

# **City of Coral Gables**

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



## **Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, September 30, 2020**

**4:00 PM**

**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

**Senior Citizens Advisory Board**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**@4:02pm**

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:**

**Celia Suarez**

**Jane Mass**

**Jim Berlin**

**Joan Valdes**

**Julian Sevillano**

**Richard Thurer**

**Absent:**

**Edward English**

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**A motion to pass the September Meeting Minutes was made by Jim Berlin and second by Julian Sevillano. Motion to approve was passed unanimously.**

## **PERSONAL APPEARANCES**

The September board meeting began with guest speaker Fire Chief De La Rosa speaking to the board on City wide closings, county mandates and suggestions of operations on COVID related matters and our current hurricane season. He also included in his overview the roles our Community Recreation staff played with helping to reach out to our elderly residents in order to conduct needs assessments. Phone calls were made to over 600 residents provided that this demographic is not well versed in social media and other computer communication options. From these calls, our residents' needs included food and grocery delivery services and community testing centers.

Fire Chief De La Rosa also went over hospital/testing center case numbers and peak numbers of cases in our community. County wide numbers of positivity rate need to be below 5% in order to open the City back up with limitations. Coral Gables is under that 5%. Restrictions will include having to wear a mask, how many can be seated in restaurants, limited outdoor spaces usage. Any effects after opening will be seen 10-14 days after the implantation or removal of any kind of restrictions.

De La Rosa went over hurricane preparations for the City and how, if needed, we plan on operating our Emergency Operations Center using the guidelines in order to protect staff from COVID illnesses.

He also informed the board that the new state of the art public safety building is nearing completion. Police and Fire will be in the new building located north of Alhambra.

Jim Berlin asked the Chief what the current number of cases and deaths due to COVID are in the City. De La Rosa shared that 5.26% ~ 2,683 cases have been recorded within Coral Gables. However, these cases are determined by zip code so any cases recorded within bordering communities that share the same zip code will also be counted towards any Coral Gables statistics.

Richard asked to verify the testing process for employees to return to work. De La Rosa explained that If staff was sick and cannot be tested, they would need to self-isolate for 14 days. If they have tested positive for COVID, they will follow the same isolation process, and in order to return to work they would need to test negative twice. He also went over a series of What-if scenarios that could affect staff reporting to work. If the employee was able to work from home, then those options were utilized.

The Chief also shared with the board that the Coral Gables Police and Fire Department participated in a COVID antibody study with the University of Miami to try to identify if any of our workforce had unknowingly been exposed to COVID and were never tested. Results seemed to prove that most of the positive cases had previously know of having COVID.

Jim Berlin asked whether there would be any special procedures for the upcoming elections and voting. Chief De La Rosa explain that besides offering open areas to host voting, all operations will be handled through Miami Dade County.

Celia Suarez asked if any budgetary issues would impact the operations to the Fire department specifically. Chief informed the board that the City has been anticipating shortfalls already and have started internal budget reductions in order to not be affected into the next fiscal year. Hiring of vacant positions have been frozen, budgetary shortfalls have been absurd without having to impact services. Park Director Fred Couceyro added that cost reductions in Parks did not affect services because services have been postponed. Soft cuts or money that is being held to see if revenues bounce back, will be returned to the department when needed.

Celia Suarez wanted to put on record that if any budgetary cuts were to affect the Fire or Parks departments and their services that they are currently providing, she will make herself available to protest any proposed cuts. The services that both departments have been providing during this pandemic have given her hope in a time of despair. Julian Sevillano also wanted to give his thanks to both departments.

In closing, Chief De La Rosa wanted to inform the board that the City continues to offer home bound testing for residents not able to leave their homes.

## **SUPERVISOR'S REPORT**

Fred Couceyro spoke to the board about new county emergency orders allowing the re-opening of restaurants, playgrounds, parks, and sports. Some language was also released on adult day cares so City management will have a meeting later today in order to disseminate the information and how to implement.

Jim Berlin asked about SHINE and Mrs. Lowell at the Youth Center. Fred notified the board since the Youth Center is still closed; SHINE has not been able to meet. As the center starts to re-open, we will reach out to the organization in order to make sure guidelines are met.

Richard asked if any of the facilities' air handling systems have been modified. Fred said that City did meet with Public Works and did a survey of all systems and certain older buildings were cleaned and updated, but most of air systems are newer.

Katherine gave her supervisor's report with giving a brief overview of upcoming events. Among those events was the previously discussed Annual Art Show. She spoke with assistant director Carolina Vester to come up with a different way to showcase the art pieces in the center with adhering to new CDC guidelines for group gathers. Katherine will reach out to the board when a plan has been solidified.

The Health Fair in conjunction with Baptist Health might become a virtual event much like the Senior Day event that took later this summer. Baptist also shared flu shot information that Katherine will share with the board. Katherine shared with the board photos of the new mirrors that were installed in the Great Room for the AAC's exercise classes.

Starting October 1st, all board meetings must meet quorum in person. The AAC and City Hall Chambers will be used for board members to meet and to also share the meeting via Zoom. If the executive orders change, the board will be notified. Richard Thurer suggested meeting in an outdoor space. Katherine also mentioned to the board that Edward English will rejoin the meetings once meetings are held in person again. He has had computer issues.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

- a. How low local participation in Census could impact Gables seniors.

**ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY**

The next meeting date is set for November 5th at the AAC unless the executive orders are extended then which our meeting will be held via Zoom.

Jane Mass asked for assistance from the Board to help highlight events to include in the Annual Report. She will submit when completed.

**ADJOURNMENT**

at 5:00pm

**NOTE**