



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD
Thursday, May 16, 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	5	1
Pamela Aiken	A	5	1
Heather Brinkworth	A	4	2
Kristina Dever	P	5	1
John Gillen	A	1	2
Erin Gohl	P	3	3
Juliet Gray-Williams (at 6:24 p.m.)	P	6	0
Charles Laster (at 6:27 p.m.)	P	3	0
Alyssa Mendez	A	2	4
Felicia Shuman-Newkirk	P	1	1
Denia Perloff	P	4	2
Deborah Rosenbaum	P	2	1

Also Attending

Susan Grant, Acting City Manager
 Susan Leon, Chief Education Officer
 Von Howard, Public Affairs Administrative Supervisor
 Leslie Harmon, Prototype
 Dr. Jeff Holness, Broward County School Board, District 5
 Joseph Balchunas, Director, Central Region, Broward County Public Schools
 Janyssse Edouard, Executive Assistant, Broward County Public Schools
 Armando Arana, Government Affairs, Broward County Public Schools

I. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum

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

Roll was called and quorum was not yet present, so the meeting would proceed as a workshop.

Acting City Manager Susan Grant introduced Susan Leon, the City's new Chief Education Officer and shared a brief overview of her experience in education. Ms. Leon introduced herself and shared her excitement for the new opportunity.

Ms. Leon read comments for the record from Heather Brinkworth, who had been unable to attend the meeting, highlighting ongoing discussions at the Broward County School Board which would impact the City, and asserting it is imperative the City demand real conversations with the neighborhoods to better understand needs and impacts, along with advocacy on behalf of those less successful schools and those without vocal parents.

Acting City Manager Grant shared that Ms. Leon would be making a presentation with the most recent update from the School Board at the next Commission Conference Meeting, May 21 at 1:30 p.m. at the Nova Southeastern University Art Museum. She noted it was too late for a Communication to the Commission, but Ms. Leon would communicate the Board's feedback.

Item IV.b. was heard prior to Item II.

II. Approval of the April 18, 2024 Minutes

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

III. Old Business

None.

IV. New Business

a. Appointment of New Board Chair

Motion was made by Ms. Gohl, seconded by Ms. Perloff, to nominate Janet Gualtieri as Chair. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Ms. Gray-Williams invited Ms. Rosenbaum and Ms. Shuman-Newkirk to introduce themselves. Each gave a brief overview of their background. Discussion ensued as to the process and whether the bylaws allow for a written ballot or Co-Chairs, and consensus was to discuss appointment of a Vice Chair at the June 20 meeting.

Item IV.b. was heard prior to Item II.

b. BCPS Board Member Presentation

Dr. Jeff Holness, Broward County School Board, District 5, introduced members of his staff, Joseph Balchunas, Central Region Director, and Janyse Edouard, Executive Assistant, and provided a brief update on the achievements of schools and students in Fort Lauderdale, enrollment and capacities, school grade reports, strategic support for priority schools, SMART Bond projects, and information on Redefining Our Schools.

Ms. Gray-Williams arrived at 6:24 p.m.

Mr. Laster arrived at 6:27 p.m.

Vice Chair Gualtieri asked for a copy of the action plan included in the presentation. Ms. Edouard stated she would send the plan via email.

Vice Chair Gualtieri asked if the action plan the School Board recently asked the Superintendent to outline included public participation. Dr. Holness advised heavy community involvement was a priority, but there are also concerns about having enough time for adequate community input.

Ms. Gohl commented that her takeaway from the Town Hall was that there was definitely variation in timelines being discussed. She stated the communities need to feel engaged and part of the process, and advised that in order for that to happen authentically, the longer timeline is necessary. She noted the Board agrees the steps are necessary and they want to be a part of outreach. She noted that if the community is invested in the solutions, they are much more likely to have success.

Discussion continued regarding the timeline and factors to consider in the process. Dr. Holness emphasized that the process must be equitable, beneficially District-wide, and it must be necessary.

Vice Chair Gualtieri stated the School Board should be taking up some of the good suggestions shared at the Town Hall. She highlighted comments pointing out they needed to look not just at numbers in a spreadsheet but at the quality of education and impact on students, as well as the potential for selling property. Dr. Holness responded that part of the process was looking at properties owned by the School District and considering options for sale or lease. He noted presentation of those findings to the School Board would take place on May 29.

Ms. Gohl stated there is a growing community that is paying attention and asked for suggestions as to how the average citizen can engage in the Redefining Our Schools process. Dr. Holness advised that the Superintendent is exploring opportunities for expansion of community involvement.

Vice Chair Gualtieri recognized that a quorum was now present and returned to Item II.

c. BCPS Government Affairs Update

Armando Arana, Government Affairs, Broward County Public Schools, introduced himself and provided a brief presentation which included details on the newsletter put out by his office, a registry for providing comments and feedback, the School District budget calendar, the recently created Multilingual Advisory Committee, highlights from the legislative session, and poll locations in schools.

Ms. Gray-Williams shared concern with security at the schools being used as polling places. Mr. Arana advised of the policy to protect students, including a single point of entry and no facilities made available to voters. He noted the General Election date is a Teacher Planning Day. Discussion continued.

Mr. Arana noted there had been a high school voter registration drive in April with the goal of registering 10,000 new voters. A member of the public asked for clarification and Mr. Arana stated the program had been led by the Supervisor of Elections and took place throughout all District high schools.

Mr. Arana discussed parent webinars to train on the new parent portal system and upcoming graduation ceremonies. He asked that the Board assist in reminding elected officials they have been invited to attend graduations. He commented on preparations for hurricane season and the need for hurricane shelter volunteers.

Ms. Gohl inquired as to how the community can get involved with the Multilingual Advisory Committee. Mr. Arana stated he would share the list of committee vacancies.

Ms. Gohl highlighted the EAB's interest in being involved in the redefining process and any other changes. She thanked Mr. Arana for his efforts to keep them informed.

d. Discussion of Scholarship Recommendations

Acting City Manager Grant shared that Rufus James, Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport Manager, had reached out to express an interest in partnering on fundraising for scholarships.

Vice Chair Gualtieri noted Mr. Howard had distributed a list of example programs to be used as a starting point for the conversation. Discussion ensued briefly regarding the Pledge2Success scholarship. Consensus was to continue the discussion at the June 20 meeting to allow Ms. Aiken to provide feedback.

Ms. Shuman-Newkirk stated she had attended an event at Nova Southeastern University Art Museum and collected pamphlets with military scholarship information for high school students, and would bring them to the June 20 meeting.

e. Summer Meeting Schedule

Acting City Manager Grant advised of the previous discussion and precedent for canceling summer meetings.

Motion was made by Ms. Gray-Williams, seconded by Ms. Gohl, to cancel the July and August EAB meetings. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

f. Location of Future EAB Meetings

Acting City Manager Grant stated staff is still working on the long-term meeting location, so the next EAB meeting would again be held in the Fire Administration Building.

VII. Member Discussion

Ms. Gohl asked Ms. Leon if there was any further feedback the Board could provide to help her move forward in reporting to the Commission during the Conference Meeting.

Ms. Leon stated she had attended the Town Hall and she felt they were starting over with a new vision under a new Superintendent. Discussion continued regarding the need for a clear Redefining Our Schools plan, communication with the community and elected officials, consideration of the application window for school choice, and the presentation to the Commission.

Ms. Shuman-Newkirk asked about the awards luncheon scheduled for May 23 at the Lauderdale Center for the Performing Arts. Mr. Arana shared that each EAB member had been offered two (2) tickets to the Broward County Public School District event and shared RSVP information.

Ms. Shuman-Newkirk highlighted that Governor Ron DeSantis was scheduled to make a decision on the future of the Step Up for Students program by June 1.

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 June 20, 2024.