



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD
Thursday, June 20, 2024, 6:00 p.m.
Fire Administration Building
528 NW 2nd Street
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311**

June 2024 - May 2025

| Members | Attendance | Present | Absent |
|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Chair Janet Gualtieri | P | 1 | 0 |
| Pamela Aiken | A | 0 | 1 |
| Heather Brinkworth | P | 1 | 0 |
| Kristina Dever | P | 1 | 0 |
| John Gillen | P | 1 | 0 |
| Erin Gohl | P | 1 | 0 |
| Juliet Gray-Williams | P | 1 | 0 |
| Charles Laster | A | 0 | 1 |
| Alyssa Mendez | A | 0 | 1 |
| Denia Perloff | A | 0 | 1 |
| Deborah Rosenbaum | A | 0 | 1 |

Also Attending

Susan Leon, Chief Education Officer
Von Howard, Public Affairs Administrative Supervisor
Leslie Harmon, Prototype
Armando Arana, Government Affairs, Broward County Public Schools

I. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Chair Janet Gualtieri. Roll was called and it was determined a quorum was present.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Gualtieri asked the Board to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Approval of the May 16, 2024 Minutes

Motion was made by Mr. Gillen, seconded by Ms. Brinkworth, to approve the May 16, 2024, minutes as presented. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Old Business

Chair Gualtieri noted there had been discussion at the May meeting as to whether there could be co-Vice Chairs. Ms. Leon reported it had been determined that per City policy, only a single Vice Chair would be allowed.

Chair Gualtieri shared that it had also been learned that one (1) of the candidates was running for office, so she would not be able to continue her service on the Board. Ms. Leon stated Ms. Shuman-Newkirk had been notified.

Discussion ensued, and consensus was to table discussion of the Vice Chair position to the September meeting, as the candidates were not present.

IV. New Business

Chair Gualtieri asked if there was an update on the previous discussion regarding scholarship recommendations. Ms. Leon stated she had done some research on what other cities do and spoken with staff members, and had learned Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport (FXE) and Airport Manager Rufus James are willing to partner to support a scholarship.

Ms. Brinkworth asked if FXE had a 501(c)3. Ms. Leon advised that they do not have their own 501(c)3, but had an existing relationship and would be willing to partner with that organization. She noted he is very interested in offering a scholarship to students interested in the aviation field.

Chair Gualtieri inquired as to whether the scholarship would be limited to a certain type of student. Ms. Leon stated the scholarship would be for aviation students, but could serve as a starting point for building offerings.

Board members asked questions regarding parameters for the scholarship and the potential for other scholarships in partnership with the 501(c)3 mentioned. Ms. Leon advised Mr. James could be invited to a future meeting to discuss details.

Mr. Gillen asked if the Board should focus on one (1) scholarship program or if the Board members should continue to explore other potential opportunities. Consensus was to continue pursuing other ideas.

Mr. Gillen stated he had contacts he would reach out to regarding a potential scholarship for LGBTQ+ students and would report back at the September meeting.

Motion was made by Ms. Gray-Williams to invite Rufus James and other interested parties to discuss scholarship opportunities at the September meeting. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

V. Chief Education Officer Update

Ms. Leon shared that she had attended the Broward County Public School Board workshop the previous week along with Ms. Gohl. She stated an update was provided on the Redefining Our Schools initiative, and the Board voted 7-2 to direct Superintendent Howard Hepburn to expand programmatic options at the District schools, to recommend the closure of a minimum of five (5) schools, and to develop a plan to attract students back to Broward County Public Schools for the 2024-2025 school year. She reviewed the criteria discussed and next steps, and noted they had mentioned hiring a third party to conduct a facility assessment, and she would be part of the walk-throughs of the Fort Lauderdale schools if it is allowed. She stated plans are to start the community engagement piece of the plan in the summer and fall with decisions by November in deference to the proposed First Choice application window.

Chair Gualtieri asked how the community was to be involved. Ms. Leon stated there had not been a formal plan shared, but they talked about including existing city advisory boards and commissions, as well as their own advisory board.

Chair Gualtieri noted this would be the last meeting of the EAB before that process would be happening, and asked if there was anything the Board should do to notify the Commission. Ms. Leon advised of her efforts to educate and reach out to the Commission as a body and individually, and noted she was working to establish a one-on-one meeting between Mayor Dean Trantalis and Superintendent Hepburn. She stated it would be important for the Board to make their voices heard.

Ms. Gohl commented that following the developments can be tricky, and asked Ms. Leon to keep the Board informed. She shared her feedback from attending the workshop, noting Fort Lauderdale was disproportionately impacted by the first round of recommendations, and the criteria being used for this round is not different. She stated she was pleased to hear that feedback the EAB had given School Board Member Dr. Jeff Holness at the May meeting informed his comments at the workshop and he made the motion asking it to be a whole District approach. She pointed out that not all schools have a PTA or SAC, so the Board could be involved in helping to amplify those voices. Discussion continued regarding engagement with local groups.

Ms. Brinkworth highlighted the lack of discussion about the financial analysis of the plan. Ms. Gohl advised that there had been several comments made that the plan needed to be based on financial modeling, but that was not the approach being taken. She stated the initial plan had been to do a district-wide facilities assessment, but that had been revised so that once the schools are identified, a third party would be brought in to do a facilities assessment of just those schools. She agreed this was concerning and much of the criticism of the plan was that it was not actually based on data and modeling, and this next round also would not be.

Discussion continued as to the impact of selling School Board property financially and long-term, access for the future, leasing versus selling, and the budget deficit. Ms. Leon clarified that the plan as presented appeared to be based on seat allocation compared to capacity rather than on budget deficit.

Chair Gualtieri asked about topics to have in mind when attending civic association meetings over the summer. Mr. Gillen pointed out that most boards do not meet over the summer. Ms. Gohl noted that had been brought up at the workshop, as the plan included action steps with municipalities, which is not feasible if they do not meet.

Chair Gualtieri inquired as to how Board members could stay informed about upcoming meetings. Ms. Leon stated she would be watching the websites and agreed to keep the Board informed. She noted the next workshop did not have anything related to this initiative on the agenda.

Armando Arana, Government Affairs, Broward County Public Schools, distributed a handout which included an official initiative update and a timeline. He stated June and July was the timeline for beginning engagement with the municipalities, and through the end of October was set for community engagement with organizations and stakeholders.

Ms. Brinkworth noted the calendar included items which had already happened, including the Broward City Managers Association meeting and the Broward League of Cities meeting, and asked how the School Board is ensuring the right people are in the room to have the conversation. Discussion continued.

Ms. Gohl stated she hoped the School Board and District staff really do want the community engagement piece, but there were issues such as a lack of time certain for public comments and meetings that do not follow the order of the agenda which cause chaos and make it difficult for parents and educators to participate. She asserted removing the barriers for engagement would be huge. Mr. Arana responded that this had been discussed, and noted that he was hopeful for it to be addressed moving forward. Discussion ensued briefly regarding the Parent Community Involvement Taskforce and opportunities for improvement of the school system.

Ms. Brinkworth shared that at the last PTSA meeting for Fort Lauderdale High School, the Middle River Terrace Association President had reached out asking for discussion of the dangerous intersection at NE 16th Street and NE 5th Terrace. She stated there is a lot of congestion on 4th Avenue for drop off and pickup, so parents are dropping off in the back and conflicting with student traffic going to the student parking lot. She advised the Association had asked the PTSA to support their request for a traffic study at that corner, and the PTSA had voted to send a letter to Broward County. She noted concerns with studying the intersection during the summer and highlighted that future advocacy may be required.

Consensus was to ask Ms. Leon to reach out to staff, PTSA, and school advisory forums in the City of Lauderdale to provide her contact information and make them aware the EAB welcomes them to bring their issues to the Board so they can help with advocacy. Ms. Leon shared that Neighborhood Support has passed on concerns brought forward by Homeowners Associations and that she would be meeting with the principals on a regular basis.

Ms. Gohl asked about the process for securing more crossing guards. Ms. Leon stated she would investigate. Ms. Dever commented that it would be nice to have more adults in the neighborhood, because students should feel safe walking to school. Discussion continued regarding traffic safety.

VI. Member Discussion

Armando Arana, Government Affairs, Broward County Public Schools, provided an update. He stated he had been asked at the last meeting about identifying openings on advisory committees and how to apply, and had learned that interested parties should reach out to their School Board member. He noted he had requested a list of vacancies.

Mr. Arana shared that the 2024 school year had concluded with 48 graduation ceremonies, all of which were online, and noted the recognition of many award winners and scholarship recipients. He shared the emergency shelter map and stated 41 schools had been identified as shelters, with five (5) serving special needs, three (3) serving those with pets, and three (3) that would be assistance centers. He advised that volunteers are still being sought to work the shelters in an emergency.

Mr. Arana discussed school safety briefly, advising the installation of walk-through metal detectors in all 32 high schools was in process as an expansion of the District's weapon detection program, and installation at two (2) schools would be complete for the beginning of the school year. Ms. Dever asked if the School District would be looking at data before and after the investment to determine if it makes sense. She stated it may make some people feel safer, but they need to look at whether it is actually decreasing incidents. She noted she was also interested in the logistics and whether it was feasible. Discussion continued regarding feasibility, penalizing students who are late as a result, and balancing negative social emotional impacts.

Mr. Arana stated 93 schools will be used as polling sites for the primary election on August 20 and the General Election on November 5, including 10 in Fort Lauderdale. He noted a recent voter registration drive in cooperation with the Broward County Supervisor of Elections, which resulted in 8,464 students being registered. He highlighted the recently updated report on the implementation of the interlocal agreement for public school facility planning, which works to align Comprehensive Plans for school concurrency. He highlighted upcoming events and directed the Board to the newsletter and municipal registry for additional information.

Ms. Leon commented that the City's enrichment summer program is in full swing, with students engaged in math, English, science, social studies, and arts. She noted the City has interns for the summer in partnership with Career Source Broward and Junior Achievement.

VII. Closing

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for September 19, 2024.

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