

APPROVED



# Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School

## Minutes

### Board of Trustee Meeting

May 2026

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#### **Date and Time**

Tuesday May 12, 2026 at 6:00 PM

#### **Location**

[15 Mulligan Drive](#)

[South Hadley, MA 01075](#)

or

[Zoom link](#)

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#### **Trustees Present**

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

#### **Trustees Absent**

Matthew Schmidt, Esq

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

Brent Nielsen, Marcy Conner

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

Brent Nielsen, Marcy Conner

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## Guests Present

jwinell@pvpa.org (remote)

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### 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 May 12, 2026 at 6:07 PM.

#### C. Reading of the Mission

Read by Azizah Yasin

#### D. Approve Minutes

Azizah Yasin made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustee Meeting on 04-14-26.

Emily Whitebear seconded the motion.

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

##### Roll Call

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

#### E. Public Comments

Emily Pfeiffer - requesting that Board start transcribing these meetings. Other communities do this and it should be put on next agenda so public can hear the deliberation.

### II. PVPA Staff and Student Report

#### A. PVPA Staff Report

President invited Jayme to share as she has not yet been approved by DESE. Jayme introduced herself and talked about the recent dance production for catalyst; she gave a shout out to Martin Bridge for set & Mike for work with the light board. The new lights are beautiful and have more options. Another shout out to Lauren Reuter for costumes -

some costumes being sewn on site was amazing to see. WOFA & Hip Hop residency artist Tiaona Pope.

Also just recently took place was the theater production - John Deserves to Die. Students met this new playwright which made the for a full circle teaching experience. AJ double casting was truly teaching excellence that allowed more students to access the experience. Intimacy coordinator - new to PVPA productions and developed by AJ to respect student boundaries during shows - ensure student are comfortable with difficult materials and scenes.

Last weekend was the Music Showcase - 7-12 grades performed.

The Gala was in April.

Frisbee tournament tomorrow

As the year is wrapping up we look forward to student college decisions - can't wait . During January break we like to offer dance alumni workshops that brings back alumni as teachers.

This year our professional development has centered around restorative practice and what it looks like in the classroom. Pam Jones has come into several classrooms and conducted observations to assist staff in this work.

BSU & LSU recently held a couple of fundraisers to support their field trip to NYC.

Emil wanted to give a shout out for the awesome student teacher from UMASS that he worked with this semester.

Last week was Teacher Appreciation week with the PTO providing breakfast, lunch and snacks for staff throughout the week.

Recent field trips included Smith College & the botany trip.

Looking forward to Unity Day in June.

AJ's work with John Deserves to Die was immersive with a gallery for the audience to learn more context of the play. Pedagogy to be visible so audience can appreciate the show. Isabelle did art and Julian took pictures - really a multi disciplinary effort.

The President asked how does the Board support the work? What does this look like? Open conversations - come see the classes. Love opportunity to co-teach. Keep coming to shows.

## **B. Student Reports**

Alex Solis - added to Jayme's list of upcoming activities. Musical next week - Urine Town. May 15th is the Jr/Sr Prom. Seniors only have 10 day left - finishing the year feeling relieved but apprehensive about future.

Prom theme? A night in Vegas. What happens at prom stays at prom!

President asked for something you would like the Board to know? Tough question - will think on this and be prepared to give a response later.

## **III. Head of School Report**

### **A. General Updates**

Brent thanked Jayme & Alex say that it is always nice to hear directly from staff and students involved in the happenings around the school.

To understand just how amazing John Deserves to Die was put together with the gallery on the stage and the theater in the round. Students did research that was on display; essays, quotes from playwright and info that was in the news from the time period that paralleled the Anita Hill hearing in terms of power dynamics and sexual harassment - really demonstrated what PVPA does on a daily basis.

The recent Music showcase was amazing - especially the talent of the middle school students.

PVPA completed a Welcome Day in April and is planning another for Thursday for accepted students (primarily 7th graders). Teaching staff and arts teachers involved in planning and execution. Parents & students come and see some of our performances - representations of all arts departments. Parents then stay for a presentation from the Administration and students went on to classrooms for an abbreviated day schedule.

Feedback very positive - current student commenting on how they wish they experienced this. Helpful for kids to see what we do at PVPA and make the right decision about enrolling.

MCAS - 7&8 math 7&8 science, 10th English completed for the year with 10th math & biology still to come. A lot of time goes into this schedule and student experience a lot of testing. Ultimately the competency determination approved last year determines graduation.

Scheduling underway. With the production schedule for next year set & auditions done we are able to move forward and schedule students for the 2026-2027 school year.

Rising Senior schedules are completed and we will be moving on to 11th grade next. Incoming 7th graders will be completed in August when placement tests have been completed.

Next week we will be attending the Florence Bank event at Look Park where they award their community grant - last couple of years PVPA has received \$3,000-\$3,500 in awards. We will not know until the presentation how much we have been granted.

Upcoming events include the musical then the spring one night gallery. Also coming up on May 30th is our 30th year celebration from 12:00pm-4:00pm. The event will include PVPA performances, food trucks, carnival style games and fundraising by some of our student groups. Then we will wind down the year with Grad show on June 3rd and Graduation on June 4th. The last day of school is a half day that will include Step Up day and the staff picnic.

Our current enrollment for next year is at 400 students! All offers for spots are out and people will start to let us know if they are making other plans and choosing not to come. Over summer will fill some spots. Current wait lists include: 7th grade - 10, 8th grade 13.

Still taking applications and may hold another lottery. 9th grade is the biggest year of transition where we can lose 10-15 kids but have 59 students on wait list. Wait lists are looking healthy - 10th grade has 22 students on the wait list. Always best for students to start at the beginning of the year well prepared - mid year transitions can be hard.

Comment form Board members included:

Theater in round is amazing to see. Thank you to Jayme for a glimpse into the behind the scenes. Double casting was also amazing.

Alex enjoy your time left.

Jayme - permission to address Board - Brent when is the last day of school? June 17th half day & Step Up day.

What is the demographics of new students? - newer region with a few just outside our region. Will look at the breakdown of communities to evaluate finance - South Hadley vote will impact enrollment at the school? - not to much this year as accepted students were done prior to town vote.

New England birth rates are decreasing - enrollment is also decreasing. Something to consider for enrollment is the many factors and how they effect us differently such as how decreases in enrollment and Ch 70 for municipalities can have negative effect on our revenue. This is a big reason why schools are talking about fundraising - will talk more about this in near future. Another factor - district schools cut arts programming first - enrollment will not drop before tuition revenue does because of what we offer.

## IV. Officer and Committee Reports

### A. Finance Committee Report

Marcy was invited by Neil to walk the Committee through the FY27 Budget Presentation.

An updated version was not provided to members after the posting of this meeting but an update was made as the health and dental insurance rate were locked in on Monday, May 11, 2026. Attached is the updated [FY27 Budget Presentation](#) that was used for the meeting.

The presentation is broken down into revenue and expense slides with highlighted footnotes for discussion purposes then followed by slide with other pertinent financial data and graphs. On the revenue side there are 4 highlights:

1. Tuition revenue - the Finance Committee reviewed all available data to arrive at a 3.5% increase of FY25 3rd quarter tuition projections for DESE. This is not as conservative as in the past but is what was required to fund items like health insurance that we will get to in the expense conversation.
2. Grant revenue - the numbers will look very off when you consider that the FY26 budget had \$261,975 and the FY27 proposed budget has \$266,212 and there is actually a 7% decrease in Title I funding from the Federal Government. Our approach to grant budgeting is to level fund based on current year as we do not know how much we will receive until August (well past our budget season). FY26 actual amount received is \$275,975 - so you can now see the decrease.
3. Transportation revenue - our expanded transportation program that started this year now qualified us to receive local transportation aid from South Hadley as well as regional transportation reimbursement from the state. We receive the local funding monthly based on the lower cost of either PVPA or South Hadley's per student cost and the regional transportation reimbursement will not be received until June 2027 - the financial information is submitted to the state with the End of Year Annual Financial Report that is due November 1st.
4. School based medicaid - this is new to PVPA this year. We contracted with the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative (LPVEC) to manage the process with accessing students on medicaid for certain services that the school offers. This has given the school an new revenue stream.

Revenue will increase overall by 4.12%

On the expense side of the budget there are 11 highlighted footnotes. Also we would like to mention that some of the percentages seem to vary greatly - this is due to the new accounting structure and our continued alignment with state reporting. An example would be the Administrative Costs line that shows a 44.25% increase - there has NOT been a substantial increase in any line items as this budget is pretty static.

1. Salaries and FTEs - proposing one new position - Educational Team Leader - that would assist the Director of Student Services with IEPs and meetings to keep the special education program on track. Would decrease permanent substitutes by .40 - down from 3.4 to 3.0 FTEs. Overall pool available for staff raises is approximately \$214,000 over FY26 current spending - no further details are available as we are currently bargaining our next collectively bargained agreement with the UAW that will take effect in the fall.
2. Admin cost & Instructional cost - again fluctuate due to reclassification of expenses
3. Pupil services - the increase here is due to the increase in our transportation contract for next year. 2026-2027 will be the last year of a five year contract and we will have to bid services for the 2027-2028 school year and could see a substantial increase in cost for FY28.
4. Operation & Maint of Plant - were able to decrease some spending through careful planning and also some reclassification of expenses.
5. Other fixed charges - predicting an increase in our non-employee insurance ie. liability insurance and building insurance.
6. Employee Retire/Taxes and Fringe Benefits - This is what caused the last minute update to the presentation. When the meeting was posted we were not yet done negotiating with BCBS over the increase to the health and dental insurance. The initial offer for coverage included a 22.4% increase to health and a 3.5% increase to dental. Through much dialogue and agreement to increase co-pays for office visits and prescriptions - we finalized at 11.9% and 1.5% respectively. Still a double digit increase but better than where we started. We also discovered that workers comp insurance and disability insurance was over budgeted by FY26.
7. Community Service - this is new. DESE is asking us to track the cost of our dissemination activities which are required as part of our accountability plan.
8. Non-operating Facilities Cost - this is our lease expense for the Friends of PVPA building lease
9. Grant expense - grants are on a reimbursement basis - net effect on budget should be zero as you only receive funds for what you have actually spent.

The next two items are something new to our account structure and are generally only seen on the financials completed through the audit process. This budget increased expenses by 3.63% and shows a healthy net operating income. Number 10 and 11 represent Other Income and Other Expenses considered to be outside of our operations.

10. Other Income - interest income, rental income and miscellaneous income.
11. Other Expenses - depreciation and bad debt.

The results in a small total net income for the year of \$4,021.

The next several pages represent the number of staff positions, or FTEs, that PVPA actually has. Looking at this list you can see that PVPA has 15 arts teachers - this is considerably more than traditional schools that may have one music and one art or

theater teacher. You can also see the changes that were previously mentioned vs FY26. Overall FY27 is proposing 90.48 FTEs. This is a number that we watch in terms of how close it comes to 100 employees when we include part-time substitute teachers not calculated in the FTEs. Once you reach 100 employees new requirements come into effect for compliance with the Affordable Care Act and employment laws.

The FY27 Capital Budget was voted and approved previously at \$120,000. This summer will be busy as we do reconstruction on a music and a theater classroom designed to give more space and be more conducive to teaching the arts and storing instruments.

PVPA's five year history of cash reserves. This is a good representation of how our conservative budgeting has allowed us to set aside funds for capital purchases. New this year, the Finance Committee voted in the Transportation Reserve to have the cash to fund the transportation costs until the reimbursement is received from the state. Future years will not see as much money being added to the reserves as tuition funding is projected to decrease.

The next couple of pages are graphs that depict visual representations of the budget:

1. Health insurance rates - as you can see PVPA saw a spike in the cost in FY26 with a 29.9% increase. FY27 increase, while lower at 11.9%, is still higher than the years preceding FY26.
2. Tuition increase by year - this is a good representation of the Student Opportunity Act - seven year implementation, FY26 figures will be included when we have final numbers. The SOA addresses some inflation factors that increase cost for things like employee benefits, special education expenses and low income designations for each community. The graph shows how this brought more funds to PVPA initially then trails off in the later years. The state has established a committee that will once again look at the Chapter 70 funding formula. The consensus across the state is that increases for FY28 and FY29 will be in the neighborhood of 3% per year.
3. FY27 Expense Budget - Overall of the \$9.7 million expense budget, 54.44% personnel costs + 12.97% Employee Benefits/Taxes = 67.41% that is spent on staff. The next largest amount is 13.84% that is transportation.
4. FY27 Salaries - we can see further that the salary budget is \$5.3 million with 72.47% going to Education Teachers and Staff. The visuals really show where PVPA's funds are spent.

Comments/Questions from Board members:

This budget represents conservative growth.

Why the upward spike in health? BCBS will explain it as COVID catch up and the increased cost of medical services, usage and an older staff population that uses the insurance vs a younger, healthier staff that does not.

School based medicaid- LPVEC received a % for managing the process. This program allows PVPA to access or bill a students' medicaid for services performed by the school such as OT, speech, nursing and counseling.

Jayme address the board - Does PVPA have a grant writer? No - we do have folks responsible for entitlement grants can also receive competitive grants. Challenging to have full time person to do this. Can bring grants to Marcy & Brent? Yes.

Since the expansion of theater, heard some alumni talk about being overwhelmed about what has changed since we were in Hadley. Excited....enormous growth.

Azizah Yasin made a motion to Accept FY27 budget.  
Ann Dargie Gladd, Esq seconded the motion.  
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

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

**B. Friends of PVPA Liaison**

No report with the next meeting on May 15th.

**C. Head of School Support and Evaluation**

Committee met to talk about last year evaluations and goals. Increase in hitting the mini goals set for Brent. Brent often does not share the goals or the progress in his report to the Board.

Evaluation has been sent to Board and his direct reports. Brent has his self evaluation.

Brent - start of year - discussed areas of focus - based on observing and taking feedback from previous year. 1 - strategies to develop ways to overcome communication barriers for staff and parents. Community needs to feel that they are receiving information in a way they can access and digest the information. Ever increasing amount and ways to deliver it - this year have been working with our communications team - TV - navigate the use of the platforms we have access to - PS, brightArrow email - along with Sandra

Courtney - community bulletin - staff input sent to all families. John and other Admins - doing things to inform new families of how PVPA works - trying to include community in things that are happening like the Gala and 30th celebration - trying to better communicate.

Attendance is important - going to be more engaged and involved if you are here - automated letters notifying families about attendance, importance and next steps for those close to chronic absenteeism.

Most criticism has been about communication - will continue to improve.

Fundraising - been working on for a couple of years - FOPVPA 501c3 - been working with them but they have needed to focus on building needs. A couple of campaigns - new light board. Did fundraising for wireless microphones. Gala was a learning event - was successful - looking for something in the future to continue with what we learned.

Transition PVPA as an institute - set up for success - educational horizon. Things that have been done aren't always apparent - shrink region, busing, less spent on bussing - now may help enrollment as it is more accessible. Finding ways to increase what we offer programmatically in the arts - increase skill levels for students- possible to go to conservatory and possible to work in a theater after graduating from PVPA.

Help us remind Brent how things connect to goals and being apparent about how it connects. Strategic action plan - work being done to move things forward. Conditions - some of which we were planning - climate and culture survey - timeline from DESE may be challenging but will be gathering feedback from survey - will also run focus groups - other data like student achievement data will involve students and families over the summer to collectively review information and complete new SAP and accountability plan. Its a process with DESE, will have a diverse group give input.

We have talked as a Board about including the community and being able to hear voices - this year has been inclusive and we've worked hard to get students & teachers as representatives - important stakeholders in governance and day to day incorporated into the management of the school. Leveling up of communication - hard work put into all of it. Conditions - parallels what we were already planning. Global communications as well as individual items from PowerSchool.

Gala was wonderful - dancing and so much hard work. Would like this to become a norm - need more support - thinking what more can we do?

#### **D. Governance and Vice President**

The process for Board memberships was discussed where the Committee revised the application and re-opened it; holding interviews for 3 of 4 candidates. - Meetings were

open to the public. Vice Chair failed to give resumes to Board President so we cannot vote on the candidates tonight. Here is brief description of the candidates:

Laura Grant - from Florida with an arts background in choral music and band. - Has been a mental health clinician. She values different perspectives and learning styles currently teaches at UMASS - connection to PVPA is as a 7th grade parent. Values diversity - PVPA has been saving grace to her daughter - pleased with diversity of school and wants to be part of continued growth. Some experience with a college judiciary committee. She has been seen in attendance at community events. Spirit of gratitude - energy of giving back. Attended a Board meeting in March.

Maritsa Bonda - always worked with children and values community volunteering - lived in Brazil - Did musical theater in high school and sees the arts as very important. Currently a high school special education teacher in Amherst. Inclusivity is important. Currently co-authoring a book - Love and joy at the center of everything. She likes offering support to students to create classrooms that are intentional and cozy where students know they are cared about in terms of who they are and who they will become. Have had friends that went to school here - know some employees - using arts is important - Is a member of the Board of Amherst Media.

Kenzia Fitzgerald - from Andover and has an art degree - Caroline fundraising for medical devices. Kenzia has an incoming 7th grader. She met a PVPA teacher at the YMCA and became aware of PVPA then attended events for prospective students. Values how your career or training can use artistic skills and is seeking to join to help her to support the arts more fully and lend a hand to support students and the school. Power of Yes - yes you can do this. Has experience in fundraising and grant writing. Twice survivor of cancer - 2019 last - medical devices in AI from patient perspective.

Governance Committee voted to present all 3 candidate to the Board for a vote. All value the arts and all are educators in their own way - seemed connected and like minded - value hearing voices.

Vote will go on agenda in future.

Bylaws update - DESE work is a process; they provided provisional approval but are requiring us to do some revision work. Some items should be removed because they would hold up the process and should be in a policy and procedural document rather than part of the bylaws. Teaching staff representatives should be in policy documents as well as the interview process. Will follow up with DESE on Friday and finalize everything this month - if vote needed will be on June agenda.

New prospective Board members - will conduct a special meeting to expedite the vote. Will invite them to meeting.

Bringing good elements to the Board - Important mental health, spec, fundraising experience - all different age levels.

Jayne - address the Board - how many seats are open? No specific number of members but there are min number of parents. We will review anyone interested and interview - confirm. Year long recruiting effort - trying to streamline .

#### **E. President's Report**

Charter renewal - update - waiting for approval to DESE - Purpose Ed - Sonia Pratt - training for DESE and charter school leaders. Former Charter school leader in Boston.

Climate & culture training - Julia Bowen - Board on Track - Mike Mazonni as second person. Training on foundations of Boards.

Attorney awaiting approval from DESE - highly recommended.

Open meeting law training - deadline April 28th last available meeting - no certification - confirmation email that you received - please email to Latrina. - AGO advice. ASAP!

Recommend that the trustee candidates complete the OML training. Board to incorporate into on-boarding practice policy & procedures manual.

On target with actions required by conditions.

Graduation - June 4th - grad show June 3rd. President's ASK- try to attend - trustees get 2 tickets - email Latrina the number of tickets needed. Brent will communicate with staff.

Grad show - PVPA 6:00pm Graduation - Academy of Music 6:30pm Northampton

### **V. 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 8:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Marcy Conner

### **Documents used during the meeting**

- PVPA FY27 Budget Presentation 5-11-26.pdf