

**Minutes  
Bridges Outreach, Inc.  
Board of Trustees Meeting  
September 15, 2015  
Oakes Center, Summit, NJ**

**PRESENT:** Lois Bhatt, Amanda Parrish Block, Alison Bryant, Michele Damodaran, Coni Frezzo, Coleen McCaffery, Malcolm Mead, Kathy McHale, Jennifer Rooney, Joshua Schor, Victoria Smith, Beth Tulloch, Geoff Worden

**ABSENT:** Laura Zinn Fromm, Brian Ginsburg, Jon Maslin

The meeting was called to order by Amanda Parrish Block at 7:15 pm.

**CONSENT:**

A motion to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2015 meeting was made by Geoff Worden and seconded by Alison Bryant.

A motion to make Janice Beckmen and Kathryn Radutzky Chairs Emiriti was made by Amanda Parrish Block and seconded by Coni Frezzo. Unanimously passed.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Lois Bhatt informed that Project Connect has been in operation for eighteen months, and we are assessing strengths and weaknesses of the services provided to plan for the future. Bringing in strong partners who can be on site, tapering down the ID program and getting involved in the Newark Housing First Initiative are all possibilities being considered. The Wise Woman project, a five-part program to help women get jobs and housing, is underway. The photography project, funded by the Arts Council of Newark is being successfully implemented and will provide great public relations and marketing opportunities. The photographer leading the project may seek outside funding for an oral history and/or documentary. Summer runs went smoothly, and the number of runs exceeded last year's.

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Beth Tulloch reported that BridgeFest will take place on May 7, 2016, with The Wine Library once again organizing the beer wholesalers. ***Corporate sponsorship packages will be available, and board members should think about any contacts they may have.*** Marketing materials are being redesigned, with the help of Abbie Moore, a local graphic designer. The new designs aim to be eye-catching and consistent.

## **COMMUNITY:**

Michele Damodaran informed that the focus groups at Project Connect are continuing on a monthly basis. They provide an opportunity to assess how Bridges is meeting the needs of the people served and allow clients to share struggles and strategies. ***Board members are urged to sign up to lead.*** The 2015 dates are 9/25, 10/30, 11/20 and 12/28, all from 10am until 11am.

## **FINANCE:**

A representative from the auditor's office, Robyn Roberts, came to answer any questions the board might have about the profit/loss statement, balance sheet and projected cash flows. Malcolm Mead raised the point that Bridges is a financial entity and should operate more like a traditional business. He raised the concern that the budget is crucial, as expenses are steady while revenues have an element of uncertainty and are realized unevenly throughout the year. As per Robyn's recommendation, Lois has begun tracking cash flow actuals to compare to projections. This will be very helpful in creating a realistic budget. Over the past three years Bridges has exceeded both projected expenses and projected revenues, and has completed each of the years with a surplus.

## **MARKETING:**

Coleen McCaffery has been assessing marketing strategy. She is investigating the possibility of using off-shore developers to design a mobile application for the website. Additionally, she is trying to increase traffic on our Facebook page and is utilizing Instagram to reach people and follow organizations to create a network.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING:**

Coni Frezzo indicated that Jennifer Rooney, Victoria Smith, Beth Tulloch and Lois Bhatt will be working with her to develop a four-year strategic plan to sustain and grow Bridges. Geoff Worden voiced concern that board members should have some involvement during the process to facilitate understanding prior to approval. Coni indicated that there would be options for board input along the way. For the present, FY2016 written goals will stand in for the strategic plan.

## **GOVERNANCE:**

Geoff Worden reviewed strategies to create and sustain a highly effective board. Key points included the increased complexity of Bridges' finances, necessitating a board that has greater understanding of budgets. Bridges' by-laws currently mandate that the board include homeless constituents. This mandate needs to be recognized or removed. Lois Bhatt replied that our by-laws will be updated. Brian Ginsburg will be working on this. Geoff mentioned that an advisory board would be something to consider in the future, and might be a way to engage Emeriti. Coni Frezzo added that small advisory boards can be

useful for specific tasks and time frames. Geoff emphasized that with fewer board members, board members will need to serve on multiple committees or committees will need to be smaller or fewer. He pointed out that a paragraph detailing the function of each committee would be helpful, with the executive committee being critically important. Amanda Parrish Block answered that board members who rolled off the board this year will still be active on committees, and outside individuals with expertise in each area can be brought on as well. The board will need to decide how outside individuals will be approved.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Lois Bhatt reported that Leonard Prentice is no longer on the board and has started his own organization offering weekly sessions providing peer support, role modeling, inspiration and advocacy. He would like to use space at St. John's and function as a partner. In return, he would line up speakers for Bridges, and if needed, refer clients to Bridges' case managers. Jennifer Rooney stated that since he is not affiliated with an agency and is not a licensed social worker, he is not an appropriate partner. Coleen McCaffery said that provided Prentice was not providing or advertising that he provides professional, i.e., social services, she did not see a problem from a legal standpoint. Options discussed included Prentice creating a legitimate agency by applying for 501c3 status or having him partner with/volunteer for an existing agency.

Alison Bryant spoke on behalf of Bridges over the summer and will be organizing a speakers' bureau.

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

The board participated in discussion without staff presence.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12pm.

#### **UPCOMING MEETING DATES TBD**

Respectfully submitted by Michele Damodaran