

**CITY OF CORAL GABLES
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING**

Minutes of September 18, 2014

Members	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	
Herb Levin	P	P	*	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	P	Mayor Jim Cason
Luba De Witt	E	P	*	A	P	P	E	P	A	A	*	*	P	Commissioner Pat Keon
Les Pantin III	P	P	*	P	A	P	P	E	P	P	*	*	P	Commissioner Vince Lago
Vacant														Comm. Frank C. Quesada
Connie Crowther	P	P	*	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	P	Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk

* No meetings

Staff in attendance:

Maria Rosa Higgins Fallon, Public Affairs Manager
Rodolfo Roman, Public Affairs Specialist

The meeting came to order at 9:30 a.m.

Approval of minutes

The minutes from the June meeting were circulated for approval.

Motion: Les Pantin motioned to approve the June meeting minutes. Connie Crowther seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Police Communication Issues

Higgins Fallon invited the Police Department PIO to the meeting, and is hoping that she is delayed. She discussed the current situation and would like the advice of Communications Committee members on how to best assist in improving communications about the Police Department issues. The City has a new Interim Police Chief who is now in charge of changing the sentiment from citizens who feel are not being protected enough. The former Police Chief resigned under pressure. Last Thursday, at a City Commission meeting, residents said that there is not enough police presence in the community and that information about crime statistics is not credible.

Higgins Fallon met last Monday with Interim Police Chief Ed Hudak and was asked to collaborate in conjunction with Police PIO to address police communications with citizens. Police has autonomy through their own Public Information Officer in issuing communications, and Higgins Fallon, at the request of Chief Hudak, will enhance her participation in a collaborative manner with the Police Department. Chief Hudak is in the process of elaborating his action plan and Higgins Fallon will collaborate in putting together a strategic communications plan for the Police Department in conjunction with the Chief's Office and the Police PIO.

One of the ideas that emerged from this initial meeting is to do more public service announcements (PSAs) to explain the active role that police is now taking to combat crime, as well as to present Crime Prevention Tips for awareness on how citizens can assist in public safety. An idea Chief Hudak presented was to feature important members of the community in these new television PSAs for name recognition and better publicity. She asked Communications Committee members if they had any additional suggestions.

Chairperson Herb Levin said that the main communication issue was clarifying whether the crime statistics given were really accurate. Higgins Fallon said that the Interim Police Chief is looking into this previous reporting. Levin said that it would be helpful for the Police Department to propagate a policy for standardization of reporting crime statistics. This controversy over giving the correct information about crime statistics is worth the attention.

Connie Crowther agreed that this information needs to be published and informed in a better way. Levin said that it would be appropriate for the new Chief to announce a schedule of publication of crime statistics either every quarter or twice a year.

Luba DeWitt said that one must be careful on how the crime statistics are presented to the public. Coral Gables is known as the City Beautiful and as a safe place to be, and information about crime that would portray it otherwise would result in people moving to another city. Information must be presented in an appetizing way, she said.

Levin also suggested comparing our crime statistics with another city of similar size. The story on crime, according to him, is being greatly exaggerated as other similar cities also have crime incidents like ours. It would be important to compare crime on a per-capita basis and compare with other similar communities.

Crowther also said that the message should be “it’s a new day, and we have a new Police Chief, and things are being done to combat crime.” The new Police Chief must put more feet and wheels on the street so that citizens can see policemen in their cars patrolling their neighborhoods.

Higgins Fallon said that in the last couple of days, the CGTV team has been working on putting PSAs about the many actions taken by police since the new Chief’s appointment, along with crime prevention tips for educational purposes.

Les Pantin suggested planning more Police town hall meetings. Higgins Fallon said that they are already part of the action plan. Crowther also suggested to live-stream these meetings to make them accessible to seniors who can’t go out as much.

Higgins Fallon will work on preparing a communications plan for the Police Chief’s use and will get more involved in a collaborative role with the Police Department.

Crowther said that of all the topics that bring the leadership and staff together, this is the one you get most contact with. It requires much emphasis and finesse with the right message, and

the suggested PSA campaign is an excellent idea. Levin also suggested using the CBS4 Magazine to publish the crime tips.

Higgins Fallon also made the announcement that a new City Manager has been selected and that he is currently in negotiation over his contract.

Levin complimented Higgins Fallon for performing well under fire. Higgins Fallon thanked him and introduced Public Affairs Specialist Rodolfo Roman as a new staff member in her department. He has been with CGTV for the past six years and is now working on a part-time basis in the Public Affairs Office.

Roman spoke briefly about social media on how it can be promoted once it is launched. Pantin indicated that the county puts a sign-up to social media message on the screen with all County Commission meetings being broadcasted on TV.

Crowther said it is important to use social media technology and that she utilizes this as part of the PRSA meetings she presides. This organization will be presenting Les' father, Leslie Pantin, with the PRSA Miami Chapter Lifetime Achievement Award.

Higgins Fallon spoke about the Communications Division FY2015 budget. She is planning on drafting a business plan to request funding for additional projects and positions. Levin suggested presenting this plan first to the Communications Committee for review and discussion.

Communications Committee membership

Due to three unexcused absences in a calendar year, Communications Committee member Luba DeWitt may be asked to discontinue her service, unless there's formal action by the committee.

Motion: Herb Levin motioned to invite Luba DeWitt to continue her service as a member of the Communications Committee. Connie Crowther seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

DeWitt agreed to continue her participation as Communications Committee member. In the future, she will inform Higgins Fallon of any additional unavoidable absences prior to monthly meetings. DeWitt will have an excused absence for the upcoming October meeting.

Other Businesses

Crowther distributed the new directory of the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce. She received information from both Higgins Fallon and from Jorge Casuso from Economic Sustainability. This publication goes out to businesses, hotels and all city households. She is very proud of the final result.

Higgins Fallon also distributed the latest e-News issue. With no further issues to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.