly email to update the school community and implement a system to solicit feedback from different stakeholders in the community. When everybody is in the know and on the same page, the environment is much more positive.

I would like to hear more about your experience in managing and evaluating staff and faculty; and in developing, implementing and managing budgets and policies.

- Erica has a lot of background in implementing evaluation systems and developing policy. She does not have experience in budgeting, so that is one area of growth that she would have to address on the job. Erica has done a lot of work on developing and implementing evaluations—she has a series of ideas about how to make evaluations most meaningful. What is being evaluated versus what is expected can be disparate; closing this gap makes a school community stronger. Erica has been an evaluator in the past, so she has been on either side of the table. Evaluations can be extremely positive when done correctly. While she does not have comprehensive budgeting experiences, she does have experience writing grants and managing smaller, grant-based budgets and reporting back about how that money is allocated.

Part of PVPA's strategic action plan is improving our Diversity, Equity, Anti-Racism, and Inclusion. What steps would you take as head of school to prioritize supporting and amplifying the voices of our students and faculty who are part of underrepresented and marginalized groups?

- Erica was confused by the strategic plan—she would have liked to see more actionable steps under the goals. Being an antiracist educator has been a priority for Erica, and she wants to bring that to PVPA. Including voices from individuals from marginalized communities is the first step in addressing issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Erica has followed educators from marginalized communities and made efforts to amplify those voices. Listening, hearing, lending agency, and including marginalized voices in developing action steps is the number one priority.

How would you describe your philosophy when it comes to discipline, specifically with balancing punishment and restorative justice?

- Restorative Practices only work when they are done with fidelity. Having a conversation about how discipline and Restorative Practices function in the classroom is extremely important—all students *and* all staff need to be on the same page. Establishing a tier system for punishments in and out of the classroom is important. If behaviors continue in or outside of the classroom, it is clear that something is going on for that student. Opening a dialogue at this point is essential in developing an understanding of what might be motivating a student to act in a certain way. Suspensions often apply to students from historically marginalized communities.

What role do you envision the student body having in decision making processes and what steps would you take to create an environment where students feel listened to, communicated with, and valued by their school administration?

- What helps students helps everybody. Maintaining an open dialogue between the administration and the student body is essential. Connection with students, as a

teacher, has been an important part of Erica's life. She is prepared to utilize this background to increase communication between students and administration.

How do you approach big decision making, and what is most important to you when weighing decisions?

- Committees are extremely important. Collaboration and feedback from all stakeholders is essential when making big decisions. Working in a vacuum is not effective—we need to work together. Recognizing the value in every contribution is extremely important. Erica has worked at charter schools that practiced a collective approach in the past and plans to carry this experience to PVPA.

Have you ever engaged with workers unions in the past? If so, how might that influence your work with the PVPA teachers union? If not, how would you plan to work with the PVPA teachers union?

- Became union president unexpectedly. The elementary school and high school in Erica's previous district had a lot of conflict, and she responded to this by establishing a co-presidency between herself and an elementary school representative. The last raise received was in the distant past and a minimal increase, so her first task was to enter collective bargaining. Erica believes in unions, and she wants school leadership to work in conjunction with the union rather than in conflict. She has been on the other side and understands how to work with a union productively.

Tell us a story about a time that you made a mistake in a leadership role and how you handled it.

- Erica, as the coordinator of the after school program, hired staff and community members to manage an arts-based learning program in an effort to utilize social-emotional learning to raise test scores. She made the assumption that she would be facilitating a group of teachers from a number of different backgrounds. Staff would be working on a number of different tasks, such as boxing and math practice. The different groups of staff members were unhappy that they were given tasks requiring disparate effort (e.g. tag vs grammar practice). If Erica had been forthright about how this system would work, things would have gone better.

Given what you know about PVPA, where do you think the school needs the most support / work and how would you plan to tackle that?

- It seems that there are some behavioral issues that stem from the community feeling at PVPA. There seems to be some discomfort about policies and the way that things have gone for students. Erica reiterates that her priority is the students. The lack of communication between staff and students is one of the largest problems Erica has identified; closing this gap is a major priority.

PVPA's MCAS scores, in English and especially Math, consistently trail those of other local schools. What steps will you take to narrow the MCAS gap?

- Erica has reviewed PVPA's report card. In North Adams, Erica's current institution sits toward the bottom of the list in a number of academic rankings. As part of a team to address deficits, Erica will bring these skills to PVPA and use her experience to close the MCAS gap. Erica identifies the schedule as a potential issue bringing MCAS scores down. Having a strong system for MTSS is essential.

What concrete steps will you take to improve our arts programs?

- As an arts teacher, Erica has been looking at arts pathways for a long time. As a visual arts teacher, Erica hopes that she can play a role in improving these pathways. Working with a number of outside sources (e.g. museums, local arts teachers), Erica will play a role in finding what PVPA's arts departments need for success. 50 students from Erica's current class have artwork being displayed at Mass MoCA in the upcoming weeks.

What steps will you take to support faculty retention?

- Looking at the problems within her own school, Erica sees that people are not applying to jobs that have been posted. People are leaving teaching at an extremely high rate, and it looks like next year will be even worse. The first step to retaining staff is making PVPA a place where teachers *want* to spend their time. Getting students to buy into the atmosphere will make these staff members want to stay. As head of school, Erica reiterates that she will put students at the center of everything.

How do you envision beginning in this role knowing that collective bargaining and budgetary concerns will arise at the start of your administration?

- Erica has been on the union side of bargaining. At the end of the day, the community and the students are what matter most in a school. Even though we may have different outlooks, there is always opportunity to work together to figure out what will be best for the school. We can all be on the same side, particularly with my plan to introduce interest-based bargaining. The reason I am pursuing a school leadership position is because I know what is best for students, and I want to be in a position where I can advocate for that.

Question: What are you looking for right now in a leader for PVPA?

Jesse - As a member of the Board and as a PVPA parent, I am looking for somebody to bring joy to the school. The community is wonderful, and bringing a sense of joy to the school is something I would love to see.

Erica - I have a daughter who is an artist, and I have looked for a school that will bring her joy. Fostering the amazing qualities that every PVPA student has within them would be my priority as a head of school.

Neil - Bringing stability to the school is a need.

Erica - We need a stable leadership team, we need teachers to stay, we need stability in bargaining, we need a stable schedule. I want to help all members of the community feel grounded and see their worth.

Maggie - Putting the focus back on the kids and the arts is essential. We need a head of school who will stabilize the school and prioritize students and the arts.

Erica - The student group said the same things. This is clearly an issue that is on the minds of all stakeholders, and it is something I hope to address.

Rick - As a parent, my kid and her friends want to be listened to and validated. We need a head of school who will listen to student voices, follow up on things, and stand with the student body.

Erica - That is what I want, as well.

III. 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 6:22 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jacob Rosenblum