Rally highlighted by calls for metal detectors in schools

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RIVIERA BEACH – In South Florida, one response to the spate of gun violence that has roiled the nation is a proposal to have metal detectors and guards installed at all Palm Beach County School District schools.

The proposal by area mayors and other officials was brought forth as part of a Jan. 8 community peace march and rally at the Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Riviera Beach.

Speakers called attention not only to the national problem, illustrated in the Dec. 14 shooting massacre at a Connecticut elementary school, but also the shooting deaths of Antonio Hinds, 17, of Riviera Beach, and Andy Joseph, 16, a Palm Beach Gardens High School sophomore, during a September “Sweet 16” party altercation in Riviera, and before that the murders of two sisters, Daphne Clemons, 41, and Janice Rahming, 54, in their home in Boynton Beach.

“The level of violence is off the chain,” one participant commented. Leading the march were Mayors Woodrow Hay of Boynton Beach, James DuBois of Lake Park, William Albury of Mangonia Park and Thomas Masters of Rivera Beach. “We must create an atmosphere of safety and security for our children,” said Masters.

The community leaders, residents and other participants included newly elected state Rep. Bobby Powell (D-Riviera Beach), and Dan Liftman, a legislative aide to U.S Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-Miramar).

The petition that they and others plan to take to the school board’s Jan. 16 meeting reflects the positions of their Mayors Against Illegal Guns group, and also echoes similar proposals issuing forth around the nation.

The idea – which gained traction last month when National Rifle Association Chief Wayne LaPierre, in response to the Newtown massacre, proposed training and placing armed guards in every school in the nation – has been criticized by some educators and law enforcement as unrealistic, unwise and unaffordable.

The local petitioners plan to call on the business community's financial support if the school district balks as expected, citing the expense. A distinction from the NRA's is their proposed ban on assault rifles and high-capacity

ammunition magazines, which President Barack Obama supports.