



CITY OF MIAMI SPRINGS, FLORIDA

The **Miami Springs Education Advisory Board** met at 6:30 p.m., on Tuesday, March 20, 2012 in the City Hall Council Chambers.

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m.

1) Call to Order/Roll Call

The following were present: Chair Robert J. Gordon
Vice Chair Dr. John Salomon
Libby Manning
Golnaz Sami
Dr. Mara Zapata*

*Arrived at 6:35 p.m.

Also Present: Deputy City Clerk Suzanne Hitaffer

2) Approval of Minutes: February 21, 2012 Regular Meeting

Minutes of the February 21, 2012 meeting were approved as written.

Vice Chair Salomon moved to approve the minutes. Board member Sami seconded the motion, which carried 4-0 on voice vote.

3) Special Reports and Presentations

Chairman Gordon announced that Mindy McNichols is a special guest who was one of the founding members and the Chair of the Education Advisory Board for ten years. She will be reporting on her new responsibilities with the Glenn Curtiss Mansion. He thanked Ms. McNichols for her accomplishments and said that the Board is working hard to continue the tradition.

Former Education Advisory Board Chair Mindy McNichols of 1471 Hammond Drive reported that she has been on the Board of Directors for Curtiss Mansion, Inc. (CMI) since June 2011. The “soft” opening of the Curtiss Mansion is on Sunday, April 1st and she encouraged everyone to take the opportunity to come and see the amazing work that has transpired. She said that some of the Senior High School students will be participating by dressing up in clothing from the Glenn Curtiss era and they will be providing musical entertainment.

Ms. McNichols explained that she was asked to serve on the CMI Board because of her education background and connections. They are planning a Teacher Professional Development program at the Mansion in November that consists of a four hour program to learn the history of Glenn Curtiss and the Mansion, including architecture and science elements in order for the teachers to put together lesson plans. CMI is hoping to have the participation of teachers from Miami Springs since there is a common interest and they would like to spread the word about Glenn Curtiss throughout the community.

Ms. McNichols added that school projects are planned for next year and one is called “The Unsung Heroes” where students will be invited to develop a project about an unsung hero. She explained that Glenn Curtiss was an unsung hero because he was not recognized for many of his accomplishments and inventions. The exhibits would be displayed in the museum and they would change from time to time featuring different unsung heroes.

Ms. Nichols explained that a Community Garden is planned at the Curtiss Mansion that will have vegetables and herbs that were grown in the 1920’s. She said that everyone is welcome to participate in the planting and harvesting of the garden. In addition, there will be a lecture series for adults in the evening and many other activities are planned after the grand opening. The Mansion will also be available for weddings and events.

Chairman Gordon commented that he toured the Mansion and it is one of the best facilities in Miami-Dade for holding events and seminars. He said that it is beautiful and that CMI did an incredible job.

To answer Chairman Gordon’s question, Ms. McNichols explained that she would be the CMI contact person for the schools. She said that once the Mansion is open to the public it would be available for student field trips, although it will not be a museum with standing exhibits.

Ms. McNichols explained that the President of CMI is Jo Ellen Phillips and the Board consists of many members, including Captain Barrington Irving who will have a simulator lab and summer camp at the Mansion.

Discussion ensued regarding the Learning Garden at Springview and the Victory Garden at All Angels Academy.

Ms. McNichols reported that the legislative proposal to divert the School District's capital construction funds and revenues to charter schools was defeated. She explained that during the legislative discussions the District put together a report on facilities needs for every school. She suggested that the Board should request a copy of the report in order to make sure that the Miami Springs' schools are included.

Chairman Gordon offered to reach out to School District representative Lubby Navarro to request a copy of the facilities report or the updated five-year plan.

Ms. McNichols said that she hopes to come back often to report on the Curtiss Mansion as the programs develop.

4) **School Reports**

Principal Sally Hutchings from Miami Springs Elementary reported on the following curricular activities and events:

- Students were recognized for their artwork that is on display in the school auditorium in celebration of women's history and Black History month. The work will be displayed at Starbucks and the City Hall.
- A mock FCAT/SAT test was conducted during the week of March 5th.
- The Book Fair will be held on Friday, March 23rd and Book Fair Night is scheduled for Tuesday, March 27th from 6:00-7:00 p.m.
- Enrollment remains at 645 students.
- Second grade will take the Cultural Passport field trip to the Cleveland Orchestra on Thursday, March 22nd.
- Papa Johns night is March 28th, and Chuck E. Cheese is March 29th from 3-9p.m.
- The P.T.A. is hosting a recognition ceremony for the Teacher and Rookie Teacher of the Year.
- The Student Council is sponsoring Women of the Week ("WOW") and will share bios on famous females who made an impact.
- On Earth Day in April students will hold a clean-up day; their motto is "We Stay Green by Being Clean".
- ELL tutoring is going well and should continue for three more weeks based on the budget.

Discussion ensued regarding converting white boards to smart boards and the parent's garden.

Chairman Gordon referred to a recent article in the River Cities Gazette regarding an incident at the school. He asked Principal Hutchings to share her comments about it, if possible.

Principal Hutchings responded that she could not comment on the incident due to the confidentiality since it involves a minor. She told the Board not to believe everything they read because there were many inaccuracies in the article.

Springview Elementary Principal Mayte Dovale explained that there had been many inquiries about the incident and she agreed with Principal Hutchings that the Gazette reported inaccurate information. The student involved in the incident is not in the school and she does not foresee that happening. She pointed out that the information was not given out by a Staff member.

Chairman Gordon felt that the River Cities Gazette should be advised to seek better sources of information or to at least verify the information before it is published. He said that it is very important to set the right image for the schools and the principals work hard to make that happen.

Principal Dovale said that she and Principal Hutchings are very open to the community and any time there is a question, they would be happy to provide the information.

Board member Manning suggested that the Gazette could publish an article to clear up the matter and to report on how these types of situations are handled in order to give some reassurance to the parents.

Principal Dovale explained that the situations are handled through the Code of Student Conduct.

Principal Mayte Dovale reported on the following activities and events at Springview Elementary:

- Black History Month was concluded with a “Flash Mob Unity Dance” on the hard court prior to picking up the students for classes; there was a performance from the new choir and the Staff luncheon was held on February 29th.
- Spring Break was kicked off with an opera based on “Little Red Riding Hood”.
- Teachers are organizing several field trips through the District Cultural Passport opportunities, including a trip to the Adrienne Arsht Center to participate in the Cleveland Orchestra.
- Kindergarten will go to Disney on Ice and first grade will be going to the movies to see the “The Lorax”.
- Tutoring is ongoing for students in grades 3-5 in the areas of reading, math and science. Science is only for fifth grade at this time.
- Incentives will be awarded for students completing Reading Plus, FCAT Explorer and the FCAT Camp.
- A mock FCAT test is being conducted this week to prepare students for the testing in April.
- Fifth graders participated in the articulation with the Middle School.
- The General P.T.A. meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 21st at 6:30 p.m. to discuss accountability, budget, and school-wide improvement. The student choir and after school dancers will perform for the parents.

Principal Dovale commented that in regard to the five-year plan, the school needs to have the smart board projectors mounted in kindergarten, first and second grades. The school will be going through some construction to make the school ADA compliant.

To answer Chairman Gordon's question, Ms. Dovale explained that the P.T.A. purchased a math program that is used throughout the District to give students a glimpse of the different benchmarks that will be seen on the test. The students receive a daily math journal entry on the smart boards with five math problems that are completed and reviewed. There are math interventions for those students with deficiencies.

Miami Springs Middle School Assistant Principal Vicky Rodriguez reported on the following school highlights:

- Articulation was recently completed with the High School and the Elementary Schools.
- In-house articulation will be held for 6-7 grade students in the coming week and subject section forms are available on the school website.
- Saturday School tutoring has four sessions remaining and a drawing will be held for three Kindles as an incentive for students that have been attending.
- FCAT incentives are planned for the beginning of the school year.
- Self Harm Awareness Day was held on March 1st, with students and staff wearing orange to support the cause.
- The Principal's honor roll students and members of Club 55 will be going to the Youth Fair; the eighth grade awards ceremony will be held on June 5th at the High School and Staff Olympics will be held on March 30th.
- Student Josh Perez was selected to attend the World Mountain Bike Race.
- The school painting project has begun and is scheduled for completion in the summer.

To answer Chairman Gordon's question, Ms. Rodriguez said that magnet program invitations were sent out to 135 students from outside the boundaries and 35 students within the boundaries. The school is waiting for acceptance letters and to expand the program.

Discussion ensued regarding the magnet program and student orientation.

AIE Charter School teacher Nevenka Huertas reported the following on behalf of Principal Hirsh:

- FCAT/SAT tutoring is covering every bench mark and the mock testing is being conducted this week; Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment (CELLA) testing will conclude next week for all campuses.
- Teachers are attending Rosetta Stone conferences this summer.
- A school Walk-A-Thon raised \$2,000 last month.
- The P.T.A. will be meeting on Wednesday, March 21st at 7:00 p.m.

- Enrollment is up and there is a waiting list for next year's kindergarten and first grade; 142 students are enrolled in all campuses and school tours are on Thursday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

North Central Regional Center Director Nereida Smith explained that she is one of three Directors for the Region and they share a number of feeder patterns and different duties. She explained that Miami Springs is not in her feeder pattern, but it is a pleasure to be here and listen to all the wonderful things happening in the schools. She said that each school works very hard and people have no idea how much they do everyday for the children. Ms. Smith invited everyone to visit the schools to see all the wonderful activities.

5) PTA/PTSA Reports: None

6) Business/Reports:

a. Youth Advisory Council

Board member Golnaz Sami reported that she presented a Youth Advisory Council application to AIE Charter School Principal Vera Hirsh and she is working on the other three private schools.

Chairman Gordon asked Ms. Sami to provide an update on the progress that has been made on establishing the Youth Advisory Council.

Board member Sami explained that she prepared an application and information based on the Resolution that was adopted by the City Council. Seven schools are involved, including Miami Springs Senior High, Miami Springs Middle School, Miami Springs Elementary, Springview Elementary, All Angels Academy, Blessed Trinity and Seventh Day Adventist School. The instructions specify that the Youth Council will consist of one student from each school.

Ms. Sami stated that since the current school year is more than half over, it would be best to start the next school year. The Youth Council will be comprised of students in the fifth grade and above, and she hopes to include the AIE Charter School since they will have a fifth grade next year. She questioned whether or not there could be eight members on the board and if the resolution would need to be amended.

Chairman Gordon stated that the Education Advisory Board would have to petition the City Council to amend the Resolution to include additional schools.

Board member Salomon suggested that the language in the Resolution could be generalized to include Miami Springs' schools, as the number of schools could vary in the future.

Board member Manning noted that Blessed Trinity School is not in Miami Springs.

Board member Sami commented that the Resolution includes Blessed Trinity as one of the seven schools.

Chairman Gordon agreed that the Resolution could be amended to remove Blessed Trinity and include the AIE Charter School.

Board member Zapata moved to appeal to the City Council to amend the Resolution for the Youth Advisory Council to delete Blessed Trinity Catholic School because it is not part of Miami Springs and to add the AIE Charter School. Board member Sami seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously on voice vote.

b. Advanced Academic Committee

Chairman Gordon stated that on February 27th a walk-through was held at the High School by Cambridge and District personnel to inspect the physical needs of the school. He does not know how it went and he will reach out to get information. The purpose of the walk-through is because they are moving forward with the Science/Technology/Engineering/Math (STEM) program and they are hoping to partner with Cambridge to make it happen.

Chairman Gordon reported that he had preliminary conversations with community members about after school programs that are computer program oriented. There are parents who are interested in this type of program and they are going to be contacting the elementary schools.

Board member Manning agreed that there are many good programs for elementary and middle school students to teach computer programming.

Chair Gordon added that learning programming teaches kids to take apart problems and solve problems, which is a good thinking exercise.

Vice Chair Salomon noted that the Board members received a memorandum from Mayor Garcia in reference to the letter to students recognizing exemplary citizenship that was discussed at the last meeting.

Vice Chair Salomon explained that the Mayor suggested that the school principals would submit the names of the students that are being issued the letters so that he could recognize students for their actions by issuing a special certificate or proclamation, as he feels is appropriate.

Board member Manning felt that the Mayor's suggestion is good because he would like to recognize the students further, as it is called for. She said that the information would be forwarded to the principals and she feels that it is a good idea.

Chairman Gordon stated that the award would not take the place of the letter and it would be an addition to the letter.

Board member Zapata commented that it looks like the special certificates or proclamations would be in place of the letter once he has the names.

Board member Manning felt that the suggestion was good because the Board was not trying to create that work for the City Council, but if they are willing, it would be even better than the letters.

Board member Zapata asked the other Board members to consider what it means to a child to accept an award from the Mayor.

Board member Manning reiterated that it would be a good thing if Council is willing. She asked if any of the Board members could see a problem with it.

Vice Chair Salomon mentioned that he liked the letter, but this would be replacing the letter.

Chairman Gordon said that it seems like the letter would go out to more students and the awards would be presented to fewer students.

Vice Chair Salomon agreed that the awards would simplify the process for the principals. He said that ideally it would be nice to empower the principals to issue the letters and they could submit the names of the students at the Education Advisory Board meeting and explain why the letters were presented. For example, maybe a student found and returned a wallet and that information could be given to the Mayor; if he deems the deed to be exemplary then a certificate could also be given to the student.

Vice Chair Salomon would like to empower the community to recognize and move this type of behavior forward. If a student is good to his fellow citizens, this should be celebrated. There are many wonderful things that happen in the schools every single day that no one really hears about and in this day and age people need to hear more about these types of things. At the same time, it sends a message to other kids that are “on the fence” about making the right choice.

Chairman Gordon suggested a motion to accept the Mayor’s recommendation, or to continue to move forward with the letters being issued by the Education Advisory Board.

Vice Chair Salomon interjected by informing the Chair that the Education Advisory Board cannot issue letters because they are only an advisory board.

Board member Sami noted that the memorandum from the Mayor is asking the Education Advisory Board members to let him know if they consider his suggestion.

Board member Manning commented that there are two discussions; one is letting the City Council take over the award recognition, or to do the letters in combination with the special recognition.

Vice Chair Salomon questioned whether or not the City Council could empower the Education Advisory Board to do the letter. In other words, the letter would come from the Education Advisory Board, instead of from the City Council. Then if they deem an action to be exemplary they could issue a special certificate or proclamation. He asked if this made sense to the other members.

Chair Gordon responded that the Vice Chair's suggestion made sense to him.

Board member Manning was concerned about how the timeframe and the procedure would be handled by the Board because it would depend on the meeting date, the decision making, issuing the letters and it could take two or three months. She added that the Board does not meet in December and the process could be so bogged down that it might not mean as much because young kids need to be recognized quickly. She explained that she is okay with both suggestions, but she does not want to create a lot of work for the Board if it cannot be done in a timely manner.

Board member Zapata felt that it really says something about the Mayor to make this suggestion, and the Education Advisory Board should not say that they agree, but still want to do the letter. She understands the purpose of the letter, but in her opinion she would agree to leave it the way the Mayor suggested.

Board member Zapata moved to accept the suggestion from the Mayor. Vice Chair Salomon seconded the motion, which carried unanimously on roll call vote.

7) Other

Former Chairman Mindy McNichols asked if the Board had held any discussions about the new grading system for schools and the new scores that will affect schools. She knows that the District is trying to get information about the subject out to the communities because some of the schools that have always been "A" schools might not be in the future.

Ms. McNichols suggested that the Education Advisory Board should schedule a presentation in order to be able to understand the system because it is complicated. There are people who are very skilled and can make a PowerPoint presentation to educate the public. She said that Gisela Field or someone from her department could make the presentation.

Board member Manning agreed with Ms. McNichols that it would be a good idea to schedule a presentation.

Ms. McNichols added that it is going to take effect this year because of FCAT 2.0, but it could be worse next year.

Board member Manning mentioned that the Miami Herald on-line provided a simulation grade and if you entered the name of a school it would identify the school grade this year and what it would be under the new system. For example, Springs High is a “C” and it will be a “C”, but certain schools saw a drastic change based on the new factors.

Ms. McNichols explained that according to the law, a “D” or “F” school falls into an intervention category, which none of the Springs’ schools have ever been in, but they could be in the future. In some ways it means the school receives additional services, but in other ways it is a stigma that the schools have never experienced.

Ms. McNichols discussed the new law regarding the end of course exams and the corresponding FCAT subject. If a student takes an end of course exam for algebra or geometry they would not have to take the corresponding FCAT math. This is a good thing, but it must be determined how the end of course score will figure into the grade because they are very difficult exams. She felt that it will take the school system awhile to teach the kids to become proficient on the exams.

Board member Zapata agreed with Ms. McNichols that the teachers must be trained because the questions on the end of course exams are difficult. She felt that the presentation would be good for the Education Advisory Board and the community and she would like to find a way to make the meeting known to the community and the interested parents.

Ms. McNichols felt that the District would help the Education Advisory Board publicize the presentation.

Chairman Gordon announced that on Friday, April 27th there will be a City of Miami Springs Education Tour and invitations were sent to business and civic leaders. The tour will begin at City Hall at 8:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. and the bus will visit all the schools. He added that there should be press on this event and the educational forum.

Board member Zapata stated that it is important for the parents to understand what the change in the grading system means.

Board member Manning commented that there was a previous discussion on the P.E.R.T. test and students who do not perform well on this test would have to take another course in their senior year. She said that people should be aware of these new policies.

Chairman Gordon assured Ms. McNichols that the Education Advisory Board would work with her and the School District representatives in order to obtain the information.

Chairman Gordon reviewed highlights of the legislative update that he obtained from the District website. He noted that education Pre-K - 12 funding is provided an increase of approximately \$1.05BB, making up most, but not all of the lost ground from last year. HB 7127 would revise Florida's differentiated accountability system; HB 7059 is related to acceleration options and public education, amending various provisions of the law to establish curriculum to enhance learning options and provide an opportunity for students to graduate earlier from high school.

Chairman Gordon thanked Ms. McNichols for providing a wealth of information.

Board member Manning stated that she would like to discuss the magnet program at the high school, but the High School Principal needs to be present to provide a report

8) Adjourn

There was no further business to discuss and the meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,


Suzanne Hitaffer
Clerk of the Board

Approved as written at meeting of: 04-17-2012

The comments, discussions, recommendations and proposed actions of City Citizen Advisory Boards do not constitute the policy, position, or prospective action of the City, which may only be established and authorized by an appropriate vote or other action of the City Council.
