APPROVED

# Bridge Preparatory Charter School

## Minutes

### Board Meeting

**Date and Time**
Tuesday June 10, 2025 at 7:00 PM

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

600 Commodore Court
Philadelphia, PA 19146

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

**Trustees Absent**
Geena Kuriakose, Tara Gore

**Ex Officio Members Present**
Tim Castanza

**Guests Present**

Kathy Baldassano (remote), Rose Marie Illuzzi

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## I. Opening Items

### A. Record Attendance

As per Public Officers Law, Article 7, § 103-a *(Videoconferencing by public bodies)* although board members Mark Harmon-Vaught 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

Mark Harmon-Vaught called a meeting of the board of trustees of Bridge Preparatory Charter School to order on Tuesday Jun 10, 2025 at 7:14 PM.

### C. Approve Minutes

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 05-08-25.
M. Harmon-Vaught stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 05-08-25 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. Votes

### A. Contract Renewal of edIT Support Technology Services

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve an extension of the contract between edIT Support Technology Services and Bridge Preparatory Charter School effective July 1, 2025.
Traci Frey seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

### B. Arthur J Gallagher (AJG) Insurance Contract FY26

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve the Commercial Insurance Proposal dated June 9, 2025 from Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services, LLC.
Amanda Wolkowitz seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

## III. Updates

### A.

**Academic Committee Update**

T. Frey gave the following report on the topics covered in the *Academic Committee Meeting* of June 9, 2025:

- **STAFF RETENTION:** As of yesterday of 34 instructional teaching staff, 4 are non-return voluntary, 3 are non-return terminated, and 7 are undetermined/we are still awaiting their decision. We are waiting for 2 letters of return, not anticipating them to be leaving and of those that were outstanding all indicated they're returning. So the non-terminated, the terminated and non-voluntary numbers have not changed. Regarding 7 instructional, non-teaching staff, 1 is non-return terminated because the position was cut from the budget *(it was not a termination based on performance)*. We are still awaiting 1 decision. Of the 8 non-instructional staff 2 are non-return voluntary. Those are operational roles and 6 are coming back. T. Castanza reached out to the DoE District Office to see if any Parent Co-Ordinators were retiring who may be interested in the Family Coordinator position here. Our new Principal Livingston has also shared resumes for teachers from her previous school, and some are coming in for demo lessons. The school will create a feedback form for students to complete after demo lessons so that we can get feedback from the students.
- **SPECIAL CLASSES/PROGRAMS:** Currently, there's Physical Education, Art and Music; we discussed whether a Library class might be a good addition, especially for kids needing preparation for middle school - with a different focus for the younger grades versus the older grades.
- **SUMMER SCHOOL:** Scheduled to start July 1st for baseline assessments; we received a grant from Summer Boost; we have between 50-58 students enrolled. An offer was made to incoming students as well. So many kids are coming that we needed to get a 2nd bus to transport students.
- **NEW PRINCIPAL:** Our new principal, Lauren (Liv) Livingston will start working full-time on July 7th; she was on-site last Friday and a lot of good, thoughtful questions were asked around goal-setting. She also identified summer reading for the leadership team, a book study. Teacher articulation data was done; we're waiting for student holdover counts; we're updating the student information system and the school's website is being refreshed/upgraded.
- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** T. Castanza met with Principal Livingston to discuss summer professional development for staff. New staff is coming in on August 18th and full staff will return on August 25th, It's a little different than last year, but we thought the days are better planned and coordinated this summer. The *Wit and Wisdom* team is coming to train the entire staff regarding the new ELA curriculum on August 27th. *Student & Family Orientation* is August 29th, which will be a half-day combined with a staff professional learning session. The 1st day of school for our students is Tuesday September 2nd; both September 2nd & 3rd will be half days and our teachers will engage in more professional learning on the afternoons of the those 2 days.
- **NEW DATA DASHBOARD:** Principal Livingston has a data system that she's used, and she wants to continue to use that can link with the student information system

to create a new user-friendly data dashboard and will provide us and the staff with better data points to analyze.

- **ENROLLMENT & FACILITY SPACE:** This current school year we had 258 students enrolled. We're projected to have between 264-274 students this upcoming school year. Since we budgeted for 239, so that's going to create an influx of cash, which will be a future conversation for us to figure out what to use the funds for. There will be additional class sections of Kindergarten, 1st grade and 5th grade and a reduced number of class sections in 2nd grade and 4th grade. We are not accepting any more 4th or 5th graders, because we are full. The total section count should be finalized by the end of next week. T. Castanza stated that our final section count is going to be between 15 and 16 sections. We had 15 sections this year. The deciding point is our 5th grade and our 2nd grade, and we're waiting to see how the numbers shake out. We're also considering building space. We're having a space crunch, so a 16th section puts us at a space deficit, particularly since the DoE is not going to be giving us an additional classroom based on their most recent email. DoE offered us a room - not a classroom - a quarter-sized space. We wrote back asking for an additional classroom for instruction to benefit students and DoE responded that they will monitor the situation and let us know if there's a change. T. Castanza added that we've been told that the *Committee on Special Education* (CSE) footprint in the building has been growing; DoE has not made public the footprint formula that they use for administrative offices (District 31 office) or the CSE offices. But schools get a footprint formula. The administrative offices & CSE require additional space for staff and DoE is providing it to them in this building in the Welcome Center area. When we met with DoE Facilities Planning team we asked since the CSE is getting new additional space, and there is space on our 2nd floor that CSE will no longer need, that we would like to take that area for an additional classroom. DoE indicated that they might be able to work something out and they were going to speak to CSE. DoE came back and said it's not gonna work. We have a lot of questions about how DoE building space is allocated to non-district schools and there appears to be no clear way that space is allocated other than *"We'll see what we can do"*. We've been very collaborative. We've been good neighbors and flexible. But we're at a point where our school space is now fully maxed-out. And we are making choices that impact students and staff. And we can't be compromising. And he shared at the Campus Council meeting that we just really want to understand how things work and what are the limitations of the building space moving forward. We may be relying on our students' parents to support us in this through some some advocacy. He's seen some success that charter schools have had when using their parents to ask really meaningful and common- sense questions. And he believes what we're asking for is not very egregious. We are asking for 1 additional classroom space for students. He wants to quote the email to have it on the record: Their email stated that *"the CSE has graciously decided to offer you back this room".* We really did appreciate that they are offering to return a room which was originally allocated to us, but that tiny room cannot be used for instruction. It has no window. That room should never have been taken from our allocation anyway, because it's next to our student bathroom.

We've raised this as a safety concern in the past. We do have the support of of our colleagues on the Campus Council in this. We have to figure out how to navigate this in a thoughtful way. This will be a good topic for our Strategy Session in July. The CSE meetings are mostly virtual as well as the district office staff on multiple days during the week. Both the CSE and the district office staff work remotely outside of the building, meaning that their rooms remain empty and vacant. We will keep you posted on our classroom space requirements and long-term planning.

**B. Finance Committee Update**

R. Peters gave the following update on the topics discussed at the *Finance Committee Meeting* held on June 10, 2025:

- **ENROLLMENT NUMBERS**: We discussed that enrollment is up, which is a good problem, with more money than we had budgeted for. So we're in good shape there.
- **INSURANCE**: We discussed our insurance needs and about adding some of the insurance vendor names in the *Financial Policies & Procedures Manual* (FPP). We will review the FPP and our insurance policies this summer. T. Castanza added that part of our summer work with the *Finance Committee* is refreshing the FPP.
- **BANK ACCOUNTS RESTRUCTURING**: We discussed our current banking situation. We opened up and funded accounts at IDB Bank, and we plan on closing out accounts at Bank of America over the summer. So that is in progress.
- **AUDIT:** We just filed our tax return for the prior fiscal year. We are starting our audit season now, which will start in July, but the field work will begin in August. We started working with a new auditor last year, and that went really smoothly. And so we're anticipating another smooth, clean audit this year as well.

**C. Executive Director's Update**

T. Castanza stated that much of his update was discussed in the *Academic Committee* report, which is great. Thank you. This is the way that it's supposed to work.

- **STAFF RETENTION & HIRING**: We are finalizing our end-of-year processes, including staffing and hiring. We're rounding out our staff retention and student retention. We were getting forms back from students who have said they're coming back or they're not returning. We have a couple of students moving out of state, which happens every year. We lost only 4 teachers, considering the unprecedented hiring that the DoE is doing right now, he feels really good about that. We spent a lot of time - person time - checking in with our staff over the past 3 months in different ways, whether it's in classroom observations, midterm visits, QRs, PPOs, etc. We've been in their classrooms a lot, but we've also been taking time to do one-on-one check ins with teachers and staff. He has spoken to every instructional and non-instructional team member that works with students on a day-to-day basis over the past 4 weeks for 30 to 45 min to talk to them about whether they are returning but also what would prevent them from returning. When they return, what do they need the year to look like? What are they excited about? What are they anxious

about? And that's separate from their end-of-year conversations with their supervisor. This is this is just purely to get a pulse before we make a major transition in terms of our structure. Those conversations have been going very well. It has yielded us some people that we might have lost. If you've been a principal and a school leader, particularly a charter school leader that deals with this, you know staff retention is a struggle. That's a battle that sometimes we don't win for a variety of reasons. So we are learning as we go forward in this next chapter, that we cannot lose sight of that people-focus in leadership and that there are ways that we can reach people if we are really thoughtful about understanding what they need. He's very proud of that and he is proud of his team that's done the work with him. We still have more work to do. We're not out of the woods and we're still actively hiring. We made an offer to our student teacher, Miss Ka, and we're excited to hopefully have her join our team. She was phenomenal. She was the 1st teacher that we had through our new partnership with NYU focused on the *Science of Reading.* Our new principal has also shared the resumes of 4 of her current colleagues who are interested in joining her here.

- **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING WITH PRINCIPAL LIVINGSTON:** We had really phenomenal day of professional learning on the 6th of June. Principal Livingston came, and the presentation that she did with the staff and the engagement that she had with the staff at various points of the day was excellent. But I want to highlight the work that was done prior to that visit. Principal Livingston had asked me for some feedback on the presentation that she was going to give to the staff, and I gave my thoughts from my conversations that teachers had shared, about what they liked, what they had some concerns about, and also what has been successful and what has not been. She was able to really retool the presentation in a way that teachers felt seen immediately by the new leader. We introduced the presentation together. She met with the new leadership team to talk about structures and it was a very promising start to where we're heading. There will still be work ahead. We had a nice conversation about goal-setting and aligned goal-setting and being in alignment with the organization's goals and how they'll be delivered by the school team. Overall. our teachers felt very seen.
- **JUNE EVENTS:** May was a busy month but June is usually the time where people start to get back to enjoying some things. We have really wonderful things coming up next week for our 5th grader graduates. We're looking forward to celebrating with you all at Graduation on June 18th at 4 PM. We hope to see you there, and also afterwards at our staff celebration at Beso. Our 5th Grade Awards Ceremony is June 17th at 6 PM here at the school. And our Kindergarten Stepping-Up Ceremony is that same day at 9:30 AM.

### D. Family Association Update

D. Medina gave the following *Family Association* update:
Due to new elections, we're getting a whole new board starting tomorrow.
We're just wrapping up the year and have nothing planned for the rest of the school year.
Actually, we're kind of winding down everything at this time.

## IV. Data Dashboard

### A. Review of Academic Data Dashboard

T. Castanza gave a presentation of the end-of-year MAP Data Dashboard using a chart via screen-sharing. He stated that this is this is a different version of the data than the Board saw earlier in the year because he wanted to make sure that at this moment we had snapshot data that told us 2 things: proficiency level of students at the beginning of the year and at the end of year, across grades. We added a new layer which is showing the lower school collective grades. What does proficiency look like from a K-2 grades in both ELA and Math? And then in our testing grades? How do does this data help us predict what the state assessment is going to look like? How does the MAP data classify students? We generally saw growth across every grade, in every subject. There are some grades where, from a proficiency standpoint, we are really pleased i.e., our 2nd grade. There's still areas that we need to grow. This is actually more a more rigorous look at data than we've done in a couple of years. Starting next year there will be a different Data Dashboard as discussed earlier in the *Academic Committee* report.

He then presented each section of the Data Dashboard and explained what the data means for both ELA and Math at Beginning of Year (BOY) and End of Year (EOY) for each grade level. The 5th grade hit the target that they had set for proficiency in ELA, and came just very, very short in Math by a couple of percentage points. The 4th grade in ELA exceeded their proficiency that they were projecting, but did not meet it in Math, and by a good amount. The 3rd grade met the targets that they set for ELA, but not the targets that the school leadership team set for them.

A question and answer session followed regarding growth and proficiency, scores, ranges and points in each category, which grades need more attention, discussions about the proficiency data indicating students *at-or-above grade level/ approaching grade level/below grade level.* Also what can be changed or adjusted to help increase proficiency for students.

T. Frey asked about setting up a date and time for the planned July Strategy Session Meeting. Discussion followed and the board members agreed that a weekday would be better than a weekend. Friday afternoon was considered favorable. An email will be sent to the board to find out everyone's availability and preference. And after responses come back a date will be chosen and everyone will be notified. Hopefully everyone will be able to attend in-person to the meeting.

## V. Proposed Executive Session

### A. Proposed Executive Session

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to enter into CLOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION as per as per Public Officers Law, Article 7, §105 (1)(f) to discuss the employment history of a particular person.

Rebecca Peters seconded the motion.

The Board entered into **CLOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION** at 8:10 PM.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
The Board returned to public **OPEN SESSION** at 8:24 PM.

## VI. 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 8:24 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano

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**Documents used during the meeting**

- SY2425 BP Data Dashboard_EOY -2.pdf