APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Saturday February 8, 2025 at 9:00 AM

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

Trustees Present
Amanda Wolkowitz, Deidre Medina, Geena Kuriakose, Mark Harmon-Vaught, Nicole DeStefano, Rebecca Peters, Tara Gore, Traci Frey

Trustees Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present
Tim Castanza

Guests Present
Kathy Baldassano (remote)

I. Opening Items

A.

Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Geena Kuriakose called a meeting of the board of trustees of Bridge Preparatory Charter School to order on Saturday Feb 8, 2020 at 9:00 AM.

C. Approve Minutes

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 01-09-25.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 01/09/25 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 Strategy Session

A. Welcome from Co-Chairs

M. Harmon-Vaught welcomed the attendees and thanked them all for coming in person. Good to be in fellowship, good to be together. And we're really excited for these unique conversations. Some big picture topics on the table today.
T. Frey added that by now you have learned that I love protocols and I love to start meetings with openers. Today's opening, since it's February and show your love month, I thought we could just do a quick look around and respond to *"How's Your Heart?"*
Trustees responded with the following comments:

- Grateful
- It's the emotion of the day for me. There's lots of negativity in the world, but I feel in this room and in my life, there's a lot of positivity and I'm grateful for that.
- Calm, making a lot of changes to get some better work/life balance, so things are starting to look good.
- I have a lot going on in my life right now. But today, especially with everything I'm involved in. I have to run an event, and I'm not going to be there until after it starts. Just a lot happening.
- I feel like my heart is full of a lot of different things, gratefulness and chaotic-ness and just Mom-ness. I think that sums it up. Mom-ness.
- My heart is heavy in the moment. It's been a challenging few weeks, a lot going on at work, the changing national landscape and just a lot to deal with. But really genuinely, deeply excited to be with you all today, because this is a great, bright spot.
- Instead of full, I'll say my heart's lucky. I sit in stress all the time. But I think I'm lucky to have all the things that I care and stress about, and the people, the work and the collaborators I have, I'm looking at as lucky, not stressed.

- My heart is settling right now. It's been a crazy 6 weeks, and I'm trying to settle it before another crazy 3 months, which is always busy for us in February, and May. And it's gonna get crazy. So I'm trying to calm it down.
- I think grateful is a good word for me today. I'm excited that we're all here together in person because we have a lot of work to do, and it's going to be so much more effective because we're with each other and not on a small little video screen. And I'm also grateful that a lot of the work streams that I have are starting to interlink. I was at an event last night with one table of an organization that I'm involved in and there was another table with another organization that I'm involved in and they were all in one place. So I'm happy and grateful to all of you that we are all able to come together today.

B. Strategic Planning & Organizational Chart

T. Frey stated that a consistent agenda item that she and M. Harmon-Vaught do when we meet with T. Castanza each month is to try and frame the day and also go over what documents we'll be using. We're going to do that today as well with all of you. T. Castanza has added some documents to today's discussion, and they're in the folder you've been given. The immediate documents that we're going to be using are on the left hand side. There's the **Organizational Chart** and a narrative document that we're going to go through first. Then the second part of our agenda has some resources for our school walkthrough with a room list.

On the left side of the Organizational Chart you can see some of the changes we've made based on more in-depth discussions at both our Board meetings and the *Academic Committee* meetings.

You'll notice that the Chart is color-coded with a legend at the top. Please take some time to review the Chart and other documents and annotate whatever resonates with you. You can put an exclamation point, a question mark if you need clarification or a star if you agree with something. Just write whatever is most comfortable for you. And we're going to focus on what you think is working along with any questions that you may have.

T. Castanza presented the proposed school **Organizational Chart** to the Board of Trustees using a visual color-coded document indicating both existing and new titles and roles of the school staff. There will be levels of communication that exist between the roles, especially if there's overlap in any responsibilities. Not everything will be fully insourced at this time; there will still be contracted vendors for some situations.

The following details were given regarding the proposed Chart:

TITLE CHANGES:

1. ***Executive Director (current) to Chief Executive Officer (new)***
   Clarify role and differentiation from current structure,
   Ensures the Principal has clear autonomy over school-based efforts, while the CEO focuses on external affairs and organizational strategy.
2. ***Director of Operations (current) to Director of Strategy (new)***
   Shift of focus from having to manage both day-to-day school operations and “district” level operational and compliance workstreams to focus more on long-term

planning, organizational capacity-building, organizational compliance and strategic initiatives.

3. ***Director of Family and Community Development (current) to Director of Community Partnerships (new)***
   Title modification to focus on strengthening external engagement, fundraising and partnerships, as well as overseeing new Grants Officer.
4. ***Operations Assistant (current) to External Affairs Coordinator (new) & Finance Coordinator (new)***
   A current Operations Assistant role that supports organizational operations now being given specific title to support branding, enrollment, and marketing
   A current Operations Assistant role that supports organizational operations now being given specific title to support payroll, accounts payable, and billing, with emphasis on ensuring financial sustainability and regulatory compliance.

ROLE ELEVATIONS:

1. ***Director of Teaching and Learning (current) to Principal (new)***
   This existing role, which currently is tasked with only overseeing the school's instructional program will now serve as the leader in charge of the entire school based team (operations and instructions) and will serve as the liaison between instructional staff, students and families. The role will continue to report to the Chief Executive.
2. ***Dean of Student Support (current) to Assistant Principal of Student Support (new)***
   This existing role's workstream will shift focus to supporting the unique special education needs of our students through management of the full Student Support Team, mandated services and special education compliance.
3. ***Dean of Specialized Instruction (current) to Assistant Principal of Specialized Instruction (new)***
   This existing role's focus will shift from being focused exclusively on Special Education (compliance and teacher support) to managing the team that supports teachers in classrooms, supporting the development of teacher pedagogy.
4. ***Director of Operations (current) to Assistant Principal of Operations (new)***
   Shift of focus from managing both day-to-day school operations and district-level operational and compliance workstreams to only school-based operations as well as team members who support school culture (Dean & Family Coordinator)

NEW ROLES:

1. ***Dean of Culture*** will focus on developing and maintaining positive school culture through the following key student workstreams: attendance, tardiness, behavior, dress code, activities, after-school and schoolwide systems.
2. ***HR Coordinator*** will Insource specific HR functions, including hiring, compliance, and internal staff support, reducing reliance on external providers.

3. ***Grants Officer*** will Identify and secure new funding opportunities, manage Title Grants, and ensure compliance

After taking some time to review the Chart documents, a question and answer session followed during which the Board members asked about the various roles and responsibilities and made some non-material suggestions to help refine the chart.

C. Adopt Resolution #34 Approving Proposed School Organizational Chart Revisions

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to adopt Resolution #34 approving the revisions to the Bridge Preparatory Charter School organizational chart as presented to the Board of Trustees, pending non-material revisions based on the discussions taking place at today's meeting.
Geena Kuriakose seconded the motion.
RESOLUTION #34 – Approving the Proposed School Organizational Chart Revisions
WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of Bridge Preparatory Charter School ("Bridge Prep") deems it to be in the best interests of Bridge Prep that the following action be taken by the Board of Trustees of Bridge Prep pursuant to this Resolution:
WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of Bridge Preparatory Charter School approves the revisions made to the school's Organizational Chart, for implementation beginning in the 2025-2026 school year.
NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to applicable law, and the authorizing Charter, the members of Bridge Prep Board of Trustees hereby consent to, approve, and adopt the aforesaid Resolution.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

D. School Facilities & Space Planning – Walkthrough

T. Frey said because we've been sitting for a while, we built the middle part of our agenda to get some motion and movement. So we are going to do a building walkthrough. There are students in the building today for Saturday Academy.
T. Castanza added before we go, I want to share some context. We've been like talking a lot about space with the *Finance Committee* and *Academics Committee* a lot. Day to day we talk about space during at least 50% of our conversations. And I want the Board to understand why. Because space impacts everything that happens here with students and staff. The conversation around space usage and long term space planning is a not a singular conversation. Today is a good opportunity for us to get some baseline points clarified. And to have the Board actually see the space so we can have conversations about space usage and needs. In your folder there are 4 plans to take with you when we go on our walk. We're not going to see every room, but I'll show you what a standard size classroom here looks like, or a non-optimal classroom and other rooms that are used for specific activities. And I'll ask you from a protocol perspective to take some notes for when we get back to discuss what you've seen. The question that I want the Board to think about before we go is our shared vision and ultimate organizational goal for our students for both

now and in the future. What role does space play in that? What role does our space play in the way that the organization can effectively achieve the outcomes that we're aiming for in the short term, but also in our longer term vision for students that aren't even here yet. We prepared a current space usage document.

Every school has an auditorium and a public assembly space, a gymnasium, a cafeteria, etc. The headcount is the number of people that fill in that space category. Rooms needed are based on the headcount. We have 30 teachers, with 2 teachers in every room. So we need 15 classrooms for the instructional sections. On the walkthrough you'll be able to see which rooms are allocated as classrooms. An auditorium or public assembly space doesn't have a headcount. We currently have zero. This is what we do everyday, and we do a monthly spacewalk with the Director of Operations to discover our current section count and our projected section count as we do our projections for next year. The question that oftentimes comes up is do we have enough space to open another class section? If we have to open additional sections, then rooms have to come away from somewhere else. We also share space with the other schools on this campus. So when you see the current allocation of 1 gym and 1 cafeteria, it is not fully allocated to us. We share it. It's important to understand the experience that our students have when they go to the cafeteria since they don't have access to our own.

We can talk about private space when we get back from the walkthrough. What happens if we wanted to leave co-located space? What is the difference between co-located space and private space? The Charter School Center created a good resource document about school facilities. It really lays out the types of space., what other charter schools are doing, and how much it costs. What is the law around facilities funding? What happens if we wanted to get our own lease. There are 8 charter schools on Staten Island and we are the only 1 in co-located space. So when we think about the market and our competitors, this affects the reality of student recruitment. We have been so fortunate to be able to recruit students purely based on our mission, word-of-mouth and siblings but not our facility space. But situations change and at the end of the day, one of the things parents look at when choosing a school is its facility. It does matter when parents are making a choice, and enrollment is the name of the game. Our walkthrough should last about 30 minutes. The meeting paused while the Board members and T. Castanza went on a tour of the school building.

When the Board returned they discussed what they saw and what they liked about the rooms, including seeing students' work displayed, and decorated bulletin boards. Several agreed that the Speech & OT rooms are over-utilized as there is little privacy for therapy sessions and students may have trouble hearing their therapist when several sessions are being held at the same time in the same room. A few Board members also agreed that the Social Workers' office is being under-utilized and that perhaps there might be a more optimal use for that space. Also the Main Office is large and perhaps part of that room could be parceled off for special ed. services.

Discussion followed regarding what type of reconfiguring could be done to the building to allow for more services for students, including adding walls or utilizing the Hall of Science space for students - which DoE has refused to allow, although T. Castanza has requested using that area several times. He said that the school has ordered tall cubicles for the Speech Therapy room for privacy and sound-proofing. If that works, it will be mirrored in

the OT room. We can only use dividing units that are not permanently attached to the floors or walls, since a permit would be needed from DoE for permanent renovations to create more space. Our school building's utilization rate is at 205% and we are out of solutions to create more space.

E. Board Development & Recruitment

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that part of this conversation about maturation, and future needs includes Board development and recruiting new Board members. There are 2 areas to be discussed: what we need from the Board in skills, experience and expertise and once we know what we need, how do we recruit, expand and build that capacity. He wants to obtain a brief inventory of the skills that each of us brings to the Board, such as finance, legal, academic, etc.; the survey is linked to the agenda and can be completed during this meeting. This will help us get an idea of where we are now in the skill-set area, so we can know what we are lacking, and where do we want to build capacity. The form is called *Board Skills and Inventory* and the Board members can access the form now, and complete it today. The Board members took a few minutes to complete the skills inventory and the anonymous results will be shared with the Board later to help prompt the discussion on who we should be looking for to join the Board.

N. DeStefano added that Board recruitment is multi-pronged and she distributed a document that will help the Board once we know the skill areas that we need to fill. This document is a visual aid in setting benchmarks for how to assemble prospects, and how many prospects do we want to establish a pipeline in particular industries/skills. As members leave the Board, our needs will evolve. This can help show best practices on how to steward and cultivate relationships once the needs are identified. We're in the infantile stages of this process but this gives us an idea of recruiting for future planning of board development. Discussion followed regarding how many Board member are ideal, how that would affect quorum numbers, whether there is a cap on how many Board members are allowed, and that it would be a conflict for school staff to join the Board. M. Harmon-Vaught added that we have to think strategically about how we're doing Board member development, because over time members will leave and we need internal development for future Board leadership and a pipeline to bring people onto the Board.

III. Other Business

A. Focus of March Board Meeting

The next Board meeting is scheduled for March 13th and the scheduled topics are:

- Annual Review of the Board Bylaws
- Academic Data Dashboard Deep-Dive

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 12:01 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano

Documents used during the meeting

- SY2526 Modifications Narrative.pdf
- Strategy_Session_Proposed_Organizational_Chart_02-08-25.pdf
- Resolution_34_Organizational_Chart_Feb_2025 DRAFT.pdf
- SY2526 Proposed Organizational Chart (rev. 02.04.25) (2).pdf
- RESOLUTION_34_Organizational_Chart_Revision_Approval.pdf