APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Special Board Meeting & Strategy Session

Date and Time
Friday July 19, 2024 at 4:00 PM

Location
Wagner College
Reynolds House Library
631 Howard Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10301

Trustees Present
Geena Kuriakose, Mark Harmon-Vaught, Nicole DeStefano, Rebecca Peters, Traci Frey

Trustees Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present
Tim Castanza

Guests Present
Amanda Wolkowitz, Deidre Medina, Kathy Baldassano (remote), Tara Gore (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

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 Friday Jul 19, 2024 at 4:06 PM.

C. Welcome from the Co-Chairs

M. Harmon-Vaught welcomed everyone to the meeting and said he is excited to be in fellowship with all of the trustees and to partner with T. Castanza and the school's staff; it's wonderful to be in physical presence with everyone today; he is looking forward to the new school year and is grateful for the time and effort trustees put in; we come with our hearts and are deeply invested in this school; in order to be effective we need all of us to engage together; he is grateful for all board members and especially for T. Frey, his co-chair, who is a joy to work with. He then gave the floor to T. Frey.
T. Frey agreed and said since we are board members of a school, trustees will notice that some of the structures put in place, even for our board meetings, will be school-related; we will open today with an activity; some of the reason why we are doing this is to model for E.D. and school staff the practices and protocols that can be shared with teachers and then by teachers with students. Welcome - we are very excited for the year ahead and for today's work as well.

D. Breaking the Ice

T. Frey gave a fortune cookie to each board member and asked them to read their paper fortune aloud and align their paper fortune to the work ahead this school year. The group followed directions and proceeded to read each fortune and then speak on how they believed each one applied to the school year ahead. New potential trustees Deirdre Medina and Tara Gore spoke briefly and each trustee introduced themselves and spoke about their terms on the board.

II. Business Meeting

A. Approve Minutes of June 11, 2024 Board Meeting

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 06-11-24.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 06-11-24 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.

B. Proposed Selection of a Parent Trustee: Amanda Wolkowitz

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve Resolution #31 selecting Amanda Wolkowitz as a member of the Board of Trustees.
Geena Kuriakose seconded the motion.

NOTE: This resolution was necessary since Amanda Wolkowitz was previously a board member due to her position as President of the Family Association; as she no longer holds that position, a new resolution must be passed to select her as a parent member on the board. This 1-year term takes into account the 2 years she previously served on the board amounting to an initial 3-year term, as per our Bylaws, Article III, § C (4d).

RESOLUTION #31 – Selecting Amanda Wolkowitz as Member of Board of Trustees
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 Bridge Preparatory Charter School Board of Trustees, having conducted a thorough criminal history record check via fingerprinting which is deemed acceptable by NYSED, and having discovered no State or Federal criminal history, or having provided information regarding such history to NYSED, if found, and having verified that any academic and/or professional credential or qualification presented by the proposed member is genuine, and having reviewed the application in its entirety, has voted to select **Amanda Wolkowitz** as a member to its Board of Trustees, with a term expiring on **June 30, 2025** pending approval by NYSED. The resolution approving **Amanda Wolkowitz** is adopted upon NYSED's approval.
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to applicable law, and the authorizing Charter, the undersigned, being a majority of the Members of Bridge Prep hereby consent to, approve, and adopt the aforesaid Resolution;
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call	
Mark Harmon-Vaught	Aye
Rebecca Peters	Aye
Nicole DeStefano	Aye
Geena Kuriakose	Aye
Traci Frey	Aye

C. Proposed Selection of a New Trustee: Tara Gore

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve Resolution #32 selecting Tara Gore as a member of the Board of Trustees.
Geena Kuriakose seconded the motion.
RESOLUTION #32 – Selecting Tara Gore as Member of Board of Trustees
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 Bridge Preparatory Charter School Board of Trustees, having conducted a thorough criminal history record check via fingerprinting which is deemed acceptable by NYSED, and having discovered no State or Federal criminal history, or having provided information regarding such history to NYSED, if found, and having verified that any academic and/or professional credential or qualification presented by the proposed member

is genuine, and having reviewed the application in its entirety, has voted to select **Tara Gore** as a member to its Board of Trustees, with a term expiring on **June 30, 2027** pending approval by NYSED. The resolution approving **Tara Gore** is adopted upon NYSED's approval.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to applicable law, and the authorizing Charter, the undersigned, being a majority of the Members of Bridge Prep hereby consent to, approve, and adopt the aforesaid Resolution.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

Rebecca Peters	Aye
Traci Frey	Aye
Geena Kuriakose	Aye
Nicole DeStefano	Aye
Mark Harmon-Vaught	Aye

D. Proposed Selection of a New Trustee: Deirdre Medina

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve Resolution #33 selecting Deidre Medina as a member of the Board of Trustees.

Nicole DeStefano seconded the motion.

NOTE: Since Deidre Medina is joining the board due to her position as the current President of the Family Association her term of office on the board will be for 2 years, as per our Bylaws, Article III, § C (4c).

RESOLUTION #33 – Selecting Deirdre Medina as Member of Board of Trustees

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 Bridge Preparatory Charter School Board of Trustees, having conducted a thorough criminal history record check via fingerprinting which is deemed acceptable by NYSED, and having discovered no State or Federal criminal history, or having provided information regarding such history to NYSED, if found, and having verified that any academic and/or professional credential or qualification presented by the proposed member is genuine, and having reviewed the application in its entirety, has voted to select **Deirdre Medina** as a member to its Board of Trustees, with a term expiring on **June 30, 2026** pending approval by NYSED. The resolution approving **Deirdre Medina** is adopted upon NYSED's approval.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to applicable law, and the authorizing Charter, the undersigned, being a majority of the Members of Bridge Prep hereby consent to, approve, and adopt the aforesaid Resolution.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Roll Call

Mark Harmon-Vaught	Aye
Geena Kuriakose	Aye

Roll Call

Rebecca Peters	Aye
Traci Frey	Aye
Nicole DeStefano	Aye

III. Strategy Session

A. Executive Director Update

T. Castanza gave the following update of items to be presented in August:

- **SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN** - By law we are mandated to update the school's safety plan; DoE has a district safety plan that we use as a base for our safety plan, modified for our needs. A big focus for us this year is how we communicate with families, the board and community. Our school safety plan needs to be presented at a public meeting as well as to the Board of Trustees, which we expect to do in August.
- **CONTRACT RENEWAL** - SI Media Group was very helpful with student recruitment, and we want to renew their contract.
- **KINDERGARTEN LAUNCH** - We will launch a Kindergarten class to start this September, as suggested by NYSED during our charter renewal process. Since our admission lottery was already held prior to the plans for Kindergarten, we will accept any students that apply until the class is filled and then we will start a wait-list for additional applicants; if we get enough K applicants we may open up a 2nd K class; we have classroom space available and teaching staff also available. We hope to limit each K class to 10-12 students.
- **BUDGET & ENROLLMENT** - In June we approved a budget for 235 students; NYSED authorized us to serve 270 students; as of now, including the new Kindergarten students and the additional students in other grades, we have 261 students enrolled. When we do our budget review, we will see a massive increase in revenue due to the additional students. That will allow us to think about additional personnel; we will pause on upper grade applications while we wait to see what the lower grades, K, 1 & 2 bring in student applications.
- **STAFFING CHANGES** - We looked at the results of multiple focus groups as well as the end of year MAP data to decide what direction we wanted to go, and are we moving in the best direction in all areas that we need to; if there is any area that we feel needs improvement, then this is our opportunity to make that change. Cheryl Otterbeck, *Director of Specialized Instruction*, has graciously agreed to step into the role of *Interim Acting Director of Teaching and Learning* while we hire an external search firm to conduct a national search for Bridge Prep’s new Instructional Leader. In addition, we will be contracting with a former principal to mentor and assist C. Otterbeck in her new role. We presented the staffing changes to teachers and staff moving forward and must present a united front to staff regarding these plans. There is still work to be done, but we have the right personnel in place now; we're on the right path.

- **FACILITY SPACE** - We have enough space now for our needs, but we don't have enough space for what we want to do in the future. This is something that we will need to discuss in the months ahead, especially if we see more demand for seats in the early grade levels; we need to see if we can expand our current space with physical upgrades or decide what else is possible. This is something that we will be focusing on this year and can discuss together.
- **PARENT COMMUNICATION** - Focus group results indicated that we need to concentrate on communicating with families in a really meaningful way; E.D. will be working together with D. Medina, President of the *Family Association* to address this issue. We will be adding a new staff position that was not in the budget - a Parent Coordinator, that families can go to with questions or problems. We will also be getting a 2nd P.E. teacher to focus on movement and student wellness. We are looking into hiring a music teacher; we are reimaging a former classroom space as an arts studio for students.
- **LEGAL COUNSEL PRESENTATIONS** - Susan Briggs who is legal counsel for our school has offered to share her expertise with the Board of Trustees; she is very knowledgeable about charter schools and her skills can be utilized in many ways.
- **OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRUSTEES** - E.D. would like to demystify the Board of Trustees and invite board members to be more present with parents and staff; one way is for board members to be invited to professional conferences attended by school leadership and staff. The *NYS Charter Association Conference* is a good example - it is attended by many board members and is held in Manhattan at the end of October; he encourages our trustees to attend. Also, the *Orton-Gillingham Conference* held in April would be very interesting for our board members to attend. He will share the dates and details for both.
- **PASEK CONTRACT RENEWAL** - We haven't decided yet if we are going to renew the contract with Pasek Consulting; they offered us a contract for 3 years at $36,000 per year; our charter will be up for renewal in 3 years but in the meantime, Pasek simply helps us create our annual report each year. At his point we are not ready to sign onto a new 3-year contract with them since we can create our own annual report this year. The decision on whether to renew the contract with Pasek is something that we need to discuss and decide if, or when, we want to utilize them again.
- **SCHOOL BUILDING REFRESH** - E.D.'s office is moving to the space that was previously a Literacy Lab; and former E.D. office will now be a 5th grade classroom; we will be converting another space into a conference room for meetings. The Literacy Lab will be moving into a double space that was previously administrative offices. We are doing some minor renovations to the courtyard.

B. Reorienting Ourselves to Our Work

M. Harmon-Vaught and T. Frey offered a PowerPoint presentation: ***BPCS Board Strategy Session*** which covered the following topics:

Refresh and Re-orienting Ourselves to Our Work

- **Setting our "why" as a board** - what are we here for and what do we want to accomplish as a board? These are some of the grounding mechanisms for us, something we'll return to and we'll think about as we set goals: Strategy lens/Meaty meetings/Full hearts & clear eyes/ Support & accountability/Capacity & bench depth
- **What is a charter school, really?** - Publicly funded, tuition-free; Autonomy and performance- based accountability; Innovation in educational programs and operating model; Charter authorizer oversight; Lottery-based admissions; Emphasis on community and parent engagement
- **What does a charter board do?** - Safeguard the school's mission & fidelity to the charter, Select, support & evaluate the school leader, Monitor & evaluate the school's educational programs; Oversee the school's strategic planning; Ensure adequacy of resources and ethical, compliant stewardship; Review & approve school budgets, policies, & contracts; Provide advice & guidance; Promote the school as its ambassadors; Evaluate & continuously improve board performance
- **How is a charter school board different from a nonprofit board?** - Entrusted by NY to spend public funds in a transparent, legal, & ethical way; Accountable to NYS authorizers for meeting performance benchmarks; Must comply with the Open Meetings Law (OML); Make decisions that directly affect student education & school performance; Hold a fiduciary duty to act in the best interests of the school
- **Who is Bridge Prep: *Our* Mission**
- **Who is Bridge Prep: Our Students** - A graph was shown indicating the following: Total Enrollment: 199 students in Grades 1-5; Male: 74.9% & Female: 25.1%; Students with Disabilities (SWD): 67%; Economically Disadvantaged: 89.4% FRPL; English Language Learners (ELL): 9.0%; Multiracial: 1.0%; Asian: 3.0%; White: 10.1%; Latino: 52.9%; Black or African American: 32.5%
- **Who is Bridge Prep: Our Board** - 5 members currently/soon to be 8 members; 4 standing committees: Executive, Academic, Finance, and Board Development/Governance
- **Our Charter Renewal** - Bridge Prep charter renewed in May 2024 for a 3-year term, authorized to open Kindergarten & expand the number of seats in existing grades; we aspire to a 5-year renewal (the maximum) in SY 2026-27
- **Charter Performance Framework Benchmark Ratings**
- **Focus group feedback from Parents, Students, and Staff**

In addition, the board members were given copies of the *Bridge Prep Mission Statement*, a *Glossary of Charter School Terms* and the *NYSED Charter School Performance Framework Rating* indicating which performance benchmarks the school met or approached, which was used to determine the term of the school's charter renewal approval this year.

After the presentation, attendees were asked to share the one segment that was relevant to them, from the topics covered. Discussion followed many of the points included in the presentation.

IV. Closing Items

A. Review of Action Items/Next Steps & Board Planning for SY 2024-2025

Some Logistics & Next Steps

- The ED is setting annual goals which will feed school-wide goals
- School-wide goals will be set and communicated
- Annual performance goals for school leaders who report to the ED are developed and agreed

Setting Board Goals and Plans for SY 2024-25

- The board and committees will agree on its own annual goals to reflex the school's goals and monitor, evaluate, and support progress toward them
- Consent agenda & written summary reports
- Streamlined decision-making
- Combine routine items into one agenda
- Reduce time spent on non-controversial issues
- Some committee reports will be written summaries
- Efficiency and Focus: Frees up time for strategic discussions; keeps meetings concise and effective
- Pre-Meeting Preparation: Materials sent in advance for review; board members come prepared to approve
- Transparency and Accountability: Items can be removed for discussion if needed; ensures all members are informed and involved

B. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 6:05 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano