

School Site Planning & Construction Committee 2009 Annual Report

Introduction

The School Board's School Site Planning & Construction Committee (Committee) meets regularly on a monthly basis, typically in the School Board Administration Building, at 1450 N.E. 2 Avenue, Miami, unless there is no business to conduct.

The Committee is extremely broad-based in terms of its membership, representing a variety of key sectors in the community, ranging from parents, to business and community representatives, to real estate experts and other professionals. The Committee plays a critical role in the facilities planning activities of the School District and, in its role as an advisory body to the School Board, makes recommendations to the Board on the formulation of the Five-Year Capital Plan, as well as on site acquisitions and other closely related matters. In addition, the Committee interfaces with other key groups, such as the Staff Working Group (SWG).

The Committee's Annual Report

In prior years, the Committee's focus was primarily on site acquisition, in response to the needs expressed in the District's Five-Year Capital Plan. Over the last year however, the Committee has successfully transitioned into other areas under its purview, with a specific focus on reviewing and recommending cost efficiencies and revenue generating options in the facilities area. Below is a summary of the Committee's most notable accomplishments during 2009.

First Quarter (January-March)

During this quarter, the Committee met once on February 4, 2009 to establish a plan of action for 2009 based on the District's priorities and needs in the areas under the Committee's purview. That plan of action included activities that interfaced with the SWG, such as a required Planning Forum, the schedule for reviewing the capital plan, and planning for informational sessions on capital funding and related impact on the capital plan.

Second Quarter (April-June)

During this quarter, the Committee met on April 1, 2009 and May 6, 2009. The Committee reviewed options to achieve cost savings and generate new revenue for the District, including potential short range and long range opportunities to consolidate/vacate select ancillary facilities, through the sale of Board-owned property. Preliminary analysis of potential options to achieve cost savings or generate revenue was provided to the Committee for review. Options analyzed included the possible surplus of select Board-owned sites/ancillary facilities as well as the possible relocation of select uses from leased space to Board-owned sites. Feedback from the Committee resulted in a recommendation to the School Board to authorize the commissioning of appraisals on three Board-owned sites (Tier I) for possible surplus. Additionally, given the initial interest by the County's Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) program, the Committee also recommended that staff pursue the disposal of two Board-owned sites encumbered by Natural Forest Communities (NFC). The appraisal review process

is ongoing as of this writing for the three Tier I properties, with further action on the two EEL properties on hold, due to a lack of available funds in the County's Environmentally Endangered Lands Program.

The Committee also reviewed information on the 2009/10-2013/14 Tentative Five-year Plan and proposed funding outlook, inclusive of projected funding shortfalls for 2009-10. The Committee discussed a variety of alternative funding approaches. Discussions pertaining to underutilized facilities led to a Committee recommendation to work jointly with the Attendance Boundary Committee (ABC) in the upcoming months (see comments under Fourth Quarter) to further analyze the issue and ultimately provide a recommendation to the School Board.

The Annual Joint Planning Forum hosted by the Committee and the SWG was held on May 27, 2009, providing an opportunity to showcase the newly constructed Miami Jackson Senior High School; the Forum was attended by local planning officials. Those in attendance were provided updates on the implementation of school concurrency and the Interlocal Agreement for Public School Facility Planning. The 2009/10-2013/14 Tentative Five-year Plan was also presented and an opportunity was provided for attendees to discuss a variety of topics related to the Plan including school projected open seats, funding shortfalls and renewed focus on certain facilities projects and objectives.

Third Quarter (July-September)

During this quarter, the Committee met on July 8, 2009 and September 16, 2009. The Committee had an opportunity to review the information provided to the School Board at its Capital Funding Workshop concerning the 2009/10-2013/14 Tentative Five-year Plan. Issues highlighted included class size requirements and their impact to the District's capital program. The Committee reviewed information pertaining to historical capital project funding sources, including PECO, Certificates of Participation and local millage revenue. Additionally, the Committee discussed the impact of previous and proposed capital projects and possible options to mitigate the loss of revenues while adhering to the Superintendent's guiding principles. Ultimately, the Committee recommended to the School Board approval of the 2009/10-2013/14 Five-Year Capital Plan, which was approved on final reading by the Board as part of its annual budget cycle in September of 2009, and subsequently submitted to and approved by the DOE.

Also discussed were examples of potential alternate funding sources, which included the possible placement of commercial telecommunications equipment at school sites in an effort to to replace a portion of the District's existing educational communication infrastructure, while also creating a mechanism to generate additional income for the District. The Committee further elaborated on other innovative measures to generate revenue such as the sale of naming rights at schools. Also mentioned in the discussion was the possibility of utilizing school facilities for advertising purposes, as allowed under Board rules. Such a measure was under review by School Operations and ultimately implemented by the District through the issuance of a Request for Information, and the review and acceptance of qualified proposals by the District's Advertising Review Committee.

The Committee also discussed best practices in the area of public school facility planning, including transportation related options for schools in urban areas and the

establishment of District Eco-sustainability initiatives which include the implementation of a “green education program” and the commitment to incorporating “Green” and sustainable practices within the District.

Fourth Quarter (October-December)

During this quarter, the Committee held a meeting on October 21, 2009. In earlier months, the Committee had discussed the sale of naming rights at schools as a possible way to generate additional revenue for the District. In response to the Committee’s comments, staff provided the members information concerning the naming policy currently followed by the nine other largest school districts in the nation. The Committee was advised that a task force was recently established by the School Board to review the School District’s current policy concerning naming of schools, and that staff would follow-up on the matter since current Board rule does not prohibit the sale of naming rights. Draft guidelines have since been developed and are currently under review.

In anticipation of working with the ABC on issues related to underutilized school facilities, the Committee was given an overview of the role of the ABC and its annual process for reviewing possible changes to attendance boundaries. Information regarding targeted schools during the 2009-10 ABC process was also shared with the members. The Committee voted to create a Subcommittee comprised of members of the Committee and the ABC, to develop a protocol to address underutilized schools, and formulate a process to address this issue. Subcommittee meetings were held on November 10, 2009 and December 7, 2009. The Subcommittee established the goal of maintaining the District’s educational mission while maximizing the co-use or re-use of underutilized facilities by either adding programs or bringing community partners into the facilities to sustain a presence in the community.

In order to allow for the development and testing of a model, the Subcommittee selected critical elements for inclusion in a matrix to be used in analyzing underutilized school facilities for possible repurposing. Subcommittee meetings are ongoing, with an expectation of bringing a recommendation to the full Committee and ABC in early 2010.

While the above is not meant to be all-inclusive, it provides a fairly comprehensive snapshot of the Committee’s activities and is a testament to the Committee’s continued relevance in the area of public school facility planning.