

**CORAL GABLES MERRICK HOUSE GOVERNING BOARD MEETING**  
**Meeting Minutes of November 13, 2023, 8:30 a.m.**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Coral Gables, Florida 33134**

MEMBERS	D 22	J 23	F 23	M 23	A 23	M 23	J 23	J 23	A 23	S 23	O 23	N 23	D 23	APPOINTED BY
Bonnie Seipp		E	P	P	P	E	N	N	P	E	E	P		Vice-Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Carmen Cason	N	P	E	P	P	P	O	O	P	E	P	P	N	Mayor Vince Lago
Mary Beth Burke	O	E	P	P	P	P			P	P	E	P	O	Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez
Margaret Groves	M						M	M		E	E	E	M	Commissioner Melissa Castro
Alexis Ehrenhaft	E	P	P	P	P	P	E	E	P	E	P	P	E	City Manager Peter Iglesias
Genevieve Orr	E	*	*	*	*	*	T	T	P	P	P	E	E	Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Joanne Meagher	I					P	I	I	P	E	P	P	I	Board-as-a-Whole
	N	P	P	P	P		N	N					G	
	G						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, 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 by Chairperson Meagher at 8:37 A.M.

**ROLL CALL**

**A motion was made by Ms. Meagher, seconded by Ms. Cason, to excuse the absence of Ms. Seipp, Ms. Cason, Ms. Groves, Ms. Meagher, and Ms. Ehrenhaft from the meeting on September 11, 2023.**

**The motion passed (Ayes: 5; Nays: 0.)**

**OPENING STATEMENT:**

*That autumn, Solly returned to Yale, Allie, to Lebanon Valley College. Before the school year ended, she left for her parents' home in Springdale, where she delivered their first child – George Edgar – on June 2, 1886, in the same bedroom her brother Denman had arrived in six years earlier.*

*Later that summer, the new Solomon Merrick family would settle into the parsonage at Gaines Congregational Church (halfway between Rochester and Niagara Falls in New York), where he had accepted a \$600 a year position as “paster and teacher” (Parks, 38). Gaines, a quaint rural community known for its apples, provided George with an idyllic chapter in his childhood. He never knew a stranger. Close knit residents measured their days by the seasons. Church events and sermons reflected agricultural themes. Solomon planted what George called an “orderly, thrifty, flourishing garden” (Parks, 39). After living in Gaines, he spent the rest of his days in search of an apple as tasty as those enjoyed in boyhood.*

*Bright and curious, George loved the stories sprinkled throughout his fathers' sermons. He attended Sunday School, two Sunday services, weekly prayer meetings, missionary society events, and church socials. A sensitive, compassionate lad, he welcomed sisters Ethel in July 1888 and Almeda (“Medie”) one year later, becoming a doting and protective brother. Active and outdoorsy, he relished running barefoot through the fields with friends- catching frogs, gathering blackberries, jumping in “the ole’ swimming hole.”*

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

1. Merrick House Governing Board Meeting Minutes October 9, 2023

**A motion was made by Ms. Burke, seconded by Ms. Cason, to approve the minutes with amendments for the meeting on October 9, 2023.**

**The motion passed (Ayes: 5; Nays: 0.)**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Merrick House Activity Report October 2023

Ms. Gay Bondurant 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.

In addition, Ms. Bondurant notified the Board that one of the artists that will be submitting a proposal for the Commemorative Centennial Artwork came to visit the house. There are +/- 10 artists that will be submitting proposals to be reviewed by the Arts Advisory Panel and Cultural Development Board. The submittals are due in late January. Site for the artwork will be outside City Hall in Merrick Park.

2. Porch Table – Restored and located on the East porch, is now available.
3. Public Works – Delighted at all the work happening at the Merrick House thanks to Deena Bell and Ralph Rodriguez, including new plantings, sprinkler repairs, cleaning windows and doors and more. Board will work on putting together a maintenance list to share with staff to create a regular schedule.
4. Gramophone & Piano – Ms. Meagher will be contacting a gentleman that submitted a proposal to St. Philips’s School organ. Perhaps he can suggest a repair person if unavailable to do it himself.
5. Pond – Pond Doctors in the works, working on the insurance requirements.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

1. 100 Voices, October 22, 2023 – approximately 25 attendees. Dona Spain was the speaker.
2. Coral Gables Garden Club – Will be decorating the House on November 30th. The Merrick House board member will meet to decorate the tree on December 5<sup>th</sup>.
3. Villagers Holiday Tour, December 9, 2023 – Anyone working at the Merrick House will be able to attend the Holiday Tour at no charge. Schedule will be finalized for volunteers and any last minute details circulated through staff.
4. Holiday Open House, December 17, 2023 – Vendors are still confirming, there will be less than last year. The flyer will be emailed out to the mailing list, staff will work with the Communications Department to find a mailing service. Board members will provide cookies and materials for the kids craft table.
5. Villagers Grant Application – Ms. Ehrenhaft suggested a vendor that lives in Tampa but was in the area to work on the painting. She was able to spend time with the artwork to determine what needs to be done.
6. Staff Tours – Discussions were had on inviting the Public Works department heads to tour Merrick House. Tours would begin in Spring.

7. Craig Johnson – Memorial plaque to arrive by end of year. Once the plaque is received we can coordinate a date with the Board and Public Works staff for a memorial event.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Garden Tea - Want to schedule for March 10, 2024. Suggested theme, “old fashioned kitchen implements, old fashioned cookbooks.” The date was confirmed by the majority of the board members present.
2. Friends of the Garden - Ms. Meagher would like to have a very informal event called “Althea’s Garden Brigade.” This is for minor work on the garden. This is an effort to keep the garden clean. Staff will find out if a liability waiver would be necessary.
3. Coral Gables High School – Ms. Seipp to reach out and see if the high school garden club or students would be interested in visiting and learning about the Merrick House.
4. Sunroom – Ceiling is getting worse. Approvals for the Professional Service Agreement are underway.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:** None.

**CITY COMMISSION ITEMS:** None.

**ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY:** None.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:34 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Anna C. Pernas

Historic Preservation Officer