

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D-3
October 14, 2008
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Donald D. Slesnick, II
Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Commissioner Maria Anderson
Commissioner Rafael “Ralph” Cabrera, Jr.
Commissioner Wayne “Chip” Withers

City Staff

City Manager, David Brown
City Attorney, Elizabeth Hernandez
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
City Clerk Staff, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Mark Trowbridge, President, Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce
Sarah Artecona, Chair-Elect, Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce

D-3 [Start: 9:52:22 a.m.]

Mark A. Trowbridge, President, CEO, Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce, to
present Quarterly Report.

Mayor Slesnick: I do have a report to follow up the B.I.D. report from the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce. Its there regular quarterly update, and I see that the President, Mark Trowbridge is here, also Carol Ellis-Cutler our Government Relations or Outreach person, and Sarah Artecona, the Chair Elect is here with Mark, is that the whole team?- did I miss somebody?

Mr. Trowbridge: Mr. Jim McCoy, Jim will join us as well, he chairs our Business and Government Affairs Committee.

Mayor Slesnick: Welcome.

Mr. Trowbridge: He was the former Mayor of Miami Shores. Well thank you all for inviting us. I'm going to turn it right over to our Chair-Elect, Sarah Artecona, she is pinch-hitting, our Chairman had some car trouble this morning, he may join us probably in a few minutes, he just called to let me know.

Ms. Artecona: Good morning everybody, good to see you on Chamber business, not University. I'd like to thank you all and obviously for this invitation to come here in front of you to do a brief update. Our team's been introduced and we'd like to thank you all for your help and participation over the last year with our efforts with the Chamber, and obviously David, Liz,

Walter, are terrific partners with us as well. We'd like to thank you for the financial and diplomatic support for the Diamond Awards, the City Beautiful Awards, the flags on Ponce and our mission to Italy, which is upwards of twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) of cash and in-kind services. But it's always great to thank you all, and always to thank the top leadership, but we are here today to thank your staff leadership as well, because they are our tremendous day-to-day partners with the Chamber. For our City Beautiful Magazine the coverage of our summer school, the Board installation, an update on our 20/30 group, and our Go Green Task Force on Channel 77, Maria Rosa Higgins Fallon; we'd like to thank Cathy Swanson for her program support, including the Fairway Gourmet, Travel and Tourism activities and our Diamond Awards. We'd like to thank Fred Couceyro, am I pronouncing that correctly?- for his in-kind support and leadership with our annual Baptist Health 5K Run; and of course the attendance and support of our restaurant committee, which you just heard a little bit about from Mari, that would be Kevin Kinney and Jessica Wotherspoon. Of course our signature program, which may be one of our most visible are the flags on Ponce, we'd like to thank Dave very much for his help and support of that. I'd like to turn it over to Mark just for a moment for a brief PowerPoint presentation, if I may. Thank you.

Mr. Trowbridge: First of all, I want to echo Sarah's comments and just say thank you to each and every one of you for your support, and always being willing to meet with us, take a phone call, talk about issues that obviously are affecting our businesses here in the community, and especially to our Manager who has been a real stalwart supporter since I came to the Chamber. Just some accomplishments that I want to mention that we have been very proud of over the last year or so; and I just want to give a special thank you to Carolina Rendero. Carolina is actually travelling with the Beacon Council right now on a follow up tour on a mission to Italy we did in May to bring a major event here to Coral Gables and South Florida; but much of this was obviously accomplished during her tenure as Chair, so I certainly would want to thank her. Over the last year, we have grown our Chamber by over 200 members that includes 38 new Trustees courtesy of a membership drive. We have sponsorship dollars of over two hundred thousand dollars, which was very positive given the state of our economy. Some of that included some new events that we brought to the table, including a Commercial Real Estate Forum, an International Business Forum, that focused on Columbia. We did a little travelling in April; a March Madness Membership Invitational, which is an annual event, and a culinary event that we did in conjunction with the Miami Beach Chamber to really kind of kick off the summer months for our restaurants that need a lot of attention during that time. We did a complete re-write of our Chambers By-laws, something we have not done in over ten years; created a new membership category for restaurants that has added fourteen new restaurants to our Chamber family; and increased the portfolio of membership activities by re-instituting the some Member2Member programs, and other activities. Other accomplishments were our new City Beautiful Magazine, which you all have been a major proponent of and supporter of, which had a seventeen page visitor section that is now in all of our hotel properties. As mentioned before by Sarah, we had our outbound mission to Italy that we did in conjunction with the Beacon Council regarding a new fashion and lifestyle initiative that we are partners on, but we also received delegations from Barranquilla, Colombia, Pamplona, Spain and the European Union. In conjunction with the City, we reclaimed the Flags on Ponce Program that the Chamber helped begin in 1993; and we are now tapping into corporate and residential sponsors to sustain that. We re-started the Independent Business Committee which was previously known as the Small Business

Committee, a facet of our VISION Coral Gables Program, growing our Travel and Tourism Committee with more involvement and more visible activities including producing an episode of the Fairway Gourmet with the Biltmore Hotel and other community partners. A little snap shot about our membership. In the past year I mentioned that our membership had grown by about 200 new members, including 38 new Trustees that bring us to about 800 total companies that are members of the Chamber and about 1600 representatives. As I mentioned, we did manage the Chamber-wide membership campaign and brought in forty-five (45) new members during the spring months. The pilot program for our restaurants is based on a cash and trade component and our goal was to increase our market share from twenty-eight (28) restaurants. Before we began the program, we added fourteen (14). We repositioned two awards this year. Our Diamond Awards and Business Women of the Year Awards to be luncheons; both increase revenue, expand sponsorship and to raise their profile; and both events were sell-outs with over two hundred (200) in attendance. And our retention number remains strong at about eighty-two percent (82%) for our Trustees and about seventy-two percent (72%) for members overall, even in this challenging economy. I'll talk a little bit about our value proposition for membership benefits; talk a little bit about our City Beautiful Magazine and how that's now available in our hotel properties. We also mail it to every resident in Coral Gables, as well as use it in our relocation materials. Working to increase obviously the return on investment for membership is becoming increasingly important that Member2Member networking, and discounts. We've added some new workshops for our smaller businesses; we've done partnership with Dale Carnegie; and have worked to use the Chamber Grand to instill confidence in our members and the consumers as well. We are focused each day to bringing value, obviously in terms of the Chamber having value to our members, but also to the community at large. Membership is involved and energized and you can see that by our advance, we are doing over a hundred events; we've obviously worked to strengthen our alliances with our various stakeholders, including the Beacon Council, the B.I.D., the GMCVB, the City which has been a stalwart supporter for many, many years; and a re-energized coalition of Chambers. New partnership with Books and Books; we are doing several events a year; I mentioned Dale Carnegie, and the way we communicate with our various constituencies. Partnership is very important for serving as a resource, both for each and every one of you in term of our briefings with you and being that voice for businesses; an advocate for our businesses. We did trips this year to Tallahassee where we were joined and pleased to be joined by the Mayor and the City Manager, and to Washington D.C. as well. I mentioned a little about our work with the B.I.D., Mari did her report, for the first time both of our Boards have approved joint membership that will be focused around our restaurants and see how that works to give as much added value as we can to those organizations. We now have a monthly column in the Coral Gables News Tribune and utilizing other community organizations and partnerships to expand our programming and our profile in the community and you see those listed there. Some of the challenges that we are obviously facing as an organization are the sluggish economy, its leading to the closure of some of our businesses, cut-backs of some sponsorship dollars and slower payment of investment dues. Obviously, we deal with competition both from other Chamber-like organizations, and other business networking organizations. One of our challenges is always to keep our members energized and engaged, and we want to increase their participation and raise their level of enthusiasm. Obviously we are competing for a lot of the same resources in terms of sponsorships, and events, and activities, so that's a challenge, and some of the statewide economic woes that have hurt some of our largest employers have lead to reduction of some of those resources. We have, in

terms of our committees-at-work, we have over a hundred and fifty (150) community meetings per year. We added some new committees this year, putting our Go Green Task Force, which is focused on sustainability, the best green practices in our business community; expanded the programs of our Trustee Council which represents over one hundred and seventy-five companies. Our annual Holiday Party, which you all are a major part of draws over four hundred guests and supports a variety of charities, including ones for children and seniors. I mentioned some of the things we are already doing with Travel and Tourism. In terms of our 5K Tour, its really becoming a community-wide event. It draws over seven hundred (700) runners to the City Beautiful each May; and again with our awards programs, we do five now, including one for outstanding young leaders, outstanding business women, the best companies in business, and our Diamond Awards, young professionals, and our newest one related to community leadership, the George Merrick Award; and again, I'll remind you that the City is incredibly important in our City Beautiful Architectural Awards each year from having support from the judging standpoint, down to sponsorship dollars, and that's really great as well. Just some collaborative issues that we do, this is information that we send to our members. This gives you an idea of some of the things that we are up to and how we communicate with the members, in some cases on a daily basis. And last but not least, some of the things that we see as opportunities; talk about the challenges, talk about the opportunities. Obviously, a full implementation of our VISION Program focused on travel and tourism, independent business and economic development, those are moving along well in our second year of that. We are engaged in an entrepreneurship program with the University of Miami, with their new program called the "Launch Pad" that we are assisting with, with mentors and other things. You met Carol and Jim before at the beginning of the presentation who are leaving our division for Government and Legislative Affairs. Carol is the Vice Chair, sits on our Executive Committee and our Board of Directors; Jim chairs the Working Committee. We are working with the City on Business and Arts Showcase in Fall 2009. Some of you may remember this event that we held many years ago out on Miami Beach, it really kicked off the cultural season when the Jackie Gleason was privatized, that venue was no longer available. So we've taken that opportunity over and working with the University of Miami to produce that. We obviously see Coral Gables positioned as a cultural epi-center for the community and it should be held here annually. I mentioned the fashion and lifestyle initiative already with the Beacon Council. Another program we are beginning to work on that we are going to roll out is called the Red Carpet Welcome Program, is where our members provide discounts and incentives to their companies and employees to relocate here as a way to introduce them and welcome them to Coral Gables. Some of you may remember Welcome Wagon when you were growing up. This is our version of the Welcome Wagon geared toward businesses. Obviously we are still meeting with our quarterly Town Hall meetings with our restaurants. We get great support from the City on; and some big events that are coming to our community that Coral Gables can play a part in, include Pow Wow 2009, its is May of '09; Super Bowl 2010 in February '10, and other familiarization tours. So that is our quarterly report. I'm going to also echo Sarah's comments and thank each of you for your wonderful support of the Chamber and availability; and then we'll certainly take any questions and invite my colleagues to come back up and join me now that you've heard me carry on for the last ten minutes. Thank you.

Mayor Slesnick: Well, thank you all very much for our business community and the work that you are doing to keep the image of Coral Gables before the greater public out there, and between

you and the B.I.D., we have a vibrant wonderful business community; and I know it been that in part because of your work, we thank you. Any questions? Thank you all.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you very much.

Mayor Slesnick: Great presentation, you covered it all.

Mr. Trowbridge: Thank you all very much.

[End: 10:05:55 a.m.]