APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday September 12, 2023 at 7:00 PM

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

201 Pondfield Rd
Bronxville, NY 10708

142 Joralemon Street
Brooklyn, Ny 11201

300 Cromwell Avenue
Staten Island, NY

735 Sheldon Avenue
SI, NY 10312

Board of Trustees is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.
Topic: BPCS Board Meeting
Time: Sep 12, 2023 07:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)
Join Zoom Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86392790755?pwd=NHViZzVQWFhGbzRIcDlIODM4MGpVZz09
Meeting ID: 863 9279 0755
Passcode: pQxXh4

One tap mobile
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Dial by your location
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• +1 360 209 5623 US

Meeting ID: 863 9279 0755
Passcode: 770864
Find your local number: https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kSSW58aIX

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

Trustees Absent
Maria Casale, Rose Kerr

Ex Officio Members Present
Tim Castanza

Guests Present
Christine Volpe (remote), Kathy Baldassano (remote), Rebecca Peters (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

As per Public Officers Law, Article 7, § 103-a *(Videoconferencing by public bodies)* although board members Geena Kuriakose, Traci Frey and George Winn 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. Board member Becky Peters 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 Sep 12, 2023 at 7:03 PM.

C. Welcome From Chair

L. Gyimesi welcomed the attendees and thanked everyone for all the time and attention they devote to the school, even during the summer months and behind the scenes; we are meeting in a different office tonight and there has been other room shifts and changes in the last week. We have an exciting year ahead, with our Practicum and the charter renewal application and we look forward to the new school year and our upcoming plans.

D. Approve Minutes of Board Meeting on 08/01/23

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 08-01-23.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 08/01/23 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. Academic Committee

T. Frey *(standing in for R. Kerr for the Academic Committee report)* gave the floor to T. Castanza and C. Volpe for their update on the start of the new school year:

- T. Castanza spoke about redesigning and reconfiguring the school's new space in Building A; we have expanded from the first floor to additional areas of the second floor; we moved into the new space on August 22nd but staff arrived on August 21st; it was a massive effort to get the additional space ready for the first day of school; we have great feedback from students, staff and families about the new space.
- Our summer school and summer professional learning was wildly successful; there was a good sense of collaboration across the team this year; he thanked his leadership team for making it work so well.

He then gave the floor to C. Volpe.

- C. Volpe said that we really did have a very very successful opening and the students are responding well to being in 1 building this year; summer school ended on a high note, we had very positive feedback and we met our quota for attendance, so we'll get full funding.

- She met with T. Frey several times and they did initial walk-throughs together; she thanked T. Frey for her assistance.
- The theme for this year's professional learning is "Support"; T. Frey and R. Kerr are her support; we expanded our school team to include Mr. Cooper (instructional Math Coach), C. Otterbeck's workload has been lightened up with Ms. Cook taking on IEP work and Maria (language instruction) offering support in the classrooms. We had really good professional learning sessions, including team-building activities. We had a successful launch of student behavior support with Donna Simon of Step-By-Step who offered a full day staff workshop covering what teachers should have in place to cope with students who have challenging behaviors; Donna Simon's team will be working with us throughout the school year. We also utilized our own staff for professional development, the Special Education Team did a session on differentiation; the Admin Team did a session on good practices for co-teaching; we also talked about goal setting for students as well as teachers;
- We restructured our school teams with teachers assigned to specific teams; C. Volpe leads the "Data Team" comprised of 7 teachers and school admin; we discuss what is important to show the board about our data and how the data can drive student instruction; the data will look different this year; there will be a calendar for the board and we hope to present initial data at the next board meeting. Upper-level OG training is happening now with more experienced teachers of higher grades; next week we will offer professional development to our new teachers and refreshers to our current teachers, which means we will have only 1 teacher in the classroom and our data assessments may take longer to compile.
- T. Castanza added that he spoke to the staff about our charter renewal and how important it is that we are all on the same page regarding mindset; the mindset that we need is to be successful with our charter renewal and achieving a mission we all agree on; we talk a lot about growth (A goal) and proficiency (THE goal). Growth is a goal that we continue to meet every year; but how can we get to our bigger goal of proficiency: students accessing text at every level for every student. Are we focusing on the needs of students? Are we focusing on what is in our control? These are questions that teachers face; discussion of these issues has allowed us to start the year off as well as we have.
- We identified a formula for success: if we increase student and staff voice, if we increase student and staff engagement, and we continue to focus on our identified core values, we believe that we will see increased achievement from students and output from staff and a much higher level of investment in the work by students and staff. During this 2nd week of school, we are already seeing progress from the changes that we made structurally over the summer. We are excited to see what this conversation looks like in January and again in June.

T. Frey responded that it has been a pleasure to work with both C. Volpe and T. Castanza this summer; she wants to thank them both for their open mindset as we all

work to make the students' experience the best it can be. Thank you to the school's staff as well.

B. Finance Committee

G. Winn gave an update on the *Finance Committee* meeting held yesterday which discussed the following:

- *Finance Committee* meetings will be held at 3:30 PM on the Thursday of the week prior to the regular board meetings, which usually means the 2nd Thursday of the month. The committee is comprised of G. Winn, B. Peters, A. Wolkowitz, L. Gyimesi, T. Castanza and sometimes Josh Moreau of BoostEd.; anyone else who wishes to join is welcome.
- Our audit is submitted annually at the beginning of November and is being worked on now. It goes to NYSED with our annual report.
- Cash Management - We are speaking with outside groups that can take on cash management work for our school under our direction. We are looking at what's possible and are mindful of risks and constraints from NYS regarding the types of investments we are allowed to make; as we go forward with discussions on staffing models and benefit packages we are exploring how these outside groups might help us. We already met with 2 firms and will reach out to another. When we have more information, we will share it with the board.

He then gave the floor to T. Castanza.

- An audit team will be coming to begin the review of our files this Friday; Josh Moreau of BoostEd has been helping us prepare for the audit; F. Ebanks will also be working on the audit. Out goal is a clean audit, as we have every year.
- Facilities - The space we were given on the 2nd floor of Building A was previously office space and had to be modified to be classroom space. The renovations done by DoE was not enough because the space they left us was not ready for students. We had to hire a contracted painting team via the DoE 3rd-party vendor process using money that was in our budget to paint the classrooms and hallways. We still have approximately $200,000 in the capital improvement line of our budget; we will wait until we are settled into our new space (by November/December) to discuss with the board and the school leadership team which capital improvements the school needs. Possible security cameras for the 2nd floor? Cameras might be funded by local politicians instead of our budget; these discussions/decisions will be considered at the end of 2023.

G. Winn added that school buildings are inspected every 5 years and the *Finance Committee* will be making sure that our building is up to standards and working with our co-tenants to see how that might be done efficiently. Proper lighting is very important too.

L. Gyimesi responded that there have been some minor glitches and things E.D. had to fight for, inspection-related or safety-related, but she has not seen any lack of oversight in those areas. Although it wouldn't hurt to get another safety inspection, we are already fully compliant with safety and building codes.

C. Renewal Task Force

L. Gyimesi gave the following update on the charter renewal:

- We submitted our renewal application covering 9 benchmarks; benchmark #1 is still being worked on by our academic team; still meeting with Pasek Consulting every week; the problem is that NYSED has still not released the state test results needed for benchmark #1.
- We have no test scores or comparatives and critical benchmark #1 is due in 18 days. NYSED said they "might" extend the deadline for submission of benchmark #1 or they might not. If not, they want us to use the original information we already have. No matter what, we will make it work. We know what we have, we know what the scores were, and we anticipate what the scores could be.
- We have someone preparing a report for us who is an expert in this area to address the type of testing involved and the co-morbidities regarding our students and how they interact. We will submit that report with benchmark #1 and will tailor it the best we can. We'll see if Pasek has more information when we meet them this Thursday at 9:00 AM.
- After we finish the renewal application paperwork, we will still have the NYSED site visit to our school ahead. T. Castanza and L. Gyimesi will attend a seminar on Monday regarding the site visit to be fully informed on the types of things NYSED will be looking for. Our NYSED liaison has already reached out to E.D. regarding specifics on a charter material change, so it seems that they are already reviewing our paperwork.
- After the site visit, we will be given a NYSED report, we can then address the report and dispute anything we believe is inaccurate; Pasek will be helping us with our response to the report. By June we should know our status and what length of renewal we will be given.

T. Castanza added that the renewal process has been beneficial for the school on an organizational level because it's been good to revisit our core, see what we need to do better, and it has spurred us forward with new energy.

III. Report of Executive Director

A. Executive Director Update

T. Castanza gave the following update:

- This summer we moved into and reconfigured a new area in our building; we restructured our entire team organization; we redesigned curriculum maps-

standards based work; we hired and trained new teachers and re-trained current teachers; we focused on renewal; we recruited, enrolled and registered 74 new families *(the largest class we've had since we opened)*; we worked on and refined school culture improvements.

- We had a safe and successful first day of school. Our currently enrollment is 241 out of 242 due to a student leaving today; we will fill that 1 seat quickly from our waitlist of 75 students.
- Hired 8 new staff members who are bringing a lot of positive energy *(teachers/instructional staff members)*; we feel good about our hiring process.
- Experiencing difficulties for the first time with our neighbors here on the Petrides Campus; have been trying to work collaboratively with the others sharing our building, but we are at an impasse; we have reached out for support from DoE Central *(Campus Governance/Grievance Process)*; but the issues are with adult DoE staff in the same building where we are located (Building A); adult employees share this building with children/students and we all need to feel welcome and safe; meeting tomorrow with the District Superintendent to discuss our concerns. Our team is developing safety systems to make sure our students are safe; at the same time we share the building with adult DoE employees that need to work in this location and that has caused a problem.
- Some classroom doors on the 2nd floor require vision panels to be installed as a safety mandate; we notified DoE Division of School Facilities over the summer that these doors need to be replaced but nothing was done and we are not comfortable going further into the school year without the fix. If DoE doesn't replace those doors, we will have to replace them ourselves. This is not something we should have to do since there are procedures in place to take care of this type of issue. *L. Gyimesi stated that she told T. Castanza to bring this problem to the board of trustees and that the board could vote to approve the expenditure for hiring someone to replace the doors, if DoE does not take care of this; the funds could be reimbursed later by DoE.* E.D is grateful to have the support of the board of trustees regarding this issue.
- Starting a STEM class this year as a special offering to all students.
- Focusing on tech classes, including keyboarding since state tests will be administered solely on computers starting in 2025.
- Every staff member has been assigned to one of five school-wide teams, each team represents a critical cultural element: Growth & Development Team, School Safety Team, Leader-in-Me Team, Data & Curriculum Team, School Events Team. Each team is supported by a member of school leadership and each team has a staff member Team Leader that drives that work;
- We are expanding the school leadership team to be more like a cabinet; including other members of the staff such as our office manager and our new dean.
- The Leader-in-Me Team is redesigning our students' morning meeting with a new curriculum aligned with the *"7 Habits of Highly Effective People"*: #1 Be Proactive; #2 Begin With the End in Mind; #3 Put First Things First; #4 Think Win-Win; #5 Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood; #6 Synergize; #7 Sharpen the

Saw. Each month the theme changes and each month the students will all read the same book. The 7 habits are posted on signs throughout the building and in each classroom; we hope to engage students in a different way. We will be offering external events that align with all of these habits. This will start on September 18th. *T. Frey suggested a book for the month of January, "We Don't Eat Our Classmates".*

- Classroom partnerships and office partnerships are almost like a marriage; you have to know and trust your partner; we asked our teachers and office staff to paint their work-partner and on display in tonight's meeting room are small canvases with portraits of school staff created by other staff members. We want to make our school a welcoming place that teachers and staff feel comfortable and always want to come back.
- In October we will have some data to share with the board and we encourage staff members to attend board meetings.

IV. Family Association

A. Family Association Update

A. Wolkowitz gave the following update:

- The *Family Association* set up a table to greet families at orientation last week; parents were enthusiastic and many wanted to volunteer for the Family Association and get involved in events or fundraising; we had a sign-up sheet for emails and will update our mailing list We offered a raffle for a Back-to-School Basket to families at orientation.
- Setting up a *Fifth Grade Events Committee*
- *Pumpkin Patch* event planned for Halloween; we will decorate and have treats for the students
- *Trunk-or-Treat* event planned for October 22nd in Petrides parking lot
- The Hungerford School *(which shares Petrides Campus with us)* has a fundraiser selling beautiful student-made outdoor welcome mats that can be customized; we are hoping to obtain those mats to use as a fundraiser for our school. We think that we will have a really successful fundraising year based on how things went last year.

T. Frey asked what time the Trunk-or-Treat event will be? A. Wolkowitz responded that it will be 11am-1pm on October 22nd. T. Frey said that the *Staten Island Breast Cancer Walk* is on the morning of October 22nd and families would have to choose which event to attend. A. Wolkowitz thanked her and made note of the conflict so that the the Trunk-or-Treat event can be moved to another date (TBD).

V. Other Business

A. New Business

L. Gyimesi said that the following board members are assigned as committee chairs from now through June 2024:

- **Academic Committee**: Rose Kerr and Traci Frey, Co-Chairs
- **Finance Committee**: George Winn, Chair
- **Governance Committee**: Heba Nassef-Gore, Chair
- **E.D. Support & Evaluation** Task Force: Mark Harmon-Vaught, Chair
- **Charter Renewal** Task Force: Laurel Gyimesi, Chair
- **Fundraising** Ad Hoc Committee: Mark Harmon-Vaught and Amanda Wolkowitz, Co-Chairs

The *Fundraising Committee* was formed based on discussions at our last strategy session; we talked about the necessity of codifying our philosophy and the mechanisms for fundraising. We will probably add staff members to the committee. We will look at capital projects within our building that are beneficial to our students or teachers. Also we can look at long-term external projects; what do our students need? Will we need to amend our bylaws?

- All committees flow into each other and support each other. *Governance* flows into *Fundraising* and *Finance*. *Academic* is involved with budget and capital improvements, which involves *Finance* and *Fundraising*.
- *Academic* drives our school from step one: the children have to learn and become proficient; to reach that goal, should we do something with the building (capital improvements) or with our teachers (professional development)? *Fundraising* can help with our philosophy and all our committees to meet goals. This is a new energy in our school.
- We also need to look at the Practicum and decide where that is going; there will be 6 teachers enrolled and that is exciting because it was a main goal of our original charter.
- We support each other, our committees and the school leadership team. We are going to tighten up the structure through *E.D. Support & Evaluation* and *Governance.*
- We need to discuss our goals for the year; a new direction for our board and school; do we tighten things down or open things up? Our goals will be tied to the renewal process;

We need to fulfill material changes of our charter and focus on:

1. Opening kindergarten classes in the fall
2. Implementing or extending the Practicum
3. An investment policy plan legal and appropriate for our school
4. Fundraising policy and board development are both critical

M. Harmon-Vaught added that this is an exciting plan for the year; we are securing the immediate with renewal and using it as an actual moment of renewal as we think of our processes; there is a lot of rich work happening for the board and for the school.

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 8:07 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano