APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Thursday December 12, 2024 at 7:00 PM

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

328 Oakland Avenue
Si NY 10310

557 5th St
Brooklyn, NY 11215

60 Washington Sq S
NY, NY 10003

Trustees Present
Amanda Wolkowitz, Deidre Medina, Geena Kuriakose (remote), Mark Harmon-Vaught, Nicole DeStefano, Rebecca Peters (remote), Traci Frey

Trustees Absent
Tara 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 Geena Kuriakose 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. **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 Thursday Dec 12, 2024 at 7:08 PM.

C. Approve Minutes from November 21 Meeting

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 11-21-24.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 11-21-24 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.

D. Welcome from Co-Chairs

M. Harmon-Vaught welcomed the attendees and said we are grateful to be in fellowship with all of you.
T. Frey added what he said. Happy December. We can move right on into our monthly deep-dive, which is to look at the budget and school organization.

II. Monthly Deep Dive

A. Budget Refresh

M. Harmon-Vaught asked R. Peters to offer a summary of the conversation we had with the Finance Committee around the budget refresh.

R. Peters stated that the budget refresh gives a more accurate picture of what the year has been and what it will look like. Historically speaking, we always budget conservatively so revenue has increased, based upon the student numbers we have. The other significant revenue piece is the interest income from our investments. And there are various lines on the expense side that have increased, which T. Castanza is going to share. Overall, we're adjusting our budget and spending money in ways that are aligned with our mission. She looks forward to T. Castanza's budget deep-dive. She then gave the floor to T. Castanza for his budget presentation.

T. Castanza started by sharing an Excel worksheet showing the school's budget for the Fiscal Year 2025 ending June 30th. The worksheet contains columns marked "FY 2024", "Original Budget FY 2025", "Revised Budget FY 2025" and "Variance". There are additional columns projecting finances for FY2026 through FY2030, the length of our charter renewal term. As discussed in the *Finance Committee,* we have a new way to look at budgeted versus actual. We hadn't done it in this very linear, straight line method before, and this is a new template that he worked on with Josh Moreau to prepare for this deep-dive review. What are the most important things for us to highlight? He then referred to the Excel page on the screen *(a general overview of the original budget approved last June)*. There are always changes between June and our 1st billing cycle in October, and there will be changes again through the end of the year. There are multiple billing cycles in each year. This is a really helpful template to view this budget on a month-to-month basis. These are the highlights:

- **STUDENT ENROLLMENT:** Original budget for 235 students; revised budget for 253.275 students; variance 18.275 is accurate up until October 2024. The current pupil invoice count will bring it up to 262. That will cause additional pupil revenue to increase.
- **SPECIAL ED. REVENUE:** Our Special Ed. revenue is down a little since we are serving more General Ed. students this year, as we had projected. As we work through more students' IEPs and get them corrected or aligned, we will see further increases in revenue from special education funding as the year goes on. With this additional revenue, we have to make a choice of where to allocate the funds: into budget lines or does let it stay in operational surplus? This year in response to conversations we've had about thoughtful, responsive budgeting and to drive forward towards our goal of a longer-term renewal, we decided to reallocate this additional funding immediately into academic and instructional budgetary lines. M. Harmon-Vaught commented that rather than simply accrue additional dollars into our large reserves, this is how we make sure we're leveraging our budget dollars to actually meet our students' needs. This is an example of doing that in response to our original conservative budgeting and numbers above our projections. T. Castanza added that as we continue now into the late winter, and into the spring there will be questions regarding what we can afford to do. As things change and we generate and move the numbers around the budget, this tool will show us the impact of certain financial decisions we make or may want to make.

- **REVENUE BREAKDOWN**: Specifically where student revenue comes from and how it's broken out in the past; what funding comes from NY State, what funding comes from the Federal government, Title I, Title IIA, Title IV, Special Ed. funding, IDEA, DoE, fundraising, etc. Our school does not rely heavily on Federal funds because most of our funding is from per-pupil NY State revenue.
- **DIRECT EDUCATIONAL**: We added $50,000 in curriculum and materials as a look ahead for the springtime when we do a lot of purchasing of new materials for the upcoming school year. We anticipate bringing in a new ELA curriculum in the Spring, which will be discussed with the *Academic Committee*. We also added some additional funding in supplies based on a recommendation from Josh Moreau, although we have sufficient supplies and we give teachers a lot of supplies for their classrooms. Last year we spent $105,000 in supplies. So we put some of the money into the supply line in the event that we do need it there. We added an additional $15,000 for professional development because we took on a new partnership with the *Reading League* to offer professional development sessions for our teachers in the spring. Also included some extra wiggle room in case the Academic Team wants to offer more professional development. We added some funding into staff recruitment, to cover the search firm contract. And as we go into the spring we will be discussing our priorities around staffing and staff recruitment, which is something that our Leadership Team has been talking about. We did add some money into staff appreciation as part of our culture-building. There isn't much change in professional services because these represent contracts and contractual agreements. Insurance increased a little due to one policy going up in price. Funds on the Board line covers payment to Board-on-Track and there's some extra funds in case the Board wants to hold a retreat or a strategy session, there's some flex in there. There are general administrative budget lines for postage, equipment, office supplies, printing and printer maintenance as well.
- **FACILITIES**: Budget lines cover furniture, staff transportation, staff meals, phone, depreciation and repairs. We budgeted $70,000 for repairs earlier this year because we anticipated some larger projects that are now pausing because we are waiting for DoE bureaucracy. So this may be an area as we get into the spring that we don't use as much, and it will go back into operational surplus. We did use some of the repair line for painting in the building, stairway enhancement, new signage and minor repairs to some classrooms.
- **BALANCE SHEET**: This is the document that NYSED looks at to see the financial condition of the school, it is an overview of the school's assets and liabilities without the details of every expenditure. NYSED just wants to look at the bottom line regarding the fiscal condition of the school and we have always had a strong fiscal condition because we are really thoughtful when we budget. Also built into this model is what would be the cost for a facility if we had our own space or building? How much does it cost to manage and run your own facility? So we added a line for leasehold improvements or lease-holding as a way for us to have a conversation about the actual cost, because we always ask the question. We have a lot of surplus funds, and that surplus rolls over into cash. It's significantly larger than a lot of other charter

schools have, and much of that is tied to the fact that we are in DoE co-located space, which saves us a lot of money. We can discuss this further at some point in the future.

- **SALARY DETAIL & PERSONNEL SUMMARY**: This is an area where there's been some variability since June because our hiring was not complete in June. There is some variability in the salaries that we budgeted for a position versus what we ultimately hired - both up and down, also what positions we funded, and what we still have open. Because this section of the school budget contains staff/personnel names, it should not be discussed in an open public meeting.

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that the Board will need to enter into closed Executive Session to discuss this topic regarding the financial history of particular individuals as it pertains to current and historical salaries for individual named staff members.
Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to enter into closed Executive Session to discuss the financial and employment history of particular persons, as allowed per NYS Public Officers Law, Article 7 §105 (f).
Geena Kuriakose seconded the motion.
The Board of Trustees entered into closed Executive Session at 7:31 PM.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
At 7:39 PM, the Board ended the closed Executive Session and entered into an open Public Session.

B. School Organization Deep Dive

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that as mentioned to the *Executive Committee* last week, we're going to begin a conversation today about school organizational structure as part of larger strategic planning conversations that we'll have over the next few meetings. We'll discuss this with committees in January and at the the January Board meeting as well. And then he and his Co-Chair, T. Frey will schedule a strategy session with the Board for February. We'll circulate and confirm timing for that. That will be a fuller opportunity for strategic planning in which is a critical part. A struggle with timing is the need to launch the search for the new instructional leader before Martin Luther King Day, to be competitive with the market. So we need to know certain things about the structure of that role before then. And we're going out of sequence a little bit but we didn't want the trustees to be out of the loop on the planning of *Executive Director* T. Castanza and his team with regard to the organizational target of the school.
T. Castanza said that we will engage NYSED as part of the process; we are still working on the specifics. This will be considered a non-material change; we will work directly with NYSED and the Charter School office since we're updating some titles and responsibilities of the organizational chart. Ultimately the Board will reach an agreement on, and then we'll collectively present it to NYSED.

- We have 2 sides on the school's Organizational Chart. We're going to focus today specifically on the instructional side because that's really what involves the search firm. There's not much change in terms of the titles that we already have, but really a shift in the way that we're thinking about the roles of those titles. He is encouraged

because we've been having conversations that led to this at multiple different team levels in the school. This is not something we've shared at the school-level yet, but it's driven by what is coming from the school level, from teachers all the way through the *Executive Leadership Team*. That is the need for real, clear understanding and structures and systems from an instructional side that reflect the school that we have and the students that attend here. (He then shared the proposed new Organizational Chart with the meeting attendees.) The 1st thing you will see is that we have a new title for the instructional leader, formerly known as the *Director of Teaching & Learning.* Moving forward that title will be the Principal.

- M. Harmon-Vaught added that this is not a new conversation. We've talked about this as a Board and the *Academic Committee* has discussed this. It is not a new idea to elevate the instructional leader to be the senior academic head of the school.
- T. Castanza continued that anyone familiar with our Organizational Chart will remember that we had the *Director of Teaching and Learning* and the *Director of Operations* who reported up to the *Executive Director*. With other titles reporting under those positions. We will now streamline the teams reporting directly to the **PRINCIPAL**.

The *Principal's School-Based Leadership Team* will consist of:

1. **TEACHERS** *(will report directly to the Principal)*
2. **SCHOOL OPERATIONS MANAGER** *(focused on the work of the school on the everyday basis from an operations side; works with DoE agencies, transportation, school food, custodial staff, facilities and school safety; the Family Coordinator, Operations Assistants and School Aides will report directly to this Manager)* There's an additional layer of operations that happens at the district and organizational level that's separate.
3. **DEAN OF STUDENT SUPPORT & SERVICES** *(focused on and responsive to the students that we have who need additional special ed. support or counseling; the Special Ed. Coordinator, Social Workers, SETSS Teacher and External Providers i.e., Speech and Language OT/PT and Paraprofessionals will report directly to this Dean)*
4. **DEAN OF SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTION** *(focused on supporting teachers and improving instruction and pedagogy in classrooms; the Instructional Coaches, Speech Language Pathologist, Literacy Interventionist and ENL Teacher will report directly to this Dean)*

The **PRINCIPAL** will report to the **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/HEAD OF SCHOOL** who will report to the **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**. We hope that this new streamlined operational plan will really improve teacher practice and student academic outcomes. The search firm will be looking for someone to fill the position of Principal and will need to know the organizational structure of the school.

A question & answer session followed with T. Castanza and board members regarding the positions, roles and responsibilities of the titles in the Organizational Chart.

III. Other Business

A. Executive Director Update

T. Castanza gave the following *Executive Director* update:

- We have a lot of exciting new partnership opportunities that have come our way. The *Atlas Foundation* will be here on Monday. Teddy Atlas himself is coming dressed as Santa. We are thankful to our new music teacher, Mrs. Bruschi and Ms. Illuzzi and her team for doing the work in continuing to grow our partnerships.
- We're approaching the end of the calendar year and we're getting holiday joy in the building But come January, academically we are picking up our Acadience assessments for a report to the Board.
- Looking ahead to the NYS assessments in the spring.
- Sending teachers to training for nonviolent responses/intervention to crisis. Our *Social Work Team* has already been trained and now we're sending 1 teacher from each grade level to the training.
- Mock testing was not held this week because our partner, *Rally! Education* was not ready. We moved the ELA mock test to next week and the Math mock test when we get back in January. We're not solely relying on mock testing data for student eligibility for *Saturday Academy* scheduled for January 11th. We're looking at last year's NYS testing data and grouping students based on their performance.
- Regarding school on December 23rd, although DoE is not holding classes on that date, we will have a half-day of school with busing and lunch scheduled for students that do come in. We anticipate a lower attendance that day.
- Admissions applications are being launched and going live on Tuesday; it's a more aggressive timeline than we've had in the past, but it's a practice we've been striving towards; charter schools usually open their applications sometime in November or December. We made edits to the application, and we just secured a new partnership with an organization that's going to do translations of physical documents for recruitment in 4 different languages: Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, and Arabic. We locked in the translations, and all of our materials will be translated into those 4 languages. We will have less available seats than we've had in the past, because our graduating class is a little bit smaller. We will target Kindergarten and 1st grade heavily this year. We already engaged with some early childhood centers and Pre-K centers about doing presentations for their family associations as a way for us to do some outreach. We already have about 20 applications for next year. Our actual application for new seats will go live on the 17th of December, and then we'll share with the Board the admissions events that we're planning both in-person here in the school building and virtually online. We placed our school recruitment banner in the Staten Island Mall under a renewed contract with the Mall. In our 1st year we had a fantastic banner at the ferry terminal, it was expensive, and at that time, Staten Island tourism gave us their banner. We've been looking at bus stop ads and found that ads on the sides of MTA buses are not very expensive. This is

something we might go for if we are recruiting for a new grade. We have ads for our school on Facebook due to our partnership with SchoolMint.

B. Update from the Family Association

D. Medina gave the following *Family Association* update:

- We had our 5th Holiday Fair on December 3rd and it was a really wonderful great day. Many parents attended and we had some really good vendors. We're getting ready for the holidays now with holiday parties in the classrooms and teacher gift collections.
- We're planning something next week for our staff, still working on the details for that.
- We give out stuffed animals to all the students, donated from PetSmart. We've been doing it for the last 5 years but there is so much going on this year, not sure we would do it again, but PetSmart contacted us and we're going to give out the stuffed animal toys again. They're really cute. We use them for the Santa Parade, and we always get extra for the school, so we're getting them again.
- Our snowflake decorations went up with all the class pictures attached.

C. Public Comment

IV. Closing Items

A. Review of Action Items & Next Steps

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that we have some follow-ups on:

- Clarifications on budget items we discussed tonight
- A follow up for the *Academic Committee* regarding discipline in schools. We'll continue this conversation with a report from the *Academic Committee*, and then move forward with that.
- Our January meeting open topic is a Midyear Check-in; just a general progress report.
- Finalize the upcoming strategy session and confirm a strategized plan.

B. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:08 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano