APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday March 21, 2023 at 7:00 PM

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

11 Pondfield Rd
Bronxville NY

300 Cromwell Avenue
Staten Island, NY

1 Campus Road
Staten Island, NY 10301

814 Route 9W
Grandview on Hudson, NY

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

Trustees Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present

Tim Castanza

Guests Present
Christine Volpe (remote), Francesca DiCanio (remote), Karen Smith (remote), Kathy Baldassano (remote), Nicole Lebovic (remote), Rebecca Peters (remote), Rose Marie Illuzzi (remote), Traci Frey (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

As per Public Officers Law, Article 7, § 103-a *(Videoconferencing by public bodies)* although board members George Winn, Laurel Gyimesi, Maria Casale and Mark Harmon-Vaught are not present in-person for this meeting, they are attending via videoconference from locations posted on the public meeting notice/agenda and open to the public; they are therefore considered to be in attendance for purposes of quorum and are 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 Mar 21, 2023 at 7:04 PM.

C. Welcome From Chair

L. Gyimesi welcomed all present and thanked them for giving their time to the Board; welcome to Spring and the exciting events to come; we will be holding our first Bridge Prep 5th grade graduation this year and she is looking forward to hearing more about that; forward onto the rest of tonight's meeting.

II. Approve Minutes

A. Approve Minutes from Board meeting 2/28/23

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 02-28-23.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 02-28-23 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 stated that the *Academic Committee* met on March 14th and the following was discussed:

- **Academic Data** and it's impacts
- **Practice NYS (Mock Test) Assessments** administrated in March
- **New MAP Assessments** to be administered in late March and will be reported on at a future time
- **Professional Teacher Mentoring Project** is on target; there are mentors in the classrooms; tiered mentoring is directed toward exactly what the teachers need, based on formal and information observation
- **Structured Literacy Practicum Center** was discussed in greater detail; the members of the *Academic Committee* are ready to make a recommendation to the entire Board that we are confident that we are ready to begin the Practicum; there are 2 entry points for our teachers to join the program that are already being met by our teachers, i.e., one-to-one mentoring - and OG classroom teaching - with formal, structured observations of teachers by *Literacy for Life* staff; we are ready to endorse the entry-level phase of the Practicum for the upcoming school year. It's important to remember that this will include a very limited scope of staff; perhaps 2 to 4 teachers may be enrolled; there are stringent qualifications and reviews to enter the program. T. Castanza added that because of the commitment required, we will be strongly vetting each teacher/applicant; the criteria and requirements are very clear; the proposal will be shared with staff next week; we want to show teachers that we are working toward these pathways; we want teachers to feel encouraged by the program. R. Kerr said that the Practicum is a start in meeting our charter requirement for a teacher institute; we can add to our charter renewal narrative that we have begun steps toward establishing a teacher institute; we have formalized the plan with rigorous reviews to enter the program and rigorous observations while in the program. M. Harmon-Vaught added that he spoke to the Wagner College Provost and the Chair of the Education Department last week and there is a lot of interest in a potential partnership for the long term; he will follow up with a further conversation about how that could look but he can definitely confirm that there is strong interest at Wagner College about the program.

The next *Academic Committee Meeting* will be April 18th at 11:00 AM.

B. Board Development and Governance

M. Harmon-Vaught gave the following update:
We are still awaiting final approval of Becky Peters as a member of the Board; we have received interest from another potential Board member, Traci Frey - and propose her for consideration as a Board member tonight. We are excited to welcome Traci to the board; the process of getting NYSED approval of her membership will begin.

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to invite Traci Frey to become a member of the Board of Trustees of Bridge Preparatory Charter School.
Geena Kuriakose seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

C. Renewal task Force

L. Gyimesi gave the following update:
The *Renewal Task Force* still meets weekly with Pasek Consulting and the school's executive leadership team; in about a month we should have a draft of our renewal application for the board to review; we are very happy to have Pasek Consulting working with us since we still don't have a NYSED liaison to guide us through the renewal process.
There has been a drop in enrollment in charter schools (15%) and NYC public schools have also had a drop in enrollment (about 5%); T. Castanza will discuss our school's enrollment data in further details tonight.

D. Finance Committee

G. Winn reported that the *Finance Committee* met on March 13th and discussed the following:

- **Scheduling of Budget** - getting ready for a board vote to approve the budget in June
- **Reviewing Contracts** -we will be looking into contracts with other committees over the next cycle of meetings
- **Staff List & Personnel** - a lot of work is being done around the staff list as we move into the new year; we will update and share as we finalize; it may not be final by April and certain numbers may be just place-holders, but we should know more by then; if the *Academic Committee* thinks there are any staff that should be added, please begin to fill in those slots with the E.D.
- **School's Assets** - have not been affected or diminished by the bank failures or the busy week in the stock market; we diversified our banking relationships and reduced risk to our accounts by moving funds to bigger banks; this was expedited seamlessly with our financial partner, BoostEd; we are fine and have a lot of confidence in how both BoostEd and the E.D. handled this
- **Cash Management & Credit Cards** - streamlining our ability to manage cash and credit based on our relationship with Chase and Bank of America; we also looking at where we put balances outside of what is needed for operating funds; everyone is more risk-conscious now.

Many thanks to Becky Peters for her counsel as we work through this.

The next *Finance Committee Meeting* will be April 17th at 4:30 PM

IV. Executive Director Report

A. ED Report

T. Castanza began by introducing and acknowledging the school staff that are remotely attending tonight's board meeting: Christine Volpe, Francesca DiCanio, Rose Marie Illuzzi; along with parents Nicole Lebovic, and Karen Smith. He is happy to see staff and parents joining our meetings to see the work done by the board of trustees. Board members want to hear about the good things that are going on at the school.

- **Read-a-Thon** - it's been great to have this school-wide goal and see the joy on the faces of the students is wonderful; our school community is energized and excited about the Read-a-Thon to celebrate literacy and have raised over $20,000 towards our $30,000 goal (when the E.D. will be slimed); thanks to everyone for all the work they have put into the event;
- **Budget** - the FY2024 budget continues to move forward and a draft of the proposed budget will be shared with the *Finance Committee* in April; updates to staffing and other new academic expenses will be shared at the *Academic Committee* meeting in April; will keep the board in the loop and updated in all aspects
- **Admissions/Enrollment** - charter schools have been seeing declines in enrollment since COVID; we have not been affected as much as some of the district schools, most of the students we lost during the year are moving out-of-state; in a school of our size (242 students) even losing a handful of students matters; we are close to 98% of our target admissions goal and we will hold a lottery for seats in Grades 3, 4 and 5 and are close to needing a lottery for seats in Grade 1. We don't think we will need a lottery for 2nd grade. The lottery will be held virtually online on April 4th at 5 PM. We have between 14-19 applications for every grade; we expect an increase in applications from mid-May through June. We will start registration in May and expect to complete it by June. We will invite parents to come to the school and take a tour of the building.
- **Permanent Petrides Siting** - the Joint Public Hearing for our permanent space proposal was held virtually on March 8th; the District 31 CEC spoke on our behalf and we thanked their president and invited her to visit our school; we expect no pushback on the proposal's approval; the PEP will vote at their virtual meeting on April 19th at 6 PM. We encourage everyone to send a comment to the PEP via email or phone. ***Oral and written comments on the proposal will be accepted from February 3, 2023 through April 18, 2023 at 6 PM.*** **Comments on the long-term placement of Bridge Prep can be sent via email to: D31Proposals@schools.nyc.gov or by leaving a voicemail at 212-374-0208.** *Comments will be accepted by DoE up to 24 hours prior to the Panel on Educational Policy vote.*
- **NYSED Town Hall Meetings** - will be held in the Spring and are very informative; dates to be announced; Lisa Long, the new Charter School Director will chair the meetings.

- **Charter Renewal** - spoke to Regent Cea at the *Charter School Legislators' Breakfast* and she has been an ally to us; we will be inviting her to our school this Spring and also to our 5th grade graduation ceremony; she is part of the Regents Board voting on our charter renewal.
- **Pasek Consulting** - Pasek has been really responsive and knowledgeable about NYSED; our work with Pasek has been very productive
- **Income Tax Return** - received a copy of our tax returns from the audit team, and will share them with the *Finance Committee* at their April meeting and with the full board for approval at the April meeting. The deadline to file our taxes with the IRS is May 13th.
- **Visitu SafeCampus Program** - we are exploring purchasing this security/safety program to streamline visitor check-in; school safety officers will direct visitors to the main office, where visitors will sign-in using an iPad; Visitu will also print visitor badges. it will be a secondary safety/security level in addition to the school safety officers and since we will be sharing this building with district office staff, we need to be extra careful about visitors; we are also asking for additional security cameras to be installed in the building.
- **Annual Orton-Gillingham Conference** - five staff members will be attending this conference in Boston on March 23rd-24th; the attendees will come back and turn-key what they learn there with the teachers at our school.
- **Tuesdays Professional Learning on Student Engagement & Staff Investment** - sessions began today with staff communication styles, which went very well; we will be holding 5 sessions now through April.
- **Changes to Proficiency Levels** - R. Kerr asked E.D. to speak about NYSED lowering test standards. T. Castanza responded that the Albany Times Union newspaper published an article on NYSED changes to minimum scores for student proficiency in Math and English; they are changing the metrics they use and are resetting the lowest scores - called "cut scores" - for each achievement level on this spring's new ELA and Math tests due to the impact of COVID on last year's assessment scores; students won't need to get as high a "cut score" to be deemed proficient; that bodes well for our students. However there are some charter school leaders who are very opposed to this change because they feel that this is "lowering the bar" and there are some high-performance charters schools that rely on talking points that they out-performing the districts in significant ways and that his change will give district schools a more competitive advantage. This will be a hot topic at the NYSED Town Hall Meetings. R. Kerr added that there are also new NYS standards. We will communicate with parents soon regarding the benefits of not opting out of the state tests which they have the right to do, but there are ramifications to opting out of the tests.

V. Family Association Update

A. Family Association Update

A. Wolkowitz gave the following update:

The 5th grade trip is next Friday to Medieval Times; the fifth grade t-shirt design is finalized; the yearbook is still being worked on; we are selling ads until the end of April; the yearbook sales will end in early May; it's our first yearbook and will be very special. We are planning the year's Family Day as a Carnival at the Petrides Campus; the money collected by Read-a-Thon will pay for Family Day and also be used for the new decodable library at the school. A Plant Sale will be held on April 22nd, which is also Earth Day. She then introduced Nicole Lebovic, Parliamentarian of the *Parent Association* to give a Read-a-Thon update: Read-a-Thon is now in its 3rd week with 132 students participating; it's been hard work, but the kids love it; right now we have collected $21,740 towards our goal; the students have won lots of prizes; they won an ice cream truck visit to the school; when we reach $22,000 we will have a school-wide Pizza Party; when we reach $27,000 we will host a Pajama-Cereal Party; if we reach $30,000 by March 31st, we will slime Tim Castanza.

T. Castanza thanked N. Lebovic for her hard work on making Read-a-Thon such a success and C. Volpe added that the students come into school each morning and are so excited to look at the Read-a-Thon goal chart; we had teacher training about goal-setting/what students need to do to achieve goals and because the students are so excited about the Read-a-Thon challenge, teachers can make that connection to goal-setting in the classroom; she thanked N. Lebovic. L. Gyimesi said that on behalf of the board, she wants to share our thanks; to hear all this and to know that it succeeds at the school, your contribution makes Bridge Prep the wonderful school that it is and we can't thank you enough. N. Lebovic wants to thank Karen Smith who has been her right-hand through all this, helping with planning, decorating and giving out prizes; she could not have done any of this without her. K. Smith thanked N. Lebovic and said that it's been a pleasure working with her, and she can't wait to see T. Castanza slimed.

VI. 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 8:01 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano