APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday January 31, 2023 at 7:00 PM

Location
Bridge Preparatory Charter School
715 Ocean Terrace
Building A - Atrium (Main Floor)
Staten Island, NY

Christ Episcopal Church
17 Sagamore Rd
Bronxville NY 10708

Trustees Present
Amanda Wolkowitz, Geena Kuriakose, George Winn (remote), Heba Nassef-Gore, Laurel Gyimesi, Mark Harmon-Vaught, Rose Kerr (remote)

Trustees Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present
Tim Castanza

Guests Present
Azalia Volpe (remote), Christine Volpe (remote), Kathy Baldassano (remote), Maria Casale (remote), Rebecca Peters (remote), Rose Marie Illuzzi (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that as per Public Officers Law, Article 7, § 103-a *(videoconferencing by public bodies)* Board Member Rose Kerr is attending this meeting via videoconference and has been determined to meet "extraordinary circumstances" for remote attendance at a location not open to the public; she therefore is considered to be in attendance for purposes of quorum and is permitted to vote.

In addition, Board Member George Winn is attending via videoconference from a location posted on the public meeting notice/agenda and open to the public. Therefore, George Winn is considered to be in attendance for purposes of quorum and is permitted to vote. Quorum is met for this meeting.

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Geena Kuriakose called a meeting of the board of trustees of Bridge Preparatory Charter School to order on Tuesday Jan 31, 2023 at 7:01 PM.

C. Welcome From Chair

- L. Gyimesi wants to expand her welcome tonight; she quoted something that she believes is thoughtful and apropos: *"Success comes not from what you do occasionally, but from what you do consistently."*
- Consistency is our touchstone; it's the work that's done every day in our school. She always thanks everyone for their service, which is not done lightly or without thought; it's the consistency of the service that everyone brings which makes Bridge Prep what it is and for which she thanks everyone here; as we begin the year 2023, she wants to acknowledge the time and attention given to Bridge Prep to make sure our school is a success.
- L. Gyimesi reports that Board Member Azalia Volpe (Lopez) is resigning her position on the Board due to family responsibilities; she thanked A. Volpe for her time and efforts on behalf of Bridge Prep; she has been a constant vocal supporter of our school; she was the first Parent Association President and then ran for a position on the Board of Trustees; she has been a champion of our school since the beginning and we thank her for all the time she devoted to the school; the Board wishes her well. She then invited Ms. Volpe take the floor and say a few words.
- A. Volpe thanks each and everyone; due to family obligations and her mother being very ill, she must scale back her volunteer efforts and step off the Board in order to spend as much time as possible with her mother, who is the source for making her the person she is today; she wants to devote as much time as possible

to her mother and family while she can. Bridge Prep will always be in her heart and she will always be a champion for literacy for all; she then left the meeting.

II. Approve Minutes

A. Approve Minutes from Board meeting 12/20/22

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 12-20-22.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 12-20-22 meeting will be adopted.
As there was no objection, the motion is adopted and the minutes are approved by unanimous consent.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

III. Committee Reports

A. Academic Committee

R. Kerr reported that the *Academic Committee* met on January 10th and had a very full agenda. C. Volpe and T. Castanza will report later tonight on the topics from that meeting.

At the next *Academic Committee Meeting* in February, the focus will be on the needs presented by Pasek Consulting since the emphasis of our reauthorization will be on academics; the committee will be working with Pasek on that; in February there will be a trimester report of data and other topics on our Dashboard. We will also discuss staffing/teacher training needs and curriculum objectives in combination with the E.D. and Finance Committee.

The next *Academic Committee Meeting* will be on February 14th at 11 AM.

B. Board Development and Governance

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that the *Board Development and Governance Committee* met on January 10th and gave the following report:

- Heba Nassef-Gore is now officially a Board of Trustees member, approved by NYSED last week. Approval of Becky Peters to the board is still pending but should be forthcoming soon.
- Every year we do a board self-evaluation and assessment survey; we are launching the survey tomorrow and the necessary paperwork will be emailed to board members; please take the time to complete the assessment within the next few weeks; we can use the results to let us know where we are and where we need to go as a board.

- The survey is a diagnostic tool to help us do better but it is also important as a launching point for how we need to build the board's capacity in the years ahead. We have some key members who will be rolling off the board soon and we have some skill areas that will be important to the board as the school develops; the committee will use this information as a way to target our board future improvement.
- There is no update on the E.D. evaluation this month.

The next *Board Development and Governance Committee Meeting* will be February 14th at 7:45 AM.

C. Finance Committee

G. Winn reported that the *Finance Committee* met on January 19th and the following was discussed:

- Reviewed cash management and investment returns over the last calendar year;
- Discussed how to move forward with something regarding the current interest-rate environment; how to take advantage of interest rates with some of the accounts the school maintains.
- Budgeting was discussed and reviewed different line items to help clarify things for the new members of the *Finance Committee*
- We are mindful of where we are financially now, mid-year.
- How we can best support school leadership and the *Academic Committee* to do what is needed near and long-term to support learning by students and faculty.

The next *Finance Committee Meeting* will be February 15th at 4:30 PM.

IV. Executive Director Report

A. ED Report

T. Castanza gave the following update:

- Wished everyone a Happy New Year.
- Printed E.D. update documents shared each month with the board are now more concise and focused on the things being developed out of committees. The work being done in committees is also being done in the school building and trickles down among the school leadership team. This very much aligns with our school-wide goals and priorities. The board and the school is working in unison and this will be good to show for our charter renewal.
- We have been having really good *Finance Committee Meetings*, focused on end goals and task-at-hand, making sure that our budget is meeting the needs of our students and staff. We are well on-track financially; C. Volpe and E.D. have been discussing 2023-2024 needs and are now shifting into the staffing area of the

budget. This is the first year we are not adding a new grade to the school; our hiring should be right on target.

- Regarding grants and funding: R. Illuzzi has begun professional development with a new vendor we have taken on to help identify local grants, as well as engagement with local community partners and future grant identification. We are ahead of the scheduled deadline for our Discretionary Funding Application submitted to our 3 local citywide council members; we requested funding from them for a multi-sensory library for our building; we are also asking for a playground to be installed close to our location in Building A.
- February will once again be “Show the Love” month; the events for the month will involve the entire school community participating as a way to reinvest everyone in each other. The February school events: "Show the Love Calls", Bridge Prep Love Wall, Everyday Acts of Love, Senior Day for Athletes, 100th Day of School (02/09), World Read Aloud Day - we give a book to each student in the school (02/01), [Details can be found in the printed E.D. Update Report.]
- Fifth grade students will be given a copy of the book "Fish in a Tree" about a young person with dyslexia and ADHD; teachers will be incorporating that book in lessons in February and March and at the end of March the entire school will go to a presentation of the book by NYC Children's Theatre; board members are welcome to attend. We have formed a partnership with the NYC Children's Theatre and they will come to school to present workshops to our students.
- Focusing on school culture; C. Otterbeck and E.D. will be visiting classrooms to gage the investment of students and staff; part of this is having staff monitor the time spent by students out of the classroom, in the hallways. etc.; that information will be added to the results of the mini-surveys we are distributing to all students and staff; the results will be coupled with other data as part of a larger project for the Cahn Fellowship related to investment in the school community.
- Admissions update: The student admission application is live on our website; based on the number of graduating 5th grade students (55) and accounting for natural attrition between grades we have set a target of 80 applications by April 1st; a large number of applications come in after the April lottery through the summer; we have met 35% of our application goal. Our recruitment process has changed this year; we will be holding an open house on February 28th for school-based personnel (teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, SBST members) from local elementary schools to help them become familiar with our program and what we offer; also most of our student applications come from direct referrals from those other schools;
- Siting of Bridge Prep on Petrides Campus: DoE will post a proposal on February 3rd to permanently site our school in Building A; E.D. has met multiple times with DoE and Petrides School Principal Buckheit to finalize the plan to place all of our school's classrooms in a single building permanently; the proposal will be voted on by the Panel for Educational Policy at either the March or May PEP meeting. There will be a custom-built 1,800 square foot adaptive gymnasium installed in Building A for our students who need that type of gym and our other students will have

allotted time in the Petrides School gym in Building C; Our school will expand onto the 2nd floor of Building A, and may eventually be allowed to expand further if District Office personnel are relocated to another building. T. Castanza then gave the floor to C. Volpe to discuss academics.

C. Volpe gave the following academic updates:

- Students are beginning to go on field trips again; 1st grade visited Eggers, other classes went to the St. George Theatre; some of our 4th and 5th grade students visited the Richmond County Courts and experienced a mock trial; some of the court officers, attorneys and a judge came to visit our school and talked to the 3rd graders.
- Mock testing continues on March 1st and March 3rd; it is going to reduce student anxiety around test taking; the teachers feel that it is very helpful to let them know what they need to work on in the classroom;
- Our after-school program, trimester 2 has started and are working on test prep for grades 3, 4 and 5.
- We have partnered with the YMCA to provide SEL programs to our 3rd, 4th and 5th graders; they are offering a 7-week program "Too Good for Violence" about coping skills to manage anger; our 1st and 2nd graders will get 10 sessions to enhance their social skills, social and emotional development, etc.
- Connect Saturday is February 4th and parents will come to school with their children; there are fun activities along with workshops for parents on conflict resolution, how to communicate effectively with their children; social media for children, bullying, etc.
- Teacher observations and feedback; formal and informal observations are being done with C. Otterbeck and they have been able to provide some targeted interventions based on the needs of the teachers; also offering walk-throughs and observations of highly effective teachers.
- We are getting very targeted in our professional development; continuing our partnership with Core Collaborative who shared with our ELA and Math teachers various programs; we are working on building our libraries with chapter books for our 4th and 5th graders.
- R. Kerr asked about targeted intervention professional development for new teachers and said she wants to discuss this further with C. Volpe and E.D. T. Castanza responded that they are discussing the needs of individual classrooms and individual teachers and have determined tier levels of support needed for each teacher; based on their tier level, the teachers are assigned a coach from the academic leadership team to offer targeted support on a continuous rotating schedule. This is based on data and observations and has started already. R. Kerr said that this should have a significant impact on teacher quality by improving and enhancing instruction in the classroom and that is what really counts,

B.

Charter Renewal Process Update

L. Gyimesi gave the following update:

- Pasek Consulting has been meeting weekly with the school leadership team and L. Gyimesi; Pasek is very focused and directed and have given us a general timeline for the renewal process;
- There are certain things we need to focus on right now: our actual charter and any amendments we plan on making to that charter.
- We need to schedule another board strategy session to make decisions on what we want to do for next year to get it into play as part of our renewal application. Our changes to the charter need to be voted on by our May meeting so that Pasek can get the paperwork done in time.
- Another thing we need to decide is whether or not we can create an OG accredited certification program through our school to offer our teachers certification in OG. T. Castanza and school leadership team members have been working on a draft plan for this accreditation which can be discussed at the next *Academic Committee Meeting* and our strategy session.
- Discussion followed on the possible date for the **board strategy session: Saturday, March 4th from 10:00AM-1:00PM** was agreed upon. The location is Bridge Prep Charter School in Building A at Petrides.

V. New Business

A. Other New Business

- R. Kerr said she has 6 copies of a book, *"The 7 Habits of Happy Kids"* by Sean Covey, signed by the author that she wants to offer to the school to be used for fundraising or as a student incentive prize.
- And for school administrators, she offers another book, *"The Leader in Me: How Schools Around the World Are Inspiring Greatness, One Child at a Time"* by Stephen Covey and Sean Covey that she would also like to donate to the school.
- She hopes that the school can utilize the books in the best way. T. Castanza thanked her.

VI. Family Association Update

A. Family Association Update

A. Wolkowitz gave the following update:

- This Saturday is *Connect Saturday* and there will be a book drive; we are asking families to donate used books to help supplement for our Readathon; a student who donates used books will get a token to obtain a new book;

- The Read-a-thon is March 1st for 10 days in school and at home; a minimum of 10 minutes of reading per day; there will be small prizes for students who complete their reading assignments;
- Proceeds from our *Family Day Carnival* can help fund our new multi-sensory library.
- On February 3rd in conjunction with "Share the Love" we will have a Treat Truck and are asking for donated baked goods; we will offer erasers, pencils, friendship bracelets, etc. and each class will be able to come and pick some items, and show kindness to a friend.
- *Dress-Down Day* is also February 3rd, and usually the $2 collected from each student is donated to a different charity each month; however for February we are not asking for $2 (because kindness can be free), instead we are asking each student to fill out a paper heart with a kindness word which will be hung outside their classroom;
- For the *100th Day of School* (February 9th) we will be giving each student a glow stick with *"Congratulations You Are 100 Days Brighter"* written on it.
- The Fifth Grade Yearbook is now available for pre-sale, but is still being completed; senior pictures will be taken next month.

T. Castanza added that the *Family Association* has a large fundraising goal and he will share a link to the Read-a-thon with the board members. He asks that they share it with their networks to spread the word about this worthy fundraiser, which is mission-based in literacy.
As an added incentive, if certain fundraising thresholds are reached, T. Castanza and his staff will be slimed or get a pie in the face, and possibly a dunk tank at the carnival.
Our *"Love of Literacy" Community Event* at Barnes and Noble on January 28th was a great success and the largest turnout we have had for an event of this type; we had 3 staff members do readings and we took over the entire store; a percentage of the store's sales that day are donated to our school.

VII. 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 8:04 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano