APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Virtual Strategy Session - Charter Renewal

DATE CHANGETHIS VIRTUAL MEETING WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PARTICIPATION REMOTELY VIA ZOOM

Date and Time
Monday August 10, 2026 at 7:00 PM

Location
ZOOM MEETING:
Meeting ID: **872 2236 2024**
Passcode: **102241**

ZOOM MEETING LINK:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87222362024?pwd=DR8a4VrlYvXbk0QxAaRUWNl1rfJlXW.1

One tap mobile
+16469313860,,87222362024#,,,,*102241# US
+16465588656,,87222362024#,,,,*102241# US (New York)

Remote Viewing Locations:
• 16 Northport La, Staten Island, NY 10314
• 68 Harbour Ct, Staten Island, NY 10308
• 557 5th St, #3, Brooklyn, NY 11215
• 1495 East 63rd St, Brooklyn, NY 11234
• 2406 Dorrington St, Unit C, Houston, TX 77030
• 18 Seth Court, Staten Island, NY 10301

• 47 Highview Ave, Staten Island, NY 10301

This Special Board Meeting is being held IN ADDITION to the regularly scheduled August 24th Board Meeting

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

Trustees Absent
Rebecca Peters

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

Guests Present
Christina Caputo (remote), Kathy Baldassano (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, Nicole DeStefano, Amanda Wolkowitz, and Jennifer Sammartino-Mallen 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.**

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 10, 2026 at 7:03 PM.

C. Welcome from the Co-Chairs

T. Frey welcomed the virtual Zoom attendees and said that she hopes everyone's having a great summer. Can't believe it's August already. January and March go really slow, even though they have the same number of days as July and August, and those always seem to fly by. So I hope you're all enjoying your summer, and staying cool.
M. Harmon-Vaught added before we jump in, just for information, Board member Tara Gore has been a Trustee for the last few years. She is having an exciting happening in her life, she's having a baby and she has decided that she needs to step back and resign from

the Board. Obviously we're incredibly thankful for her participation over the past few years, on the Academic Committee and the Board in general, but, she needs to resign effective immediately and has submitted her written resignation. We just wanted to make you aware of that. He is echoing the thanks for making time tonight and there are some key contracts and agreement we need to approve.

II. APPROVAL OF CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS & INVOICES

A. Edwards Orton-Gillingham Contract SY 2026-2027

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve the contract agreement between Bridge Preparatory Charter School and Edwards Orton-Gillingham for professional services for School Year 2026-2027.
Traci Frey seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services: Pre-Paid Insurance Invoice

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to the Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services pre-paid insurance invoice for School Year 2026-2027.
Nicole DeStefano seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

C. W.B. Mason Furniture Invoice

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve the W.B. Mason furniture invoice dated 07/23/26.
Jennifer Sammartino-Mallen seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

D. Resolution #37a Updating Chase Bank Authorizing Representatives and Signers

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to approve Resolution #37a updating the Bridge Preparatory Charter School authorizing representatives and account signatories for the JP Morgan Chase Bank accounts.
Traci Frey seconded the motion.
RESOLUTION #37a Updating the Chase Bank Authorizing Representative and Signers:
WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of Bridge Preparatory Charter School (“Bridge Prep”) deems it to be in the best interests of Bridge Prep that the following action be taken by the Board of Trustees of Bridge Prep pursuant to this Resolution:
WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees desires to update Bridge Prep’s Authorizing Representative(s) and authorized signer(s) with Chase Bank; now therefore, be it
RESOLVED that, pursuant to applicable law and the authorizing Charter, the Board of Trustees hereby consents to, approves, and adopts the following:

1. ADD Authorizing Representative(s): Chris Zilinski (CEO)

2. ADD signer(s): Chris Zilinski (CEO)
3. REMOVE Authorizing Representative(s) and signer(s): Alyse Pecoraro (CEO)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the officers of Bridge Prep are authorized and directed to execute any and all documents and to take any and all actions necessary or advisable to effectuate the foregoing changes with Chase Bank, effective immediately upon adoption of this Resolution.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

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

III. STRATEGY SESSION

A. Update on NYSED Authorization Visit to School in October

T Frey stated that we received some information from NYSED regarding their reauthorization visit to the school which will be over a 2-day period, October 13th and 14th, right after Columbus Day.
We do not know the schedule at the moment, and we don't know which day NYSED will want to speak to the Board as a whole. We just want you to put a hold on your calendar, a save-the-date, as it will be either the 13th or the 14th that we will need all Trustees, either in person or virtually on Zoom for this meeting with NYSED. For those of you who've been on the Board a little while, you will remember we've done this in the past, and for those of you who are new, NYSED will ask us questions about our role at Bridge Prep.

B. Charter Renewal Planning

T. Frey asked CEO C. Zilinski to give the Board an update on the renewal process: where we are now and any input or work needed from the Board of Trustees. Any support you need from us?

- C. Zilinski responded that he finally got the renewal application draft today, and this was his first time to get eyes on it. Benchmark #1 is very much in its infancy, as state exam scores were released last week. There are some bright spots in there. The trends indicate regression throughout District 31, NY City, and NY State, and we regressed a little as well. Our regression beat the trend, though. There are grades that jumped upwards of 10 percentage points, and other grades that regressed. There are wins but there's work to be done in both ELA and Math. We hit a new high in Science, so Science is moving in the right direction. Overall, the takeaway is we showed some regression, and the name of the game for renewal is to start closing that gap with the district and the state. That being said, looking at some other metrics that are going

to be inserted in the renewal application, our MAP data indicates for ELA, 56% of our kids meet or beat their projected growth, and the nationwide average is 50% for ELA and 62% for Math. Our students averaged hitting 110% of growth in Math, so not just meeting it, exceeding it. And when you look at grade levels, there are some grade levels where 94% of the students met growth and some exceeded growth as much as 150%. There are stories to be told, and part of my goal is to make sure that Benchmarks #1 and #2 are telling that story; while we may be inconsistent, we have a solid foundation to build on. That's going to be the story that's woven throughout the renewal application: that we hit some inconsistencies last year due to the multiple changeovers occurring, and you can see that in the data, and there are bright spots and inconsistencies based on grade level. It's very easy to see which grades were more functional than other grades based on the data. With all the transitions at the school last year, interventions didn't really start working until the Spring, and not all the systems were put into place immediately. He'll share the draft with the Board to make sure we can all contribute because he cannot tell the whole story himself since he's only been CEO of Bridge Prep for a month and four days. The more information we can compile, the better it will be for our charter renewal if we can show how something happened, or what was missed. The charter renewal application is due September 3rd, we have some lead time and the draft is ready to go. He will review the draft over the next day, and then he'll share it with the Board to see what feedback the Trustees can give.

- A question and answer session followed during which C. Zilinski clarified that we regressed in both ELA and Math, but the regression in Math was less than the regression in ELA. Overall, for grades 3-5, District 31 regressed by 12 percentage points. Bridge Prep regressed by 9 percentage points in ELA. In Math, we only regressed by 1 percentage point. Fifth grade fell about 10 percentage points, but 3rd grade stayed pat, and 4th grade jumped up 7 percentage points. There are a lot of small victories that are showing that change will take hold now coming into a fresh year, making sure that everybody's singing the same song. He is confident we're going to have an exponential year. He's grounded in the numbers, but seeing what's taken place and spending time with Principal Livingston and her team to reveal what went well and what didn't and what is yet to come, he knows there's a lot to build upon here. We actually moved ahead of District 31 in special education proficiency in 5th grade and in some ELL subgroups. T. Frey commented that would be great to highlight under Benchmark #1. Principal Livingston and her team have a strong vision for what quality instruction should look like, what data-driven decisions should be made, and he is here to support that vision. Our ELLs exceeded District 31 by about 10 percentage points. We know we are under-enrolled in ELL and it is a small group but our regression was actually better than District 31's regression.
- T. Frey stated that the fact that we're exceeding District 31 in some metrics is definitely something we need to not only celebrate, but shout from the rooftops because we thought that we were never going to reach District 31 levels in terms of general proficiency due to the number of our students that have IEPs. However, we were moving towards closing the gap, and if we close the gap, or potentially

exceed the gap, that's amazing. We want to shout out to Principal Livingston and her work with the staff this year, because it was a challenging year. Kudos to Principal Livingston and the work that she did with the teachers and the support staff to even bring us to this point.

- Principal Livingston commented that most of the interventions that we put in place in response to the data could not be fully implemented until February and March, but she is very, very confident that right out the gate this new school year, we're not only going to reimplement those same systems, but we improved them as well. And it's very important that everyone is on the same page, understanding all their roles/responsibilities, and all tracking student growth and proficiency in the same way. She is very confident that we're going to continue to make positive changes in student outcomes.
- M. Harmon-Vaught added that one of the most challenging things is that student outcomes are a lagging indicator, not a leading indicator. We know that it takes time to change the system and structure before you actually begin to see outcomes. Regression is very frustrating, and we're reminded, especially in the context of the district, that progress is taking time; we're getting footholds in places, we're building on strengths that already exist, and we're investing and doubling down in places where we know we've had challenges. So, kudos again to everyone.
- C. Caputo, *Family Association* representative commented that she's been dissecting the DoE data since release on Friday, and it's clear in the DoE data that something happened this year in 3rd grade ELA scores which tanked. Those 8-year-olds were being tested on a computer and there were a lot of different variables. But that being said, 3rd graders in high-performing district schools dropped in the double digits. Some of these high-performing schools are down 13%, and the 3rd grade phenomenon across the city is something that needs to be looked at. She thinks *Wit & Wisdom* was a great choice of ELA curriculum for our school. Feedback from students, teachers and parents indicate that they really enjoy the program which emphasizes critical thinking. She is confident about the new school year and she appreciates the role of everyone moving forward. She thinks it's going to be a good year with these systems in place.
- C. Zilinski responded that he agrees about *Wit & Wisdom* and made sure we reinvested in that program; we just signed a contract with them getting their experts to ensure that we're applying the curriculum in the right way. It is necessary to have that level of ongoing support because it's not the easiest curriculum, and the experience of our teachers has a wide range. Fifth grade is the outlier for us. They were the ones whose ELA scores dropped double digits. In 3rd grade, District 31 dropped 15 percentage points, the city dropped 17, the state fell 11. We dropped only 7 percentage points. So, we are beating the averages in 3rd & 4th grade. That's the bright spot. The not-so-bright spot is our scores are in the 20s and the teens, so we need to raise that up. And we need to monitor progress with the interventions to make sure that the interventions are strategically applied to students' needs. Not every student is on a straight line, and the lines need to adapt to the children. And that is something that we've been working on. You're going to see the intentional

application of interventions and the use of data be a major factor this year, so we could have a little more predictive results before the end of the year. MAP data is not predictive of anything but MAP. MAP is good to show nationally normed data and how kids are progressing on an individual basis, but it is not predictive. He's never seen it be accurately predictive of state exam scores. And we saw again this year, it didn't actually predict well because you can have an outlier year where everybody's scores go down.

- T. Frey commented that the work that's been put in is showing some results at Bridge Prep, and we can celebrate the fact that we're above the district, above the state, and above the city in certain areas, but it still means that 80% of our students are not proficient in reading. We have a way to go to get more of them proficient.
- C. Zilinski stated that's the narrative. Some progress, but not enough, and there are systems and structures in place that should accelerate our growth. And in the renewal paperwork, that's the story we need NYSED to see, because there's only so much that Impact Charters LLC can write without knowing all of that. Principal Livingston's team is going to look at the renewal draft, and we'll share with the Board to make sure that we're getting as many eyes as possible on it. T. Frey added thank you to the whole school team. Good work.

- M. Harmon-Vaught asked C. Zilinski if there are any other particular things he wants the Board members to keep in mind, or particular sections he wants us to zoom-in on?
- C. Zilinski said his understanding, from our meetings is that NYSED will not have the capacity to really thoroughly review every single benchmark, so they're going to focus on the benchmarks that we have been "approaching" in the past. We will make sure those are highlighted, so that way we're keeping a focus on the areas they're going to cover the most: Benchmark #1 (Student Performance), Benchmark #2 (Teaching & Learning), Benchmark #7 (Organizational Capacity), Benchmark #8 (Mission & Key Design Elements), Benchmark #9 (Enrollment, Recruitment & Retention) and Benchmark #10 (Legal Compliance). Work has been done on all these, but frankly, we're going to take another ding on Benchmark #1 based on the state exam results, but the narrative there has to be yes, but this is the work we're doing, because you just have to own the data where it is. So he will make sure to highlight the areas of focus when he shares the renewal draft. He could use Trustees' help to make sure that we are capturing everything for Benchmark #6 (Board Oversight & Governance) that's been done over the course of the year, because this has been a very active Board term. We need to make sure that we've captured all the wins, and where there's losses, the actions that were taken to reverse those losses and create potential wins. You know, the renewal is not about trying to tell NYSED that this isn't what they see, it's - this is what they see, this is what we are doing to make sure that it's going to improve in the future, and here's the evidence that that will happen, and hopefully that will give NYSED the confidence to give us the longest renewal term possible.

C. CEO Update

C. Zilinski said at this point of the year, it's all about staffing and enrollment.

- **STAFF RETENTION:** After last year, there has been some turnover. The team has been replacing staff as quickly as people have resigned. Principal Livingston and team have been interviewing and we have 6 staff candidates in the pipeline. We do not have 6 vacancies at this time, we are just making sure that we have our bases covered. The energy the school team is putting into this is admirable, and if a resignation comes in, within a day or two, there's a replacement. We are not fully staffed. There are 3 or 4 vacancies right now, but there are offers ready to go out, and interviews being scheduled. This is a product of last year being a little tumultuous, and there being a lot of change, and that's one of the things we want to make sure that we reverse. Principal Livingston stated that we have 4 interviews this week and 2 next week. She and her team have planned the summer teacher training and anything that comes up, we'll be able to get through without any issues. We want to make sure that this is a community of professionals that are committed to bettering the outcomes of children, and that's going to be the message we send. We don't want any drama.
- **STUDENT ENROLLMENT**: This is a bigger problem since we are under-enrolled. This is our number 1 priority now. In the last week, we've enrolled 5 students, so our efforts are working. We've seen our first Bridge Prep ad on social media. We've been scouring neighborhoods and going to local community organizations, giving them our admission flyers, asking them to put our flyers on their front desks. Our student enrollment campaign includes street teams going to community events through NYCHA and backpack giveaways. Right now we are under-enrolled by about 20 students, approximately a month before school begins and we are doing everything we can. If any Board members have ideas, or any community partnerships, reach out and let us know, because we're going to do everything we can to increase enrollment. In the last 3 weeks, about 7 or 8 new students have joined us and 5 enrolled in the last week. Some of the decrease in student enrollment is the result of there being a lot of change last year, and some families withdrew, but we believe that Bridge Prep has a solid plan moving forward. Right now, we would like to have 2 Kindergarten cohorts. We have about 15 Kindergarten students and we would like to increase that number into the 20s. J. Sammartino-Mallen asked if there is an exit interview or some kind of survey of the families who leave so that we can get an understanding of why they're leaving? C. Zilinski responded yes, we've found families are leaving due to a mixture of moving and some were just not happy with this past year. We do have the specifics. A lot of them are saying there was too much change, and they want more stability. We told them we're actually hitting the stability now, but their year wasn't what they wanted it to be. We had quite a few families move away. A. Wolkowitz suggested someone from the school attend a CEC meeting as it might be beneficial to reach out and get on their September agenda. Can't hurt to preach a little bit about Bridge Prep. C. Zilinski said he would see if we've done that, and if not, we'll set it up. T. Frey stated that if our student test numbers are good in the sense that we regressed less than our neighbors, maybe the Staten Island Advance

newspaper education reporter, Annalise Knudson would write an article about Bridge Prep. Just get our name out there. J. Sammartino-Mallen added that between the new kindergarten suite, the student test numbers that you shared, and the new CEO coming on board, we could get a lot of press out of this. If she can be helpful, just say the word. T. Frey said that October is *Dyslexia Awareness Month* and maybe that can help. C. Zilinski added that we're going to take advantage of getting face-time with all the community organizations that we've previously had partnerships with and also the local elected officials, just to see what we can do. We delayed doing that until we had students in the building, because it's a lot better to invite them to come see the kids. It's a better opportunity for them to put it on their social media as well. These are good recommendations, thank you. The priorities right now are the charter renewal, making sure we're fully staffed and student enrollment is a major concern right now. We're trying to get our flyers into a lot of the Pre-K centers, but if they're associated with the DoE they do not want to let us in. If they're independent Pre-K, they have no problem letting us in, so we're trying that as well. So, if you think of anything, please share, and shoot me an email.

D. Board Public Meeting Calendar for SY 2026-2027

M. Harmon-Vaught thanked K. Baldassano for sharing the Board Meeting Calendar for the new school year. The calendar is linked on this agenda. As a reminder for everybody, we did a poll earlier this year and discovered that Monday evenings were actually the best day for Trustees to attend our meetings, which is great. We've set our Board meetings primarily for the 4th Monday of each month, except for 3 months where we're moving to the third Monday due to holidays. The meeting calendar will also be posted online on Board-on-Track.

E. Action Plans & Follow Ups

- M. Harmon-Vaught asked C. Zilinski about timing for the vote on the charter renewal. Will we be able to vote on the renewal packet on August 24th, given our proposed September timeframe for submission to NYSED? C. Zilinski responded that September 3rd is the submission date, so it has to be ready, because we have to have time to convene and give feedback, and potentially have a follow-up meeting if necessary. Hopefully that won't happen, but he will work with Impact Charters LLC to make sure that timing is realistic. M. Harmon-Vaught encouraged Trustees to actually review the renewal paperwork and asked the Board members to try to spend some real time with the renewal materials when you receive them in the next few days. Send your feedback to C. Zilinski by next week, so that he can incorporate any new information. This is a very important document that is a reflection of our story, and your voice and your viewpoints will matter, and each of you has perspective that will add value. We can then have something that's ready to go for the August 24th meeting. And you know, on the chance that that doesn't work, we may have to schedule a special meeting, but ideally, we'd be able to do it on the 24th.
- T. Frey asked K. Baldassano if the 2 potential new Board applicants, Vincenza Gallassio and Michael Saadeh were sent the Board meeting calendars? K.

Baldassano responded that she was never given their email addresses, but she thought that N. DeStefano would send them the calendars since she had contact with them. N. DeStefano said she was locked out of her Bridge Prep email box but has since gotten access again and she will share the meeting calendar with the 2 Board applicants, and also share their email addresses with K. Baldassano. M. Harmon-Vaught said that we heard back from M. Saadeh, but not from V. Gallassio. This is a good time to bring people onto the Board of Trustees. We lost a Board member this month, so it's a good time to recruit. If there's anybody in your networks who's coming to the fore, please, we're always recruiting for new Board members. And if you know any lawyers, we'd love to welcome a lawyer to the Board.

- M. Harmon-Vaught said thank you to C. Zilinski and Principal Livingston for all the work they're doing. It's a Herculean task under normal circumstances, but then to have a charter renewal too. Walking into a renewal process in your first few weeks on a new job is just really hard. That's a hard ask of someone who's starting in a new position, who's trying to get to know a culture and a community, build relationships, understand where we are and drive progress. And so, thank you Chris for doing that and for jumping right in. Obviously, we're incredibly thankful to A. Pecoraro for her stewardship and all the work that she's put in. I know she and C. Zilinski worked very closely, but we're really grateful to have Chris aboard now. And Liv, we appreciate all the leadership you've brought to Bridge Prep over the past year. Challenges notwithstanding, we have a great year ahead of us and we're going to make the most of it, so thank you, everyone.
- T. Frey added her thanks to everyone. Have a great rest of your summer, and we'll see you in a few weeks on the 24th.

IV. 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 7:48 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano

Documents used during the meeting

- BOARD MEETING CALENDAR 2026-2027 FULL MEETINGS.pdf