

# City of Coral Gables

405 Biltmore Way  
Coral Gables, FL 33134  
[www.coralgables.com](http://www.coralgables.com)



## Meeting Minutes

Friday, January 20, 2023

8:30 AM

Police and Fire Headquarters, Community Meeting Room

### School Community Relations Committee

*Chairperson Dr. Winnie Chang*  
*Vice Chairperson Sandy Dimitris*  
*Board Member Erin Anding*  
*Board Member Sam Joseph*  
*Board Member Carmen Manrara Cartaya*  
*Board Member Andrew Nadal*  
*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, Jan. 20, 2023, 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 8:32 a.m.

## ROLL/QUORUM CALL

Board Member Watson listened into the meeting via zoom.

**Present:** 7 - Slesnick, Dimitris, Joseph, Chang, Anding, Board Member Ward Sando and Nadal

**Absent:** 2 - Watson and Manrara Cartaya

## A. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

School Community Relations Committee Meeting of December 16, 2022.

**Attachments:** [Cover Memo](#)  
[Draft Dec. 16 SCRC Minutes](#)

This Minutes were approved.

**Yeas:** 7 - Slesnick, Dimitris, Joseph, Chang, Anding, Board Member Ward Sando and Nadal

**Absent:** 2 - Watson and Manrara Cartaya

## B. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Estelle Lockhart: Carver Elementary PTA is planning on hosting an election forum similar to prior Coral Gables election cycles. This forum gives students the chance to ask candidates questions. A date has not been determined for the forum but it will most likely take place at the end of Feb. Forum will be virtual.

## C. NEW BUSINESS

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

Recently a 500 Role Models event was held in commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King; event sponsored by Congresswomen McCollum. Over 1,500 were in attendance. Many elected officials were also present. Event proved to be a good opportunity to discuss the need for and importance of mentoring students, to let them know that someone is there to help and guide them.

**Immigration status in South Florida:**

- There is a large number of new students coming into the school system. This situation was discussed at a recent School Board Meeting. The Superintendent also provided a workshop for School Board Members.
- The number of incoming students changes on a day-to-day basis. The last report on the numbers shows close to 3,000 Cuban immigrant student entering the Miami-Dade County school system. A more recent report indicated that the number is now closer to 7,000. These numbers are not including other nationalities such as Haiti, Venezuela, Colombia, and Nicaragua. The School Board is prepared to address this issue and current students will not be affected.
- The latest number received as of January 10, 2023, of immigrant students entering the school system are as follows: Cuba: 7, 088, Haiti: 373, Nicaragua: 996, Venezuela: 866.
- Prior to Covid and the current immigration influx, there was already a human capital shortage when it comes to teachers. Less students are going into the education field; this is not only happening in Florida but also throughout the country. It's important that teachers are duly compensated; they must feel valued and appreciated. The School District is being innovative in the manner in which recruiting is done. It is important to reward teachers and ensure salaries are comparable with other careers.
- Four R's. Recruitment, Retention, Reward and Respect.
- Although not currently in a crisis mode, a crisis is possible. Additional services in ESAL and free/reduced lunch programs will be needed and are being looked at.
- Board Chair is scheduled to travel to Washington and Tallahassee to address funding issues for program implantation.
- Important to be proactive instead of being reactive to ensure that students receive the best quality education they can have.

**ABC Update:**

- This process is currently taking place. At this time only the targeted schools are being looked at.
- Carver Elementary, Coconut Grove and Coral Gables Preparatory are on advisory.
- Chairperson Chang asked if all three of these schools were under advisory for the same reason. School Board Chair states that there are different reasons but the main reason is the quantity of students. Many buildings are coming online which will eventually lead to more students.
- Board Member Joseph comments that he is happy to hear that George Washington Carver is under advisement, as a few years ago they were under populated. This is a success. It's one of the best schools.
- Board Chair Rojas indicated that Tucker is no longer in her district.
- They are looking closely at the number of students at these schools.

Teacher of the Year event is scheduled for January 31. Event will be at Doubletree Airport Hilton Hotel. This event is opened to anyone that would like to participate.

**Proffered School Board Items:**

- **B-6:** Request Approval of Resolution No. 23-004 of the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida. Recognizing Ms. Rebeca Sosa, Former Miami-Dade County Commissioner Representing District 6 and Retired Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) Educator.
- **Revised H-5:** School Board Confirmation of Appointment to the Miami-Dade Value Adjustment Board (VAB).
- **H-6:** Miami-Dade County Public Schools Temporary Instructors Task Force – Recruitment, Engagement, and Retention.
  - There is a serious shortage of substitute teachers, and this task force will work to find solutions. Due to the lack of teachers, currently classes such as music, Spanish and other classes are being cancelled. A solution must be found. This is a nationwide situation. Salaries have been raised for substitute teachers, but other items such as school locations continue to detract applicants.

**C-2 Coral Gables Literacy Festival - Literacy Laureates Honorees Selection (Facilitated by Sam Joseph, Board Member)**

Updated list of nominees is reviewed. Board Member Joseph adds Judy L. Attar a second grade at David Fairchild Elementary as an additional nominee. Judy is the Miami Herald Spelling Bee champion. A discussion is had on the different nominees.

**Board Member Joseph nominates:**

- Ava Volman, Senior at Coral Gables Senior High School, and Highlights Magazine Editor (Chairperson Chang seconds nomination)
- Judy Attar (Chairperson Chang seconds nomination)
- Dr. Paul George from History Miami (Board Member Ending seconds nomination)
- Leonard Pitts, Jr. (Board Member Ward Sando seconds nomination)

Chairperson Chang nominates Jose Andres. No second is received.

Board Member Dimitris motions to honor Ava Volman, Judy Attar, Dr. Paul George, and Leonard Pitts, Jr. as the 2023 Literacy Laureates, Board Member Joseph seconds. Motion passes unanimously. A letter from the Mayor's office will be sent to the selected honorees.

Board Member Dimitris suggests having a written criteria for nominations and honoree selection to be used for future years. Board Member Slesnick suggests consistence in the number of honorees.

**Attachments:** [Updated Literacy Laureates Nominees List](#)

A motion was made by Board Member Dimitris, seconded by Board Member Joseph, to honor Ava Volman, Judy Attar, Dr. Paul George, and Leonard Pitts, Jr. as the 2023 Literacy Laureates. The motion passed by the following vote.

**Yeas:** 7 - Dimitris, Joseph, Chang, Anding, Board Member Ward Sando, Nadal and Slesnick

**Absent:** 2 - Watson and Manrara Cartaya

**C-3 Presentation on "Tweet Your Story! My Miami Migration Tale" Short Story Contest (Facilitated by Sam Joseph, Board Member)**

Board Member Joseph introduces Isabel Perez from Meta Miami Gallery who provides a brief presentation on the contest and reads a letter on behalf of Ramiro Villapadierna of Caterdra de Vargas Llosa. This is a pilot contest but will hopefully become an annual occurrence.

This short story contest focuses on condense stories into a 560 character "tweet" that tells of the student's immigration story. The contest is opened to student from 8th to 12th grade and submissions open next week through March 31. Miami-Dade Public Schools is a main partner in this program. Everyone is eager to ensure students participation, thus it will be heavily publicized. Private and public schools are encouraged to participate. A jury panel will select the top three winners. Winners will be honored and announced at the May Coral Gables Literacy Festival. Contest submissions will be accepted in English and Spanish. Additional languages will be looked at for future years.

Attachments: [Contest Flyer](#)  
[My Miami Migration Story Presentation Slides](#)

**C-4 Request for update on adding a self-contained classroom in a Gables elementary school (Facilitated by Jennifer Sando, Board Member)**

Board Member Ward Sando attended the Disability Affairs Board meeting last week. They selected the board priorities for 2023 and adding a self-contained classroom in an elementary school was fourth on the list. This would be in addition to the self-contained classroom that was added at Ponce Middle School. The board ask Board Member Ward Sando to request an update at a SCRC meeting. A formal email will be sent to Board Chair Rojas.

**D. OLD BUSINESS**

**E. ONGOING BUSINESS**

**E-1 General Updates (Facilitated by Naomi Levi Garcia, Staff Liaison & Solanch Lopez, Secretary)**

Staff Liaison Levi Garcia mentions that Commissioner Menendez's CodeMania! competition is kicking off soon. Original registration deadline was January 27; however, it was pushed to February 3rd. CodeMania! is a coding competition hosted by the University of Miami in partnership with the City of Coral Gables. The program is targeting high-school students. The competition will bring people together, a fun family competition. Request for the SCRC members to help spread the word.

Request for a possible discussion on education questions for election forum on a future agenda.

**F. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

F-1 Next SCRC Meeting - Friday, Feb. 17, 2023 | 8:30 a.m.

Comments/Questions: [scrc@coralgables.com](mailto:scrc@coralgables.com)

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

F-3 Movies Under the Moonlight: The Mighty Ducks - Friday, Jan. 20, 2023 | 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

F-4 Farmers Market - Saturdays | 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

F-5 My Squad Tie Dye and Flashlight Egg Hunt - Wednesday, Jan. 25, 2023 | 6 to 9 p.m.

F-6 School Board Chair Rojas' Office Hours - Thursday, Feb. 2 & 16, 2023 | 12:30 to 3:00 p.m.

F-7 Daddy-Daughter Dance - Saturday, Feb. 11, 2023 | 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 10:06 a.m.

## **NOTE**