

Business Operations
Joe Arriola, Chief Business Officer

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON APPLICATION FOR CONVEYANCE OF FEDERAL SURPLUS LAND LOCATED AT 13601 S. W. 176 STREET FOR PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES AT A PUBLIC BENEFIT DISCOUNT ALLOWANCE OF 100% AND AUTHORIZATION TO AMEND THE APPLICATION TO MODIFY THE LOCATION FOR THE PROPOSED SCHOOL SITE

Background

At its meeting of October 24, 2001, the School Board (Board) adopted a Resolution authorizing execution of an application to request and negotiate the conveyance of 100 acres of the subject property to the Board, at a public benefit discount allowance of 100%, subject to a number of due diligence factors, and further review and action by the Board (Attachment A).

Analysis

Staff has undertaken considerable research to ascertain the subject property's suitability for development as a school facility. Below is a summary of staff's findings.

1. Land Use Reviews:

- The Miami-Dade County Department of Planning and Zoning has indicated that the site is consistent with the Comprehensive Development Master Plan and is acceptable for use as a school.
- The Miami-Dade County Aviation Department has indicated that the site is compatible with airport operations and is located outside the no-school zone.
- The Water Control Division of the Miami-Dade County DERM indicated that no water retention area is required for the subject property.

Please see Attachment B.

2. Adjacent Land Uses:

The subject property is bordered on its north by the Miami Federal Correctional Institute/Miami (FCI), on the east and southeast by Miami-Dade County MetroZoo and Larry and Penny Thompson Memorial Park and Campground, and on the west by the Martinez U.S. Army Reserve. Within the immediate vicinity, lie low, medium and high density residential uses, fully developed commercial shopping strips and vacant land planned for industrial and office uses. Land

values in this area of burgeoning population growth are estimated commercially from \$350,000.00 and up per acre with residences ranging from \$275,000.00 and up per acre (Attachment C).

3. Environmental Assessment:

LAW Engineering and Environmental Services, Inc., performed a site reconnaissance for development suitability of the proposed site. The field survey focused on a concentrated search area (Attachment D), consisting of approximately 50 acres, located at the southernmost portion of the subject property. This acreage was identified as environmentally disturbed, and therefore the area where development would have the least impact. In addition to this, staff met on site with local environmental agencies, and as of the date of this writing, the following assessments were received:

- The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers has provided a preliminary verbal determination that the subject property is non-jurisdictional wetlands;
- The South Florida Water Management District has indicated that there are wetlands on site, which will require mitigation (Attachment E). A response from DERM is pending; if their determination is received before the May 2002 Board meeting, a further update will be provided at that time.

4. Archaeological Assessment:

The Miami-Dade County Office of Historic Preservation (County) advised that although no historic sites have been recorded for the subject property, an artesian well or spring is likely to be present, which may include evidence of human prehistoric and/or historic activity. The County also recommended a Phase I Archaeological Survey (Attachment F). As such, staff commissioned the services of John G. Beriault, B.A., from the Archaeological and Historical Conservancy, Inc., in the performance of a Phase I Archaeological survey of the subject property. No archaeological or historical material, features or sites were noted, although two small areas within the site may contain a spring or artifacts. The consultant made recommendations, which are contained in Attachment G.

5. Proximity to Federal Correctional Institute (FCI) Miami:

FCI Miami is located at 15801 S. W. 137 Avenue, to the north of the subject property. The facility, which sits on 206 acres, 40 of which are inside a secured perimeter, includes both a medium level security unit, a minimum level security satellite camp that offers a Residential Drug Abuse Treatment Program, and an outdoor ballistic range. In total, FCI Miami houses 1,400 inmates. The Executive Assistant for FCI Miami has advised that there have been a few escapes throughout the years, and no riots have been reported since the facility's inception in 1976. The facility provides armed guards for the medium level security unit only. In the opinion of the Executive Assistant for FCI, the facility

would not pose a risk or be detrimental to schoolchildren should a school be built in close proximity; please see Attachment H.

- As noted above, FCI Miami houses a ballistics range (range). The range is used by federal, state and local law enforcement personnel approximately two days per week. The Miami-Dade Schools Police Department (MDCPS Police) along with the Department of Safety, Environment and Hazards Management researched the safety issues concerning the proximity of the range to the proposed school site and support the placement of an educational facility on the subject property due to a number of mitigating factors as summarized below and provided in more detail in Attachment I. Notwithstanding, MDCPS Police cautioned that an accidental misfire (into the air) is a possibility at any firing range. As such, the trajectory of the projectile could not be predicted and consequently, the immediate area including the proposed school campus could be impacted. In light of this possible mishap, staff has contacted FCI Miami to explore the feasibility of enclosing the range or relocating it to a remote non-urbanized location, which would help ensure the safety of the surrounding community and the students of the proposed school facility (Attachment J).
- The firing direction of the range is due south and cross firing is prohibited, therefore, all correctly fired projectiles travel south into a 20-foot high soil berm;
- The range is limited to small arms fire by law enforcement personnel, no rifles are used and no public access is allowed;
- The proposed school location would be over 3,000 feet from the firing range in a diagonal, southeast direction;
- The range is scheduled to undergo extensive renovations to increase the safety of the surrounding area. The existing 20-foot soil berm is proposed to be raised to 26 feet above ground level and anti-ricocheting devices are to be installed to prevent stray projectiles from leaving the range area. The range renovations are scheduled for completion by the end of 2002; and
- A staff training officer for the U. S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Prisons, has advised that that safety is stressed at all times on the range.

It should be noted that FCI Miami has co-existed harmoniously with the Miami-Dade County MetroZoo, which is located immediately to the east and where the District currently houses the Richmond Heights Middle Science/Zoo Magnet Program. Records provided by MetroZoo indicate that the yearly child admission to the zoo is

approximately 162,188, a majority of which represents students on school field trips from both Miami-Dade and Broward County public and private schools.

In addition, there is precedence within the School District and within the State for locating facilities adjacent to federal correctional facilities, without use conflicts or incompatibilities. Examples are the New World School of the Arts, which is located approximately .3 miles from the Federal Detention Center, a full range security facility, and Lincoln High School in Tallahassee located within 1.24 miles from the Florida Correctional Institute.

6. Proximity to the U.S. Army Reserve:
The Supervisory Staff Administrator has advised that no live firing of weapons is conducted at the Reserve. On occasion blank 5.56 mm training ammunition is used, but only in the area immediately adjacent to the Reserve center building. No pyrotechnical devices or simulators are used at the Reserve; please see Attachment K.
7. Potential Additional Site Development:
The Miami-Dade County Police Department has expressed an interest in the site as well, requesting approximately 10-acres for the construction of a combination District headquarters police and communication center. The facility could be housed adjacent to the proposed school, and serve as a buffer between the school and FCI Miami; please see Attachment L.
8. Amendment to Application:
The original application described the property requested as one hundred acres of the northwest section of the federal surplus property. Based on the research results and due diligence, staff is recommending amending the application to include instead one hundred acres generally on the south and east of the referenced federal property; please see Attachment M.
9. Community Input:
District is exploring the possibility of taking this matter before a non-zoning meeting of Community Council 11 as a public information presentation to the neighboring community, and to provide an opportunity for community input as it relates to the possible siting of a school facility on the subject property.

A copy of the proposed Amendment to the Application will be placed on file in the Citizen Information Center and the Recording Secretary's Office.

RECOMMENDED:

That the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent of his designee to:

- 1) execute an amendment to the original application for conveyance of federal surplus property to the School District at a full benefit discount allowance of 100%, to modify the location of the requested property to one hundred (100) acres in the south and east sections of the referenced surplus property; and
- 2) continue pursuing the subject property as an option for State School "YY1" or other school and/or District facility.

VGv:hf