

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-4
August 27, 2024
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Arts and Cultural Affairs Specialist, Catherine Cathers

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz
Jackson Rip Holmes

Agenda Item G-4 [12:02 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission honoring artist Janine Antoni and approving an application to Art Basel for an official event, further approving funding up to \$ 20,000 from the Art Fund toward program and marketing materials (unanimously recommended by the Cultural Development Board approval/denial vote: 5 to 0); and authorizing an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Operating Budget to recognize the transfer of funds from the Art in Public Places Reserve and to appropriate such funds to put towards the cost of the project.

Mayor Lago: So, moving onto item G-4, which is time certain for 12 o'clock.

City Attorney Suarez: G-4 is a Resolution of the City Commission honoring artist Janine Antoni and approving an application to Art Basel for an official event, further approving funding up to \$ 20,000 from the Art Fund toward program and marketing materials (unanimously recommended

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by the Cultural Development Board approval/denial vote: 5 to 0); and authorizing an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Operating Budget to recognize the transfer of funds from the Art in Public Places Reserve and to appropriate such funds to put towards the cost of the project.

Mayor Lago: How are you. Good to see you.

Cultural Arts Specialist Cathers: Good afternoon. Catherine Cathers, Arts and Cultural Specialist. The Cultural Development Board is making a recommendation to the City Commission to honor Janine Antoni for the city's annual application to Art Basel through an official event. On January 24, 2023, the City Commission approved the commission and installation of the sculpture, "Whispering Through a Stone" by Janine Antoni, who is a celebrated artist, world-renowned and meets the qualifications for recognition, consideration by Art Basel. The installation site is currently being prepared for this sculpture which is expected to be completed in time for Miami Art Week and Art Basel Miami Beach. On August 20, 2024, the Cultural Development Board discussed options for the city's annual Art Basel 2024 event application and made a motion unanimously recommending recognition of Janine Antoni through her appearance at a debut presentation of a documentary featuring work related to the city's new sculptural acquisition. The Coral Gables Art Cinema has been approached as a host site and will work with us on presenting this event at a future event with the artist. Building on the established relationship with Art Basel, the city proposes to submit an Art Basel VIP event application to celebrate her and her work. Funding of \$20,000 for this recommendation, related expenses, and marketing is proposed through the art fund, which is of course funded through private development projects. I just want to add that the city, just a little historical context here. The city reached out to Art Basel Miami Beach many, many, many, many years and times and was not afforded the recognition to do an event here in the city until 2016, and that was the first year. So, we've been doing, it's an application process to do this, and we do get to say that it is an official Art Basel recognized event. We do need to do it outside of Art Basel hours, so we have the time of 8:30 a.m. on a Sunday morning at the end of Art Basel as people are making their way out of the city. It tends to draw people from around the world and from prominent galleries and collectors who may otherwise not be here in Coral Gables. So, it's been a really wonderful event for us to promote the city in a different way and to a different audience, and we are hoping to continue that relationship with Art Basel in the city.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. I'll entertain a motion or any further comment, if we have any.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I think it's a wonderful opportunity. I'll move it.

Commissioner Menendez: Second.

Commissioner Fernandez: How many people came out to the event last year or this year, I guess.

Cultural Arts Specialist Cathers: It depends. His range is anywhere from about 30 to 70, I would say and it also, this is the time of year that part of this funding is used, actually a majority of the funding is used for annual promotion of the city through our public art program in publications, so

that includes ads in art newspaper, which is a publication as distributed at Art Basel Miami Beach every day of the event. So again, its really reaching out to a different audience.

Commissioner Fernandez: And how would we go about trying to request a different time slot?

Cultural Arts Specialist Cathers: We have spoken with them numerous times about that and I'm sure the Mayor could probably speak to this as well. There are very few, there's a lot of competition of course, with other times and once people are on Miami Beach its very difficult to get them off. So, we have found that we've kind of embraced the time and now we have regulars that are regulars to Miami and Art Basel that they know that we do this event on Sunday morning, and they participate, and it also aligns with the other Art Basel events that are happening outside of Miami Beach and in this area, kind of west, southwest of the Beach. So, it's the same, its right before FIU does their annual brunch, the Coral Gables Museum, and the Lowe Art Museum. So, one of the things that we offer is trolley service between our event and UM's, the Lowe Art Museum.

Mayor Lago: Anything else. I'll entertain a motion.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Its done.

City Clerk Urquia: We have a motion Mr. Mayor. I do also have a member of the public requesting to speak on the item.

Mayor Lago: Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. When I read this, it brought bad memories because we didn't get, we did get involved with Art Basel before and we're still paying for that involvement, because we still have the beautiful sidewalk that's very close to this building that we have to pay the artist to repaint it. Sometimes I go, I suggested one of my granddaughters could come with chalk and whatever and do it again, but we cannot do that. I'm having trouble, I don't even know the artist. I have nothing against the artist, nothing about, except that \$20,000 to have 30 to 70 people coming, that says that in this city with all the art pieces that we have, we cannot put some kind of a catalogue or something to invite people to come see the wonderful things that we have in this city, have to pay \$20,000 for one event for a short time, at an inconvenient time just to, you know. We have things that we can showcase and for \$20,000 we could have something to give everybody that goes to Art Basel a sample of how this city honors art. I think this is a waste of money.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Fernandez: A follow up question Catherine. I participated in an event that was held by a non-profit this year prior to Art Basel, it wasn't an official event. They had over 200-250 people there at the event. Does making it an official Art Basel event make it more successful if

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we're saying 35 to 70 people are coming versus doing it during Art Basel and if people are staying at the Biltmore for Art Basel or at the Lowes for Art Basel, they have a place to go here in the city.

Cultural Arts Specialist Cathers: For this particular event, we are the artist, and we agree are going to replicate it as well for something that is more open beyond the Art Basel time period. It really is – we would not get the recognition of Art Basel. Its that simple. We wouldn't have it.

Commissioner Fernandez: Right. But I guess going back to the question, you know, we are spending \$20,000 on this event for 35 to 70 people to show up. I understand. We're trying to attract the Art Basel crowd. The question is, can we use that money to attract the Art Basel crowd even if we're not listed as one of the official events of Art Basel.

Cultural Arts Specialist Cathers: It would not be listed in Art Basel.

Commissioner Fernandez: I agree. It will not, but we can still have our own art event.

Cultural Arts Specialist Cathers: Its my opinion that we would not be attracting the same people and part of the, as staff, its my opinion, and it has been the initiative of this Commission through years to make sure that we are building a reputable public art collection. It's a very diverse collection and it has a lot of access to a lot of people who have different tastes in different types of art, as you've seen today. I think that's a strength of the program and part of that trying to reach that height of, in some ways we sort of treat the city as a sculpture of art in some ways. We have been dedicated to having artwork that meets a certain level of quality and access and I think along with that, having that recognition of Art Basel says so much for our community and Coral Gables it takes, you know we are taken more seriously in the art world and with different artists and the ability to access them, than we would otherwise, and people want to do things here as well. So, I think its definitely worth it and as I said and this is actually about \$15,000 less than we usually ask for, and in the past, we've also gotten grant funding from the state, which of course is nonexistent this year, to help support this project as well, and the majority of that funding is going for the marketing and advertisement. So, it's one time a year.

Commissioner Fernandez: So that's what I'm saying. So, you know, realistically we could end up just doing a trolley tour of all of our art pieces in the City of Coral Gables and showcase all of the art that we have in the city for probably a lot less.

Cultural Arts Specialist Cathers: I think we can do both.

Commissioner Fernandez: If you think we can do both, let's sit down and talk and let's figure out a way to do it, because I think, you know, prior Commissions have invested a lot of money on ensuring that we have high-level art in our city. A lot of people don't get to see it. If we can do an event where residents can come out and go and see the different art pieces throughout the city, I think that would be a win for us. It also showcases all of the art that we have in the City of Coral Gables, and we can probably try to get some media attention to that as well.

Cultural Arts Specialist Cathers: We've done a couple of things. I, of course, have led a couple of bike tours of the public art collection, we've done some walking and trolley tours. We did a couple trolley tours in the past year for the public art collection. So, I think we can do it all and we're fortunate enough to have the resources to access to do it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, Mayor, I'll just make a brief comment. I think this is one of the many pieces that we need to work on with our business community in order to promote the cultural arts, all arts, the physical arts, performance arts. We have a lot in this city to showcase and it will dovetail in with our Strategic Plan, to be able to say, come to Coral Gables, you can come and enjoy it all here. You have the physical art pieces; you have the performing art pieces. This can go up in the airport in conjunction with the airlines. They don't need to go to New York and freeze in New York during the winter. You can come down here and enjoy Coral Gables and showcase everything that we have to offer. Yes, we do have the bike tours for those who like to get out and move their blood and those who prefer the air conditioning in the trolley, we can do the trolley tour as well. So, I think this is one very important piece that can work together cohesively with everything else that we're trying to do for the city's Strategic Plan.

Mayor Lago: Any further comment from the Commission.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, we have additional comments from a member of the public.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Jackson Holmes.

Mr. Holmes: I apologize for taking up your time. I know that in the past I have been against spending for art and yet here I am about to plug this particular item. As you may know, I used to live in Switzerland, so I knew Basel from when I was 15 years old or something, and I lived on Miami Beach. I think it can be said that the transformation of Wynwood is really due to Art Basel, which is a heck of a transformation, right. So, I recommend that we spend the money because the claim to fame in the art world for \$20,000, I think its going to pay dividends. Thanks.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, sir.

Mayor Lago: What is the will of the Commission?

Vice Mayor Anderson: We have a motion, we have a second, we're ready to vote.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

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Mayor Lago: Yes
(Vote: 5-0)