

# City of Coral Gables

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



## Meeting Minutes

Friday, May 20, 2022

8:30 AM

Draft Minutes

Police and Fire Headquarters, Community Meeting Room

### 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, May 20, 2022, 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: 305-461-6769 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 8:41 a.m.

## ROLL/QUORUM CALL

Board Member Watson moved to allow Chairperson Fernandez to participate via zoom due to COVID exposure. Board Member Slesnick seconded and the motion passed. Board Members Sando and Manrara Cartaya were not present for the vote. Vice Chairperson ran the meeting.

**Present:** 9 - Slesnick, Watson, Dimitris, Joseph, Chang, Fernandez, Manrara Cartaya, Anding and Board Member Ward Sando

## A. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A-1 The School Community Relations Committee Draft Minutes of April 8, 2022.

**Attachments:** [Cover Memo](#)  
[SCRC Draft Minutes - April 8](#)

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

**Yeas:** 7 - Slesnick, Watson, Dimitris, Joseph, Chang, Fernandez and Anding

**Absent:** 2 - Manrara Cartaya and Board Member Ward Sando

## B PUBLIC COMMENTS

Daniel Stankiewicz- Capital Improvement Chair from Little Carver PTA: Media Center roof still is a main concern although it had been patched. Roof tiles are showing water spots and stains, there is a concern there are leaks. Daniel also indicated there are a lot of projects going very well.

School Board Member Rojas states she is happy to see how parents are involved in the schools and expressed further appreciation to the Mayor and the City of Coral Gables for allowing her and her team to have a satellite office at City Hall which gives parents the opportunity to address concerns and issues. Pursuant to the roof issues there will be upcoming meetings that will include the presence of Mr. Raul Perez (Chief Facility Officer) to discuss and address the status of some schools which are older and in need of repair, as such areas of need will be identified and reviewed in depth.

Board Member Dimitris mentioned Capital Improvement needs at Coral Gables Preparatory and concerns that stucco and painting work scheduled for CGPA may not be fully completed by the time CGPA celebrates its centennial anniversary.

School Board Member Rojas indicated they will be ready, and it's being addressed with everybody and believes it will be a huge celebration! That particular site is a high priority for the summer. The Board Member will follow up with the superintendent's office as to details of the list of schools that will be open and to understand what impact summer programs will have on the project.

**C. NEW BUSINESS**

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

Draft

School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas provides the following updates:

The Coral Gables Chamber Breakfast allowed for networking and idea sharing. Several Committee members were present and the new superintendent, Dr. Jose Dotres, was introduced.

- There is a teacher shortage crisis which includes substitute teachers. The school district is partnering with universities to assist with filling some of the substitute teacher shortages. There is a need to attract more people to work in our school district as substitutes. Recruitment is needed as this is a major concern.

- SCRC members are encouraged to help spread the word.

- The proper and thorough screening of teachers and substitutes will take place to ensure children are safe.

- Compensation is one of the reasons for the current teacher shortage.

- A decision needs to be made between human capital and programs.

- 4-R's: Recruiting, Retaining, Rewarding and Respecting teachers. This continues to be a priority to ensure we have an expansion of teachers.

- Board Member Watson provided comments on incentivizing teachers. Will there be incentives for students to be incentivized to become teachers? Something like a compensation package.

- Board Member Chang brings up the fact that although the background check and finger printing are necessary, substitute must pay almost \$100.00 out of their pocket to complete this requirement. This might serve as a barrier of entry to the job. They would have to work two (2) days to recover this money. School Board Member Rojas will look into this.

- There are housing options in certain locations of Downtown and Miami to provide housing to a specific number of educators so they can afford to live here. Cost of living is tremendous.

#### Coral Gables High School

- Secured additional funds for gymnasium as previously mentioned.

- Look into scheduling a tour of the school for SCRC to view new facilities.

- School Board Member has been working closely with PTSA & Alumni through Friends of Gables.

- Looking to generate additional funds to remove chain link fence and replace structure.

- Looking at updating the field and astroturf as well.

Looking forward to various graduations.

The Office Employee of the Year was from District 6 – she is an outstanding employee!

There will be a robust summer school program offered by M-DCPS. The program will be different from in the past. This program is County wide but will be available at select locations. School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas has the list of program locations and can provide.

Striving to have a nurse in every school. Regrettably not too many nurses are available to provide the service. Nurses are limited to what they are authorized to do and/or administer to the child for example: administer pain medication etc. only if written preapproval is provided by parents. Looking at expanding mental health programs wherever possible, School Board Member Rojas spoke to Nicklaus Children's Hospital and will also be exploring telehealth opportunities as well.

She also mentioned recognizing employees with a tenure of 30 to 40 years of their life in the school district.

School Board Member endorsed implementation of the newly adopted House Bill, Victims of Communism Day. Numerous families have fled their countries to come here seeking freedom of speech and religion. Kids will receive instruction and information alerting them of the dangers of communism. This was unanimously approved at the School Board during the past meeting.

Board Member Watson wants to recognize the Miami-Dade PTA who gave 16 graduating senior each a \$1,000 check. One of the graduates from SAS, Nicole Torres applied to 16 universities and was accepted to every university! Princeton was the university of her choice.

Vice Chairperson Joseph also mentioned that School Board Member Santos of District 9 brought from all nine districts children who had received prominent scholarships and are going to prominent universities at a recent event. District 6 was very well represented. One of these students was Ashley who will be attending Harvard University and attends a District 2 school. Another recognition went to Lauren Gregorio from Coral Gables Senior High School who is an IB student. The Coral Gables Community Foundation also gave away \$400K in scholarships.

**C-2 Discussion on Fathers In Education Day Event (Facilitated by Sam Joseph, Vice Chairperson)**

Vice Chairperson Joseph provided a brief update on the event. Attended lower academy at Coral Gables Preparatory Academy and read to children. Chairperson Fernandez also participated at George Washington Carver and read to children. The staff and children are most appreciative for all these efforts. Looking to have Commissioners, City Manager and City Clerk participate next year.

**C-3 Youth Appointment Position on the Sustainability Advisory Board (Facilitated by Solanch Lopez)**

Calling all high school students! A new youth appointment seat is now available on the City's Sustainability Advisory Board. If you are a freshman, sophomore, or junior with a passion for sustainability and want to get involved in your city, we encourage you to apply. This appointment will serve for two years and is opened to a youth member that attends a high school located in Coral Gables and/or is a resident of Coral Gables. Their participation will not interfere with schoolwork as the board meetings take place on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 5:00 pm. Applications are open now through the online portal, further details are indicated online.

**D. OLD BUSINESS**

**D-1 Update on the Cavaliers Future Leaders Internship Program**

Update provided on both the Cavalier Future Leaders Internship program and the Page Program. For the Page Program there were four Page interns selected, two of the selected interns participated in last year's program. The Cavalier Program received two applicants; Commissioner Menendez reviewed the information and decided to accept both. There are also three possible Columbus students that might be participating in a separate internship with the communications department.

Chairperson Fernandez had spoken with Principal Ullivarri to confirm that the school had actively promoted the Cavalier Future Leaders Internship program. That being said there is a lot of competition nowadays in the types of internships offered. During Covid there were less programs offered and less interaction in the workforce. There are a lot of jobs being offered due to vacancies and younger individuals are being accepted to a few positions. Will continue to work on this next year.

**D-2 Update on Gables Family Literacy Festival (Facilitated by Sam Joseph, Vice Chairperson & Mitchell Zuriarrain, Administrative Operations Supervisor - Community Recreations)**

Draft

The Coral Gables Family Literacy Festival is one week away. Over 45 vendors will participate; this is a larger number than last year's event. ADA parking will be available, in addition to several parking venues, such as the library. The neighbors in the area were provided with notice of the event and the fact that Riviera will be closed during the event duration. There will be a ribbon cutting at the beginning of the event.

There are two slots opened for readers. Board Member Chang volunteered to serve as a reader. Event date was discussed. Memorial Day weekend is not convenient for this event as many people already have previous engagements. Request from Chairperson Fernandez to look at a different date next year. This program needs to be available for everyone within Coral Gables. The point of this event is to promote literacy and if 50% of the residents are on vacation it's a disservice to the community.

The International Village is not happening this year. Seven food vendors will be available. City will provide water sales to ensure everyone stays hydrated. Two schools will be participating.

Vice Chairperson Joseph complimented the Community Recreations department specifically Mitchell and Norma. They have done an amazing job. They are always very responsive.

Vice Chairperson Joseph proposes nominees for the 2nd Annual Coral Gables Family Literacy Festival Literacy Laureates.

- Mr. Richard Blanco (Miami-Dade County's First Poet Laureate)
- Dr. Cheryl E. Johnson, awarding posthumously (former Principal at George Washington Carver Elementary)
- Ms. Edwina Prime, awarding posthumously (Community Leader/President, McFarland Homestead Historic District)
- Marina Devine Guzmán and Lucia Chico (Creators of the "The Garden Project" at Coral Gables Senior High School, National PTA "Outstanding Youth Advocate" award winners)

Chairperson Fernandez motions to approve the four nominees, Board Member Sando seconds. Motion passed unanimously.

Request is made to find a way for these names to be memorialize at the festival. Chairperson Fernandez mentions that the process for nomination of Literacy Laureates needs to take place earlier in the year, perhaps January. This will allow board members a chance to read about the nominees and provide additional feedback.

Additional request for signage to recognize the Teachers and Rookie Teachers of the Year.

## **E. ONGOING BUSINESS**

- E-1 General Updates (Facilitated by Naomi Levi Garcia, Staff Liaison & Solanch Lopez, Secretary)**



Teacher Appreciation Proclamation was presented during the April 26 Commission Meeting. The presentation went very well with great representation from several of our schools. Working on receiving copies of the proclamation to be sent to all of the schools within the city.

Project Victory is set to move forward for the beginning of the next school year.

Vice Chairperson Joseph provides an update on Haitian Heritage Month. Both the Principal & Assistant Principal of the Year are Haitian.

## **F. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**F-1 Next SCRC Meeting - Friday, June 17, 2022**

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

**F-2 Join a local PTA or subscribe to their newsletters using the following links.**

**F-3 Downtown Community Cleanup - Monday, May 23 - 5:00 p.m.**

**F-4 Community Action Day at Chapman Field Park - Thursday, May 26 - 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**

**F-5 Gables Family Literacy Festival - Saturday, May 28 - 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

**F-6 School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas Satellite Office Hours - Thursday, June 2 & 16 - 12:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **NOTE**