APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Thursday December 11, 2025 at 7:00 PM

Location
Bridge Preparatory Charter School
Petrides Educational Complex
715 Ocean Terrace, Bldg. A
Staten Island, NY 10301

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

Trustees Absent
Jennifer Sammartino-Mallen

Ex Officio Members Present

Tim Castanza

Guests Present
Alyse Pecoraro, Christina Caputo (remote), Kafayat Jempeji (remote), Kathy Baldassano (remote), Valentina Reilly (remote), Vallerie Herskowitz (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 Thursday Dec 11, 2025 at 7:02 PM.

C. Welcome & Kickoff

M. Harmon-Vaught welcomed everyone to the meeting. We have some meaty topics tonight. Regular reports during the main section of the meeting, and then we have some proposed topics for board discussion and closed executive session. With that, we'll move to the first item on the agenda, which is the approval of minutes.

II. Approve Minutes

A. Approve Minutes of November 6, 2025 Special Board Meeting

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve the minutes from SPECIAL VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING on 11-06-25.
M. Harmon-Vaught stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 11-06-25 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.

B. Approve Minutes of November 13, 2025 Board Meeting

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 11-13-25.
M. Harmon-Vaught stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 11-13-25 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.

III. Reports & Updates

A.

CEO Report

T. Castanza gave the following CEO update:

- **TRANSITION TO NEW INTERIM ACTING CEO:** We welcome Alyse Pecoraro, our new Interim Acting CEO; A. Pecoraro and T. Castanza have been working together since she arrived at the school; the Board members know the work that was done to A. Pecoraro joining us, but he thinks that work has shifted now that she is here. We're able to get more focused on some of the topics that are really critical during our transition to make sure that the school continues to be not only viable, but strong and mission aligned. We will talk about mission alignment a lot over the next 6 to 8 weeks because it's super critical for the success of the school. He and A. Pecoraro have begun identifying the needs and really getting into the weeds of the school. When we transition this work, we're transitioning a lot of historical context, not just processes, He wants to thank A. Pecoraro for pushing him on how we organize information, and thanked M. Harmon-Vaught and T. Frey for pushing on getting things really calendared for the month of January. We need to get all the key topics done before the end of January and we now have a week-by-week calendar which I will summarize so the board understands what is going to be happening. A lot of this is also being discussed in each of the Board committees that we attend; the *Finance Committee* knows the financial timeline, same for the *Academic Committee*, etc. But, so far we've been really focusing on relationships, with one-on-one conversations that A. Pecoraro has been having with our ELT *(Executive Leadership Team).* This week, A. Pecoraro is here at tonight's Board meeting, and attended some Board committee meetings. We're starting to peel-the-onion a little bit on mission and vision, and really trying to understand what that means. Also doing a dump of all the key policies that we have; A. Pecoraro has been doing a lot of reading about those and diving in. Next week, she will join his individual check-ins with the Executive Leadership Team. We're going to do some classroom observations, see the new ELA curriculum and our Orton-Gillingham periods, two things that are really critical for the success of the school. And then we're going to be talking about admissions, specifically recruitment and retention, because that process is going to begin soon. We start doing student recruitment at the end of December. And when we get back in January, the topics will get more narrow because they're larger in their scope. We'll do 2 weeks of financial, handoffs. The 1st week will cover budget and accounts, A. Pecoraro was able to sit in a budget meeting with our team and Josh and also a Board *Finance Committee* meeting. We'll refocus again on mission alignment and what it looks like in practice. The 2nd week, we'll cover contracts. We have our team compiling all our contracts and I'll give some recommendations regarding what I would be thinking if I were looking at this item. And then we're going to cover a little of the external-facing part of the CEO role. Who are our key partners, and what do those partnerships look like? We also have a PPO that week, so it's going to be a busy week. As we end the month of January, we'll be focusing specifically on what keeps the school sustainable long-term. NYSED, the Charter Performance Framework, and some partner handoffs. Our external partners have helped to keep our school

successful, and that our team believes will continue to keep the school successful. We have a clear scope of what we want to accomplish and there will be things added along the way, but that's the general overview.

- **SUPPORTING STAFF & STUDENT FAMILIES:** We were able to attend the Family Association meeting last night and we're going to try to find ways for families, students and staff to have some authentic conversations with us over the next couple of weeks. We're also going to the SLT *(School Leadership Team)* meeting tomorrow, specifically to talk about teacher support and teacher coaching, and the plan to support teachers during the remainder of the school year. When we implemented the new school organizational structure with 3 new assistant principals, we thought this would be a good set-up to give teachers consistent support with regular and clear feedback. We want to make sure that's happening, and if it's not happening, understand why. How can we support our school in the continued development of teachers?
- **SHARING DOCUMENTATION WITH THE BOARD:** We have these documents that we're working on with documents in them, documents within documents. If any of those might be helpful for the Board as T. Castanza begins to transition off or if there are any specific documents that the Board would like - much of which has been shared with the Board already. He will take a look through his hard drive containing 10 years' worth of school documentation and a lot of historical context, particularly our marketing materials, how we talk about the school, how we successfully recruit students, the language we've used, strategies that worked and didn't work. And a lot of information regarding charter renewal, in case there's any renewal documents that we still have that the Board doesn't have. We will upload all that into the Board's shared Google Drive.

M. Harmon-Vaught added that we want to say thank you both to T. Castanza and A. Pecoraro for all the work that you are doing in the transition. It's an enormous amount of effort, and it's not without a heaviness that comes with this type of change for T. Castanza and for the community, We're just really grateful for the way you are approaching it. And the setting you're providing at a time of tremendous change for a community that we all care so deeply about. Also, it's rare to have the opportunity for this kind of overlap between CEOs, which was intentional and wasn't an accident. We really appreciate that as well.

B. Academic Committee Report

T. Frey gave the following report on the *Academic Committee* meeting held on December 9, 2025:

- **INTERIM ACTING CEO**: We welcomed Alyse Pecoraro to the committee meeting
- **BULLSEYE DATA ANALYTICS:** Principal Livingston discussed the Bullseye Data Analytics Program, which is the system that she and the assistant principals use to enter observation information, and teachers can access it to get their feedback. She provided us with a cross-section of the data and highlighted cognitive engagement, time-on-task, use of verbal cues, use of exemplars, and lesson framing as priorities

with teachers. The focus in the next phase for the teachers will be looking for continuing cognitive engagement, exit tickets, systems and routines, pacing, and continued lesson framing. They also are rolling out Instructional Phase 2 on December 8th. The assistant principals and Principal Livingston will be looking at student work quality, and how teachers are circulating around the classroom to check on students. They are couching all of their feedback in the Danielson rubric, which Principal Livingston has amended from the original Danielson language; it includes examples and action steps that teachers can take to move up the chain from developing to effective, or effective to highly effective. By now, all teachers should have been observed at least 3 times using an informal observation process. They acknowledged that there is a lapse from the time teachers are observed to the time that the data is entered into Bullseye. So we suggested giving them quick feedback via an email at the end of the day, or a post-it note just so teachers get some immediate feedback. It's not the detailed Bullseye results, but at least they'll have a sense of what changes they could immediately implement because if they wait too long, the feedback is not meaningful or actionable.

- **CLASSROOM DATA TRACKING**: In response to teacher feedback from the focus group that we had as part of the Quality Review process, Principal Livingston and her team shifted their data tracking, which was rolled out to teachers on Tuesday during the PD session. The data will be tracked in the classroom, under 3 umbrellas. Classroom data, maps data, and the IEP goal tracker, and one of the 2 teachers in the room will be carrying a physical tracker where they can log what they're observing in the classroom so that they have a running record. Students will be grouped during their Math Fluency and Humanities classes based on the data that's being collected.
- **MAP DATA WORKBOOK:** They shared with us the MAP workbook that's updated after each assessment. The teachers had been responsible for updating that workbook in their PLCs weekly, but Principal Livingston has taken that off their plate, and her team is doing the update instead, so teachers don't have to. This is very much appreciated by the teachers.
- **QUALITY REVIEW RESULTS:** We also engaged in a quick debrief of the results of the Quality Review. We saw progress in terms of systems and structures and high expectations. The focus is still on refining and pushing teacher pedagogy. There were some trends across the school that we noticed, which Principal Livingston has acknowledged, For example, when students are in stations, are students working independently monitored? Teachers are spending time with those designated Tier 2 and Tier 3 students, but how are the students working independently being monitored for accuracy, fluency, etc.
- **PRINCIPAL PERFORMANCE OBSERVATION:** We mentioned that T. Castanza and A. Pecoraro will be conducting a PPO (Principal Performance Observation) on January 13th. A Quality Review looks for trends across the school, and it's generally used as an evaluation tool for the CEO or the Executive Director, which is what it used to be, whereas the PPO is an evaluation tool for the principal, and what moves the principal has taken or made to improve the school in a series of competency

areas, including instruction and systems, etc. So, the 1st PPO will be in January, and there's another PPO scheduled in late spring.

C. Finance Committee Report

R. Peters gave the following report on the *Finance Committee* meeting held on December 9, 2025:

- **FINANCE SUMMARY FOR CEO TRANSITION:** Discussion was held on compiling information for the CEO transition on certain things like bank accounts, understanding our vendor profile and who we work with - gathering that all in one place, so it's easy for the new Interim Acting CEO to see what's going on with school finances. At the same time, re-evaluating those things and making sure that everything is in line with our current structure, since this is the first year we have the new organization arrangement in place.
- **BUDGET REFRESH:** We spent a good amount of time on the budget refresh, which is essentially looking at the budget that was approved last spring and comparing it to our actual expenses now, and our needs now. One note is that there are changes from what we originally budgeted to what's going on now, and there are some expenses that will remain. The finance team will let the *Finance Committee* know which of those changes are one-offs, and which of those changes will continue at the school so we can accurately see what we'll need to sustain school growth and proceeds in the next few years. More to come on that at a later date. M. Harmon-Vaught added that It was a really good meeting, but also highlighted some key areas which the *Finance Committee* will continue to monitor and be engaged to question. The whole finance team and leadership is problem-solving where we are, but we're ultimately in a good financial position, and we'll continue to monitor as we go.

D. Board Development & Governance Committee Report

N. DeStefano gave the following update on the *Board Development & Governance Committee:*

- **BOARD TRUSTEE RECRUITMENT:** The committee is working on creating a formalized system to recruit and appoint new trustees and to see where the process already in place can be enhanced regarding identification of candidates, reviewing candidates' strengths, aligning Board needs with individual candidates' expertise, meeting with board leadership, etc. If we think they're a good fit, taking it to the full board, all the way through recommending appointment to the Board, the NYSED approval process and eventual onboarding if we deem the candidate a good fit. We will share the formal process with the full Board once it is finalized, but wanted to inform everyone that the work is happening. We're also moving forward, with 3 potential candidates that we'll be following up with in the next couple of weeks using this as a test case of our formalized process to see if it will vet them appropriately.

E.

CEO Search Process Update

R. Peters gave the following update on the *CEO Search Committee:*

- **CEO SEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING HELD:** We are well underway with our first kickoff meeting and have been working with the CEO search firm. We're doing our best to incorporate as many different viewpoints in this process as possible. As of this evening, we have an initial draft of a profile for the, position, so we are staying on track while also incorporating the intentional viewpoints we want to have when considering this CEO position. M. Harmon-Vaught added that we've had some listening sessions for various groups, parents and families, staff members, the leadership team, and those sessions are really helpful, because obviously, the work of this committee starts with defining what the CEO role should be, and that requires a lot of input from this community in an intentional way, so thanks to everybody who's leant their voices so far to that work. That will certainly continue as we go forward.

F. Family Association Report

C. Caputo gave the following *Family Association* update:

- **INTERIM ACTING CEO:** The IA CEO was discussed at the Family Association meeting. Introductions and greetings were very much appreciated. Welcome, Alyse Pecoraro. C. Caputo thanked her for being at tonight's meeting.
- **FAMILY ASSOCIATION MEETING SCHEDULE:** They're in the process of trying to figure out future meeting times, and what works best for different types of families. When should they hold their meetings, daytime or nighttime? They may poll the parents to see how to get the most parent involvement to attend the meetings. That also applies to in-person PTA meetings, and the barriers to having in-person versus virtual meetings, such as meeting space, security, a permit to use the school building, etc. That's something that the Family Association has been working on.
- **FUNDRAISING**: They're in the process of trying to recalibrate fundraising because it's a new executive board, and they're trying to figure out what fundraising works and what doesn't. It was mentioned that the Family Association might have spent an excessive amount for the Holiday Fair last year, which was a really big undertaking. So this year, they're scaling it down a bit. They're going to be doing some fundraising in the next week as a Bake Sale/Holiday Sale and they are asking parents to send in prepackaged goods.
- **FIFTH GRADE PLANS:** They're getting parent volunteers to work on planning 5th grade events.
- **FAMILY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER:** They're going to start working on a newsletter for families, which helps to engage families who might otherwise be unable to attend meetings. So they're working on creating a newsletter, and figuring out the format: weekly/monthly/quarterly? Something informative, and something that would really help communicate with families since some parents are at the school more often to get information and some parents are not. Parents really do appreciate newsletters.

- **RECORDING SECRETARY ELECTION:** They're accepting nominations for the position of Recording Secretary since the previous Recording Secretary stepped down. They're going to be holding an election for the position.

M. Harmon-Vaught added a thank you to C. Caputo for diligently taking care of all the paperwork necessary to be formally added to the Board of Trustees. We expect that we'll be able to take a vote at our next meeting, and then move forward with your formal board membership. C. Caputo responded by thanking M. Harmon-Vaught for all his help with her questions and the documents.

IV. Public Comment

A. Comments From Public

- **VALENTINA RILEY** *(Parent of Twins in 1st Grade)*: My main concern at the moment with the way things are going at this school is that one of my son's teachers seems to have been dismissed. And we didn't get any notification of it, and I'm just concerned about the level of communication. None of the parents in the class received any notification. My son is a first grader with autism, and he was used to a certain routine. My concern as a mother is just more communication would actually be amazing. T. Frey responded thank you so much for sharing, and since Mr. Costanza and Ms. Pecoraro are here, they will be sure to take that up with Principal Livingston and their staff to make sure that that does not happen again. Also to send an email out to all of the parents in the class - not necessarily what happened, because that is confidential information - but at least to give the parents a heads up as to what the plan is moving forward. *T. Castanza asked V. Reilly if she received an email or any notification or communication introducing the new teacher? V. Reilly responded that she has not. T. Castanza added thank you; T. Frey added that we'll make sure that happens as well and that the new teacher reaches out to you and all the other parents in the class.*
- **VALLERIE HERSKOWITZ** *(Parent of 4th Grade Student):* Her daughter has been so successful at Bridge Prep with all of her subjects, and her current teachers are phenomenal, I'm literally having prayers every night, hoping they switch up to 5th grade, so the reason why I came on tonight was I noticed a lot of the Bridge Prep Family Association meeting was all about fundraising. How can we get people to go? And people want to come up to see their kids at school - they want to come. And when we had the talent show it was amazing, and I loved it, and I was crying the entire show of happy tears because of the judgment-free zone that my child can go to and be a part of, and I was so impressed by it, and now that we have a music teacher Ms. Bruschi at Bridge Prep, it would be great if you had a concert, a winter concert, a spring concert, for every grade kindergarten through 5th, and just let each class sing three songs. I'm telling you, everybody would fill that auditorium. Yes, you'd have to get a permit. If you didn't want to do it in the auditorium, you could do it in the parking lot. There's so many ideas, but music is the way to get everyone to come, and fundraise, and $15 for tickets, or... So that's my little gripe. I just hope that

maybe you can hopefully put something together for each class to do that, because everybody will come. Three times a year, I promise you. That's it. I love Bridge Prep. That's my only statement. *T. Frey responded thank you so much. I don't think it's a gripe, I think it's a great suggestion, and it's a great way to engage parents and families with the school, and I saw T. Castanza writing it down, so I'm sure he and A. Pecoraro will bring it up to Principal Livingston, and we'll make it happen. R. Peters agreed and she didn't think it was silly at all. She really appreciates hearing from all perspectives, whether it's communication or how to get more people involved, so thank you for sharing that.*

- **VALENTINA RILEY:** My other quick question was, one of the things that attracted us to Bridge Prep for my twins was we were told about all these great clubs that they would have during lunchtime to join, and all the extracurricular activities, like soccer that was supposed to happen, and I was just wondering if there was any progress on that. I know with principal changes and leadership changes, it can take a little bit. I was just wondering if we were moving towards that again. *T. Castanza responded that we heard from students that they wanted to see some of the clubs back. We heard it from some families and even some faculty who really enjoyed leading those clubs. So I did share that with the principal and with the assistant principal of operations, who was managing school culture and the schedule. My hope is that they're going to make that reappear, at least for the second half of the year. But we are going to the SLT meeting tomorrow, and we'll double down on that to make sure that that's something that's still on their radar. In the second half of last school year, every student was offered to be in a lunch club: art, yoga, dance, board games, and the kids loved it because they also got to pick their interest. And we do offer sports, but I think that's also more of spring activities: basketball, track. soccer. There was an issue last year with the soccer league at the last minute they bailed out on us, and our two athletics point people were trying to formulate that relationship again with the league, so we're still working on that. I'm happy seeing families at these Board meetings, and I appreciate however you all got here. I think you should continue to come. It's really important for the Board to hear from families, even though we have families on the Board. It's good to hear from others. We've heard a lot of feedback that our social media presence is different than it was in years past, and we're taking a look at some of the content that we post, and trying to bring back some of the ways we were highlighting student success on social media. We are planning an alumni series on social media as part of our way to highlight our historic first graduating middle-school class who's going to high school. So we're working on a few things and just keep an eye out and know that these types of things are very important to us. M. Hamon-Vaught added thank you, everybody, for joining. I want to just say you are always welcome in this space, absolutely, always. We're eager for parents to be part of these conversations, and your voice is really important to everything we do, so please know, please hear that from us. We are eager to be your partners in this work, so thank you for being here.*
- **KAFAYAT JEMPEJI:** *(Mother of Zana and Frasal)* I just want to give a shout out to Ms. McKenna, and Ms. Lleshi. They've been awesome teachers to my kids, and I'm

so happy to be a parent. And I'm so happy that my kids are in Bridge Prep, because ever since my kids have been in Bridge Prep, I've seen changes, and I just want to appreciate that's it. *T. Frey and M. Harmon-Vaught responded thank you so much.*

V. PROPOSED CLOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Vote to Enter Into Closed Executive Session

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to enter into CLOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION as per Public Officers Law, Article 7, §105 (1)(f) to discuss the employment history of a particular person.
Tara Gore seconded the motion.
The Board entered into CLOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION at 7:41 PM.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Return to Open Public Session

The Board returned to public OPEN MEETING SESSION at 8:45 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 8:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano