

CORAL GABLES MERRICK HOUSE GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
Meeting Minutes of April 8, 2024, 8:30 a.m.
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, 2nd Floor, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

MEMBERS	F 23	M 23	A 23	M 23	J 23	J 23	A 23	S 23	O 23	N 23	D 23	J 24	F 24	M 24	A 24	APPOINTED BY		
Bonnie Seipp	P	P	P	E	N O M E E T I N G	N O M E E T I N G	P	E	E	P	N O M E E T I N G	P	P	P	A	Vice-Mayor Rhonda Anderson		
Carmen Cason	E	P	P	P			P	E	P	P		P	P	A	P	A	Mayor Vince Lago	
Mary Beth Burke Vice Chair	P	P	P	P			P	P	E	P		P	P	P	P	P	Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez	
Margaret Groves								E	E	E				P	#	P	P	Commissioner Melissa Castro
Alexis Ehrenhaft	P	P	P	P			P	E	P	P		P	P	P	A	E	E	City Manager Peter Iglesias
Genevieve Orr	*	*	*	*			P	P	P	P		E	P	P	P	A	P	Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Joanne Meagher Chairperson	P	P	P	P			P	E	P	P		P	P	P	P	P	P	Board-as-a-Whole

LEGEND: A = Absent; P = Present; E = Excused; * = New Member; ^ = Resigned Member.
 - = No Meeting; # = Late meeting arrival.

STAFF: Anna Pernas, Historical Resources Director, Kara Kautz, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer;
 Gay Bondurant, Docent Coordinator, Yvelisse Bonilla, Administrative Assistant.
 RECORDING SECRETARY/PREPARATION OF MINUTES: Yvelisse Bonilla, Administrative Assistant

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 8:42 AM by Chair Joanne Meagher. Attendance was stated for the record.

ROLL CALL:

In attendance were Ms. Burke, Ms. Meagher, Ms. Groves, Ms. Orr.

OPENING STATEMENT:

Unbeknownst to most, Goerge has changed his position on Coral Gables becoming a municipality. This occurred after he purchased the Deering property and realized that an individual owner or even a private corporation would not be able to complete his ambitious 100-million-dollar plan for what he now called Coral Gables Colon Miami Riviera. After Boca Raton and Miami Shores announced they would soon be cities, he felt the need to trump his competitors.

On April 27th without previous announcement, state senator John W. Watson passed a 50-page charter bill and sought and received unanimous consent from the Florida Senate to create the City of Coral Gables. Hardly more than a half hour later, the Florida House of Representatives followed suit and sent the document to Governor Martin for his signature. Thus, on April 29, 1925, the City of Coral Gables was born with the same men who managed the Coral Gables Corporation named as its first commissioners. These were Edward L. Dammers or Doc Dammers, Tal Far Knight, Charles F. Baldwin, F. Wingfield Webster, and George Merrick. On the same day as his statement appeared, the first trolley arrived in Coral Gables, physically linking the two cities.

The newly minted city fathers, along with featured speaker William Jennings Bryan and an army of other dignitaries arrived by trolley to participate in the official inauguration ceremonies held in the corner of Ponce De Leon Boulevard and Coral Way. At the same time, George announced plans for extending the tracks southward and spoke of the creation of a new line he called the Coral Gables rapid transit. After speeches and congratulations, George invited the entire entourage to lunch at the Coral Gables Country Club.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Meeting minutes will be provided at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Merrick House Activity Report March 2024 -
Ms. Meagher read the March 2024 House Report. The report was shared with the Board in advance of the meeting and is included as an attachment to the minutes.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Lampshade – Ms. Meagher received a suggestion for a vendor to fix the lampshade. Ms. Meagher took it to the vendor, and it has been restored.
2. Stag Painting – Ms. Meagher will be contacting Art Care Conservation to have the quote updated. Current project is on hold, until new quotes are provided.
3. City Staff Tours – Ms. Burke contacted Deena Bell-Llewellyn to confirm a date for the Greenspace Management staff tours. Ms. Burke has not heard back from Ms. Bell-Llewellyn. Staff will reach out to the Department Directors for their feedback.
4. Althea’s Garden Brigade – Staff advised that the City Attorney draft a waiver for this. The City Attorney also confirmed that a board member or staff member needs to be present.
5. Pond – Deep cleaning of pond occurred last month. The vendor does come out monthly to service the pond. Looking into what type of food is best for the fish.
6. Craig Johnson Memorial – Ms. Bell Llewellyn is working on obtaining the Lignum Vitae tree for the memorial. The stone and plaque are at the House.
7. 100 Voices – Dan Fedora is not available for the May event, hoping to move him to the Fall. Will be reaching out to Margo Friedman, wife of Mr. Miracle Mile, Albert Friedman, for May.
8. Place Maker Poet – Mr. Church has trimmed down his presentation to a 45 minute video. This will be part of the George Merrick installation scheduled to run 06/03/24 through April 2026.
9. Way Showers Monument – Artist Morel Doucet was selected by the Cultural Development Panel. Ms. Meagher and Staff met with the mayor to make sure that the art has context that relates to George Merrick.
10. Eagle Scout – Approached by Ben Martinez for a project at the Merrick House. Ms. Meagher is proposing that as the project he build a door for an area outside the carriage house that is currently not used. Staff will check to make sure this is acceptable.
11. Flag – The flag at the house is in poor condition. Ms. Orr can take the flag to do a decommissioning ceremony. Staff will confirm how to get a new flag for the House.
12. RLA – Currently waiting for all of the signatures on the contract. Staff to coordinate with Public Works.
13. Woodwork – Staff is working on budgets for next year. The Department has asked for Capital Improvement Projects for the restoration and maintenance plan for interior woodwork at the House for approximately \$30k.

14. Rug – The rug has not been returned from Public Works. When the rug does return, we will need to coordinate enough people to move the furniture.

15. Dishwasher – Still needs to be ordered.

DISCUSSION ITEMS: None.

CITY COMMISSION ITEMS: None.

ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY: None.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:43 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Anna C. Pernas

Historic Preservation Officer