APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Thursday November 21, 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
Brooklyn, NY 11215

60 Washington Square S
NY, NY 10003

Trustees Present
Amanda Wolkowitz, Mark Harmon-Vaught, Nicole DeStefano, Rebecca Peters (remote), Tara Gore (remote), Traci Frey

Trustees Absent
Deidre Medina, Geena Kuriakose

Ex Officio Members Present
Tim Castanza

Guests Present

Cheryl Otterbeck (remote), Fahron Ebanks (remote), Kathy Baldassano (remote), Rose Marie Illuzzi (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

QUORUM IS MET FOR THIS MEETING.

As per Public Officers Law, Article 7, § 103-a *(Videoconferencing by public bodies)* although board members Tara Gore 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, 4 board members are present in-person for this meeting: Mark Harmon-Vaught, Traci Frey, Amanda Wolkowitz and Nicole DeStefano.

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Mark Harmon-Vaught called a meeting of the board of trustees of Bridge Preparatory Charter School to order on Thursday Nov 21, 2024 at 7:03 PM.

C. Approve Minutes from October 17 Meeting

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 10-17-24.

M. Harmon-Vaught stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 10-17-24 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.

D. Welcome from Board Co-Chairs

T. Frey wished everyone a Happy November and said that she and M. Harmon-Vaught started a 2-day quality review of the school today, a comprehensive evaluation looking for trends that they see across the school. We started at 8:15 this morning and finished around 3:30 PM and will return tomorrow for a 2nd day; we've seen some great things happening. We met with parents and staff today and tomorrow we'll meet with students. We visited classrooms today and will go back into more classrooms tomorrow. We're having very productive conversations with *Executive Director*, T. Castanza and C. Otterbeck and their Academic Leadership Team.

M. Harmon-Vaught said he echoes the excitement and gratitude to the school team for all the hard work and putting everything together; it's really exciting and important. With gratitude to our NYSED Liaison, Paolo Giovine who quickly responded when we reached out regarding approval of one of our potential board members and we're pleased to announce that Tara Gore has officially been NYSED approved to join our Board of Trustees. With Tara's membership our quorum is 5 members.

II. Votes

A. Vote on Search Firm

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve Storbeck Search to assist in identifying and hiring an instructional leader for Bridge Preparatory Charter School.
Traci Frey seconded the motion.
T. Castanza said that since last summer we have been in the market to look for a partner to help us find our next instructional leader, which is a really critical role and person that we need for the school; fresh perspective is welcome since we are a very unique school. In order to find that special candidate, we believe it's best to bring somebody else on to help us do that. And so we've been looking for a search firm. Over the past few months, we reached out and received a proposal from Storbeck Search. I met with the managing directors and had a really good conversation with them. As part of our financial policies and procedures we need to consider multiple bids for any contract over $20,000, so we reached out to 4 other educational leader search companies; all 4 told us that they don't work with charter schools any longer for several reasons, including not having good experiences or the inability to find candidates the charter schools were looking for. We found 1 other company that was a possibility, PGT Search. We received a proposal from PGT for consideration and we compared the 2 proposals to make a thoughtful decision and recommendation to the board. We compared cost, experience, references and timeline. (*He shared the search firm comparison chart with the board.)* His recommendation is to hire Storbeck Search since they are ahead in the areas most important for our leadership search.
R. Peters commented that the comparison was really helpful, and thanked T. Castanza for sharing that with the Board. And although at first, it seemed we had only 1 company possible, having a comparison with another company helped to reaffirm our choice which is great.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call	
Mark Harmon-Vaught	Abstain
Tara Gore	Aye
Amanda Wolkowitz	Aye
Geena Kuriakose	Absent
Traci Frey	Aye
Nicole DeStefano	Aye
Rebecca Peters	Aye
Deidre Medina	Absent

NOTE: M. Harmon-Vaught is abstaining from this vote not because he has a business relationship with Storbeck Search, but because he had a prior relationship with the company.

III. Monthly Deep Dive

A.

Enrollment Data Exploration

M. Harmon-Vaught thanked the school team for putting tonight's presentation together; he said we're really excited to home-in on specific topics for our board meetings. We have a couple of key areas which will be interrelated. One is around enrollment data. And the other is about special education services. He then gave the floor to *Executive Director* T. Castanza.

- T. Castanza stated that these are 2 very substantial topics that we could definitely take a whole meeting to talk about individually. We put together and will share different types of of data: demographic data, different ways to look at both special education data and enrollment data. And we'll break out each of those specifically; we're happy to answer questions as they arise.
- From an enrollment perspective, we look at the process before students get here. How are we recruiting students? Who are we getting? What is our lottery telling us? What are the strategies that we might want put in place to improve or refine our practice? How are we doing? We took a really good look at how we're doing from a demographic standpoint, from a percentile breakdown in the subgroups that NYSED looks at: economically disadvantaged (eligible for free and reduced-price lunch), students with disabilities, and English Language Learners. Since our charter renewal process confirmed that there are no truly comparable schools to our school, we took the liberty of comparing our school to other charter schools on Staten Island that serve similar grade spans, along with the Petrides School and District 31 as a whole, because we will always be compared to our district of residence. When we look at academic data, we can look at state levels, city levels and district levels. A further discussion on our enrollment strategy will be forthcoming. It's something that our External Affairs Team has been working on for several weeks and will continue to meet on through November and December. He then shared documents containing Bridge Prep enrollment data with comparisons to other District 31 charter schools, and gave the floor to F. Ebanks to discuss the data.
- F, Ebanks reviewed charts indicating student enrollment by zip code, gender *(47.7% female/52.3% male*), by race *(white 44.2%/Hispanic 41.5%/black 35.4%/mixed race 9.2%/Asian 3%)* and by grade; economically disadvantaged *(70.4%)*, students with disabilities *(63.5%)* and English Language Learners *(1.9%)*. A question and answer session followed each data subtopic.

B. Special Education Exploration

T. Castanza shared charts showing special education data which is presented very differently as pure data points. He and C. Otterbeck highlighted some of the key takeaways and then answered any questions that the board members asked.

- The charts indicate numbers of students who are: special education/general education; special ed. by grade/race/gender; special ed. new students/returning students, special ed. by testing accommodations/"in-process" IEPs/disability classifications (ASD/SLI/ED/HI/LD/OHI); special ed. by economically

disadvantaged/free-reduced-price-lunch; special ed. by grade indicating BOY ELA MAP/NYS ELA/NYS Math; special ed. by related services/not receiving services.

NOTE: Regarding special education students who are not receiving mandated services: It is the responsibility of the CSE (Committee on Special Education) to provide special ed. services, but since there is a shortage of providers, especially OT (Occupational Therapists) if CSE is unable to offer a provider, then they offer the family an RSA or P4 to obtain services from a provider outside of the school system. Many families do not want to accept an RSA or P4. We do what we can at the school, and our number of students not receiving mandated services is very very low, but it is CSE who is out of compliance if special ed. services are not available, The number of students citywide that are not getting OT services are extremely high. There are not enough providers citywide to fill DOE students' needs, so not having those OT providers to support charter schools and non-public schools is not surprising.

IV. Other Business

A. School Leadership Updates

T. Castanza gave the following essential updates:

- Getting ready for the Quality Review
- Partnering more with our Family Association
- External communication that we're doing from an external perspective. We're starting to improve our presence on social media. We're also making some changes to our website; thank you to the board members who have given us updated items post on the website.
- Our new schoolwide app. has been launched to all of our families as the primary way that we'd like to communicate.

B. Academic Committee

T. Frey gave the following report on the *Academic Committee Meeting* held on November 4, 2024:

- Teachers had a great professional development session on Election Day; they brought a consultant to work with C. Otterbeck to cover differentiation
- Techer observations are going on; formal observations have started. Both T. Castanza and C. Otterbeck are doing the teacher observations
- Student enrollment was already covered in tonight's meeting
- Teachers went to conferences, learned a lot, brought information back
- They had some wins with bulletin boards
- The school had pure joy every day during Spirit Week

C. Finance Committee

R. Peters gave the following report on the *Finance Committee Meeting* held on November 12, 2024:

- T. Castanza spoke about the search firm which was covered earlier at tonight's meeting. That was a big topic at the *Finance Committee* meeting
- The monthly financial report looks great. We budget very conservatively, so we actually have a lot more revenue coming in than we budgeted for. In December we anticipate having the budget refresh, so that'll be a deeper-dive for the Board to get into.
- We talked about asset managers, our relationship with them and partnership with them, and what we're looking for out of those; just making sure we're maximizing our funds in a conservative way.
- And lastly, space, which will be another conversation, either in December or early next year; if we had more space we could consider another smaller kindergarten class, which is a big topic to get into later.

D. Update from the Family Association

D. Medina was unable to obtain a signal to attend tonight's meeting remotely and asked A. Wolkowitz to give the *Family Association* update in her place:

- We had a very busy October, including a successful Trunk-or-Treat with a great turnout on a beautiful day.
- We held our Halloween Bake Sale with wonderful support from our parents.
- The Pumpkin Patch event was perfect. The kids and volunteers all had a great time.
- We started holiday decorating at the school; thank you to our wonderful Corresponding Secretary for beautiful and reusable Menorah and Kwanzaa Kinara, to help create an inclusive holiday display with more festive decorations to come.
- Our Holiday Fair is our next big event on December 3rd; we have a variety of items to appeal to many shoppers and have invited our neighbors on campus to enjoy the fun
- Our BJ Membership fundraiser is still going on. We added a Dave & Buster's Power Card fundraiser for the holidays.

E. Public Comment

V. Closing Items

A. Review of Action Items & Next Steps

M. Harmon-Vaught said that our next steps include a few data items to follow up on as we discussed tonight.

- The focus of next month's board meeting is the budget refresh along with our regular academic progress report

- We also listed a deep-dive on school organizational structure for December's meeting, but maybe that can be part of a broader strategic planning conversation that we come back to work with given some of the conversations we've had.
- Thank you to K. Baldassano who will provide a new Trustee Orientation for our new board members immediately after we adjourn tonight's meeting.

B. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:12 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano

Documents used during the meeting

- Enrollment Data Dashboard.pdf
- Special Education Data.pdf