APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday June 11, 2024 at 7:00 PM

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

557 5th st #3
Brooklyn, NY 11215

600 Commodore Court
Philadelphia, PA 19146

201 Pondfield Rd
Bronxville NY

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

Trustees Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present
Tim Castanza

Guests Present

Kathy Baldassano (remote), Maria Casale (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 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. Board member Maria Casale 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 Jun 11, 2024 at 7:04 PM.

C. Welcome From Chair

L. Gyimesi said that because it's her last meeting, she will offer a longer welcome.
Since it's my last meeting as an officer of Bridge Prep just give me a moment of reflection. I always thank you all for your service to the school. I can't say it enough and the school's existence and the success of our students is a testament to the time and commitment that everyone has given to this school. And as you all know, Rose, myself, Maria and George are all rolling off now. I have to personally thank you all in particular for the time that you've given to the school and bringing this school to fruition. Thank you so much for that. And I have to comment that Maria who is also rolling off the board has given more time and effort than I probably can ever express. Later at this meeting, we will be hearing about her findings regarding the doctoral thesis that she has been working on.
You probably heard me mention that when we submitted our first application to establish the school, we were not successful. We had to go back and resubmit and reapply and it was wearing upon us all, but we we did it. The second time around we did two sets of capacity interviews and for the second capacity interview we had to drive up to Albany. While we were all there for that interview, there were a couple of questions that really stood out. And I still think about them all the time.
One questions was: What would we do if we were successful? If we're so successful that the DOE adopts our program for all public schools? And we all looked at each other. Why would we not be happy with that? We weren't trying to patent this success formula and hide it from anybody. We are very appreciative if that was the outcome. We thought that was a surprising question. Parents had been advocating for a school like ours for years; and here

we are 8 years later and our program has not been adopted by the DoE. There is still a need for our school. It is necessary for Bridge Prep to exist and continue to exist.
The second question that was very odd and we didn't anticipate at all: Why are we devoting our time to a charter school? And I wondered if they thought there's something nefarious about opening a charter school? Did they think it was odd that none of us had children that were going to be attending the school? I didn't understand the logic of it. But I thought to myself as we were getting ready to open this school as Charles Dickens wrote, what better deed could we do than opening this school? We've got to do it. So that was the answer that I gave and I have to say that's still true for me, what better deed could we do than this? And as the founding trustees roll off the board, and we hand over the school to the new wonderful people to lead and run the school, I just want to thank you for the time and effort that you're going to devote to the job. And tell you what better deed can be done than this? So onward we go and let's move forward with the agenda.

D. Approve Minutes of May 21st Board Meeting

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 05-21-24.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 05-21-24 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. Board of Trustees Elections

A. Approval of New Terms for 3 Board Members

Laurel Gyimesi made a motion to approve M. Harmon-Vaught to serve a second 3-year term as a member of the Board of Trustees.
Geena Kuriakose seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve G. Kuriakose to serve a second 3-year term as a member of the Board of Trustees.
Traci Frey seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
George Winn made a motion to approve A. Wolkowitz to serve a first term as a selected parent member on the Board of Trustees, no longer contingent upon her previous position as president of Family Association.
Geena Kuriakose seconded the motion.
NOTE: A. Wolkowitz' previous membership on the Board of Trustees was due to her status as President of the Family Association. She no longer holds that position and is now being selected to serve her first term as a parent member on the Board of Trustees.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Election of Officers of Board

Laurel Gyimesi made a motion to nominate M. Harmon-Vaught for the position of Co-Chair of the Board of Trustees.
Geena Kuriakose seconded the motion.
There were no other nominations from the floor. M. Harmon-Vaught accepted the nomination.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to nominate T. Frey for the position of Co-Chair of the Board of Trustees.
Amanda Wolkowitz seconded the motion.
There were no other nominations from the floor. T. Frey accepted the nomination.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to nominate G. Kuriakose for the position of Secretary of the Board of Trustees.
Traci Frey seconded the motion.
There were no other nominations from the floor. G. Kuriakose accepted the nomination.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
George Winn made a motion to nominate R. Peters for the position of Treasurer of the Board of Trustees.
Mark Harmon-Vaught seconded the motion.
There were no other nominations from the floor. R. Peters accepted the nomination.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

III. Votes On Multiple Contracts

A. Approval of Contract Renewal ExtensisHR Client

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve renewal of contract with ExtensisHR.
Laurel Gyimesi seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Extension of Contract EDIT Tech Support

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve an extension of the contract with edIT Support Technology Services.
Nicole DeStefano seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

C. Approval of Insurance

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve renewal of insurance policies from multiple carriers via Gallagher Insurance as presented to the Board of Trustees.
Laurel Gyimesi seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

D.

Approval of SuperPower Mentors Contract

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the contract with Superpower Mentors.
Traci Frey seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

IV. Data Review

A. June Data review

T. Frey gave the following report on the Data Dashboard information shared at the last *Academic Committee* meeting regarding MAP growth and proficiency, and student data from the beginning of the school year through the end of the school year. She then gave the floor to C. Volpe to summarize and review the data.
C. Volpe thanked the trustees who are leaving the board due to term limits: L. Gyimesi, R. Kerr and G. Winn and congratulated the trustees whose new terms are beginning. She then presented the following Data Dashboard information to the board:

- **CODE OF CONDUCT INFRACTIONS:** Incident reports of student infractions this school year
- **STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**: 67.2% Special Ed. students with IEPs vs 32.6% General Ed. students
- **STUDENT DAILY ATTENDANCE**: Average student daily attendance for each month Sept-June
- **PROFICIENCY DATA**: Math & ELA proficiency percentages for Beginning of Year (BOY) vs End of Year (EOY) for each grade
- **GROWTH & ACHIEVEMENT OVERVIEW:** For each grade from 1st-5th

T. Castanza stated that at the *Academic Committee* meeting, we talked about how much of the data speaks to growth, which is an important part of the narrative for us at the ground level and as we continue to talk about the impact of our work. As we enter our new charter term, it's important to focus on proficiency and the continued need for growth towards proficiency which are metrics that NYSED uses. Growth is a step, but proficiency is the goal; growth gets us towards the goal, but ultimately we're continuing to strive for proficiency. T. Frey added that at the meeting, we discussed that our charter goal was that 75% of our students who have been here with us at least 2 years would be proficient and we are not there yet. So the work is to translate what that data is showing us into what's happening in the classroom to make sure that our students have the skills and tools they need to be proficient.

V. Committee Reports

A. Academic Committee

T. Frey gave the following report on topics covered at the *Academic Committee Meeting* on June 4th:

- **DATA DASHBOARD REVIEW:** Already covered previously.
- **NYSED CHARTER RENEWAL:** Will be discussed later tonight by L. Gyimesi or T. Castanza.
- **STUDENT ENROLLMENT**: Expecting 73 new students next year; we're still planning on 15 sections total, but there will be one section of 1st grade and three sections of 2nd grade. We are going to see if we can convert some of the small classrooms into larger classrooms. The school has called every family to confirm whether they were returning for next year and the wait list a week ago had 36 students across grades.
- **STAFFING, HIRING & RETENTION:** Hiring has begun; teachers have been vetted; demo lessons are happening. Literacy Interventionist and Instructional Coach positions have been filled by internal candidates. T. Castanza added that we still have one more teacher vacancy to fill. We are interviewing candidates, but he is happy to say that we have candidates that have accepted our offers, some are right out of school, they are a mix of experience, many of them dual certified. We are also speaking to our staff members that are currently still in school getting their certifications or nearly completing their certifications. We are entering into a partnership with Touro College to work with their education students and social workers doing graduate work; we have a student teacher coming in from Touro College this summer. We are thinking about this Touro partnership as a long term pipeline for future staffing.
- **SCHOOL YEAR SCHEDULE**: There will be 50-minute instructional periods for additional minutes of instructional time and longer teacher prep periods. Will restructure the daily schedule to move the OG period to 1st period and the structured literacy period will happen later in the day, and no longer require it to follow the OG period. The SEL period (Social & Emotional Skills) is still being taught by the Y.M.C.A. which frees up that money for other things. And the last period of the day will end at 3:17 PM.
- **MERGING GREAT TEAM LEADER INTO SCHOOL-WIDE TEAM LEADER:** Candidates will be chosen by E.D. and C. Volpe.
- **NEW SCIENCE CURRICULUM:** Amplify Science program
- **SUMMER BOOST PROGRAM**: Budgeted for 55 students, and won't know the final number until next week.

B. Finance

G. Winn gave the following report on the topics discussed at the Finance Committee Meeting of June 10th:

- **INSURANCE POLICIES**: Discussed earlier by T. Castanza and voted upon at tonight's meeting
- **HUMAN RESOURCES**
- **SUPERPOWER MENTOR PROGRAM**: Happy to see the restructuring of that program to be offered to every graduating student; to the extent we can maintain a connection with our diaspora and see how our academic work spreads after the

children articulate in the top grades. We can begin to see data and patterns of success and need beyond 5th grade.

- **REDUCED CLASS SIZE**: It's important to be able to have smaller class sections; glad to see the direction the school is headed in terms of class size and what we're asking our staff to do in the classroom; Good to know that we are in a facility that can accommodate our expanded class levels to Kindergarten through Grade 5.
- **CASH MANAGEMENT**: We now have roughly $8 million in the bank by the end of the fiscal year, June 30th; a little over $4 million is in 2 different accounts and are yielding around 5% interest, which is a nice market yield commonly referred to as a risk-free rate in terms of U.S. Treasuries. We are getting a decent return for our cash management. The other half of our cash assets are spread into different accounts. Board members can see the monthly financial report available in tonight's meeting. He has full confidence that R. Peters, the new Board Treasurer has the ability to work collaboratively with T. Castanza and BoostEd to take our school forward.

C. Executive Director Support and Evaluation

M. Harmon-Vaught and T. Frey gave the following update:

- **BOARD-ON-TRACK E.D. SURVEY** - Please complete this online survey if you have not done so already; it will close out this Friday. The survey doesn't take very long and it's incredibly important. Your data allows us to help support T. Castanza and think about long term planning and reflect on the current year, so please do by Friday the latest and I will remind you until you do.
- **FOCUS GROUPS:** We held a series of focus groups with students, school faculty and parents. Those were rich, robust and very instructive. We began to debrief those today and are putting together a memo that reflects the results and trends we saw across the 3 stakeholder groups, and things that were specific to each of the stakeholder groups. We will share this information with the E.D. and board members for board comment and review. Based on that and the survey results, we will put together a confidential memo for the board that will be circulated for comment as part of the end-of-year E.D. evaluation process.

D. Renewal Task Force

L. Gyimesi gave the following update on the Charter Renewal Task Force:

- As we all know the results the actual Board of Regents vote was today. And we were disappointed, but not necessarily unaware of getting a 3-year charter renewal. That was buttressed by the approval of an expansion of our school with permission to add Kindergarten-level classes and incorporate 30 more students into our school. So it was a bit of a give-and-take; a vote of confidence that the school is expected to continue and thrive and they're allowing us more children within the program. She shared with the board members the comments that we had gotten back, direct input from the NYSED Commissioner and the Regent so she won't go into all that again. Just some comments on the process and how we got here. We received the NYSED

draft site visit report, with which we were all unhappy; we tried very hard, but there's a matrix and when you fall within the matrix, there is really no way out of it. And so we were within that matrix and they lowered us into groups from a level of "meeting" to a level of "approaching". We tried very hard to switch that back because we didn't think that was fairly based, but we were not successful. She does believe that everybody sees our school as having a long, robust, successful future. And so that's that's how the chips fell. Sometimes it happens and we will be undeterred. All we can do is move forward knowing exactly what's going to be examined in the future and work towards student proficiency, focusing on the academics. We always knew that that was exactly how we were going to be assessed and hopefully next time we'll get a 5-year charter renewal and continue for each term after that.

- M. Harmon-Vaught stated that this has been a multi-year process and so the outcome is not exactly what we wanted. We followed the process extremely well and we did a great job and that was thanks very much to the hard work of L. Gyimesi, T. Castanza and everyone here in many ways Thank you for all of that important work.
- T. Castanza added that in his conversations with the NYSED Commissioner, she was really clear about her commitment to our school and she was explicit in saying that she gave directives to her team and the charter school office that we are to be given whatever resources we ask for and maybe even some that we don't ask for and that's really good. As we go forward, it's really about how do we improve; how do we take this outcome and make it better next time? And there is a real roadmap for that, knowing specifically what NYSED's concerns were and how to improve those areas on our end. We began that process today; we talked to our staff about the renewal result and how we can get better, and how we continue to move forward. And so that work begins.

VI. Family Association Update

A. Family Association Update

A. Wolkowitz gave the following Family Association update:

- **FAMILY DAY** was held over last weekend, and we had good attendance by new families and existing families; a really fun day - the weather was beautiful and it was held outside on the field. There were games and arts & crafts; the Family Association had a table of raffles of summer fun baskets. She met a lot of new parents that are a little nervous about starting a new school in September and we made a lot of good connections that day.
- **FAMILY ASSOCIATION OFFICERS' ELECTIONS:** There is a new slate of officers for next year. All the officers' positions were filled. We have people willing and able and we're very excited about what plans they have for next year. The new President is Deidre Medina.

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that even though A. Wolkowitz is still going to be here, he just wants to say again, thank you for your leadership. It's been such a joy to hear all the

unbelievable things that you're doing with families. It's such a special thing about this community and you have steered that ship so incredibly well. T. Castanza added that part of the work that she does really well with our families is build a pipeline really making sure that we have strong body of parents coming on. And as a school leader, the group of families and parents that are coming on to support our school next year is exciting and represents a much more diverse group of families, a group of families that look more like our students.

VII. Other Business

A. Dr. Maria Casale's Presentation of Findings

M. Casale gave a presentation of her dissertation proposal titled: *Educator Motivation for Acquired Expertise to Support Students with Dyslexia: A Phenomenological Study* which is based on research on how teachers acquire motivation for a PhD program that she hopes will lead the work for future researchers. She said her findings were super positive and really insightful. This is a qualitative data analysis looking at perceptions of teachers in this study. She looked at how job-embedded professional development contributes to teacher motivation. A problem is that K-12 teacher training is not accessible to support learning among students diagnosed with dyslexia. She chose our school's teachers to study the unique opportunity for those who have been trained by us in Orton Gillingham and what that means for them in teaching students. All the data is private and confidential so no one knows it's our school; it's a northeastern charter school renamed Oak Dale Mission Charter School, working with students with dyslexia language-based disabilities. When her research is published, she will share the link to the full study with the board members.

VIII. Closing Items

A. New Business

T. Castanza stated that he wants to thank those board members who have been with him since the beginning. We did a lot of work in the trenches together and we only had a pencil when we started; we worked in the basement of M. Casale's office. And he said then that he can't wait until one day we're looking back and we have an actual school. But you were there before we even had an office. We just had the idea of Bridge Prep - and there was a ton of work that went into getting us to where we are now. You consistently gave us your time. Whether that was a phone call, long meetings, or trips out of town to advocate for Bridge Prep. He has a gift from the school for all of the founding members of the board that are leaving. And for those that are not here, you'll get your gift at graduation. He is going to give L. Gyimesi her gift now. It's just something so he knows that you'll never forget your time that you spent with us here. Just something from us at the school to say thank you. *(He presented a wrapped gift to L. Gyimesi).*

L. Gyimesi said she was opening the gift on behalf of all the departing trustees. It's a beautiful desk clock, with a plaque that says "To a Founding Trustee from Bridge Prep". She said thank you, it's lovely. T. Castanza added that the plaque contains a copy of the

original beginning logo of the school, since that is how we started. We look forward to the next couple of days of celebrating, tomorrow night's Awards Dinner and the Graduation.

IX. 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 8:33 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano

Documents used during the meeting

None