

APPROVED



# Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School

## Minutes

### March Board Meeting

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#### Date and Time

Tuesday March 12, 2024 at 6:00 PM

#### Location

Zoom Account is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: March Board Meeting

Time: Mar 12, 2024 06:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82836688148?pwd=SDE3empERkpXTklaZzZtVkl5RWU0dz09>

Meeting ID: 828 3668 8148

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#### **Trustees Present**

Azizah Yasin (remote), David Cavallin, David Potter, LATRINA DENSON (remote), Mindi Winter, Neil Hede (remote), Sasha Viands (remote), Shino Pichette (remote)

#### **Trustees Absent**

Fiona Yates, Vanessa Ford

#### **Ex Officio Members Present**

Brent Nielsen, Marcy Conner

#### **Non Voting Members Present**

Brent Nielsen, Marcy Conner

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### **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 Mar 12, 2024 at 6:10 PM.

#### **C. Read the Mission Statement**

David Potter read the mission statement.

#### **D. D. Approve Minutes**

David Potter made a motion to approve the minutes from February Board Meeting on 02-13-24.

Mindi Winter seconded the motion.

Remove the repeated information in Brent's report section.

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

#### **Roll Call**

|                |        |
|----------------|--------|
| Neil Hede      | Aye    |
| Vanessa Ford   | Absent |
| Azizah Yasin   | Aye    |
| Mindi Winter   | Aye    |
| LATRINA DENSON | Aye    |
| Shino Pichette | Aye    |
| David Cavallin | Aye    |
| Sasha Viands   | Aye    |
| David Potter   | Aye    |
| Fiona Yates    | Absent |

## **II. Head of School Report**

### **A. Brent's Report**

#### **Brent reports out:**

The lottery was very successful and looking good. We plan to start the year at capacity and a bit over, anticipating that some students leave early on (as typically happens every year).

Next week Brent will share information about the districts our students are coming from and trends we see for next year.

We submitted the March 1 enrollment data. We were at 403 students at that time. We're currently at 400 students. Banner year for maintaining enrollment.

The school is working on scheduling courses for next year. This year was transitional towards a standardized block schedule.

The Jazz Cafe happened since our last meeting. A fundraiser for the 10th grade. It went super well. Students took orders and brought food to tables, and there were performances. And they raised roughly \$1,500.

The Wofa show happened since our last meeting. It was amazing.

The Catalyst show is coming up.

May 9th will be a site visit from DESE regarding the charter renewal.

## **B. Frank Newton, Director of Arts**

### **Frank Newton reports out:**

(Has been the Arts Director since 2021.)

See "PVPA Arts\_A Way Forward" document attached for Frank's whole presentation.

Frank shared a power point. Building a future for arts education at PVPA in the evolving K-12 public school landscape.

Frank introduces himself to the board. Shared some personal and professional details so the board can get to know who he is. Started working at PVPA in 2010.

Look where you've been, to know where you are going. Frank took an excerpt from the original charter about an **equal emphasis on excellence in academics and performance art** as a vehicle to produce confident adults etc.

Frank walked the board through PVPA's 1996-2008 history, both the logistics of the school and some traditions. During this time, we were allowed to have additional flexibility due to our small size and far less stringent regulatory/accountability standards for early charter schools. In turn, the practices and traditions that were created during that time were designed to work for those students/faculty/admin etc.

PVPA 2008-2020 PVPA at a glance.

- Far more stringent regulatory requirements from 2022 no child left behind act, and DESE revamped accountability expectations for charter schools (2014).
- PVPA widens its region of sending towns.
- Moved from a part time model for arts teachers to a full time model.
- We were put on probation for not meeting standards at one time.
- A lot of upheaval during this time. 7 heads of school in 12 years.
- A lot was also created during this time.
- We started restorative justice practices.
- A lot of new arts groups were started.
- Opening of the PVPA mainstream theater.

These were the middle school / teenage years of the school. The ground under our feet was changing. There were still many long time teachers who held institutional memory. Wonderful things happened during these 12 years, but the world was changing. Our responsibility to keep the institution viable became apparent. The need to evolve.

2020-present

- March 13, 2020 the pandemic closed doors to in-person schooling. The impact of remote school was drastic at PVPA. The whole environment had to change and be nimble and adaptable to ever-changing circumstances. Decades old traditions had to adapt to COVID. The school did amazing things to invest in our technological capacity. Worked to evaluate practices through the lens of social justice. Allowed us to build our institution to insulate our ability to offer transformative arts focused education regardless of the status of our world environment. The pandemic moved us down a road that was ultimately inevitable. The school had to keep taking things away from students due to the pandemic, and that was so hard.

The "real talk" for the future.

We must reconcile the joys of the past and nostalgia with the uncertainty of the present, and develop as appropriate for the current situation.

Reality for PVPA now:

- Events/activities/curriculum (EAC) must be available to all students.
- EAC must work seamlessly in our regular school day.
- EAC design must provide a general equality of experience for academic and arts faculty.
- EAC must not overburden faculty planning time.
- EAC offerings must have accountability for their artistic and academic rigor. (as true to the original charter)
- EAC must be sustainable regardless of administrative personnel available.
- EAC must be able to run within our school building with our entire student body, faculty and staff.
- EAC must involve all full time teaching faculty executing the process.

PVPA initiatives that need change to meet our reality:

- Standards based grading
- Community time and methods for club/affinity group cultivation (two lunches has made this difficult)
- Paideia
- Production calendar layout and production capacity
- Production expectation brought inline with design capacity
- Permanent block schedule that serves students and faculty

What we've done, what we're doing:

DONE

- revamped production calendar to account for all constituencies at PVPA (the middle school previously didn't get a chance to perform in the first semester).
- production apparatus is more attainable and accessible.
- standardized a 2 year arts curriculum.
- position costuming and film to create a new 5th arts department in technical theater

- other things...

#### DOING

- revamping the grading model to lower grading burden on faculty and create more transparent communication
- re-envisioning Paideia "the activity" into Paideia "the philosophy" and aligning PVPA's academic and artistic practice with the concept of true Arts Integration as envisioned in the founding charter.
- reevaluating the production calendar for equity across constituencies developing bell schedule and after school protocols/expectations to increase student club/affinity group participation.

#### Final Thoughts / Conclusion:

- Frank loves PVPA. Change is scary. Miles Davis was great because he embraced change and searched out people to help him change. He kept developing. Never be so in love with the things we create that we can't change them. PVPA has reached a point in our evolution that we must change. We must change to remain relevant in the arts and academic education. We must change to respond to the needs of our students. We must change to survive. Come see the love that emanates from our faculty and staff and the students of today that navigate their world through PVPA. The arts won't die here. Though the means may be changing, the mission remains the same.

#### Notes/Questions:

- Thanks Frank for sharing that. It's great to hear administrators be so passionate.

### III. Board Committee Reports

#### A. Finance Committee

Neil Hede reported out:

The committee wasn't able to meet this month.

The state governor's budget request came in at a 4.1% increase in education across the state (not necessarily 4.1 to PVPA), which is lower than anticipated. We won't know the final number until June.

The Esser funds will leave at the end of September. We currently have (roughly) 6 positions currently funded by those Esser funds, so will have to figure that out.

Still waiting to find out what the "above rate" funding from sending districts will be.

#### B. Governance Committee

Latrina Denson reported out:

The main committee did not meet this month. The Subcommittee met for half a day to work on the ByLaw edits. We will plan to invite the board to come to the committee meeting where we review all the proposed changes.

We had another interview with a potential new member, and we have a couple other folks interested.

Latrina sent out a doodle poll to establish the date for the annual board meeting.

David asks the Gov Committee to remind members where they may be in their terms.

#### **C. Head of School Support & Evaluation Committee**

David Potter reported out:

The group met last night. They are about to process Brent's responses to the broad leadership survey. This will be shared to Brent's direct reports to complete, and the board will also be asked to complete the survey. The committee will then review all these and provide feedback to Brent, and start establishing next year's goals.

Final meeting is the end of June.

#### **D. Long Range Infrastructure Planning Committee**

Mindi Winter reported out:

We are meeting monthly again. We are working on finding a way to bring in an external vendor to evaluate all the projects on our plate to help with planning, pricing and executing as many things as possible.

We are working on prioritizing the list of the projects we currently have.

Marcy Conner, John Kulas, and Brent Niesen have been working with the Friends of PVPA to help identify who can help support this work.

### **IV. Internal Stakeholders**

#### **A. Staff Reports**

David Cavillan reported out:

- David echos his previous statement from last month.
- There are still great concerns about losing Paideia might impact working conditions, and he's excited to talk about it more.

#### **B.**

## **Student Reports**

PVPA Mock Trial is going to State Finals! So the students missed this meeting tonight.

## **V. Public Comment**

### **A. Brief comments and/or questions welcomed.**

Carissa Degenais '08 alum: She is here representing many alumni that would like to be involved in the conversation about Paideia. The alumni would like to form a group of professionals who work in the arts to offer support and involvement in the ongoing conversation about Paideia. Carissa is a creative arts therapist. There is a passion in the alumni group to contribute to the future development. The group wants to find a way to be maintained long term, not just a temporary group. Carissa volunteers to help select a thoughtful group of alumni to weigh in. Carissa doesn't want just a bunch of angry emails sent, she wants to help support a sustainable future approach. She hopes PVPA will consider moving forward with the growing pains of continuing to try to make Paideia work. She thinks the alums can offer some wisdom and support to the school.

David's response: It might make more sense for Carissa to take charge of the group, the board wouldn't manage that. Also, the board doesn't make curriculum decisions, that is up to the administration.

Brent's response: Brent is very excited to get alumni more involved. He is very excited to see the amount of interest that has come up. One of Brent's goals is to improve the school's ability to engage alumni long term. He is also working on creating a school advisory council - and it would be amazing to have arts working professionals (in many ways) alumni on that. Brent welcomes Carissa and other alumni to reach out to himself and Frank directly to collaborate.

Frank invites alumni to come to Interskate 91 on May 9th for a fun activity / fundraiser. And Headgear will be at the Parlor Room in the spring.

## **VI. President's Business**

### **A. Diversity Task Force**

This was recently developed to support the diversity missions of the school.

The group is interested in getting involved with the grants missions that Brent is working on.

Latrina will be joining some administrators and teachers to attend some diversity training for recipients of grant funds.



Do we want to include the Friends of PVPA as a regular participant in board meetings, to keep us updated about their work? Or maybe just keep in touch with the leaders to see whenever there are things they want to bring to the board.

The summer retreat survey has been sent out.

David Potter announced that we will not reconvene after the executive session. David stated the reasons for the executive section.

## VII. Closing Items

### A. Adjourn Meeting

David Potter made a motion to to go into executive session.

Azizah Yasin seconded the motion.

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

#### Roll Call

|                |         |
|----------------|---------|
| Mindi Winter   | Aye     |
| David Potter   | Aye     |
| Sasha Viands   | Aye     |
| Neil Hede      | Aye     |
| Fiona Yates    | Absent  |
| Shino Pichette | Aye     |
| David Cavallin | Abstain |
| LATRINA DENSON | Aye     |
| Vanessa Ford   | Absent  |
| Azizah Yasin   | Aye     |

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:47 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Shino Pichette