APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Executive Committee Meeting

Date and Time
Thursday March 14, 2024 at 4:30 PM

Location
Zoom Meeting
Meeting ID: **846 9797 4734**
Passcode: **tek4UX**

One tap mobile
+16465588656,,84697974734#,,,,*346592# US (New York)
+16469313860,,84697974734#,,,,*346592# US

Dial by your location
• +1 646 558 8656 US (New York)
• +1 646 931 3860 US
• +1 309 205 3325 US
Meeting ID: **846 9797 4734**
Passcode: **346592**
Find your local number: https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kcdFeizwh5

600 Commodore Court
Philadelphia PA 19146

201 Pondfield Road
Bronxville, NY 10708

51 Ionia Ave,
SI, NY 10312

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814 Route 9W
Grandview on Hudson, NY

328 Oakland Avenue
Staten island, NY 10314

Committee Members Present
Geena Kuriakose (remote), George Winn (remote), Laurel Gyimesi (remote), Mark Harmon-Vaught (remote), Rose Kerr (remote)

Committee Members Absent
None

Guests Present
Kathy Baldassano (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

As per Public Officers Law, Article 7, § 103-a *(Videoconferencing by public bodies)* although board members Laurel Gyimesi, Rose Kerr, Geena Kuriakose, Mark Harmon-Vaught 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.
QUORUM IS MET FOR THIS MEETING.

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Geena Kuriakose called a meeting of the Executive Committee Committee of Bridge Preparatory Charter School to order on Thursday Mar 14, 2024 at 4:33 PM.

C. Review Notes of 02/15/24 Executive Committee Meeting

Since quorum was not met at the last *Executive Committee Meeting* on February 15, 2024, there are no minutes of that meeting. G. Kuriakose encouraged the attendees to review the previously shared notes from that meeting.

II. Committee Updates

A. Academic Committee

R. Kerr gave the following report based on notes taken by T. Frey, who led the *Academic Committee Meeting* of March 12th, in her absence:

- **ACADEMIC BUDGET & FUTURE STAFFING NEEDS**: Details can be supplied by G. Winn during his *Finance Committee* report. Recommendations for improvements to the academic program for the coming year includes cluster teachers for Science and Social Studies to give classroom teachers more planning time, structured like most elementary schools; potentially up to 4 cluster teachers, depending on scheduling and budgetary constraints. The cluster teacher recommendation has to go through the budget process. R. Kerr promotes adding a separate Literacy Coach to be another helping hand. They're going to see is how the new structure with C. Otterbeck, C. Volpe and E.D. is working out. A Math Coach is in place and R. Kerr will continue to advocate for a separate Literacy Coach. L. Gyimesi said that she thought that they had already identified someone to be the Literacy Coach. R. Kerr responded that she has no information about that - only that we will continue to talk about the needs for a Literacy Coach over the next few months - we'll have to ask E.D. about this.
- **ACADIENCE READING ASSESSMENT:** Administered in December; it tests fluency, comprehension, decoding skills, and lexile levels - all without testing accommodations. These are the same assessments used by the *Committee on Special Education* (CSE) to determine a student's reading level. If there is data to report, the board will hear more about this at the next board meeting, but it may be an internal assessment only used to inform instruction.
- **CONNECT SATURDAYS/PER SESSION FUNDING**: There was some push-back from staff regarding whether Saturdays can be considered working "school days" for teachers; according to NYSED, Connect Saturdays are not "school days", and won't be mandatory for teachers to work those sessions. Instead teachers will be paid "per-session" for working at these Saturday sessions. There was a suggestion about bringing in community partners to lead Connect Saturdays next year; however, community partners (CBOs) will cost money and that has to be worked out with the budget and funding.
- **STUDENT ENROLLMENT & ADMISSIONS:** We are authorized for 242 students; based on our charter renewal target that number increase with the addition of Kindergarten classes; we are budgeting for 222-225 students for school year 2024-2025. Student application numbers are lower than in the past. We currently have 51 applications across grades 1-5; and 51 students are leaving from the 5th grade. Current 2nd grade is relatively large at 22 students. The proposed budget is conservative, however we may need to hire additional staff in spite of a lower budget. L. Gyimesi added that right now we have 51 applications for 51 seats. E.D. expects more applications in April and May after a big enrollment push; and we may have 30 more students if we are approved to add Kindergarten classes.
- **REAUTHORIZATION PROCESS/SUNY CHARTER APPLICATION/STAFF SALARIES:** Will leave these topics to be covered in reports from the other committee Chairs
- **SATURDAY ACADEMY**: Test prep began on March 9th.

- **SUMMER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS:** Commenced last week; further details will be forthcoming.

Discussion followed regarding: cluster teachers, what they are, how they could help relieve teachers who say that they don't have enough time to prep; connecting the board budget to programming; reviewing a master schedule indicating the times teachers classes overlap, and why we would insert cluster teachers; how the board would benefit from seeing what this actually does to the day's schedule. It was stated that we don't know many details yet about how the cluster teachers will be scheduled each day or week; the successful transition of a classroom teacher into the new Math Coach.

The next Academic Committee Meeting will be held on April 9th at 8:30 AM.

B. Finance Committee

G. Winn gave the following report on the Finance Committee meeting topics planned for March 18th:

- **PREPARING BUDGET ANALYSIS FOR BOARD**: We have been providing significant spreadsheets to both the E.D. and the third party finance manager to basically walk them through what we ultimately want to show the board, i.e., how cash and savings are arrayed at present and also how different accounts are used. Notably the operating account from which we write all the general checks to literally operate the school; and the account that we run payroll from; and the account that would receive our revenue on a bi-monthly basis from the state, based on our per-pupil numbers. So if you multiply 242 students by the per-pupil allotment of $18,340, you have your operating revenue for the year. We know what we think the finances should look like and we expect that the school will end up with a less complex set of bank accounts that have very clear purposes.
- **SAVINGS ACCOUNTS REVIEW**: Some basic reviews were done of how our savings are arrayed. We discovered that out of $7.4 million in January. only $2.2 million was covered by FDIC insurance, the rest was deposited all over. The standard deposit insurance coverage limit is $250,000 per depositor, per bank, per ownership. Deposits held in different ownership categories are separately insured and we gave directives in December to separate our funds into different ownership account categories, which was not done as of February. We have made sure that our team follows up with Fiduciary Trust and JP Morgan Chase to correct this. We need to get to a place where this is set up and it's done.

Discussion followed regarding: the types of accounts where the school's funds are currently deposited; what about the "sweep accounts" the banks had offered; sweep accounts are insured up to the amount of money deposited because they sweep the funds up and spread them over a number of accounts in various banks, each of which is insured; we haven't even invested in those accounts yet, but they're getting to that point but It's taken them quite a while; we have money market accounts that are US Treasury-based; how much we need

in the operating account and for payroll; we're not chasing yield per se, but on a relative basis when you measure risk and yield, we are following a best practice. Bottom line is we expect to be able to show the board not only that we are more secure, but we're getting a much better yield. Board Member R. Peters is working on the banking issues now and he has full confidence in her knowledge and ability to manage it.

- **STAFF SALARIES:** We obtained a market teacher payroll/staff salary grid; a very rough proxy of teacher salary levels that we talked about in the July board meeting. This information is valuable because we'll be able to see where we are and how our staff is motivated; what do we see in the teachers who are staying and teachers who are leaving; he has reviewed the salary grid a few times and will dig in more with R. Peters over the weekend. L. Gyimesi stated that based on these conversations about comparing our teachers' salaries to the market pay-scale, the board may need to decide what to do with this information. Right now this is only a comparative analysis by the *Finance Committee.* G. Winn suggests that we are able to use this as a point of reference in setting individual salaries; as a comparative to see where we are. We're lucky to have this benchmark and other HR departments in high-performing firms that rely on talent depend on this type of comparison.
- **E.D. AGENDA POINTS:** T. Castanza sent his agenda points for the next meeting; he wants to talk about the Fiscal Year 2025 budget and the tax returns. The good news is that the tax returns are coming to us in March, a month earlier than last year and in plenty of time for finalizing before June 30th. We've done some planning and gotten ourselves in a good place, timewise.

The next Finance Committee Meeting will be held on April 8th at 3:45 PM.

C. Governance

L. Gyimesi gave the following report on the *Board Development & Governance Committee* meeting held on March 12th:

- **MARKETING CAMPAIGN FOR BOARD MEMBER RECRUITMENT**: Had a very quick Governance meeting this week and she had a brilliant idea. In order to move forward with board governance and increasing governance, since we just spent a lot of money on outside media vendors to help with enrollment marketing we're want to utilize them to do a marketing campaign to recruit new trustees.
- Staten Island Advance Media Group is probably going to be working with us. We'll come up with some content and methodology for discerning and putting this out there, create a targeted Instagram or whatever. So that that is the plan that she hopes to report on at the next meeting in April; she would like to get it in effect before the April meeting so I will be working on developing the content with with E.D. and with Staten Island Advance Media Group.to find a methodology to obtain more trustees. If anyone has any areas or organizations where they think we should reach out please feel free to email L. Gyimesi.

- **REVIEW OF BOARD BYLAWS**: We will work on the bylaws at the next meeting.
- **REAUTHORIZATION UPDATE**: It's been radio silence with regards to our charter renewal - we have not heard anything. The Board of Regents had 2 meetings in March with an agenda including 1 or 2 charter schools being voted on for authorization by SUNY - not by NYSED; no other charter schools have been on their agenda; we have not received any letters or gotten any feedback. T. Castanza reaches out often, trying to find out the status of our renewal application. T. Castanza is in Albany today for *Dyslexia Awareness Day* and of course he's reached out to David Frank to get a sense of what is going on, and if they wanted to touch base; another school said that maybe we'll get a letter sometime in May. The process is moving slowly and we still hope to be placed on the Board of Regents meeting calendar in April so that we have time to add Kindergarten to our school.
- **SUNY MIDDLE SCHOOL CHARTER APPLICATION**: SUNY has been very hands-on and we hear from them often; they have reached out for some details and are very concerned about our charter renewal; they asked about our Action Plan that was put in place by NYSED. We give SUNY information as fast as they ask for it; 20 schools have applied for 9 available SUNY zombie charters and have gone to the next level; they have already scheduled our public hearing with the DoE, for April 2nd; we have stiff competition: Success Academy asked for 6 schools, 1 of which is on Staten Island and there's at least 3 or 4 other applicants that are looking to open charter schools on Staten Island. Pasek Consulting is very helpful in guiding us and providing us with some background when we need it. We're in mid-March and we expect we'll know something from somebody soon. Our SUNY Middle School public hearing is approaching fast on April 2nd. We may need to do something regarding commenting on how we need bridge prep middle school and how it responds to community need. Families have told us how much a middle school is necessary. T. Castanza said that SUNY will have a New York City interview for our board potentially sometime May 1st-3rd, so please hold some free time then - as soon as T. Castanza knows the exact date he'll let us know, but it's around that time.

III. New Business

A. Executive Session

Laurel Gyimesi made a motion to enter into closed Executive Session to discuss proposed, pending or current litigation, under NY Public Officers Law, Article 7, §105.
Geena Kuriakose seconded the motion.
The board members entered into CLOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION at 5:15 PM.
The board members returned to OPEN PUBLIC MEETING at 5:25 PM.
The committee **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
M. Harmon-Vaught said that he wants to make an observation, which is that this meeting is an example of the power of having a board with experts. We heard from R. Kerr and G. Winn and L. Gyimesi each about something that directly relates to the expertise that they bring to the board in a really deep and profound way. That is a tremendous value to the school. And you know obviously as we're thinking about repopulating the board it's really

critical that we sustain that level of expertise. He is really glad that we're doing the work and Laurel, you're championing with helping us enhance our board recruitment; it's just so rare to have a board like this where you have people with such deep knowledge in adjacent fields that can be useful to the school. And this meeting put that on broad display - knowing that you all are not going to be with us forever. It amplifies the need to continue building our board. So I just wanted to observe that before we close. And thank you all, of course.

IV. 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 5:27 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano