

# City of Coral Gables

405 Biltmore Way  
Coral Gables, FL 33134  
[www.coralgables.com](http://www.coralgables.com)



## Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

6:00 PM

<https://coralgables.zoom.us/j/88544224443>

Youth Center, Conference Room

**Parks and Recreation Youth Advisory Board**

## **CALL TO ORDER**

This meeting was called to order at 6:11 p.m.

## **ROLL CALL**

### **Present:**

Cecilia Slesnick  
Lucy Hansen  
Emma Joseph

### **Absent:**

Lucas Miro  
Leyla Alfonso

## **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

This meeting did not meet quorum. Approval of the November, December, January and March Parks Youth Advisory Board meeting minutes will be deferred to the next meeting.

## **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**a. General Updates.**

Assistant Director Pichardo provided several updates regarding upcoming programs, events, and operational activities. Staff announced a series of upcoming community events, including Carnival on the Mile scheduled for early March, as well as the Summer Camp Open House taking place on March 15. The Open House will include participation from multiple facilities, including the Venetian Pool, War Memorial Youth Center, and additional program areas, where families will be able to obtain information, review program schedules, and engage directly with staff.

Additional programming updates included the continuation of Movies Under the Moonlight, with a showing of Spider-Man: No Way Home scheduled for March 20, as well as the Bike and Barbecue event taking place at the end of the month. Staff noted that these events continue to serve as important opportunities for community engagement and resident participation.

Assistant Director Pichardo also provided an update on programming contracts at the Youth Center, noting that several contracts are nearing completion. New programming vendors will provide specialized services that are not currently offered in-house, including STEM-based programming, theater, dance, and soccer. Staff highlighted that the STEM program is expected to serve a wide age range, currently exploring offerings from kindergarten through high school, and will include hands-on learning experiences such as building drones and robotics projects. These programs are designed to enhance educational opportunities and provide engaging, skill-based activities for participants.

Assistant Director Pichardo further noted that preparations are underway for summer camp programming. Recruitment efforts have begun for both seasonal staff and volunteers, including opportunities for high school students to obtain community service hours or participate in the Counselor-in-Training program. This program provides participants with hands-on experience, including training in program operations, supervision, reporting procedures, and leadership development. He concluded his report by encouraging the board members to apply for the CIT positions or counselor positions available for the Summer season.

**b. Special Events**

Farmers Market ongoing through March 28th

Carnaval on the Mile – March 7th – 8th

Summer Camp Open House – March 15th

Bike and BBQ – March 15th

Movies Under the Gables Moonlight, Spiderman No Way Home – March 20th at the Youth Center

**c. Administrative Updates**

Assistant Director Pichardo provided an update on a recently completed park project

located on Blue Road, identified as the David T. Kennedy Family Park. A ribbon cutting ceremony is scheduled for Saturday, March 14. Due to the neighborhood setting and limited on-site parking, staff will provide trolley service from designated parking locations, including Lots 12 and 16, to accommodate attendees.

Assistant Director Pichardo described the park as a unique space featuring modern amenities and design elements, including enhanced lighting features and upgraded recreational components. The project reflects the City's continued investment in neighborhood parks and efforts to enhance recreational opportunities within smaller community spaces.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Civics Education Initiative presentation**

Citizen Samuel Joseph brought fourth a presentation for a city wide civics initiative aimed at increasing civic engagement among residents, with a particular emphasis on youth participation. He explained that although the City of Coral Gables is often viewed as civically engaged, voter turnout data suggests otherwise, noting that some elected officials are voted into office with participation rates as low as approximately 29 percent. He emphasized that this trend reflects a broader lack of civic participation rather than issues related to election timing.

Mr. Joseph discussed the importance of introducing civic education at an early age and strengthening curriculum efforts beyond memorization of historical facts. He outlined a vision that includes collaboration with Miami-Dade County Public Schools to enhance civics and social studies instruction across all grade levels, with the potential to pilot the program in select schools before expanding it citywide, including private and charter institutions. He further noted that youth play a critical role in influencing civic behavior within their households and communities, sharing examples of how younger generations can encourage greater participation among adults.

The presentation also included a proposed “Kids Voting” program that would allow youth to participate in a simulated voting process. This would provide hands-on experience with voter registration, ballot distribution, vote tabulation, and certification, with the intent to pilot the program during an upcoming November election. Mr. Joseph also highlighted the need to address the aging population of poll workers by introducing opportunities for youth, beginning as early as age 16, to become involved in election operations and civic service.

In addition, Board Member Emma Joseph introduced a youth-led voter pre-registration initiative, spearheaded by a Girl Scout project. The initiative focuses on increasing awareness among individuals under the age of 18 about pre-registration opportunities and encourages outreach through digital platforms and community engagement.

Mr. Joseph also referenced national trends indicating declining reading and social studies scores, reinforcing the importance of strengthening civic education to support informed and engaged communities.

Mr. Joseph encouraged Board members to begin developing ideas on how to increase civic engagement among youth and to consider ways the Board can actively support and participate in the initiative. He noted that he will return at a future meeting to review feedback and provide updates on the program’s progress.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY**

Next meeting is Wednesday, April 1, 2026 at 6 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**NOTE**