

# 先锋中英双语学校

Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School

## Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes October 26, 2023 at 6:00pm

School Location: PVCICS, 317 Russell Street, Hadley, MA 01035

The meeting was held with Zoom and Telephone access in accordance with current Massachusetts Open Meeting Law (OML) guidelines for remote access as extended by Governor Healey from March 2023 to March 31, 2025. The host for this meeting was Executive Director Richard Alcorn.

NOTE: The posted agenda for this meeting was entitled “ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE”. This was a clerical error – the Annual Meeting was held in June 2023.

In virtual attendance for this meeting: Board Chair Cynthia Farmer, Vice-Chair Mike Rooney, Frank Soleimani (via telephone), Greg Rota, Student Representative Francesca Barlow (joined at 6:19pm) and Treasurer Charles “Nick” Bagley (joined at 6:30pm),

Absent: Gina Ocasion and Ann Kochis

Others in virtual attendance: Executive Director Richard Alcorn, Principal Kathy Wang, previous Board member Elizabeth “Betty” Larivee (meeting scribe), and three parents

### Documents used in this meeting:

1. Meeting Agenda with information for Zoom and Phone access
2. Draft Minutes of the Board Meeting dated September 7, 2023
3. Email dated 9/30/23 announcing postponement of meeting scheduled for 10/5/2023
4. Email dated 10/4/2023 regarding Financial Reports dated 8/31/2023
5. Email dated 10/19/2023 regarding letter from DESE Commissioner Riley declining approval of proposed Board Bylaw Amendment
6. Email dated 10/19/2023 regarding Financial Reports dated 9/30/2023
7. Email dated 10/22/2023 regarding Draft FY2023 Financial Audit
8. Email dated 10/22/2023 regarding Resume of Student Representative to the Board
9. Email dated 10/23/2023 regarding Executive Director’s Annual Goals for SY23 (2022-2023) and SY24 (2023-2024)
10. Email dated 10/23/2023 regarding Regulations for Investment of Funds (Mass. General Laws, Sections 55 and 55B)
11. Email dated 10/24/2023 and re-sent on 10/25/23 regarding report in Athol, MA newspaper about Bilingual Detective Book published by granddaughters of previous PVCICS Board Chairperson
12. Email dated 10/26/23 regarding Principal’s Annual Goals for SY24 (2023-2024)
13. Email dated 10/16/23 regarding Transportation costs for school year 2022-2023
14. Email dated 10/26/23 regarding End-of-Cycle Summative Evaluation Document for Evaluation of Executive Director

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The meeting was officially called to order by the Chair at 6:03 PM. Chair Cynthia completed a roll call for attendance of Board members. Present were Frank, Greg, Mike, and Cynthia.

Public Comment: None

Administrative Items: Minutes from the meeting of September 7, 2023 Board Meeting were presented for review. No corrections were noted. Cynthia made a motion to approve the minutes; seconded by Frank. Roll call vote: Approval from Frank and Cynthia; Mike and Greg abstained from the motion. Motion passed.

Election of Representatives to the Board of Trustees: Students at PVCICS elected Francesca Barlow (Grade 11) as their Representative to the Board. The Board reviewed her resume and briefly discussed her appointment. Greg made a motion to approve Francesca Barlow as the Student Representative; seconded by Mike. Roll call vote was unanimous approval from Greg, Mike, Frank, and Cynthia. Francesca then joined the Board meeting a few minutes later. Election of the Faculty Representative is “On-Hold” at this time.

## Committee and Task Force Reports:

Trusteeship Committee: Committee Chair Frank reported that a possible candidate for the Board has been identified. An application is being put together. He would like to hold a meeting in November but does not have five committee members as required by the Board Bylaws. This November committee meeting will be for discussion purposes only unless another person joins the committee.

Finance Committee: Committee Chair Nick had not yet joined the meeting so his report was postponed until he enters the meeting.

Personnel and Grievance Committee: Committee Chair Gina was absent so Committee member Mike gave the report. He said the committee met on October 19<sup>th</sup> and reviewed documents related to the evaluations of the Principal and Executive Director. The committee is responsible for reviewing the Annual Goals of both the Principal and Executive Director and making recommendations to the Board for final approval of these Annual Goals. The Committee then completes four observations of the Principal during the school year and works with the Principal at the end of the year to complete the final Evaluation. The final Evaluation for the Executive Director is completed by all members of the Board and compiled by the Board Chairperson.

At this time, the Committee has set a time line for the Principal’s Evaluation Cycle –

- Annual Goals by September of each school year to the Personnel Committee
- Reports by the Principal during regular Board meetings on progress towards attainment of various Goals
- Final Evaluation Summary (documentation of attainment of Goals) to the Personnel Committee by December following the school year closure
- Completed End-of-Cycle Evaluation Summary to the Board in January for review and final approval

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Following discussion on the Annual Goals, Greg made a motion to approve the 2022-2023 Annual Goals for Executive Director Richard Alcorn; motion seconded by Mike. Roll call vote was unanimous approval from Mike, Frank, Greg, and Cynthia. Greg then made a motion to approve the 2023-2024 Annual Goals of ED Richard; motion seconded by Mike. Roll call vote was unanimous approval from Mike, Frank, Greg, and Cynthia. Mike made a motion, seconded by Greg, to approve the 2023-2024 Annual Goals for Principal Kathy Wang. Roll call vote was unanimous approval from Mike, Frank, Greg, and Cynthia.

Chair Cynthia said that the Summative Evaluation of ED Richard for the 2022-2023 year will be completed by all Board members. The End-of-Cycle Summative Evaluation Form was sent to all Board members for review. ED Richard will be sending out his “documentation” to describe the attainment of his Annual Goals as well as the Charter School Standards that are part of the Evaluation Form. Once documentation is received and reviewed, Board members can complete the Evaluation Form and return it to her. She will develop the final summary report based on the Board’s responses.

Finance Committee: Committee Chair Nick thanked the Board for their patience while awaiting his arrival. He said that the MP Group had completed the required Financial FY2023 Audit for PVCICS. The DRAFT document had been sent to the Board for their review. There were no exceptions or issues reported in the Audit. The Finance Committee is recommending acceptance of this report. Cynthia made a motion to accept the Audit; seconded by Mike. Roll call vote was unanimous approval from Mike, Frank, Greg, Nick, and Cynthia. Greg made a motion to allow either the Board Chair or Treasurer to sign the “Letter of Acceptance by the Board”; motion seconded by Mike. Roll call vote was unanimous approval from Mike, Frank, Greg, Nick, and Cynthia.

Principal’s Report: Principal Kathy reported via Power Point presentation:

- ✓ The students have completed 39 days of school; Fall Semester K-8 Curriculum Night has been held; Parent-Teacher Conferences have been held with almost 100% participation.
- ✓ The new food service provider called “Epicurean Feast” seems to be doing a good job as food orders are on the rise.
- ✓ Staff is still being hired for Special Education Teachers, School Nurse, and various classroom Teachers.
- ✓ Two Teachers from Taiwan started to work in early October. Professor Hsiao from the National Taiwan Teachers College, where these new Teachers are from, came to PVCICS on 10/11/23 for an observation. This visit helps to cement the relationship between PVCICS and the Taiwan College.
- ✓ Reports from DESE show a statewide drop in student enrollment during Covid which has not recovered. Chronic absenteeism also adds to this problem. Recommended absence

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of 8 days for Covid during 2022-23 and now 5 days for Covid during 2023-24 compounds the absenteeism issue.

- ✓ DESE will be doing a Tiered Focused Monitoring with a site visit on December 6-7, 2023. This will be a record review of Civil Rights and Special Education.
- ✓ There will also be an Accountability Site Visit on 3/19/24 when DESE will be meeting with the Board. Further details on time schedule will be developed.
- ✓ Some School Policies need to be reviewed and updated due to revisions in State Regulations. These Policy changes will be presented to the Board at the December meeting for approval.

MCAS Test Results: Principal Kathy reported the following:

- ✓ 2023 Spring Testing was the first “normal” year for testing since 2019 and the Covid restrictions.
- ✓ All testing was done on-line via computer unless accommodations were required for paper tests.
- ✓ Results from DESE indicate that PVCICS students “Met or Exceeded” the State Averages except in Grade 3 English (PVCICS=37; State=44) and Math (PVCICS=39; State 41).
- ✓ All test results can be found on-line at the DESE website.

Transportation Policy and Costs: Principal Kathy and ED Richard reported the following:

- ✚ Kathy had a meeting yesterday about the costs for regular busing services as well as sport-related busing
- ✚ ED Richard sent out a financial report on 2022-2023 costs for transportation services
- ✚ DESE Bus Reimbursement is given when a school/district provides transportation for ALL students beyond a mile of the school. Reimbursement is about 65% to 75% of the annual cost and is distributed during the following school year.
- ✚ PVCICS provides transportation to/from athletic events. The small 14 passenger bus which is operated by the school is too small for some of the school teams – a larger bus is required at additional costs to the school. There is no after-sports busing from school to home.
- ✚ Last year, as with other years, costs for transportation have been subsidized in the Operational Budget of the school.
- ✚ Principal Kathy plans to meet with the Family Association and Athletic Supporters to discuss transportation costs.

Frank asked a question about the possibility of a new bus route to cover the Westfield, Granville, Agawam, and West Springfield areas. Parents now drive 30 to 45 minutes to the current stop in Holyoke and would appreciate a more localized bus stop.

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Liz (School Parent) spoke about the equity of students that participate in sports. She said there are students of color/ethnicity that do not participate in sports because they cannot return home without bus service. She would like to establish a Parent Advisory Group to review all the busing issues and to advise the Administration on future action. Additionally, there should be capped costs on fees for families with multiply students at PVCICS.

Mike asked about the feasibility of buying another mini-bus. Concerns were raised about who would be available as a driver for the after-athletic events schedule.

Chair Cynthia asked if there were any volunteers that wanted to work with Principal Kathy on these transportation matters. Frank, Liz, and Mike all expressed an interest.

## Executive Director's Report: ED Richard reported:

- ❖ A Bylaw Amendment was submitted to DESE in December 2022. The response from Commissioner Riley dated October 13, 2023 denied approval of the Amendment due to various "Conflicts of Interest" if ED Richard were to become a voting member of the Board.
- ❖ Richard said that the Commissioner's response did not address the requested Amendment which stated "the Board may include a PVCICS Executive Director" – not specifically that ED Richard would be on the Board.
- ❖ Chair Cynthia spoke about her Zoom meeting with DESE on this issue. They indicated that the Board has the right to appeal the Commissioner's decision.
- ❖ After discussion, Frank made a motion to request a review of the decision to deny the PVCICS Charter Amendment to the Board Bylaws; motion seconded by Nick. Roll call vote was unanimous approval from Greg, Mike, Frank, Nick, and Cynthia.
- ❖ ED Richard spoke about the money that the school has in the bank and coverage from FDIC Insurance. The Auditor has indicated that moving funds into Treasuries is appropriate in accordance with Commonwealth General Laws Section 55 and 55B. He will look into moving some funds into a Treasury Account and/or a CD account upon consultation with the Board Treasurer and Finance Committee.

New Business: Chair Cynthia asked about the Board's opinion on the next meeting scheduled for November 2<sup>nd</sup> – Should the meeting be held next week or changed to another date? After discussion, the Board's consensus was to hold the meeting as scheduled even if it is a light agenda. There will be no Executive Session.

Having no further business, Chair Cynthia thanked everyone for their participation in tonight's lengthy meeting. Comments were also made to welcome Francesca to the Board.

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Chair Cynthia then read the following statement:

The PVCICS Board of Trustees will enter into Executive Session per M.G.L. Chapter 30A section 21(a) 1 – To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against a public officer, employee, staff member or individual; and M.G.L. c.30A, section 21(a)(3) -- To discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares. An Open Session would not reconvene at the conclusion of the Executive Session.

Cynthia called for a motion to adjourn the Regular Meeting and move into Executive Session. Mike made the motion; seconded by Greg. Roll call vote was unanimous approval: Nick, Frank, Greg, Mike and Cynthia. The meeting adjourned at 8:19pm.

Minutes approved by Board of Trustees on November 2, 2023

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