

# City of Coral Gables

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



## Meeting Minutes

Friday, November 19, 2021

8:30 AM

Draft Minutes

Police & Fire HQ - 2151 Salzedo Street, Community Meeting Room

A

### School Community Relations Committee

*Chairperson Ariel Fernandez*  
*Vice Chairperson Sam Joseph*  
*Board Member Erin Anding*  
*Board Member Winnie Chang*  
*Board Member Sandy Dimitris*  
*Board Member Carmen Manrara Cartaya*  
*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, November 19, 2021, 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: 786 635 1003 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.

Draft

## CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 8:33 a.m.

## ROLL/QUORUM CALL

**Present:** 8 - Slesnick, Watson, Dimitris, Joseph, Chang, Fernandez, Anding and Board Member Ward Sando

**Excused:** 1 - Manrara Cartaya

**Attachments:** [Sign-In Sheet.pdf](#)

## A. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

School Community Relations Committee Meeting of October 15, 2021.

**Attachments:** [Cover Memo.docx](#)  
[Draft School Community Relations Committee 10-15-21 Minutes.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Joseph, seconded by Board Member Slesnick, that this matter be approved. The motion passed by the following vote.

**Yeas:** 8 - Slesnick, Watson, Dimitris, Joseph, Chang, Fernandez, Anding and Board Member Ward Sando

**Excused:** 1 - Manrara Cartaya

## B. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Daniel Skankiewicz- Mr. Skankiewicz is currently the Capital Improvement Chair for the PTA at George Washington Carver Elementary. Mr. Skankiewicz discussed the portable at GW Carver Elementary School stating it does not look stable and no longer serves the number of enrolled students. Mr. Skankiewicz mentioned, he and Ms. Estelle Lockhart would be attending School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas' office hours at City Hall to discuss this issue.

Vice Chairperson Sam Joseph - Mentioned issues with temporary lunch tents erected during the COVID-19 pandemic and how time is running on how long the tents could remain up.

## C. NEW BUSINESS

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

School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas updates the Committee on COVID-19 protocols within schools.

- Masks are no longer mandatory at Miami-Dade Public Schools but are still encouraged when indoors.
- Students/employees who have been exposed to COVID-19 but are asymptomatic are no longer required to quarantine.
- Students/employees who test positive are required to self-isolate.

School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas gave an update regarding the lunch tents at Carver Middle School raised during public comment, stating that region personnel are addressing this issue and it will have a positive outcome.

School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas' upcoming events in District 6 Schools.

- Annual turkey giveaway at Coral Gables Preparatory Academy on Monday, November 22.
- The first in-person town hall meeting is on Monday, December 6, focusing on the SW and South Miami area. Coral Gables area will be the focus of the second town hall, dates pending.
- Toy giveaway event on Saturday, December 11.
- Satellite office at Coral Gables City Hall on December 2.
- Workshop regarding redistricting on December 8 at 9:30 a.m.

**C-2 Publicizing for Coral Gables the US News and World Report ranking of Sunset Elementary and West Lab as premier schools (Facilitated by Carmen Manrara Cartaya, Board Member)**

A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Joseph, seconded by Board Member Slesnick, that this matter be deferred. The motion passed.

**C-3 iPad Donations to District 6 schools (Facilitated by Sam Joseph, Vice Chair)**

iPad distributions - 4 iPads to Francis Tucker elementary, 2 to Fairchild and 2 to Carver elementary.

Attachments: [iPad Donation Pictures.pptx](#)

**D. OLD BUSINESS**

Time Certain 8:45 a.m. (Agenda Item D-1)

**D-1 Discussion with Mayor Lago Continued (Facilitate by Ariel Fernandez, Chair)**

•Request for a School Community Relations Committee budget.

Chair Ariel Fernandez mentioned that a budget for this board is needed to facilitate urgent needs related to education in the City that may arise during the school year as well as to cover initiatives put into place by the board, e.g., teacher awards and literacy festivals. Chair Fernandez also suggested that this budget could come from developers funding these programs through their projects.

Mayor Lago mentioned that he has no problem allocating funds to this board. Still, he would like to clarify that the City has lost revenue due to the pandemic. The City is also implementing new services like extending the trolley hours to cover evenings and Saturdays. The Mayor asks the board to be patient and allow the year to end to reevaluate this request.

The Mayor requests a list of boards with budgets to review.

•What is a need or blind spot that the Mayor thinks the SCRC can assist with?

Mayor Lago request needs or blind spots to be brought to his attention via his weekly office hours on Fridays 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., email or call.

•Discuss sustainability in Coral Gables schools.

Vice Chairperson Sam Joseph mentioned Green Apple Schools and STEAM.

Board Member Cecilia D. Slesnick mentioned implementing LEED like materials and solar panels to school renovations and implementing gardens for beautification and possibly a vegetable garden. She mentioned chipping paint at Gables Preparatory and how implementing gardens could assist with beautification.

School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas states she has visited Coral Gables Preparatory Academy and has documented several issues like the one Board Member Slesnick mentioned and others, such as the auditorium. The District is working on addressing these issues, but they have encountered problems obtaining materials. School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas also mentioned her desire to have Mayor Lago join her at Coral Gables Preparatory Academy to address the historic windows in the cafeteria that are not currently in the renovation plan.

School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas informed the committee of the School Board's sustainability task-force that will be providing recommendations on how to best address the issue of sustainability. Regarding Green Schools, School Board Member Rojas states that some schools have solar panels; this issue is complex, and research is being conducted on implementing this initiative.

•Discuss crossing guards at Coral Gables High School.

School Board passed item H3 titled Crossing Guards in High Schools, having the Miami-Dade Public Schools approach municipalities to discuss this item.

• West Lab Expansion by City of Coral Gables.

Mayor Lago is in support of expanding West Lab, but the cost needs to be considered. The Mayor requests a meeting with School Board Member and City staff to discuss. This issue could be placed on the Commission Agenda for January to gauge interest to engage in negotiations with the School Board. The Mayor recommended that the School Community Relations Committee prepare

for the January Commission Meeting discussion.

Board Member Cecilia D. Slesnick stated that West Lab's Homework Policy attracts parents to this school. Why can't other schools in Coral Gables adopt a similar policy? Board Member Slesnick also asked, how many seats would be added by a West Lab Expansion?

Additional questions from the public.

•What is the City doing to promote public schools in the City, especially during the Oct 1-Jan 15 magnet application window? (Estelle Lockhart)

•How can the city improve communication to the community as it relates to Coral Gables Senior High School as an excellent public high school option. (Jackie Kellogg)

Mayor Lago requests ideas on how to promote public schools in the City effectively.

## E. ONGOING BUSINESS

### E-1 SIP Committee Member Assignments Review (Facilitated by Ariel Fernandez, Chair)

Attachments: [SIP Descriptions](#)  
[SIP Descriptions 2022 Updates Proposed by Vice Chair.docx](#)

This Agenda Item was Continued

### E-2 Update on Redistricting (Facilitated by Ariel Fernandez, Chair)

Mayor Lago wants to provide an update to the Commission and requested information on the steps taken and outcomes.

### E-3 Update on self-contained autism classrooms (Jennifer Sando, Board Member)

Mayor Lago mentioned facilitating a meeting with County Commissioner Raquel Regalado, School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas, County Commissioner Rebeca Sosa, and District ESCE Director Angie Torres.

School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas mentioned she had been actively working on this item alongside personnel within the district to obtain data to move forward adequately. Some of that data is as follows; Within Coral Gables, there are 16 students with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) in separate class settings – 8 students in Kindergarten through Five Grade, 4 students in Sixth through Eighth Grade, and 4 students in Ninth through Twelfth Grade. That number goes up to 38 to include nearby schools - 20 students in Kindergarten through Five Grade, 11 students in Sixth through Eighth Grade, and 7 students in Ninth through Twelfth Grade.

School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas also mentioned she had received the information submitted by Board Member Sando, which she forwarded to the Chief Academic Officer to research the matter and address concerns.

Attachments: [Draft for Self-Contained Autism Classroom in a City of Coral Gables Elementary S](#)

A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Joseph, seconded by Board Member Anding, that the following resolution be adopted. Resolution in support of exploring the feasibility of adding a self-contained autism classroom to a coral gables elementary school and designating Jennifer Ward Sando as the point person of this initiative and authorizing her to speak about this initiative to other boards and committees. The motion passed by the following vote.

**Yeas:** 6 - Slesnick, Watson, Joseph, Chang, Fernandez and Anding

**Absent:** 1 - Dimitris

**Abstentions:** 1 - Board Member Ward Sando

**Excused:** 1 - Manrara Cartaya

**E-4 General Updates (Facilitated by Naomi Levi Garcia, Staff Liaison)**

An update was given on crossing guards at the high school level. Staff Liaison Naomi Levi Garcia stated that a crossing at Coral Gables High School is not currently recommended. However, the Coral Gables Police Department will be stationing an officer in front of Coral Gables Upper Academy to observe traffic patterns and crossing paths. If they find that a crossing guard is warranted, a position is currently budgeted and filled.

**F. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Vice Chairperson Sam Joseph: Miami International Book Fair Street Fair  
November 18 – November 20.

Request to include upcoming events under the announcement portion of the agenda for future meetings.

**F-1 Next SCRC Meeting - Friday, December 17, 2021**

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

Discussion on moving the January 2022 SCRC meeting to January 14, 2022.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 10:48 a.m.

**NOTE**