



CORAL GABLES MERRICK HOUSE GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2022, 8:30 a.m.
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, 2nd Floor, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

Historical Resources &
Cultural Arts

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FLORIDA 33134

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MEMBERS	D 21	J 22	F 22	M 22	A 22	M 22	J 22	J 22	A 22	S 22	O 22	N 22	APPOINTED BY
Ana Lam	-	P	P	P	#	P	N	N	P	P	P	P	Mayor Vince Lago
Barbara Reese	-	P	P	P	P	P	O	O	E	P	E	E	Vice-Mayor Michael Mena
Bonnie Seipp	-	P	E	P	P	P	M	M	P	E	P	P	Commissioner Rhonda Anderson
Carmen Cason	-	P	P	P	P	A	E	E	E	P	P	P	Commissioner Jorge L. Fors, Jr.
Mary Beth Burke	-	P	P	P	P	P	E	E	P	E	P	P	Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez
Alexis Ehrenhaft	-	P	E	P	P	E	T	T	E	P	E	E	City Manager Peter Iglesias
Joanne Meagher	-	P	P	P	P	P	N	N	P	P	P	P	Board-as-a-Whole

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; Gay Bondurant, Docent Coordinator.

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

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Meagher at 8:47 a.m. and attendance was stated for the record.

Everyone introduced themselves.

OPENING STATEMENT:

Chair Meagher read an excerpt about the Biltmore Hotel from the Miami Daily New and Metropolis on February 19, 1924.

Martin L. Hampton had drawn plans for the spread. It was estimated that the hotel would be built at a cost of \$1,250,000. There would be 350 rooms in the hotel which would have a high tower, and architectural adornment that fit into the Merrick overall plan from the beginning. The next news bulletin concerning the new hotel and country club came in a grand manner on November 25, 1924, when he invited two hundred influential businessmen to attend a dinner at the Coral Gables Country Club to introduce his new partner in the project, none other than John McEntee Bowman, top man in the hotel field. With Bowman came his own architects, Schultze and Weaver.

Bowman was the daddy of a string of Biltmore hotels, the first of which opened in New York City on December 30, 1913. It was followed in 1922 by Westchester Biltmore Country Club, Rye, N.Y.; next came the Lost Angeles Biltmore. Soon to come were the Sevilla Biltmore in Havana, Cuba and the Atlanta Biltmore.

The Biltmore would be the “tallest building in Florida” at 315 feet with a curved ramp to lift it up off the flat pineland for a grand entrance above street level.

George Merrick was not alone in his appreciation of towers. Miami along with other parts of the nation was mad about towers and by the time the Biltmore opened on January 15, 1926, after ten months of round-the-clock activity, there were three of them. You could stand in the Tower of the Roney Plaza at Miami Beach and gaze across Biscayne Bay to view the Tower of the Miami Daily News and Metropolis and the beyond – clear out to Coral Gables where the Biltmore Tower gleamed.

One way or another, they were all patterned aft the fifteenth century Giralda Tower of Seville, Spain – and small wonder. The same team of Leonard Schultze and S. Fullerton Weaver had drawn the plans for all three of them.

APPROVAL OF ABSENCES:

A motion was made by Ms. Lam and seconded by Ms. Reese to approve the absence of Mrs. 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 October 10, 2022, with corrections.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Chair Meagher introduced Dana Pezoldt, Regent of the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution).

Ms. Pezoldt, introduced herself and stated the following:

1. Their home was the Merrick House until COVID and since then they have been nomadic travelers holding meetings from porch to porch.
2. They procured a Tulip Insurance Program that was cost effective.
3. They would like to hold a meeting at the Merrick House on Tuesday, December 6, 2022, on the porch with refreshments.
4. One of the vice-president generals from the national chapter, a former State Regent and leader of the organization will be speaking on Plume wars in the Everglades at the turn of the century.
5. She invited the Board to attend.
6. They were looking to have 3 or 4 meetings at the Merrick House.

Ms. Pezoldt responded to questions as follows:

1. Setup: The last time they had used the porch on the east side, with chairs lined up and they met in the corner. There was a podium, a few chairs off to the front for the speakers, and a DAR & United States flag on the dais. 40 people were present, this should be the same.
2. Upcoming Meetings: They meet the second Tuesday of each month. They may be looking at the second Tuesday in January, February, April and possible May, but haven't figured out the speakers. The only month would probably not be March. She would coordinate with Ms. Kautz.
3. Schedule: She will submit a schedule to be approved by the Board.
4. Invitations: Board members were invited to attend.
5. Fees: If the board would waive the \$500 rental fee as before they will pay the \$50 per meeting.
6. Podium & Microphone: A podium is at the house and Ms. Kautz will provide the microphone with speaker.

A motion was made by Ms. Seipp and seconded by Ms. Lam to approve the event as submitted, waiving the security deposit for the DAR to use the Merrick House for the December 6th, 2022, meeting.

The motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Ms. Lam and seconded by Ms. Cason to approve any scheduled meetings for the DAR from January through May 2023, as submitted in a schedule, and to waive the deposit and charge only the \$50 fee for the meetings on the second Tuesday of the month.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Pezoldt said they were working with the Miami Military Museum and the Coral Gables Chapter of the DAR to get a historic marker for Chapman Field, which comes to the border of Coral Gables, Pinecrest, and unincorporated Dade county all in one little triangle. It was a World War I & II landing field. Miami-Dade County Parks is reopening the park.

Chair Meagher said that docent Tom Abel, docent who had joined during the pandemic and did a lot of research on the Merrick Family has passed away.

HOUSE REPORT:

1. Coral Gables Merrick House Report: Chair Meagher read the Coral Gables Merrick House Report for October 2022 (attached).
2. Pressure Cleaning of Ramp: Completed.
3. Private Tour for Ukraine Students: Chair Meagher, Ms. Bondurant, Ms. Perez & Mr. Schubert hosted 30 students ranging in age from 6 to 17 from Ukraine, coordinated by a professor at Barry University. They were given a private tour and introduced to the concept of grapefruit and guava by serving grapefruit juice and guava crackers.
4. Phone and Fire Alarm: There are 4 phone lines to the house, so the fire alarm is never inactivated.
5. Fiber to the House: IT has once again started to work on this.
6. Cell Phone: Working on getting a cell phone for the docent.
7. Repair Work on Side Perimeter Wall: Rockers will be repairing the wall. The permit is being worked on and work will start in the next couple of weeks.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Imagos for the Arts: Was able to coordinate to have their event at the Coral Gables Museum. The students would not perform at the Coral Gables Open House as the teacher felt they were not ready. They are happy to have an ongoing relationship with the Merrick House.
2. HPACG – Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables Joint Event with the Merrick House – The joint event for “100 Voices” and their Tertulia is scheduled for Sunday, February 12, 2023, at 4:30pm.
3. Maintenance Schedule: Chair Meagher requested to have the Public Works representative meet her and Ms. Kautz at the Merrick House to discuss repairs that need to be done as well as ongoing maintenance. Ms. Kautz said she would follow up with Mr. Adams.
4. Display Key: Has been found in the key box.
5. “100 Voices”: Chair Meagher thanked the Ms. Lam, Ms. Seipp & Ms. Cason for their efforts. Photos would be put on the website. 47 people attended including the board, videographer and docents. 22 from EventBrite, 17 at the door. One of the teachers from Coral Gables Preparatory School attended. Everyone had a good time. The video was sent to the Board members this morning. A gift of a poetry book and notes was given to the speakers. An orchid would be given to Ms. Bondurant.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Hosting the Coral Gables Museum Board: Will take place this Thursday at 6pm. The mission is to continue to foster a partnership between the Museum and the Merrick House Governing Board and Docents to have input on the new exhibit. Elvis and team are amenable to this. Once the Board members confirm their attendance, Chair Meagher said she would create notes for each person as they will be in different parts of the house. It would not be a full tour. Ms. Reese and Ms. Seipp will not be present.
2. Garden Club: Chair Meagher and Ms. Cason will meet with ladies from the garden club on Wednesday to see what décor they have. The contact person for the Garden Club is Ms. Cason and Cathy Sacramento.

3. Tree Decorating and Pricing of Merchandise: Wednesday, December 7, 2022, at 8:30 am.
4. Open House:
 - a. Bell Ringers and Carolers: Are the only performers. Carolers are scheduled from 2:30 to 3:30 pm.
 - b. Santa Claus: John Adams will be Santa Claus and will be dropped off by the Fire Department not before 3:30 pm.
 - c. Santa Presents: Candy Canes.
 - d. Agenda: Ms. Kautz will send a draft agenda to Chair Meagher which is needed for the Special Event Committee.
 - e. Vendors: Are listed on the flyer.
 - f. Mailers: Should be received at the end of this week and out in the mail before Thanksgiving.
 - g. Assignments: Chair Meagher will send out assignments.
 - h. Symphonettes: Chair Meagher will confirm with them.
 - i. Boy Scouts: Chair Meagher will confirm with them.
 - j. Food: Provided by Rita Tennyson.
 - k. Apple Cider: Table will be staffed by Board members and Symphonettes.
5. Ribbon Cutting: Will be held at 1:45pm before the open house. Ms. Kautz will get big scissors & ribbon.
6. "100 Voices": Second Sunday in January. Topic: Postcards.
7. Museum Exhibit: Chair Meagher suggested everyone attend the Dorothy Thompson's exhibit "The one vote that saved the Biltmore".
8. Tea Party: Tentatively set for Sunday, March 19, 2023
9. Donations: Thank you letters need to be sent and Ms. Levasser will process them and then they will be taken to the Merrick House.

DISCUSSION ITEMS: None

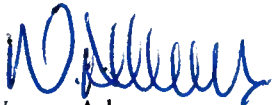
CITY COMMISSION ITEMS: None

ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY: None

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:43 am.

Respectfully submitted,



Warren Adams
Historic Preservation Officer

November 1, 2022

TO: Warren Adams, Historical Resources & Cultural Arts Director, City of Coral Gables
Kara Kautz, Assistant Preservation Officer, City of Coral Gables
Joanne Meagher, Chairperson, Coral Gables Merrick House Governing Board

FROM: Gay Bondurant, Docent Coordinator, Coral Gables Merrick House

RE: October 2022 Monthly Activity Report

October posed some challenges for covering the 5 weekends, 1 special event and 1 special tour. However, "Thanks" to Ms. Meagher and Ms. Burke we did it even with two docents out for medical reasons.

We want to inaugurate the new *Merrick House Matters*, a newsletter for the docents and Governing Board members. Attached, please see proposal for the appearance of the publication. The month got away from me with two docents unavailable.

The house continues to provide technical surprises. On Saturday, October 8, I arrived at the house to find the security system malfunctioning resulting in my inability to open the back door. Not being successful in locating any backup authority, ultimately, I called the CG Police who called Ms. Kautz and finally Public Works was contacted. Ms. Kautz responded and was able to enter through the side door. We had to turn away 7 visitors at 1: 00 pm as we did not know when the issue would be corrected. By 2:00pm we were able to open for tours.

The phone remained non-functional for most of the month. However, as of Sunday Oct. 29, 2022, it seemed to be operating properly and the greeting message was updated.

There continues to be a fault on the phone line which carries the fire alarm. I am reporting this on the docent activity summary as the fault causes a continuous beeping sound if not turned off. It sometimes comes on during tours. At other times it is sounding when we arrive to open the house. It can be turned off but on occasion it will come on again. It is very disconcerting when a tour is in progress. We note these issues were mentioned in the September Monthly Activity Report.

There has been no feedback regarding the **Points to Ponder**, also in the September Report.

SUMMARY OF TOUR/SALES ACTIVITIES FOR OCTOBER 2022

Number of Visitors for tours: 54 (38 Adults, 13 Seniors, 3 Students +12) **\$334.00 (Inclusive)**
Sales: 2 Poetry Books (*Song of the Wind on a Southern Shore*) \$30.00
1 Postcard: \$1.00
Tips: \$46.00

SUMMARY OF 100 VOICES: SPECIAL EVENT ON OCTOBER 2, 2022

Presentation by Juan Riera: The Miami Postal Service and The Merricks

23 Attended: 14 paid cash = \$70; 3 Paid by Eventbrite \$?; 5 Docents \$0; 1 did not pay=\$0

Submitted by Gay Bondurant, Docent Coordinator
Coral Gables Merrick House