

EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
Monday, August 19, 2021, 6:30 P.M.
CITY HALL, 8th Floor Conference Room
100 North Andrews Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301

Members	June 2021 – May 2022		
	Attendance	Present	Absent
Dr. Allen Zeman, Chair	P	1	0
Amy Ellowitz, Vice Chair	P	1	0
Heather Brinkworth	P	1	0
Ruchel Coetzee	A	0	1
Yolanda B. Francis	P	1	0
Leah Polhemus Hopkins	A	0	1
Tina Jaramillo	A	0	1
April Jeff	P	1	0
Chad Klitzman	A	0	1
Colleen Lockwood	A	0	1
Tomislav Lukic	P	1	0
Lisa May	P	1	0
Vickie Melus	A	0	1
Dr. Jean-Jacques Rajter	A	0	1
Christopher Relyea	P	1	0
Betty Shelley	A	0	1
Lillian Small	A	0	1
Rory Sponsler	A	0	1
Dr. Michele Verdi-Knapp	P	1	0

Staff

Zoie Saunders, Chief Education Officer, City of Fort Lauderdale
 Enrique Sanchez, Parks and Recreation Deputy Director, City of Fort Lauderdale
 Tedra Allen, Prototype, Inc.

Guests

Ryan Atwood, Principal, Sunrise Middle School
 Veronica Floyd, Poinsettia Heights Civic Association
 Robert Spagnola, Poinsettia Heights Civic Association
 Marilyn Mammano, Harbordale Civic Association
 Dacha Steiner, FERN Collective

Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Dr. Allen Zeman, Board Chair. He invited guests to introduce themselves.

Attendance and Roll Call, 19 appointed members; 10 needed for quorum

As of this date, August 19, 2021, eight (8) of the 19 members were present, which did not constitute a quorum.

Board Chair's Minute

Dr. Zeman stated it was the second day of the school year, and shared stories of early hiccups. Brief discussion regarding the effective Police Department response to a code red ensued. Dr. Zeman noted the other big news was Broward County being in the national spotlight due to an ongoing dispute related to mask rules and funding. He stated the President of the United States had spoken with the Superintendent of Schools and members of the Board were very aware of the issue. He asserted the COVID-19 protocols in place were sophisticated and followed all health standards, so he thought Fort Lauderdale was happy with the Broward County stance as they continue to protect students, staff, and families.

Dr. Zeman asked Zoie Saunders, Chief Education Officer, to give a brief update on what is happening with the City of Fort Lauderdale.

Ms. Sanders stated it had been a productive summer. She shared an update on the first summer enrichment program, which received City Commission approval in April and was launched in June. She noted the program exceeded enrollment expectations and resulted in positive feedback from students and teachers. Continuing, Ms. Sanders shared that headway is being made in exploring opportunities to expand quality early learning opportunities in the City. She discussed efforts to improve equity and stated additional items would be shared later in the meeting.

Dr. Zeman commented on quick wins and stated any time the Board can assist in moving these items forward, it makes a splash. He shared a story of a playground leading to neighborhood engagement.

Old Business

- **Strategic Initiatives**
 - **Joint Use Parks:** Review Proposal for Parks, Recreation, and Beaches Advisory Board

Dr. Zeman stated the joint use parks effort had a long history with a significant amount of analysis and work put into it to get to the point of the recommendation.

Ms. Sanders shared a *PowerPoint* presentation on the joint use parks initiative, defining joint use parks and the strategy to make sure every resident in the community can access an exceptional park within a 10-minute walk of their residence by partnering with Broward School District. She discussed the Recreational License Agreement between the two (2)

parties, explaining the operational responsibilities and safety measures. Continuing, Ms. Sanders discussed funding through the Parks and Recreation Bond and guiding principles for the vision to create as many joint use parks across the community as possible. She reviewed the key tenets of the approach, including efforts toward geographic equity, transparency, and collaboration.

Ms. Sanders shared a map of existing joint use parks and the proposal for expansion and discussed the milestones along the timeline of the project. She reviewed the criteria used to create beneficial projects and account for changes, including looking at the nuance of community need, feasibility of school site design, and the benefit to the school. Continuing, Ms. Sanders provided a summary of the proposal. She stated staff was recommending 15 schools for Parks Bond funding, totaling approximately \$11 million. She noted adjustments to the scope of work were being proposed based on the scoring and adjusted need, as well as in coordination with the School Board.

Dr. Zeman highlighted that the total budget had not changed, and the assessment and analysis that went into the proposal was clear and transparent. He pointed out some projects had grown, some had shrunk, and some had stayed about the same. He asked how many projects were in the original Master Plan.

Ms. Sanders responded that there were nine (9) projects in the Master Plan, and the proposal was adding to that.

Dr. Zeman asked about the level of coordination between the City and Schools when the original Master List was developed.

Enrique Sanchez, Parks and Recreation, explained there was coordination regarding needs and some broad community outreach, but not at the level of the recent discussions.

Dr. Zeman offered that it was primarily a City-driven list.

Mr. Sanchez confirmed the original list was based on needs from a City perspective.

Dr. Zeman asserted the Master Plan list was the list which was made public, and residents voted on.

Heather Brinkworth asked if there were any constraints with regard to the list and what voters had approved.

Mr. Sanchez explained the structure of the vote to provide for flexibility and to set up a system of gatekeeping that would ensure the projects met with the intent of the voters. Discussion continued regarding the vote and related expectations.

Ms. Sanders noted the proposal was being put forth based on community need, and commitments on the original list were being honored to the extent they were viable.

Dr. Zeman pointed out the presentation would be shared again at the next meeting due to a lack of quorum.

Ms. Sanders explained the proposal would also be going before the Parks Board at their next meeting on August 25.

Dr. Zeman pointed to the list of public hearings and stated there were a total of approximately 20 meetings planned before going to the Broward County School Board, and it was likely the plan would evolve through that process.

Mr. Sanchez further explained the process.

Ms. Sanders and Mr. Sanchez reviewed the list of projects proposed and described the revisions and additions.

Veronica Floyd, Poinsettia Heights Civic Association, shared concern regarding the proposed decrease to the improvement plan for Sunrise Middle School. She commented on parks available to her neighborhood and asked the Board to reconsider and uphold the original Master Plan.

Dr. Zeman reviewed the applicable adjustments to the plan and stated it would not be a huge ask to take additional steps to see what is feasible to meet the community needs. He stated he was not giving an opinion but was recognizing that what Ms. Floyd was talking about was \$725,000 of a \$200 million bond.

Robert Spagnola, Poinsettia Heights Civic Association, stated the artificial turf was important for the students, as grass fields would disintegrate quickly with the use, and the area children need an athletic outlet north of Sunrise Boulevard.

Ryan Atwood, Principal at Sunrise Middle School, thanked the Board and City staff for all of the work done behind the scenes. He stated the recent upgrade to the pickle ball courts had been a big lift. He noted a full-size field will not fit at the location originally discussed, but to see \$1.7 million going to the campus and the kids he really cares about was something he was grateful for and would continue to lift the community up.

Dr. Zeman asked Mr. Atwood what a synthetic turf field of an appropriate size would mean for his school.

Mr. Atwood discussed the current need for bussing students to other facilities for sports and stated a field would be used by P.E. classes, regular classes, and the community. He noted they would also try to utilize it to host outside teams.

Dr. Zeman led a discussion regarding the changes to the plan for Sunrise Middle School, including parks in the area, technical adjustments, location of portables, improvements to the green space, curb appeal, park deserts, liabilities, making amenities specific to sports at Sunrise, equity, and budget considerations.

Dr. Zeman stated students attend Sunrise Middle School from all over Fort Lauderdale, so at least from a school-use perspective, funds spent there were a good equity investment. He asserted that to the point made by the speakers from Poinsettia Heights Civic Association, it was important to have a clear picture of how many people would use the multi-use field and what they would use it for. Dr. Zeman added that he did not want to give up on the discussion regarding moving the portables, because the School Board does it every year.

Discussion continued regarding how the existing facilities are used. Mr. Atwood noted the school uses two (2) of the three (3) portables and would be over capacity without them.

Marilyn Mammano, Harbordale Civic Association, shared her thoughts on the park plan and discussed park security.

Dr. Zeman thanked those who had attended the meeting to discuss the parks issue and stated he would be at the Parks Advisory Board meeting and would carry the consensus that the Board is interested and wants to hear more, supports equity, and is struck by the idea of going back to look at Sunrise again.

Ms. Brinkworth added that given the new information about what might be happening at Lockhart, she would ask that the plan keep flexibility in mind going forward.

Dr. Zeman responded that Lockhart was 50 percent of the Parks Advisory Board meeting on Wednesday, so there would be extensive conversation on the subject. He asserted there was a lot more to be done on the joint parks initiative and it would be nice to have shovel ready projects to fill in if funds were to become available.

- **Early Learning Initiative:** The Bezos Academy Partnership Opportunity

Ms. Saunders provided an overview of an opportunity related to a non-profit Jeff Bezos founded called Bezos Academy. She stated the non-profit operates tuition-free early learning programs for children aged three (3) to five (5) in a full-year, full-day program which is Montessori-inspired and includes three (3) meals a day. Ms. Saunders explained the partnership the Bezos Academy is seeking is to co-locate in a building that has space. She stated they do not pay rent but do pay for capital improvements to retrofit the space for their use as a preschool and will fully operate for a 10-year period under the initial terms of the contract.

Continuing, Ms. Saunders stated the program is based in Washington and is looking to expand into Texas and Florida markets. She noted they had visited the City of Fort Lauderdale and toured four (4) elementary schools which seemed viable and explained the next steps would be to execute a partnership agreement to allow the organization to explore further and to determine demand, including commuters. Ms. Saunders stated they are looking to open five (5) to six (6) schools in the area by fall 2022. She reviewed the parameters of the program and its target families.

Dr. Zeman highlighted that the program would be free and stated this was fundamental for kindergarten readiness. He asserted this was a big deal and a huge opportunity. He thanked Ms. Saunders for her efforts to bring forward opportunities like this and for the interpersonal play to get the Bezos Academy to the right place.

Ms. Saunders stated she had shared with the organization the Board's passion for early literacy and would invite them to a future meeting. She added it was a great fit, as positions were very much aligned, and the need exists in the community. She asked that Board members share the names of any businesses or organizations with space. She explained depending on the number of classrooms in any given location, they are looking for between 3,500 to 6,000 square feet.

Discussion ensued regarding reaching out to potential location. Ms. Francis suggested Mt. Hermon African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church as a possibility. Other ideas included a former Home Depot, an assisted living facility, and a community center. Ms. Saunders stated they were trying to finalize the list by September.

New Business

- **Summer Enrichment Program Recap**

Addressed during opening comments.

- **Stranahan High School SMART Bond Update**

Not discussed.

Approval of Last Meeting Minutes: May 20, 2021

Item tabled due to lack of quorum.

Closing

Ms. Saunders shared that Fort Lauderdale had been chosen as a pilot by Children's Services Council to implement an asset-based community development project. She noted Fort Lauderdale would be positioning the project with an education focus, and the other pilot city, Lauderhill, would be positioning their project with a prosperity focus. She explained the idea was to bring in the community and give them a seat at the table.

Dacha Steiner, FERN Collective, introduced herself and discussed the process of community organizing which focuses on the assets already existing and working to mobilize those assets.

Ms. Saunders outlined the key next steps, including training for partner organizations and community meetings. She explained a Civic Design Team would be created to work together to create their own asset-based map of the community through a community

lens and then conduct a listening campaign to understand opportunities to improve education and what could be built on. She stated there would be funding available to implement the idea which the group comes up with.

Ms. Steiner shared additional details on the funding objectives.

Ms. Saunders asked Board members to let her know if they were interested in participating in the trainings offered or had organizations to recommend. She stated they would also like to identify a liaison from the Board to share information back and forth.

Dr. Zeman asked the time commitment involved in serving as a liaison.

Ms. Steiner explained the commitment would be two (2) phone calls to get things started, then two (2) meetings a month, each two (2) hours long.

Mr. Lukic asked for additional information, and Ms. Saunders agreed to email it prior to the next meeting.

Adjournment

Dr. Zeman adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

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

Attachments

Joint Use Parks *PowerPoint* presentation