



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

DRAFT
MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD
Thursday, April 18, 2024, 6:00 p.m.
Fire Administration Building
528 NW 2nd Street
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311

June 2023 - May 2024

Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Vice Chair Janet Gualtieri	P	4	1
Pamela Aiken	P	5	0
Heather Brinkworth	P	4	1
Kristina Dever	P	4	1
John Gillen	A	1	1
Erin Gohl	A	2	3
Juliet Gray-Williams	P	5	0
Charles Laster	P	2	0
Alyssa Mendez	A	2	3
Felicia Shuman-Newkirk	A	0	1
Denia Perloff	P	3	2
Deborah Rosenbaum	P	1	1

Also Attending

Susan Grant, Assistant City Manager
Von Howard, Public Affairs Administrative Supervisor

I. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Vice Chair Janet Gualtieri.

Von Howard, Public Affairs Administrative Supervisor, shared that Chair Suzanne Dean had sent an email stepping down from the Board due to personal conflicts. He read the email for the record. Susan Grant, Assistant City Manager, advised that election of a Chair and Vice Chair would be placed on the next agenda.

Roll was called and quorum was present.

II. Approval of the March 14, 2024 Minutes

Motion was made by Ms. Gray-Williams, seconded by Ms. Brinkworth, to approve the March 14, 2024, minutes as presented. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

III. Old Business

a. Reimagining BCPS Schools Update

Assistant City Manager Grant shared a report from the Broward County Public School Board workshop on Reimagining Our Schools. She stated the meeting room was standing room only, and those present listened to the discussion and continue to be engaged. She explained that initially they were looking at a list of around 60 schools with a threshold of 70 percent enrollment or less, and a School Board member had asked that the threshold be brought down so they are looking at a smaller number of schools, as well as considering factors beyond enrollment such as historical significance and lack of investment by the School Board.

Assistant City Manager Grant advised that the School Board is also in the process of contracting for a facilities assessment which will not be complete for some time. She stated that process would include walk-throughs of certain schools, and City staff had asked to be included in those walk-throughs. She reported that the School Board had asked that cities send letters of support. She noted Fort Lauderdale did not send a letter because the timing of the request and deadline did not allow for Commission consensus. She stated more information was needed before proceeding with a letter, noting that what one (1) neighborhood wants will be different from what is right for another neighborhood. She highlighted discussion that a school may be underenrolled but have a facility in good shape, so it would not be a good candidate for closure versus, which is where the facilities assessment comes in.

Mr. Laster asked how many schools are being considered. Assistant City Manager Grant advised that she does not know the number on the revised list, but some are within the City's boundaries.

Ms. Gray-Williams asked whether it was important to send a letter despite not being able to provide it within the timeframe requested. Assistant City Manager Grant stated that Zoie Saunders is leaving Broward County Schools but had provided two (2) names of School District employees and staff has invited them to present a City Commission conference meeting. She noted the Commission would entertain a presentation and then discuss sending a letter.

Ms. Aiken inquired as to how much the Commission has been updated on the number of Fort Lauderdale schools impacted by Save Our Schools. Assistant City Manager Grant stated the Commissioners are following the issue and are briefed by staff twice a month prior to Commission meetings.

Ms. Gray-Williams asked if the School Board had discussed closing schools versus leasing schools. Assistant City Manager Grant commented that discussion of repurposing is a part of the initiative. She stated the Cemetery Board had made a

Communication to the Commission asking to be considered in the process due to a lack of land for the City's cemeteries. Discussion continued.

Ms. Brinkworth asked if Alan Strauss was among the names Ms. Saunders had provided for follow-up. She noted he had been appointed to Ms. Saunders' position. Assistant City Manager Grant stated she would add Mr. Strauss to the list.

IV. New Business

b. Chief Education Officer Update

Assistant City Manager Grant shared a brief update on the Chief Education Officer hiring process. She advised that five (5) interviews had been conducted on April 9, and the position had been offered to an individual at the recommendation of the hiring panel. She stated the offer has not yet been accepted, but the hope is to have them in place prior to the May 16 EAB meeting. Discussion ensued briefly regarding the background of the candidate.

Ms. Gualtieri asked if the Commission had approved the ongoing position. Assistant City Manager Grant explained the Commission approves positions in the budget process, and one (1) Commissioner had questioned the need for the position, but four (4) were very strongly in favor, so staff was proceeding.

Assistant City Manager Grant commented that the City's elected officials deal with the School Board members directly, but the staff-to-staff relationships with the County and School Board are also important, because that is where a lot of stuff gets done.

Assistant City Manager Grant stated staff is putting together a work plan for the new Chief Education Officer, which will include meeting with each and every principal, the School Resource Officers, Parks and Recreation, and all of the departments they will be interacting with. Mr. Howard discussed the wide variety of projects that Ms. Saunders was instrumental in or a part of. He noted there are a lot of things which are not necessarily seen.

Ms. Brinkworth highlighted the fiscal issues faced by the Broward County School District and the recent settlement with the charter schools. She noted State Statute requires that a certain fund balance be kept or risk takeover, and stated this issue should be on the City's radar. Assistant City Manager Grant asked if that had happened in Broward County before. Ms. Brinkworth stated it had not to her knowledge.

Mr. Laster asked for clarification on the settlement issue. Ms. Brinkworth provided a brief history. She explained that in 2018, the School Board put forth a referendum to voters, asking that they fund supplemental items such as teacher bonuses, mental health, and safety and security. She advised that referendum was explicitly written to

exclude charter schools except for safety and security. She stated the legislature subsequently passed a law that referendums must include charter schools, resulting in a letter from the State Commissioner of Education and eventually the recent settlement with the charter schools. Discussion continued.

Ms. Brinkworth asked if staff was still moving forward with recommendations to the School Board for a vote on school closures. Assistant City Manager Grant stated that was unclear after the workshop, but staff would continue to be on top of it.

c. BCPS Government Affairs Update

Armando Arana, Governmental Affairs Coordinator, Broward County Public Schools, was not present to provide an update.

Mr. Howard confirmed the EAB members have received ongoing updates from Mr. Arana. He noted he forwards the emails on as they are received. He noted the agenda item was a standing invitation to provide updates.

Ms. Gualtieri asked if a new Superintendent of Schools had been selected. Assistant City Manager Grant advised that Deputy Superintendent Howard Hepburn had stepped into the role at the same meeting as Superintendent Peter Licata announced his retirement. Discussion continued. Mr. Howard stated he would forward on the Sun Sentinel article explaining what happened.

VII. Member Discussion

Ms. Gualtieri asked for an update on the resignation of City Manager Greg Chavarria. Assistant City Manager Grant provided a brief overview, noting appointment of an Interim City Manager was expected at the May 7 Commission meeting.

Ms. Aiken referred to a discussion regarding scholarships at the January EAB meeting and stated she would like to see the idea moved forward. She stated Fort Lauderdale is the only city that does not have scholarships for its high school students. Assistant City Manager Grant suggested a discussion at the next meeting regarding criteria, examples in other cities, and recommendations.

Discussion continued as to agenda items for May. Mr. Howard stated Broward County School Board member Jeff Holness was scheduled to attend. He will add discussion of the summer meeting schedule to the May agenda.

VIII. Closing

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 6:32 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 16, 2024.

Education Advisory Board

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[Minutes prepared by C. Parkinson, Prototype, Inc.]