APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

SPECIAL VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING: STRATEGY SESSION

THIS VIRTUAL MEETING WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PARTICIPATION REMOTELY VIA ZOOM

Date and Time
Tuesday May 12, 2026 at 7:00 PM

Location
ZOOM MEETING:
Meeting ID: **876 9927 5285**
Passcode: **717305**

ZOOM MEETING LINK:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87699275285?pwd=Zla4rXFdeYXXnqSUYeaQGOZvwZR8qV.1

One tap mobile
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+16465588656,,87699275285#,,,,*717305# US (New York)

Remote Viewing Locations:

- *16 Northport La, Staten Island, NY 10314*
- *735 Sheldon Ave, Staten Island, NY 10312*
- *557 5th St, #3, Brooklyn, NY 11215*
- *1495 East 63rd St, Brooklyn, NY 11234*
- *600 Commodore Ct, #2620, Philadelphia, PA 19146*
- *18 Seth Court, Staten Island, NY 10301*
- *3298 Victory Blvd, Staten Island, NY 10314*

• *47 Highview Ave, Staten Island, NY 10301*

This Special Board Meeting is being held IN ADDITION to the regularly scheduled May Board Meeting set for Thursday, May 21st, 2026.

Trustees Present
Amanda Wolkowitz (remote), Mark Harmon-Vaught (remote), Tara Gore (remote), Traci Frey (remote)

Trustees Absent
Jennifer Sammartino-Mallen, Nicole DeStefano, Rebecca Peters

Ex Officio Members Present
Alyse Pecoraro (remote)

Guests Present
Chris Zilinski (remote), Christina Caputo (remote), Kathy Baldassano (remote), Lauren Forsythe (remote), Nora Clancy (remote)

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, Traci Frey, Amanda Wolkowitz and Tara Gore 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 May 12, 2026 at 7:04 PM.

C. Welcome from the Co-Chairs

Mark Harmon-Vaught: Thank you all for being in attendance this evening. We're all on Zoom and this is a special virtual strategy session to discuss the upcoming charter renewal process. We also want to give a special welcome to Chris Zilinski, who's joining us tonight. Chris is Bridge Prep's incoming CEO. As we're moving into the renewal work, we wanted to bring Chris into the conversation because obviously this will be important work for him to champion in the months and years ahead, so welcome, Chris, we're happy to have you

here. We also have as our guests tonight two representatives from Impact Charters LLC, our charter renewal partners, Nora Clancy and Lauren Forsythe. *(At this point, a round of introductions were made by the Board members and other attendees.)*

II. Strategy Session

A. INITIATION OF CHARTER RENEWAL PLANNING

Lauren Forsythe and Nora Clancy, Project Managers at *Impact Charters LLC* gave a PowerPoint presentation overview of the charter renewal process and our collaborative team roles, and what *Impact Charters LLC* will do for Bridge Prep as we approach charter renewal season and renewal deadlines, including some different expectations and things that we would love to collaborate with Bridge Prep on to make sure that we are putting our best foot forward for the school and students when it comes to the renewal application. They proceeded to go over some objectives, Bridge Prep's renewal and charter term history, and different milestones through September, which is when our ultimate deadline will be.

The presentation covered the following topics:

- **Team roles** - *Both at Impact Charters LLC and at Bridge Prep*
- **Objectives for the project**
- **Renewal and charter term history** - *Charter schools in NY State apply for renewal the year before the last year of their charter term; Bridge Prep applies for renewal from their authorizer, NYSED.* Bridge Prep's charter term history starts in the 2019-2020 school year through the 2023-2024 school year; at that point, Bridge Prep applied for charter renewal and NYSED granted you a 3-year-long second term. That is from the 2024-25 school year through next school year, which is 2026-2027. Now Bridge Prep needs to apply for charter renewal again.
- **Renewal milestones through Sept. 2026** - Document Collection May 7–May 30; Leadership Interviews June 6–June 17; Application Review July 4–July 25; Final Approval August 7–August 22; Renewal Application Submission Deadline is September 2, 2026
- **Renewal outcome options** - Schools can be given any charter term of 2, 3, 4, or 5 Years
- **Renewal application components** - Narrative summary of benchmarks; Mission;;Key Design Elements; Enrollment; Grades served; Calendar (number of school days in year); Schedule (start/end time); Discipline Policy; DASA Policy; By-Laws and Code of Ethics; Organizational Chart; Enrollment & Admissions Policy; 5-year budget for next term; Innovation narrative
- **Key data points**
- **Charter revisions** - Potential charter revisions can be made to: the schools' Mission Statement; Key Design Elements; Maximum Enrollment; Calendar; Schedule; Organizational Structure; Evaluation tools

A wide-ranging and extensive question and answer session followed the presentation.

Mark Harmon-Vaught stated that the aim of these strategy sessions is as an orientation conversation for the Board on the work of the charter renewal. The aim of these conversations is to provide the Board with an opportunity to engage in the important work of renewal, to do some thinking and planning in this time of transition, and make sure we're providing ample support for the school during the renewal process.

B. ACADEMIC UPDATE

T. Frey said that she and A. Pecoraro spent the last two days going through a school evaluation process, conducting a quality review; they visited 10 classes over the last 2 days, covering every grade, ELA, and Math; they met with teachers, parents, staff, and students. They observed a team meeting and met with the Executive Leadership Team and the School Leadership Team. The highlights are that instruction has definitely improved since we were there in January. So the systems and structures that the principal has put into place are showing up in the classroom. There is a lot of consistency in classrooms. We'll talk more about this during the next *Academic Committee* meeting, but this was an area of success and celebration, the improvement in pedagogy and the consistency across classrooms, differentiation, and all the things that we had been saying were needed, we saw evidence of. But the area still needing growth is communication and transparency. Parents would like more timely communication, or just communication in general. The biggest issue for them was that it's inconsistent across the school. Some teachers are more communicative than other teachers. There was a little bit of an issue with the DeansList communications program, some parents had trouble accessing DeansList or getting information from DeansList. Some parents said that the DeansList messages went to their spam, but they didn't realize it was in spam, and so for some parents, it was really more inconsistency. For staff it was similar that the messages that they're getting from one administrator aren't necessarily the same as the messages from another administrator, or they're getting information last minute. The staff said that decisions are being made, and staff isn't sure why. Some employees feel that there is no transparency regarding leadership decisions. If they understood why a decision was made, they wouldn't be coming up with their own rationale about why things are happening. Perception becomes reality, and it may be far from the truth, but without knowing why things are happening, they're left to their own devices to come up with a reason. That doesn't seem to be happening as much with some staff as with others.

C. SCHOOL BUDGET & FINANCIAL PLANNING UPDATE

A. Pecoraro stated that she will be meeting tomorrow with B. Peters and Josh Moreau regarding the school budget, which will need Board approval at the June Board meeting. At the last Board meeting we talked a little bit about where we are with budget, and that our expenses are outpacing our revenue year over year. And even when we account for some of the one-time expenses this year, we're still facing a structural challenge that requires us to think about how to increase our revenue, while also reviewing and adjusting spending over time. We're also at a very important transition point. With C. Zilinski beginning as

CEO in July, after a year of leadership transitions and entering the renewal cycle, with our submission being due this fall. Under different circumstances, we might be already engaged in a multi-year planning process. Where does Bridge Prep want to be in 5 years? Where does Bridge Prep want to be in 3 years? That would drive our budget planning for this coming year. But instead, we're thinking about the planning right now being an on-ramp to that work. And so, we think about priorities with the budget and to position the organization for that longer-term strategic work under Chris's leadership. As we look at the budget, there's two levels of work, larger strategic planning, and what we're doing in the short term. And some of the strategic planning work would be grappling with questions like, do we expand to middle school? Do we increase kindergarten sections? Things that we can't do right now for next year's budget. At the same time, there's some immediate short-term decisions that we need to make as we're finalizing the budget. First of all, I think we should avoid major personnel reductions or structural reorganization right now in creating this budget. And personnel is our largest expense category. Purely from a financial perspective, it's the easiest place to find money and make reductions. But significant staff cuts right now, or a major restructuring would be wrong in this moment. We're in the first year of this new organizational structure. We haven't even completed a whole year. We implemented it intentionally in response to the feedback from our last renewal application Benchmark #7 (Organizational Capacity) and dismantling that now as we're approaching a new renewal timeline might be a mistake. I don't think we've really had the opportunity to fully pressure test and optimize this structure in place, and with a major transition, any reorganization requires time for calibration, reflection, and adjustments along the way. But there wasn't an opportunity to do that with all the transitions. Also with C. Zilinski coming on board as CEO and the potential for a longer-term strategic planning process - what team should be built to achieve those longer-term goals? So short-term, we're trying to figure out a way to make the budget math work without having any major personnel reductions. However I think there's opportunities to streamline, and be more efficient without any major reductions right now. I've been looking line by line, transaction by transaction in every line of our budget, and there are meaningful opportunities to reduce non-essential spending. I've been combing through it, and I think that there's there's some straightforward places where we can make reductions that really won't impact the mission of our school or teaching and learning. And there's other places in the budget where we could spend more strategically. We can't reduce spending for student recruitment while enrollment is a major issue. We shouldn't reduce right now, but it does need to be more targeted and more mission-aligned. There was a time when Bridge Prep needed to emphasize brand-awareness. But now, more targeted recruitment to find students will be a better way to spend that money. We need to think about how to prioritize spending more strategically. I would like to try to keep curriculum and professional development flat as much as possible. And have that spending really tied to a limited set of teaching and learning priorities. We're preparing for renewal and Benchmarks #1 and #2 are the most important. We need to think more about what our academic priorities are. B. Peters, Josh Moreau and A. Pecoraro will sit down tomorrow and dig into the budget framework and get the math to work with that approach. M. Harmon-Vaught commented that our school has had a strong surplus year after year consistently and has accrued a very strong cash position. This is the first year where we've seen our

expenses balloon beyond our revenues. Part of that is the natural rebalancing that comes with the new model we implemented, which intentionally increased staffing, increased leadership roles, made strategic investments in a number of places with curriculum and created latitude for incoming leaders to make instructional decisions that had additional costs, but would drive progress. So, where do we level off, and where are we're making intentional trade-offs? We have a $10.6 million cash position which is strong for our size and scope, and we're not in a dire financial situation, but we want to be at a place where our long-term planning is really effective and fiscally responsible. C. Zilinski added that he welcomes A. Pecoraro's viewpoint and he knows we're going to have more conversations, but he appreciates the tension between the short-term and the long-term, and some of the things mentioned about potentially increasing enrollment, based on what we just heard, this would be the time to submit those changes. Some of those decisions would have to be sooner rather than later. He will make himself available as best as he can so he can be part of this. Increasing kindergarten enrollment would be a material change that should go in with the charter renewal. It's the easiest way to get that change through, rather than submitting later. He will help navigate as much as possible.

D. NEXT STEPS & FOLLOW UPS

M. Harmon-Vaught proposed holding a series of these conversations on a biweekly basis so we can do some intentional planning integrating key strategic questions about material changes to the charter, budget planning, and other key topics together. We can hold this time on Tuesdays and repeat this strategy session two weeks from tonight. We need to make sure we have time beyond the regular meetings to actually make progress this summer. We need to be particularly engaged. We are sensitive to the needs of the school in a period of transition. We'll engage with colleagues, A. Pecoraro, C. Zilinski, and others as appropriate to keep the work moving forward. We can virtually meet on Zoom at this time two weeks from tonight. He added that he's grateful for everyone's continued efforts. Thank you all so much. This is really important work. Alyse, we're grateful for your leadership and stewardship. Chris, we're grateful for joining us and coming aboard. We're excited for this moment, and we want to make sure we steward it effectively together.

III. 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 8:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano

Documents used during the meeting

- Impact Charter LLC Renewal Presentation 05-12-26.pdf