

APPROVED



# Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School

## Minutes

### Board of Trustee Meeting

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#### Date and Time

Tuesday April 14, 2026 at 6:00 PM

#### Location

15 Mulligan Dr, South Hadley MA 01075

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83886873873?pwd=v9hrc1XRKBQAo2T11GNd3z4XT8zu8w.1>

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#### Trustees Present

Azizah Yasin, Emily Whitebear, LATRINA DENSON, Thomas Roy (remote)

#### Trustees Absent

Ann Dargie Gladd, Esq, Matthew Schmidt, Esq, Neil Hede

#### 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**

LATRINA DENSON called a meeting of the board of trustees of Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School to order on Tuesday Apr 14, 2026 at 6:05 PM. Technical difficulties were experienced with the on-line platform and had to be disconnected and then restarted. The meeting re-commenced at 6:08pm.

**C. Reading of the Mission**

Azizah Yasin read the full mission.

**D. Approve Minutes**

Azizah Yasin made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustee Meeting on 03-17-26.

Emily Whitebear seconded the motion.

No discussion.

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

**Roll Call**

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

**E. Public Comments**

No public comment.

**II. PVPA Staff and Student Report**

**A. PVPA Staff Report**

No staff present.

**B. Student Reports**

No student report. Auditions taking place tonight.

**III. Head of School Report**

**A. General Updates**

This is a busy time of year! The schedule for next year is in the process of being finalized. Auditions have started as they are needed for scheduling. During the week after vacation live scheduling with students will start for next year. All students in grades 9-12 will have schedules for next year before they leave for the summer. Tomorrow fist

welcome day for new students! They will be seeing performances and receiving information about arts programming as well as moving through an abbreviated daily schedule. We are really aiming for student satisfaction, it has improved greatly in last 5 years and we hope to continue this trend.

Events:

Catalyst production this past weekend. The show is our Catalyst Dance Companies annual production and it also featured some middle school students. A couple of pieces were taught by our artist in residence this year featuring hip hop and bomba dance.

30th Anniversary Gala. Education landscape is showing budget constraints that are leading schools to cut the arts. This demonstrates the need and why it is important to have a school like PVPA for students to turn to. Cuts in municipal funding also means less funding for PVPA thus the need to fundraising. Silent auction, Amherst Jazz Orchestra, made good connections and received media coverage.

The remaining weekends of the school year are full of production activity. Plays, musical and grad show...Thursday night is Headgear.

Lottery & enrollment - applications are open, current enrollment is full. There does tend to be attrition over the summer; especially entering 9th graders who intentionally leave for another high school experience. Wait lists are full in 9th and 10th grades with some room in 11th and 7th grades. Currently have over 400 students committed for the 2026-2027 school year.

Substance use at school - vaping and other substances. Unhealthy and dangerous activity. Creates issues when students over occupy the bathrooms. Policy follows state law. Vapes are cannot be used on school property. If we suspect the use of these substance then we need to have a policy that allows searching the students. Most school have this type of policy; allows us to address the issue and promote health activity.

The Board commends the staff for all of the work that took place to put on the Gala. It was a lovely evening and very well put together event.

## **B. Interrogations and Searches of Students Policy**

Azizah Yasin made a motion to approve.

Emily Whitebear seconded the motion.

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

### **Roll Call**

Azizah Yasin

Aye

**Roll Call**

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

**C. Prohibition against Tobacco Products, Including E-Cigarettes and Vaping Devices on School Premises Policy**

Azizah Yasin made a motion to approve the Prohibition.

Emily Whitebear seconded the motion.

Questions asked by the Board:

Have issues increased over time or has there been a stark increase this year? Since returning from COVID. Private bathrooms for all genders misuse became more apparent.

What type of education is taking place for students? Tier I for all students included in health & wellness curriculum. Tier II or III for students who are struggling; they are receiving referrals and program information to help students. 99% taking place in bathrooms with occasional use outside and on buses.

Gateway issue - vapes open door to substances that are not lawful and kids not having an awareness to what they are vaping and the dangers.

Did South Hadley Police have input? Yes - Hampshire Co Sheriff and the Dist Atny Office met with PVPA Administration. Advised us on how we can address substance use at school and the need for this policy to enable the school to take action. The policy was crafted using South Hadley Public School's policy and MCPSA policies. This policy is about protecting the rights of individuals and safety of all.

Will it be distributed to parents and students? Before we put it into action it will be shared with families and students through Advisory program. Staff are already receiving training and it will continue. Will share through email with parents and we will be holding an on-line feedback session.

No mention of cell phones - intentional? Do not intend to do criminal investigations or follow evidence of where it came from. Crimes will be turned over to proper authorities. When we investigate cyber bullying, we only use screenshots from people reporting.

Will be in student handbook - policy plus consequences.

Will the policy apply to school buses? - PVPA doesn't own - is the bus company on board? Yes, part of state law as well.

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

**Roll Call**

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

**IV. Officer and Committee Reports**

**A. Finance Committee Report**

Finance Committee met on April 7th and discussed the following:

1. Request for proposal for auditing services - seeking a new auditing firm for the year ended June 30, 2026 and beyond.
2. FY26 3rd Quarter Budget vs Actual - expect to finish the year within budget but with a smaller reserve than has been experienced in the past few years
3. FY26 3rd Quarter Tuition - DESE released tuition projections a little later than usual. There remain some downward trends in Above Foundation Funds. PVPA will not meet the required benchmarks to give staff the contingency bonus outlined in the collectively bargained agreement.
4. Financial Transparency. Financial transparency document reviewed. Highlights included how PVPA is funded, the importance of our mission and how it leads spending. During FY26 there were 89.88 FTEs (full time equivalent positions) that accounted for 53% of the budget. Due to the arts related mission, PVPA has 12 arts teacher positions that other district do not have. 72.26% of the salary budget is for teachers and educational staff. 52.51% of the budget as a whole is spent on Education. PVPA also has priorities that other school do not: Restorative Practices (+2 FTE \$160,698 and \$22,000 in grant funding), Production budget that is mission related but not required (1 FTE \$58,896, \$70,815 in stipends and \$47,585 in program expenses = \$177,296). The 2025-2026 school year saw a substantial increase in busing services; \$1.1 million. This qualified us for regional transportation funds from the state where for 2025-2026 we will be reimbursed 84% of the cost. Facilities expenses of \$1.1 million or 11.07% of the overall budget - rising utility costs and the cost of supplies and services that PVPA has no control over. Employee benefits; PVPA has a robust employee benefits package but did see a 29.9% increase in health insurance this past year. The increase for 2026-2027 has yet to be determined but will most likely be in the double digits again. the remaining pages of the report include graphs and charts from DESE and other sources showing that PVPA is financial strong and has experienced favorable trends over the past five years.

FY27 is the final year of the implementation of the Student Opportunity Act. School across our region are facing critical decisions about budget and budget cuts. In fact, South Hadley is seeking and proposition 2 1/2 override as we speak. These decision will

have a direct impact on PVPA funding. The feeling being shared across the state is that FY28 and FY29 will see modest if any increases to tuition.

Can you explain the contingency payments? The Collectively Bargained Agreement has benchmarks for tuition that lead to one time payments based on a % of salary. When we are budgeting we don't always know how much tuition we will receive so this creates a safety net for the school. The salary structure promises modest increases however PVPA is able to provide as much as possible to staff through this contingency feature.

We hear the flat FY28 projection. Grateful that the Finance team is ensuring we enter into a difficult financial situation in a positive way. Concerns around salaries and benefits.

There was also an Executive Session meeting on April 7th to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining.

Emily Whitebear made a motion to approve the FY27 Capital Budget.

Azizah Yasin seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

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

**B. Friends of PVPA Liaison**

Emily Whitebrear, as the liason, reported that the Friends are reviewing studies from Hvac, roof, lighting scope, building envelope, weatherization, water heater provided by two vendors. Eversource is working with Environ. They are still reviewing documents - Environ looks good. FOPVPA have not made a decision but are continuing to moving forward.

Are the Friends actively recruiting? Yes, they need replacement for Treasurer for next year.

Would the FOPVPA be interesting in a meeting with the BOT? Yes, there is great interest - need time. Please seek an evening time to hold a meeting before July retreat if possible.

**C. Governance and Vice President**

The Governance Committee is focused on recruiting Board members - applications remaining open until Governance meeting on April 28th. Someone who attended the

Gala submitted an application. Some people may not be interested in being on the Board but in fundraising with the FOPVPA - intersectionality. Fundraising is a critical part of our sustainability. Azizah was finally able to speak with DESE concerning our bylaws. DESE has experienced some staffing issues themselves and were not able to respond. Some of the bylaw revisions were DESE recommendations, they are scrutinizing to ensure language meets the targets. Azizah will be meeting with them soon to push this forward. Need to understand to be in compliance. Hopeful to have approval by Board retreat.

#### **D. President's Report**

Selection of additional training dates: Same day of week and time seems to work best (Tuesdays at 6:00pm). Reached out to Board on Track to see if they can provide and will be reaching out to Mike Mazoni to see about further training.

Board membership feedback. Please respond to notices on Board on Track. We are actively looking for items where we can improve. Board on Track has evaluative questions about process and understanding our roles plus options for additional training. We need to be goal setting and think about strategic planning.

Head of School evaluation to be coming as well.

Please be sure to accept any meeting notices on Board on Track or respond to other communications.

Open meeting law training - a few dates left to attend 4/16 & 4/28. No one has received there certificates of attendance.

Please try to attend some of the upcoming performances.

Alot of committee work being done - May meeting will be the budget.

#### **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 7:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Marcy Conner

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

- Interrogations and Searches of Students Policy.pdf

- Prohibition Against Tobacco Use on School Premises Policy.pdf
- PVPA FY27 Financial Transparency 4-1-26.pdf
- FY27 Capital Budget.pdf