

APPROVED



Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School

Minutes

Board of Trustee Meeting and Retreat

Date and Time

Tuesday November 18, 2025 at 4:00 PM

Location

15 Mulligan Dr., South Hadley, MA 01075

or zoom link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81817963886?pwd=hUBjInioSFurRjtVJns4bbR5n15bpO.1>

Trustees Present

Ann Dargie Gladd, Esq, Azizah Yasin, Emily Whitebear, LATRINA DENSON, Matthew Schmidt, Esq (remote), Thomas Roy

Trustees Absent

Neil Hede

Trustees who arrived after the meeting opened

Ann Dargie Gladd, Esq, Matthew Schmidt, Esq

Ex Officio Members Present

Brent Nielsen, Marcy Conner

Non Voting Members Present

Brent Nielsen, Marcy Conner

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

LATRINA DENSON called a meeting of the board of trustees of Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School to order on Tuesday Nov 18, 2025 at 4:25 PM.

C. Reading of the PVPA Mission

Read by Brent Nielsen

D. Approval of Minutes

Moved to next meeting.

II. Charter School Board of Trustee Training

A. Board of Trustee Training

The training session was led by Julia Bowen, Principal, from Prospect Leadership Group. [Slide deck](#) used in presentation.

Ice breaker: [Pick A Quote](#) - explain why it resonates with you.

-Review and Discussion of Board Roles & Responsibilities

-The Charter Accountability System. [Board of Trustees Bylaws - Rev March 11, 2025](#).

Three case studies were reviewed and answers/discussion about different approaches that are in line with training and right practice.

1. A small group of concerned caregivers attends a recent Board meeting and during the public comment period shares that they want changes made to the curriculum for next year. Specifically, they share that they feel that their children need access to more AP and dual-enrollment classes than are currently being offered. They assert that their kids and many others are being put at a disadvantage for college admissions due to a lack of rigor in the curriculum.

What is the "right" level of board engagement and how should the board engage? Why?

The board discussed that the Board has one employee: the Head of School. If Trustees begin picking specific classes or dictating curriculum changes, they undermine the HOS's authority and the faculty's expertise. This creates "structural drift" where the Board loses sight of the big picture because they are bogged down in daily operation

Therefore the first step during the meeting would be to listen without entering a debate. The Board Chair should thank the caregivers for their input and ensure their concerns are recorded in the minutes.

The Board should formally refer the concern to the Head of School (HOS) for an assessment.

The Board should ask the HOS to provide a report at a future meeting

2. There is an altercation between 7th grade girls at lunch that turns atypically violent. Both girls emerge without serious injury, but do have visible scrapes and bruises. The incident is captured by a student using a cell phone. By the end of the day, the video has been posted to social media by multiple students. Students and parents are clearly watching the video and commenting on it. A local reporter views the video, reads the comments, and reaches out to members of the board for comment. It is clear that the reporter intends to write an article about what happened.

What is the "right" level of board engagement and how should the board engage? Why?

The "One Voice" Policy: Individual Board members must **refuse to comment** to the reporter. They should refer all inquiries to the Board Chair or the Head of School (HOS).

The Board Chair should request a confidential briefing from the HOS to ensure that:

The families of the involved students have been contacted.

The Student Code of Conduct is being applied consistently.

A plan is in place to address the "viral" nature of the video within the school community.

If a public statement is required, it should come from the HOS or the Board as a collective body, not individual members. It should focus on values (safety and community) rather than specifics (disciplinary actions).

3. Four students and eight parents attend the June board meeting. During the public comment portion of the meeting, each one uses their time to share how sad they are (and for some, how disappointed they are) that Ms. Johnson is leaving your school. All label her an exceptional educator. Some comments question why the school can't keep its best teachers. Prior to the meeting, two of five board members received calls from friends with students in the school about this teacher's decision not to return to your school.

What should be the Board's role in this scenario?

The Board has zero direct involvement in the hiring, firing, or retention of individual teachers (except for the Head of School). Engaging in a debate about a specific teacher's departure violates the fundamental separation between Governance (the Board) and Management (the Head of School).

Personnel files are legally protected. Even if Ms. Johnson's departure is purely her own choice (e.g., moving closer to family), the Board cannot confirm or deny any details. Publicly discussing a staff member's employment status can lead to defamation or privacy lawsuits.

During the Meeting: The Board Chair should allow the speakers their full time. Once finished, the Chair should offer a warm, neutral acknowledgment

In Response to "Why?": The Board must not answer questions regarding why she is leaving. Personnel matters are strictly confidential.

Ann Dargie Gladd, Esq arrived at 5:05 PM.

Matthew Schmidt, Esq arrived at 5:30 PM.

B. Break

15 minute break to grab food and restroom break.

C. Board of Trustee Training Continue

Fourth case study was discussed/reviewed.

-Board of Trustees Norms - based on bylaws revision and training/discussion the following were agreed to as norms for the Board of Trustees:

1. Know our place, roles, and direct to right person
2. Trust Head of School
3. Minimize direct conversation between Board members outside of Board meetings
4. Vote = voice of Board - respect decision, even if not your choice
5. Responses are from Board Chair only - trust that Chair is leaning into all resources available
6. Be present/available - schedule far in advance (1- 2 months)
7. Show up, even when hard - follow through on commitment
8. Be clear about all the available resources for helping parents (eg-know the website!)

-Community Engagement:

How to build trust with teachers:

1. Trustees as ambassadors, with Head of School's guidance
2. Work thorough the PTO - teacher appreciation week

How do we educate community about Board?

1. day to day operations are up to school administration
2. Events - armed with examples, armed with questions stems/starters, and know your "why"
3. Swag
4. Know resources to share/point to
5. Website updates/description - role of Board and complaint procedure
6. Training fro students/faculty representatives on roles, policies and expectations

How to support the Head of School?

1. Validate challenges
2. See them as human
3. Show up! Be present when hard.
4. Trust him
5. Offer help/resources
6. Check in privately
7. Maintain clear policy on public comment.

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 8:09 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Marcy Conner