

CITY OF CORAL GABLES ADVISORY BOARD ON DISABILITY AFFAIRS  
 CORAL GABLES HUMAN RESOURCES & RISK MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT  
 254 Minorca Avenue, Suite 214  
 Coral Gables, FL 33134  
 WEDNESDAY, June 3, 2026

- MEETING MINUTES -

<b>MEMBERS</b>	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	<b>APPOINTED BY:</b>
	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	
Jennifer Ward Sando	P	P	P	*	P	P							Mayor Vince Lago
Justine Chichester	P	P	P	*	P	P							Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Wilfredo Jauregui	Z	Z	P	*	P	Z							Commissioner Richard Lara
Bonnie Blaire	P	P	P	*	P	P							Commissioner Melissa Castro
Vanessa Bedoya	P	P	P	*	P	P							Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Eddy Martinez	P	P	P	*	P	P							Ex-Officio Member Chamber of Commerce

Z – Zoom

\*Quorum was reached

P – Present  
 E – Excused Absence  
 A – Absent  
 (-) – No Appointment  
 (\*) – No Meeting

**STAFF:**

Jose Rodriguez – Human Resources & Risk Management – Assistant Director  
 Norman Clark – Recruitment Coordinator for Publix Safety  
 Yanessa Rodriguez – Community Recreation – Administrative Operations Manager  
 Catie Hastings – Community Recreation – D.E.I. Coordinator

**CITIZEN ADVISORS:**

Debbie Dietz, Citizen Advisor (Via Zoom)  
 Dr. Jennifer Durocher, University of Miami (Absent)

**PUBLIC GUEST:**

Mr. Nick Chang – Miami-Dade County Public School Project Victory Program  
 Ms. Raydeln Munoz – Miami-Dade County Public School Project Victory Program  
 Ms. Pamela Perez-Melms – Cultivate Behavioral Health & Education

**CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting was called to order at 10:02am

**MEETING ABSENCE:** Mary Palacio-Pike (SCRC)

**MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL:**

May 6, 2026  
 Motion by: Bonnie Blaire / 2<sup>nd</sup> Vanessa Bedoya / Approved unanimously

**SECRETARY’S REPORT:** None

**BOARD MEMBERS’ REPORTS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Miami-Dade County Public School Project Victory Program -Mr. Nick Chang / Ms. Munoz**

Mr. Chang introduced himself and provided information regarding what Project Victory is all about.

Ms. Ward Sando asked if there is any type of job training or career training for those participants whose cognitive limitations are considered more than moderate. Ms. Munoz advised there are school-based enterprise programs as well as step programs with their students. Ms. Munoz provided several examples at different locations.

Mr. Rodriguez asked Mr. Chang to provide further information regarding when students qualify for the program and when they age out of the program. Mr. Chang advised students commence in the program Project Victory when they are juniors to ensure they will be able to meet the necessary requirements to graduate and can remain as a participant till they are twenty-two. Mr. Chang provided additional information such as number of participants and ages. Mr. Chang stated program set up is in collaboration with the actual contract in place with the entity and provided additional information regarding support available to participants once ready to commence seeking employment.

Ms. Blaire asked Mr. Chang advised number of young adults who have gone through this program. Mr. Chang advised Project Victory has been in place for forty years, with close to about 250-350 students per year. Ms. Munoz stated program is established in other entities throughout the county, both public and private sector. Ms. Munoz stated one of the biggest hurdles, is trying to find employment for these participants to get hired and then continue to maintain these jobs.

Mr. Martinez expressed this was a lot and amazing information which he can share with the Chamber.

Ms. Hastings shared with the board information regarding adaptive CITs between the ages 16-25 with intellectual disabilities will be providing support to campers in the city's summer programs.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Sitting Pretty Presentation – Ms. Justine Chichester**

Ms. Chichester spoke regarding “Sitting Pretty Show” and stated she believes this would be a wonderful, creative and innovative way to bring this discussion of disabilities to the City of Coral Gables, directors, residents, and others as well. Ms. Chichester provided additional information regarding the presentation and how it had been reduced to a forty-five-minute presentation.

Mr. Rodriguez asked who the target of the presentation would be and if the previous venue, Adult Center, utilized for director's training would be a good location to have this presentation. Ms. Chichester stated she believes so and would ask for the production representative to perhaps join the upcoming board meeting to further discuss. Mr. Martinez stated one option could be to contact the Actors' Playhouse at the Miracle Theatre facilitating access to many more people. Ms. Chichester stated it would be great to do both, director's training and reach more of the community. Mr. Rodriguez stated as for the director's training, it would be best if the production representative could communicate with Ms. Yanessa Rodriguez, Community Recreations to identify best venue to be utilized.

Ms. Blaire stated this is a wonderful topic and something the board should run with, however, having said that there are two dimensions to it. Ms. Blaire stated one is city personnel training is a very targeted audience and perhaps some community leaders, including Chamber, Rotary Club, etc. can be included. Ms. Blaire expressed the importance of providing this type of training to those within the city to assure everyone maintains same goal. Ms. Blaire stated it would be great to also have one board member from all the other city boards attend. Ms. Blaire stated the second aspect she is going to call educational entertainment. Ms. Blaire stated the presentation is same, however, audiences would be different. Board further discussed possibilities of venue and types of presentations and how to best proceed.

Mr. Rodriguez suggested perhaps utilizing the CMR area at the Public Safety Building and this would be placed on agenda for the next upcoming board meeting for further discussion. Ms. Bedoya stated perhaps going forth, board can consider including discussions regarding Mental Health Awareness.

Ms. Chichester asked board to come to agreement how to go forth. Mr. Rodriguez stated perhaps representatives of the show could come in and address board. Ms. Blaire asked how someone could obtain information about things taking place within the city and Mr. Rodriguez suggested going to city website and signing up for newsletter. Mr. Rodriguez suggested training regarding Mental Health Awareness would be placed on the upcoming July 1, 2026, meeting agenda.

**Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce October Disability Awareness Month 2026- Eddy Martinez**

Mr. Martinez shared with the board pamphlet Employment Pathways Summit (Exhibit 1) idea. Mr. Martinez spoke of possible process for this summit, commencing by contacting entities to identify the type of employment they have available. Mr. Martinez stated then identify possible candidates which can be considered for the available employment, have them interview and go forth. Mr. Martinez said the most difficult is to have the businesses participate and establish a venue. Mr. Rodriguez stated the city can aid regarding obtaining a venue.

Ms. Sando stated what is the timeline to get the city and commission to formally support this initiative for October. Mr. Martinez stated he has commenced working on this now so that when October comes around there will be more information in place already.

**Adventure Day Update—Ms. Yanessa Rodriguez, Community Recreation—Administrative Operations Manager**

Ms. Rodriguez stated they had a meeting with a 5K provider and special events manager for parks and received a quote for \$50,000.00, which is not ideal because city does not want to charge participants. Ms. Rodriguez advised compared to cost of \$2,000.00 overtime for the Adventure Day structure in place, they have pivoted to hosting Adventure Day as usual.

**Accessible City Website – Mr. Jose Rodriguez**

Mr. Rodriguez advised of meeting held with Ms. Marta Pantin and Ms. Mary Palacio-Pike regarding website as well as updates completed.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None

**NEXT MEETING:** July 1, 2026

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Meeting adjourned at 11:01am

Motion by: Vanessa Bedoya / 2<sup>nd</sup>: Jennifer Ward Sando / Approved unanimously

# **EXHIBIT 1**

**Employment Pathways Summit**

# Employment Pathways Summit

## A Disability Employment Month Initiative

Presented by the Coral Gables Advisory Board on Disability Affairs

OCTOBER | DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT MONTH

### Built to move beyond awareness and create action.

By first identifying businesses and real employment opportunities, then connecting those opportunities with qualified support organizations and prepared candidates, Coral Gables can open practical pathways to employment for individuals with disabilities, neurodiversity and learning challenges.

#### WHY THIS IS DIFFERENT

- **Business-first model**  
Identify participating businesses and real opportunities before candidate outreach.
- **Prepared introductions**  
Organizations review opportunities in advance and prepare candidates for meaningful conversations.
- **Support around placement**  
Businesses learn about training, coaching and follow-up support that can help employment succeed.

#### HOW THE INITIATIVE WORKS

- 1 **City support**  
Mayor and Commission formally support the initiative.
  - 2 **Identify businesses**  
Board, City, Chamber and advocates identify participating employers.
  - 3 **List opportunities**  
Businesses share jobs, internships, shadowing or training options.
  - 4 **Review and prepare**  
Employment organizations review opportunities and prepare candidates.
- Preplanned meetings, networking and public leadership program.

#### CITY SUPPORT REQUESTED

- 1 **Formal recognition**  
Mayor and Commission support as a Disability Employment Month Initiative.
- 2 **Funding or sponsorship**  
Help cover venue, event needs, outreach and program materials.
- 3 **City participation**  
Leadership presence, communications support and help encouraging business participation.

### Summit format

A conference-style program followed by structured employment pathway meetings and open networking

#### Conference Program

City leaders, the Advisory Board organizations and business representatives speak about the importance and goals of the initiative

#### Preplanned Meetings

Prepared candidates are matched with participating businesses based on real opportunities identified in advance.

#### Open Networking

Businesses, organizations and candidates connect for resources, introductions and next-step conversations.

#### PARTICIPANTS AND PARTNERS

**UN-ANSU CARD** - de Moya Foundation - Goodwill - Lighthouse for the Blind - FIU Embrace - Summer of Success - local schools, workforce programs and other disability employment partners

#### DESIRED OUTCOME

Coral Gables becomes a countywide model for moving Disability Employment Month beyond awareness and into measurable action.