

City of Coral Gables

405 Biltmore Way
Coral Gables, FL 33134
www.coralgables.com



Meeting Minutes

Friday, June 17, 2022

8:30 AM

Draft Minutes

Police and Fire Headquarters, Community Meeting Room

School Community Relations Committee

Chairperson Ariel Fernandez
Vice Chairperson Sam Joseph
Board Member Erin Anding
Board Member Dr. Winnie Chang
Board Member Sandy Dimitris
Board Member Carmen Manrara Cartaya
Board Member Cecilia D. Slesnick
Board Member Jennifer Ward Sando
Board Member Sharon Watson

The School Community Relations Committee will be holding its Regular Meeting on Friday, June 17, 2022, commencing at 8:30 a.m. While the Committee is back to live in-person meetings, members of the public may participate in person but are also able to participate via the Zoom platform. Members of the public may join the meeting via Zoom at (<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83893614478>). In addition, a dedicated phone line will be available so that any individual who does not wish (or is unable) to use Zoom may listen to and participate in the meeting by dialing: 305-461-6769 Meeting ID: 838 9361 4478.

To speak on an Agenda Item, please "Raise your Hand" or send a message to one of the meeting hosts using the Zoom Platform. If you joined the meeting via telephone, you can "Raise your Hand" by pressing *9.

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 8:34 a.m.

ROLL/QUORUM CALL

Board Members Manrara Cartaya and Anding listened in on the meeting via zoom.

Present: 6 - Slesnick, Watson, Dimitris, Joseph, Chang and Fernandez

Absent: 2 - Manrara Cartaya and Anding

Excused: 1 - Board Member Ward Sando

A. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

School Community Relations Committee Meeting of May 20, 2022.

Attachments: [Cover Memo](#)
[Draft May 20 SCRC Minutes](#)

A motion was made by Vice Chair Joseph, seconded by Board Member Watson, that this matter be approved. The motion passed by the following vote.

Yeas: 6 - Slesnick, Watson, Dimitris, Joseph, Chang and Fernandez

Absent: 2 - Manrara Cartaya and Anding

Excused: 1 - Board Member Ward Sando

B. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Estelle Lockhart from Carver Elementary School PTA:

•Fencing around the perimeter of school campus has become an issue of concern. Fence is damaged and security is compromised. Currently fence is 4 feet tall. After seeing Texas attacks on school children, the current height of the fence is of immediate concern. Front school entrance is another security concern; there is no buzzer system. Surrounding schools such as Coconut Grove Elementary, Coral Gables Prep have 6-foot estate fencing which is more secure, and visitors get buzzed in. It's a large expense, however, we are asking for this Committee to help in ensuring we get the school more secure for our children.

Chairperson Ariel Fernandez indicated he will bring this matter to the attention of the mayor. The city is limited when it comes to capital improvements to schools; however, will escalate this matter and do what can be done to address this situation as the safety of our kids is of most importance.

Vice Chairman Sam Joseph indicated to look at other campuses like Fairchild and others that might need assistance and further suggests there should be a school safety update for next meeting. We must be more proactive regarding this matter.

School Board Member Carmen Cartaya (via Zoom) inquired if Carver Little (Elementary) is doing PTA fundraisers to get money for improved school projects.

Ms. Estelle Lockhart responded indicating that they have several fundraising events such as Miami Day, Friends of Carver Gala annually those funds go to the following:

•Funds go toward computers, and during the pandemic they raised funds for upgrading media center, upgrading broadcasting studio and outdoor classrooms. There is a big concern if money should go to fencing and safety structures. This might be a big, heated debate on whether PTA funds should go to security guards and fencing covered as this falls under the district's responsibility.

•School Board Member Carmen Cartaya further indicated that she is not asking or has the intention that Carver school be prioritized over other schools in terms of safety instead wishes to have this school at the same level as the nearby schools. Through an assessment of those schools, we can determine the needs and priorities of these schools.

C. NEW BUSINESS

C-1 Miami-Dade County Public Schools Update (Facilitated by Mari Tere Rojas, School Board Member)

Chairperson Ariel Fernandez indicated that School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas had a situation that came up which prohibited her from being present in this meeting. Her Chief of Staff is also unavailable. Thus, he will provide several updates on her behalf.

- Graduation season has been phenomenal! Turn out of parents and family members has been successful.

- Robust summer program for children based out of CGPA has begun and it's available for those who need it; contact person is Lourdes Diaz in Academics. Contact details were provided.

- School safety, a new School Board item has been sponsored to create a subcommittee of the safety task force that will study all recommendations from Marjorie Stoneman Douglas. School Board Member Rojas wants to make sure that all the recommendations have been enacted in the public schools.

- Update on human capital and staffing for next year is still a concern. Still looking for teachers, they are working with the colleges and universities, and trying to build on local talent, the emphasis is not only on academic but also vocational skills. If there are questions, please contact School Board Member Rojas, her chief of staff or directly with the school program.

- Not doing office hour during the summer, these will resume in August. Meetings are the first and third Thursday in August at City Hall conference room; room will be ready for her to use.

C-2 Discussion on summer meeting schedule (Facilitated by Ariel Fernandez, Chairperson)

Chairperson Ariel Fernandez and other Board Members plan on visiting schools and asking principals about their safety concerns. Secretary Lopez shared on screen via Zoom the calendar of upcoming SCRC meetings for all to view. Secretary Lopez will send list of the 11 schools we service. Vice Chair Joseph motions to cancel the July 15 SCRC meeting and use that date for a school safety workshop. Board Member Chang seconds, motion passed.

D. OLD BUSINESS

D-1 Update on Self-Contained Classrooms (Facilitated by Naomi Levi-Garcia, Liaison and Solanch Lopez, Secretary)

Update provided by Secretary Lopez on behalf of Raquel Elejabarrieta, Labor Relations & Risk Management Director who also acts as liaison to Disability Affairs Committee she sent update indicating as follows:

On January 25, 2022, this Commission approved, and supported resolutions presented by the City's Advisory Board on Disability Affairs and the City's School Community Relations Committee urging the City Commission to support and request Miami-Dade County Public Schools ("MDCPS") to offer self-contained classrooms for students with disabilities in public elementary, middle, and high schools located within the City's boundaries.

I am happy to report that MDCPS has confirmed that they will be opening a self-contained Autism program at Ponce de Leon Middle School for the 2022-2023 school year. With the opening of this self-contained classroom at Ponce de Leon Middle School, there will be self contained classrooms in public middle and high schools within City boundaries.

During this coming school year, we will continue to work with MDCPS to open a self-contained classroom at a public elementary school within City boundaries.

Thank you for your support on this important matter.

SCRC members give kudos to Board Member Sando for her involvement on this item.

D-2 Gables Family Literacy Festival Post Event Update

The Literacy Festival was a huge success. The Community Recreation department outdid themselves once again; there were 20 to 30 staffers who were present on a holiday weekend and happy to participate even though weather was very warm. A great turn out, approximately 1900 attendees. There was conversation on possibly changing the date for next year because many expressed the desire to attend but since it was a holiday weekend already had plans and were out of town. Board Member Chang did a great job during her reading. Commissioner Anderson played an active role in the event and had a pop-up tent for potato plant removal. She was offering a free book for children who removed three potato plants which are considered invasive. Commissioner Fors was present and thanked the staff for their help and support.

Amazon gift cards were raffled during the event.

Secretary, Lopez provided comments: Consider adding an agenda item for the August meeting and invite Mitch Zuriarrain, Community Recreations Supervisor so he can provide details on future events and event results.

There are several designated locations for little libraries within the City of Coral Gables, check map online. Consider having a little library passport to provide reading incentives.

E. ONGOING BUSINESS

E-1 Notice Pursuant to Resolution No. 2020-245 (Facilitated by Solanch Lopez, Secretary)

•New project on 1505 Ponce de Leon, discussion of the project will be on June 21 initially during Planning and Zoning meeting and then to Commission for first hearing on June 28. Staff Report, PZ Package and DRC Submittal was viewed on Zoom for further review. Overall details of the project were provided.

•Chairperson Fernandez, mentioned that the new projects coming in will have a major effect on the school's capacity, perhaps some schools don't have the space for all the new children coming in. It would be ideal to have developers contribute monetarily in addition to building fences, planting trees etc., thus have them be an active member of the community and help with school needs. Further conversations are necessary to evaluate all the multiple current and future school needs especially with the possible influx of children. Chairperson will coordinate a meeting with Mayor Lago and Board Member Rojas and will report back with comments from meeting.

Attachments: [1505 Ponce - PZ Package](#)
[1505 Ponce - DRC Submittal](#)
[2022 06 21 - Staff Report - 1505 Ponce - in-progress](#)

F. ANNOUNCEMENTS

F-1 Next SCRC Meeting - Friday, July 15, 2022 at 8:30 a.m.

Questions/Comments: scrc@coralgables.com

Workshop to take place of meeting as previously discussed during item C-2.

F-2 Join a local PTA or subscribe to their newsletters using the following links:

F-3 My Squad Pilates - June 29, 2022 | 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 9:33 a.m.

NOTE