

City of Coral Gables



Meeting Minutes

Friday, April 17, 2026

8:15 AM

<https://coralgables.zoom.us/j/89943974263>

Youth Center - Conference Room

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:17 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present:

**Maite Halley
Richard Smit
Jennifer Marques
Kirk Menendez
Michelle White
Vanessa Gutierrez
Erik Rodriguez**

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MARCH MEETING MINUTES WAS MADE BY BOARD MEMBER RICHARD SMIT AND SECONDED BY BOARD MEMBER KIRK MENENDEZ. ALL IN FAVOR; PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. General Updates.

Director Couceyro provided a detailed update regarding golf course operations and the ongoing transition to a new golf course maintenance contractor. Director Couceyro explained that the new maintenance company will oversee a significant renovation and restoration of all golf course tee boxes, which golfers have reportedly responded to positively.

Director Couceyro also informed the Board that multiple presentations had recently been made before the City Commission regarding department-wide fee adjustments. While fees across several divisions were adjusted, staff noted that golf fees experienced some of the largest increases due to rising operational and maintenance expenses associated with the golf courses.

Director Couceyro explained that the City is continuing efforts to integrate golf memberships into the broader Coral Gables Golf & Country Club membership structure, as originally intended when the City assumed operations of the Country Club.

Director Couceyro reported that the current golf membership structure includes approximately 86 active golf members. These members expressed concerns regarding the elimination of unlimited golf privileges. The proposed membership structure would instead provide a set number of rounds along with discounted rates for additional rounds and Country Club membership benefits.

Director Couceyro presented data indicating that the 86 golf members account for approximately 25% of all golf rounds played annually at the course. Director Couceyro explained that overall course usage has increased dramatically over the past several years, contributing to excessive wear and tear on the nine-hole course.

To support operational concerns, Director Couceyro consulted with golf industry experts and the National Golf Foundation regarding course usage standards. According to those consultations, a nine-hole course exceeding approximately 50,000 rounds annually is considered over-utilized. Director Couceyro stated that Granada Golf Course currently exceeds that threshold significantly, contributing to deterioration of course conditions, particularly at tee boxes.

Director Couceyro further explained that the golf course's shorter layout results in increased wear because players frequently utilize irons and repeatedly strike from similar tee locations. This repeated use has intensified maintenance challenges and operational costs.

Additional discussion focused on three longstanding golf associations that utilize reserved tee times at the course. Director Couceyro explained that the associations have historically operated without formal written agreements despite existing for decades. These associations currently pay fees for access but receive preferred tee times on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays.

The City Commission requested additional information regarding both the golf memberships and the association tee time arrangements. Director Couceyro explained that although extensive operational data had already been presented, Commissioners requested further information regarding individual usage patterns and operational impacts before making final decisions.

As a result, the Commission deferred the matter for further discussion and review at a future meeting.

Director Couceyro also provided updates regarding the soccer programming procurement process. Director Couceyro noted that a provider selection process had recently concluded and that the recommendation would likely move forward to the City Commission for consideration at an upcoming meeting.

Board member Michelle White inquired about when the RFP for baseball would be available. Director Couceyro responded the RFP is not open at this time but that staff will start the process soon. Board Member Michelle White raised concerns regarding feedback received from parents involved in the baseball programming.

Director Couceyro explained that the City's procurement and evaluation process is highly structured and formalized. Requests for proposals are distributed to multiple providers and reviewed by a formal evaluation committee. Committee members independently review submissions, assign preliminary scores, and later participate in a structured evaluation meeting facilitated by Procurement.

Director Couceyro further explained that procurement evaluations include discussions regarding past performance, and that any formal notices of violation or documented operational concerns involving vendors are considered as part of the review process.

Board members asked whether the public has opportunities to provide input during procurement evaluations. Director Couceyro explained that while procurement committee meetings do not typically include public comment periods, residents and participants may submit concerns, complaints, or feedback directly to staff for consideration during the evaluation process.

Director Couceyro provided several updates regarding Adult Activity Center programming and staffing.

The Board was informed that the Adult Activity Center Variety Show would feature approximately 20 performances and would include refreshments and concessions for participants and attendees. Director Couceyro described the event as an opportunity for participants to showcase talents and remain actively engaged in programming.

Additional upcoming events discussed included the Cinco de Mayo Mixer scheduled for May 1, movie programming at the cinema, and the upcoming Literacy Festival

scheduled for May 16.

Director Couceyro also discussed ongoing efforts to secure sponsorship opportunities for department events and programs. Sponsorship discussions currently include potential partnerships related to free swim lesson programming at Venetian Pool.

As part of the Venetian Pool partnership efforts, staff explained that John Bell Construction, which previously completed improvement work at Venetian Pool, may participate in sponsorship efforts connected to free swim lessons and a plaque unveiling ceremony recognizing their contributions.

Director Couceyro additionally provided staffing updates at the Adult Activity Center. Following the retirement of longtime manager Norma, Gregory Walters was promoted to Adult Activity Center Manager. Director Couceyro reported that participants responded positively to the promotion.

Director Couceyro also announced the promotion of Danays Silva, previously a Guest Services Specialist at the Adult Activity Center, to the supervisory position. Director Couceyro expressed confidence in the new leadership team and emphasized the department's continued commitment to innovative and creative programming.

b. Special Events.

Director Couceyro highlighted the annual Egg Hunt event as a major success. Director Couceyro explained that the event operated smoothly and efficiently with no major operational concerns or complaints from attendees. He specifically noted that there were no issues regarding crowd control, egg distribution, or event logistics, which staff viewed as a positive operational accomplishment given the size of the event.

Director Couceyro discussed coordination efforts related to the helicopter egg drop component of the event. Due to windy weather conditions, staff coordinated directly with the helicopter operator prior to the event to ensure safe flight operations and proper execution of the egg drop activities. Despite weather concerns, the event proceeded successfully and safely.

Director Couceyro further explained that the department is now transitioning fully into summer operations and programming. Summer camp preparations, aquatics programming, and pool operations are actively underway across the department. Director Couceyro confirmed that pool operations are now active and that facilities are preparing for increased attendance and usage during the summer season.

Director Couceyro noted that summer operations require significant coordination between programming staff, aquatics personnel, facility staff, and maintenance teams

to ensure facilities remain operational and prepared for increased seasonal activity. Director Couceyro reported that several recent seasonal events concluded successfully, including the Farmers Market and the annual Egg Hunt event. Director Couceyro noted that community participation and feedback for the Farmers Market remained very positive throughout the season.

Director Couceyro also updated the board on the following upcoming special events:

- AAC Variety Show, Friday, April 17th from 1 - 3 p.m.
- AAC Cinco de Mayo Mixer, Friday, May 1st from 2 - 4 p.m.
- A Saturday at the Cinema, Saturday, May 2nd showing "The Getaway"
- Gables Family Literacy Festival, Saturday, May 16 from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. at the Youth Center
- Memorial Day Ceremony, Monday, May 25 at 9 a.m.

c. C.I.P Updates.

Director Couceyro reported that improvements at Phillips Park are progressing well. The new playground installation and synthetic turf areas have significantly improved the appearance and functionality of the park.

Director Couceyro explained that the current phase of improvements includes the relocation of the basketball court into one of the former tennis court areas, allowing the existing basketball court footprint to be converted into two pickleball courts.

Board Member Michelle White inquired about the anticipated timeline for the splash pad portion of the Phillips Park project. Director Couceyro explained that the splash pad and associated building are planned as part of a future second phase of the project. He further noted that the estimated cost for the future phase is approximately \$4.5 million and that the project has not yet been funded.

Director Couceyro also provided updates regarding several additional capital improvement projects currently underway throughout the City. Improvements at the Youth Center include replacement doors and fire-related infrastructure upgrades, with staff recently coordinating meetings with the Fire Department as part of the review process.

Director Couceyro also reported that the Granada Golf Course shelter project is anticipated to begin during the summer pending final contract approvals and contractor selection. Additionally, the Rotary Park and Cooper Park improvement projects are expected to move out for bid in July pending final grant funding approvals.

Director Couceyro further advised the Board that blue light emergency AED poles have been installed at pools and additional recreational facilities as part of ongoing park safety initiatives. As future parks are renovated and new projects are developed, the department plans to continue incorporating blue light poles and flag poles into future park designs whenever feasible.

NEW BUSINESS

OLD BUSINESS

a. 520 University Drive Dog Park

Board Member Richard Smit inquired about the status of the proposed dog park project and requested an update on recent developments.

Director Couceyro provided an overview of the ongoing community engagement and public input process related to the proposed dog park. He explained that staff has compiled feedback received through community meetings, petitions, emails, and public comments submitted by residents and stakeholders. Director Couceyro further noted that staff continues conducting follow-up outreach efforts to clarify the positions of individuals who attended the public meeting but did not formally indicate whether they were in support of or opposed to the project.

Director Couceyro explained that the goal is to provide the City Commission with a thorough and organized summary of all public input prior to the Commission's consideration of the item. He anticipated that the proposed dog park discussion would be presented at one of the upcoming City Commission meetings in May.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Coral Gables Merrick House Chairperson Genevieve Orr presenting upcoming Petals and Pastimes event on Sunday, April 19, from 1 - 4 p.m.

Chairperson Genevieve Orr attended the meeting and formally invited Board members to the upcoming Petals and Pastimes event. She provided an overview of the event activities and distributed informational flyers to the Board.

ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY

Next meeting date is on Thursday, May 14th at 8:15 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 a.m.

NOTE