

APPROVED



Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School

Minutes

May Board Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday May 14, 2024 at 6:00 PM

Location

Zoom Account is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: My Meeting

Time: May 14, 2024 06:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

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Trustees Present

Azizah Yasin (remote), David Cavallin (remote), David Potter, Fiona Yates (remote), LATRINA DENSON, Mindi Winter, Neil Hede (remote), Sasha Viands (remote), Shino Pichette (remote), Tim Cable (remote), Vanessa Ford (remote)

Trustees Absent

None

Ex Officio Members Present

Brent Nielsen (remote), Marcy Conner (remote)

Non Voting Members Present

Brent Nielsen (remote), Marcy Conner (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

Visitors: Craig Santos, as a potential new trustee.

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 14, 2024 at 6:07 PM.

C. Read the Mission Statement

David Potter read the mission statement.

D. Approve Minutes

LATRINA DENSON made a motion to approve the minutes from April Board Meeting #2 on 04-16-24.

Sasha Viands seconded the motion.

Note: Tim Cable not yet eligible to vote.

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

Roll Call

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

II. Public Comment

A. Brief comments and/or questions welcomed.

Carissa Dagenais:

Shared a prepared statement. She's an alumni. Discussed her credentials. She shared her experience witnessing and participating in the conversation around Paideia at the board. The issues shared about Paideia's presence at the school did not seem to be addressed in an open way. She felt her engagement was dismissed. She mentioned gaslighting after the kind words of encouragement she initially received compared to the way she was ignored. She accepts that Paideia is likely not able to be saved, she accepts that. But she wants to work to repair and notes that she stays committed to PVPA and the coming alumni. She hopes leadership can reflect and proceed differently in the future.

Maggie Solis:

Shared a prepared statement. She's a parent of two current students. She notes the harm done to the community in the way in which the Paideia change happened. She notes the danger of the idea that the board shouldn't weigh in on a decision like this. The board should be setting policy and ensure that PVPA operates in a way that is consistent with its charter and strategic action plan. What precedent is set if the board doesn't weigh in on this decision? She highlighted two other changes that have occurred at PVPA that weren't shared openly, or were obscured. A change in ELA classes for 11th graders. A

change in the way independent study credit may or may not be available. The way she learned about these changes impacted Maggie's impression of the school's environment and investment in community engagement. If accountability to transparent communication isn't enforced, it can easily slip away.

III. Head of School Report

A. Brent's Report

Brent Nielsen:

The site visit from DESE occurred. Charter schools are on a 5 year renewal cycle, and we're on year three. Another visit will happen before the charter is renewed. The site visit team wanted a lot of documentation in preparation for the visit. During their full day visit they also visited classes, conducted focused groups, and reviewed facilities and policies. The purpose of this visit is to review PVPA's core criteria (instruction, governance etc). The full report comes out in 6-8 weeks - which will include notes about weaknesses the school needs to work on before the final charter review. They gave Brent a very quick overview at the end of their visit. They said the mission and vision is very much alive in everyone they met with.

There was a middle school dance a few weeks ago.

St. Joan, the HS theater production just happened. Frank and Brent got to participate in the show.

Recipients of the Florence Bank grants were invited to a Look Park reception.

The Iron Horse is reopening. Preparing to have PVPA students perform there again, like they used to. Frank is at the soft opening tonight. :)

The prom is happening on Friday.

There's an ultimate tournament on Sat.

Accepted Students night is happening soon. We are very on track with enrollment!

Enrollment:

84 new students for next year already confirmed their enrollment. And there are still folks on the wait list. We are prepared for 415 students to start the year. This puts us in a great place, planning for standard "melt" of enrollment. Hats off to Sandra as the enrollment coordinator. Sandra, as also the communications coordinator, is doing a great job of getting the word out.

Scheduling:

The scheduling process is already happening. Students used to receive their schedules on the first day of school in the fall. Now, the whole process is done before summer. Sophomores, juniors and seniors are already done and have their schedules. This is a huge difference and works much better for everyone. Now, given the way the master schedule has been updated, there are far more options for students, so student satisfaction is higher.

Hiring for 24-25:

The school is working on diversifying our workforce. We were part of a professional learning community, and we attended some workshops on this - learning tips and strategies for recruitment, and learned about pitfalls to avoid. PVPA now has a recruitment calendar to increase the diversity of the applicant pool. The applicant pool for the art positions is deeper than Brent has ever seen it. The pool for academics teachers is still fairly small.

Attendance:

An ongoing concern that we continue to work on. We are struggling to get back to pre-pandemic levels of attendance. Our averages are lower than the state. Working to address chronic barriers. Stressors from the pandemic remain for many students, and this impacts attendance. Attendance is important for student achievement and our accountability measures as a school (like test scores etc).

IV. Board Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee

Neil Hede:

Revenue is up. We budget conservatively. We propose a 2.5% increase, we don't usually go above 4%. The state projections suggest we should be conservative, but we are in good shape. It's not as big of an increase as we have had in past years, but we are increasing.

Marcy Conner (prepared a presentation shared with the board in the agenda):

Most charter schools saw a decrease in revenue for this year, which is directly related to "above foundation" levels across the state. Covid funds have dried up. The language being used referring to next year is very pessimistic about what might happen. We're still waiting to hear from the state about funds for next year, so our budget is based on guesses about what we'll get. We'll hear in July about the final state budget. We anticipate that the state will continue to fund the Increase for Education Act. A difference from this budget to past year, is that this is not a level funded budget. We increased some areas that support arts integration, DEI work, and SAP initiatives.

Reviewed the highlighted areas of the revenue section such as:

1. Per Pupil Income – On April 30, 2024 the Finance Committee voted to set the FY25 tuition budget increase at 2.5% of the DESE projected tuition for the third quarter of FY24. Total \$7,719,979.
 2. Grant Revenue – grant funding levels for FY25 have not yet been released by DESE. The \$285,227 budget figure represents FY24 level funding for ESSA, IDEA and CSHS grants.
 3. Student Activities Revenue – student fundraising adjusting downward to be more in line with current activity.
 4. Interest – will continue to roll over certificates of deposit as they mature however interest rates are projected to go down so the return will not be as much as FY24.
- Overall increase of 5.93% proposed in revenue as compared to FY24.

Review expenses section of the budget such as:

1. Salaries & Benefits - increase FTEs overall. This is the first time we'll do step increases on the first day of school.
2. General Education Expense - \$15,000 increase over FY24. \$5,000 for field trips and \$10,000 for curriculum development.
3. Grant Expenses – grants are paid as reimbursements. Expenses reduced to match revenue.
4. Education Other – increases built in for Library books, Nursing Office software, DEI training for staff and funds for Arts Integration expenses.
5. Production – increase in stipends and additions/changes to the production calendar
6. Technology – significant increase due to FY24 evaluation and application for eRate program. Required updates to infrastructure and security monitoring contract.
7. General Administration - \$8,500 decrease to adjust closer to actual.
8. Recruitment of Employees – increased efforts in diversity recruitment and retention to include funds for advertising positions and career fairs.
9. Business Office Expense – increase for annual audit and required MCPPO certification
10. Facilities Expense – overall increase of 3.04% to cover rising cost of contracts and utilities.
11. Depreciation – adjusted closer to actual
12. Transportation – annual increase in bus contract (we're in the middle of our transportation contract)

It is a balanced budget proposed, with a small surplus of \$12,000.

The capital budget:

- Last year we projected a 3 year capital budget, so there aren't any big changes this year. The finance committee is coordinating with the Friend of PVPA about facilities uses / costs because the building is technically owned by the friends. The proposed capital budget is consistent with expectations.

PVPA salaries:

- The proposed version is based on the union negotiation.

5 Yr History of Cash Reserves:

- Have healthy cash reserves. It has been growing over the last five years.

Discussed health insurance rates & tuition increases from prior years. The FY24 numbers are not yet final.

Q: What do you mean about this is not level funded? This year we didn't budget everything at the same levels as past years. This year we changed some areas, so that we could increase in strategic areas.

Shino Pichette made a motion to approve the FY24-25 budget as presented.

Mindi Winter seconded the motion.

Fiona Yates notes: Comprehensive presentation, thank you so much for your work, finance committee!

Note: Tim not able to vote.

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

Roll Call

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

B. Governance Committee

Latrina Denson:

Last meeting we discussed upcoming officer positions for the board. Will vote in June.

For new members, the goal is to bring all potential new members to the meeting in June for voting.

The employee handbook updates were shared with the committee by Brent. We recommend that the board approve the updated employee handbook.

Tim Cable was nominated by staff for membership on the board through the 24-25 school year. Note: that is also true for David Cavallin.

LATRINA DENSON made a motion to approve the updated employee handbook.

David Potter seconded the motion.

Brent: Changes that were made were mostly to bring the employee handbook into alignment with our union contract. The changes have already been happening in practice since they are connected to the union contract.

Tim Cable not able to vote.

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

Roll Call

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

LATRINA DENSON made a motion to vote in Tim Cable for membership on the board through 2025 June.

David Cavallin seconded the motion.

No discussion.

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

Roll Call

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

C. Head of School Support & Evaluation Committee

David Potter:

We have received the leadership survey which was completed by ALMOST everyone it was sent to. The committee is working to process all the info received to synthesize it and bring a report to the board for approval. And we will have to set goals for the next year for Brent. This will come at the June meeting.

This committee will be looking for some new members starting next year. Committee members do not have to be board members.

V. Internal Stakeholders

A. Staff Reports

David Cavallin:

Early in the year, David had an idea to do a skate party with live music. We we hosted a fundraising event at interskate 91 for gig band. It went super well! Insterskate 91 wants to hire Gig Band for one of their own events in the future. The funds raised will be used to secure venues in advance, for more fundraisers and music activities. The kids played 90 minutes of music which is a lot!!

The music showcase opens next week (Fri and Sat). Friday will be the audition groups. Spring visual arts showcase will be the following week. The MAPS showcase is next Wednesday during community time.

Lots coming up, it's going to be a BUSY end of school.

(Brent: MAPS is "Music And Poetry Synchronized" - poems from kids in other schools and then PVPA kids put them to music. PVPA has been working with kids in Puerto Rico on this. This year, the change is that now our students take a music theory class to give them song writing skills before working with the poems. Now they are writing out the music to these songs and sharing with musicians to perform. It will make it a more professional experience for the kids.)

Tim Cable:

Shout out to the Mock Trial team!!!!

PVPA has a 3D printer, so folks are working on how to use it more! The music department has printed whole instruments!

B. Student Reports

Fiona Yates:

So much to share!!

Mock Trial!!!! Did a good job in DE. They didn't get as far as they had hoped at Nationals (after winning States), but it was an amazing experience.

Seniors got their caps and gowns. Senior spirit week is next week. College decision day is May 15... IG is sharing some of the senior's decisions. Tomorrow is the last open mic for seniors.

Graduation is Thursday June 6. The grad show is going to be amazing. The show is at PVPA, the show is at the Academy of Music.

Shout out to Brent: He is always participating in events. And that is seen and appreciated by students.

Saint Joan was amazing.

VI. President's Business

A. SY 24-25 Calendar

David Potter made a motion to vote to approve the 24-25 calendar as presented.

LATRINA DENSON seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

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

B. Strategic Action Plan - Check-in on Leadership and Governance

David Potter leading the discussion. Discussion of SAP Leadership & Gov section.

Reviewing what has been done.

Goal 1: Prioritize PVPA mission.

- Objective 1.1: Done

Goal 2: improve transparency and increase the use of inclusive, collaborative decision-making.

- Shino Q: Has 2.3 been made? - flow chart of how decisions are made. Not yet made. Everyone is working together well. This will also be handled in the curriculum days next year. It will be shared once it is written up. Note that it needs to be made transparent.

Goal 3: cultivate and maintain our leadership position in the community etc.

Goal 4: improve overall effectiveness of the board etc.

Fiona: What is the status of the policy handbook? We have been approving policies, but do we have a handbook yet? What's the status? Brent: They are included on the website.

It's not a "handbook", but they are all available there. We'll never be done with policy updates... but we are well on the way to having formal policies that need to be there.

Fiona: Can Brent give an update about Arts Integration? (3.1) Brent: It is still in the works, but well into the process. The plan is in line with the SAP and the original application for our charter. It will create a mechanism to ensure that arts integration is actually happening. It will require teachers to be involved in an arts integration project every year. Example: History teacher and Visual Arts teacher and Math teacher collaborated on an Islamic Tiles learning project. The school will be gathering data about these projects and they will be archived for sharing out best practices etc. This arts integration is one of the things that makes us most unique. We should be doing it the best!

Q about updates to this or should updates be made to future SAPs? The MATRIX can be updated, but the SAP content cannot be changed because it was already approved by DESE. The Matrix should be how we track and evaluate how we are working towards the objectives listed.

NEWS BREAK: 3 out of 5 of the performers for the soft opening of the Iron Horse tonight, are PVPA alumni! So cool.

Let's keep revising the SAP to review what has been done and what needs to be worked on.

C. Paideia - Review of Decision-Making Process

David Potter:

Over the course of the past few meetings, the board has voiced concerns about how the Paideia decisions have evolved to where they are right now. Information was shared with the board (Frank Newton's presentation about the progression of PVPA) was helpful. Quality education is at the core of PVPA. The admin team reviewed the concerns and considerations and made the decision to remove Paideia from the calendar.

Shino Pichette: I hope that this can be a learning experience and that big decisions can be made with more community involvement. Even when hard decisions need to be made, we should ensure that voices can be heard before changes are made. In the Values section of the SAP, we note that "we value all voices being heard when important decisions are made" and it seems like that didn't happen here. We want the community to thrive and this process created some real pain and turmoil, and I hope that this can be a learning experience so other things can be done differently.

Mindi Winter: PVPA is a build your own adventure school. The more you put in, the more you get. Mindi has been involved in the schools for over a decade and see a lot. Mindi is on the side of keeping Paideia, but also understands why it has to change. Audition

groups didn't used to use Paideia in the way they have been. Everything changes. We don't use Paideia the way we used to use Paideia. That's not a problem. The problem is the way in which this change occurred. The community wasn't involved in all the internal conversations, and they don't see all the changes over time. So it feels sudden now, even though internally it wasn't. Communication has to be better. As the governing body of the school, we have to take responsibility for that. Arts integration is in our mission statement.

Fiona Yates: She's going to talk about the communication issues, not the merits or challenges of Paideia. Fiona remembers the conversation from the beginning of her time at PVPA (when there was a consideration to move Paideia to the end of the year). The issue was maybe that there were too many points given for the reason to remove Paideia. Some of the reasons seems like they were solvable, so students would maybe brainstorm reasons just to be told there was no other option. Also, what is the difference between formal and informal surveys for staff and students. Folks did not realize that the decision was so near.

Shino: She thinks that the board SHOULD be included in big decisions like this. It felt like the board was not properly notified / included in the decision.

David Potter response: The calendar should have been brought to the Governance Committee before the board. Then it could have been explored more before the board was asked to vote on it. Process has its place.

Azizah Yasin: Azizah has heard some passionate experiences over the past months about Paideia. It shows how special a community we are. We should try to restore trust so that folks understand the roles of the board vs. administration more. Azizah wants to share what her 7th grade son shared with her. He needs special support who needs some scaffolding around learning. Her son learned during Paideia that he is bad at chess. He didn't have a very engaged Paideia experience. He didn't get the academic support he usually gets. The board retreat can be a time when we discuss when the board should get involved in decision making and communication vs. when we defer to the administration. We should move past criticizing people and build the community we want. This can be an opportunity to work cohesively and connect with the broader PVPA community.

David Potter wants to thank everyone for their participation. Hopefully we all continue to learn.

VII. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

David Potter made a motion to adjourn.

Shino Pichette seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

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

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:26 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Shino Pichette