

EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
Thursday, April 21, 2022 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	8	0
Amy Ellowitz, Vice Chair	P	8	0
Heather Brinkworth (Arrived at 6:39 p.m.)	P	8	0
Ruchel Coetzee (Arrived at 6:55 p.m.)	P	4	4
Yolanda B. Francis (Arrived at 6:40 p.m.)	P	6	2
Tina Jaramillo	P	6	2
Colleen Lockwood	P	5	3
Tomislav Lukic	A	6	2
Lisa May	A	4	4
Vickie Melus	A	2	6
Christopher Relyea	P	8	0
Lillian Small	A	3	5
Rory Sponsler	P	5	3
Dr. Michele Verdi-Knapp	P	5	2
Denia Perloff	P	5	2
Suzanne Dean	P	6	0
Erin Gohl	P	3	0

Staff

Zoie Saunders, Chief Education Officer, City of Fort Lauderdale
 Carla Blair, Prototype, Inc.

Guests

Greg Boardman, Project Manager
 Joe Balchunas, Cadre Director, Office of School Performance & Accountability

Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Dr. Allen Zeman, Board Chair, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Attendance and Roll Call, 17 appointed members; 10 needed for quorum

As of this date, April 21, 2022, 13 of 17 appointed members were present, which constituted a quorum.

Communication to the City Commission

The Education Advisory Board appreciates that the Commission has decided to commit additional funds to the Joint Use Parks project at Sunrise Middle School. We respectfully request the Commission consider a review of the list of items that were removed from all projects and find additional funds to make those projects whole. Attached is the original list with revisions noted. The Education Advisory Board does not support further reduction of any projects and strongly suggests the Commission fund these items with additional allocations.

Motion made by Ms. Lockwood, seconded by Ms. Dean, to affirm Ms. Brinkworth's draft formal Communication from the Education Advisory Board to the City Commission members to be delivered prior to the May 3, 2022 Commission meeting. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed, with Mr. Relyea in opposition. (11-1)

Ayes: Ellowitz, Brinkworth, Coetzee, Gohl, Francis, Jaramillo, Lockwood,
Sponsler, Verdi-Knapp, Perloff, Dean

Nays: Relyea

Board Chair's Minute

Chair Dr. Zeman announced his resignation. He stated he has to leave the Board to serve in another capacity but would like to remain involved as a citizen. He turned the meeting over to Vice Chair Ellowitz.

Vice Chair Ellowitz advised it was a pleasure working with Chair Dr. Zeman.

Selection of Chair & Vice Chair

Vice Chair Ellowitz commented elections are supposed to be held every year, but they were not aware of this.

Ms. Dean questioned what the Chair and Vice Chair entails and volunteered to help.

Vice Chair Ellowitz explained it is pretty much what they have been doing; meeting with various people from the City and getting more involved with some of the initiatives they are involved in. She was hoping to delegate with other members meeting with different initiatives they are working on.

Ms. Saunders commented that since this Board is so large, any votes must be done by roll call.

Motion made by Ms. Lockwood, seconded by Mr. Relyea, to nominate Amy Ellowitz as Chair, and Suzanne Dean as Vice Chair. No one else was interested in running for Chair or Vice Chair. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed unanimously. (10-0)

Ayes: Brinkworth, Coetzee, Gohl, Jaramillo, Lockwood, Relyea, Sponsler,
Verdi-Knapp, Perloff, Francis

Nays: None

Note: Chair Ellowitz and Ms. Gohl could not vote.

Stranahan High School Cafeteria: Construction Update

Greg Boardman, Project Manager, reported the project is running about two weeks behind schedule due to a problem of securing a surveyor. The Architect of Record has put together a mitigation plan for the schedule and they can make up the two weeks by changing the logic between activities. They are still on track, but the Contractor has identified some complications and the Construction Manager has identified a few disciplines; they are having material shortages of bar joists and difficulty getting hollow metal doors. These things will be ordered early, so they will not impact their schedule. They are confident they can do the job within 420 days from the time they are told to start. They might have to do a direct owner of purchase for some materials ahead of time to help get those things ordered.

Mr. Boardman mentioned Phase 3 and noted 50% of the drawings were submitted to the entire design team, the pre-construction, and the Building Department. The review is complete, and they were given comments. There are some complexities with the geometry of the site and how they are trying to fit the building on the site. One has to do with the access road that is going to be on the east side where there is a fire lane, and the other complication is the receiving area. There is a bus loop used to service ESE students and they want to keep that separate from other bus loops on the west side of the campus. They are trying to work out some geometry reconfigurations. The schedule was distributed and reviewed. When the review is complete, they should be ready for the Letter of Recommendation for Permit. They are expecting one revision and gave it another two weeks. They say the latest they will have the Letter of Recommendation is June 8, 2022, which is their finish line date to get a permit to start construction. After they receive the Letter of Recommendation, they must go to the Board with a guaranteed maximum price, so they can approve it and get the project under construction.

Mr. Relyea asked if there is still a point where this can get derailed and not move forward. He questioned the date that no longer becomes true. He asked if the mitigation was pushing this.

Mr. Boardman replied once they are past the guaranteed maximum price, it is a done deal; the date is September 7, 2022. He stated there have been negative comments from someone who spoke at the meeting, who still thinks the cafeteria is too small. They are

in compliance no matter what this person says, and they have it in writing; she has nothing in writing. He indicated they are trying to change the logic within the schedule to keep the current end date. He noted there was a question about the size.

Chair Ellowitz asked if that was related to Equity.

Mr. Boardman stated there is a question of Equity because they are trying to use the CCC settlement to say the school should get a cafeteria that is congruent to what other prototypical schools get. This cafeteria is going to be designed for 800 students, which is what their prototypes are. The school feeding to Miami Palmetto Senior has 2,900 students and Stranahan has about 1,300. The demographics are showing a flat 1,300 students; there will pretty much be an empty cafeteria for the first eight to ten years. If Stranahan gets more popular, they can easily accommodate up to the maximum capacity, which is 2,300. At that point, they could go to three lunches if necessary.

Joint Use Parks: Recap of Public Hearing on March 15, 2022 & Next Steps

Chair Ellowitz advised there will be a Public Hearing with the Commission on May 3, 2022. She reported the Board's recommendation was rejected by the Commission and they asked the Board to find \$725,000 for Sunrise Middle School, which would likely give them a turf field.

Ms. Saunders stated the direction was to identify additional funding for Sunrise Middle School. Other projects were adjusted, so they are looking to identify an additional \$725,000 to be fair. They are working with the City Manager and the Budget Office to look at scenarios, so that has been deferred until May. The Education Advisory Board made a recommendation to the Parks Advisory Board, and the Parks Advisory Board accepted the recommendation, which includes funding for 15 school sites to become Joint Use Parks. Within that proposal, some were increased in terms of their funding allocation based on scoring criteria and others were reduced. When this went to the Public Hearing on March 15, 2022, the only discussion was regarding Sunrise Middle School, so there was not a lengthy conversation. Staff was directed to look for additional funding and come back with a revised proposal.

In response to Ms. Francis, Ms. Saunders advised the Mayor and the entire Commission made the decision for staff to go back and look at additional funding. No direction was given to the other projects, so it is her hope they can maintain the project scope for all of those and find additional funding. If additional funding cannot be found or agreed upon, they will be able to look at reductions. That is part of the reason this was deferred until May, so there can be more focus.

Vice Chair Dean questioned where they are proposing to find additional funding.

Ms. Saunders stated there was discussion among the Commission looking at another pot of money that is for land acquisition. They are considering allocating money from their

individual allocations they have within the districts; nothing else was discussed at the meeting.

Ms. Brinkworth questioned if Sunrise Middle School was the only school discussed by the Commission regarding things that were “promised” and removed, and if there was conversation about other schools where staff went back and removed things from the scope, which was not discussed.

Ms. Saunders indicated it was not a lengthy conversation and because they are looking to defer it, they focused on Sunrise Middle School.

In response to Mr. Sponsler, Ms. Saunders stated this would be readdressed at the May 3, 2022 meeting, which is scheduled in the evening. She noted Public Hearings are heard at the end of the meeting.

Ms. Brinkworth questioned if it is appropriate to send a Communication to the Commission since they dismissed what the Board said, requesting they look at all the projects for what has been cut and treat all the schools with the same lens.

Chair Ellowitz liked that idea and stated they would have to come up with a recommendation. She asked if Ms. Lockwood could write something to be submitted during this meeting.

Dr. Zeman advised the Commission comments during the meeting included two Commissioners volunteering funds to add money. Instead of being roughly \$11 million, it may be \$11.7 million, and more money would be added. Commissioners Ben Sorenson and Steve Glassman are on record saying they would give up \$350,000 each out of their land acquisition money to pay for this if staff can come up with good recommendations for reductions. The outcome may be what this Board and the Parks Advisory Board recommended.

Ms. Lockwood commented that the fact the Commission rejected the Board’s proposal but wanted to give Sunrise Middle School the extra \$750,000 says they have considered other projects through the lens. Perhaps a way to do this is to soften the written recommendation as a reminder to be inclusive as possible. She does not want to lose the opportunity for Sunrise Middle School.

Ms. Brinkworth has questions as a resident about what Sunrise Middle School is getting because things were added to the list that were not on the original list like the pavilion and track resurfacing. Benches and other things were cut by staff, and she thinks it is important to tell the Commission that the Board appreciates them looking to do things, but they want to remind them there are things from other projects that were cut through staff review, which they would like them to consider as well.

Chair Ellowitz questioned if the Board could do that by attending the May 3, 2022 meeting. Ms. Brinkworth believed a formal written recommendation from the Board is from all members.

Ms. Saunders indicated the City Attorney advised only one representative from a Board can attend a City Commission meeting.

Dr. Verdi-Knapp wanted to be clear that \$750,000 was originally promised to Sunrise Middle School, which was taken away, and other things were taken away from other schools as well. The Board is saying if the Commission is going to give the money back to Sunrise Middle School that was already agreed to, they have to look at everything else that was taken off. When the Board was voting and moving things, she asked if they were changing numbers already agreed upon. She thought the specific pot of money for Sunrise Middle School was promised.

Ms. Saunders clarified there are three different project lists: 1) the original list proposed as part of the Parks Bond, 2) the list proposed by the Joint Use Working Group, and 3) the revised list proposed by the Joint Use Working Group.

Dr. Verdi-Knapp mentioned Step 1, the first list and first amount of money, and questioned how that was communicated to the schools and/or communities. The community feels it was somewhat of a guarantee; they were promised this money and it was taken away. She questioned if any other schools are in the same situation.

Ms. Francis asked if they were promised the funds when it was done or if everyone wrote a wish list and that is how much the cost was initially before knowing how much it would cost.

Ms. Saunders advised the project list that went out with the Parks Bond had an itemized list with costs. There was an understanding the school projects would be reviewed because it is School Board property and there would be a reevaluation of how those funds were spent. In terms of communities and their response, the focus has not been on money, it has been on recreational amenities.

Ms. Gohl commented the field initially promised will not fit at Sunrise Middle School and she thought for them to get a turf field was a difference of about \$400,000.

Ms. Saunders stated there was a conversation around a regulation size field and track and different options were considered to accommodate that at Sunrise Middle School, but it would not fit. They looked at bringing in another turf adjacent to the existing track and at cost scenarios of making the field turf versus natural grass

Ms. Gohl questioned if Sunrise Middle School would get the turf field and then some other things with the additional money.

Ms. Saunders advised the community submitted a letter with their request for what they want, which includes a restroom, lighting, and turf. At this point, the conversation is less around actual amenities that will be put on the property and more about the dollar value that will be assigned.

Chair Ellowitz indicated she plans to attend the May 3, 2022 Commission meeting.

Motion made by Ms. Coetzee, seconded by Ms. Gohl, for Chair Ellowitz to represent the Board at the May 3, 2022 Commission meeting. The **motion** passed unanimously. (12-0)

Ms. Brinkworth read the letter she wrote as follows:

The Education Advisory Board appreciates that the Commission has decided to commit additional funds to the Joint Use Parks project at Sunrise Middle School. We respectfully request the Commission consider a review of the list of items that were removed from all projects and find additional funds to make those projects whole.

Chair Ellowitz asked if it is possible to submit the revised list, so they can highlight things that were removed. Perhaps they could add, "Attached is the original list with revisions to illustrate what has been removed from the list".

Ms. Brinkworth clarified saying, "Attached is the original list with revisions noted".

Dr. Zeman commented that the Commission believes there are two options; one is to add money to Joint Use Parks, so it is \$11.7 million instead of roughly \$11 million. The alternate is to reduce the existing plan by \$725,000 and fund it that way. If the Communication would put it in that context, he thought it would communicate more efficiently to the Commission.

Ms. Brinkworth asked if it should say, "The EAB does not support further reduction of any projects".

Dr. Zeman suggested adding, "Given the two options of adding versus reducing the scope of other projects, the EAB strongly recommends finding new money, including funds from land acquisition in Commissioner Sorenson's and Commissioner Glassman's district.

Mr. Sponsler commented the Board was asking Commissioner Sorenson and Commissioner Glassman to come up with even more money.

Dr. Zeman stated the two Commissioners said they are willing to do that, so the Board is calling them out; reduce the scope of existing projects within the \$11 million.

Ms. Brinkworth thought that was not the Board's ask.

Mr. Sponsler indicated the Board wants them to make all the other projects just as whole as Sunrise Middle School.

Ms. Francis stated Sunrise Middle School had things added from their list of projects.

Dr. Zeman commented that he misunderstood intent.

Ms. Francis questioned why they are going for Sunrise Middle School's original list and then giving everything extra to the school that has already gotten extra. If she was not mistaken, they have already received over \$300,000 in upgrades while other parks are waiting to break ground.

Ms. Lockwood stated Sunrise Middle School is a lower performing school that has been overlooked for a quite a while.

Ms. Frances disagreed.

Ms. Lockwood mentioned Poinsettia Heights is moving to District 1.

Ms. Saunders advised Sunrise Middle School is on the list as one of the higher performing schools.

Ms. Lockwood apologized for the misstatement and asked in terms of allocation of resources if there have been equitable resources to the degree other schools have.

Ms. Francis advised it is not the lower performing school or the least equitable performing school in Fort Lauderdale. It is not Sunrise Middle School; it would be Walker Elementary or North Fork Elementary.

Ms. Saunders indicated the criteria was around park deserts. There is a need for parks in Poinsettia Heights, which is why \$1 million was recommended. The City already invested about \$350,000 into Sunrise Middle School to bring in the playground and tennis courts. The idea was to think about how they can spread the resources to address park deserts, which was the primary purpose to have a neighborhood impact. She noted Sunrise Middle School, VSY, and Harbordale have a strong enrollment and because of that, they have better resources than other schools that tend to be under-enrolled where they are investing to make Joint Use Parks.

Mr. Relyea questioned if there was a reason Sunrise Middle School might be funded by the \$700,000 additional dollars that was so graciously found by two Commissioners land acquisition funds and why other projects were not cut. He thinks more is better; \$11.7 million is better than \$11 million. It concerns him that the \$700,000 goes to one thing and other projects that were not fully funded do not get anything.

Ms. Saunders thought it was the focus of the conversation; the community is involved and saw a tremendous opportunity with this funding to create a wonderful park.

Ms. Coetzee commented the Board went to the table with recommendations and the City said they are giving \$700,000 to Sunrise Middle School and no one gets anything else.

Ms. Saunders advised the Commission did not say that; it was direction around identifying additional funding for that one project; which is what was inclusive in the conversation.

Ms. Coetzee indicated they are saying the City made a decision and they did not listen to the Board.

Ms. Francis did not think they did not listen to the Board; they were not in agreement. She mentioned the Parks Advisory Board meeting and instead of talking about how all the schools could use Joint Park monies, the entire conversation was only about one location. Even when they had a four-hour meeting, not until the last 15 minutes was there clarity that the meeting was not just about Sunrise Middle School. The meeting should never be centered around one park and she thinks that needs to be clarified. She noted she would speak as a resident of the City of Fort Lauderdale if necessary.

Chair Ellowitz commented that Ms. Saunders said there is a long list of people who spoke at the meeting, and they are not going back to ask again. When she attended the Parks Advisory meeting, Phil Thornberg said there were no funds for the project at Sunrise Middle School. The Commissioners have come up with the money, so from that perspective, she can understand why the Board would go back and say they were told publicly that there was no money for the project, but now there seems to be a possibility the money could come from those grants. She did not feel this was going back to ask again, there is new information that says money is available.

Ms. Brinkworth read a letter she drafted to the Commission as follows:

The Education Advisory Board appreciates that the Commission has decided to commit additional funds to the Joint Use Parks project at Sunrise Middle School. We respectfully request the Commission consider a review of the list of items that were removed from all projects and find additional funds to make those projects whole. Attached is the original list with revisions noted. The Education Advisory Board does not support further reduction of any projects and strongly suggests the Commission fund these items with additional allocations.

Mr. Relyea thinks the \$700,000 is a gift and doubts there is more. He questioned if all the \$700,000 is going to Sunrise Middle School and asked if some of the money could go to other things rather than the turf field.

Chair Ellowitz expressed concern that would require the Board to go line by line to specifically ask for things to be put back in.

Ms. Francis suggested giving the Commission the attachment and not telling them this is the decision the Board thinks they should make.

Ms. Saunders stated from a staff view, they have all the documentation to provide more context, which can be provided as part of this discussion with different scenarios as opposed to one comparison from the initial list

Ms. Brinkworth suggested a slight revision and maybe not mention Sunrise Middle School. Perhaps it should say, "The Education Advisory Board appreciates that the Commission has decided to commit additional funds to Joint Use Parks projects.

Ms. Saunders did not think the Commission directed more funds for the Joint Use Parks initiative. The conversation was about finding additional funding for Sunrise Middle School and the direction to staff was to find additional funds for that. She does not want to misquote the Commission.

Ms. Francis stated an option can be allocating money for Sunrise Middle School and removing extra items that have already been requested.

Chair Ellowitz asked if there were any suggestions as to who would write this. She noted Sunrise Middle School would have to remain in the recommendation.

Ms. Brinkworth read her draft Communication to the Commission as follows:

The Education Advisory Board appreciates that the Commission has decided to commit additional funds to the Joint Use Parks project at Sunrise Middle School. We respectfully request the Commission consider a review of the list of items that were removed from all projects and find additional funds to make those projects whole. Attached is the original list with revisions noted. The Education Advisory Board does not support further reduction of any projects and strongly suggests the Commission fund these items with additional allocations.

Ms. Gohl suggested saying something after the first sentence such as, "It is our understanding this does not require the full \$700,000 to complete the turf field. We respectfully ask that they use the difference between the turf field and that amount to consider the other projects".

Ms. Lockwood mentioned the recommendation was to keep the turf field and the excess can be reallocated.

Ms. Francis stated the community is asking for a dollar number.

Dr. Verdi-Knapp indicated the purpose of the Communication is to redirect.

Ms. Francis will go with whatever but noted their entire Communication has been about a dollar amount, which is not part of the project.

Mr. Sponsler commented it almost sounds like what they risk saying is let Sunrise Middle School have what the Poinsettia Heights community wants and then everyone else gets what is left over.

Ms. Francis thought if the money was already designated, they do not want to say use what is left, but they can say the things they have added. Joint Use Parks is already in the budget, so take those lines out and let them use the \$700,000 to pay for those. The money removed can pay for other projects that were removed.

Chair Ellowitz stated that focuses on Amenities, not the dollar amount, because they want the Amenities back that were taken.

Ms. Francis indicated they were focusing on Amenities; their conversation has always been around what they were promised as a dollar amount, which they continue to want even though the projects they were given were available and they were going to get them.

Ms. Saunders advised it is important to note there are different lenses: one is the dollar amount, and one is looking at Amenities. Perhaps they should clarify the lens they are approaching.

Ms. Lockwood asked if they need to point out that everyone else is using the Amenity lens and only Sunrise Middle School is using the dollar lens.

Ms. Saunders did not know if they could speak for every community but thought they could speak to the lens used to make a recommendation.

Ms. Brinkworth did not know if Sunrise Middle School and Poinsettia Heights understand what they are going to get. If they want a pavilion and track resurfacing, which is really what they need, those things were not on the original Amenities list and that is going to be problematic for the school and the community who wants a place to walk. Now they have asked for additional Amenities on their wish list.

Ms. Coetzee mentioned that is what the Commissioners are willing to take out of their pocket.

Ms. Brinkworth appreciates the focus on Amenities because that is what they should be focusing on, but if they suggest the Commission look at the Amenities and they look at their original list, the important Amenities for the community and school are possibly going to be eliminated from the project.

Ms. Saunders stated the additions the community requested was the track, removal of the racquetball courts, the addition of the pavilion, turf, and entryway landscaping.

Ms. Brinkworth did not want them to take away what is important for the Joint Use Park, the community, and the school in what they communicate to the Commission.

Ms. Lockwood feels so much time has been spent on this and now they are giving it another 40 minutes. She thinks Ms. Brinkworth's original statement was perfect and they should go back to it. The Board would like the Commission to reconsider. With respect, here is the list highlighted for consideration. The Board clearly had a position that was agreed upon, voted on, and submitted in writing, which she misinterpreted.

Ms. Francis agreed.

Ms. Brinkworth re-read the draft to the Commission as follows:

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Motion made by Ms. Lockwood, seconded by Ms. Dean, to affirm Ms. Brinkworth's draft formal Communication from the Education Advisory Board to the City Commission members to be delivered prior to the May 3, 2022 Commission meeting. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed, with Mr. Relyea in opposition. (12-1)

Ayes: Ellowitz, Brinkworth, Coetzee, Gohl, Francis, Jaramillo, Lockwood, Sponsler, Verdi-Knapp, Perloff, Dean

Nays: Relyea

Early Learning: Bezos Academy Update & Community-wide planning

Ms. Saunders explained they have been working closely with Bezos Academy and Broward County Public Schools to identify opportunities for the Bezos Academy to co-locate at under-enrolled schools in the City of Fort Lauderdale and she highlighted the following points:

- A proposal went before the School Board for discussion at a Workshop; it was not an item to be voted on.
- There were many questions from the School Board and the Teacher's Union expressed vocal opposition to the proposal with concern that it is privatizing education.
- The conversation among School Board members was understanding more about the Bezos Academy, the nature of the partnership with the City of Fort Lauderdale,

and the ability of the School Board to deliver that type of service for the Early Learning population.

- A series of questions was documented, which the School Board is responding to.
- There were several questions directed to the City that the City did not have an opportunity to respond to during the Workshop.
- A follow up letter was written and forwarded to the Education Advisory Board providing a little more background and clarifying the City's role in identifying the partnership opportunity, involvement, and the rationale for proposing that as a recommendation.
- Over the last three years, they have been working closely with the School District to identify additional funding opportunities to expand Early Learning. Several letters of support to that effect in coordination with the district have been submitted.
- They have not been able to do the expansion.
- This was seen as an opportunity to lead a critical need; many children are entering Kindergarten that are not ready for school.
- Several under-enrolled schools in Fort Lauderdale are older facilities that could benefit from some capital upgrades that are currently not budgeted and part of the program is that they would retrofit those facilities to offer preschool for ten years.
- They are working on three things as it relates to Bezos Academy; one is continuing to work with Broward County Public Schools to evaluate the proposal and identify the right fit and where and what questions need to be answered. The other opportunity is for the City to look at existing facilities owned by the City as potential and other facilities through their partner organizations.
- There have been meetings with Early Learning providers, and they are working closely with the Early Learning Coalition and the School District to do a Comprehensive Gap Analysis and a larger Community and Outreach Campaign, so the City can zero in on how they define the gap in terms of access and quality.

Mr. Sponsler questioned if the quest to find new properties for the program would be in addition to public schools identified for the program or instead of the public schools.

Ms. Saunders thought the interest would be in addition; it is a matter of how that comes forward and if there is School Board support for that proposal. There is an interest from the Bezos Academy in meeting the need where the need is, and they know the areas identified are great candidates for the program in terms of their specifications. If they find an additional need, they are certainly interested in meeting that.

Joe Balchunas, Cadre Director, Office of School Performance & Accountability, indicated that a few Board members said no matter what, this is not going to be voted on positively for fear of using private dollars to fund public schools. This is a collaboration between the Bezos Academy and the City of Florida to benefit the students of Fort Lauderdale. Some Board members said absolutely not, some said they need more information, and some asked why Early Childhood could not be funded at a high-level using School Board dollars. All those conversations lead to coming back to the table. One Board member said if they do not do this, Bezos Academy will use a building somewhere on Sunrise

Boulevard and turn it into a beautiful academy. He thinks there is enough interest if they can get Bezos Academy to come back to the table and answer the questions at a high-level and perhaps present a more solid plan. The Board felt there was not enough information to make a sound decision.

In response to Chair Ellowitz, Ms. Saunders advised there are three schools.

Ms. Jaramillo mentioned privatization and whether they could partner with non-profits already doing this. She questioned if it is pulling away from organizations already doing good work. Another question was who has access to Bezos Academy and if they are choosing who can come to the school.

Mr. Sponsler stated when the people from Bezos Academy were here, he asked for some data, which still has not been received.

Ms. Saunders advised their lottery process is straight forward and is documented in terms of how they prioritize who is admitted into the program. Children who are homeless or in foster care are given priority, and from there, it is based on the threshold of the Federal poverty level; it is designed to serve the underserved but does serve above the 200%. One of the things they must be mindful of is limitations of resources, so they need to be strategic where things should be placed within the community to have the biggest impact and they are working with the providers. The City also invests in Early Learning in other ways. Through Community Development and Block Grants they have been able to provide funding to the Jack and Jill Children's Center, the YMCA, and several other programs.

Ms. Gohl watched a little of the Workshop and thinks the word, "Privatization" is being thrown around incorrectly. The Bezos Foundation is a non-profit, they are not making money off the schools. Usually, the question is when they are using public dollars to fund for-profit or private entities to provide education. She asked if the Teacher's Union provided the biggest pushback.

Mr. Balchunas stated the conversation started with comments from the Broward Teacher's Union.

Ms. Saunders indicated there was a comment from the Facilities Task Force about what went into looking at these sites and if there was consideration how these fit in with the SMART Plan and those types of things.

Mr. Balchunas stated that would be something they would have to investigate to make sure the scope and sequence of any SMART projects would not interfere and some other data as well, such as boundaries, demographics, etc. He thinks a lot of information is needed before considering this for a vote.

Chair Ellowitz asked what they specifically want or need to know.

Mr. Balchunas stated he could forward that information.

Dr. Verdi-Knapp questioned if it is appropriate to ask what major reservations were for people who would not consider this for a vote.

Mr. Balchunas indicated the major point was that Bezos is Amazon and they do not want private dollars used for this program because as a School District, they could potentially have the program themselves. They referenced some of the VPK and Pre-Kindergarten programs in Magnet Schools and there was conversation regarding Head Start versus VPK, how they get students, what the numbers are, and why there cannot be more programs like that. The Montessori program was mentioned. There are Montessori Magnet Schools in the City of Fort Lauderdale with successful VPK programs, which would be the basis of the Bezos Academy; it is a Montessori like education. The cost was discussed, and it was noted it would be between \$200,000 to \$250,000 per program.

Mr. Sponsler indicated there is not much data, but he questioned how many Academies the Bezos has started so far that have been open for more than a year.

Ms. Saunders stated they are new, and they are clear on that.

Mr. Sponsler advised that as a high school teacher, he is receiving the effects of students not being able to read at the appropriate level by the time they reach the third grade, and they are doing everything possible to catch the students up. If there is money available to increase the number of students who have access to good Early Childhood Learning, he is in favor of it. The question is what informed Mr. Bezos' decision that his organization is qualified to do what they are doing without a certain amount of vetting. The only experience he received with the Education Advisory Board came with a caveat from his representative who said, "They do not want this out in the public yet". There is skepticism because there are all kinds of research that start-ups in the education field are not more successful than the Public School system.

Ms. Saunders stated they did not want to do any type of joint Press Release until they have the contract. One point is that it is a new initiative and sometimes that takes more time to process.

Ms. Lockwood thought it sounded like more socialization was needed.

Dr. Verdi-Knapp commented that it might have been a better idea if his name was not listed.

Ms. Saunders mentioned there is always value when there are these types of discussions because the questions are clearer. Now there is a robust set of questions the School Board has that they want answers to, which are being provided, and that opens an opportunity to have further discussion about what a right partnership looks like. The questions and outcomes are important, so that was not discussed much at the meeting in terms of the types of assessments used.

Ms. Perloff questioned what they are comparing it to.

Ms. Saunders stated they are using National Assessments.

Ms. Francis asked what some of the public complaints were.

Mr. Balchunas replied the complaints were the same; they should not be entering into any partnerships with this business organization. All the questions are being sent to him, so they can be revisited.

Dr. Verdi-Knapp questioned how this is differentiated from funding for Charter Schools.

Ms. Saunders advised Charter Schools are Public Schools that are funded through the State.

Ms. Gohl stated VPK is more for private funding for Early Education than the Bezos Academy. Most VPK providers are private providers, so that is more on the side of privatization than this, because there is no public money.

Ms. Lockwood mentioned the GEO Group is a group who turned down a seven-figure gift because of their affiliation with private prisons. There is an issue of trust; Foundations can do a lot of good. This is an in-kind donation from an organization that has a lot of money, and they want to do good for the community. It is not privatization; it is an in-kind donation for support of a needed service.

Ms. Brinkworth questioned if the City is moving forward with the Bezos Academy in looking for locations to have Early Childhood happen in the City of Fort Lauderdale outside of what is happening with the School District.

Ms. Saunders replied yes. They have committed to any sort of partnership they do; they would make sure they continue to work with the School Board because articulation into Kindergarten is so important. Nothing has been solidified at this point and they are exploring other opportunities.

Ms. Francis thought the School Board would think they are in direct conflict because they are going to steal the teachers. Currently, it is just the teacher shifting in the same buildings, but if the City opens their own buildings, their teachers will go to those programs, and that is the concern. If the School Board does not move faster to decide what they are going to do and the City finds a place, then the School Board will lose out because they will be losing staff.

Aviation & Aerospace Training Hub: Recap of March 1, 2022 Conference & Next Steps

Ms. Saunders appreciates the Education Advisory Board's feedback to the Consultant; it was quite helpful. She sent the revised presentation that went before the Commission.

The conversation was good, and the Commission expressed their appreciation for the Study narrowing down the need and began to explore different partnership models. The Commission expressed interest in the possibility of making land available for the project, which would be Municipal land adjacent to the Executive Airport. That was not voted on, but it is a partnership opportunity and something they can bring forward. The Commission also expressed an interest in moving forward with establishing a Working Group of Education Industry Partners and the task for that Group is to finalize the educational model and partnership roles and responsibilities, then to pursue funding opportunities, which have been identified at State Level; there are also Grants they can explore. The immediate next steps are working with the core educational partners; Broward County Public Schools and Broward College coming together to determine which model will be most viable and meet the need identified for aviation training.

Chair Ellowitz asked if a Working Group is already in place.

Ms. Saunders stated they are bringing together core educational partners because there are several different models they could explore, and they want an initial sense as to how they could contribute. They will widen that circle to include Industry partners. As part of the goal setting process, this was identified as a goal for the Commission, so through that, they can secure the Consultant for the first cycle and for the second year. The second-year scope of work is much more focused on implementation planning and getting into specifics around certificates offered to the number of students served and the financial model. Part of that is understanding resources that might be available through Grants and potential Industry partners.

Chair Ellowitz asked if there is a building available or if it is just the land.

Ms. Saunders advised the City does not have a building available, it would be land. The thought is for Fort Lauderdale to be an Aviation Hub, so they want to make use of existing infrastructure to support the training. While they think about a possible scenario in working with Broward County Public Schools and creating a Magnet Pathway, one of the Foundational courses can be done at the school, and when more specialized training is needed with hands- on equipment, it would be at the Training Center. Ultimately, it is a Hub creating an opportunity for the community, and they are zeroing in on what the actual Training Center would look like. Commission approval would be required to make that land available. There is a lot of interest in this, but they are not at a stage where there are any formal partnership agreements. It is understood this is a need from the Industry and there are opportunities and resources all partners can bring to the equation.

Chair Ellowitz asked if Bezos Academy students would be able to attend the program.

Ms. Saunders stated Blue Origin has a focus on aerospace, so they are reaching out.

Community Engagement Strategy: Initiate discussion on goals and approach

Ms. Saunders advised the School District will be going through a long-range planning process where they are evaluating the maximum educational value of all their facilities. There are many under-enrolled schools in the City of Fort Lauderdale, and she thinks there is an opportunity, as a community, to come alongside the School District, and do outreach to identify community priorities for education. That input can be provided to show what would create more demand in the schools and where there are opportunities to do other partnerships that meet the educational need. Fort Lauderdale is a growing City, and it is important to think about how that growth is translated into Public School enrollment and what type of educational offerings would help. The big picture can be broken down into developing a Gap Analysis and a Community Outreach Plan, from which they would have recommendations for what the community has identified as the most critical educational needs.

Ms. Saunders advised the School District will be going through a long-range planning process where they are evaluating the maximum educational value of all their facilities. There are many under-enrolled schools in the City of Fort Lauderdale, and she thinks there is an opportunity, as a community, to come alongside the School District, and do outreach to identify community priorities for education. That input can be

Ms. Brinkworth commented when looking at the School Board agenda, she noticed communication to the School Board that there was going to be a review and a Demographic presentation on North Fork Elementary School regarding the SMART project. That was a signal to her that the school could be in danger of re-purpose. She thinks it is important for the City to be highly engaged in understanding what schools are significantly under-enrolled and what the community needs from those schools to come back. The community is growing and if the School District looks at it only with the lens of demographics, projections, and schools that are currently under-enrolled, they are going to close schools in our City. They need to look carefully at the needs and be ahead of the conversations the School Board is going to have, so they are prepared to come alongside and help them understand the needs of the community.

Ms. Saunders expressed concern about North Fork Elementary being on the agenda because it is being reviewed outside of the context of the long-range plan and tremendous growth in this City. She attended a Broward Workshop for the Urban Board Committee, and their conversation is that more schools are needed Downtown.

Ms. Lockwood questioned if any high schools were on the list.

Ms. Brinkworth did not recall. She indicated they need to be concerned with schools that are not within the boundaries of Fort Lauderdale but serve students within the City.

Ms. Saunders indicated she has been reaching out to schools that serve City of Fort Lauderdale children, but are not located within the City, to fill those relationships. It is important to come back and ask what schools they support.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: February 17, 2022

Ms. Saunders advised she has had conversations with Prototype, and she will redline changes while listening to the audio, so they can review and provide a draft.

Closing:

Chair Ellowitz indicated she would not be present for the May 19, 2022 meeting and suggested the meeting be held on May 12, 2022.

Ms. Saunders requested two dates that work be provided to her, so she can confirm with the City Clerk's Office.

Chair Ellowitz stated May 26, 2022 would not work and suggested May 12, 2022 or June 16, 2022. She also mentioned July 21, 2022, and it was noted there was previous discussion that the July meeting was cancelled.

Ms. Saunders advised she would follow up tomorrow.

Adjournment

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned the meeting at 8:29 p.m.

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

Minutes changes are to be made only by Prototype. Please make all staff edits at one time via redlining or in an email and return to your minutes writer for our approval and acceptance. We will then create a second draft. We will also make final changes after Board approval. Contact Lisa with any questions.