APPROVED

# Bridge Preparatory Charter School

## Minutes

### Board Meeting

**Date and Time**
Tuesday August 1, 2023 at 7:00 PM

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

7717 Welton Drive
Madison, WI 53719

300 S. Sykes Creek Pkwy
Merritt Island, Fl, 32952

220 36th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11232

300 Cromwell Avenue
Staten Island, NY

201 Pondfield Rd
Bronxville, NY 10708

Hi all,
Please review the minutes from the last meeting and send any edits to the secretary in writing 48 hours before the meeting so that we can make any necessary edits.

Thank you,

**Trustees Present**
Amanda Wolkowitz, Geena Kuriakose (remote), Laurel Gyimesi, Maria Casale (remote), Mark Harmon-Vaught (remote), Rebecca Peters (remote), Rose Kerr (remote)

**Trustees Absent**
Heba Nassef-Gore

**Ex Officio Members Present**
Tim Castanza

**Guests Present**
Christine Volpe (remote), George Winn (remote), Kathy Baldassano (remote), Rose Marie Illuzzi (remote), Traci Frey (remote)

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## I. Opening Items

### A. Record Attendance

As per Public Officers Law, Article 7 § 103-a *(Videoconferencing by public bodies)* although board members Maria Casale, Rose Kerr, Geena Kuriakose and Becky Peters 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. In addition, board member Mark Harmon-Vaught 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; he therefore is considered to be in attendance for purposes of quorum and is permitted to vote.
Board member George Winn is in attendance via telephone/audio only and therefore not counted toward quorum and is not eligible to vote at this meeting.
Board member Traci Frey is in attendance via videoconference from a location not posted on the public meeting notice/agenda and therefore not open to the public; she is therefore not counted toward quorum and is not eligible to vote at this meeting.

**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 Aug 1, 2023 at 7:00 PM.

### C. Approve Minutes of Board Meeting on 06/20/23

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 06-20-23.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 06-20-23 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.

### D. Approve Minutes of Board Meeting on 07/18/23

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Special Meeting - Board Strategy Session on 07-18-23.
*L. Gyimesi stated that she emailed Kathy Baldassano to let her know that she did such a phenomenal job culling all the material from that strategy session, making us all sound brilliant and putting it together for us to review. I just want that on-the-record. Thank you to Kathy.*
*G. Kuriakose also expressed her gratitude that Kathy handles the minutes.*

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G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 07-18-23 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.

## II. Committee Updates

### A. Charter Renewal Task Force ~ Renewal Application Due August 15th

- L. Gyimesi stated that at tonight's meeting we will vote on the charter renewal application covering benchmarks #2 through #10, prepared by Pasek Consulting and reviewed by the full Board of Trustees; we are ready to move forward; the renewal application is due August 15th.
- Our next task will be completion of benchmark #1, due on October 1st and will be guided by the NYS standardized test results when they come out; T. Castanza responded that the timing will depend on when the standardized test results arrive; they usually come out between August 14th-21st, but if there is a further delay it will push benchmark #1 into September.
- If any board members or the *Academic Committee* members want to set up weekly Zoom meetings with Pasek Consulting to discuss benchmark #1, just ask. R. Kerr responded that's a good idea and she would like to meet with Pasek Consulting to discuss benchmark #1 as soon as possible since it is vital to our charter renewal success.
- Pasek has not been able to find any schools comparable to us based on our population. Usually a school is judged against its peer group, but there are no peer groups for us and that has never happened before. They could only judge us based on local schools and District 31, but none of those schools are similar to us.
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We have some leeway and flexibility to show who we are since there are no schools comparable to us.

- T. Frey had a question about the table contained in benchmark #2 regarding the disability classification of students (pages 12-13 of the application), in which the 2nd column refers to percentage of total enrollment, and the 3rd column refers to percentage of students with disabilities (SWD) in 2022-2023, and she wants to know why there is a difference in those numbers and what the difference represents. T. Castanza responded that the 2nd column represents the percentage of ALL students of the school that fall into a particular disability classification, whether they be general ed or special ed students (100% of student population) and the 3rd column represents the percentage of SWD students that fall into that same disability classification (referring to the 67% of our students identified as SWD).
- A discussion followed regarding how detailed the narrative should be and how we could add many more pages to the document to explain every facet of each benchmark, but we are trying to be thoughtful and concise; Pasek Consulting guided us to truncate the narrative somewhat; we already added quite a few pages to the narrative regarding what we've done in the past as well as what we are planning to do this coming school year, 2023-2024. We can go deeper into details during the Charter School Office mid-term visit to our school.
- R. Kerr remarked that the NYS Charter Schools Office seems to be understaffed and are not replacing staff that has left, which is concerning. Also they left our last mid-term visit saying that they didn't see any of our key design elements, which was not true, so we have to double-down on those key elements during the next visit because we don't know who will be coming to scrutinize us.
- L. Gyimesi agreed and said that we weren't assigned a liaison from the Charter Schools Office for over a year now and the staff sent to inspect us at the mid-term visit could be from outside of NYC and unfamiliar with our community and school.
- T. Castanza said he was told that the people coming to our school for the mid-term visit will likely be "external consultants" because there is only 1 State Liaison left in the NYS Charter Schools Office, Paolo Giovine. Paolo is familiar with our school and we hope that he will be part of the contingent sent here for the mid-term visit.
- M. Casale stated that criticism by "external consultants" should not be a worry, since they cannot critique what they don't know or understand, and she offered to champion our school against unfair critiques.
- T. Castanza added that as long as we have board members and school staff knowledgeable and extensively prepared, we should have no problem with the visit.

Laurel Gyimesi made a motion to approve the Application for Charter Renewal as presented to the Board of Trustees.
Mark Harmon-Vaught seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

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| Amanda Wolkowitz | Aye |
| Laurel Gyimesi | Aye |
| Maria Casale | Aye |
| Mark Harmon-Vaught | Aye |
| Heba Nassef-Gore | Absent |
| Rose Kerr | Aye |
| Geena Kuriakose | Aye |
| Rebecca Peters | Aye |

## B. Academic Committee

R. Kerr said that she and C. Volpe spoke on the phone and T. Frey visited the school and met with C. Volpe in the past month; she gave the floor to C. Volpe for her report.

- **Bullseye Program:** C. Volpe has been working with T. Frey and they discussed teacher observations and the feedback cycle; they brought in a new tool, *"Bullseye for Schools"*, a school walkthrough, coaching, and feedback platform which allows all the teacher feedback to be housed in one place; it shows trends, teacher strengths and weaknesses so we can plan accordingly with tiered support and/or professional development. Teachers will also have access to the Bullseye program.
- **Data:** We are talking more about data; we want to bring more data forward to the Board of Trustees so that they can understand who our students are; we will have a larger Data Team and a Curricula Team next year so we will be able to bring more detail to the Board.
- **Summer School:** This is our last week of Summer School and it has been going very well; we have been able to maintain our 70% attendance to qualify for full funding; we are on-target to obtain the entire Summer School Grant; we have incorporated some new activities: Water Wednesdays, Pizza Fridays and Ice Cream Truck Mondays; we shared our activities calendar with parents at the beginning of Summer School and that helped to boost attendance.
- **Staffing:** Interviewing is still ongoing; we are not fully staffed yet with 1 special ed teacher vacancy and a candidate being interviewed this week; the pool of highly qualified candidates is small. We have already hired a Math Coach, Mr. Culpo who we stole from DoE, District 75.
- **Curriculum:** Some of our Curriculum Team has been coming in over the summer to build out our curriculum maps; Mr. Culpo has been helping with curriculum building and will be starting Monday.
- **Professional Development:** Teachers return to school on August 21st and we have 2 full weeks of professional learning scheduled; a 3-day virtual TWR *(The Writing Revolution)* strategy training for all teaching staff. We have secured a licensed BABC specialist *(Board Certified Behavior Analyst)*/LSW *(Licensed Social Worker)* who will offer 1 & 1/2 day workshops on trauma informed practices and

classroom strategies, and we have contracted with her to provide 4 hours per week all year to help identify students and classrooms that may need extra support. M. Casale suggested that we look at the IEPs of students who may have already received ABA *(Applied Behavior Analysis)* or are in need of ABA because if the CSE *(Committee on Special Education)* can add ABA to an IEP it can help to get the support of the family at home, which is important for ABA to be successful.

- **Miscellaneous Plans:** Math Coach and Special Ed Support Teacher will be working with classroom teachers on compliance issues, special ed procedures, differentiation, reviewing co-teaching models and best practices. Social workers will be rolling out the *Code of Conduct* and how to implement it. Parent orientation will be September 6th. We will have an assessment calendar to share with the Board at the September board meeting.

T. Castanza added that they have been working on setting up the new classrooms in Building A and are still deciding on class placement; we are targeting the last week of August for classroom completion to be finished. We have finished most of our supply ordering and our materials should be arriving this month. We shared the school calendar with families and teachers; we will be offering a more diverse professional development program to our teachers this year. He thanked board member T. Frey for the work she is doing with the school and for sharing her knowledge and resources for our school.

**C. Finance Committee**

G. Winn said he is unable to video-conference today due to the FIOS internet being out in his location, so he is communicating via telephone. The *Finance Committee* met on July 26th and followed up on items from the board strategy session meeting:

- **Staff Compensation & Benefit Policy:** We want to actively find how our staff compensation fits within the financial market; T. Castanza and BoostEd are working on completing that model and will share that with the board soon. We also want to look at our benefits policy and figure out where we are market-wise with that policy; that involves looking at the benefit choices and what their impact would be across our 5-year budget; this is critical in planning our future. With a full student population and full staff, we are beginning to look at our operating revenue and how it will grow to see if our staffing model will work on both the salary side and benefits side. The Board of Trustees will have to make some informed decisions regarding this.
- **Cash Management & Investment Policy:** We are examining our own policies and certain rules that govern schools and New York State non-profits *(New York Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act)* with restrictions on the management and investment of funds; we are trying to figure out how we as an LEA *(Local Educational Agency)* fit within that regulation. What do our guidelines look like? According to our *Policy & Procedures Manual* our guidelines are compliant with NYS Education Law, but the question is, if we decide to perform

certain types of fundraising, what is permitted for an organization like ours? Those are the things we are going to need to define if we are going to fundraise or devote our savings to certain goals; What are we allowed to do? What types of asset classes are we allowed to invest in, knowing that some may yield higher performance but they also contain more risk? We have the names of some bank advisors that can help us. We expect to be able to put more of our saved cash into vehicles that will yield higher return but stay within a margin of safety under guidelines. We will circle back on this at a later time.

- **Budget Adjustment:** T. Castanza stated that we look to adjust the school's budget in October and move funds from one budget line to another. We will need to spend a little more for facilities, upgrades and renovations that are non-capital in nature *(assets that are not fixed to a permanent structure, can be easily removed or have a shelf life between 1-5 years)* so we added additional funds to that budget line to hire a painter to paint all of the rooms, hallways and stairwells. We have $200,000 in our budget for capital expenditures, which are larger and longer-lasting; we probably won't do more than 1 or 2 capital projects per year; we may explore a capital project to upgrade lighting and in the future we may do flooring as well. For the first time we will be able to use the DoE *Third- Party Vendor Portal* to request billing quotes from vendors for projects we want done, and we would pay for the work from our own capital expense budget; we are not restricted to projects that DoE agrees to do for us, we can decide on what projects would be best for our students, if we can afford it. Discussion followed regarding how installing flooring over existing flooring avoids asbestos abatement; whether it would be beneficial to look into partnering with the other schools on the Petrides Campus to get new lighting installed in all the buildings on the campus as a major project, which will take more time to finish, etc.  There is a lot to look at and we need to be smart about choosing capital projects.

## III. Other Business

### A. New Board Member Orientation

L. Gyimesi will speak to the board's Parliamentarian, Kathy Baldassano about holding a brief virtual orientation session with new board members, T. Frey, B. Peters, and H. Nassef-Gore.
Kathy can review our board documents, and where to find them and an overview of the NYS Open Meetings Law before we get up and running in the fall.

### B. New Business

- L. Gyimesi would like to set up the date for our September Board Meeting as September 12th and after that return to our usual schedule of holding our meetings on the 3rd Tuesday of every month. She asked if anyone is unable to attend the meeting on September 12th. R. Kerr said she will not be able to attend that meeting.

- Asked committee chairs to lock in their meeting dates for the new school year beginning in September, so that we can publicize the meeting dates and we can be compliant with public notice. She would like to get the meetings posted on our calendar.
- M. Casale said she will be working on her dissertation this year and will not be able to co-chair the Academic Committee. Her dissertation will be a study of pedagogical experiences of teachers at Bridge Prep Charter School and the uniqueness of that experience. It's a very big undertaking and when finished, she wants it to be her gift to the school. She would like the board to review it and tell her what they think. She said that although she will be taking a back seat, if the board ever needs anything, please reach out.
- L. Gyimesi said she will be naming committee chairs at the September 12th board meeting and will also go over the goals for the year from ideas that were discussed at our recent strategy session, but primarily based on our charter renewal.
- R. Kerr said that she and T. Castanza were interviewed by Danyela Souza Egorov from the Manhattan Institute for an article to appear in their magazine, City Journal about Bridge Prep. Ms. Egorov was very impressed with the energy and happiness she felt at our school. The article is posted on their website at: https://www.city-journal.org/article/nyc-can-learn-from-bridge-prep-charter-school

## IV. Family Association

### A. Family Association Update

- A. Wolkowitz said the *Parent Association* is planning their new school year; they met last week and will meet again soon. They are planning events and fundraisers and coming up with new ideas.
- The *Parent Association* was able to present the school with a check for $18,000 from the Read-a-Thon to be used for the new library.
- T. Castanza said that the school also received $8,000 from Councilman Borelli for the new library, which we expect to be up and running in November.
- We received a $25,000 grant from the *Staten Island Foundation* to support our Teacher Institute/Practicum program.
- L. Gyimesi said that we are making progress in starting a soccer team at the school this fall.

## V. 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 7:57 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano

### Documents used during the meeting

- 2023 BPCS Renewal Application Narrative _August vote (1).pdf