



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**DRAFT**

**EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING  
CITY HALL**

**8<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

**100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE**

**FORT LAUDERDALE, FL 33301**

**THURSDAY, September 17, 2020 6:30-8:30 PM**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>July 2020 – May 2021</b>	
		<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Dr. Allen Zeman, Chair	P	3	0
Ruchel Coetzee (arrived at 6:49 p.m.)	P	2	1
Wendy Gonsler	P	2	1
Lisa May	P	2	1
Amy Ellowitz, Vice Chair (arrived at 6:38 p.m.)	P	2	0
April Jeff	P	2	1
Jennifer Lovell	P	3	0
Dr. Heather Munns	P	3	0
Tina Jaramillo	P	3	0
Colleen Lockwood	P	3	0
Sarah Owen DelNegri	P	3	0
Vickie Melus	A	2	1
Christopher Relyea	P	3	0
Lillian Small	A	1	2
Rory Sponsler	P	3	0
Betty Shelley (arrived at 7:23 p.m.)	P	2	1
Dr. Michele Verdi-Knapp	P	3	0
Yolanda B. Francis	A	2	1
Tomislav Lukic	P	3	0

**Staff/Guests**

Zoie Saunders, Chief Education Officer, City of Fort Lauderdale

Danielle Smith, Principal of Bennett Elementary School

Vice Mayor Steve Glassman

Celia Gisleson, Vice Mayor Glassman's assistant

Mark Strauss, Resident

John Sullivan, Broward County School District

Michael Walker, Sunrise Middle School

Barbara Collins, Resident and Bennett Elementary teacher

Amy Schmidt, Joint Use Parks

Monique Collazo, President of Bennett Elementary School PTA

Alex Collazo, President of Poinsettia Heights Civics Association

Jill Young, Broward County Public Schools

Joseph Beck, Broward County Public Schools  
Heather Brinkworth, Broward County School Board  
Daniece Williams, Broward County Public Schools  
Martha Steinkamp, Parks and Recreation Board  
Jamie Opperee, Prototype, Inc.

**I. Welcome and Pledge of Allegiance – Dr. Allen Zeman, Chair**

This meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m.

**II. Attendance and Roll Call, 21 appointed members; 10 needed for quorum**

As of this date, September 17, 2020, 18 of the 21 appointed members were present, which constituted a quorum.

**III. Approval of Last Meeting Minutes – August 20, 2020**

Page 12, last paragraph, should read, “**Beachside Montessori**”.

Motion by Ruchel Coetzee, seconded by Tina Jaramillo, to approve the August 20, 2020 minutes as amended. Motion passed unanimously. (18-21)

**IV. Presentation: Bennett Elementary School, Danielle Smith, School Principal**

Chair Dr. Zeman indicated there is an opportunity for the City’s Education Advisory Board to make a meaningful contribution to a school that is poised to make a big leap in both educational quality and enrollment. He introduced Danielle Smith, Principal of Bennett Elementary School.

Principal Smith reported that information relating to the Smart Bond and Bennett Elementary was mentioned during last month’s meeting and they are currently in the process of getting community input. She shared the following information:

- Bennett Elementary is one of two elementary schools in Fort Lauderdale that has the Cambridge Innovative Program, which was implemented in 2018. The Program is part of the feeder pattern that goes from Sunrise Middle School to Fort Lauderdale High School. There are currently eight teachers trained in Cambridge and a total of 14 classroom teachers. The Program is available for students in Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Based on enrollment, Bennett Elementary is a unique boutique small school.
- Based on data trends from 2019, their learning gains are on an upward trend. Students were unable to take State Assessments last year, but based on their mid-year Assessment, they are projected to increase by a whole letter grade. Students

are slated to have State Assessments this year and they are hitting the ground virtually with all their programs in place through e-learning.

- 2019 data showed an increase of 13% in math learning gains and a 7% increase in ELA English Language Arts. Bennett Elementary is a small school and they have a lot of specialized learning that is customized to take care of all students.
- The Literacy and Math Coaches have designed some great data chats and progress monitoring plans with common Assessments, and they collaborate with their teachers.
- One program replicated from Bayview Elementary and implemented is the “Want to Read” program.
- Some Smart Bond project facts were shared last month. In 2000, Bennett Elementary was slated for a new building, but based on the Castaldi Analysis Report, it was recommended repairs not be done, but to demolish the buildings and repair; for economic reasons it was more feasible to rebuild. Due to economic reasons and the real estate crash, those buildings were put on hold and 20 years later they have the Smart Bond. They are in the preparation stages with the Project Manager and Architects in getting things into place; however, they are at crossroads where they need to divide their scope and sequence of the plan because the entire plan for the Bond is for repairs. Their plan is in two phases. Phase 1 is moving forward with repairs that need to be placed and Phase 2 needs to go back to the School Board, as they want to complete the remainder of the scope project deciding whether to repair or rebuild. That information is being shared with the community. Phase 1 is going to the School Board in October or November and there needs to be a Board Workshop for Phase 2 for changes in the Bond to be approved. Because of Covid, a date for the Workshop has not been determined.
- It was noted that 78% of the reassignments are Fort Lauderdale residents.

Chair Dr. Zeman advised there is a chance for this Board to inform the City Commission about the opportunity to ask the County to reprioritize funds in the Smart Bond.

Mayor Glassman commented that the Fort Lauderdale City Commission does not take a band-aid approach, they are a “can-do” Commission. He is willing to do whatever it takes to communicate this and to help everyone work towards an actual rebuilding of the facility. He has talked to people in District 2 neighborhoods that feed into Bennett Elementary and pretty much has heard a consensus for a rebuild. He believes Ms. Brinkworth knows that feeling and he thanked her for her years of service to the children of Fort Lauderdale and to the School Board of Broward County. He welcomed Ms. Sarah Leonardi, School Board Member-Elect District 3, and stated that he told her how important this is as a project, what a priority it is, and that he wants to see a new school for Bennett Elementary. This is an important priority of his as well as for the entire City Commission.

Chair Dr. Zeman commented that Mayor Glassman has always been open to the Education Advisory Board and has helped in ways that are not so obvious to everyone. He thanked Mayor Glassman for his service and concern about education, not just in this District or City, but Countywide. He welcomed Heather Brinkworth and requested she share thoughts about the potential for a construction project at Bennett Elementary School.

Ms. Saunders requested Ms. Brinkworth be made a presenter as well as all attendees participating in the discussion around Bennett Elementary.

Ms. Brinkworth thanked the Education Advisory Board for their commitment to public schools in Fort Lauderdale. There has been conversation with many schools across Broward County Public Schools regarding Bennett Elementary. She pushed conversations with community help to advocate for a common-sense approach as to how money would be spent for North East High School in District 3 and believes Bennett Elementary falls into that category. One concern is that dollars are tight and the cost for demolishing and replacing some of the buildings at Bennett Elementary, as recommended by staff, is more than what the School Board has shown an appetite for. This is going to take great advocacy from the community, a very well thought out plan, and an opportunity for a possible public private partnership. She would like the Education Advisory Board to think about how resources could be leveraged in the community to make this a reality because it is important to the City. Bennett Elementary serves a great community and there is a need to retain its capacity, which she feels strongly about. She will advocate as hard as she can for the time she is on the School Board and then will continue advocating as a community member and resident of the City of Fort Lauderdale. There is a lot of opportunity, but she reiterated it is going to take advocacy and that is where the Education Advisor Board, the City of Fort Lauderdale, and the Commission will play a big role. Money should be spent on the buildings that need renovating and then renovations can be a longer discussion. She thinks they owe it to the school to get those renovations started.

Alex Collazo, President of the Civics Association in Poinsettia Heights, was in attendance with his wife, Monique, who is President of the PTA at Bennett Elementary. He spoke in favor for the push for a new school at the last meeting. He thinks this area is still affordable, but it does not have the public school that is needed. He and his wife would like to support a hard push to get this school rebuilt and they can be contacted at [PoinsettiaHeights.org](http://PoinsettiaHeights.org) to see how their community feels. Most people are in favor of the rebuild. There are many questions regarding funding and the numbers, and it would be helpful if those could be published to help people understand. There is some concern with the Educational Bond overall, not necessarily against it, but some people like to see where the money is going and how it is divided. Bennett Elementary was at the back burner for a long time and should be at the front of the line for a full refit.

Chair Dr. Zeman indicated that a link could be provided, which shows where the Smart Bond money has gone, what has been executed, what is under obligation, and what has been completed.

Mark Strauss, resident and Cadre Director for Bennett Elementary, thanked the Board for the work they do. At Bennett Elementary there is truly a passion for working to meet the needs of every individual child and that is the boutique feel mentioned. Bennett Elementary is a jewel. The Education Advisory Board's advocacy is truly needed to make a difference. Advocacy is one thing that drives decision-making.

Chair Dr. Zeman questioned if Mr. Strauss wanted to share anymore in his position about the plans. Principal Smith is not there by mistake; there is a real interest in Bennett Elementary given its location and history of the school being so great in the past, adopting changes like Cambridge, and hiring teachers with a long history of academic excellence.

Mr. Strauss stated that Principal Smith is awesome and she is at Bennett Elementary because she is seen as a person who can grow the enrollment, who will roll up her sleeves and get involved in the community, and she has a passion and vision for excellence in education; she is there to do visionary work.

Michael Walker, with Sunrise Middle School, concurred with everything said. While working with Principal Smith for the last few years, he has seen a big change at Bennett Elementary. He always looks at the school system with the end goal, which is to have students graduate and move onto a career or college and he sees the visionary leadership Principal Smith has brought to the school. He commented that 78% of the students on reassignment live within the City, so they are serving students regardless of which boundary they are in. He thinks there is a huge need to improve and make the school a welcoming environment for their students and to continue to increase the enrollment as Principal Smith has been doing. As a resident in the area, he heard Mr. Collazo mention the cost of homes and living; people want good options for their children and there are not too many neighborhoods left in the area that are super affordable. When parents spend a lot of money on a house, they want a quality school. He believes Principal Smith is providing a quality school, but there is always more that can be done with the building itself. He believes the most important thing Principal Smith has been doing is being a welcoming Principal for the community surrounding their school.

Mr. Relyea indicated he is at a school that originally was slated to be demolished and rebuilt, but that did not happen and they went with a retrofitting option, which sounds similar to the plight Bennett Elementary may fear to deal with. That option has not been great for the school or the community and he thinks it will ultimately cost more money. Money should be spent wisely even if it means spending a little more now, as it could save money in the long-term. He mentioned the Return on Investment and stated that as

a community, everyone knows what a quality school can do for a City and Bennett Elementary is primely located to give that money back in tax revenues tenfold. It is his strong recommendation not to retrofit Bennett Elementary and to demolish and replace the buildings.

Mr. Sponsler mentioned when he joined the Board a year ago, the first meeting was held at Fort Lauderdale High School and he was listening to conversations from Principals on the west side of the City who were having difficulty retaining teachers. The Board has moved away from the discussion about equity and educational opportunities for students on the west side of the City. He is a firm believer that Bennett Elementary is due for upgrades and it serves a great purpose being next door to the middle school, but he does not want to lose sight of the fact that one of the goals a year ago was how we were going to improve education opportunities and elevate learning goals and gains to students on the west side of the City.

Ms. Gonsler commented that her Homeowner's Association is zoned for Bayview Elementary and people moving into the area know that. A few years ago, there was discussion about zoning and Districts being changed and their neighborhood would be going to Bennett Elementary. She questioned where the perception came from that Bayview Elementary students would be so against going to Bennett Elementary or if that was based on old information. She questioned what needs to happen to make the numbers and perceptions change if Bayview is overenrolled and Bennett Elementary is under-enrolled.

Ms. Brinkworth stated there are long held perceptions in the community that do not match the reality of what occurs in the schools. The only way that can be changed is for community members to visit the schools and see what is really happening. She believed Sunrise Middle is reaping the benefits of that type of community change and the same must be done for elementary schools. Bennett Elementary School is primed for that to happen and she thinks spending the dollars to demolish some of those buildings on that campus and replace them will make a difference because there are already great programs, an amazing administrative team, and very talented teachers.

Chair Dr. Zeman mentioned changes throughout the immediate neighborhood and in the Bennett Elementary district. It is an area where more people are coming in, who have high expectations. Teachers like when parents express high expectations because there is more engagement. The question about east and west Fort Lauderdale is totally legitimate. This is the only east Fort Lauderdale Elementary School that is not an "A" school. That does not mean west Fort Lauderdale schools are being ignored; this Board has been attentive in closing those gaps. Their approach has been analytic and strategic, and they know there are things to do on both sides. Two years ago, the incident that lead to hardening the schools in Broward County pushed the neighborhood out and since that

time it has been difficult to visit neighborhood schools. Something to consider in the future is how to open doors to Fort Lauderdale neighborhoods so more people can visit schools.

Chair Dr. Zeman went down the list of people registered to speak as follows:

Barbara Collins, resident of Poinsettia Heights and Bennett Elementary School teacher, was present. She is on the school PTA and SAC Committee and she supports the rebuild; it is much needed and long overdue. She is a strong advocate for the Cambridge Program, and they are currently implementing The Area of Global Perspectives, which prepares students for the Cambridge Program at their sister school, Sunrise Middle, and then onto Fort Lauderdale High School. She believes the rebuild of Bennett Elementary will draw neighborhood children back to the best little secret kept in Broward County.

John Sullivan, Broward County Schools, was in attendance, filling in for Leslie Brown, and Jill Young and Daniece Williams, Broward County Public Schools, were in attendance.

Joseph Beck, Broward County Public Schools, indicated that Bennett Elementary School is uniquely positioned to help the City of Fort Lauderdale attract young people who want to live here. As Principal Smith shared, Bennett Elementary is a great reassignment opportunity. We are not going to get another opportunity to build a new school in east Fort Lauderdale, so the best plan is to bring the facility quality to parity with other crown jewel schools, such as VSY, Bayview, and Harbordale.

Chair Dr. Zeman summarized that a lot was heard about Bennett Elementary last month. This is an opportunity to advocate for a better facility while supporting information gathering and advocacy required to improve both inside the building while at the same time trying to convince the Commission to influence the Broward County School Board to think seriously about this jewel of a school and making it into a facilities jewel. He thanked Principal Smith and stated that the fact their learning gains are on a positive trend is huge.

Vice Chair Ellowitz advised she is a huge Bennett Elementary fan. With all the construction happening in the Downtown area, she has noticed that specific area is one of the last affordable communities for a family. As mentioned in past meetings, there are so many issues with mold and as Principal Smith said, "You can't put lipstick on a pig".

Motion by Vice Chair Amy Ellowitz, seconded by Christopher Relyea, to ask for the construction project at Bennett Elementary to be named as a Strategic Initiative by this Board. Motion passed unanimously. (18-21)

Ms. Coetzee commented that to motivate this movement to get Bennett Elementary construction is to get the community involved because the City cannot carry all the dollars. It would be helpful if teachers and students could give some testimonials that might help

motivate some dollars to build a new school. She wanted to add marketing materials to all the real estate agents that tells them exactly why Bennett Elementary is so good.

Chair Dr. Zeman stated it is part of the motion, which was to make it a Strategic Initiative; how we achieve that initiative is built into the motion.

Ms. Lockwood mentioned the Strategic Initiative and thought it was important to dig into points by Ms. Brinkworth and Mr. Sponsler. To do this, Ms. Brinkworth's suggestion about a public private partnership is key. She did not think we would be in a position for the School Board to sign off at this point, but if we came with a community partner or two, and she knows the City is hiring a Grants Coordinator, research could be assigned to investigate funding for this project. She did not know if they should start with discussing public private partnership, but thought it was a great suggestion that would be a significant challenge to go after without a larger context. She did not know if that would mean an amended motion.

Chair Dr. Zeman indicated those were critical points. All of that would be wrapped into this as a Strategic Initiative including the PPB option, thinking about the context of everything going on in the world. One advantage is that this Board is advisors to a political Board and the political Board makes those decisions all the time. The question is if this is the time to push construction in the City of Fort Lauderdale or work more on Equity issues or other issues. The Board's job is to collect information, run the facts, advise the Commissioners, give them all the information, and then the Commission will decide if they want to move forward. He did not think a new amendment was needed because there was no content to the motion; the motion is to make this an issue that the Board needs to spend time studying.

Mr. Sponsler commented that he would like his property values to increase with a top rated and quality constructed school.

Ms. Saunders suggested thinking about the larger City School Engagement Strategy. As part of that, defining an approach that is equitable. Bennett Elementary is being brought forward as a key opportunity for many reasons. Looking at the data for enrollment is one indicator that shows an opportunity for the community to become more involved to connect residents with the experiences and learning what is going on in the school. Secondly, there is an opportunity with the Smart Bond to move this forward. Timing is a consideration as well in bringing Bennett Elementary School forward as a Strategic Initiative. As a City, it is important that we are looking at all schools and making sure equitability is being focused throughout all the Districts. Many other initiatives are being worked on at staff level, which will be brought to the Education Advisory Board, so they can continue to get input and guidance beyond Bennett Elementary School. She encouraged as part of the next conversation to begin thinking about some of the indicators

that create an equitable approach for the Board to focus on schools throughout the City and to place a strategic and concerted focus on a way to make a meaningful difference. She reiterated that timing is an issue because there is an opportunity on the table to be able to utilize Smart Bond dollars and it is imperative that the community is involved in that decision-making. There is compelling data on the City website that shows an increased enrollment demand for the Fort Lauderdale High School zone and that is an important element to consider. Over a ten-year period, there has been a 13% enrollment increase in the Fort Lauderdale High School zone. The other piece to consider is with two schools that benefitted from new construction and as shown in the data packet, there is a correlation with higher enrollment for in-boundary students. That is something this Board has thought a lot about and we want to make sure magnet schools continue to be recognized with many awards, but also making sure there is a quality neighborhood option in whatever neighborhood you live in. When looking at Fort Lauderdale High School and Harbordale Elementary School as a comparison with two schools in this zone that benefitted from new construction, data shows there were spikes in in-boundary enrollment, meaning they are creating more demand for residents zoned for those schools. There are also some programmatic aspects, which is an important element. Putting this out there shows the Board is considering this as a vote and it does not preclude the Education Advisory Board or the City for advocating for positive changes at other schools. Other projects that can benefit from this Board's advocacy and support.

Chair Dr. Zeman stated that this Board, for at least the last three years, has been clear there are Cities like Weston and others in Broward County, who have significant engagement in their schools. Fort Lauderdale is growing, and we are trying to catch up to other Cities, which is crucial. That is the role of liaisons, the role of taking the Joint Use Park Bonds and making sure we continue to engage in picking a school where this Board can make a difference now just because of the facts on the ground. That model of engagement is the long-term model of how a City, a school system, and a partner get to higher levels of excellence. There is nothing that says we cannot have "A" schools in all 30 schools in Fort Lauderdale. Some schools have lots of parents on the PTA and many volunteers and other schools have no participation. The engagement to our schools is fundamental to success and as a Board, there is an opportunity with our liaisons as individual initiatives. It is the long-term growth of the City's relationship to the schools and County that will contribute to sustained growth and education. The elements are there; City residents want great education, but there are institutional barriers preventing it from happening and we must beat those barriers down and make that relationship honest and genuine.

## **V. City School Engagement Strategy**

Ms. Saunders explained that the project with Bennett Elementary School is a way to pilot how we, as a City, can push forward change by engaging our community. She thanked Colleen Lockwood, who serves as the President of the Counsel for Fort Lauderdale Civic Associations, for inviting her to provide to the Counsel, much of the work this Board has been engaged in over the last year, and also to provide a spotlight on Bennett Elementary School. The intent moving forward is to continually engage with our neighborhood Associations, Counsel, and having these school spotlights. Currently, a number of indicators put Bennett Elementary School at the top of the list for this Board to pursue for reasons discussed and there is an opportunity to explore other ways in which the Board can help to prioritize that focus. She is following up with neighborhood Association Presidents to provide an education update and spotlight schools within their community. If a school is not physically located in their community, it is a school zoned for their neighbors. In doing so, being able to create a larger understanding of the programs available to the residents and a forum for them to provide input. For those liaisons assigned to schools, she would like to reach out and invite them to the neighborhood Association meetings, so they could be part of the effort, along with work they are doing with the PTA Associations in giving updates. While moving forward the Board needs to think how to more effectively engage community members in promoting public education and sharing their voice around what they want to see in schools and building greater awareness of what is available in public education throughout the City. She would like to discuss ideas of other ways to meaningfully engage community members as one and how the Education Advisory Board can begin to prioritize the focus. Equity is a key driver in all work at the City.

Ms. DeNegri questioned where we stand with the walkaround the team was doing to prioritize the parks.

Ms. Saunders stated that a preliminary list could be shared later in this meeting.

Chair Dr. Zeman questioned if there were any thoughts on City school engagements.

Mr. Relyea commented that schools in their City might have sister schools in other locations. He suggested matching schools on the east side of the City with schools on the west side of the City. There are different metrics of success. It occurred to him that there is so much going on in the east side and he knows the constraints and resources are different, but he cannot imagine why it would be bad to get east and west side schools together in some sort of official or unofficial capacity.

Ms. Saunders stated that last year, as part of the kickoff of the school year, Principals and City staff were brought together to engage in these conversations around how they can collaborate. It was more focused on how the City could support schools, but during those discussions there was an opportunity for Principals to share similar questions, concerns,

and requests. Anytime they can have a forum where they are promoting conversation, engagement, and sharing best practices is welcome and a lot of that is occurring especially with Dr. Strauss and his Principal meetings and other opportunities for them to engage. They have not had an opportunity to do that type of event this year and questioned what they might be able to meet virtually to compensate.

Mr. Strauss indicated that he is a Cadre Director because he supports and supervises most of the schools in the City of Fort Lauderdale. He has schools on both the east and west side, so a lot of their discussions are around equity and how schools can support and learn from one another. He always reminds schools that may have a higher letter grade that they can learn from the hard work taking place in schools that may not have the same letter grade. While looking at equity, they need to look at what high performance schools can provide in the way of motivation and helping during holidays. Unofficially, schools have adopted each other to ensure that every child in school goes home with a Christmas present. They are always discussing issues around equity or talking about race during their meetings. Many people are uncomfortable talking about race, but it is an important topic that must be explored and embraced, realizing it is a big piece of the equity conversation.

Chair Dr. Zeman advised that he would like Mr. Strauss to attend another meeting at some point and talk to the Board about Fort Lauderdale and the engagement of the City with the schools, what he has seen that has worked, or what the opportunity looks like here. This Board could benefit from his perspective as to whether they are on a three or ten-year path, if they are engaging in getting traction, or if this is just to get a few things done and go home. As a body, this Board has tried to be aspirational in where they go, and they have a great Commission. There is a need opportunity, but some information is missing. There are 20 members on the Board and 30 schools; they are trying to link a member with one to two schools but are struggling because of the pandemic. They can only study what needs to be done, so when the pandemic ends, they will be poised to do something that has a meaningful impact on the engagement of the City with the 30 schools.

Mr. Strauss stated he works very closely with Ms. Saunders. He is the liaison to the City of Fort Lauderdale and he and Ms. Saunders speak multiple times a week. The City of Fort Lauderdale has made a huge shift in the way it works with the School District and it is noticed by his colleagues, Principals and by the School Board. He applauded the Education Advisory Board, the Commission, and Ms. Saunders for the dynamic shift that has taken place in the relationship between the City of Fort Lauderdale and the schools within the City.

Mayor Glassman commented there have been discussions and the course has changed just by the fact that Ms. Saunders' position was created. He thinks that showed this Commission was treating their relationship with the School Board in a different way than prior Commissions.

Vice Chair Ellowitz commented that as a Social Worker, she has seen that often people are not aware of their rights or benefits to participating in having a voice. That is something this Board needs to look at; how to engage and get people excited about participating.

Chair Dr. Zeman stated that is a key point. Part of the Commission's passion about education was creating a CEO position and hiring someone with the talents Ms. Saunders has, and the energy keeping her issues going forward, which reflects on the City. The City of Fort Lauderdale is demanding better education and their politicians and Board are responding to that. The schools need more volunteers, more money, better schools, Principals that care, and teachers who teach as well as giving time to Counselors so they can counsel rather than do testing and lunchroom duties. He understood Vice Chair Ellowitz's point as a Social Worker. The issue was the school, parents, and a combination of factors got them to a point where the traditional engagement with the parents did not exist.

Mr. Lukic mentioned the issue of the ability parents have in terms of free time to participate in their child's school. He is sure the student population of Bayview and their families are in a position where at least one parent might have greater amounts of free time to dedicate or volunteer at a school whereas when going to schools that have families with limited resources, it is more difficult to take time to engage and volunteer at the PTA when working two or three jobs. We must be cognizant of people's abilities to engage on a physical level with volunteering in the schools and see if any other ways can be developed.

Ms. Jaramillo commented on the sister school engagement and stated that perhaps some of the private schools in the Fort Lauderdale area could be a good resource. Other ways for City school engagement may be instituting some sort of Civic involvement, getting community leaders to go into the schools and engage, offering internships or other ways for students to actively engage in the community with leaders within the community and learning from those leaders through various programs or speaking engagements. She teaches high school students, and many do not know how a Commission functions.

Mr. Sponsler mentioned the Joint Use Parks being open for a longer amount of time, which the Board has discussed, so adults can use the parks during hours they are not at work or on the weekends. Before moving to Fort Lauderdale, he taught at Bridgeville in Delaware and they started wraparound services to serve underserved students and families. The school was open for laundry services and food pantries were opened, which would get more community adults actively engaged in coming to the school, particularly if they had a child at the school. He was the Band Director and there was one field for the football team and marching band, so the football team would take the field for practice after school and he would have to wait until 5:30 p.m. to start rehearsals. If children went home after school, they would not have the means to come back, so they instituted a

meal program and homework help where the cafeteria ladies prepared meals. When he heard about the Recreation plan, he envisioned that the school would stay open later for underserved students. There could be a combination of recreational activities and additional support for learning gain or activities, and then an evening for a certain amount of time they offer wraparound services that would help the parents. One of the wraparound services in Bridgeport was during tax time where people from the community would help parents with their income taxes and filings. Covid is not conducive to that right now, but perhaps we can get public private partnerships going, so there would be a reason for adults to come to the school other than to check in with a teacher or see what is on the bulletin board.

Ms. Gonsler referred to what was said about Dillard High School earlier and it seems that given what is happening in the world today, this Board needs to look at the issue of equity a little differently and broader. It is presumptuous of the Board to try to determine what would get parents in any given neighborhood engaged in their school; we do not know why parents are not participating. She noted there are no people of color on this Board, but they are talking about issues of equity. If the Board wants to encourage engagement, they need to walk the walk, not talk the talk. The Board needs to be more representative of the Fort Lauderdale population and then input or involvement is needed from people to say what is needed from the Board, the City, and the schools.

Chair Dr. Zeman questioned if anyone in attendance by telephone had anything they wanted to share on this issue. To Ms. Gonsler's point, nothing changes because the Board talks about things during the Education Advisory Board meeting. Members take Strategic Initiatives seriously and work for real measurable outcomes, they are not interested by having an interesting academic debate at a Zoom meeting. It is about how to get engagement to the point. When residents are involved in the schools it no doubt raises the standards for what that school delivers. Facilities, quality of Administrators, and quality of teachers matter. This is something the City of Fort Lauderdale could do better than it is doing now, and it would be catching up with other Cities who have an active engagement between City residents and the schools.

## **VI. Old Business**

### **A. Fort Lauderdale School Reopening Update**

Ms. Saunders agreed that focus needs to be on racial equity. She acknowledged that racism is structural and requires policy change. The City of Fort Lauderdale is involved in that and is taking a priority focus. Our City Manager is part of a Task Force to focus on racial equity with Cities and understanding what different policies need to be enacted. This is part of a fuller and broader conversation that needs to happen.

Ms. Lockwood mentioned equity and thought Ms. Gonsler was correct, problems that are not understood cannot be solved. The first step to addressing equity is taking a course and being trained. She referenced the County with something called Groundwater, which is a short three to four-hour deal that she thinks is imperative. Ms. Saunders is working on getting that delivered. She would share that in the Collective Group she runs across K-12 higher ed non-profit serving agencies. They are forming a youth led, student led Racial Equity Advisory Group; the first meeting is in October. Adults are being invited and she will forward the date and time to the Board. Equity in education is the focus.

Chair Dr. Zeman questioned if Education Advisory Board members would be able to take that course or if it was only for City staff.

Ms. Lockwood stated that CSC offered the course last month and she and Ms. Saunders shared the information. Free slots were offered in the past and it took a while to fill up; however, the slots for the Racial Equity Training filled up within hours. They are currently out of slots, but more will be opening.

Ms. Saunders advised the school reopening is top of mind for everyone and noted the following:

- The Parent and Community Task Force is hosting Parent University Webinars and they are prerecorded for anyone who is unable to watch live. She encouraged everyone to review, as they provide great resources for families supporting their children with e-learning.
- The City of Fort Lauderdale is operating a supervised e-learning program that is supported by the United Way at four different Community Centers across the City and currently, the capacity is to serve six students.
- The School Board meeting is scheduled for September 22, 2020, where they will have a full Board Workshop to discuss reopening. Superintendent Runcie has recommended October 5, 2020 as a potential start date and athletics for Phase 1 will begin for high school on September 21, 2020.

John Sullivan, with Broward County Schools, indicated that Ms. Brinkworth and the School Board Collective will be having a discussion next Tuesday, which should begin shortly after 10:00 a.m. He believed this would be their ninth meeting on school reopening. Superintendent Runcie is recommending an October 5, 2020 start date and students and families will still have an opportunity to select e-learning if they choose, they are not forced to come back. A survey for families will be available after the next Board meeting where they will be asking each family to select their mode of education, whether it is in person or e-learning.

Mr. Strauss stated there are many work groups going on behind the scenes that are helping to inform and bring up questions, so the Board can have an informed discussion on September 22, 2020. He encouraged everyone interested in this topic to tune into the

Board Workshop, which should be posted either late Friday or Monday, which would be an opportunity to look at an extensive Power Point.

Ms. Saunders advised that this Board has had the benefit of hearing from Dr. Posner, Chief Architect of the school reopening design. She had an opportunity to participate in a working group that Mr. Sullivan leads around partnerships for school reopening. Any questions can be shared with Ms. Brinkworth or anyone on the call.

Ms. Brinkworth requested that specific questions be sent to her at HeatherBrinkworth@browardschools.com. All emails will be read, but she does not personally respond to all of them because there are hundreds. She does; however, ask questions specifically raised to make sure community concerns are answered.

Ms. Lockwood mentioned digital design, a point of contact in the School District for students who lack adequate wi-fi, have a broken laptop, or not enough in the home. She questioned who she should contact.

Ms. Lockwood believed they should reach out to their school directly.

Mr. Sullivan suggested contacting their school Principal. The School Board has invested in technology and over 100,000 devices have been distributed during this pandemic. They have also worked with internet providers, so they have access to the e-learning model via internet.

Ms. Saunders advised that the City continues to explore collaboration with Broward County Public Schools to expand Broadband internet access through a partnership cultivated with Hot Wire. Data has been analyzed in coordination with the Broward County Public Schools team to geographically target areas within the City that are most in need or have challenges accessing reliable internet. That project will continue and will be important even when school reopens, as students need individual pathways of instruction. They are making progress targeting and identifying specific areas that would most benefit. She will continue to share updates with the Board.

## **B. Joint Use Parks Initiative Update**

Ms. Saunders indicated that win-win projects have been identified that will benefit both the school and community. Key projects are being looked at in two phases. Some projects are short-term opportunities, which require minimal fencing. Long-term projects identify standout opportunities for investments through the City's Park Bond. All schools listed for short-term opportunities are also part of the consideration for longer term investment in terms of making enhancements to those sites. The next step will be putting together a memorandum that will go to the School Board and to the City Commission to provide those updates. They will be working to finalize the schematics for the required fencing for short-term opportunities in coordination with Broward County Public Schools,

always involving school Principals, and then they will host community forums related to the Bond to get broader input from parents and students. Those schedules will be shared once they are finalized.

Chair Dr. Zeman commented that this is saying public property is public property and we should take full advantage of the schools after hours and of the parks when schools are in session. He thinks the Board has created a relationship between the City and schools. The County has zero funds for parks, but the City has resources that can help schools and facilities that fundamentally help students learn; this is not just about physical exercise, it is about the ability to learn more. There is a tremendous synergy between physical activity and academic growth.

Ms. Saunders acknowledged Martha Steinkamp, who has been the liaison for the Parks Advisory Board and thanked her for her leadership and support. Ms. Steinkamp continues to provide updates to the Parks Advisory Board on this initiative.

**VII. Open Discussion – None.**

**VIII. Closing**

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

[Minutes transcribed by C. Guifarro, Prototype, Inc.]