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BOSTON PREP

# Boston Preparatory Charter Public School

# Minutes

## SY26 Board of Trustees Retreat #4

**Date and Time**
Friday March 27, 2026 at 8:00 AM

**Location**
We are located at 1 Kingsbury Ave Watertown, MA 02472
Enter the Arsenal Campus through Kingsbury Ave and take your first right onto Wooley Ave, where there is a parking garage with free parking. Alternatively, there is an entrance from N Beacon Street if you're coming from that direction. Here is a link to a map showing both entrance options, parking garage location, and walking directions from the garage to our office.

*The public is welcome to attend any meeting of Boston Prep's Board of Trustees or its subcommittees. If communication assistance or any other accommodations are needed to ensure equal participation, please contact Lily Jewell at ljewell@bostonprep.org at least two (2) business days prior to the meeting. Any changes in the agenda will be posted on Boston Prep's website and will be electronically filed with the secretary of state at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting.*

*Boston Prep does not discriminate on the basis of race or color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, age, country of ancestral origin, or veteran status in administration of its admissions or educational policies, curricular programs, other school-administered programs, or in its hiring and employment practices in accordance with applicable Federal and Massachusetts laws and regulations*

**Trustees Present**
B. Jones, C. Newton, D. Russell, J. Beck, J. Johnson, J. Nobles, K. Borchert, K. Dumornay, N. Branch-Lewis, S. James, S. Laberis, T. Huff, V. Centeio, V. Lipschitz

**Trustees Absent**
J. Ripert, M. Gametchu

**Guests Present**
Carrie Irvin, L. Jewell

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## I. Opening Items

### A. Record Attendance

### B. Call the Meeting to Order

K. Borchert called a meeting of the board of trustees of Boston Preparatory Charter Public School to order on Friday Mar 27, 2026 at 8:40 AM.

### C. Approve Minutes

### D. One-Time Amendment for Charter re: Snow Days

Governance chair recapped the one-time amendment opportunity to shorten the amount of extra snow days. The school conducted a survey with families, staff, and students to poll if they wanted to do the one time amendment. DESE is allowing this and encouraging charter schools to do this as long as they meet the requirement of 180 days and the necessary hours of schools. Brought it to the board to vote to approve that June 22nd is the last day of the school year. It also helps with summer school and allowing the staff to flip over to summer school.

Team asked to make sure we had the necessary days and what would happen if there was another snow day. After March 31st, DESE does not count the snow days.
S. James made a motion to Approve the school year end of June 22nd.
K. Borchert seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

| | |
|---|---|
| M. Gametchu | Absent |
| J. Nobles | Aye |
| S. James | Aye |
| J. Johnson | Aye |
| C. Newton | Aye |
| K. Borchert | Aye |
| K. Dumornay | Aye |
| S. Laberis | Aye |
| V. Centeio | Aye |
| D. Russell | Aye |
| N. Branch-Lewis | Aye |

**Roll Call**

| | |
|---|---|
| J. Ripert | Absent |
| V. Lipschitz | Aye |
| T. Huff | Aye |
| J. Beck | Aye |
| B. Jones | Aye |

## II. Welcome and Connector

### A. Overview of Agenda and Objectives

Opened up the meeting with a thank you to work and their bravery with diving into the work of being on a Charter School Board. The work to start charter schools with approximate governance to support kids and do what is best for them. And this important work could not happen without volunteers like this board.

Carrie Irvin, from Bellweather, is leading the board retreat. She introduced herself and the work that Bellweather. Reviewed the objectives of the retreat:
- Understand the current state, opportunities, and risks for Boston Prep
- Inspired new and continuing board members to govern for Boston Prep's next chapter, during and after this leadership transition
- redesign board organization and structures as needed
- Create an action plan to guide board work going forward

Reviewed the norms for the meeting:
- Keep the mission and students of Boston Prep at the center of your mind and your words
- assume the best in one another
- leave room for all voices
- speak with candor, clarity, and care
- accept non- resolution and ambiguity
- avoid speaking for others' perspectives
- ground in data when possible: governance without data is not as productive

Reviewed the Agenda for the day.

### B. Connector: Share an experience from high school that stayed with you.

Attendees introduced themselves and share an experience from your own 6-12th grade years that has stayed with you. People shared experienced that shaped them in the academic spaces.

## III. Leadership Transition Update

### A.

**Updates on agreements and 30/60/90 day priorities**

The new interim director joined the meeting to re-introduce herself. Board chair introduced her and discussed the path to choosing her to be the interim executive director. VaLonda has played many roles at Boston Prep and the board thanked her for her work at the school and jumping into this new job. VaLonda introduced herself and explained all her roles at Boston Prep, which started as an assistant teacher. She has worked under all three executive directors and has learned different things from all of them. She is excited to work on this new phase of growth with the Board. Shared her education experience and how it took a whole community. And how we want Boston Prep to be this community. Changing one students path with education can have an impact on those around them and make really significant change.

Opened up to the Board to ask any questions they may have.

What is it like in the building? March is a long month, we are wrapping up a quarter 3 and a lot of the work is being done with MCAS, etc.

## IV. Current State of the School

### A. Overview Mission, students, staff, budget

Opened up the current state of the school with making sure the Board understands they matter and that their bar matters. And we set this bar we are couragesly setting a bar that will push schools. Many schools are struggling in this current state for those who are not education during their day job.

Reviewed the basics: Boston Prep serves 6-12th grade, 673 currently enrolled students, 21.8 million annual budget. 62% Black/African American, 19$% Hispanic/Latino, Two or more races 12%, Asian 3%, White 3%, 78% high needs, 65% low income, 17% multilingual learners, 23% special education supports.

While there are a few bright spots in the data, BP students are far below the bar a college-prep school school achieve, and the school is not on track to achieve its mission. One Team has shown remarkable fortitude in a challenging context, However BP is performing below their standards.  Academic achievement has been in decline, despite significant and needed investments in improving curriculum and instruction. High staff turnover has made improving academic performance challenging, staff culture has suffered, staff is motivated to focus on improving academics and is looking to the board for leadership stability and support. The board is engaged, governing with courage and intention, and looking ahead to sustainability. A leadership turnover provides momentum for a pivot and can galvanize staff families and students to refocus and recenter on Boston Prep's powerful and compelling mission.

Carrie Irvin, Reviewed Data, made a point to emphasize that we made the graphs display 100 on the y-axis. Reviewed the data against Charter peers, BPS, and MA state. We are performing below it all. That remains true for students with disabilities, students of color, students who are Multilingual learners.

Boston Prep is outperforming BPS and State in having a strong postsecondary options. Chronic absenteeism and out of school suspensions rate have been high. Our absenteeism is lower than BPS but out of school suspensions is above BPS.

Staff culture continues to be a challenge with low teacher satisfaction and high teacher attrition in recent years. Enrollment has seen a decline this year and the school is projected to operate in deficit in FY27.  Enrollment declines is happening in north east cities.

This board did a strong job at reviewing the Executive director. The most recent overall rating was partially meeting.

Opened it up to VaLonda's reflections or corrections and then to the Board for questions.

Reflected that we are not setting kids up for the college bar, but are exceeding in getting our kids into college. But it is heartbreaking we sending them there to not be successful.

Board asked: what are the changes that have happened when we were sending them prepared before? Verse what we are doing now?'

VaLonda: lots of reasons, covid, losing staff members, we are training young new teachers, we are working on restabilizing our culture systems. Coming out of COVID we did decide to element demerits, suspensions, etc. But now we have brought them back , but this management training is taking time to bring back

Board shared that when the school was 5 years old, as a brand new teacher that for any new teachers there was a whole systems for behavior that teachers could lean on to then focus on teaching the math. Veteran and new teachers we invested in this.

Also shared that the founding Boston Prep was the norm across the charter sector. But aspirationally that wasn't what the culture needed at that time. But the intent to make this shift was pure although not executed to the best of the ability.

School staff shared that during the transition there was a lot of veteran leadership and teachers to guide. And losing this has caused siloed spaces and a lack of consistency across departments. And it makes it really difficult to

What are the new teacher training? PDs, techniques, priorities? New team gets an extra week of training with classroom management, we have 1:1 coaching model, we have new teacher cohort meetings, circulating the room, monitoring student work.

The Board has observed that it seemed the framing for training new teachers was not streamlined, and clear processes. This seemed like a push to think about. This is something the school used to have and the Board would like to see implemented.

Board complimented the Persistence's team positive work and counseling students to attend schools they can be successful in. Both financially and academically, we are still not at the level we would like to be at. This is a bright spot we are proud of.

Reflecting on Curriculum and academic specifically, asked VaLonda if the curriculum changes we believe have been the best. A big piece is the implementation and are we supporting teacher to implement the quality curriculum at a high level. For context, like many charter peers we started with teacher created curriculum.

Question asked about why 10th grade is outperforming? Parent perspective about caring more when it is a graduation requirement, staff perspective about a strong educator. Board pointed out the 10th grade data tanked more because of the competency standard changing. Social emotional perspective shared about entering 10th grade. Boston Prep voted to keep MCAS as a competency determination, but the state voted to get rid of it. Which has changed the investment across state.

**B. Performance data on academics, financial and operational health of the school**

## V. Opportunities and Risks on the Horizon

### A. Opportunities

There are a lot of opportunities, we want to be thoughtful about the following
- Support and build communications, with OneTeam, parent communities: data shows if the community knows the board beyond just times of crisis they are more likely to embrace the board
- Refocus school on academic achievement, student success, and work with one team to do this
- New leaderships brings opportunities to pivot, new leadership can bring new energy
- Financial picture is relatively strong 4+ cash reserves and a clean audit, foundation support gives runway for scenario planning future-ready financial models
- Charter renewal timeline gives some time for improvement initiatives

Would be productive to move a lot of this work into committiees

### B. Risks

*What the broader landscape means for Boston Prep's next chapter:* 11 sector trends identified by Bellwether & MCPSA (May 2025), Implications for a single-site 6–12 charter in Hyde Park, Boston,

There are several key trends shaping the MA Education landscape. Reviewed the things attributing. Carrie reviewed the current risks that are at state. Risk 1: Funding & Policy headwinds are real and coming-- federal funding at risk, student opportunity act gains after SY27, philanthropy

Risk 2: The Political and authorizing environment is in flux. DESE is the single charter authorizer

Risk 3: less teachers and less students, advising all boards to plan around this. Across the country, we need to be thinking further ahead to look at population trends and communities to be less afraid about what we want to see in charter patterns. This is something to keep on the board radar to be able to thinking far ahead.

Another leadership turnover, we should be thinking about long term board members rolling off and what we will need to fill these spaces, to have different experiences and strengths support the board,

Discussion around what the opportunities and risks are across the school. Board proposed setting the foundation of

Outcomes committee: how are we going to monitor academic improvement? We have lacked a theory of how we are going to do that, lack of clarity around 3-5 most important strategies. Need to align on that so the board knows what to monitor. Noise > signal. We need to know what the steps are, in what order, we have struggled with that. We have been in turnaround. Need to say what we are going to do–there are a lot of ways to call the play–we need to call the play! VL: I trust you –seen many phases of boston prep, board can be helpful, but most proximate work is to lead to the theory of the case: make the ladder. We are going to climb this ladder, these are the rungs, used to have a specific vibe in the school.

OneTeam–it was ONE team. Moved awy from that. Need to bring that back. Ethics are a part of the school ethos–have these guiding lights ethics, OneTeam. THEN we can name the rungs/the lily pads towards the goal.

sharon's theory was OneTeam–gotta get the team together, team works this way,

sharon was great at galvaizing around one team one mission/one band one sound. Linking arms. All in this together. Profound impact on staff culture. Now siloed.

is there opportunity for outreach to innovation in the space to prep kids, to move the needle? We need more urgency. Can we also intervene with a few kids/few teachers in intense intervention?

looking at the proficiency over time–it's been a long time. Need to stablize foundation in the short team. We don't know how to teach teachers how to teach/manage a classroom. Hasn't been a clear plan–this is the problem, this is how the org is solving. We need that level of clarity about a few things

These are our kids, different, special, different problems. Lot going on. We have to teach OUR kids. Need teachers who can teach the kids with IEPs. Our community is changing quickly

Our job is to support leadership. Before headed to break capture your opportunities and risks on the post it notes.

## VI. Inspiring Action: The Road Ahead

### A. Supporting the Interim

Boards keep eyes on the future and ears on the present. We are all One team including the Board. We are keep our eye on the sustainability of the organization and measure if the school is on track and eyes on the charter renewal. The board is responsible for monitoring whether the school is fulfilling promises in the charter. Starting with approving a multi year strategic plan, approve annual goals for academics, financial and operational performance aligned with the strategic plan. Approve annual budget making sure it aligns with the goals. Monitor the progress to the goals and measuring progress against benchmarks.

Turned to board discussion:
- What are the most important priorities facing the school right now? Next 30 days, rest of this school year, next school year
- How can the board best partner with and support VaLonda in balancing planning and acting, accelerating academic priorities, and stabilizing staff culture?
- What is the most important data for the board to be monitoring?
- Where do you see yourself playing an active role?

Board discussed how they are going to continue to listen to what the school community is feeling. What are the gaps in the line of sight? Specifically, how much time the board is spending in the school with our students, staff, families. This can lead to a big disconnect.

How are we truly understanding our students and their needs. Really understanding what the reputation of Boston Prep is.

One thing that feels urgent, especially with student teachers are out. How do we set her up with the best team possible to go through this transition.

Additionally, brought up the HR concerns, there is a shift with HR roles. Board worries about how many unfilled roles will be there going into the summer. Especially, being concerned with someone hiring them who had education experience.

What are the asks of VaLonda to ensure we address this? By what day, what are the benchmarks for hiring. What is the clarity around this?

School staff shared some positions are already posted, teacher offer letters need to be signed by today. Leader offer letters go out today.

Budget and enrollment was brought up, along with development, and how are we going to tell our story and continue the necessary fundraising. How are we going to hold on to existing donors during this transition? And what are we going to do to absorb new donors? Development Chair shared that our donors are foundations, individuals, and corporate donors. Foundations look deep into data. The stories that individuals want are catered to their interests.  As philanthropy has moved away for K-12. The most invaluable thing you can do for the development team is get the word out about Boston Prep on an individual basis. When people see the love and commitment people have. There is a lot of goodwill with VaLonda that we can sell to older supporters. We need to insulate VaLonda from this gap so she can focus in on fixing things in the school. The board needs to focus on fundraising.

Is enrollment and re-enrollment on whose plate?

Support for V to develop crisp narrative on what the vision is, coupled with her being not new to BP and new in this role.  Pulling out best parts of Sharon and Meekerley era and then building new narrative of improvement.

What are the major things we need to do to shift how families and the community feel about the school?

What are the thing VaLonda is going to move? So that the Board knows and is being constantly revisited and should be the things that One Team is focused on every day as well. And what are the discreet data points.
What is realistic level of urgency around the things that need to happen around staff culture, staff development, and curriculum/ instruction?

For example, with staff culture, how are we gathering data on this. How are we ensuring and investing teachers in completing this? What is the response rate? How can we make sure we are hearing from all community members as well? All families. Getting good data needs to be a focused point. Can we lean on the new leadership to invest people in getting us the data? Are we then implementing the feedback we see on the data.

Priorities: Academic Priority, Culture priority, etc. What are some things are going to really focus in? And what are we not going to focus on?

How do we accelerate helping VaLonda getting a vision in place? In our June Board meeting, we would be 3-5 priorities and focus. Knowing that if anyone circles back that everyone in the community would be committed-- families, students, staff, leaders, board. VaLonda has the foundation to be able to do this if supported. The board is working to find a consultant who can support her in making this decisions. This person would be a partnership. The board is going to vet a pool of people and VaLonda will pick from those people who she wants to partner with.

Pointed out the difference between an executive coach vs. a consultant. There is a different between the two. There is a key distinction in governance. The Boards responsibility is to participate in the setting outcomes with the consultant vs. working with the coach to make sure they are on track. A lot of this is how we show up.

Question posed about how VaLonda is handling communications with One Team. The board announced. Now it is on VaLonda to handle communicating and setting things with her team. Is the Board going to set a date for when VaLonda needs the senior leaders in the certain positions?

How can we inform families? And make sure they feel seen and heard during this transition.

Making sure VaLonda understands the resources they have to spend. Partnering with foundation to make sure they know there will be additional fund we will need to use. Since we not fully outliving our mission.

We can partner with her to really understand what the stakes she wants to put in the ground. How can we proactively communicate with staff the changes that will be on the horizon. How can we be transparent as a board. The board is going to conduct and search but also support VaLonda to do the best that she can.

Questions: How much are we putting on VaLonda's plate? And what else are we putting on other leaders plates?

**B. Doing a strategic review and plan**

**C.**

**Monitoring current school performance**

**D. Leading Communications**

## VII. Redesigning the Board for the Work Ahead

**A. Governance**

Reviewed the current state of the different committees to ensure they are best prepared to serve all the needs of the school? Board took time to go through and write what they want for priorities for the different committees and where they would want their focus to be?

**B. Outcomes**

**C. Finance Committee**

**D. Board Leadership**

Proposal to have a ED Support & Evaluation Comm, this is a way for another group to meet regularly (monthly or so) to share a perspective on how things are going. Sometimes the Board Chair should not be leading the eval because it gives too much power to one individual. Ideally, two board members. There is a necessary reset of what needs to get done.

Is there guidance in how this committee would interact with governance? What are the open meeting law logistics with this committee or subcommittee? The goal of the governance committee is focused on running the board. There is a lot to be done to support the interim ED.
Development Committee

## VIII. Board Calendar

**A. Committee Assignments**

**B. Month by month board communications**

**C. Roles and responsibilities**

Terms of separations agreement- Board and Meekerley have signed documents with the terms of separation. The terms included that Meekerley and the new leader would work on a joint transition plan focused on families, students, and staff. Meekerley has a severance package.

Additionally, Board voted to give Bryant and Kim the responsibility to work on setting next steps with VaLonda. One thing Kim and Bryant decided is that there would be an interim,

and that we were not going to conduct a permanent search right now. Which the board then voted to do an interim. Once down the interim path they looked at three candidates and VaLonda was the best candidate. As a first year Executive Director there is a set pay. But currently VaLonda is the Chief Culture and Equity Officer and also now the Board Advisor to incorporate the additional work. Her salary is now the salary of an ED with the corresponding ED.

Clarified to the end of the year Meekerley is the executive director, but VaLonda is in charge of making changes for next year and signing off on policy. They are working collaboratively. On August 1st, VaLonda will officially be interim Executive Director. There are certain things that are clearly Meekerley and certain roles that are VaLonda's.

We have also looped in Tyler from a budget side of things.

Over the summer they will pick up the search. We would like VaLonda to be a part of the search. We also know we want to have key community engagement during the search. We want to have key stakeholders as well on to be on a formal search community.

Bryant is taking over the chair of Governance next year which is why he is taking this on.

Board is also in the process of deciding how often to meet with Meekerley and VaLonda to discuss transition logistics. What are all the things we need to do to ensure for a smooth and compliant transition.

When do we expect to communicate with One Team and families about next steps. The Board is hoping to go to the family committee meetings. And also thinking about what is being communicated and how.
Wrapped up the retreat with a moment of gratitude. Trustees shared out.

## IX. 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 2:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
K. Borchert