



CITY OF MIAMI SPRINGS, FLORIDA

The **Miami Springs Education Advisory Board** met at 6:30 p.m., on Tuesday, May 20, 2008 in the City Hall Council Chambers.

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m.

1) Call to Order/Roll Call

The following were present:

Chair Mindy McNichols
Vice Chairman, Eduardo A. Molliner
Libby Manning
Maria Mitchell
Debra Sheridan (arrived at 6:43 p.m.)

Also Present: Deputy City Clerk Suzanne Hitaffer

2) Approval of Minutes: April 15, 2008 Regular Meeting

Minutes of the April 15, 2008 meeting were approved as written.

Board member Mitchell moved to approve and Vice Chair Molliner seconded the motion, which carried 4-0 on voice vote.

3) Special Guest: Alexandra Mirabal, River Cities Charter School

Alexandra Mirabal, one of the founders of the River Cities Charter School, stated that there were many parents who wondered why there was no option for a Charter School in Miami Springs. Approximately three years ago they began the process to apply for a Charter Middle School with the Miami-Dade County School Board. Their concern about Miami Springs Middle School was the size of the school.

Ms. Mirabal stated that their focus was to provide an option for parents in the community to send their children to a smaller school. The Charter School capacity is 250 students and it is operated by the parents who are committed to open this year. They had luck in finding another parent based Charter School in Miami Beach that extended their campus to the River Cities Charter School, since the main issue has been the facility. The River Cities Charter School contract provides for facilities at two of the churches in Miami Springs, but since they are older structures they require renovations.

Ms. Mirabal explained that the school would open with approximately 65 students who would be commuting from the Miami Springs Recreation Center to the school site that is located by North Bay Village. Most of the students are sixth graders, although the contract allows for seventh and eighth grades. They hope to move back to the community for the 2009/2010 school year.

Chair McNichols explained that the River Cities Charter School would open in the existing Charter on the Beach Middle School that is not operating at full capacity.

Ms. Mirabal clarified that the Charter on the Beach Middle School capacity is 194 students and they anticipate only having 100 students this year and they graciously granted use of their building for up to seventy students. Transportation will be provided to bring students to and from the school on a daily basis free of charge.

Ms. Mirabal emphasized that it would be a parent school that will serve the community and partner together with the local public schools. It is not their intention to take over or say that they are better than the public schools; their intent is to provide a smaller learning environment and to help reduce overcrowding at Miami Springs Middle School.

Chair McNichols agreed that the Charter School should help with the overcrowding at Miami Springs Middle School.

Ms. Mirabal stated that open house events would be held at the Charter on the Beach school site to make sure the parents feel comfortable. There are also informative sessions that will be held at the Miami Springs Recreation Center on May 22nd and 29th.

To answer Chair McNichols' question, Ms. Mirabal clarified that the school's operational hours would be from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with the bus leaving at approximately 7:45 a.m. She said that the return commute is good because of the Okeechobee road improvements and the students would be back around 4:15 or 4:30 p.m. The school Principal Connie Crawford-Rodriguez is currently a teacher with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, her resume is on the school website and she can be met at the open house events.

Chair McNichols mentioned that one of the school's core missions was community service and extension into the community. She asked if this would be possible with the school location on Miami Beach.

Ms. Mirabal explained that they would be limited in implementing their main goals the first years, but that does not mean can't give back to the community. The three parents involved are very proud because they have been able to get donations and corporate sponsorships.

Board member Mitchell congratulated Ms. Mirabal for giving the parents a choice for their kids' education. She asked if the enrollment was limited to kids from the Miami Springs' area.

Ms. Mirabal responded that Charter schools must be open to everyone in the Miami-Dade County School District. She continued to answer questions from the Board members regarding the school's governing board, transportation, etc. More information is available on the school's website at rivercitiescharterschool.com.

4) Individual School Reports

Chair McNichols stated that Springview Principal Ms. Dovale announced at the last P. T. A. meeting that IHOP provided breakfast for all the teachers during Teacher Appreciation Week. She remembered that the Education Advisory Board previously gave awards to business partners for their support of local schools. She felt that IHOP would be a good nominee and suggested that the school principals could also nominate a business they feel should be recognized by the City Council.

Principal Sally Hutchings reported the following for Miami Springs Elementary School:

- The Chess Team placed second in a tournament on Saturday May 17th.
- P. T. A. elections were held on Monday, May 19th, it went very well and she recognized them for their contributions to the school.
- The Media Specialist is holding the accelerated reader celebrations, including bowling, ice cream and pizza parties, etc. This motivates those students who did not reach their goal to this year to reach it next year.
- The Talent Show contest is Wednesday, May 21st for kids of any grade level to showcase their talent.
- Fifth grade will hold their dance/luncheon and the Lion's Club provides their facility free of charge.
- There will be more honor rolls, field trips and the fifth grade awards ceremony.
- Volunteer appreciation will be held Wednesday to recognize parents.
- The school is continuing SIP end of the year and increasing the focus on student achievement, fitness levels and parent involvement.
- Principal Hutchings nominated Starbucks for the Business Education Partner for holding a monthly staff incentive with free coffee, sandwiches or pastries.
- Summer school will be held at South Hialeah Elementary for retained third graders.

Guidance Counselor Olga Siddons reported the following for Springview Elementary:

- The after school care program participated in “Baynanza” beach clean in Key Biscayne on Saturday April 19th.
- Springview celebrated Earth Day with the gifted students planting a tree and native plants. Students decorated Milam’s paper grocery bags with Earth Day message to promote community awareness. Posters were placed throughout the school and third graders made sculptures out of recycled products.
- The school participated in the fourteenth annual elementary math bowl on Saturday, May 3rd, which was sponsored by the Dade County Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Two teams participated against 77 schools throughout the county and the primary team won second place.
- The Art Fair Gallery was held Thursday, May 15th, which was a fundraiser family night and parents purchased their child’s work mounted on a frame.
- Science Day was celebrated Friday, May 16th with the fifth graders launching rockets and the science experiments were exhibited in the school.
- The Volunteer Dade Partners breakfast took place last month with a good turnout.
- Career Day activities were different this year. The first through fourth grade students went to Wannado City and Pre-K and Kindergarten had presentations at the school.
- Math Family Night is Wednesday, May 21st from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at Milam’s Market.
- A Parent Workshop will be held in Spanish and English on Tuesday, May 27th at 7:00 p.m. to discuss “What you should know about internet safety and video game addiction”.
- Accelerated reading celebration will take place on Friday, May 23rd with a carnival.
- Springview Class of 2008 will be having their end of the year activities with field trips to CEMEX (a rock quarry), Super Wheels Skating Center and a Memory Book signing day.
- The annual awards ceremony and banquet will be held on Friday, May 30th.
- Fourth grade writing results were 3.8 on the combined section, 3.8 in narrative and 3.8 in expository. They are analyzing the data and moving forward for next year.
- First and second grade SAT results are being analyzed for next year as well.
- The new media center construction is scheduled to begin in July 2008. Miami-Dade County Public Schools met with the Miami Springs City Council and the project was approved.

Principal Dr. Gail Quigley reported the following for Miami Springs Middle School:

- Activities that were held include the Band, Guitar and Chorus evening, the eighth grade awards night, Museum Night, National Junior Honor Society installation.
- A smoking presentation was held by Miami-Dade Community College about the negative aspects of smoking, which is part of the school’s application to the Alliance for a Healthy Generation.
- Yearbooks were delivered and sales will begin on Wednesday, May 21st.

- Gifted Parent Night is Thursday evening, May 22nd and the Drama presentation is Wednesday, May 21st.
- The Orchestra and Chorus Concert is May 29th.
- The eight grade dinner dance is Saturday night May 24th.
- There will be no summer school for middle school children.
- Principal Quigley affirmed IHOP as the school's Business Partner donating food for the opening of school and teacher appreciation.

The Board members thanked Dr. Quigley for all of her years of service to Miami Springs Middle School and wished her well in her retirement.

Miami Springs Senior High School Assistant Principal Daniel Fernandez reported the following:

- The school was rated fourth in the District for the tenth grade FCAT writing scores.
- Mu Alpha Theta Math Club placed fifth in the National Convention; Frank Rodriguez placed second in the University of Miami David Essner math competition and Oscar Sanchez placed seventh.
- Principal Villalobos is not present because he is at the Silver Knight Awards; the school has six nominees.
- Odyssey of the Mind placed second with five State finalists.
- Dance Fusion placed second in the State competition.
- Three students had perfect attendance.
- The school placed fourth in attendance for the second nine weeks and third for the fourth.
- Seven students were selected for the All Dade Team for sports.
- Construction is progressing and hopefully it will be completed by the end of the summer, including new restrooms and social studies classrooms.

The Board members expressed their concerns about the Advanced Placement (AP) classes.

Board member Sheridan said that there is a problem because the school counselor gave out the wrong information last year about a mandatory physical education class and it turned out not to count. She said that kids are trying to matriculate through their credit hours to achieve certain goals and it was a wasted credit hour for an entire year.

Chair McNichols said that her concern is that there is disconnect of information between the Middle School and the High School because her son was recommended for AP World History and she was told that it is not offered at the High School.

Board member Sheridan also expressed her concern about the information disconnect between schools.

Chair McNichols knows that AP teachers are hard to find and there is a new law that judges them on their performance. She understands the difficulties, but at the same time she wants to build a world class school in Miami Springs.

Regional 3 Director Robert Kalinsky pointed out the positive aspects of the reduction of the school population to 2,100 students. He said that obviously the articulation with the Middle School and High School is something to address on a large scale. He continued to explain that the Senior High School budgets are bare bones and cuts are being made across the board.

Board member Mitchell expressed her concern about the misplacement of kids in AP classes.

Discussion ensued regarding the drop out rate.

Chair McNichols said that she would be interested in the safety statistics and number of incidents one year from now. She is hopeful there will be a significant change.

Board member Mitchell recommended a means of informing the community and the parents about the recent improvements at the High School, which could help to attract students.

Mr. Kalinsky said that another factor with the High School population is that there are no students in the school from Doral and that is why the numbers are so low. There is a possibility of going even lower if the issue with magnet transportation is not resolved.

To answer Chair McNichols' question, Mr. Kalinsky explained that the School Board had not make a decision on the recommendation not to fund magnet transportation.

Board member Manning said that it would impact the High School because of the Travel and Tourism magnet program.

Vice Chair Molliner asked about the percentage of students that passed the writing test and Mr. Fernandez responded 82%, which is higher than the District average.

Mr. Fernandez stated that he would like to recognize Dr. Jansik who gave free massages to the teachers.

5) Region 3 Report

Regional Center 3 Director Robert Kalinsky reported that money is the biggest issue at this time. There is a School Board meeting scheduled for Wednesday, May 21st to discuss many issues, including several budget cuts. He reported that last month the School Board approved the changes of the region configurations into four areas. The North Central area will encompass the additional feeder patterns of Miami Jackson, Miami Edison, and Hialeah. Coral Park was eliminated from the feeder pattern and it still includes Miami Springs, Miami Northwestern, Doral, Miami Central and Hialeah Westland.

Mr. Kalinsky stated that Superintendent George Nuñez wanted to express his appreciation for the time that he has served in Regional Center 3 and the close relationship he developed with the Miami Springs' community. Mr. Nuñez is being moved to the South Central Area that will encompass part of Region 3, Region 4 and Region 5. Dr. Pace will be the Regional Superintendent for the North Central Area and she will start on June 30th.

Mr. Kalinsky said that he is very pleased to be staying in North Central and will continue working with the Miami Springs community. He knows there is a lot of work remaining and hopes to accomplish even more than was done in the last six years.

Mr. Kalinsky reported that the new principal for the Miami Springs Middle School is yet to be named and obviously a very strong leader is needed for that school. He is glad to have continuity in place and is positive that many good things are going to happen.

Vice Chair Molliner stated that in addition to Dr. Pace, the new directors for the North Central Area will be Mr. Payne, Ms. Washington, Mr. Garcia, Mr. Kalinsky and there is a fifth director whose name he cannot recall.

6) Old Business:

6a. Draft Compact Between the City of Miami Springs and School Board

Board member Sheridan thanked Lisa Martinez for meeting with her at Florida International University to work on the compact, which is in draft form. She explained that Ms. Martinez took the draft to the District to get their input and now it is time for the Education Advisory Board (EAB) to make their recommendations.

Chair McNichols said that she spoke with Councilman Youngs who apologized for not being able to attend the meeting. She was a little confused about how the compact should be brought from the Board to the City Council.

Board member Sheridan reiterated that the compact is in draft form and the EAB should make any changes or comments that would be incorporated into the second draft, which would be recommended for review by Council. She said that the compact would then be sent back to the EAB before sending it the School Board for their approval.

Lisa Martinez, Director, Intergovernmental Affairs and Grants Administration for Miami-Dade County Public Schools stated that the process depends on the municipal structure of the decision making as it links to education. She explained that working with the City of Miami on their compact; they drafted priorities that were shared with a variety of City departments to ensure everyone was on the same page. The dynamics of the content of the compact were researched and prioritized based on the priorities of the school and the community before it was sent to the City Commissioners who reviewed it prior to their meeting so that they could provide feedback.

Ms. Martinez stated that modifications could be made to the document in the future, but it could take months by adding layers of review and drafts. She said that on her end, the District had gone through the levels of review with the different District departments, Region offices and school sites. The compact is also inclusive of the input at all the meetings with the City Manager and Councilman Youngs, as well as the EAB's input from the March meeting. Their mission is to put the compact into implementation as soon as possible, as long as it is done effectively and efficiently.

Chair McNichols suggested that the Board members should give as much input as possible at this meeting. She added that the City Council does not meet in July.

Chair McNichols emphasized that the EAB wants Miami Springs Middle School to be relieved of overcrowding. She said that the compact should include a measure or outcome saying that the number of students would be reduced within a certain timeline.

Ms. Martinez stated that the EAB should clarify the language that they would like considered so that she could take it back to the departments.

Board member Mitchell suggested another bullet point under Key Intended Outcomes to read "Reduction of overcrowding at Miami Springs Middle School". She recommended that it should be the first bullet point.

Ms. Martinez stated that it would correlate with the activity and it makes sense to have an intended outcome with that activity. She will include it and run it by the District.

Board member Manning emphasized that reducing the student population is the Board's priority as well as the citizens. She asked if the language should be more specific to say that the goal is to reduce the student enrollment to 100% capacity. She asked to consider if language should be included to clarify that they are not interested in expanding the school because it would affect traffic and how the school is operated.

Vice Chair Molliner suggested that the language in the compact should specify a number of students or capacity in regard to the reduction of overcrowding.

Ms. Martinez said that the compact is not a contract and the City must determine how they will utilize the tool. On the District's end they would like to place the priorities on the table so that they can work together with the City and hold each other accountable for the efforts on behalf of the students. The intended outcomes, as well as the measures are the keys in the process. She reiterated that it is not a contract because there is no guaranty of what the budget will be in the future.

Vice Chair Molliner reiterated that he would like specific language to say that the student population would be reduced to 100% capacity for Miami Springs Middle School.

Ms. Martinez understood that the language would be "with the ultimate goal of meeting the maximum of 100% capacity of the middle school."

Chair McNichols asked for clarification of Number two under Student Achievement.

Ms. Martinez explained that the intent of the item was to address the EAB's interest and Councilman Youngs' interest in being able to provide specialized programs within the City schools. Most of the time funding is linked to special programs and the exploration would be to determine which programs would be best for the schools and what is the associated price tag.

Vice Chair Molliner suggested that the municipalities affected by the feeder pattern might be able to come up with funding or grants that could help open specialized programs in the schools.

Ms. Martinez stated that considering Virginia Gardens, Medley and Hialeah, Council could take a leadership role in speaking to the leaders of the municipalities to determine if they have an interest in bringing the special programs into the feeder pattern.

Chair McNichols commented that under Parental Involvement it states that the school site P.T.A. representatives would be invited to the EAB. She said that they are in fact non-voting members of the EAB.

Board member Sheridan felt it is important to take back the message to the P.T.A., that they are considered members and their input would be helpful.

Ms. Martinez offered to add language stating "P.T.A. representatives as non-voting members of the EAB" are invited to the meetings regularly.

Chair McNichols recommended that the Clerk of the Board could add the P.T.A. representatives to the e-mail contact list at the beginning of the new school year. She added that language referring to Regional Center 3 should be changed to Area office.

To answer Vice Chair Molliner's question, Ms. Martinez stated that the terms of this compact may also be modified over time. She explained that it could be revised and brought forward to the Council and the School Board.

Chair McNichols suggested that the EAB could review the compact annually and work with the District to accomplish the goals.

Board member Sheridan mentioned that the compacts for other cities have milestones with actual dates and she would like to show progress toward the compact in some of the goals that are set. Once the compact is approved the EAB could prioritize the goals and with that would come milestones. She would consider the compact an annual working plan and any changes within the City or the District would have to be addressed.

Board member Mitchell commented that the compact includes good ideas but she wonders whose responsibility it would be to see that they are achieved.

Ms. Martinez stated that normally there is a contact on the Administrative side of the City that would coordinate the elements. She sent the City Manager a draft of the compact, but he is deferring to the EAB's input and insight into the document.

Board member Manning felt that some points in the compact were vague, especially related to highly qualified teachers because there should be some measure of qualification.

Vice Chair Molliner reminded the Board members that the teachers have a union and the contract clearly specifies the rights of the teachers.

Ms. Martinez suggested delineating the fact that they hope to target AP and National Board Certified teachers. She would propose the language and provide feedback from the District. She said that matters related to union issues could become complicated.

Board member Mitchell felt that the compact should include a provision to make sure that the schools that are not currently overcrowded would not become overcrowded in the future.

Board member Sheridan said that she would like some qualifications for teachers even if it is set as a goal in order to communicate the community's standards.

Ms. Martinez felt that the language could be incorporated with Activity Number 3 and it could be liked with mentoring and National Board certified and gifted teachers.

Chair McNichols asked if anyone had approached School Board member Renier Diaz de la Portilla.

Ms. Martinez responded that she is sure Mr. Caraballo and the Superintendent will have an opportunity to share the information with Mr. Diaz de la Portilla. She said that it might be valuable for Councilman Youngs to approach him as well, especially going forward with a potential June agenda. She suggested that City Manager Borgmann should review the draft before submitting it to Council.

Ms. Martinez added that there should be representation from the City Council and the District when the compact is presented.

Board member Sheridan moved to recommend that Council approve the draft compact with the suggested changes. Vice Chair Molliner seconded the motion.

Board member Manning asked if anyone in the audience would like to comment.

Bob Schultz of 100 Sunset Way stated that a group of parents met with Region 3 Superintendent Nuñez about a number of concerns, including violence and one of the points made at that time was that if the school was not so overcrowded the kids would not feel like animals in a confined area.

Mr. Schultz said that subsequently, there were discussions about repurposing eleven schools, including Brownville, which is contiguous with the Region 3 District. In his opinion, the boundaries could be extended in order to even out the student population. At that meeting, the parents were told that it would never happen and that a consolation would be to take kids out of the magnet program and send them to Brownville, which was a threat. Mr. Schultz felt that the overcrowding issue is not being addressed.

Further discussion ensued regarding repurposing of schools and boundary changes.

Virginia Gardens Councilman Richard Block suggested that the compact could include specific language about appointing Liaisons from the neighboring cities of Virginia Gardens, Medley and Hialeah.

Chair McNichols suggested that another bullet point could be added under City Involvement to say that the City would develop communication with the neighboring cities.

Ms. Martinez will include an item emphasizing the fact that the bordering cities also have students that benefit and participate in the school services and their input would be valuable and important to the process. She will include language that the City would identify Liaisons from each of the neighboring municipalities.

The motion was unanimously carried on roll call vote.

Board member Manning mentioned that Baker Aviation School should be invited to future meetings.

Chair McNichols reported that she would be out of town for the next meeting and Vice Chair Molliner offered to chair the June 17th meeting in her absence.

6c. Status of Construction Projects

Status of the construction projects was briefly discussed under the individual school reports. There was no additional discussion regarding this item.

7) New Business:

7a. Business/Education Partner of the Year

Chair McNichols stated that she would recommend both Starbucks and IHOP to be honored as Business Education Partner.

Board member Sheridan moved to recommend that the City Council honor IHOP and Starbucks as the 2007/2008 Education Partners of the Year. Board member Manning seconded the motion, which carried unanimously on voice vote.

7b. Legislative Update

Chair McNichols tabled discussion of the Legislative issues.

Board member Sheridan explained that Governor Crist would not sign the budget until June 2nd. She wondered how that would impact the decisions of the School Board. She knows that cuts could be severe and they must plan accordingly. She added that another budget cut that could happen in September because State revenue is down.

Chair McNichols stated that instead of holding a special legislative session the Governor was granted the ability to go into reserves and hopefully that will avoid another cut.

8) Other Business: None

9) Adjourn

There was no further business to discuss and the meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Hitaffer
Clerk of the Board

Approved as written at meeting of: 9-16-2008

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