

**CORAL GABLES MERRICK HOUSE GOVERNING BOARD MEETING**  
**Meeting Minutes of January 8, 2024, 8:30 a.m.**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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	APPOINTED BY
Bonnie Seipp	P	P	P	E	N	N	P	E	E	P	N	P	Vice-Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Carmen Cason	E	P	P	P	O	O	P	E	P	P	O	P	Mayor Vince Lago
Mary Beth Burke	P	P	P	P	M	M	P	P	E	P	M	P	Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez
Margaret Groves					E	E		E	E	E	E	P	Commissioner Melissa Castro
Alexis Ehrenhaft	P	P	P	P	E	E	P	E	P	P	E	P	City Manager Peter Iglesias
Genevieve Orr	*	*	*	*	T	T	P	P	P	E	T	P	Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Joanne Meagher	P	P	P	P	I	I	P	E	P	P	I	P	Board-as-a-Whole
					N	N					N		
					G	G					G		

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 8:38 AM by Chair Joanne Meagher and attendance was stated for the record.

**ROLL CALL:**

In attendance were Ms. Seipp, Ms. Cason, Ms. Groves, Ms. Ehrenhaft, Ms. Orr and Ms. Meagher. Ms. Burke arrived at 8:41 AM.

**OPENING STATEMENT:**

*January 21, 1859, Solomon Greesley Merrick was born in Matthewstown, Maryland. In January of 1900, Althea with Ethel, Almeda, Helen, and Charles, her children at the time, arrive by train in Lemon City. The first cash crop was guava from trees on the property, but then they planted beans, onions, tomatoes, eggplant, and peppers in what is now Granada Golf Course. In January of 1901 Althea opened Guavonia School and the first teacher was Winifred Cobb. January 1, 1923, in a long interview with the Miami Metropolis, George's cousin on this mother's side, H. George Fink, explains Coral Gables mandated architecture called Miami Mediterranean. January 15, 1923, Granada Golf Course opens and the Granada entrance at Eighth Street is complete.*

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

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**A motion was made by Ms. Seipp, seconded by Ms. Burke, to approve the minutes with amendments for the meeting on November 13, 2023, which passed unanimously.**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Merrick House Activity Report November 2023 -  
Ms. Anna Pernas read from the November 2023 House Report. The report was shared with the Board in advance of the meeting and will be included as an attachment to the minutes.
2. Merrick House Activity Report December 2023 –  
Ms. Anna Pernas read from the November 2023 House Report. The report was shared with the Board in advance of the meeting and will be included as an attachment to the minutes.
3. 100 Voices – Next event is scheduled for February 11<sup>th</sup> featuring Dorothy Thomson. Ms. Thomson will discuss what Coral Gables was like in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The Superbowl is also on the 11<sup>th</sup>, which may cause low attendance. Ms. Meagher will confirm with Ms. Thomson about changing the date of this event to Saturday the 10<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Burke will make baked goods for guests and Ms. Meagher will provide a beverage.
4. Garden Tea, March 10, 2024 – Ms. Orr volunteered to obtain three quotes from caterers. Ms. Meagher to share last year’s information. The Board discussed different theme options but ultimately agreed on vintage kitchen equipment and recipes. Presentations could include the first menu of the Biltmore Hotel and any Merrick family recipes that can be found. Attendance to be limited to 100 people.
5. Veterans Day, November 11, 2024– A discussion was had on having Miami Top Brass perform on the porch of the Merrick House for a Veteran’s Day concert. They can do an hour-long concert; their fee is \$750. Attendance would be free, and people could picnic in the lawn. Staff will confirm if there are other City events that day that may be a conflict.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

1. Garden Club Holiday Decor– Décor was stunning. Ms. Meagher and Ms. Cason took down the holiday décor. There are some garlands that will need to be replaced.
2. Holiday Open House – Ms. Meagher would like to pick a date now and also pick a rain date. Staff mentioned that any event on the same day as the Orange Bowl parade is problematic. The Board confirmed December 15<sup>th</sup> on Sunday as the next Holiday open house and Saturday, December 21<sup>st</sup> will be the rain date.
3. Villager Grant – Received the full \$2,000 grant to restore the Althea painting of the Stag. Ms. Meagher will get a second quote from Art Care Conservation for comparison.
4. City Staff Tours – Ms. Burke contacted Deena Bell-Llewellyn to confirm a date for the Greenspace Management staff tours.
5. Craig Johnson Memorial – Plaque is completed. The memorial plaque needs to be mounted onto a stone. Staff suggest the money come out of the Merrick House fund. Quote received for \$750.00.
  - a. Craig Johnson’s birthday was on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. Will investigate scheduling the memorial on this day and will confirm at the next meeting.

**A motion was made by Ms. Seipp, seconded by Ms. Cason, to use funds from the Merrick House fund for the mounting of Craig Johnson’s memorial plaque, which passed unanimously.**

6. Althea’s Garden Brigade – Ms. Meagher presented an idea to allow volunteers to work in the garden. Staff will confirm with the City Attorney’s office about having a waiver that participants sign before volunteering. Staff or Merrick House representative would need to be present.

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7. Coral Gables School Tours– Ms. Seipp will reach out to Coral Gables High School and Elementary School. Ms. Meagher and Ms. Burke to reach out to St. Phillips School. Ms. Cason to contact Somerset Academy.
8. Constant Contact – Using the Communications Department account for the Merrick House mailings. Current mail list to be circulated to board members for edits.
9. Pond – Still working through insurance issues for the Professional Service Agreement (PSA). Staff will contact another vendor for the pump replacement proposal, if the insurance issue cannot be resolved. In the meantime, Staff has requested a new quote from Pond Doctors, LLC for monthly maintenance.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:** None.

**CITY COMMISSION ITEMS:** None.

**ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY:** None.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:51 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Anna C. Pernas  
Historic Preservation Officer