

Education Advisory Board

August 21, 2014

1

**EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE, 1ST FLOOR CHAMBERS
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA
THURSDAY, AUGUST 21, 2014 – 6:30 P.M.**

Members	Attendance	April 2014- APRIL 2015	
		Present	Absent
Chester Ludwick, Chair	P	3	1
Edna Elijah, Vice-Chair	P	3	1
Gregory T. Boardman	P	4	0
Towana Bonaparte	P	1	0
Maureen S. Dinnen	A	2	2
Rochelle Horowitz	A	3	1
Deniece Jones	P	3	0
Jennifer L. Kimmey	A	3	1
Dr. Magdalene Lewis	P	1	3
Wayne Neunie	A	2	2
Dr. Maureen Persi	A	3	1
Catherine Pliess	P	3	1
Austin Scott	P	4	0
Lillian Small	A	0	4
Shelby Smith	P	4	0

Appointed Members to the Board: 15

Needed to constitute a quorum: 8

Staff

Junia Robinson, Neighbor Support and Staff Liaison

Charles Webster, Broward County Public Schools (BCPS)

I. Opening – Chair, Chester Ludwick

II. Attendance by Roll Call – Junia Robinson, Staff Liaison

- Introduce New member: Towana Bonaparte

Determination of quorum

As of this date, August 21, 2014 there are 15 appointed members to the board, which means 8 would constitute a quorum. At this time, there is a quorum.

III. Approve minutes (June 19, 2014)

Motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Dr. Lewis, that the said minutes for August 21, 2014 be approved. In a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

IV. Guest Introduction: Dr. Desmond Blackburn, Chief School Performance & Accountability Officer, Broward County Public Schools (BCPS)

Chair Ludwick introduced Dr. Blackburn to share and discuss the BCPS \$800 million dollar bond project.

Dr. Blackburn began his discussion by saying that on June 09th, 2014; School Board of Broward County unanimously approved and passed an item Superintendent of Schools Robert Runcie brought forward to place on the November 04th ballot an opportunity for tax payers to decide whether or not they want to invest more dollars into the capitol program for BCPS to the tune of \$800 million dollars.

Dr. Blackburn says he will talk about what this would mean to the average homeowner here in Broward. He says he will address what's going on with the resources currently in place and how resources are being used from an academic perspective; which is their core business, and an operational perspective.

Dr. Blackburn shared, until a month and a half ago; BCPS was the 6th largest school district in the country and 2nd largest school district in the State behind Miami-Dade and up until about a month or 2, BCPS was the largest fully accredited school district in the entire country.

Last year for student achievement; 16,000 students graduated from 12th grade across the district and they earned over \$125 million dollars in scholarship money to some of the most prestigious schools across the country.

The graduation rates at traditional high schools are above 80%, for all of the high schools, some are 95-100%. He continued by saying 92% of high schools right now are graded A or B. The school district as a whole was graded a C by the State of Florida and district grades came out in July.

Dr. Blackburn said, BCPS inched up from a C to a B graded school district and this year they will earn an A even though the new Florida Assessment Standard test will be given in the school district.

BCPS looks at 2 benchmarks for student's algebra in middle school and reading in 3rd grade. BCPS currently went up from 54% of third graders reading proficiently to 57% and the goal is 100%.

Algebra is really important that before kids walk into high school that they have mastered algebraic concepts. There are over 21,000 kids currently taking algebra in BCPS, in which 67% are proficient in algebra.

The school board still struggles with schools that are failing and some of them are right here in Fort Lauderdale. Some great initiatives have happened in the city like SSOS (Student Success Opportunity Schools) program where some bold innovative things have been done.

October, 2011 Superintendent Runcie landed here and there were a lot of operational dysfunctions at plague. He first initiated to get out of a lot of lease space in the district where they were renting to house staff and administrators. The most notable was the sawgrass complex located on the southwest corner of 136th and sawgrass boulevard, the rent payment was \$1.9 million a year.

Transportation, BCPS has increased the number of propane driven buses and got rid of a lot of old buses that was draining cost on a maintenance perspective. GPS systems were installed in all the buses so they can know where all the buses are at any time. The transportation operational changes lead to about 6 million in savings.

Other than salary, the next highest expenditure in the system is healthcare which is approximately a quarter of a billion dollars. Dr. Blackburn explained three big things they put in place. The first was self-insure; second push employees to use generic drugs which lead to an \$18.9 million in savings and it's still saving possibly over \$20 million by now. Last but not least, in October 2011 when Bob Runcie arrived, BCPS was facing over \$65 million in penalty for class size. He travelled to Tallahassee to beg for financial release from the State because there

was no way they could operate a school system by giving up \$66 million dollars. The State listened and reduced the penalty from \$66 million to \$8.5 million dollars in year one. In year two, it was reduced to \$1.4 million and in year three, the class size penalty was practically zero, paying \$40,000. In all total, about \$35 million dollars reinvested in classrooms.

The City of Fort Lauderdale has been the “hot bed” according to Dr. Blackburn in reform and change. Working with community leaders, “one of them sitting around this table”; BCPS took a different stance on what schooling could look like.

Lauderdale manors elementary school re-purposed to a community resource center, which is doing very well, according to Dr. Blackburn.

Arthur Ashe middle school was re-purposed to a vocational adult center and they are currently at full capacity.

Dr. Blackburn said the reasons why they did that were because Broward County is home to three of the most successful workforce education schools in the entire state and country. BCPS wanted to bring job training and job placement to this community. Although the city has some of the wealthiest homes; some of the most impoverished families live here and have children in school. BCPS wanted to train these parents and provide them job opportunities.

Sunland park elementary school was turned into Sunland park early learning center. This school is now an A school for the first time in its history; Sunland struggled with D's and F's for years.

Dillard high school was transformed from a traditional high school to a 6-12 grade environment and \$1 million in technology and now Dillard is an A school for the first time in its history.

Dr. Blackburn said the school board is doing a pretty good job on cost savings as well as academic and achievement however; based on that BCPS needs to do a whole lot better.

Dr. Blackburn shared a little history on BCPS financial deficit by saying back in 2006-2007; the Legislature decreased the mileage rate for the entire State of Florida.

He said \$1.8 billion was lost during this period that was directed for capital fund.

Capital dollars support such things as computers, athletic equipment, building renovations, new buses and things of that nature. He said without capital dollars buildings cannot be renovated and updated computers cannot be purchased. Dr. Blackburn expressed that BCPS leads the state in outdated technology for children. He says some schools have ceiling and roofing damage, as well as security /safety issues. Dr. Blackburn explained that the \$800 million dollar bond is referred to as the S.M.A.R.T initiative which is the acronym used for marketing.

S.M. A. R. T stands for:

Safety – “we will use dollars to complete the single point of entry project that we started years ago primarily in our elementary schools, so you can’t access our schools from every point”.

Music and Art – The Superintendent and Board started to replace music and arts in schools, decreasing these programs. The programs have now been increased but not to the level of art and music equipment that are very expensive and has to be purchased out of the capital budget.

Athletics – “As part of a well-rounded program in addition to music and arts is athletics. We have football fields without bleachers, high schools without up to date weight rooms. We want to put that in the hands of our children as well”.

Renovation

Technology

The catch phrase is – “**Smart investments will lead to smart students**”.

Dr. Blackburn explained that the \$800 million dollars was chosen for three deliberate reasons.

1. “It’s a responsible tax increase to the homeowner, an average homeowner defines by Broward County as a home valued at \$250,000. That homeowner with a bond of \$800 million dollars will see an increase of \$50 increase to their tax bill. The need for the system was assessed by building and technology is more around \$3 billion dollars”.

2. "It's a responsible scope of work. We could ask for and receive \$3 billion dollars but the reality is we would never be able to execute and complete \$3 billion dollars' worth of work".
3. "Last but not least we are battling the T word, Trust and we know that the system and previous administration made some irresponsible decisions that are documented with capital dollars. Since then a lot of changes and procedures have been made to personnel, oversight etc... to safe guard resources".

Dr. Blackburn said, should there be a positive vote come November there will be an oversight committee, put in place to serve as sort of a "watchdog" to the school system made up of local community leaders, faith based, business owners and parents. He said there will be an application process for those persons who will report out to the community on whether or not BCPS is doing what they said they were going to do prior to November ballot.

Dr. Blackburn clarified the \$50 to homeowners by saying "we would not draw on all of the \$800 million at the same time. Year one, we may only draw a quarter of that, which is perhaps \$200 million dollars. If we only draw \$200 million the first year, which is a quarter, the tax increase will only be a quarter for the first year to homeowners, which would be about \$12.50.

He says this really "paints" what the monies will be used for and they are doing a lot of community education and outreach on what they plan to do with these dollars.

Dr. Blackburn says "our Board has spent over 25 hours in workshops going over the expenditures for this projects and how the dollars will be used". He said they will have a final list of all projects that will receive funds by the end of August, which is in a couple of weeks.

He says the list will have detailed information by City, district, zones; every school will be touched by technology. Some schools will have renovations to buildings and music and art based on an assessment.

Education Advisory Board

August 21, 2014

7

Dr. Blackburn talked about the likelihood of this \$800 million dollar bond being passed by voters. He said as employees, they cannot campaign but they can educate the community as much as possible.

Dr. Blackburn concluded his presentations and opened the floor for questions.

Chair Ludwick introduced School Board Member Heather Brinkworth, District 3 who was also the past Chair to the Education Advisory Board.

Mrs. Brinkworth thanked the EAB for inviting her and also thanked Dr. Blackburn for giving the presentation on the bond. She said the BCPS board members have spent hours discussing the bond and projects. Mrs. Brinkworth says the Board has asked a lot of questions and will continue to ask questions throughout this process because that's their job. They will make sure every single person is accountable for what their role is with this bond, if it goes forward.

Ms. Brinkworth said "without a doubt we need the money, unequivocally I don't know what will happen to this district if we don't get the money". She continued by saying "it breaks my heart to think what would happen if we don't get the money".

Mrs. Brinkworth said she is a product of Broward County schools and has taught and graduated from Stranahan High school in district 3. She says she has friends and colleagues who still teach at the school.

Mrs. Brinkworth shared that she will watch and ask not only because it is her job but because this is the community she has come from.

She closed by saying "if you need anything or have any additional questions, feel free to reach out to me".

Chair Ludwick then introduced BCPS member at large, Robin Bartleman who was a guest as well.

Mrs. Bartleman thanked the Board for serving and announced she is there to talk about the Children's Service Council (CSC).

She shared with the roles and duties of the Children Service Board and the organizations they fund which include: Urban League, Jack and Jill learning center, 211

Broward, Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies, Kids in Distress, Early learning center, Hands on Broward and more...

She said the CSC takes care of children from the time they are in the womb to the time they transition.

Mrs. Bartleman also shared other services the CSC provides to children in the community. She provided her cell phone number, should anyone needs to contact her directly (954) 668-3662.

V. Current business

BCPS update: Charles Webster

Mr. Webster announced BCPS will begin hosting "Conversation with the District" town hall style community meetings. The first meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 08th at Northeast High School. He encouraged board members to attend the meetings.

City Staff report: Junia Robinson, Staff Liaison

Ms. Robinson invited the Board to attend the State of the City Address and Advisory Board reception scheduled for Thursday, September 04th at 6:00P.M.

She also announced the mentorship program through the City Volunteer service office.

Ms. Robinson reminded the board to address the student members who have graduated and now in college and other students who are seniors this year.

She provided an update on Board member Maureen Dinnen who recently had surgery. Ms. Dinnen is recovering well after her surgery. Ms. Jennifer Kimmey is recovering from minor medical procedure as well.

Ms. Robinson said she has been receiving a lot of phone calls from the public regarding the \$800 million dollar bond. Neighbors have called the City Manager Office asking the opinions of the Education Advisory Board members in regards to the bond project.

VI. New Future Business

VII. Next Meeting and Closing

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 18th, 2014

City Hall, 8th floor conference room

Chair Ludwick adjourned meeting at 8:33 P.M