



CORAL GABLES MERRICK HOUSE GOVERNING BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes of October 8, 2021, 8:30 a.m.
 Coral Gables City Hall, City Commission Chamber
 405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

Historical Resources &
 Cultural Arts

2327 SALZEDO STREET
 CORAL GABLES
 FLORIDA 33134

MEMBERS	N 20	D 20	J 21	F 21	M 21	A 21	M 21	J 21	J 21	A 21	S 21	O 21	APPOINTED BY
Ana Lam	-	-	-	P	P	P	-	P	P	E	E	P	Mayor Vince Lago
Barbara Reese	-	-	-	P	P	P	-	P	P	E	E	p	Vice-Mayor Michael Mena
Bonnie Seipp	-	-	-	P	P	P	-	P	E	P	E	p	Commissioner Rhonda Anderson
Carmen Cason	-	-	-	P	P	P	-	A	P	P	P	P	Commissioner Jorge L. Fors, Jr.
Vanessa Torres*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	E	P	P	P	E	Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez
Alexis Ehrenhaft	-	-	-	P	P	P	-	P	P	P	P	E	City Manager Peter Iglesias
Joanne Meagher	-	-	-	P	P	P	-	P	P	P	P	P	Board-as-a-Whole

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

STAFF: Warren Adams, Historic Preservation Officer, Kara Kautz, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer, Colette Worm, Docent Coordinator

RECORDING SECRETARY/PREPARATION OF MINUTES: Nancy Kay Lyons, Administrative Assistant

The meeting was called to order by Chair Meagher at 8:40 a.m. and attendance was stated for the record.

OPENING STATEMENT

Chair Meagher opened the meeting reading the following: "In 1924 George topped off a truly remarkable year with the release of a large new brochure entitled "Coral Gables Miami Riviera" authored by Marjory Stoneman Douglas. It was not a typical sales promotion, but a romantic interpretation, more like a beautiful essay by a gifted writer. She wrote 'after the gateways and plazas, the houses and buildings grew - and literally they seemed to grow - because each house, each shop, each structure has the sense of intimate belonging which only comes from loving foresight'."

APPROVAL OF ABSENCES:

A motion was made by Ms. Lam and seconded by Ms. Seipp to excuse the absences of Vanessa Torres & Alexis Ehrenhaft. The motion was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Ms. Seipp and seconded by Ms. Lam to approve the minutes of September 13, 2021. The motion was unanimously approved.

DOCENT COORDINATOR REPORT:

Ms. Worm provided updates on: the fire alarm, presence of snakes and rodents, pest control, the removal of homeless person's blankets, installation of AT&T fiber, air-conditioning units, trash/recycling pick-up, flagpole light replacement, updating the first-aid kits, replacement of the faucet in the men's restroom, needing to have the rugs adjusted, the first-floor toilet flaking has been fixed by the plumber, the DAR will be helping Ms. Worm polish the silver tea set, the avocado tree at the entrance to the driveway was removed. She also reported the following:

1. **Credit Card Machine:** Issue has been deferred as docents are hesitant to use machines.
2. **Photos:** An employee from Communications and Public Affairs took photographs of the Merrick House and we now have stock photos of every room and all the important items in the house.
3. **Stats for September:** \$355 collected, of that \$50 was a donation from a docent in honor of Laura Yusko and \$28 were tips received by the docents. 61 visitors toured the house with twice as many visiting on a Sunday versus a Saturday. Miami Pioneers and Natives of Dade had a private tour. Ms. Worm is in conversation with the Historical Preservation Association of Coral Gables for a private tour.

Ms. Kautz noted that the avocado tree at the end of the driveway was diseased and was removed before it spread to other trees. Chair Meagher noted that the use of the poison boxes is not recommended due to the danger to predators eating the

poisonous rodent. They are trying to create a stronger relationship between Pelican Harbor and the City to address this issue and she was hopeful that at some point the city would stop using the poison boxes. She also noted that a tree in the parking lot has a vine on it.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **DAR:** At the last meeting, the DAR requested to hold meetings at the house but stated that the cost was prohibitive. Ms. Kautz advised that Risk Management was not in favor of waiving the insurance requirement. It was suggested that they pull one policy to cover all five meetings, rather than five separate policies, which would provide a cost savings to them. Ms. Kautz said she emailed Dorothy Thomson and Ms. Worm had forwarded it to the Regent. If they wanted to move forward, they would pay the rental fee, which has not increased, and the decision to waive the \$500 security deposit was within the boards' capability.

A motion was made by Ms. Seipp and seconded by Ms. Lam and Ms. Reese to approve the waiver of the security deposit. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Kautz stated that the DAR would still need to submit the rental application with the dates and times of the meetings and any requirements that they might have.

2. **Villagers Grant:** Chair Meagher said she had submitted the Villagers Grant application for various pieces of art to be preserved. They had estimates from 2014 for the restoration of Althea's oil paintings. She had ranked her request in the grant based on necessity of restoration. The request is for \$7,159.04 for a total of four paintings. The Villagers could choose to fund all, or a portion of the items requested.
3. **Doc Dammers Event:**
 - a) **Auction Items:** Chair Meagher said that the Historical Resources and Cultural Arts Department will be supplying an auction item. She showed the board a sample of the crate that she had decorated to look like one of the Merrick plantations crates.
 - b) **Publicity:** Chair Meagher said she had sent a list to the board on the 7th of all the places she had gotten the word out to. She told everyone to watch for Christine Mayo's column in the Miami Herald on the 15th. She urged everyone to go on the City's Instagram and Facebook pages to see the items posted. Notices had already appeared in Commission Fors' and the Mayor's newsletters and would also be coming out in Commissioner Mena's newsletter. Commissioner Anderson and Commissioner Menendez would be putting it on their social media. Coral Gables Magazine will advertise the event both in print and in their e-magazine.
 - c) **Auction:** There are 42 auction items. Chair Meagher has reached out to the Colonnade and Books 'N Books and will follow up. Villager Linda Zoller donated a signed second edition of Marjory Stoneman Douglas's "River of Grass." They had found a newspaper article on Marjory from 1952 folded in the book. It will be framed to go with the book. The book still had a price of \$3.50 written on it which would add value. Chair Meagher said she had calls into Mitchell Kaplan and a book dealer in Miami to help her put a value on the item. The item would be presented in a case to prevent people from flipping through it. She also mentioned that the illustrator of the book was Robert Fink, Denman Fink's son. She was working on getting all the items on the auction site and open the bidding a couple days before the event. Chair Meagher said that they were still in need of restaurant certificates. Alexis and Bruce Ehrenhaft will be bringing antique furniture for the auction.
 - d) **Arrival of Personnel:** Set-up will begin at noon. Chair Meagher asked everyone to dress in 20s style and wear their name tags.
 - e) **Water Delivery:** Ms. Seipp asked when Shine Water should deliver the water. Chair Meagher said that they could deliver it days before and we would provide the ice.
 - f) **Guest Arrival:** Guests would show up at the Museum at 4 pm so the board members could be greeters. Ms. Seipp will be at the Venetian Pool.
 - g) **Characters:** John Meagher would be dressed as Shutts or Bowen and would be gatekeeper at the Venetian Pool along with two friends. Commissioner Menendez will play Doc Dammers, Former Mayor Don Slesnick will play George Merrick, and Commissioner Anderson would play Althea at the event.
 - h) **Logistics:** Chair Meagher and the board discussed the logistics of registration, trolleys parking and routes, food at each venue, and the flow of people into each location. They also discussed the use of a bell to announce when the trolleys leave a venue and where the board members would be during the event. The route would start at the Museum head to the Venetian Pool, then to the Biltmore, then to Merrick House and then back to the Museum. They would spread out the people so that no one place would be empty. All venues should close at 6 pm, so that by 6:30 pm everyone would be back at the Museum. People could still buy tickets right up to the event. The bar is being provided by MG Developers.

- i) **Bidding and Registration:** The bidding would be done only by cell phone. Pre-registration was not necessary, and guests could put their credit card in the system when they made their bid.
- j) **Merrick House Venue:** Christopher Harold will play the piano inside the Merrick House and recorded 1920s music will be playing on the porch. There will be a postcard exhibit that includes actual postcards, a poster of the postcard story that appeared in Coral Gables Magazine last summer, and a poster of historic photos of the interior of Doc Dammers' house.
- k) **Venetian Pool Venue:** Two bathing beauties will be at the pool and Juan Areco and his partner will be playing violins. There will be three big posters related to the Venetian Pool.
- l) **The Biltmore Venue:** The Biltmore is all set, but Ms. Seipp and Chair Meagher will coordinate with them.
- m) **Museum Venue:** The Jazz Survivors Trio is providing the music. Doc Dammers programs will be in the lobby. Chair Meagher requested board members to be at the door when people leave to hand them a program. The Villagers will have a table to sell their items.
- n) **Tickets and Gift Certificates:** Ms. Seipp said that she was concerned that they had not sold enough tickets. She said she would take flyers to Books 'N Books, Liberty Caffé and St. Phillips. She stated that they needed restaurants and she would go to Dob B's and Bachour and request gift certificates. Ms. Reese said she would go to Zucca. Ms. Lam said she would send the flyer to the Crime Watch group, the Women's Club, the Garden Club, the Music Club, and the Historic Preservation Association. Chair Meagher said she had sent the flyer to all the Sweetheart Bird organizations. Colette said she could send the flyer to City employees. Ms. Kautz said that she could not send out a Citywide email and suggested that she speak to Martha Pantin first.
- o) **Requests from Historic:** Ms. Kautz asked if there was anything specific that was needed from the Department, so they could assist.
- p) **Masks:** Masks are required inside the Merrick House and on the trolleys. They are not required in the Biltmore or outside the Museum.

4. **Holiday Open House:**

- The Holiday Open House will take place on Sunday, December 12th from 1:00 to 4:00, with Santa visiting at 3:00.
- a) **Vendors:** Chair Meagher asked Ms. Lam to send out emails to the vendors to participate.
 - b) **Masks:** They were required to follow City mandates, so anyone over two years old had to wear a mask in the house. It was suggested that Santa wear a clear shield/mask and instead of kids sitting on his lap he could be standing at the fireplace, or the kids would stand next to him when he was sitting. Ms. Lam said she would buy cotton masks for small children.
 - c) **Treats:** Treats should be in individual bags.
 - d) **Symphonettes & Kids Crafts:** Chair Meagher said the Symphonettes were on hand to volunteer, and she asked them to come up with the kid's craft. Ms. Seipp said she would cover the expenses for the supplies.
 - e) **Officers from PAL:** Ms. Lam said they were prepared to volunteer again.
 - f) **Mailbox:** Ms. Lam said she would bring Santa's Mailbox.
 - g) **Carolers:** Chair Meagher asked Ms. Reese to contact the carolers to perform at 1:30.
 - h) **Vendors and Food:** Vendors would be asked to donate if they made a profit. Ms. Kautz said she would contact the coffee vendor. It was suggested to have juice and water instead of the popcorn and snow cones. Ms. Lam said she would do goody bags.
 - i) **Santa:** Chair Meagher said she would ask John Adams to be Santa again this year.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

DISCUSSION ITEMS: None.

CITY COMMISSION ITEMS: None.

ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY: None

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:53 am.

Respectfully submitted,



Warren Adams
Historic Preservation Officer