

**THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA
DIVERSITY COMMITTEE MEETING
January 8, 2015**

SUMMARY

Members Present

Francesca Blanchard	Thomas Lauder
Harve Brosten	Esther Mizell
Rebecca Dahl	Beverly Perkins
Susan Edwards	Frederick Perry
Gaspar Garcia	Ernestine Price
Julian Gazzano	Michael Sirbola
Lillie Harris	Bryan Wilson
Charlie King	

Members Absent

Andy Ansola	Douglas Harrison
Jamie Cutler	Aaliyah McCrary
Reverend Luc Harrigan	Mary Williams

Student Support Initiatives Staff: Michaëlle Pope; Terri Jones

Diversity, Prevention & Intervention Staff: Amalio Nieves; Carolyn Salters; Marion Williams

Parliamentarian: Patricia McDougle

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:36 p.m. by **Mr. Lauder**.

ADOPTON OF THE AGENDA

The Agenda was adopted as presented.

APPROVAL OF THE SUMMARY MINUTES

The December 4, 2014 minutes were approved, as amended.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Lauder reviewed possible membership of the Bond Oversight Committee. He said, group's that members will be selected from have problems of their own. The School Board does not want Diversity Committee representation. The Board indicated that information will be shared with the Committee and members can attend the open meetings. **Mr. Lauder** encouraged members to attend the January 21, 2015 School Board meeting where this will be discussed again.

Mr. Lauder said he attended a homeowner's meeting last night. They were talking about boundary issues on the east side, specifically about Virginia Shuman Young (VSY) and a Montessori school on Broward Boulevard. He said, **Mr. King** was there; he lives in and is active in the area. **Mr. Lauder** said **Leslie Brown** and **Mr. Runcie** were there. About 100 people were there sharing their desires to go to their neighborhood school. People can go to VSY a magnet/Montessori; you don't need to live in the neighborhood, you can apply. He said, if a person decides to pay the \$5,400 Pre-K tuition you are guaranteed a seat, once you are in, siblings are grandfathered in too. From anecdotal evidence this is the kind of place where people who work downtown and are well-connected likes to go to school. Everyone else is told they have to go to Walker Elementary. There is now a boundary issue, they are talking about sending the students to Harbordale Elementary which is nowhere near Victoria Park. Everyone has issues with their boundaries. He said **Ms. Brown** mentioned the \$5,400 does not guarantee a seat anymore, you will have to apply and that the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) had a problem with that. **Mr. Lauder** said I

don't recall the Diversity Committee being told OCR had an issue with anything. I think the Diversity Committee might be clued-in to something involving OCR. He said Beachside Montessori is nowhere near the beach; it is the same situation, neighborhood kids need not apply. He shared demographics as of November 2014:

Walker Elementary 95.7% Black, 3.7 White; 696 students

VSY is 67% White 24% Black; 730 students

Harbordale 77.8% White, 14% Black; 451 students

Beachside 84.3% White, 8% Black

Mr. Lauder said, are Black kids not applying to VSY? Are they not advertising? This raises some serious questions and seems like it is right up the alley of the Diversity Committee. Instead we are talking about bylaws and indicators. You have these numbers which were in the media a few years ago. I am going to contact **Ms. Brown**; maybe we will get an answer. You would think if the OCR were sniffing around someone would bring this to us. We are on a hamster wheel doing bylaws and talking about sunshine law. It goes back to the minutes I read with the bylaws...**Ms. Mizell**...and trying to wedge us in. This is the third year we are talking about bylaws and indicators. He said an indicator that bothers me is the numbers just mentioned. This is a red flag. **Ms. Price** said we need to be correct on this Committee. She said the Chair and Vice-Chair should make sure the correct topics are put on the agenda. She is concerned that it was mentioned at a previous meeting that **Ms. Pope** should not speak and presentations from District staff not be brought forward to the general meetings. She said **Ms. Pope** needs to bring the Committee things that are going on in the District; it is important. The Bylaws Subcommittee has been meeting trying to get the bylaws done. She said she is use to the Chair person being involved in what we are doing. **Ms. Price** said she is upset that the Committee was not aware of OCR's visit. **Mr. Lauder** said this portion of the meeting is the Chair's Report. He said he thought the VSY issue is an important issue to bring forward. You say we need to get to the bylaws; other groups are not talking about their bylaws. We are still talking about the bylaws. That is a distraction. I believe **Mr. Ansola** said last month, "why are we here?" "We are not doing anything." **Mr. King** said, it is very wrong what was happening at VSY; the pay for play program. I want to know how long it was going on. I would like to haul **Leslie Brown** in here and ask her some questions about this. How did she think it was right to pay your way into a public school, especially ahead of people who live in the neighborhood? **Ms. Dahl** said the first year she was on the Committee the issue of paying for preschool was brought to several peoples' attention along with pressure from other people. It brought about the change; it took them two years to get it done. They now need to go through the lottery system. If the Committee believes the lottery system is not being done fairly, that is something you may want to look into. You could have **Ms. Brown** come in to speak about it instead of speaking about it when you don't have the facts. **Mr. Lauder** said, I appreciate it. I don't take marching orders from anybody and I am not here to cover anyone's rear. It was reported that School Board member Jennifer Gottlieb's kids got to switch from VSY to Beachside when it opened; her son gets to go to Nova. The Mayor of Hollywood's kids were going there. I would like to know if employees in this building get to send their kids to VSY. Why, if the OCR said something was wrong; why did it take two years? Why the VSY website is full, current and looking great and Walker's website looks like a shell? VSY has the Adopt-A-Classroom program at \$250 a pop and some classrooms have been sponsored multiple times, are those parents and their businesses a part of this thing or where people with money and connections get preferential treatment? He said, it has been reported and this is a fact-finding body. **Mr. Lauder** said, when **Ms. Brown** says, with 100 people, the Mayor of Fort Lauderdale, the City Manager, Fort Lauderdale City Commissioner, a School Board member, and the Superintendent, all in attendance, that the Office of Civil Rights, the United States Federal Government had an issue with something, I think the Broward County School Board Diversity Committee should look into it and ask why weren't we told? What else haven't we been told? Remember the issue with the contracts? We get told don't worry, we are fixing it. No, how did it happen and why is it allowed to continue? Those parents have a horrible idea of what Walker is like. I think that is bad and unfair; all because someone has set up a system that is unfair to everybody, which is what it seems to be.

Motion by Mr. Perry “I would like the comments of the Chair’s Report from approximately 7:02-7:06 p.m. to be transcribed verbatim.”

Mr. Garcia asked the Chair to summarize what he said because he is not sure what is being asked of the Diversity Committee. What would the next step be?

Mr. Lauder said he thought the topic was interesting and worthy to share. For the next meeting he will extend an invitation to **Ms. Brown** to explain the situation and what OCR was here for, a paper trail for us to review. That is our purview; that kind of stuff. He invited members to contact their own School Board members or do leg-work on it.

Mr. Perry asked if it there has to be a motion?

Mr. Lauder discussed the question with **Ms. McDougle**. He said “**if there is no objection, have the minutes reflect my comments verbatim.**”

Ms. Dahl said she has an objection; we haven’t done that with anything else.

Mr. Perry “I would like the comments of the Chair’s Report from approximately 7:02-7:06 p.m. to be transcribed verbatim.” Motion passed 10-4.

Mr. Sirbola asked if ideas for the Chair, Vice-Chair meeting or actionable items, could be acted on now.

Mr. Lauder said the Committee could discuss it during Good of the Order.

VICE-CHAIR’S REPORT

Mr. Perry shared information on the Red Tail Rise Above Traveling Exhibit and the story of the Airmen to impart the concept of rising above barriers in life. **Mr. Perry** said he assisted in bringing the exhibit to Broward two years ago and now an opening to bring the exhibit and the airplane to Broward has surfaced. He said the cost has been underwritten and locations have been secured. The pilot will be here and he will fly the plane. He is requesting that the School Board allow approximately 250 to 350 students a day, to visit the exhibit. **Mr. Perry** said the visit would be the second week of March; Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. A concern is, the timeframe conflicts with FCAT testing. The Boys and Girls Club and The Urban League will arrange for kids to visit as well. The focus will be on middle and high school students.

Motion by Mr. Perry “I move to proceed with delivering 250 to 350 children per day to the Pompano Air Field, for the Rise Above Traveling Exhibit, celebrating the history of the Tuskegee Airmen, subject to the exhibit being completely underwritten, with the exception of school bus transportation to and from the exhibit.” Motion passed 13-1.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Ms. Pope shared Martin Luther King celebration information with the Committee. She requested that the Committee confirm meeting dates for February before the meeting is adjourned.

Ms. Dahl asked about the upcoming date of the Office of Civil Rights visit and if the Committee can meet with them?

Ms. Pope said the visit to schools was postponed until February and that she did relay to the contact person that the Committee would like to meet with them. She said she will provide the answer to the Committee, prior to the next meeting. **Ms. Dahl** said this is important because they are looking at data for advanced placement courses which is what the Site Visit Subcommittee looks at as well. **Ms. Pope** said OCR conducts a closing conference, maybe the Diversity Committee could be included, if OCR is not going to speak with parents and the community. **Ms. Pope** said, if the Committee agrees she will inquire about the inclusion of the Committee at the closing conference.

PARLIAMENTARIAN'S REPORT

Ms. McDougale said her topic for the evening was formal vs informal parliamentary procedures. Due to the constraints of time she will forgo her report so that she may give her full five-minute report at the next meeting.

Discussion continued regarding Virginia Shuman Young. **Mr. Brosten** thanked **Mr. Lauder** for bringing this issue to the Committee and finds the paying of Pre-K abhorrent. **Mr. King** said there is a lottery to get in and a lottery for the pre-school, something is pretty dirty about it. I would like an explanation. He said I have been fighting this battle with the people of the Isles in Rio Vista and Coral Ridge; they are good at gaming the system. Of the 44 in my neighborhood that applied only 18 got in. We are supposed to have 150 seats, we have 120 students in. We are asking for an additional 50 seats. **Mr. King** said, as a real estate agent he has known about this for years. **Ms. Dahl** said **Ms. Miracola** spoke to the Committee at a previous meeting about VSY and its Pre-K. She offered to listen to the tapes of that previous meeting if the Committee would like her to. She said often schools have more, in affluent neighborhoods, because parents can give more; how do you stop the parents from giving to their kids' school? Nova is in a similar situation. **Mr. Lauder** said this Committee and the District are supposed to ensure equitable resources and not pit families against each other for seats at a school. He said there should be no preference given to people who are well-connected or have money over poor kids. **Mr. Wilson** recommended, in addition to voicing opinions and thoughts on any given situation, which is very valuable, members also provide possible solutions. He said, it was mentioned, how can we fix these problems? There are intelligent, experienced individuals on the Committee; it is our job to attempt to answer those questions. **Ms. Price** said she is tired of saying it; we have to do it right; we are wasting our time. A representative from the Diversity Committee should be on all these committees we are talking about. **Ms. Price** said "what about the furniture at Markham and Collins? The furniture has not been changed since they opened. We have to do what is right; this Diversity Committee was put here for a reason."

REVIEW OF POLICY 1.5

Mr. Lauder read Policy 1.5, page 2, Committee Functions, number 4;

- b. Review the District's policies relating to student school assignment and reassignment to ensure equitable access for all students.
- c. Review the District's Nova Schools policy to ensure that it addresses equitable access for all students.

Mr. Lauder said, it was said the Committee should be attending other District committee meetings; they should be coming to us. This group needs to ask questions pertaining to our tasks. He said, a judge created this Committee; maybe it is time we go back to that judge or some federal judge. Working on the Indicators and Bylaws are busy-work. Do you think the kids at Walker are getting the same education as the kids at VSY? **Ms. Dahl** said the Committee needs to know when meetings in the District are happening. She requested that **Ms. Pope's** Department notify the Committee of upcoming meetings that pertain to topics they are to monitor. **Mr. Sirbola** said a number of things discussed seem to be serious and actionable.

Motion by Mr. Sirbola, “to meet with the judge for guidance and clarification.” Second by Ms. Perkins.

Mr. Wilson inquired, whom will meet with the judge; how will the Committee reach him? **Mr. Lauder** said if the motion passes we need to find out whom to address the letter to and send a letter asking for instruction, clarification and guidance. **Mr. Brosten** suggested they direct the request and all subsequent requests, accordingly, through the **Fertigs**, who were instrumental with the lawsuit; let them go to the judge. **Mr. Garcia** suggested the Committee designate the Chair to move the motion forward to the appropriate person. **Mr. Perry** said, we are putting barriers in front of our Chair. I suggest the Chair proceed in the manner he deems appropriate. He can give a progress report at the next meeting. **Mr. Lauder** said he would contact the **Fertigs** first, proceed from there and keep the Committee informed. **Ms. Price** said maybe the Diversity Committee should ask the **Fertigs** first before a motion is passed to find out what direction to take. She said the current School Board attorney fought us in the lawsuit and she believes the attorney is working against us now. If they dissolve this Committee, where are we? **Mr. Lauder** said we can consult with the **Fertigs**, but we don't need to ask permission from anyone. We should not wait another month. **Mr. Garcia “called the question.”**

Motion by Mr. Sirbola, “to meet with the judge for guidance and clarification.”

Motion Passed: Yes-9, No-2, No Vote-1.

DIVERSITY COMMITTEE BYLAWS

Mr. Garcia said a good bylaws working-group has been formed. They hope to bring a draft forward by the end of the month.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Ms. Mizell said the Diversity Committee Bylaws states the Committee was formed in accordance with Florida Statute 1001.41; look it up at www.leg.state.fl.us/. **Mr. Brosten** said we cannot be afraid to bring up difficult issues; it is by law that we are here. **Ms. Edwards** said she was on the site visit to VSY over a year ago. It was clear then that the school was privileged. **Ms. Edwards** asked that members do not interrupt and talk when other members are speaking. She suggested having a representative at the meetings throughout the District.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

**The next meeting is scheduled for February 5, 2015, at 6:30 p.m.,
in the Board Room, Kathleen C. Wright Administration Building.**

These minutes are summarized and were recorded at the January 8, 2015 Diversity Committee meeting. For more information a Public Records Request may be submitted by contacting Public Relations & Government Affairs Department, SBBC, at 754-321-2300.

Approved 020515