

APPROVED



Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School

Minutes

Board of Trustee Meeting

April 2026

Date and Time

Tuesday March 17, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Location

15 Mulligan Dr., South Hadley, MA 01075

Trustees Present

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

Trustees Absent

None

Ex Officio Members Present

Brent Nielsen

Non Voting Members Present

Brent Nielsen

Guests Present

alexander.solis@pvpa.org (remote), danicka.pease@pvpa.org, jwinell@pvpa.org

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 Mar 17, 2026 at 6:03 PM.

C. Approve Minutes

Azizah Yasin made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustee Meeting on 01-13-26.

Matthew Schmidt, Esq seconded the motion.

Motion to approve minutes with correct spelling of Neil's name, Neil seconded
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

Ann Dargie Gladd, Esq	Aye
Matthew Schmidt, Esq	Aye
Emily Whitebear	Absent
Azizah Yasin	Aye
LATRINA DENSON	Aye
Neil Hede	Aye
Thomas Roy	Aye

D. Approve minutes

Azizah Yasin made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustee Meeting and Board On Track Training on 02-24-26.

Thomas Roy seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

Thomas Roy	Aye
Ann Dargie Gladd, Esq	Aye
Matthew Schmidt, Esq	Abstain
Azizah Yasin	Aye
Neil Hede	Aye
Emily Whitebear	Absent
LATRINA DENSON	Aye

E. Community Commitment

Latrina offered a presidential privilege and opened the floor to anyone who would like to address the board. There was not anyone from the community who wished to address the board and/ or provide a commitment

II. Business

A. Vote for PVPA Student Representatives

Neil Hede made a motion to Neil moved that we approve the following as student representatives – names.

Azizah Yasin seconded the motion.

Vote on new board members – 4 students, one representative from each class. Resumes are attached to the agenda.

- 12 th grade – Alex Solis
- 11th grade - Ethan Burt
- 10th grade - Danicka Pease
- 9th grade - Richter Lautzenheiser

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

Roll Call

Azizah Yasin	Aye
Thomas Roy	Aye
Matthew Schmidt, Esq	Aye
LATRINA DENSON	Aye
Neil Hede	Aye
Emily Whitebear	Absent
Ann Dargie Gladd, Esq	Aye

B. Vote on PVPA Staff Representative

Azizah Yasin made a motion to Motion to accept Jayme Winell as staff representative to the board Azizah moved, Matt seconded.

Matthew Schmidt, Esq seconded the motion.

Jayme Winell as staff representative. The resume is attached

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

Roll Call

Ann Dargie Gladd, Esq	Aye
Emily Whitebear	Absent
Thomas Roy	Aye
Neil Hede	Aye
Azizah Yasin	Aye
Matthew Schmidt, Esq	Aye
LATRINA DENSON	Aye

III. PVPA Staff and Student Report

A. PVPA staff report.

We are currently in the thick of the production season, transitioning from a successful February schedule into a high-intensity spring lineup.

Recent Highlights: The **WOFA Show** in February was a success, setting the stage for our upcoming spring events.

Upcoming Major Dates:

Catalyst + Friends: April 10–11.

Annual Gala: April 12.

Theatre Department: Currently collaborating with **David Cavellin** on the production of *Urinetown*.

Academic Climate: The atmosphere is high-energy as we balance senior activities, MCAS testing season, and the final push for the school year.

Latrina asked if videos of the productions were available to the public? Jayme – shared that they are currently internal and if available, will send it to the President to share it out with the board.

B. Student Reports

Alex Solis –

- Students are busy with productions.
- There was a successful **Senior Thesis** performance featuring a live band.
- The Senior Class is hosting it's final **Jazz Café** on March 27.
- **Headgear Show:** Scheduled to take place immediately following *Catalyst* this Thursday.
- **Sketch Comedy Show:** A student-led production scheduled for **April 16**.

Danicka Pease -

- **Spring Dance:** Final details are being polished for the **Grades 9-10 Spring Dance**, set for **April 17**.
- They are preparing for **MCAS** testing period.
- Students are very excited about the production season

IV. Head of School Report

A. General Updates

The **Latino Student Union (LSU)** and **Black Student Union (BSU)** are collaborating on a joint fundraising effort to finance a trip to New York City to see a Broadway production.

LSU Initiatives:

PD Lunch Service: LSU is preparing and selling food to staff during the upcoming **half-day Professional Development (PD)** sessions this Thursday and Friday.

BSU Initiatives:

DoubleGood Popcorn: Successfully raised **over \$1,000**.

Game Night: Recently hosted a Friday night event with concessions.

Live Family Feud: A major highlight featuring **KJ**, who dressed as Steve Harvey and stayed in character. It was noted as a highly engaging and successful community event.

Upcoming Events: The **Masked Singer** event is scheduled for late April.

B. Review for PVPA Charter Term 2021-2026 update

Brent announced that the school's charter has been officially renewed for the next **five years**. While the school was commended for its commitment to the arts and faithfulness to the mission, the renewal comes with specific conditions that must be addressed by **August 3, 2026**.

Conditions:

Climate & Communication: Addressing concerns regarding school climate and communication with the community and the Board's oversight of Open Meeting Law.

Third-Party Investigation: DESE requires the school to engage an external consultant to investigate whether PVPA responded appropriately to complaints (per 603 CMR 1, 26, and Title 9).

Deadline: The school must notify DESE of the chosen consultant and the scope of the investigation by **May 1, 2026**.

Climate Survey: The school must engage students, parents, and staff in a school climate survey. Brent noted that hiring a third party to conduct this—rather than creating an internal survey—will yield more proactive and accurate results.

Action Plan: By **August 3, 2026**, the Board must submit an action plan identifying areas for improvement. This will align with the development of the new **5-year Strategic Action Plan**.

Brent detailed two specific requirements for the Board:

Governance Training: The Board completed training in November regarding roles, responsibilities, and leadership oversight. Brent has submitted documentation to Julia (DESE) to confirm if this satisfies the condition.

Open Meeting Law: All Board members must complete training through the Attorney General's Office by **May 7, 2026**.

Neil recommended that "Updates on Conditions" be added as a permanent line item on all future agendas, including specific dates to track progress.

Jayme (invited by Latrina to speak) emphasized the importance of choosing the right consultant for difficult conversations and requested that the school ask for references from other schools they have worked with.

Latrina confirmed the Board will be a part of the final decision.

DESE requested to work specifically with **Latrina** as Board Chair on this selection; DESE must approve the final recommendation.

Brent highlighted the success of the DESE site visit, noting that observers saw teachers creating safe environments and positive student-teacher interactions. **Latrina** noted that these were random classroom observations.

Alex (invited by Latrina) inquired about student collaboration in the renewal process, recalling it was more collaborative in the past.

Brent explained that while the current phase involved data and focus groups, the upcoming **Strategic Action Plan** will involve student participation.

Brent noted a DESE comment regarding "limited dissemination." While the school has partnered with Holyoke and Springfield, they did not engage with **South Hadley Public Schools** last year. Future efforts will look to include the local district.

Latrina concluded by congratulating Brent and the team, noting that the conditions provide helpful tools and timing for the strategic planning goals already identified by the Board.

Brent shared that the most successful aspect of the assessment was the on-site visit. Observers witnessed teachers fostering spaces where students felt secure and comfortable sharing and interacting with the teachers.

It was shared that the observers went to random classrooms where students would not even know they were present.

V. Officer and Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee Report

Azizah Yasin made a motion to Move to increase the FY26 capital budget to include the purchase of F-250.

Ann Dargie Gladd, Esq seconded the motion.

The Finance Committee is formally requesting the Board to **vote on an increase to the FY26 Capital Budget**. This request is specifically intended to transition the school's Ford F-250 from a lease to a permanent asset.

Matt inquired about the annual lease cost. Brent estimated it at **\$600–\$700 per month**, then asked what the figures would look like if they traded in the current vehicle. **Brent** shared that a newer truck would cost more than **\$700 per month**. The vehicle has 8000 miles on it. Matt confirmed that it would be comparable to the lease cost over the next 4 year.

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

Roll Call

Neil Hede	Aye
Ann Dargie Gladd, Esq	Aye
Matthew Schmidt, Esq	Aye
Azizah Yasin	Aye
Thomas Roy	Aye
LATRINA DENSON	Aye
Emily Whitebear	Absent

Renovation of classes: Theater and music, demolition, flooring, and making more space

Acoustic curtains for the theater

Brent explained the plan to relocate offices and take down a wall to create a new 20x20 theater classroom on the 1st floor. This "black box" space will feature a low stage, track lighting, and acoustic curtains to stop students from being displaced from the actual theater.

The two music studios will be renovated with carpeting and wall storage to decrease volume bleed. One will be reoriented and include risers for the percussion section to project sound into the building rather than toward other classrooms.

Latrina asked if the infrastructure committee was looking at this? **Brent**, yes, specific ones he can give more details once planning starts.

Neil clarified that the acoustics require more technical paneling than just putting up velvet curtains.

It was discussed that we will have more details and the board will vote at the next meeting.

B. Friends of PVPA Update

Emily Whitebear was not available to provide a report.

It was inquired if the Friends were aware of the renovation plans.

Brent shared we handle the **Capital Budget** entirely. They have no involvement in this area.

Their Responsibility: They cover **general upkeep** and the **replacement of mechanicals** from their own budget.

Current Projects: They are working with consultants and **Mass Save** on major efficiency items, such as **replacing the roof**.

C. Head of School Evaluation Committee

Latrina shared that she will be sending out a schedule regarding the next meeting.

D. Governance and Vice President Report

The Governance Committee meeting for the previous month was postponed to prioritize specialized training with Brianna. This training focused on maximizing the use of the *Board on Track* platform to streamline board operations and communication.

Following the November retreat, the board application was revised and updated. The application window is officially open.

Targeted Skillsets: The committee is prioritizing candidates with the following backgrounds:

Education: To support academic oversight and strategy.

Finance: To strengthen fiscal stewardship.

Recruitment Strategy: Board members are encouraged to leverage personal and community networks, specifically targeting families and attendees of current productions.

Candidate Progress: * Four individuals have expressed interest; two have formally submitted applications.

Public Interviews: Per legal counsel's advice, candidate interviews will be held during next month's Governance Committee meeting in a public session.

Administrative & Housekeeping

Profile Updates: All members are requested to update their profiles on *Board on Track*.

DESE Bylaw Approval: We are currently awaiting approval from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Note that DESE is currently short-staffed and processing a high volume of revised bylaws from multiple schools.

Meeting Attendance: Members must log into *Board on Track* to RSVP for upcoming meetings.

Alex asked whether students will have board on track accounts?

Latrina shared yes, once – they are approved as board members. She will submit to BMMS, which will trigger the process and additional information to be sent them to complete. Students and staff will receive the same emails.

E. President's Report

Open Meeting Law (OML) Compliance

Our primary focus for April is ensuring that every board member is fully compliant with Open Meeting Law requirements.

Deadline: The final date to sign up for the current round of training is **April 28th**.

Status Update: Those who have completed the training so far are Latrina, Brent, and Azizah.

- We are currently collecting completion certificates. Latrina noted that those who completed earlier sessions should receive theirs shortly, though it may take a few days to process.

Communication Protocol: A reminder to all members—**do not "Reply All"** or respond to the full board via email once you have completed your training. This is to ensure we remain in compliance with OML communication standards.

Member Feedback & Insights on BOT Training:

Functionality: While the BOT platform is comprehensive, Azizah noted that the sub-menus contain significant detail. We need to move past "intro" levels to gain true comfort with the technology.

Standardization: Brent emphasized the need for a "Standard Operating Procedure" for basic tasks, such as posting meetings, making agendas public, and uploading approved minutes.

Latrina highlighted the importance of cross-training so that multiple members have the skills to step in if someone is unavailable.

Next Steps:

I will be following up with **Brianna** to coordinate a hands-on session where we can work through specific tasks and committee goals together on our devices.

Future Trainings & Strategic Development:

We are committed to continuous board development and are looking for your input on what comes next.

OML Webinar: Note that the upcoming OML training is a webinar format but includes a live Q&A chat. The facilitators are responsive to specific school-related questions.

DESE: I am currently following up with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) regarding further compliance and board standards.

Request for Input: Following the OML and BOT sessions, what other topics would you like to explore? Please come prepared to discuss future training needs.

Announcements:

The PVPA Gala: I strongly encourage every member of the board to attend. This is a vital moment for our community and a great opportunity to support our students and staff.

VI. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

Matthew Schmidt, Esq made a motion to I move to adjourn.

Thomas Roy seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

Matthew Schmidt, Esq	Aye
Azizah Yasin	Aye
Ann Dargie Gladd, Esq	Aye
Neil Hede	Aye
LATRINA DENSON	Aye
Thomas Roy	Aye
Emily Whitebear	Absent

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:33 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Azizah Yasin

Documents used during the meeting

- Alex Solis Resume (1).pdf
- Richter Lautzenheiser Resume.pdf
- Danicka Pease Resume.pdf
- Ethan Burt Resume.pdf
- 2025JWinellResume (3) (1).pdf
- PVPA Commissioner renewal letter 2026 (1).pdf
- FY 26 Capital Budget - Propsed Amendment 3-3-26.pdf
- FY27 Capital Budget.pdf