



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**DRAFT**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE**  
**EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD**  
Wednesday, November 29, 2023, 6:30 p.m.  
Stranahan High School  
1800 SW 5<sup>th</sup> Place  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33312

June 2023 - May 2024

<b>Members</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Chair Suzanne Dean (at 6:55 p.m.)	P	2	0
Vice Chair Tina Jaramillo	A	1	1
Pamela Aiken	P	2	0
Heather Brinkworth	P	2	0
Kristina Dever	P	2	0
Erin Gohl	A	1	1
Juliet Gray-Williams	P	2	0
Janet Gualtieri	A	1	1
Alyssa Mendez	P	1	1
Denia Perloff	P	1	1

**Also Attending**

Zoie Saunders, Chief Education Officer  
Leslie Harmon, Prototype, Inc.

**I. Welcome**

The meeting was called to order at 6:46 p.m. by Juliet Gray-Williams.

**II. Attendance and Roll Call** (10 appointed members, 6 needed for quorum)

Roll was called and quorum was present.

**III. School Spotlight on Stranahan High School**

Stranahan High School Principal Michelle Padura provided a brief welcome to the school and introduced the following students to speak about their respective programs:

- Marine Core Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) – Lidia Suastegui-Perez and Sebastian Tarrats
- Law Magnet Program – Madison DeVera
- Business Program – Farhanah Mangroo and Miya Dennis
- Engineering Program – Monique Reyes
- Medical Program – Jeremiah Lorthe

*Chair Dean joined the meeting at 6:55 p.m.*

#### **IV. 2024 Education and Workforce Development Initiatives**

Chief Education Officer Zoie Saunders made a presentation updating on the City's Education and Workforce Development strategies. She advised that the vision is for Fort Lauderdale to be known for world-class schools and as a training hub for top talent and discussed recognitions the City had received in conjunction with its partners in the past four (4) and a half years. She discussed the goals of workforce readiness, career connections, entrepreneurship, educational support, and provided a comprehensive overview of the initiatives and metrics associated with each.

*Presentation is attached.*

Ms. Perloff asked whether the economic recovery fellow candidates were local.

Ms. Saunders stated the candidates are not from Fort Lauderdale, but they bring a background in economic development and a focus on community organizing while capturing resident perspectives and priorities. She noted the commitment during onboarding was to introduce the fellow to the community leaders and neighborhoods.

Ms. Brinkworth commented on the importance of "nothing for us without us," and thinking about what can be most impactful in a multi-generational approach. She stated programming at the elementary level that invites adults to be involved in their child's education while also improving their own education would be beneficial.

Ms. Saunders agreed that they need to meet people where they are, and there needs to be intentionality in where these programs are placed. She added that the decisions that Broward County Public Schools will be making are also a backdrop to the conversation. She stated they are moving toward repurposing schools because of the business challenge of under-enrolled schools, and with that comes an opportunity for innovation.

Ms. Perloff stated she had been present at meetings when the discussion of repurposing was brought up, and it was off putting to the community that they were being asked for feedback and then not having it considered. She asserted the City needs to push for the School District to deliver what the community says they need.

Ms. Saunders noted the Board has been working with her to develop the education listening campaign, but the City has put a hold on it pending more understanding of where the School District is going. She stated in crafting that approach, the conversation was around creating authentic opportunities to collect input and then ensuring the School District will listen to that input. She pointed out this was important to consider when looking at creating the strategic plan.

Ms. Perloff inquired as to the timeline for the initiatives.

Ms. Saunders shared that the Startup FTL High School Edition was partially funded through a State grant and would likely reach over 2,000 high school students between February and June, then directly employ 63 in Summer 2024.

Ms. Mendez asked for clarification on who the team is that will do the day-to-day work toward the initiatives identified.

Ms. Saunders explained there was not additional staffing, but the grant allows for hiring teachers and enrichment directors that serve part-time in implementing an aspect of the program. She noted a lot of the work takes place through partnerships and vendor relationships to bring in specialized resources the City does not have staff for. Continuing, Ms. Saunders touched on the time table and milestones for each of the identified initiatives, noting some are implementing and can serve people now, while others are in the conceptual design phase.

Ms. Aiken asserted she likes the initiatives but feels the something missing is scholarships.

Ms. Saunders agreed scholarships would be something to explore under the current administration.

Chair Dean stated there had been a lot of questions between meetings as to how the Education Advisory Board fit into the restructuring at the City, so she had reached out to speak to Mayor Dean Trantalis and City Manager Greg Chavarria about education. She expressed concern that the Board's requests related to their initiatives were falling on deaf ears and highlighted the importance of advocacy.

Ms. Saunders pointed out that as the EAB thinks about their strategies, they should think about the City's cycle. She noted the vision prioritizing education and the goals within the Strategic Plan related to education and workforce development. She discussed the process for annual Commission prioritization briefly.

Chair Dean suggested the Board write a letter to the City Commission asking them to prioritize education. She read a draft she had prepared for discussion.

Ms. Saunders stated rather than trying to wordsmith in the moment, if the Board wanted to write a Communication to the Commission, there was value in having a conversation around what they thought would be most important to communicate.

Ms. Mendez motioned to table the Communication to the Commission discussion to the next meeting.

Ms. Brinkworth advised that she agreed the conversation should be tabled to allow more people to be part of the conversation. She stated to Chair Dean's point, she thinks time is of the essence, and Board members should reach out to the members of

Commission who appointed them to share their feelings on the priority prior to the goal setting discussion. Ms. Saunders noted that Commission goal setting takes place in January.

Ms. Brinkworth asked that the full EAB be encouraged to reach out to the Commission, pointing out in person would be best, but a phone call or email would also be positive.

Ms. Saunders shared that Mayor Trantalis is confirmed to attend the EAB meeting in January. She stated the discussion had been to take a few meetings to craft a strategy and get organized on how they want to facilitate the conversation with the Mayor.

**Motion** was made by Ms. Mendez, seconded by Ms. Dever, to table the Communication to the Commission discussion to the next meeting. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Chair Dean stated this meant the Board had one more meeting to discuss the language and asked that it be emailed out to the remaining members of the Board in the meantime.

Ms. Brinkworth motioned to request that Ms. Saunders send communication to the EAB members to communicate that now is the time to reach out to members of the Commission regarding educational concerns and priorities. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Ms. Saunders stated that with that communication, she would also share the goals that the City Commission has adopted around education as a point of reference. She advised it is important to recognize the work being done as a place to build upon.

Ms. Mendez asked how many members there were on the EAB.

Ms. Saunders advised there are 10 members and 10 openings.

**Motion** was made by Ms. Brinkworth, seconded by Ms. Perloff, to request that Ms. Saunders send communication to the EAB members to communicate that now is the time to reach out to members of the Commission regarding educational concerns and priorities. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Chair Dean asked that her letter also be sent out to the membership to allow them to provide feedback with tracked changes prior to the next meeting. Ms. Saunders stated she would attach the letter with the other materials requested when emailing the Board and provide context as to its creation.

Chair Dean pointed out there are 10 openings on the EAB and asked the Board members to each think of someone who has an interest in education in the City and

reach out. Ms. Saunders advised that she would also add the Board application link to the email.

Ms. Brinkworth asked where to find the list of current EAB members.

Ms. Saunders stated the roster is on the City website, along with a list of the vacancies by district.

Ms. Brinkworth highlighted the opportunity to bring members onto the Board who are not tied to education and have something different to add.

Discussion ensued as to potential dates for the December meeting. Consensus was to keep the meeting scheduled for December 21, with the location to be determined.

Chair Dean noted the location is moving around to different schools and suggested the first half hour of future meetings be an optional tour of the school. Discussion ensued as to the logistics of a school tour or presentation from the students.

Ms. Saunders advised that she goes through the Central Regional Office and works with the principals and explained that she asks the principal to do a spotlight for their school and they decide the format.

#### **V. EAB Approach for Strategic Plan Development**

Ms. Saunders opened a discussion as to developing next concrete steps for developing the strategy for moving forward, and outlining what information they may request from staff for context.

Ms. Brinkman stated they need more information on what the District is going to do, as well as any opportunities that were discussed in the past and are still open, such as the Bezos Academies and the joint use parks.

Ms. Saunders advised that the joint use parks are still happening and noted she had reported at the September meeting updating on the effort to resurface courts. She stated Harbordale Elementary School is being added to the licensing agreement as an addendum in a process being finalized by the attorneys. She explained the most recent discussion on the Bezos Academies had been regarding the initiative to do a modular, but it did not fit in the land available. She stated that had not been revisited because it had not been the pressing priority.

Chair Dean asked for an update on the Community Action (CAPE) teams.

Ms. Saunders stated volunteers continue to be recruited and those who were previously recruited continue to serve. She advised that she believed they could gather input from the principals on additional support that would be helpful or what they would like to see replicated or repeated.

Ms. Brinkman suggested that providing additional volunteers in the schools could be a goal for the City that would make a huge impact in a real and concrete way.

Chair Dean asked about the status of development of a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) at North Fork Elementary School.

Ms. Saunders shared that she had the opportunity to attend a couple of the school's PTA meetings last year and it was wonderful to see their increased engagement.

Chair Dean asked whether concerns related to school closures was something the Board should address at its next meeting.

Ms. Saunders advised that the education listening campaign had been structured to capture those priorities, understanding that changes would be made and making sure those changes were in the best interest of the community. She stated the tool kit that was developed solicited input around repurposing options and what the community felt would be most important.

Chair Dean stated it would be good to revisit the discussion of the strategic plan at the next meeting when there are more members present, along with finalizing correspondence with the Commission, and discussion about alternate modalities of education the Board could research.

Ms. Brinkworth stated it was important for the Board to gain an understanding of the innovation that is happening before making suggestions for further innovation.

Chair Dean highlighted an opportunity to educate the local realtors on positive things happening in Fort Lauderdale schools, so they have a more comprehensive understanding when communicating with clients.

Ms. Saunders stated she would share information on thinking through which stakeholder groups need to be involved in the conversation. She noted it is a complex endeavor, but there is a place to start, and she will help to provide some structure to the future conversation.

### **VIII. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

**Motion** was made by Ms. Brinkworth, seconded by Ms. Gray-Williams, to approve the September 21, 2023, minutes as presented. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

### **IX. Closing**

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for December 21.