

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
Economic Development Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 2, 2009, 8:00 a.m.
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

MEMBERS

O N D J F M A M J J A S COMMISSIONERS

Mr. Bertram "Chico" Goldsmith *							X		E	P	P	P	Mayor Donald D. Slesnick II
Mr. Raymond Zomerfeld	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	P	Vice Mayor William Kerdyk, Jr.
Mr. John M. "Jack" Thomson*							X		E	P	P	P	Commissioner Maria Anderson
Ms. Haydee Polo*							X		P	P	E	P	Commissioner Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera, Jr.
Mr. James Casey	P	E	P	E	P	P	X	P	P	P	A	P	Commissioner Wayne "Chip" Withers

STAFF:

Ms. Maria Alberro Jimenez, Assistant City Manager
 Ms. Jessica Wotherspoon, Business Development Specialist

A = Absent
E = Excused Absence
P = Present
X = No Meeting
= Special Meetings
*** = New Member**

GUESTS: Mr. John O'Rourke, Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce Liaison to Board; Mr. Rip Holmes, Citizen

Meeting Motion Summary: (No Commission action requested)

The minutes of the August 5, 2009 Board meeting were approved.

The goals/priorities for the Board's 2009-2011 term were defined.

Mr. James "Jim" Casey was appointed as the Board's Vice-Chair.

Chair Ray Zomerfeld called the meeting to order at 8:06 a.m.

1. Introductions:

All present introduced themselves. Mr. John O'Rourke introduced himself as the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce's new Liaison to the City's Economic Development Board. He is on the Board of Directors of both the Business Improvement District and the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce, and is replacing the former Liaison, Ms. Carol Ellis-Cutler.

2. Attendance:

All members were in attendance, and Ms. Polo was excused from the August 5th meeting due to illness.

3. Approval of August 5, 2009 Board Meeting Minutes:

Mr. Goldsmith made a motion to approve the Board meeting minutes of August 5, 2009.

Ms. Polo seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

4. Discussion of 2009-2011 Term Goals:

Mr. Goldsmith suggested the Board consider asking the City to, through e-News, ask what the residents, merchants, and business people would like to see for Miracle Mile. Specifically, this could give the Board a better idea of what the stakeholders are looking for. Mr. O'Rourke mentioned that he had a survey available in email format and that if the Board wished to move forward with his survey, that perhaps the BID would work with the Board on it too. Ms. Polo asked if such a survey had not already been done? Mr. Casey responded that there had been a few public hearings on the issue five years ago and what came out of that was how upset the merchants were with how much they were going to be forced to pay. Mr. Zomerfeld noted that since these public hearings five years ago, there has been a new streetscape plan proposed. Mr. O'Rourke said that the prominent issue now is still what will the streetscape redevelopment cost. He said the BID's report estimates it to run \$9-11 million. There was further discussion as to now, with the budget pending, if this is the appropriate time to ask the City to ask the stakeholders what they want for the Mile, as well as if this had not already been asked of them recently. The Board will ask Mr. Trowbridge, at the October meeting, if the Chamber has conducted a survey, and if so, learned anything about the business owners' perspective as a result of it. Ms. Alberro Jimenez stated that while the BID has done considerable work to get input from the community, the ongoing challenge has and is getting a consensus on what is wanted. It was suggested to ask Mari Molina to attend the October meeting to give an overview of the proposed project for the new members, as well as relay what she has done from a survey standpoint, and if so, what has been learned. It was also asked that Mr. Delgado attend the October meeting to address the streetscape issue from a Public Works standpoint.

Mr. O'Rourke mentioned that the BID will soon be putting out an informative 8-page publication on the Mile and Giralda Avenue area. It will specify what the challenges are, and what the BID's vision to do is. It was noted, that input in the publication was provided by the Chamber and the City as well. Ms. Alberro Jimenez mentioned that funding for improvements on the Mile has always been a challenge. Mr. Zomerfeld asked what was the budget available for the Mile improvements and what the other contributions would be needed to cover the project. Ms. Alberro Jimenez noted the cost estimates were in the \$7 to \$9 million range. Mr. O'Rourke noted that the total amount was also to include the portion of Giralda Avenue, east on Ponce de Leon Blvd., the paseos, and alley portions too. Ms. Alberro Jimenez believed the work would begin with the alleys & paseos first, and further stated the costs would be heavily dependent on if and how the parking layout were to be changed along the Mile. Mr. Thomson commented that problems with the alleys has been a plaguing issue for many years. Particularly before the BID came about when there were a lot of absentee landlords. Ms. Alberro Jimenez further mentioned that the City has approximately 1 million appropriated from a County General Obligation Bond and that the City hopes to use a portion of it for improvements to the downtown paseos.

Ms. Polo asked if the Board should start looking at what would be the next great cluster of businesses that the City could attract to make the Gables a notable hub for a particular type of business. Such as in the past there was a push to make Coral Gables the home to Latin American company's headquarters, the question was raised 'is there some other type of industry or industries that should be targeted, and once they are defined, are there key people that should be enticed to come here?' Both Ms. Polo and Ms.

Alberro Jimenez noted that a benefit could be gained in working with the University of Miami to pinpoint the clusters and people to target.

Mr. O'Rourke mentioned that almost every issue the Board brought up to make one of their goals/priorities for this term, is something that the Chamber is focusing on too. He also added that the Chamber has asked Thad Adams of the Allen Morris Company to spearhead an effort to make the permitting process less challenging for both small businesses and large developers looking to come into the City. The effort began recently with a meeting involving Mr. Adams, Chamber representatives, and the City Manager. Ms. Alberro Jimenez followed-up by stating that the overall plan is actually two-part: 1) there needs to be improved communication with the business community on how to get things accomplished and 2) there needs to be improved communication with City staff on the processes. She further noted that with the implementation of online technology, the workload has somewhat decreased and the staff now have more time to individually assist the Building and Zoning Department's customers. Mr. Goldsmith asked if the Building and Zoning Department ever met with the Planning Department to broadly address if what they are doing is in sync with the other Department and if they feel they are generally moving together in the right direction.

In the end, a motion to clarify the goal/priority areas of the Economic Development Board for the 2009-2011 term was made by Mr. Casey, seconded by Mr. Thomson, and passed unanimously.

They are to:

- Attract Class A tenants to Coral Gables in coordination with the local Commercial Realtors Association
- Focus on Miracle Mile, and the streetscape improvement and parking elements as a component of it
- Focus on strengthening tourism, and primarily as it relates to Miracle Mile
- Promote a better facilitation of the City's approval process for getting new and relocating businesses established in the City

5. Appointment of Vice-Chair:

Mr. Goldsmith motioned for Mr. James "Jim" Casey to be appointed as Board Vice-Chair. Mr. Thomson seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

6. Additional Business:

- There was a reminder about the upcoming ethics seminar scheduled for October 2nd.

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Casey and seconded by Mr. Goldsmith.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 9:09am.

Next Economic Development Board Meeting: Wednesday, October 7, 2009 at 8:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Alberro Jimenez,
Assistant City Manager