

**CITY OF TEMPLE TERRACE, FLORIDA  
SCHOOL SUPPORT COMMITTEE  
REPORT OF MEETING**

**Monday, January 23, 2012  
Conference Room – City Hall  
5:00 p.m.**

The Temple Terrace School Support Committee met on Monday, January 23, 2012, in the Council Conference Room at City Hall.

**PRESENT WERE:** Chairperson Gwen S. Mora and School Support Members Joseph A. Affronti, Jr., Loretta Campo, Marjorie Ferrantegennaro, Cynthia Mohler, Julie Nipp, and Edward Vance.

**ALSO PRESENT WERE:** Council Liaison Alison Fernandez, Deputy City Clerk Jeannie Barlow, George Gaffney, Jack Lamb, Ken Otero, Jennifer Mora Wells, Barbara B. Hancock, Barbara Shortcliff, Pansy Houghton, Frank Chillura, Calvin McElroy, and several other persons.

The meeting was called to order at 5:05p.m. by Chairperson Mora.

**Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

Upon motion of School Support Member Mohler, seconded by School Support Member Affronti and unanimously carried, the **REPORT** of the October 24, 2011, meeting was **APPROVED**.

Chairperson Mora welcomed new School Support Member Julie Nipp. Member Nipp introduced herself.

Chairperson Mora announced the Committee Members' terms will be extended to June so they can complete the school year as liaisons.

Before proceeding with the meeting Chairperson Mora asked the Committee Members and guests in attendance to introduce themselves.

**A. Persons Wishing to be Heard:**

None.

**B. Unfinished Business:**

None.

**C. New Business:**

**1. Enrollment at Temple Terrace Schools.**

Chairperson Mora distributed a list of schools with the number of Temple Terrace students enrolled at each of the schools, a copy of which is a part of the record. The Committee discussed the enrollment numbers for the various schools. Chairperson Mora explained they requested this information because several questions have come up. She said this is something they will further discuss at a later meeting.

**2. Riverhills Elementary School: What type of enhancement programs can be offered to increase Temple Terrace residents' attendance?**

Chairperson Mora expressed concern about Riverhills Elementary School, which is the main reason the Committee is asking for everyone's help. She said Riverhills Elementary School is a beautiful school in a wonderful location, but Temple Terrace residents enrollment has been steadily declining. She continued that unfortunately last year it was graded an "F" school, which may be having an impact on local residents wanting to attend the school.

Chairperson Mora stated the Committee has been discussing and questioning what they can do to promote Riverhills Elementary School; what kinds of programs are available and what their choices are in terms of what they can do to support the school to bring the community students back into the school.

Mr. George Gaffney questioned what the community's preference would be in terms of an attractor program for that school. The Committee responded an IB (International Baccalaureate) program.

Dr. Jack Lamb interjected that implementing an IB program is a long process, as it has to go through a grant process which takes years versus an attractor which is something that can happen rather quickly and be implemented as soon as the next school year.

The Committee discussed the various attractors that Riverhills Elementary School has had in the past, such as science and environmental. They suggested that something related to the arts may have the "wow" factor the school needs.

Mr. Ken Otero stated they have the ability to poll parents from areas in which they want to draw students from in order to find out what it is that parents are wanting.

Council Liaison Fernandez stated there is a decline in growth, they are seeing a lot of charter school activity, and there seems to be a lot of elementary schools within a six square mile radius. She questioned whether the School District could perhaps rent out the Riverhills Elementary School campus to a charter school like TCMS (Terrace Community Middle School), and still make money for the space without having to worry about filling empty seats at this location.

Council Liaison Fernandez said there have been a lot of attractors at Riverhills Elementary School, and not a single one has worked. She added the parents in that neighborhood do not believe the students brought into that school from other areas are academically high enough or that the parents' academic expectations or ability are high enough either; therefore, a simple attractor will not change the opinion of those parents. She said it would take a rigorous academic attractor for parents to put their children at Riverhills Elementary School.

Member Ferrantegennaro added that equal involvement and commitment from all parents, students, and teachers is important to the success of any given program.

Mr. Otero stated that turning Riverhills Elementary School into a charter school is not realistic; he doesn't see that happening as the district has children they have to serve. He added an attractor of some sort or a magnet program would be more realistic.

Member Ferrantegennaro complained about Temple Terrace residents whose children have been assigned to schools outside Temple Terrace. She said it's not fair that Temple Terrace students are being spread out everywhere.

In terms of available Choice programs, Chairperson Mora requested the expert advice of Pansy Houghton, Director of Student Planning & Placement-Choice and Magnet Programs, to find out which of the programs are attracting parent's attention.

Ms. Pansy Houghton explained how the school Open-Choice Program changed everything; most parents' first choice when selecting a school is one that is close to their jobs. She continued the second choice of schools for parents is a school with an IB Program, followed by schools with performing arts programs.

Ms. Houghton stated that parents are also attracted to the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Program, although this is mostly chosen for middle and high school, not elementary school. She added parents also like the Montessori Program, although it is a really expensive program to implement.

Ms. Houghton reported that of the students living in the Riverhills Elementary School attendance area, only 63% of them attend Riverhills Elementary; the remaining 37% of students attend schools outside of their attendance area.

Mr. Otero suggested a language program for Riverhills Elementary School that would feed into Greco Middle School.

Ms. Houghton suggested a combination of an IB and creative science program which would bring in some of the arts and languages. She said it would have to be structured right, including the hard core academics with the international flavor all molded together into something unique. She continued they would then require a lot of community support to "sell" this unique program in order to bring people back to the community.

Member Ferrantegennaro stated that whatever is done to improve Riverhills Elementary School should be done to Greco Middle School as well; both schools need help and should tie-in together.

Council Liaison Fernandez stated they are getting ready to do a City wide marketing campaign to identify the City's main schools and their programs. She questioned whether parents would have the choice to pick from any of the schools in Temple Terrace regardless of where in Temple Terrace they reside. Ms. Houghton responded affirmatively; there is plenty of room in all of the Temple Terrace schools, therefore, parents can "choice-in" any of these schools, dependent on transportation. She added the only school that doesn't have as much capacity is Lewis Elementary School.

Dr. Lamb explained how the class-size amendment affected the schools.

An unidentified person pointed out that the surrounding houses in the Riverhills Elementary School neighborhood are older homes that are not necessarily what people are currently interested in buying. She also suggested the City could help by doing something to beautify this area, which in turn would help the school. She questioned whether Code Enforcement enforces cleanup in that area.

Council Liaison Fernandez responded affirmatively, adding the City's Code Compliance Department is in the process of changing some aspects of Code enforcement and making some violations part of a citation program.

At this point, Chairperson Mora requested a recap of their discussion and asked what would be the action plan for Riverhills Elementary School.

Mr. Gaffney responded the group expressed a desire for an IB Program, which would be down the road. He questioned whether the group agrees that international studies, a STEM program, or something with a high academic focus should be the direction to go, rather than the arts.

Member Vance stated there are four IB high schools, and three IB middle schools. He said he believes there is a need for more IB schools. He feels academics is the most important aspect and hopes these ideas work in the long term.

Mr. Otero reminded the Committee that if the district was to make Riverhills Elementary School a pure IB/Magnet school, selection would be strictly by lottery; therefore, even if you live across the street it does not guarantee a student a seat.

Council Liaison Fernandez stated many parents she has spoken with worry their children are not getting adequately prepared in elementary school for the advanced curriculum that they will be getting in middle school. She recommended the district revise a program that has that rigor in order to better prepare students for middle school.

Chairperson Mora stated she personally likes Ms. Houghton's idea of the three academies. She stated the City is in total support of the schools, and she asked how the District would proceed. Ms. Houghton said they would work on a plan to present to the Committee at the February 27<sup>th</sup> meeting. She added anything they plan would be implemented in the 2012-2013 school year.

Chairperson Mora summarized that Ms. Houghton's department is going to work on a plan to present to the School Support Committee on Monday, February 27<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. She thanked everyone for attending this meeting.

### **3. Refining the Grant Process.**

Chairperson Mora stated they would continue this agenda item to a future meeting due to the lateness of the hour and many other things left to discuss.

### **D. Reports:**

Chairperson Mora reported there is a special tutoring program commencing at two of their schools the week after spring break. She explained the Methodist Church of Temple Terrace initiated this program and is working with Riverhills and Temple Terrace Elementary Schools tutoring students living in the apartment complex directly surrounding the church. She said the pastor wanted to do something for these students to have a place to go and get extra help. She said the program is starting with 24 students, 12 from each school, and will meet Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. She explained the program in detail.

Member Campo reported Woodmont Charter School is looking for an assistant principal.

Chairperson Mora reported that King High School is busy working on their inner courtyard area. She explained they were able to get a commitment of a financial donation from the Temple Terrace Garden Club, and she and Cheri Donohue will be reviewing the plan to see how they can get other partners involved.

Chairperson Mora stated sometime in the future the schools will need to be updated because they are starting to show their age.

The Committee discussed some problem areas at Greco Middle School and agreed they need to further address the situation during their March meeting.

**E. Announcements:**

Chairperson Mora announced their next meeting date is Monday, February 27, 2012, at 5:00 p.m.

**F. Adjournment:**

There being no further business to consider, the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Submitted by,

Sobeida LeBlanc  
Legislative Secretary