



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

DRAFT
MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD
Thursday, January 18, 2024, 6:30 p.m.
Fire Administration Building
528 NW 2nd Street
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311

June 2023 - May 2024

| Members | Attendance | Present | Absent |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Chair Suzanne Dean | P | 3 | 0 |
| Vice Chair Tina Jaramillo | A | 1 | 2 |
| Pamela Aiken | P | 3 | 0 |
| Heather Brinkworth | P | 3 | 0 |
| Kristina Dever | P | 3 | 0 |
| Erin Gohl | A | 1 | 2 |
| Juliet Gray-Williams | P | 3 | 0 |
| Janet Gualtieri (at 6:48 p.m.) | P | 2 | 1 |
| Alyssa Mendez | P | 2 | 1 |
| Denia Perloff | A | 1 | 2 |

Also Attending

Von Howard, Public Affairs Administrative Supervisor
Leslie Harmon, Prototype, Inc.

I. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 p.m. by Chair Dean.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Dean led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum

Roll was called and quorum was present.

IV. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum

Motion was made by Ms. Brinkworth, seconded by Ms. Dever, to approve the November 29, 2023, minutes as amended to correct any references to Brinkman to read Brinkworth. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Item V was addressed following VI.a.

V. Old Business

Ms. Brinkworth requested an update on the previously requested Communication to the Commission regarding vacant EAB positions. Von Howard, Public Affairs Administrative Supervisor, confirmed there are 20 positions on the Board and 10 vacancies. He stated they could recommend that the vacancies be filled.

Ms. Gualtieri inquired as to the process for having the positions filled. Mr. Howard explained the City Commission appoints Board members, and potential applicants should reach out to the City Clerk or complete the application on the City website.

Ms. Mendez asked whether openings could be advertised on the City's social media. Mr. Howard confirmed that they could. Chair Dean pointed out any postings should include a clear link to apply.

Ms. Gualtieri stated the posting should also include information about when the Board meets. She noted she had not been aware of the meeting date and time when she applied for the EAB. Mr. Howard pointed out that the meeting times and location were a topic for discussion later on the agenda. Discussion ensued regarding the EAB listing on the City's website.

VI. New Business

a. Introduction of EAB Liaison

Chair Dean commented that with the changes due to Chief Education Officer Zoie Saunders stepping down, it may make sense to modify the previously discussed Communication to the Commission to ensure a replacement.

Ms. Brinkworth asked if it was the Commission's intent to replace Ms. Saunders.

Von Howard, Public Affairs Administrative Supervisor, introduced himself and provided a brief overview of the transition. He stated the City would be working with Ms. Saunders through her position with Broward School District, and she would always be a phone call away. He noted that until such time as the Chief Education Officer position is filled, the Public Affairs Division would serve as liaison to the EAB and bring the Board's suggestions and comments to the Commission and staff.

Ms. Brinkworth asked if the Chief Education Officer position was funded in Fiscal Year 2024. Mr. Howard advised that he would confer with Daphnee Sainvil, Public Affairs Division Manager, to confirm and report back.

Ms. Brinkworth suggested that the Board wait on its Communication to the Commission until they had more information regarding the intentions for the position. She welcomed Mr. Howard and thanked him for his service to the Board.

Mr. Howard shared that he is a product of Fort Lauderdale schools and personally understands the effort to improve the City's school systems.

Janet Gualtieri joined the meeting at 6:48 p.m.

Chair Dean asked if Mr. Howard was aware of whether the education listening campaign would still be moving forward. Mr. Howard stated the City Commission would be discussing their priorities in a meeting the following day. He asked if there were specific details that he should share with staff regarding the listening campaign.

Chair Dean provided a brief overview of the intent to create focus groups to discuss public perception of education in Fort Lauderdale, including strengths and weaknesses. She invited Ms. Saunders to elaborate.

Zoie Saunders thanked the Board for everything they have done with the City and stated she was excited to continue working with the Board in her new role as Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer for Broward County School District. She stated the School Board is very focused on how to redefine Broward County public schools as they experience under enrollment and seek to address equitable distribution of resources to better serve the students. She noted public conversations would begin in February, with partnerships for additional focus groups on a local level. Ms. Saunders commented that the EAB had been looking at a very similar process to identify stakeholder groups and neighborhoods as an initial focus, and there is an opportunity to work with the School District on that effort. She shared a flyer outlining three (3) upcoming conversations.

Ms. Gualtieri asked why school enrollment is declining. Ms. Saunders stated it is a combination of many factors, and the School District is studying the different root causes, while trying to understand that solutions are not one size fits all. She advised this is an issue faced by districts across the country.

Ms. Gualtieri asked if there were enrollment increases in other parts of the County. Ms. Saunders shared that it is a mix, and the maps show enrollment patterns. She noted there are many opportunities for innovation.

Ms. Brinkworth stated that in light of the community conversations the District is hosting, there may be an opportunity for collaboration. She asserted it is important that the City engages in a meaningful dialogue with residents to meet them where they are in addition to an effort in cooperation with Broward County Schools. She stated it is critical for the City to make sure that where schools are the center of the community and they are under enrolled, they find ways to protect that community

center for those neighborhoods and those families. Ms. Saunders replied that the community conversations are the beginning of the process. She stated the intent is to connect, and they would welcome partnership with the City.

Ms. Brinkworth asked for clarification on the timeline. She stated her understanding is that the School Board wants to move quickly on this, and expressed concern that community input will not be gleaned before the decisions are made. Ms. Saunders stated the School Board has asked the Superintendent to bring recommendations in June for a short list of schools to look at for repurposing. She briefly discussed the variety of ways repurposing could take place. She noted from a community perspective, the data does not tell the whole story, so public input is important.

Ms. Brinkworth asked that when the School Board is identifying schools for repurposing, they work with the City to identify what the community needs, and that the conversations be advertised so the EAB members can attend without restriction under Sunshine Law.

Ms. Saunders advised that she believed District 5 Commissioner Dr. Jeff Holness was scheduled to attend the EAB meeting in March. She suggested following up on this, as the meeting would follow the first School Board workshop and the first listening meeting.

Ms. Aiken asked if there was a current list of schools the School Board would be looking at. Ms. Saunders stated there was not a pre-determined list, as there was a commitment to speak to the community before creating a list. She stated they are pulling together data to understand the challenges and opportunities.

b. Prioritization Goals from EAB to Commission

Mr. Howard shared that the City Commission would be meeting the following day for their annual prioritization meeting.

Chair Dean asked about providing input for the prioritization meeting. Mr. Howard advised that the Board's input is always welcome.

Ms. Brinkworth stated that given the fact that the EAB did not meet in December and had not provided feedback, the only way the Board could provide a collective recommendation would be to draft a Communication to the Commission and transmit it that night. She noted that individual Board members could talk to their Commissioners or send communication. Mr. Howard advised that the Board could also draft a Communication and ask for it to be presented at a conference meeting.

Ms. Brinkworth asserted that if they do not want the Commission to leave education to the side when setting their priorities for the year, the Board needed to communicate the importance of it to the City and to their constituents. She suggested

drafting the Board members reach out to the Mayor and Commissioners to convey their personal views in addition to drafting a collective communication. Discussion continued regarding the Commission priorities.

Ms. Gualtieri asked whether the Chair had received a request to communicate the Board's priorities. She noted Homeowners Association (HOA) presidents had received an email asking for input. Chair Dean stated she had not received a request.

Ms. Mendez inquired as to whether it was possible that education may already be on the priority list. Chair Dean advised that it had not been an identified priority in 2023. She suggested discussing the draft letter she had previously written and distributed through the liaison.

Mr. Howard noted the time constraints and reiterated Ms. Brinkworth's recommendation that the Board members reach out individually to their appointing Commissioner and then work on formal communication as a collective body.

Chair Dean invited the Board to discuss talking points. She pointed to the City's campaign promoting Fort Lauderdale as "the City you never want to leave," and stated money needs to be allocated to education initiatives to make that happen. Discussion continued regarding the message.

Ms. Gualtieri noted the recommendations she had seen identified were high-level concerns of residents.

Ms. Brinkworth advised that the two (2) priorities she would identify as a resident and as an EAB member would be active engagement with Broward County Public Schools in direction for the City's schools and continued funding for the Chief Education Officer position. She added that she would suggest a request for engagement would include programming, repurposing and support.

Ms. Mendez asked who an email should be sent to. Chair Dean stated they should include the City Manager, Mayor, and Commissioners. Ms. Brinkworth added that if email addresses for their assistants are available, that may be the quickest way to get information across. Mr. Howard asked that the Public Affairs office also be included.

Ms. Gualtieri noted she was not comfortable emailing all of the Commissioners, as she has an ongoing rapport with the Commissioner that nominated her. Mr. Howard suggested she could email her own Commissioner and copy the others.

Discussion continued regarding the timing of a potential communication. Mr. Howard advised that a Communication to the Commission could be placed on the agenda for the February meeting and sent to the Commission for the March conference meeting.

Ms. Brinkworth stated she would be willing to take the letter Chair Dean had drafted and add the comments of the Board, then send that to Mr. Howard for discussion at the meeting. She asked that Mr. Howard also follow up regarding the future of the Chief Education Officer position.

Chair Dean asked for any additional concerns that should be included.

Ms. Aiken noted that at the November meeting, she had brought up that the City was among the few that does not offer scholarships for career-bound or college-bound students. Ms. Brinkworth asked if there were examples from other communities that could be referenced. Discussion continued.

Ms. Dever stated there used to be a wastewater management program in the schools. She asserted those jobs are needed, and asked what is being done.

Mr. Howard advised that staff is working on that issue. He noted the City was hosting a Great Jobs, Great Cities roundtable with the National League of Cities and a variety of stakeholders the following week. He noted the YMCA was also hosting a career fair called Infinite Scholars on January 23 and 24, with approximately 800 high school seniors expected to attend. He commented that his division is new, but there are partnerships and initiatives in the works.

Ms. Mendez highlighted the Teacher of the Year and Principal of the Year programs in the School District and suggested a proposal to acknowledge those winners and highlight the great educators in the community. Discussion continued.

Ms. Brinkworth advised that the City used to have a table at the recognition for these awards when a Fort Lauderdale educator or administrator was nominated, and EAB members were invited to cheer on the finalists. Mr. Howard asked that communication be forwarded to Public Affairs, as it was not coming directly from the School Board. Discussion continued.

Ms. Aiken suggested schools should be profiled quarterly and highlighted on the City website, social media, and flyers so that people new to the City will see the information and want to learn more. She stated education is important and needs to be pushed continuously. Discussion continued regarding encouraging in-person visits by the Mayor and Commissioners.

Motion was made by Chair Dean, seconded by Ms. Gualtieri, to have Ms. Brinkworth draft a Communication to the Commission on behalf of the Board to be sent to the Public Affairs division for distribution to the Board for review at the February 15 meeting. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

c. Discussion Regarding Meeting Dates and Times

Mr. Howard noted recent meetings had been held at schools since the flooding last year, but he was advised that future meetings should be held in a more central, designated location. He advised that future meetings would be held at the Fire Administration building. He stated he would update the City website.

VII. Division Report

Mr. Howard shared that the City would be hosting a Neighbor Support Night event on February 15, 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the parking garage at City Hall.

VIII. Member Discussion

Ms. Gualtieri shared that she has a quarterly conflict and is unable to attend in-person on those dates, as she will be traveling. Mr. Howard stated he would send information regarding electronic meeting attendance, quorum, and voting.

Chair Dean reminded the Board members to send an email regarding priorities by the following morning, if possible.

IX. Closing

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for February 15, 2024.