BRIDGE PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL

# Bridge Preparatory Charter School

# Minutes

## Board Meeting

THIS MEETING PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED FOR 08/24 IS NOW MOVED TO 08/31

---

**Date and Time**
Monday August 31, 2026 at 7:00 PM

**Location**
**ZOOM MEETING:**
Meeting ID: **833 9430 7466**
Passcode: **447252**

***ZOOM MEETING LINK:***
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83394307466?pwd=AhOaKZ3BtzaPaUn2EH3AGMLb5b2FIG.1

**--------------------**
**One tap mobile**
+16469313860,,83394307466#,,,,*447252# US
+16465588656,,83394307466#,,,,*447252# US (New York)

***Remote Viewing Locations:***

- 557 5th St, #3, Brooklyn, NY 11215
- 1495 East 63rd St, Brooklyn, NY 11234
- 2406 Dorrington St, Unit C, Houston, TX 77030
- 6100 Main St, Houston, TX 77005

---

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

**Trustees Absent**
Jennifer Sammartino-Mallen

**Ex Officio Members Present**
Chris Zilinski, Lauren (Liv) Livingston (remote)

**Non Voting Members Present**
Chris Zilinski, Lauren (Liv) Livingston (remote)

**Guests Present**
Alyse Pecoraro (remote), Christina Caputo (remote), Kathy Baldassano (remote), Rose Marie Illuzzi (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 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

Traci Frey called a meeting of the board of trustees of Bridge Preparatory Charter School to order on Monday Aug 31, 2026 at 7:02 PM.

### C. Welcome & Kick-Off

T. Frey stated that she can't believe it's the beginning of the new school year already. It's crazy, goes fast. Hope everyone had a great summer. And we want to officially welcome our new CEO, Chris Zilinski. Welcome! We have a lot on the agenda for both informational purposes and Board approval. She then asked Board Co-President M. Harmon-Vaught if he had anything he wants to add.
M. Harmon-Vaught offered a quick thanks to everyone who took a look at the materials that were shared. There's a lot to cover tonight. This is a very important meeting in that we're

voting on several really important documents associated with the year ahead and with the renewal of the Charter, so thanks everybody, for the work you've done.
**NOTE: During this meeting, the school's internet connection sporadically dropped, causing the in-person attendees to briefly drop out of the virtual Zoom meeting while the remote Zoom attendees remained connected. After a few moments the in-person Zoom connection was re-established. It happened several times during the meeting causing the audio & video recordings to temporarily halt. Nothing of any importance was lost since when the connection was re-established, the meeting continued where it left off during the signal interruption.* CEO C. Zilinski responded to the issue by connecting the in-person meeting room to Zoom using his laptop and stated that since we're having some connection issues in this school space, if we have to relocate, we'll move.

### D. Approve Minutes of June 9, 2026 Special Strategy Session Board Meeting

Traci Frey made a motion to approve the minutes from SPECIAL VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING: STRATEGY SESSION on 06-09-26.
T. Frey stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2026 *Special Virtual Strategy Session* 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.

### E. Approve Minutes of June 11, 2026 Board Meeting

Traci Frey made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 06-11-26.
T. Frey stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the June 11, 2026 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.

### F. Approve Minutes of August 10, 2026 Virtual Strategy Session

Traci Frey made a motion to approve the minutes from Virtual Strategy Session - Charter Renewal on 08-10-26.
T. Frey stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the August 10, 2026 *Virtual Strategy Session* 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. Focus on Special Topics

### A. Charter Renewal Application Approval

CEO C. Zilinski previously shared all of the documents necessary for the charter renewal process with the Board of Trustees to review and become familiar with. In addition, the charter renewal application documentation is linked on tonight's meeting agenda. He spoke about the process and said that the renewal reads like a narrative of the last three years: a year where feedback was received from the state, and organizational shifts were planned in year one, implemented in year two, and executed in year three. The data is owned. He hopes it reads as optimistic that we believe we've set the groundwork to really have an exponential jump this year. There are some highlights in there. It's the strongest version we could put forth and it makes a very strong case for a longer-term renewal, which would be a four-plus-year renewal. Frankly, he doesn't think we could have done much better as it reads very strongly. The 23 documents that he shared include the renewal, the benchmark #1 narrative, the narrative itself, and all of the multitude of attachments. He asked the Board of Trustees if everyone had a chance to read through the documents and the Board members responded in the affirmative. C. Zilinski then asked if there were any questions.

- C. Caputo commented that the renewal application documents were very thorough and she liked how we integrated the chart of the literacy collaborative schools, since they are somewhat equivalent for our peer-comparisons. It's a good reflection of how the data shows Bridge Prep compared to the type of public schools that share our mission. That was a really good point in the renewal documentation. C. Zilinski responded that another thing included was we looked at where all of our students would go if they did not come to Bridge Prep, and curated a mini-district, and we performed much closer to that mini-district than District 31 did. Still a lot of ground to make up, but promising metrics.
- M. Harmon-Vaught asked if the aspiration of a long-term renewal of four-plus years would be a strong outcome for us here? C. Zilinski responded that a 5-year-renewal my not be realistic until that gap closes a little more. I think a 4-year would be the home run, and another 3-year would be an average outcome. He would be shocked if it was anything less than that. We believe we have some strong backers, and that the state looks at us favorably. As C. Caputo pointed out, the metrics are favorable when you compare us to the other schools trying to do what we're doing, and we're showing that we're not just resting on our laurels. We are working hard to continually improve, and that's what the state wants to see.
- M. Harmon-Vaught thinks it's important to name something that will come up in reports of the *Finance Committee*. We are looking at a budget this year that doesn't quite have the same outcomes that we've seen historically because of the realities of the operating environment. And one of the things that we talked about is that part of our planning here is a long-term budget. While the current year is financially challenging, we don't believe that will be a factor considered by the state, given our historical strong performance. This will come up later after we've voted on the renewal application, and he wants everyone to hear that first.

Amanda Wolkowitz made a motion to approve the Charter Renewal Application in its totality (including revisions to the Organizational Chart; Discipline Policy; Complaint Policy; Board Bylaws) as set forth in documentation presented to the Board of Trustees.
Mark Harmon-Vaught seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mark Harmon-Vaught | Aye |

**Roll Call**

| | |
|---|---|
| Amanda Wolkowitz | Aye |
| Rebecca Peters | Aye |
| Jennifer Sammartino-Mallen | Absent |
| Traci Frey | Aye |
| Nicole DeStefano | Aye |

### B. Approval of Student Discipline Policy and Code of Conduct for SY 2026-2027

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve the Bridge Preparatory Charter School Student Discipline Policy and Code of Conduct as presented to the Board of Trustees.
Nicole DeStefano seconded the motion.
C. Zilinski stated that the *Student Discipline Policy and Code of Conduct* revisions are a shift away into PBIS and MTSS and added significant more interventions before discipline. The discipline actions themselves largely stayed the same, but some of the tiered behaviors and potential interventions have changed. Those are the significant shifts in this document. This policy was rolled out earlier last school year but did not necessarily go through an approval process. So this has been live for the past year and now we are making sure that we're officially codifying it. The delay was to ensure that we did this right, working with lawyers to ensure it was all appropriate so we could establish this correctly. Outside counsel has seen the policy and says it's good and makes sense. The *Student Discipline Policy and Code of Conduct* is embedded in the *District Safety Plan* and the *Student and Family Handbook* and is really the only significant change in either of those documents.
T. Frey stated that she wants to ensure that parents will be a vital part of the disciplinary process, and be involved in the reentry and consequence processes. We need to make sure that we include parents every step of the way, because many of the complaints that we recently received  were about a lack of communication. As long as we are including parents throughout the processes, the *Student Discipline Policy and Code of Conduct* makes sense as written.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mark Harmon-Vaught | Aye |
| Amanda Wolkowitz | Aye |
| Jennifer Sammartino-Mallen | Absent |
| Traci Frey | Aye |
| Rebecca Peters | Aye |
| Nicole DeStefano | Aye |

### C. District Safety Plan SY 2026-2027

Amanda Wolkowitz made a motion to approve the Bridge Preparatory Charter School District Safety Plan as presented to the Board of Trustees.
Nicole DeStefano seconded the motion.
There are no changes to the *District Safety Plan* from last year, other than the revised *Student Discipline Policy and Code of Conduct*

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

**Roll Call**

| | |
|---|---|
| Amanda Wolkowitz | Aye |
| Nicole DeStefano | Aye |
| Traci Frey | Aye |
| Rebecca Peters | Aye |
| Jennifer Sammartino-Mallen | Absent |
| Mark Harmon-Vaught | Aye |

### D. Approval of Bridge Prep School Employee Handbook SY 2026-2027

Traci Frey made a motion to approve the Bridge Preparatory Charter School Employee Handbook for SY 2026-2027 as presented to the Board of Trustees.
Nicole DeStefano seconded the motion.
CEO C. Zilinski stated that this updated *Employee Handbook* had some title shifts to reflect the current staff titles, and we also made adjustments where the language was not specific. For example, under Dress Code, it listed "business casual", but didn't explicitly state what is acceptable and what isn't acceptable, so we added more clarity to make sure that staff is aware of the expectations. We added more details about carryover hours, because we received some feedback from ExtensisHR regarding legality. The COVID Leave section was removed and we updated the Jury Duty Policy, all based on the feedback from ExtensisHR on how the laws have changed. The biggest shifts from our common practice is specificity around the dress code and expectations regarding Critical Days, i.e., if it is a Critical Day, and you're calling out, you're going to have to provide paperwork. We worked with ExtensisHR to make sure everything we were adding or changing was correct when it comes to HR policy and laws.
*Further discussion regarding the employee dress code policy was conducted prior to the vote.*
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

| | |
|---|---|
| Rebecca Peters | Aye |
| Amanda Wolkowitz | Aye |
| Traci Frey | Aye |
| Nicole DeStefano | Aye |
| Jennifer Sammartino-Mallen | Absent |
| Mark Harmon-Vaught | Aye |

### E. Approval of Bridge Prep Student & Family Handbook SY 2026-2027

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve the Bridge Preparatory Charter School Student and Family Handbook for SY 2026-2027.
Amanda Wolkowitz seconded the motion.
CEO C. Zilinski stated that the revised *Student Discipline Policy and Code of Conduct* is in the *Student and Family Handbook.* The student arrival window was updated; early

pickup was updated; more specificity around planned visitors was added; the conversion of 5 tardies to 1 absence was removed; proactivity infused into the attendance policy making it more explicit; updated the Homework and Assessment Policies, and gave more detail around the Grading Policy. All these updates were necessary to either reflect current practices, remove practices that we didn't like, or give more clarity to families regarding procedures.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

| | |
|---|---|
| Nicole DeStefano | Aye |
| Jennifer Sammartino-Mallen | Absent |
| Mark Harmon-Vaught | Aye |
| Rebecca Peters | Aye |
| Traci Frey | Aye |
| Amanda Wolkowitz | Aye |

**F. Approval of Consulting Services Agreement With Learners Edge, LLC (d/b/a The Lavinia Group)**

Amanda Wolkowitz made a motion to approve the Agreement for Consulting Services from Learners Edge, LLC (d/b/a/ The Lavinia Group) for the period 07-01-26 through 06-30-27 as presented to the Board of Trustees.
Nicole DeStefano seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**G. Review of Board of Trustees Yearlong Business Calendar SY 2026-2027**

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that linked on the agenda is a first cut of the proposed *Board Business Calendar*, which you can click to view. This is a calendar of topics we've used the past few years to map out the key issues for the Board to address at each month's meeting. Because we are focusing on charter renewal at tonight's meeting and we had a previous meeting in August, we don't have the same type of deep-dive tonight that we've had for other meetings, but obviously going forward we intend to have those regular topic deep-dives as part of our regular meetings. You'll notice a flag around the academic goals topics. That's something that we've intentionally decided to include in the conversation we'll have at next month's meeting. Not that we're setting academic goals, we're just going to incorporate that into our broader conversation. Obviously, a lot of work is already underway on that front. You can see this is organized by meetings, and if there are topics that you think we need to cover at a different time, or we need to add to this list, that would be great. Other topics that we have historically covered that aren't listed here, or that we haven't historically covered that we want to list here, that would be great as well. He invited Trustees to take a look at the calendar; it doesn't require a vote.
C. Zilinski suggested that since the NYSED site visit is mid-October (Oct. 13th & 14th), the September 28th Board meeting should include a deep-dive to prepare for the site visit.  M. Harmon-Vaught agreed.

## III. Reports & Updates

### A. CEO Report

C. Zilinski said that most of his report was already covered earlier in tonight's meeting, however the two big things that we didn't discuss is enrollment and staffing, which is the focus at this time of year.

- **STUDENT ENROLLMENT**: Student enrollment and staffing both took a hit over the summer. We are currently enrolled at around 195 students, and as we are enrolling kids, there are kids leaving too. We're starting to get kids on the WARN report, we are reaching out to families. A number of families are moving to more convenient locations. Over the last 2 weeks, we've enrolled 12 students, and we've lost 15. We're doing everything we can to keep who we have, doing outreach, making sure parents are satisfied. There's are newsletters going out from Principal Livingston and her team. I've reached out to every family that's left and we have a contract with a marketing firm that has a couple of events coming up. They were just at the I Love SI event, getting applications there. So we're doing everything we can to continuously enroll, but we did take a hit, and obviously that hurts our budget and our operating costs. We have about 18 families right now in the admissions process from application to sign-up that we're not counting yet towards enrollment because they're in the middle of the process. They can convert over, or they cannot. And now that the charter renewal and the discipline policy is essentially done, we can shift our significant energy over to marketing and make sure that we're getting the word out of all the good stuff we're doing here, so more families can hear about us.
- **STAFFING/TEACHERS**: On the teacher side, we lost about 10 teachers. One of them we chose part ways with, 9 have resigned. Some of them new, some of them veterans. There has been turnover in this transition. We are down one staff member, but we have two candidates, one that we already interviewed and one that we're interviewing Wednesday. We already like the candidates, so we foresee opening classes fully staffed in all positions. It is good to see that people want to work here. We're able to bring in veteran teachers relatively quickly. And we are working with staff to make sure that we hear their concerns, and they understand that things have shifted, and we're moving, hopefully to stability. And hopefully this is just a bump in our growth. That is where we are with enrollment and staffing. It doesn't feel good to lose people that have been here for a while, to lose families, and we are doing what we can to make sure that we bring in new families and new teachers. Due to the lower enrollment, we've shifted from a 2 kindergarten cohort to 1, so that was 2 positions that did not need to be filled. If we hit our enrollment numbers over the course of the year, we will open up those sections. Depending what the student enrollment does.

### B. Finance Committee Report

R. Peters gave the following report from the *Finance Committee* meeting held on August 25, 2026:

- Student enrollment is a direct line to our revenue. The Board originally approved a budget with 233 students, and as you just learned, we're at 195 students, so that is a significant difference. We have a revised budget at 205 students that is being used internally right now. At 233 students we were essentially breaking even. A. Pecoraro and Josh Moreau went through the budget line-by-line to see how to maintain our academics while not disrupting culture and working within the revenue numbers. So the budget was already tight at 233 students. This 200 number we are hovering around is really significant. Rather than breaking even, we're going to have negative $800,000. It's a large difference. However, we have $9 million in the bank. Are we going to be okay? Yes. Having just approved this new consulting contract/agreement with Learners Edge, LLC (d/b/a/ The Lavinia Group) during this financial climate, how does that make sense? The financials is an important part but our number one priority is academics and serving our students. So we were not comfortable pushing back on a contract that would add to this deficit just to save money when we are trying to really improve our academics and we do have savings in the bank. The short-term problem that we have is ideally just short-term. We can handle it, but long-term sustainability is something we're really going to be looking into in the *Finance Committee.* The past couple years, the finances have been easy. Which is part of the reason why we have so much cash in the bank. This year, we ended just under $400,000, which has been our lowest net income, and now we're scheduled to have a negative number. It's very different from our normal financial health. But again, this one year we can handle. It's time to really invest in the programs and not make cuts in order to make the numbers look pretty. But sustainability and really looking at the future and how the school will look more long-term is going to be a really important part of our financial process.
- C. Zilinski added that we're not going to hit 205 students and say and we're done. We're going to try to hit 230 or 240 students. As the year progresses, the per-pupil funding will be truncated based on how long they're enrolled. So we are projecting that this year we will likely operate at a deficit, and I don't say that lightly. Those cash reserves should be reserved, especially if we're talking about the future and potentially expanding. Those reserves will make that possible. So this is intended to be a short-term hit, and we're going to do everything we can searching for grants and looking at how our reserves are allocated to offset it as much as possible.
- R. Peters commented that at the end of Fiscal Year 2024 we had 238 students; Fiscal Year 2025 we had 259 students; Fiscal Year 2026 we had 254 students. We never actually reached that 270 student level. We've hovered around 233 students that we budgeted for, which is not really that outrageous in terms of historical enrollment, but obviously we're in a different environment now. J. Moreau told us that he is seeing reduced student enrollment amongst many of his clients. And enrollment across the city has decreased dramatically as well. It's not just us, it's the city itself.

- A. Pecoraro added that when we started the budgeting process with J. Moreau, he did a quick model and even if we had kept enrollment stable, we were still going to have to reduce $400,000 worth of expenses from last year to this year, because even with enrollment flat, our expenses were outgrowing revenue. So it was already a challenge, and we budgeted at 233 students, so it's even more of a challenge. We don't even have the physical space for 270 students in our current facility. In the future, we need to figure out is that a number that needs to be adjusted? And lastly, having significantly larger upper grades just created a huge gap that needed to be filled. We graduated 65 fifth graders last year. And we were anticipating incoming kindergartens of 24 students. So, just at baseline, we were starting out with a 65 student gap being filled with only 24 new kindergarten students. It's a real testament to the work that the team has done on recruitment because we actually pulled-in close to 50 new students. In the next month we'll be able to look at an analysis of attrition to get a better idea of where we stand. We are in a rebuilding year, and as any sports fan knows, you have a little bit of turnover, you have change, somebody retires and it's a rebuilding year. The recruitment team is poised to do well. Just by the fact that they were able to pull-in so many new students while all this was happening is promising.

## IV. Public Comment

### A. Comments From Guests & the Public

RoseMarie Illuzzi, *Director of Community Partnerships at Bridge Prep* said that she is happy to announce that this year we are collaborating with the Staten Island Zoo for *Dyslexia Awareness Day*, October 3rd from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM. We're super excited. It's our first time. It's actually the zoo's first time collaborating too, with anybody. I'm hoping it's enough time to really kick-off the year for all of our new families coming in, and something for them to look forward to. I mean, who doesn't want to see the sloth? Because I do. I'll send invitations to the Board of Trustees, if you want to stop by.

### B. Family Association Update

- C. Caputo said that the *Family Association* did not meet in July or August, but she should have updates at our next Board meeting, and hopefully they're going to get parents off to a running start, and there should be more to share in September. She can share the updated banking information now, which is good to have for the record. The *Family Association* ending balance as of June 30th was $5,464.30. A lot of their expenses went towards the senior gifts, lawn signs, and they purchased senior towels for the graduating 5th graders. They made some money on senior notes, and some on lawn signs. She will have more to share from the *Family Association* next month.
- T. Frey asked if next time she could also share a calendar of events from the Family Association? If you could get us a calendar of events so that we can encourage board members to come, that'd be great.

- C. Caputo responded yes, that's something she was already speaking with *President of the Family Association*, Georgia Orosz and her team about. She asked for an outline of *Family Association* events to share with the Board. That was already in her notes to have for this year.

## V. Closing Items

### A. Final Thoughts

- N. DeStefano wants to thank CEO C. Zilinski and the team for their work on the renewal application. It was well organized with a deep understanding of the organization and the goals of Bridge Prep, it was really well laid out. Thank you.
- C. Zilinski responded by saying thanks, but Impact LLC did most of the work. And he also wants to thank Alyse Pecoraro and wish her good luck. Alyse has been great, crucial to helping him get on board. She did a great job. Best of luck with everything, Alyse. He said his fridge is stocked with seltzers from Alyse, so it will be a while before he forgets her presence.
- C. Caputo added the first day of school is Thursday. She wished a great first day with the kids to Principal Livingston and C. Zilinski. She said it's a new school year. The kids might not look excited, but they really are. It's gonna be a good year, all positive things, so have a great first two days, everyone.

### B. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano

---

## Documents used during the meeting

- 2026 BPCS Renewal Cover Letter.pdf.pdf
- 2026 BPCS Renewal Application Narrative.pdf
- 2026 BPCS Renewal Attachment N. Narrative Outlining Innovative Aspects of the Charter School.pdf
- DRAFT SY2627 District Safety Plan.pdf
- DRAFT SY2627 BPCS Employee Handbook.pdf
- DRAFT SY2627 Student and Family Handbook.pdf
- LG Learners Edge Bridge Preparatory Charter School - Agreement.pdf
- FINAL DRAFT Discipline Policy and Code of Conduct - Summer 26.pdf