APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Special Meeting - Board Strategy Meeting

Date and Time
Thursday January 4, 2024 at 5:00 PM

Location
Bridge Preparatory Charter School
715 Ocean Terrace
Staten Island, NY

600 Commodore Court
2620
Philadelphia, PA 19146

814 Route 9W
Grandview on Hudson, NY

51 Ionia Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10312

300 Cromwell Avenue
Staten Island, NY

201 Pondfield Road,
Bronxville, NY 10708

557 5th st #3
Brooklyn, NY 11215

517 Dimmock Board
Otis, MA 01253

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7872944585?pwd=VzF6Y1IuK3dwVVV4NG9lbWVzRzI2dz09&omn=88392586639

Meeting ID: 787 294 4585
Passcode: 965225

or Dial In: 646 931 3860

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

Trustees Absent
Heba Nassef-Gore

Ex Officio Members Present
Tim Castanza

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, Mark Harmon-Vaught, Maria Casale, Rose Kerr, George Winn, Rebecca Peters, and Geena Kuriakose 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 to order on Thursday Jan 4, 2024 at 5:08 PM.

II. Board Strategy Session

A. Charter Availability

L. Gyimesi gave a quick welcome and said that we have two topics to discuss on this agenda:

- A letter of intent and application for one of the SUNY "zombie" charters just released; these are NYC school charters that were issued to schools that have since closed; those charters are being made available again to applicants within NYC; they released 9 zombie charters. We can consider applying for one of those charters, either for a middle school on Staten Island or perhaps a school in another borough. The timeline to apply (with a letter of intent) is January 11th, and the application deadline is February 8th. So we don't have much time to decide. T. Costanza will go into further details regarding this.
- The second topic we need to discuss today is a potential real estate/property investment opportunity; do we want to explore that possibility and do we give our Executive Director. T. Castanza authorization to pursue that opportunity. We will not discuss property details, only the concept.

She then gave the floor to T. Castanza to discuss "zombie charters".

- T. Castanza gave an overview of zombie charters, how they occurred and what is being done about them now. There is a statutory limit on the number of charter schools that can open in New York City – the cap currently stands at 50. There are currently 0 new charters left to be issued in NYC, so applying for one of the zombie charters is the only way to open a NYC charter school and stay within the charter cap. This is a unique opportunity.
- The zombie charters will be authorized by SUNY. Our current Bridge Prep charter is authorized by NYSED. He has done some preliminary analysis of the data released by SUNY and we can consider applying for a stand-alone elementary school similar to Bridge Prep in another location or a middle school here on Staten Island. Those are the 2 options for us to consider.
- We have been learning about the charter school SUNY authorization process, which is significantly different from the NYSED authorization process with which we are familiar. There is a method by which 2 schools with 2 different authorizers can be merged into 1 entity under a single authorizer. So, if we were approved to open a SUNY charter middle school for grades 6-8, we could pursue merging our existing elementary school with the middle school into a single K-8 charter school under SUNY authorization. We are not the only NYSED charter school applying for zombie charter. We know that parents want us to open a middle school and this opportunity to expand our elementary school will be rare.
- The deadline for the letter of intent is next week but is a simple form that can be completed within a couple of hours. The RFP for the actual application (due Feb 8th) is more complicated. The SUNY authorization decisions are expected to happen before the end of this school year (June 2024) with the opening of the new SUNY charters to be September 2025. We would need the assistance in completing the application by a company like Pasek Consulting that can quickly turn-around elements of the application for us by the deadline of February 8th. The

large financial section of the application can be completed for us by BoostEd, which is familiar with SUNY charter schools financial documentation.

- SUNY is very clear on how they rate charter schools with a system of 39 points. We already know there is demand for a dyslexic middle school on Staten Island, and parent surveys make that clear; we also know we would have no trouble filling the seats of a middle school. We believe that Success Academy will also be applying for a zombie charter on Staten Island, but no existing Staten Island school will be applying for a zombie charter, other than our school.

A question and answer session followed:

1. Where would we obtain seed money for opening a new charter school? Will ask Josh Moreau at BoostEd about whether our current school budget can be used for financing any of this process. Would we be eligible for a charter school CSP grant that supports the startup of newly authorized charter schools, if we are awarded one of the zombie charters? ~ *Yes*
2. Would a public hearing be necessary prior to applying for the new SUNY charter? *~ No.*
3. Would we need to wait for a review cycle or renewal cycle prior to merging 2 charter schools? *~ Unknown, but probably not.*
4. Why not consider expanding into a middle school/high school for grades 6-12? *~ It is more complex to do that and SUNY might prefer that we don't appear to over-extend, but we can ask Pasek if it is feasible to add grades 9-12 at a future point.*
5. Can we come up with a middle school design that meets our mission by Feb. 8th? *~ We think yes.*
6. Could we open another elementary school on Staten Island under a SUNY zombie charter? *~ We might have trouble filling up all the seats of 2 elementary schools in our own borough.*
7. Can we expand our current elementary school into a middle school under our current NYSED charter? *~ Probably not, at least for the next 5 years; NYSED hasn't even approved adding Kindergarten classes.*
8. Is it worth giving up this rare opportunity for a SUNY zombie charter to wait and see if NYSED will let us expand into middle school under our current NYSED charter? *~ Board members believe that will take too long and this opportunity to expand into middle school within a year is too good to pass up and is exactly what parents want us to do.*
9. Can Pasek Consulting help us with the SUNY charter application - since much of the new SUNY application is similar to our renewal application and information can be carried over from that document created with Pasek? *~ T. Castanza will speak to Pasek and ask if they can help us. Pasek has better working connections with SUNY than with NYSED.* The application section that we need help with is the middle school academic programming component and our board members and E.D. will work as a team to design that.

10. Do we need to notify NYSED that we are going to apply for a SUNY zombie charter for middle school? ~ *Out of courtesy, we will tell NYSED when the chance arises, but T. Castanza already spoke to Board of Regents member Dr. Christine Cea this week and they discussed the existing demand for a Bridge Prep middle school and he mentioned that we are considering applying for one of the SUNY zombie charters being released this month; Dr. Cea agreed that we should consider applying.*
11. Will we need to list a location for the new charter school when applying for the zombie charter? ~ *No, the application doesn't require an actual location, just whether you will have private space or not, and we will say that we are exploring all options for space.*
12. What information will be necessary regarding management team for the new school, since this will be a separate company from our current school? ~ *The current Bridge Prep Board of Trustees will be the Founding Team for the new school, but will we include some of our current staff? Do we have to name the School Leader? We don't know yet, and will have to ask Pasek.*

L. Gyimesi stated that it seems clear that the board members have a strong interest in going forward with a letter of intent and SUNY zombie charter application for a middle school, grades 6-8 as the goal.

B. Vote on Applying for a SUNY Charter School

Laurel Gyimesi made a motion to to complete and submit the SUNY charter intent to apply form and thereafter a SUNY charter application for a new charter school on Staten Island.
Mark Harmon-Vaught seconded the motion.
The board shows interest in applying for a SUNY charter for a middle school (grades 6-8) on Staten Island.
L. Gyimesi asked the board if there was any interest in establishing an elementary charter school in another borough, but there was no interest.
The team **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

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

III. Land Acquisition

A. Possible Land/Real Estate Acquisition

T. Castanza stated that there is news recently about the St. John's University Staten Island campus being for sale; he has been doing due diligence to see if it would be viable for Bridge Prep to explore it as a private space option for our school. The size of the campus is 16.5 acres with 10 academic and administrative buildings. He believes that we will need more space in the future and would like to continue exploring this matter and include Josh Moreau of BoostEd, who has experience with this type of charter school transaction.

Details and options are still unknown and there is much that cannot be discussed at this time; also a discussion of this topic might require the board to enter into closed *Executive Session* under Public Officers Law, Article 7, §105 (h).

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 6:35 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Geena Kuriakose