

MINUTES

**Parent Subcommittee on District and School Budget Priorities
Family and Community Involvement Advisory Subcommittee
Miami-Dade County Public Schools
1450 N.E. 2 Avenue, Room 916
Miami, FL 33132
Monday, March 12, 2018**

Members Present: Dr. Nancy Lawther, Chair, Mr. Eddy Barea, Ms. Beverly Heller, Ms. Laura Philpot, Ms. Lorraine Real, Ms. Karen Rivo, Mr. Elias Seife, Ms. Meriel Seymore, Mr. Thomas Spaulding.

Members Excused Absent: Ms. Liliانا Barrios, Ms. Anita Berg, Ms. Isabelle Exume, Mr. Joseph Gebara, Ms. Belkis Gutierrez, Mr. Wade Jones, Ms. Jacqueline Perez.

Others Present: Mr. Ron Y. Steiger, Ms. Iraida Mendez-Cartaya, Mr. Jaimie G. Torrens, Ms. Martha M. Diaz, Ms. Sara Walkup, Ms. Milagros Hernandez, Ms. Jennifer Bilton.

I. Welcome and Introductions: Meeting was called to order at 5:37 p.m. by Chair, Dr. Nancy Lawther. Introductions were made.

II. Approval of Minutes for October 30, 2017: Dr. Lawther initiated a review and motion to approve the October 30, 2017 minutes at 5:38 p.m. The minutes passed unanimously.

III. M-DCPS Legislative Update: Dr. Lawther opened the floor to Ms. Iraida Mendez-Cartaya, Associate Superintendent, to provide the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) Legislative update at 5:39 p.m. Ms. Mendez-Cartaya began with telling the committee that the 2018 Florida Legislative Session had concluded on Sunday, March 11, 2018.

Ms. Mendez-Cartaya continued by providing information on passed Senate Bill 7026 regarding school safety. She shared that the bill appropriates \$97.5 million dollars to school resource officers, \$98 million dollars to infrastructure enhancements, and \$69 million dollars to mental health (includes school site mental health services, training, and screening). The most controversial portion of the bill, Ms. Mendez-Cartaya explained, is the Guardian program which appropriates funds to evaluate and train certain school support staff to carry firearms on school grounds. Classroom teachers are excluded from participating in this program with the exception to Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) teachers. She noted that this program is not mandated and that both the sheriff and local school board have to agree to adopt the program. Additionally, with this bill, law enforcement is provided the right to confiscate firearms from individuals who have been involuntarily hospitalized for mental issues or show risk of harming themselves or others. Further, this bill increases the minimum age for purchasing a firearm from 18 to 21 years old, with the exception of law enforcement or military personnel. Soon after Governor Rick Scott signed this package into law, the National Rifle Association (NRA) filed legal action against the state in specific regards to minimum age increase.

Ms. Mendez-Cartaya then moved the discussion to the positives of House Bill 7055. With the amendment to equity in funding, this legislation provides additional flexibility to local school districts in order to appropriate their Title I dollars as they see fit. Another win for the district is within the amendment of capital outlay funds distribution to charters. The General Appropriations Act will provide \$145 million from Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) funds to charter schools, thus relieving what school districts will have to share from local discretionary capital outlay levy revenue. House Bill 7055 and House Bill 1279, which addresses school district accountability through increasing spending transparency, similarly aids the district by providing additional flexibility in terms of how we construct and maintain our buildings.

Conversely, Ms. Mendez-Cartaya explained, House Bill 7055 will pull funding away from public schools through the Hope Scholarship Program. The Hope Scholarship will allow students with unsubstantiated bullying/harassment cases to obtain vouchers that range between 92-96% of the FTE funding to help pay for private school tuition or up to \$750 dollars for transportation expenses related to relocating to another public school. House Bill 7055 will also place \$9.7 million of public funding towards reading scholarships that will afford tutoring and supplemental materials to students with low reading performance. Mr. Ron Y. Steiger, Chief Financial Officer, added that House Bill 7055 also requires that teachers' unions have 50 percent

membership by July 1, 2018 or risk being decertified.

Ms. Mendez-Cartaya then called the approximately \$88.7 billion 2018-19 budget, "very, very disappointing." Apart from the Great Recession, this is by far the worst budget she had seen despite the growing economy and low unemployment rate in Florida. The Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) increased by \$484 million dollars or 2.35 percent. For M-DCPS this means a \$12.6 million increase, but with added safe schools and mental health categoricals, this is a budget cut for M-DCPS and many other school districts across the state. Typically, the District's total per-student increase is above the state-wide average, however, this year M-DCPS ranks second to lowest – with Broward being the lowest. M-DCPS' per-student increase is \$65 dollars whereas the state-wide average is \$101.50. For Florida school districts, this means a meager 47 cent increase to the Base Student Allocation (BSA). Ms. Mendez-Cartaya assured that the District is in the process of requesting a veto of the FEFP. Dr. Lawther informed the committee that the Florida Parent Teacher Association has also sent out a state-wide alert asking members to send a veto message to the Governor on the FEFP.

IV. Space Utilization At 6:17 p.m. Mr Jaime G. Torrens, Chief Facilities Officer, provided a five year overview of the General Obligation (GO) Bond and explained that construction projects costing over \$2 million dollars requires individual project solicitation. His presentation included the following updates: year one, all 68 projects completed; year two, 71 projects completed and eight larger projects presently under construction; year three, 16 out of 17 projects under \$2 million completed with one under construction and eight larger projects completed with 29 in the balance of construction or within the bidding or design process; year four, seven out of 18 projects under \$2 million completed with 11 in the design/pre-construction phase and 19 out of 32 larger projects in the design phase with 13 in the solicitation process; and year five, all 12 projects under \$2 million have been assigned to architects and contractors and currently are in the scoping or design process with 36 larger projects requiring contractor solicitations with two in design. Additionally, year 5 includes 285 smaller accelerated projects in which 225 have been completed, 17 in construction, and 43 are in design or bidding.

Mr. Torrens clarified that in sum, at about mid-point of the bond implementation, out of 586 projects, the District completed approximately 380, including advanced smaller scope projects. Additionally, through December 31st of last year, expenditures for facilities improvements equaled approximately \$459 million dollars and \$87 million dollars for technology enhancements. Highlighted was the fact that year 4 and 5 consisted of deliberately larger projects, allowing smaller firms to build capacity and grow to compete for future bids.

Mr. Torrens then presented examples of the efficient construction and operation strategies being used, such as LEED for schools design standards, "rightsizing" new buildings, selective building replacements, demolition of portable classrooms, the reuse of architectural plans, and campus consolidation. These strategies are saving the District hundreds of thousands of dollars, as well as being more time efficient. Mr. Torrens then clarified that schools with low capacities should not be examined individually, but rather as clusters in terms of space utilization. Areas that have clusters of schools with under enrollment are where opportunities for cost-saving options stand. Creative tactics, such as community leases are also being employed as a means of preserving existing real estate while being cost effective.

V. Budget Update At 7:03p.m. Mr. Steiger expanded on Ms. Mendez-Cartaya's presentation to provide a more in-depth look at the 2018-19 budget. He reminded the committee that M-DCPS is receiving a total increase of \$12.6 million, but this includes obligations in the amount of \$19 million for new spending as outlined in Senate Bill 7026. He also reminded that this equates to \$65 per student – but once you subtract the assigned mental health and safe schools funds you end up with a 47 cent total increase to the BSA. Mr. Steiger made clear that M-DCPS is pleased to have received additional funds to make our schools safer; however, stated that it is unfortunate that it comes at the expense of the actual cost of doing business.

Further, unless the Governor vetoes lines 2759-2761 in Senate Bill 7026, spending flexibility will be limited. Mr. Steiger assured the committee that creative solutions are being explored and that the committee will have input as soon as options can be presented. On a positive note, he explained that there is a provision in SB7026 that states that 10% of the \$8 million for mental health can be spent on general overhead, which will allow the District some wiggle room in terms of reducing the increase to categoricals to \$18 million. Included in this number is the \$1 million allocated to teacher supplies.

For FY 2018-19, Mr. Steiger additionally noted that the tax collection shortfall reserve is at \$12 million, which is significantly lower than it has been historically; the charter school net increase is \$8.1 million; and there is an additional workload decrease of \$5.8 million that represents the overall drop of the number of students. This calculates to a true decrease of \$20.7 million dollars for M-DCPS and even worse does not include the increases we will see to health insurance, utilities, and retirement contributions. Further, Mr. Steiger reminded the committee that the 2017-18 budget was balanced with one time funds and 2016-17 raises were given with the \$30 million transfer from the health insurance reserve.

More troubling, however, is the addition of the Funding Compression K12 Funding Formula. M-DCPS is one of the poorest districts in the State in terms of poverty and this funding formula doesn't see us that way. This formula will guarantee that teachers in low cost districts will make as much as those in higher cost of living districts and level off the per-student basis at the expense of tax payers in higher cost of living counties. This year South Florida tax payers gave away \$7.8 million dollars that otherwise would have been funneled into the M-DCPS. In FY 2004-2005, the Amenity Factor was added to the District Cost Differential (DCD) with the thought that people would be willing to pay more out of pocket without a raise in salary in exchange for local amenities that higher cost of living areas have. Fortunately, the District Cost Differential (DCD) study is included in the state budget and will reexamine the way the cost of living affects school funding.

Mr. Steiger concluded by stating that it is time for M-DCPS to draft legislation addressing the adverse features of the FEFP such as funding compression, DCD changes, and the sparsity supplement.

VI. Old Business Vote for Vice Chair commenced at 4:47 p.m. and resulted in the election of Ms. Beverly Heller.

VII. New Business: No new business.

VIII. Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.