APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday May 21, 2024 at 7:00 PM

Location
Bridge Preparatory Charter School
715 Ocean Terrace
Building A - Atrium (Main Floor)
Staten Island, NY 10301

600 Commodore Court
Philadelphia, PA 19146

328 Oakland Avenue
SI NY 10310

201 Pondfield Rd
Bronxville NY

557 5th st
Brooklyn, NY 11215

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

Trustees Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present

Tim Castanza

Guests Present
Kathy Baldassano (remote), Nicole DeStefano, Tara Gore (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

As per Public Officers Law, Article 7 § 103-a *(Videoconferencing by public bodies)* although board members Maria Casale, George Winn and Rebecca 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.
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 May 21, 2024 at 7:05 PM.

C. Approve Minutes of March 14th Executive Committee Meeting

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Executive Committee Meeting on 03-14-24.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 03-14-24 *Executive Committee 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 April 16th Board Meeting

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 04-16-24.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 04-16-24 board 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 Reports

A.

Academic Committee

T. Frey gave the following synopsis of the topics discussed at the *Academic Committee Meeting* of May 7, 2024:

- **STANDARDIZED TESTING**: We have completed both **ELA and Math**; logistically the computerized testing for ELA was easier although some students found the typing very challenging; teachers felt that the interest level of students was good. **Science**: test was administered and was challenging for some students, who took a full day to finish the test. **Math**: 3rd and 4th grade tested paper-based and 5th grade tested on the computer. The number of opt-outs were similar to previous years. Next year, we're thinking about having 3rd-5th grade test on the computer and we will use the Rally! program for mock tests twice a year to get students accustomed to testing on a computer. Next year, 4th & 5th grade will be mandated to take computer-based tests and by 2026 all standardized testing will be computer-based.
- **NYSED CHARTER RENEWAL & SUNY MIDDLE-SCHOOL CHARTER APPLICATIONS:** Details to be discussed by T. Castanza later in tonight's meeting
- **ENROLLMENT:** Registration was open and families could register online and upload their documents, which made things a little easier. They could also register in person and bring their child's IEP for review. As of May 7th we had projected 246 students for next year; we are including 235 students in next year's budget, which will be discussed in further detail later at tonight's meeting.
- **PROMOTIONAL CRITERIA:** We will be reviewing promotional criteria over the summer to see if we need to revise the guidelines; we briefly discussed social promotion. T. Castanza added that we have promotional criteria included in the charter, and now during charter renewal, it's good to revisit these policies to see how they're working; and if there is a major change in the policies, we will ask NYSED if they are considered material changes or non-material changes.
- **REDUCED CLASS SIZE:** We talked about keeping class sizes smaller than in the past; we are projecting to have less than 16 students per class and to add 2 additional sections (1 for 4th grade & 1 for 5th grade); we are planning for 5 teachers total to participate in the Practicum program next year. We may need to hire a second ICT para since we're adding a 2nd class section. Also, we will need to hire an ENL teacher because of the number of projected ELL students. A major change in Jill Edwards Orton-Gillingham contract will be to reduce her active role from 3 times a week to 2 times a week, and to build Ms. Otterbeck's capacity to take on the 3rd day that Jill is no longer providing. Ms. Otterbeck is currently participating in the Practicum program. T. Castanza added that they are still finalizing decisions; a discussion followed regarding coaches, Danielson's Framework planning, specialized instruction, 2 coaches plus Ms. Otterbeck, and special education differentiation,
- **INTENT TO RETURN AGREEMENTS:** Teachers have to submit their intention to return agreements by May 17th; a 3rd grade teacher resigned, and postings are live for vacant positions.

- **DATA DASHBOARD**: R. Kerr requested that a Data Dashboard be shared at every board meeting moving forward so that all board members are up-to-date and the data is transparent.
- **SCHOOL CALENDAR for 2024-2025**: We will have 4 professional days built in; the structure of summer professional development has changed: August 25th to the 30th the full staff will be at school having professional learning opportunities. August 19th to August 23rd are designated grade team days and classroom-setup days. Specific teachers will be asked to come in on specific days.
- **SUPERPOWER MENTORS**: Their initial proposal was too high and we asked them to restructure and they came up with a group mentorship idea of 5 students per mentor with access to the mentor over a 15-week period, this will save $50,000 from the original cost. T. Castanza added that it is on hold until June, and will be discussed again with the *Academic Committee* and any other necessary committees.
- **END OF YEAR MAP DATA**: Will be shared with board members in June; preliminary data looks promising; teachers are sharing and discussing their academic data and student growth during team meetings; it's good to see academic data shifting towards the way that we want; we'll share the MAP data and some of the growth that we're seeing across subjects in both ELA and Math next month. Discussion followed regarding MAP growth, data metrics, overall proficiency, Acadience data, whether there is a way to predict how students will do on next year's tests based on this year's scores, and how we track data over time.

The next Academic Committee Meeting will be held on June 4th at 8:30 AM.

B. Finance

G. Winn gave the following update on topics covered at the *Finance Committee Meeting* on May 15, 2024.

- **CONTRACTS:** *(Regarding the renewal of financial-related contracts, G. Winn gave the floor to T. Castanza for details.)* T. Castanza shared the contract renewal for BoostEd, which is our financial services partner; their contract is on tonight's agenda for approval by the board. Also on tonight's agenda is the contract for our new audit firm; he thanked the people who helped with interviewing the 3 audit firms we were considering. We ultimately decided to recommend MMB & Co. and their contract is also on tonight's agenda for approval by the board. Discussion followed with Rebecca Peters and G. Winn regarding the reasons for the MMB & Co. recommendation: larger company, more resources, bigger brand, a cost in line with what we were already paying our former auditors and a willingness to meet with the board to walk through any issues, to talk about best practices and bring the board a little bit closer into their process. G. Winn added that this covers some of the things we're thinking about down the road for best practices as we look at an action plan and an audit committee that's more formally structured - what we want to see as the school moves forward. Certainly MMB & Co. itself is established enough in a way that will serve everybody well. T. Castanza stated that there will be other contracts that will be

presented to the board for approval in June. Insurance is one and we're still working with Rusty Godfrey at Gallagher Insurance. Our contract renewals are on track. We will also likely present a renewal of the HR partnership contract at the June board meeting. G. Winn said regarding the extension of the BoostEd contract, the cost is about a 3% increase from the year prior. Not a major increase in the cost of that relationship and they serve us as well with accounting and bookkeeping needs. Right now it makes sense to continue as we're doing with BoostEd. But there are certain aspects of investment and management of the schools assets that may be beyond their scope. We do have 2 other partners that can help us with that. The Finance Committee can discuss this further at the next meeting.

- **BUDGET:** We looked at the compensation lines and asked to sit down with some of the managers and review some of the conclusions that they included in the budget draft. T. Castanza spent some time, with the Director of Teaching and Learning. G. WInn believes we could certainly move forward along the line of the teaching staff; there's time sensitivity around that. At the *Executive Committee Meeting* there was a question regarding whether we should vote on the entire budget tonight but he feels that we can certainly go forward and only approve the line regarding teaching staff salaries. We have typically looked at this document and had to approve that line at the May board meeting and then moved forward into June to approve the rest of the budget. There's often a portion at the very top with our most highly compensated staff at the administrative level that we sometimes had to take out until the later June board meeting. Discussion can continue on this topic when the budget vote is called on tonight's agenda.
- **CASH MANAGEMENT**: We now have approximately $4 million invested across 2 different managers. We are earning a 5% return on that money, which is substantial. He would have liked to have that money fully invested in those places much earlier in the in the year, but we can see the benefit of even having it in there for 6 weeks. That's good news and we worked hard to implement that strategy; thank you to T. Castanza and everyone who worked on that.

The next Finance Committee Meeting will be held on June 10th at 3:45 PM.

C. Board Development & Governance

L. Gyimesi gave the following update on the *Board Development & Governance Committee:*

- **NYSED CHARTER RENEWAL:** There is no news in this area; we don't have any information. Our charter renewal did not make the May Board of Regents agenda; they had only 6 schools being considered at that meeting; there are about 18 charter schools still remaining to be voted on by the Regents Board and their next meeting is the first week of June. We anticipate being on their June calendar to find out about our renewal application.
- **SUNY MIDDLE SCHOOL CHARTER APPLICATION:** No word from SUNY. So, that's where we are at this point. We're all exhausted, but move onward to June.

- **BOARD RECRUITMENT:** There is good news on that front. A. Wolkowitz will be running for a full 3-year term as a parent board member; N. DeStefano will be voted onto the board tonight; T. Gore is moving forward and her board application is being processed. A new potential board applicant is Jennifer Sanmartino. There are some more people interested in joining our board, at least one is attorney but we're waiting to see. Staten Island Media Group has added a *"Join Our Team"* webpage on the school website, which will be up all year long; interested parties can seek information, reach out and apply to join our board from that webpage. There's also a print ad drafted for staff and board recruitment. At this point with those we know joining the board, there will be 11 trustees, including the new *Parent Association* president; the board cap is 15 trustees. L. Gyimesi gives credit to our team, Including T. Castanza and R. Illuzzi who have been doing a lot of community outreach and attending events and functions to help recruit new board members.
- **TERMS OF BOARD MEMBERS:** Board member terms end on the last day of the month of June in whatever year completes their 3-year tenure as a trustee. At the June *Governance Committee* meeting we will be proposing a slate of board officers for elections at the full board meeting. Also at the June board meeting, we will be reappointing G. Kuriakose and M. Harmon-Vaught to their second 3-year term on the board.

The next Board Development & Governance Committee Meeting will be June 5th at 4 PM.

D. ED Support and Evaluation

M. Harmon-Vaught gave the following update on *E.D. Support & Evaluation:*

- **THANKS:** First he wants to thank T. Frey for her wonderful partnership in the past several weeks in planning for how we'll approach, E.D. support and evaluation both for this cycle in the immediate term and then also the long term. Some strategies from her experience will be incredibly valuable and supportive. We had a really great meeting with E.D. T. Castanza a few weeks ago.
- **ANNUAL SURVEY**: The annual survey on Board-on-Track will open tomorrow and he invites trustees to please complete that survey as soon as possible and within the next 2 weeks. That gives us really good year-over-year data as we work to support E.D. and his leadership.

III. Votes

A. Resolution #30 to Appoint Board Member Nicole DeStefano

Laurel Gyimesi made a motion to approve Resolution #30 to Appoint Board Member Nicole DeStefano.
Geena Kuriakose seconded the motion.
Resolution #30 to Appoint Board Member Nicole DeStefano

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of Bridge Preparatory Charter School ("Bridge Prep") deems it to be in the best interests of Bridge Prep that the following action be taken by the Board of Trustees of Bridge Prep pursuant to this Resolution:
WHEREAS, The Bridge Preparatory Charter School Board of Trustees, having conducted a thorough criminal history record check via fingerprinting which is deemed acceptable by NYSED, and having discovered no State or Federal criminal history, or having provided information regarding such history to NYSED, if found, and having verified that any academic and/or professional credential or qualification presented by the proposed member is genuine, and having reviewed the application in its entirety, has voted to select **Nicole DeStefano** as a member to its Board of Trustees, with a term expiring on June 30, 2027 pending approval by NYSED. The resolution approving **Nicole DeStefano** is adopted upon NYSED's approval.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call	
Mark Harmon-Vaught	Aye
Maria Casale	Aye
Geena Kuriakose	Aye
Rose Kerr	Aye
Laurel Gyimesi	Aye
Traci Frey	Aye
George Winn	Aye
Rebecca Peters	Aye
Amanda Wolkowitz	Aye

B. Approval of Academic Calendar

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the School Calendar for 2024-2025 as presented to the board.
Laurel Gyimesi seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

C. Amendments to Bylaws - ARTICLE VI, ARTICLE VII and ARTICLE XII

Laurel Gyimesi made a motion to approve the amendments to Article VI (C), Article VII (A), Article XII (A through E) of the Bridge Preparatory Board of Trustees Bylaws as presented to the board.
Rose Kerr seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

D. Approval of Contract for Edwards O-G

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the proposed contract from Edwards Orton-Gillingham Inc. as presented to the board.
Amanda Wolkowitz seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

E.

Approval of Contract for MMB+Co

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the proposed contract from MMB & Co. as presented to the board.
Traci Frey seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

F. Extension of Contract Boost Ed

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the extension of contract from BoostEd as presented to the board.
Amanda Wolkowitz seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

G. Approval of Budget

Laurel Gyimesi made a motion to approve the entire school budget for Fiscal Year 2023 as presented to the board.
Geena Kuriakose seconded the motion.
The FY23 Budget was developed by the Executive Director, in collaboration with members of the Leadership Team, the organization's Financial Services provider, BoostEd Finance and members of the Board of Trustees. Feedback on the needs of the organization was taken over the course of several months from the stakeholders above, as well as other members of the community to identify priority areas to allocate funding and assure organizational success.
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T. Castanza thanked all who worked on the budget and discussed budgeting for the next 5-year span; the sustainability of surplus and cash, budgeting conservatively, reducing class size and how expenses build out over time. Allocations for non-capital expenditures and capital expenditures, funds for renovations and repairs. Amounts for direct ed and operational costs were adjusted to amounts closer to what we actually expect to spend. Adding staff positions affects the budget; he expects to dive much deeper into conversations about staff compensation with the board members in the summer and throughout the school year, as well as doing various types of analysis around staff compensation to make sure we are keeping teachers and staying competitive with salaries. Board members also discussed topics such as ICT models, opening up additional sections of grades, bridge classes, mixed classes, and elements of personnel. A debate followed on how the budget was aligning to market; where the percentages proposed for salary increases were obtained; which board members are comfortable approving the entire budget as presented tonight and which board members want to only vote on particular portions of the budget with the remainder to be addressed after further scrutiny and analysis. Is the budget ready now for approval? Opinion was voiced that only portions of the budget are acceptable and there is still some work to do regarding the staff salary plan. Other opinions were that the staff compensation issue can continue to be analyzed and can be adjusted and modified after the board approves the entire budget as a whole.
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- A motion was made to address the budget approval via vote and seconded.

Note: M. Casale stated that she would vote on whatever will move us forward but that she has to leave. M. Casale left the meeting at 8:13 PM prior to the actual voting. Because she left the meeting prior to the vote count and there is no proxy voting, she will be marked as "Absent" for this vote.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call	
Mark Harmon-Vaught	Aye
Maria Casale	Absent
Geena Kuriakose	Aye
Laurel Gyimesi	Aye
Amanda Wolkowitz	Aye
Rose Kerr	Aye
Rebecca Peters	Aye
George Winn	No
Traci Frey	Aye

IV. Executive

A. ED Update

T. Castanza gave the following Executive Director update:

- **NYS EDUCATION ACTION PLAN**: We will submit the schools' Action Plan to NYSED tomorrow; thank you to those who gave feedback on that. It worked. We cleaned it up and corrected any typos. T. Frey and E.D. discussed building out the academic benchmarks a little bit to be more specific in their targets. The items that were in the budget specifically around class size and staff positions were built into a strategy for how we will improve academic performance. Thank you to those who helped us work on that, my team who sat with me at the school level and Pasek Consulting.
- **ENROLLMENT**: We have 246 registered students as of May 7th. We have 71 new families who applied and of that number, 38 are fully registered. We've registered 4 ELL students.

V. Family Association Update

A. Family Association Update

A. Wolkowitz gave the following *Family Association* update:
We had our **PLANT SALE** about 2 weeks ago. It was a huge success outside in the courtyard. Petrides School and Hungerford School students came by; we had 2 days and the kids had a really good time shopping - some kids just love plants. We had a **STAFF APPRECIATION SNACK BAR** set up in the upstairs lounge, with a variety of different

snacks and drinks which we kept replenishing throughout the day. It was open for all staff, including paras, service providers and teachers.
Tomorrow is the **FIFTH GRADE DANCE**. We arranged for someone to come and airbrush shirts, hats or backpacks for the 5th graders as a gift from the *Family Association*. There was a **FIELD DAY** on Friday and a **DERBY** on Saturday, the energy level here is exhausting but the students are super happy. Ms. Illuzzi has been doing a great job of posting photos of school events on social media.

VI. Other Business

A. Presentation of Shield of Bridge Prep Award

T. Castanza stated that every year at the school we give out awards to those that impact the community over and above what we ask them to do. Those are our bold, bright, unique awards, our core values. And then we have an award that basically takes all of those core values and wraps them into one beautiful shield. And the shield was built by myself and R. Kerr and L. Timoney. When we designed Bridge Prep we needed to create a logo. It's the 1st thing that someone sees and it really defines the school, who you are and what you're about. We felt that a shield was a nice logo and the most appropriate award to give to someone who truly embodies what we do and gives to the community. Not just to one group. Not just to kids, not just to faculty, but to everybody. And that award has gone to staff members in the past couple of years. This year we discussed that it was time to consider people that have taken us through the first 5 years. That we couldn't have got through the 1st term without. There was really easy choice of recipient; someone who has been with us for a long time, who knows the school and who knows the people. I had them nominate candidates for all the awards and I said I would like to consider nominating Rose Kerr for the Shield Award. This was a really easy choice. We are going to give these awards out of graduation, but I wanted to make sure that Rose gets this now, before Graduation Day knowing that she will be away in Europe then. I am very grateful to Rose because I have been personally mentored by her. Five years is a long time and there's very few people that I trust as much as her. And I genuinely mean that. And I hope that she puts this Shield Award among many other accolades that she already has. And remember how special you are to our kids, our families and our staff. So thank you.

The Shield Award is inscribed:
In celebration of your service and commitment to the Bridge Prep community and for exemplifying and modeling bridge prep's core values and mission through your actions and mindsets. Thank you. Congratulations Rose.

R. Kerr responded by saying thank you to the community at Bridge Prep. We have some of our founding trustees here: L. Gyimesi, G. Winn, M. Casale and of course T. Castanza and F. Ebanks. We've been through a lot. You mentioned L. Timoney, who had a lot to do with establishing our school. If I could have predicted 8 years ago when we started this journey, where we should be 8 years later, I would say right where we are now. That to me, is the ideal place. Notwithstanding NYSED and SUNY - whether they renew us 3, 4, 5 years, it

doesn't matter because we know what we have done from that first moment. We care and that's the key to carry this greatness on. So we can say with all honesty that we've begun something with a team of people who will go forward and continue helping those babies to become wonderful 5th graders and possibly our own middle schoolers. I couldn't have hoped for anything better than that. So thank you very much.

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 8:25 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano