APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Monday September 28, 2026 at 7:00 PM

Location
Bridge Preparatory Charter School
Petrides Campus
715 Ocean Terrace, Building A
Staten Island, NY 10301

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

JOIN ZOOM MEETING:
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
- 2406 Dorrington St, Unit C, Houston, TX 77030
- 6100 Main St, Houston, TX 77005

Trustees Present
Amanda Wolkowitz, Jennifer Sammartino-Mallen, Mark Harmon-Vaught (remote), Nicole DeStefano, Rebecca Peters (remote)

Trustees Absent
Traci Frey

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

Guests Present
Kathy Baldassano (remote), Michael Saadeh, Polina Struits (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

Mark Harmon-Vaught called a meeting of the board of trustees of Bridge Preparatory Charter School to order on Monday Sep 28, 2026 at 7:03 PM.

C. Welcome & Kick-Off

D. Approval of Minutes of August 31, 2026 Board Meeting

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 08-31-26.
M. Harmon-Vaught stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 08-31-26 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. Board Actions & Focus on Special Topics

A. Approval of Contract Extension with Extensis Group LLC d/b/a ExtensisHR

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve the contract with Extensis Group LLC d/b/a/ Extensis HR for the period November 1, 2026 through October 31, 2027, as presented to the Board.
Rebecca Peters seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. School & CEO Goal-Setting for 2026-2027

CEO C. Zilinski shared the *2026-2027 Bridge Prep Organizational Goals* document with the Board, which covered the following areas:

- **IMPROVE ACADEMICS:** C. Zilinski stated that we spent the summer working as a team, including our Interim Acting CEO, A. Pecoraro, to make sure the school goals are in alignment with the work that was started last year, that there was a continuation. The first goal was focusing on academics. These are not easy to reach goals and I want them to be stretch goals. They should not be easily met. So you're looking at an average expectation increase of around 15 percentage points in proficiency in Math and ELA and maintaining a 75% overall students meeting their growth targets in MAP. I focused on meeting growth targets in math, because I feel that's a better measurement than proficiency.
- **STUDENT ENROLLMENT & STAFFING:** The second goal focuses on student enrollment and staffing practices, making sure that we have pipelines that have continuous amount of scholars and families applying, and that there's pipelines to make sure that any staff vacancies are filled quickly. We even potentially will have some student teachers come through, which would help us in that pipeline. Some targets for this year, 220 students enrolled, 240 scholars before end of year, improving our English Language Learners (ELLs) numbers. Every goal is meant to be a stretch goal, we're going to move to attain them, but they are all designed to be aligned with the health of the organization.
- **OPERATIONAL CAPACITY & SUSTAINABILITY:** The third goal is to improve our operational capacity and sustainability. Short-term success doesn't matter if we can't sustain it long-term, and the focus here is to make sure that the staff members that are here understand what the vision is, understand their roles and responsibilities. A. Pecoraro started that responsibility with job descriptions and the organizational chart, and I'm continuing that, and making sure that everything is codified, not based on institutional knowledge, but actually codified and live in a central place. So that way, as the pieces continue to move, there is no drop-off in quality. That has not always been the case. A lot is institutional knowledge. People have just been here forever, and they know how it's done. I want to make sure that should we ever get to the point that we want to replicate or expand, we have structures in place to move.
- **IMPROVING SCHOOL VISIBILITY:** The 4th and final goal, is about improving our visibility in the internal-external community, meaning on Staten Island and in the larger schooling and dyslexia community. We want to make sure of our exposure in Staten Island and Brooklyn, that we're more of a household name, that people

know who we are and what we do, to bring in some new partners with resources, whether it be through funding or miscellaneous resources. We need to make sure that we're in alignment with one of our key design elements, which is partaking in the larger community of educational and medical institutions that are working with dyslexic families.

All of the goals were designed to continue the work being done and be aligned with our key design elements, and the focus statements at the bottom of the document also helped develop these goals. These focus statements came from the work that the leadership team, the school and network leadership team, worked on over the summer to align what we want to accomplish this year. So this was created by that team, and was then used to codify those goals and make sure that they were fine-tuned and measurable.

Principal L. Livingston added that although the academic goals are stretch goals, I do think that we can come within reach of them I feel confident about the systems that we've built with our MTSS year two. We have been able to hit all of those benchmarks and I feel confident in the way that we're providing professional development, the way that we're coaching, the way that we are bringing teachers to the table, bringing them in on conversations about current approaches and also holding them accountable. It's like the push-and-pull coaching approach that we have. We started at the end of last school year, and we have gone full throttle this year with real-time coaching. Our teachers are very receptive to it, and that is the easiest leverage point in changing teacher pedagogy in the moment. We've also drilled down to have specific department goals, as well as subject-specific goals. We have also worked on our communication, making sure that we are in lockstep with families. With those two things combined, we can really reach our goals. Enrollment and organizational structure is something that we worked on fine-tuning at the beginning of the school year, and we're starting to see the fruits of that labor, which is very promising. People understand their roles and responsibility, and that's the first step in making sure that people are able to do their jobs with fidelity. There is accountability and our staff is very responsive to it, even though there is a lot of accountability, especially with the demographics and the type of school that we have. The lift is big, and the asks are a lot, but we're giving our teachers, and all the staff, the support that they need in order to grow and reach their individual goals and their department and team goals as well.

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that the role of the Board of Trustees is broadly accountability, and as CEO, C. Zilinski is accountable to us for these goals and support is also a vital part of our role as Trustees. These are ambitious goals, and we know that they need to be to meet the moment for the school. We've heard it, it's been part of the conversation since our last renewal about the need for structures and systems, for supports for teachers, and strengthening teaching and learning and student outcomes, these have all been critical stories we've been hearing about for some time. The work that our CEO is doing, that Principal Livingston is doing, is helping us move in that direction. What do you need most from the Board of Trustees in the year ahead to best support the work you're doing on these goals?

C. Zilinski responded that partnerships is what is needed the most from the Board. I think we've gotten off to a strong start and we need that fresh perspective and that push. The

committee meetings have been very helpful. There's been some intentional shifts to grow the Academic Committee. I know the Finance Committee has great questions that push us in the right direction. To reach some of these goals, I'm going to have to engage the board in a different way to bring in different resources and different partnerships to make sure that we're moving in the right direction. And that might not be from the academic. It might be, to have a meeting about marketing. It might be, we know somebody in this institution. I believe that bringing in some outside perspective, some outside resources, some fresh partnerships is where we could see how can we take these resources and continue to elevate the program, potentially in ways that we didn't imagine. We've made a couple of connections in the medical field that are bringing in some SEL components for the school that we didn't imagine but that's coming through the pipeline. So I think that right now this is where the Board would be most helpful.

M. Harmon-Vaught added that these goals will become our North Star. And the Board wants to set goals that support the CEO school goals. And as we think about this in the coming weeks, I'm hopeful that we can ourselves set goals that are ambitious and supportive of the ambitious goals the CEO has set. Those span many areas, partnerships and new initiatives on behalf of the school, certainly, but also our own Board recruiting. How do we build capacity in areas that the CEO and school needs that capacity? These will be conversations to have in the In the days and weeks ahead. *A question and answer session followed.*

C. NYSED School Site Visit Preparation

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that we are in a charter renewal season and this is our renewal year. At our last meeting, we voted on the renewal packet that was submitted successfully to NYSED. And thank you to all the people that spent so much time to get that ready. And now we have to prepare for the NYSED site visit. This is when NYSED colleagues come to the school, they meet with various stakeholder groups, they visit classrooms, they drill in, they really want to understand if we're meeting our mission. And part of that is engaging the Board of Trustees in the process. I'm going to give the floor to CEO C. Zilinski to talk more about that process, but this will be an important way that we all need to engage, because the board's engagement here is really indicative of the support we have for the school and is an important part of the process.

- C. Zilinski shared a guide for the Board to prepare for the NYSED visit. He stated that NYSED will visit the school for two days in October, the 13th and 14th and part of that is a Board interview. They're going to make sure that we're doing everything we said in that renewal application. It was a lot of documents, but perusing it, going through it, looking at the original charter, all helps. I created a guide for Board preparation, which you can review prior to the visit. It is not the end-all, be-all. I pulled from different sources, but it's basically giving guidance as to what NYSED is looking for from the Board, and the bullet points are really the purpose. They want to make sure that the board understands its role, that you're here to hold the CEO and the school accountable. That you understand where we are financially, where we are academically, that there mechanisms to hold leadership accountable, that we are

in compliance with everything, that the different committees are engaging in the planning process, understand the expectations of NYSED, and the Board members could speak to what's working and what's not. They are not looking to come here and have us just say everything's great. They're looking for us to have our finger on the pulse of what's actually happening in the school, be able to speak to everything that is great, and everything that needs to grow. They're not looking for you to be able to quote every statistic, but they're looking for you to just have a finger on the pulse. What are the state exam scores? They're below what we wanted, and this is what we're doing to get them to improve. If you can't remember the specifics, it's not going to hurt us. They don't want the Board to have to refer to the CEO or to school leadership for answers. I included in here the renewal documents, the original charter, and the renewal guidelines. There were two charter terms. The first was the first five years. The second term is this year and the previous two years. The story of Bridge Prep is that first year was taking the feedback from the renewal and beginning the reorganization. And that led to year two, which was when we shifted to the CEO and principal's roles. And then in year two, in midst of that reorg, we had some leadership shifts with Executive Director T. Castanza stepping down, Interim Acting CEO A. Pecoraro coming in, and now we are in year three, the final year of this particular charter term, which is where you're seeing the fruits of the labor of the reorganization that happened over the past two years. NYSED might ask some questions that go back to the first term, but if you want to keep it into the last three years, inclusive of this year, that's what we're speaking to for this renewal, and the work that's been done through that. So a finger on the pulse of the academics, and financially how we're doing with our operating expenses. This year we're going to operate a deficit, but we do have a surplus that we're going to draw upon, and the plan is to make sure that that's more in alignment moving into next year. We will get the audit soon, and we'll be able to share that with everybody, so you can see what the auditors found. How the Board self-assesses, knowing the board bylaws, knowing the different committees, who serves on what, and going back, looking at the last few months of meetings and minutes, just to refresh the work that's been done. Knowing the original mission statement, and the original mission statement is to provide all students, especially those struggling with literacy acquisition, with an innovative, student-centered learning environment that challenges them with academic rigor, builds their resiliency, and forces their academic progress and social-emotional growth. Our goal is to graduate students who are confident and creative learners prepared for secondary school and beyond. I included that, because when I spoke to different teachers, different stakeholders, people have different interpretations of what Bridge Prep is. I think it's important for us to understand that we are intending to be that literacy acquisition school, particularly for those students who are struggling and have dyslexia and other diagnoses, but for everybody. And that's what we're moving towards. And I included some questions to know. I'm not going to read the entire document, but I gave as much information so you have this one source. If you scroll down to the bottom, I included about 40 sample questions that could potentially be asked. It's pretty generic, but there's questions that the Board

could reasonably be asked, and it has some sample answers. Really, the board's job is oversight and accountability, and NYSED will be probing that. The feedback I already received from NYSED on our Board has been this is a highly functioning Board, who knows everything that's going on, so I do think we're already set up in a good place to have this Board interview with NYSED. And this guide should just help you a little more. But the sum is that this has been a 3-year transition into a new organizational structure. This is the year where things are taking hold. The state exam has not met our expectations, and all of the work being done over the last 18 months, has been to improve the academic outcomes of the program.

- M. Harmon-Vaught added that this is something that's really important to be present for, if at all possible, and we do have the ability to have a Zoom option, but the more Trustees can be present in person, the better. It's really important. And I think having this guide is very helpful. I encourage Board members to read it and and raise questions if there's something here that doesn't make sense to you, or doesn't jive with your understanding beforehand. One of the things in these meetings that we found to be really helpful is leaning on the expertise of Board members who have particular skills. There are finance questions that R. Peters is probably best positioned to answer, or historical questions that I might answer, or trustee recruitment questions N. DeStefano can answer. A. Wolkowitz you bring the parent experience and you're an excellent champion. Each of our colleagues has advantages that they bring. And I really urge you to prioritize being present, because it matters to show up and be visible. We have a strong positive relationship with Paolo, our authorizer liaison at NYSED. He's been a champion for us and we have good rapport. This is a time for us to have full hearts but also clear eyes. We know and love the school's mission, we're committed to that mission, we care about the school, and we're deeply invested, but we see the challenges and we're going to name those honestly. We can talk about the ways that we're rising to the occasion, and we've made changes in line with state recommendation and our own observations to meet the moment. That's really important in our conversation. One of the reasons our midterm NYSED site visit was far more successful than our prior renewal was because we were willing to come to the table and say what wasn't working well. I think prior to that, we had a strategy that if we admit any fault, we're failing. But really what they're looking for is an honest self-assessment. Do we really understand where we are? And do we fully understand the strategy and the tactics that are moving us forward? C. Zilinski added that the NYSED focus is going to be on the benchmarks that we did not make progress in or meet, which is largely #1, which is student performance, which has to do with state exam results, #7 organizational capacity, which was why we did the reorganization and made sure that we have this new organizational and hourly compliance with respect to IEPs. So, those are the areas they will focus on.

III. Reports & Updates

A. CEO Report

CEO C. Zilinski gave the following update:

- **ACADEMICS** - Anecdotally, the school got off to a strong start. Every classroom I've been in, the students are working, their teachers are working. Now, that doesn't mean that there's no room to grow, but walking the hallways, there was a sense of calm and commitment and purpose. Classes were calm, learning was taking place, and there were few incidents. Several team members mentioned that this was a much different experience as compared to previous years.
- **RESOURCES** - The start can be attributed to the clarity of vision and time spent training and utilizing resources. Those resources include: Teach Like a Champion training, Wit and Wisdom training, LG Red Thread training, O.G. training.
- **STAFFING** - We started the year fully staffed with teachers, with one long-term substitute hired (not contracted) for current medical/family leaves. We have 10 new staff members. Everybody's in compliance with certification, we have all of our special education hours covered, and I believe we have a couple over-hires in special education, so that way there's some leeway should we need to make any shifts. So we are in a healthy place with respect to staffing, with respect to staff support, with respect to structures and systems academically, and as a network. Instead of using the substitute service, we were able to hire our own long-term sub. in the hopes that we will be able to open up another classroom section.
- **ENROLLMENT** - Enrollment continues to fluctuate as students settle in and remains under our targeted number. Our priority is to reach our target through a refreshed marketing campaign. Right now we're at 201 students, but those numbers quickly change. We will continue to enroll until we hit numbers that are not sustainable. I don't foresee that happening at any time soon.
- **CHARTER RENEWAL** - Renewal application has been submitted. NYSED visit is from 10/13-10/14. All documents are available to review.

M. Harmon-Vaught added thank you to CEO C. Zilinski for jumping right in. It's really clear, the way in which you're already putting a stamp on the school honoring the work over the last 18 months but also the longer history of the school. And really pushing us in a positive direction. I think you've been candid, you've been clear about what's happening, and you also are really committed to the mission, the families and the community. That's felt and we're hearing it. So thank you for your leadership, Chris. We're really grateful to have you aboard.

B. Academic Committee Report

Principal L. Livingston gave an academic update and shared the MAP Data for the Fall of SY 2026-2027:
This is the average percent per grade of students that have met their RIT score, which is their
projected average, how well they're going to do on the fall ELA and math assessment:

GRADE	MEETING/EXCEEDING RIT
1st	33.30%

2nd	63.50%
3rd	76.25%
4th	39.70%
5th	40.70%

This is the comparison from Fall last year to Fall this year, and this is the average growth:

GRADE	AVERAGE GROWTH FALL 2025-2026
1st	15.90%
2nd	14.60%
3rd	20.40%
4th	10.40%
5th	6.30%

The average growth is incredible. We saw that in last year's MAP data at the end of the year, and we saw growth in our state assessment data. Even though we have a lot of students that are still below proficiency, we want to keep that growth going. The way that we're setting up intervention with our reading specialists, with our intervention periods and blocks within the day, we are set up to not only support our students that are more than one grade level below, but we're targeting our students that are on the cusp of proficiency. We looked at our State data from last year, and now we have this MAP data as well. We're triangulating the data that we're getting from our unit assessments, and we're making sure that we're hitting the skill gaps, and that we're constantly regrouping our students for intervention so that we are responsive and proactive to our students' needs. And that's why you see so much growth

A question and answer session followed.

C. Finance Committee Report

R. Peters gave the following report on the *Finance Committee* meeting held on September 23, 2026:

- **MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT**: Our meeting started with the monthly financial report for August, as we're in our second month of this school year, and things are operating as usual. We are waiting for some numbers that'll reconcile the financial picture more. But for right now, it's things as usual, nothing to report there.
- **CASH OPTIMIZATION:** We want to make sure that the savings we have are being optimized in the best way. CEO C. Zilinski brought this up, and it's great that he's paying attention to it.
- **INVESTMENT POLICY:** We went over our investment policy and went through the four things that we want to keep in mind:

1. Safety - making sure that our savings are protected by the FDIC insurance limit
2. Liquidity - making sure the school's needs are met, and that we have the cash to do so
3. Yield - making sure we're getting as much ROI as possible, but also making sure we're investing in things that make sense. Our savings, if not in a traditional checking

or savings account, are either invested in T-bills, or invested in a Treasury-built product. Government investments are as safe as you can get.

4. Maintaining the public's trust

- **COMPLIANCE:** Regarding our investment policy, we have a quarterly report, which will be presented at the next *Finance Committee* meeting, to make sure we keep an eye on our investments.
- **AUDIT UPDATE:** Everything is sailing smoothly. The auditors will be joining the *Finance Committee* meeting in October, and they may also attend the October Board meeting. Either way, we'll have the finalized audit in October. If we are asked about the audit during the renewal interview, we can honestly say we have another year with a clean audit. There's some nuances, but for the most part it's a clean audit, following the systems we put into place.
- **BUDGET:** We have a current student enrollment number of 201. This enrollment number is much lower than what we originally anticipated. So every Fall, we do a budget refresh, where we look at where enrollment actually lands, and where we think things are going to be. That process will be extremely important this year, and also in future years. Making sure this model, not only on the academic side, but also on the financial side is sustainable for future years.

D. Board Development & Governance Committee Report

N. DeStefano gave the following update:
There are no pertinent updates except we should connect offline to assist potential new Board member Michael Saadeh regarding a roadblock that has come up in the process that I am not familiar with and I need to tap into M. Harmon-Vaught's historical expertise.
M. Harmon-Vaught said he is happy to help.

E. Family Association Update

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that we have a new, soon-to-be colleague joining us this evening. Usually we'd have a Family Association update, but for now, we welcome the new Family Association representative, Polina Struits, and invite her to introduce herself.
P. Struits thanked the Board for welcoming her. Hopefully, I'll get through all the background clearance soon and then be full-fledged Board member. I represent the Family Association. I'm the association treasurer, second year there, and we've actually been reaching out to the parents already this year. We've had our 1st meeting of the year. We had a good group of parents turning out and joining. Most of the parents are excited about the different events coming up. We've mentioned the upcoming dyslexia walk with the school and the trunk or treat, pumpkin patch and all other fundraisers and activities. We met with new CEO C. Zilinski and we will keep working with others at the school to make sure that we're actually partnering more and more with the events. Otherwise, as background, I'm not from an education career. My background is more banking. I've spent over 25 years in banking, and right now I'm in artificial intelligence for financial crimes, and compliance work.

M. Harmon-Vaught added that we're really excited to have you. It's not every Board that has a Family Association representative who is a full voting member. And that's a really important constitutional part of our Board because it is important that parents' voices be represented in our conversations. So we're grateful that you're willing to come aboard and hopeful all the paperwork will run smoothly. We're excited to get you aboard so you can be a full Board member with us.
R. Peters commented that hearing the Family Association perspective on what's going on from their viewpoint is one of the best parts about our Board meetings. When we hear a parent say that their child picked up a book for the first time, it's so meaningful. Sometimes we're far away and hearing those stories might feel small to you, but are very important and remind us about the work we do, so we really appreciate the perspective.

IV. Closing Items

A. Open Meetings Law Refresher

K. Baldassano gave an overview and refresher on the NYS Open Meetings Law *(Public Officers Law, Article 7, §103ff)* and "extraordinary circumstance" when a Trustee can be considered present, but there is a specific reason why they cannot attend in-person. They need to let us know in advance and it has to be approved as an extraordinary circumstance. M. Harmon-Vaught added that if you request to be exempted under the extraordinary circumstance you need to contact either of the Board Co-Presidents or Board Secretary, N. DeStefano for approval. We will then notify K. Baldassano that we've approved an exemption for extraordinary circumstances. By that allowance, you'll be able to participate in the meeting and vote. Thank you Kathy for always keeping us honest on this, and making sure we're in compliance. This may seem tedious, but it matters a great deal, and it's what allows us to be effective in operating. So thank you for all the work that you do on that front.

B. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:18 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano

Documents used during the meeting

- ExtensisHR Agreement Renewal 11-26 to 12-27.pdf
- Annual Goal for BPCS CEO, 2026-27.pdf
- BPCS BOT Renewal Visit Resources.pdf
- CEO UPDATE for Sept 2026 Board Mtg.pdf
- MAP Data - Fall 2026-2027.pdf

- OPEN MEETINGS LAW SYNOPSIS Sept 2026.pdf