

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-2
September 23, 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
Richard Naue, Jr., Chief of Police
Edward Hudak, Police Major

Public Speaker(s)

Andy Murai, City of Coral Gables Resident
Roxcy Bolton, City of Coral Gables Resident

F-2 [Start: 12:30:00 p.m.] - Discussion concerning senior programming and services.

Mayor Slesnick: OK, Ms. Anderson F2.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes, the topic is senior programming and about senior services and since we all seem to have kind of labeled ourselves museum, trolley, triangle of visibility, traffic, I'll take seniors; and I did so when I came into office in 2001 following in the footsteps of my predecessor. And how I would like to handle this particular item is that I would like a brief introduction. I'd like for staff to do their part, as far as I am going to do the past, how we got here our Parks and Rec. Director will do the present and what has happened; and I would like at the end for former Mayor Thompson, who I have asked to come, maybe say a few words on what was something that she championed. Back in 1993 when former Mayor Thompson was on the Commission, she saw the need for the senior population to be addressed; and in 1993 there was the first study, headed by FIU; and they determined that there was a need, there were some needs and the creation of the Senior Citizens Division, the Senior Division became a reality. There were other recommendations that were made at the time, including the creation of the Seniors Services Coordinator to help in that process. Other activities began to take place that focused more on our senior population. Throughout the years, and I remember hearing about it, there was increase programming at the Youth Center. There was programming at its facility that no longer exists for some of our members, which was in Salvadore Park, but when we moved into the Youth Center, that was a good thing, but there was also some tension at times as far as their place there among the young people and one of the concerns toward the later 90's. I would say early 2000's was that they were starting to really kind of desire for a place of their own. In 2001, we began the process of looking at the senior issues again; and in 2003 with the help of the University of Miami, we conducted yet another needs assessment for the senior population; and it was an extensive one which reached about 800 of our seniors; and it talked about a variety of things. What their habits were? What did they read? What did they need? As far as their aging; and what would they like to see? Some of the things that they asked for were things that were kind of out of our control per say as far as the City. Things about assistance with social workers, or home delivered

meals things or things like that transportation, but we do have in purview as a City, to link this folks into services that already exists. So while that wasn't part of our City mission, it was also kind of our duty to connect the dots; and for that our Senior Services Coordinator has done a very good job. Some of the things they also wanted to do was they also wanted to have things that expanded services, as far as trips to museums, book clubs, exercises, more activities. The ones that didn't even know that there existed a Senior Division, when they heard that there was, they decided as well, that they would want more incentive programming including computers and things like that. In that whole interval process, the question about the senior center kind of became center stage, but it was determined that it might be best to wait a little bit; that first of all, that since there are people out there that didn't know we had a Senior Division we might want to market it better, let people know about it, and then also see where the interest was; and one of mottos then was build the programs and they would come; and indeed that has indeed happened. We were very fortunate to have had the philanthropic donation by my Kirk Landon. He offer initially a million dollars towards the senior center, but when we determined that a senior center wasn't immediately needed, he asked that he would help in anyway he could, he would continue to stay involved. We tried to locate an extra space, so the next step was to locate a little more space outside of the Youth Center; and we were very fortunate after a good long search the University Baptist Church became available the space, they didn't utilize fully and we were able to negotiate a very, very good deal, I think is something like \$15 dollars per day for the use of those rooms to expand our services. So we have a very active Senior Citizens Advisory Board, also created during that time in the early 90's. I see one of our board members back there. He can wave, we had other board members here earlier, but I am sure they had to leave. So we have made great progress. We started with the senior assessment, the creation of the Senior Division, the Senior Coordinator began to program more activities; and as we look further on we have expanded it, we have moved a little, we have grown a little bit in our space, and I think you will be really pleased to see where we are now, and for that we have the drum roll for our director Fred Couceyro.

Fred Couceyro: Good afternoon, I did prepare a small presentation just to show some of the progress we have made in our senior programming, and some of the efforts that we have exerted; and some of the things we have been able to accomplished. It really has been a team effort, we have a wonderful programming staff in Anastasia Smith and Letty Ellis. We have a wonderful Senior Advisory Board that are great advocates for seniors they make sure that the best interest of seniors are in mind when we do our programming and we also have had help from other City departments. We have a wonderful relationship with the Public Affairs Division that has created the Golden Gables, which is a publication that has not only a good informational tool, but has proven to be a good marketing tool as well, and they also have the Golden Gables on TV, which also acts as an effective marketing tool for our program. This is our Senior Program, "Road To Success" and you see a couple of the pictures and I'll show a little more detail as we go of all of our programming that we have currently. This is a quick snapshot of our budget and where we have come in the last 5 years, in 2002-2003, our senior services budget consistent basically of the Senior Services Coordinator, so the total as you see there \$74,825. This past year, we have been able to increase our budget to \$311,604 and that is mostly due to our programming staff and a lot of our expenses for some of the programming things that we do. It is an increase approximately of 415%, so we are very happy with what we have been able to provide for seniors as a City.

Commissioner Anderson: Let me ask you a question Fred, I was reading in one of the board minutes that you tried to spare the senior division from any major cuts.

Fred Couceyro: Yes I did, when we did our budget cuts the Parks and Recreation Department has seven divisions; and I tried to spare the senior services division, and we were successful in budgeting and allocating resources to make sure we kept the budget as is.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you.

Mayor Slesnick: That is if we approve the budget.

Fred Couceyro: Absolutely, I am just saying my efforts, yes, you are right.

Commissioner Anderson: He did his part.

Fred Couceyro: It still needs approval. Just a quick snapshot, the Commissioner had mention what our senior programming consisted off. We did have a few of the groups, we had Young Viejos who play softball outside in the

Youth Center, we have the Friendship Club which also has a duplicate bridge club as well, they play cards and they utilize the Youth Center and we did have some field trips in a couple of programs that we were programming out of the Youth Center through one of the Youth Center programming staff. Our Youth Center, as I said in 2002, our Senior Services Division only consisted of the coordinator; and the programming was handled by a Recreation Specialist that was in the Youth Center Division at the time, Barbara Bein, who we later moved over. Some of the milestones, some of the stuff that was already discussed by the Commissioner that helped us get to where we are today, we are able to allocate resources to have a fulltime staff member as part of the Senior Services Division we have had three wonderful people one after the other, Anastasia Smith is actually in the audience. She has been wonderful. We also were able to add a part time position which really helped us with the program that we have now and that Letty Ellis, and I am not sure if she is here, she might be working. One of the other milestones that we had and was mentioned was the donation from Kirk Landon and it was part of a senior center proposal that I brought to this Commission quite a while back and it had a lot of components of programs that we wanted to offer and we started to offer and you will see as I go through the presentation those programs and how popular they have been we were correct in thinking these would be draws for the senior population; and the last milestone as the Commissioner described was also that we were able to enter into the use agreement with the University Baptist Church they have been wonderful and accommodating with us and we love the partnership and that space has really been integral to the advancement of our program. Let me go into our highlights, one of the factors that we wanted to make sure was emphasized as we did a senior center was through the proposal was to make sure we had not only programming for classes, but also have a program as a social component. We wanted to make sure the seniors had an opportunity to come in and just sit discuss things with other seniors and just be in a comfortable social environment. We termed it our Coffee Club when we had the proposal and the coffee club is now called the Monday Morning Coffee Club and it has become a reality, it is wonderful. In the month of July we had 120 participants, here is picture we use the one of the rooms at the University Baptist Church and there is one of our groups, it looks like a discussion being led by our program assistant Letty Ellis is there, so as you can see, they are discussing and it just becomes a nice place for them to have a social place to be with other seniors and discuss anything that they would like. Another program that I thought would be one of our anchors through our senior program proposal was computers, we used some of the donation money from Mr. Kirk Landon to come up with a mobile computer lab and what we did is we set up a lab that had a wireless network and it was able to be transported and secured in carts and consisted of laptops and then it also had a teaching cart as well so we could have instruction. We do instruction at both the Youth Center and the Church it is very popular, we continue to sell out, we continue to add more sessions, here is an example of one as you can see we are using the laptops there and everybody is going through. We started with some basic instructions I know some of the first classes dealt with this is a mouse, this is windows, and it has moved on as they continue to take classes it becomes more advance and it is wonderful. As you can see there is our instructor using that mobile lab and then we have a class that goes on and they teach it on the screen and it has been very good programming anchor for us.

Commisisoner Withers: Fred let me as ask you a question.

Fred Couceyro: Sure.

Commissioner Withers: Is it acceptable for the City to have sponsorships of programs like that from businesses or do you like to keep your staff alienated from that?

Fred Couceyro: No, we are looking, we are aware of what is going on with budgets and we are looking for sponsorship of different programs. I'll be describing one of our biggest programs that we had sponsored before and we welcome sponsorship. Our Senior Board is actively looking at sponsorship opportunity. We have actually put together a little sponsorship packet with a letter that our Senior Board is actively pursuing to get sponsors for different things.

Commissioner Anderson: Excellent.

Commisisoner Withers: So like that was what? IT component, computer component?

Fred Coycero: Yes.

Commissioner Withers: You would look for someone CompUsa or someone that would come in.

Fred Couceyro: Yes, absolutely. We would look at anything that maybe providing free instructions. free peripherals, more computers anything.

Commissioner Withers: Does that have to bid Liz?-Or how does that work?

Elizabeth Hernandez: I am sorry.

Commissioner Withers: If we were looking for a sponsorship for program say Publix did a cooking class; I don't know, whatever it was it would benefit the sponsor obviously to do that.

Fred Couceyro: My understanding is that we wouldn't have to, it is a donation, so we would accept it as a donation I don't think we would go out to bid for people to give us money.

Elizabeth Hernandez: What we are in the process of developing is the guidelines for sponsorships and packages that different corporate citizens may want to invest in providing for sponsoring of events. We are actually in the process of developing guidelines with Maria Higgins that are used citywide, but you don't have to go out to a bid. You can, if the Commission wishes to you know the event, you are renaming City Hall. You may want to go out to a bid but typically you will set prices based on what you believe is appropriate, and then, you know, have companies...

Commissioner Withers: And then next year if someone else wants to sponsor the same thing do you bid it out? That is what I am concerned about someone says I am going to give you \$1,000 if I could be the sponsor of this programs how do you choose who you use? I know it is a good problem to have.

Fred Couceyro: It is not a problem we have encountered yet, it is a good problem.

Commissioner Withers: It will happen though.

Commissioner Anderson: And actually the art show I believe is being sponsored by the Palace.

Commissioner Withers: Let say someone comes in the next year and says we are now going to give you \$2,500 for that art show instead of \$2,000. How do you select? I just think that if we are headed in this area we need to come up with some guidelines.

Elizabeth Hernandez: And we are coming up with guidelines, because historically what had happened in the past was that the City Commission had frowned upon any individual, or any board members, or anyone, seeking any type of private contributions for anything; and so the commission really had a policy that it was through the City Manager, if someone was interested in sponsoring something, they would contact the City Manager's Office which would say for the July Fourth, we do accept sponsorship and what not, and this is what we provide; because there has been an increase and the need for and the desire to do it Ms. Higgins Fallon has sent an email to my office, we have met, and we are looking at what other communities are doing. We are meeting with the City Manager, so that we do have a uniform policy in place that we are going to be presenting to the City Commission for consideration. We just haven't finalized it yet. So we are still very **peace meal** on that.

Commissioner Anderson: Good point.

Commissioner Withers: Thanks, Fred.

Fred Couceyro: Sure. One of the other programs that we wanted to highlight is we started to do fitness and wellness programming. We have had programming at the Youth Center. We have had a program that is called Ageless in Motion that is operated by a fitness center contractor, but we also added dancercise; and dancercise has become very popular at the University Baptist Church; and we reached 50 in our last monthly tally number; and we have had to add new classes and here are a couple. As you can see it is a full room and they are very active, they do a lot of the aerobic activity, it is wonderful to see and this is our Ageless in Motion and I wanted to illustrate that it is not only the getting up and exercise they allow chair fitness as well for those seniors that need to use a chair to get through

the fitness classes. It is still important for them to be active. So we have those fitness and wellness opportunities, and we will continue to come up with them as we get demand.

Commissioner Anderson: Great.

Fred Couceyro: Our first big program in effect that we had it started as a tea and talk. It was an annual program that we had. We started at the Biltmore. We were very encouraged by the first time we did it a few years ago. We turned our tab almost two hundred people. We realized this was the starting point of realizing that we needed to provide opportunities for our seniors and with senior board we put together an annual event that has become our signature event and it has turned in; now it is a lunch we have we just had the Coral Gables Country Club and it was over 200 people about 225. Here is an example of one we have had in the past. We have them every year. We are now in the middle of creating one that I did not include here we have so many programs. We are in the process of creating another signature event this is our second year in November we will have our Senior art show; and senior art show and one of our board members Doctor Bill Schiff who has been instrumental in putting our art show together he made sure that I showed the flyer on TV to say that we are looking for senior artists.

Commissioner Anderson: Good, that was beautiful last year you had a lot of talent.

Fred Couceyro: It is a wonderful event I think it is well on its way to being our second signature event. This will be the second time we do it. It is November 14, it is the opening night; and we do need senior artists, so please contact the Parks and Recreation Department and we can get you on the right path there to get into that show. Of course our second anchor, I talked about anchors in our senior center proposal. The second anchor that we had aside from the computers is programs that had food as the center component. You know if you feed them they will come, you know we have two different programs we have a weekly lunch program where we have a catered lunch that comes in; seniors are allowed to come in; they do pay it is I think six dollars a lunch, yes, it is six dollars per lunch they come in they eat; and we also have a lunch and lecture which is a once a month event where we have a lunch, a catered lunch and we also have as an added bonus to them to come in is a lecture and the topics could include all kinds of issues that are pertinent to seniors today. I have one picture here that I'll show you. Very popular events, the lunch and lecture in July had 101 participants the lunch program for the month had 143; so we are closing in on 50 per week which is wonderful. This our lunch program that is over at the church, so as you can see there is the line we have quite a few people that are there to take advantage of that I think it is a wonderful opportunity for them to gather again in a social setting. This is an example of one of our lectures. This is the hurricane preparedness lecture the past year, this one was at the Youth Center and as you can tell is well attended as well, and those are not all the programs we have; I wish I had twenty thirty minutes to tell you everything we do. How about the movie nights, how about all those things, we do have a program Knitting For A Cause, it had a nice write up in the Herald I have a copy of that Article I'll leave it with you as I leave, where we have a knitting class where it is doing things for a good cause. We have a health programs, we have done flu shots. Here is an example of the arts and crafts. Here is an example of one of our health expos. We try to do all kinds of programs not just recreational some of the social service stuff as well. We are always looking for different ideas, and that is not say that the original programs of 2002 are gone. Those are there as well, we still have Friendship Club, the duplicate bridge club is going strong, the Young Viejos continue to come out there, and they are great ball players. I marvel at how good they are when we watch them at the Youth Center. So as a recap of where we have been in the last few years, we offered this past budget year 126 different activities and programs. We try to offer a full slate every month, my last totals that I had available was July 2008. We reached a total participant number of 549 for 11 programs. So that tells you that we are starting to meet those needs and we are getting more and more participation every single month. We are overjoyed with the results, and as I said in the beginning we just had a Senior Services Coordinator now we have a coordinator we have two programmers and we are moving along beautifully. That is all we have.

Commissioner Anderson: That is great, that is wonderful. Let me ask you a question. The Commission might want to ask a couple of questions themselves, does our Senior Board and/or staff have they consider, you do survey instructions? To see how people are satisfied and suggestions as far as to all the activities.

Fred Couceyro: We have in place for all of our programs we have some evaluation forms that we try to do. I don't have the latest summary of it. I have to see what are numbers are, but we get them in recreation we get them quite a bit, not only formally and in forms, I get them verbally from people that walk up and tell me what they think when it

comes to recreation people are very honest and frank when they don't like something. The majority of the comments I get are very happy comers and also grateful that we offer the programs that didn't exist.

Commissioner Anderson: Great, that is good to know, I appreciate it and I want to make sure that you send the thanks to your staff and to the boards.

Fred Couceyro: It is like I said the staff, the board and some of the departments that we have had help from the Development Department with the art show, the Public Affairs with the Golden Gables.

Commissioner Anderson: Thanks for your enthusiasm, Commissioners?

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I just have quick question, first of all a statement would you do me a favor in getting Paul Hunt a telephone recorder so when I call him he can return phone calls.

Fred Couceyro: Absolutely.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Please that would be appreciated. Apparently the Baptist Church is working out very well for you, the Baptist Church overthere.

Fred Couceyro: Yes.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: This question is not for you, but for the City Manager, there is a good opportunity sooner or later, and we have spoken about this here, not exclusively for the senior citizens but for the City of Coral Gables to purchase that Baptist Church are we in the process? Where exactly are we in that process of looking at that as a possible site for the City of Coral Gables to utilize sooner or later?

City Manager Brown: The first time we began to talk to the Church we had one appraisal for \$13,500,000.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: How much?

City Manager Brown: \$13,500,000.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: And how long ago was that?

City Manager Brown: Probably two to three years ago. As the Commission directed as to go forward, we asked for another appraisal, and it came in at about \$18 million.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: And that was when?

City Manager Brown: That was less then a year ago, and at that time I told the church that we were probably not going to be able to make that number because price had gone up substantially, so I told Ron Sheffield and the Church that we probably wouldn't be interested. Only recently Ron has called me back and said you know that number of 13.5 we would be interested in talking again. So I am in my processes of going through that to see if this Commission would be amenable to that. That is still a hefty number, but the possibility would exist that we could sell off the offices to the north.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Not the offices, but the apartment buildings.

Commissionwe Withers: But the bigger issue is it would revert back to the zoning because that is special.

City Manager Brown: It is special zoning and that is correct.

Commissioner Withers: And you would have, I am sorry what were you going to say.

City Manager Brown: Go ahead because that is exactly what I was going to say.

Commissioner Withers: I mean we as a Commission would deal with neighbors, we would have to go back and rezone it again to whatever we wanted to; probably have some political debate with the neighbors and the neighborhood because it is going to go back to I guess D-1 in Segovia and R-1 in the back here.

City Manager Brown: Unless you do different.

Commissioner Withers: So we would have to stand up and say we want to rezone this as a government building or community center, as opposed to back to a residential area.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: So are you saying that once they sell it. If they sell it to another entity.

Commissioner Withers: If they sell it to another church.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: It is okay.

Commissioner Withers: It is okay, but if it reverts back to the original zoning from what I understand then we would just have to have the political backbone to say we want a rezone.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Let me tell you there are \$13 million reasons of why we would have that political backbone if we decided to move forward.

Commissioner Withers: That has to be part of it.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: No doubt about it, and I have to tell you this environment the \$13 million that is rich to at this point, but again having said that very seldom do you have a piece property that is appropriately located.

Commissioner Withers: Near the Youth Center, near the library.

City Manager Brown: Parking.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: That could be a governmental entity...

Commissioner Anderson: Beneficial addition to our...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: For everything for the City of Coral Gables for many, many years to come.

City Manager Brown: Let's be honest, there also are a great deal of ADA improvements that must be made and so the price tag is probably another several million dollars I'll say 2 to 5 million to bring that place around to where it should be. It is not just 13.

Commissioner Cabrera: I think I just heard GO Bond.

[Laughter]

Commissioner Cabrera: I think that is something that we should be talking about.

Commissioner Anderson: At this time I would if there are no more questions, I would like to have former Mayor Thomson come up and say a few words. I would like to thank her having started this and I hope you are happy with what you have seen. Thank you for coming.

Dorothy Thomson: Thank you for the invitation to come to come today, look like really a full blown program now to the credit of the City; and the Commission who has given the authorization to go ahead with a very extensive and very wonderful program as I see it. Your Commission meeting today started out with Dr. Hirschman, and he started a wonderful program in the early 1970's which continues today, Crime Watch didn't exist until the early 1980's and it continues today; and I thank you all for that incidentally, and now the senior citizens program which is another indication of the wonderful endeavors that the City embarks on and continues with and just don't drop the

ball some place along they way. To me 1993 there was no where or no place or no person to which senior residents, senior age residents could go for any answers to questions or concerns or and there was a lot of heartbreak that I encountered my first few years on the Commission different individuals calling me and asking what do I do because I can't do this I can't afford that I don't know what to do. And I would do best I could to give information that I would know but other than that I would just have to refer them to downtown, Dade County services and so forth, and so when 1993 came around and the infamous decision was made to go ahead and do something with these people, because there are more and more of them and more and more of us. And as we all grow old, we realize that there are a lot of problems out there that the City can only address so much, but has done so much to help; and I have to say I see Roxcy here today, she kept prodding me along too, all the way as you can well imagine about looking out for senior citizens; and to come today and listen to what has occurred from that time where it was nothing to the point where we started out step by step. First of all setting up a board, your Senior Advisory Board one of the members I understand is here now, your predecessors worked very hard to make meaningful board; and then we went to a search for a director for the program and we found that in him in Paul Hunt; and he is still here ;today; and he did a marvelous job because he is bilingual, and that was sort of a novelty at that point to have someone in the City could come to the Spanish speaking people. So step by step we started with baby steps and it has really grown it is really sprint along; and I applaud you and I thank you for continuing. I am a senior citizen now, I didn't start out that way.

Commisisoner Anderson: We will all get there hopefully if we are lucky.

Dorothy Thomson: And each one of you as you go along will appreciate more and more the services that are being offered that are being given residents here, it is wonderful thank you so much.

Commissioner Anderson: and thank you for starting it, and helping to start it, and for all the encouragement you got.

Mayor Slesnick: Thank you. Ms. Anderson thank you.

Commissioner Anderson: My pleasure, thank you.

Mayor Slesnick: And thanks to Commissioner Cabrera as of November I get no charges for my false alarms, and I get to have garage sales free and all kinds of things.

Commissioner Withers: And how old are you going to be Don.

Mayor Slesnick: A qualified 65 in November.

Commissioner Cabrera: And there is more to come.

Commissioner Withers: Free cup of coffee at Dennis.

[Laughter]

Mayor Slesnick: I got my Medicare card the other day in the mail, so I am really moving up.

Commissioner Anderson: Big milestones.

Mayor Slesnick: Ohh, Frank we have been talking about you. We wanted to recognize the board member that was here; and that you took your time to come.

Commissioner Anderson: He waived earlier.

[off mic]

Mayor Slesnick: Mr. Coral Gables, true you are.

[12:30:00]