

**TOWN OF DAVIE
WORKSHOP MEETING
SEPTEMBER 28, 1998**

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. Present were Mayor Venis, Vice-Mayor Cox and Councilmembers Bush, Paul and Weiner. Also present were Interim Town Administrator Rawls, Town Attorney Webber, and Town Clerk Reinfeld recording the meeting.

1. Charter Schools

Mayor Venis turned the floor over to Octavio Visiedo, from the Haskell Company, who introduced Mayor Fekete from the City of Pembroke Pines. Mayor Fekete gave an outline of the issue of Charter Schools, indicating that Pembroke Pines had done a lot of research and study on the subject. After discussing the choice of development company, Mayor Fekete stated that Pembroke Pines was able to build the school, consisting of kindergarten through grade five, at a cost of \$8,600 per student station, whereas, Broward County was currently spending \$13,000 to \$14,000 per student station. He stated that the City had made a commitment that the School would be a neighborhood school and there would be 500 students with no more than 25 students to a classroom, further noting that current studies were suggesting that 18 to 20 students per classroom was the optimal number. The School would have State certified teachers, a teacher's aide for each classroom, and back to the basic's of good core education with character development as well as future technology. It was explained the cafeteria/warming kitchen versus a full service cafeteria and the choice of having a media center with additional computers between every two classrooms rather than having one large media center made for a more efficient building on a compact piece of property. Mayor Fekete indicated that privatizing services such as transportation and food service also helped to keep the costs down.

Mr. Visiedo gave an overview of the passing of legislation authorizing Charter Schools mentioning the idea that Charter Schools were an extension of the public school system and one solution to some of the problems within the public school system. He explained that Pembroke Pines had financed the entire Charter School through money made available through the Charter School Legislation along with borrowing from bond issues, and that the City itself had not utilized any additional funds from its coffers. They did, however, have a fee supported prekindergarten component which was operated by the City of Pembroke Pines which was next to the Charter School which helped to support the school. Adding programs such as before school programs and after school programs would also add to the financial support of the School.

A tour of the School was taken at 6:45 p.m., during which the physical aspects of the School were discussed in terms of how efficient and well built it was with the focus being on education. Accommodations for the handicapped had been incorporated into the School. There was also discussion surrounding the fact that it was open enrollment, open to anyone from anywhere which was done by a lottery system. Mayor Fekete explained that Pembroke Pines had lent itself the funds for the School which would be paid back through utility revenues. Accreditation was discussed in terms of having no library and it was explained that accreditation at the elementary school and middle school levels was not that important. At the high school level, accreditation was critical and a library would be planned into the charter high school.

It was pointed out that the teachers at the School were not public employees, they were not part of the Florida Retirement System; however, they did have a 401K pension plan. The teachers were hired by the Professional Employee Organization that also provided background checks and assumed full responsibility for all other matters such as insurance. Teachers at the School were hired at the same starting salary as the County and the Broward County Teachers Union was brought in as a partner to oversee the set up for the teachers.

During the discussion, it was related that the principal of the school worked for the City of Pembroke Pines and was considered a department director as the principal reported directly to the City Manager. It was also indicated that the City Commission appointed a advisory committee to deal with the issues of the school.

At 7:25 p.m. the tour was completed and the meeting resumed.

Mr. Visiedo gave a brief outline of how the finances of the School worked with regard to money per student and how various factors were added to the base amount due to individual programs that each student may be involved in. A school lunch program, ESOL, and other special needs were factored into the amount allocated for each student. Funding of transportation, determining eligibility of students and the radius of the transportation routes were also discussed.

Mr. Visiedo expressed his opinions on whether elementary, middle, or high schools could stand alone, stating that middle schools did not get the financial factors that the elementary and high schools did so they need to be looked at a more closely in terms of stand alone and being self-sustaining. He also indicated that an elementary school would need a critical mass of 400 to 500 students in order to be self-sustaining and a middle school should not be any larger than 600 students with a high school of 1,200 students. The acreage needed for the individual schools was also discussed.

Mr. Visiedo explained that parents were required to volunteer a specific number of ours per year.

Mayor Fekete suggested that if the Town wanted to get involved in a Charter School, it needed to involve the Broward County School Board and unanimous support from Council's constituents was needed. He indicated that in Pembroke Pines, there would be a PTA at some point and right now, an advisory committee was handling complaints. Mayor Fekete indicated that these were situations the Town would need to consider. He stated that \$625,000 was provided to the City by developers which helped offset the cost of the Charter School.

Mayor Venis thanked all the participants from Pembroke Pines who gave their time and input into the workshop in order to enlighten the Town.

There being no objections or further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.