

先锋中英双语学校

Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

September 7, 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.

In virtual attendance for this meeting: Board Chair Cynthia Farmer, Gina Occasion, Frank Soleimani (via phone access), Treasurer Charles “Nick” Bagley (joined the meeting at 6:30pm).

Absent: Vice-Chair Mike Rooney, Ann Kochis, and Greg Rota

Others in virtual attendance: Executive Director Richard Alcorn, Principal Kathy Wang, previous Board member Elizabeth “Betty” Larivee (meeting scribe), Attorney Kimberly Roche, and, approximately 25 Parents and Staff Members.

Documents used in this meeting:

1. Meeting Agenda with information for Zoom and Phone access
2. Draft Minutes of the Board Meeting dated July 27, 2023
3. Email dated 8/4/23 forwarding an e-mail sent to the Board from a Parent regarding “Transportation costs PVCICS”
4. Email dated 8/27/23 forwarding an e-mail sent to the Principal and Board regarding “A Letter from 5th Grade Parents”
5. Email dated 8/30/23 regarding U.S. News Article entitled ‘Overview of PVCICS’ High School in National and State Rankings”
6. Email dated 9/7/23 regarding PVCICS Bus Transportation Policy

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

NOTE: ED Richard Alcorn indicated that Nick Bagley had called to say that he was having technical difficulties and could not enter the Zoom session. If allowed the time, he would change his location for better reception. At 6:10pm, Chair Cynthia called for a brief delay in the start of this meeting to wait for Nick and ensure a quorum.

The meeting was officially called to order by the Chair at 6:30 PM. Chair Cynthia completed a roll call for attendance of Board members. Present were Gina, Frank, Nick, and Cynthia.

Election of Board Officers: Chair Cynthia indicated that this meeting had many non-Board attendees so she anticipated a lengthy “Public Comment” section. She recommended that the election and Board Committee assignments be postponed until the October Board meeting. Board members concurred with her.

317 Russell Street, Hadley, MA 01035

Phone: 413-582-7040 Fax: 413-582-7068 Email: info@pvcics.org Web: www.pvcics.org

This institution is an equal opportunity provider

先锋中英双语学校

Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes of September 7, 2023

Page 2 of 4

Public Comment:

First Speaker: Parent Liz V. congratulated the School for their hard work and excellent ratings as noted in the U.S News article. She indicated that she has three children at PVCICS and has concerns about several items. She noted: (a) high cost of transportation for families with several children; (b) availability of reimbursements for busing from DESE which could be used to offset parental costs; (c) the lack of a late bus for Middle and High Schoolers wanting to attend after school activities/sports; (d) the location of the Springfield bus stop on the “dangerous” Union Street; (e) the need for a Parent Involvement Committee in school decision making; (f) the need for Parent Surveys for input and suggestions; (g) the lack of curricular choices for band/orchestra as well as STEM/computer programming in light of \$2.9 carryover funds in the school budget.

Chair Cynthia responded: (1) many of the noted concerns were Administrative items that the Board does not handle and cannot control; (2) ED Richard is once again looking into the DESE transportation reimbursement process; (3) options for a late bus can be explored; (4) Springfield bus stops are difficult to locate because of various businesses, their hours of operation, and parking lot space.

Second Speaker: Parent Colby B. referred to the parental concerns over Teacher assignments for Grade 5. He said that some parents had information regarding certain staff that could have been shared with the Administration if they were part of a Parent Advisory Group that could assist with staff recruitment and hiring.

Attorney Roach responded to say that it should be noted that the staff recruitment and hiring process involves privacy issues and rights so there are legal limitations on the sharing of applicant information which may not be appropriate for a Parent Advisory Group.

Principal Kathy also responded to say that an open meeting at school had been set up for tomorrow, Friday afternoon at 4:30pm, to discuss with parents the Grade 5 concerns. This will be a follow-up to the Zoom meeting held earlier this week.

Chair Cynthia asked for any other speakers but none came forward. She thanked those that participated as well as those that were in virtual attendance.

Administrative Items: Minutes from the meeting of July 27, 2023 Board Meeting were presented for review. No corrections were noted. Nick made a motion to approve the minutes; seconded by Gina. Roll call vote: Approval from Gina, Nick and Cynthia; Frank abstained from the motion. Motion passed.

Committee and Task Force Reports:

Trusteeship Committee: Committee Chair Frank reported that there was a possible candidate for the Board. An application is being put together.

Finance Committee: Committee Chair Nick reported that the fiscal reports are being completed and will be sent out for the next board meeting.

317 Russell Street, Hadley, MA 01035

Phone: 413-582-7040 Fax: 413-582-7068 Email: info@pvcics.org Web: www.pvcics.org

This institution is an equal opportunity provider

先锋中英双语学校

Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes of September 7, 2023

Page 3 of 4

Personnel and Grievance Committee: Committee Chair Gina reported that Principal Kathy is working on her 2023-24 Annual Goals so the Board should have them at the next meeting.

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

- ✓ New staff started work on 8/19/23 for In-service Training; other staff returned on 8/21/23
- ✓ Students started on 8/30/23; masks are optional, everyone seems happier and more relaxed compared to the start of school last year
- ✓ It was a fairly smooth start of school with some bus issues; everyone's patience was greatly appreciated
- ✓ The previous food service provider resigned in late August so there is a new food service provider called "Epicurean Feast"
- ✓ An additional bus has been added to the Springfield route
- ✓ Staff is still being hired for Special Education Teachers, School Nurse, and various classroom Teachers
- ✓ The afterschool program at the YMCA will start on 9/11/23 due to their lack of staff
- ✓ Staffing issues are prevalent throughout the State; the State Board of Education is looking at amendments to the licensing regulations. See article from 6/28/23 on website: wbur.org
- ✓ First school fire drill successfully occurred yesterday. It took 2 minutes 9 seconds to empty the building's four floors of 650 people
- ✓ If not already read, please see the U.S. News article on PVCICS High School ranking
- ✓ MCAS scores are due in late September; this year, DESE will be doing a Tiered Focused Monitoring with a site visit in December; there will also be an Accountability Site Visit on 3/19/24

Executive Director's Report: ED Richard reported:

- ❖ The State's Transportation Reimbursement System was designed to support high-needs communities rather than an independent school
- ❖ There was no interest for universal bus services when PVCICS started
- ❖ The "Plan" for bus services was copied from the Performing Arts Charter School in So. Hadley. Their plan can be re-visited for updates.
- ❖ The local shuttle bus service was added due to traffic and construction on Route 9. Local Police are not available for traffic duty because this is a State Highway.
- ❖ He will revisit the current State Transportation Reimbursement process
- ❖ The current budget surplus exists because PVCICS is looking for an additional building to expand space and curricular offerings. The current facility does not have enough space for additional offerings. Changes are being planned for September 2024
- ❖ Recruitment of additional students is minimal. Additional staffing and student headcount cannot increase until new space is developed

317 Russell Street, Hadley, MA 01035

Phone: 413-582-7040 Fax: 413-582-7068 Email: info@pvcics.org Web: www.pvcics.org

This institution is an equal opportunity provider

先锋中英双语学校

Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes of September 7, 2023

Page 4 of 4

- ❖ A Bylaw Amendment was submitted to DESE in December 2022. They requested some additional information which was sent to them. As of this date, no response has been received from DESE. Attorney Roche will follow-up on this issue.

Annual Evaluation of the Executive Director:

As reported last month, Chair Cynthia stated that this evaluation will be done in the upcoming months. ED Richard still needs to prepare his “documentation” to support the attainment of his 2022-2023 Annual Goals. Once done, she will send the Evaluation paperwork to Board members for their individual scoring and then complete the Summary Report based on their responses.

New Business:

Chair Cynthia expressed concern about students going outside during high heat and humidity. Principal Kathy responded to say there is an option for students to stay indoors if enough staffing is available for coverage; the Athletic Director follows the MIAA guidelines for outdoor activities and sports; the School Nurse is also consulted as needed.

Having no further business, Chair Cynthia thanked everyone for their participation in tonight’s meeting and apologized for the postponement at the start of this meeting. She 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. Gina made the motion; seconded by Nick. Roll call vote was unanimous approval: Nick, Frank, Gina and Cynthia. The meeting adjourned at 7:45pm.

Minutes approved by the Board of Trustees on October 26, 2023

317 Russell Street, Hadley, MA 01035

Phone: 413-582-7040 Fax: 413-582-7068 Email: info@pvcics.org Web: www.pvcics.org

This institution is an equal opportunity provider